STRESS AND THE 9-1-1 DISPATCHER
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Work-related stress affects agencies in myriad ways such as employee morale, increased turnover, and decreased productivity.
Symptoms of Stress

- Feeling anxious, irritable or depressed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Physical symptoms: headaches, stomach problems, sleep issues, loss of sex drive
- Apathy, loss of interest in work
- Social withdrawal
- Use of alcohol or drugs to cope

Effects of Stress In The Workplace

- Increased absenteeism and tardiness
- Decreased productivity
- Increased employee turnover
- Disciplinary problems

- Organizations with stress management programs reduce key indicators.

Common Causes of Workplace Stress

- Fear of being laid off
- Long work hours and/or shift work
- Heavy workloads
- Interpersonal relationships
- Conflicts with management’s style
- Poor environmental conditions
Causes of PSAP Workplace Stress

- All of the above and...

- Daily exposure to traumatic events
  - Tragic and/or violent calls for help
  - Radio contact with field units in perceived life-death scenarios
Any event that overwhelms the coping ability of individuals or groups exposed to the trauma is a critical incident.
Top Indicators of a Critical Incident

- Line of duty death or serious injury
- Mass casualty incident
- Officer-involved shootings
- Death or serious injury of a child
- Suicidal callers
Can indirect exposure to trauma create distress?
Are dispatchers “first responders”?
Who is at risk for PTSD?
Indirect Exposure to Trauma

- 911, What Is Your Emergency?
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
The FIRST First Responder
Studies Show...

- 16.3 percent of 9-1-1 Telecommunicators/Dispatchers may be at risk of Post or Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD/STSD)
  - Comparison: 10-15% of Law Enforcement personnel diagnosed with or present symptoms of PTSD
  - Comparison: 10-30% of Fire Service personnel diagnosed with or present symptoms of PTSD


*Indirect exposure to the trauma of others: the experiences of 9-1-1 telecommunicators.*


*Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM): A New Era and Standard of Care in Crisis Intervention*
Stress-Related Syndromes

- Chronic Stress Response
- Acute Stress Disorder
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Compassion Fatigue
- Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder

NENA Standard on 9-1-1 Acute/Traumatic and Chronic Stress Management. (NENA-STA-002, 2013)
Helping The Helpers

Care and support for the 9-1-1 Professional
Stop The Bleeding

- Provide Training
- Encourage Empathy
- Minimize Exposure
Making Change At Your Agency

- Employee assistance program
- Stress Management training
- Policies and Procedures
  - Critical Incident Stress Debriefings
  - Referral to additional services
- Peer Support programs
The Peer Support Team

Training
Policies and Procedures
Leadership and Structure
Training

- Essential Skills:
  - Individual Crisis Intervention
  - Critical Incident Stress Management
  - Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

- Knowledge Is Power:
  - Referrals
  - Resources
Policies

- Define team composition, goals and values
  - Consequences
  - Required Training

- Define when and how team will be activated
  - When/How are staff referred to Peer
  - When is a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) indicated?
Leadership and Structure

- Members Will:
  - Support the team’s values and goals
  - Be representative of the agency’s personnel
  - Work different shifts so all staff have access to the team

- Effective Leaders Are:
  - Flexible and Neutral
  - Management Level
The Most Important Thing

- Confidentiality, Confidentiality, Confidentiality
- Trust Is Much Easier to Destroy Than to Build
- Exceptions Are Required
You can’t control when the next critical incident comes your way, but you can plan for your response when it inevitably does.
Resources


Resources (continued)

- International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) – www.icisf.org
- California Peer Support Association (CPSA) – californiapairofpeersupport.wildapricot.org
- Training For Safety (Janet Childs) - www.trainingforsafety.com
- Central Coast Critical Incident Stress Management Team – www.criticalincidentteam.com
Thank You!

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