

THE IMPACT OF STRESS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR POLICE ADMINISTRATORS TO AMELIORATE THE PROBLEM

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THE IMPACT OF STRESS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
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Acknowledgements

The inspiration to pursue my Masters Degree was borne from the adversity of experiencing unprofessional leadership during a small portion of my career. The motivation for completing my seminar research paper on police stress was a result of the professional challenges I endured during this time period. Sometimes, negative experiences can encourage positive changes. My goal is to use any chance I am afforded to facilitate positive organizational change and career development opportunities for those I work alongside day in and day out.

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Abstract

The impact of stress in law enforcement: Policy recommendations for police administrators to ameliorate the problem

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Under the Supervision of Dr. Sabina Burton

Statement of the Problem

Policing is a profession which exposes its practitioners to a wide array of dangers. An important but infrequently publicized occupational hazard is the high degree of stress that police officers are exposed to. Researchers have developed a substantial body of evidence indicating that stress is problematic in the law enforcement industry, and that methods used to reduce the impact of stressors are inadequate. Data suggests that police officers suffer from a number of physical, psychological, and behavioral issues at rates higher than or equal to that of the general population (Anderson, Litzenberger, & Plecas, 2002; Gershon, Barocas, Canton, Li, & Vlahov, 2009).

Stress may be experienced through exposure to traumatic incidents or through stressors that exist in an organizational environment (Stinchcomb, 2004). When officers are subjected to elevated levels of stress, both the individual and the agency are impacted, resulting in a less efficient and effective police response (Zhao, He, & Lovrich, 2002). Many law enforcement agencies are not prepared to adequately help officers cope with the negative consequences of stress, and lack properly developed or implemented stress management programs for officers (National Institute of Justice, 1996). Agencies are recognizing the detrimental impact that stress

can have, but programs that presently exist are primarily reactive in nature (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). In order to ameliorate the problem, a proactive, comprehensive stress management program that incorporates a combination of training, education, lifestyle changes, and organizational changes is necessary.

Methods of Approach

This research paper employs secondary research and empirical evidence gathered from scholarly research journals, course textbooks, and government sponsored studies. Additionally, analyses of existing intervention programs are discussed to highlight the importance of designing and implementing effective programs to deal with stress-related problems in law enforcement. Lastly, police stress is examined from different theoretical perspectives, with emphasis given to how these theories can be used to understand and combat problems associated with the inevitabilities of stress in law enforcement.

Results of the Study

The results of this paper indicate that stress is a significant problem in the law enforcement industry, and that current methods of combating stress from both the officer and the organizational perspectives are inadequate. Police executives recognize that traumatic incidents are major factors that contribute to the levels of stress by police officers, but have been slow to recognize the impact that chronic organizational stressors have on officers. Stress is often treated as an individual coping problem, and the organizational environment is infrequently recognized as the primary source of stressors.

This paper demonstrates how necessary it is for law enforcement agencies to recognize all potential sources of stress, internal and external to the organization. If police agencies intend to design and implement a stress management plan, it is essential that administrators reflect upon

existing policies and directives that contribute to the levels of stress experienced by officers, and be willing to make changes conducive to reducing or eliminating the effect of stressors. This paper also makes a number of program and policy recommendations for managers that are intended to contribute to a proactive stress management program that can be tailored to the unique needs of individual law enforcement agencies.

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

The Impact of Stress in Law Enforcement: Policy Recommendations for Police Administrators to Ameliorate the Problem

Statement of the Problem

Policing is a profession that subjects its practitioners to a high degree of stress. Over the past half-century, researchers have developed a significant quantity of scholarly evidence documenting the affiliation between the milieu of law enforcement and workplace stress. American society has recognized policing as an essential public service profession, and the desire to reduce stress amongst police professionals is the catalyst that has driven this body of research (Zhao, He, & Lovrich, 2002).

One of the primary sources of police stress, and one that has received significant attention in the literature, is exposure to traumatic events. Police officers may experience a wide variety of traumatic events, ranging from fatality accidents, to officer involved shootings, to child sexual abuse. Stinchcomb (2004) characterizes these events as episodic stressors, and underscores the fact that a police officer can experience one of these events on any given day at work, but they generally happen infrequently and are very intense experiences. The secondary source of police stress is chronic organizational stress, which is stress that is constantly present in the workplace. Organizational stressors are customary in police organizations, and occur daily (Stinchcomb, 2004).

The negative impact that police stress has on the organization and the individual is well documented. Organizational dynamics that impact the stress experienced by officers include peer pressure, performance appraisals, role models, promotional desires, policies and procedures (or the absence of adequate policies and procedures), job satisfaction, insufficient training, morale, derisory

supervision, excessive or deficient administrative control, the hierarchical structure of the department, among innumerable other stressors (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). These stressors may contribute to high levels of stress experienced by some police officers, and in turn may lead to low rates of work attendance, job burnout, workplace hostility, premature retirement, and substandard job performance (Anderson, Litzenberger, & Plecas, 2002). Essentially, simply being a member of a paramilitary organization with a rigid hierarchical structure can provide a considerable amount of stress for officers (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008).

Individually, exorbitant stress levels can lead to many physical, psychological, and physiological problems. Some of these problems include higher rates of workplace accidents, troubles sleeping, matrimonial conflict, intimate partner violence, depression, suicide or suicide ideation, substance abuse, digestive ailments, and respiratory and cardiovascular disease (Waters & Ussery, 2007). Police stress-related issues can also impact the community in negative ways when symptoms of stress are exhibited, such as through excessive force or violence. These manifestations can lead to distrust in police officials, and a loss of support for police organizations within a community (Gershon, Barocas, Canton, Li, & Vlahov, 2009). Consequently, a failure to recognize stressors and to deal adequately with the stress responses of police officers has led to a significant problem within the profession.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research is to increase awareness of the impact that stress experienced by law enforcement officers has on individual officers, the function of the organization, and the department's relationship with the community. The research will provide a foundation for policy recommendations to police administrators to help ameliorate the impact of stress felt by officers, the agency, and the community.

It is important to differentiate between stress that results from a traumatic incident, and stress that is manifested through reoccurring, organizational elements. While it is equally imperative to address problems associated with both sources, the methods used to alleviate the problems are quite different. The effects of everyday stressors, combined with exposure to traumatic events may culminate in behavioral problems with officers, which may negatively impact organizational efficacy (Gershon et al., 2009). In recent years, law enforcement administrators have started realizing the detrimental impact that stress has on officers, organizations, and communities. Some agencies have attempted to develop programs to help assist officers experiencing problems. However, these programs have largely been reactive in design, and have done little to solve the problems that create stress in the first place; they are aimed at helping officers deal with the symptoms of what they are experiencing (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). This research will emphasize the importance of having organizational policies, procedures, and programs in place to deal with stress in the form of episodic stress incidents and organizational factors that contribute to the stress response of officers, with the intention of identifying effective, proactive options to minimize the problem in the first place.

Methodology

This research paper employs secondary research and empirical evidence gathered from scholarly research journals, course textbooks, and government sponsored studies. Additionally, analyses of existing intervention programs are discussed to highlight the importance of designing and implementing effective programs to deal with stress-related problems in law enforcement. Lastly, police stress is examined from different theoretical perspectives, with emphasis given to

how these theories can be used to understand and combat problems associated with the inevitabilities of stress in law enforcement.

Contribution to the Field

Law enforcement agencies and administrators must understand the impact that stress has on officers, which in turn impacts the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization, and the ability of the organization to provide proper public services to the community. This paper serves as a comprehensive educational tool for police administrators, designed to raise awareness of the problems associated with stress in police work, and recommend policy implementations and organizational programs to mitigate these problems.

SECTION II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will consist of four main sections. The first section will provide a definition of stress and how this definition relates to the profession of law enforcement. The second section will discuss the physiological and biological processes and manifestations associated with stress. The third section will identify the types and sources of stressors experienced by law enforcement officers. The fourth section will focus on how stress impacts the physical, psychological, and social well-being of police officers, as well as how stress can impact the relationship between an officer and the community they serve.

Defining Stress

The existence of stress in the profession of law enforcement is a well documented proposition (Anderson et al., 2002; Anshel, 2000; Gershon et al., 2009). Different officers will exhibit the signs or symptoms of stress in varying ways, which makes providing a universal definition of stress a difficult task. Some experience stress as any environmental stimulus that causes anxiety, nervousness, or apprehension, which requires the person experiencing said stimulus to make an adjustment to cope (Stinchcomb, 2004). However, stress may be subjective in nature, and not everyone will experience stress in the same way, despite similar circumstances or events. As such, Brown and Campbell (1990) define stress as a “self-perceived negative or unpleasant impact” (p. 307) caused by the circumstances of a situation.

Although stress is typically associated with negative connotations, stress is not always a dysfunctional phenomenon. As Gaines and Kappeler (2008) note, stress will often initiate a beneficial response from people, providing the necessary motivation for them to perform to the best of their abilities. Under the right circumstances, stress may induce a heightened sense of attentiveness and responsiveness, thereby enhancing the capability of the individual to respond

effectively. However, for purposes of this paper, stress will be examined as a detriment to the proper function of police officers; both individually and within the organizational environment. Therefore, a useful working definition of stress for this paper is any type of interaction between an individual and his or her operational or organizational environment that prompts and adaptive response.

Physiological and Psychological Effects of Stress

Substantial evidence in the literature shows that police officers, as a profession, are subjected to more acute and unremitting life stressors than most other professions, which makes them susceptible to the development of numerous physiological and psychological problems. Most police officers begin their careers in prime physical condition and excellent health, yet many are forced in to early retirement or die prematurely due to stress disorders that go unresolved throughout a career (Waters & Ussery, 2007). Frequent exposure to stressors like crisis situations that are unique to law enforcement, combined with the daily workplace stress experienced in police organizations (as is true in most professions) can have a profound impact on officers, leaving them with a higher risk for unfavorable physical and mental problems such as gastrointestinal disorders, anxiety, depression, cardiovascular disease, and post traumatic stress disorder (Arnetz, Arble, Backman, Lynch, & Lublin, 2013). Without adequate protective skills and coping mechanisms to handle the cumulative stress of the profession, police officers will likely experience deleterious consequences on their overall well-being.

Physiological Effects

The physiology of a stress reaction in the human body is a complex process, but involves two primary responses from systems in the human body. The first response comes from the endocrine system, and involves a variety of hormones that are secreted into the body. The

second response comes from the nervous system in the form of an autonomic nervous system reaction (Anderson et al., 2002).

Regardless of what causes a stress reaction, once circumstances indicate the presence of a threat or danger, the human body triggers a “fight-or-flight” response. This natural response is what prepares a body for action, and allows individuals the strength and energy necessary to defend themselves from aggression (fight), or remove themselves from precarious situations (flight). This response is triggered from the activation of the sympathetic nervous system, which consists of fibers that are connected to the major organs of the body to help normalize the involuntary functions of these organs. This heightened response from the sympathetic nervous system can also contribute to tunnel vision and auditory exclusion, in which only information directly related to the stressful situation at hand is perceived, and any extraneous sensory information is filtered out. In conjunction with the sympathetic nervous system response, the hypothalamus (a portion of the brain) triggers the secretion of hormones into the blood and saliva, readying the body to expend energy in order to stand and fight or flee from the threat (Anderson et al., 2002).

Cortisol is a glucocorticoid stress hormone that is released at the direction of the anterior hypothalamus, which serves to increase attentiveness and arousal, and is theorized to contribute to the creation and retrieval of fearful memories (Arnetz et al, 2013). The posterior hypothalamus stimulates the adrenal medulla through a direct connection to the nervous system, triggering the production of epinephrine (adrenaline) and norepinephrine, which serve to increase heart rate and increase blood flow to the skeletal muscles. As a result of these chemical secretions, metabolism is increased, which is supported by a flow of free fatty acids into the bloodstream that act as a fuel supply (Anderson et al., 2002).

Neuroscientists generally believe that increased cortisol levels during stressful situations are beneficial, and are intended to return the body to its normal state when the stressful event concludes (Yehuda, Brand, Goleir, & Yang, 2002, as cited in Arnetz et al, 2013). However, when events contribute to sustained levels of increased cortisol, harsh negative effects have been documented, including osteoporosis, high blood pressure, depression, and anxiety, just to name a few (Arnetz et al., 2013). Additionally, a physiological change may not only affect one's general health, but may also impact an individual's decision making abilities, and reduce one's acceptance of other people's behavior. Disruptions to physiology can also occur due to shift work, which can disrupt a person's biological clock and circadian rhythms (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). If the body fails to respond to the aftermath of stress in an appropriate way, then residual hormones remain in the body, contributing to adverse health effects and impacting the long-term well-being of the officer (Anderson et al., 2002).

Psychological Effects

The stressors associated with police work can also have a significant impact on an officer's psychological well-being. When the stress reaction is the most intense, officers may suffer from burnout, which completely saps the officer of his or her energy and ability to adapt to the work environment and conditions of the job. Prior to burnout, officers may experience overload, which happens when stressors continue to accumulate but are not appropriately resolved. Some officers may also experience underload, which may happen when expectations for an officer are minimal, and they suffer from boredom because so little is asked of them. When officers experience overload or underload, psychological problems may exhibit themselves outwardly through symptoms such as insomnia, irritability, inattentiveness, and a lack of productivity (New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, 2000).

An officer's psychological state can be impacted by almost any type of stressor. Gaines and Kappeler (2008) posit that when an officer responds to an active shooter situation in a mall or school, a feeling of fear may be generated internally with the officer. This can be beneficial if the officer recognizes the fear as a warning which increases his or her awareness and raises their level of caution. However, if the officer does not adequately discharge this fear after the incident, the fear may become internalized, which can have a detrimental impact on the officer's psychological state.

Fear is just one example of what can become a psychological stressor. Other examples include the frequency with which police officers encounter the worst facets of human kind, and dealing with horrific traumas such as murders, the physical and sexual abuse of children, and gruesome traffic fatalities. These types of stressors tend to accumulate in the minds of officers, and if the negative emotions associated with these stressors are not adequately dealt with, it can result in psychological problems such as depression and anxiety (Barker & Carter, 1994, as cited in Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). Stinchcomb (2004) likens this cumulative effect of stress to how the ocean surf erodes beaches through the incessant pounding of waves along the shoreline. Correspondingly, the continuous exposure to repetitive stressors eventually reduces a person's capacity to cope, having a detrimental effect on their mental, physical, and emotional well-being.

Stressors Experienced by Police Officers

For years, scholars have studied how stress relates to the profession of law enforcement. Some of the topics that have been researched include whether or not stress exists in the profession, its causes, its effects, and how individual officers and police organizations can manage the negative impacts that stress can cause (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). Some research suggests that police officers are subjected to a work environment that is portrayed as one of the

most stressful professions because their duties ensure the potential of violence at any given time during their shift (McCarty, Zhao, & Garland, 2007). Other research indicates that there is no significant impact of the operational variables that are exclusive to policing when compared to the organizational variables widespread in other professions, or no noteworthy differences between police officers and other reference populations in the cumulative amount of stress experienced. This may be understood to mean that the operational variables exclusive to policing may have a negligible impact on officers' experience of stress (Webster, 2013).

Despite the lack of agreement on the scope of police stress and how it impacts officers and organizations, there is ample evidence to show that stress in the profession not only exists, but is pervasive and problematic (Gaines & Kappler, 2008). It is imperative that law enforcement administrators recognize the stressors that impact officers on a daily basis so that they can develop policies and procedures to help support officers and sustain their mental and physical well-being. This section of the paper will discuss some of the common types of stressors experienced by police officers, and the effects that these stressors have on officers and organizations every day. While most police administrators should be aware of the existence of these stressors, this section should provide clarity as to the effects that stressors can have on individuals and organizations and raise awareness that solutions to combat the problems are needed or these factors will become detrimental to the organization.

Critical Incident Stress

Over the past 40 years, a large body of research has been developed describing the relationship between the police profession and work-related stress (Zhao, He, & Lovrich, 2002). Much of this literature has centered on the intrapersonal nature of such stressors as traumatic incidents and life-or death decision making situations, and those who work in the human services

are particularly vulnerable to exposure to such incidents (Stinchcomb, 2004). In order to understand the depth at which these events can impact human services workers, particularly police officers, having a comprehension of what exactly constitutes trauma in the eyes of a first responder is essential.

A traumatic event is an intense and momentous occurrence that engulfs a person's ability to cope with the stress of the situation in their normal way—even highly skilled law enforcement personnel who are trained to function effectively in moments of crisis. Normally, traumatic events involve death or great bodily injury, and powerful emotions of fear, defenselessness, or terror (Kirschman, 2000). Stinchcomb (2004) refers to these events as episodic stressors, and notes that these high-stress situations typically begin and end very quickly and often unexpectedly, such as in situations involving officer involved shootings or high speed pursuits. Episodic stressors can be characterized as those events that are the inherent hazards associated with police work, as police officers are known to be involved with the most aggressive persons and dangerous situations that society produces.

Continuous exposure to an uncontrolled work environment coupled with regularly encountering dangerous criminal elements places a significant burden on police officers working the street (Zhao, He, & Lovrich, 2002). Most police officers will experience violence and trauma at some point during their career, but such exposures are normally sporadic occurrences. Despite the paucity of traumatic events, they can serve as incapacitating stressors for officers (Chae & Boyle, 2013). One of the most traumatic events that a police officer can experience is the violent death of a partner or fellow officer in the line of duty (Violanti & Aron, 1994). In 2012, 48 sworn police officers were feloniously killed in the line of duty, while 52,901 officers were assaulted while serving their communities. Of the 52,901 who were physically assaulted,

14,678 suffered some type of injury as a result of the assault (FBI, 2013). These statistics serve as a grim reminder of the dangers police officers face, which is in and of itself stressful.

Experiencing these situations adds an entirely different dimension to the stressors experienced by police officers.

While felonious killings and assaults upon police officers are relatively rare events given the number of police officers that work in American society, these violent encounters happen frequently enough to serve as a constant reminder for officers about the dangers they face on the job. In this way, the threat of physical harm is one of any number of contributors to an officer's level of cumulative stress. Cumulative stress is extended, unmitigated deterioration on an individual's well-being because more demands are placed upon that person than what they are able to respond to (Kirschman, 2000). An especially important facet of the constant possibility of death or violent injury in the profession is the knowledge that violent attacks against police officers are intentional, and not accidental. Because the awareness of this danger is constant, the effects of this type of stressor are naturally cumulative (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). Other traumatic events that officers may experience during their career range from having to kill another person while in the line of duty, to observing badly abused or mistreated children, to responding to traffic accidents involving dead or dismembered bodies. Exposure to these types of events, and other disturbing situations that are too numerous to list, tend to have an accumulating effect on officers throughout a career and can be debilitating when not properly handled (Weiss et al., 2010).

While the nature of a critical incident may be traumatic in and of itself to police officers, the aftermath of the situation can be tenuous as well if the necessary follow-up is not provided to the officers involved. According to research by Plaxton-Hennings (2004), a frequent complaint

amongst officers who were recovering from a critical incident was that agency executives did not seem concerned about the well-being of officers who were recovering from violent, potentially lethal encounters. Many departments failed to provide adequate support and follow-up debriefings for the officers who were involved in critical incidents, giving the impression that they were distancing themselves from the officers involved. This led to feelings of isolation, insignificance, and fear, and causing officers to feel unsupported and question their own decision-making (Plaxton-Hennings, 2004).

Organizational Stress

While episodic stressors, otherwise known as traumatic incidents, pose significant challenges for those law enforcement officers who are unfortunate enough to encounter them in their careers, their overall impact is less momentous if for no other reason than the frequency with which they occur. As Stinchcomb (2004) aptly notes:

Contrary to popular opinion, it is not the danger of police work that is most stress-inducing. Rather, there is substantial evidence that stress is more likely to be produced by the routine, day-to-day features of work life that tend to be taken for granted. (p. 263).

These ever-present work conditions may be referred to as chronic organizational stressors. They are encountered on a regular, if not daily basis, and may be the result of a wide range of causes, from strict operational policies to ineffective supervisors (Stinchcomb, 2004). Some research has discovered that organizational issues in the workplace are more significant stressors than traumatic events because they are frequent and sustained, and that the nature of the police organizational context makes these issues difficult to cope with (Huddleston, Stephens, & Paton, 2007).

Aside from the impact it has on officers, organizational stress can serve as an incessant strain on the spouses of police officers, being the source of much discussion at the dinner table or

at bedtime. According to Kirschman (2000), studies have indicated that spouses are vicariously affected by organizational stress, disheartened by the role office politics play in their spouses' careers, disdainful of how extensively the department intrudes into their personal lives, and upset that police organizations seemingly care nothing about the personal or family lives of the members of the department.

Combating the causes and effects of organizational stressors has proven to be a difficult endeavor. In order to successfully address these problems, police administrators must be willing to take a hard, introspective look at how the department is managed and recognize and accept those factors within the organizational milieu that contribute to the problem. From this viewpoint, police executives have normally considered stress-related problems to be individual disorders, rather than the result of organizational dysfunction (Stinchcomb, 2004). This viewpoint is contrary to how stress should be viewed in the profession of law enforcement. The following sections aim to assist administrators with taking that necessary introspective look by identifying the more common sources of organizational stress, which will provide a foundation for the identification of problems within their own organizations and help facilitate the development and implementation of effective solutions.

Bureaucracy

Research on police stress has identified the bureaucratic, paramilitary structure that exists in the majority of police organizations as a major contributor to high stress levels within the work environment (Zhao et al., 2002). The stratification of members based on rank and status contributes to a culture of extreme formality based upon customs that require adherence to procedures and regulations that serve as the core of day-to-day operations (Chae & Boyle, 2013). The lack of flexibility provided in many policies and procedures contributes to a dichotomy in

the profession that is stressful. By the nature of the job, police officers are given great amounts of latitude to exercise discretion while handling calls for service on the street. However, within the confines of the organization, officers are often under constant scrutiny by their supervisors and held to task by an abundance of administrative rules that regulate their work (Zhao et al., 2002). This paradox can create a complicated dynamic for officers that can be difficult to navigate.

Additionally, rank and file officers are rarely given the opportunity to offer their input in to the decision making processes in their departments or assist with policy development, despite the fact that they are typically the officers responsible for executing policies. This can lead to a perception that the work rules established by the administration are problematic or unfair to the line officers who are responsible for achieving the goals and objectives of the agency (McCarty et al., 2007). When officers are not allowed to have meaningful contributions to the philosophy of the organization, they may feel as though the work they do has no real worth. As a result, officers may experience lower levels of job satisfaction, a decrease in motivation, and elevated levels of stress (Chae & Boyle, 2013).

Operating within the confines of a paramilitary organization can also be stressful for managers and executives. According to Pagon, Spector, Cooper, and Lobnikar (2011), the primary stressors for police managers include work overload, insufficient staffing, lack of financial resources and capital, and lack of consultation by subordinates. Additionally, the rigid structure of the bureaucracy is not conducive to facilitating good relationships between supervisors and subordinates, makes it difficult to organize work responsibilities equally, and often does not provide a mechanism for the recognition of individual contributions, particularly at the line-officer level. Frequently, these factors culminate in a low rate of job satisfaction for

police managers and executives, increasing the likelihood that they will leave their posts (Pagon et al., 2011). Similar to how officers on the street believe that no matter how they perform, their decisions will be second-guessed by supervision, managers also feel that no matter what decisions are made with respect to the efficient and appropriate operations of the organization, the rank-and-file officers will voice their opposition.

Shift Work

Police work requires officers to work in shifts, around the clock, to provide 24 hours per day, seven days per week public safety services to the communities they serve and protect. According to Vila, Morrison, and Kenney (2002), obligatory and repetitive shift work rotations can prevent officers from getting the rest required to be effective, which may cause increased emotional strain, fatigue, diminished attentiveness, and confusion. The fatigue experienced by officers can have negative impacts on their health, work performance, decision making ability, and their interpersonal relationships with members of the public.

Most shift workers experience disrupted circadian rhythms and uncharacteristic sleep patterns that can lead to brain disruptions. Working overnight hours has been associated with reduced sleep duration, ranging from about four to seven hours, insomnia during the primary sleep period, and fatigue during the primary wake periods (Boudreau, Dumont, & Boivin, 2013). These sleep disruptions can be particularly impactful for police officers, because officers who are assigned to work night shift have a 72% increased risk of injury when compared to their counterparts working day shift, which results in higher levels of worker compensation claims from officers who must work overnight hours (Violanti et al., 2012).

In a study of 14 south central Pennsylvania police departments located in one mid-size county, Juleseth, Ruiz, and Hummer (2011) found that shift work can have a significant impact

on the stress level and level of job satisfaction experienced by police officers. The results of their study indicated a reasonably strong association between the frequency with which officers rotated shifts and overall levels of job satisfaction. The more frequently officers were required to switch between the day shift, the afternoon shift, and the night shift, the lower their reported levels of job satisfaction were. This lower level of job satisfaction contributed to (along with other factors) higher levels of reported stress among the sample (Julseth, Ruiz, & Hummer, 2011).

Shift work also appears to be a contributing factor to reduced levels of health amongst police officers. A study by Barton et al. (1995) found that shift workers suffer from cardiovascular disease, digestive complications, heartburn, constipation, and loss of appetite at rates higher than those experienced by workers assigned to work a consistent dayshift. Moreover, the rate at which digestive problems occur to shift workers was found to be between two and five times greater for shift workers than for workers who work fixed day shifts (Barton et al., 1995).

Some industries, including policing, have attempted to alleviate the strains of shift work by experimenting with schedules that vary from the traditional eight hour work day, such as 10 and 12 hours shifts. According to Smith, Folkard, Tucker, and MacDonald (1998), 12-hour shifts were advantageous in that they increased the length of blocks of rest time off, reduced time spent driving to and from work, allowed for more time for meetings and conferences during the work day, and led to improvements in customer service. Smith et al. (1998) also found that persons who worked 12- hour shifts also had a small increase in sleep quality when compared with those who worked eight hour shifts. Another study conducted by Amendola et al. (2011) found that officers who worked 10-hour shifts got significantly more sleep per night than those

officers who were assigned to 8-hour shifts and had an appreciably higher quality of work life. Officers who worked 8-hour shifts also worked more overtime than officers assigned to 10-hour or 12-hour shifts. The research also found that 12-hour shifts did not impact job tasks such as driving or reaction time, but those officers who worked 12-hour shifts had significantly lower levels of alertness at work and were generally more tired than those on 8-hour shifts (Amendola et al., 2011). Evidence indicates that 10-hour shifts may be the optimal work schedule for police officers, offering professional benefits for the organization and both personal and professional benefits for officers.

Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals serve as a source of stress for many police officers. It has been suggested that many supervisors complete performance reviews in a biased manner, using subjective assessments and evaluation criteria to evaluate the performance of their subordinates (Shane, 2008). Without standardized evaluation criteria and specific definitions of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable performance, subjectivity is likely to play a role in the evaluation process. Shane (2008) also noted that too often departments utilize performance evaluations as a tool for documenting criticisms and deficiencies in order to justify punishment, rather than as a career development device and to positively reinforce performance successes. Officers may also view their department's promotional process as a flawed system, influenced by subjective factors rather than based upon objective performance evaluation criteria. Paton et al. (2009, as cited in Chae and Boyle, 2013) argue that many police promotional processes are seen as lacking credibility from the viewpoint of officers, and that those promotional decisions are based upon political favoritism rather than proven performance. Unfair promotional processes, or at least the perception that the process is unfair, may increase the stress level of officers

involved in the process and negatively impact their attitude toward the department and the profession.

Communication

The bureaucratic nature of law enforcement organizations contributes to problems with communication within law enforcement organizations. Chae and Boyle (2013) posit that obedience to strict regulations hinders organizational efficiency, particularly with respect to interpersonal communication and collaboration. Officers are generally expected to adhere to a strict chain of command, so if a supervisor does not agree with suggestions or observations relayed by the officer, it may not reach higher levels of the command structure, despite the veracity of the suggestion. Officers who reported serious communication problems within an organization also tended to receive less favorable performance appraisals from their superior officers (Chae & Boyle, 2013).

In one study related to stress in policing, Toch (2002) found that communication was a significant source of conflict within police organizations. Some of the problems that were reported in this study included a lack of consistency on the part of supervisors with upholding policies, rules and regulations that changed frequently but were not adequately explained, and obstacles and bureaucratic inefficiencies that kept things from getting done in a timely manner. Toch (2002) also noted that a critical impediment to the effective flow of information is that communication is often not permitted to be bilateral. Too often information is strictly communicated downward, from the chief executive to the rank and file. Frequently, a mechanism for communication that allows information to flow from the bottom up is not in place, or not complete so that information can reach past the next level in the chain of command.

Other Organizational Variables

The aforementioned organizational variables are some of the more significant stressors that are present in law enforcement agencies; however, the list is not all-inclusive, as numerous other organizational dynamics have been identified as stressors. Kirschman (2000), through extensive research, has identified some of these dynamics as insufficient training, incompetent supervision, inoperable or malfunctioning equipment, unequal workload distribution, inadequate salary, lack of recognition for accomplishments, politics, poorly managed organizational change, and a lack of direction and feedback with respect to roles, expectations and responsibilities, to name a few. Because numerous variables may be present in every police organization, police organizational structure and management practices have been noted to be the primary sources of stress in the work environment (Zhao, He, & Lovrich, 2002). Administrators must be cognizant of the full gamut of stressors in order to formulate a plan to reduce their impact. As Kirschman (2000) notes, departments cannot completely eliminate the organizational sources of stress, but they can learn to manage them more effectively. Administrative failure to recognize and deal with the full spectrum of stress-related problems will result in negative impacts on organizational members, the organization itself, and the community.

Negative Impacts and Outcomes of Stress

Stress in law enforcement has the potential for many negative outcomes if it is not handled in an effective manner. Failure to cope with stress will have detrimental impacts on the individual officer, the police organization, and the community that the officer and organization serve. This section of the paper will examine the relationships between stress and police officer suicide, intimate partner violence, divorce, alcohol and substance abuse, health and wellness, and differences in how male and female officers experience stress.

Suicide

The most significant outcome associated with stress in law enforcement is suicide. Police professionals and mental health experts have been attempting to establish what events lead to police suicide for many years. Chae and Boyle (2013) found that at least five important factors that are associated with police suicide risk: organizational stress, critical incident trauma, the burdens of shift work and unusual work schedules and hours, interpersonal relationship or marital problems, and alcohol abuse. Other contributing risk factors may include disciplinary issues in the workplace, depression, easy access to firearms and the knowledge and ability to use them, drug abuse, inadequate coping skills, financial problems, or being involved in a scandalous or sensationalized incident (Kirschman, 2000). The interaction of multiple risk factors, as opposed to one risk factor, likely increases the risk of suicide (Chae & Boyle, 2013).

Statistics related to the frequency with which law enforcement officers commit suicide are generally uncertain because of a lack of a methodical means to collect accurate data. However, research has consistently shown that police officers are more likely to commit suicide than to be killed in the line of duty (Kirschman, 2000). Additionally, data has shown that police officers are at an increased risk of suicide when compared to the general population, but due to some problems with reporting procedures, it is believed that the present statistics underestimate the extent of the problem (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008; Violanti et al., 2009, Waters & Ussery, 2007). In a study by Aamodt and Stalnacker (2001), it was found that law enforcement officer suicides occurred at a rate of about 18.1 suicides per 100,000 officers, when compared with data showing the U.S. general population with a suicide rate of 12 per 100,000 persons.

Another measure compared the suicide rate reported by Aamodt and Stalnacker (2001) with a different group. According to Clark, White, and Violanti (2012), when compared with the

2009 suicide rate of Caucasian males of 21.6 per 100,000 persons, the law enforcement suicide rate is actually lower. While Clark, White and Violanti (2012) argue that Caucasian males are a more appropriate comparison group than the general U.S. population, they also noted in their research that law enforcement suicides are more likely to be underreported or improperly classified as accidental deaths in order to protect the family of the deceased and the agency from the disgrace of suicide.

Regardless of how many police officers commit suicide, any number above zero is too high. The prevention of police suicide is a very practical ideal if family members, coworkers, and police administrators recognize the symptoms of stress that may contribute to suicidal ideation. Unfortunately, supervisors and officers are not always adequately trained to identify the indicators of stress, or if they are, they do not take the appropriate action (Waters & Ussery, 2007). Until things change, suicide and other negative outcomes of stress in the police profession will continue to plague the industry.

Intimate Partner Violence and Divorce

The prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) in relationships is a troubling social phenomenon. Kirschman (2000) reports that between two and four million women, and 100,000 men are the victims of domestic violence every year. What's even more troubling is that police officers are often the abusers in relationships, although statistics involving IPV and police officers are difficult to ascertain. However, if IPV occurs at the same rate in police families as it does in the general population, then approximately 60,000 to 180,000 police families are impacted by IPV each year (Kirschman, 2000). In one study cited by Kirschman (2000), 728 police officers and 479 spouses were surveyed, with forty percent of the police officers reporting that they had been physically violent towards their spouses or children in the previous six

months. However, only ten percent of the spouses reported physical violence during the same timeframe. Additionally, between twenty and thirty percent of the spouses reported frequent verbal abuse directed towards themselves or their children. While these numbers are concerning enough, some researchers believe that underreporting of IPV in police families is a significant problem because there are many deterrents for reporting these incidents, including the loss of financial stability and health insurance, among other benefits, if the offending officer were to lose his job (Erwin, Gershon, Tiburzi, & Lin, 2005).

Studies have correlated IPV in police families with numerous work-related factors, including work assignment, work hours, working extended hours, sleep deprivation, inadequate coping strategies, burnout and job frustrations, and extensive use of sick leave. Uniformed patrol officers and narcotics officers, as well as officers assigned to work the overnight shift and officers who work more than 50 hours per week had higher propensities for engaging in IPV (Kirschman, 2000). An interesting observation noted by Erwin, Gershon, Tiburzi, and Lin (2005) after conducting a large, anonymous survey of police officers was that indicators of IPV were more often reported by female police officers who had female partners than were male officers who had either other males or females as their significant others.

Domestic violence may be the result of a number of different dynamics present in police families. Hanks (1992, cited in Kirschman, 2000) proposes three different types of domestic abuse: stress-related abuse, control-related abuse, and other special circumstances. All three of these types of abuse are present in police families. Stress-related abuse is generally described as an isolated incident that is sparked from crisis or some unremitting pressure in the abuser's life, such as the death of a close friend or job loss. Both the offender and victim are horrified by the incident, and the offender immediately recognizes the significance of his transgressions and

displays remorse. Often, this type of abuse is a one-time occurrence and can be eliminated when the abuser seeks counseling and utilizes effective coping skills to help reduce stress levels.

On the opposite side of the spectrum is control-related abuse. This type of abuse occurs when the abuser rules by fear and intimidation, and the abuser rarely takes responsibility for his actions. He expects loyalty and becomes aggressive when his partner does not predict and meet his needs adequately. The victim often develops symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and feels trapped in the relationship, often not reporting violence unless children are impacted by the abuse. Police officers often fit into this category of abuser because they have learned in their profession that they must always be in control of every situation, and how they control situations at work may lead to them using the same tactics to control their family as well (Hanks, 1992, cited in Kirschman, 2000).

Lastly, other special circumstances may contribute to violence by the abuser, such as a war veteran who is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. The experiences endured by the abuser may have increased his propensity for violence, and he may have learned that violence is the simplest way to solve problems. Many police officers have been exposed to critical incidents, and these experiences may lead to violent reactions (Hanks, 1992, cited in Kirschman, 2000). Regardless of the type of abuse, the abusers are responsible for controlling their emotions, and the victims must learn how to keep themselves and their children free from dangerous situations (Waters & Ussery, 2007).

Increased risk of IPV is not the only detrimental effect that stress can have on police family units. Divorce, a common problem in the general population, is so prevalent in police families that some departments report the divorce rate for their officers at 50 to 80 percent. Marriages that happen after the officer is already on the job tend to last longer than marriages

that began prior to the officer starting in the profession due to a lack of artificial expectations (Waters and Ussery, 2007). One scholar succinctly describes the relationship between the policing profession and marriage:

...It *is* true that habits learned at work, particularly police work, can be hazardous to home life. And certain “givens” of the job, such as long hours, are not family friendly. But, perhaps the most damaging factor is that police work provides a ready-made scapegoat for a troubled marriage and an easy out for avoiding the task of managing differences with loved ones and learning positive ways to build, strengthen, and maintain a family. (Kirschman, 2000, p. vi)

Alcohol Abuse

Police officers are believed to have exceedingly high rates of alcoholism and substance abuse when compared with other professions (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). Kirschman (2000) notes that the profession has many of the same risk factors as other non-policing occupations, such as high stress levels, peer pressure, isolation from the normal conventions of society, a workforce dominated by young males, and a culture that sanctions alcohol use as a means of relaxation. However, a number of other risk factors are unique to the profession. One example is that police officers are trained to resolve problems and move on to the next incident, which requires high levels of emotional stability and a resolute mentality. These work habits may encourage officers to fail to deal with their personal problems and simply push them aside in favor of some other task. Additionally, policing is a profession that requires hypervigilance while on duty to ensure the personal safety of the officer. This mentality drives officers to find a quick means by which to relax and wind down, and the culture readily endorses the use of alcohol as a means to do so (Kirschman, 2000).

Further exacerbating the problem is the failure of police officers to recognize their alcohol use as problematic. In a study consisting of police officers from a Midwestern state, Chopko, Palmieri, and Adams (2013) found that 77.5% of the officers surveyed reported that

they had no risk of alcohol problems, however 20.4% of those officers surveyed reported high-risk binge drinking behavior when they did drink. This study also demonstrated a significant association between alcohol use and individually experienced work-related traumatic stress and post-traumatic stress disorder avoidance indicators (Chopko, Palmieri, & Adams, 2013).

According to Violanti (2004), experiences with work events and the presence of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms clearly indicate an elevated risk for alcohol abuse and suicidal ideation.

General Health and Wellness

Research has shown that police officers have higher mortality rates from heart disease and diabetes than do members of the general population. Studies have also indicated that police officers are more susceptible to certain cancers, such as colon and liver cancers (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). Fekedulegn et al. (2013) found that shift work, a significant stressor discussed above, is linked to adverse health outcomes including metabolic disorders and cardiovascular disease; particularly when the officer is assigned to work the midnight shift or a rotating shift. Anderson et al. (2002) report that stress can impact the cardiovascular system by increasing blood pressure and heart rate; the muscular system by increasing muscular tension, the digestive system by increasing intestinal gasses and indigestion; and the integumentary system by reducing saliva production and increasing glandular secretions. In the short-term, these manifestations of stress may be positive for the officer as they endure the body's fight-or-flight response. However, over the course of a career, these stress responses can have a detrimental effect on the health of the officer when the causes of these symptoms are not properly disposed of (Anderson et al., 2002). A study by Gershon, Lin, and Li (2002) of police officers aged 50 or older found that officers who reported higher levels of work stress were appreciably more likely than those with lower levels of stress to have anxiety, depression, somatization, post-traumatic

stress disorder, and burnout. Higher levels of work stress were also linked to problems such as chronic back and foot pain, alcohol dependency, and aggressive behavior. Clearly, this indicates that the longer one stays in the law enforcement profession, the longer they are exposed to chronic stress and more episodic stressors. This makes the ability to cope with and manage the manifestations of stress essential for police officers to have a healthier life when they near retirement and post-retirement.

Gender Differences

Policing is a unique profession. While it shares many of the same stressors as other industries, it has a number of stressors in its work environment that are inimitable to any other vocation other than perhaps the military. The challenges of navigating the profession are many, but one variable that may make it even more challenging is often overlooked; the gender of the officer. McCarty et al. (2007) highlight three significant stressors that impact female officers. First, the hierarchical nature of many police organizations may impact female officers more so than it does males, as sex discrimination has been a significant problem in the history of American law enforcement organizations. Second, unusual work hours may have more of an impact on female officers who are the primary caregivers of children or other family members, further complicating an already difficult work and personal calendar. Lastly, policing has been a male dominated profession for many years, and gender discrimination may still exist in hiring and promotional processes of many departments, despite the fact that many of the procedures and practices that previously facilitated these discriminatory processes have been greatly reduced.

Dowler and Arai (2008) conducted a study seeking to examine the perception of gender differences in the perception of gender discrimination and in levels of stress. The study found

that males and females have very different perceptions of the levels of discrimination in police agencies. Male officers tend to believe that administrators treat females more leniently than they do males officers, however female officers believe the opposite is true. Female officers also believe that they are held to higher performance standards than male officers are, while male officers disagree (Dowler and Arai, 2008). Dowler and Arai (2008) also found that females suffer from higher levels of stress than male officers. Male officers tended to benefit from higher levels of education and social support from their peers, friends, and family members, helping to decrease their reported levels of stress. The study attributes higher levels of stress for female officers to several factors: the male-oriented police culture serves as a barrier for male officers because they are naturally indoctrinated into the “brotherhood” of policing by virtue of their gender, while leaving female officers feeling isolated and less important because they receive less support from their male associates (Harrington & Longsway, 2004, as cited in Dowler & Arai, 2008); administrative policies may not be family friendly, making family leave and pregnancy leave difficult to schedule and child care challenging to arrange, particularly in smaller agencies that have female officers assigned to specialized assignments that no other officers are trained or qualified to do; and stress may result from the paradox of perceived femininity and police work, in which females attempt to prove their value by demonstrating proper police techniques while still maintaining their feminine appearance (Dowler & Arai, 2008).

Conclusion

This section of the paper has defined stress and described the adverse physiological and psychological effects that stress has on police officers. The major sources of police stress and the numerous unfavorable impacts that unresolved stress can have on individual officers and the

departments that employ them were discussed at length. Research shows that police officers endure stress from many sources, most of which are outside their sphere of influence and control. This section has also demonstrated the far reaching consequences that stress can have on officers when administrators fail to or refuse to recognize the organizational variables that contribute to the problem. Reduction or elimination of all sources of stress is the primary purpose of any stress intervention program within a police agency, and it is essential that executives understand that both episodic and chronic organizational stressors are injurious to officer well-being.

The next section of this paper will examine several theoretical underpinnings that offer possible explanations for police organizational behavior. Analyzing theoretical explanations for dysfunctional and productive behavior may aid police officials with developing policies designed to eradicate the possible environmental conditions within an organization that allow stressors to exist and thrive.

SECTION III: Theoretical Framework

Extensive research has been conducted to determine the primary sources of stress in law enforcement. Often, findings address the tangible sources of stress that exist in the criminal justice industry, and how these stressors impact the individual and the organization. The sources of stress can also be examined from a sociological, theoretical perspective to help understand what may cause these stressors to exist in the first place. The purpose of this section of the paper is to consider the topic of police stress from two theoretical perspectives: General Strain Theory and Social Learning Theory. While these theories are often used to examine the causes of criminal behavior, they are also relevant to an analysis of the behaviors that exist within the police profession. The central tenets of each theory will be thoroughly explained, and the applicability of the theories to the topic of police stress will be addressed. The theories will lend support to the argument that stress is problematic in policing, and needs to be addressed at the organizational and individual level.

General Strain Theory

The foundations of Strain Theory were developed in the 1930's by Robert K. Merton. The central idea to classic strain theory was that nearly all members of U.S. society are socialized to support the notion of the "American Dream", in that people will achieve all of their life's ambitions if they work hard and pay their dues. The ideal for the average American is to become successful in their work so as to attain material wealth, and this is achieved through attaining higher education and finding a career that suits their skills and desires (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). According to Tibbetts and Hemmens (2010), since nearly all members of society, including upper and lower class people, are socialized to believe in this ideal, the failure to achieve the "American Dream" results in strain, or stress. Merton argued that American

society places too much emphasis on the goals of the “American Dream”, and too little emphasis on the means to achieve the end result; a concept that he referred to as anomie. Anomie motivates people to find alternate ways to achieve the desired end result when they are not successful using the means endorsed by society. Therefore, according to Merton, anomie results in citizens using disparate and dysfunctional methods to achieve their desires, usually perpetrated by members of the lower class; these methods are known as crime (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010).

General Strain Theory is an adaptation of classic Strain Theory that was proposed by Robert Agnew in the 1980’s. This proposal focuses on strains experienced by every member of society from all different social classes, whereas classic Strain Theory focused more on deviant behavior by lower class citizens. The basic premise behind general strain theory is that all members of society experience frustrations in their daily routines, which in turn leads to stress and strain (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010).

Agnew proposes three different causes of frustrations which may lead to strain: an inability to attain positively valued objectives, an introduction of deleterious stimuli, and the elimination of positively valued stimuli. According to Agnew, the existence of any of these three strains in an individual’s life will lead to frustration and stress, which can subsequently cause anger and other hostile emotions. The manifestation of these emotions may be enhanced by a lack of adequate coping mechanisms, which in turn leads to criminal behavior on the part of the individual experiencing the stress (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). The inability to attain a positively valued objective may include a person getting passed over for a promotion or not being assigned to a workspace with a window. If a person works for a critical or disingenuous boss or has a child that is not doing well in school, they may be experiencing a deleterious stimulus. Examples of experiencing an elimination of a positively valued stimuli may include a

worker having a \$5,000 annual bonus eradicated from their wage and benefit package, or having a take-home business vehicle taken away from them. After considering some of the examples of the different types of strains that Agnew proposes, it is easy to see how these strains can lead to frustrations that are experienced by people every day.

Agnew's general strain theory identifies anger as the principal intervening factor in the causal model of the theory's structure (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). If any of the aforementioned sources of strain cause an individual to feel anger, that individual may be inclined to commit deviant behaviors if they do not possess an adequate coping mechanism to reduce their level of hostility. Coping mechanisms may include stress reducing techniques such as working out, watching a funny movie, or traveling on a relaxing vacation. Coping mechanisms are highly subjective, and their effectiveness will vary greatly from person to person (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010).

The obvious goal when examining General Strain Theory and relating it to deviant behavior is to identify, develop, and implement positive coping mechanisms with the end goal of reducing antisocial behavior as the alternative means of coping (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). The following section will discuss General Strain Theory in relation to the profession of law enforcement, and how a failure to have control over factors in their work environment and a lack of adequate coping mechanisms can create high levels of stress and dysfunction for police officers.

Application of General Strain Theory to Police Stress

Agnew's General Strain Theory is one of a number of different criminological theories developed to explain the reasons that crime occurs within a society. However, the tenets of General Strain Theory can also be applied to the law enforcement profession, and may help

explain how the stressors associated with the policing industry impact the ability of police officers to do their jobs.

Organizational commitment can be adversely impacted by the detrimental effects that stress can have on police officers (Moon & Jonson, 2012). As discussed above, Agnew identifies three causes of strain, the first of which is an inability to attain positively valued objectives (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). Most police officers have certain duties within the job that they enjoy, and many of these tasks come in the form of special assignments, such as becoming a member of the department's tactical team, or becoming an investigator specializing in homicide investigations. Officers will actively seek job responsibilities or training opportunities that will increase their chances of being selected for these specialized assignments. When they perform their duties well and receive positive feedback from supervision, yet fail to attain a desired assignment, stress or frustration are likely and natural responses. Moon and Jonson (2012) opine that when there is a difference between an officer's expectations and actual outcomes, police officers will experience strain and become less committed to the organization. To be more precise, the authors contend that when the performance of job duties does not coincide with what they believed their responsibilities would entail, they will become disinterested in the work and less committed to the organization (Moon & Jonson, 2012).

Agnew's second proposed cause of strain is the introduction of deleterious stimuli into an environment (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). Police officers are frequently subjected to aversive stimuli in the work environment, such as ambiguous work conditions or directives, responding to traumatic incidents, or working for an unsupportive supervisor. Police officers who encounter these types of aversive stimuli are less likely to be highly committed to their organizations than those officers who are employed by organizations where these negative strains do not exist

(Moon & Jonson, 2012). Lastly, Agnew's third posited source of strain is the elimination of positively valued stimuli (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). The nature of the profession and its 24 hour-a-day, 365 day-a-year commitment to community safety ensures that officers are frequently subjected to the elimination of positively valued stimuli. Any 24 hour-a-day operation requires that at least some employees make sacrifices in order to make the organization run the way it is intended to run. In law enforcement, shift work, required overtime, special events in the community, and incidents that require officers to work hours beyond what they are scheduled are the most common examples of strains that cause officers to miss out on positively valued stimuli. These stimuli may include holiday celebrations with their families, sporting events or extracurricular activities with their children, or enjoying their own leisure activities, just to name a few. When officers are required to sacrifice these valuable life experiences in the name of their job, it can cause a tremendous amount of strain and greatly reduce the commitment on the part of the officer to the organization (Moon & Jonson, 2012).

Agnew's model of general strain theory also predicted that when individuals experience strain and frustration, regardless of which of the three sources instigated it, deviant behavior is a likely result if coping mechanisms do not intervene (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). One deviant behavior discussed previously in this paper is the abuse of alcohol. Swatt, Gibson, and Piquero (2007) studied the applicability of general strain theory to problematic alcohol consumption among police officers using data collected from a large sample of Baltimore, Maryland police officers. The researchers found support for their basic hypotheses that police officers who experienced higher levels of strain would report suffering from higher levels of negative emotions; and those officers who experienced higher levels of negative emotions would also report higher levels of alcohol use (Swatt, Gibson, & Piquero, 2007). The study also led

credence to Agnew's contention that deviant behavior can be prevented or interrupted by adequate coping mechanisms. Swatt et al. (2007) found that officers who had higher levels of social support from friends, family, or peers were less likely to report feelings of anger, anxiety or depression regardless of what type of strain they were experiencing. According to Agnew's model of General Strain Theory, a lack of feelings of negative emotions such as anger, and the presence of adequate coping mechanisms such as a positive support structure, will reduce the likelihood of the individual engaging in deviant behavior (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). The study by Swatt et al. (2010) serves as an excellent representation of the importance of police officers having prosocial coping mechanisms in place within their organizations and in their personal lives to help cope with the stressors associated with their profession.

Stinchcomb (2004) opines that the key ingredient that influences how much impact various stressors have on officers is their level of control over a situation. If officers have little control over the work they are expected to produce and what the results of their efforts are, they are likely experiencing high levels of stress. Stress is directly linked to lack of control, and if an officer is not able to have control over a particular situation, then the situation has the capacity to create stress for that officer (Stinchcomb, 2004). Within the framework of Agnew's general strain theory, lack of control over a situation is relevant to any of the three proposed sources of strain. For example, if a desired goal for an officer is to be promoted to the rank of lieutenant, the only aspect of the promotional process they control is how they test and interview for the position. Officers have no control over the final decision made by those responsible for the promotional process, and other factors that may be out of the control of the officer will likely cause him or her stress, such as political favoritism or the achievements of competing officers. Similarly, if an officer is presented with a negative stimulus such as a police chief who supports

a different style of policing than what the officer believes in, the officer may no choice but to adopt the chief's desired policing style, or seek out employment at a different agency that is more conducive to the officer's policing style. Certainly, having to choose between embracing a philosophy that the officer does not support or finding a new department to work for would cause strain in that officer's life. Lastly, if an officer has spent years in their career aspiring to attain a certain position, such as a specialized detective within the ranks of their department, and budget constraints forced the elimination of that position, the officer will undoubtedly experience strain as a result of this decision that is out of their control and force them to look for a different career path to maintain job satisfaction.

Agnew's general strain theory offers a compelling explanation for the causes of deviant behavior. While it was designed as a sociological explanation for the causes of crime, its ideology can also be used as a foundation to explain deviant behavior and stress reactions within the police profession. While officers will never be able to eliminate the three primary sources of strain that Agnew proposed, it is important for officers and administrators alike to understand that the decisions that are made within a police agency will cause strain for somebody within the chain of command, and that those decisions may have a negative impact on the work product, and eventually the career of officers if ramifications are not dealt with appropriately.

Social Learning Theory

The Social Learning Theory of crime proposes that the learning process in humans is the same for both socially deviant and conforming behavior, and that the resulting exhibited behavior occurs within the context of social structure, interaction, and the situation at hand, and is an amalgamation of a number of different learning theories, including Imitation and Modeling, Differential Association, and Operant Conditioning (Akers, 2009).

Imitation and Modeling is a Learning Theory of crime that was developed by Albert Bandura, and posits that human beings learn behaviors from others simply by watching what others do (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). Differential Association Theory, introduced by Edwin Sutherland, hypothesizes that relationships between significant others, such as parents and peers, are instrumental in the development of criminal behavior (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). Operant Conditioning is a psychological learning model that concludes learning is the result of an association between and action, and the feedback that the action stimulates (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). Robert Burgess and Ronald Akers later integrated the principles of Bandura's Learning Theory with B.F. Skinner's idea of operant conditioning, along with Edwin Sutherland's Differential Association Theory to create a comprehensive theory of criminal behavior known as Differential Reinforcement Theory. (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). The following subsections will discuss the principles of Akers' Social Learning Theory.

Differential Association

Differential Association, as originally described by Sutherland, refers to the belief that one learns criminal behavior through his or her interactions with their significant others (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). Differential Association's central principle was that criminal behavior was learned behavior. This differed from other criminological theories that had been described by Sutherland's contemporaries, as the common belief at the time was that people were born with criminal tendencies. Differential Association Theory hypothesized that learning took place as a result of classical conditioning, or associations that develop between stimuli and responses. Classical conditioning was introduced by Ivan Pavlov, and was the dominant psychological learning theory at the time that Sutherland was developing the differential association theory (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010).

Differential Reinforcement

As previously stated, Differential Reinforcement refers to a theory of criminal behavior that incorporates different styles of social learning into an explanation for deviant and conforming social behavior. The different learning styles include classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and imitating/modeling. By incorporating operant conditioning into the framework of differential reinforcement, the theory recognizes that humans actively seek rewards for positive behaviors and learn when their behaviors are not desired through punishments or negative reinforcements (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). As an example, if a person commits a convenience store robbery and gets away with \$500 in cash, but they are later apprehended by the police, the negative consequences associated with getting caught should teach the offender that the deviant behavior (the robbery) was unacceptable and act as a deterrent to prevent further deviance. This proposition may be true in an ideal environment, but many other social factors may also encourage this type of deviant behavior to continue despite the negative consequences. This is where other concepts of the Social Learning Theory become relevant to the discussion.

Definitions

People absorb their surrounding culture and form attitudes and beliefs about the normalcy of patterns of behavior they experience. When individuals engage in deviant behavior, they do so because they are surrounded by the deviant actions of others, and they lack exposure to non-deviant behavior. People assign “definitions” to what they see as normal behavior, and build their behavioral repertoire based on these definitions, whether or not it is socially acceptable or deviant (Sutherland, 1955). When someone has distorted definitions of what is appropriate behavior, he or she is more likely to deviate from social norms. Some people may define certain types of crime, such as theft or burglary, as unacceptable because their behaviors may impact the

security of others. However, those same people may see no problem with using illegal substances because they don't define that behavior as inappropriate if it does not impact the security of another, even though society may define the behavior as unlawful.

Imitation/Modeling

Imitation and Modeling is a learning theory that suggests that human beings learn behaviors from others simply by watching what others do. This theory was first proposed by Albert Bandura. Through a series of experiments, Bandura explained that individuals can learn behavior even if they are not rewarded or punished for behavior or if they have not made associations between a stimulus and response. Instead, much of our behaviors and attitudes are learned simply by making observations of what others do and how they feel; young children are particularly impressionable when making observations of adults. As such, if a person is imitating behavior that they have observed and the person they observe endures no negative consequences, the behavior is more likely to be imitated (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010).

Bandura's landmark research included what is known as the Bo-Bo Doll experiment. In this study, Bandura randomized an experimental group of children and had them view a video of adults acting aggressively towards blow-up plastic dolls. A control group of children that did not view the video were also part of the experiment. Both groups of children were then placed into a room containing Bo-Bo dolls. The experimental group of children who had observed the aggressive adult behavior towards the dolls mimicked the behavior, engaging in the same types of conduct with the dolls. The control group of children was much less aggressive towards the dolls. The experimental group did not have any prior associations of more aggressive behavior towards the dolls, indicating that the probable explanation for their aggressive actions was that they were modeling the adult behavior they had observed on the video. The Bo-Bo Doll

experiment represents evidence of the role that Imitation/Modeling Theory plays in sociologically learned behavior.

Application of Social Learning Theory to Police Stress

The concepts that make up the framework of Social Learning Theory are not only applicable to the study of criminal behavior, but are also highly applicable to the behavior of law enforcement officers. According to Gaines and Kappeler (2008), professionalization is the “process by which norms and values are internalized as workers begin their new occupation (p. 318). Police officers begin this socialization process when they enter the recruit academy, and the indoctrination into the profession continues through regular in-service training and through the field training programs that exist in most law enforcement agencies. These experiences form the social characteristics of police officers as a group, and officers learn how to conduct themselves and what to think in order to fit in well with the rest of the group (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008).

As discussed previously, the cornerstones of Social Learning Theory are the concepts of Differential Association, Differential Reinforcement, definitions and Imitation/Modeling. A central principle of Social Learning Theory is the contention that behavior is learned, as opposed to humans being born with built-in conforming or deviant tendencies (Tibbetts & Hemmens, 2010). The majority of this behavior is learned from being immersed in a culture; it surrounds every aspect of human life. Police officers are not only part of a culture at large, but a part of the subculture of the profession of police work. A culture is a term that describes differences between large groups of people, containing the symbols, artifacts, and traditions of that particular group (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). A subculture will share many of the values and beliefs of the culture as a whole, but will have adapted its own separate and distinct values, specific to the

smaller group (Stojkovic et al., 2008). A new police officer will already have an understanding of the culture in which they were born into and grew up in; it is only through the professionalization process that they will learn the intricacies of the police subculture in the agency which employs them. This learning process incorporates all of the principles of Social Learning Theory mentioned above.

The social learning principle that is perhaps most applicable to the notion of stress in law enforcement is the principle of Imitation/Modeling. When police officers are hired in to a department, they are likely to be assigned to a field training program, which will require them to work closely with at least one field training officer. During this time, they are expected to model their performance after that of the veteran field training officer, and when they can competently demonstrate proficient performance, they are assigned to solo patrol, outside the direct purview of a field training officer. However, not all examples of Imitation/Modeling serve a useful function in the socialization process of new police officers.

As discussed in an earlier section of this paper, alcohol is often a dysfunctional coping mechanism used to deal with the aftermath of stress, whether the experienced stress is episodic in nature or chronic and ongoing. Often, police officers rely on one another for emotional support after experiencing trauma, because very few professions experience things with the same view as police officers. One of the more common coping mechanisms endorsed by the police subculture is the use of alcohol (Waters & Ussery, 2007). Officers often partake in what is referred to as “choir practice” or “safety briefings” after work, in which they will meet with other officers at a tavern and consume alcohol and discuss the events of the shift they just completed. Young officers may be particularly impressionable, and quickly come to learn that this type of behavior is a common and socially acceptable way to relieve stress. Simply by watching their veteran

peers engage in this type of social drinking behavior, new officers may be encouraged to partake in the same activity, thereby modeling their behavior after that of their peers.

Police officers serve a unique role in contemporary American society. This individualized social status differentiates police officers from other segments of society, which may foster an “us vs. them” mentality amongst officers (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). The formal socialization process into the profession of policing is perhaps more complex than in any other industry (Stojkovic et al, 2008). Police officers learn and adopt their newly acquired social status through the principles identified in Akers’ Social Learning Theory. Unfortunately, the socialization process often results in dysfunctional learning on the part of the new recruit, which may teach unhealthy ways to cope with stress, or serve as a source of stress in and of itself.

SECTION IV: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADMINISTRATORS

Law enforcement agencies have long recognized the debilitating impact that stress has on police officers and how they perform their duties. Stress poses significant challenges for administrators as they attempt to strike a balance between managing an effective, efficient operation and providing support for officers and their families to enable them to properly cope with the pressures of the job. The purpose of this section is to identify the critical components of a stress management program for police administrators to consider when implementing or revising a strategy in their organization.

Involvement of Family Members

Police officers rely on a number of different coping mechanisms to assist them through stressful times in their career. Perhaps the most essential coping mechanism for a police officer to have during times of stress is a dependable support system, namely a compassionate family unit (Watters & Ussery, 2007). In order to assist with the development of family members as an effective resource, police agencies should incorporate them into solutions designed to relieve stress. Family members are frequently the first to recognize when an officer requires assistance with their problems, and they can play an essential role by persuading the officer to seek services before the problem becomes incapacitating. They are often more in-tune with the officer's off-duty attitude, and can quickly identify when personality or behavioral changes begin to manifest themselves. Symptoms of stress are more likely to be properly recognized and referred if families have been properly trained to identify stress related problems and are aware of the services available to the officer to address the strain. Unfortunately, many police agencies that offer stress management programs to their officers fail to extend training and services to their family members (National Institute of Justice, 1996). In order to maximize the effectiveness of

any intervention program, administrators should incorporate family members in to the agenda to ensure that they remain valuable sources of support, instead of contributing the problem as another stressor.

Planning the Program

When law enforcement agencies decide to incorporate a stress management program in their organization, it is essential that administrators carefully plan the development and implementation of the program. Factors that executives must consider include the often competing interests of management and organized labor, the financial commitment on behalf of the agency, and the common cynicism and negative connotations that police officers often associate with mental health services (NIJ, 1996).

During the initial planning phase of a stress management program, administrators have the opportunity to gain buy-in for the program they seek to implement. In order to attain buy-in, program developers should consider the project a collaborative effort, and involve key stakeholders including management, officers, union representatives, family members, and any other individuals with an investment in the program. The critical steps in program planning include identifying the program's target population, conducting an initial and continuing needs assessment, establishing a committee of decision makers, developing program objectives, determining what services to offer and identifying referral sources both inside and outside the organization, determining a budget and identifying potential sources of funding, and establishing and circulating written policies regarding confidentiality and how to obtain services (NIJ, 1996).

Target Populations

While it may seem obvious that the primary beneficiaries of stress management services will be the police officers in the department, there are other target groups that should be

incorporated into the program as well. According to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ, 1996), other entities that may have a vested interest in a stress management program include civilian employees, dispatchers, retired officers, officers from nearby law enforcement agencies, other public safety workers, and as already mentioned, family members. It is easy to overlook the interests of officers or other employees who have already left an organization, but may be living with the aftermath of a traumatic event or career-induced stress that was never appropriately addressed during their employment. Additionally, civilian employees and others, such as dispatchers, can also be served well by appropriate programming due to their direct or indirect involvement in incidents that precipitate the negative ramifications associated with stress. Program developers must be cognizant of the fact that programs are developed to serve the needs of employees, not the needs of the organization (NIJ, 1996).

Needs Assessment

It may seem counterintuitive to emphasize the importance of a needs assessment to a police administrator who is developing a stress management program. After all, they would likely not be utilizing resources for the development of such a program if they did not recognize stress as a problem with members of the organization. However, a needs assessment serves several vital purposes.

The first, and perhaps most important function of a needs assessment is to identify the perceived sources of stress experienced by police officers and other target groups (NIJ, 1996). The possible sources of stress are many, and may include both episodic stressors and chronic organizational stressors, both of which are discussed at length in Section II of this paper. However, the important takeaway from understanding the need to conduct a proper needs assessment is that it may require a the Chief Executive Officer of the organization to reflect on

their own performance and take responsibility for decisions they have made that have contributed to a stressful workplace environment for officers. Many executives, whether because of ego or some other reason, simply are not willing to do this. Too often, administrators fail to reflect upon their performance as a leader and recognize their contributions to the stressful milieu which may create organizational dysfunction. Instead, administrators often focus on the individual as being the source of disorder in the organization. When this happens, any decisions made to combat problems associated with stress are a direct reflection of the incorrect assumption that employees fail to adequately cope with stress. This perspective fails to acknowledge that the organization itself is likely to blame for a significant amount of stress being experienced by officers (Stinchcomb, 2004). While many officers may rely on dysfunctional or inadequate coping mechanisms to handle the stress they experience, it is imperative that department leaders understand that organizational factors are frequently not considered as problematic when stress management programs are designed and implemented. Police Chiefs or Sheriffs may find it easy to become so focused on running an organization in the most efficient way possible that they lose sight of how their decisions impact those that have to execute their decisions or are directly impacted by them, creating stress amongst the ranks. When this happens, the basis upon which the Chief or Sheriff's decision may have been made in the interest of efficiency may be negated by the harmful impacts that the stress associated with implementation of such a decision has on the rank and file officers.

Several other reasons are identified as to why it is important to conduct a needs assessment prior to developing a stress management program. First, it is essential to identify the sources that are already being utilized, and to what extent they are being utilized (NIJ, 1996). Many agencies already offer some type of resources, although the program may not be

comprehensive. Second, the types of services sought by the target populations must also be identified (NIJ, 1996). Different constituents will want to access different types of services; for example, one officer may be battling alcoholism as a way to cope with stress, while another officer is overweight due to an unhealthy diet and inactive lifestyle. These two officers will require access to very different resources. Third, information must be gathered for proposals to possible sources of funding, whether it is city or county boards or private donors (NIJ, 1996). Without being able to specifically articulate the need for particular services, funding will be a difficult commodity to obtain. Lastly, conducting a thorough needs assessment will help educate officers, family members, and others involved with the program of the efforts an agency is making to deal with stress-associated problems (NIJ, 1996).

Establishing a Planning Committee

Forming a planning committee is an essential step to creating buy-in amongst the police officers and other target groups who will be the primary consumers of the new stress management program. By allowing members from all ranks and divisions within an agency, administrators can obtain a wide array of perspectives and input into the development of the program. It also allows members of various positions to give their opinions and express their desires as to what they believe are important components of the program, which is essential to gaining grass roots support for the program (NIJ, 1996).

Developing Program Objectives

Each organization that implements a stress management program will clearly have the reduction of stress as the overall goal. However, each agency will have specific tasks that they want to accomplish, which is why it is important that administrators define specific program objectives at the outset of the project (NIJ, 1996). While one organization may have a significant

problem with sick time that they hope to reduce through stress relief solutions, another organization may have a number of officers who struggle with alcohol abuse. Each program must be tailored to the specific desires of the department, which reinforces the requirement for both an initial and ongoing needs assessment. Many agencies that implement a stress management program also incorporate a mission statement into the policy which addresses the ramifications of stress at the individual, organizational, and community levels (NIJ, 1996).

Selecting Services and Referral Sources

When deciding what services are offered for officers, the planning committee must consider the needs and desires of the target groups, the services that may already be available through existing employee assistance programs, the credentials of the service providers local to the organization developing the stress management program, and the support that exists at the outset of the program. For example, the planning committee may want to consider implementing only very basic services until the value of the program can be established, and seek to add additional services once the worth of the program is proven (NIJ, 1996). Additionally, the planning committee must understand the benefit to have flexibility within the program, allowing for the addition of new services if justified, or eliminating redundant programs that do not serve the needs of the target groups.

Identifying Funding

According to the National Institute of Justice (NIJ, 1996), law enforcement agencies have been forced to reduce their budgets significantly in recent years, eliminating staff and other departmental expenses. These reductions leave little money left for the development of stress management programs, and have forced some agencies to look for external funding sources. In order to secure funding from the city or county board that controls budgets, data will be needed

to prove that the investment in a stress management program up front will reduce costs in the long run by reducing early retirements, preventing chronic illnesses, and reducing major health problems such as heart disease, cancer, or other types of degenerative diseases.

Establishing and Distributing Written Guidelines

In order to properly advertise and utilize the resources that are included in the stress management program, written policies should be developed by the planning committee and distributed to all of the relevant target groups. Written policies will assist with clearing up any misunderstandings about the nature of the program, and serve as a guideline for service providers so that they have a clear understanding of what the program objectives are, and allow them to tailor their services to what the clients specifically require (NIJ, 1996).

Recommended Components of a Stress Management Program

Law enforcement agencies are diverse organizations comprised of individuals with competing interests, needs, and desires. Numerous factors influence the make-up of an organization, and each and every agency is different. As such, it is difficult, if not impossible, to develop a one-size-fits-all model stress management program that could be implemented effectively in any and every law enforcement agency that exists. The programs and services that are discussed in this section are intended to be a guide for administrators and planners to consider when developing a stress management program of their own.

When considering the components that may be included in to a stress management program, it is important to include strategies that target all different sources of stress. Stinchcomb (2004) proposes a stress prevention hierarchy that highlights the importance of providing services designed to treat the aftermath of stress that impacts officers individually, as well as the underlying organizational difficulties that actually form the basis for much of this

stress that is experienced by officers. Likewise, resources must be available to assist officers dealing with traumatic experiences when these unfortunate incidents arise.

Stinchcomb's (2004) stress prevention hierarchy attacks stress at three different levels:

1. *Primary prevention*-to eradicate or mitigate the sources of stress;
2. *Secondary intervention*-to reduce the potential consequences for officers after being exposed to stressors;
3. *Tertiary intervention*-to provide support for the officer who is already experiencing stress.

The stress prevention hierarchy advocates administrators taking a proactive approach to addressing the causes of stress. Additionally, the program must incorporate mechanisms that are reactive in nature as well, in order to deal with officers who are already experiencing significant stressors, or to deal with the consequences of crises when they occur. The remainder of this section will discuss stress management program components that fit into the primary prevention, secondary intervention, and tertiary intervention categories, within the guidelines recommended by Stinchcomb (2004).

Organizational Change

Research has repeatedly shown that much of the stress that is experienced by police officers is a direct result of factors present in the organizational environment (Stinchcomb, 2004; Toch, 2002; Zhao et.al, 2002). Contrary to this evidence, law enforcement agencies have been slow to address the sources of police stress by making changes to the milieu that fosters the existence of these stressors (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). Instead, police agencies have continued to focus their efforts on emphasizing that stress is the result of individual dysfunction and their failure to cope, directing resources to helping with individual coping strategies rather than making changes to improve the work environment (Stinchcomb, 2004).

The first step in Stinchcomb's (2004) stress prevention hierarchy, primary prevention, seeks to eradicate or mitigate the sources of stress. Officers have little control over what they experience while working the street, so it is fruitless to expend time and resources trying to directly reduce episodic stressors. However, Stinchcomb (2004) argues that agency leaders can have a direct impact on the organizational factors that contribute to stress by partaking in the primary prevention step of the stress prevention hierarchy. This process involves three primary ingredients-commitment, participation, and action (Stinchcomb, 2004).

The first task that organizational leaders should accomplish to have an impact on the level of organizational stress is to recognize the role that they play in contributing to stress and make a decision to change. Leaders must proactively reflect on the decisions they have made and how those decisions have impacted their subordinates in the day-to-day performance of their duties. Additionally, administrators must understand that stress cannot be adequately addressed simply by offering training programs to officers on positive coping techniques (Stinchcomb, 2004). This step requires more than many police administrators are willing to sacrifice because it forces them to recognize their own flaws that they have made, and may identify weaknesses in their organizational and leadership styles.

The second step to eliminating the negative organizational elements contributing to stress is for these same administrators to involve staff members at different levels of the organization in creating solutions through participatory management. Participation by officers of different rank and status solicits a wider range of input to come up with alternative solutions outside the perspective of management, and lets officers know that the administration is concerned about stress in the workplace and trusts the rank and file officers to meaningfully contribute to finding solution (Stinchcomb, 2004). This step may be particularly meaningful to officers, because lack

of involvement in decision making and planning has been a significant organizational stressor identified in the literature (Pagon et al., 2011).

The final step in the stress prevention hierarchy is action. This is the phase where strategies are developed and undertaken to assuage the stressful practices that are part of the organizational operation (Stinchcomb, 2004). The strategies that are implemented will be dependent upon what stressors are identified as being problematic for a particular organization. For example, one of the most significant stressors for police officers, and one that is readily modified, is the work schedule that officers are assigned to. As discussed in Section II, shift work is frequently reported as a significant source of fatigue for officers because of the unusual sleep patterns that develop from working different shifts (Vila et al., 2002). Julseth et al. (2011) also found that rotating frequently between shifts, or varying work hours from day to day or week to week, drastically lowered the job satisfaction experienced by officers, which resulted in higher levels of reported stress. The work schedule is a prime example of a correctable problem, provided that administrators are willing to engage in a dialogue and accept input from the rank and file officers and union stewards and allow them to have input into the schedule they work. For example, switching from an eight hour day, working six days on with three days off, to a 12 hour schedule that allows officers to have every other weekend off to spend time with their family, may improve the quality of life for officers and result in improved attitudes at work, while having minimal impact on the efficiency of the department.

The literature on police stress indicates that most of the organizational stressors are related to the bureaucratic relationship that exists between administration and officers (Zhao et al., 2002). If executives follow the stress hierarchy model and actively engage in the primary prevention phase, there are a number of actions that can take to help reduce the existence of

stressors in organizations. These actions include decentralizing decision-making authority by entrusting officers to use their discretion that is an inherent feature of the job; improving communication through face to face interactions by upper-level management with lesser ranking officers, in which clear explanations are given as to why new policies are being enacted or new directives issued; transparency in management decisions, with timely and appropriate follow through to demonstrate that intended actions are being delivered; soliciting feedback from employees in a participative management style; and training command staff and supervisors in effective leadership techniques to facilitate greater awareness of how their actions and management style can cause stress for subordinates (Stinchcomb, 2004).

As Stinchcomb (2004) aptly notes, the commitment-participation-action model squarely places responsibility on organizational administrators for developing a healthier and more prolific cadre of employees by removing organizational stressors from the workplace setting. Many police executives will lack the courage or ambition to partake in the self-reflection that is required of such a process. However, those leaders who actively attempt to exact positive changes in their workplace through this process will very likely experience a work environment with happier, more productive workers.

Counseling and Therapy Options

A common and useful tool for administrators when developing a stress management program is the use of counselors to offer mental health services. These services, also known as employee assistance programs (EAPs), can be useful in providing a form of intervention for officers who may be suffering from behavioral health problems, substance abuse problems, or marital and family discord as a result of the stressors associated with their employment in law

enforcement. As with any other service that is part of stress management program, EAPs should be structured in a format that best serves the needs of the target groups within the agency.

Counseling services are normally structured in one of three ways: in-house programs, which are operated by department employees; external programs, which are operated by an individual or group that contracts with the agency for services; and a hybrid of these two options, an example of which is a program that is overseen by a agency employee but uses contracted services for certain types of assistance (NIJ, 1996). Each model has distinct advantages and disadvantages, so the option that works best is very agency specific.

In-house programs normally exist as a separate division within a police department, so they are more conducive to large law enforcement agencies, which may require a full time staff of counselors to meet the demands of the program. One of the major advantages of an in-house program is that it can be much easier to schedule appointments with a department employee than with an external service provider. Additionally, because they are a department employee, in-house counselors may have a higher level of trust with the target groups, and may have a more intimate knowledge of the rigors of the police profession. Conversely, a significant disadvantage is the cost of having an in-house program, which likely puts the ability to keep the program in-house out of reach for small agencies. Additionally, officers may be concerned about confidentiality with in-house program options, as interactions with counselors may be much more visible to others within the department (NIJ, 1996).

With external service providers, it may be more difficult for counselors to establish rapport with officers, as they are likely to be considered outsiders with limited knowledge of the law enforcement profession. If the program is not institutionalized with service providers being employees of the agency, the program may be more likely to be cut during difficult economic

times, as there may be less loyalty to a contracted service provider than to a permanent employee. However, officers may see benefit to external providers because there is less likelihood that confidentiality may be breached, providing officers with a greater sense of privacy. Normally, these services are also significantly cheaper than an institutionalized program because the municipality does not have to provide a benefits package to the provider; they simply pay on an agreed upon fee schedule (NIJ, 1996).

Agencies that employ hybrid counseling services claim to offer the advantages of both in-house programs and external programs. According to NIJ (1996), the hybrid programs offer few disadvantages because the availability of resources are visible within the department, but confidentiality can be maintained when desired by accessing outside resources. The key to the development of agency programming is to consider what services are most appropriate for the organization and the identified target groups.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) is a professional organization that addresses contemporary issues affecting law enforcement through advocacy, programs and research, and training and professional services. One of the research projects undertaken by IACP was the drafting of numerous model policies for law enforcement officers. A model policy they developed is for Employee Mental Health Services (1994), and it emphasizes the importance of having services available to officers who are struggling with stress or other mental and behavioral health issues. In this policy, it is recommended that mental health problems be treated by employers the same as any other work related injury, and that the services may be invoked by self-referral, or referral of a peer counselor, supervisor, or the chief executive of the agency. Under emergency conditions, the policy recommends that supervisors have the authority to remove the officer in question from duty and direct the officer to obtain immediately obtain

mental health services by an agency authorized mental health services provider. The discussions and results from such meetings are extremely confidential, and administrators are not allowed to know specific results or discussions that take place during sessions. The only information administrators are allowed to receive pertain to the counselor's recommendations for fitness for duty and recommendations for assignment. The policy delineates that job security and promotional opportunities may not be impacted by an officer's decision or requirement that they obtain mental health services. Failure to obtain services when needed or required to correct performance deficiencies in job performance may result in denial of promotional opportunities and the potential of job loss. The IACP model policy concerning mental health services for employees is available in Appendix A.

Peer Support

One of the most powerful tools available to administrators who seek to implement a stress management program in their agency is to utilize peer support. When police officers are in crisis, one of the most comforting things they can know is that what they are experiencing is not unique; that many other police officers have experienced the same trauma, stress, and anxiety. This feature in stress management programs has been popular since the 1980's, and is based on the anecdotal concept that in every police agency, there seems to be a handful of individuals that other officers turn to for help when they are experiencing stress (NIJ, 1996).

According to NIJ (1996), peer supporters serve two major functions in police stress management programs: first, they provide a source of assistance for officers who are not willing to speak to a mental health professional due to mistrust or from suffering from the professional stigma of seeking mental health services; and second, peers can provide referrals to mental health specialists to those officers who are receptive to this particular kind of assistance. Peer

supporters also bring an inherent trustworthiness to a stress management program because so many officers believe that a person cannot be empathetic unless that person has also shared the experience that the troubled officer is experiencing. Peer supporters are frequently better positioned within an organization to detect officers with trouble on the horizon, before stress manifests itself into a full-fledged problem because they are more aware of the symptoms of stress being exhibited by police officers (NIJ, 1996).

Peer support programs also have several disadvantages. First, because police officers are sworn officers first and peer counselors second, they may be ordered to provide information in sensitive situations such as officer involved shootings. The therapist/client privilege of confidentiality may not be present when an officer confides sensitive information to a peer. Confidentiality limits should be explicitly stated in the policy governing stress management if peer counseling is a tool incorporated in the program (Kirschman, 2000). While peer support is valuable, it does not offer the same benefits that speaking with a professional mental health counselor may. It may be best to augment peer support with the use of a trained mental health professional. Similarly, some peer counselors may overstep their bounds and decide that they are in fact qualified to be more than support and offer counseling services, which may in fact cause more harm to the officer than good (NIJ, 1996).

Appendix A, the IACP model policy on Employee Mental Health Services (1994), details the recommended requirements for peer counselors. The policy requires that peer counselors attend department prescribed course of instruction, and that peer counselors should volunteer for the assignment, not be assigned to the role. The policy allows for officers to voluntarily seek the services of their peer counselors, and that counselors may make referrals to mental health service providers for additional treatment. The model policy also provides that any conversations

between the officer seeking assistance and the counselor be completely confidential, with the following exceptions: discussions about criminal violations; officers who have violated their oaths of office; or if the officer presents a clear and present danger to him or herself or others. In these situations, the peer counselor is required to report their beliefs to the chief executive officer of the agency. The complete details of the peer counseling policy can be found in Appendix A.

A very successful peer support program was founded in 2000 in New Jersey, and is known as the COP-2-COP program. This program established the first confidential hotline for police officers and their families to use when officers were enduring a crisis. The hotline uses retired police officers who are trained in assessment and crisis intervention techniques to speak with callers (Waters & Ussery, 2007). One of the most significant benefits of this type of service is the ease with which anonymity can be maintained, and because retired or former police officers answer the phone, it is usually easy to establish a rapport and line of communication with the caller because of their shared occupational experiences. Staff members continually express concern about the caller's feelings, and inquire about what coping strategies have been or are being used by the caller to see if any functional coping mechanisms are being utilized. The goal is that each caller will participate with the counselor and help develop a crisis plan so that the caller can establish a sense of control over the situation. The counselors will call back as often as necessary to make sure that the officer is following the intervention plan. This program has been very successful, and serves all public safety workers and first responders (Waters & Ussery, 2007).

Critical Incident Stress Debriefs

Critical incidents are traumatic situations that police officers can face on any given day and without warning, the results of which may overcome an individual's ability to cope with the

results (Stinchcomb, 2004). They may involve an officer involved homicide, a gruesome traffic accident, or the sexual or physical abuse of a young child. Much of this paper has focused on organizational stressors, but stress resulting from critical incidents that police officers are involved in should never be overlooked. The critical incident stress debrief is an essential tool in assisting officers to learn to cope with the aftermath of a traumatic incident.

According to the IACP Model Policy on Critical Incident Stress Management (2011), a critical incident stress debriefing is a formal discussion, either one-on-one, or in a group setting, in which a qualified mental health professional and a properly trained peer support officer help participants understand their emotions and strengthen their coping mechanisms in the aftermath of a critical incident. The policy recommends that officers involved also follow up with counselors on a one-to-one basis, and provides a mechanism for officers and their families to obtain these services in a confidential setting. The IACP Model Policy on Critical Incident Stress Management is available in Appendix B.

Critical incident stress debriefs have become commonplace in the field of law enforcement ever since the negative impact that stress has on officers and organizations has become publicized. They are regarded by officers as an effective tool for coping with the repercussions of a traumatic incident with which they may have been involved, and are a positive coping mechanism that aims to help officers deal with emotional overload.

Early Warning Systems

Many police departments are electing to implement early warning systems as an administrative tool to help identify officers who may be experiencing stress as evidenced by their conduct while on duty. According to Gaines and Kappeler (2008), when an agency implements an early warning system, supervisors track all complaints against officers, whether they are

justified or not, to identify officer patterns of behavior. After officers have accumulated a number of complaints, their entire personnel file is reviewed in an effort to identify problem areas that may be impacting their job performance. The goal is to intervene before the complaints escalate and to provide an early intervention for the problem behavior prior to discipline becoming necessary.

The IACP also developed a model policy for the implementation of an early warning system into a police agency. The Model Policy on Early Warning Systems (2002) provides that supervisors must track the following types of complaints: complaints lodged by one employee against another; disciplinary actions taken against an employee by a supervisor with or without a formal complaint; complaints filed by citizens against agency personnel; incidents of domestic abuse involving agency personnel; and administratively identified examples of improper actions or misconduct. The following information is also incorporated into the early warning system by the model policy: use of force reports completed by officers; involvement in traffic accidents; involvement in police pursuits (both within and outside of policy); civil litigation and claims for damages; assaults against officers (officers are victims); officer reports of resisting arrest or obstruction; sick leave used; criminal arrests made; and commendations and awards given. While some may believe that an early warning system is simply a tool to deal with problem employees, the true intent, when properly administered, is to stave off dysfunctional conduct before it escalates into criminal or unethical behavior (Gaines & Kappeler, 2008). The IACP Model Policy on Early Warning Systems is available in Appendix C.

Training

Given that police officers are frequently exposed to stress through both traumatic incidents and from organizational sources, it seems appropriate that officers should be provided

with training opportunities early in their careers to help develop positive coping techniques and anticipate the stressors that exist in the occupation. Arnetz et al. (2013) designed a training model for police trainees in a Swedish Police Academy that augments an officer's sense of self control over stressful situations by making the incidents more predictable and by developing a psychological/tactical catalog of techniques for the officers to utilize. The training program includes an introductory psycho-educational component to familiarize the participants with the nature of the intervention. The training program consists of 10 weekly sessions, with a 90-minute per session classroom format. The training courses include relaxation training, the use of guided imagery to assist with exposure to stressful on-the-job incidents, and mental practice and rehearsals of police tactical skills. Also, the course includes instruction on positive coping strategies for different tactical scenarios, and a presentation on theories of stress, how stress impacts health, and an explanation of the benefits of imagery-based exposure and skills training. As a result of the training program, officers learn job specific skills, self-efficacy, and increased predictability of their job in order to encourage successful adjustment to future exposures to traumatic incidents (Arnetz et al., 2013).

As a result of the study incorporating the training program design, Arnetz et al. (2013) found that the protocol was effective in reducing stressful responses among police officers in terms of both physical and psychological well-being, when compared to a control group of officers who did not participate in the training program. The officers who went through the training protocol reported fewer stomach and digestive problems, significantly less difficulty sleeping, and lower levels of depression, anxiety, and social dysfunction. While the study is not conclusive, it does offer evidence supportive of the need to offer prevention training at the outset of a police officer's career.

Physical Fitness and Wellness Programs

Police officers have higher rates of stress-related physical complaints and mental health problems than workers in nearly every other profession, which contributes to a high incidence of sickness, absenteeism, burnout, and early retirement. When officers fail to cope with stress, they experience an increased likelihood of heart disease, stomach complications, and substance abuse (Anshel, 2000). One of the most effective ways to combat these problems is for police administrators to incorporate a wellness program that encourages regular exercise, healthy eating habits, weight management, and substance abuse prevention.

In 2002, a Task Group comprised of representatives from insurance companies, professional law enforcement organizations, labor union leaders, law enforcement research organizations, and FitForce (a privately owned company specializing in physical fitness solutions), developed a model wellness program for police officers known as the Public Safety Physical Readiness Program. The goal of the program is to help officers ensure that they have the requisite fitness to perform their job duties, improve the lifestyle and habits of officers to decrease health risks and improve overall quality of life, and to aid agencies with the reduction of liability by ensuring their officers' physical readiness to perform while minimizing risk and the costs associated with risks (FitForce, 2010). The fitness and lifestyle areas that the program addresses are exercise, nutrition, weight management, stress management, tobacco cessation, and alcohol and drug abuse prevention.

According to FitForce (2010), it is recommended that a wellness program consist of nine different components:

1. Training of organizational leadership: Agency leaders must receive instruction on potential legal concerns, financial costs, and policies and procedures that emphasize that the desired result of the program is behavioral modification.

2. Assign a program coordinator to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively screen participants, develop the agency program standards, maintain safety, and provide education on basic health and fitness principles.
3. Conduct a health screening that certifies that participants are able to receive physical fitness testing and exercise, or provide a referral for a discovered problem such as heart disease or diabetes.
4. Conduct a fitness assessment to establish a baseline on current physical fitness level.
5. Establish individualized goals for the participants that are measurable, articulable, systematic, and progressive.
6. Establish a plan for participants to follow that may include an exercise routine or a meal plan or a dietary restriction plan.
7. Educate participants on what appropriate, healthy behaviors consist of and about the negative impacts that poor choices can have on the training or diet plan.
8. Establish on-going support from administrators all the way down the chain of command. This may include administrators establishing an incentive-based plan for when officers reach certain goals in their program. Perhaps the most important supportive gesture that administrations can make is to allow for officers to exercise and train while on duty, as providing up to three hours per week for fitness training likely will have a significant impact on program participation, adherence, and success.
9. Plan a phase in program for newly hired and incumbent officers.

The key to a physical health and wellness program being successful in a law enforcement agency is support from agency leadership. Administrators must understand that the goal is to change the destructive health habits of officers, and by reinforcing positive behaviors engaged in by officers, the overall health of the department will increase, likely resulting in reduced use of sick time, fewer work place injuries, and increased productivity from more energetic officers (FitForce, 2010).

SECTION V: CONCLUSION

Police officers are trained to respond to threatening situations which require them to protect innocent people from violence, provide for safety of the general public, and defend themselves from danger. While this training is critical for any street officer to ensure survival in precarious situations, the policing industry has been slow to recognize the inherent dangers associated with stress that impact far more officers every single day. It is imperative that police administrators implement initiatives to ameliorate the detrimental effects that stress has on police officers in order to preserve the credibility of the profession in the eyes of the public.

This paper has provided extensive evidence indicating that stress is endemic in policing, and when coping mechanisms are insufficient or dysfunctional, negative consequences may result, such as suicide, spousal abuse, divorce, substance abuse, and poor health. An important source of stress that must be adequately recognized is the exposure to traumatic incidents that police officers will inevitably encounter during the course of their career. However, a significant number of stressors that police officers endure every day exist within the organizational environment, and can be modified if police executives are willing to confront what may be difficult but necessary changes.

Unfortunately, many of the traditional stress management strategies that have been attempted by law enforcement agencies have had a misguided focus. To date, many agencies have directed important resources at assisting officers cope with the lingering effects of stress encountered as a result of episodic stressors. These services are critical, and cannot be overlooked in any stress management plan. Regrettably, as police administrators have focused resources at relieving the effects of episodic stressors, organizational factors as a source of stress have been overlooked and have become chronic sources of tension for officers.

In order to make a significant impact on the levels of stress that permeate law enforcement, it is imperative that police executives have the leadership and courage to facilitate the organizational self-analysis that is required to identify the elements present in the workplace that are contributing to a taxing environment. Initiating the process of rumination will undoubtedly be difficult for some, and those executives likely will not make the essential changes, instead making only cosmetic modifications to the operations of their department that have no real consequence for the reduction of stress. Those who have the audacity to examine the causes of chronic stress within their organization regardless of whether or not their policies and decisions have been a contributing influence will likely reap the benefits of a happier, healthier workplace. But the responsibility of reducing stress does not rest solely with administrators. Officers must still be accountable for their failure or inability to cope with stress in a meaningful, productive way, as it is their responsibility to take the steps necessary to resolve their problems in a healthy manner. Effective organizational leaders will recognize how critical it is for them to initiate the paradigm shift within their department, and make the changes necessary to reduce the potential for the existence of stressors and implement an effective and enduring stress management program that officers will support and buy in to. A partnership between officers who are driven to improve their personal well-being and administrators who are bold enough to recognize the need for organizational improvements will result in the development and implementation of a successful stress management program.

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APPENDIX A-Employee Mental Health Services Model Policy

Model Policy

Subject

Employee Mental Health Services

Effective Date

January 1, 1994

Reference

Special Instructions

Distribution

Reevaluation Date

December 31, 1995

No. Pages

4

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline this law enforcement agency's response to personnel requiring mental health services.

II. POLICY

The duties and responsibilities of the law enforcement profession are often emotionally demanding and difficult, and officers generally risk experiencing stress and related emotional difficulties. Emotional problems may have a negative impact on personnel performance, and, in extreme instances, may present a danger to the welfare and safety of officers, their families, the general public and fellow officers. Therefore, it is the policy of this law enforcement agency to provide all personnel with access to mental health services to help them preempt and resolve emotional difficulties and, under emergency conditions, to take those measures necessary in the provision of mental health services to ensure the well-being and safety of officers and the general public.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Peer Counselor. A non-professional employee volunteer of this agency, or, as authorized by this agency, a chaplain or physician who provides mental health intervention services to agency personnel.
- B. Mental Health Professional: A licensed professional, departmentally authorized social or mental health caseworker, counselor, psychotherapist, psychologist or psychiatrist.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Peer Counseling

- 1. Peer Counselors shall be authorized by this agency to provide voluntary counseling services to agency employees only after having successfully completed this agency's prescribed course of instruction.
 - a. Employees who wish to serve as peer counselors shall notify this agency's coordinator of peer counseling services.

- b. Selecting candidates for peer counselor shall be the responsibility of the peer counseling supervisor with final approval of the agency chief executive.
 - c. This agency's training director is responsible for ensuring that peer counselor candidates receive appropriate training through designated licensed professionals.
2. The name and telephone number of peer counselors and their availability shall be posted for the benefit of all employees. The peer counseling supervisor shall be responsible for administering and supervising the program and assuring that services are available on a reasonable basis to all agency employees.
3. Agency employees may voluntarily seek the assistance of a peer counselor at any time while off-duty without supervisory approval or, with supervisory approval during duty hours.
4. Peer counselors may be used to assist officers and their families in cases of job-related crises through informal counseling and support and through referral to professional mental health service providers where necessary.
5. Employees should use peer counselors as a referral source where appropriate and may, with or without anonymity, provide the name of a fellow officer or employee for discreet and confidential intervention.
6. Strict confidentiality shall be maintained between the peer counselor and the counselee. With the exception of criminal activity, nothing discussed between counseling participants shall be divulged to any third party without the express written consent of the counselee or under the following conditions.
 - a. Officers who have been involved in a violation of law or their oath of office shall not rely upon nor expect peer counseling to serve as a means of relieving or diminishing their real or perceived responsibility.
 - b. When there is an indication that an employee presents a clear and present danger to himself or others, peer counselors are required to report these facts to the agency chief executive.
7. As an alternative to peer counseling, employees are encouraged to contact personal or agency-authorized clergy, physicians or mental health professionals when deemed necessary for resolving emotional crises.

B. Professional Mental Health Services

1. Mental health service providers are available to all employees of this agency and their families as allowed by insurance coverage or agency policy. Use of these services shall be treated in the same manner as any other work-related illness or disability.
2. The services of mental health professionals may be invoked by employee self-referral, referral of a supervisor or peer counselor through the agency chief executive or by policy following life-threatening, traumatic experiences.

3. Supervisory personnel are responsible for continuously monitoring personnel performance and behavior and shall be alert to behavioral indicators that suggest emotional problems. These include, but are not limited to,
 - a. Uncharacteristic or repeated citizen complaints, particularly those related to excessive force;
 - b. Abrupt changes in prescribed officer response or behavior such as excessive tardiness, absenteeism, abnormal impatience, irritability or aggressiveness, or repeated instances of overreaction or failure to act in the line of duty;
 - c. Irrational or bizarre thoughts or actions;
 - d. Unexplained changes in work habits or patterns of leave usage;
 - e. Erratic mood swings; and
 - f. Indications of alcohol or drug abuse
4. Supervisory personnel who observe or receive information regarding the above types of behavior shall consult with the employee for an explanation and, where necessary, may confer with peer counselors or mental health professionals for guidance.
5. Where circumstances indicate, the supervisory officer shall suggest a voluntary self-referral to the subject officer. Where emotional impairment/dysfunction is suspected, either prior to or following these consultations, supervisory personnel may contact the employee's commanding officer to determine whether an administrative referral to mental health professionals is warranted.
6. Under emergency conditions, when an officer's behavior constitutes a significant danger to himself or others, a supervisory officer may order his direct and immediate referral for mental health evaluation. The mental health professional shall be contacted for instructions prior to referral, and transportation shall be provided for the subject officer.
7. In instances where the commanding officer believes an employee is experiencing serious or debilitating emotional or psychological problems, he shall direct that the employee be interviewed by an agency-authorized mental health service provider.
 - a. A written copy of the referral order shall be forwarded to the subject officer, to the mental health service provider and to the agency's chief executive officer.
 - b. The commanding officer shall take all necessary steps to ensure the confidentiality of the referral order and its contents and shall restrict access to those persons with legitimate need to know.
8. The mental health professional shall
 - a. Maintain the confidentiality of all communications concerning the referral and its findings;
 - b. Acknowledge receipt of the order and advise whether the officer responded; and
 - c. Advise the agency's chief executive of the officer's fitness for duty and provide recommendations for assignment.

9. Following the mental health assessment, an employee may be returned to the original duty assignment, reassigned to alternative duty, placed on temporary light duty or placed on administrative leave as deemed appropriate.
 - a. An employee's work status shall be reevaluated every 30 days while under the care of a mental health professional or until such care has been terminated.
 - b. An officer may be returned to regular duty, his work assignment may be modified or he may be temporarily or permanently relieved from duty at any time in accordance with recommendations of the mental health professional. The employee's powers of arrest may also be terminated or suspended in accordance with the above recommendations.
 - c. Reinstatement to regular duty of any employee requires the affirmative recommendation of an agency-authorized psychologist/psychiatrist.
10. Job security and promotional opportunities shall not be jeopardized by an employee solely for having participated in psychological counseling services. However, failure to seek treatment to correct deficiencies in job performance may reduce or eliminate promotional consideration or jeopardize continued employment.

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Every effort has been made by the IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center staff and advisory board to ensure that this model policy incorporates the most current information and contemporary professional judgment on this issue. However, law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that no "model" policy can meet all the needs of any given law enforcement agency. Each law enforcement agency operates in a unique environment of federal court rulings, state laws, local ordinances, regulations, judicial and administrative decisions and collective bargaining agreements that must be considered. In addition, the formulation of specific agency policies must take into account local political and community perspectives and customs, prerogatives and demands; often divergent law enforcement strategies and philosophies; and the impact of varied agency resource capabilities, among other factors.

**Content copied from the IACP Model Policy on Employee Mental Health Services*

APPENDIX B-Critical Incident Stress Management Model Policy

Model Policy

Subject

Critical Incident Stress Management

Effective Date

July 2011

Reference

Special Instructions

Distribution

Reevaluation Date

July 2012

No. Page

4

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines that shall be uniformly applied to the management of stress resulting from critical incidents. Providing support following any critical incident will assist in minimizing the chances that involved personnel will suffer from the negative physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions that may occur.

Law enforcement duties often expose officers and support personnel to mentally painful and highly stressful situations that cannot be resolved through normal stress coping mechanisms. Unless adequately treated, these situations may cause disabling emotional and physical problems. It has been found that critical incidents such as officer-involved shootings, vehicle accidents, line-of-duty deaths, and gruesome homicides may cause adverse reactions and behaviors in officers.

II. POLICY

It is the responsibility of this department to manage critical incident stress by providing personnel with a critical incident stress management program (CISM). The CISM program shall be utilized to provide personnel with information on reactions to the trauma associated with critical incidents and assist in the deterrence of negative responses. It is the policy of this department to take immediate action after such incidents to safeguard the continued mental well-being of all involved personnel.

III. DEFINITIONS

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: An anxiety disorder that can result from exposure to a traumatic event and is diagnosed as such if symptoms persist after 30 days.

Acute Stress Disorder: An anxiety disorder that can result from exposure to a traumatic event and occurs within 30 days of exposure.

Critical Incident: An incident that is unusual, violent, and involves a perceived threat to, or actual loss of, human life that may overwhelm an individual's normal coping mechanisms and cause extreme psychological distress.

Critical Incident Stress Management: A formal process used to assist an individual who has been involved in a traumatic event to return to or maintain an effective level of functioning.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefings: A formal one-on-one or group discussion conducted by a qualified mental health professional and, where possible, an appropriately trained peer support officer that is designed to assist participants in understanding their emotions and strengthening their coping mechanisms following a critical incident.

Qualified Mental Health Professional: Any individual who is licensed as a mental health professional and has an in-depth understanding of the law enforcement culture.

Peer Support Team Members: A formal group of individuals consisting of department members who have undergone training in peer support methods.

Involved Personnel: Any employee who is directly affected by a critical incident. This may include officers who are on the scene at the time of the incident, those individuals who respond to the scene immediately following the incident, and/or support personnel participating in the response to the incident, such as emergency dispatchers.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Immediate Response Following a Critical Incident

1. During any period where it is reasonable to believe that involved personnel may experience physical, cognitive, emotional, and/or behavioral reactions to a critical incident, the department shall provide personnel with the proper mental health resources.
2. Where possible, the supervisor shall briefly meet with involved personnel to
 - a. Ask supportive questions concerning the critical incident;
 - b. Discuss any standard investigations that will occur concerning the incident; and
 - c. Advise the involved personnel that they may seek legal counsel if necessary.
3. At all times, when at the scene of an incident, the supervisor should interact with all involved personnel in a manner that acknowledges the potential stress caused by the incident and refrain from passing judgment regarding the critical incident or the reactions of the individuals.

B. Post Incident Procedures

1. The supervisor shall notify the appropriate person in his or her chain of command so that a QMHP can be contacted as soon as possible in order to schedule a one-on-one or group debriefing for all involved personnel. The on-scene supervisor shall brief the QMHP on all important and relevant aspects of the critical incident.
2. All involved personnel shall be required to attend a one-on-one and/or group debriefing provided by the department's QMHP as soon as reasonably possible. After a QMHP meets with the involved personnel,

and with the involved personnel's understanding and release, the department shall be advised of

- a. Whether it would be in the best interest of certain individuals to have time off work; and
 - b. The best continued course of counseling and intervention.
3. Follow up counseling services should be made available to every individual who was involved in the critical incident. The initial follow-up should be face-to-face.
 4. In order to promote trust and encourage the use of CISM services, all one-on-one debriefings and other individual counseling sessions shall be kept confidential and shall not have any bearing on the involved personnel's fitness-for-duty evaluation. Any information provided to the QMHP will be used solely for return-to-work status recommendations. Whenever possible, the QMHP involved in the CISM program should not conduct this department's fitness-for-duty examinations.
 5. This department strongly encourages the families of the involved personnel to take advantage of any available department mental health/counseling services. It is recommended that family/relationship joint counseling services be offered to the involved personnel and their families or significant others whenever possible.
 6. Any department investigation of the incident shall be conducted as soon as practical. This department shall make every effort to expedite the completion of any administrative or criminal investigation with the understanding that it can decrease the negative distress reactions that the involved personnel may experience.

C. Daily Stress Recognition

1. Physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions or problems may not arise immediately. In addition, involved personnel may attempt to hide their negative responses to the critical incident. Supervisors are responsible for monitoring the behaviors of personnel for any adverse reactions or symptoms.
2. A supervisor may mandate that involved personnel seek assistance or counseling from a QMHP upon recognizing behavioral indicators that suggest stress may be disrupting the individual's job performance.

D. Training

1. This department shall provide employees with training pertaining to the negative physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions that may occur following a critical incident and the uniform procedures contained in this policy. This training should be offered on a regular basis.
2. Supervisors and administrators shall be trained to identify physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions to critical incidents.
3. Supervisors are responsible for making available to their personnel information about the department's peer support, chaplains, and mental health services.

Acknowledgment

This Model Policy was developed by the IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center in cooperation with Nancy K. Bohl, Ph.D., Director, The Counseling Team, Southern California.

ENDNOTES

1 See the Peer Support Guidelines developed by the IACP Police Psychological Services Section available at http://theiacp.org/psych_services_section/pdfs/Psych-PeerSupportGuidelines.pdf.

2 See the Psychological Fitness-for-Duty Evaluation Guidelines developed by the IACP Police Psychological Services Section available at http://theiacp.org/psych_services_section/pdfs/Psych-FitnessforDutyEvaluation.pdf.

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Every effort has been made by the IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center staff and advisory board to ensure that this model policy incorporates the most current information and contemporary professional judgment on this issue. However, law enforcement administrators should be cautioned that no “model” policy can meet all the needs of any given law enforcement agency. Each law enforcement agency operates in a unique environment of federal court rulings, state laws, local ordinances, regulations, judicial and administrative decisions and collective bargaining agreements that must be considered. In addition, the formulation of specific agency policies must take into account local political and community perspectives and customs, prerogatives and demands; often divergent law enforcement strategies and philosophies; and the impact of varied agency resource capabilities, among other factors.

**Content copied from the IACP Model Policy on Critical Incident Stress Management*

APPENDIX C- Early Warning System Model Policy

Model Policy

Subject

Early Warning System

Effective Date

March 2002

Reference

Special Instructions

Distribution

Reevaluation Date

No. Pages

4

I. PURPOSE

This policy is intended to assist police supervisors and managers in identifying officers and other employees whose performance warrants review, and where appropriate, intervention in circumstances that may have negative consequences for the employee, fellow employees, this agency, and/or the general public.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of this agency to establish a system for tracking and reviewing incidents of risk to this agency and the involved employees. To this end, the Early Warning System (EWS) shall be used as a means to identify and assess employee performance involvement in potential risk-incidents and intervene where appropriate.

III. DEFINITIONS

Office of Professional Standards (OPS) or equivalent office, division, or bureau: Also sometimes referred to as internal affairs, this function is executed by the employees or unit with primary responsibility for conducting investigations of employee misconduct allegations. It is recognized that in smaller departments, this function may be administered by an individual officer or other department employee.

Use of Force: Efforts employed by an officer to compel compliance from an unwilling subject, to include but not limited to the use of hands-on physical force; chemical, electronic; and impact devices; firearms; and other weapons or means.

Excessive Use of Force: The application of an amount and/or duration of force greater than that required to compel compliance of a non-compliant subject.

Potential-Risk Incidents: Actions that may result in injury to employees or the public, cause civil rights violations, increase the civil liability to the department, or cause this agency to lose public support and confidence in its ability to perform its duty in a professional manner.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. General

1. It is the duty of line supervisors to directly monitor the performance and behavior of personnel under their charge on a daily basis.
2. The EWS is a tool to assist supervisory personnel in monitoring employee performance.
3. Supervisory personnel shall be familiar with alternatives and authorized actions they may take (as detailed in the *Employee Mental Health Policy*) in response to personnel exhibiting behavioral problems with or without information provided through the EWS.

B. Reporting Procedures

1. This agency's Office of Professional Standards (OPS) shall be responsible for establishing and administering the EWS and generating reports specified under this policy or as otherwise directed by the agency Chief Executive Officer (CEO). OPS shall receive copies of the following:
 - a. Complaints lodged by one employee against another;
 - b. Summary disciplinary actions taken against an employee by supervisors with or without a formal complaint;
 - c. Complaints lodged by citizens against agency personnel;
 - d. Incidents of spousal abuse;
 - e. Disciplinary actions taken against employees;
 - f. Administratively defined examples of improper actions and/or improper conduct.
2. Use-of-Force Reports-All use-of-force reports shall provide the following information:
 - a. Name, rank, badge number, and assignment of the officer;
 - b. Case number, date of the incident and the report;
 - c. Name of subject(s);
 - d. Location of the incident;
 - e. Nature of force and weapon used by the officer and the subject, and injuries sustained by the officer and subject, if any; and
 - f. Narrative report of the incident.
3. Performance-based and related information shall also be included in the EWS, to include the following:
 - a. Traffic accidents;
 - b. Pursuits, both within and out of policy;
 - c. Lawsuits and claims;
 - d. Assaults on the officer (i.e., officer as victim);
 - e. Officer reports of resisting arrest, and obstruction;
 - f. Sick leave used;
 - g. Criminal arrests made; and
 - h. Commendations and awards.

C. Reports

1. OPS shall collect and report on the aforementioned data and information by comparing it to historical norms of all agency personnel functioning in the same or similar assignments. Norms will be updated on an ongoing basis for each behavioral or performance indicator. Reports on individual

- officers based on deviations from those norms will be distributed to respective organizational supervisors.
2. Reports shall be developed on a routine basis for all employees but shall be generated whenever an officer has exceeded the threshold established by this agency requiring supervisory review and intervention. (For example, an agency threshold might be an employee who has received two or more complaints and/or has been involved in two or more use of force incidents within a twelve-month period).
 3. Reports shall provide a brief summary of complaints, use-of-force incidents, and/or performance indicators and their respective dispositions where available. Reports shall draw no conclusions nor make any determinations concerning job performance. Reports are intended to assist supervisory personnel evaluate and guide their subordinates. Reports alone shall not form the basis for disciplinary action.
 4. Supervisors shall review reports with the subject officer and encourage him or her to provide insight to the itemized incident and problems identified in the report.
 5. The subject officer's commander or designee and the officer's supervisor shall meet to discuss the report and other relevant information and determine if corrective actions are warranted. These actions may include but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Refer the officer to an agency peer counselor;
 - b. Refer the officer to an agency-authorized mental health professional or other mental health care provider authorized by the department;
 - c. Require that the officer participate in agency-authorized training, targeting personal or professional problems that the officer may be facing (e.g., communications, cultural awareness, coping with stress, anger management).
 - d. Initiate reassignment or transfer; or
 - e. Conclude that the officer's actions do not warrant immediate need for corrective action.
 6. A report of action recommendations and justification for those recommendations shall be forwarded through OPS to the CEO or his/her designee for approval.
 7. Once approved, the employee shall follow the plan to completion. The employee's progress shall be monitored and formally reported to the CEO at intervals prescribed by this agency. Indications of employee compliance or noncompliance, to include evidence on completion, of the agreed upon plan should be included in the employee's EWS jacket for future reference.

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