



## WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

**A**ccording to the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2009 approximately 572,000 nonfatal violent crimes were committed against individuals age 16 or older while at the workplace. These crimes included rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated and simple assault, and they accounted for 15% of all nonfatal violent crimes against persons over age 16. That same year, approximately 521 persons age 16 or older were victims of homicide while they were on duty or at work (Harrell, 2011).

The incidence of workplace violence has decreased since the 1990s, a decade during which the U.S. Department of Justice deemed the workplace to be “the most dangerous place in America” (American Probation and Parole Association, 1999, p. 97). However, recent statistics indicate that workplace violence is still a significant problem for employers, workers, and the criminal justice system.



## FIGURE #1

### EMPLOYEE-INVOLVED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is often considered to be a problem that occurs within the privacy of a victim's home, but research shows that IPV also takes a toll on victims at their workplace (Lynn, 1998; Swanberg and Logan, 2005). One study of nonfatal workplace violence cases showed that nearly two-thirds of all incidents reported to police involving an internal threat source were perpetrated by the victim's former or current intimate partner (Scalora et al., 2003). Between 1992 and 1996, approximately 18,000 individuals were assaulted by an intimate partner at work each year (Warchol, 1998).

Studies show that IPV can have serious and wide-ranging impacts on victims in the workplace. Victims report being prevented from going to work by their abuser, being harassed or assaulted by their abuser while at work, receiving threats while on duty, being stalked to or from their jobsite, and being physically abused by their partner for reasons connected with the victim's work performance (e.g., the abuser's disapproval of their job or their interactions with customers). In one study, nearly 91% of the domestic violence victims interviewed either had resigned or had been fired from their job as a result of their abuse in the 2 years prior to the study. The same percentage of the study's participants had resigned from more than one employment position in that 2-year time frame (Swanberg and Logan, 2005).

The impacts of IPV also have significant implications for employers. One study estimated that domestic violence causes victims to miss 8 million days of work each year, totaling nearly \$728 million (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). More recently, Reeves and O'Leary-Kelly (2007) concluded that reduced productivity among victimized employees resulted in even more significant costs to business organizations than lost working days alone.

Recognizing that community corrections employees are not immune from committing or being victimized by intimate partner violence, APPA in 2005 approved a Position Statement and Model Policy on Employee-Involved Domestic Violence. Its purpose was to provide guidance to community corrections agencies on implementing policies and practices that address employee-involved domestic violence in ways that promote victim safety and offender accountability. It can be accessed at [www.appa-net.org](http://www.appa-net.org).

Analysis by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) provides more detail.

- National crime data indicate that in the period between 2005 and 2009, the average annual rate of workplace violence (5 violent crimes per 1,000 employed persons age 16 or older) was approximately one-third the rate of both violence outside the workplace (16 violent crimes per 1,000 employed persons age 16 or older) and violence against individuals who are not employed (17 violent crimes per 1,000 persons age 16 or older) (Harrell, 2011).
- About one-fifth of workplace violence that occurred between 2005 and 2009 consisted of serious violent crime (i.e., rape/sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault) (Harrell, 2011).
- In 2010, there were 506 workplace homicides in the United States, representing a decrease of 7% from 2009 levels (BLS, 2010).
- Though workplace homicides declined overall between 2009 and 2010, workplace homicides involving women increased 13% during the same period (BLS, 2010).
- Law enforcement officers (including corrections professionals), security guards, and bartenders had the highest rates of nonfatal workplace violence between 2005 and 2009 (Harrell, 2011).
- Firearms were used in only 5% of nonfatal workplace violence incidents between 2005 and 2009, but shootings accounted for 80% of workplace homicides during that timeframe (Harrell, 2011).

Although workplace violence has declined overall throughout the past decade, it remains a significant problem, particularly for those within the corrections field and allied professions. Therefore, it is imperative that probation and parole agencies and their staff members are well-equipped to prepare for and respond effectively to incidents of workplace violence, as well as being prepared to provide appropriate support and services to those who are victimized.

## **CORRECTIONS AND THE SCOPE OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE**

Professionals in the corrections field, including probation and parole officers, are at heightened risk of being victimized by workplace violence. The supervision of criminal and delinquent offenders with histories of violent behavior alone increases the likelihood of potential victimization.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) identified 10 factors that may increase a worker's risk for workplace assault (1996):

1. Contact with the public;
2. Exchange of money;
3. Delivery of passengers, goods, or services;
4. Having a mobile workplace;
5. Working with unstable or volatile persons in health care, social services, or criminal justice settings;

6. Working alone or in small numbers;
7. Working late at night or during early morning hours;
8. Working in high-crime areas;
9. Guarding valuable property or possessions; and
10. Working in community-based settings.

Most if not all of these factors are part of the daily work experience of many community corrections professionals.

## **CATEGORIES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE**

The Injury Prevention Research Center has identified four categories of workplace violence (Loveless, 2001).

- *Criminal Intent*, in which the violence is committed in conjunction with the commission of a crime or crimes. In these forms of workplace violence, the perpetrator typically has no significant relationship with the business or its employees.
- *Customer/Client*, in which a client becomes violent while being served by the business. In this form of workplace violence, a “client” could include customers, patients, inmates, students, or any other group that may receive services from a business or organization.
- *Worker-on-Worker*, in which both the perpetrator and the victim of violence are employees of the business or organization.
- *Personal Relationship*, in which the perpetrator of violence typically has a personal relationship with an employee of the business or organization. This category includes victims of domestic violence who are assaulted, threatened, or stalked while they are at work.

A fifth form of workplace violence, *Client Victimization*, may occur in correctional settings. This refers to incidents in which the organization’s clients are victimized by staff and/or other clients. In recent years, new light has been shed in particular on the sexual abuse of individuals under correctional supervision, resulting in the passage of federal and state legislation to enhance efforts to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual violence in both institutional and community-based correctional settings. More information about the U.S. federal government’s Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (PREA) and efforts to prevent and address sexual violence in correctional settings is presented in Figure 2.

Each of these categories can be important to consider in the development of strategies to prevent and respond to workplace violence in probation and parole settings.

## **KEY ELEMENTS FOR PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE**

Community corrections agencies and personnel face a range of risk factors related to workplace violence. Simply the nature of the work that is conducted by probation and parole agencies—the supervision of criminal offenders and adjudicated juveniles—poses a risk for violence. The potential



## FIGURE #2

### PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO SEXUAL ABUSE IN COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS SETTINGS

A probation officer in Portland, Oregon, was convicted of sexually abusing five teenage boys under his supervision between 1994 and 2002. Additional charges of abuse against the officer were dismissed following the suicide of one of his alleged victims. He was convicted in 2005 and sentenced to 80 years in prison (Roberts, 2005).

In Concord, NH, a former corrections officer was sentenced to 20 to 40 years in prison for raping a woman under his supervision at a halfway house. According to news reports, he was the highest-ranking officer assigned full-time to the halfway house, where he worked nights and supervised other officers. In addition, he had the authority to rule on low-level disciplinary reports, bedroom assignments, and inmate visit requests (Timmins, 2007; 2008).

These and other recent incidents of sexual violence within America's correctional systems have brought the matter to the foreground among public policymakers, researchers, and corrections professionals, resulting in growing attention and response to the issue. As a result, all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam now have statutes criminalizing staff sexual misconduct by corrections professionals (Smith, 2007), including 43 state statutes that cover some form of community corrections (NIC/WCL Project on Prison Rape, 2009).

Most significantly, the U.S. Congress passed the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (PREA). PREA supports the elimination, reduction, and prevention of sexual assault, including abuse both by correctional staff and by inmates, in federal, state, and local prisons, jails, lock-ups, private facilities, and community residential facilities. Passed unanimously by the U.S. Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush, PREA established a zero-tolerance policy for sexual abuse in America's correctional settings.

To assist community corrections professionals in more effectively preventing and responding to sexual abuse, the American Probation and Parole Association, through funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, has published *Preventing and Responding to Corrections-Based Sexual Abuse: A Guide for Community Corrections Professionals*. The document can be downloaded from the APPA Web site at: [www.appa-net.org/eweb/docs/APPA/pubs/PRCBSA.pdf](http://www.appa-net.org/eweb/docs/APPA/pubs/PRCBSA.pdf).

More information about PREA and resources to assist correctional professionals in addressing corrections-based sexual abuse can be found at the National PREA Resource Center website at [www.prearesourcecenter.org](http://www.prearesourcecenter.org).



for other types of critical incidents involving friends or family members of agency staff, coworkers, and even strangers also poses threats to the safety of community corrections staff.

Following are recommended strategies to prevent and respond to workplace violence in probation and parole settings.

### **PLANNING FOR POST-TRAUMA RESPONSE**

It is helpful for community corrections agencies to develop a mission statement, goals, and objectives that clearly define a vision for and approach to preparing for and responding to staff victimization, critical incidents, and workplace violence. A workgroup may be convened to assist in this effort.

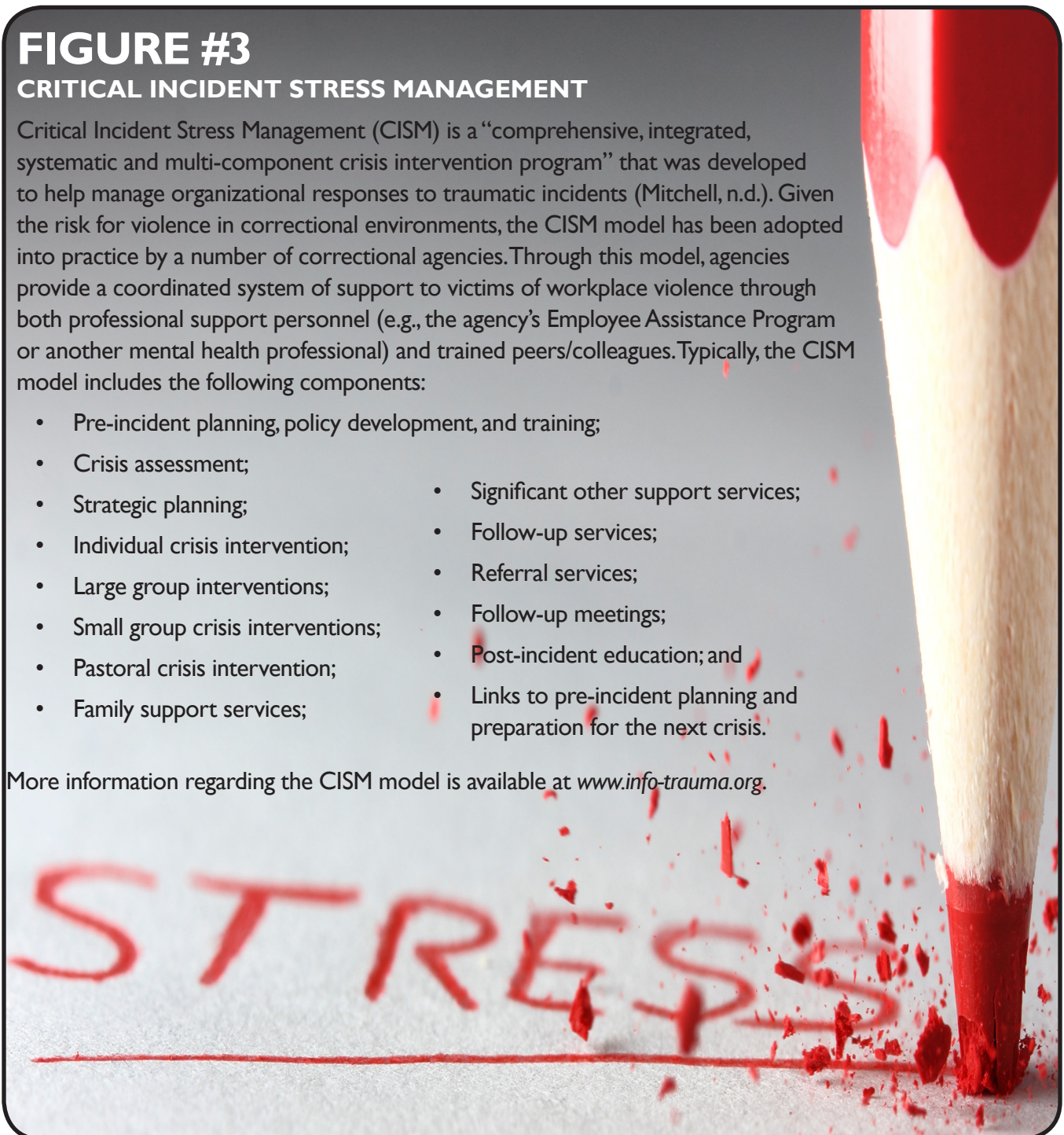
## **FIGURE #3**

### **CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT**

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a “comprehensive, integrated, systematic and multi-component crisis intervention program” that was developed to help manage organizational responses to traumatic incidents (Mitchell, n.d.). Given the risk for violence in correctional environments, the CISM model has been adopted into practice by a number of correctional agencies. Through this model, agencies provide a coordinated system of support to victims of workplace violence through both professional support personnel (e.g., the agency’s Employee Assistance Program or another mental health professional) and trained peers/colleagues. Typically, the CISM model includes the following components:

- Pre-incident planning, policy development, and training;
- Crisis assessment;
- Strategic planning;
- Individual crisis intervention;
- Large group interventions;
- Small group crisis interventions;
- Pastoral crisis intervention;
- Family support services;
- Significant other support services;
- Follow-up services;
- Referral services;
- Follow-up meetings;
- Post-incident education; and
- Links to pre-incident planning and preparation for the next crisis.

More information regarding the CISM model is available at [www.info-trauma.org](http://www.info-trauma.org).





Such a group should include a range of agency personnel and allied professionals, such as representatives of the agency administration, employee assistance program, victim services, critical incident response team (if applicable), Victim Advisory Council, and line staff or employee union.

### **ESTABLISHING POST-TRAUMA RESPONSE POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS**

Agency policies and protocols should be developed to provide guidance on appropriate responses to staff victimization, critical incidents, and workplace violence. Policies and protocols should reflect and augment the agency's mission, goals, and objectives for post-trauma response. They should also provide specific guidance on how the agency and its staff will respond to these types of incidents. Aspects include how incidents should be reported, how confidentiality of victims will be protected, and how investigations will be conducted. Policies and protocols should also identify available services for victims of violence that occurs within the workplace. Additional topics may also be addressed.

### **DELIVERING STAFF TRAINING**

After agencies develop new policies and protocols on responding to violent incidents within the community corrections environment, staff training is imperative. Agency staff need

## **FIGURE #4 USEFUL RESOURCES**

APPA Position Statement and Model Policy on Employee-Involved Domestic Violence. American Probation and Parole Association, July 2005. Available at [www.appa-net.org](http://www.appa-net.org)

APPA Position Statement on Staff Safety Standards. American Probation and Parole Association, January 1993. Available at [www.appa-net.org](http://www.appa-net.org)

Draft Policy on Responding to Workplace Violence & Staff Victimization. Association of State Correctional Administrators, May 2001.

In Action Partnerships for Corrections-Based Victim Services: Policy Manual for Victim Service Programs in State Correctional Agencies. Available at [www.asca.net/system/assets/attachments/2079/victimsservices-1.pdf?1296150837](http://www.asca.net/system/assets/attachments/2079/victimsservices-1.pdf?1296150837)

Preventing and Responding to Corrections-Based Sexual Abuse: A Guide for Community Corrections Professionals. Lexington, KY: American Probation and Parole Association, 2009. Available at [www.appa-net.org/eweb/docs/APPA/pubs/PRCBSA.pdf](http://www.appa-net.org/eweb/docs/APPA/pubs/PRCBSA.pdf)

Workplace Violence Prevention Strategies and Research Needs. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, September 2006. Available at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2006-144/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2006-144/).

Workplace Violence: A Report to the Nation. The University of Iowa Injury Prevention Research Center, February 2001. Available at: [www.public-health.uiowa.edu/iprc/resources/workplace-violence-report.pdf](http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/iprc/resources/workplace-violence-report.pdf).



to receive training on both the specific policies and procedures that are in place and the resources that are available to victims following an incident. Ideally, training should also address strategies for providing support to those victimized by violence in the workplace, both in the short- and long-term. More intensive training should be offered to members of an agency's post-trauma response team to ensure they are adequately prepared to respond should an incident occur.

#### **ANTICIPATING VICTIM-SUPPORTIVE RESPONSES BY AGENCY AND STAFF**

Overcoming the traumatic experience of violent victimization can take an extended period of time. Research indicates that the reaction of others to an individual's victimization and the degree of social support that the victim receives can have significant implications for his or her ultimate recovery. It is imperative that probation and parole agencies allow ample time for victimized staff to reconstruct their lives in the aftermath of a crime, particularly when it occurs on the job. Often there is a tendency to get back to "business as usual" as quickly as possible; however, this approach can exacerbate the trauma experienced by a victimized staff member. Both the agency, as a whole, and fellow colleagues, individually, should respond to the victim in a supportive, non-judgmental manner. The rights of victimized staff should be acknowledged, including the right to be consulted in decisions related to the investigation and prosecution of the case, the right to be informed about the status of the case, and the right to workers' and victims' compensation.

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#### **PLANNING FOR TREATMENT AND SERVICES FOR VICTIMS**

Governments in all 50 states and at the federal level have established versions of a "victims' bill of rights" that guides how the criminal justice system should treat victims and how they will be informed of and/or involved in case proceedings. Staff who have been victimized by violence in the line of duty as community corrections professionals should be afforded the same rights as are provided to any other victim of crime. This includes access to appropriate treatment and services. These rights should be clearly articulated to staff through informational brochures, staff training programs, agency policy manuals, or other means.

Community corrections agencies should provide employees who become victims of workplace violence with information about available services, such as victim services provided within the agency, community-based services, and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). Agencies also should be prepared to make appropriate referrals for mental health treatment. When possible, referrals should be made for treatment providers who have specialized training in treating correctional professionals. Agencies also should protect the confidentiality and privacy rights of staff who have been victimized while on duty. Staff should be able to access victim services and treatment in the aftermath of a workplace violence incident without fear of others finding out—including colleagues and clients/supervisees. Any limitations or exceptions to the protection of confidentiality for victims following an incident of workplace violence should be explained in agency policy and discussed in resources for staff such as brochures, handbooks, and training programs.



## **COORDINATING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PROSECUTION**

Community corrections agencies should coordinate with law enforcement agencies and prosecutors' offices to ensure that criminal investigations into incidents of workplace violence are conducted effectively and efficiently and referrals for prosecution are made as appropriate. Victimized employees should be fully consulted on how the department will proceed with the case as it relates to administrative and criminal investigations, criminal charges, and sanctions. In both administrative and criminal proceedings, victimized staff should be provided all of the rights accorded by state law to "civilian" crime victims.

## **PLANNING FOR RESPONSE TO LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH**

The ultimate violation of a community corrections professional—murder—requires a well-planned, sensitive, and collaborative approach in the aftermath of tragedy. The agency must provide support to the victim's family and loved ones, his or her colleagues, and the agency's personnel as a whole. Immediately following the death of an employee while on duty, community corrections personnel should be prepared to document and provide to agency administrators the key facts about the murder. Agency protocols should designate the personnel responsible for initiating death notification to the next of kin. Notification protocols should be closely followed after a death using information provided by employees through regularly updated emergency response forms.

Agency administrators also should work to minimize rumors concerning the incident by sharing the basic facts surrounding the incident with employees via email, memo, or other official communication. They should also explain to staff the protocols involved in death notifications and the agency's response to media requests.

Beyond the initial notification of surviving family members, agencies also should consider ways to provide ongoing support to the victim's loved ones. Examples include having one or more agency administrators attend the funeral, providing family members information about services available through an Employee Assistance Program, assisting in the submission of claims for workers' compensation and death benefits, providing information concerning the adjudication of any criminal case resulting from the death, and being involved in any memorial tributes to the deceased employee.

## **PLANNING FOR MEDIA COVERAGE OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

Critical incidents involving community corrections personnel are undoubtedly newsworthy. It is not uncommon, unfortunately, for information about the incident to be "leaked" to the press. Some leaks may be inaccurate; all leaks can be traumatic to the families and friends of correctional personnel involved.

First and foremost among administrators' tasks in responding to an incident is centralizing the dissemination of information to the news media. A coordinated plan for dealing with the news media minimizes the chance of misinformation being shared. In addition, agency administrators should ensure that the family of the victimized employee is promptly notified, and that this notification is accomplished before the victim's name is released to the media. The agency should also consider utilizing the services of victim service providers, who are often well-trained to help crime victims and survivors deal with news media inquiries during a crisis.

## CONCLUSION

Daily, community corrections professionals play an integral role in supporting victims of crime—primarily by holding criminal offenders accountable for their criminal behavior, but also by providing important services directly to victims. This critical job often puts community corrections professionals in harm's way. It is therefore imperative that community corrections agencies and staff are well equipped to provide, to their colleagues who are victimized while carrying out their duties and to the families of these personnel, the same support and services they provide to victims in the community.

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