# Promoting Wellness and Resiliency in Correctional Staff

February 2<sup>nd</sup> | 2:00 PM EST





### **Presentation Team**



Hayden Smith, Ph.D.
Professor of
Criminology &
Criminal Justice,
University of South
Carolina



Karin Ho
Division Director
Victim Services &
CISM Program,
South Carolina
Department of
Corrections



Scott Richards
Correctional
Program
Specialist,
National Institute of
Corrections



## Polling Questions

- ► In which correctional setting do you work?
  - A. Community
  - B. Jails
  - C. Juvenile
  - D. Prisons
  - E. Other

- ► In which field do you work?
  - A. Administration
  - B. Case Management
  - C. Medical/Mental Health
  - D. Operational Staff
  - E. Other



## Learning Objectives

- ▶ Develop an understanding of the current research on correctional staff wellness and resiliency.
- ► Learn how to apply a holistic approach to workplace wellness.
- ► Gain knowledge on promising real-world practices that can assist and promote both wellness and resiliency.



## Dr. Hayden Smith

- ▶ Officer safety and wellbeing is area of interest and I have worked with international settings on the topic.
- ▶ Over 60 journal articles, 3 books, 20 technical reports, numerous trainings, and chairs of several dissertations on the topic (e.g., including studies of officer wellbeing, retention, burnout, resiliency, absenteeism).
- ► <u>Key programs</u>: Inmates who self-injure, PREA, character dorms, mental health dorms, training academy work, and program evaluations of a wide range of officer-based programs.



## Welcome

- ► The all-encompassing nature of staff wellbeing and resiliency.
- ► Stress → Burnout/absenteeism/quitting/staffing crisis
- ► Complex problems require partnerships.



### **Current Research**

- ▶ Over reliance on measuring deficits and problems while offering few solutions.
- ► Using inappropriate methods from other work groups (i.e., police)
- ► Conducted by researchers with no experience or expertise in criminal justice settings.
- ► Front-line officers are a difficult population to study.
- ► High turnover in CO's means that policy interventions are often short-term.

## Ferdik & Smith (2017) NIJ White Paper

Summary of Dangers and Risks Confronting Correctional Officers					
Work-Related Dangers	Institutional-Related Dangers	Psycho-Social Dangers	Mental Health Risks	Physical Health Risks	
Gangs	Role Ambiguity/Role Conflict	Work/Family Conflict	Stress	Injuries	
Contraband	Demanding Work Obligations	Media/Political Scrutiny	Burnout	Death	
Mentally ill Inmates	Poor Leadership/Trust/Support				
Disruptive Inmates	No Input into Decision-Making				
Disease-Afflicted Inmates	Inadequate Resources				
Riots	Inadequate Employment Benefits				
	Extended Hours				
	Co-worker Conflict				
	Understaffing				



## Wellness Poll Question

- ▶ When correctional officers are asked about stress, what do you think their most common response is?
  - A. "Those inmates are just too much"
  - B. "The administration doesn't care"
  - C. "I am worried about violence"
  - D. "I don't get paid enough"
  - E. "I don't know my role"

## Wellness

The active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL**

Good health
by occupying pleasant,
stimulating environments
that support
well-being.

#### **EMOTIONAL**

Coping
effectively
with life and
creating satisfying
relationships.

#### INTELLECTUAL

Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills.

#### **PHYSICAL**

Recognizing the need for physical activity, diet, sleep and nutrition.

#### FINANCIAL

Satisfaction with curren and future financial situations.

#### SOCIAL

Developing a sense of connection, belonging and a well-developed support system.

#### **OCCUPATIONAL**

Personal satisfaction and enrichment derived from one's work.

#### **SPIRITUAL**

**8 DIMENSIONS** 

**OF WELLNESS** 

Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life.



## Resiliency

- ► Resiliency: "being able to continue functioning relatively normally".
- ▶ In research I use the term "bounce back" because it is understandable to people.
- ▶ 1) Social support is key.
- ▶ 2) Good physical & mental health habits
- ▶ 3) Flexibility in thought: Creating new frameworks...



## Changing a Framework

- ► How to change a framework?
- ▶ Welcome to baggage claim



▶ Inmates who engage in self-injurious behaviors.

Old Framework	New Framework
Inmate motivation: Manipulation, control movement, hospital tour.	Inmate motivation: Early/severe trauma, coping, mental distress.
Response: Staff stress, staff take behavior personally, punitive isolation of inmate.	Response: Empathy, staff do not take personally, staff assist in prevention & response with training.
Outcome: Class action lawsuits, increased mental illness, staff burnout/stress, etc.	Outcome: Improved outcomes for staff, inmates, and the workplace.



# Holistic: The Two Pillars of a Healthy Work Life (Control & Meaning)

**▶** Bus drivers vs. Taxi Drivers



- ► What opportunities are there in your current workplace to provide a sense of control and meaning in the work of officers and staff?
- ▶ Prison Example: Programs and Community-Based



### **Best Practices**

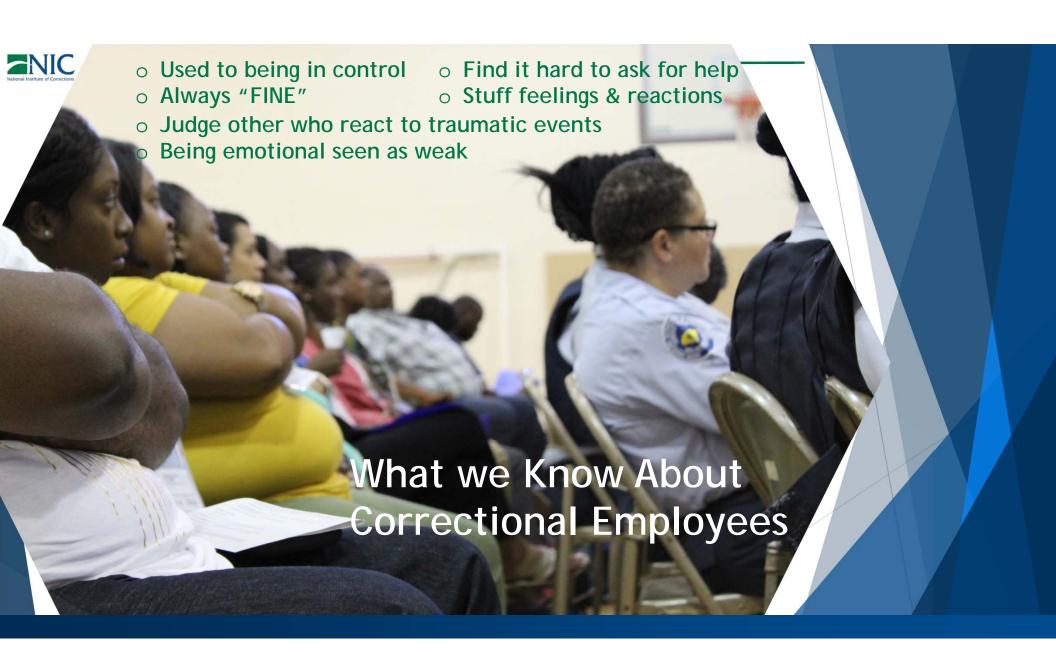
- ► Three criteria towards best practices
  - ► Innovative (as new or unique as possible)
  - ► Cost effective (as cheap as possible)
  - ► Comprehensive (as holistic as possible)
- ► Hypothetical: Correctional Officer on 12-hour night shift.



### Karin Ho

- ▶ Over 25 years experience working in corrections in both Ohio and South Carolina
- ► Provides technical support and guidance to correctional agencies across the nation
- ► Victim Advocate for over 35 years
- ▶ Privileged to be trusted by countless crime victims, correctional employees and others to provide support to them following some of the most traumatic experiences in their lives
- ► Having experienced traumatic events personally, recognize the importance of peers helping peers in the aftermath of these situations







## Changing Times

- ► Thankfully, many agencies are starting to recognize the toll corrections can take on staff.
- ► Understanding that critical events can and DO impact employees, it important.
- ► Every state reports challenges in recruiting & hiring correctional employees, so it is critical to take care of those who do join our profession, so they make it a long career, rather than leaving!



## Holistic - Systemic Approach

**INDIVIDUAL PEER SUPPORT** 

Recognize that each employee's needs are different. Do your best to meet them where they are.

**GROUP DEBRIEFING/DEFUSING** 

Peer Team adds layer of support into existing EAP and other support within agency or family structure

PCIS EVENTS
(Post Critical Incident Seminar)

Address ongoing trauma-related issues through PCIS

**ONGOING TRAINING FOR EMPLOYEES** 

Implement agency-wide, mandatory training for entire workforce addressing culture of correctional environment to strengthen resiliency



## Post Critical Incident Seminar

□3-Day Seminar
☐ For Employees (and their Spouse/Partner) Experiencing Ongoing
Issues Related to a Traumatic Event(s)
□ Combination of:
□ Presentations/Information
☐ Peer Team Support
☐Small Break-Out Group Discussions
Opportunity to Talk with Mental Health Professional
☐ Possibly Experience EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization
Reprocessing)
■ Medical Massage Therapy
☐ Mindfulness Exercises (meditation, breathing exercises,
etc)
Research



Be creative to implement strategies that effectively break barriers and connect with staff in the way that they need!



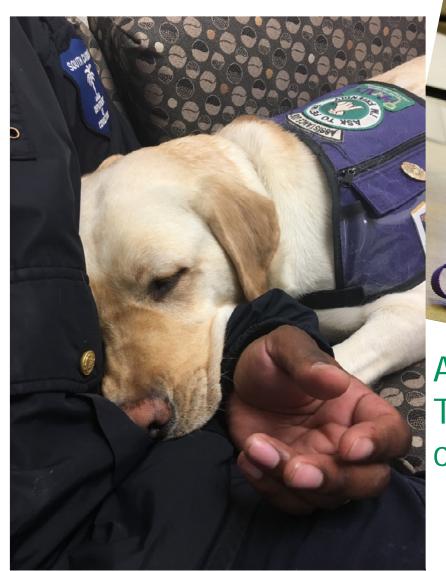
## Trauma Dog

Recognize that not everyone likes dogs. Some may have allergies and/or be afraid of dogs. Respect everyone's feelings and train dog to wait for command to approach people.

Make sure trauma dog is specifically trained to work with trauma and in highly emotional situations.

- o Can have a calming effect in stressful environment
- Can utilize pressure-points to reduce blood pressure and heart rate
- Can utilize "leaning" and "weight" to provide feeling of being "grounded" for someone experiencing a panic attack or Post Traumatic Stress triggering event
- o And...









## Contact Us!

Dr. Hayden Smith, <a href="mailto:smithhp@mailbox.sc.edu">smithhp@mailbox.sc.edu</a>
Karin Ho, <a href="mailto:Ho.Karin@doc.sc.gov">Ho.Karin@doc.sc.gov</a>
Scott Richards, <a href="mailto:s1richards@bop.gov">s1richards@bop.gov</a>



## Thank you!

Thank you for your participation today! Please visit the National Institute of Correction's website for more information about additional trainings and webinars.

www.nicic.gov



## **Questions?**

Please submit your questions in the WebEx chat



## Wellness Poll Results

- ► When correctional officers are asked about stress, what do you think their most common response is?
  - A. "Those inmates are just too much" 15
  - B. "The administration doesn't care" 518
  - C. "I am worried about violence" 23
  - D. "I don't get paid enough" 130
  - E. "I don't know my role" 25