

TRANSCRIPT

Addressing Vicarious Trauma in First Responders

BILL TULL, BATTALION CHIEF, NORFOLK FIRE-RESCUE: Our public safety first responders are certainly seeing more than they've ever seen in the past, and it's affecting us.

BRANDON DOMMEL, BATTALION CHIEF, NORFOLK FIRE-RESCUE: You see people injured from accidents. You see people injured from fights and gunshots and violence.

KAREN OWENS, EMERGENCY OPERATIONS MANAGERS, VIRGINIA OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES: It is hard for someone to not take it home. The firefighter, the EMS provider is always going to have that residual, and the police officer as well.

SHAWN S. KELLEY, DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC SERVICES, INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS: I've seen suicide with my colleagues. I have seen excessive drinking. I've seen drug use. I've seen, um, bullyish behavior.

KAREN OWENS: There is a need to focus on the physical and mental well-being of the providers—not just their knowledge and skills to do the job, but their ability to process and handle it.

WILLIAM PETTY, FORMER DIRECTOR, VICTIM SERVICES, AUSTIN POLICE DEPARTMENT: As management, we have to take care of our employees who we know we're putting in situations which could adversely affect the quality of their work and the quality of their life.

BRANDON DOMMEL: I want it to be okay in the fire service for someone to say, "This is bothering me. I need to talk about it," and having the coping mechanism for them to try and de-escalate the anxiety that they might be experiencing.

KAREN OWENS: It's not that you're not macho if you ask for help. In fact, it's actually a good thing when you recognize it both in yourself and in others.

SERGEANT CHRISTOPHER SCALLON, PEER SUPPORT UNIT, CISM TEAM, NORFOLK POLICE DEPARTMENT: The *Vicarious Trauma Toolkit* provides a platform from which any agency can begin the steps to becoming more trauma-informed.

SHAUNA WILLIAMS, CORPORAL, SPECIAL CRIMES UNIT, NORFOLK POLICE DEPARTMENT: We're offering help and services before something has a tendency to get worse. And we're putting things in place, aiding and assisting, so that things can get back to working smoothly.

RABBI LEVI BRASHEVITZKY, CHAPLAIN, NORFOLK POLICE DEPARTMENT: After a serious scene, I'll wait on the side and just let them know that I'm available. Instead of waiting till it blows beyond control, they can deal with the trauma or deal with whatever's necessary at the time.

CHRISTOPHER SCALLON: And I think that if an agency is trauma-informed, you have a better workforce, you have a happier workforce, you have a more productive workforce.

WILLIAM PETTY: Your agency needs resources to be able to understand and address the direct and vicarious trauma which your employees, by the very nature of what they do for a living, are going to be exposed to.

KAREN OWENS: Our hope is that this toolkit will give them everything they need—teaching people to cope, teaching people to mentor others on how to cope, and giving resources to really take care of our own.