



NCVROW Creating a Vicarious Trauma- Informed Organization: Strategies for Success

THE VICARIOUS TRAUMA TOOLKIT

The webinar will begin shortly.

Polling Question

Which of the following, most closely describes your organizational affiliation:

- Law Enforcement
- Corrections
- Courts
- Victim Service Provider
- Health and Human Services
- Education
- Fire/Rescue
- EMS
- Other



NCVRRW Creating a Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization: Strategies for Success

Introducing

THE VICARIOUS TRAUMA TOOLKIT

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Webinar Objectives

Regarding Vicarious Trauma:

- Raise awareness
- Describe staff impact
- Introduce Vicarious Trauma Toolkit (VTT)
- Introduce Vicarious Trauma Organizational Readiness Guide (VT-ORG)
- Describe process for becoming vicarious trauma-informed

Vicarious Trauma in Victim Services



https://youtu.be/XHewhs_4YMM

Why we are here:



“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

R. N. Remen, M.D. 1996

What is Trauma?

- Direct – An event that includes exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence
- Indirect – Experiencing first-hand repeated or extreme exposure to details

Single Event or Mass Violence



What is Vicarious Trauma (VT)?

- Work-related exposure to trauma
- Inevitable occupational challenge
- *Vicarious traumatization* – the negative impacts can be prevented or managed

Change in World View

“...the transformation or change in a helper’s inner experience as a result of responsibility for and empathic engagement with traumatized clients.”

Saakvitne et al., 2000

PTSD Definition

- Direct experiencing or witnessing of actual or threatened:
 - Death
 - Serious injury
 - Sexual violence
- Indirect exposure:
 - Learning of the traumatic event of a loved one
 - Experiencing first-hand repeated or extreme exposure to details, usually during professional duties
 - Does not include viewing of violent TV, movies, etc.

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

“...the natural consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by another...the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person.”

C. Figley, 1995

Compassion Fatigue

“A combination of physical, emotional, and spiritual depletion associated with caring for patients in significant emotional pain and physical distress.”

Anewalt, 2009; Figley, 1995

Burnout

“A state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in emotionally demanding situations.”

-Pines & Aronson, 1988

Vicarious Trauma is...

An “**occupational challenge**” for those working with trauma survivors.

Organizations have an ethical mandate of a “**duty to train**” wherein workers are taught about the potential negative effects of the work and how to cope.

Munroe, J. F., in Compassion Fatigue, 1995

Work-Related Trauma Exposure

Polling question:

Have you witnessed a colleague who was impacted by vicarious trauma in a negative way?



Prevalence: Victim Services

34% met PTSD diagnostic criteria from secondary exposure to trauma.

B. Bride, 2007

37% clinical levels emotional distress associated with compassion fatigue.

Cornille & Meyer, 1999

50% of child protection staff experienced high or very high levels of compassion fatigue.

D. Conrad & Y. Kellar-Guenther, 2006

Prevalence: First Responders

- **98%** of police officers have experienced at least one type of critical incident

- Weiss et al, 2010

- Exposure to multiple traumatic events (direct/indirect) has a cumulative impact on the severity of negative responses

-Brunet & Best, 2010 - *law enforcement*; Follette, Polusny, Harvey et al, 2015 *firefighters*; Donnelly et al 2012 – *EMS*



Risk Factors

Personal:

- Trauma history
- Pre-existing psychological disorder
- Young age
- Isolation, inadequate support system
- Loss in last 12 months

Professional:

- Lack of quality supervision
- High percentage of trauma survivors in caseload
- Little experience
- Worker/organization mismatch
- Lack of professional support system
- Inadequate orientation and training for role

Vicarious Traumatization

- How does it affect us personally and professionally?
- How does it affect our organizations?

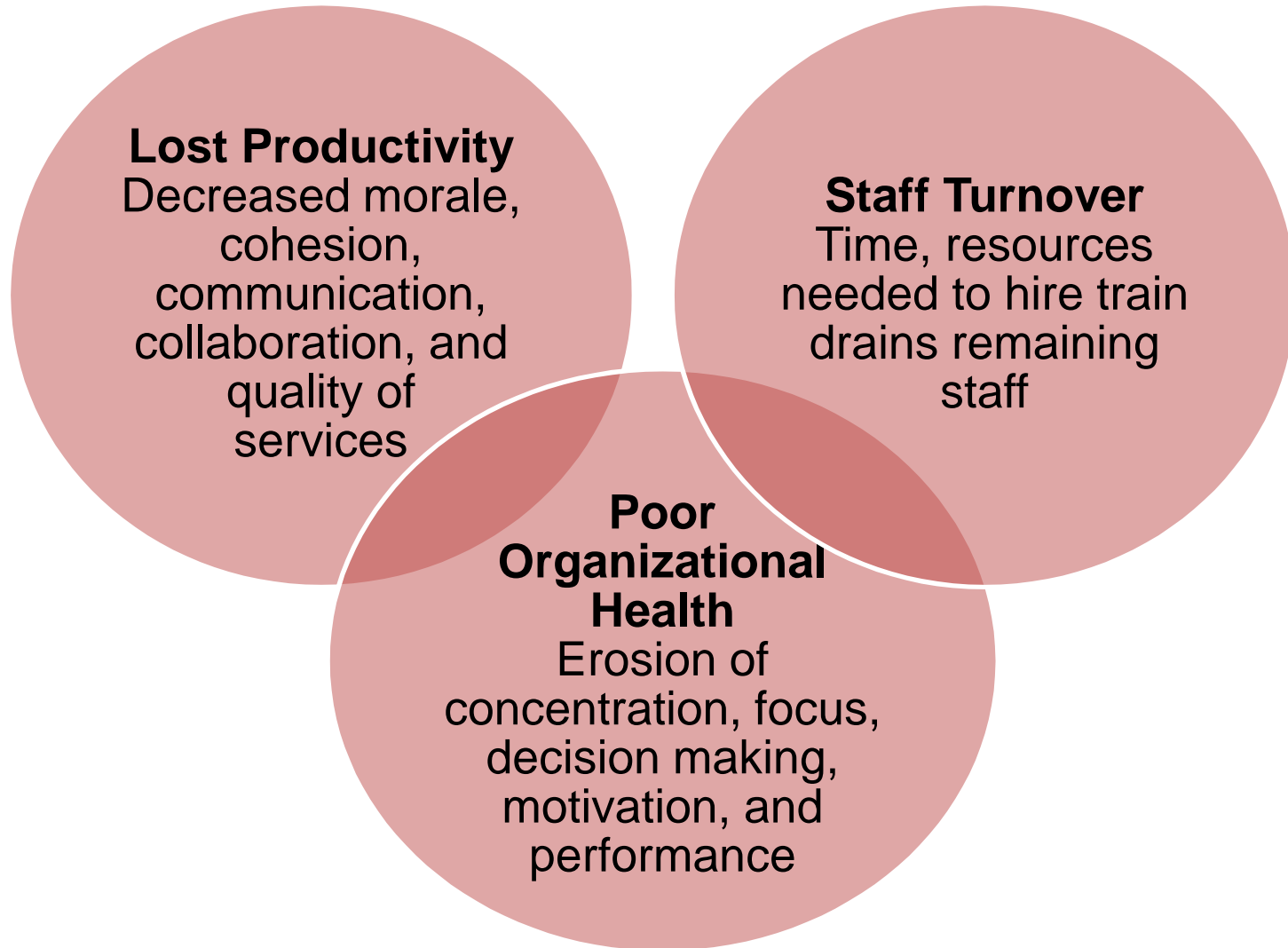
Examples of Vicarious Traumatization: Personal

Physical	Rapid pulse/breathing, headaches, impaired immune response, fatigue
Psychological	Feelings of powerlessness, numbness, anxiety, fearfulness, disillusionment
Behavioral	Irritability, sleep/appetite changes, isolate from friends/family, substance abuse
Spiritual	Loss of purpose, questioning meaning of life, questioning good vs. evil
Cognitive	Cynicism, pessimism, hopelessness, preoccupation with clients, traumatic image
Relational	Withdraws or becomes “clingy,” mistrustful, lack of interest in sex, lack of close friends

Examples of Vicarious Traumatization: Personal

Performance	Decrease in quality/quantity of workload, low motivation, task avoidance or obsession with detail, working too hard
Morale	Decrease in confidence, decrease in interest, negative attitude, apathy
Interpersonal	Detached/withdrawn from co-workers, poor communication, conflict, impatience
Behavioral	Absent/tardiness, overwork, exhaustion, irresponsibility, poor follow-through

Impact of Vicarious Traumatization on the Organization



Acknowledging the Positive

Post Traumatic
Growth

Vicarious
Resilience

Compassion
Satisfaction

Vicarious
Transformation



Vicarious Resilience

Involves the process of learning about overcoming adversity from the trauma survivor and the resulting positive transformation and empowerment through their empathy and interaction.

Hernandez, Gangsei, Engstrom, 2007

Impact of Vicarious Resilience



- Greater perspective and appreciation of own problems
- More optimistic, motivated, efficacious and reenergized
- Increased sense of hope, understanding, belief in the possibility of recovery from trauma and other serious challenges
- Profound sense of commitment to, and finding meaning from the work

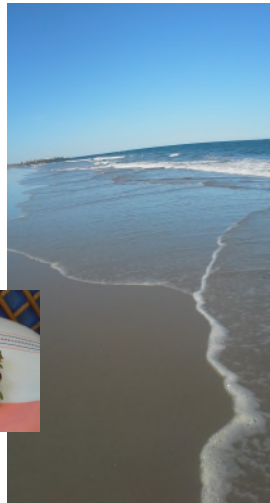
Hernandez, et al, 2007; Engstrom,
et al, 2008

Essence of Resilience

Think about someone you know who survived a trauma or tough situation, and type a few words – IN THE CHAT BOX – describing what you think was key to their resilience...



Self-Care?



“It impacted me in a way where it made me...it didn't give me hope – he said ‘you've got to do this, this, this, this’ – It didn't give me hope, it gave me more stress.”

--Victim services provider, VTT focus group

Why is this important?

- What we pay attention to, grows...
- Bringing conscious attention to organizational strategies is key
- Being vicarious trauma-informed provides a path





Developing the VTT

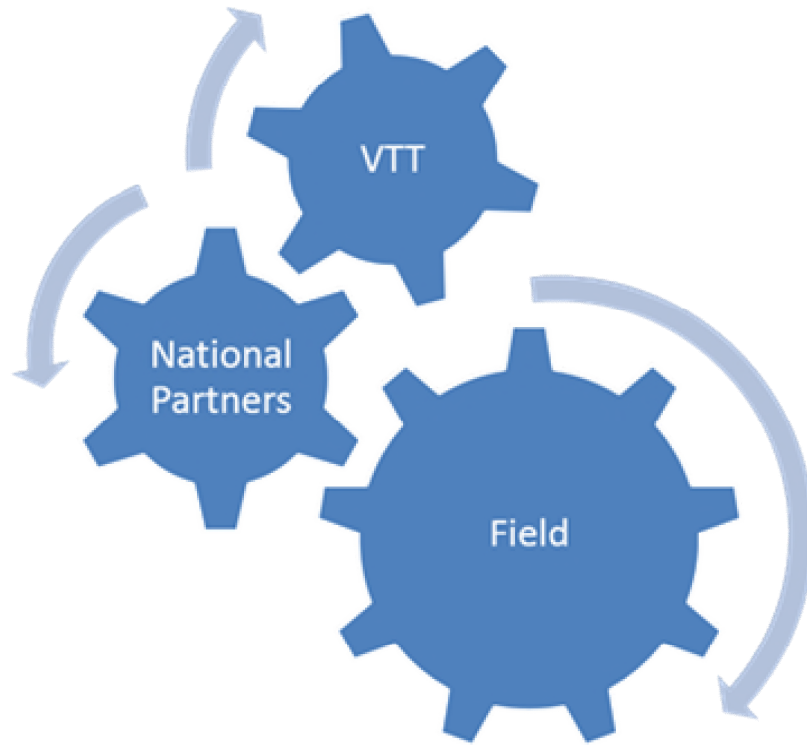


OVC 2013 Solicitation
An Evidence-Based Approach to
Understanding and Addressing
Vicarious Trauma

VTT Team

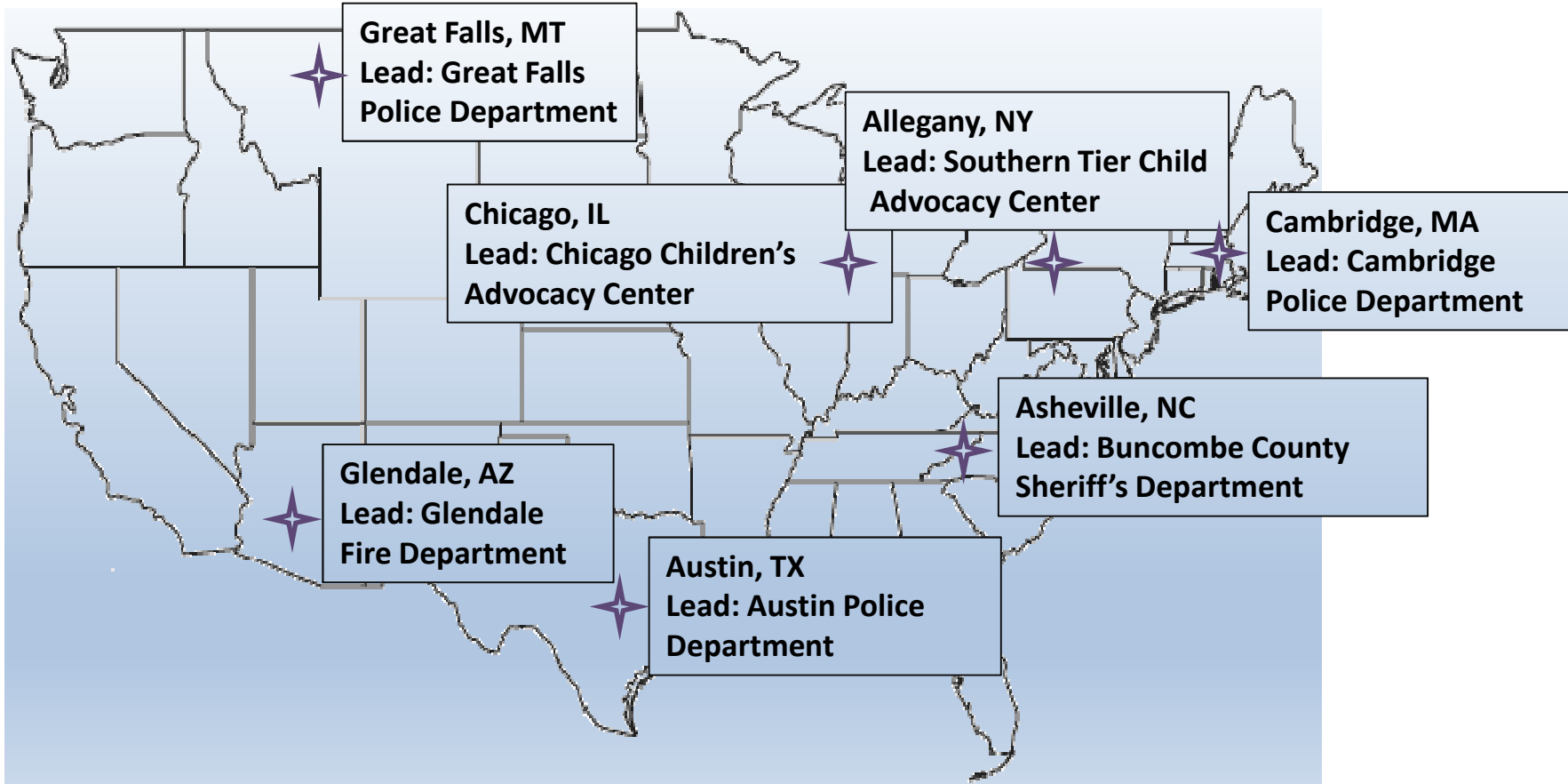
- Northeastern University
- Office for Victims of Crime
- Boston Area Rape Crisis Center
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
- National Association of State EMS Officials
- National Center for Victims of Crime
- Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
- The National Children's Advocacy Center
- International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies
- International Fire Chief's Association

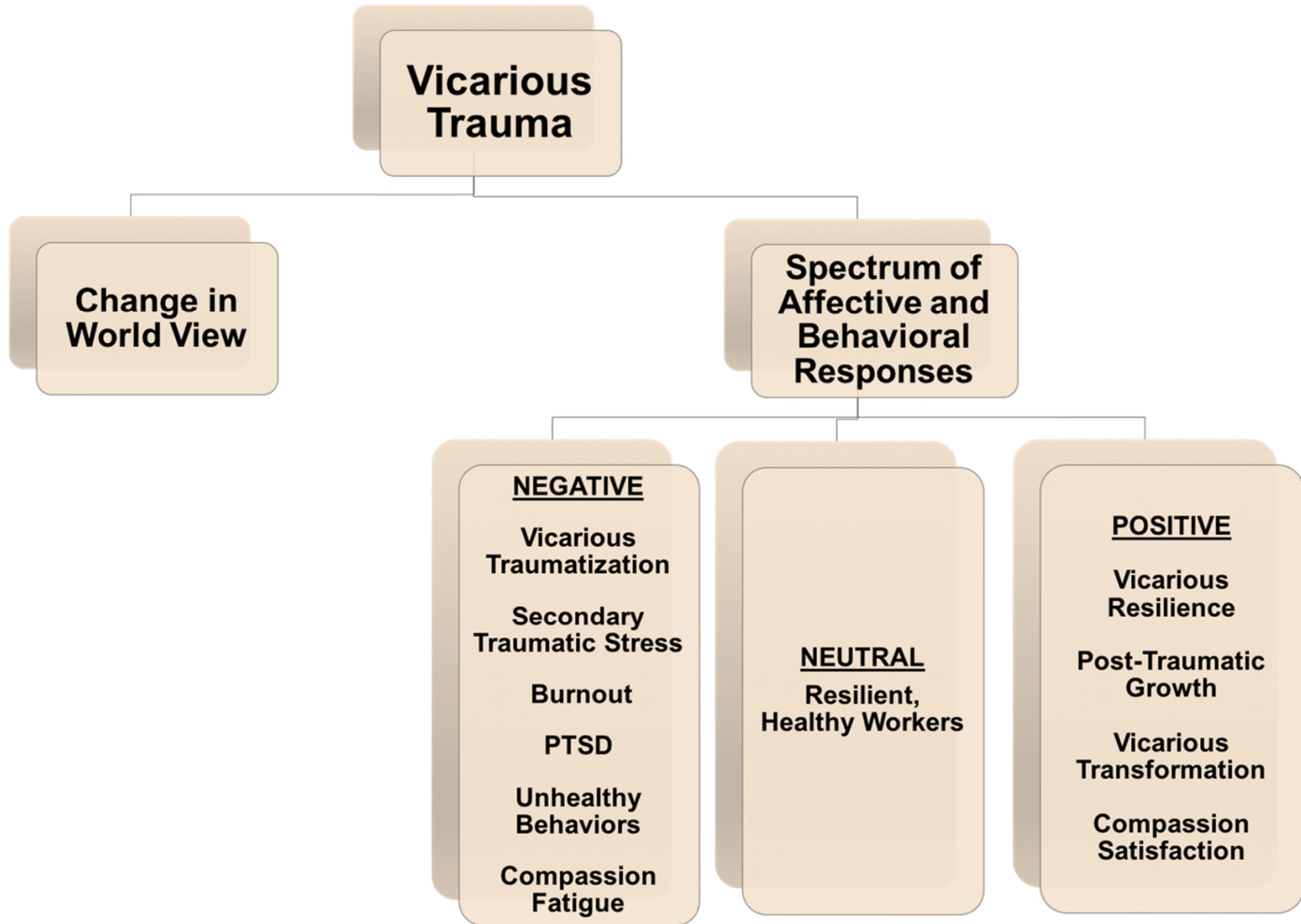
By the Field for The Field



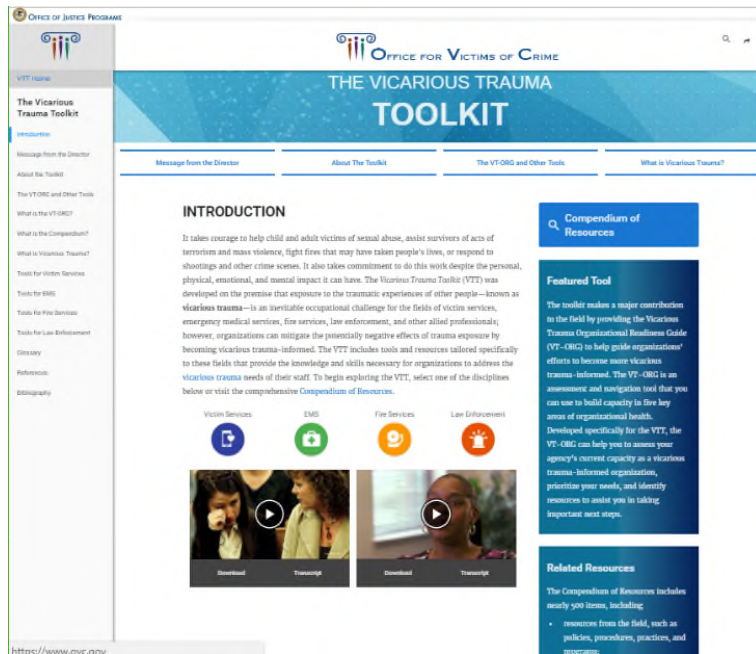
- From the Field:
 - National Survey: 8,140 participants
 - IACP Fellowship
 - National Summits
 - Pilot Testing in 7 diverse communities/all four disciplines

National Pilot Study





What's in the Vicarious Trauma Toolkit?



~500 resources:

- Policies, procedures, practices and programs
- Websites, podcasts, and videos
- Research literature
- New Tools

www.ovc.gov/vtt

Sample New Tool

Leadership Communication



Message:

We are implementing agency-wide strategies to strengthen our response to vicarious trauma (VT) because it is an occupational challenge that can have a negative impact on us and the community we serve.

What: Describe Vicarious Trauma

- VT is the exposure to the trauma experiences of others.
- By implementing training, we will increase awareness about VT and its impact.
- We must acknowledge the cumulative stress of responding to calls, victims, and community members every day and over time.
- By addressing VT, we are reaffirming our commitment to professionalism, the health of our employees, and the safety of our community.

Why: Address VT as an Agency

- Acute and/or chronic exposure to violence experienced by others can negatively affect us.
- Employing strategies to address VT will improve morale and increase our collaborative efforts, internally and externally.
- Taking steps to address VT will improve our overall response to those we serve, thereby building and sustaining relationships and community trust.
- Addressing VT will enhance our employees' physical and emotional health, well-being, and organizational effectiveness.

How: Steps We Will Take

- Use the Vicarious Trauma—Organizational Readiness Guide (VT-ORG) to assess our current response to VT and our need for additional policies and programs to address VT.
- Use the Vicarious Trauma Toolkit to access research and resources gathered specifically for our discipline.
- Review and update our policies and procedures to address gaps identified in our agency-wide assessment using the VT-ORG.
- Create a work environment and culture where it is safe to discuss VT and seek support when needed.
- Conduct an agency-wide training regarding the realities of VT, signs and symptoms, and effective individual and organizational strategies.

Organization/Agency Specific Details

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

For more information about vicarious trauma, visit <https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/>.

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Sample New Tool

Supervision Guidelines

Guidelines for a Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

Supervision

WHAT IS A VICARIOUS TRAUMA-INFORMED ORGANIZATION?

Vicarious trauma (VT), the exposure to the trauma experiences of others, is an occupational challenge for the fields of victim services, emergency medical services, fire services, law enforcement, and others. Working with victims of violence and trauma changes the worldview of responders and puts individuals and organizations at risk for a range of negative consequences (Bell, Kulkarni, and Dalton, 2003; McCann and Pearlman, 1990; Newell and MacNeil, 2010; Vicarious Trauma Institute, 2015; Pearlman and Saakvitne, 1995; Knight, 2013). A *vicarious trauma-informed organization* recognizes these challenges and proactively addresses the impact of vicarious trauma through policies, procedures, practices, and programs.

For more information on vicarious trauma and its effects, visit <https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/>.

(NOTE: Although these guidelines were created by a victim services organization, they contain insights and practices that first responder organizations can modify for their own use.)

Regardless of their role, all workers in a victim services organization are exposed to trauma and are at risk for the negative effects of VT. Supervision has been shown to be effective at decreasing the negative effects of exposure to the trauma experiences of others on staff and helping to mitigate turnover, burnout, and low morale. (Bell, Kulkarni, and Dalton, 2003; Middleton and Potter, 2015). In a vicarious trauma-informed organization, supervisors have the requisite knowledge and skills to help their staff and volunteers address VT.

Recommendations for Vicarious Trauma-Informed Supervision

Create a Safe Space for Addressing Vicarious Trauma

- Design a workplace that is safe, fosters collaboration, demonstrates respect for diversity, and acknowledges the importance of addressing VT on a regular basis.

- Affirm the importance of staff and volunteers and the work they do for the organization to advance its mission (Canfield, 2005).
- Provide regularly scheduled supervision that is evaluated by both the supervisor and the employee or volunteer.
- Acknowledge staff differences (e.g., in culture, race, identity, gender, survivor status, work experience) and discuss how they inform one's work and experience of VT.
- Openly discuss exposure to trauma and the resources available to help employees and volunteers address VT.
- Ensure that any discussion of the trauma history of a staff member or volunteer is solely to identify its potential impact on their work and their risk for vicarious traumatization.

Manage Workload and Expectations

- Monitor staff and volunteer workloads and jointly set realistic expectations for meeting clients' needs including, but not limited to, extra time for non-English speaking clients, time for writing notes, formal and informal meetings, stress-reducing and self-care activities, and time off (Schauben and Frazier, 1995).
- Attend to the "whole person," understanding the employee's client caseload, other life stressors, and symptoms of vicarious traumatization (Cerny, 1995; Trippany, Kress, and Wilcoxon, 2004).
- Offer staff and volunteers opportunities to have a wide range of cases and other work responsibilities (e.g., varied types of cases, policy advocacy, training, outreach).
- Offer opportunities for professional development through participation at conferences, trainings, and community meetings that also strengthen collaborations.
- Represent the organization on committees and task forces that address systemic issues.
- Discuss macro issues that impact both the supervisor and employee or volunteer (e.g., lack of critical resources for clients, lack of adequate staffing).
- Remind staff and volunteers of the important contributions they make for clients despite limited resources.

The Vicarious Trauma Organizational Readiness Guide (VT-ORG)

- Assesses agency's current capacity: strengths & gaps
- Prioritizes needs
- Identifies resources
- Helps to navigate the VTT

Assessing Organizational Capacity

VT-ORG for Victim Services

Leadership and Mission

To address the impact of vicarious trauma, leaders in vicarious trauma-informed organizations proactively integrate strategies into workplace values, operations, and practices; maintain a clear vision that supports and articulates the agency's mission; and regularly model and promote open and respectful communication.

In answering the following questions, consider the past 6 months in your organization.	1 = Never	2 = Rarely	3 = Some- times	4 = Often	5 = Always	N/A
1. Leadership demonstrates a clear and decisive vision that supports and articulates the mission of the organization.						
2. Leadership models, values, and promotes open and respectful communication among staff.						
3. Leadership communicates clear and specific information on decision-making throughout the organization (e.g., resource allocation, scheduling, deadlines, implementation of policies and procedures).						
4. Leadership proactively addresses vicarious trauma in the organization's long-term vision and strategy.						
5. Leadership recognizes and values my role within the organization.						
6. Leaders model a healthy work/life balance.						
7. Leadership communicates and enforces a no-tolerance policy concerning—						
a. sexual harassment;						
b. workplace violence, including bullying/hazing;						
c. intimate partner violence within or outside of the workplace;						
d. discrimination based on age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion, ability, etc.						

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Five Pillars of Healthy, Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organizations

- 1. Leadership and Mission**
- 2. Management and Supervision**
- 3. Employee Empowerment and Work Environment**
- 4. Training and Professional Development**
- 5. Staff Health and Wellness**



Vicarious Trauma-Organizational Readiness Guide (VT-ORG),
Created by the Vicarious Trauma Toolkit Project, 2016
Based on Organizational Psychology and Relational Coordination
Theories

Examples of Current Practices

- Leadership & Mission
- Management and Supervision
- Employee Empowerment & Work Environment
- Training & Professional Development
- Staff Health & Wellness

The Vicarious Trauma-Informed Organization

1. Recognizes work's potential negative consequences.
2. Proactively addresses impacts.



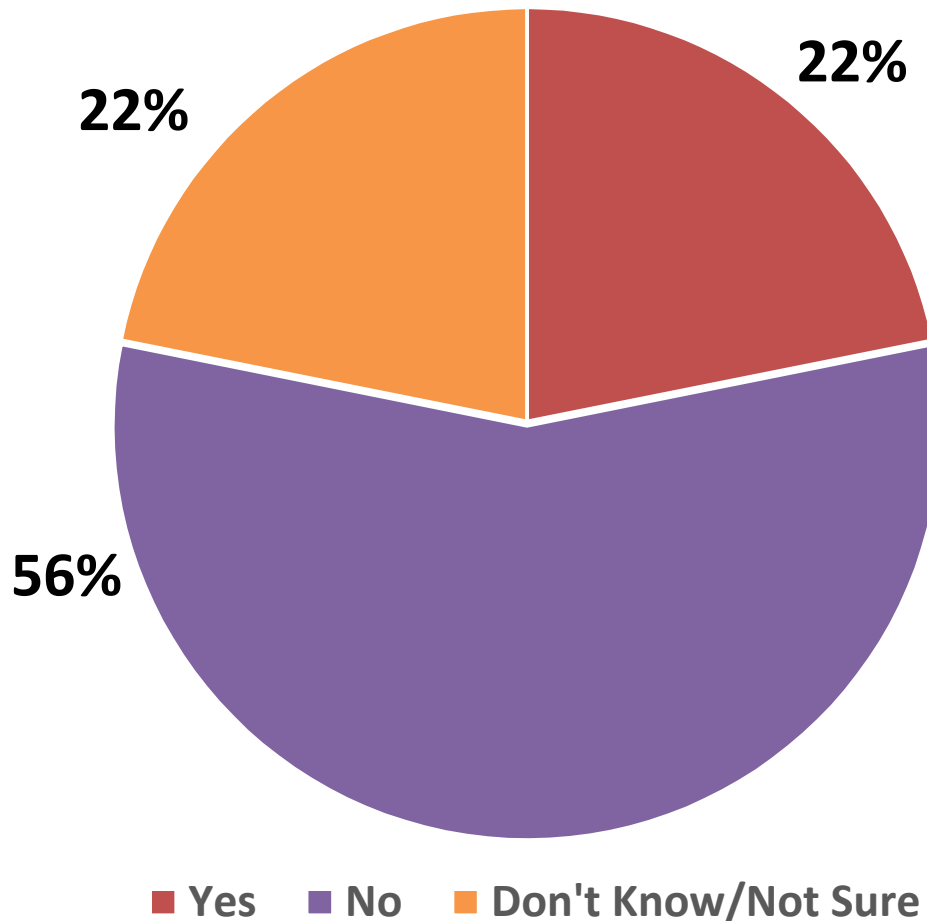
Getting Started

Polling Question:

In *your* opinion, is addressing VT a priority for your agency or organization?

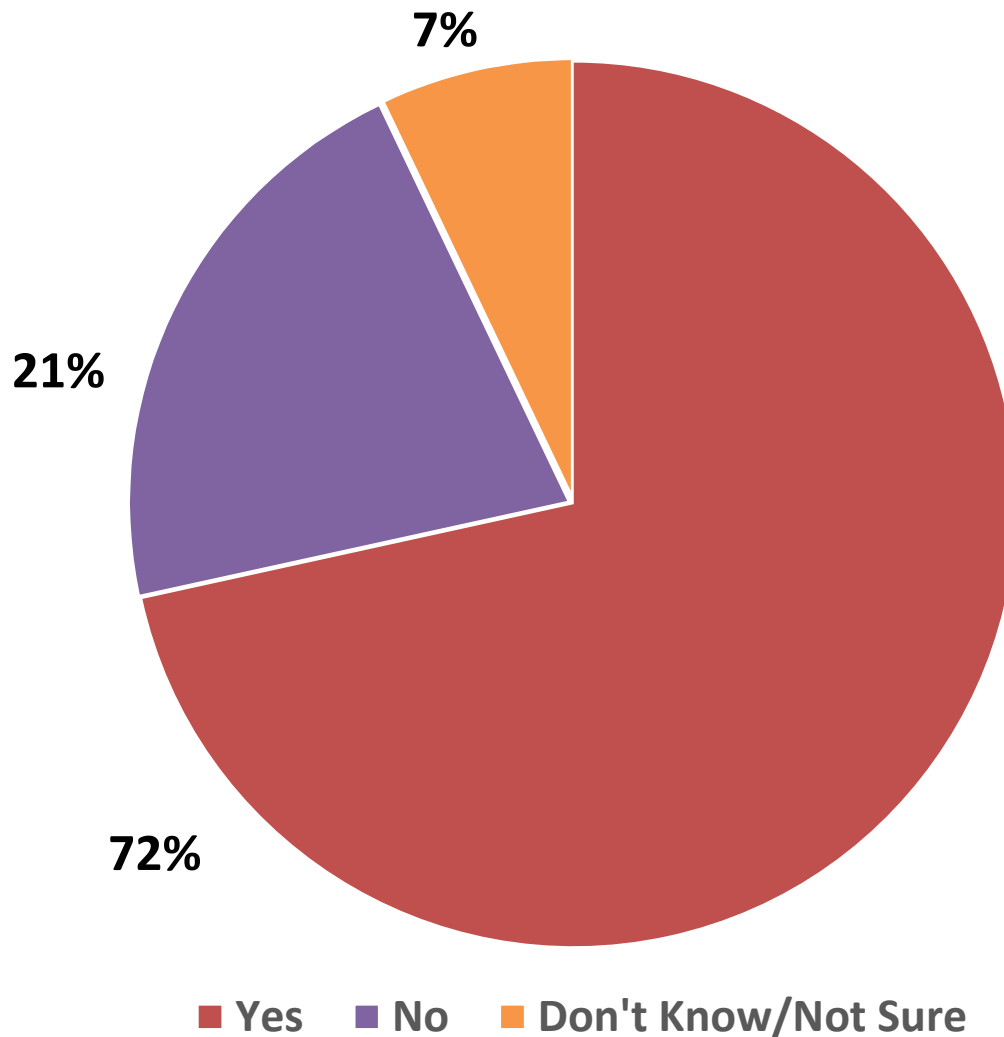


Survey Responses



Does your agency/organization have specific or formal practices that address vicarious trauma?

Survey Responses



Does your agency/organization address vicarious trauma in informal ways (i.e., peer support, time for exercise during the day, regular staff lunches, holiday parties, etc.)?

How does an organization do this?

1. Lay foundation for success
 - Get leaders on board.
2. Assess current capacity with the VT-ORG.
3. Determine priorities and develop action plan.
4. Explore the VTT for resources.



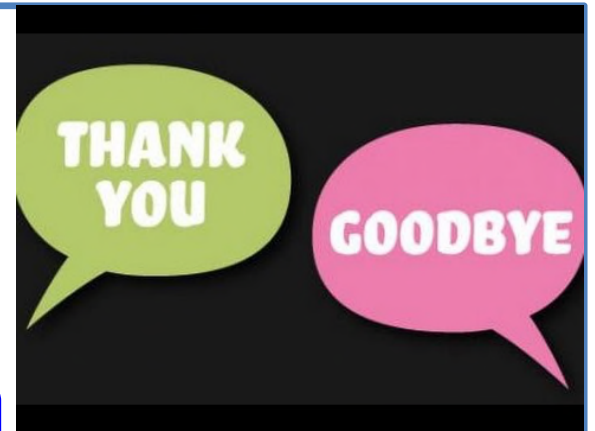
OVC TTAC Resources

- **Scoring Packet for VT-ORG**
- **Request** training and/or technical assistance for your agency:
 - TTAC@ovcttac.org
 - 866–OVC–TTAC (866–682–8822)

Q&A



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[**www.ovc.gov/vtt**](http://www.ovc.gov/vtt)