HEARING THREE
COMMISSION ON SAFETY AND ABUSE
IN AMERICA'S PRISONS

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PLACE: Washington University School of Law
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        St. Louis, Missouri 63130

Consequences of the Job on the Health
and Well-Being of Corrections Officers
Pages 192-243
This next panel entitled Consequences of the Job on the Health and Well-Being of Corrections Officers will explore consequences of this job on not only the officers and their well-being, but also their families. I am very pleased to welcome our three witnesses, Dr. Robert Delprino, Mr. Larry Brimeyer, and Mr. William Hepner.

There is evidence that corrections officers have a lowered life expectancy, higher divorce rates, and higher rates of alcoholism than other law enforcement officers. I had direct experience of this when I was directing the Massachusetts Maximum Security Mental Hospital For the Criminally Insane, the prison mental hospital. And also mental health programs for the state prison system in which I had opportunities to work not only with prisoners, but also with officers.

I remember that one year we measured the blood pressure of all the corrections officers who worked at the prison mental hospital, and discovered that the vast majority of them had blood pressures that were so high that they would have qualified for immediate medical leave of absence. And that we've heard earlier today about the low number of retirement checks that correction officers receive after they
1 retire. They just -- the survival rate is remarkably
2 diminished. So this is a real major, serious problem
3 along a number of dimensions.
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5 This distinguished panel of experts and
6 corrections professionals will discuss the myriad
7 consequences of work in the correction field,
8 including the stresses of the job and the impact of
9 those stresses on the health and well-being of
10 corrections officers and their families, as well as on
11 work performance, including the implications these
12 have for safety and abuse. The panel will describe
13 these issues for us and suggest ways administrators
14 can work to support corrections officers and reduce
15 the negative consequences of the job.
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17 Dr. Robert Delprino is a professor of
18 psychology at Buffalo State College, and has served as
19 the visiting fellow with the National Institute of
20 Justice.
21
22 Larry Brimeyer is the deputy director for
23 the Eastern Region of the Iowa Department of
24 Corrections and has worked on a stress pilot project
25 in Iowa.
26
27 William Hepner is the program development
28 specialist at the New Jersey Department of Corrections
29 Training Academy and was the project director of the
pilot program of New Jersey Stress Management. I want to thank each of you for your time today and for your insight into these important issues. Can we begin with you, Dr. Delprino?

DR. DELPRINO: Thank you. Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to be here today, and I also want to say it's a real pleasure to be serving with these gentlemen, Deputy Director Larry Brimeyer and Program Specialist Bill Hepner. I think they both represent a great deal of practical knowledge in the field of corrections.

As you're aware, the commissioner said we're here to talk today about the consequences of the job and health and well-being on correctional officers. When you read the description that was given about this session, there's a mention of COs having a high divorce rate, high rate of alcoholism than other law enforcement officers, and how other stresses on the job impact work performance on the officers and family members.

I also just want to remember as a group not to forget that many correctional officers go through this career of 20, 25 years with themselves and their families intact, and we see that sometimes folks are negative maybe because it's more interesting. But
many COs are proud of their profession, have a high
degree of respect for what they do, and see themselves
as serving an important role and service for their
community, which they do.

Now, similar to that, we have the
consequences that correctional officers and family
members face that do impact their well-being, their
job performance, and family life. I thought I would
start by discussing why the three of us are here, at
least my best guess of why we're here in front of you
today.

We've all been involved in various stages
in a program that was managed by the National
Institute of Justice, and that program was the
Corrections and Law Enforcement Family Support Program
also known as CLEFS. The program was developed in
response to Section 2301 of the 1994 Violent Crime
Control and Law Enforcement Assistance Act and as part
of the act the LEFS program was established in
recognition of the negative consequences the
job-related stress issues with the job have on law
enforcement personnel and their families.

I did say LEFS because originally the
program just dealt with law enforcement officers. It
wasn't until 1998 that the title was changed to CLEFS
to recognize that correction officers and families
also experience negative consequences as a result of
the job.

Now, it was good the title was changed, and
the National Institute of Justice, NIJ, did a really
good job of giving more attention to correctional
officers. For example, it made aware of the
publication from the NIJ addressing correctional
officers' strengths, programs and strategies by Peter
Finn. This publication discussed some of the
job-related stresses for COs and what agencies could
do to be more supportive.

But I think the oversight of including
corrections in the title and focus of the programs I
think is an indication of the general lack of
attention that's been given to corrections and to the
cconcerns of correctional officers, their health,
well-being, and family concerns.

I think we can see this in the literature
sometimes where there is some literature that talks
about correctional officer strengths and how it
affects a family compared like to law enforcement
officers. It's not a very good balance there as far
as comparison.

Having said that, though, we look at the
literature on correctional officer stress and how it affects the family, I guess we could organize that in three areas, how that job affects them. People have spoken about it at earlier sessions.

One source of stress for the officer is the job itself, the tasks they do. It's from the violence from inmates, actual violence between inmates and on staff members, response to the constant demands they make, things like showers, phone calls, requests for toilet paper, things like that. Possible manipulation by inmates. Also a possible concern about trusting co-workers. I think the last session really talked about that quite a bit.

There's also organizational issues, things such as understaffing which leads to forced overtime. Concern for shift work and how that affects their family life. Lack of support from supervisors, and getting ready for this today I spent some time talking to correctional officers in New York State ranging from 23 years on the job to rookies, and I asked one of them, "What stresses you out most on the job?" And they all said inmates at some point, but most of their energy and time was spent talking about the organization and organizational issues they face, which I thought was interesting. In general, they
presented issues that could be considered out of their organizational control.

And the third area that causes stress is the poor public image, and people spoke of that earlier today also. I think the public really doesn't know what a correction officer does and perhaps they don't want to know. I think one of the co-chairs said earlier today that corrections really is a misunderstood work force to a great degree. I think what we know about them is really influenced by the media and what they get there.

And I think many COs I found really don't want to tell people that they are correctional officers. They'd rather just say I work for the state. That's what I do. You know, think about it. When you talk to children, they want to grow up to be a police officer or firefighter. How many children say they want to grow up to be a correctional officer?

Not too many I don't think.

So the goal of the CLEPS program was to develop programs and identify what are the sources of stress for correctional officers and family members, and also to offer some solutions that correctional officers and family members could obtain or assist them. Now, there are programs out there in existence
and in use, but to realize the full potential they
must exist as a supportive culture, and people said it
again earlier today.

It's not just to have a program or policy
in place, but programs and policies have to be
supported in an ongoing way by the organization, the
administration, and supervision. And it has to be
supported in a way that increases the knowledge of the
programs, but also enhances the utilization of those
programs. They're both key.

Not only letting them know the programs are
out there, but also encouraging officers to make use
of them, and also encourage family members to make use
of them. I think what the deputy director and
Mr. Hepner are going to talk about are some of their
experiences with the CLEFS program, programs they've
developed, and how those programs contemplate out --
and in what stage they're in right now. Thank you.

MR. GILLIGAN: Thank you very much,
Dr. Delprino. Mr. Brimeyer.

MR. BRIMEYER: Thank you, Doctor. As I
indicated in my paper that is included in your
materials, in 2001 the National Institute of Justice
provided grant funding to the Iowa Department of
Corrections to implement a program focusing on the
prevention and reduction of stress among correctional officers and their families as part of a field test. The grant required four components. Number one, a wellness program. Two, a family services program. Three, training for supervisors. And four, in-service training for correctional officers. Within each component were suggested elements which might be developed. However, each test site was allowed to select those elements that the site felt most benefited their needs and enriched their environment. Data was collected around a number of elements and provided to an independent evaluator contracted by the NIJ. Results of the evaluation have not yet been received. Some of the data elements included absenteeism, sick time, tardiness, early retirements, turnover rate, medical leaves, rule violations, union grievances, inmate complaints, EAP contacts, and participation in program components. Now, while it is true that the project ended when grant funding ended, pieces of the program remain, and in fact, flourished and expanded. For example, family tours of the facilities continue to be a real hit with family members of all ages of correctional staff.
Last month, for example, over 350 family members toured the Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility as part of a now annual event started with the stress grant project, and the true shining star of the project is the peer support program.

Very briefly, peer support is a process where co-workers who are trained to recognize various symptoms and problems assist their fellow staff through listening, understanding, and providing appropriate referrals when necessary. Peer support programs may serve as early detection mechanisms to help staff deal with problems before they become serious. These programs are popular and successful because many staff prefer to confidentially discuss personal or professional problems with one of their own.

Familiarity breeds comfort. Peer support helps reduce the daily stress of correctional work. It can also help alleviate the emotional impact of critical incidents, help to prevent the buildup of anger, frustration, and despair that often lead to alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, depression, suicide.

In December of 2003 a first-ever staff victimization and support services policy was signed
by Iowa's director of corrections, Gary Maynard. This policy combined a staff program, a peer support program, and an emergency staff services program. The department established objectives, procedures, training requirements, and guidelines for selecting local coordinators.

The department -- the department coordinator is the administrator of victim and restorative justice programs. The policy calls for all institution and community-based corrections programs to develop and implement a program to provide assistance and intervention to employees and their families during and after times of personal and professional crisis to include a major emergency. These members are provided 24 hours of training and understanding the dynamics of sexual assault, workplace violence, characteristics of traumatic events, mental health issues, effects of victimization, roles and responsibilities, confidentiality, crisis intervention, peer support, diffusings, debriefings, making referrals, and victim's rights. Results so far are preliminary but promising. There are over eighty employees in Iowa's institutions who have been trained as peer supporters. During the first nine months of 2005 over
400 contacts have been made with those peer supporters of the approximately 3,000 employees in the department. In community corrections four of the eight judicial districts have the program in place and have reported nearly fifty contacts this year of the 1,000 employees in community corrections. The program is still being developed in the other four districts. Topics of contacts include suicide, problems with co-workers, supervisors, stress, substance abuse, medical problems, and marital problems. Peer supports include activity specialists, lieutenants, correctional officers, nurses, maintenance workers, secretaries, food coordinators, prison industry workers, and unit managers. Peer supporters will also seek out employees they have heard may need someone to talk to and let them know they are available.

Interestingly, during the first 24 hours of training in May 2004 the topic of bullying was raised. This was followed by some training by Dr. Noa Davenport, author of the book Mobbing and Bullying in the Workplace. Peer supporters wanted to know more about it in order to provide assistance to their co-workers. Can I finish that? I have about three sentences.
MR. GILLIGAN: Go ahead.

MR. BRIMEYER: Thank you. With the support of the employees' union, a bullying survey was conducted at each facility and bullying training has already occurred at three institutions. Survey results are provided to the regional director to review with respective wardens to address.

In conclusion, it seems clear that the stress grant project raised awareness levels for everyone in corrections in Iowa and served as a springboard for the expense of the support program and development of the bullying work I just described. Thank you.

MR. GILLIGAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Brimeyer. Mr. Hepner.

MR. HEPNER: Thank you, Doctor. Good afternoon, commissioners. Please refer to your folder as I give my opening remark. The New Jersey Department of Corrections recognizes the effects of occupational dynamics, including stress, upon our correctional officers and its impact upon their families. Our department's committed to developing effective strategies not only to address and prevent stress among correction officers, but also to promote a healthy lifestyle for officers and their families.
For that reason in January of 2001 we submitted a proposal to the CLEFS program in the Justice Department to be part of that field test site. As you heard from my other two colleagues all the information regarding that, and you have a summary in that folder of the -- of the two-year grant that we've used the four components, the wellness, family services, the supervisory training, and in-service training.

A little disheartened about the financial support that has declined with the CLEFS program. We thought it was a great program and allowed us to explore more information into the lives and the families of correctional officers, and it seems that a lot of research information out there is more towards law enforcement on the street and more towards inmates incarcerated than there is for correctional officers. I hope you don't sort of step backwards from that. I hope we continue and continue to have more of what we're talking about today, discussing problems in this branch of law enforcement.

It should be noted that at the New Jersey Department of Corrections we have a critical incidents and stress management program theme that was immediately formed prior to the application of this
grant. You have a pamphlet in there describing our stress management critical incident theme. We also provide a cop-to-cop hotline that you can call 24/7. It's confidential and there's a referral service there, and that service is provided by retired officers who have been formally trained to deal with that.

We find that both programs are NJ DOC stress -- critical incident teams and cop-to-cop more favorable than our employee advisory services and more trust in that. So we find that to be a very viable alternative to the employee services.

We recognize that occupational stresses are a pervasive problem within all correctional jurisdictions, including the New Jersey Department of Corrections, particularly amongst correction officers. And as you already heard, faced with ever-increasing inmate populations, more stringent sentencing laws, restricting inmate releases, and tougher restrictions and sanctions for inmate misconduct, correction officers face daily challenges of effectively managing the inmate population as well as their own stress levels. Ongoing confrontations with inmates and inmate-upon-inmate assaults are apparent in the day-to-day operations of a prison.
When you're a correction officer and you graduate from the academy and you show up at that front door and you start your career and you're in there five days a week, 52 weeks a year, five years, ten years, fifteen, twenty, 25 years, you become part of the job. When you go to work in a place that has a tendency to be condescending, negative, vulgar, that can show up in your life.

You don't work at the YMCA. They don't come home happy every day. I don't mean to paint an ugly picture, but the consequences of the job, this shows up in a great deal of our correctional officers, and I've witnessed this in the 22 years at the four prisons I've worked at.

And I've seen officers the first year maybe putting on 75 pounds, and they talked about blood pressure. They get to become cynical. Everybody is under suspect. They get to become a little bit more paranoid. I've seen some of my friends that I've talked to or even put me in a different light because I'm an ununiformed staff member. I'm not one of them. There's even a separation between uniform and ununiformed staff on there.

I'd like to use the analogy of my wife. Twenty years -- over twenty years she's been an
elementary school teacher. She talks and deals with third grade students for over twenty years. She becomes part of her job. When she comes home and she talks to me, how do you think she talks to this 55-year-old man? "Husband," she'll say, "Bill, time out." I believe that's the same thing with correctional officers, but they don't work with third grade students.

Let me tell you about some of the statistics and let me get back on point with that, and you have these statistics. I can't be on zero time already. I have a lot of statistics here. You have them in your folders, and I'll open it up to questions. We have a good hour, and I'll be able to answer any questions between the three of us. If not, I'll defer to one of my colleagues here. Thank you.

MR. GILLIGAN: Well, thank you very much. I hope all this will come up in the extended discussion that we'll be having. I just wanted to ask all three of you a very general question. Have you noticed or been able to document any changes or shifts in the type or amount of stress facing corrections officers over, say, the past ten years? What's happening in this area?

MR. DELPRINO: Someone once told me that
the inmate population is changing, and that's kind of
affecting how they do the job. Some inmates come
in -- I don't know the word is tougher or more
desensitized to things than previous before. So they
see the job changing that way, the kind of inmates
they're dealing with.

MR. BRIMEYER: And I would agree with that
in that the changes that we're noticing in Iowa and I
think most states are noticing is the increasing
number of mentally ill offenders that we're receiving.
When I started in this business 35 years ago, it was
about two percent of our population were seriously
mentally ill. Now it's approaching twenty percent.

We're not experts in dealing with the
mentally ill. We're not trained. That's not our area
of expertise, but certainly we're required to become
so, and so we're learning that with staff who have
been hired some time ago and so it now requires us to
become experts in dealing with the mentally ill, and
as you all know, it's a very -- it's an unpredictable
lot.

I mean, you can't always make a connection
between what's going on one moment and then some
assaultive behavior over here. It's a very difficult
population to deal with, and we're learning as we're
going. And we're trying to -- we're trying to adjust
the attitude from a correctional or penitentiary
mindset to suddenly a mental health mindset, and so
that brings on some new stressors that we weren't
anticipating.

MR. HEPNER: Well, we're seeing in New
Jersey a number of violent inmates coming into the
prison system. At one time years ago an inmate would
come into the prison system, and there used to be a
respect to your older lifer who might be doing time in
a prison facility.

What we see coming today, there's no holds
barred. It doesn't matter who you are, what you are.
There's no respect. Inmates will fight now at the
drop of a hat. They're more gang-oriented. Drugs are
continuing to come into our facilities. I believe
that what you see inside prison is a reflection of
what's going on outside the prison with the amount of
drugs, violence, and gangs going on.

As our older inmate population is growing
and the youth is coming in, even our staff, custody
staff is growing older with them too. And I believe
there's a stress there with these older custody staff
members dealing with these younger inmates coming in
that don't have any rules, don't have any respect, and
1 really don't care.
2               Mr. Gilligan: Do you have any personal
3 experience or stories to recount of how the stresses
4 that correction officers undergo affect their methods
5 of interacting with the prisoners?
6               Mr. Brimeyer: I will offer a story. When
7 I started in corrections 35 years ago I started as a
8 correctional officer. There was no training and no
9 academy at that time. And so I vividly remember one
10 of my very first days on the job. I hadn't yet had
11 any confrontations or issues with any inmates, hadn't
12 met any inmates, but I was assigned to supervise the
13 dining hall, about 200 inmates eating.
14               So I'm trying to watch everybody as best I
15 can, and from nowhere comes an olive and hits me right
16 between the eyes. I'm reasonably sure it wasn't
17 thrown at me because somebody thought I was hungry,
18 and I had no issues with any inmates prior to that,
19 but I believe it was a test. It was a test of me as a
20 new officer, but in a figurative sort of way I would
21 offer that we spend our lives as correctional officers
22 dodging olives, if you can follow that figurative
23 analogy.
24               Mr. Gilligan: Yeah.
25               Mr. Brimeyer: We're not always being
hammered with olives, but that's kind of the nature of
the beast of the work we're in. Dr. Delprino, I agree
with him completely. There's something inherent about
this work that promotes or promotes stress, and that's
just an example of what we do day in and day out.

MR. GILLIGAN: Mr. Maynard, you had a
question.

MR. MAYNARD: Over the past several years
I've talked to literally thousands of correctional
officers who a majority enjoy their work, and I ask
them what's the main thing they like about their
work? And they talk about the fact that it's
difficult, that it's -- no two days are alike, that
it's -- they seem to enjoy the challenge of the job.
So is there a good side of stress? I mean, those of
us who have been in the profession a long time, we
sort of enjoy some of that stress. I mean, does that
make any sense in terms of what's good and what's bad?

MR. DELPRINO: Yeah, it does make sense.

Somebody there talked about job satisfaction with
officers. It makes the job more satisfying is having
the challenges, do different things. Unfortunately
the job doesn't always allow that. Some job is
mundane, routine work they have to do, and research

I'm reading, there's a study in 2001 talked about two
of the main issues that a majority of the officers who
turn over in the job state they were stressed and how
much part they take in decision making about their
job.

So you have some of those challenges are a
good thing to have to keep them interested --
interested in the job and not leave the job so early.
I think I wrote in my paper about turnover rate that
sometimes is with correctional officers. I think it's
the number from the American Correctional Association
was 68 percent in one study they did. That's not
uncommon. That routinely happens within the first two
years. A lot of the reason is the stress, or they
just feel they have no decision or no say in what's
going on in the organization. So the challenge is
good to some degree. It is helpful.

DR. DUDLEY: I was wondering if any of you
could point to things that have been done on the other
end of the spectrum. We talked about what to do with
officers who are stressed out, who they can call and
etc. Is there much that's been done to try to make
the job less stressful or to -- I guess I don't mean
that. What I mean is is there as much that's been
done to make -- help officers be less stressed out by
a stressful job, kind of more primary prevention?
MR. DELPRINO: That's what the CLEFS program is all about, I think, was trying to identify strategy interventions that we put in place to help the officer, you know, deal with the job better. I remember listening earlier to some of your earlier testimony that one of the persons was saying -- I'll get the wording right here, that an officer, it's about the officer being passionate and zealous to the job as someone said earlier.

Well, I was wondering when I heard that how do you counter the passion and zeal that's taken away from a person that's been on the job so long, you know. So there are things organizations can do. The CLEFS program I think gave out over 35 grants in the time it existed to help organizations to develop programs.

Peer programs are very successful. There are programs that Bill talked about earlier. The programs are out there. I think the problem is they're not utilized to a great degree because they're not trusted, or officers aren't aware about the programs that exist.

We've done studies a few years back; this is on law enforcement officers. We asked how many of you folks are aware of your employee assistance
program in your organization, which is a fairly common program. Maybe ten percent aware of the program. We would think a hundred percent would be. Then we asked the question how many would use it? You get like twenty percent of them will actually use it.

So the program is great to have and have in place, but if they don't support it or the officer is not aware of it or a family member is not aware of it, I will say it's a pretty useless program. I think that's where we need to focus some of our energy, make the program more acceptable, more understandable, and really based on the officers' needs. I think a lot of times in these organizations we throw a program in place because we think it's a good idea.

One thing we found with CLEFS is not a lot of agencies spend time going to the officers and saying, "What are your concerns? What do you need to have done?" We've got to be careful. It's not a cookie cutter approach. It's not a one size fits all. The model of the programs we do implement to really fit the organization, the employees, and in place of CLEFS really the family members needs of the organization. Does that answer your question?

DR. DUDLEY: Let me try it this way. For example, it seems to me that we've learned, say, in
the military, for example, that they've used the idea of being in the supportive environment of other -- of other peers, you know, as -- and have used that to mitigate against the stress of the experience that you're in, they've learned how to do that. Whenever we hear about kind of peer collegiality amongst corrections officers we hear about, you know, the wall of silence and kind of negative implications as opposed to the possibility of it's being used as a way to help manage the stress of this situation.

So I'm wondering has anybody attempted to do that, so that even though they're in a stressful situation, that there are things that can be done so that corrections officers' experience of it is less stressful?

MR. BRIMEYER: I think the peer support program that I described may be an example of that. It clearly does not remove the stressors of the job. It provides a support system for those people who are feeling that stress and the support system can be a great comfort when you find out that you're not alone, that you're in this boat with someone else who are feeling similar emotions, and that kind of support system I think can help people deal with the stressors, but it clearly does not delete the
MR. GILLIGAN: Mr. Nolan.

MR. NOLAN: This morning we heard from the director of the Department of Corrections here in Missouri, and he recognized one of its officers diffused a very tense situation which the SORT team was about to go in and extract a prisoner that was HIV positive, and the officers were all concerned. This officer had just gone through negotiator training and effectively stood the prisoner down without any use of force at all, without endangering the other officers.

I see here, Larry, that you have a peace institute. I'd like to hear more about that. In Ohio they developed a program called Opening Doors, which is fascinating because it didn't come from the staff. It came from a religious volunteer teaching the inmates how to deal with conflict. She noticed that they just didn't -- their use -- the standard way their whole life of dealing with conflict was to become aggressive, and so she taught them that the CO saw such a change in the behavior of the problem inmates they said, "We need that. I'd like to have those skills so I don't have to put on my game face all the time."

And it started in Marion, a tough, tough
institution, and it's now spread throughout the state, and so I'd like to hear about the Peace Institute, but also know if you've considered even having that type of training for the inmates to teach them how to deal with their conflicts with each other, but also with officers because in Ohio it's proved very, very effective at lowering the stress within the institution.

MR. BRIMEYER:  The Peace Institute is a -- sorry, I should say was. Was a private foundation that exists no more. It was a privately-funded foundation that provided mediation services and conflict resolution services to anybody who wanted it. It was primarily used by the public school systems in Iowa by not only the faculty, but by the students as well. They had peer support and conflict resolution programs going on among students in a public school system. It ended about a year ago. I am sorry to report it doesn't exist anymore because I think it was a very valuable thing we had in Iowa.

One of the things that -- I really am intrigued by your point of teaching inmates about conflict resolution, and I think that's worth looking at and I'm interested in doing that. One of the things that I like to encourage my wardens to do in my
facilities is when we have a potential use of force, that before we do that, that we do the kind of thing we heard about from Missouri. We use our hostage negotiating team.

We have trained hostage negotiators. We rarely get to use their skills. I don't want to ever have to use their skills quite frankly, but I prompt my wardens to use those hostage negotiators in those times to see if they can use their negotiation skills to talk down an inmate so we don't have to use force. That does a lot of things. If it can prevent the use of force, we're all glad about that. It helps them -- gives them an opportunity to practice their negotiating skills. So I'd like to do that.

MR. KRONE: Mr. Brimeyer, I'm concerned about this one part in here where it said that one of the reasons the pilot failed is officers viewed participating in it as a sign of weakness. Now, how are we as a commission and coming about to study something that sounds good, something that does have proof positive that it works, how are we going to overcome that obstacle if the officers, the people we're trying to help, are going to refuse to implement it or agree that it did actually help? How do we overcome that as a commission to get over that kind of
stigmatism or that kind of insecurity?

MR. BRIMEYER: It's a great question. I'm not sure I know the answer. I think in this particular case, this pilot was in effect in two facilities. The one facility we have some pretty major I think cultural issues that I think go to the weakness issue. That comment is conjecture on my part. I have no evidence for that. That's my conjecture and based on what I know about that facility and about that facility's culture.

I'm not sure that would be the case at other facilities. So I'm not sure it's a huge obstacle elsewhere, but it's certainly an issue for me at the institution where we have those cultural issues, and I'll have to figure out how to do that.

MR. HEPNER: May I comment on that?

MR. GILLIGAN: Surely.

MR. HEPNER: The one thing is that you can tell the correctional officers that it's mandatory you have to come. That turns them off from the get-go. Trying to persuade them to come and that they'll get paid overtime to make them want to come. So it's all in the approach in how you market it, and you try to get buy-in right away from the unions to get them to support the program.
So we had great success. Of the fourteen state facilities we have, we conducted that program at Albert C. Wagner. We chose that institution because it was a younger, more violent population there. It was a facility built in 1930s for about 1100. It houses about 1600 inmates. Age group is somewhere between nineteen and 29, and they were the kind of drop and fight at the drop of a hat.

So when we avoided things like mandatory training and that kind of thing, they were more open to it. We found it to be successful in running the program, and the committee and myself felt that this would be an ideal program to be conducted at all fourteen of our facilities with the union support and management.

MR. DELPRINO: I think -- I agree with the saying it is about marketing. You know, there is supposed to be a stigma about seeing mental health. I mean, psychologists don't see mental health professionals. Those peer programs are so useful that I think a peer has a better chance of getting through to another officer than a psychiatrist, psychologist, or social worker.

A lot of the successful programs were really dependant on buy-in from the top. You know,
programs come and go and even the top administrators don't know what's happening there. So you put a program in place, and either the person running the program leaves for a while or the top administrator leaves, and with that person the programs goes. And the administration doesn't want to have that program because it's not their baby for lack of a better phrase. It's not their child they developed.

So I think really who's in place running the program is important, but buy-in from the top -- if a chief or warden says, "Hey, it's okay to do this" or admits maybe that had -- they went to see some -- their actions, it kind of gets to their program and say it's okay to use this. But it's all about marketing and breaking down that stigma I think just in general in mental health.

MR. KRONE: I thank you all for your answers to that because us as a commission have a daunting task ahead of us. Of course, we write a report, and no matter how good or how bad an opportunity is, if we don't realize that we have to market it and who we're marketing it to, we're spinning our wheels. Thank you all for that response.

MR. GILLIGAN: Do any of you have any information or observations about how stress levels
may be affected by the type of environments in which a
particular officer is working, for example, comparing
prisons with jail or maximum security with minimum
security or isolation units, supermax units, solitary
confinement units, or with different methods of
different correctional methods, direct supervision
versus the older style? Does stress level vary with
these kind of environmental or structural?

MR. HEPNER: I'll comment on that. Yes, it
does. Dr. Gilligan, as you know, what might be
stressful to you might not be stressful to me. It's
such an individual thing. Some officers may be
stressed out based on inmates. Some might be stressed
out based on the supervisor's relationship between the
officer and the supervisor. Even the physical plant
itself or co-workers.

You know if you confide in a co-worker at
work, before you know it that rumor mill is throughout
the entire jail. There's not a whole lot of
confidentiality that goes on. That's one of the
reasons about this cop-to-cop hotline.

Let me mention about the critical incident.
For us in New Jersey that's not a prevention-type
thing. That's after the fact when somebody has been
traumatized for one reason for another. We need to be
more proactive. And we have a fourteen week training
program at our academy. In there we teach a three and
a half hour stress management class. We cover -- now
we cover an eight-hour domestic violence class because
of the escalating violence that we were having in our
fourteen prisons. Well, a little nervous about saying
that now. I'm directing you to ask me more questions
in that direction.

We need to follow up on our programs more
and be more proactive rather than reactive in what's
going on, and we seem to be doing that, but we are
making attempts and doing follow-up because once you
initiate at the training academy and there isn't
follow-up throughout the officers' career of five,
ten, fifteen, 25 years, then what they learn is doomed
to fail. And it needs to be a continuation of a
refresher course. I think that on our part that might
be lacking.

I heard earlier today about training, more
training, and I'm in agreement with that, that we
should continue that throughout the career of an
officer, and stay on top of the most advanced
techniques as they come out in all areas of
communication, the escalating conflict resolution,
anything to enhance the officers' relationship with
MR. DELPRINO: I guess I've got a question. While he was talking I was thinking it would be more proactive -- my colleagues could agree or disagree. I think of a correction agency as type kind a reactionary type of agency. They react to an alarm, a bell, a fight. I think what happens that maybe trickles down how they treat their own staff. Let's not be proactive before something happens. We react after it becomes a problem, or there's a problem with suicide or something like that.

I think there's something about corrections and maybe law enforcement and fire service, they're reactionary type of agencies. Their instinct is to react to things. So it again about -- it goes back to changing that culture, how they see their organization, how they see their employees. Maybe that would be a step towards thinking more about being more proactive.

MR. BRIGHT: What about race as a stressful matter? We were talking earlier about this practice a lot of states have now putting prisons in the most remote part of the state, which often have no people of color whatsoever there, but all the inmates, New York being a good example, from New York City or
whatever from urban areas, African American kids and Hispanic kids who go up and are housed in Plattsburgh or somewhere, and there's not a single person like them in the staff.

I assume it's stressful to think you're being discriminated against, whether that's true or not, may be true, may not be. I assume it's as stressful to be accused of discriminating against someone, but again whether it's true or not you sort of -- you decide what is stressful. And yet that's increasingly what we're seeing in a lot of these institutions all over the country. What do you do about that?

MR. HEPNER: Let me comment on that. I don't see as much of a problem with racial discrimination going on in our facilities as I see other problems. I think we're pretty balanced as far as the statistics between what we have on there with Hispanics and minority officers and white.

MR. BRIGHT: You're talking about New Jersey?

MR. HEPNER: New Jersey, correct.

MR. BRIGHT: Do you have any institutions where you have virtually 95 percent African American population and a hundred percent white correctional
officer staff?

MR. HEPNER: Well, we have fourteen state facilities. I don't find us being as remote as you're describing New York to be. We can probably go within two hours in any direction and I can cover all fourteen facilities. We're pretty densely-populated.

MR. BRIGHT: Right.

MR. HEPNER: We do have -- we do have a problem where in certain areas, like Camden, New Jersey we were required to hire with the local government there -- if you're going to build a prison in our town, you're going to have to hire our people. There you might have a predominance of a minority officer population. And I had worked there at this particular prison in Riverfront State Prison for two years realizing that the officers had grown up with the inmates, and that was a really big change for me to actually see that interaction at that facility.

So we do have that with local government where we're required to hire the population within that area, and they allow us to build -- we have two or three prisons like that. So it might sway to one group as opposed to another one, but normally I think we're pretty balanced throughout the state.

MR. BRIMEYER: We're disproportionate in
Iowa, but not to that extent. We may reach as high as 25 percent minority in any one of our facilities, but again, very, very few minority staff. So we certainly have that problem, but not a huge disproportion.

MR. DELPRINO: I don't really have an answer to that, but I think about something else about remoteness. In New York State I was talking to an officer who told me he was from Buffalo, but he was assigned right out of New York City. They were totally removed from their families and they would go for weeks, maybe months before they actually get to see their family with shifts and stuff. You know, time to get back and forth.

Since we were talking about CLEFS programs and family support, they were isolated from their support system of their families, which leads to a lot of stress for them. Living in renovated facilities that are made specially for correctional officers, but not seeing their families like weeks at a time without that support as we were talking.

MR. BRIGHT: Is that a widespread practice in New York?

MR. DELPRINO: I don't want to misspeak about that, but a couple of the correctional officers I spoke to, that's what they're going through. They
live in one part of the state or assigned to another area. From day one they're trying to put in papers to get relocated to where their home base is. It takes a while to do that.

The problem is they get comfortable in that facility. They know the facility, they know their job, they know the people, they got time in, they choose their -- so it's a risky thing for them to change the location of where they're going to go. They want to be near their family for support. It's always that delicate balance. I have security here in my job, but I miss the security of my families. It really does a number on the family in terms of relationships with officers and family members.

MR. GILLIGAN: Mr. Maynard.

MR. MAYNARD: Mr. Hepner alluded earlier to the fact that sometimes inadequate or -- yeah, inadequate supervision causes stress on a correction staff. You've got four supervisors who mistreat staff, don't take care of them and all that. Do you see in your studies or do you have any thoughts about the stressors in working as a correctional officer, certain portions of that is environmentally-related because of what you have to deal with?

The other part is might be supervision. Do
you see very much a proportion of supervision that creates stress for corrections staff?

MR. HEPNER: Absolutely. Very good question. Our supervisors in the Department of Corrections who come up through the ranks make sergeant first, line supervisor, and then lieutenants and captains, and we have -- we haven't really did a good job of running our supervisory classes in our in-service department. Usually, you know, when we're -- budget constraints, usually in-service programs are cut way down.

I've seen firsthand a lot of things where an officer who goes through the school of hard knocks and makes sergeant, doesn't have any formal supervisory training. He's only seen what had worked before, good, bad, or indifferent. They accomplish the job regardless of whether it's stressful on the job or not. You got the job done. That was a priority.

Stress or how the officer handled it wasn't even a factor to it. I think with the CLEFS program we talked about that, and it's in that summary of the CLEFS grant. How to identify stressors and yourself and the officers not to inflict more stress on getting the job done. We need to conduct more first-line
supervisory courses, more upper level management
courses to look at stress where it wasn't really
looked at before.

Sergeants can come on, and depending on
what shift, you can be a first sergeant -- first line
supervisory sergeant on first shift, and they can run
it quite different than a second shift or third shift
officer or your personality. As an officer you have
to adapt to that particular supervisor and finding out
what direction does he want this particular thing to
have done, and it doesn't matter what the post order
says.

You can be a conscientious officer, look at
the post orders and know, you know, what's to be done
in this area that he's supervising. A supervisor can
come along and it's stressful because it leaves you up
in the air like I don't know what he wants, and I
don't know what to do on that. So that is a big
problem, and again, we're more training and more
supervisory training on there.

MR. DELPRINO: You know, I don't think you
should underestimate the role the supervisors play in
mitigating stress in the workplace. They often --
supervising co-workers fill in the gaps between what
you learn in the academy and what you learn on the
job. If they're aware of signs of a trouble in an officer and know the resources available to get that officer help, they can play a big role in minimizing the stress of the workplace. I agree with what Bill said there about training is key. Training supervisors, recognizing the signs, and then how to appropriately guide the officer and direct the help they need.

MR. HEPNER: Mr. Maynard, may I address this analogy to you? At Trenton State Prison -- it's not called Trenton anymore. New Jersey State Prison, which is our biggest maximum security prison, perfect analogy to that. Where an officer was coming to me, said, "Bill, man, I'm fed up with this. Every time they want a cell extraction, they're coming to me. There are 900 officers that work in this jail that make the same amount of money as me, and I always have to be the one going to do a cell extraction. I'm tired of getting beat up and taking my lumps. Because I'm a big guy, they come to me all the time."

And I said -- I don't want to use any names, but I said, "Well, just let the supervisor know. You know, hey, let the supervisor know, and he said, "Well, I can't do that. Co-workers will look at me like I'm a punk. The supervisors won't give me the
respect that I want." So he's got to keep his mouth
shut, internalize it, and continue taking the bumps.
The point I'm getting at is that this officer makes
sergeant, and what do you think his attitude was when
he made sergeant and he went to another big guy, "Hey,
I did it. Now it's your turn, buddy." That's the
kind of mentality that we need to address about the
stressors.

MR. GILLIGAN: Judge Sessions.

MR. SESSIONS: Both Mr. Hepner and
Mr. Brimeyer have talked about dispute resolution.
Settling disputes, settling disagreements, and it
occurs to me that I might tell you a story that may be
helpful to you. Back in 1995 the San Antonio Bar
Foundation was trying to devise a program for lawyers
that would tend to neutralize the negative perception
of the community about lawyers.

In two years they finally came up with a
program to begin a dispute resolution program in the
schools because there was so much violence in the
schools of San Antonio. There are thirteen
independent school districts, or were. There may be
more than that now.

They surveyed each of the superintendents'
offices to try to find the elements of the violence
and disagreement and to try to see which were the most difficult schools. And out of all of the thirteen independent school districts, they found that the most violent one was a middle school, seventh and eighth graders. The program they devised was actually asked those young people, the whole class of seventh and eighth graders, who would like to become mediators to settle disputes. And they got twenty volunteers, took them to training to train them as mediators to handle disputes that were happening on the campus in the classroom, in the school building.

They found -- they went and they had an extra one in a school bus that went to the downtown courthouse to get the training, to start the training. It ended up it was a gang member. He was a tagger, and the reason he was there was he hadn't put his name in, but he wanted to know what they were doing and how to control it. That violent school in one year of mediation between the students who were having the disputes by their peers ended up becoming the least violent school in all of the independent school districts.

It's my understanding that the fever spread, that it was contagious. It went into the homes of these children where mamma and papa were
having disputes or having disagreements, and the children had learned to sit down and with a mediator talk it out and work it out satisfactorily.

Now, most of the violence in prison comes between inmates, and most of the stress that you all are describing day in and day out comes in how to manage that violence and how to deal with it in the personal lives of your officers. So it occurs to me maybe it's something worth examining. If you want to examine it, I'll be glad.

MR. HEPNER: Absolutely. I want to have that information, and I will be contacting you on that.

MR. SESSIONS: Good.

MR. HEPNER: At the academy when we have a group that comes in, usually about a class of 150 which we have now, we train them to -- we read this little thing about Elaine Crowley. Any of the commissioners familiar with the public work of Elaine Crowley about the prison officers, work that they do? I would recommend strongly for your reading Elaine Crowley on prisoner work.

Let me mention a few things about her. Research in the correctional field by Elaine has indicated officer training paired with the environment
in which correction officers spend much of their time may contribute to dysfunction in their personal lives and relationships. The term spillover describes notion that what makes a good correction officer may not make the best domestic partner.

Family members often have distorted image by the public of the work environment of the officers. They also fail to understand how occupational dynamics affect the correctional officers and how to best provide support for their loved ones. We at the academy after looking at that book, we teach power and control. We teach how to be regimental. Our officers become institutionalized.

We encourage that. And yet they become good correction officers, but they might not come home and carry out -- they're not toggle switches where they shut off and they walk out the door and they take the uniform off and they're like Joe Public. Like my wife, she doesn't turn off being a school teacher on there. They go home with that.

Very interesting about the qualities that produce an exceptional correctional officer, strict adherence to rules and establish routines and structure, and expectation of obedience and a desire, indeed a need, to command and control situation can
also act as a catalyst for violence outside the workplace and particularly within the home. Very good book. I would recommend reading that.

MR. SESSIONS: What's the title?

MR. HEPNER: Elaine Crowley. The book, prison work -- I'll have it for you. We'll be in touch, and I'll E-mail everybody if I can through the commission regarding -- and I'll give you the ISDN number.

MR. LUTTRELL: I'd like to give you all a scenario, get you to really react to it. It's a scenario really that I think prison administrators deal with more frequently than we may think about, and certainly I think it's going to be a challenge for us in the future.

You're claiming you're developing strategic plans for human resource recruitment and development. And you're looking at five years out. Your state legislature or county commission tells you to do more with less. You establish you're going to be competing for the talented young people in your area. What can you do or what would you recommend that we do to become a little bit more innovative in the quality and type of people that we recruit, how we prepare those recruits, and how we sustain those recruits during
those formative years of their work?

MR. HEPNER: Turn this over to Deputy Director Brimeyer. I'll make comments on that. I'll be interested in how he would make comments on that.

I want to hear him first.

MR. BRIMEYER: I'll skip to the second part of the question.

MR. LUTTRELL: Let me -- while you're thinking about it, let me make this comment. We know that our prison populations are going up. We know that we're spending more and more money on prisons. We heard references made this morning that every time you open a new prison you're looking at hundreds of new employees. Are we as a society doing a very good job of preparing people for this profession, and as administrators, what do we need to be doing to facilitate that process?

MR. BRIMEYER: We need to be working on our culture to -- so that people will believe and come to know that these facilities are the best place in town to work because it's a caring environment, and by that I mean that we care about our employees so that they will want to stay, and that our employees care about offenders. Pat talked about that this morning. It's okay.
It's okay for our employees to care about offenders, that they ought to. Those are the ones in my opinion that make the best employees. So we need to develop that kind of a culture, and how to do that is a bigger question. I think that's what we need to do. We need to develop that kind of a culture in our setting so it becomes known that this is the best place in town to work because of that kind of culture, and we'll attract that kind of person who will care about the people that we work with.

MR. HEPNER: It starts with recruitment. That's pretty important. We can't -- as a civil service agency, it's really difficult to screen people out on that. It's almost like if you can breathe, you got the job. We put you through a number of phases, medical, psychological. We do have visits to their home, and we do the best we can.

We've come a long way in our training programs from a week, two weeks to now fourteen weeks that we even encourage the officers after they graduate from the academy that they get fifteen, sixteen credits towards their degree, and we encourage them to go on the criminal justice system.

But there is a certain type of clientele that gravitates to being a correctional officer, and I
believe it's not always the best. Our screening process has to be better. I don't know what that can be.

I was just looking at an article regarding that the type may be perhaps to target people with a history of sales work or persons with experience involving services to others. It doesn't always have to be -- somebody has great communications skills, the escalates and conflict resolutions that we're talking about rather than use of force skills. You know, I have to say that we're a little bit part of the problem because we're training officers to go in there to be able to unarm defensive tactics, how to use a baton, how to use mace, how to take control, how to stand up there and command presence.

How to be that John Wayne facade and suck it up and internalize it, and after all, if you can't handle the stress, then maybe you shouldn't be here. That's a tough question about recruitment, getting the right clientele in there rather than the guy who wants to be the tough guy, and I think we heard some talk about that today earlier today. That's tough.

We see them come into the academy after recruitment. We're wondering -- we're like where did they recruit these guys? We have a high attrition
rate. Roughly might be 400 people leave a year. We have about almost seven thousand correctional -- out of a population of 28,000 inmates, we have about 9,500 staff, and of that almost 7,000 -- 6,500 to 7,000 are custody staff.

We have about a turnover of about 400 a year ballpark figure through leaving for other law enforcement jobs, retirement, disability, or just fed up with the job and they leave. We have a tough time trying to manage graduating at least 400 a year just to replace that. Our inmate population has still grown. Most of our prisons are overcrowded. We're just maintaining right now. Maintaining.

MR. BRIGHT: Do you recruit at the criminal justice schools and social work skills, like John Jay College and places like that where people are going to be criminal justice professionals?

MR. HEPNER: Our recruitment unit does go out trying to recruit. In many places, yes. You know, our academy sits right next door to the state police. They come out. What a world of difference and it's glaringly obvious that you have our correction officers, 150 of them out there, and you have state troopers. There might be a hundred of them. And if you look at them, the requirements are
night and day. They demand more higher education, anywhere up to a degree, where we just require a GED. All of them seem to be about six foot and about two percent body fat, state troopers. A lot of ours are just basically civil service employees getting a job, and we can't get enough of them in. I don't think we scrutinize as much as we could in getting maybe a better crop. I don't know if we could do that because we're trying to get in as many as we can. My son is on the list to come in to become a correctional officer, even though he didn't pay any attention to all the things I told him.

MR. SESSIONS: How is he on body fat?

MR. HEPNER: Right. His body fat is up there. It upsets me too. He falls in -- fourteen weeks, you spend an hour, five hours a week of physical training, and it's a nightmare for those who are not prepared to do physical training. It's stressful getting through the academy, and he's a reflection of the general population.

You hear all the information out there. Sixty-five percent of the American population is overweight, and of that thirty percent are obese. Diabetes are up, heart attacks are up, and he's just a reflection of that. It scares me. I'd rather not
have him in corrections because of all the things with
the high divorce rates and all those statistics that I
have in your handout that I didn't get to and I
apologize. You can review there.

MR. GILLIGAN: Well, listen. It's been a
long, very packed day. I want to thank each of the
three of you as well as all our previous witnesses
throughout the day for devoting your time and giving
your energy to help us and really help the whole
country with this problem. Thank you very much.