

## Psychological First Aid:

### Responding to Emergencies at Colleges and Universities

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## Learning Objectives for Today

*Through participating in today's program, you will gain a heightened understanding and appreciation of:*

- psychological first aid (PFA) and how it can be used at colleges/universities
- key resources that can be used to prepare you (and colleagues) to offer PFA
- guidelines for offering postvention services at your college or university

- We will *NOT* discuss all facets of disaster preparedness, response, or recovery
- We will *NOT* be focusing on the role of first responders
- This session will *NOT* serve as a substitute for undergoing more extensive PFA training

## Resources for today's program were drawn from the following:

- "Psychological First Aid: Responding to Emergencies at Colleges and Universities"--Training Program developed by the ODMH University Linkages Committee
- *Psychological First Aid: A Guide for Responding to Emergencies at Colleges and Universities* -- by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, the National Ctr for PTSD, and the Ohio Department of Mental Health (University Linkages Committee)
- *Counseling Center Guidelines for Offering Group Postvention Services* --developed at Bowling Green State

## What's Been Accomplished to Date?

- Creation of a PFA Guide for Ohio's colleges and universities
- Development of a "Training-of-Trainers" (TOT) curriculum
- Implementation of a one-day pilot TOT program
- Videotaping of a one-day PFA web-based training program

## What Do We Mean by "Psychological First Aid"?

- "Psychological First Aid" (PFA) refers to the provision of assistance aimed at reducing acute distress as well as promoting successful coping and functioning.
- PFA is used in the immediate aftermath of traumatic events (hours, days, weeks).
- PFA is a modular approach designed to reduce the initial stress caused by these events and fosters short and long term adaptive functioning and coping skills.

- Helpful to people of diverse backgrounds and ages
- Can be delivered by anyone who has received appropriate training
- Appropriate for use in field settings
- Can be provided to individuals or groups

Psychological First Aid is **NOT**

- therapy
- Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

Why do we often feel discomfort or anxiety when called upon to provide psychological first aid?

Offering PFA involves redefining what it means to offer “help”

■ **After a traumatic event, who will need PFA?**

- Some individuals who are most directly impacted will not need or want PFA.
- Some who appear far removed from the traumatic event will need PFA.
- Key groups that are “at risk” include...?

**Core Actions of PFA**

- contact and engagement
- safety and comfort
- stabilizing
- gathering information
- practical assistance
- connecting with social supports
- information on coping
- linking with collaborative services

From the *Psychological First Aid Field Operations Guide (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed)*—by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network & National Ctr for PTSD

**Resource #1:**

***Psychological First Aid: A Guide for Responding to Emergencies at Colleges and Universities***

Written by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, the National Center for PTSD, and the Ohio Department of Mental Health (University Linkages Committee)

**What Kinds of Information does the Guide Include?**

- Tips for working with college students, students' families, faculty and staff
- Sample scripts for what you might say (and NOT say) in specific situations
- Suggestions for stabilizing emotionally overwhelmed individuals
- Clarification of adaptive and maladaptive ways of coping

**What Kinds of Information does the Guide Include (cont'd)?**

- "Culture alerts"
- Religious and spiritual considerations
- Information about substance use/abuse
- Ways of responding to acute grief reactions as well as anger, guilt, shame
- Tips for how faculty, parents and others might support students
- Suggestions about provider self-care

***Excerpts from "Working with College Students" Section***

- Recognize that in times of major crisis, many students will wish to connect with family members, other loved ones, or friends who are geographically remote.
- Consider creative ways of providing students with sources of comfort- such as bringing "therapy dogs" to campus.

***Excerpts from "Working with College Students," continued...***

- Afford students opportunities to be active as a way to counteract feelings of helplessness. (For instance, after the shooting at Northern Illinois University, many students made special ribbons to commemorate the victims, helped create memorial sites, or offered 'free hugs'.)

***Excerpts from "Working with Students' Families" Section***

- Designate a specific area on campus for families. Have group space as well as private space available. Arrange for counselors, clergy, food, lodging, etc.
- In the case of a student death, first aid providers (and other representatives from the college/university) may attend the visitation and/or funeral service.

### **Excerpts from "Working with Faculty and Staff" Section**

- Offer suggestions on how to handle the first meeting of classes after the incident, especially if a member of the class was injured or died.
- If you are asked to be physically present in classrooms following a crisis or traumatic event, be respectful of how the faculty member wishes to conduct the class. Use faculty members' expertise about which students may need special attention.

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### **Resource #2:**

#### **Web-based PFA Training**

(provided by the Ohio Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence)

### **Participating in the Web-based Training**

#### *How to access this training:*

- Go to <http://www.neomed.edu/ciccoe/> (or type "Ohio Criminal Justice Coordinating Center" on your web-browser)
- Click the link "Ohio Program for Campus Safety and Mental Health"
- Click the link "Psychological First Aid: Responding to Emergencies at Colleges and Universities"

### **Participating in the Web-based Training**

#### *What you will then see:*

- Psychological First Aid: Responding to Emergencies at Colleges and Universities
- Web-based training now available!

The Criminal Justice Coordinating Center of Excellence and the Ohio Department of Mental Health are pleased to present you with a unique opportunity to obtain on-line training in the provision of psychological first aid. This training program is "Psychological First Aid: Responding to Emergencies at Colleges and Universities" featuring trainers Carol Yoken, Ph.D. and Craig Vickio, Ph.D.

#### *What you will see, cont'd:*

- Please review our brief PowerPoint slide show on the Intended Use and [Introduction to Psychological First Aid](#) before viewing the training videos. The slide show will advance automatically. We recommend that you then view the training videos sequentially.
- [Part 1: Preparing to Deliver Psychological First Aid](#)
- [Part 2: Core Actions 1 thru 3](#)
- [Part 3: Core Actions 4 thru 8](#)
- [Part 4: Strategies for Training](#) (supplemental resource)

### **Key Points about Web-based Training**

- Consists of video-streamed modules that provide:
  - A description of each of the 8 core actions, including:
    - Goals/reasons for each
    - Strategies for engaging in these core actions
  - Exercises, demonstrations, discussion

*-Excerpts from Training Curriculum:*

### **Core Action 7: Information on Coping**

#### *Goal*

Provide information about stress reactions and coping to reduce distress and promote adaptive functioning

*-Excerpts from Training Curriculum, cont'd:*

#### ■ Key Points:

- Stress reactions include intrusive phenomena, avoidance and withdrawal, physical arousal, often prompted by reminders. Loss and grief are common in traumatic situations.
- Educate and normalize stress reactions. They are expectable and understandable, but everyone recovers in his or her own way and time.

*-Excerpts from Training Curriculum, cont'd:*

#### ■ Provide information about coping:

- Adaptive coping includes...??
- Maladaptive coping includes using alcohol or drugs, withdrawing, excessive blame and anger, and risky behavior.

*If problems persist for more than 1 month, the individual may benefit from professional help.*

*-Excerpts from Training Curriculum, cont'd:*

### **Role Play**

**Purpose:** To practice skills from 6,7,8

Shots were fired in a residence hall room a week ago, killing two students—a young woman and her new boyfriend. It was a crime of passion. The shooter was arrested and is in jail. People from the building and especially the floor are feeling traumatized.

You are sent to the residence hall to work with people who were on the floor at the time or were close to the victims—suitemates, RA's, a few other friends.

*-Excerpts from Training Curriculum, cont'd:*

### **Small-Group Discussion Exercise**

- Imagine this morning's training has just ended. After leaving, you are asked by a reporter or a friend to share what you believe to be two or three of the most important points that you should keep in mind when delivering psychological first aid.

### **Resource #3:**

#### **Counseling Center Guidelines for Offering Group Postvention Services**

Bowling Green State University

**Offering Group Postvention Services:**

Tips for Helping Persons Exposed to Traumatic Events

**Provide a forum for fact-sharing and dispelling rumors.**

- This preliminary discussion may be facilitated by a representative from the police, a school authority, and/or other administrative leader affiliated with the impacted person(s).
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**Offering Group Postvention Services, cont'd**

**Listen empathically.**

- “Don’t just do something, sit there.” Offer individuals the “gift of presence”—i.e., convey caring, concern, and an openness to whatever people are experiencing.
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**Offering Group Postvention Services, cont'd**

**Normalize individuals’ reactions and educate them about typical responses.**

- *Consider mentioning:*
    - Diverging responses of different people
    - Numbness/disbelief
    - Priority realignment
    - Feeling lack of control/world shaken
    - Experiencing guilt over what you’re NOT feeling
    - Thinking “What if…” or “If only…”
    - Experiencing anger, self-blame, fear/anxiety, helplessness
  - *Make written and electronic resources available that help clarify what are normal, legitimate responses to trauma and loss*
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**Offering Group Postvention Services, cont'd**

**Discuss options for coping.**

- *Suggest:*
    - Turning to those close to them—making use of their support network
    - Finding solace in spirituality/faith/prayer
    - Maintaining some of their daily routine (which can afford a sense of predictability and control)
    - Doing something to honor the deceased
    - Engaging in healthy self-care—including appropriate physical activity
    - Doing what’s been helpful in coping with past stresses or traumas
  - *Make written and electronic resources available that clarify options for coping*
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**Offering Group Postvention Services, cont'd**

**Offer resources.**

- *Consider the following:*
    - Offering to be personally available right after the meeting
    - Discussing mental health and related services
    - Discussing crisis hotline services
    - Sharing information about grief resources/programs
    - Mentioning how other agencies or organizations may be of help
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**Offering Group Postvention Services, cont'd**

**Don’t force mental health services on individuals.**

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### **Delivering PFA: Implications for You**

- Should **YOU** be delivering PFA?
    - Have you been trained in providing such services?
    - Are you part of the institution's network that has been assembled to provide PFA?
    - Do you possess the cultural sensitivity and knowledge to work with those impacted?
    - Are you too personally involved—and in need of such services yourself?
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### **Delivering PFA: Implications for You**

- What are some important ways that you as a PFA provider can attend to your personal needs?
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### **Contact information**

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