

Development of Evidence Informed Learning Resources to Promote Staff Wellness, Well-Being, and the Reduction of Staff Trauma and Organizational Stress in Prison and Jail Settings

BRIEF REPORT

U.S. Department of Justice

**National Institute of Corrections
320 First Street, NW
Washington, DC**

**Stephen LoBuglio
Director**

**Robert Brown
Senior Deputy Director**

**Holly Busby
Deputy Director**

**Ronald Taylor
Chief, Prisons Division**

**Belinda Stewart
Project Manager**

**Dena Owens
Project Manager**

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Belinda Stewart, National Programs Advisor, Prisons Division

Dena M. Owens, PsyD, National Programs Advisor, Prisons Division

Research Team

Mazen El Ghaziri, PHD, MPH, RN | UMASS Lowell

Lisa Jaegers, PHD, OTR/L | Saint Louis University

Martin G. Cherniack, MD, MPH | UCONN

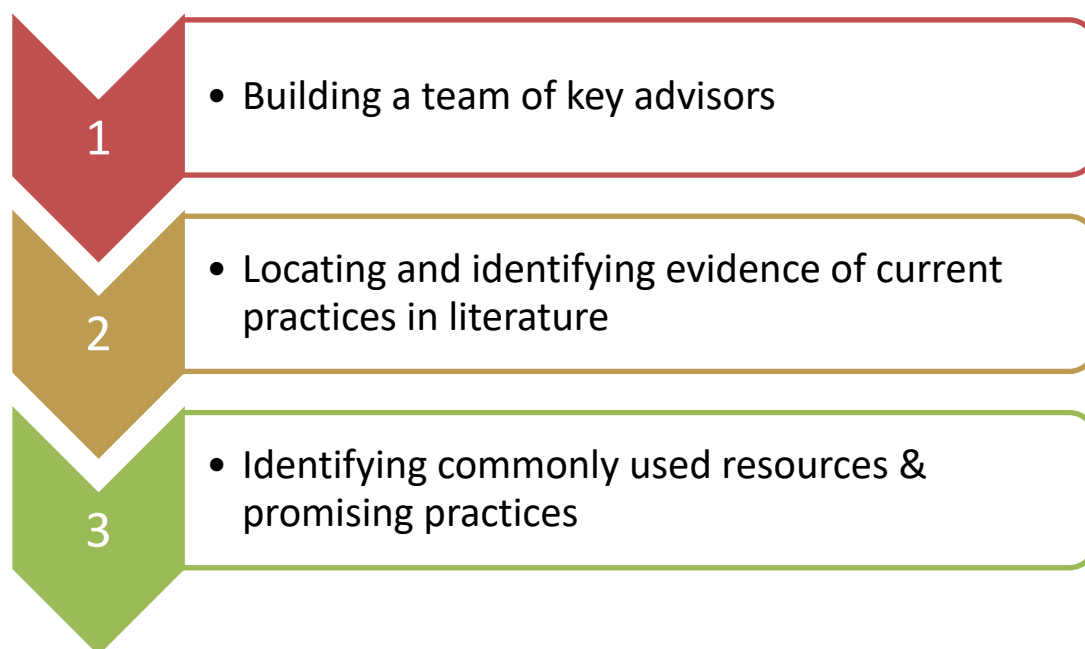
Pamela Fallon, APRN-BC, COHN-S | UMASS Lowell

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Purpose

To identify and share common practices and innovative solutions to promote correctional officer wellness and well-being, and to reduce trauma and organizational stress. Solutions are based on the best practices and innovative resources discovered in a scoping review of research and a national survey.

Project Stages 1 – 3



Project Definitions

Staff Trauma: A deeply distressing or disturbing experience including:

- *Direct trauma*, such as fights among incarcerated individuals, attempted and/or completed self-harm, assaults or threats to assault staff, and use of force;
- *Indirect trauma*, such as the review of materials related to traumatic incidents (e.g., videos, pictures), writing incident reports, and debriefing.

Organizational Stress: Negative response related to the nature of the job, role within the organization, support and rewards at work, organizational structure, and work climate.

Guiding Models

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)

Total Worker Health® (TWH)

This model is a participatory approach that has been used by research team members in past jail and prison workplace health studies. TWH is an approach for the development of policies, programs, and practices that integrate protection from work-related safety and health hazards with promotion of injury and illness prevention efforts to advance worker well-being.



U.S. Surgeon General (2022) Five Essentials for Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being



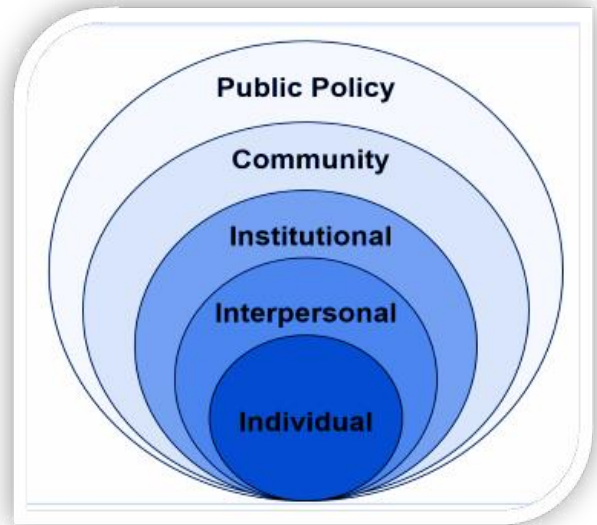
This framework offers a structure to consider worker voices while building resources to grow workplace mental health, wellness, and well-being. It aligns with the participatory TWH approach adopted for this project.

Within this project's scope, two models were used to analyze findings from the scoping review and a survey of “commonly used” resources.

Social Ecological Model (SEM)

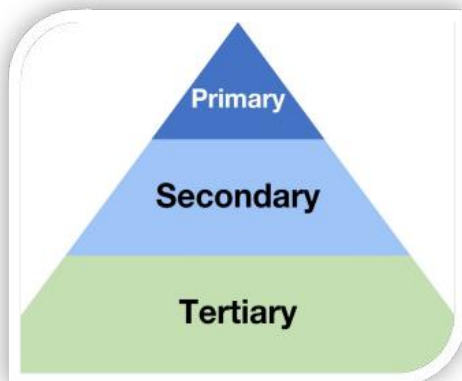
SEM looks at the influence that individuals, groups, organizations, and communities may have on an individual. Within the context of this project, staff trauma and organizational stress is affected by interaction between:

- Individuals = Corrections officers
- Interpersonal = Supervisor or workgroup
- Institutional = Jail or prison
- Communities = General public/neighborhood and physical, social, and political environments (city/county/state/federal governments)



Levels of Prevention

Preventions are actions taken to reduce the likelihood of an incident. Different types of interventions can be used based on the severity of an incident.



Primary prevention interventions focus on stopping or preventing staff trauma and organizational stress before it occurs by developing strategies to identify risks, increase buffers, and reduce vulnerabilities. **Secondary prevention** is an immediate and effective response to staff trauma and organizational stress that addresses emergent short-term consequences and reduces negative effects.

Tertiary prevention: Encompasses long-term responses and rehabilitation to reduce the consequences of staff trauma and organizational stress.

Stage 1: Building a Team of Key Advisors to Guide the Project

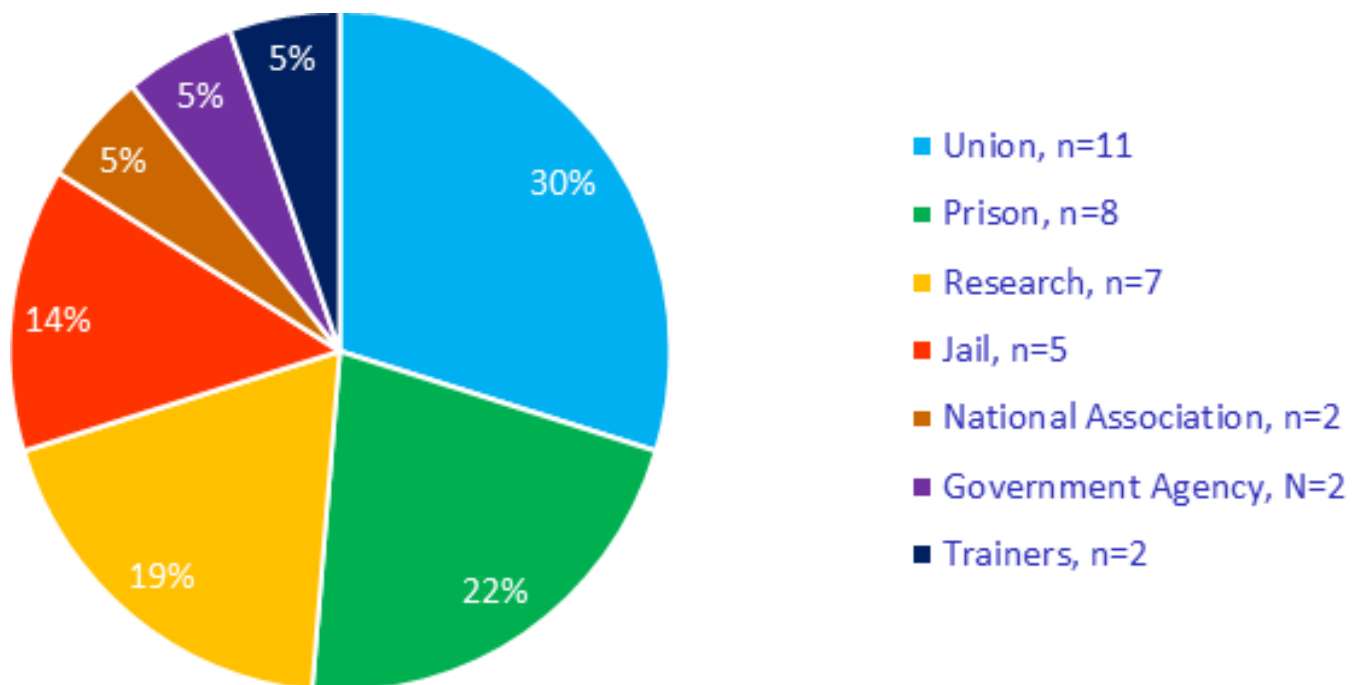
Purpose

To ensure that the voices of corrections professionals were engaged and included during all stages of the project, we called on the National Corrections Collaborative (NCC) to serve as the Project Taskforce (PT) for the corrections field.

Findings

The NCC PT included 37 members representing stakeholders within the correctional sector that were invited during phase I of the project. The NCC PT advised the project team along the different phases of the project during 10 participatory virtual meetings.

National Corrections Collaborative Project Taskforce Representatives, N = 37



Working with the NCC Participatory Taskforce, we identified commonly used programs in these areas:

- Policies, practices, training for leadership and staff, and peer support programs

Stage 2: Locating and Identifying Evidence

Purpose

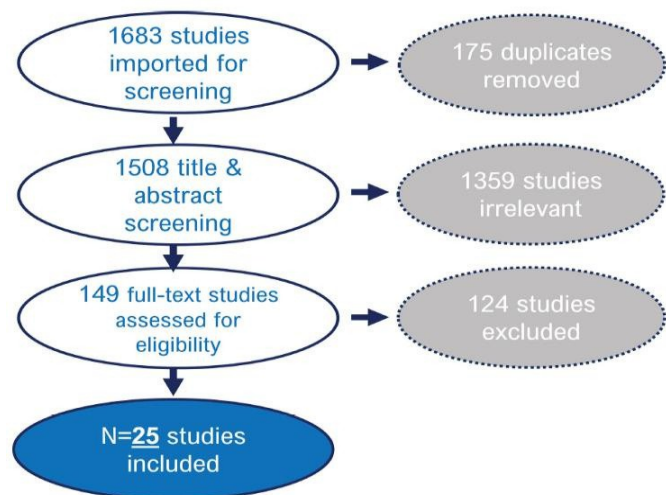
Conduct a scoping literature review to identify interventions to address vicarious trauma, secondary trauma, compassion fatigue and job-related stress in prison and jail facilities.

Methods: During the development of the literature review, the NCC PT and NIC National Program Advisors reviewed and contributed to a list of literature review search terms based on their experience and knowledge. The list was then edited for duplicates, relevance, and eligibility (studies of stress & trauma resources in corrections)

Findings: In total, there were **25 articles** that met criteria for inclusion in the literature review after an analysis of 1,508 unique articles.

Scoping Review Results by Topic and Number of Articles, N = 25. Article themes were grouped into 7 categories including:

PRISMA Flow Diagram



Stage 3: Identifying Commonly Used Resources & Promising Practices

Purpose

Building on the findings from the scoping review, conduct a national survey to identify existing and common programs to address trauma and stress in criminal justice facilities.

Methods

Survey development began in early 2021. The survey was piloted and launched in December 13, 2021 and was open until April 12, 2022.

The sampling strategy was based on the following characteristics:

- Types of Facility
- Geographic Location
- Security level (for prisons only)
- Sex of the incarcerated population

Findings

There is an opportunity to better address the usefulness and helpfulness of policies, practices, peer support, and training designed for trauma prevention and response.

There are different perceptions among correctional officers regarding the use and helpfulness of available resources

Three levels of prevention are included



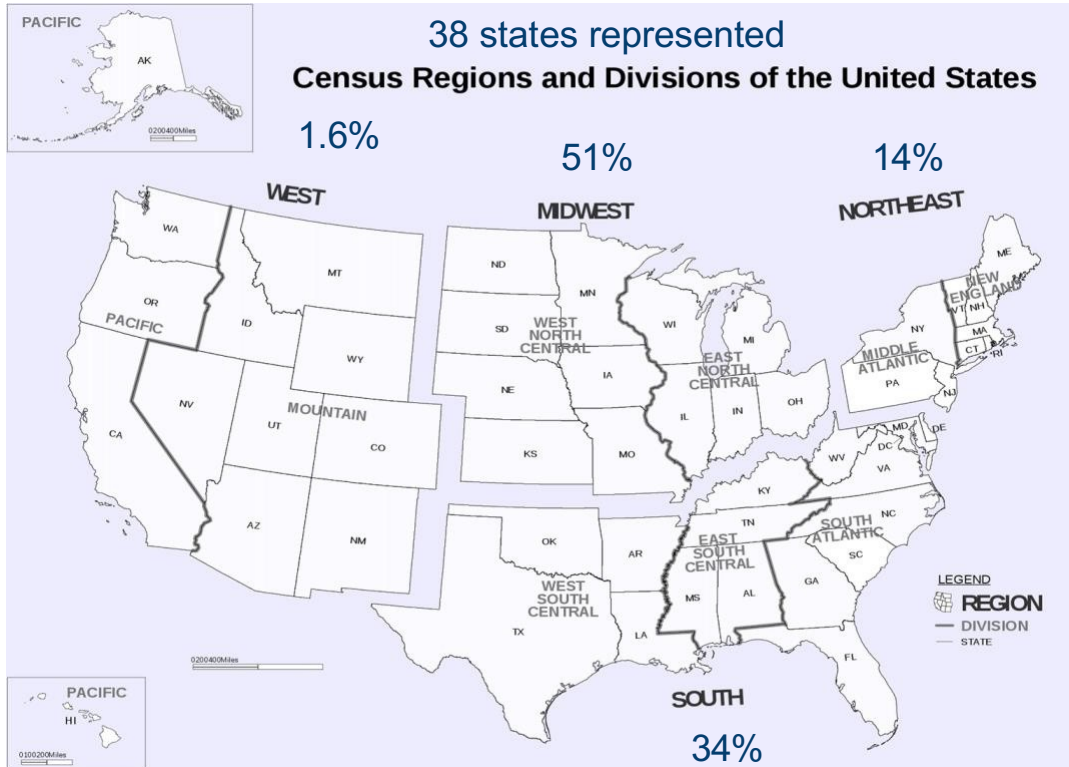
There is a gap among correctional officers about their awareness of some resources



There is generally limited evidence of resources

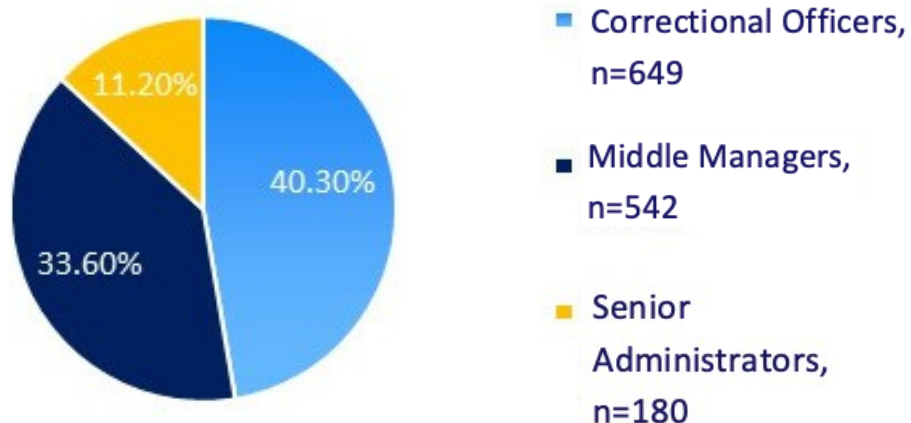
Survey Results Overview

The survey includes correctional officers from 38 states, with 51% from the Midwest, 34% from the South, and 1.6% from the West.



A total of 1,371 Correctional Officers responded to the survey with 88% representing prison workplaces.

Survey Responses By Job Category, N = 1,371



Resources Reported

The survey included 4 domains focusing on policies and practices, peer support programs, leadership and staff training, and a section on participant demographics and work-related characteristics. The survey assessed the awareness of correctional officers about the resources available to them, their use, and their helpfulness. We asked correctional middle managers and senior administrators about usage of these resources in their facilities and whether each resource fit the needs of correctional officers.

Top Aware, Used, and Helpful Resources Reported by Correctional Officers, Middle Managers, and Senior Administrators

Policies	Practices	Peer Support	Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting traumatic incidents • Clear job descriptions • Debriefing after traumatic incidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to Employee Assistance Program • Internal sharing of positive employee recognition • Health and well-being committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff peer support team • Peer mentoring of new staff • Trauma/critical incident team of co-workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De-escalation, non-invasive tactics • Management and leadership skills training • Workforce-focused "Mental Health First Aid"

Less Aware and Used, yet Helpful Resources Reported by Correctional Officers, Middle Managers, and Senior Administrators

Policies	Practices	Peer Support	Training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time to de-stress after a traumatic incident • Adequate staffing levels and assignments • Enforced scheduled/protected break 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith-based and spiritual resources • Implement community engagement activities • Promoting a supportive, more positive culture facilitywide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small peer support team with an extended focus around mental health • Free-standing critical incident team • Formal management-designed peer support program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-Trauma/Critical Incidents Seminar • Trauma-Informed Care • Direct and Indirect Trauma Training

Actions to Take – What Can We Do?

Correctional Worker Voice Engagement

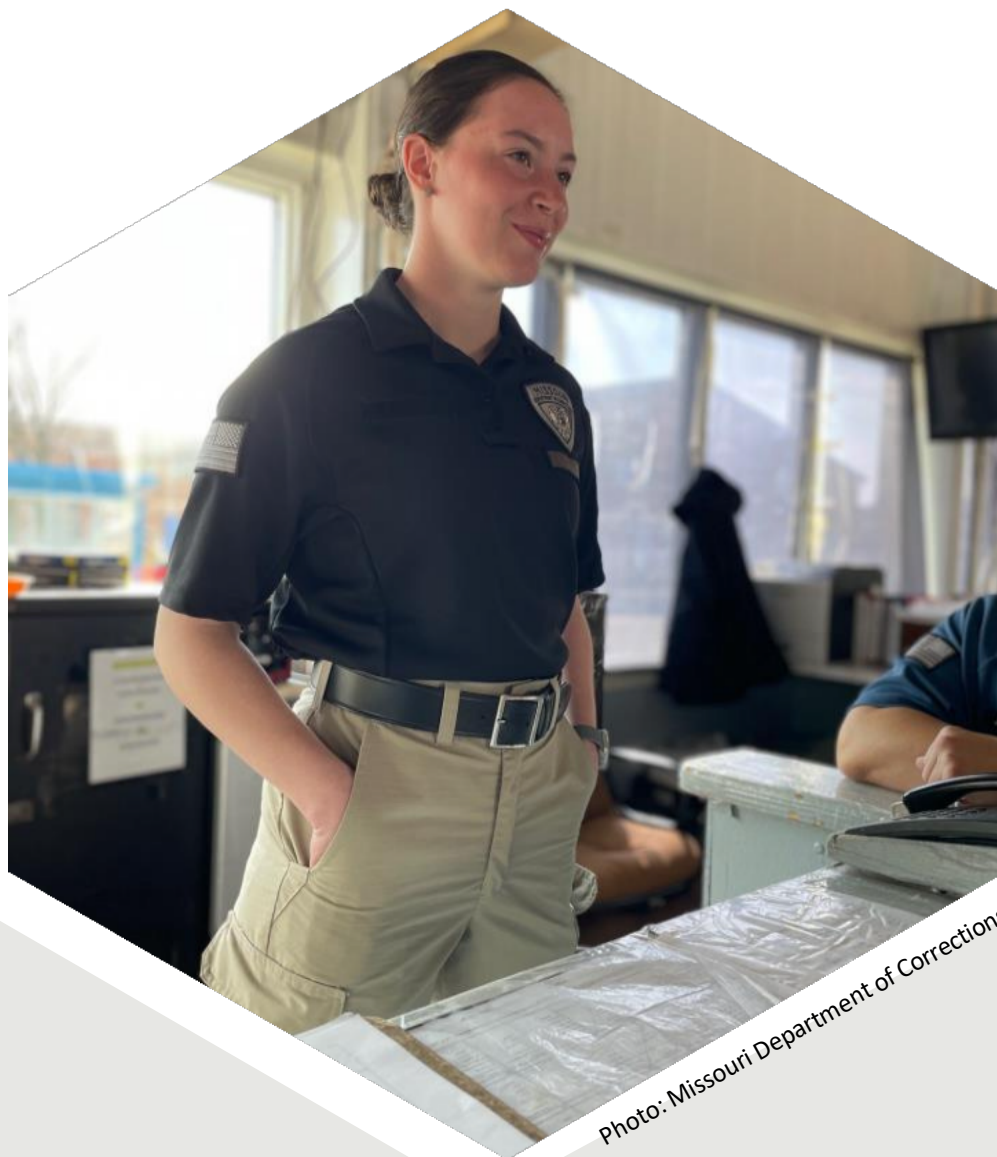


Photo: Missouri Department of Corrections

- ◆ Providing support for input from correctional officers (COs) in the design, development, and implementation and evaluation of resources.
 - Examples include officers receiving time to meet, a location, and time off from shifts to attend meetings.

- We recommend that COs explore opportunities to share their feedback and input,
- ◆ participate in meetings at work, and directly voice their input and concerns through the facility structures such as committees and unions.

Actions to Take – What Can We Do?

Address Resources Awareness, Usefulness, and Helpfulness

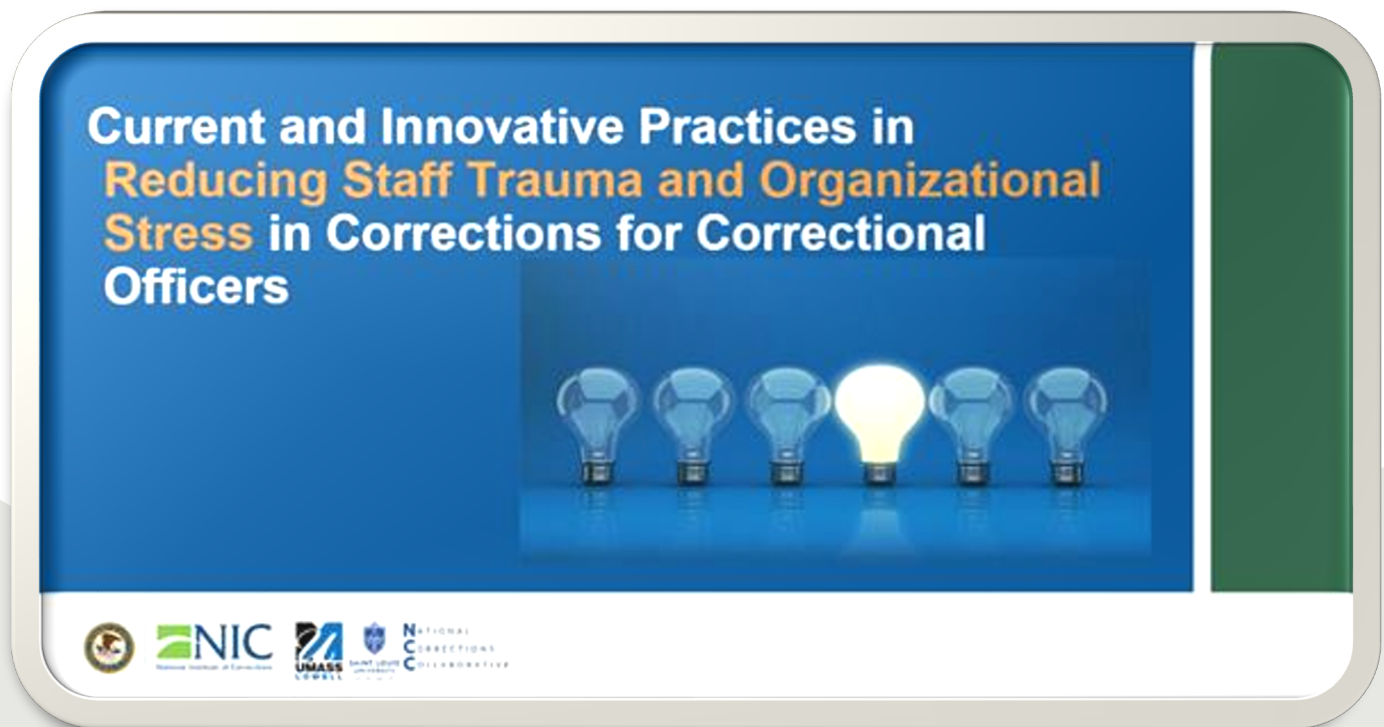


Photo: Missouri Department of Corrections

- Continually assessing the awareness, use, helpfulness, and fit of resources to ensure that they are meeting the needs of COs and are feasible to implement with management and leadership support.
 - Multiple levels of prevention
 - Process and structures
 - Tailored resources
 - Peer supports
 - Advocating for time and scheduling the use of resources.
- Sharing constructive feedback on available resources and how they can
- be accessed and used.

NIC Resource

National Institute of Corrections Webinar: Current and Innovative Practices in Reducing Staff Trauma and Organizational Stress in Corrections for Correctional Officers



Go to the NIC Resource Library for more information:

<https://nicic.gov/resources/nic-library>

Authors

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Dena M. Owens, PsyD

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