

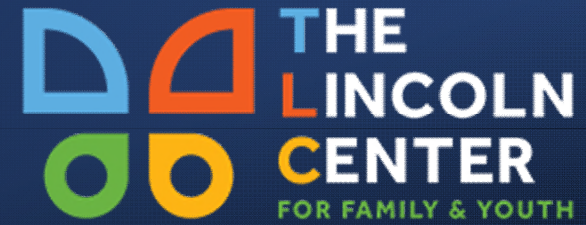
Mental Health Meets Law Enforcement: Collaboration for Resilient Policing

Julie Knudsen, LCSW – TLC Director of Program Development

Lieutenant Rodger H. Ollis, Jr. – City of Coatesville Police Department

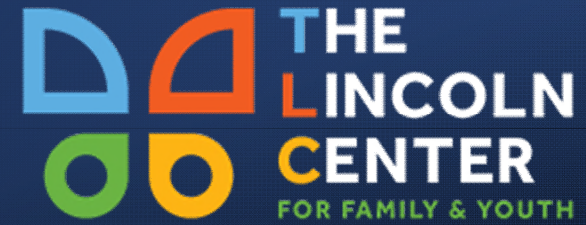
Nicole Martin, MLSP, MSS, LCSW, CCTP-II – Trainer TLC Education Institute

Why This Matters



- Officers face high exposure to trauma, leading to burnout, PTSD, and decreased job performance.
- Training programs that emphasize mental health, resilience, and trauma-informed strategies have been shown to impact rates of depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation among law enforcement officers.
- A collaborative training model builds officer well-being while improving community trust.

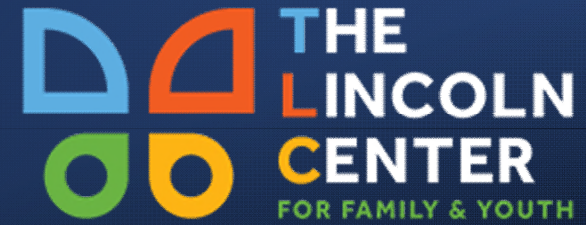
Realities of Law Enforcement Trauma



Personal accounts from officers:

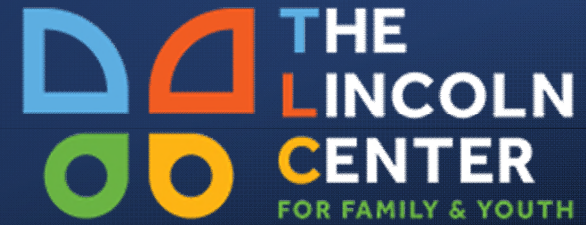
- Struggles with suicide and the stigma of seeking help.
- Acute stress responses after critical incidents, including hypervigilance, detachment, and substance use.
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how they shape officers' stress responses.
- Officers often relate to the struggles of community members facing trauma.
- A negative work environment (low morale or team disunity) contributes to the likelihood and severity of PTSD symptoms.

Impact of Stress on Performance and Turnover



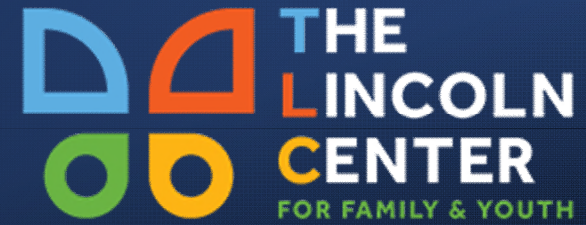
- Chronic exposure to high-stress situations reduces cognitive function and emotional regulation.
- Stress leads to increased use-of-force incidents, poor decision-making, and ethical fatigue.
- Departments face retention challenges when burnout and mental health struggles impact officers.
- Organizations with officer wellness programs see lower turnover rates and higher job satisfaction.

Barriers to Support and Organizational Impact



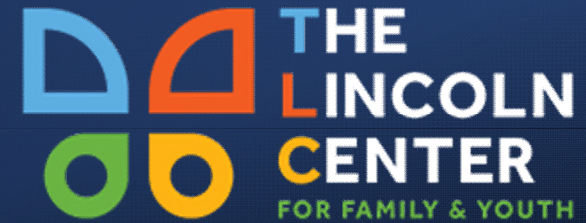
- Challenges preventing officers from seeking help:
 - Stigma surrounding mental health within law enforcement culture.
 - Fear of losing credibility or being deemed 'unfit for duty.'
 - Lack of department-wide trauma-informed policies and support networks.
 - Organizational impact: Reduced morale, increased absenteeism, and strained community relations.

Why Collaboration is Essential



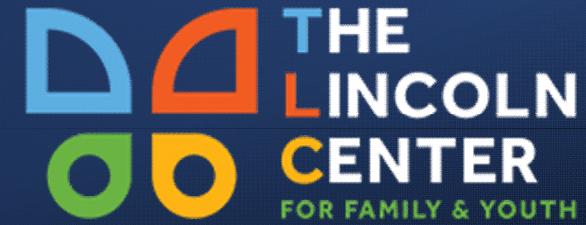
- A joint approach integrates trauma-informed mental health strategies into law enforcement:
 - Law enforcement officers provide real-world, relatable perspectives on high-stress encounters.
 - Mental health professionals introduce science-backed resilience-building techniques.
 - Combining both perspectives ensures practical, applicable, and credible training content.
 - Combining both perspectives reduces stigma around mental health concerns and receiving support.

Co-Facilitating Training



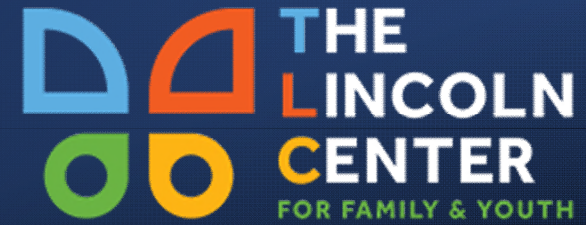
- The benefits of a mental health professional and law enforcement officer co-teaching:
 - Ensures credibility and relatability for officers resistant to mental health discussions.
 - Provides real-life scenarios with practical trauma-informed response strategies.
 - Encourages buy-in from leadership by balancing science-based methods with field-tested tactics.
 - Fosters a culture shift where mental well-being is as critical as tactical training.

Trauma-Informed Training Framework



- Guiding principles based on SAMHSA's 4 R's:
 - Realize trauma's widespread impact on officers and the communities they serve.
 - Recognize the signs of trauma in behavior, decision-making, and interactions.
 - Respond by integrating trauma-informed de-escalation, communication strategies, and psychological skills training for resilience.
 - Resist re-traumatization by creating a training environment that benefits officers, increases team cohesion, and enhances morale.

Building Resilience in Officers and Teams

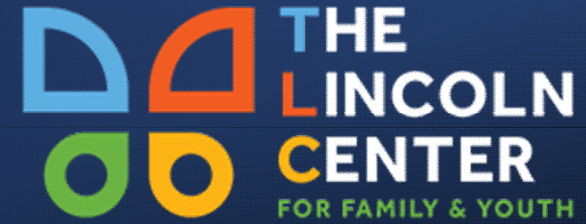


- Peer support and leadership involvement normalize mental health discussions.
- Stress inoculation techniques help officers build emotional and cognitive resilience.
- Regular wellness check-ins and debriefings improve long-term mental fitness.
- Group training enhances cohesion, morale, and mutual accountability.

Training Program Evaluation Metrics:

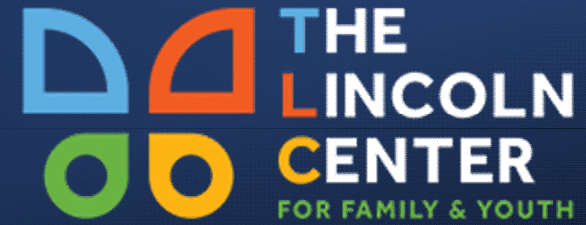
- Number of Departments: 31
- Number of Officers: 103
- Average Post-Test Score: 87%
- Average Change in Learning: +22%

Officer Feedback



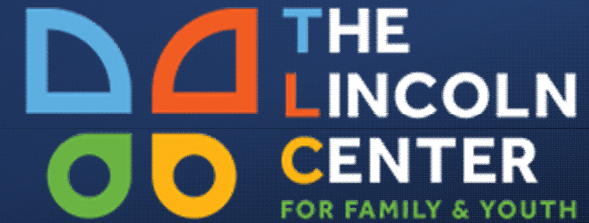
- ❖ "Would like more of these [trainings]/have more on a regular basis"
- ❖ "Have this type of training annually"
- ❖ "I think more officers should take this course"
- ❖ "This training is helpful is everyday life, not just law enforcement training"

Practical Next Steps



- Encourage leadership buy-in by demonstrating the impact of trauma-informed training.
- Expand department participation and ensure long-term integration of training principles.
- Continue data collection to refine and enhance training effectiveness.
- Strengthen partnerships between law enforcement and mental health professionals.
- Prioritize officer wellness as a foundational pillar of effective policing.

References



- Associated Press. (2024, February 13). *The cumulative stress of policing has public safety consequences for law enforcement officers, too*. AP News. <https://apnews.com/article/police-lethal-restraint-stress-12cbfbac3f683fe6f43850463e56177c>
- Chopko, B. A., Palmieri, P. A., & Adams, R. E. (2021). Burnout and posttraumatic stress symptoms in police officers exposed to traumatic events: The mediating role of ruminations. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 36*(2), 235–246. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351120839>
- Girotti, M., Bulin, S. E., & Carreno, F. R. (2024). Effects of chronic stress on cognitive function - From neurobiology to intervention. *Neurobiology of stress, 33*, 100670. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ynstr.2024.100670>
- Johnson, M., & Thompson, L. (2023). Stress and trauma-related concerns among law enforcement: Efficacy of peer support groups. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 38*(3), 345-362.
- Johnson, R. R., & Todd, S. M. (2022). U.S. law enforcement officers: Stress, job satisfaction, job performance, and the impact of resilience training. *Police Quarterly, 25*(3), 289–310. <https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/us-law-enforcement-officers-stress-job-satisfaction-job-performance-and>
- Lu, Y., & Petersen, K. (2023). Effectiveness of psychological skills training for police personnel: A meta-analysis. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 80*(10), 590-598. <https://doi.org/10.1136/oemed-2023-108878>
- Maguen, S., Metzler, T. J., McCaslin, S. E., Inslicht, S. S., Henn-Haase, C., Neylan, T. C., & Marmar, C. R. (2009). Routine work environment stress and PTSD symptoms in police officers. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 197*(10), 754-760. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3974929/>
- McEwen, B. S., & Morrison, J. H. (2013). The brain on stress: vulnerability and plasticity of the prefrontal cortex over the life course. *Neuron, 79*(1), 16–29. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2013.06.028>
- Mishara, B. L., & Fortin, L. F. (2022). Long-Term Effects of a Comprehensive Police Suicide Prevention Program. *Crisis, 43*(3), 183–189. <https://doi.org/10.1027/0227-5910/a000774>
- Mishara, B. L., & Martin, N. (2012). Effects of a comprehensive police suicide prevention program. *Psychiatric Services, 63*(4), 365-369. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9158739/>
- Officer Survey Research Team. (2023). The impact of self-care on law enforcement officers' performance. *Officer Survey*. <https://officersurvey.com/the-impact-of-self-care-on-law-enforcement-officers-performance/>
- Police1 Staff. (2024). The cost of service: How understaffing and stress are impacting police wellness in 2024. *Police1*. <https://www.police1.com/what-cops-want/the-cost-of-service-how-understaffing-and-stress-are-impacting-police-wellness-in-2024>
- Purba, A., & Demou, E. (2024). Burnout and post-traumatic stress disorders in police officers: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11896-024-09713-7>
- Syed, S., & Brewin, C. R. (2022). Association between job quality and the incidence of PTSD among police officers. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, 16*(3), 541–556. <https://academic.oup.com/policing/article/doi/10.1093/police/paac054/6717934>
- Ugwu, L. E., & Idemudia, E. S. (2024). Burnout and post-traumatic stress disorders in police officers: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-024-09713-7>
- U.S. Department of Justice. (2023, May). *Report on best practices to advance officer wellness*. https://www.justice.gov/d9/2023-05/Sec.%204%28a%29%20-Report%20on%20Best%20Practices%20to%20Advance%20Officer%20Wellness_FINAL.pdf
- Violanti, J. M., Charles, L. E., Hartley, T. A., & Burchfiel, C. M. (2017). Police stressors and health: A state-of-the-art review. *International Journal of Stress Management, 24*(4), 370–394. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6400077/>
- Wessels, J. A., & Davis, R. (n.d.). The six facets of holistic wellness. *Police Chief Magazine*. Retrieved from <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/six-facets-holistic-wellness/>