

## RECOGNIZING AND ADDRESSING VICARIOUS TRAUMA FOR CHILD ABUSE PROSECUTORS AND ALLIED PROFESSIONALS

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## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1. To understand the definition of vicarious trauma/secondary trauma.
- 2. To learn symptoms of vicarious trauma/secondary trauma.
- 2. To learn suggestions for addressing vicarious trauma/secondary trauma in the workplace and in a non-work environment.
- \* I have no financial relationships to disclose.

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### TERMS

- Vicarious Trauma
- Secondary Trauma
- Compassion Fatigue
- Burnout

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### DEFINITION

• "Secondary trauma (also called secondary traumatic stress) is defined as the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another. Its symptoms mimic those of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)." \*

\*Source: Stacy Miles, Thorpe, LCSW, The Texas Prosecutor, July-August 2016, Volume 46, No. 4, Trauma for the Tough-minded Prosecutor, Journal archive

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### DEFINITION

• "The difference between secondary trauma and vicarious trauma is that secondary trauma can happen suddenly, in one session, while vicarious trauma is a response to an accumulation of exposure to the pain of others". (Figley, 1995)\*

\*Source: When compassion Hurts: Burnout, Vicarious Trauma and Secondary Trauma in Prenatal and early childhood providers , Best Start Resource Center (2012) Toronto, Ontario, Canada: author

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## BURNOUT

- "STS is different from burnout, although STS and burnout have some risk factors in common—high caseload demands, a personal history of trauma, limited access to supervision, lack of a supportive work environment, and/or a supportive social network. Burnout is often due to long-term involvement in a nonsupportive work environment, large caseloads, and onerous paperwork. With burnout, increased workload and institutional stress are the precipitating factors, rather than exposure to clients' trauma."\*

\*Source: Module 6, Activity 6C Child Welfare Work and Secondary Traumatic Stress Christine B. Siegfried, MSSW National Center for Child Traumatic Stress, UCLA

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## HOW DO YOU WORK WITH CHILDREN?

- Prosecutor
- Child protection
- Physician
- Nurse
- Law enforcement

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## HOW DO YOU WORK WITH CHILDREN?

- Victim witness advocate
- Forensic interviewer
- Therapist
- Others?

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### WHAT DOES YOUR TYPICAL WORK DAY LOOK LIKE?

- Courtroom stress
- Trial anxiety /stress
- Caseload
- Reading sensitive material
- Speaking with victim/witnesses
- Looking at sensitive material



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### WHAT DOES YOUR TYPICAL WORK DAY LOOK LIKE?

- Interacting with colleagues
- Interacting with management
- Long hours
- Nonexistent lunch hour
- Thinking about cases nights and weekends

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### RECOGNIZING SYMPTOMS

- Do you have work/life balance?
- Are you able to divide work and personal life?
- Any pre-existing risk factors?

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### RECOGNIZING SYMPTOMS

- Workplace symptoms
- "leaving early, missing meetings, avoiding clients, skipping certain questions during interviews), ■ hypervigilance (e.g., feeling on edge, perceiving colleagues and clients as threatening, feeling like all clients are in danger), seeing things as "black or white" rather than tolerating ambiguity, ■ becoming argumentative, and ■ shutting down or numbing out (alcohol and drug use are common coping mechanisms)."\*
- \*Source: Understanding Secondary Trauma: A Guide for Lawyers Working with Child Victims by Christina Rainville, ABA Child Law Practice Volume. 34 No.9, September 2015

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### RECOGNIZING SYMPTOMS

- Personal life symptoms
- "Secondary traumatic stress can also impact people's personal lives. Common symptoms can include: ■ sleep disturbance and nightmares, ■ headaches, ■ stomach pain, ■ PTSD symptoms such as intrusive thoughts and memories; severe emotional distress or physical reactions to something that reminds the person of the traumatic event; avoidance of people, places or things that remind the person of the event; irritability, angry outbursts or aggressive behavior; inability to focus; being easily started; hypervigilance, ■ extreme fatigue/always tired".\*
- \*Source: Understanding Secondary Trauma: A Guide for Lawyers Working with Child Victims by Christina Rainville, ABA Child Law Practice Volume. 34 No.9, September 2015

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### RECOGNIZING SYMPTOMS

- Personal life symptoms
- "negative thinking and a tendency to become upset about everything, ■ strained relationships with family and friends, ■ compromised parenting, and ■ doubts about whether the world is a safe place".\*
- \*Source: Understanding Secondary Trauma: A Guide for Lawyers Working with Child Victims by Christina Rainville, ABA Child Law Practice Volume. 34 No.9, September 2015

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### PROSECUTORS

- May always be in trial mode
- Oftentimes in role of negotiator
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- May be making charging decisions

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### PROSECUTORS

- "A study of 23 Canadian prosecutors working with "sensitive cases" involving domestic violence and incest revealed symptoms of demoralization, anxiety, helplessness, exhaustion, social withdrawal".\* (citing to I.M. Gomme & M.P. Hall, Prosecutors at Work: Role Overload and Strain, 15 J. Crim. Just. 191-200, 1995)
- New: Integration in some law schools curricula about vicarious trauma
- Factors for attorneys to consider risk of STS/burnout: high caseloads, difficult court system and working with traumatized clients.\*
- \*Source: Andrew P. Levin MD, Secondary Trauma and Burnout in Attorneys: Effects of Work with Clients Who are Victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse, ABA Commission on Domestic Violence e-newsletter, Volume 9 Winter 2008

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### LAW ENFORCEMENT STUDY

- The Emotional Impact on and Coping Strategies Employed by Police Teams Investigating Internet Child Exploitation by Carolyn M. Burns, Jeff Morley, Richard Bradshaw, and José Domene
- Data: 14 members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police
- Results of study:

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### LAW ENFORCEMENT STUDY COPING STRATEGIES

- Personal strategies:
- "exercise,"
- Hobbies\*,
- time limit on viewing"

\*Source: The Emotional Impact on and Coping Strategies Employed by Police Teams Investigating Internet Child Exploitation Carolyn M. Burns, Jeff Morley, Richard Bradshaw, and José Domene, *Traumatology* 2008 Volume 14, No. 2, Sage Publishing

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### LAW ENFORCEMENT STUDY COPING STRATEGIES

- "Mitigating factors:
- right person for job\*
- Good supervision\*
- Humor\*
- Sense of control\*
- Organizational support and social support\*
- Psychological support – professional to talk to" \*

\*Source: The Emotional Impact on and Coping Strategies Employed by Police Teams Investigating Internet Child Exploitation Carolyn M. Burns, Jeff Morley, Richard Bradshaw, and José Domene, *Traumatology* 2008 Volume 14, No. 2, Sage Publishing

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### FORENSIC INTERVIEWERS STUDY

- Research to Practice Summary by Chris Newlin Executive Director, NCAC on CAlIO:
- Article: Bonach, K. & Heckert, A. (2012) Predictors of secondary trauma stress among children's advocacy center forensic interviewers. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 21(3), 295-314
- Results of study:

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### FORENSIC INTERVIEWERS

- "257 forensic interviewers (229 females and 27 males)\*
- Ages 24-68\*
- Average of 6.3 years conducting forensic interviews\*
- 4.01 average forensic interviews per week\* \*

\*Source: Research to Practice Summary by Chris Newlin, Executive Director, on CAIIO:Article: Bonach, K. & Heckert, A. (2012) Predictors of secondary trauma stress among children's advocacy center forensic interviewers. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 21(3), 295-314

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### FORENSIC INTERVIEWERS

- Three hypotheses for the study\*:
- 1. the higher the level of satisfaction with the organization, the lower the secondary trauma\*
- 2. The higher the organizational buffers (supervision, mentoring, clinical supervision), the lower the secondary trauma\*
- 3. The higher the perception of job support , the lower the secondary trauma\*

\*Source: Research to Practice Summary by Chris Newlin , Executive Director, NCAC on CAIIO:Article: Bonach, K. & Heckert, A. (2012) Predictors of secondary trauma stress among children's advocacy center forensic interviewers. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 21(3), 295-314

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### FORENSIC INTERVIEWERS

- Findings:
- "#3 Hypothesis supported: The higher the perception of job support, the lower the secondary trauma\*"
- Support from colleagues and friends\*
- Professional supervision\*
- Talking to family\*
- Support from administration and incentives help workers cope with trauma and stress\*\*

\*Source: Research to Practice Summary by Chris Newlin, Executive Director, NCAC on CAIIO:Article: Bonach, K. & Heckert, A. (2012) Predictors of secondary trauma stress among children's advocacy center forensic interviewers. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 21(3), 295-314

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### FORENSIC INTERVIEWERS

- Some themes from qualitative data\*:
- "dual roles of FI and coordinating or some other job duties are draining"
- lack of strong leadership or job support can be more frustrating than the children's disclosures\*
- Need for continuing education on FI, court preparation and expert testimony, STS training and stress management\*\*

\*Source: Research to Practice Summary by Chris Newlin, Executive Director, NCAC on CAHO; Article: Bonach, K. & Heckert, A. (2012) Predictors of secondary trauma stress among children's advocacy center forensic interviewers. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 21(6), 295-314

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### PERSONAL LIFE

- What happens when someone asks you what you do for a living at a social event?
- Are you hypervigilant with family and friends because of what you see and hear at work?
- Are you able to speak with family and friends about your work?




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### IN WORK

- Speak with colleagues
- Speak with supervisor/open door policy of supervisor important
- Stress-free as possible work environment
- Have a professional present on topic of vicarious trauma
- Lunchtime – important to take some time for yourself
- ASK: WHAT ARE YOU DOING FOR YOU THIS WEEKEND?




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## HUMOR

- Is it possible in this line of work?
- Talking about what you are feeling

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## OUTSIDE OF WORK

- Fun Activities
- Exercise
- Family
- Friends both in and out of work



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## MINDFULNESS

- Why do I do this job?
- Taking time to remember why I chose this career



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### POTENTIAL RESOURCES FOR ADDRESSING VICARIOUS TRAUMA

- Lawyers helping lawyers organizations
- Local and national trainings on vicarious trauma
- Vicarious trauma studies/articles/newsletters
- Programs/trainings offered by your regional and national organizations
- Professional assistance




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### REFERENCES

- Stacy Miles-Thorpe, LCSW, *The Texas Prosecutor*, July-August 2016, Volume 46, No. 4, Trauma for the Tough-minded Prosecutor
- Christine B. Siegfried, MSSW, Module 6, Activity 6C Child Welfare Work and Secondary Traumatic Stress, National Center for Child Traumatic Stress, UCLA
- The Emotional Impact on and Coping Strategies Employed by Police Teams Investigating Internet Child Exploitation Carolyn M. Burns, Jeff Morley, Richard Bradshaw, and José Domene, *Traumatology* 2008 14: 20, Sage Publishing




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- Andrew P. Levin MD, Secondary Trauma and Burnout in Attorneys: Effects of Work with Clients Who are Victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse, *ABA Commission on Domestic Violence e-newsletter*, Volume 9 Winter 2008




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**ASSOCIATION OF PROSECUTING ATTORNEYS**

- Technical Assistance
- Training
- Resources/Monographs
- Expert Witness recommendations/information
- Newsletter
- Listserv
- Webinars
- APAINc.org



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