

# CAMPUS LAW ENFORCEMENT JOURNAL

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Volume 43, No. 5

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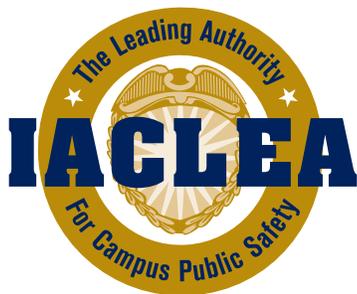
September/October 2013

## Helping the Helpers

**POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS**

### **IACLEA** *Inside...*

- ▶ Using Social Media to Build Your Department's Reputation
- ▶ Models of Campus Policing
- ▶ Heroes in Campus Law Enforcement



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## On the Cover

Campus disaster plans focus on helping the victims of crisis, but there is another layer to remember: who is helping the helpers, the people on the front lines of a response effort?

This article by FEI Behavioral Health addresses the issue of building resiliency in first-responders and is a follow up to their popular workshop held at the 55th Annual Conference. They are a Corporate Partner with IACLEA.

Please see page 16 for the article and information.

*Campus Law Enforcement Journal* is the official publication of the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators. It is published bimonthly and dedicated to the promotion of professional ideals and standards for law enforcement, security and public safety so as to better serve institutions of higher education.

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# Helping the Helpers: Building Resilience for Those on the Front Line

By Terri Howard, FEI Behavioral Health

A crisis on campus can be frightening and life-altering for students and faculty, and for parents and the community receiving nuggets of confusing, and sometimes conflicting, information



through the media. Once the situation has calmed down, the true heroes emerge: the campus and local police officers who rush to the scene of any crisis or mass casualty event the first responders on campus to help. The college and university administrators who work to inform and protect their students, employees and parents amid an unfolding situation. Even at its worst, a crisis situation can bring out the best in people. Campus disaster plans rightly focus on helping the victims of crisis, but there's another layer to remember too — who's helping the helpers, the people on the front lines of a response effort?

As a campus law enforcement officer, you've taken numerous training classes where the focus is on responding to emergencies, helping those who are hurt or in danger, along with a variety of crowd control and AODA courses. The steps you take to ensure the safety of others come as easily to you as putting on your uniform. You've been trained, you're ready. But what about you — you the father, brother, mother, sister, daughter? Are you ready? You're the helper, and you need to be prepared for that role.

## Responder Training Strengthens Resilience

Training is an important and necessary tool in the first responder's toolkit. The main goal in providing "Help the Helper" training always is to strengthen responder resilience. A good program builds skills and training and includes practice time to help you fully prepare for:

- **What to expect going into a crisis situation and coming back**  
Have you practiced the specific roles you might be playing? Are you prepared to communicate and interface with people who have been affected by an incident? Have you helped others on campus understand and train for their roles, so that a response effort is unified?
- **Getting ready for deployment**  
What should you do for your own



readiness? What happens if a crisis becomes an extended situation? Is there a back-up plan for your role at home or work, even for things as simple as cutting the grass?

- **Building resilience**  
A lot of this gets back to the old rule that, to help others, you must first help yourself. That's harder to stick to during the chaos of a crisis or natural disaster, but that's when it's most vital. Get rest, eat well, and exercise. This helps you take on the emotional and psychological burdens you might confront.
- **The ins-and-outs of setting up a temporary redundant office**  
In many crisis situations, it becomes necessary to set up an on-site office of sorts, but what happens if the printers there suddenly won't work? Or, worse, what if you thought you were going to the office to staff printers and the reality is you spend the day fielding calls from victims and helping with paperwork? That's an entirely different challenge both logistically and emotionally.
- **Reintegrating into a new normal**  
After an incident, responders often find it difficult to get back to their normal lives. They've experienced things others have not and sometimes develop what's known as compassion fatigue (more on this important term later). Learning tips about how to deal with that and

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how to return to a “new normal” is very important in maintaining overall resilience. There also is a lot to be said for a high-level support system that provides counseling, grief support and resources for these helpers after the fact. Responders will carry memories much like the victims will — for months or years afterward.

### Overwhelmed Onsite

Sadly, the words “crisis on campus” bring to mind an active shooter situation based on what the country has experienced in the last few years. Yet, campus law enforcement professionals also may be called to action during large-scale natural disasters like Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, the Oklahoma tornadoes or most recently, the Colorado floods. You may find yourselves, in many ways, unprepared to deal with the devastation and need you encounter. If a college campus in the vicinity of a natural disaster was not directly affected, it may act as a staging ground for responders, displaced students and nearby residents. What does this mean for campus law professionals? It may shift your role from monitoring for threats and reacting, to one of crowd control for mass evacuees who have come to campus for temporary shelter.

This can have an impact from two angles: It can rock people emotionally, and in some cases (like Hurricane Katrina) the scope can be so overwhelming that responders are unable to function from a capacity standpoint as well. The same is true for tragic events like Newtown and Boston.

### Understanding Stress

During “Help the Helper” training, a great deal of time should be spent talking about resilience. Responders are constantly learning from previous experiences, asking, “What will I do differently next time?” and then putting those ideas into practice. Understanding and working

through the two common levels of stress can help strengthen that type of resilience.

- **Burnout:** An accumulation of stressors at work that occurs over time when perceived demands outweigh resources and a sense of powerlessness develops.
- **Compassion fatigue:** Also known as Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder, this is a gradual lessening of compassion. It’s a state of mind experienced by those helping people in distress. When you are in an extreme state of tension and are preoccupied with the suffering of those being helped, it can be traumatizing.

It also is important to note that precipitating factors — including family dynamics, health issues, a perfectionist personality and personal experiences with trauma or loss — can influence when and if you experience compassion fatigue.

You must learn to recognize signs of distress in yourself and in others, from physical signs like headaches and exhaustion, to behavioral indicators like increased irritability, isolation or vulnerability, to psychological signs of depression or anxiety. Professional signs of distress also exist, which can impact how you are able to function in your role. In a crisis, stress factors like decreased productivity or an inability to make decisions can be detrimental to response efforts.



Responders must become trained in how to deal with burnout and compassion fatigue before these symptoms take their toll. Stay aware of the symptoms especially in the midst of an unfolding situation, establish clear, realistic stress management goals, and incorporate the support and planning necessary to make it work. This last point is where “Help the Helper” sessions can be so vital.

The challenge is to find the optimal level of stress each of us requires in order to thrive. To maintain this balance, training elements often focus on four key areas:

1. **Personal Mastery:** To know one’s own strengths and limitations.
2. **Awareness:** To understand the context of current challenges and the resources needed to build and sustain solutions.
3. **Emotional Intelligence:** To realize your personal impact on others and to understand how that connection creates a need to lead with authentic character and intent.
4. **Well-being:** To maintain optimal physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Understanding these four elements helps not only you but also those you are serving.

### Traits for Recovery

The capacity to recover from an incident is largely based on an individual’s ability to:

- Learn from experiences
- Adapt quickly
- Maintain solid self-esteem and self-confidence
- Rely on strong interpersonal relationships
- Express feelings honestly
- Expect things to work out

Responders must develop skills that allow them to rapidly assimilate new or unexpected experiences and facilitate being changed by them. You must be mentally and emotionally flexible, comfortable with your own contradictory personality qualities — toughness and sensitivity, calmness and emotional turmoil — and have a deep optimism guided by internal values and standards.

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## Helping the Helpers: Building Resilience for Those on the Front Line

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You must also learn to ask: “What could go wrong, so it can be avoided?” This simple question will help you better prepare for anticipated situations. The follow up is then: “How can I interact with this so that things turn out well for all of us?”

### Renew and Restore

After deployment, it’s important for responders to disengage from the experience in order to restore emotional balance. From a physical standpoint, you must continue to eat healthy, get enough rest and relaxation, participate in physical activity, preferably something fun like dancing; put yourself first and indulge in something positive.

Managing emotional and psychological well-being is another key factor toward building resilience. It is okay to balance tears and humor, work and personal life. This is when responders most need their support system to cope and monitor how they’re recovering on an ongoing basis, not just immediately after deployment.

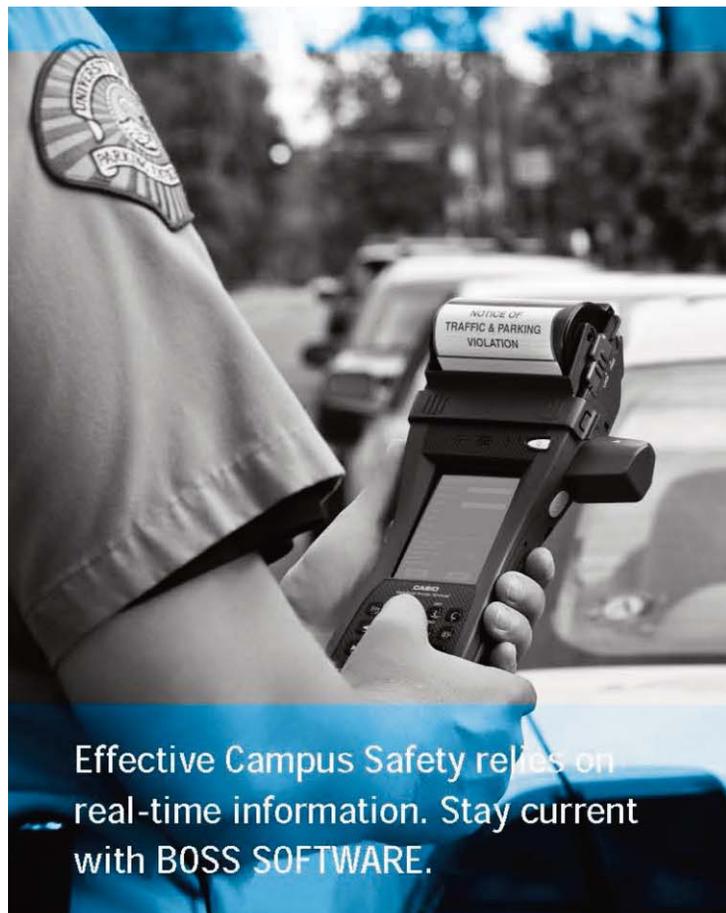
“Help the Helper” policies and planning allow campus responders to stay focused and perform better, knowing they have preparation and support before, during and after an event. Engaging an outside third party for those resources adds a buffer of distance and calm, which often is helpful for responders who are more personally and directly involved in the situation. You face a lot during a crisis. This type of service should have the goal to help you bounce back and remain resilient.

### About the Author

**Terri Howard**, Senior Director, Crisis Management is responsible for working with corporate clients to ensure companies are prepared for, can respond to and can recover from a crisis incident. She also coordinates the people support and psychological first aid services for those impacted by a crisis incident and is experienced in developing drills and exercises aimed at testing current crisis management plans and procedures.

Prior to her tenure with FEI, Terri served as vice president for the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) and also worked for Target Corporation, leading a team for incident management, crisis response and business continuity. Terri has contributed to several international standards and guidelines on crisis management and workplace violence prevention, including ASIS and the FBI. She has spoken at numerous conferences and conducted webinars. She completed undergraduate school at Chatham University, attended both Pennsylvania State and Marquette University for graduate study, and is currently pursuing a doctorate in public safety/emergency management leadership.

FEI Behavioral Health is the workforce resilience expert. It delivers peace of mind to workers and their families through crisis management, EAP and work-life services. FEI established the first national EAP and is an industry leader in crisis management. It offers professional, user-friendly, 24-hour access to problem solving resources that result in better work environments. FEI Behavioral Health is part of Families International, Inc., a nonprofit membership organization of four closely-aligned, yet separate entities. Visit [www.feinet.com](http://www.feinet.com) for additional information.



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