

Background

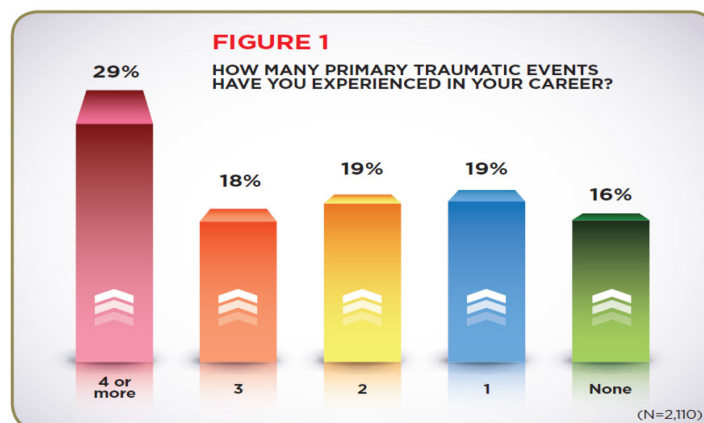
Last session, members from MAPE, Teamsters, and the county probation services brought forth a proposal to allow staff in probation and parole services an early retirement option. During that hearing, several legislators asked why probation and parole agents shouldn't just be added to the MSRS and PERA correctional plans. And as the LCPR Staff memo highlighted, placing probation and parole agents into correctional plans had already been considered 22 years ago by an interim taskforce.

The outcome was impasse; despite finding that Minnesota is generally an outlier when it comes providing enhanced retirement benefits to probation and parole agents,¹ there was disagreement that agents experience similar levels of stress and exposure to risk, using lack of disability and worker's compensation claims as the basis of their assertions. The main objection by employer groups, however, was cost, as the study group did provide contingent recommendation that if the legislature and the governor agreed to provide an enhanced benefit, it should look almost exactly like the current Correctional Employee Retirement Plan without the enhanced disability benefit.

Our agents understand that simply adding job classes to the list does not have broad support in this taskforce, and while we hope to change that perception, we understand that more conversations and financial support would be required. However, the purpose of the taskforce is to look at the current statute holistically and review whether the criteria is truly meeting its purpose in providing a meaningful retirement benefit for correctional employees. Limiting access to employees that work within the walls of the facility, which only oversees approximately 15 percent of persons committed to the care of the Commissioner of Corrections, can be perceived as quite an oversight.

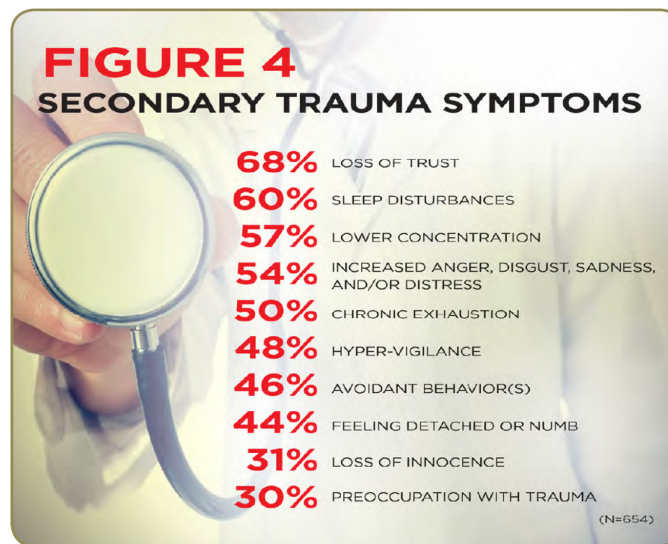
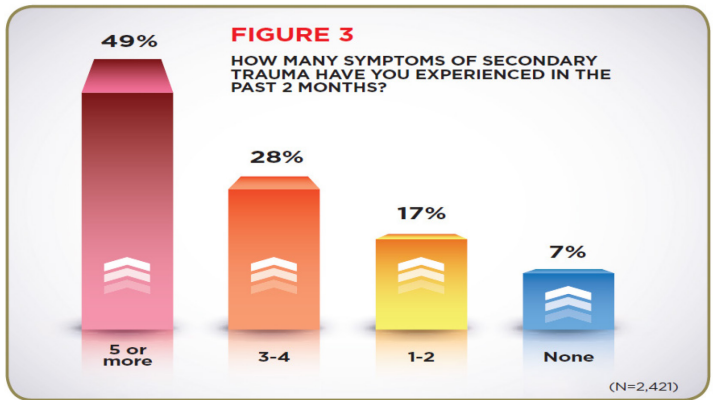
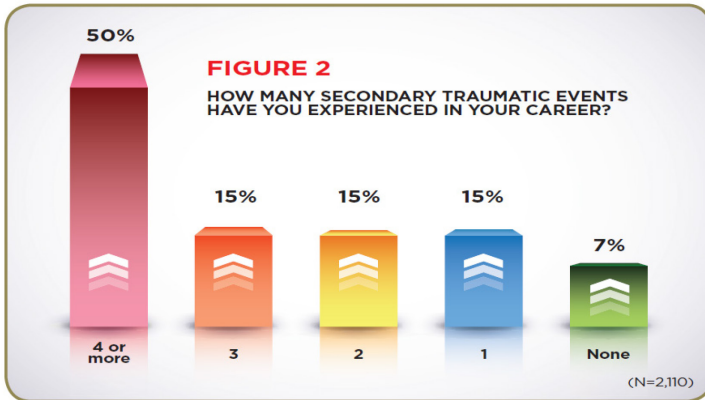
Updated Research and Findings

Corrections agents within the field of probation and parole experience report experiencing both primary trauma and secondary trauma. Primary trauma includes incidents personally observing and experiencing assaults, receiving threats, stalking and harassment, animal attacks, witnessing violence/injury/death, conducting risky home visits and searches, and more.



¹ In the 2002 LCPR study, the survey of various other states typically provided full retirement after a set number years of service, combined age and service (Rule of 85 or 80), but very few exceeded 60 years of age. Furthermore, other states typically group their special benefits by job classes that have public safety duties; almost all of them place corrections officers, probation and parole agents, and police officers and firefighters together.

Secondary trauma, typically experienced by exposure to pain and suffering of others, uniquely impacts agents as they are also responsible for conducting interviews with clients and their victims, reading police reports and creating presentence reports, reviewing treatment and polygraph results, viewing graphic and disturbing content like child pornography, and more.



Studies as far back as 1985 correlate burnout as a function of seniority versus age.

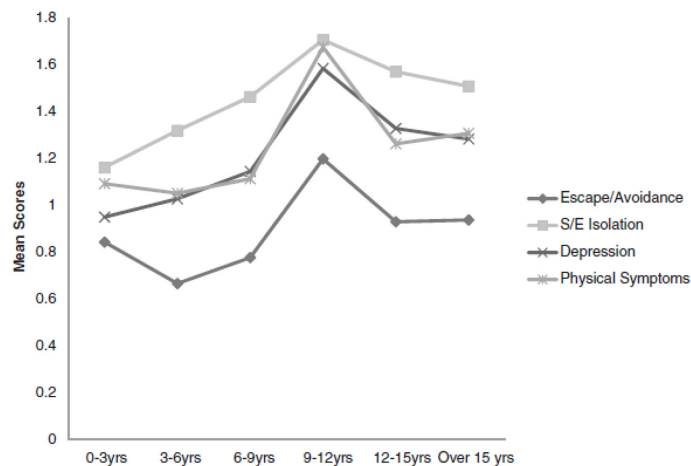


Fig. 1 Mean scores for each PI scales (listed in legend) where significant differences were found based on seniority (time in the field of probation). Seniority is broken into time intervals similar to Whitehead (1985)

The traumas of probation and parole are unpredictable and ingrained within the work. "Whereas most helping professional assist motivated clients in physically and psychologically safe environments, probation and parole officers work with involuntary clients, are repeatedly exposed to a variety of traumatic incidents, must maintain heightened and sustained level of mental vigilance for officer safety and have the dual (and at times conflicting) responsibility for both offender rehabilitation and control (Spinaris & Denhof, 2012)."²

Trauma symptoms and burnout impacts the ability of agents to provide quality interventions. "In order to continue the national trend of probation success, it is imperative that departments recognize that prioritizing the health and well-being of the individual officer is paramount for sustaining effective practices."³ While education and recognition of trauma and trauma responses, as well as access to resources can help agents develop healthy coping and stress responses, that is only part of the answer.

Conclusion

Minnesota should provide an early retirement option for public employees in probation and parole services similar to benefits receive by other public safety positions. the simplest approach would be to do what many states already doing, which group public safety jobs together in the same plans; we have provided suggestions on how definitions would need to change in order to add the job class through the legislative process. But as it is unlikely that there would be consensus to add agents to CERP, we hope that this presentation is compelling enough to garner support for alternative methods.

Charts and Figures Sources:

Lewis, K. (2015). If there is hope for Trauma-Informed Care in Community Corrections... It has to start with us! *Perspectives*, 39(3), 60-71.

https://www.kslresearch.org/app/download/764028018/Perspectives_Trauma+Informed+Care.pdf

Lewis, K., Lewis, L., & Garby, T. (2013). Surviving the Trenches: The Personal Impact of the Job on Probation Officers. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38(1), 67-84.

<https://www.kslresearch.org/app/download/764023406/survivingthetrenches.pdf>

² Lewis, K. (2013). Secondary Trauma: The Personal Impact of Working with Criminal Offenders. *Perspectives*, 37(1), pg. 56.

<https://www.kslresearch.org/app/download/764028039/Perspectives.Secondary+Trauma.pdf>

³ Lewis, K., Lewis, L., & Garby, T. (2013). Surviving the Trenches: The Personal Impact of the Job on Probation Officers. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 38(1), pg. 82.

<https://www.kslresearch.org/app/download/764023406/survivingthetrenches.pdf>

Definition changes to permit inclusion of agents and AMRTC

Qualifying Facilities and Programs

"Qualifying Facilities or Programs" refers to Correctional Facilities, probation and parole services operated by the Minnesota Department of Corrections, the State-Operated Forensic Services Program or the Minnesota Sex Offender Program, or the Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center.

Direct contact

"Direct contact" refers to interactions between an employee at a qualifying facility or program and ~~incarcerated justice-involved~~ persons, patients, clients, or residents where the employee is required to provide continuous service and be physically present and engage with the individual(s) while performing their normal job responsibilities that include maintaining safety and security. This includes, ~~but is not limited to~~, activities involving the custody, rehabilitation, supervision, or treatment services.

Continuous Service

"Continuous Services" refers to at least 75 percent of the employee's normal duties is spent in direct contact.

Support to the Operations

"Support to the Operations" means

Normal Duties:

"Normal duties" means specific tasks designated in the employee's job description and which the employee performs on a day-to-day basis but does not include less frequent duties which may be requested to be done by the employer from time to time.

Custody

"Custody" refers to the legal and physical control exercised by an employee at a qualifying facility or program over a ~~justice-involved~~ ~~incarcerated~~ person, patient, client, or resident, particularly in contexts where the individual is detained, confined, or otherwise restricted from freedom of movement. This control is necessary to maintain safety, security, and order.

Rehabilitation

"Rehabilitation" refers to the process of providing treatment, education, or other interventions designed to improve the mental, physical, or behavioral condition of a ~~justice-involved~~ ~~incarcerated~~ person, client, patient, or resident with the

goal of facilitating their reintegration into society or improving their quality of life. Employees involved in rehabilitation are tasked with implementing and supporting these programs within the framework of maintaining security and safety.

Supervision

"Supervision" refers to the oversight and management of incarcerated-justice-involved persons, patients, clients, or residents by an employee at a qualifying facility or program, ensuring that they comply with rules, regulations, and treatment plans. This includes, but is not limited to, monitoring behavior, enforcing discipline, and providing guidance or direction as necessary to maintain the safety and security of the facility or program.

Treatment

"Treatment" refers to the medical, psychological, educational, or therapeutic interventions provided to incarcerated-justice-involved persons, patients, clients, or residents by or under the supervision of employees at a qualifying facility or program. This encompasses a broad range of services aimed at addressing the health, mental health, or behavioral needs of the individual, with the objective of improving their overall condition while ensuring the safety and security of the facility or program.