The Many Dimensions of Correctional Staff Health

CATERINA SPINARIS, PHD, LPC
ACA’s 2017 Corrections Staff Wellness Resolution

• “... correctional employees’ wellness is a critical issue and has reached crisis proportions; ...”

ACA RESOLUTION SUPPORTING CORRECTIONAL EMPLOYEE WELLNESS 2017-1
What We Know

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS
ACA’s 2017 Corrections Staff Wellness Resolution

• “... the unique inherent risks correctional employees are exposed to have resulted in increased health risks; ...”

ACA RESOLUTION SUPPORTING CORRECTIONAL EMPLOYEE WELLNESS 2017-1
Some Corrections Work Challenges

Built-In Risk Factors

- Violence, injury or death
- Harsh physical conditions
- Work overload
- Overtime
- Organizational structure and climate
ACA’s 2017 Corrections Staff Wellness Resolution

• “... very few resources have been used on researching correctional employees’ wellness and very few resources have been used to provide tools to improve correctional employees’ wellness; ...”
Corrections Work Challenges

• Occupational stressors
  Traumatic
  Operational
  Organizational

• Corrections Fatigue
Context

• Insufficient understanding by:
  Family and friends
  Supervisors
  Employers
  Even themselves

• Culture of “toughness”
• Negative public image
ACA’s 2017 Corrections Staff Wellness Resolution

• “... the nature of the correctional environment can be a causative factor in high-risk behaviors, such as the abuse of alcohol, prescription medications, and illegal substances; ...”

ACA RESOLUTION SUPPORTING CORRECTIONAL EMPLOYEE WELLNESS 2017-1
ACA’s 2017 Corrections Staff Wellness Resolution

• “... traumatic events in a correctional environment may result in employees experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder; ...”
Signs of Declining Health and Functioning

- Hypertension
- Overweight/obesity
- Anxiety
- Depression
- PTSD
- Substance Use Disorders
- Work-family conflict
- Elevated suicide risk
Solutions Basics

BALANCING ACT
What is Needed?

“Hazmat suit”
Preparation to deal effectively with what is encountered

“Tool box”
Means to process and cope with what is experienced

“Hospital”
Means, conditions and resources for recovery
ACA’s 2017 Corrections Staff Wellness Resolution

• “... the American Correctional Association urges correctional agencies to raise awareness and educate employees regarding employee wellness in a corrections environment, including emphasis on employment-related stress; ...”

ACA RESOLUTION SUPPORTING CORRECTIONAL EMPLOYEE WELLNESS 2017-1
ACA’s 2017 Corrections Staff Wellness Resolution

• “... the American Correctional Association encourages agencies to develop and implement wellness initiatives and convene wellness committees regarding all the dimensions of wellness, including emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, occupational, physical, social and spiritual; ...”

ACA RESOLUTION SUPPORTING CORRECTIONAL EMPLOYEE WELLNESS 2017-1
Solutions Approaches

Approach 1
Top-down | Bottom-up

Approach 2
Prevention | Recovery

Approach 3
Holistic | Corrections
ACA's 2017 Corrections Staff Wellness Resolution

• “... the American Correctional Association is committed to supporting and improving the overall wellness of correctional employees.”
Solutions Elements

M.O. Marathon
In Conclusion

• Effects of occupational stressors on corrections workers’ health and functioning can be severe.

• Psychosocial skills that promote wellness/resilience CAN BE TAUGHT.

• Combinations of organizational and individual initiatives can be expected to be the most beneficial.
Thank you!
References

• American Correctional Association Resolution Book. http://www.aca.org/ACA_Prod_IMIS/docs/GovernmentAffairs/ACA_RESOLUTIONS_BOOK.pdf?WebsiteKey=139f6b09-e150-4c56-9c66-284b92f21e51&=404%3bhttp%3a%2f%2fwww.aca.org%3a80%2fACA_Prod_IMIS%2fACA_Member%2fdocs%2fGovernmentAffairs%2fACA_RESOLUTIONS_BOOK.pdf


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