

Identifying Occupational Stressors to Inform Workplace Health Programs for Jail Corrections Officers in Eastern Missouri

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BACKGROUND

The National Public Safety Agenda seeks to reduce occupational stressors in corrections personnel and the National Institute for Occupational Safety Health supports this effort by suggesting the use of Total Worker Health™ (TWH) to develop and implement workplace health programs.

We implemented Phase I of a TWH study to develop tailored corrections officer (CO) health interventions.

This study supports the DCHS mission to serve humanity by exploring COs workplace health-related concerns and developing evidence-based solutions to reduce stressors in the workplace.

We will present the methods for our study and preliminary findings from Phase I of our needs assessment.

What is TWH?

TOTAL WORKER HEALTH™ is policies, programs, and practices that integrate protection from work-related safety and health hazards with promotion of injury and illness prevention efforts to advance worker well-being.

TWH includes

- **Health protection**, such as reducing mental, physical and safety hazards; and,
- **Health promotion**, such as integrating mental and physical health and well-being into workplace safety and health programs.

METHODS

Study Methods – Phase I

- Recruited 3 jails, 1 urban, 2 rural.
 - Community-based participatory research (CBPR) teams were formed at each jail.
 - With the CBPR teams, developed a survey using existing measures to assess COs perceptions of stress at work.
 - Administered the survey at each jail.
- Survey Construct Examples*
- Depression, job stress, health risk factors, physical activities (barriers), nutrition (barriers), sleep, health changes readiness, work-safety tension, work-family conflict, and decision authority.

Preliminary Data Analysis – Descriptives

Figure 1.



CBPR Team Process

1. Invite COs, upper management.
2. Discuss concerns.
3. Review survey, provide input, gain approval.

CBPR Team Participation:

- Rural sites, 2-3 members, Urban site, 13
- All teams were eager to participate.
- All teams identified workplace and job-related concerns that may contribute to stress.
- One team developed a name for their group and a logo to use on jail memos and communication in the jail. (Figure 1).
 - They call their group, "Better Tomorrow in Corrections (B2C)."

DISCUSSION

Rural and urban jails were eager to participate in corrections officer health promotion. These results will inform Phase II of a needs assessment to develop CO focus group questions and to create recommendations for workplace health interventions.

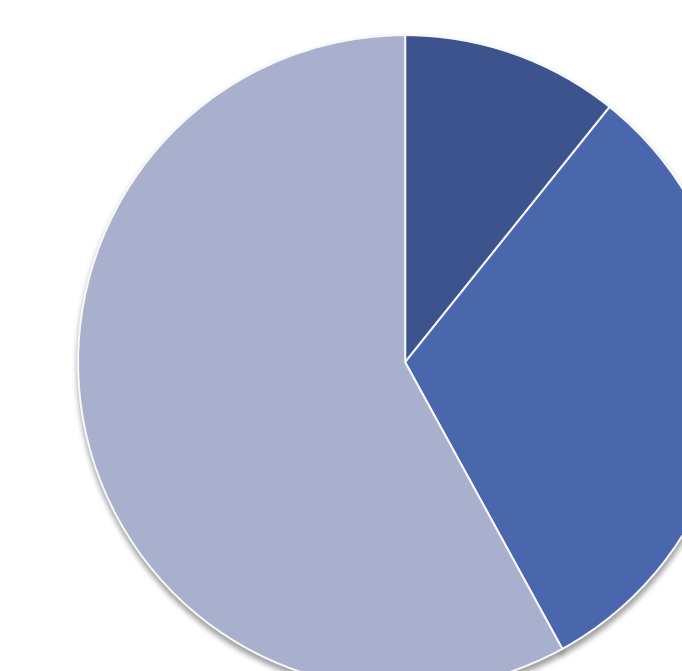
This research has the potential to inform practices and policies for COs workplace safety and mental health for the long-term goal of reducing the occurrence of suicide, injuries, and illnesses among COs.

We invite researchers and community partners to participate in this study and we ask for suggestions to address the potential facilitators and barriers to developing and implementing a TWH program among COs.

RESULTS

Jail Corrections Officers Survey Descriptives

Demographics	Rural (n=48)	Urban (n=278)	Overall (N=326)
Age (mean) Overall: 19yrs (min), 75 yrs (max)	37yrs	45yrs	44yrs
Gender - Female	13 (4%)	157 (48%)	170 (52%)
Race – Black, African American	-	100%	245 (75%)
Highest Level of Education – Some College	20 (6%)	113 (35%)	133 (41%)
Commute to work alone in car	44 (13%)	237 (73%)	281 (86%)
Marital status - Partnered	32 (10%)	133 (41%)	165 (51%)
Primary or shares responsibility for children under 18	29 (9%)	145 (45%)	174 (54%)
Household member who is elderly and ill	12 (4%)	78 (24%)	90 (28%)



- BMI < 25, normal/healthy (11%)
- BMI 25 - < 30, overweight (31%)
- BMI > 30, obese (58%)

Felt depressed at least 1-2 days in past week	39%
Diagnosed with anxiety/depression	13%
Felt fearful at least 1-2 days in past week	25%
Feeling of worry that job is emotionally hardening to self	41%
Bothered by repeated, disturbing memories in the past month	33%
Missed days / absent from work for medical problem in past 4 weeks	47%
Taking medication for high blood pressure or hypertension	31%
Uses tobacco products	30%

REFERENCES

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