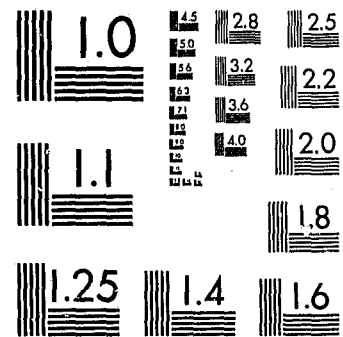


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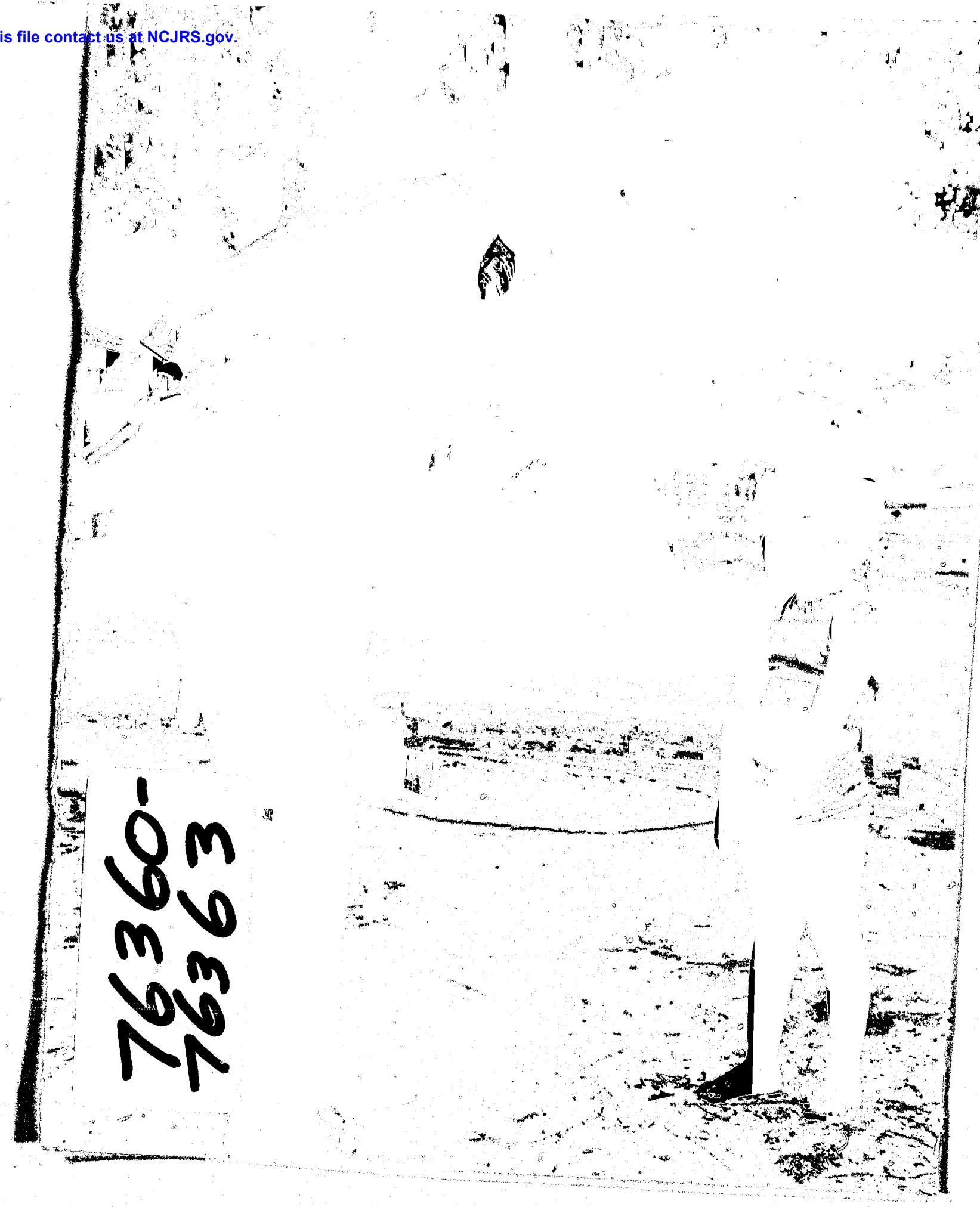
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The Cover: Providing assistance to both young and old, a Jacksonville police officer comes to the aid of a damsel in distress. (Photo courtesy of Frank Smith, Florida Times-Union, Jacksonville, Fla.)

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Management

Occupational Stress and Compensation in Law Enforcement

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The importance of improving the health and safety conditions of employees has increasingly received the attention of government agencies, business organizations, and labor unions. Not only are the physical and emotional well-being of workers an issue of humanitarian concern, but they also have a significant legal and economic impact upon the employer. Adverse working conditions can have a detrimental effect upon employee morale, job satisfaction, attendance, and attrition. Ultimately, productivity can be affected. When this occurs, it becomes costly to the organization.

As a consequence, administrators within both the public and private sectors are committing personnel and resources to the development of programs designed to prevent or reduce the adverse effects of physical and psychological stress. Nowhere is this effort more evident than within the field of law enforcement. Innovative programs of physical fitness and psychological services have been established as a response to these concerns. Police administrators have begun to recognize their responsibility to preserve and maintain a healthy, stable, and productive work force by providing necessary services. This article will alert the reader to the necessity

of compensating law enforcement personnel as a result of the various stresses associated with the occupation.

Compensation

Compensation may be defined as a payment, indemnity, or benefit given to an employee for a service or loss. It may be provided in the form of a monetary settlement, which includes salary or wages, as well as financial remuneration, after an injury or loss. An example of the latter are the workmen's compensation plans that offer pecuniary settlements to an employee who has suffered a job-related injury. However, compensation does not necessarily have to be in a monetary form—there are several other ways in which an employee can be compensated for his work.

Another method of compensation is provided through early retirement. This frequently occurs when an employee suffers a disability that prevents him from continuing to perform his duties.

Often overlooked as compensation are transfers to less stressful or less sensitive assignments that are provided when it becomes obvious that the employee should no longer function in his original capacity. The employer may also grant a leave of absence to an individual who suffers from a medical or emotional malady.

Preventive or remedial services can be provided by the employer as a form of compensation. Private industry and public service agencies alike have established programs addressing both physical and mental health. Among these programs are scheduled periods when employees may engage in organized recreation. Some industries, most notably chemical and textile manufacturers, periodically evaluate the medical health of their employees in order to detect symptoms of diseases that may be the result of conditions in the work environment.

These diverse forms of compensation have been applied to a variety of occupations. The Federal Government has mandated that certain hazardous occupations in the military service receive higher remuneration or incentive pay. For example, incentive pay is granted for military personnel assigned to submarines or self-propelled submersible vessels used for undersea exploration and research. Personnel also receive special pay when participating in the following:

- 1) Frequent and regular aerial flight;
- 2) Parachute jumping and deep sea diving;
- 3) Demolition of explosives; and
- 4) Specified research projects as experimental subjects.

The Federal workmen's compensation program permits air-traffic controllers with psychological disabilities to retire at 75 percent of their salary, provided they have been employed for 5 years and their condition has been sufficiently documented. Iron workers, painters, roofers, window washers, and other tradesmen whose work entail an element of danger, such as working at precarious heights, often receive more pay than their counterparts who are not exposed to comparable danger.

These examples illustrate the many and varied forms of compensation made available in other occupations.

Compensation in Law Enforcement

Numerous studies have demonstrated that there is an inordinate amount of stress associated with law enforcement. It can also be documented that the effects of stress can have an adverse impact upon the manner in which police officers perform their duties.¹ Beyond affecting a person's mental and physical health, stress can influence individual and collective productivity, as well as the quality of work. Due to the critical nature of police work, it is imperative that law enforcement personnel be emotionally stable.

Since stress is directly attributable to the work environment and the effects of stress can influence the performance and behavior of law enforcement personnel, *provisions must be made to compensate the police employee.* Compensation may not only benefit the individual officer but will also indirectly benefit the organization, and ultimately, the community it serves.

Monetary Compensation

Since occupational stress is an intangible factor, monetary compensation is unrealistic. The causes of stress vary in intensity and effect among individuals. While they can be identified, these stressors defy quantification. Since stress cannot be measured empirically, a standard payment schedule is difficult, if not impossible, to establish.

The incentive pay schedules employed by the military are based upon hazardous duty assignments. While it may appear that compensation is awarded for stressful work, it must be noted that stress and danger are not synonymous. Dangerous or hazardous duty may contribute to stress, but should not be considered the equivalent of stress. In law enforcement, incentive pay for dangerous assignments can impair the proper selection of personnel. Individuals may volunteer for potentially hazardous assignments, such as tactical units or bomb squads, enticed by the additional financial remuneration. As a consequence, the officer essentially becomes a mercenary. In such critical assignments, individuals should be selected for their abilities, not their willingness to expose themselves to danger for financial reward.

Compensating personnel for stress is further complicated because of the different stress levels of law enforcement functions. For example, undercover narcotics work is generally considered to be a highly stressful assignment. The combination of irregular shifts, constant exposure to danger, and the daily requirement to assume different identities, in addition to the normal organizational causes, can produce a higher degree of stress than the more traditional law enforcement role. Not only is there a variation in the extent of stress associated with different assignments, but subtle organizational variations can also induce varying degrees of stress. It is reasonable to conclude that stress will vary according to the nature of the patrol assignment. Factors such as motorized or foot patrol, one-man or two-man vehicle patrol, area of assignment, and shift assignment can all influence the degree of physical and psychological stress. Since patrol strategies must respond to community needs, these factors are constantly changing, and therefore, preclude the provision of a standard compensation schedule.

It has been established that administrative positions are as stressful as patrol positions. Again, it would be most difficult, if not impossible, to assign an appropriate scale of compensation based upon rank and responsibility. For example, a captain who commands a headquarters division may have a more or less stressful job than a captain who commands a patrol division. Undoubtedly, both individuals would have strong feelings about the relative pressures of their individual assignments. However, since stress cannot be measured, any differences between the two positions will remain a matter of conjecture.

While the degree of occupational stress may vary with rank and function, it must also be noted that individuals possess different tolerance levels for stress. Some individuals are more susceptible to the physical and emotional disorders that result from stress. Because individual tolerances may vary with time and experience, this further prohibits the development of a standard compensation schedule.

Recent arbitration has noted the distinction between work-related injuries and illnesses. An Illinois police officer, employed for 3 years in the narcotics division, claimed that he suffered from "anxiety and depressive neurosis" as a result of his assignment. While the city concurred that his work could have contributed to the debilitating illness, his claim was denied because there was no indication that it was the exclusive cause. A Connecticut police officer experienced psychological distress after he shot and killed the assailant who stabbed him and his partner. Yet, because the resultant symptoms of anxiety and fearfulness did not manifest themselves until several months after the incident, the city denied his claim for compensation. The first case exemplifies the cumulative effect of stress, while the latter illustrates the effect of a single significant episode. The fact that both claims were rejected clearly indicates the difficulty in prescribing monetary compensation for stress.

If law enforcement personnel are offered monetary compensation for their exposure to stress, the human dimension of the problem is ignored. By failing to recognize unique individual responses to stress, the employer fails to demonstrate concern for the individual employee. If all of the variables contributing to occupational stress were static, it would be convenient to assign them monetary values. However, the causes of stress are dynamic. Therefore, monetary compensation for occupational stress is neither realistic nor responsible.

"It can . . . be documented that the effects of stress can have an adverse impact upon the manner in which police officers perform their duties."

Removal from the Work Force

To remove an employee from the work environment through premature retirement is also a negative response to the problem. In fact, such action can hardly be considered a response, since it fails to address the needs of the individual worker. While a leave of absence or a transfer for medical or psychological reasons may be considered a form of treatment, they are equally unresponsive if not accompanied by adequate remedial services.

It has become increasingly expensive in terms of time and money to recruit, select, train, and equip law enforcement personnel. To release an employee who is suffering from the effects of occupational stress is costly and wasteful. Manpower, our most precious resource, should be sustained and guarded. The community that supports the police department expects the maintenance and development of its resources. As a public service agency, the law enforcement organization is obligated to protect the investment of the community and to insure the welfare of the employee.

Provision of Services

The most appropriate form of compensation is through the provision of services. Specifically, these services address the prevention and treatment of occupational stress. The strategy most effective in aiding the employee is also the most suitable method for the organization and the community. The police department has wide latitude in the development and implementation of a psychological services program. Generally, options can be grouped under two major headings—"professional" and "in-house" programing.

Professional Programing

A professional program format might include hiring a psychologist to design and implement a program, contracting for services, or using voluntary professionals. The larger metropolitan police departments have made the most progressive achievements toward preventing and treating occupational stress in law enforcement.² Several agencies, including those in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Seattle, Dallas, and San Jose, have established exemplary programs of psychological services. These departments vary in size from 800 employees to more than 23,000 officers. Yet despite numerous departmental variations, the consensus is that the most effective method of delivering psychological services is through the use of a full-time clinical psychologist. There is general agreement that when personnel are referred to professionals outside the agency, there is no continuity in the treatment of police-related issues. Although any competent psychologist could be of assistance in dealing with ordinary personal problems, police-related problems require the psychologist to recognize the operational character of the department and to be aware of the complexities of the police function.

The employment of a full-time psychologist allows the counselor to become a specialist in the unique problems associated with law enforcement and the specific needs of the agency. His relationship with the department also increases both his credibility and his acceptance by the personnel he serves. Employing a full-time psychologist insures the availability of assistance during critical incidents, and finally, he can establish alliances with administrators to facilitate the treatment of personnel.

Clinical psychologists are generally preferred to psychiatrists as police counselors. Although psychiatrists are licensed physicians and are qualified to prescribe medication, police personnel do not normally require that type of treatment. Should the necessity for prescribed medication arise, a competent psychologist would recognize the exception and make the appropriate referral. Furthermore, since psychologists are usually more research oriented, the agency would benefit from the continuing evaluation of personnel and the development of ancillary programs. These additional programs frequently include the following:

- 1) Psychological screening of applicants;
- 2) Spouse orientation;
- 3) Recruit training;
- 4) Inservice training;
- 5) Suicide intervention;
- 6) Investigative hypnosis; and
- 7) Hostage negotiation.

Finally, since the most practical consideration for any department is monetary, it should be noted that psychologists are substantially less expensive to employ than psychiatrists.

If it is deemed infeasible or unnecessary to hire a full-time psychologist, the agency may obtain the same services on a part-time basis through a contractual agreement. While a part-time consultant would not offer all of the ancillary services available through a full-time counselor, the agency may find that the former is more cost effective. A major consideration in weighing the choice between a full-time psychologist and a part-time consultant is the size of the department or the number of potential clients.

If it is determined that services could be most appropriately provided through a consultant, the agency has the option of hiring one person, a clinical group, or several professionals. Once again, this decision must be based upon the specific need for service, the department's size, the geographic distribution of agency personnel, and financial considerations.

Another alternative available to an agency that chooses to use the services of a professional is to establish a method of soliciting the voluntary as-

"Since occupational stress is an intangible factor, monetary compensation is unrealistic."

sistance of medical professionals. Many people within the community have distinguished themselves through their willingness to devote their time, energy, and expertise to public service. By using these resources, a department can not only expedite the development of a counseling program but can also cultivate a lasting union with an important segment of the private sector. However, when considering the use of volunteers, the agency must remember that the volunteer's primary commitment is to his occupation. If the availability of the volunteer does not conform to the organization's needs, consideration must then be given to supplementing his services or offering another type of program.

In-House Programing

Strategies are available to police departments that wish to develop in-house capabilities to respond to the problem of occupational stress. Peer counseling is one such strategy. A number of police departments have designated employees as peer counselors and have provided them with the necessary training to offer assistance to personnel within the agency. Perhaps the best known program of this type is located within the Boston police department. The director and the counselors—all veteran patrolmen—include divorcees and recovered alcoholics. The program is based on the premise that a person who has experienced the problems associated with the job makes a more credible counselor. This type of program also satisfies the contention that policemen are inherently suspicious of "outsiders" and will not confide in a mental health professional.

A potential problem with using lay counselors is that they may not be qualified to handle every case. While a peer counselor is generally capable of an initial assessment, subsequent treatment might require professional intervention. Such a system only serves to create an additional barrier between the employee and the professional, without offering any measurable benefits.

Another problem encountered with a peer counselor program involves guaranteeing the client's anonymity and the confidentiality of his problem. The psychologist or psychiatrist is bound by law and professional ethics to maintain the confidentiality of his consultations. There is no such assurance of confidentiality when dealing with a lay intermediary. The reassignment or promotion of a peer counselor could produce serious questions regarding the confidentiality of the system. Furthermore, it is doubtful that a supervisory officer would confide in a subordinate. Therefore, since police administrators are not immune to the effects of occupational stress, the system would effectively eliminate a portion of the service's potential clientele.

Another in-house service may be provided through training. A graduated program of continuing education could be implemented through recruit, in-service, and supervisory training. A specific training curriculum pertaining to the causes and effects of occupational stress in law enforcement is most effective if implemented as a component of a counseling program. However, training by itself can be successful in inculcating the employee against the adverse effects of stress.

Recruit training is one of the most important elements of stress prevention. Reiser has noted that "officers can be taught to anticipate stressful situations, to become knowledgeable about the internal and environmental factors affecting decisionmaking under stress, and to cope more effectively with difficult situations in the field."³ By identifying the sources and the results of job stress, a department can effectively defuse the "John Wayne syndrome" among its novice officers. If it is available, it is also critically important that recruits be informed of the psychological counseling service. If an officer is assured of the integrity of the counseling program upon his initiation into the agency, he will be less reluctant to use the service if the need arises.

Inservice and supervisory training should reinforce the coping mechanisms introduced during recruit training. More importantly, inservice training provides the means to introduce techniques available to reduce stress. Procedures such as regular physical exercise, proper nutrition, and relaxation techniques offer the employee a means to increase his tolerance to stress. Supervisors should be exposed to the techniques of psychological counseling, not trained as therapists, but sensitized to the signs of mental disorganization. Once trained to identify the symptoms of stress, they can then direct their subordinates to the available treatment programs.

Spouse orientation is another strategy that will heighten the employee's tolerance to stress. The primary function of this program, which should be conducted concurrently with recruit training, is to identify the causes and effects of occupational stress upon the employee and his family. The National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals has observed the importance of stabilizing police marriages through spouse orientation. "Policemen's wives have an enormous effect not only on their husband's efficiency on the job but also on their general well-being. Adequate orientation and ongoing group counseling programs help new policemen's wives adapt to the requirements of their husband's occupation."⁴

Conclusion

Law enforcement administrators must recognize their responsibility to maintain a healthy, stable, and productive work force. Considerable time and effort have been expended to establish standards of physical fitness, intelligence, character, and emotional stability as necessary prerequisites for employment. Efforts to recruit the most desirable candidates is the primary concern of most law enforcement executives. Having established these standards, it follows that they should be maintained throughout an employee's career. By offering the employee compensation through the provision of psychological services, the law enforcement administrator will insure the maturation of the community's initial investment.

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Footnotes

- ¹For a full discussion of the causes and effects of occupational stress in law enforcement see: William H. Kroes, *Society's Victim: The Policeman*, (Springfield, Ill.: Charles W. Thomas, 1976.)
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- ³M. Reiser, "Mental Health in Police Work and Training," *The Police Chief*, vol. 41, August 1974, p. 52.
- ⁴President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, Task Force Report, *The Police* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), p. 276.

END