

the important things in our lives in service of our work. And when offenders fail, as some inevitably do, we immediately conclude that we too have failed. This can be a devastating process for each of us and cause us to experience what we call “secondary trauma,” or the experience of feeling (psychologically, emotionally, and physically) like you have been traumatized as a direct result of the work you do with sex offenders and victims of sexual assault.

So with that in mind, I’d like to accomplish a few things during this brief training session today that I think will be helpful to you in your work. First and foremost, I’m going to provide you with a clearer understanding of how our work—and the way that we approach it (both individually and organizationally)—can negatively affect us and cause secondary trauma. I also want to empower you with some practical tips and strategies that you can use in your day-to-day work to lessen some of the negative effects of your work. In other words, I’m going to provide you with a primer on self-care because historically, those of us who are in this business haven’t done a particularly good job of taking care of ourselves. In addition, we’ll have some conversations about things that can be done organizationally within our agencies to prevent and mitigate the effects of secondary trauma.

The agenda is designed to be interactive, so if you have questions or concerns as we move forward, please speak up. I often find that what we have to offer one another—our reflections and thoughts about our work and how it impacts us—is just as helpful as the material provided by the trainer.

I’m thrilled that you all are here today because I believe that this training is just as important as the substantive part of our work. Our ability to assess or treat or supervise is directly related to our ability to stay emotionally and physically healthy and motivated in the context of incredibly difficult work circumstances. Similarly, our ability to stay emotionally healthy and motivated, and to live balanced, rich, and rewarding lives, depends on how well we process and cope with this challenging work.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this training, you will be able to:

- Define secondary trauma in the context of the management of sex offenders;
- Distinguish burnout from secondary trauma;
- Describe the impact of secondary trauma on individuals and agencies that share responsibility for sex offender management;
- Recognize no less than five indicators and symptoms of secondary trauma;

➤ **Use Slide #2: Goals of This Training**

➤ **Use Slides #3–4: Learning Objectives**

- Select at least three self-care strategies that you can use in your day-to-day work to mitigate the effects of—or prevent—secondary trauma; and
- Identify three or more strategies that agencies can undertake to address secondary trauma.

Group Activity: Introductions of Trainer(s) and Participants

Because this is going to be an interactive session that includes discussions, and because I don't think that everyone knows each other, I'd like to spend just a few minutes on introductions. Let's quickly go around the room and please state:

- Your name;
- Your title and agency;
- The nature of your job; and
- Your experience in sex offender management—how long you've been in this business.

Please write down on a piece of paper what you perceive to be the hardest part of your job and pass it to the front of the room. We'll briefly discuss some of the most common responses. I think we will learn that we all have a lot in common when it comes to our work.

➤ Use Slide #5: Introductions of Trainer(s) and Participants

***Note:** Opportunities for discussions among audience members can be particularly helpful when covering material on secondary trauma, as they often want to process their own experiences and hear from their colleagues about how this work impacts them. These interactions can be a very valuable source of additional information and support for participants because their exchanges often reveal that they have faced similar challenges and stressors in their work with sex offenders. This curriculum is, therefore, designed to promote frequent dialogue among the participants and the trainer about the information that is presented.*

Therefore, it is wise to allow time for introductions in order to set an "interactive" tone for the training that encourages participation and interaction. Introductions will also provide the trainer with an opportunity to get a clearer sense of the group's level of knowledge and experience. Introductions in

large groups can be made around individual training tables; introductions of all participants are appropriate when the audience is small.

The trainer should review the responses submitted by participants and read aloud some of the most frequently noted responses. The trainer should then note that these are very common reactions, and are in fact topics that will be covered during the remainder of the session.