

Crisis Planning for Specialized Docket Teams and Participants

Ohio Specialized Docket Conference

November 22, 2019

Michelle O'Brien
Principal Court Consultant
National Center for State Courts



Goals for Today

- ✓ Understand what an adverse event plan is and why it is important
- ✓ Understand how to develop an adverse event plan
- ✓ Understand critical incident stress debriefing
- ✓ Demonstrate supportive services for professionals and participants



*As part of a treatment court,
every day is about problem-solving...
trying to be **proactive** and stop the
use of drugs, **encourage recovery**
for mental health...*

Adverse Event



Adverse Event Plan

Have you thought about what you or your team would do if something bad happened:

- in your court
- to a participant
- to a team member
- to the public?

How would you handle the event?

Who would handle the event?



What is an adverse event?

An adverse event is:

- A criminal act by one of the participants
- A serious injury to a participant, team member, or someone else
- An overdose of a participant
- An impropriety of a team member
- Anything that would jeopardize the integrity of the program



Why have an Adverse Event Plan?

An Adverse Event Plan seeks to protect:

- All participants (past, present and future)
- Participants confidential information and reputations
- The court, its employees and their reputations
- The treatment court team
- Contributing agencies and their reputations
- Funding sources
- The integrity of the program itself and sustainability of the program



Pieces of an Adverse Event Plan



Coordinated Response

- Define adverse event
- How and when adverse event is reported?
- Who will be the point person?
- Who will the point person notify?
- Team phone numbers, 24/7
- Where and when will the team assemble?
- Who will be the spokesperson regarding the adverse event?
- How to address the adverse event without affecting a potential case or the rights of the participant
- What outside resources can be used?
- What materials should be available?
- Agencies may have their own individual responses, how to coordinate?



Written Incident Report

- Memorialize the adverse event
- Report written by the team member most directly involved in the incident or with the most information about the incident
- Completed as close in time to the incident as possible
- Who will keep the incident report?
- Why develop an incident report?
 - Reports may be subject to subpoena if criminal charges or civil lawsuit results from the incident
 - Form and detail of the report is important



Care of Team Members and Participants

- How do you care for your team members?
- What do they need?
- When do they need it?
- What to do when showing signs of distress and impairment or dysfunction



Critical Incident Stress Management

- Pre-incident education
- Critical incident stress debriefing
- Individual crisis intervention
- Family support services
- Follow-up services
- Referrals for professional care
- Post incident education programs



Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

- A supportive, crisis-focused discussion of a traumatic event
- For small, homogeneous groups who have encountered a powerful traumatic event
- Aims to reduce distress and restore group cohesion and unit performance
- Structured group story-telling process combined with practical information to normalize group member reactions to a critical incident and facilitate their recovery



Objectives of Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

- The mitigation of the impact of a traumatic incident
- The facilitation of the normal recovery processes and a restoration of adaptive functions in psychologically healthy people who are distressed by an unusually disturbing event
- Functions as a screening opportunity to identify group members who might benefit from additional support services or a referral for professional care



Required Conditions for Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

- Small group (about 20 people) must be homogeneous
- Group members must not be currently involved in the situation
- Involvement complete
- Situation has moved past the most acute stages
- Group members should have had about the same level of exposure to the experience
- Group should be psychologically ready and not so fatigued or distraught that they cannot participate in the discussion



Timing of the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

- Often not the first intervention to follow a critical incident
- Brief group information process
- One-on-one interventions
- Typically 24 to 72 hours after the incident
- May be delayed
- Crisis still ongoing
- Not psychologically ready to accept help
- 1 to 3 hours to complete



Phases of the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

- **Introduction** Introduce team members and process
- **Facts** Brief overview of the facts from their viewpoint
- **Thoughts** Speak on one's thoughts
- **Reactions** Focus on impact and feeling
- **Symptoms** Effects in your life
- **Teaching** Team normalizes symptoms, explains reactions, and provides stress management information
- **Re-entry** Participants may ask questions or make final statements
- **Follow-up** Provide refreshments which allows the team to follow-up with each participant and "anchor" the group



Follow-up for the Adverse Event

- Approximately 30 days after the incident
- Team should review and discuss the incident
- How the adverse event was handled
- Any procedures not followed or need to be changed
- Outcome of the incident
- How to reduce the risk of similar future events



Example of Adverse Event Plan

- Illinois Problem-Solving Court Standards 4.2 Written Policies and Procedures
- As part of the PSC procedures, the PSC should consider drafting and adopting an "Adverse Event Plan" to clarify how information about an adverse event which may compromise the integrity of the program (such as a violent act by one of the participants or serious injury to a participant) is disseminated to team members. It should also cover designating a spokesperson for the PSC under those circumstances. (See Appendix I.)
- https://courts.illinois.gov/Probation/Problem-Solving_Courts/P-SC_Standards_2015.pdf



Contact



Michelle O'Brien

mobrien@ncsc.org

