

Thank you for attending the Symposium on Police Officer Suicide sponsored by The Center for Applied Psychology and Forensic Studies and Daninger Solutions, Inc. Keep this event summary for your records. Feel free to share with related parties as appropriate.

Featured Speaker:

Dr. Daniel L. Hollar holds a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Florida State University. His expertise is suicide risk assessment. He has co-authored more than 10 publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals and authored a book on Suicide and Eating Disordered Behavior. He has worked alongside law enforcement professionals at the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, the Florida Department of Children and Families and at the largest forensic psychiatric inpatient hospital in Florida. He serves as CEO of Daninger Solutions, Inc. and Chairperson of the Department of Behavioral and Social Science Studies at Bethune-Cookman University.

Event Overview:

During November 15th - 16th, 2018, the Center for Applied Psychology and Forensic Studies and Daninger Solutions, Inc. sponsored a Symposium on Police Officer Suicide featuring Dr. Daniel Hollar, Ph.D. The purpose of this event was to increase understanding of psychological (mental, behavioral, emotional) issues as they relate to Law Enforcement Officer suicides. Participants included law enforcement personnel from the Chicago Police Department and police psychologists from Chicago, Boston and Toronto. Over the two-day workshop, participants:

- **Assessed the problem** of police officer suicide
- **Reviewed the leading suicide theory** and learned how to apply a model of suicide risk assessment to plan effective intervention strategies for police officers at risk for suicide
- **Surveyed the main obstacles** which impede police departments in developing and implementing solutions to the problem of suicide among officers
- **Proposed solutions** for prevention and intervention of police officer suicide which may be implemented by police departments

Event Highlights:We assessed the problem:

- The Chicago Police Department's officer suicide rate is 60 percent higher than other departments, according to a 2017 Department of Justice report.
- Leading models on suicide risk suggest law enforcement officers may be at increased risk relative to general public.
- Suicide in law enforcement is an understudied problem because researcher access to information on police suicide is extremely limited.

We reviewed the theory:

Participants learned the three components of the Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicidal Behavior (IPT). The ability to engage in lethal self-injury is a combination of the three components.

Component	Description	How to Observe in LEOs
Thwarted Belongingness	feeling that one does not belong	problems with fellow officers, lack of family support, targeting by community
Perceived Burdensomeness	self-misperception of incompetence, ineffectiveness, and/or being a burden	demotions, reassignments, poor evals, targeting by media
Acquired Capability	habituation to pain through repeated exposure to pain or traumatic events	being injured, multiple incidence of physical confrontation or firing weapon in line of duty

We surveyed the obstacles:

- EAP may not be sufficiently trained to deal with suicide
- Officers resist requesting or engaging in treatment because it may be perceived as weakness and they fear repercussions to career
- Often no buy-in from Administration hierarchy

We proposed solutions:

Create avenues for emergency assistance such as a 24-7 suicide/trauma-support hotline, manned by trained, volunteer CPD officers and available to CPD officers and their families.

Implement continuing-education programs such as Performance Enhancement for Police (*PEP*, see attached “Proposal of Services”) designed to elevate the mental well-being of officers, mitigate the psychological impact of job-related stress among officers, and decrease the risk of suicide.

Perform wellness check evaluations (*not fitness-for-duty*) to screen for elevated suicide risk (based on IPT) and mental illness. The process should have clear steps for redemption perhaps involving individual or group therapy, trauma support, PEP, substance abuse treatment, and re-evaluation.

Develop a system to acknowledge and respond to officer trauma, to include assigning affected officers to trauma support meetings in the form of group conversations with fellow officers or individual conversations with a therapist.

Enhance understanding of officer suicide through the development of a forensic autopsy to determine critical factors predictive of police officer death by suicide.

Schedule a suicide risk conference to increase awareness, gather support and generate ideas.

Members of the legislature, academia, union representatives, community religious leaders, and police department administrators should attend.

About us: Daninger Solutions, Inc. is a Florida-based consulting firm specializing in human resources, risk assessment, community safety, and policing. We assist various firms -- from law enforcement agencies, local governments and schools to corporations and not-for-profits -- in effectively and efficiently carrying out their missions through consultation, support, and intervention in Mental Well-being and Psycho-education. Please contact Daninger Solutions at daningersolutions@gmail.com or visit www.daningersolutions.com for more information.