

Transforming
Lives

Shifting Cultures: Addressing Vicarious Trauma in Adult Protective Services

Offered by Drs. Matt Goldenberg, Tara Fairfield, Jill McCarl
Adult Protective Services/Department of Social and Health Services
Washington State
November 2020





Notice: What associations do you have with the images?
What thoughts arise?
What feelings come up?
What changes in your body are you experiencing?

Vicarious trauma (VT) is a shift in your worldview that causes skepticism, suspicion, hostility, or a negative attitude towards individuals or groups of people. VT is a result of observing harm towards and the suffering of others.



2006 study found of 1000 active social workers, 39% are burned out but this increases to 75% over a career. 3 most significant factors to a professional career included supervision, high case load, and hours worked per week (Siebert)

2 Qualities of Social Workers that create high vulnerability for burn out:

- *High empathic capacity (ability to identify emotions in self and others and relate)*
- *High idealism (world-view)*

The difficulty in retention of highly skilled staff in protective services is not a natural consequence of our work.

It is a call to action.

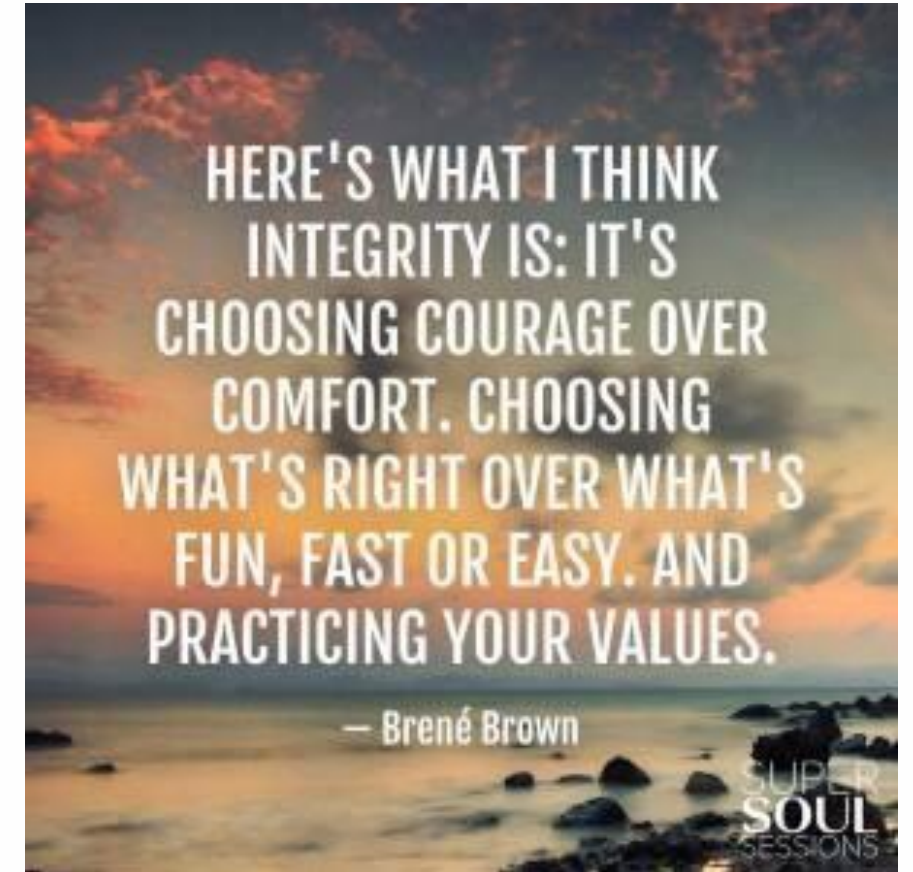
Making the case for a culture shift:

- Economic costs of replacing staff
- Skill level of a young workforce
- Attraction for new grads/millennials
- Consumer population with increasing complexity
- Authority is undermined when staff are overwhelmed
- The need for protective services may be greater than available talent pool
- Staff relationship to their agency will directly impact their relationships with clients



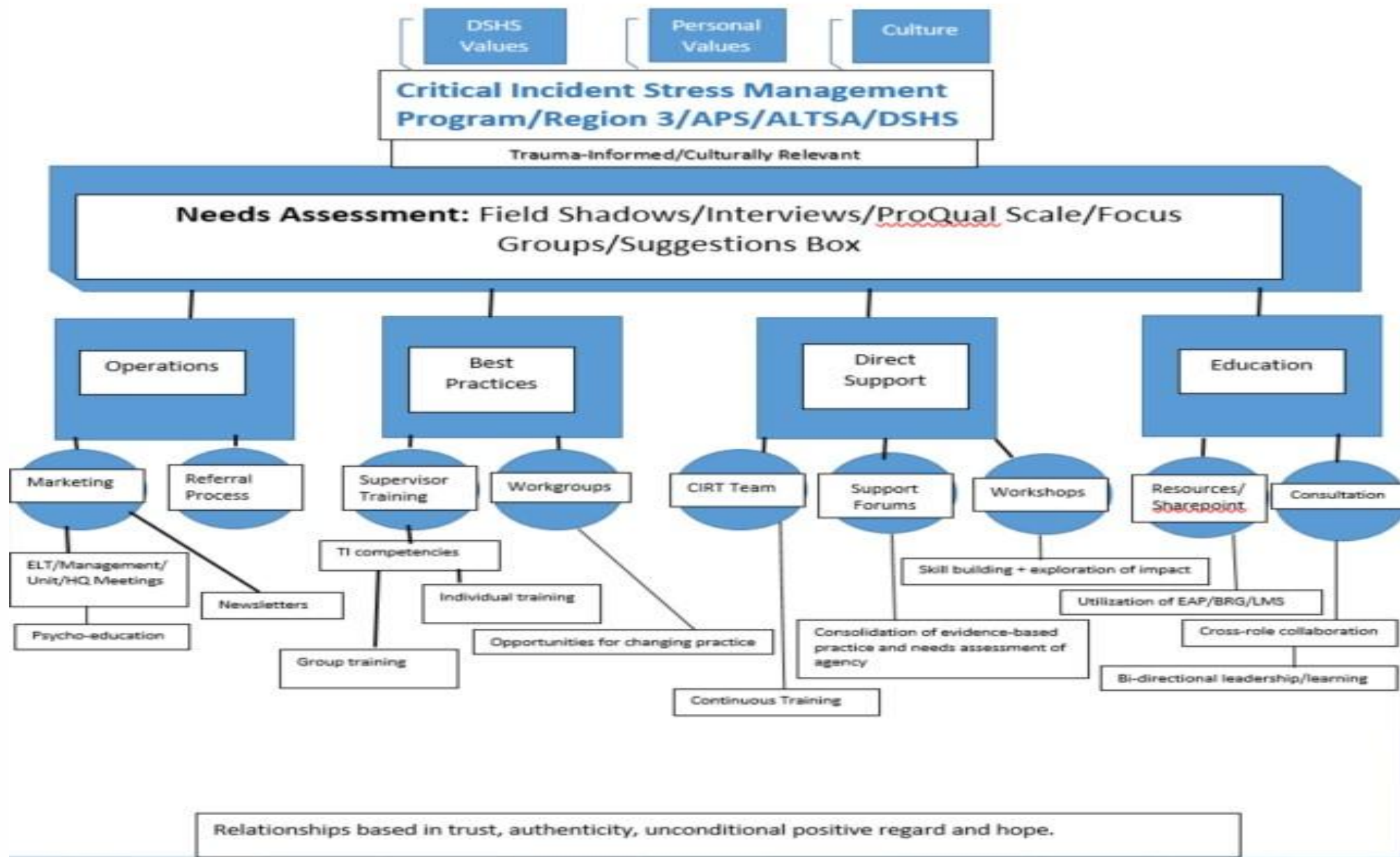
Critical Incident Stress Management Program

Main objective: To use evidence-based practices to prevent trauma, manage stress, and increase organizational and individual resiliency.



Essentials of a CISM Program

- Trained crisis interventionist: Graduate-level mental health professional with training in evidence-based crisis intervention practices and theory
 - Continued funding for a full-time position
 - Ability to support manager with supervision and ongoing trainings
 - Positive support from headquarters and upper leadership
 - Investment of time to market the program to staff
 - Access to meet with staff at all levels for program development
 - Policies and procedures manual
 - Strategic plan
 - Program mission and/or vision statement
 - Team recruitment and training strategy
 - Quality assurance measures



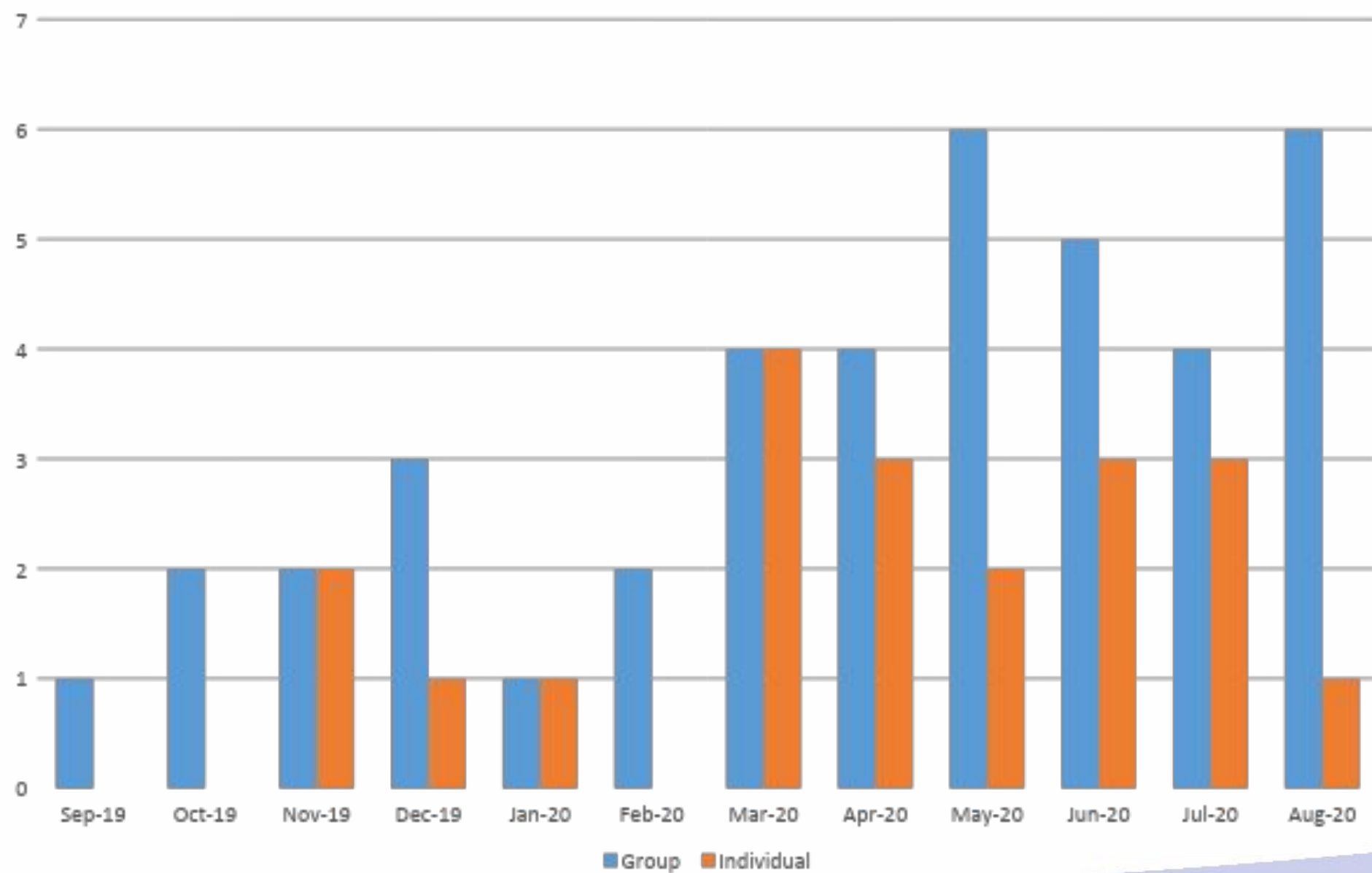
Examples of CIRT Referrals

- Sudden or unexpected death of staff/colleague
- Sudden or unexpected death of friend or family member
- Death or serious injury of child on case load
- Death or serious injury of parent/caregiver on case load
- Act of violence resulting in injury or death
- Aggressive behavior/assault
- Witness to act of violence resulting in injury or death
- Workplace violence or threat of violence
- Act of terrorism or community violence
- Victim of violent crime during performance of work-related duties
- A serious injury, illness to yourself or a colleague
- Observation of traumatic event
- Natural disaster
- Cumulative stress
- Other event which overwhelms normal coping mechanisms

How does this work?

1. Any staff member completes a one page form requesting help
2. Requesting staff member emails form to CIRT mailbox
3. Program manager reviews request and confirms who will respond and when
4. Intervention is completed by volunteer from team
5. Team member completes response form and emails to program manager

Group/Individual Crisis Intervention Utilization



CISM Participant Survey

July 2020

"I think it has just helped me to be aware of stressors to look for and ways to deal with the stress. I was experiencing a lot indicators of stress, sleeplessness, foggy brain, etc which I didn't realize was stress related. I think identification of symptoms and being aware when you are experiencing them is helpful. Then I know I need to work on some self care."

"I feel incredibly supported and care for. The support is phenomenal and without CISM I cannot imagine what that would be like. This work is very challenging and evolving, its great to have CISM offering support for everyone."

"I am very grateful for the CISM program and Matt. I feel that I have personally gone through much stress and sadness in the wake of COVID-19 and feel that I would not be in as good a place without the CISM platforms for support."

"Being able to have an open forum to discuss issues we are having as individuals and as a team, and being able to speak freely has helped me so much. As clerical, I feel the work load has greatly increased and then our world around us is so devastating right now, I need an "out" and Matt is able to make that happen and everyone seems to feel safe to openly speak."

"I will be the first to admit that when CISM was introduced I was very against it. I did not appreciate the approach and was not ready to buy into it. A co-worker encouraged me to join one of the forums once COVID-19 hit, so I did. And, I enjoyed my experience. It changed my perspective on Matt and his knowledge. While sometimes I have questioned if he knows what frontline workers go through, Matt has expanded his hand and kindly shared his wealth of expertise in many areas. CISM forums have helped me normalize my feelings within APS, especially through these recent difficult times."

The Office for Victims of Crime Vicarious Trauma Toolkit:
ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/what-is-the-vt-org

International Critical Incident Stress Foundation: <https://icisf.org/>

The World Health Organization Psychological First Aid:
https://www.who.int/mental_health/publications/guide_field_workers/en/

Transforming Lives

Matt Goldenberg, PsyD
360-968-3317 (work cell)
Matthew.Goldenberg@dshs.wa.gov

