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Perceptions of the Hays County Sheriff's
Office Pertaining to the Texas
Commission on Law Enforcement
Officers Standards and Education's
Stress Management Curriculum

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**Perceptions of the Hays County Sheriff's Office Pertaining to the Texas Commission
on Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Education's Stress Management
Curriculum**

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to describe the perceptions and attitudes of the Hays County Sheriff's Office employees who have taken the (TCLEOSE) Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education's stress management training. TCLEOSE mandates the training curriculum used in this study be given to all law enforcement officers throughout the State of Texas. The Hays County Sheriff's Officer participants indicate that while the training is effective in identifying sources of stress, more work is needed in the instruction of coping methods.

About the Author

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Chapter 1: Introduction

History of the Study of Stress

Stress is defined as “any event that requires us to adjust in some manner—physiological reaction, thinking, feeling, or behaving” (Anderson et al. 1995, 2). Hans Selye is credited with discovering stress in 1935, while testing hormones in laboratory rats. Selye discovered that the organs in his lab rats began to harden and the health of the rats declined as he introduced changes to their environment. According to Viner (1999, 391) “Before Selye, the term stress had occasional use in psychological circles to describe a mental strain.” Selye pioneered the research in stress and proved stress caused negative effects on the body. Selye’s research contributions provided strong evidence that stress plays a role in many types of physical and mental disorders including cardiovascular heart disease and depression.

Stress and Law Enforcement

While stress affects everyone, individuals in certain occupations, such as law enforcement, experience disproportionately higher levels of perceived stress than the general population. According to John Violanti (1992, 718) police officers are one of the most stressed groups of workers in the United States. Viner (1999) argues law enforcement may be one of the most stressful careers in the world.

Stress on police officers affects everyone around them including their families, friends, the agencies where they work and even the general public. According to the National Institute of Justice (2000, 21) “the cumulative negative effects of stress on

officers and their families typically affects the agency through impaired officer performance and the job-related problems of tardiness and absenteeism, and low morale”. In a study conducted by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, 2,300 police officers from 29 different departments of various jurisdictions were interviewed. The study found that 23 percent were having serious problems with alcohol, 10 percent were struggling with drug addictions, and 20 percent were having problems with their children (Madonna & Kelly, 2002, 35). These proportions are significantly higher than the general public. Ainsworth (2002, 131) agrees that officers stress can have a “detrimental effect” on their organizations and the public at large.

Stress and the Officer

There are many situations and events that cause stress in an officer’s life. Some of these events are caused by actions of others and some are considered a typical component of the job. The following are situations that add stress to the officer and contribute to law enforcement being considered a stressful career.

The Chase

After completing a 12-hour night shift and on his way home from work, an officer found himself behind a car that appeared to be unable to maintain a single lane of travel. The officer observed the vehicle nearly strike an oncoming vehicle and decided to make a traffic stop. The officer turned on his emergency lights and siren and attempted to pull the vehicle over. As the suspect driver noticed the police car behind him he began to flee from the officer. As a result of the high speed, the suspect lost control of his vehicle and smashed into the retaining wall. The officer approached the vehicle and

removed the driver from the car. The driver was found to be under the influence of alcohol and was taken to jail. Upon arrival at the jail (now three hours after he should have been off duty) the officer began writing his booking paperwork. The officer was approached by the day shift supervisor and was informed that the report and all the necessary paperwork needed to be turned in prior to going home. The officer advised the supervisor that he had already worked 15 hours and needed to get home and take his children to school as his wife needed to leave for work. The supervisor replied that the paperwork could not wait and had to be done. The officer contacted his wife and advised her of his situation. The officer's wife was less than understanding and hung up on her husband after complaining about the hours he had to work for his job. After completing the paperwork and driving home, the officer had worked a total of 18 hours. The officer arrived home and realized that he had to report back on duty in less than 6 hours.

In this incident the officer was faced with many stressful situations. Not only did the officer lose sleep, but he was forced to place his job over his family. The officer then had to complete an excessive amount of paperwork in order to comply with the wishes of a supervisor. This situation is a typical scenario faced by police officers many times during their career.

The Holiday

While patrolling a business area on Christmas day, an officer is on the phone with his wife to see if the kids have had a chance to play with their new toys. As the officer is talking to his wife, he is interrupted by his dispatcher advising him a physical disturbance in progress. The officer says goodbye to his wife and responds to the call. As the officer arrives on location he is met in the driveway by a woman who has been assaulted by her

husband. The woman is bleeding and is in need of medical attention, but is trying to get back to her children who are inside with her husband. The officer requests an ambulance to his location and continues to make entry into the residence. As he enters the residence he observes the suspect which is obviously under the influence of an unknown narcotic. The officer is forced to physically subdue the agitated and resisting suspect in order to place him under arrest. After placing the suspect in a secure location, the officer observes two children in the house. It is apparent that the children have been abused due to the numerous fresh and old bruises on their bodies. The officer sends the children to a different hospital than the mother for a medical evaluation and possible emergency removal from the home.

Violence during the holidays and exposure to violent acts are a common occurrence that law enforcement officers are forced to witness and control. Stressful situations, like the ones mentioned and numerous others not mentioned, are examples of why officers need training to recognize and deal with potential stressors.

Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education

Law enforcement agencies and officers in the state of Texas are governed by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education (TCLEOSE). TCLEOSE mandates training requirements and controls the issuing of licenses to peace officers. In response to the apparent problems associated with governing a high-stress occupation, TCLEOSE took action and implemented a stress management program. TCLEOSE recognized stress management as an important tool for new officers to possess and mandated that stress management training be given during the basic peace officer

training program. Specific components of the TCLEOSE stress management curriculum include: internal department stressors; external department stressors; stress from the work itself; individual officer stress; effects of stress; and coping methods. The Hays County Sheriff's Office, in compliance with TCLEOSE, provides stress management training as part of its basic police officer class (BPOC). The stress management curriculum implemented by the Hays County Sheriff's Office BPOC is the same curriculum used by other law enforcement agencies throughout the state of Texas. After reviewing the literature and the TCLEOSE curriculum, it was noted that the TCLEOSE components are a direct reflection of the literature.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is threefold. The first purpose of this paper is to identify and explain the rationale for the components of the police officer stress management training used in Texas. Secondly, this study describes the attitudes and perceptions Hays County Deputies regarding the effectiveness of the stress management training. Third, this research makes recommendations to improve the training based on survey data and the literature review.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter two (Literature Review) discusses the scholarly literature pertaining to stress management and examines the TCLEOSE curriculum. In chapter two the literature is reviewed and compared to the TCLEOSE curriculum components. Chapter three discusses the setting where the research was conducted, which was the Hays County Sheriff's Office and Hays County. The methodology used in this research project is introduced in chapter four. This chapter also discusses the population, statistical analysis

and survey design. The survey results and data are explained in chapter five. Chapter six is the final chapter and gives a summary of the findings, makes recommendations for improving the stress management program and gives recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the scholarly literature related to stress management programs. Next the chapter explains the rationale for the components of the police officer stress management training. Finally, the descriptive categories are formulated and connected to the literature.

INTRODUCTION

An effective stress management program begins with training officers how to recognize stressors he or she will encounter throughout their career. According to Violanti (1996, 81) stress awareness courses help officers cope with stress. Violanti (1996, 81) adds “a well-rounded stress education program should include identification of stress, the value and techniques of physical exercise, benefits of proper nutrition, interpersonal communication methods, and coping styles.”

Another consideration for a stress management program is timing. According to Graves (1996,106) recruits must be taught how to identify stressors and then taught “productive coping methods and proper stress management methods.” If recruits are not educated in proper coping methods; negative coping methods may be used such as alcohol, other drugs and may even begin to withdraw from family and friends (Graves 1996, 106).

According to the literature reviewed, the following topics should be incorporated into stress management training for police officers.

- Sources of inter-departmental stress
- Sources of external department stress
- Stress from the work itself

- Individual officer stress
- Effects of stress
- Coping methods

The above mentioned topics are all components of the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education stress management training curriculum.

Internal Department Stress

Law enforcement officers are burdened with many types of stressors each and everyday. One source of stress that cannot be escaped is inter-departmental stress, also known as organizational stress. According to Zhao et al. (2002, 46) “research on police stress has tended to view police organizational structure and management practices as among the primary source of stress in the law enforcement workplace environment.”

Finn and Tomz (1996, 7) point out stressors stemming from organizations include shift work, negligent supervisors, lack of rules, inadequate policy input, and lack of upward career mobility. Researchers such as Zhao (2002) and Anderson (1995) argue that organizational stress is greater than other stress encountered by law enforcement officers due to its frequency and the officers inability to avoid the organizational stress.

Stinchcomb (2004, 262) suggests that traumatic experiences such as shootings, and death do add to stress, but for most officers, most of the time identify the “frequent” daily grind of the organization as the most pervasive source of stress.

Officers must be trained to better manage the inter-departmental stressors they encounter within the law enforcement agency. Officers must be able to identify sources of organizational stress in order to effectively cope with stressors from within the organization. In addition, officers must know that they are not alone in feeling stress and that it is normal and appropriate to seek help if stress becomes too great to handle alone.

Shift Work

One of the most common sources of organizational stress is shift work.

According to Peter Finn (1981, 31) the term shift work can be interpreted differently by people. "Shift work is properly regarded as work in which employees 'shift' schedules on some regular basis from daytime to evening or nighttime." It is largely accepted that shift work implies a person works between the hours of 1900 though 0700 (Finn 1981, 31). In addition, shift work may cause problems in employee's health, family, social life, and job safety (Finn, 19981). Due to the nature of law enforcement shift coverage is required twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. Working all hours means that officers are forced to work on weekends and holidays. Evenings, weekends and holidays are typically busy times for officers. During these times, officers are more likely to be exposed to violent crimes.

Shift work often makes it difficult for an officer to function properly. One of the problems shift work creates is that it makes it difficult to maintain a normal sleep pattern. This is especially true when the officer's shift rotates from days to nights. Not having a steady sleep pattern and working different hours can cause serious fatigue. Vila, et al. (2002,5) suggest "fatigue is a mental and/or physical state" that occurs due to lack of sleep or extensive mental or physical task. Fatigue can cause mood changes, interfere with decision making and overall job performance Vila, et al. (2002, 5) also argue fatigue can effect "officers' performance, health, and safety; their relations with the public; and the quality of their discretionary decisions."

Shift work can also cause strain within family relationships. Anderson, et al. (1995, 62) argue shift work imposes serious stress on the officer in the form of emotional turmoil regarding social requirements. Shift work takes the officer away from his family

during evenings and holidays and other special family events, therefore creating a source of tension.

Most departments across the nation give the preferred shifts (Monday-Friday 8:00am to 5:00pm) to senior officers. Young officers should be educated in the effects of shift work while still in the academy. Not only should police officers be educated about the ill effects of shift work, but so should their significant others. Being advised of potential problems should make the transition into shift work easier and help resolve many problems before they begin.

Negligent Supervision

In addition to shift work, supervisors with weak management and leadership skills are a large source of organizational stress. A negligent supervisor can lead to problems such as low morale, and even “officer exodus” from the department. Officers have a unique relationship with their supervisors because the majority of law enforcement agencies work in a paramilitary structure with a chain of command. The officer must feel that his direct supervisor is there to provide support when needed and serve as a buffer between other administrators. One key reason officers have supervisor related stress is that the supervisor holds power over the officer (Toch, 2002). If an officer feels harassed by the supervisor, the officer may feel helpless and isolated (Toch, 2002, 47). Often times, problems with supervisors are unchallenged because officers are unwilling to risk skipping the chain of command and go directly to the top. They fear that going outside the chain of command will lead to additional problems in an already strained supervisor – supervisee relationship. The added strain, in turn leads to more stress.

Teaching officers the possibilities of having a negligent supervisor and what could happen because of negligent supervision can help the new recruit cope with a negligent supervisor. In addition, recruits or young officers need to be informed of how to handle such a situation per agency's policy and procedure.

Lack of Career Opportunities or Career Development

Many new officers enter the field of law enforcement with the hopes of promoting and having a long-term career within a department. Unfortunately, in many departments there are a lack of career opportunities and career development programs. During training, recruits should be informed of the stress that lack of career opportunities and career development can place upon them.

Most law enforcement agencies in the United States are small rural organizations, and unlike large cities, room for advancement and career development are limited. One reason is that for many small rural departments budgets are limited. According to Anderson et. al. (1995, 212) "rural law-enforcement agencies often operate on limited budgets." Therefore, money for training and other education are unavailable. Lack of career opportunities and limited career development can enhance stress because limited career advancement leads to increased turnover and less stability in the workplace. Often times, officers that are more educated leave smaller departments and go to larger departments where there may be more room for advancement. To overcome stress and to help achieve their goals, officers may have to pay for their own continuing education placing additional strain on their ability to make ends meet (Kirschman, 1997).

Perceived Favoritism in Regards to Promotions and Assignments

Promotions and duty assignments can be a constant source of stress for officers. According to Pranzo and Pranzo (1999, 14) “promotional opportunities and selection can be the catalyst for either enhancing or reducing stress.” Promotions typically include pay raises, which will reduce financial strains, and some duty assignments can either help or hinder family life for officers and their families.

Toch (2002, 49) argues, “Strong frustration” is often felt by officers who feel that there are inequalities in the system; politics may play a role in the promotion. Many large police departments fall under civil service which have and follow strict guide lines and testing procedures to ensure that chances for advancement are equal for all officers. Civil service agencies focus on test, years of service and overall job experience. While many smaller rural departments have no set procedure, as to how promotions or duty assignments are decided. According to Souryal, (1995, 134)

If police agencies are to retain their qualified members, they should make careers in police work attractive by keeping career paths open to all officers. However, the promotional path is often unreasonably frustrating, and many outstanding officers resign each year because the climb upward is blocked by people promoted for political considerations or friendly relationships with department heads.

According to Toch (2002) many officers feel that promotions are based on “who you know” or the “good-ole-boy” system instead of merit or overall job performance. Perceived favoritism is a large source of stress for many officers because they perceive promotions as being handed down and not earned. Many officers that work for elected officials feel that promotions are given to friends and supporters in return for political support, or to show reward for loyalty. Others feel that the promotion process is subjective and without any objectivity (Toch, 2002; Kirschman, 1997, Finn & Tomz

1996, Souryal, 1995; Anderson. Et al, 1998). Making officers aware of possible problems with promotions and assignments during basic training may help prepare the new officer and aid in acceptance of any problems that he or she may encounter during his or her career.

External Department Stress

Another key for successful stress management training is to make officers aware of the external departmental stressors they will encounter. Sources of external stress include the court systems, interaction with the media and interaction with the general public (Finn & Tomz 1996, 11). While these external sources of stress may be less apparent than organizational stress, they have the potential to effect officers in adverse ways.

Frustration With the Court System

The court system is a constant source of stress for officers. Problems with case docket schedules and other issues will be a continuous problem for officers. According to Finn & Tomz (1996), officers face significant stress from the court and larger criminal justice system. There are many reasons for frustration with the court system such as lack of follow-up with police officers as to the disposition of cases, premature release of offenders on bail, probation or parole, and court rulings are too restrictive on methods of criminal suppression and investigation (Finn & Tomz, 1996, 11). Kroes (1985) points to leniency for offenders as far as punishment, and lack of consideration by the courts and the attorneys regarding officers' schedules and days off. One way the courts show lack of consideration to officers is starting early in the morning when some officers are finishing a night shift. Anderson, et al. (1995) agrees with Kroes's argument that officers disagree with court decisions and add other reasons for frustration with the court system.

Anderson, et al. (1995) suggest that there are two different reasons for stress from the court system: the first is officers must testify and the second involves “frustration” and dissatisfaction with court decisions. Testifying in court is a stressful experience and many times officers sit and wait their turn to take the stand and give their testimony. When its time to testify, officers have to defend themselves from remarks and questions made by the defense attorney. Police officer “frustration” with court decisions comes when the officer believes that the sentence the defendant receives is too lenient or in some cases the defendant is found not guilty.

All officers will deal with some type of stress from the court system. This is a common occurrence and new officers should be made aware of the stress they will face when dealing with the court system. Training should be given to the officer not only to prepare them to deal with stressors from the court system, but also how to testify in ways that will reduce stress associated with giving a sworn statement.

Media

All officers should be made aware that the media can be a source of stress and taught appropriate methods for dealing with the media. Many agencies will appoint public information officers to handle media questions and give fair and adequate press releases to help ensure that the facts are given to the media in an attempt to alleviate officer stress. The media can be a blessing for law enforcement and a curse at the same time. The media provides a great service in distributing information quickly and effectively (Anderson Et al., 1995). This can be a benefit when police need help in an investigation. In contrast, the media can hinder and investigation just as quickly if they gain and release information on an active case. According to Finn and Tomz (1996, 12)

while some negative media coverage is necessary for police behavior that is unlawful, “the attention generated by high-profile cases may create the erroneous image that all or most law enforcement officers are worthy of blame.” Many officers perform tasks that truly help citizens feel safer and live a better life, but these are not generally reported on the news or on the cover of the paper. According to Anderson, et al., (1995, 11-12) the media plays a large role in officer stress as they print what sells and not what the facts are. Instead, the media portrays the law enforcement officer as the bad person often times twisting the story or failing to tell the entire story as the actual event took place. Few other jobs are as exposed to public scrutiny. The scrutiny itself can be a source of stress.

Officers may be aware of behind the scenes information that demonstrates the flaws in the media depiction of events. The disparity between the public view as depicted in the media and their private sense can cause frustration and stress.

Perceived Lack of Public Support

Along with poor media attention comes the lack of support from the public and sometimes political officials. According to Anderson et al.(1995) one problem that causes stress in an officer’s life is based on the fact that the public has a different idea of how police should be performing their duties. Citizens do not appreciate the officer that pulls them over for a traffic violation on the way to work, but are content seeing officers patrolling the neighborhoods and school zones. According to Anderson et al. (1995, 137) most of what police officers do in the way of “public service is invisible to the majority of the public, partly because it seems to be taken for granted and not talked about”. This can include a number of tasks ranging from roadside assistance to assisting the elderly. While police may be performing their duties appropriately, the public may perceive they

are not, which can lead to complaints from the public and in turn more stress for the officer. In addition “criticism of an officer’s actions can also come from political officials who take an interest in the case for its publicity value, or because one of their important supporters has been accused of illegal acts” (Anderson et al. 1995 12).

According to Anderson et al. (1995, 12) “damaging criticism in some cases comes from citizens who have unreasonable complaints”. The criticism in some cases can lead to the early resignation of good officers.

While officers may be performing their job appropriately, complaints and other forms of public scrutiny will continue to stress the officer. The officer should be made aware of this source of stress during stress management training. This will help the officer better handle the situation when it occurs in their career.

Stress From the Work Itself

Law enforcement officers deal with various situations daily. There are no “routine” days in law enforcement, and the constant exposure to society’s problems can produce unneeded stress. According to Hapold and Feemster (2002, 5)

officers are never the same as they were prior to entering the law enforcement profession. When officers come in contact with individuals who have been victimized by criminals, officers also are victimized because people naturally relate to the pain of others.

In addition to witnessing despair and violence, police officers are overloaded with paperwork and exposure to diseases on a daily basis. According to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Education (TCLEOSE) curriculum (2006) sources of stress from the work itself must be explained to the new officers during their basic training. The training would help them mentally prepare for some situations and mitigate the stress from unexpected events.

Frequent Exposure to Violence and Death.

Officers are continuously responding to calls for service involving violent assaults, vehicular accidents and other traumatic events. Over a period of time, these events can have a serious negative effect on the officers. According to Anderson et al. (1995, 87)

Individuals do not enter law enforcement mentally or emotionally prepared to deal with the dead, dying, or seriously injured. They must learn how to cope with normal anxiety this is caused by dealing with (1) dead bodies, (2) persons who have been severely injured, and (3) persons who have just been through a traumatic event such as an auto accident or rape.

Pranzo and Pranzo (1999, 24) argue, “Witnessing so much violence and death on a repetitive basis can subconsciously set-off serious behavioral changes.” Exposure to violence can lead to emotional hardening and make it difficult to deal with personal relationships at an appropriate level. Officers need to be aware of the frequency they will witness violence and death and the possible effects it can have on their emotional well-being. Training officers on this subject can bypass problems later in their career.

Work Overload

Work overload is a common source of stress for officers. Officers must be well informed of the possibilities of work overload and be made aware of how to handle this source of stress when it occurs. Officers are called upon to perform many functions in many types of situations. Each situation will require some type of action by an officer and as an officer responds to several calls for service, the officer’s work load grows. According to Kroes (1985, 32) work overload can include too much work assigned to a particular officer or an officer may be assigned a task that he or she is not capable of performing. Kroes (1985, 35) recognizes both patrol officers and detectives alike share

in work overload. “In practically every department, the caseloads carried by detectives are too heavy to allow them to follow through thoroughly.” According to Maslach (2001, 414) officers who are overloaded with work often find that too many demands can exhaust an officer to a point that they may take longer to fully recover from the amount of energy they lost. Workload does not simply apply to the physical demands of law enforcement it also applies to the emotional drain. Police officers are tasked by dealing with all types of problems and are expected to maintain a professional demeanor when dealing with them. Police officers often hide their true emotions as they deal with various situations causing another source of overload. According to Maslach (2001, 414) “emotional work is especially draining when the job requires people to display emotions inconsistent with their feelings.”

Work overload can become a source of stress for many officers who are simply not prepared to handle the excessive amount of paperwork or emotional demands placed on them. Officers should be made aware of this source of stress through proper training so that they are better prepared to handle excessive work or emotional drain.

Exposure to Diseases

In addition to the stressors already mentioned, police officers also have to keep in mind the fact that they run the possibility of being exposed to AIDS, TB and other blood borne and air borne diseases while on duty (National Institute of Justice, 2000, 19).

When exposure occurs there is little the officer can do but wait and see if any disease was contracted. In some cases an officer may not know he or she has been exposed to a disease. Exposure to diseases and other blood borne pathogens is common for law enforcement. Exposure to diseases can occur in large cities and rural areas alike.

Averhoff Et al. (2002) studied the exposure rates of 2,910 public safety workers from

various jurisdictions. Averhoff et al. (2002) found 6.8 percent of the sample reported being exposed to hepatitis B within the last six months. Of the sample population, 3.2 percent were sheriff's deputies in rural areas and 7.4 percent of the sample consisted of police officers from urban cities. In addition to Hepatitis B, exposure to AIDS and HIV is likely due to the environments police officers work and people they come into contact with. Police officers working crime scenes and accidents are placed at high risk of exposure due to free flowing blood and other body fluids. In addition, police are at a high risk of needle sticks when searching both people and items. According to Jeanne Flavin (1998) being stuck with a needle does present a small but significant chance of contracting HIV/AIDS when dealing with drug users. As part of their duties police make arrest and search the arrested subjects to ensure the subject is not armed. This is a common time for officers to be stuck with needles or other sharp objects as they pat down subjects they deal with.

Exposure to disease is a serious problem for officers and can be a source of stress. Officers must be educated in ways to protect themselves from exposure to diseases. By pointing out the dangers involved and how to avoid contaminating themselves this may reduce the stress in dealing with possible infected subjects.

Individual Officer Stress

Another component of the stress management program deals with individual officer stress. Something that may be a source of stress for one officer may not affect another. Two key sources of stress that seem to be most common are stress related to family and stress related to job safety and career success.

Family

A constant problem for an officer will be trying to manage time between his career and his family. Another problem an officer will face is deciding if they will take an assignment that is better for family life or one that is better for their career. Effective communication and understanding from the entire family is a necessity in a law enforcement family. Making officers and family members aware of some issues an officer and his family should be done during basic training so that when issues arise both the officer and family members are prepared to deal with the situations.

Family is a source of stress as the officer is forced to work strange hours and miss out on family time and activities. According to Kirschman, (1991, 11) there are many things that an officer will have to endure due to their career that make family life hard to handle sometimes. Things such as working late, showing up for court, or just having to stay late on shift due to someone running late make it hard for officers to have family activities planned and even harder to keep plans made. In addition to missing family functions, officers that are dealing with stress may not effectively communicate the issues they are dealing with to their family. According to Toch (2002), communication between spouses regarding about the officer's stress may be difficult because officers do not want to burden their spouses or make them worry. Some officers feel their spouse will not understand their situation because they are not police officers. The lack of communication between spouses then becomes stressful for both parties. A common source of stress that officers face is concern about safety and career success. This is not only a source of stress for the officer, but it also carries over to the family as well.

Danger of police work is another source of stress to the officer and his family (Pranzo &Pranzo, 1999). This is a topic of concern for many families of law

enforcement. By its very nature, law enforcement is a dangerous line of work. In addition to normal duty assignments many officers feel the need to join specialized units such as SWAT or undercover narcotics. The officer may be attracted to the action of a dangerous assignment or feel the assignment will further their career, regardless, danger is a source of stress.

Fears Regarding Safety and Career Success

Officers will experience fears regarding both their safety and the successfulness of their career. Officers need to be made aware that fears regarding their safety is a normal part of the job and be taught how to effectively deal with those fears. In addition, as the officers' tenure with a department grows fears regarding a successful career set in. It is important that officers during the basic training be advised that stress regarding their career will set in as their time with a department grows.

People start a career in law enforcement knowing it is a dangerous job and accept the fact that they could be injured or even killed. After years of service those attitudes start to change and the fear of injury and death become a source of stress for the officer.

According to Anderson et al. (1995, 75)

law enforcement officers' reactions to danger represent one of the dualities of police work. On the other hand, fear is a frequent part of the job and officers will complain about the dangers they have to face; on the other hand, their complaining is a cover for their love of action and search for adventure that made police work appealing.

There are many jobs regarded as dangerous due to the fact that accidents can happen anytime. The field of law enforcement differs in this manner from other occupations. Law enforcement officers are fully aware of how dangerous their jobs are because they understand that any situation can become violent. Law enforcement is potentially

dangerous due to police officers dealing with people experiencing high emotions or when under the influence drugs and alcohol. Some people are unpredictable and an officer does not always know what type of person they are dealing with or what that subject's intentions are. When dealing with a subject under the influence of any substance or high emotion increases the officer's chances of becoming injured. Anderson et al.(1995,76) argue

Police officers know injury and death may result at any time because another human being can intentionally decide to hurt them. Due to the constant threat of danger and the unknown circumstances officers face high stress levels are to be expected.

According to Anderson et al.(1995, 76) “the officer is physically more stressed by police work because there is an increased sense of danger due to the unpredictability of human violence.”

Having a successful career is source of stress for police officers. Officers enter a career in law enforcement to have a successful career and achieve many accomplishments during their tenure. How success is measured depends on the officer but the overall goal is to promote and retire feeling as though they have accomplished their goals. Problems officers have involve lack of promotional opportunity this is due to some departments having limited promotions available. According to Alexander (1995,59) “the vast majority of police officers start and end careers as patrol officers.” Having limited promotional opportunity causes some officers to feel as though there career may not be as successful as they would like.

Effects of Stress

A key component to a stress management program according to TCLEOSE (2006) is to teach officers the effects of stress. There are two types of stress; eustress and

distress Eustress is good stress, and gives a person a sense of fulfillment. Distress is bad stress that leads to many undesired effects. With high amounts of stress comes mental and physical illness, and in some cases “the extreme health-strain consequences of job stress, is of course, death.” (Kroes, 1985, 129). Gershon, et al. (2002, 161) assert that stress causes the following types of problems for organizations: job dissatisfaction, low morale, poor productivity, high absenteeism, high turnover, early retirement, high accident rates, poor public relationships and law suits. While stress has negative effects on the organization, it has even greater strain on the individuals. According to Finn & Tomz (1996, 14) officers can experience cynicism, emotional detachment, posttraumatic stress disorder, multiple health problems, and in some situations suicide.

Physical Effects of Stress

Stress affects the body adversely and often leads to serious health problems. Stress causes serious health problems by itself but when mixed with poor coping methods such as drugs and alcohol the affects can magnify leading to other serious health complications. Due to the high stress levels of law enforcement officers and the serious side effects of stress officers must be educated on the ill effects of stress and be taught proper ways to deal with stress.

Harpold and Feemster (2002, 1) argue that stress increases distress on the body which can cause illness among some individuals. Researchers such as Kroes (1985) and Toch (2002) supports Hapold and Feemter’s claim that distress causes illness and premature death. According to Toch , (2002, 5) undesirable consequences of stress include higher than anticipated mortality rates for illnesses such as coronary heart disease and cancer. Frankie et al.(2002) compared officers cardiovascular health of law enforcement to the general public. The study shows that law enforcement officers had a

higher percentage of employees with hypertension, high cholesterol, and that use tobacco (Frankie et al, 2002, 1185). With high rates of heart disease and an increase in tobacco use mortality rates will rise within the profession of law enforcement. In an additional study conducted by Violanti et al.(1998) the researchers studied the mortality of police between 1950 though 1990. The results suggested an increasing trend in police suicide, and significantly higher rates of death due to digestive cancer. According to Kroes(1985, 129), “evidence linking psychological job stress to coronary heart disease is growing, as is the number of researchers who have concluded that stress is more important factor in the etiology of coronary heart disease then diet, smoking, and exercise combined.”

Emotional Effects of Stress

Stress affects law enforcement officers emotionally as well. Emotional effects of stress can include but are not limited to burnout, exhaustion, depression and even suicide. Law enforcement personnel suffering from burnout and depression is a problem for law enforcement agencies because they can bring down morale and even become a safety issue as they don't take necessary precautions in dealing with subjects. Often times job performance will suffer and relationships with other officers, supervisors and citizens can suffer due to emotional effects of stress. It is because of potential problems that officers should be trained to deal with stress and made aware of problems stress can cause to their mental well being.

Burnout in law enforcement is common and causes problems for both the officer and others that may depend on them. Burnout is defined as “prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, and defined by three dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy” (Maslach et al. 2001, 397).

According to Maslach et al.(2001) exhaustion is not a state of being tired; but a reason

people distance themselves from ones work both emotionally and cognitively in an attempt to cope with the work overload. While burnout statistics remain consistent as years progress, it is safe to assume that burnout is a prolonged response to job stress (Maslach et al, 2001, 405). Burnout is a serious problem for law enforcement officers as it can cause several problems for an officer. Maslach et al.(2001) argues that burnout not only affect's and individual's job, but also affects his or her health as well. Burnout has been found to be linked to depression and substance abuse. Burnout is similar to depression because it can lead to low self-esteem and cause serious mental health problems. Burnout in law enforcement can spread discontent through the ranks and have a devastating effect upon morale. Burnout and depression are serious emotional issues that stress can cause but a much more serious outcome of stress is suicide.

Suicide is another significant emotional problem associated with officer stress. Kroes (1985) found in a study conducted by the National Institute of Health and Public Safety, that suicide was six times greater in police officers than in the general public. Kroes(1985, 130) argues there is a strong connection between suicide and occupations with high stress. While Kroes looked at all occupations, Pranzo and Pranzo focused on police officers. Pranzo and Pranzo(1999) conclude that suicide is not limited to any specific area, department or type of officer. They also found occupational stress in police work is a major cause for suicide. While the effects of stress can be severe there is hope. Teaching our officers to deal with stress in a positive manner can reduce the ill affects of stress.

Coping Methods

The last topic that should be included in stress management training is the coping methods. During this section, officers should learn different strategies to cope with their stress. According to Finn and Tomz (1996, 109) “the principal goal of stress management training is to increase the officer’s ability to prevent or cope with stress by using a wide range of strategies.” While there is no specific strategy for coping with specific sources of stress there are general methods that can help.

There are positive and negative methods to cope with stress. The positive ways are obvious and include exercise, communication, and activities that bring enjoyment or relaxation. Unfortunately, many police officers turn to negative coping methods such as drugs and alcohol, which only add to the ill effects of stress. The next two sections discuss both coping methods.

Positive Coping Methods

According to Beehr & Johnson (1995, 6), coping is any activity that is intended to reduce the effects of stress. TCLEOSE (2006) includes the following examples of positive coping methods: exercise, healthy diet, hunting, fishing, sleeping, TV/movies, needlepoint, time off from work, reading, talking to co-workers, discussion with significant others, discussion with supervisor, and seeking professional counseling. According to Finn and Tomz (1996, 109) some strategies for reducing stress include increasing physical health and well-being through a better diet and increase exercise, increase body relaxation via yoga or other methods, learning effective communication, planning out a career, and rethinking attitudes about stress.

The aforementioned coping methods are intended to work for everyday stressors and are not specifically designed for any particular stress but are generic strategies to help

people cope. Sometimes the training does not work and stress becomes too much to handle resulting in officers reaching their breaking point. If an officer has come to the point where simple coping methods have failed methods that are more appropriate must be taken. The next step is to refer to a professional who can further assist in counseling or treatment (Finn & Tomz, 1997, 132). Departments should be able to provide short-term counseling for officer's that are not considered in need of extended long-term counseling. Long-term counseling is designed to treat severe family problems such as marital or other relationship issues. Depression and drug abuse are also good candidates for long term counseling (Finn and Tomz, 1997, 132). A good stress management program must not only make officers aware of the stress they will face but also teach them methods to protect themselves against the ill effects of stress.

Negative Coping Methods

While some activities reduce stress, others add fuel to the fire. According to Violanti (1996, 41) police officers “primarily turned to two types of coping methods when confronted with stress: escape avoidance and distancing”, both methods are dysfunctional. Escape avoidance occurs when officers avoid people they are close to and turn to alcohol or drugs for support. Distancing occurs when officers distance themselves from the emotional aspects of the situation but cannot avoid the consequences of stress places on their lives. Kroes (1985) and Violanti (1996) have suggested that police officers are at higher risk of being alcoholics or suffer from other forms of substance abuse than members of other occupations.. Kroes(1985) quotes a study conducted by Unkovic and Brown, which found eighty percent of all heavy drinkers were police officers. This study focused on other high stress occupations and concluded that police officers are more likely to become dependent on alcohol to cope with stress. Alcohol is

such a serious problem for law enforcement some officers actually have to have a drink during their normal work hours to function. In a study by Van Raalte, concluded that sixty-seven percent of the sample reported that the officer had drunk while on duty (Kroes, 1985, 133).

Just as officers are taught appropriate methods of coping with stress the negative coping methods must be taught as well. Making officers aware of the ill effects of using negative coping methods could give officers the opportunity to have a better understanding of how important it is to use appropriate coping methods.

Conceptual Framework

The majority of the components in the stress management training simply identify the sources of stress. The last two components shift gears and describe the effects of stress and provide examples of ways officers can cope with stress. The conceptual framework used is descriptive categories. According to Shields (1998, 213) “categories are linked to the descriptive purpose.” After reviewing the literature, the following components and their subcategories belong in a stress management curriculum: organizational stress, external department stress, stress within the work itself, individual officer stress, effects of stress and coping methods. Table 2.1 connects the categories to the literature.

Table 2.1 Components of the TCLEOSE stress management Curriculum.

Categories in the stress management Curriculum	Literature
<p>Internal Department Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift work • Negligent supervision • Lack of career opportunities or development • Perceived favoritism in regards to promotions and assignments. 	<p>Anderson et al.,1995; Toch, 2002; Finn &Tomz, 1996; Stinchcomb, 2004; Zaho et al., 2002; Finn, 1981; Villa et al. 2002, Souryal, 1995.</p>
<p>External Department Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustration with the court system • Media • Perceived lack of public support 	<p>Finn & Tomz, 1996; Kroes, 1985; Anderson et al., 1995; TCLEOSE, 2006.</p>
<p>Stress within the work itself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent exposure to violence • Work overload • Exposure to diseases 	<p>Hapold & Feemster, 2002; TCLEOSE, 2006; Anderson et al., 1995; Pranzo & Pranzo, 1999; Kroes, 1985; Maslach, 2001; National Institute of Justice, 2000; Averhoff et al. 2002; Flavin, 1998</p>
<p>Individual Officer Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family • Fears regarding success • Fears regarding safety 	<p>Kirschman, 1991; Toch, 2002; Pranzo & Pranzo, 1999; Anderson et al., 1995; Alexander, 1999</p>
<p>Effects of Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional • Physical 	<p>TCLEOSE, 2006; Kroes, 1985; Gershon et al. 2002; Finn & Tomz, 1996; Hapold & Feemster, 2002; Toch, 2002; Frankie et al. 2002; Violanti et al. 1998; Maslach, 2001; Kirschman, 1997; Pranzo & Pranzo 1999.</p>
<p>Coping Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive • Negative 	<p>Finn & Tomz, 1996; Beehr & Johnson 1995; TCLEOSE, 2006; Violanti, 1996; Kroes, 1985.</p>

Conclusion

Law enforcement officers are called upon to deal with task that most citizens do not want to deal with or should not attempt to deal with. Over time these tasks or situations add up and put an undue stress on our police officers. According to Anderson et al. (1995, 14) “If there are too many demands, they can cause distress. To prevent burnout, the officer must be mentally prepared for a variety of situation and trained to practice stress management techniques.”

This chapter has described the components of the stress management curriculum and linked it to the literature by forming the conceptual framework. The next chapter introduces the Hays County Sheriff’s Department and gives a brief description of the department and its responsibilities.

Chapter 3: Research Setting

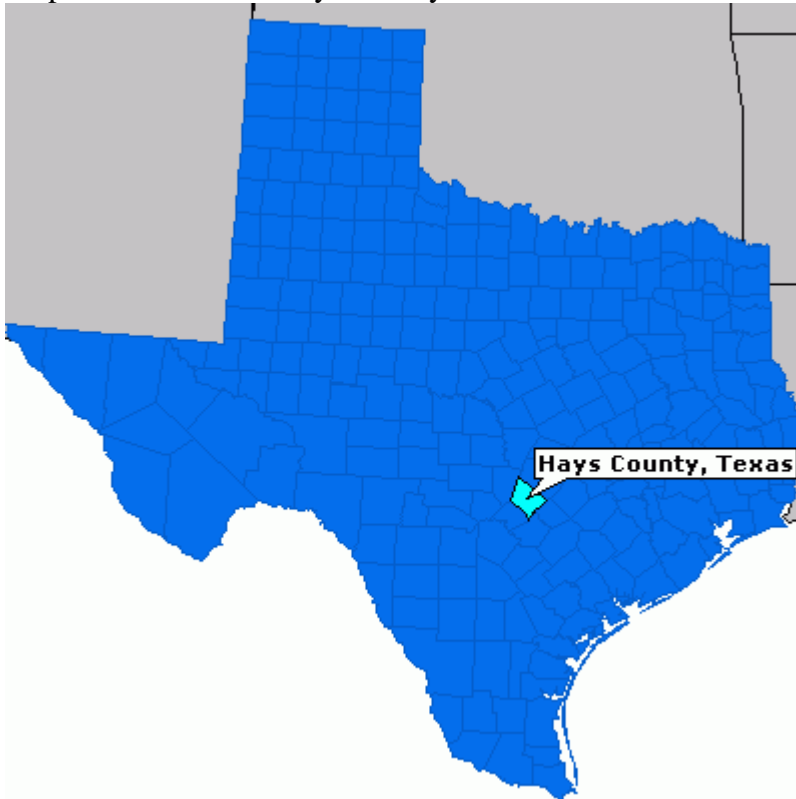
Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the Hays County Sheriff's Department. The responsibilities of the Sheriff's Office and the geography of Hays County are highlighted.

Hays County Overview

Hays County is a semi rural county spanning over six hundred seventy square miles. Major cities within the county include San Marcos, Kyle, Buda, Dripping Springs, and Wimberley. Currently the county has an estimated population of 124, 400 and is considered one of the fastest growing counties in the state. Set between the major cities of Austin and San Antonio the county is home to Texas State University and the ever popular San Marcos Outlet malls. San Marcos serves as the county seat of Hays County and is the location of the Hays County Sheriff's Office. San Marcos is approximately 40 miles north of San Antonio and 30 miles South of Austin on Interstate 35. Map 3.1 provides geographical look as to the location of Hays County within the State of Texas.

Map 3.1 Location of Hays County



Map source: <http://www.epodunk.com/cgi-bin/genInfo.php?locIndex=22680>

The Hay County Sheriff's Office

The Hays County Sheriff's office under the direction of an elected official serves as the law enforcement agency of the county. It is responsible for staffing and maintaining the jail, patrolling the county, as well as investigating crimes of cities within the county that do not have their own city law enforcement agencies. The Hays County Sheriff's Office currently employs approximately ninety sworn law enforcement officers. This includes officers assigned to patrol, criminal investigations, traffic, and administrative positions.

The sheriff's office is set in a paramilitary structure meaning there is a set chain of command. At the top of the chain is the sheriff, followed by two Chief Deputies, three

captains and multiple sergeants. Under the sergeants are multiple subordinates. This type of chain of command is common for most law enforcement agencies and ensures that agencies are run smoothly.

Duties of the Sheriff's office include but are not limited to criminal investigations, animal control, and patrol. A majority of the law enforcement personnel at the sheriff's office are assigned to the patrol division. The patrol division is the backbone of the department and is also the most visible. The patrol division is responsible for responding to calls for service that are both emergency and non-emergency (Anderson et al., 1998).

All law enforcement personnel employed with the Hays County Sheriff's Office are licensed peace officers in the State of Texas, commissioned through Hays County. Each officer has passed a basic peace officer training program and has taken the TCLEOSE stress management training during their basic training at the beginning of their career.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the Hays County Sheriff's Office and the area in which they work. The next chapter discusses the methodology and introduces the operationalization table.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Chapter Purpose

This chapter links the literature from chapter two to the current study. The research describes the perceptions of Hays County Sheriff's Deputies pertaining to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education Stress Management Curriculum. The methodology and research design are also discussed in this chapter.

Operationalization of the conceptual framework

Using the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education (TCLEOSE) stress management curriculum and other literature, six descriptive categories were formed. The six categories used to create the survey instrument include: 1) internal department stress; 2) external department stress; 3) stress within the work itself; 4) individual officer stress; 5) effects of stress; and 6) coping methods. The coping methods category as in the conceptual framework was incorporated within each of the previous five categories for the purpose of the survey instrument and the operationalization table. By incorporating the coping methods section with the five other categories makes it possible to determine how well the officers believe the training helped them cope with a particular source of stress. Table 4.1 links the categories to the survey instrument.

Table 4.1. Operationalization table.

Categories	Survey Questions
<p>Internal Department Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negligent Supervision • Excessive Paperwork • Lack of career opportunities • Perceived favoritism in regards to promotions and assignments. • Shift Work 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training is effective in identifying sources of stress from within the department. 2. Training has helped me recognize stress from Negligent supervision. 3. The training has helped me recognize stress from excessive paperwork. 4. The training has helped me recognize stress from Perceived favoritism in regards to promotions and assignments. 5. The training has helped me recognize stress from shift work. 6. The training has helped me recognize stress due to lack of career opportunities. 7. Training provided tools to cope with internal department stress sources.
<p>External Department Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustration with the Court System • Lack of Public Support • Negative Media 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. The training was effective in identifying sources of external department stress. 9. The training helped me recognize stress caused by frustration with the court system. 10. The training helped me recognize stress caused by lack of public support. 11. The training helped me recognize stress caused by negative media attention. 12. Training provided tools to cope with external department stress sources.
<p>Stress within the work itself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent exposure to violence • Work overload 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. The training was effective at identifying sources of stress within the work itself. 14. The training has helped me recognize stress from frequent exposure to violence. 15. The training has helped me recognize stress from work overload. 16. Training provided tools to cope with individual officer stress.
<p>Individual Officer Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family • Fears regarding success and officer safety 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. The training was effective at identifying sources of individual officer stress. 18. The training has helped me recognize stress as it pertains to fears regarding success and officer safety. 19. The training has helped me recognize stress associated with my family. 20. Training provided tools to cope with individual officer stress.
<p>Effects of Stress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional • Physical 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. The training was effective at identifying effects of stress. 22. The Training has helped me recognize the effects stress plays on my mental well-being. 23. The training has helped me recognize the effects of stress as it pertains to my physical well-being. 24. Training provided tools to cope with the effects of stress.

*This 24-item measure uses a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*).

Research Method

Survey research is the method used for this project. Sworn law enforcement officers from the Hays County Sheriff's Office completed an anonymous survey at their leisure. The measure assessed deputy perspectives on the TCLEOSE stress management curriculum and contained 24 items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*).

. Strengths of Survey Research

The survey method "is probably the best method available to the social researcher who is interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly" (Babbie, 2004, 243). Due to the nature of law enforcement officer's schedules, surveys were the best option for obtaining data. In addition, the survey method allows for anonymity of the respondents, which was crucial for successes of this study. Anonymity allows for increased response rates and unbiased opinions. The survey method also emphasizes breadth, and provides big picture summaries.

Weakness of Survey Research

Survey research also has weaknesses. According to Babbie (2004), two weaknesses of surveys are standardization and inflexibility. Surveys restrain the researcher to more generalized questions and do not identify specific details. In addition, once a survey has been administered it cannot be modified if changes are made to the research project. Finally, surveys are designed to provide a general overview of a particular subject sample and may overlook special circumstances and needs within the general population.

Population

The population for this research consisted of Hays County Sheriff's Office Law Enforcement Officers who have completed the TCLEOSE stress management program. Mid-level managers with the Hays County Sheriff's Office were asked to distribute 46 surveys to their subordinates. Attached to each survey was a cover letter explaining the study along with an envelope to return the completed survey. Officers returned the completed survey sealed in the provided envelope to their supervisor. The supervisor then returned the sealed surveys to the investigator. Twenty-four completed surveys were returned giving a 52 percent return rate. According to Babbie (2004) a 50 percent response rate is the minimum required to have an accurate analysis.

Institutional Review

Law Enforcement Officers of the Hays County Sheriff's Office were asked to complete the survey at their leisure and on a voluntary basis. The survey did not ask questions that would reveal the identity of the respondent, such as police officer rank, years on the force, or other demographic data. There are no foreseeable risks for this study and no participant discomfort is expected due to the voluntary nature of the survey.

On 09/18/06 this study was declared exempt from the institutional Review Board of Texas State University. Exemption status was delivered via email. A copy of the email is included in appendix B.

Statistics

Descriptive statistics using percentages and modes are used to evaluate the survey results. The percentages and modes are used to access the perceptions of the Hays County Sheriff's Office participants.

Chapter Summary

The survey is used to gather the attitudes and perceptions of the Hays County Sheriff's Office participants in regards to the TCLEOSE Stress Management Training. The next chapter discusses the results from the survey and provides the statistical analysis.

Chapter 5: Results

Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the data from survey from the Hays County Sheriff's Office. As discussed earlier the purpose of this study is to evaluate the attitudes and perceptions of the Hays County Sheriff's Office towards the TCLEOSE Stress Management Program. The survey used in this study is based from the conceptual framework derived in part from the TCLEOSE stress management curriculum. The data from the surveys is discussed in each of the following tables and has been broken down by curriculum categories.

Internal Department Stress

Internal department stress is an important aspect of the stress management program and is a key component in the stress management curriculum. Table 5.1 presents the descriptive statistics as perceived by employees of the Hays County Sheriff's office in regards to this internal department stress.

Table 5.1. Perceived effectiveness of training in the area of Internal Department Stress

Survey Question	N	% strongly agree to agree	% Strongly Disagree to disagree	Mode
Training is effective in identifying sources of stress from within the department	24	75%	21%	Strongly agree
Training has helped me recognize stress from Negligent supervision.	24	54%	25%	Agree
The training has helped me recognize stress from excessive paperwork	24	58%	29%	Agree
The training has helped me recognize stress from Perceived favoritism in regards to promotions and assignments.	24	50%	29%	Strongly agree
The training has helped me recognize stress from shift work	24	63%	25%	Agree
The training has helped me recognize stress due to lack of career opportunities.	24	41%	25%	Agree
Training provided tools to cope with internal department stress sources.	24	29%	58%	Disagree

All in all the results reveal that the officers learned about internal sources of stress from the training (see table 5.1). Seventy five percent indicated the training was effective at helping them identify sources of stress from inside the department. When individual sources of stress were included the results changed somewhat. The strengths of agreement fell and the proportion that believed the training did not cover the topic rose. For example, only 50% found that the training helped them identify favoritism and almost a third disagreed (the training did not adequately cover favoritism). Although not the majority, a significant fraction (25%) of the officers thought the training did not adequately identify sources of internal stress (lack of career opportunity, shift work, favoritism). Perhaps most disturbing, almost 60% of the officers felt the training did not provide them with tools to cope with internal department stress.

External Department Stress

The results for external department stress were much the same as the internal department stress results (see table 5.2). Fifty percent agreed that the training was effective in identifying sources of external department stress. However, a smaller portion (21%) disagreed and felt the training was not effective in this area. A majority of officers also agreed that the training helped them recognize stress caused by frustration with the court system (46%). However, over a quarter of the officers disagreed (29%). Officers also identified that the training helped them recognize stress caused by a lack of public support (54%) and a small number felt it did not help (17%). Officers most agreed that the training helped them recognize stress caused by negative media attention (59%) while only a small proportion reported that the training did not help identify stress caused by negative media attention (21%). As with the internal department stress category, more officers felt the training lacked adequate tools for coping with external department stress (51%). However, a large portion of officers (42%) felt the training did provide tools to cope with external department stress. Table 5.2 provides an overview of the survey results.

Table 5.2, Results from the External Department Stress category.

Survey Question	N	% strongly agree to agree	% Strongly Disagree to disagree	Mode
The training was effective in identifying sources of external department stress.	24	50%	21%	Agree
The training helped me recognize stress caused by frustration with the court system.	24	46%	29%	Agree
The training helped me recognize stress caused by lack of public support.	24	54%	17%	Agree
The training helped me recognize stress caused by negative media attention.	24	59%	21%	Agree
Training provided tools to cope with external department stress sources.	24	42%	51%	Disagree

Stress From The Work Itself

Overall the results unveiled that the training provided most officers with knowledge about stress within the work itself. In fact, 67% of officers responded that they were able to identify sources of stress from their work, whereas 8% did not. More officers (42%) agreed that they were able recognize stress from frequent exposure to violence however; one third of the officers disagreed. The results were similar for work overload just over one third (38%) of the officers felt the training helped them recognize stress from work overload and one quarter disagreed with the effectiveness of the training. Again, the majority of the officers (46%) felt the training lacked tools for coping with individual officer stress. However, a large portion (42%) of officers did agree that the training provided tools to cope with stress. Table 5.3 provides an overview of the survey results.

Table 5.3 Results from the Stress Within the Work Itself category.

Survey Question	N	% strongly agree to agree	% Strongly Disagree to disagree	Mode
The training was effective at identifying sources of stress within the work itself.	24	67%	8%	Agree
The training has helped me recognize stress from frequent exposure to violence .	24	42%	33%	Agree
The training has helped me recognize stress from work overload .	24	38%	25%	Agree
Training provided tools to cope with individual officer stress.	24	42%	46%	Disagree

Individual Officer Stress

Results for individual officer stress were the most positive of all the categories in the study. The majority (54%) of the reporting officers agreed the training was effective

in identifying sources of officer stress. While less than a quarter felt, the training was not effective in teaching officers to identify individual officer stress. The vast majority of the officers felt the training was effective in teaching officers about stress associated with family (71% agree) and fears regarding success and officer safety (67% agree). Although a high percent of officers felt the training was effective in teaching officers to recognize stress, tools to cope with individual stress seems to be an area of concern. The majority of officers (50%) agreed the training provided tools to cope with individual stress. However, a third of the officers (33%) felt the training was ineffective in teaching coping methods. Table 5.4 gives the percentage breakdown and the mode.

Table 5.4. Results from the Individual Officer Stress category

Survey Question	N	% strongly agree to agree	% Strongly Disagree to disagree	Mode
The training was effective at identifying sources of individual officer stress.	24	54%	21%	Agree
The training has helped me recognize stress as it pertains to fears regarding success and officer safety .	24	67%	13%	Agree
The training has helped me recognize stress associated with my family .	24	71%	13%	Agree
Training provided tools to cope with individual officer stress.	24	50%	33%	Agree

Effects of Stress

The effects of stress results are not as definitive as in previous categories. The highest percentage in this category did not exceed fifty-five percent. The majority (54 %) of the officers responding to the survey reported the training was effective in identifying effects of stress. However, one quarter of the officers reporting disagreed and felt the training was ineffective at teaching officers to identify effects of stress. Although the

majority of the officers (50%) agreed that the training teaches officers to recognize the effects on mental well-being, nearly one third disagreed and felt the training is ineffective. The results were similar in regards to recognizing the effects of stress as it pertains to physical well-being. Fifty percent of the officers felt the training was effective while a small portion (17%) felt the training was ineffective. While not a significant percentage, the majority of the reporting officers, (50%) disagreed and felt the training did not provide adequate tools to cope with the effects of stress. Table 5.5 gives the percentage breakdown along with the modes.

Table 5.5 Results from the Effects of Stress Category

Survey Question	N	% strongly agree to agree	% Strongly Disagree to disagree	Mode
The training was effective at identifying effects of stress.	24	54%	25%	Agree
The Training has helped me recognize the effects stress plays on my mental well-being .	24	50%	29%	Agree
The training has helped me recognize the effects of stress as it pertains to my physical well-being .	24	50%	17%	Agree
Training provided tools to cope with the effects of stress.	24	33%	42%	Disagree

Chapter Summary

The statistical analysis of the survey data provides insight to the perceptions of the Hays County Sheriff's Office respondents regarding the Stress Management Program. The analysis shows that while the training is successful in identifying sources of stress and teaches officers to recognize stress of various sources of stress discussed within the curriculum. On the down side the analysis shows the stress management program is not successful in teaching coping methods in most categories with the exception of individual

officer stress. The next chapter summarizes the research of the Stress Management Curriculum and discusses recommendations for future research and improvements in the stress management training.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and summarize the research findings. Recommendations for future research regarding law enforcement stress management are also included. Recommendations for improvement of the current stress management program used at the Hays County Sheriff's Office are discussed. The recommendations for improving the existing program are taken from the literature and survey findings.

Summary of Research

The purpose of the research was to gather the perceptions and attitudes of the Hays County Sheriff's Office regarding the Stress Management Training mandated by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education (TCLEOSE). To perform this research scholarly literature and the TCLEOSE curriculum were reviewed. After reviewing the literature and the TCLEOSE curriculum, a conceptual framework was developed containing of six categories. The categories consisted of (1) Internal Department Stress, (2) External Department Stress, (3) Stress Within the Work Itself, (4) Individual Officer Stress, (5) Effects of Stress, and (6) Coping Methods.

Survey questionnaires were distributed to mid level supervisors of the Hays County Sheriff's Office. The supervisors then distributed the surveys to their subordinates. The return rate was adequate, 24 of the 46 surveys distributed were returned yielding a 52 percent response rate. Table 6.1 summarizes the results of the Hays County Sheriff's Officers perceptions of the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education Curriculum. The results expressed in table 6.1 are based on modes. While the majority of the officers agree the program is effective in

meeting most of its goals there are a large number of officers that disagree with the effectiveness of the training program. Appendix C provides a complete breakdown of the results.

Table 6.1 Summary of Results

Categories	Components	Mode
Internal Department Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying stress from within the department Recognizing stress from Negligent supervision Recognizing stress from excessive paperwork Recognizing stress from perceived favoritism in regards to promotion and assignments Recognizing stress from shift work Recognizing stress from lack of career opportunities 	Strongly Agree Agree Agree Strongly Agree Agree Agree
External Department Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying sources of external department stress Recognizing stress from frustration with the court system Recognizing stress from lack of public support Recognizing stress from negative media attention 	Agree Agree Agree Agree
Stress from the work itself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying sources of stress from the work itself Recognizing stress from frequent exposure to violence Recognizing stress from work overload 	Agree Agree Agree
Individual Officer Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying sources of individual officer stress Recognizing stress from fears regarding success and officer safety Recognizing stress from family issues 	Agree Agree Agree
Effects of Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying effects of stress Recognizing effects of stress has on mental well-being Recognizing the effects stress on physical well-being. 	Agree Agree Agree
Coping Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Department Stress External Department Stress Stress from the work itself Individual officer stress Effects of Stress 	Disagree Disagree Disagree Agree Disagree

The respondents indicated that overall the program is effective in identifying sources of stress in each category as well as teaching officers to recognize stress from various components of the curriculum. However, not all areas of the curriculum are perceived to be effective. With the exception of the Individual Officer Stress category, all other categories were perceived to be ineffective in dealing with coping methods. This is an area of concern, as coping is a significant process in stress management.

Program Recommendations

According to the survey results, the training curriculum is somewhat adequate in addressing the needs of officers. Although the majority of the respondents indicated the curriculum mandated by TCLEOSE is effective in identifying sources of stress and the effects of stress, a high percent of officers found the training is ineffective in teaching coping methods to deal with stress. Based on the survey responses, further instruction is needed to teach officers how to cope more effectively with stress. Coping methods in all categories with the exception of one were found to be ineffective in providing officers with the tools needed to combat stress. Coping is a critical area of training that must be addressed and corrected. While the TCLEOSE curriculum sets the minimum requirements for stress management training, other programs and further education could be implemented by the Hays County Sheriff's Office to ensure that its officers have proper training and resources to effectively cope with stress.

According to Finn and Tomz (1996) few simple implementations such as teaching officers to increase their physical health and well-being through a better diet and increased physical activity are effective ways to reduce stress. These methods can be implemented quickly and with little cost to the department.

Future Research in this Area

The purpose of this research was to gather the attitudes and perceptions of the Hays County Sheriff's Office law enforcement personnel regarding the TCLEOSE stress management curriculum. This study did not take into account the officers age, experience, marital status, shift worked, if the officer has children or other demographic information that could lead to further research questions. Future surveys should allow officers to write comments or suggestions they feel may have been left out by the researcher. In addition, participants may offer opinions as to areas of improvement in the training. Future studies could focus on these aspects as they may provide useful information pertaining to stress management training.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

Chose the number that best coincides with your opinion.	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Training is effective in identifying sources of stress from within the department.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Training has helped recognize stress from Negligent supervision.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The training has helped recognize stress from excessive paperwork.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The training has helped recognize stress from Perceived favoritism in regards to promotions and assignments.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The training has helped recognize stress from shift work.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The training has helped in recognizing stress due to lack of career opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Training provided tools to cope with internal department stress sources.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The training was effective in identifying sources of external department stress.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The training helped me recognize stress caused by frustration with the court system.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The training helped me recognize stress caused by lack of public support.	1	2	3	4	5
11. The training helped me recognize stress caused by negative media attention.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Training provided tools to cope with internal department stress sources.	1	2	3	4	5
13. The training was effective at identifying sources of stress within the work itself.	1	2	3	4	5

14. The training has helped recognize stress from frequent exposure to violence.	1	2	3	4	5
15. The training has helped recognize stress from work overload.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Training provided tools to cope with individual officer stress.	1	2	3	4	5
17. The training was effective at identifying sources of individual officer stress.	1	2	3	4	5
18. The training has helped me recognize stress as it pertains to fears regarding success and officer safety.	1	2	3	4	5
19. The training has helped me recognize stress associated with my family.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Training provided tools to cope with individual officer stress.	1	2	3	4	5
21. The training was effective at identifying effects of stress.	1	2	3	4	5
22. The Training has helped me recognize the effects stress plays on my mental well-being.	1	2	3	4	5
23. The training has helped me recognize the effects of stress as it pertains to my physical well-being.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Training provided tools to cope with the effects of stress.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B: IRB Exemption Email

Exemption Request

The exemption application you sent on 9/06/ 2006 has been accepted. Your project is exempt from full or expedited review by the Texas State Institutional Review Board.

Compliance Specialist
Office of Sponsored Programs
Texas State University-San Marcos

601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666
Texas State University-San Marcos is a member of the Texas State University System

Appendix C: Statistics

Perceived effectiveness of training in the area of Internal Department Stress

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Training is effective in identifying sources of stress from within the department	46%	29%	4%	21%	0%
2. Training has helped me recognize stress from Negligent supervision.	8%	46%	21%	21%	4%
3. The training has helped me recognize stress from excessive paperwork	13%	46%	13%	21%	8%
4. The training has helped me recognize stress from Perceived favoritism in regards to promotions and assignments.	13%	38%	21%	21%	8%
5. The training has helped me recognize stress from shift work	17%	46%	13%	21%	4%
6. The training has helped me recognize stress due to lack of career opportunities.	13%	29%	29%	25%	0%
7. Training provided tools to cope with internal department stress sources.	4%	25%	13%	29%	29%

Results from the External Department Stress category.

Survey Question	strongly agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. The training was effective in identifying sources of external department stress.	13%	38%	29%	17%	4%
9. The training helped me recognize stress caused by frustration with the court system.	8%	38%	25%	25%	4%
10. The training helped me recognize stress caused by lack of public support.	17%	38%	29%	8%	8%
11. The training helped me recognize stress caused by negative media attention.	8%	50%	21%	8%	8%
12. Training provided tools to cope with external department stress sources.	4%	38%	8%	17%	33%

Results from the Stress Within the Work Itself category.

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13. The training was effective at identifying sources of stress within the work itself.	4%	62%	25%	8%	0%
14. The training has helped me recognize stress from frequent exposure to violence.	8%	33%	25%	25%	8%
15. The training has helped me recognize stress from work overload.	8%	29%	33%	17%	8%
16. Training provided tools to cope with individual officer stress.	8%	33%	13%	29%	17%

Results from the Individual Officer Stress category

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17. The training was effective at identifying sources of individual officer stress.	13%	41%	25%	21%	0%
18. The training has helped me recognize stress as it pertains to fears regarding success and officer safety.	13%	54%	21%	13%	0%
19. The training has helped me recognize stress associated with my family.	17%	54%	17%	4%	8%
20. Training provided tools to cope with individual officer stress.	4%	45%	17%	8%	25%

Results from the Effects of Stress Category

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
21. The training was effective at identifying effects of stress.	13%	42%	21%	21%	4%
22. The Training has helped me recognize the effects stress plays on my mental well-being.	13%	38%	21%	25%	4%
23. The training has helped me recognize the effects of stress as it pertains to my physical well-being.	13%	38%	33%	17%	0%
24. Training provided tools to cope with the effects of stress.	8%	25%	25%	17%	25%