

in this issue >>>

- A New Dimension
- Workplace Culture
- What is Staff Wellness?
- Staff Resources
- Family Talk: Just a Day
- Shopping



Issue one

A Monthly Insight into Correctional Wellness

IDOC Staff Wellness

current topics >>>

“Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment”

After a summer/covid break to allow operations at facilities to catch up- CF2F will ~~be planning to~~ resume as soon as possible. See you there!

All IDOC employees are eligible to attend this 2 day workshop. A waitlist at each facility has been established and is worked through in order of voluntary sign up. Please see your warden to sign up.

“A New Dimension”

Turning the page in IDOC wellness

IDOC Staff Wellness Coordinator Stephanie Rawlings

We find ourselves in a very different time in both our profession and our world, and I feel confident that no one feels settled in either arena. The Staff Wellness Team, like everyone else, has certainly had to develop new approaches and ideas to support staff through these times also. As we move forward into a new era within corrections, and maybe even as a society, I want to highlight the areas that our team will be focusing on to better equip and support our staff. It boils down to one word: holistic. What does this mean? Well, it’s really quite simple. The Staff Wellness Team recognizes that our profession impacts every facet of our lives. From the physical to the mental to the spiritual. This work is HARD. The Team has developed a list of areas that we



will be developing new and innovative programs and resources for staff. This newsletter will be one of them. Over the next

several months, we will be highlighting the “dimensions” of wellness by defining how it relates to both our professional and personal lives. We will be asking line staff what their primary concerns for wellness are as well as what they think

can make the biggest difference in not only their wellness, but their families as well. Be watching for a survey that will be available to all employees so that we can understand how to serve you better.

We look forward to serving you better in these new dimensions!

set the stage >>>

Connecting with Family at home....

Table Talk: no matter your shift/days off, find time to share good/bad things that happened that day as a family, or as one SWRT member calls it: roses and thorns

Start to Share

Our families really struggle to understand the places in which we work. They can't visit or visualize us at work, and corrections staff often feel like sharing about their day could induce fear and stress in loved ones, but

the unknown is often a scarier idea for them. Challenge yourself to find appropriate ways to share both good and bad things you experience at work with your families. Their reactions and support may surprise you.

LOCKDOWN WITH LUKE

Weekly podcast featuring topics relevant to staff wellness for correctional employees. Topics include mental health, physical wellness, mind-body connection, covid19 material, and correctional fatigue prevention. Luke Fairless and Stephanie Rawlings interview a number of guests.

<https://open.spotify.com/show/45E6M1U1k6EYgdGB28GHWd>

Positive workplace culture >>>

“Burn the Ships”

“Step into a new day
We can rise up from the dust and walk away
We can dance upon our heartache
So light a match, leave the past, burn the ships
And don't you look back”
“Burn the Ships”

Staying Well

The book is available for all staff to borrow from their facility. It is a guide to identifying and protecting yourself against corrections fatigue as well as a glimpse into our world for families. See a SWRT member today to take home a copy.



Recently, while driving home from CF2F a song by a popular band came on my radio. It was a song I have listened to many times, but never directly after facilitating CF2F. SWRT has been on a mission for the last three and a half years to promote the wellness of staff, but maybe a lesser known mission is to turn the tide of negativity within our department. I cannot count the times staff have said to me, “I am a positive voice at my facility, but I am outnumbered by negativity, one person can't make a difference”. It struck me on this drive home that we have many staff who believe this negativity is just how it is, that there is no escaping it; we work in prisons after all. But I ask myself, what if we just “burn the ships” at the gatehouse everyday? The chorus to the song I was listening to became an anthem for me of what I need to be doing for my own wellness at the end of each work day as I transition from IDOC employee to wife and mother at home. We encounter so many fires in our workplaces, and the longer we spend immersed in negative workplace culture, the more mindful we must become of leaving it behind. As we move forward in our wellness efforts in the next few years, I challenge every single employee in our department to spend equal or more time and energy dwelling on good happening around you as you do the bad. Focus on what you as an individual has control over, and well, for the rest of it....burn the ships.
Lyrics: “Burn the Ships”, For King & Country, 2018.

What is the “Staff Wellness Response Team” and what do they do?

COMMUNICATION STATION

The two most dangerous words in IDOC are the words “I Heard...” More stress and strife have never been known than after these words are spoken between 2 employees. We joke about the rumor mill but the truth is, people hear these words and make decisions, or worse, waste emotions (strong ones) on the information that follows. There is something we can all agree on at IDOC. There is a big difference between “I Heard” and “I know”. Let’s strive to make “I Know” a larger part of our communication!

The Staff Wellness Response Team is a team comprised of a diverse group of line staff who applied, interviewed, and certified to be a peer support team at IDOC. Here’s some quick facts about SWRT:

- Team at every facility, available for **peer to peer**, to present resources in cycle training, certified to conduct all the responses of the Critical Incident Stress Management program
- Available immediately to their own facility
- Available for responses to other facilities
- Offer support, listen, refer to more resources when necessary (PSP, EAP, other provider)
- visit icisf.org for more info on CISM.
- Canvas facilities following large scale traumatic incidents

Critical Incident Stress

Management What is CISM?

CISM is a confidential, peer driven/mental health supported, comprehensive, integrative, multi-component crisis intervention system. CISM is considered comprehensive because it consists of multiple crisis intervention components, which functionally span the entire spectrum of a crisis.

CF2F: What is this?

From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment™

From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment™ (CF2F) is a course that uses evidence and data to explain the psychological dynamics behind the negativity of the corrections workplace and its costly consequences. CF2F analyzes the causes and signs of corrections fatigue and provides strategies for professional fulfillment and self-care.

For more info visit www.desertwaters.com

ask the experts >>>

AFSCME Illinois Personal Support Program



The professional staff of the AFSCME Personal Support Program (PSP) is ready to help you or a member of your family with personal concerns or problems, whether they occur at home or at work. The PSP offers services statewide through a network of licensed professionals who are specially trained to provide confidential assistance on a wide variety of concerns and problems, including stress, marital/partner problems, parenting, grief, and elder care concerns. You can reach the PSP from 8:30 Am through 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, at 1-800-647-8776.

finalthoughts...

From a SWRT member with 20+ years in maximum security....

For the last few months, the author who wrote the below has been sending his thoughts to SWRT leadership via email every few weeks, especially when something causes him to pause and think....below is one of those thoughts....



This old inmate is very upset that his \$5.63 headphones he bought last month broke. There is no warranty on something like that. I remain professional just as I should with someone on the street. As professionals we have to keep their crimes out of our mind, we are there to do the job. Inmates have already been judged and sentenced, so it's not our place to do so. That is best anyway; handle them professionally as expected and their little blowups don't escalate into incidents.

Never good to watch TV shows on serial killers and sadists if you work in an environment where you have to tell a serial killer, "I am sorry but we can not replace your headphones, we do sell a higher quality one" and listen to him yell for 10 minutes about how we are all crooked and he is a victim. Honestly none of us even blink an eye.

I can suck this up here without a problem but think to myself that I could not work customer service at Walmart. Really, we all feel that way, right? Why is that? It's definitely not about the pay, that does not cross our minds.

At Walmart I would expect people to act civilly and would not tolerate getting yelled at, but here some guy that tortured and murdered people gets a social pass from my psyche. Maybe below the surface I didn't give it a complete pass. I took CF2F and maybe I just think I gave it a pass. All I know is the first thought that comes to mind is next time I am in line at Walmart and hear someone behaving badly to an employee I will gladly tell them to just shut up. I don't feel hurt or even care about how this inmate just acted, I just think I feel bad for those poor employees that have to REALLY eat it at Walmart Customer Service.

Still not convinced it is the job and not just age. Every year I have less concern about presenting my issues with others outside the wall politely or taking the high road when given the option. I almost look forward to calling others out when they deserve it. Am I just starting to age into that crusty old man or it is the job? Still not completely sold on it, behind the wall is my comfort zone. How can it be okay here if the job is the problem?

This essay is intended to get us thinking about those subconscious behaviors we may have developed over the course of our career as a coping mechanism to the daily life we also live behind the wall. Awareness is key when beginning to evaluate where we are with our own personal wellness.

Discussion Questions for Family Talk:

What thinking patterns have I developed through my career that might be appropriate at work but not so much in the world?

What worldview have I developed like the above? Does it make sense outside of the walls?

Do I share openly with those outside of my workplace? Why or why not?

Has this job changed me?



Connect with us on Facebook – "CORRECTIONS STAFF WELLNESS" >>>

IDOC SWRT
Leadership Team

[Camile Lindsay, Chief of Staff, IDOC](#)

Marcus Hardy, Executive Liaison

Stephanie Rawlings, Coordinator

Regional & Backup Coordinators

Sandy Seibert & Toriano Jeffries, North

Greg Runyan & Rod Dial, Central

Chuck Mattmiller & Jon Brown, South