



## Webinar Takeaways

# Officer Down

## The Road Ahead

This Webinar illustrates the importance of the **mental health and wellness** of law enforcement officers following a critical incident.

Former Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority police sergeant Dic Donohue provided the following lessons learned about recovery after being shot during the pursuit of the Boston Marathon bombing suspects.

### Prepare

**Physically**—maintain proper fitness levels to give your body the best fighting chance, should you ever be critically injured on the job.

**Mentally**—know that you have the courage to take on unthinkable situations, and nurture your relationships now to build a strong support network.

### Train

**Practice first aid.** These critical incidents happen quickly, and you need to be able to respond properly and immediately to save your life, your partner's life, or a citizen's or suspect's life.

**Wear your bullet-resistant vest!** Train for different possible scenarios, and train with your vest on. Always wear your vest on duty.

### Support

**Support networks** make the biggest difference. Be willing to accept support from family members, fellow officers, and the community. Should the situation be reversed, be part of the network of people who are willing to help an injured officer and his or her family.

**Continued support**—initial support to officers involved in a critical incident is key. Remember that these events have long-term implications, including at trials and anniversary events. Sometimes, assistance with day-to-day tasks is just as important to the officer.

**Dr. David Englert**, clinical psychologist for the Charlotte–Mecklenburg Police Department, provided the following overview of the importance of proper planning and the short- and long-term effects on other officers within the agency.

## Organizational Support

- **Support (or the lack thereof) from the chain of command has a significant impact on the well-being and vision of the organization.**
- **Following an incident, the organization should be ready by providing or assisting with:**
  - The right intervention to the right people at the right time.
  - Psychological first aid to reestablish immediate and effective coping.
    - Consider basic needs.
    - Remember social support.
    - Encourage/improve in-place coping strategies.
    - Help develop new strategies.
    - Link up with collaborative services only if needed.
- **Make sure that appropriate personnel—such as the clinical director, peer support members, chaplains, and leadership—are identified and known throughout the agency before critical incidents occur.**
- **Post-incident**
  - Make initial contact ASAP.
  - Follow up, as needed; remember key dates—such as trial, anniversary, and dates when similar incidents happened to others.
  - Provide continued contact after initial post-incident activities.
  - Ensure that all questions are answered (some may have to wait for investigations to be concluded).
  - Officers report that the opportunity to have crime-scene personnel go over available information with them has been incredibly helpful in resolving questions and putting them at ease.
- **Peer support should include an occupationally tailored program, including officers from various units, officers who were involved in the incident, and nonsworn personnel.**
- **Organizational post-incident interventions and support for consideration:**
  - Tactical debriefings
  - Other units/individuals affected but not directly involved
  - Communications personnel
- **Consider other support networks and individuals outside of the organization:**
  - Family members and children
  - Retirees of the organization
  - Community members