

December 14, 2018

Good afternoon, Chair Barker, Chair Prozanski, and members of the committee,

For the record my name is Dawn Davis, I am a retired detective from the Albany Police Department and part-time instructor at the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training, providing both classroom and scenario based training. Additionally, I am a law enforcement instructor for the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force where I have been actively involved in providing trauma informed training to law enforcement both nationally and throughout Oregon.

As a law enforcement instructor for the Sexual Assault Task Force I have worked with other states to implement legislation requiring law enforcement to have training in trauma informed response, recently training 600 law enforcement officers in Illinois. In addition to national trainings, I work with the Sexual Assault Task Force to instruct at DPSST on Sexual Assault Investigations in both the initial basic academy recruit training and also for career officers. We also bring trauma informed best practices to departments throughout the state.

We recognize trauma occurs when one either witnesses or believes they themselves will be seriously injured or killed and also believe they are helpless to stop it. Therefore, it should be recognized that trauma may occur in any violent encounter. Although my background is in trauma informed response and sexual assault investigation, I have found the Sexual Assault Task Force materials applicable to trauma occurring from any violent encounter.

There is a saying that no one should have to be a witness to their own crime. Traditionally a victim of violent crime has been treated as a witness as law enforcement seeks to obtain "just the facts". What we know about trauma, however, is that victims of violent acts are often terrified and overwhelmed by their experience. A traditional approach in these situations is not only inadequate for investigative purposes, but does a disservice to the victim and the larger community we serve.

When training law enforcement there are a few things we have found important to emphasize. We look at the different types of trauma, and how historical, cultural and complex trauma can impact the victim's experience within the criminal justice system. Training law enforcement about the neurobiology of trauma, helps officers let go of their preconceived notions about how victims should've have acted during and after their experience of trauma. We all approach situations with our own ideas about what we "would have" done under similar circumstances and it's easy to translate that into what a victim "should have" or "could have" done or reacted. We have been able to help law enforcement understand that there are a multitude of reasons victims of trauma may not act or react in a particular way. Law enforcement in turn is able to apply their understanding of trauma in the language they use to document the assault, resulting in improved reports and prosecutorial outcomes.

Finally, we have focused attention on how strong community relationships helps law enforcement do the very hard work that is required of them. We know that any trauma survivor needs support and validation to heal, and we have found that in helping law enforcement strengthen those community relationships builds the foundation for a victim centered law enforcement response and communicates the care and dedication Oregon officers have for their communities.

Taking the time to respond in a transparent and trauma informed manner serves to instill a sense of safety both physically and emotionally for the victim and the larger community. Connection and control in the process provides victims with power and autonomy, positively impacting their healing process and mitigating trauma.

A trauma informed law enforcement approach not only serves the need of the specific victim, but is also beneficial to law enforcement, the criminal justice process, and the community as a whole, by providing support for the victim to proceed in holding the offender accountable if that is their wish. In order to accomplish this, first we have to educate our law enforcement about the impact of trauma, give them tools to work with victims, and provide a system of support. Yes, we want perpetrators to be held accountable - but more importantly, we also want healthy, thriving communities that trust their law enforcement to care for them and their needs throughout the criminal justice process.

In conclusion, if we continue to emphasize training for law enforcement in victim centered, trauma informed practices, not only will we reduce the impact of trauma on the victim and begin the healing process, we will grow trust between officers and their community. Increased trust creates closer communities.

I am happy to answer any questions you have. Thank you for your time.