

State of New York OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH <hr/> OMH OFFICIAL POLICY MANUAL	Date Issued 10/23/03	T. L. 03-03	Section # OM-410
	Section Operation Management-Human Resources		
	Directive Response to Traumatic Events		

A. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the Office of Mental Health that employees who are involved in, witness, or are otherwise exposed to a traumatic event in the workplace shall be offered appropriate psychological support. Although facilities are currently responsible for the provision of on-site emergency medical care for employees in response to emergencies (which may include traumatic events), the emotional impact of events which occur on the job may also have negative consequences on an individual's life. Such effects can be minimized, however, with the provision of appropriate and timely intervention.

This policy directive sets forth requirements in regard to addressing and reducing the emotional impact of traumatic events on employees. This policy directive is applicable to all State-operated inpatient facilities, and is to be implemented no later than six months from the date of issuance.

B. RELEVANT STATUTES AND STANDARDS

OMH Official Policy Manual, section PC-605

C. BODY OF DIRECTIVE

- 1) Each State-operated inpatient facility shall ensure the provision of appropriate and timely responses to traumatic events, as well as any necessary follow-up. Traumatic events include unusual and extreme events occurring in the workplace which may be considered to be a threat to persons' lives or the safety of the workplace, or which cause employees to experience extreme grief, loss or distress. Examples of such events may include, but are not limited to: fatal or serious injuries or accidents, or other sudden deaths; hostage situations; and serious assaults.
 - a) Each facility shall designate or identify one or more persons who shall be responsible for the coordination and provision of services described in this policy directive. Such persons may include the Employee Assistance Coordinator, facility mental health staff, or any other persons deemed capable of fulfilling this function.
 - b) As soon as practicable after a traumatic event, designated persons shall contact affected employees and offer appropriate assistance. When possible, this initial contact should occur within a few hours of the event.

As needed, such assistance may include but is not limited to:

- i) provision of emotional support;
- ii) provision of related information, including referral information;
- iii) accompanying the employee home or to medical facilities;

- iv) assistance in accessing other relevant resources;
 - v) assistance in accessing related benefits; and
 - vi) assistance in dealing with the criminal justice system.
 - c) As soon as practicable after a traumatic event, the persons designated in accordance with C)1)a) of this policy directive shall arrange to meet alone with affected staff in a neutral setting to allow them to express whatever concerns they may have. Such designated persons shall seek out affected staff, but should not require them to express their emotions. The designated persons should offer any assistance which might be requested and should be especially alert to affected staff who appear to have become numbed or disconnected.
- 2) If a traumatic event is related to a community disaster, designated persons should contact the county department of mental health to coordinate with the county's disaster response team.
- 3) Any actions completed pursuant to this policy directive shall be separate and distinct from other administrative processes related to the event (e.g., incident review meetings or investigations).