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Counseling in Federal Probation: The Introduction of a Flowchart into the Counseling Process *John S. Dierna*

Probation Officer Burnout: An Organizational Disease/An Organizational Cure, Part II *Paul W. Brown*

Experimenting with Community Service: A Punitive Alternative to Imprisonment *Richard J. Maher*
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Local Impact of a Low-Security Federal Correctional Institution *George O. Rogers*
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of Proprietary Prisons **NCJRS** *Charles H. Logan*

ounselors and the Adult Children **JAN 7 1988** *Eric T. Assur*
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This Issue in Brief

In this issue, the editors are pleased to feature three articles authored by United States probation officers. In that the manuscripts were sent unsolicited, we believe that they offer good indication of issues that are of real interest and concern to persons working in the Federal Probation System. The articles, the first three presented in this issue, discuss counseling offenders, preventing job burnout, and employing community service as a sentencing alternative—information valuable not only to probation officers but to professionals in all phases of criminal justice and corrections.

Counseling in Federal Probation: The Introduction of a Flowchart into the Counseling Process.—In many probation officer-probationer/parolee relationships, the potential problems facing clients are not addressed, often because the client does not understand or consciously accept the problem or focus area. To assist Federal probation officers and other change agents in using counseling methods and problem-definition skills, author John S. Dierna introduces a systematic framework. The tool is a flowchart—which defines a variety of processes and decisions which may be pertinent in addressing issues such as, "What is the problem?" The flowchart—which the author applies to an actual probation case—offers a flexible yet structured approach to defining problem areas and defusing the resistive barriers which initially inhibit steps toward problem resolution.

Probation Officer Burnout: An Organizational Disease/An Organizational Cure, Part II.—Paul W. Brown authors his second article for *Federal Probation* on the topic of burnout. While the first article (March 1986) discussed the influence of the bureaucracy on probation officer burnout, this second part emphasizes some specific approaches that management can take to reduce organizationally induced burnout. Noting that organizational behavior can influence staff burnout, Brown points out that the role of the supervisor is vital in reducing the

stress which can lead to burnout. Much can be done to provide a work environment which is healthier for the employee and more productive for the organization.

Experimenting with Community Service: A Punitive Alternative to Imprisonment.—For the past

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Probation Officer Burnout

An Organizational Disease/An Organizational Cure, Part II

BY PAUL W. BROWN

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PART OF the reason for burnout among probation (and parole) officers is the traditional bureaucracy. In a previous article on this subject (Brown, 1986), the author discussed several definitions of burnout, the influences of the workplace on burnout, and approaches to alleviating the stress that can lead to burnout. Here, the key points of the previous article will be reviewed briefly, and the role of the organization in reducing employee burnout will be more thoroughly examined.

Some Definitions of Burnout

Of the numerous definitions of burnout, many mention stress, which appears to be one of the fundamental causes of burnout. Pamela Patrick (1981) defined burnout as

... the feeling of emotional exhaustion, negative attitude shift, and sense of personal devaluation that occurs over time and in relation to high stress work environment.

Whiton Paine (1982) in his book on job stress and burnout used the concept of burnout stress syndromes (BOSS) which are due to "high levels of job stress, personal frustration, and inadequate coping skills." A "calling" becomes a job according to Cherniss (1980), "one no longer lives to work but works only to live." For Carroll and White (1982), signs of burnout included "a significant decrement in the quality of services provided clients," inadequate communication, formal staff interaction, poor morale, and absenteeism. One of the foremost authorities on burnout is Maslach. Many of the studies on burnout have used her burnout inventory as a measurement device. According to Whitehead (1985), Maslach saw three aspects of burnout: (1) emotional exhaustion, (2) depersonalization of clients, and (3) a negative self-image.

In his study, Whitehead (1987) tested both Maslach's theory that client contact was the chief cause of burnout and Cherniss' which emphasized the organizational causes of burnout. He found support for Cherniss' theory but not Maslach's. In fact, he found that greater client contact led to "more frequent feelings of accomplishment."

The negative aspects of burnout become readily apparent. Not only does the employee suffer, but the client and the mission of the organization are also adversely affected. The initially promising employee may abandon a career early or may remain on the job and become less productive, more negative, and cynical with time. The burned-out employee also tends to infect other employees (Carroll and White, 1982).

The Organization

Although individual differences are important, the work environment is the most significant influence in staff burnout. The supervisor is seen as one of the keys to the reduction of organizationally induced stress.

Individuals may deal with stress in such positive fashions as meditation, exercise, and diet. Obviously, a degree of stress will always be present in the organization. Some degree of stress can even have positive effects, as there are people who work more efficiently under a degree of stress or pressure. What is at issue here are those stressors which have overall detrimental consequences for both the individual and the organization and how these sources of stress can be minimized by the organization.

For example, Pines (1982) found that "red tape, paper work, and communications problems" were frequently encountered in the bureaucratic organization and were significantly related to burnout. Lack of participation in the decisionmaking process was also found to be correlated to burnout. Focus on the work environment is vital if burnout is to be reduced.

In a recently completed dissertation on probation officer burnout, McCabe (1986) found that some employees were subject to burnout even when "healthy individual coping skills" were utilized. The organization became a significant element in burnout. McCabe concurred with this writer's earlier position:

... Brown proposed that analyzing organizational behavior and changing management styles is a necessity for the reduction of burnout in the probation office. This study's [McCabe's] finding of a significant relationship between confrontive coping and high burnout lent support to Brown's hypothesis. It

may be speculated that this particular setting is not conducive, and perhaps even counterproductive to attempts by the individual to cope in ways that are commonly considered healthy and productive in other settings.

In a study published in 1966, Aiken and Hage examined what sounded to be organizationally induced burnout. The term "burnout" did not appear in print before 1974 (Cherness). Aiken and Hage studied 16 public and private social welfare agencies, concluding that highly centralized and formalized organizations have more significant "worker alienation." Their explanation of alienation is similar to that of burnout:

Alienation from work reflects a feeling of disappointment with career and professional development, as well as disappointment over the inability to fulfill professional norms. Alienation from expressive relations reflects dissatisfaction in social relations with supervisors and fellow workers.

Since the 1966 study, there have been a significant number of studies which demonstrate the influence the organization has on the employee. Pines (1982) characterized as "crucial" the influence of the work environment on burnout. It is interesting to note that one study (Whitehead, 1986) did not find any gender difference when it came to probation officer burnout. As a result, he observed that future research should address how all officers can avoid burnout "and how the organization can assist all employees in that goal." The remainder of this article will look at what some of the experts view as ways the organization can help reduce stress and burnout.

Participation

Lack of participation in the decisionmaking process has been identified as a stressor and a burnout correlate (Pines, 1982). Assuming the validity of this, the organization should logically move away from the traditional bureaucracy to a more democratic management style. In reality, the concept of the traditional bureaucracy may be more fiction than fact; however, it is assumed that many probation organizations have much in common with the bureaucratic organization.

A self-fulfilling prophecy may evolve in the bureaucracy. The employee is not trusted, much like in the X theory of McGregor: people will not work unless made to do so and do not have the interests of the organization at heart. Because the bureaucracy finds feedback unacceptable, staff who are faced with burnout become increasingly negative and detrimental to the organization (Carroll and White).

In a recently published study on professionalism and the work environment in corrections, Jurik and

Musheno (1986) noted the need for "far greater participation of line personnel in decision-making." Professionalization requires not only a more democratic management style, but care in the recruitment and training of staff who can function in a liberalized management environment.

In his study of probation officer burnout, Whitehead (1983) found many officers "dissatisfied with their levels of participation in decision-making. . . ." More progressive, modern management theories place more emphasis on employee participation in the management process. Government organizations usually lag the private sector in many ways, and management systems are no exception. However, there is no inherent reason for this unfortunate situation to continue if change is desired.

Professional Development

Job dissatisfaction can lead to burnout. The organization can help reduce job dissatisfaction by providing opportunities for self-growth. These can include not only promotional opportunities which might be limited, but also professional development and achievement (Pines).

Carroll and White (1982) confirmed the importance of the employee having adequate education and training in reducing stress and frustration on the job. If the employee was hired with an educational deficit, then the organization should provide an environment in which the deficit could be overcome. Shapiro (1982) addressed the importance of training:

Training can serve to invigorate staff by providing ideas of new, different, more sophisticated, or more advanced ways of performing work responsibilities. The supervisor who initiates contacts with community educational resources and who follows through by helping trainer and staff identify learning needs, anticipates that training can be a valuable preventive intervention against burnout.

Whitehead (1985), a pioneer researcher in the field of probation officer burnout, found that officers with 6 months to 3 years of service suffered increasing burnout during those critical years. Conventional wisdom might have told us that burnout would not have been critical during the rookie years. To deal with that burnout, Whitehead suggests improved orientation programs to prepare the new employee for the realities of the work. Interestingly, Whitehead found that the most and the least experienced officers suffered the least burnout. The message is that those in-between workers may need the most attention from management in order to minimize the negative effects of burnout.

The organization can encourage attendance at pro-

fessional conferences and training seminars by providing time off and/or expenses to attend. They can help prevent the employee from becoming "stale" and losing a professional perspective (Moracco, 1985). It is also important that the organization seriously consider and utilize, when practical, some of that which the employee has learned at the seminars and conferences.

Acknowledgment

One inexpensive, easily implemented method of reducing stress and frustration is that of giving recognition to the employee. One aspect of recognition is to allow the officer input in the decisionmaking process. Another is for the organization to demonstrate concern for the employee. Both can add to job satisfaction and reduce job stress (Pines, 1982). A basic complaint of most burned-out workers in the health field is the lack of acknowledgment by supervisors (Patrick, 1981). The recognition can be in various forms, since appreciation of awards by employees differs. While some might value monetary awards, others would prefer nothing more than a letter of appreciation or a few words of thanks for a job well done. As Pines (1982) pointed out:

Unfortunately, in many large bureaucratic organizations the rewards distribution is very slow and inappropriate, resulting in the loss of a very powerful burnout antidote.

Certainly during the periodic evaluation the employee can be recognized for both achievements as well as be apprised of areas where improvement is needed. However, this should be an ongoing process not limited to annual reviews. Feedback is most valuable when it is immediate and ongoing (Pines, 1982).

The supervisor plays a key role in providing recognition of the employee. It should be recognized that supervisors may be "stress carriers" and can be very harmful to the organization. This concept was not found very frequently in the literature, but Humphrey (1978) expressed it well:

Being a "stress carrier" gets in the way of individual and organizational effectiveness. The creative genius of a staff may not reach full potential to be turned loose on the problem of business . . . Not only the organization suffers, but the individual, the family, and friends bear the brunt of the frustration and torment.

Job Flexibility

Shapiro (1982) outlines numerous ways in which the organization can be flexible in the employees' work day. Flexitime may be one of the more obvious, and sometimes easiest, measures to implement. Having employees working earlier or later than the tra-

ditional 8 to 5 shift could provide more adequate services to the community as well as allow the employee more personal and professional flexibility.

The workload itself could be made more flexible. In probation work, more flexible work could mean specialized caseloads that would be periodically rotated or staff development positions that would remove employees from carrying caseloads. Some might prefer working as a supervision team. With the increasing popularity of intensive supervision, there may be additional opportunity for flexible hours and team supervision. For those who do not want either the intensive involvement or flexible hours, there could be the alternative of an administrative caseload with its large numbers and minimal involvement.

Job routine also needs to be varied. Moracco (1985) refers to "time-outs" where the employee can get away from the job totally. Here, as mentioned above, are the conferences, workshops, and staff development positions. Patrick (1981) suggests mental health days which allow the employee to take off when there is a strong need to get away.

This writer has long urged the implementation of sabbaticals for corrections personnel. Ideally, time off with pay or reduced pay could be granted to attend college. Six months to a year off to do something totally different could greatly renew the spirit when the employee returns to the job. One other aspect worth exploring in corrections departments is job exchanges between the institutional and the field staff. Not only could such action result in more enlightened personnel on both sides of the correctional sphere, but it could provide tremendous opportunities for job rotation not available to either field or institutional staff alone.

Role Conflicts

An almost inherent problem with probation work is the role conflict that the officer frequently has to face. There are the simultaneous roles of the cop, the caseworker, the counselor, and, at times, the prosecutor. Manning (1983) in his discussion of correctional counselors characterized "role ambiguity and conflict" as the primary cause of their burnout.

McCabe (1986) also noted areas of "various and contradictory roles" such as that of a law enforcement officer on one side and a counselor/rehabilitator on the other. Additionally, the officer frequently has to work with involuntary clients who resent any intrusion in their lives. Finally, the officer has to face a generally critical public who sees probation as ineffectual.

Pines (1982) looked at both role conflict and role

ambiguity and the subsequent frustration that resulted when they were not adequately addressed. Role conflict "exists whenever an individual is torn by conflicting demands." It can result when the demands of the supervisor and administrator conflict—for example, when each expects the probation officer to complete a different task at the same time. Role ambiguity can result when the employees have "inadequate information about their work roles, and the scope and responsibilities of the job." Shapiro (1982) addressed the need for the supervisor to make clear to the employee, especially the new employee, the job role that is expected by the organization.

One final area of role conflict is the professional-bureaucratic conflict. This may occur at the beginning of the new employee's career when he faces the reality of working within the confines of a bureaucratic organization that does not allow the freedom of operation that the idealistic employee envisioned. It can also occur later in the career when the employee has developed a sense of professionalism that conflicts with the constraints of the organization. Poole and Regoli (1983) noted that "one consistent finding is that as an organization's members become more professional, the likelihood that they will encounter role conflict, work alienation, anomia and the like increases." Pines (1982) found evidence which demonstrated "the more autonomy, the less burnout."

Exercise

There seems to be general acceptance of the idea that exercise both helps to reduce stress and improves job performance.

Studies of police officers and other psychologically and physically stressful jobs have shown that a physically fit employee is better equipped to handle the physical and mental demands placed upon him through job stress (Gilbert, 1984).

A 6-month study (Bernacki and Baun, 1984) of white-collar employees involved with a company exercise program determined a "positive although probably noncausal relationship between exercise adherence . . . and above average job performance".

A news release from the United States Office of Personnel Management dated April 4, 1986, encouraged Federal managers to develop exercise programs. Director Horner made her position clear: ". . . there are tangible benefits, particularly in productivity, to be realized from an increased fitness in the ranks of the civil service." In acknowledging the employee as the government's "most important resource," Horner concluded that the government

should be "concerned with the whole health of its employees."

Frequently exercise is cited in the literature as a means for the individual to reduce job stress. However, the organization can also become involved by encouraging employees to exercise. Such involvement could include everything from a formal exercise program with a gym, to group membership in a health club, to allowing several hours of leave per month for the purpose of exercising. There are strong indications that exercise both reduces stress and otherwise aids the individual in becoming healthier. The organizational benefits are obvious from both a short-term and a long-term perspective. The message that the organization cares is very important to the employee.

Conclusions

Numerous organizational benefits result from reducing burnout. Retaining experienced, productive employees who can contribute positively to the organization's mission is an obvious one. An additional benefit rarely found in the literature was addressed by Lipton (1981). He wrote on the increasing number of stress-related legal claims by employees against employers. A precedent has now been set in awarding "worker compensation for mental and emotional disability resulting from occupational stress." A recent news release (1986) from the National Center for Disease Control reported that "[s]tress, boredom and frustration at work are causing substantial health problems for Americans." By addressing the causes of organization burnout, costly legal actions can be reduced. With respect to economic costs, Riggan (1985) puts the loss to the American economy due to burned-out workers in the "billions of dollars."

In probation work as in many other professions, supervisors are promoted from field positions because of their expertise and not because of their supervisory knowledge. The supervisors' treatment of the line staff is highly correlated with job satisfaction (Pines, 1982). It is therefore very important that the organization provides these front-line troops with adequate training to deal with staff stress and infectious burnout. Appropriate training can have a supplemental benefit of reducing burnout in supervisory personnel (Shapiro, 1982).

In summary, burnout is a very real problem, much of which can be attributed to the organization. Individual stress-reducing techniques will have minimal effect on reducing organizationally induced stress

and burnout. It is vital that management evaluate its policies and make changes where appropriate. The physical and mental harm done to the employee by an organization over which he has little or no control can be minimized by enlightened management.

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