

Convention Presentation Summaries

Each year, CCAPS sponsors several programs for continuing education credits for psychologists. At this year's convention in Las Vegas, we sponsored 28 programs. If you couldn't make all the programs you wanted to attend or weren't able to attend the convention this year, you can still find out more about some of the quality presentations that were sponsored. Below are descriptions of several presentations from this year's convention.



Psychological First Aid: A Best Practices Model

Meggen Tucker Sixbey

The student affair professional is increasingly being called upon to serve in the role of a first responder to students in crises, providing early response and intervention. This may include sitting with a student after they are notified that a family member has died, after a student experiences a sexual assault, or after a student has been witness to a traumatic event. Because of this increased duty, it is imperative that the student affair professional has training in how to respond to such crises.

Many models of crisis response and intervention exist such as the model provided by the National Organization of Victims Assistance, Arnold Lazarus' BASIC ID model assessing general functioning, the Dixon Intervention Model, FIRST Model of Crisis Intervention, or the James Crisis Intervention Model. While these models are sound and noteworthy models of crisis response, the Psychological First Aid model provides a thorough, yet easy to follow and easy to implement approach.

The Psychological First Aid model is an evidenced-informed approach to help individuals in the immediate aftermath of crisis. It is designed to reduce the initial distress caused by traumatic events and to foster short and long term adaptive functioning and coping. (*Psychological First Aid: Field Operations Guide 2nd Edition*). The PFA model is user-friendly and includes basic information-gathering techniques to allow the responding individual to make quick and accurate assessments of immediate concerns and subsequent needs. It operates on the premise that individuals are resilient and will bounce back more resourceful after a crisis, especially when provided compassionate support and proper future preparation at the early stages of a crisis. Additionally, it emphasizes developmentally and culturally appropriate interventions for various ages and backgrounds, which is a critical point of consideration on college campuses.

PFA provides the responder with 8 "core actions" that constitute the basic objectives of providing early assistance: Contact and Engagement, Safety and Comfort, Stabilization, Information Gathering, Practical Assistance, Connection with Social Supports, Information on Coping, and Linkage with Collaborative Services. The goal of each of these core actions will be briefly described here as listed in the *Psychological First Aide Field Operations Guide (2nd ed)*.

- **Contact and Engagement:** To respond to contacts initiated by the individual in crisis, or to initiate contacts in a non-intrusive, compassionate, and helpful manner.
- **Safety and Comfort:** To enhance immediate and ongoing safety, and provide physical and emotional comfort.
- **Stabilization (if needed):** To calm and orient emotionally overwhelmed or disoriented individuals
- **Information Gathering – Current Needs and Concerns:** To identify immediate needs and concerns, gather additional information, and tailor PFA interventions
- **Practical Assistance:** To offer practical help to survivors in addressing immediate needs

and concerns

- Connection with Social Supports: To help establish brief or ongoing contacts with primary support persons and help sources of support, including family members, friends, and community helping resources.
- Information on Coping: To provide information about stress reactions and coping to reduce distress and promote adaptive functioning
- Linkage with Collaborative Services: To link survivors with available services needed at the time or in the future.

This program will provide an overview of common student crises and traumatic life events before introducing the PFA model of responding to an individual in crisis. This introduction will include what PFA is, what professional behavior includes when delivering PFA, guidelines for delivering PFA, and behaviors to avoid. Finally, the majority of the program will address the 8 core actions of PFA and how these core actions can be utilized practically in their student affairs role. It will end with a case scenario allowing participants to utilize the core actions learned.

This program will employ several methods of presentation: PowerPoint presentation, didactic components, interactive group discussions, and an experiential multi-phased case scenario.

References:

National Organization of Victims Assistance, www.trynova.org

Arnold Lazarus' BASIC ID model assessing general functioning,

Lazarus, A. (1997). *Brief but comprehensive psychotherapy: The multimodal way*. New York: Springer Publishing Company

Dixon, S. (1987). *Working with people in crisis*. (Rev. ed.). Ohio: Merrill Publishing Company.

James, Richard K. (2012). *Crisis Intervention Strategies*. (7th Edition). California: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

PFA. National Child Traumatic Stress Network and National Center for PTSD, *Psychological First Aid: Field Operations Guide*. September, 2006.