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An Analysis of the Role of Chaplains
In Law Enforcement

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ABSTRACT

An analysis of the Role of Chaplains

Tens of millions of Americans call upon clergy and faith community leaders for spiritual guidance, support, and information in times of personal crisis. While the faith community has historically provided prison ministry programs, few religious institutions have developed programs to specifically serve and support victims of crime (Delaplane & Delaplane, 2004)

However, religious entities and congregations working in conjunction with victim assistance agencies have the capacity to provide important services to crime victims (Abercrombie, 1977). In an effort to increase awareness about the key role of the faith community in the delivery of comprehensive and sensitive support services, this research examines the role of chaplains within the parameters of law enforcement is to accompany officers in emergency situations. The chaplains are assumed to be the liaison between the department and the general public by meeting the psychological needs of the people who have been physically injured or victimized.

This paper will explore the value of adding a chaplain in law enforcement. Current research efforts are driven by a focus group where comments were gathered from Texas police officers.

The researcher has concluded that contrary to include a spiritual/religious person in the public sector, because of the question separation of church and state; it is not the case, because it contributed to an ethical character. Man is tracheotomy body, soul, and spirit. Positive peer pressure is needed through socialization of family, friends, positive community, and religion.

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INTRODUCTION

Chaplains, clergy and spiritual leaders serve the various personal and spiritual needs of people who are in need of support. A police chaplain holds not only the symbol of a professional, but he is also a symbol of faith to many. He or she must have a true concern for people in order to gain the trust of officers in law enforcement. He/she must be willing to meet them at any time and offer support. Prospective chaplains must be required to have the characteristics of being nonjudgmental, and display a caring attitude a person during crisis (DeRevere, 2000). A good chaplain would be described as fair, honest, reliable, and an excellent listener. He or she must have a true concern for people in order to be an effective chaplain in law enforcement.

Chaplains respect the people that they serve, though sometimes there can be different factors and obstacles that can render the chaplain ineffective, i.e. race, gender, religious experience, socioeconomic status, etc. An example of this challenge can be the preference of an African American that is Pentecostal to be counseled by one who is of the same faith as opposed to being counseled by a person of another faith. Other similar factors include experience; however, when the chaos of a crisis scene is taking place, a chaplain can be a part of the solution (DeRevere, 2000). With teamwork, police officers and chaplains, which are sometimes one in the same, make a difference in the lives of people.

The purpose of this paper is to address the question: Is there a need for incorporating chaplains in the police service area in today's society? Besides a short review of literature, the methodology used for the purpose of this paper will be a focus group. The anticipated finding is that there is a certain level of need to incorporate chaplains into police services. The benefits of

this research will be that a department that is contemplating integrating a chaplain into their department may find information that will be useful to them in their decision making process.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The East Lansing, South Carolina, Police Department began their Chaplain Program in 1998 (The East Lansing Police Department Report, 2000). The program was established as an approach to reduce and manage the stress of police and correctional employees. Some of the program's goals included:

- Identifying stress,
- Overcome stress factors,
- Stress outlets,
- Exercise,
- Family time management and etc.

The primary program goals included identifying stress issues, program development, implementation, and finally evaluation of the program (The East Lansing Police Department Report, 2000). The Chaplain's program was set up as an approach to reduce and manage police and correctional employee East Lansing Police Department's Chaplain Program was received from the National Institute of Justice in July of 1998. Two police clergy were recruited, interviewed, and hired to target and provide service to police and correctional officers and their families by using counseling, training, and reduction of organizational barriers, or other means which would assist in the reduction of stress which including job duties, identification of job stressors, program development and monitoring, training issues, dissemination of information, record keeping on number of clients served, and confidentiality issues such as grievances were

objectives for the chaplains. Chaplains in the program were also required to be certified by the standards outlined by the International Conference of Police Chaplains (or ICPC). In addition, the program requires chaplains to provide counseling services to the department's employees, including their families, and visiting sick/injured officers and departmental personal in their homes or at a medical facility. Another facet of their duties included making death notifications for both department personnel and citizens alike, and provide assistance to victims that affected emotionally by crime (The East Lansing Police Department Report, 2000).

By examining the program, one may define several aspects that have to be keep in mind. First, the chaplain involved in law enforcement is expected to be a spiritual leader to fellow officers. "He may be called upon to lead bible study, counseling or praying those officers who confide in him and doing whatever he is asked to do to get the job done (Fitzgerald, 2000, p 4 of 11)". It is important for a chaplain to earn the trust from his or her colleagues, by their availability, because a chaplain may sometimes be call upon to rush to an emergency in the middle of the night simply to counsel an officer who may be struggling with personal issues. "We're looking at a more holistic approach to dealing with crime...what we really needed to do, we decided, was to get smarter, get more attuned to the Antecedents of crime. We have to take a more proactive approach to identifying the risk factors that lead to crime (Fitzgerald, 2000, p 4 of 11). " In one form or another, ministers throughout time have been involved in situations of crisis or distress. In this sense, clergy's have always been a counselor. Sometimes the demand seems to be constant. Law enforcement officials deal with the high stress levels and danger daily. Though the may present with a strong emotional front, behind those badges there are often men and women who need spiritual guidance in their lives. When the stress of the job becomes too much, they are not likely to turn to an outsider most likely they will seek out their own

(David, 2003). Their chaplain can mean so much to employees when their chaplain makes weekly visits just to listen and encourage. This small gesture can bring about positive results and a spiritual component to the work force through the police chaplain program.

Secondly, law enforcement chaplains are often involved in public events and programs. They are normally taking part in training programs with their officer as partners. Chaplains within law enforcement have been known to teach classes that cater to the Community. Some topics could be on relationships, family life, stress in the workplace, ethics on the job, or other issues (Eidam & Sager, 2004).

The minister is called and ordained not only to serve his own congregation directly, but the Larger community within he ordinarily performs this service through direct helpful contact with persons and families in a variety of educational activities and through a number of functions within other established helping agencies (Switzer, 1974). Some chaplains may work directly within the prison system. One related article titled “Florida Faith Based Prison Stirs Concerns” tells the story of a Florida prison; it is the First known faith based prison in the United States (JoinTogether, 2004). This facility utilizes an alliance between church and state. The inmates volunteer to live there, and Approximately 100 chaplains are on salary. They are responsible for addiction treatment, Life skills courses and faith based mentoring (JoinTogether, 2004). Each year Florida Spends millions on this prison hoping that it will motivate the inmates to change their Behavior so as not to return to a life of crime when released. By this example, it is evident that a chaplain’s presence can be essential to the quality of the services provided to the community.

METHODOLOGY

On July 27, 2004, eight officers participating in Module III of LCC comprised a focus group lead by this author. LCC from LEMIT is a special training curriculum that provides police executives with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful leadership in a modern law enforcement agency. The eight officers, two of which were females, participated in the focus group representing all levels of policing from sergeant to chief. The officers represent in the group are all from departments within the state of Texas and were appropriately diverse in race and gender, department size from 1 man department to 4000 officers. Included in the focus group was one male student currently attending Sam Houston State University (SHSU). The focus group was held in a private room at LEMIT. All gave their input on the topic with great detail and knowledge over the subject. Each person was anxious to speak of their experience on the subject, and their interpolations of the functions of a chaplain. This author introduced himself after every volunteer was present and seated. Then this author began to explain the purpose of the focus group, and how their information would enhance this area of policing. The focus group lasted approximately one hour. At the end of the focus group, the officers were debriefed and free to leave.

FINDINGS

The first question asked if the officers knew there were chaplains working in law enforcement and if there were any chaplains in their area. In addition, this author asked the officers what they thought of this idea. The officers were not at all hesitant to respond. Yes, most of the officers had a chaplain program in their department. Most of the officers had a chaplain who where volunteers and denominations were diverse. The chaplains had to undergo a

background check, training and an orientation that would prepare them to assist the officers and police-citizen contacts.

There was an exception of two participants of the focus group who explained their departments did not have a chaplain program. One of the officers stated they did not have a chaplain program since their city was so small. The other officer stated they did not have a chaplain program since the chaplain they had was convicted of robbing a convenience store and the department did not replace the chaplain.

When the officers were asked of the idea of a chaplain program, the officers agreed it was a sound idea. The officers in this discussion were very enthusiastic and based on facial expression and body language; they felt comfortable discussing the topic. Several of the officers explained that the chaplains from their department are issued a special type of badge identifying them as a police chaplain. They added however that this was an issue because the chaplain would often arrive at scenes and flash their badge to the public or the residence and attempt to take command of the scene. The officers explained this was a safety issue and even lead to event of having one officer physically removed from the scene. One of the officers added that their chaplain from their program was even issued a semi-marked unit and was issued special uniform that required kakis, a distinct polo shirt and badge. This together resulted in having the chaplain arrive at a scene unexpected and appeared to the public as not a chaplain but as a supervising officer. For those officers who did not have a chaplain program at their department, did not oppose having one.

The officers were then asked if they had a problem with having an officer becoming a chaplain and participating in the chaplain program at their department. The officers stated they saw a potential problem where a chaplain is needed to become involved in the personal lives and

professional life of an officer and having an officer be both roles was not recommended. The officers explained there could be a problem if the officer is a supervisor and must deal with boyfriend/girlfriend issues or married couples both working as officers and the complexity of dealing with the issue as a supervisor who needs to issue discipline or a chaplain who needs to offer advice and counsel. In addition, if a supervisor who is also a chaplain is entrusted with certain knowledge, the dilemma becomes if the supervisor should report the information to internal affairs or exercise the role of a chaplain of not revealing the information.

Another participant of the focus group presented another potential dilemma where an officer was both a deacon and chaplain. When the officer responded to a shooting, the officer put everything aside-safety, securing the area, crime scene, etc. and went to comfort the victim of the shooting. The officer was later reprimanded for “crossing the line” and abandoning his duty as an officer however, in the eyes of the officer; he did not commit an error.

Another participant emphasized the need for chaplains to receive critical incident stress for chaplains so that chaplains would know how to respond to officers when they encounter severe situations (e.g. chemical explosion, decapitation, etc.). The officers agreed this was a good idea and recommended chaplains receive additional training of when they can interact with the citizens police encounter and when they need to refrain due to safety reasons. One of the participants noted that some chaplains seek to initiate program and often get discouraged due to poor participation. The officers agreed the role of a chaplain should not be to seek but to wait until they are called upon by officers.

When asked if chaplains be involved in sensitivity training culture diversity training, sexual harassment the officers agreed they would like to see chaplains in this area of training. The officers were supportive of the idea. In fact, when asked if they would prefer to set a certain

amount of money aside for training or pay for a chaplain program, they all agreed they would prefer to see a chaplain program. Many of the officers explained that some of the chaplain programs were given a budget of approximately \$2,000 a month and most often did not spend it.

The officers agreed that chaplains needed to receive critical incident stress management training and would have been utilized for officers during the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma. The officers added that fire departments and the military have had a chaplain program and the concept is not new to them, however, it has become a staple in law enforcement. Initially, the officers did not note a problem between having an officer as a chaplain.

The officers felt this had no conflict between a separation of church and state because a chaplain program only is offered, not forced. Because participation of the program is voluntary, it would not violate the separation of church and state. It would violate the clause “when the chaplain crosses the line.” One of the officers explained that the chaplain they had at their police department would often interfere with crime scenes during the investigation, and even interfere while fellow officers would de-escalate a disturbance; endangering the officer(s) and the chaplain.

One officer explained they do not have a chaplain program at their police department. Instead, the department has a notation of what the officer’s denomination is and what type of spiritual leader they would prefer to speak to—minister, priest, rabbi, etc. She explained this is because some individuals would feel more comfortable with their own personal pastor rather than with a chaplain or a full time employee appointed by the department.

The last question the officers were asked was to suggest how to evaluate the success of the chaplain program. One of the officers commented that he had never used a chaplain’s

services nor did he know of any officer using a chaplain's service. To determine the effectiveness of a chaplain program in law enforcement, one of the officers suggested an anonymous survey to be administered to fellow officers of a department who had a chaplain and the chaplain.

This suggestion led the discussion to the issue of anonymity. The officers explained the controversy of needing to know the effectiveness of having a chaplain program by asking probing questions and yet the private discussion a chaplain has with others is based on confidentiality and even possibly anonymity. The officers agreed that they themselves were hesitant to complete a survey regarding the services they received from a chaplain program because they value confidentiality. One of the officers explained that it was his experience that secrets could not be kept within a department, no matter how trivial or significant, the information was still known. The other officers present murmured in agreement.

In conclusion, the officers suggested then that a hotline be posted at the police department where an officer could anonymously call for a chaplain. Several agreed that this would increase the level of trust an officer would feel and decrease the level of threat perceived by the individual officer that their confidentiality and anonymity would be forsaken. One of the officers reiterated the issue previously discussed of how a secret is never kept. Additionally, the officers recommended surveying the citizens who had utilized the services of a chaplain and measure their level of helpfulness.

CONCLUSION

Police chaplainry is an extremely challenging career the requirements placed on Law enforcement chaplains can be stressful the hours can be long and the circumstances unpleasant.

They must have a great concern for people as a whole because there are so many potential obstacles and factors to consider. A chaplain has an interfaith, once you become a chaplain; a chaplain is non-denominational and be willing to provide their services to any citizen.

Chaplains are a crucial element needed to be found in policing, because when a citizen is seriously injured, or killed, major disasters/hazmat/evacuations, or when a child is victimized it affects the community and assistance is needed. Chaplains are both symbols of authority and of faith for the people who know them. Their presence is essential during times of distress. Chaplains have the ability to comfort, counsel, and guide people that are seeking advice. It may be colleagues or a stranger in need. The chaplain's role in law enforcement is crucial to the community, especially when they do what they do best: protect and serve. There is no problem with a police department having a chaplain, nor a police officer being a chaplain if he or she meets the requirements, nor is it a conflict of interest between separation of church and state.

To sum it up it appeared to this author contrary to include a spiritual/religious person in the public sector, because of the question separation of church and state, it is not the case, because it contributed to an ethical character. Man is trichotomy body, soul, and spirit. Doctors may x-ray the body, but there is no device to x-ray the soul of a man. Positive peer pressure is needed through socialization of family, friends, positive community, and religion.

It appears to this author that having a chaplain is beneficial to police services in today's day and age. But again there are always pros and cons to the reasons for implementing such a program within a department. The author would recommend to any department who is contemplating initiating a program to do their own focus group within their community to field the needs of the people they serve, along with an internal focus group to balance the needs of the officers within the department.

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