



Jan 8, 2019

Dear Editor of Chicago Tribune:

In ["Spike in cops seeking mental health help"](#) (Jan. 8, 2019), the Tribune highlighted the woefully inadequate treatment resources available to serve this exceedingly highly stressed population through the Chicago Police Department's employee assistance program. While your article portrays the increase in professional staff to 10 as a remedy, the Psychotherapy Action Network (PsiAN), which weighed in on the proposed consent decree in August, described this increase as "minimal at best."

If CPD is truly dedicated to culture change, as the decree prescribes, then there will be more officers seeking more in-depth treatment, and more attention paid to the needs of professionals to receive adequate support themselves to avoid secondary trauma, which requires adjustment in their time allocation. Further, as PsiAN has noted in its petition to the American Psychological Association ([PTSD Petition](#)), post-traumatic stress disorder often requires extensive treatment beyond the short-term offerings currently informed by the cultural and time pressures at CPD.

The tendency to minimize the effects of both catastrophic events and ongoing trauma is endemic, both in police departments and in our culture, and leads to repetitive cycles of violence, intergenerational transmission of trauma and an incapacity on the part of well-meaning officers truly to serve the public in difficult situations in which de-escalation skills can save lives.

We at the Psychotherapy Action Network urge CPD to take trauma seriously. If real culture change is not created at CPD, we can predict the ongoing mutual terrorization of police personnel and those they have sworn to serve.

—Nancy Burke

Co-Chair, Psychotherapy Action Network