

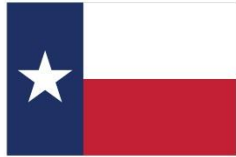
TEXAS CRISIS RESILIENCY TEAM

After Action Report (AAR)
NOVA Basic CRT Training
San Antonio, TX
2-4 October 2012



PLANNING: This NOVA Basic Course was planned in the spring of 2012 as a result of a discussion between Dan Franklin, Lawrence Trevino, and James Mendoza. Lawrence Trevino is the Manager and James Mendoza the Assistant Manager at the Emergency Manager at the San Antonio Emergency Operation Center. They provided the location for the training and I coordinated all training preparation. I coordinated with the Joe Nail (the National NOVA Trainer), and Booby Smith (the Director of Texas Baptist Chaplaincy) for all issues of publicity and any needed support.

EXECUTION OF TRAINING: There were 25 participants in this training. This group was more highly trained than most NOVA courses. The group included 13 psychologists, several counselors, an instructor for the Incident Command System courses, and several other professionals. Many of the group already knew much of the content of the course. Because of this, two people rated the course as not meeting their expectations and one specifically commented that the “training was redundant”. The other 23 participants evaluated the training as meeting their expectations and the comments in general were very positive.



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POSITIVES:

Location: The facility for the training was outstanding. By conducting it at the Emergency Operations Center, participants gained a greater understanding of emergency operations and how a crisis response team could work with other responders. A couple people did mention the seating arrangement was not ideal for training, but the other positives of the facility made up for that.

Instructors: The group appreciated having several instructors participate. The instructors were seen as knowledgeable and experienced. Even though the instructors came from a religious background, they were objective and did not use the training as a tool to promote their belief system.

Diversity of Group Members: There were a large number of school psychologists, but there were also members from other disciplines. The diversity of the group was a big plus. They brought different experiences and knowledge to the group.

IMPROVE:

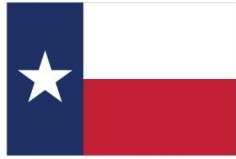
Handouts: Several people commented that they would have liked to have had a printout of all the slides.

Video of Group Crisis Intervention (GCI): Several people also expressed that a video of a GCI would have been helpful.

Greater Diversity of Instructors: This is my observations and was not suggested by any in the group. All of our instructors were from ministry backgrounds. Especially for this type of group, it would have been a plus to have at least one instructor not associated with a religious institution. A school counselor or psychologist could be a great addition to the team. (See more under discussion).

DISCUSSION: It is difficult to teach this type course, where the participants are already highly trained. I addressed this at the beginning of the course. I emphasized that I was not the “expert” on all this area, and that many of them had significant experience and knowledge they could share in the training. I encouraged discussion and in general this was very effective. It is just a reality that when a person reaches a certain level of expertise, they will find it difficult to get a significant amount of new information from this type training.

The comments on the handouts were a good reminder that people learn differently. I personally don't like the handouts power point slides. I usually end up throwing them away. BUT – some people do find having them of value. After the course, several people did download the



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information on a flash drive. Mentioning that option at the beginning of the course might be a good option.

A video of a GCI might already be available, although I do not have it. The video might be helpful to some and not to others. If the video is available, then it should be reviewed and evaluated for possible usage.

There were also some in the course that did not have the same level of expertise. This mixture has its limitations, but the mixture of participants was generally seen as a positive for the group.

Teaching the NOVA course is not the primary job of the instructors. None of them received any extra money for doing the training. The Texas Baptist Chaplaincy supports this and underwrites the expense of the instructors, because of the commitment and desire to help those going thru the difficulty of recovering from traumatic events.

The instructors are all semi-retired and do this because of their personal commitment. This is a natural for retired military chaplains. It is a “perfect fit.”

It would be ideal if we could get someone from a different background as an instructor. Finding someone who has the same ability to do this might be difficult.

There are a couple of others in Texas trained as NOVA instructors, who are not ministers. In most cases their NOVA focused training is for their institution of employment and their ability to do regional training is limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Consider giving out copies of the power point slides as handouts. If this is not done, then emphasize in the introductory session that they can download the material on a flash drive.
2. Consider using a video of a GCI.
3. Try to enlist and train other instructors from different backgrounds.
4. Utilize the San Antonio Emergency Operations Center for future training events.

Dan Franklin
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