

Supporting Heroes In mental health Foundational Training (SHIFT)

Finding A Mental Health Professional

Selection Guidelines and Recommendations



When choosing a mental health provider, it is imperative to find one who is not only qualified, but understands the unique trauma associated with exposure to child sexual abuse images. The provider and Criminal Justice Professionals should be able to develop a relationship based upon mutual trust.

The following outline should serve as suggested guidelines/recommendations to develop a process to select the appropriate mental health provider for your organization. Each section of this outline should be contingent upon the successful completion/passing of the prior section.

1. IDENTIFICATION OF APPROPRIATE MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER

Define Minimum Criteria for the MH Provider Position

Education-Training

- Ph.D. not required. However, a minimum of several months of training in mental health field plus specialty health services (e.g. nurse) could be acceptable. Candidate should be accredited by a professional mental health professional body. Master's degree in area of specialty may be desirable
- Specialized/advanced skill sets such as dealing with trauma and/or behavioral analysis may be desirable.
- Experience working with law enforcement may be desirable.
- Criminal Justice field experience/education may be desirable.

Public Presentation/Program Development Experience

- History of having developed and presented training/education programs for/to the first responder/law enforcement community or other organizations may be desirable.

The Purpose of this Guide is to:

- Provide best practice recommendations for choosing a mental health professional for your organization to work with those individuals exposed to child sexual abuse images
- Provide suggestions for practical guidelines ranging from identifying possible candidates to initiating a formal contract
- Provide suggested questions to ask during the interview process

Develop Potential Candidate Pool

- Current mental health professionals at your agency
- Employee Assistance Program members or referrals
- Referrals from team members and people that you know and trust
- Local child advocacy center mental health professionals
- Mental health providers employed or contracted with state or federal agencies (e.g. US Marshalls, ICE, DHS, Department of Public Safety, Dept. of Corrects, etc. for recommendations)
- International Association of Chiefs of Police Psychology Division
- Mental health professional organizations, such as:
 - American Psychological Association
 - American Psychiatric Association
 - American Counseling Association
 - American Psychotherapy Association
 - National Association of Social Workers
 - American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
 - American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work
- Traumatic stress professional organizations
 - National Center for Crisis Management – American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress
 - International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation
- State Licensure Board listing of active members

2. IDENTIFY POSSIBLE CANDIDATES

Identify more than one potential provider for selection process

- Reach out to possible providers to assess interest
- If interested, send the candidate a letter from your organization soliciting them for interest and requesting they contact you directly if interested. The letter should outline the following:
 - a. Your organization/type of work
 - b. Your designed protocol/program
 - c. Intended goals of your program
 - d. Confidentiality agreements/requirements
 - e. Other

- If interested in providing service, request the following from the candidates:
 - a. Resume/CV
 - b. Outline of any relevant specialty training
 - c. List of professional affiliations
 - d. Obtain professional information (e.g. license, insurance, etc.)
 - e. Request information regarding confidentiality process
 - f. Request professional references
 - g. Request client references (from similar/LE agencies)
 - h. Other

3. SCHEDULE INTERVIEW WITH CANDIDATES

Conduct formal interview of candidates

Interview should be conducted by members of the team to address varying perspectives (e.g. ICAC Commander and team member)

- Interview panel should also include a Mental Health professional when possible
- Refer to Appendix A for list of potential interview questions

4. BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION

Conduct standard/agency background investigation for civilian personnel

Recommendations include:

- Standard application/background information packet
- Criminal History/LE Involvement
- Professional Misconduct (e.g. Discipline/Suspension)
- Publications/Expert Testimony (defense/prosecution)
- Check of references provided by MH Provider
- Other

5. MEET AND GREET WITH CANDIDATES

Coordinate a meet and greet opportunity for MH provider to meet team/members of team for informal meeting/conversation (develop first impression).

- Meet and greet should be informal and at the workplace to allow MH provider a chance to observe location of work/environment, etc.
- This should be informal question/answer session and information should flow in both directions.

After meeting, members of team present should discuss viability of candidates and come to agreement.

6. INITIATE INTERIM/EVALUATION PERIOD

- Conditional contract should be drafted for set period of time (e.g. 6 months) and have a termination clause which is very flexible to both parties
- Program/MH provider should be evaluated in middle/end of evaluation period as follows:

Quantitatively:

Should consist of anonymous evaluations given to members of team participating in program:

- Quantitative evaluations developed by the SHIFT program should be utilized and/or unit specific evaluations should be developed by commander/supervisory staff.
- Evaluations should be drafted to measure personal satisfaction with the selected provider, perceived team satisfaction with the selected provider, perceived benefits of program, suggested changes, etc.

Qualitatively:

Through one-on-one unit commander/supervisor interviews with staff or a group meeting with staff covering the following areas:

- Technical expertise of provider
 - Personal approachability (“likeability”) of provider/trust of provider:
 - i. Does the provider display personal empathy and personality?
 - ii. Is provider willing to/and does provider view images to which team members are exposed?
 - iii. Does provider take time to sit with team or individuals as they work in an effort to understand their work?
 - How well does the provider deliver program (contract) elements?
 - How do individual members feel about the various elements of the program itself?
- Based upon feedback and evaluations, decision should be made regarding any changes to the program, if necessary, and the formal/long term contract for services if appropriate.
 - Mental Health Provider should also be evaluated independently by unit commander in the following areas:
 - Are they open to making changes in the program if necessary?
 - Are they adapting to people and situations?
 - Are they putting forth enough effort to pro-actively work to know the team, visit the site, and learn about the crimes and work?

7. INITIATION OF FORMAL CONTRACT/HIRING

- Formal offer of employment/contract should be made to MH provider
- Formal contract should be drafted and should outline the following:
 - i. Services to be provided
 - ii. Duration of time
 - iii. Compensation
 - iv. Termination of contract
 - v. Other information as required by your agency

Final Thoughts on Choosing a MHP

When choosing a mental health provider...

- MH Providers should have experience working with Law Enforcement.
- MH Providers should be familiar with unique trauma associated with exposure to child sexual abuse images.
- MH Providers should have experience in the fields of trauma: Law Enforcement critical incident stress, PTSD, professional trauma, etc.
- Should have attended some type of specialized training like SHIFT training for mental health professionals.
- Must have the ability to develop trust with criminal justice professionals.



GENERAL QUESTIONS

- What is your understanding of the ICAC program?
- Why are you interested in the (AGENCY NAME) mental health program?
- What do you feel you can bring to the (AGENCY NAME) mental health program?
- What is (are) your current area(s) of expertise?
 - Any specific disciplines/professional focus?
- What is your relevant experience? (*LE associated trauma, CSE investigations/image trauma, PTSD, etc.*)
- Do you have prior experience in working with LE agencies?
 - If so, in what capacity and for how long?
 - Do you have an experience critical incident stress, PTSD, professional trauma, etc?
- What do you know about the unique trauma associated with exposure to child sexual abuse investigations/viewing of CSE images?
 - Have you ever been exposed to child sexual abuse images in your work previously?
 - Would you be open to viewing child sexual abuse images in a controlled law enforcement environment in order to get a better understanding of the work? (*If answer is no, seek explanation*).
- What differences have you observed in the impact of general trauma and that which is experience by those exposed to CSE images?
 - How might you respond differently to those individuals?
- Have you attended some type of specialized training like SHIFT training for mental health professionals? (*If so, please explain, location, name of training, training provided by, content etc.*)
- Describe your “technique” for assimilating into a guarded or closed community such as you might find in the ICAC (or) criminal justice field.
 - How do you think you might have been more successful?
- Have you been the subject to/of any professional investigations/discipline/suspensions?
 - If so, detail?
- Any criminal background/history?
- Have you provided testimony on behalf of defense attorneys?
 - If so, in what capacity?

- Have you provided testimony on behalf of prosecution?
 - If so, in what capacity?
- Have you engaged in any professional writing/research/studies?
 - Published? If so, what?
- Can you discuss are your confidentiality procedures/guidelines? Would you be willing to work with (AGENCY NAME) on implementing a process that will coincide with your current confidentiality procedures/guidelines?

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

- Based on what we have discussed, what do you feel you can bring to this program?
- Do you have any thoughts on direction? Program design? Modifications?

SCENARIO BASED QUESTIONS

Below are several scenarios that may happen with team/during group meetings, etc. What would you do if?

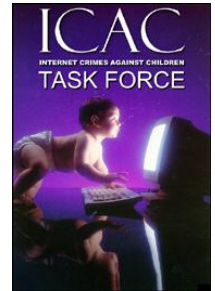
- You had difficulty establishing trust with the team?
- Feedback indicated the team was not happy with the program design?
- One of the team members indicated they were thinking of causing self or another harm?
- One of the team members indicates that they are unhappy viewing images or are feeling “burned out.”
- One of the team members would like to have you see their spouse separately or participate in couple’s therapy?
 - Do you feel it is appropriate to see the spouse or refer the spouse to another MHP?
- One of the team members indicated they had had a physical response to some of the images?
- You were present when high-level management or law enforcement from other parts of the agency might call child sexual abuse images “kiddie porn”?
- You were asked to educate reluctant upper level management on the negative effects of the work and how to mitigate them?
- Overall, how would you support this unit to provide a compassionate, yet confidential service when you identify an individual is reaching “burnout” or is

otherwise encountering serious negative effects from his/her involvement with this work?

- Are you open to developing a clear response protocol with (AGENCY NAME) to any or all of the above scenarios that you might encounter? If so, what would you recommend?



Vermont Internet Crimes Against Children
Task Force – *VT ICAC*
One North Avenue
Burlington Vermont 05401
802-540-2112



VT ICAC MH Provider Job Description

The Vermont Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (hereafter VT-ICAC) is tasked with investigating computer/Internet facilitated child sexual exploitation. As a result, personnel from the VT-ICAC are exposed to images/movies depicting graphic child sexual exploitation pornography and text describing the sexual assault of children. The potential for negative emotional and physical effects upon personnel with long term exposure to this type of material has been clearly documented. For this reason, the VT-ICAC has worked to develop a program to ensure the mental health and well-being of its personnel, ensure the adequate supervision of those exposed to the above referenced materials and to ensure that any issues arising out of an individual's exposure to these materials are identified as soon as possible and appropriate steps are taken.

The VT-ICAC is currently seeking a mental health provider to assist us in the above endeavor to ensure the long term wellness of our personnel. The VT-ICAC has a current protocol in place detailing the general goals of this program, however, we are looking to partner with a mental health provider to work with and tailor our current program to meet some/all of the following needs:

- Recommendations for care for unit staff,
- Training regarding self-care and stress management,
- Education for supervisors, staff, family members and interested friends,
- Team cohesion exercises,
- One-one-one sessions for exposed individuals.
- Developing an understanding of the true nature and scope of child sexual abuse images,
- Develop trust and relationships with criminal justice professionals.

Minimum Qualifications:

- Ph.D. not required, Master's degree is desired, however, several months of training in mental health field plus specialty in health services (e.g. nurse) could be acceptable (Should be accredited by a professional mental health professional body)
- Specialized/advanced skill sets such as dealing with trauma and/or behavioral analysis (particularly as it relates to law enforcement) is desirable.
- Experience working with law enforcement analysis is desirable.

Appendix B – (cont'd)

- Criminal Justice field experience/education analysis is desirable.
- Experience developing and presenting training/education programs for/to the first responder/law enforcement community or other organizations is desirable.
- Applicant must be willing to attend and present specialized training, which may require travel.

This position is a contract position and would initially be for a 6 month evaluation period. This contract may be extended, contingent upon receipt of ICAC grant funding. Compensation will be based upon services provided.