



## MOOC 1

### Learning Unit 7

#### GOOD PRACTICE 4

### Leadership in an emergency intervention in a State Police accident

#### Instructions

In the following case study, you will be given a series of questions related to a scenario. You will have:

- 10 minutes (optional) to watch a video about the real scenario from which the case was taken. You will listen a brief part of the interview of the Director of the Psychology Service of the National State Police (Italy) about an emergency scenario.
- 5 minutes to read about the setting and the scenario.
- 15-30 minutes for answering the questions.

#### Background Scenario Description

Police officers daily operate in situations of high emotional impact (e.g. they have contact with images of child pornography, view bloody crimes, handle violence and high tension, operate in

serious cases of domestic violence, operate in serious traffic accidents by identifying dead bodies with families), their ordinary work is an emergency work. Often psychological support interventions are targeted to policemen involved in service incidents where police officers could die during operations.

The role of Head Psychologist of the State Police Psychology Service requires high leadership skills which concern creation of protocols, management of the communication flow, creation of criteria for choosing the team, creation of actions and behaviours that team must follow so that nothing is left uncovered in the intervention. The team is usually made up of 2-3 psychologists, a doctor or a nurse and an auxiliary figure (Peer). An important role is played by the person with more years of service who, by virtue of years of experience, assumes the role of team leader and will be responsible for the organization, management of interventions, presentation to the authorities at the scene of the event and the possible modification of standard procedures of intervention.

### **The accident**

It's September 2005, an observer left for a reconnaissance flight with 3 young operators on board (two pilots and a technician, aged 28, 30 and 33) suddenly disappeared and there was no news for at least ten days. As leading coordinator of Police Psychology Service when you received news of the disappearance from the central director, you are requested to go to the hangar to coordinate psychological interventions and to provide support to colleagues and relatives. Infact, inside the hangar there were about 90 colleagues, great was the fear and confusion, while they continued the search of the helicopter on the river. At the hangar arrived the relatives of the missing operators, there were elderly parents, wives (one of them pregnant) and young children. After a few days inside the hangar there were about one hundred people, including managers and authorities who came to coordinate the actions. Tension, pain and fear were very high.

After several days, with the help of divers and ship, it was possible to locate the helicopter sank in the river. It was necessary to recover the bodies of the victims. On the site arrived the relatives of the three officers, the managers and the colleagues of the victims.

As psychological emergency facilitator leader of the state Police Psychology Service you are expected to manage and organize the recovery of the corpses. It is also your task the restitution of the objects belonging to the victims. Since personal effects are the last and only thing that remains for the families to have a sense of what the other has been, the return process should never take place with sacks or shopping bags. The emotions are high, personnel in stressed and a sense of hyperactivity is pushing rescuers to a rapid intervention to conclude the operation, without really reflecting on the importance of the modality to recapture and returned remains and personal objects of three victims to their relatives and colleagues. As psychological emergency facilitator leader of the state Police Psychology Service you are expected to organize the restitution ensuring the respect of ethical standards. You have to focus and set clear priorities, manage stress and be competent and oriented in order to make decisions and give correct indications in a moment of great difficulty in which most people find themselves in a situation of disorientation and confusion.

### **Methods, resource and obstacles:**

Working in State Police department there are different professional figures including policemen, psychologists and rescuers. Some colleagues in your unit have been involved in previous emergency crisis.

Emergency Psychology team is made up of 3 psychologists, a doctor or a nurse and an auxiliary figure (Peer). To support your team you have a few resources available, the main concerns are

about the ethical issues, stress management, shortage of information and time and focusing priorities.

The nature of the event makes necessary to create a focused response in accordance with ethical standards, be able to successfully manage stress and give correct indications in a moment of great disorientation and confusion.

### **Objective:**

As psychological emergency facilitator leader of the state Police Psychology Service you are expected to organize the recovery of the bodies and restitution of the objects belonging to the victims, ensuring the respect of ethical standards.

The main challenge is to provide guidance, evaluate appropriate referrals, and maintain confidentiality in a moment of great difficulty in which most people (including authorities and institutions without psychological competencies) find themselves in a situation of disorientation and confusion.

The nature of the event makes necessary to create a focused response basing on reliable protocols.

You will be expected to:

- have ability to work and coordinate with different jurisdiction,
- support authorities in making critical choices (such as how to return bodies to victims' relatives) in a very tight time frame,
- provide psychological support to the families of the victims, included fragile targets as children and a pregnant woman,
- gain credibility and build trust demonstrating a deep understand of the gravity of the situation.

Personal effects are the last and only things those remains for the families to start the grief elaboration and have a sense of what their loved ones have been. The aim is for you to guarantee that return process should never take place with sacks or shopping bags, but it has to be in accordance with ethical standards.

**Instructions:** Review the details of the case study and respond to the following questions focused on leadership in emergency to complete the activity. Don't worry if you are not providing all of the details of the full process. The point of this activity is for you to consider how you would use leading process in a crisis situation.

**Response Time:** 40 minutes

**To know more** by the voice of Dr. Ida Bonagura, Director Psychology Service, Health Centre Direction, State Police - Italy, click on the link

<https://youtu.be/P38azxgsV50>

## Questions

Please answer to the following questions

1. How can you organize the recovery of the bodies and restitution of the objects belonging to the victims, ensuring the respect of ethical standards?



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2. As psychological emergency facilitator leader of the state Police Psychology Service, which leadership tools would you use to provide stakeholders guidance, referrals, and maintain confidentiality in a moment of great difficulty?

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3. What are your objectives? Which tasks can you delegate?

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4. Which criteria do you use to plan and prioritize actions?

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5. Which information can you share with stakeholders? And with members of your team?

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6. How can you communicate to other jurisdictions?





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7. How can you communicate to families of the victims?

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8. Are there available protocols to support you and your team in planning and executing interventions?

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9. Which stressors may affect efficiency of stakeholders? How can you help them to cope with adversities?

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10. How can you manage conflict proactively and reactively?

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11. How can you provide psychological support to the families of the victims?





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12. How can you gain credibility and build trust demonstrating a deep understand of the gravity of the situation?

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