



Campbell & Associates  
**LOSSteam**  
Postvention Workshops & Training

Capt. Michael D. Rhoads  
French Settlement Police Department  
French Settlement, La

October 26, 2015

Captain Rhoads,

During your tenure in Law Enforcement you have served the community in a variety of roles. From your experience what was it like prior to the Loss Team program at the scene of a suicide?

Prior to the Loss Team those of us in law enforcement arrived at a scene, made sure the scene was safe, did our investigative work, called the coroner, told whatever family there may be that we were sorry for their loss, and pretty much left when the body was removed. Years ago very few folks in law enforcement had any training in dealing with the emotional aspects of those that may have found the deceased or returned home while we were there. Some officers tried to comfort family members, but for far too many it was simply just another call that required a report. Not all officers/deputies were quite this callous, but there was a sense of "oh well". There was very little compassion for the deceased and only a slight bit more for the family.

How did this change after the Loss Team program began going out to support families and first responders at the scene?

In our case the creation of the Loss Team coincided with a more concerted effort on the part of the department to recognize that the suicide included more than just the deceased. Specifically we began training in not only suicide prevention and intervention, but also in how officers/deputies responded to the scene of a suicide (Postvention). While it is important to remember that the scene of a suicide is a crime scene and must be handled accordingly, there can nonetheless be a professional, caring approach in dealing with those that found the deceased and those friends and family members that rush to the location when they find out.

I believe one of the best things that the use of the Loss Team did for our department was create a greater sense of awareness of the folks that are left behind; the survivors. We knew that they were going to need help and now we had an actual referral to utilize.

Another very positive aspect of having Loss Team members at the scene was freeing up resources. Instead of an officer/deputy staying with the friends and family at the scene the officer/deputy could focus on the investigative side of the scene. There was an additional "mediation" aspect of having Loss Team members on scene. The scene of a suicide is often chaotic and always emotionally filled. Many responding family members want to see the deceased before believing that the person actually took their life or was even dead. Law enforcement has to protect the scene and as such not allow access to unauthorized people. This, too often, leads to a great deal of tension and even anger directed at the officer/deputy. I'm not sure how accurate it is, but it has been my impression that the family frequently views the presence of law enforcement at the scene as the "official" and visible acknowledgement that something terrible has occurred. Having the Loss Team members on scene allowed someone other than a police officer to intercept, so to speak, the responding family members.

Responding to a suicide is often very difficult for the officer/deputy. Any number of factors such as age and sex of the deceased, the manner of death, the location, can all influence the emotional response that the responding officers/deputies will undergo. Trying to console a bereaved family member is often harder than seeing the deceased. The heartache of the surviving family member is often more stressful than anything else related to the incident. Having Loss Team members on scene helps lower some of the emotional impact that the responding officers/deputies experience.

What suggestions do you offer to any law enforcement considering the opportunity to have a local Loss Team in their community?

First is to simply do it. Thankfully, the models are out there. Get in touch with the coroner. Make him/her aware of the existence of Loss Teams if they do not already know about. Encourage them explore the use of the Loss Team. Second, the administration must be supportive of the idea of using the Loss Team. They need to be aware that the use of the Team does not interfere in the investigative aspects of responding to a suicide. Team members, in my experience, have been very pro law enforcement and will do all they can to make the job of responding officers/deputies easier. Third, take advantage of the use of a Loss Team to improve how the department responds to suicides. Undertake/renew training in Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention. Establish/strengthen the use of a Critical Incident Stress Management Team. Establish/strengthen the relationship with the local mental health professions, crisis intervention centers, and the like.

How might someone get in touch with you to ask more specific questions about what it is like to work with a Loss Team program?

Anyone who would want to contact me are welcome to call, write, e-mail or carrier pigeon if they want at this address:

Capt. Michael D. Rhoads, MPA  
Captain, French Settlement Police Department  
P.O. Box 3  
French Settlement, La 70733  
(225) 921-8394  
[mdrbr@cox.net](mailto:mdrbr@cox.net)

Background on Captain Rhoads:

Capt. Rhoads has been in law enforcement for over 20 years. He has served in corrections, narcotics, detectives, and uniform patrol. He has a Bachelor of Criminal Justice with a minor in psychology from LSU and a Master of Public Administration from LSU. He has served as the commander of the E. Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office Critical Incident Stress Management Team. He is a former instructor at the LSU Basic Training Academy and other instructional forums for law enforcement personnel.

Sincerely,

*Frank*

Frank R. Campbell, Ph.D., LCSW, C.T., Senior Consultant  
[frank.campbell@lossteam](mailto:frank.campbell@lossteam)

[www.lossteam.co](http://www.lossteam.co)

28426 Island Drive, Lacombe, Louisiana 70445 - voice: 225.413.9018