



## NEWS RELEASE

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# Missoula County Attorney's Office earns national achievement award for Innovative Criminal Justice and Public Safety program: ***“Secondary Trauma Group – Implementing Organizational Resiliency for Prosecutors.”***

**WASHINGTON – Missoula County Attorney's Office, in collaboration with Andrew Laue, L.C.S.W.,** has been recognized with an Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo). The award honors innovative, effective county government programs that enhance services for residents.

NACo recognized ***“Secondary Trauma Group – Implementing Organizational Resiliency for Prosecutors”*** in the category of **Criminal Justice and Public Safety** as an innovative new program, worthy of sharing with other counties.

The Missoula County Attorney's Office, in collaboration with local trauma expert Andrew Laue, L.C.S.W., created and implemented an innovative and groundbreaking organizational resiliency program for prosecutors and staff called Secondary Trauma Group, to prevent and mitigate the negative effects associated with working with victims of violent crime. The program's facilitator is a clinical social worker who teaches the fundamentals of working with victims who have experienced trauma and also the devastating effects of long term exposure to secondary trauma stress to those professionals working closely with victims.

As a community, we are only beginning to understand and appropriately respond to trauma. Even more recently we started discussing the need to address secondary trauma in professionals who work with victims of abuse and violence. Little if any secondary trauma work has been done in the field of criminal prosecution, a profession literally immersed in violence and trauma. We've created a program to specifically address secondary trauma within a prosecutor's office.

The program has four major components—**Orientation; Development of Group Culture of Trauma Resiliency; Integration and Impact;** and **Case-Specific Trauma Response Teams**, involving prosecutors, jurors, advocates and law enforcement.

We have been able to successfully accomplish several of the program's goals. We have fostered an organizational culture that is safe, supportive and trauma-informed and are educating prosecutorial staff about neurobiological and behavioral effects of primary trauma in victims. Additionally, we've become organizationally fluent in secondary trauma. Our employees understand the risks associated with cumulative trauma exposure and are learning specific prevention strategies and remediation techniques.

In another particularly successful part of the program, we've provided case-specific post-trial trauma processing for jurors, investigators and our litigation team.

"This is such an honor," said Missoula County Attorney, Kirsten Pabst. "The program has enriched our staff and enabled positive, trauma-informed work with the victims we serve."

Facilitator Andrew Laue, L.C.S.W. said, "We are building a *Resiliency Toolbox* full of resources for prosecutors to help them understand what victims are experiencing and to mitigate the impact of cumulative trauma so that they can continue to work in this high-stress field serving others."

NACo President Bryan Desloge said, "Counties overcome complex challenges, provide essential services and constantly do more with less. We applaud these Achievement Award-winning counties for outstanding efforts to improve residents' quality of life."

Started in 1970, NACo's annual Achievement Award Program is designed to recognize innovative county government programs. Nationally, awards are given in 18 different categories that reflect the vast, comprehensive services counties provide. The categories include children and youth, criminal justice, county administration, information technology, health, civic engagement and many more.

NACo will recognize award-winning counties at its 2017 Annual Conference and Exposition July 21–24 in Franklin County, Ohio.

*The National Association of Counties (NACo) unites America's 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public's understanding of county government and exercise exemplary leadership in public service. Learn more at [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org)*