



## Sustaining Yourself in Trauma Work

*Compassion Fatigue* or *Secondary Traumatic Stress* is the emotional and physical stress one may experience after having had close contact with victims of violent or traumatic crimes.\* Attorneys, and others working in the child protection field, can be at high risk for developing compassion fatigue reactions due to their frequent exposure to victim/witness stories and evidence that is graphic in nature.

### Facts about Attorneys and Compassion Fatigue:

- Attorneys and child protection workers demonstrated higher levels of secondary trauma that were correlated with caseload.\*\*
- 1 in 3 attorneys reported symptoms of compassion fatigue while 11% met criteria for PTSD.\*\*\*
- Symptoms of compassion fatigue can include: changes in mood, changes in sleeping and/or eating patterns, increased hypervigilance, intrusive thoughts or images of case details, reduced empathy towards victims/witness, using alcohol or drugs to self-medicate, or feeling a loss of hope or faith in the justice system all of which can negatively impact an attorney's ability to effectively prosecute a case.

### Managing Compassion Fatigue:

- Increase self awareness about personal impact and reactions.
- Increase knowledge base about trauma and how working with those who are trauma-exposed, impacts the attorney.
- Seek out regular debriefing with supervisor or colleagues.
- Develop/Increase personal wellness (physical and emotional) plan.
- Seek outside professional help when reactions are no longer manageable.

### THE MAINE CHILDREN'S INITIATIVE IS...

- creating a network of trauma sensitive service providers,
- training clinicians in evidence-based treatment, and
- empowering community members to guide children into quality care.

### RESOURCES AND MORE INFORMATION:

#### » **Maine Children's Initiative:**

<http://www.mainebehavioralhealthcare.org/our-programs/maine-childrens-trauma-response-initiative/>

#### » **National Child Traumatic Stress Network STS Webpage:**

<http://nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress>

**To learn about training opportunities  
please contact:**

**Allegra Hirsh-Wright**

**ahirsh@mainebehavioralhealthcare.org**

**or 207-661-6510**

\*Figley, 1983.

\*\*Levin & Greisberg, 2003.

\*\*\*Levin et al, 2011.