



# Saint Alphonsus

CENTER FOR GLOBAL  
HEALTH & HEALING



International Clinic  
CARE Maternal Child Health Clinic  
Community Health Advisor Program  
Travel Medicine  
Program for Survivors of Torture

Presenters:

Ryan Lipscomb, LPC – PSOT Program Director  
Jaimie Cain, LMSW – PSOT Quality Supervisor, Clinician  
Tessa Murdock, BSW/MSW Candidate – PSOT Service  
Coordinator

# Background Information



## United Nations – General Assembly

- Produced a Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1975)
- Adopted a Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1985)

# Background Information



The Convention defines torture as:

“Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.”

# Torture



## Do the Math:

Countries where torture has been documented: **112**

Countries that have signed or ratified the UN  
Convention Against Torture: **154**

Total number of countries in the world: **195**

Source: Amnesty International 2012, Wikipedia • Photo: Oxfordian Kissuth/WikiMedia

# Impacts of Torture



- **Individual:**
  - Breaks down the identity of the victim
  - Possible symptoms: Trauma plus depression, helplessness, ambivalence about life, body pain, chronic health concerns, aggressive personality
- **Families / Communities:**
  - Loss of trust, ruptured friendships and relationships, isolation
  - Children and Secondary Survivors also experience symptoms
  - Creates terrorizing effect
  - Instills fear and mistrust in communities and families
- **National / Global:**
  - Weapon against democracy
  - International insecurity

# Torture



**An estimated 10 to 30 percent of the three million refugees coming to the U.S. since 1975 were tortured.**

Source: Modvig & Jaranson, 2004; Burnett & Peel, 2001 • Photo: Wikimedia

# Background Information



## United States of America

- Establishes the Torture Victims Relief Act of 1998 which:
  - ✦ Defines torture as “An act committed by a person acting under the color of law specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental suffering upon another person within his custody or physical control.”
  - ✦ Authorizes appropriations for foreign and domestic assistance to include:
    - Rehabilitation of victims including treatment of the physical and psychological effects of torture
    - Social and legal services for victims of torture
    - Research and training for health care providers outside of treatment centers, or programs for the purpose of enabling such providers to provide the services described above

# Office for Refugee Resettlement Funds



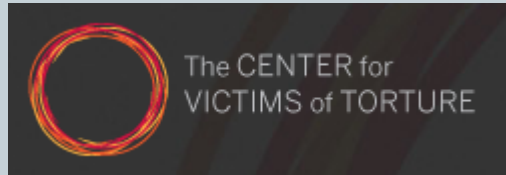
- 3-year grant cycle
- All services are voluntary and can be dropped at any time by the survivor
- Participation in any service is not dependent upon participation in another service
- No requirement to disclose torture upon arrival
- No time limits for participation
- Avoid duplication of services



# Programs Funded by TVRA / ORR



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Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma

*world peace.... global health and mental health.... science and culture*





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# **Program for Survivors of Torture**

Partners:

Alpine Behavioral Health

Tidwell Social Work Services & Consulting

Kathy Railsback, Attorney at Law, PLLC

# Services Available



- **Medical Services:** Integrative Primary Care
- **Mental Health Services:** Individual / Family / Group Therapy, Cognitive Testing
- **Social Services:** Service Coordination
- **Legal Services:** Citizenship with an N-648 waiver, Asylum services
- **Integrative Services:** Massage, Trauma Informed Yoga, Art Classes
- **Healing Encounters:** Training on providing trauma informed, culturally sensitive, and linguistically appropriate services

# Eligibility Criteria



The applicant is a **Primary Survivor of Torture** (includes individuals who were forced to witness the torture of another).

OR

The applicant is a **Secondary Survivor of Torture** (family member or close intimate of primary survivor).

# Eligibility Criteria



## Reported Methods of Torture

- Beatings with hands or objects and mutilations
- Electric shocks to sensitive body parts
- Hanging by the arms, legs, or shoulders
- Sexual humiliation and rape
- Burning with cigarettes, hot water or acid
- Exposure to environmental extremes (i.e., very high or low temperature)
- Being forced to stand for extended periods of time
- Being forced to stare at the sun
- Having one's head submerged in water or excrement
- Mock execution (for example, having an empty gun fired at one's head)
- Threats of violence to loved ones
- Being forced to watch or participate in the torture of or death of others, including loved ones
- Forced nakedness
- Not being allowed the use of a toilet
- Solitary confinement or overcrowding
- Exposure to continuous noise
- Sleep deprivation
- Being forced to remain with dead bodies
- Repeated interrogations conducted at random and unpredictable times

# Eligibility Criteria



**The purported act(s) of torture occurred  
outside the U.S.**

# Eligibility Criteria



The applicant has a current status as a refugee, asylee, asylum seeker, immigrant, displaced person, or U.S. citizen.



# Eligibility Criteria



## Color of law:

- A government official
- A de-facto authority acting in a government of quasi-governmental capacity or role
- A non-governmental (private) party acting under the color of law.

# Eligibility Criteria



If a government or related entity is unwilling or unable to punish the acts that have caused harm, and this appears to be generally true (not just in the particular instance of the applicant) as to these type of acts, then such acts (and the pain and suffering they entail) may be considered as “officially” tolerated, and is covered under most interpretations of the term “color of law,” as the products of “deliberate indifference” on the part of the governing authority.

The questions below can help determine if this was the case:

- Does law enforcement, including a law enforcement infrastructure and personnel with the authority to respond, exist in the country?
- Were appropriate law enforcement authorities aware of the purported acts of torture, or was there a general pattern of torture of which law enforcement authorities were aware?
- If law enforcement was aware of the purported acts of torture, did they fail to take any action to stop or hinder the acts, or to protect the SOT?
- Was the lack of action, if applicable, due to unwillingness or inability to act, for example willful blindness to the act itself?

# Eligibility Criteria



- The perpetrator specifically targeted the victim for the act.
  - (S/he was not one of many people randomly subjected to an act, like a bombing).
- Torture is a technique/political ritual and should not be mistaken for lawless, unrestrained rage.

# Eligibility Criteria



At the time the act was committed, the victim was under the custody or physical control of the perpetrator. (e.g., held in a prison, holding facility, compound, camp, hospital, school, etc., or was otherwise seized for the time necessary for the torture to occur).

# Referral and Intake



- Referral sheets are received at the International Clinic. See referral sheet for email and fax.
- The Service Coordinator meets with the applicant to complete an intake packet (includes needs assessment and eligibility determination form).
- A committee reviews the applicant's information and makes a decision regarding eligibility and appropriateness for program.
- If the applicant does not qualify, we offer other resources and referrals.
- If the applicant does qualify, we coordinate services as indicated by the needs assessment.

# Healing Encounters



PSOT eligibility is ideally assessed within a relationship and setting that is:

- Trauma Informed
- Culturally Responsive
- Linguistically Appropriate

and

- Provides Choice
- Builds Trust
- Restores Dignity

Please contact us for training if interested.

# Contact Information



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# Acknowledgements



Office for Refugee Resettlement

Heal Torture

Center for Victims of Torture

Thank you!