

Ethics in crisis negotiation: A law enforcement and public safety perspective.

Citation

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Abstract

Historically, hostage taking is a phenomenon that has been around for centuries. In many cases, formal negotiation models did not evolve until the early 1970s. The origins of hostage negotiation and the role of psychological consultation can be linked to the tragic incident at the 1972 Olympic Games when 11 Israeli athletes were taken hostage and subsequently murdered (Schreiber, 1973). Following that incident, in 1973, the New York City Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) instituted a hostage negotiations training program to train police officers around the world. The first involvement of a psychologist in hostage negotiations can be traced to the 1970s when Harvey Schlossberg, a detective with a doctorate in psychology, and Frank Boltz, a police lieutenant, began developing a model for negotiations that was built around psychological principles and was sensitive to understanding personality, behavior, emotions, and motivation. Although the roles, responsibilities, and functions of psychologists consulting on crisis negotiations are well documented, ethical guidelines for consulting on this mission have yet to be established. Consulting on crisis negotiations brings about a variety of ethical challenges, and the need for ethical guidelines is clear. By the nature of the task, the psychologist is placed into a conflict between the needs of the law enforcement agency (the psychologist's client) to provide public safety, the needs of any persons taken hostage, and the needs of the individual in crisis (in this instance, the hostage taker). Addressing these often competing responsibilities can be challenging, but the importance of effectively operating in this environment using clear ethical guidelines is paramount. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2016 APA, all rights reserved)