

Ohioans to Stop Executions

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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Campaign and Advocacy

[Ohioans to Stop Executions](#)

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The moral debate surrounding the death penalty is visible. However, most do not think about the moral issue of appointing human beings to end the lives of death row inmates. Assisting in executions is a violation of the [AMA code of ethics](#), so the burden is generally placed on inexperienced and anonymous prison medical employees.

Psychological Harm

The death penalty takes a heavy toll on those directly involved in executions prison wardens, chaplains, executioners, and corrections officers. Many of those involved in executions have reported suffering PTSD-like symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares and other forms of distress. These symptoms are reported by multiple witnesses such as journalists, executioners, and wardens alike. The Catholic chaplain on Ohio's death row wrote about witnessing an execution, calling the experience ghastly. (Read the full article [here](#)).

A [2005 study](#) published in *Law and Human Behavior* titled The Role of Moral Disengagement in the Execution Process aimed to understand the psychological strategies officers use to perform and cope with executions. The 5 year study was conducted by then-Stanford psychology student Michael Osofsky, social cognitive theory pioneer Albert Bandura, and Stanford prison experimenter/psychologist Philip Zimbardo.

The core thesis is that individuals must morally disengage in order to perform actions and behaviors that run opposite and are counter to individual values and personal moral standards, Osofsky says.

During his interviews with execution teams and uninvolved correctional officers, Osofsky used the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale ([CAPS-1](#)) Life Events Checklist and the [Beck Depression Inventory](#), two tools psychologists use to measure trauma and depression. Nearly all corrections officers, whether involved or uninvolved with the execution process, rated high on the CAPS-1 Life Event Checklist, indicating they have witnessed traumatizing events.

The Proof is in the Polling

Polling indicates that law enforcement officials would much rather have resources spent on other, more helpful tools, than on capital punishment. Law enforcement also believe they would be able to perform better without the dysfunction of the death penalty.

And [in this 2009 study](#), the nation's police chiefs rank the death penalty last in their priorities for effective crime reduction. The officers do not believe the death penalty acts as a deterrent to murder, and they rate it as one of most inefficient uses of taxpayer dollars in fighting crime.

Other Significant Findings

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