



SAN JOSÉ STATE  
UNIVERSITY



# Lessons learned from a civic-partnered participatory action research study with first responders

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RAPID.  
LOCAL.  
CO-CREATED.  
IMPACTFUL.

CIVIC  
INNOVATION  
CHALLENGE

CARESTAR  
FOUNDATION



## Background Context

- An estimated 20% of police calls in the U.S. involve a person experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis
- Communities across the U.S. have recognized the need to shift responsibility away from police to alternative first responders.
- These programs also aim to increase connection to resources for people experiencing homelessness, addiction, and/or mental illness, thus reducing strain on emergency services, easing crowded hospitals, and saving cities money.

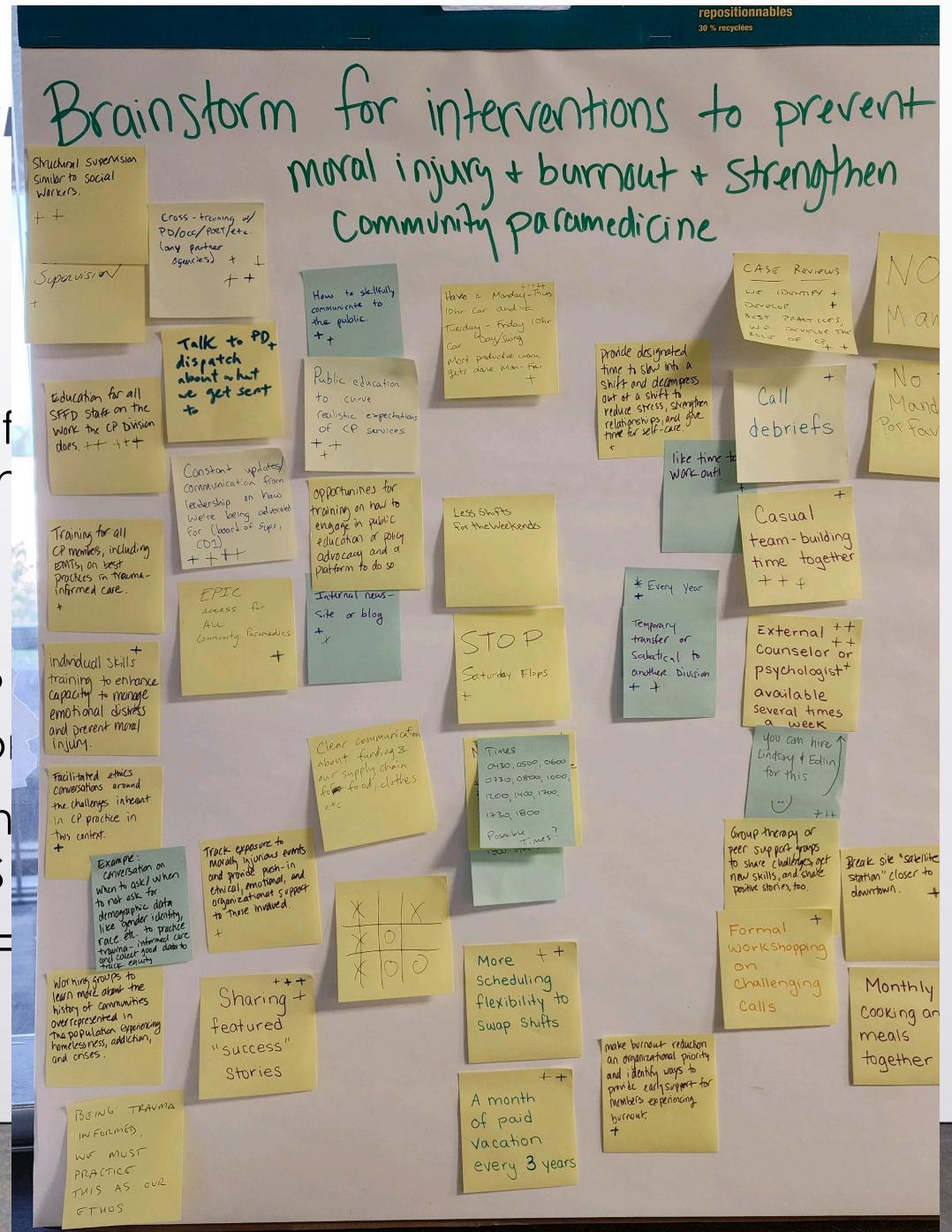


# Our Partnership

- Began in Summer 2021 between Chief of CP and Miranda
- In Fall 2021, Miranda brought students in to discuss what is going on
- Soma & Miranda were already collaborating on a different project and began working together on this one in Spring 2022 with a broader group of members of the CP division leadership
- In Summer 2022, we were awarded a Planning Grant from the NSF Civic Innovation Challenge

# Process

- During the planning grant, we held a series of and with peer support specialists working with programs
- We met weekly with CP leadership
- In January 2023, we reported back to the CP and shifted to co-developing intervention concepts
- In Summer 2023, we obtained a grant from the a conference focused on data equity in EMS
- In Fall 2023, we obtained a full grant from NSF





# **Objective 1: Prevent and treat moral distress and injury in CP members**

## **Research Questions:**

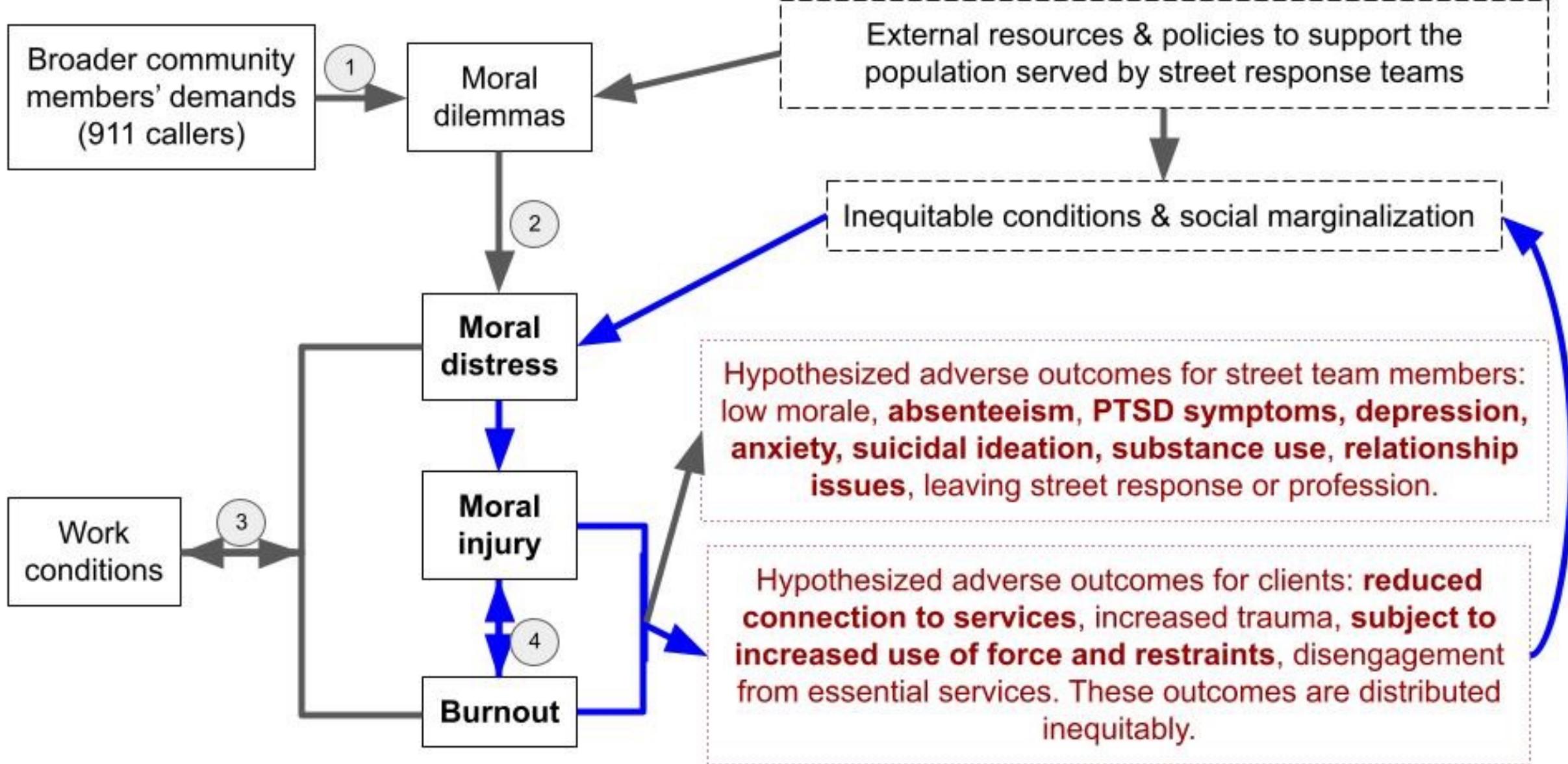
- What is the scope and magnitude of moral distress and injury in a sample of EMS and CP members?
- What psychosocial and functioning outcomes are associated with moral distress and injury in EMS and CP members?
- What intervention strategies prevent moral distress and injury and mitigate their negative impacts among community paramedics?

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## **Objective 2: Strengthen equity capacity of community paramedicine**

### **Research Questions:**

- Does a group-based intervention on health equity improve community paramedics' knowledge and comfort with diverse clients and lead to better relationships with clients?
- What are best practices for field-based demographic data collection and data sharing agreements to backfill demographic data on clients to understand, monitor, evaluate and improve equity in community paramedicine?



Moral Injury Interventions	Strategy & Impact
Internal and external education campaign	Improve interactions between community and CP members; improve understanding of referral options; promote understanding of Street Response Programs; reduce moral distress; increase community members' knowledge. (Pathways #1 & 3)
Equity & Ethics Peer Conversations	Increase awareness and understanding of equity; increase resilience; promote connection within the workplace; reduce moral distress, moral injury and burnout; cultivate deeper understanding of clients. (Pathways #2, 3 & 4)
Shift meals	Promote camaraderie; reduce moral distress and burnout; institutionalize workplace culture changes. (Pathways #3 & 4)
RAMS Advisory Board	Deepen understanding of role of peer specialists in street based services; increase resilience and promote camaraderie; reduce moral distress, moral injury and burnout. (Pathways #2, 3, & 4)
Moral Injury Survey	Increase understanding of exposure to potentially morally injurious events, moral injury symptoms and burnout among San Francisco Fire Department members (Pathway #3)

<b>Data Equity Interventions</b>	<b>Strategy &amp; Impact</b>
<b>ASTRID: All Street Outreach Integrated Datasets</b>	Promote data integration between SFFD CP and other agencies serving SF unhoused population. Collaborate with Mayor's Office of Innovation to infuse project with equity lens.
<b>California EMS Data Equity Conference</b>	Host conference bringing together California EMS Agencies and Authorities to deepen understanding of equity in EMS and CP practice.
<b>California EMS Data Equity Learning Community</b>	Facilitate a year-long learning community to identify and share best practices and support adoption of strategies to understand, monitor, evaluate, and improve equity.



# Some Challenges

- Fit of CBPR/PAR methodology with hierarchically structured organization and a grant mechanism that attempts to be community-centered but is from a very traditional academic funder
- Dynamic context – shifts based on supreme court decisions, leadership changes, the last emergency and more
- High budget and fast timeline of NSF grant meant we took on a huge scope of work, when a more focused scope and longer timeline might be more appropriate for this type of transformative work
- Environment is high stress and there is a high level of exposure to potentially morally injurious and traumatizing events
- Deeper and more structurally challenging aspects of the equity work will likely not continue within the organization



# Successes

- Really well received interventions
  - Came from the members and the members like them and they seem to work
  - Many (mostly moral injury) will be sustained with internal agency funding
- Connections made across the state to support equity and moral injury focused work
- Institutional change through leadership transitions
- Diffusion of ideas through meetings, conferences, and public facing dissemination and trade magazines