

FIRE SERVICE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RAPID RESPONSE: SUICIDE

PRE-PLANNING

GOAL: To promote behavioral health in terms of preparing for major events

> **Lead by Example: Promote the importance of behavioral health.**

- Communicate the importance of behavioral health to members.
- Sponsor behavioral health trainings and encourage attendance.
- Establish and/or support local peer support teams by encouraging involvement.
- Include a behavioral health representative in trainings and events to show importance of behavioral health.
- Provide information on suicide prevention mobile apps and behavioral health apps (WWW.POCKETPEER.ORG).

> **Learn about common reactions to potentially traumatic events, suicide prevention, and behavioral health resources.**

- Available on WWW.POCKETPEER.ORG.
- Stress First Aid on WWW.FIREHEROLEARNINGNETWORK.COM

> **Research clinicians firefighters and their families have used in the past.**

- Anonymously survey the department to find clinicians firefighters and their families have used.

> **Implement a buddy system among members (i.e., notice changes in behavior or if someone does not show up to work)**

IMMEDIATE (0 – 48 HOURS)

GOAL: Survival, communication

> **Establish basic needs have been met by assessing the members' safety and security.**

> **Remain calm and communicate.**

- Identify members who were involved in the call or may have responded to the scene.
- Hold an operational meeting with members – provide information about details (when appropriate).
- Listen to concerns and plan regular follow up.
- Identify members the firefighter worked with and state clearly that no single factor leads to suicide and that suicide is a complex issue with multiple contributing factors.

> **Encourage self-care and buddy-care.**

- Give the members autonomy to decide when and where to rest (i.e., at home vs station).

- Encourage members to get enough sleep – prolonged time in the incident increases stress.
- Check in that members are eating healthy, avoiding abusing alcohol and getting sleep.
- Inspire members to talk to peers.

> **Contact experts to provide supportive behavioral health services and provide information on suicide related mobile apps.**

> **Be prepared to provide information about behavioral health programs locally or local clinicians with a good reputation among fellow firefighters.**



Provide all members with information on the
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255)
and Crisis Text Line (TEXT: 741741)

FUNDING GENEROUSLY PROVIDED THROUGH DHS/FEMA'S
GRANT PROGRAM DIRECTORATE FOR ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS
GRANT PROGRAM – FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY GRANTS.

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RESCUE (0 – 1 WEEK)

GOAL: To support immediate needs and encourage communication

- > **Conduct a needs assessment to determine how well needs are being addressed.**
- > **Review the Seven Cs of Stress First Aid and encourage members to look after each other.**
- > **Coordinate psychological stress resources**
 - Facilitate meeting with local peer support team
 - Provide resources on local services and resources

RECOVERY (1-4 WEEKS)

GOAL: To support immediate needs and encourage connectedness

- > **Establish that basic needs have been met by assessing the members' safety and security.**
 - > **Remain calm and communicate.**
 - Conduct an After Action Review.
 - Develop an action plan to address operational improvements (if appropriate).
 - Assess communication with family, friends and community,
 - Listen to concerns and follow up.
 - > **Encourage self-care and buddy-care.**
 - Give the members autonomy to decide when and where to rest
 - > **Contact experts to provide supportive behavioral health services.**
 - Provide contact information to Employee Assistance Programs or peer support programs.
- (i.e., at home vs station).
- Review the Seven Cs of Stress First Aid and encourage members to look after each other.
 - Check in that members are eating healthy, avoiding substance abuse and getting enough sleep.
 - Inspire members to talk to peers by talking about personal experience talking to peers.

LONG TERM (4 WEEKS – ONGOING)

GOAL: To continue to support needs and encourage ongoing connectedness

- > **Monitor the recovery environment.**
 - Hold follow-up meeting with members – provide additional information to help reduce behavioral health stigma.
- > **Foster resilience and recovery.**
 - Sponsor relevant support groups and trainings (i.e., family, coworker, and grief support; coping skills).
 - Provide information on behavioral health and suicide prevention related mobile apps like WWW.POCKETPEER.ORG.
- > **Reduce stigma by supporting and encouraging behavioral health treatment.**
 - Continue to provide handouts on resources and services.

Family support infrastructure and resources are equally important in every phase. A department's Peer Support Program or Employee Assistance Program may be able to assist. The Center for Firefighter Behavioral Health (WWW.CFFBH.ORG) also has resources available for fire service family members.

For more information on Stress First Aid, visit WWW.FIRSTRESPONDERCENTER.ORG/TRAINING-FOR-FIRST-RESPONDERS