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.**
  - PocketPeer.org
  - Stress First Aid on WWW.FIRSTRESPONDERCENTER.ORG

- **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)**

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

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 follow up as needed.
  - Identify members the firefighter worked with and state clearly that it’s not their fault.

- **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.**
**FIRE SERVICE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RAPID RESPONSE:**

**SUICIDE**

**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
- Have resources available for family members

**RECOVERY (1–4 WEEKS)**

**GOAL:** To support immediate needs and encourage communication

- 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 (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.
- Contact experts to provide supportive behavioral health services.
  - Provide contact information to Employee Assistance Programs or peer support programs.

**LONG TERM (4 WEEKS – ONGOING)**

**GOAL:** Appraisal, planning

- 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](http://WWW.POCKETPEER.ORG).
- Reduce stigma by supporting and encouraging behavioral health treatment.
  - Continue to provide handouts on resources and services.

For more information on Stress First Aid, visit [WWW.FIRSTRESPONDERCENTER.ORG](http://WWW.FIRSTRESPONDERCENTER.ORG)

Funding generously provided through DHS/FEMA’s Grant Program Directorate for Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program – Fire Prevention and Safety Grants.