# Resiliency & Mental Wellness

## First Responders

### What is a Crisis?
A state of heightened emotional arousal to some powerful stimulus or a demand.

Psychological crisis: An acute response to a trauma, disaster, or other critical incident wherein: psychological homeostasis is disrupted, usual coping mechanisms have failed, and there is evidence of distress or impairment.

### Crisis and Stress
Crisis impacts us emotionally, mentally and physically all at the same time. We always live in stress, whether good or bad, mild or extreme. You can have stress with no crisis, but you can’t have a crisis without stress!

Critical incident stress: heightened cognitive, physical, emotional and behavioral arousal that accompanies crisis.

Crisis is inevitable, especially for First Responders as they manage a balance between their professional careers and their personal life.

### Why?
- Many officers work hard to disguise symptoms for fear of being perceived as weak
- Stigma of mental health
- Often do not seek help
- Inherent risk of homicide or accidents overshadow psychological danger
- Knowledge of emergency petitions
- Fearful of losing job
- Poor coping strategies (such as substance use, family disruption, and work deviance)

### Risk Factors
- Relationship Problems – Family Stress
- Department Stress, Officer Stress (Shift work, “extremes,” fear of injury or death, alcohol abuse, mistrust in management)
- Financial Problems
- Isolation or Separation
- Illness or Injury
- Depression
- Trauma
- Involvement in high profile critical incidents
- Access to Firearms

### Protective Factors
- Restricting access to highly lethal means of suicide
- Easy access to a variety of clinical interventions

Data adapted from “Resiliency & Mental Wellness for First Responders”, a webinar originally held on 1/11/21. Presented by Lt. Steven Thomas and Michelle Warshauer.
Crisis Intervention

Temporary, active and supportive entry into life situation during extreme distress to help stabilize or mitigate crisis response.

Crisis intervention targets the RESPONSE, not the EVENT.

Solution Model: Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

A comprehensive, phase sensitive, and integrated, multi-component approach to crisis/disaster intervention.

Six core elements that can be used at any point given the situation:
1. Strategic Planning
2. Informational Group Crisis Intervention
3. Interactive Group Crisis Intervention
4. Assessment and Psychological Triage
5. Individual Crisis Intervention
6. Personal Resilience and Self-Care

The ultimate goal of these practices is to promote post-traumatic growth in first responders after they have been involved in a crisis situation.

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