



A newsletter for members of the Trusts
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First Responders and Risk of PTSD

by Gwen Mahabir, MS, CHES

One of the monthly health and wellness observances for June is awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder. Although everyone is susceptible to experiencing PTSD, first responders who serve our municipalities are at much higher risk. PTSD is two to five times more prevalent among these employees.

First responders are commonly exposed to potentially traumatic events as a part of their jobs and may sometimes replay these events in their mind, which can cause strong upsetting thoughts/feelings. Encouraging staff members to engage in daily self-care and talk with others can help them cope. However, if employees are experiencing persistent or intensifying symptoms over months or years after a traumatic event, they could be experiencing PTSD, a diagnosable and treatable mental health condition. This help becomes possible when firefighters, police and paramedics can recognize the signs of PTSD among their sisters and brothers in uniform.

Five common signs to look out for are:

- isolation from others
- disturbed sleep
- increased irritability
- decreased interest in important activities
- self-destructive or reckless behavior.

Municipalities are encouraged to **routinely** communicate to staff all the services/resources that are available to them through their EAP (employee assistance program) and ensure they know what other internal program options are available to them and their coworkers. Also, see the list of resources below.

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PTSD Resources and Training Materials

- Educational materials including training documents from [Division of Workers' Compensation](#), Florida Department of Financial Services.
- Multiple sources of information from the [National Center for PTSD](#), U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Education and consultation on patient care and prevention from [UCF Restores](#) at the University of Central Florida. This resource includes a training program titled [REACT](#), which is designed to introduce and improve peer support skills among first responders.

To view the full edition of *Trust Tips*, visit insurance.flcities.com/education/trust-tips.