

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER



WHAT IS POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)?

A mental health condition triggered by experiencing or witnessing traumatic or life-threatening events. These events could include critical incidents such as officer-involved shootings, responding to violent crimes, witnessing severe injury or death (such as fatal accidents or child fatalities), being assaulted, handling suicides or homicides, and encountering the aftermath of traumatic events like abuse or natural disasters.

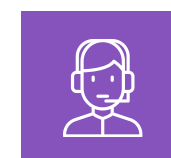
ARE OUR EMPLOYEES AT GREATER RISK?



Corrections officers have the highest reported rates of PTSD, often exceeding **30%** and in some studies over **50%**.



Police officers have elevated rates compared to the general population, with most estimates between **15%** and **20%**.



Emergency dispatchers also face significant risk, with prevalence typically in the **11% - 24%** range.

*These numbers are compared to about 8% of civilians.

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PTSD CAN INCLUDE:

Re-experiencing (Intrusive Symptoms):

- Flashbacks or feeling like the traumatic event is happening again
- Intrusive memories or distressing thoughts about the trauma
- Nightmares or trouble sleeping
- Intense emotional or physical reactions to reminders of the event

Avoidance:

- Avoiding people, places, or activities that are reminders of the trauma
- Trying not to think or talk about the traumatic event

Negative Changes in Thinking and Mood:

- Emotional numbness or feeling detached from others
- Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Feelings of guilt, shame, hopelessness, or persistent negative thoughts
- Trouble remembering important parts of the traumatic event

Hyperarousal (Increased Alertness):

- Irritability, anger, or mood swings
- Being easily startled or feeling “on edge” (hypervigilance)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Self-destructive or reckless behavior

Physical and Cognitive Effects:

- Fatigue, headaches, or unexplained aches and pains
- Memory problems or difficulty making decisions

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Because unaddressed PTSD can impact job performance, relationships, and overall health. Law enforcement officers are at a higher risk for depression, substance abuse, and suicide. Officers die by suicide at a rate **69% higher** than the general population. Early recognition and intervention saves lives and careers.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?



For Yourself: Monitor your reactions after critical incidents, practice healthy sleep habits and stress management, reach out to other people. Seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.



For Your Team: Watch for changes in behavior or mood in colleagues, approach peers with concern and listen without judgement, encourage the use of support resources.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Stay Centered

- Practice mindfulness and stress management techniques (e.g., deep breathing, meditation, exercise).
- Focus on what you can control; let go of what’s beyond your influence.

Stay Connected

- Build strong relationships with peers, family, and support networks.
- Engage in peer support and foster a sense of mutual trust and belonging.

Stay Self-Aware

- Improve emotional intelligence: increase self-awareness, empathy, and emotion regulation.
- Maintain perspective and respond—not react—to stress.



BUILDING RESILIENCE (continued)

Stay Purposeful

- Find meaning in your work and personal life through hobbies and activities you enjoy.
- Reconnect with your sense of purpose regularly.

Stay Supported

- Reach out to mental health professionals or use peer support and resilience resources when needed.
- Attend required behavioral health and crisis intervention training (TCOLE 1850).

SUPPORT & RESOURCES

HCSO Behavioral Health Division: Services include an in-house clinic offering confidential, no cost mental health services to HCSO employees.

Phone: 346-286-3150

HCSO Peer Support Network: Trained HCSO employees offering peer-to-peer assistance.

Email: hcsopeersupportadmin@hctx.net

Phone: 346-286-3175

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (988): 24/7 mental health support.

Copline: A 24/7 confidential support for law enforcement officers and their loved ones.

Website: <https://www.copline.org/>

Helpline phone: 1-800-267-5463

Warrior's Heart: Inpatient/residential, and outpatient (IOP and PHP) treatment exclusively for first responders and veterans with PTSD or substance use disorders.

Website: <https://www.warriorsheart.com/>

Phone: 855-670-0701

NAMI: Offers a wealth of resources tailored to first responders.

Website: www.nami.org

Phone: 703-524-7600

Heroes Helpline: A 24/7 confidential referral and navigation service for Texas first responders; helping connect first responders to treatment for mental health and substance use concerns.

Website: <https://sbmi.uth.edu/cbear/heroes-helpline.htm>

Phone: 833-367-4689.

Texas Law Enforcement Peer Network: A statewide program offering confidential peer support from trained law enforcement officers via their app and online platform.

Website: <https://www.untDallas.edu/sites/tlepn/index.php>

Phone: 972-336-1314

Aetna EAP: Employee Assistance Program, a free service through Aetna insurance for Harris County employees and their household.

Phone: 1-833-657-2111



Our goal is to be proactive, providing you with the knowledge and tools to build resilience, support your well-being, and strengthen our team as a whole. By taking steps now, you can be better prepared to face challenges before they arise.