

## **First Responder Wellness: Tools for Strength**

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Topic: Wellness, Peer Support, Stigma Reduction, and Officer Investment

This handout provides actionable strategies to improve mental wellness in law enforcement through peer support, stigma reduction, proactive wellness checks, and cultural change. These tools can help you survive and thrive in your career and beyond.

### **1. Peer Support - A Lifeline, Not a Luxury**

- - Peer support is often the first and most trusted outlet for officers in distress.
- - Ensure your agency has a culturally competent, non-punitive peer support program.
- - Normalize mental health check-ins in the same way you check your gear.

### **2. Smashing the Stigma**

- - Strength is not silence-mental toughness includes emotional honesty.
- - Officers are often afraid of being labeled or sidelined.
- - Share your stories of growth and healing to normalize help-seeking behavior.

### **3. Wellness Checks Without the Side-Eye**

- - Ask: 'What can we take off your plate?' instead of 'What's wrong with you?'
- - Routine check-ins should be casual, compassionate, and judgment-free.
- - Embed mental health check-ins in the daily culture-not just annual paperwork.

### **4. Invest in Your Officers**

- - Leaders must model the behavior they want to see.
- - Provide accessible, confidential support resources without penalty.

### **5. The 9/11 Health Program & Legislative Action**

- - Programs like the World Trade Center Health Program prove the need for long-term support.
- - Support legislation like the First Responder Wellness Act.
- - Advocate for your right to physical and mental health care as part of your service.

### **Final Words**

- You were never meant to carry the weight of the world alone. Peer support, mental wellness, and courageous conversations save lives. Be part of the culture shift.

## Resources

**988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:** <https://988lifeline.org>

**Blue H.E.L.P.** <https://bluehelp.org/>

A non-profit organization dedicated to reducing mental health stigma and preventing suicide in the law enforcement community.

**COPLINE** <https://www.copline.org> / 1-800-COPLINE or 1-800-267-5463.

A confidential, 24/7 hotline answered by retired law enforcement professionals.

**Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS)** <https://www.concernsofpolicesurvivors.org/>

A non-profit that supports families and co-workers of law enforcement officers who die in the line of duty.

**Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association (FLEOA)** <https://www.fleoa.org/>

A professional association representing federal law enforcement officers.

**International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)** <https://www.theiacp.org/>

A non-profit organization that focuses on advancing community safety, leadership, and professionalism in policing worldwide.

**Survivors of Blue Suicide (SBS)** <https://www.survivorsofbluesuicide.org/>

A non-profit that addresses the emotional and psychological needs that arise from the loss of a loved one by suicide in the law enforcement profession.

**VALOR for Blue** <https://www.valorforblue.org/>

A clearinghouse designed to enhance the safety, wellness, and resilience of law enforcement officers. It focuses on preventing injuries and deaths, improving officer health, and providing innovative resources and training.

**World Trade Center Health Program:** <https://www.cdc.gov/wtc/index.html>

Mount Sinai Selikoff Centers for Occupational Health (NY):

<https://www.mountsinai.org/care/occupational-health/programs/first-responders>

Rutgers Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute (NJ):

<https://eohsi.rutgers.edu/wtc/>