



Promoting wellness and recovery

Mike DeWine, Governor
Lori Criss, Director

The Opioid Crisis and Its Growing Impact on First Responder Health and Wellness

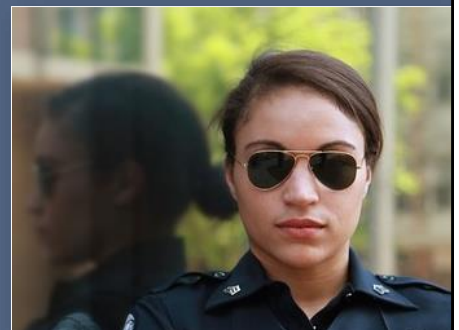
Steven M. Click
First Responder Liaison, Trauma Informed Care

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First Responders and Trauma

This webinar will help you

- Understand the connection between the opioid crisis and the stress felt by first responders
- Learn about the growing issue of suicide among first responders
- Identify some ways to help address issues related to trauma, stress, and first responders
- Know where to find assistance and resources



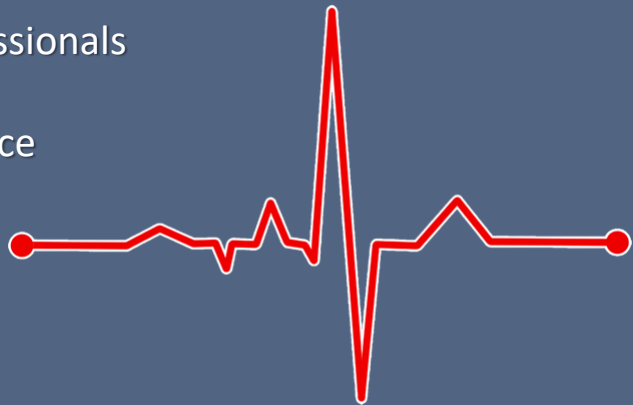
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Any day may go from routine and uneventful to a multiple casualty incident, the use of deadly force by or against the first responder, or administering Narcan to save the life of a person overdosing on opioids

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Firefighters and EMS professionals are not exempt from being threatened with deadly force



First responders not only manage initial incidents but often must also address the aftermath, including effects on the families

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*“Life” doesn’t stop
because someone is
a first responder*

*Family issues are the
number 1 concern for
first responders*



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Sources of Stress for First Responders

- Physical danger
- Accidental exposure to drugs or hazardous material
- Public reaction and criticism
- Media and social media
- Family needs and demands
- Shift work
- Fear of being stigmatized or labeled
- Loss of promotions/training opportunities
- Being looked at differently by coworkers

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Stress Is Cumulative



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Depending on the size/location of an agency, first responders may deal with more than 189 critical incidents in the course of their careers

2015 Survey from Journal of Traumatic Stress

The larger the jurisdiction, the more chances to experience trauma

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In the United States

More than 1.1 million **Firefighters**

- 70% of firefighters are volunteers, making up 85% of the more than 27,228 fire departments in the country

<https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/registry/summary>

More than 800,000 **law enforcement** officers in 17,000 agencies

- Half have fewer than 10 officers
- Only 5% have more than 100 sworn officers

National Law Enforcement Mental Health & Wellness Act of 2017



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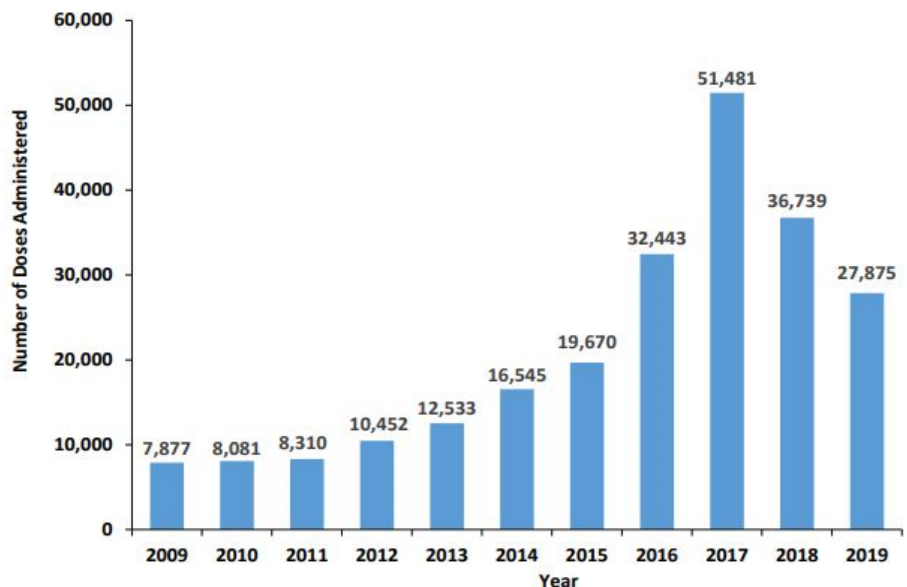
**Overdoses
are a daily
experience**

Source: Ohio Department of
Public Safety, Division of
Emergency Medical Services,
EMS Incidence Reporting System
(EMSIRS)

Naloxone Administration by Ohio EMS Providers, 2009-2019 ^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8}

Summary Brief as September 3, 2019

<https://www.ems.ohio.gov/links/EMSNaLoxone2009-2019.pdf>



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In 2018, the Columbus, Ohio, Police Department had 1,464 runs that were overdose related. *So far in 2019, 1,200 overdose calls*

Since January 2019, troopers from the Ohio State Highway Patrol, *whose primary role is traffic enforcement*, have administered Narcan or naloxone 104 times, or an **average of 13 times per month**

In 2017 and 2018, the Columbus Ohio Fire Department Emergency Medical Services had 3,300 runs in which Narcan was administered, compared with 170,000 calls for “overdose” during the same time period

Average 10-12 calls per day, 7 days a week

First Responder Suicide v. Line-of-Duty Deaths

	Law Enforcement	Fire Service	EMS
Suicide	159	72	14
Line of Duty	89	37	n.d.

Law Enforcement: Blue H.E.L.P. website and Officer Down Memorial Page Web Site
 Fire Service: Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance and U.S. Fire Administration Web Site



Suicides Are Underreported

Many suicides are reported as being accidental, from natural causes, or “undetermined”

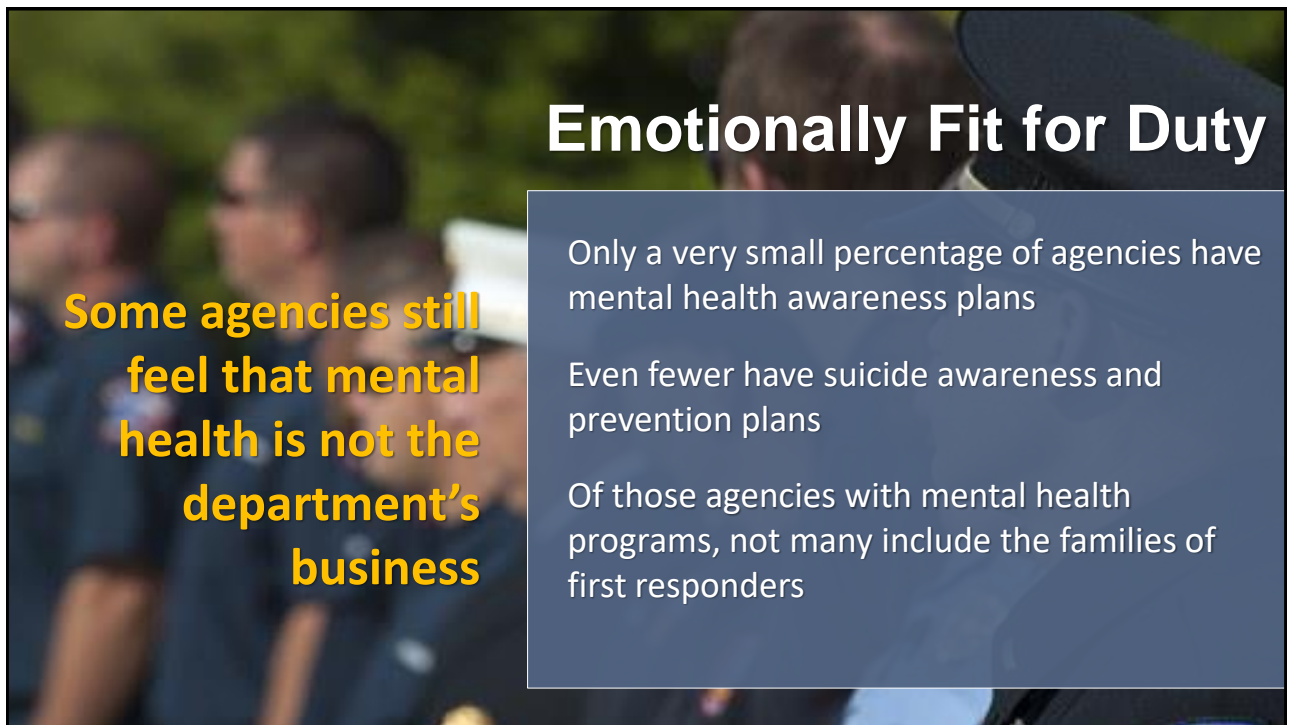
Why?

- Fear of stigmatizing the first responder or his or her family
- Fear of loss of benefits for survivors
- Fear of admitting there is a problem

*Less than 10% of agencies have a suicide prevention program**

*www.forbes.com

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Emotionally Fit for Duty

Some agencies still feel that mental health is not the department's business

Only a very small percentage of agencies have mental health awareness plans

Even fewer have suicide awareness and prevention plans

Of those agencies with mental health programs, not many include the families of first responders

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Recruitment and Retention Are Serious Issues

WE ARE HIRING

- Unhealthy coping mechanisms lead to discipline issues and a lack of confidence by the public
- Losing experienced personnel because of job stresses and the lure of private businesses
- Loss of experience leads to a constant turnover of personnel, resulting in constant training of new personnel
- Shortage of personnel willing to assume supervisory responsibilities
- Lack of mentors to guide new personnel

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What can be done?

- Support peer support teams
- Build relationships with local mental health organizations
- Assist personnel in returning to their “new normal”
- Command staff: encourage attention to personal health/wellness from basic training throughout career
- Embed mental health professionals within first responder agencies

BUT . . . there is a long way to go

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First Responders and Trauma

We can

- Create policies and procedures requiring mental health awareness training for all personnel, including suicide awareness and family dynamics
- Establish partnerships with local mental health organizations
- Encourage peer support teams and their use
- Make mental health education and resources a fundamental part of agency culture



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OOC: Vicarious Trauma for First Responders

Instructor:A.Ebased - Language: English - ★★★★★

<http://www.ebasedacademy.org/learn/course/external/view/elearning/72/OOCVicariousTraumaforFirstResponders>

- This **FREE** OhioMHAS course provides an in-depth look at trauma and its impact on firefighters, emergency medical services (EMS) personnel or paramedics, disaster response workers, and law enforcement
- Identifies how first responders can be more effective and safer by being trauma informed and aware of the implications and prevalence of vicarious trauma

Content

- Define vicarious trauma and its impact on first responders
- Understand why vicarious trauma occurs
- Identify the personal impacts of vicarious trauma
- Identify strategies to build resilience following a traumatic event

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