



# BRIDGING THE GAP: EFFECTIVE FIRST RESPONDER & MENTAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

The lack of mental health crisis services across the U.S. has resulted in a need for first responders to serve in mental health situations. It is important for first responders to form effective strategies and partnerships with local mental health services.

## First Responder Culture

- Lifespan averages 10 years less than the general population
- Higher rates of heart disease than the general population
- 4x more likely to develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) than the general population
- First responders often find it difficult engaging in mental health treatment

1 in 4



First responders will report having suicidal thoughts at least once in their lifetime

## Future Planning

- Mental health check-ups, the same way physical health is often annually done
- An increase in therapeutic and support groups
- More training
- **Combatting the stigma among first responders:**
  - Attend more training/classes that teach mental health first aid
  - Be open to the discussion surrounding mental health with others
  - Be open about telling others about therapists

## Strategies

- **Providers** are encouraged to get involved in the Mobile Crisis Teams. You get a unique lens on what it's like being a first responder.
  - Ride Along and be present with first responders
  - Attend ICISF training
- **Peer support programs** are important. Always be a good listener but also be able to recognize when someone needs additional help.
- **First Responders** are encouraged to understand who the providers are. Ask questions that increase the understanding of how the relationship between first responders and clinicians work.



## Best Practices

- Flexibility
- Fluidity
- Practicality
- Logistics
- Training
- Peer support/Clinician competency

Data adapted from "Bridging the Gap: Effective First Responder & Mental Health Care Partnerships, a webinar originally held on 2/8/2021. Presented by Lt. Steve Thomas & Steve Plummer, LCPC.



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