

Federal Healthcare Resilience Task Force

EMS/Prehospital Team

COVID-19 Behavioral Health Resources for First Responders

Product Purpose

First responders are facing unique stressors during the COVID-19 pandemic. This document (EMS27) presents resources and strategies in support of first responder behavioral health. This document contains weblinks to non-federal websites and webpages. Linking to a non-federal website does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. government, or any of its employees, of the information and/or products presented on that site.

Developed By

The Federal Healthcare Resilience Task Force (HRTF) is leading the development of a comprehensive strategy for the U.S. healthcare system to facilitate resiliency and responsiveness to the threats posed by COVID-19. The Task Force's EMS/Pre-Hospital Team is comprised of public and private-sector Emergency Medical Service (EMS) and 911 experts from a wide variety of agencies and focuses on responding to the needs of the pre-hospital community. This Team is composed of subject matter experts from NHTSA Office of EMS, CDC, FEMA, USFA, US Army, USCG, and non-federal partners representing stakeholder groups and areas of expertise. Through collaboration with experts in related fields, the team develops practical resources for field providers, supervisors, administrators, medical directors and associations to better respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Intended Audience

State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Governments (SLTTs) First Responders (Police, Fire, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and 911 communication personnel)

Expected Distribution Mechanism

EMS.gov, stakeholder calls, EMS stakeholder organization's membership distribution
Email mechanisms, USFA website, social media posts

Primary Point of Contact

NHTSA Office of EMS, nhtsa.ems@dot.gov, 202-366-5440

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Tips for Self-Care during the COVID-19 Pandemic

[The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) recommend the following:

- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories**, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- **Take care of your body.**
 - Take deep breaths, stretch, or [meditate](#).
 - [Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals](#).
 - [Exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep](#).
 - Avoid [alcohol](#) and [drugs](#).
- **Make time to unwind.** Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- **Connect with others.** Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

In addition, some first responders find yoga to be a helpful [stress management tool](#).* Practicing [mindfulness](#), or being completely aware of what is happening in the present without judgment or preconceived notions, may also be beneficial. Several mindfulness smartphone apps, such as [Headspace](#)* and [Mindfulness Coach](#)*, are free to use during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you are using these suggested self-care methods and you still feel overwhelmed, it means that you are human. Consider reaching out to a friend, loved one, or mental health professional. Additional resources for first responders are listed on the next page. Asking for help takes strength and will help you stay healthy and get back to being able to take care of others.

If you are having thoughts of suicide, take immediate action:

- Call 911 *or*
- Call the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) at 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 *or*
- Call the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) (800-273-TALK [8255])* *or*

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- Text FRONTLINE to 741741 to reach a Crisis Counselor at the [Crisis Text Line](#)*

First Responder Behavioral Health Resources

- [Wayne State COVID first responder hotline](#)*
- Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress factsheet [Sustaining the Psychological Well-Being of Caregivers While Caring for Disaster Victims](#)*
- The Code Green Campaign [webpage](#)*
- Fire Hero Learning Network webpage [Stress First Aid for Fire and EMS Personnel](#)*
- First Responders First factsheet [Sustaining Yourself during the Coronavirus Crisis](#)*
- International Association of Fire Fighters webpage [COVID-19 Behavioral Health Resources](#)*
- International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. webpage [COVID-19 Resources](#)*
- Massachusetts General Hospital webpage [Guide to Mental Health Resources for COVID-19 for Health Care Providers](#)*
- Mental Health America webpage [Mental Health And COVID-19 – Information and Resources](#)*
- Mental Health First Aid webpages [Self-Care Tips for Health Care Workers](#)* and [Mental Health First Aid for Fire and EMS](#)*
- The Mindfulness Initiative webpage [COVID-19 & Mindfulness: Resources for Health & Care Staff](#)*
- National Center for PTSD webpage [Managing Healthcare Workers' Stress Associated with the COVID-19 Outbreak and PDF](#)
- National Emergency Number Association webpage [Health & Wellness Resources](#)*
- Healthcare Resilience Task Force Prehospital Team document posted on EMS.gov. (2020). [Mitigate Absenteeism by Protecting Healthcare Workers' Psychological Health and Well-being during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [Preventing and Managing Stress: Tips for Disaster Responders](#)
- Suicide Prevention Resource Center webpage [Resources to Support Mental Health and Coping with the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)*
- SAMHSA's National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357) for mental and/or substance use disorders Treatment Services Locator Website for mental and/or substance use disorders
- First Responder Center for Excellence webpage [COVID-19](#)*

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- [Yoga for First Responders*](#) has [Yoga Shield Free COVID-19 Resources*](#)
- Dispatch Yoga webpage [7 Poses to Decrease Stress and Increase Mental Health*](#)CDC webpage [Emergency Responders: Tips for taking care of yourself](#)
- Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) webpage [Health & Wellness Resources*](#)
- Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Technical Resources, Assistance Center, and Information Exchange's (ASPR TRACIE) webpage [Topic Collection: Responder Safety and Health](#)

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