



# First Responder Mental Health Outreach Series

*Exclusively For* Firefighters ■ Law Enforcement Officers ■ Paramedics/EMTs  
■ Emergency Dispatchers ■ Military First Responders

Mental health is as essential as physical health for top performance in the line of duty. Chronic stressors, extreme conditions, exposure to traumatic incidents, and life-threatening events adversely impact the emotional well-being of emergency responders, increasing their risk for serious mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, substance abuse, relationship issues, and suicidality.

Emergency Responders Health Center (ERHC) is committed to decreasing the cultural stigma surrounding mental and behavioral health among first responders, and promoting timely access to trusted, effective, and occupationally-relevant care.

Our Mental Health Outreach series is designed to increase first responders' awareness of:

- ✓ Mental health risks inherent in emergency response professions
- ✓ Mental health "first aid" (self-care and day-to-day coping strategies)
- ✓ Resources available for effective mental health support and treatment

ERHC Mental Health Outreach presentations are designed and delivered by licensed mental health therapists and medical professionals, based on up-to-date research and data.



This series is made possible through collaboration with the non-profit First Responders Health Institute, funded through a generous grant from the Holland M. Ware Charitable Foundation. Thanks to this support, ERHC is able to offer our customized outreach presentations at no cost to host departments or members during the grant term.

For more information and to request a workshop at your agency: ☎ (208) 229-8433 | [abrooks@er-hc.org](mailto:abrooks@er-hc.org)

## Presentation Overviews

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### I. Occupational Mental Health Hazards | 90-minute presentation/interactive workshop + 30-minute Q&A

**Objectives:** To increase first responder awareness of their individual risk for experiencing a mental health concern at some point during their career, and what to do to bolster their own emotional well-being. Participants will break down the stigmas associated with mental health in the line of duty, learn about prevalent conditions and available therapies, and meet local mental health professionals dedicated to first responder wellness, in order to overcome barriers to seeking help when it's needed the most.

#### KEY POINTS INCLUDE:

- Duty-specific mental health risks, including common conditions, their causes, prevalence, and symptoms
- Prevention strategies to recognize, offset, and respond to mental health stressors before chronic adversity escalates into debilitating conditions
- Practical recommendations for self-care, to cope with day-to-day stressors and lifestyle disruptions, and build resiliency
- Clinical therapies proven effective in treating mental health conditions widespread among first responder populations
- Available mental health resources, including trusted local mental health professionals who specialize in caring for first responders and their family members



## II. Trauma, Burnout & Compassion Fatigue – Prevention, Healing & Hope

90-minute presentation/  
interactive workshop +  
30-minute Q&A

**Objectives:** To assist first responders to recognize, seek support for, and build resiliency when experiencing vicarious trauma, emotional burnout, and compassion fatigue, while balancing placing others' needs above their own. Participants will learn how to better "inoculate" themselves against these experiences, to prevent emotional burdens from becoming career-sidelining conditions.

KEY POINTS INCLUDE:

- Trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue risk factors, prevalence, and symptoms
- Mental exhaustion and job performance (or, why to put on your own oxygen mask, first)
- Harnessing protective factors and support systems to offset emotional and mental exhaustion
- Practical strategies for self-care, to cope with chronic stressors and re-energize
- Available mental health resources, and signs that it's time to seek professional mental health care

## III. Stress. Sleep. Solutions.

90-minute presentation/interactive workshop + 30-minute Q&A

**Objectives:** To support first responders to overcome chronic stress, shift work, and lifestyle disruptions as barriers to quality (and sufficient) sleep. Participants will learn about the complex and critical relationship between sleep and mental and physical health; sleep and job performance; and achievable strategies for preserving their sleep – from meditation to medication.

KEY POINTS INCLUDE:

- Sleep physiology and healthy sleep cycles
- Sleep disruptors and physical and psychological causes of insomnia and other sleep conditions
- Sleep deprivation and chronic disease
- Linkages between sleep quality, mental health, physical function and injury risk, and cognition in the line of duty
- Practical techniques for establishing – and protecting – healthy sleep regimens
- Mental health and wellness solutions for restorative sleep
- Medical solutions for correcting poor sleep and sleep pathologies

## IV. Decoding Substance Abuse: Risks & Resources

90-minute presentation/interactive workshop +  
30-minute Q&A

**Objectives:** To increase awareness of the widespread prevalence of substance abuse as a coping mechanism among first responders, as well as resources for addiction recovery. Participants will learn to differentiate between the recreational enjoyment of alcohol and other substances and concerning dependency, as well as proven treatment strategies to overcome substance overuse/addiction for alcohol, prescription medications, marijuana, and other street drugs.

KEY POINTS INCLUDE:

- Risk factors for substance abuse and signs of dependency/over-use
- Psychology and physiology of addiction
- Physical and mental health impact of substance abuse
- Fentanyl/opioid overdose risk
- Substance abuse prevention, protective factors, harm reduction strategies, and alternative coping tools
- Promising outpatient therapies, medication regimens, and inpatient programs for addiction recovery

## You Are What You Think: Rewriting the Unhelpful Self-Talk that Keeps You Stuck

45-minute presentation/  
interactive workshop +  
15-minute Q&A

**Objectives:** To identify and redirect self-critical and self-defeating thought processes that impact your mental health, by replacing negative thought patterns with proactive, productive, and self-affirming messages.

*Bonus Presentation*



## Presenters

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ERHC's experienced Mental Health Services (MHS) team specializes in supporting emergency response professionals to maintain a healthy outlook in the line of duty. Our medical and mental health providers recognize responders' compounding stressors, unique work culture, lifestyle disruptions, relationship pressures, and elevated risks. ERHC mental health professionals are experienced in delivering trauma-informed care, using therapies such as Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and/or Accelerated Resolution Therapy (ART).



### **Ari Brooks, LCSW**

Ari Brooks has more than a decade of experience as a mental health therapist, and serves as the Director of ERHC Mental Health Services. Ari specializes in addressing the elevated mental health concerns of first responders, and divides her time between clinical treatment, program development, and outreach. When not at work, Ari enjoys exploring the great outdoors with her husband and two children.



### **Rich Brown, LPC**

Rich Brown, ERHC staff therapist, has more than 30 years of experience as a firefighter in wildlands, emergency services, and fire services operations as well as a master's degree in counseling. Rich's blend of person-centered and solution-focused therapy, along with his lived experience as a first responder, equips him to bring a well-rounded perspective to the mental health treatment of first responders.



### **Rob Hilvers, MD**

Rob Hilvers is the founder and medical director of Emergency Responders Health Center, and is well-regarded as our region's leading expert in first responder health and wellness. Dr. Hilvers has 20 years of experience in designing and delivering specialized first responder healthcare programming, and has facilitated the integration of mental health screening and risk counseling into ERHC's primary healthcare setting.



### **Matthew Lemons, LPC**

Matthew Lemons, ERHC staff therapist, is honored to provide support to first responders struggling with anxiety, depression, trauma, grief and related concerns. Matthew is trained in Accelerated Resolution Therapy for the treatment of trauma, as well as other traditional therapeutic modalities. He cares for adult as well as adolescent clients.