



THE SHIELD

Providing mental health services to Central Oregon veterans & first responders

New Nonprofit, THE SHIELD, Supports Central Oregon Veterans & First Responders

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Veterans and first responders are often exposed to intense, repetitive stress and traumatic events which often result in acute or chronic stress reactions leading to short and long-term health problems. As a result, these individuals have unique mental health and wellness needs.

THE SHIELD provides prevention, diagnosis and treatment of mental health concerns for those who have sacrificed for others. THE SHIELD (501c3) was founded in 2018 to support these needs of local veterans and first responders.

Unfortunately, there are many barriers to accessing services for these very important members of our community. Some of these barriers are:

- The build-up of cumulative stress can be gradual and go unrecognized, consequently individuals don't seek help until conditions become severe.
- Cultures that encourage "sucking it up" and discourage seeking help.
- Limited local resources and overly bureaucratic approval processes. Some individuals successfully access VA services or utilize private insurance or Medicaid, but many in Central Oregon do not.
- Minimal or no coverage for prevention. Individuals often do not qualify for coverage unless (until) their symptoms are extreme enough for a diagnosis such as PTSD, addiction, etc. Consequently, early intervention is not available for these individuals and their destructive symptoms continue to increase in number and severity.
- Confidentiality concerns.

THE SHIELD bypasses these and other barriers, providing services from specially trained providers to veterans and first responders quickly and with 100 percent confidentiality, at no cost to the individuals. THE SHIELD has only two criteria for accessing services: 1) The individual is a veteran or first responder. 2) The individual requests services. This approach allows THE SHIELD to provide timely support to these individuals before their symptoms become severe, possibly preventing destructive consequences for the individuals, their families and the community.

THE SHIELD (501c3) is funded entirely by donations, grants and volunteers, and has been providing services since early 2018. Currently, THE SHIELD is reaching out in collaboration with other community resources including the Central Oregon Veterans Council, Central Oregon Suicide Prevention Alliance, St. Charles, and others.

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