

# Joliet Firefighters Peer Support Group

## Annual Report 2022



2022



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## Welcome

Welcome to the 2022 Joliet Firefighters Peer Support Group (JFPSG) annual report. Again, we have made great strides over the last 12 months. This report will describe group usage statistics and other activities. We are proud to serve the Joliet Fire Department and the community and look forward to a productive 2023.

## Strategy

We established the Joliet Firefighters Peer Support Group (JFPSG) in September 2019 with the support of IAFF Locals 44 and 2369 and generous funding from the Joliet Foreign Fire Tax Board. We have steadily grown in scope and hands-on involvement since then. We continue to serve our firefighters, retirees, families, and now citizens in times of need.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality is critical to a successful peer support program. We are immensely proud to report that since our inception in 2019, the JFPSG has not recorded a single breach of confidentiality complaint. We have helped many firefighters and have proven that the JFPSG takes privacy and confidentiality seriously and will continue to do so.

## Looking Ahead

The JFPSG looks forward to continued growth and development in 2023 to fulfill our mission. We are committed to the well-being of Joliet Firefighters, retirees, and their families and promoting new and creative ways to enhance wellness within the JFD family and the City of Joliet.

## Operations

In addition to our work with the citywide mental health program (see 2022 goals), throughout 2022, the JFPSG has provided peer support aid and offered outreach to several firefighters after critical incidents. We had 19 documented individual contacts in 2022, resulting from 11 events. Of the 19 contacts, 6 were referred to our chaplain or clinicians. We also appear as a resource on the Illinois Association of Retired Firefighters website and have had over 2,500 visits to our website.

Thankfully, we have been permitted by the JFD administration to present our program to all new hires since the program began. We thank those who have supported our mission and made use of our group for trusting us to be part of their career journey.

**John Lukancic, CCISM**  
**Joliet Firefighters Peer Support Group Coordinator**  
**February 1, 2023**  
**Jfdpeersupport.com**  
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## Vision Statement

A Fire Department where all Joliet Firefighters and their families are holistically cared for by their peer group regarding all forms of mental and emotional health.



## Mission Statement

The Joliet Firefighter Peer Support Group believes that the path to Joliet Firefighter mental and emotional health begins with firefighters, clinicians, clergy, religious, and public officials working together to provide support, education, and connection to resources to our firefighters, retirees, and their families. The public can depend on firefighters. Firefighters can depend on their peer support group.





## Our Partners

In addition to the Joliet Fire Department, the JFPSG has accepted the aid of expert partners from the Aspire Center for Positive Change, the Upper Room Crisis Hotline, the Franciscan Friars, Province of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and Sage Bodywork & Wellness to promote our mission to provide quality resources for mental, spiritual, and physical wellness.

### Joliet Fire Department (815) 724-3500

The Joliet Fire Department has been incredibly supportive of our efforts to continue the growth of this group. Special thanks to Chief Jeff Carey, Battalion Chief of EMS Aaron Kozlowski, and all the men and women of the JFD for their support and trust.



### Aspire Center for Positive Change: (815) 353-3339

The mental health professionals at Aspire Center for Positive Change have been invaluable since our founding in 2019. Their group consists of several crisis counselors and social workers. Our contacts are Courtney Doyle-O'Brien, LCPC; Nancy Nelson, LCSW; and Carissa Silunas, MSW.



## **The Upper Room Crisis Hotline (888) 808-8724**

The Upper Room Crisis Hotline is a 24/7 crisis hotline in Joliet. They consist of volunteer personnel trained in crisis intervention and suicide prevention. The line is headed by Terry Smith, Psy.D., Executive Director, and Sister Mary Frances Seeley, OSF, Ph.D., Suicidologist, and founder. The Upper Room has been instrumental in the JFPG's development and growth since our inception.



## **Sage Bodywork & Wellness (779) 205-8055**

Sage Bodywork & Wellness is located at 10 N. Fairlane Dr., Unit 103 in Joliet, and offers numerous programs for Joliet firefighters, retirees, and their families. The special offers to firefighters and families include free yoga and meditation classes and discounted massage rates.



## **2022 Goals Achieved**

- Train all firefighters in Crisis First Aid for Paramedics (CFA-P)

The JFD and JFPG continued to develop the CFA-P program and performed alpha and beta testing at the beginning of 2022. Beginning in the spring, the entire JFD participated in training to become educated in CFA-P. All members of the JFD completed the course.

The training and testing were completed in June 2022. Throughout the remainder of 2022, the members of the JFD have performed CFA-P with hundreds of patients and bystanders at traumatic stress incidents.

- Help implement the 988 Crisis System/Help develop and implement the Joliet Model

The JFPSG spent a substantial portion of 2022 helping the JFD design and implement the Joliet Community Mental Health Program.

- Continue meeting with area schools

Representatives from the JFPSG attended several meetings with area schools regarding mental health and suicide. These included Joliet Grade schools District 86, Joliet High schools District 204, Plainfield Consolidated School District 30C, Joliet Catholic Academy, the Diocese of Joliet Grade Schools, the University of St. Francis, and Joliet Junior College.

- Complete monthly training with JFD

2022 was a hectic year for mental health training in the JFD. Over 200 members were trained and tested in Crisis First Aid for Paramedics, which took over five months to complete.

## Group Highlights

Once again, 2022 was a very eventful year for the JFPSG. In addition to providing "fast attack" services after critical incidents by responding directly to the fire stations post-event and providing follow-up, there are several highlights to mention. They will be covered more specifically in the following sections.

1. Overall Use
2. JFD Training
3. Upper Room Crisis Hotline Operator First Responder Training
4. FYRE Program for Recruits
5. Firefighter Fitness Challenge Sponsorship
6. City of Joliet Community Mental Health development with JFD
7. 2023 Goals



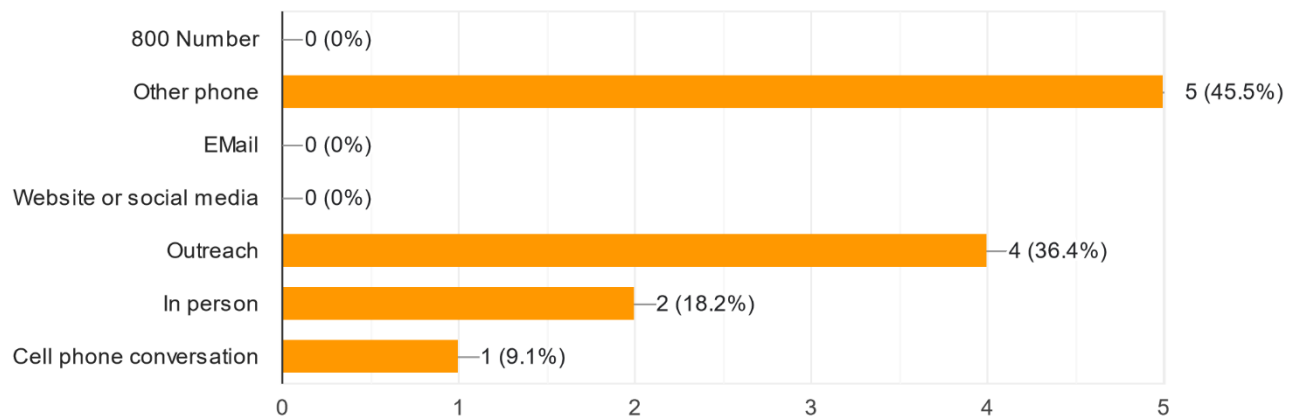
## Group Usage 2022

2022: 19 individual interactions (down 40% from 2021)

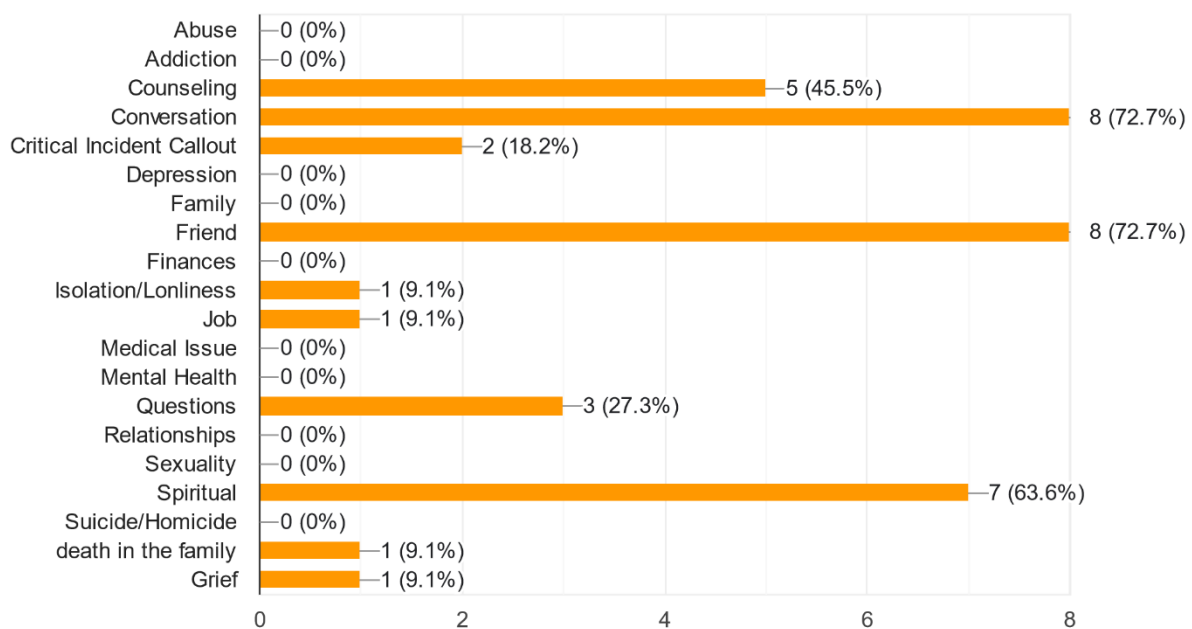
2021: 32 individual interactions (down 30% from 2020)

2020: 48 individual interactions (First full year of data)

### Method of Contact



### Problems



## JFD Training

In the first half of 2022, the JFPSG was busy providing Crisis First Aid for Paramedics practical and written examinations to firefighters.

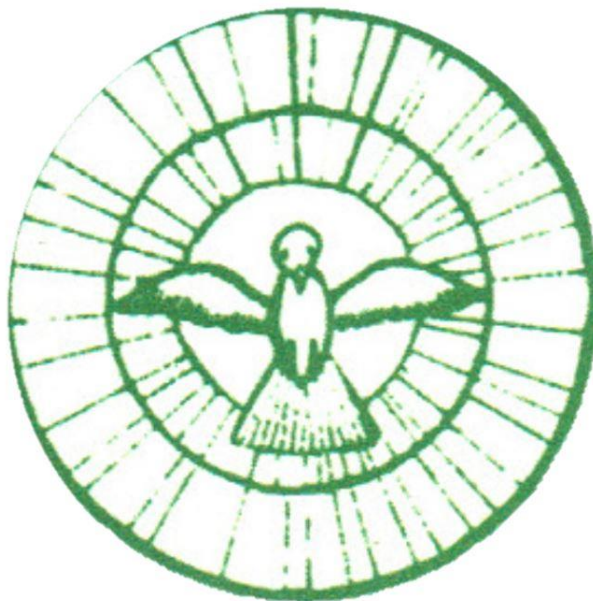
We should note that there were no firefighter calls for support to the JFPSG after the CFA-P training ended in July. Since it was founded, this was the program's intent - to train all firefighters to be peer supporters. Hopefully, members learned how to communicate better in the station and may not have needed the JFPSG.



## Upper Room Crisis Hotline Operator First Responder Training

The Upper Room Crisis Hotline is a 24/7 crisis hotline that operates in the Catholic Tradition out of Joliet. The Upper Room is an all-volunteer group of personnel trained in crisis intervention and suicide prevention. The line is headed by Terry Smith, Psy.D., Executive Director, and Mary Frances Seeley, OSF, Ph.D., Suicidologist, founder, and JFPSG member. The line receives thousands of calls annually from all over the world and has operators in two countries.

The JFPSG was asked to instruct new operators to the Hotline regarding first responder culture and likely trends in behavioral health for this group. The class took place via Zoom on October 27th and was a component of a more extensive course that included clinical care practitioners from the Will County Sheriff's Office.



## FYRE Program

The FYRE (First Year Recruit/Retirement Experience) program continued in 2022. All new hires were assigned a peer with whom to make contact every month during their first year. The FYRE Program concept is modeled after the Sunshine Program established by the Upper Room Crisis Hotline in Joliet, Illinois, created by Sr. Mary Frances Seeley, Ph.D. The JFPSG understands that peer support must always be available for firefighters, regardless of their career stage. There are, however, two critical periods when they may need extra, more focused support. These times include the first year after hire and the time leading up to and through the first year of retirement. In addition to the standard services that the JFPSG provides, we provide this extra support for these two groups. We refer to this program as the FYRE Program. The program has two modules, the recruit module, and the retiree module. Both include an assigned peer supporter with whom the recruit or retiree may have regular, confidential contact. Captain James Boyd manages the program.



### Firefighter Fitness Challenge: FIT-4-DUTY

The JFPSG once again sponsored the Firefighter Fitness Challenge, organized by Battalion Chief James Ryan. The competition was held on June 3rd at ATI Stadium ATI Field at Joliet Memorial Stadium.





## **Crisis First Aid for Paramedics (CFA-P) Course**

### **City of Joliet Community Mental Health with JFD**

Since its inception, one of the primary goals of the JFPSG has been to train all firefighters in psychological first aid (PFA) to help one another. Due to the length of the program, the JFPSG designed a program specifically for paramedics, using existing education and training to shorten the course [Crisis First Aid for Paramedics (CFA-P)]. The program was taught in 2022 as part of a larger JFD mental health initiative headed by Chief Jeff Carey and Battalion Chief of EMS Aaron Kozlowski. All firefighters were asked to be part of the program design and give ideas and feedback.

All JFD active firefighters (excluding those new firefighters who require training) may now be considered peer supporters.



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## Goals for 2023

- Train new firefighters in Crisis First Aid for Paramedics (CFA-P)
- Continue to develop the Community Mental health Program
- Continue meeting with area schools
- Complete monthly training with JFD
- Complete in-person quarterly training with the JFD
- Perform outreach to retirees
- Re-institute monthly newsletter

*We look forward to a productive and helpful 2023 and value the support and trust of the entire Joliet Fire Department Family.*



# Joliet Firefighters Peer Support Group

## Peer Support Members & Contacts

  Active
   Retiree
   Clergy/Religious
   Clinician
   Suicidologist
   Elected Official/Spouse

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The Joliet Firefighters Peer Support Group Toll-Free Number:

**CALL (855) JFD-PEER**