



**COVID-19 MENTAL HEALTH
AND
ADDICTION RESOURCES
FOR FIRST RESPONDERS
AND THEIR SPOUSES**

How Has COVID-19 Impacted First Responders?

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased stress for first responders, making it more apparent than ever the need to focus on the mental health impacts of their work.

A study was done on health care workers and first responders determined that the pandemic has caused them higher occupational stress and has decreased their likelihood of staying in their current field.

The study concluded that prioritizing the treatment and prevention of both insomnia and PTSD symptoms was important for protecting workplace functioning.

Study:

[Link Here](#)

First-responders have been forced to keep up with constantly changing practices in response to the pandemic. In what was already a high-pressure, high-risk environment, they have had to adapt to a completely new way of doing their jobs — donning full PPE with each encounter to protect them from the heightened risk of contracting COVID-19.

It benefits all of us to support a proactive approach to mental health and wellness for these essential workers because while they're helping us, we must ensure that they, too, are being supported.

A survey was conducted with 151 first responders and their spouses in April 2021. The goal of the survey was to come up with workshops, resources, and connections for First Responders and their partners to access to assist them in navigating this unique lifestyle.

Grief & Loss

Many first responders and their spouses deal with grief and loss more often than the average civilian. With the added stress of COVID-19, it is important to deal with these emotions and have the ability and resources to do so.

Resources:

AHS crisis and distress line:

Edmonton 780-482-4357

Calgary 403-266-HELP (4357)

Online Chat: [AHS Crisis and Distress Line](#)

AHS Helpline

1-877-303-2642

Benoit Wellness Consulting

[Benoit Wellness Consulting](#)

Grief and Loss During a Pandemic

[Grief and Loss During a Pandemic](#)

Grief and Loss Resources [Grief and Loss Resources](#)

Grief and Trauma Healing Center

[Grief and Trauma Healing Center](#) or 17802888011

Anger Management

Many first responders deal with PTSD which has a direct correlation to anger, so it's important for first responders, as well as their spouses to recognize this, and learn to deal with it, especially with the added stress and long working hours due to Covid-19

Resources:

Family Violence Information Line Alberta

310-1818

Bullying Hotline

1-888-4562323

Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-387-5437

Feeling Angry

[Feeling Angry](#)

1-877-303-2642

Mental Health Commissions Canada

[Mental Health Commissions Canada](#)

Anger Management and First Responders

[Anger Management and First Responders](#)

Dr. Trevor Wilkins - Online Resource

[Dr. Trevor Wilkins](#)

Passion & Purpose

First responders often become consumed by their work especially with the longer hours brought upon by Covid-19. Their need for the job results in them having little time for anything else, including their spouse at times. The trick is to balance your passion and purpose.

Resources:

Keeping your passion through adversity

[Keeping your Passion Through Adversity](#)

Finding your purpose in life [Finding your Purpose in Life](#)

How to keep going when your purpose makes you upset [How to Keep Going When your Purpose Makes you Upset](#)

Lauren Cleveland - Life and Business Coach

[Lauren Cleveland](#)

Ikigai - Finding Purpose

[Ikigai](#)

Richard Leider - Guide to Unlocking your Purpose

[Richard Leider](#)

Parenting

First responders are constantly exposed to dangerous situations, it's a constant worry and stress on both parent and child, as neither knows when their time may be cut short. Parents often bring home their stresses and worries, and their kids, whether big or small, will feel that and take on responsibility for it, especially during the pandemic due to the increased time at home.

Resources:

Kids Help Phone

1-800-668-6868

Children's Legal and Educational Resource Center 403-207-9029

Connecteen Hotline

403-264-TEEN (8336)

[Connection Hotline](#)

Parenting Through the Pandemic

[Parenting Through the Pandemic](#)

Mental Health Commission of Canada

[Mental Health Commission of Canada](#)

Badge of Life Canada

[Badge of Life Canada](#)

Wounded Warriors Kids Camp

[Wounded Warriors Kids Camp](#)

Finances

Studies have shown that individuals dealing with high amounts of stress and anxiety are three times as likely to be in debt. Emergency responders are almost always put in high-stress conditions, which has increased since Covid-19. They have no patience or time to look through their financial situation, which often results in it falling on their spouse.

Resources:

Financial Literacy for First Responders

[Financial Literacy for First Responders](#)

Veteran Affairs

1-866-522-2122

Managing Finances During COVID-19

[Managing Finances During COVID-19](#)

Benoit Wellness Consulting

[Benoit Wellness Consulting](#)

Get the Hell Out of Debt

[Get the Hell out of Debt](#)

Credit Counseling Society

[Alberta](#)

1-888-527-8999

Sleep

For first responders sleep can be a difficult thing. Often First Responders won't work just four or eight hour shifts, but twelve or longer due to COVID-19. There will also often be times where they will have to respond to a dangerous situation at a moment's notice. Without sleep this can cause slower reaction time, a diminished focus, and impact on their patients as well.

Resources:

National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project (first responders)

[National Healthy Sleep Awareness Project](#)

First Responders and Sleep

[First Responders and Sleep](#)

Sleep culture

[Sleep Culture](#)

Seize the Night & Day

[Seize the Night & Day](#)

Fatigue Risk Management for First Responders

[Fatigue Risk Management for First Responders](#)

Addictions

First responders deal with tragedy on a daily basis, and without the proper coping mechanisms, alcohol and drugs are the easy & quick fix. With the added stress of Covid-19, it can take away the time and energy to deal with the addictions, allowing them to become harder to get rid of.

Resources:

Addiction Helpline

1-866-332-2322

Alberta Detox

[Alberta Detox](#)

Dealing with Addiction in First Responders

[Dealing with Addiction in First Responders](#)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services](#)

Richard Luykenaar

[Richard Luykenaar](#)

Homewood Health

[Homewood Health](#)

Edgewood Health

[Edgewood EHN Canada](#)

Recovery

In recovery first responder's and their spouses need to use positive coping methods which consist of taking breaks, eating healthy, exercising, and using the buddy system. These methods can help prevent and reduce burnout and secondary trauma stress especially while the stress of COVID-19 is still predominant.

Resources:

Addiction Alberta Directory

[Addiction Alberta Directory](#)

Recovery Coaches Alberta

[Recovery Alberta Directory](#)

Families for Addiction Recovery

[Families for Addiction Recovery](#)

Aurora Recovery Center

[Aurora Recovery Center](#)

Wellness Together Canada

1-866-585-0445

Homewood Health

Edmonton contact: call 780-809-5004 or 1-866-978-4915 Calgary contact:
call 403-768-3199 or 1-866-492-6832

[Homewood Health](#)

Additional Resources

YOU ResponderStrong

A digital platform designed to support the mental health of emergency responders and their families.

It also provides a resource for educational content.

Link: [Responder Strong](#)

The Mental Health Commission of Canada

Creates programs and tools for the mental health of all Canadians. They also run a program through The Working Mind First Responders offers three courses aimed at helping First Responders and their mental health.

Link: [Mental Health Commission](#)

The Canada Suicide Prevention Line

Helps Canadians who are struggling to find support and resources in their area. They help both those who are suicidal and those who have lost someone to suicide.

[Canada Suicide Prevention Service](#)

Legacy Place Society

Legacy Place Society provides confidential and empathetic support to the individuals and families of law enforcement, emergency medical/fire services, 911 dispatch, veterans and military personnel.

This includes a confidential response by telephone (403-201-9945) for facilitating connection to professional and peer support;

Provision of confidential and safe transitional housing for their well-being, security and access to professional support that allows recovery from a broad range of serious difficulties;

Education partnerships to increase knowledge, reduce stigma and enable networking thru mental wellness and suicide awareness workshops/conferences and family camp.

Link: [Legacy Place](#)

Badge of Life Canada

Helps first responders and their families who are suffering from the effects of operational stress. They also include peer support meetings through Zoom, and offer group programs for both active and retired personnel.

Link: [Badge of Life Canada](#)

First Response Mental Health

Offers PeerConnect which is a peer support and wellness app. The app gives first responders access to resources, self-assessment tools, and a proactive peer management tool.

Link: [First Response Mental Health](#)

First Responders First

Offers a PTSD resource toolkit as well as resources and services for First Responders suffering from occupational stress. The toolkit includes an assessment, action plan, and PTSD prevention plan.

Link: [First Responders First](#)

Centre for Suicide Prevention

An education centre who offers events and workshops. Each workshop is designed to help both those who are suffering and those who want to educate themselves on potential warning signs and intervention.

Link: [Centre for Suicide Prevention](#)

Wired Differently Canada

Helps veterans and former first responders who suffer from mental illness. They are a group who connect through groups and throughout COVID-19 have maintained coffee meetings.

Link: [Wired Differently Canada](#)

After the Call

Offers free tools to help develop mental wellness in First Responders. These tools include podcasts, presentations, consultations, and articles.

Link: [After the Call](#)

Boots on the Ground

An anonymous peer support helpline for First Responders. They are a volunteer run organization available 24/7.

Link: [Boots on the Ground](#)

Alberta Critical Incident Stress Management

A peer driven support network for First Responders. Its purpose is to help build psychological resistance and resilience to occupational stress.

Link: [Alberta Critical Incident Stress Management](#)

True Patriot Love

An organization who supports military members, veterans, and their families by raising awareness of the career path. They help with well-being, rehabilitation, community re-integration, and assist families of military personnel.

Link: [True Patriot Love](#)

Formation

A health care lifestyle brand created to provide resources and mental health support for health care workers. They also offer events such as peer support sessions, webinars on mental health, and online sessions.

Link: [Formation](#)

OSI-CAN

A peer support group for First Responders in Alberta offering an open and safe environment to discuss mental health. They also offer support for family, service dogs, and referrals to equine therapy programs.

Link: [OSI-CAN](#)

Sea to Sea for PTSD

Our goals are to promote Mental Wellness amongst Emergency Service and Military Communities. along with raising funds to assist established programs so that they, in turn, may help those who need help.

Link: [Sea to Sea for PTSD](#)

Beyond the Blue Calgary

Calgary Beyond The Blue is an independent, peer-led, non-profit organization with the support of the Calgary Police Service and the Calgary Police Association, dedicated to serving the spouses, common law partners & family members of Calgary police officers. We strive to promote an awareness of our officer's worth as well as an understanding of the joys and struggles that are

uniquely experienced in life in law enforcement.

Link: [Beyond the Blue Calgary](#)

Can Praxis

Can Praxis is the leading Equine-Assisted Therapy provider for the Veteran and First Responder communities. We help Veterans, First Responders (serving and retired) and their families living with Operational Stress Injuries (OSI).

Link: [Can Praxis](#)

Crisis Support: 811

Distress Center: 403-226-HELP (4357)

Suicide Support: 1-800-Suicide (784-3433)

Mental Health Hotline: 1-800-303-2642

Canada Wide Crisis Text Line: 741741 (Brave)

Alberta Support Hotline: 211

To Serve and Connect Society of Canada.

Our organization's mandate is to offer a safe space for connection and support, resources and engagement opportunities for First Responders and their families.

The organization's programs and activities provide opportunities for first responders and their families to manage the demands of their jobs while living a fulfilled life, as well as, providing a support network that empowers individuals to overcome their hurdles and challenges.

Link: [To Serve and Connect Society of Canada](#)