



Promoting wellness and recovery

Mike DeWine, Governor
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[First Responder Liaison](#)

Ohio First Responders stand ready to protect, defend and provide life-saving services to the citizens of the State of Ohio, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Often, this can put them at risk, both physically and mentally. Ohio Mental Health & Addiction Services has always supported our first responders. In December of 2018, OMHAS created the position of **First Responder Liaison**. Steve Click is the staff lead.

Steve retired after 36 years with the Ohio State Highway Patrol. During the last 2 ½ years of service with the Patrol, he served as the Commander of the Ohio *ASSIST* program which provides pre-critical incident training and post-critical incident aftercare for first responders and their support persons. Steve has been active in peer support since 1993 and was twice deployed to New York City after the 9/11 attacks to work with the NYPD peer support team. In 2002, he helped create the first peer support program for the Ohio State Highway Patrol and oversaw the program until his retirement in 2018. Steve is trained in CISM and is ICISF trained for group and individual response. Steve serves as a resource to first responders, their agencies, the mental health community as well as being a resource for OMHAS in assisting this population.

Ohio ASSIST

- Ohio *ASSIST* is a partnership between the Ohio State Highway Patrol and OhioMHAS
- Ohio *ASSIST* is a three-day Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS) for Ohio First Responders (Law enforcement, fire / EMS, dispatch and local corrections) at no cost to the agency or the individual.
- **PCIS is best described as participant driven, peer facilitated, and clinician supported.**
- Ohio has held 7 PCIS with 200 first responders and support persons having attended since 2017.
- Ohio *ASSIST* partners with 9 other states, sharing peers and resources for PCIS in these states.
- PCIS gives participants the chance to talk about their trauma and the effects it has had on them, their families, their agency and their communities
- Participants are given the opportunity to meet with clinicians, familiar with public safety in a one-on-one environment to discuss any issues or concerns they have.
- Participants meet in small groups to have conversations with other first responders who have been involved in similar incidents. This allows them to see that they are not alone in their issues and concerns and that they are having a normal reaction to an abnormal circumstance for them, right then.
- Peers, who have received training from the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) and have also been participants themselves, are utilized to support the participants.

- Peers come from agencies all over the state including state, county and municipal public safety as well as spouses and professional staff.
- A licensed and certified clinician serves as the clinical director to oversee the mental health aspects of the program.

Crisis Awareness Training

Provides first responder participants examples of physical and emotional signs that a co-worker, family member, friend or the employee themselves may be in crisis after a traumatic event. This course gives some possible signs and symptoms as well as techniques to help someone who may benefit from assistance. Issues discussed include; physical, cognitive and emotional responses to trauma, alcohol / drug issues, techniques and strategies for working through the effects of a traumatic incident. A considerable amount of time is focused on addiction and addiction related issues and how they affect public safety personnel.

“After the Call” Training

“After the Call” was created to provide administrators with ideas, concepts and techniques they might use to help themselves during a critical or traumatic incident. It’s important for officers to know that, just like the rest of their agency, they are having a normal reaction to an abnormal circumstance. It’s not only ok to ask for assistance, it will help ensure that they are able to provide the guidance and oversight to help their agency and personnel work through the aftermath to be stronger.

QPR; Question. Persuade. Refer. First Responder Suicide Awareness and Prevention

Each year, the number of First Responder Suicides for First Responders and Fire / EMS exceed line-of-duty deaths.

There are very few incidents more devastating to an agency than the suicide of a member of that agency, sworn or civilian. In addition to some of the same effects of a line of duty or accidental death, the added issues of guilt, anger, helplessness only add to the traumatic effects felt by the surviving members of the agency. Public safety personnel help others, and when these incidents happen to people they know, first responders are often very reluctant to ask for help they might genuinely need. As a culture, first responders take on the unrealistic burden of being responsible for the actions of others or the first responders’ failure to anticipate those actions and provide answers and solutions.

The QPR awareness course provides tools and techniques to help first responders themselves, their co-workers or the public.

Supervisors, co-workers and friends often feel they should have known how the person was feeling, that they needed help and can also feel angry at the person, which often leads to a vicious cycle of guilt and anger. They feel they could have stopped the person from their actions and that they must have “missed something”, when the reality is that they may not have missed a thing and they also may have had no bearing on the outcome.