

A popular theme that has repeatedly surfaced at Medic is the need for additional options for employee support regarding stress management. We see and hear a lot in our line of work that most people never deal with on a regular basis. First responders—paramedics, EMTs, firefighters, police—are considered to be at greater risk for Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) than most other occupations. This is because their everyday duties routinely encounter “traumatic stressors” (Haugen, 2012, p.370). Some researchers believe that experiencing PTSD is also a high risk factor for subsequent suicidal behaviors (Sareen, et al., 2007). Our current EAP has proven to be beneficial in many areas, but employees report they are hesitant to contact EAP regarding call related stress because “they are not in our line of work” and “do not understand EMS.”

If we recognize an employee who seems to be having a difficult time with a call or a particular series of calls, we have identified the following resources; these are not meant to take the place of EAP but instead meant to be additional options for employees. All of these services have the ability to work with the employee to get through the immediate crisis and provide referrals to local counselors as needed.

Utilizing an identical survey (attached) for Safe Call Now, Share the Load, and Serve & Protect, we asked employees to call the three resources and then complete the survey. We tested these services with two small groups of employees and received at least three surveys for each provider. All of the completed surveys provided positive feedback about ease of contacting, ability of the call taker to understand EMS, make a personal connection and provide appropriate level of support, per the caller.

Please consider these tools and offer them to our employees when helping an employee cope with a difficult incident, or stress in general. All of the web links should take you directly to the page you need for contact info and additional resources.

Safe Call Now

Website: <https://www.safecallnow.org/>

Phone number: 206-459-3020

About: Safe Call Now was established in April of 2009 in the hopes that no other officer, first responder or public safety employee should have to walk through a crisis alone. Spearheaded by Lt. Governor Brad Owen of the State of Washington, Congressman Dave Reichert and Gil Kerlikowski, former drug Czar for President Obama, legislation was passed in Washington State that protects all first responders nationwide, civilian support staff and their family members with a confidentiality guarantee if they come forward and ask for help.

Safe Call Now provides public safety employees, all emergency services personnel and their family members nationwide with a simple and confidential way to ask for help. Staffed by officers, former law enforcement officers and public safety professionals, Safe Call Now is a safe place to turn to get help from individuals who understand the demands of a law enforcement career. These trained peer advocates will provide assistance and referrals for any public safety personnel and their families who are experiencing an emotional crisis or desire a need for someone to listen. Safe Call Now is also a registered 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization and is not funded at the state or federal levels.

Share the Load

Website: <http://www.nvfc.org/programs/share-the-load-program/>

Phone number: 1-888-731-FIRE (3473)

About: The Fire/EMS Helpline was developed by fire service veterans Mike Blackburn and Mike Healy. Based on their own professional and personal experiences, both recognized the need for firefighters to be able to reach out to other firefighters when they need help. The Fire/EMS Helpline allows firefighters, EMTs, and their families to talk to trained professionals that understand what they are going through and who can relate to the special needs of the fire and emergency services. *(This has also been tested by employees and received positive feedback for those who were able to*

reach a counselor. We did have some technical difficulties due to a bad web link but that has been corrected with the link above.)

Serve & Protect (Important note: This service subs out their crisis counseling to Safe Call Now but they do offer chaplain services. We think some people would ultimately like to have this as an option too.)

Website: www.serveprotect.org

Phone for chaplain: 615-373-8000

About: Founded by Robert Michaels, who served with the 229th Military Police Battalion VANG, and Norfolk Police on patrol and as a detective, we provide services with a boots on the ground understanding of the job. Michaels serves as Chaplain for the FBI Memphis Division, State Chaplain for the TN FOP State Lodge, and 2nd VP for Morris Heithcock FOP Lodge 41, TN.

(One employee chose to contact this service during our testing and it also received positive feedback)

Mobile Crisis Team

Website: <https://www.thesantegroup.org/>

Phone number: 704-566-3410 (opt.1)

About: The Mobile Crisis Team (MCT) provides residents of Mecklenburg County who are experiencing a mental health crisis assistance and access to supportive community resources. MCT is dispatched to provide emergency crisis assessments, immediate intervention for family crises, interventions for parents and children. MCT dispatch offers a new alternative to individuals that may eliminate a visit to a psychiatric ER. MCT is available 24 hours/day, 365 days/year.

EAP

Website: <https://www.theeap.com/public-safety-eap>

Phone number: 1-888-327-1060

About: The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free support service that is available to employees and their household members. The EAP is completely confidential and provides access to a panel of clinicians and professional resources nationwide. The EAP can help with personal or work related problems. These include relationships between a co-worker or spouse, marriage or divorce, life challenges, and depression/anxiety. 90% of Employee Assistance Program cases are resolved within the program. You will be assigned a Care Coordinator that will follow your case from the initial phone call through case closing. The EAP offers unlimited telephone access 24/7, telephone assessments, face-to-face sessions, and expert advice.

For additional assistance, please reach out to:

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