

Being Your Own First Responder: A Training to Identify and Respond to Mental Health

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Abstract : In 2022, the Ohio Peace Officer Training Council and the Attorney General required officers to complete a minimum of 24 hours of continued professional training for the year. Much of the training was based on Mental Health or similarly related topics. This includes Officer Wellness and Officer Mental Health. It is becoming clearer that the stigma of Officer / First Responder Mental Health is a topic that is becoming more prevalently faced. To assist officers and first responders in facing mental health issues, we are developing new training. This training will aid in recognizing mental health-related issues in officers/first responders and citizens, as well as further using the same information to better respond and interact with one another and the public. In general, society has many varying views of mental health, much of which is largely oversensationalized by television, movies, and other forms of entertainment. There has also been a stigma in law enforcement / first responders related to mental health and being weak as a result of on-the-job-related trauma-induced struggles. It is our hope this new training will assist officers and first responders in not only positively facing and addressing their mental health but using their own experience and education to recognize signs and symptoms of mental health within individuals in the community. Further, we hope that through this recognition, officers and first responders can use their experiences and more in-depth understanding to better interact within the field and with the public. Through recognition and better understanding of mental health issues and more positive interaction with the public, additional achievements are likely to result. This includes in the removal of bias and stigma for everyone.

Keywords : law enforcement, mental health, officer related mental health, trauma

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