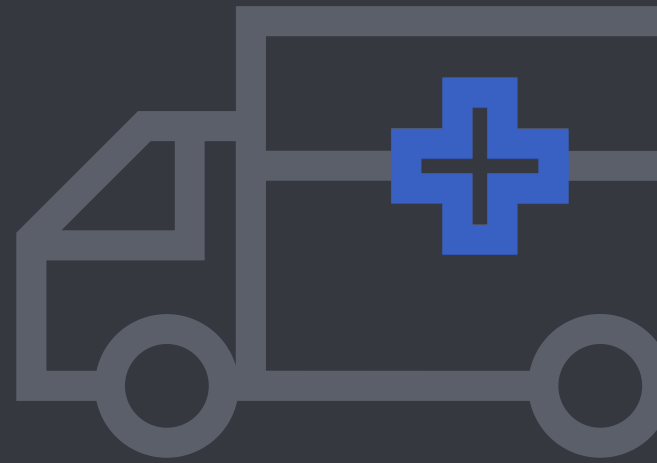


# FIRST RESPONDER MENTAL HEALTH:

## Breaking the Stigma



Given the nature of their jobs, first responders are repeatedly exposed to danger, violence, trauma, and grief. While mental health challenges are common for first responders, seeking help is not because of the enduring cultural perception that getting help is a sign of weakness. But there is hope. We're starting to break down the stigma that prevents so many in need from getting support.

## HOW COMMON ARE MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES FOR FIRST RESPONDERS?



85% experience symptoms related to a mental health issue<sup>1</sup>

Depression and PTSD are up to

5x

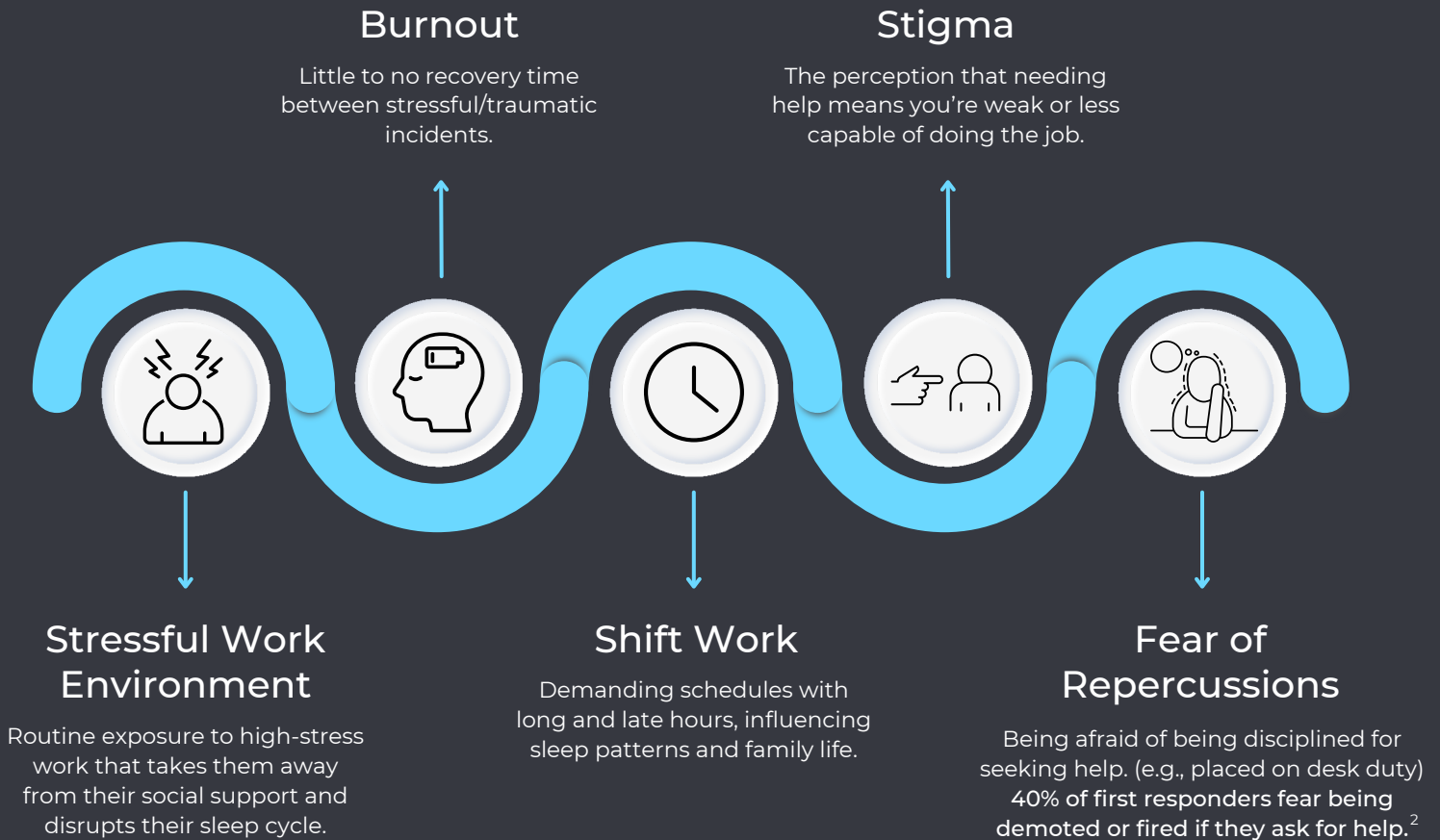
more common<sup>2</sup>

3x

more likely to suffer from substance use disorder<sup>3</sup>

First responders are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty.<sup>1</sup>

# WHAT ARE THE CAUSES?



# WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO

- 1** Normalize mental health-related conversations and model self-care.  
**70% of first responders are more likely to seek help if leadership speaks openly about mental health.<sup>2</sup>**
- 2** Establish peer support programs and offer training so co-workers can effectively support each other.  
**80% of first responders are more likely to seek help if a close colleague spoke openly about mental health.<sup>2</sup>**
- 3** Encourage staff debriefings after traumatic incidents, and provide consistent follow-up in the weeks afterward.
- 4** Provide easily accessible, confidential mental health resources and promote engagement.
- 5** Offer training that helps staff recognize warning signs and teaches them how to approach peers or family members with effective support.
- 6** Offer skills-based training on coping mechanisms and reiterate the importance of healthy strategies.

1. [https://rudermanfoundation.org/white\\_papers/police-officers-and-firefighters-are-more-likely-to-die-by-suicide-than-in-line-of-duty/](https://rudermanfoundation.org/white_papers/police-officers-and-firefighters-are-more-likely-to-die-by-suicide-than-in-line-of-duty/)

2. <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20170420006384/en/University-of-Phoenix-Survey-Finds-Majority-of-First-Responders-Have-Experienced-Symptoms-Related-to-Mental-Health-Issues>

3. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sure-recovery/201803/police-and-addictio>

# RESOURCES FOR FIRST RESPONDER MENTAL HEALTH:

## 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988 for free, confidential support if you or a loved one is in immediate danger.

## Firefighter Behavioral Health Alliance

[www.ffbha.org](http://www.ffbha.org). Confidential behavioral health resources for firefighters.

## Responder Health

[www.responderhealth.com](http://www.responderhealth.com). Community resources for first responders by first responders. Responder Health includes a confidential hotline, concierge services for first responders in need, and online wellness training.

## Safe Call Now

[www.safecallnowusa.org](http://www.safecallnowusa.org) or 206-249-3020. Confidential 24-hour support for all first responders and their families that provides mental health education and support.

## NAMI

[www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Frontline-Professionals/Public-Safety-Professionals](http://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Frontline-Professionals/Public-Safety-Professionals). The National Alliance on Mental Illness has information on when to reach out for a mental health issue, peer support resources, and tips for building resilience.

## US Department of Justice Officer Safety and Wellness Resources

[www.justice.gov/asg/officer-safety-and-wellness-resources#mental](http://www.justice.gov/asg/officer-safety-and-wellness-resources#mental). This site provides a collection of resources including articles, podcasts, infographics, trainings, webinars, and other publications produced (mainly by the COPS Office and Bureau of Justice Assistance) addressing various aspects of law enforcement officer and family wellness from financial literacy to substance use disorders to preventing or recovering from the suicide death of a colleague.



[www.youturnhealth.com](http://www.youturnhealth.com). A virtual treatment program for behavioral health, substance misuse, and suicidal ideation. The program includes confidential online education on topics like stress management, anxiety, substance misuse, and mental health and peer coaching support from former first responders to help you through whatever you're experiencing.