



NAEMT Mental Health Resilience Officer Course

Mental Health Resilience Programs and Services

Agencies can build a culture of wellness and resilience by first recognizing the value of such a culture to their personnel and its impact on the overall effectiveness of their operations. Agencies can offer programs and services to build and strengthen individual, interpersonal, and agency resilience. The following are programs and services that agencies should consider offering:

Employee Assistance Program

An employee assistance program (EAP) with counselors who understand the unique challenges of the EMS industry. Employers need to continually educate employees about EAP services, starting with the fact that counseling is confidential. Reinforce with employees that no reports come back to the organization from the EAP. EAPs should include the following services:

- A health risk assessment (HRA), which may include a self-administered questionnaire about health behaviors and clinical screenings (height, weight, blood pressure, blood glucose, and cholesterol)
- Individual, group, or family mental health counseling
- Education assistance
- Legal help or financial counseling
- Substance use and alcoholism treatment referral
- Weight loss or nutrition coaching
- Stress management programs
- Smoking cessation assistance
- Access to grief counselors

Peer Support Teams

Peer support teams comprised of EMS practitioners who have been trained to provide confidential peer-to-peer support during and after critical events, as well as for the daily challenges faced by EMS practitioners. Peer support teams do not provide therapy; rather, they are available to discuss personal and/or professional problems and current challenges. Peer support encourages practitioners to realize

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they are not alone, have a place to openly discuss vicarious trauma, and process personal and work-related stress.

Comprehensive Wellness Program

A comprehensive wellness program, inclusive of mental health, that addresses the overall health and well-being of EMS practitioners. Prevention-focused programs help EMS personnel build resilience so that they can better cope with stress and other challenges, and which may be protective against depression or anxiety disorders. Psychological well-being and physical well-being are closely intertwined. Getting sufficient exercise, proper nutrition, and adequate sleep has been shown to prevent injuries, fight the development of chronic disease, and boost the mood. Yet long shifts and stressful work conditions all conspire against the physical health of EMS practitioners. EMS agencies can help EMS practitioners by implementing programs that encourage better physical health. EMS agencies can offer a variety of low-cost programs to encourage their personnel to get more physical activity, such as

- Provide an in-house fitness area with weights, exercise equipment, foam rollers, and medicine balls. Keep the area well-maintained to encourage usage.
- Partner with a fitness expert to offer your personnel individualized fitness programs.
- Approach local fitness centers, recreational centers, or YMCAs about offering free or discounted memberships to EMS practitioners. Remind them of the vital role that EMS provides in the community, the challenges EMS practitioners face in keeping fit due to time spent on the road and working long shifts, and how keeping EMS practitioners fit and healthy means they can continue to respond to and focus on patients in need of life-saving medical care.
- Get creative! Invite employees for a group run in a forest preserve or state park or on the beach, or organize a group to participate in a fun run or 5K for charity.
- Good nutrition is also essential and includes eating a diet that contains the vitamins and minerals that fuel the muscles and the brain and helps to maintain a healthy weight. Foster good nutrition habits in your agency by:
 - Keeping a bowl of fresh fruit on hand for employees.



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- Maintaining an employee food pantry, stocked via employee donations. If an employee is having difficulty making ends meet, he or she can confidentially tell a member of the leadership team, who will make the food pantry available.
- Subsidizing the cost of a weight management program.