National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention
Public Safety Sector

Ms. Erin Oehler
Associate Project Director, Secretariat
National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention
Education Development Center
eoehler@edc.org
In Loving Memory

Michael F. White
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“You belong among the wildflowers
You belong somewhere close to me
Far away from your trouble and worry
You belong somewhere you feel free”

Tom Petty
Disclaimer

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Presentation Overview:

- About the Action Alliance
- Public Safety Task Force
- 2019 Public Safety Summit
- What We Need From You
- Discussion / Q&A
WHO WE ARE
The Nation’s Public-Private Partnership

Bringing together influential public and private sector leaders (representing automobile, construction, defense, education, entertainment, faith, forestry, health, insurance, justice, law enforcement, mental health, military, news media, sports, railroad, technology, and veteran services) to advance the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.
Action Alliance’s Priorities

Transforming Health Systems

Transforming Communities

Changing the Conversation
Transforming Community-based Suicide Prevention:  
Public Safety Efforts

To advance suicide prevention in public safety, we:

- **Develop resources** that the public safety sector can use to integrate suicide prevention in the workplace
- **Convene diverse leaders** from public and private sectors to identify public safety needs and solutions
- **Created a Public Safety Task Force** consisting of leaders from across the sector that convenes monthly
What we see

What’s below the surface that we may not see:

- Trauma
- Work stress
- Family stress and issues (e.g., parenting stress, sick parent)
- Other life challenges
- Health issues (e.g., mental illness, other chronic health issues, injury)
- Exhaustion
- Life changes
PUBLIC SAFETY TASK FORCE
Transforming Community-based Suicide Prevention:
Public Safety Task Force

Members of the Public Safety Task Force work together to:

➤ **Strategize and take actionable steps** to increase help-seeking and reduce suicide among the nation’s first responders.

➤ **Close the gaps** in suicide prevention efforts across the public safety sector; and

➤ **Share best practices and challenges** to suicide prevention for public safety professionals.
Transforming Community-based Suicide Prevention:
Public Safety Task Force

Organizations and agencies represented include, but are not limited to:

- Law Enforcement
- Fire Service
- Emergency Medical Services
2019 PUBLIC SAFETY SUMMIT
Public Safety Summit

▶ Held in May 2019 in Washington, DC.
▶ Brought together national leaders from law enforcement, fire service, emergency medical services, research, and health care entities.
Summit Objectives

- **Identify best practices and challenges** around suicide prevention in the public safety sector.
- **Build a shared vision** for a comprehensive, national response to suicide among public safety professionals.
- **Facilitate cross-sector connections** that spark innovative, actionable solutions.
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

**STRENGTHS (+)**
- More focus on mental health and wellness (incoming workforce)
- Increased social connection
- Successful programs exist (IAFF peer support training)

**WEAKNESSES (–)**
- Lack of policy/process around addressing work-related trauma
- Structure and nature of public safety jobs
- Lack of knowledge about what to expect in help-seeking
- Focus on suicide postvention (org./culture/families after suicide loss)
- Rural vs Urban department size issues (capacity for programs, policies, paid vs volunteer staff)
- Gaps within the public safety sector (differences in LE, fire service, EMS, etc.)
- Awareness and training occurring later in career (midstream and downstream, rather than upstream)
- Role of leadership and lack of knowledge

**OPPORTUNITIES (+)**
- Improve communication about what to expect when seeking help
- Engage affinity/national groups at higher level
- Providing consistent tools and resources to individuals
- Build robust family support infrastructure
- Amplify protective factors
- Gather and better understand data around first responder suicide
- Incorporate suicide prevention and resiliency as foundational principle of recruit training (upstream approach)
- Engage state-level suicide prevention coordinators (webinar about public safety sector issues)
- Encourage NVDRS to better identify occupation-specific data
- Fund and develop an intervention toolbox prior to critical incident
- Educate leadership on their role and what to do (create culture of safety, resiliency, hope for help-seeking)

**THREATS (–)**
- Lack of education/understanding of behavioral health professionals of public safety sector culture
- Lack of reliable data on first responder suicide
- No protection/privacy for peer support
- Affordability of technology solutions
1. Educate high-level public safety sector leaders on safe messaging around suicide and suicide prevention
2. Collaborate with American Psychological Association (APA) or others to leverage training for mental health workforce to consider first responder culture competence
3. Mobilize a research review team to collect information on the different first responder crisis lines available; how can we leverage the best, accredited help lines; promote national structure that already exists (1-800-273-8255)
4. Efforts to build mental health and suicide prevention into certifications, trainings, standards, etc. within the sector
5. Develop 10-15 minute training segments that can be incorporated into daily/weekly roll calls, shift changes, meetings, etc.
6. Close gaps/silos across public safety agencies – awareness; serve as community leader; encourage collaboration
7. Catalyze local collaboration (share resources, build connectedness, etc. across urban and rural agencies)
8. Policies/Systems — remove disciplinary action for those seeking help; review national privacy protection policy; best practice models; standards by accreditation organizations around suicide prevention
9. Emphasize humanity of public safety sector and suicide prevention, rather than focus on the “hero” label
SWOT Analysis: Strategy to Action

Identified 3 key areas of focus

- Policy
- Collaboration
- Messaging
Action Step: Policy

- Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute and Action Alliance
  - Conduct landscape analysis of current national policy (e.g., Governor’s and Mayor’s Challenge policy academy)
  - Research accreditation organizations – suicide prevention policies
Action Step: Collaboration

• Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and Action Alliance
  • Work with state and local suicide prevention entities and coordinators on issues around suicide prevention for public safety professionals.
  • Help get Action Alliance’s *Suicide Prevention Competencies for Faith Leaders* resource into the hands of department chaplains.
Action Step: Collaboration

- **Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) and Action Alliance**
  - Work together to expand COPS’ cultural competency training to cover all public safety professionals.
  - Develop tools and resources.
Action Step: Messaging

- Promote positives messages through agencies’ respective channels (social media, trade publications, websites, conference materials, etc.)
- Involve public messengers from public safety organizations (public information officers, public affairs officers, etc.) in safe messaging efforts.
- Develop consistent messaging for the public safety profession
  - Requires—audience audit (who are we messaging to, what is the message we are trying to convey, what is the best channel to convey the message, etc.)
WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU
The Action Alliance requests that the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association/Urban Fire Forum Chiefs:

- Endorse the work of the Action Alliance Public Safety Task Force; and
- Commit to working across the public safety sector to reduce first responder suicide.
DISCUSSION / Q&A