


F R O M	Name & Title	Niles R. Ford, Fire Chief <i>NRF / AM</i>	CITY OF BALTIMORE MEMO	
	Agency Name & Address	Baltimore City Fire Department 401 E. Fayette Street, Mezzanine		
	Subject	City Council Bill #22-0091R – Informational Hearing – The Effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder on First Responders		

TO: The Honorable Nick J. Mosby, President
And All Members of the Baltimore City Council
City Hall, Room 408

DATE: June 27, 2022

The proposed legislation invites the leaders of the City’s public safety agencies to appear before the City Council to discuss how post-traumatic stress symptoms, compassion fatigue, and burnout impact first responders. The resolution also calls on these agencies to inform the council about intervention programs that are currently in place.

The Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD or the Department) has a Peer Support Team (PST) to provide services to members who may need emotional support. Some of the services include;

- A hotline for all members that is anonymous and confidential. The caller can provide their name, but it is not required.
- Links to resources for the member or their family members, including everything from inpatient treatment centers to massage therapists.

In the unfortunate instance of an active member’s death, the PST makes contact and offers resources to the family (partner, spouse, children, parents, etc.). In the case of a line-of-duty death (LODD) the following protocol is followed:

- Full deployment of resources funded via International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF).
- Peer teams and resources deployed from across the region. The deployment consists of 1:1 clinician visits, in-station visits, and dispersion of resource information to the impacted fire station.
- Peer Meetings for personnel in need (group therapy – functions similar to AA/NA), a safe place for members to speak or observe. These groups meet every Wednesday.

The PST meets quarterly (COVID had an impact) and members are offered a variety of free

training opportunities. In July and August of this year, the PST is hosting a two-day training funded by Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland (PFFMD) and IAFF. There are currently 26 members of the PST. Five peer trainers per 24-hour period work the hotline. This allows the members connected to the hotline some flexibility. Providing a 24-hour service is challenging, so the team leader works hard to make sure the team has flexibility to avoid burnout. PST provides regular tips on self-care and prevention.

We see a lot of the collective effects of stress, burnout, and PTSD. The PST would like to build something that aids our members in mitigation methods to prepare them for what they are going to see and ways to prevent the cumulative build-up. Self-care, stress mitigation, education, and prevention strategies would improve mental health for the Department as a whole.

The BCFD also contracts with Business Health Services (BHS), a locally owned and operated Employee Assistance Program provider, to provide all BCFD employees and their household members with access to BHS' "Live Well" program. The Live Well program provides free, confidential, in-the-moment support to employees and their household members with personal or professional issues that arise. When a member or his/her household member contacts BHS, a Care Coordinator (a master's level clinician) confidentially assesses the issue and connects the individual to the appropriate resources. This may include up to five sessions with a counselor, or assistance locating a long-term community resource or treatment provider available through the individual's health insurance plan. The Live Well program may be accessed by call, text, online or via an app. In addition, the Live Well on-line and app resources include information and resources related to PTSD, as well as self-care and prevention tips/methods for our membership.

The Baltimore City Fire Department looks forward to a productive discussion about CC 22-0091R.

NF/kw