



## **Riverside County Suicide Prevention Coalition**

**Quarterly Meeting** <https://youtu.be/iOLzB5pFwI4>

**4/26/2023**

**9:00 am- 11:30 am**

### **I. Welcome**

- Suicide Prevention Coalition Overview by Rebecca Antillon and Diana Gutierrez

### **II. Presenter Paul C. Bearce “Saving Those Who Save Others”**

Mr. Bearce introduced himself as part of the Fire Department, served the community for 25 years, and moved on to an administrative role to help the Fire Fighter do their job better and be safer, share awareness of Suicide/ PTSD prevention, and challenges faced by first responders.

#### **A. New stresses in the Fire Service**

- New Roles & Responsibilities

#### **B. New challenges**

- COVID-19
- New Viruses
- New safety protocol
- New Safety Concerns

#### **C. On their worst day they may witness:**

- Pain and suffering of the sick and injured
- Death of adults and children
- Families and friends of victims who suffer the loss of their loved one
- Wide-spread destruction of property
- People in deep despair

As a Fire Fighter, they had been taught in their academy’s orientation:

- fire attack, fire behavior, ventilation, rescue profiles, and now they’ve added how to seek help when the job becomes overwhelming.
- cultural brainwashing – how it manifests in our departments
- Stigma of asking for help
- Stigma of counselors lacking knowledge about the “job”
- Officer’s/ FF’s lack of training
- Lack of access to counseling services

The conversation about Mental Health awareness started to take place in 2017 along with how to solve the problem by implementing technical and adaptive ways.



**Mr. Bearce mentioned that:**

- More than 71% of firefighters suffer from anxiety due to (sleep deprivation, promotions, shifts, emergency incidents, family issues, financial issues, union, management, retirement, injury, or death) and anger is common as a result of the stress and anxiety.
- More than 17% suffer from addictions (gambling, alcohol, smoking, eating, or pornography)
- A high percentage of firefighters can be diagnosed with PTSD.
- They can be suffering also from (primary trauma, secondary trauma, vicarious trauma, and transference trauma)
- Adding to the previous list they can also have negative maladaptive stress as coping mechanisms which can lead to suicide.
- 100 firefighters die by suicide every year in the line of duty (tracked by OCHA), this includes statistics about suicides globally, nationally, and by gender, race, and age.
- **The 5 top suicide warning signs:**

Recklessness/Impulsive, Anger-displacement, Isolation, Loss of confidence in skills and abilities, sleep deprivation, and the loss of sense of humor.

Mr. Bearce shared Dr. Joiner's theory, which is a model for why people die by suicide:

Through three diagrams: Thwarted Belongingness, Perceived sense of Burden, and Acquired Capacity of Pain. The risk and protective factors for the general population as well as the risk and protective factors in firefighters specifically, and how to seek available resources. This informs the Action Plan for different departments how to seek support, and what kind of help could be offered on daily basis.

**Advice for first responder departments**

- Seeking professional help when needed
- Train staff on listening skills
- Train department staff to know the signs of suicide
- Train staff to deal with stress
- Train staff on resiliency and self-care

Mr. Bearce shared some thoughts about prevention, resources, and a short summary for his presentation.

**III. Man Therapy Presentation by Mr. Thomas Vossler**

Man Therapy started back in 2012, the goal is to reach men in distress who do not access mental health resources and to have an upstream approach before men reach a point of crisis through shrinking stigma, increasing help-seeking, decreasing suicide ideation, and producing a sustainable impact model.

How do they reach men in distress who do not access mental health resources?

Through 8 approaches:



|   |                              |   |  |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|
| Meet men where they are                     | Remove the technical problem | Give men the chance to fix themselves         | Connect the dots                               |
| Show male testimonials of hope and recovery | Target double-jeopardy men   | To give back and make meaning out of struggle | Coach men's on what to look for and what to do |

The man therapy Model is Based on:

- Man Therapy campaign promotion and outreach
- Website user journey, and impact measurement
- Communication data dashboard.

In November research published in the Official Journal of the American Association of Suicidology showed that if men complete the mental health assessment on the website that can lead to an 80% improvement in depression and 36% moved from high risk to moderate or low risk for depression and/or suicide risk.

For Riverside County, Quarter 1, 2023 (January-March 2023) 788 completed head inspections out of 1,155 started inspections.

Man Therapy utilizes many methods to share the campaign including broadcast, OOH, and live radio scripts, showing their layered strategic approach, and they welcome everybody to share it with their community. Man therapy is working on localizing different resources for targeted underserved communities which will launch on their website soon.

**IV. Next quarterly meeting July 26, 2023**