

**International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc.**

The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc., provides leadership, education, training, consultation, and support services in comprehensive crisis intervention and disaster behavioral health services to the emergency response professions, other organizations, and communities worldwide.

**410-313-2473 (Emergency Hotline)**  
<https://www.icisf.org>

**First Responder Support Network**

The First Responder Support Network provides first responders and their families with tools to reduce personal and family stress, encourage appropriate career decisions, and reduce the effects of traumatic incident stress on an individual's life.

**415-721-9789**  
<http://www.frsn.org>

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**

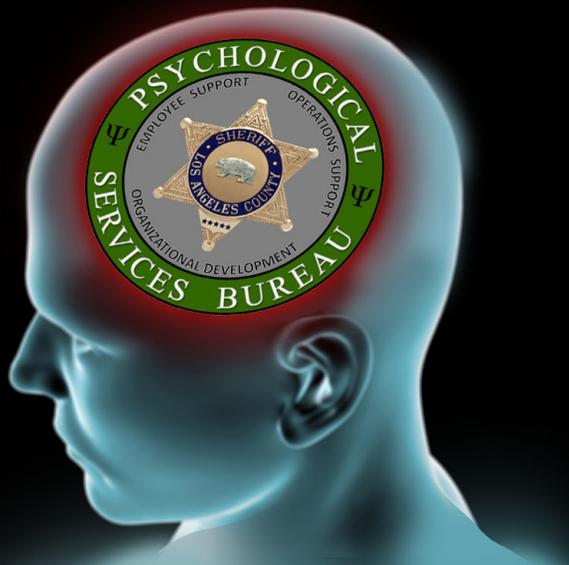
NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization, dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

**800-950-6264 (NAMI Helpline) or**  
[info@nami.org](mailto:info@nami.org)  
<http://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Family-Membersand-Caregivers>



**Law Enforcement Personnel  
are more likely to die by suicide than  
be killed by a suspect while on duty.**

**There is confidential help available  
to you and your family members  
free of charge.**



**Los Angeles County  
Sheriff's Department  
Psychological Services Bureau (PSB)  
is available  
to provide 24/7 support at  
213-738-3500**



*Los Angeles County*  
**Sheriff's Department**

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*Los Angeles County*  
**Sheriff's Department**

**CRITICAL COMPONENTS  
OF MENTAL WELLNESS  
AND RESILIENCY**

AN INFORMATION GUIDE



**COPS**  
Community Oriented Policing Services  
U.S. Department of Justice



[WWW.LASD.ORG](http://WWW.LASD.ORG)

## The importance of mental wellness

Mental health issues are not signs of weakness or low levels of resilience. Law enforcement officers have very important jobs—jobs that potentially require them to experience stressful and traumatic situations daily. Even law enforcement officers who are trained to handle distressing events can be affected by the long-term buildup of emotions. Mental wellness is a vital part of an officer's general well-being and needs to be addressed with the same level of importance as physical health and safety.

## How family members, friends, and loved ones can help

Having the right work-life balance—as well as support from family, friends, and loved ones—will help ensure an officer's professional success. Family, friends, and loved ones of law enforcement officers play an integral role in an officer's mental health. Family members can be the first to notice when an officer is struggling and can be a critical support for an officer experiencing mental health issues. Relatives can help the officer realize how important it is to get support and can encourage them to access that help. If family members know who to call and what steps to take, they can make a difference.



## Understanding responses to trauma

Trauma is a person's physical and psychological response to experiencing, witnessing, or being confronted with events that involve actual or threatened death, serious injury, or threats of bodily harm to self or others.<sup>1</sup> The effects of trauma can also be cumulative. Repetitive exposure to trauma can have a cumulative effect over one's lifetime.<sup>2</sup> If an officer experiences a particularly traumatic event, some of the symptoms referenced here may be part of a normal recovery. Each person is unique and will cope with trauma differently. By establishing an open dialogue with members of the department—a supervisor, human resources specialist, psychologist, peer support member, or chaplain—family members will gain a greater understanding of these reactions and know when normal coping crosses into an area of greater concern.

It is important for family and loved ones to understand how long these symptoms can last, how to best support the individual experiencing trauma, and when to engage professionals or notify the department of these issues. It is also not uncommon to see symptoms emerge after time has passed—sometimes even months or years later—as new situations or events can trigger memories of trauma.

1. "Psychological Trauma and First Responders," American Mental Health Foundation, April 3, 2015, <http://americanmentalhealthfoundation.org/2015/04/psychological-trauma-and-first-responders/>.
2. "Trauma Awareness" in Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services, Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) series, no. 57 (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK207203/>.

## Warning signs

The following warning signs may indicate that an officer is experiencing a severe life stress or mental health issue:

- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities
- Feeling trapped
- Withdrawing from family, friends, or society
- Dramatic mood changes
- Anxiety, agitation, inability to sleep, or sleeping to excess
- Rage, anger, or seeking revenge
- Constricted thinking—seeing issues as all or nothing, black and white
- Increased consumption of alcohol or drugs
- Emotionlessness or numbness
- Irritability or increased conflict with others
- Hopelessness
- Disturbance in appetite and weight

These feelings or behaviors can indicate that an individual is facing deeper challenges. If unresolved, they can potentially lead the individual to cause harm to others or him- or herself or to engage in problematic coping strategies, such as alcohol and substance abuse and risky behavior. While experiencing a few of these feelings or behaviors by themselves may not be overly concerning, these behaviors can vary in intensity and each situation should be treated individually.

## Resources: Whom to contact for help

If a family member, friend, or other loved one is concerned about an officer's behavior, it is important they express these concerns and encourage the officer to seek out professional support. Resources are available for both law enforcement officers and their families.

### Safe Call Now

Safe Call Now is a confidential, comprehensive, 24-hour crisis referral service for all public safety employees, all emergency services personnel, and their family members nationwide.

**206-459-3020**

**<https://www.safecallnow.org>**