

## National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) Unveils Share The Load Behavioral Health Training And Awareness Program For First Responders

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Firefighters, EMS providers, and rescue personnel routinely face situations that can impact their behavioral health. May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and now is a great opportunity to evaluate your own risk factors as well as implement behavioral health training and awareness in your department so that all personnel have access to immediate help.

## Mental Health Awareness Program

Firefighters and emergency personnel are at risk for many behavioral health issues including PTSD, stress, anxiety, addiction, suicidal thoughts, depression, burnout, and more. A key step in preventing tragic outcomes is for personnel to be able to talk openly about behavioral health issues. Work to create a culture in your department where behavioral health is recognized as being just as important as physical health and safety. Train members on why behavioral health is important, what risk factors they face, how to recognize signs and symptoms, and what to do if they or a fellow firefighter or EMT needs help.

## Fire/EMS Helpline

The NVFC offers resources to assist through the Share the Load program. This includes the Fire/EMS Helpline, a free, confidential helpline available 24/7 to provide support to firefighters, EMS providers, and their families struggling with behavioral health issues. Run by American Addiction Centers, the Helpline was created by firefighters and is specifically designed to meet the unique needs of fire service personnel and their families.

Additional resources available through 'Share the Load' include behavioral health and suicide prevention training, outreach materials, guides and reports, videos, and more.

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