

Suicide Calls Can Affect You

Suicide calls can be confusing. First responders are often left feeling powerless to help survivors or victims. Some responders feel sad, some angry, and some may have no feelings at all. All of these are normal reactions.

Factors that may heighten reactions:

- Victim is a child or young person
- Victim is someone you know
- The level of violence involved
- Distress of the family or individuals who found victim
- Strong visual images, sounds, or smells
- Personal history with suicide loss
- Personal history with suicidal thoughts or behaviors
- Time on scene
- Reminds you of someone in your life

About Riverside Trauma Center

Riverside Trauma Center, a service of Riverside Community Care, helps people in Massachusetts recover from the overwhelming stress caused by traumatic events, including natural disasters, serious accidents, and suicides by providing community outreach, consultation, and counseling. It also educates communities and organizations about suicide prevention, resilience, psychological trauma, and the emotional needs of returning veterans.

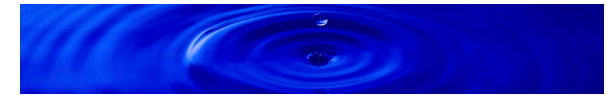
Contact Us

For information about trainings for first responders, contact Sarah Gaer at sgaer@riversidecc.org. For help after a traumatic event, call 888-851-2451, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and ask to speak to a Trauma Center Manager. For more information or to make an appointment, please call 781-433-0672, ext. 5738.

Riverside Trauma Center services are primarily funded through the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, donations, and grants. All contributions are welcome and appreciated. Some services may require a fee.

Riverside Trauma Center
A SERVICE OF RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY CARE

www.riversidetraumacenter.org



Responding to a Suicide Fatality: Not Your Average Call

“I’ve been in the fire service 10 years. You become desensitized to death. There’s something about suicide that just hits you a little different.”

Firefighter, Fall River, MA



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Pay Attention to Certain Signs

Many first responders will feel back to normal within a few days of a tough call, but pay attention to any of these signs you may experience:

- Quick to anger
- Increased substance use
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Upsetting dreams or nightmares
- Isolating yourself from people who are your usual supports
- Suicidal thoughts or feelings

If you have any of these symptoms, please seek support so you can get the tools to help you feel better.

Where You Can Find Support

Peers: No one knows the job better than your coworkers. Peer support is free, almost always available, and usually a mutually beneficial experience

Family: Our family members know us best. You do not have to go into detail about the call itself in order to talk about your feelings. If you are struggling, they probably already know.

Chaplains/Faith Leaders: Spirituality is a big part of many people's lives and chaplains are there to support you.

Critical Incident Stress Management Teams

(CISM): CISM teams can be activated to support the fire service in the Commonwealth 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can contact a team member directly or through the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) at (508) 820-2000.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP):

An employee benefit program that assists you with personal and/or work-related problems that may impact your health as well as your mental and emotional well-being.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Available 24/7 to provide free and confidential support for people in distress, even if it is not a suicidal crisis: 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Self-Care Tips

- **Sleep hygiene:** Long shifts and broken sleep is an inherent aspect of the fire service. For more information, please visit www.sleepassociation.org/sleep-hygiene.
- **Limit caffeine and alcohol:** Both substances can impact sleep and increase our physical arousal and anxiety levels. Limit them as much as possible after any potentially traumatic event.
- **Physical activity:** Help reduce stress by doing a type of exercise you enjoy several times a week.
- **Make time to have fun:** We tend to get wrapped up in our "to do" list and for some reason having fun never makes it on that list. Having fun is an important way to let our mind and body unwind.

Resources to Help the Community

Riverside Trauma Center, a service of Riverside Community Care, can respond on-site after a critical incident to help workplaces, organizations, and communities identify healthy coping strategies and provide additional support services and referrals. For help after a traumatic event, call 888-851-2451, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and ask to speak to a Trauma Center Manager

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) is available 24/7 to provide free and confidential support for people in distress.

Suicide prevention training for first responders is available through Riverside Trauma Center. Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) teaches firefighters how to recognize the warning signs, clues, and suicidal communications of people in trouble so they can act vigorously to prevent a possible tragedy. The three-hour program is free to fire departments. Three OEMS credit hours have been approved for Massachusetts EMS personnel for this training. For more information, contact Sarah Gaer at sgaer@riversidecc.org.

"Sarah provided excellent training on a subject which all first responders should take a long hard look at. It is time to brush aside the bravado and realize our first responders are extremely susceptible to mental health issues due to the incidents they are exposed to."

-Joseph A. Conant, Commissioner, Springfield Fire Department