



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2022.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: _____

Program Title: _____

Program Category: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Telephone: _____ Website: _____

Email: _____

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: Elyse T. Johnson

Prince William Public Safety Resilience Center Executive Summary

The public safety agencies of Prince William County are no strangers to tragedy. Over the past fifteen years, the Prince William County Fire and Rescue System and the Prince William Police Department have experienced three line of duty deaths, five deaths by suicide and two police officers seriously wounded by gunfire. These incidents created a recognition at the highest levels of Prince William County Government of the importance of providing public safety personnel and their family members with high quality, culturally competent behavioral health care and support.

That realization led to the creation of the Prince William Public Safety Resilience Center (PSRC). The creation of the Prince William Public Safety Resilience Center and the subsequent introduction of the Stress First Aid (SFA) model energized the existing public safety peer support teams. The unique SFA framework emphasizes peer support, is both proactive and reactive, and is based on research about what helps people recover following adversity.

The PSRC provides a readily accessible option for behavioral health support/treatment for public safety personnel and their immediate family members. The peer support team members often serve as the bridge between the distressed employee and the PSRC, helping countless public safety personnel receive the behavioral health help they need. The PSRC behavioral health specialists also encourage public safety personnel who have sought treatment to connect with a member of the peer support team to provide the encouragement and perspective that comes with lived experience.

The Prince William Public Safety Center is proud of the partnership created with the public safety agencies of the county. This cooperative effort has led to a near seamless system of peer support and access to a higher level of behavioral health support and care for public safety employees and their families throughout their careers.

Prince William Public Safety Resilience Center Brief Overview

Prince William County's Public Safety Resilience Center was created in 2016 to serve and promote resilience in employees within the county's public safety agencies – police, fire and rescue, public safety communications – and their families through behavioral health and wellness promotion, crisis intervention, crisis support and behavioral health counseling services.

The Public Safety Resilience Center is dedicated to the behavioral health and wellness of the public safety personnel of the county. The staff offers a proactive prevention-based approach, as well as a reactive treatment and crisis response approach to behavioral health and wellness. The combination of the lived experience of peer support personnel, the use of the Stress First Aid model, the on-going behavioral health education, and the ready availability of behavioral health care through the Prince William Public Safety Resilience Center ensures that Prince William public safety personnel and their families have a safe, confidential environment in which to receive behavioral health support throughout their careers.

While the center only has four full-time employees, it has provided an average of 1200 wellness promotion and behavioral health services each year since its inception; and 100 percent of the clients who respond to the satisfaction survey (approximately 60 percent) indicate that they were very satisfied with the assistance they received, that they achieved their goal(s) and that they would refer a friend or family member to the center.

The Prince William Public Safety Resilience Center is proud of the partnership created with the public safety agencies of the county. This cooperative effort has led to a near seamless system of peer support and access to a higher level of behavioral health support and care for public safety employees and their families throughout their careers.

Prince William County Public Safety Resilience Center

Background

Following the 2007 line of duty death of a firefighter, the Prince William County Fire and Rescue System quickly came to the realization that the Employee Assistance Program was ill-equipped to provide the needed behavioral health care for its members. In 2008, they created a position for a behavioral health specialist to provide behavioral health care to members without cost to the member.

Over the past decade, the Prince William County Police Department has experienced two (2) line of duty deaths, two (2) officers critically wounded by gunfire, and four (4) deaths by suicide. Prince William County recognized the importance of providing public safety personnel and their family members with easily accessible, culturally competent, quality behavioral health care. The existing Employee Assistance Program (EAP) simply had proven itself inadequate to meet the needs, demonstrated by the slow response to calls for assistance, the lack of culturally competent therapists, and the lack of therapists with training in evidence-based treatment approaches for depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, post-traumatic stress and marital issues. It should be noted that Employee Assistance Programs were created to assist employees with routine problems of daily living, not to be responsive to the myriad of complex needs of the public safety population or provide crisis response.

The Prince William Public Safety Resilience Center

In 2016, in response to the concerns about the lack of appropriate behavioral health support for public safety personnel, The Prince William Public Safety Center (PSRC) was created as a partnership between the Police Department, the Fire and Rescue System and the Department of Public Safety Communications. The FY23 operating budget for the PSRC is \$819,538 plus approximately \$65,000 for rent per year.

The center is a stand-alone unit within the County government with four staff: a director and three behavioral health specialists. Each public safety agency has a “dedicated” behavioral health specialist, but all behavioral health specialists are available for referrals from any participating agency. To increase the comfort level of personnel related to confidentiality and the likelihood that the services would be utilized, the center director reports directly to the Office of Executive Management, rather than to any of the involved public safety agency chief officers. In addition, the PSRC Advisory Group, comprised of chief officers from the public safety agencies, representatives from Risk and Wellness, the County Attorney’s Office, the Office of Executive Management and the Director of the PSRC, meets quarterly to set direction and review trends.

The purpose of the Public Safety Resilience Center is to promote resilience in public safety personnel through behavioral health and wellness promotion, crisis intervention, crisis support and behavioral health counseling services. The Center staff provide the following services:

Behavioral Health and Wellness Promotion

- Dissemination of information that promotes behavioral health and wellness
- Support and consultation to supervisors
- Enhanced use of peer support team
- In-service training
- Auricular acupuncture

Crisis Support

- Support and consultation to command staff
- Support and consultation to supervisors and senior staff
- Support to personnel (individual and groups, crews or units)
- Support to family members of public safety personnel

Behavioral Health Emergency Support/Consultation (Crisis Intervention)

- Support and consultation to senior staff and supervisors
- Assessment of level of care needed
- Support to personnel experiencing a behavioral health emergency
- Support for family members of personnel experiencing a behavioral health emergency
- Referral and coordination with the appropriate level of care

Counseling Services

- Assessment
- Counseling: Individual, Couples, Family, Group
- Referral
- Follow-up

Post-Shooting Support

- Post-shooting support services for law enforcement personnel
- Post-shooting support services for families of law enforcement personnel
- Follow-up

Wellness Checks

- Wellness “check-ins” for specialized service personnel
- Voluntary wellness “check-ins”

Support for Peer Support Teams and Chaplains

- Specialized training for the peer support teams and Chaplains
- Guidance and consultation
- Stress First Aid training (customized for each public safety agency)

The agency peer support teams disseminate copies of the PSRC rack cards at roll calls, squad days and trainings. In addition, the poster about PSRC services is displayed at every worksite.

Cultural competence requires an understanding of public safety culture and the culture of each agency, the ability to communicate and interact effectively with public safety personnel in everyday conversation and during extreme crisis situations. The staff of the PSRC are acutely aware of the need to remain culturally competent by participating in training, shadowing recruit classes, participating in regularly scheduled ride-alongs with officers, and seeking feedback through meetings/training and service delivery satisfaction surveys. All the behavioral health specialists are trained in auricular acupuncture to reduce stress and anxiety through the reduction of cortisol levels.

The staff of the PSRC are committed to the growth, improvement and development of their skills and the program. They continually strive to monitor and adopt new best practices for providing treatment and support to public safety personnel for combatting job stress and addressing behavioral health concerns. The staff provides training for the members of the peer support teams to increase and hone their skills.

The strong relationship with the peer support teams is a critical component in the success of the PSRC. Peer Team members make referrals to the PSRC and PSRC staff facilitate connections between public safety personnel in need and peer support members. PSRC behavioral health specialists can be counted on to respond quickly and can be reached by phone, text or email. Endorsement of PSRC services by peer support members has proven to be invaluable for the PSRC and has resulted in many successful referrals for treatment.

Stress First Aid for Public Safety Personnel

Prince William public safety peer support teams were originally created in 1985 and utilized the traditional Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) model that focused on responding after an event occurred with a one size fits all approach for occupational exposures to trauma. Over the

years, the team moved away from this reactive CISM model to a more proactive peer support approach. In 2016, the peer support teams became re-energized with the creation of the Prince William Public Safety Resilience Center (PSRC) and the subsequent introduction of SFA by the PSRC staff.

The Prince William County public safety agency peer support teams utilize the Stress First Aid (SFA) framework to provide support to public safety personnel from the time they first enter training as a new hire throughout their careers. SFA is a self-care and peer support model that was adapted from the US Navy/Marine Corps Combat and Operations Stress cooperation with the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (an arm of the Veterans Administration). It includes a set of supportive actions, grounded in research, designed to help public safety personnel assist each other in reducing the negative impacts of stress. SFA has subsequently been tailored to support firefighters, emergency medical services personnel, law enforcement and medical personnel. The director of the PSRC was invited to contribute to a national workgroup to explore the feasibility of adapting the COSFA program for firefighters and EMS professionals and subsequently became one of the co-authors of Stress First Aid for Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Personnel. With assistance and support from the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training, an adaptation for law enforcement was completed in 2013. The Prince William public safety agencies proudly became the first east coast departments to adopt the SFA model.

This approach to assisting a co-worker experiencing stress recognizes that disasters and “critical incidents” are not the only stressors that professionals in these fields face. It is based on the acknowledgement that stress can be ongoing and cumulative, resulting from multiple sources, and resistant to formal intervention for many reasons such as stigma and cultural factors. Therefore, SFA is designed to be practical, flexible, attentive to multiple sources of stress, and tailored to the specific styles and needs of those involved.

The SFA framework emphasizes peer support, is both proactive and reactive, emphasizes early intervention, and is based on two decades of research about what helps people recover following adversity. The framework provides a blueprint for appropriate action and is individualized for each situation/person, is not event only focused and is not a one size fits all approach.

Public Safety Resilience Center Interface with Public Safety Agency Peer Support Teams

The provision of SFA requires three basic skills: 1) the ability to recognize a stress injury in a peer, 2) the willingness and ability to **directly** speak with the affected individual about concerns and 3) the knowledge of resources and ability to connect the affected individual with those resources.

Stress Injury

SFA posits that there are four types of stress injuries: life threat/traumatic injury, loss/grief injury, moral/inner conflict injury, and wear and tear/fatigue injury. SFA recognizes that all stress experienced by public safety professionals is not the result of occupational exposure to trauma and provides support for officers who are distressed by the problems of daily living (financial challenges, marital discord, issues with children, substance use, etc.) These four sources of stress often operate simultaneously, and their effects are cumulative.

Stress Continuum Model

The Stress Continuum Model was adapted from the model developed by the United States Marine Corps. Public safety personnel can monitor their own (and other's) stress levels by using the stress continuum. The stress continuum has four zones: green (mission ready/coping skills are working well), yellow (expected reactions to life's normal stressors/reversible), orange zone (stress injured/may be temporarily non-mission ready) and red zone (stress ill and in need of behavioral health treatment).

Public safety personnel may more commonly be in the **Yellow Zone** rather than the **Green Zone**. Stress reactions (Yellow Zone) are common and are a part of developing competence and confidence as a result of facing life's challenges. Most people have sufficient resources and skills to recover from a stress reaction with limited outside assistance. Stress injuries (Orange Zone) can result when there are more significant impacts. These may result in no longer feeling like one's normal self, feeling out of control, or being impaired in work or personal roles. They typically require activation of additional resources to facilitate recovery and growth.

Stress Continuum

READY (Green)	REACTING (Yellow)	INJURED (Orange)	ILL (Red)
<p>DEFINITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Optimal functioning ✦ Adaptive growth ✦ Wellness <p>FEATURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ At one's best ✦ Well-trained and prepared ✦ In control ✦ Physically, mentally, spiritually fit ✦ Mission-focused ✦ Motivated ✦ Calm and steady ✦ Having fun ✦ Behaving ethically 	<p>DEFINITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Mild and transient distress or impairment ✦ Always goes away ✦ Low risk <p>FEATURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Feeling irritable, anxious or down ✦ Loss of motivation ✦ Loss of focus ✦ Difficulty sleeping ✦ Muscle tension or other physical changes ✦ Not having fun <p>CAUSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Any stressor 	<p>DEFINITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ More severe and persistent distress or impairment ✦ Leaves a scar ✦ Higher risk <p>FEATURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Loss of control ✦ Panic, rage or depression ✦ Not feeling like normal self ✦ Excessive guilt, shame or blame ✦ Disengagement/isolation <p>CAUSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Life threat ✦ Loss ✦ Inner conflict ✦ Wear and tear 	<p>DEFINITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Behavioral health conditions ✦ Unhealed stress injury causing life impairment <p>FEATURES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Symptoms persist and worsen over time ✦ Severe distress or social or occupational impairment <p>TYPES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ PTSD ✦ Depression ✦ Anxiety ✦ Substance use disorder

Seven Core Actions of Stress First Aid

SFA has seven core actions that provide a roadmap to guide peer support personnel in giving the "right" kind of assistance based on the individual's need, including referral to culturally competent behavioral health professionals. As one peer support member said, "Stress First Aid doesn't teach us how to talk to a co-worker, it teaches us what to talk about."

These core actions of SFA were derived from an exhaustive literature review of elements related to how people recover from a number of different types of adverse circumstances (Hobfoll

et al., 2007). The five essential elements of immediate and mid-term intervention that are related to better recovery from stress are: Promote a sense of safety, calming, connectedness, self and collective efficacy, and hope. (Hobfoll, S. E., Watson, P. J., Bell, C. C., et al. (2007). Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention: empirical evidence. *Psychiatry*, 70(3), 283-315.)

Use of these actions following major disruptive events helps public safety personnel to not only persevere, but to emerge stronger. They guide what to focus on in initial contacts, what to watch to monitor progress and assess needs, and what resources might be needed. SFA is meant to be incorporated into work in a natural, seamless way, and implemented only when needed. In most cases, it is not necessary to provide all the SFA actions. Often the actions overlap, for example, providing cover (safety) might also facilitate calming and connection. As one peer support member reflected: “Doing something supportive doesn’t have to look like a mental health intervention. In fact, the best interventions are often the least noticeable ones.”

Below is a brief summary of the actions of Stress First Aid:

SFA FUNCTION	POSSIBLE ACTIONS
Check	Assess current level of distress, functioning and risk Assess need for additional SFA interventions or higher levels of care
Coordinate	Decide who needs to be informed of situation Refer for further evaluation or higher levels of care, if indicated
Cover	Ensure immediate physical safety of stressed individual/others Foster a sense of psychological safety and comfort Protect from additional stress
Calm	Reduce physiological arousal Reduce intensity of negative emotions such as fear or anger Listen empathically and provide information that calms
Connect	Encourage connection to primary support people Help problem-solve to remove obstacles to support
Competence	Help mentor back to full functioning Arrange for retraining, if necessary Encourage gradual re-exposure to potentially stressful situations
Confidence	Restore self-esteem and mentor back to full confidence in self, leadership, mission and core values Foster the trust of coworkers and family members in the individual

(For a complete description Stress First Aid, please refer to Watson, P.J., & Westphal, R.J. 2021. Stress First Aid for Law Enforcement Professionals Workbook. U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. National Center for PTSD.)

Measuring the Success of the PSRC

The table below shows the average of the performance measures from FY2017 to FY2022:

Response to emergency requests for service within one hour	100%
Number of behavioral health services/contacts provided*	1,206
24 hour response to non-emergency service requests	98%
% of clients responding to anonymous survey who are satisfied with services received	100%

* Number of clients served, behavioral health promotion activities, consultations, trainings delivered by four staff

The PSRC sends a simple, anonymous satisfaction survey to each client at the conclusion of treatment. 100% of the clients who respond to the survey (approximately 60% of total clients served) indicate that they were very satisfied with the assistance they received, that they achieved their goal(s) and that they would refer a friend or family member to the PSRC.

Some comments from the survey or emails:

“Thank you for helping my daughter. You saved her life.”

“The skills I learned will help me throughout my career.”

“I plan to return periodically for a tune-up!”

“I hear from so many people in my work area about how pleased they are with our Wellness Program and can attest to the fact that many have really found it to be beneficial for their circumstances.”

"I'm sure that due to the nature of your job you don't get the recognition that you guys deserve, but I wanted to make sure that you know how grateful we are for everything that you have done for our family."

New for FY23

In May 2022, additional funding was allocated in order to include the employees of the Prince William-Manassas Adult Detention Center (ADC) and Prince William County Sheriff's Office (PWSO). A new staff member was added in June and is beginning his orientation to the program.

Summary

The Public Safety Resilience Center is dedicated to the behavioral health and wellness of the public safety personnel of the county. The staff offers a proactive prevention-based approach, as well as a reactive treatment and crisis response approach to behavioral health and wellness. The combination of the lived experience of peer support personnel, the use of the Stress First Aid model, the on-going behavioral health education, and the ready availability of behavioral health care through the Prince William Public Safety Resilience Center ensures that Prince William public safety personnel and their families have a safe, confidential environment in which to receive behavioral health support throughout their careers.