First Responder Training for Providers:
Couples & Family Considerations

MINES & ASSOCIATES
A National Business Psychology Firm

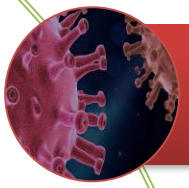
First Responder Training for Providers: Couples & Family Considerations

Summary

1. **What impacts First Responder families differently than the average family?**
2. **Couples impact**
3. **Family life - At home**
4. **Family life - In the community**
5. **Impact of physical/mental health issues**
6. **Financial impacts**

First Responder Covid & Social Unrest

Perspective: How do the Following Impact the First Responder, the Couple, the Family?



Impact of Covid

Impact of social unrest

Impact of the call to defund the police

Impact of the Blue Flu

Budget cuts in government funding

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What impacts First Responder families differently than the average family?

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Commonalities Across All First Responder Groups

- At parties and BBQ's, their loved one will lose their personal identity.
- Their loved one will speak differently after becoming a first responder.
- Weekends no longer include Saturdays and Sundays.
- Holidays will now have different meanings.
- Their loved one's appearance will change (uniforms, badges, emblems, undercover personal appearance, scars).
- Their loved one may laugh at the weirdest things and during the most inconvenient times…often to keep from crying (triggers of bad memories, anxiety or mood changes).
- Their loved one will have a new set of friends.
- The world will be looked at differently.
- Their loved one will not be allowed to have an opinion. (For example, they may be Catholic and have to risk their life to protect pro-choice rights to free speech).
- Frustration/anger happen when social media and the public spread messages that they don't care.

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First Responder Couples Impact

Police Couples

- OODA LOOP: Observe, Orient, Decide and Act
- Hypervigilance and shutting down at home
- Spouse feels disrespected, disregarded, and alone
- Bids to connect (Gottman) are ignored, disregarded, or rejected
- Spouse additional pain, disconnection and loneliness
- Taking off the Invisible Armor
- Intimacy is impacted (emotional and physical)

First Responder Couples Impact

Police Couples

- Blocking of negative emotions limits capacity for positive emotions to occur.
- Don't ask for help at home or elsewhere, sets up isolation, loneliness, and resentment, can set up potential for affairs or even deep depression due to limited emotional support.
- Can also show up in the spouse as well.
- Cynical or negative beliefs of seeing the underbelly of a community can lead to negative impacts on conversation and communication between spouses. The officer may become distrustful, controlling, have verbal outbursts, anxiety, Trust can become an issue.
- Spouses may respond to these beliefs and behaviors by harshly confronting the officer, sitting in silent contempt, or "walking on eggshells" to prevent the negative behavior.

First Responder Couples Impact

Fire Couples

- The obsession is real
- It starts with a V and ends with acation…
- The second family …accommodation
- Time management
- Dealing with PTSD and mental health
- Spend more time away than together
- Not enough money
- Rookie needing a second or third job
- Volunteer, no pay

First Responder Couples Impact

EMS Couples

Significant overlap with fire: however here are some differences that can impact the couple

Lower prestige among first responders

Lower pay in the private sector away from the fire department

Patient exposure (think Covid, other diseases)

Less time to debrief between calls

Less healthcare resources potentially in the private sector

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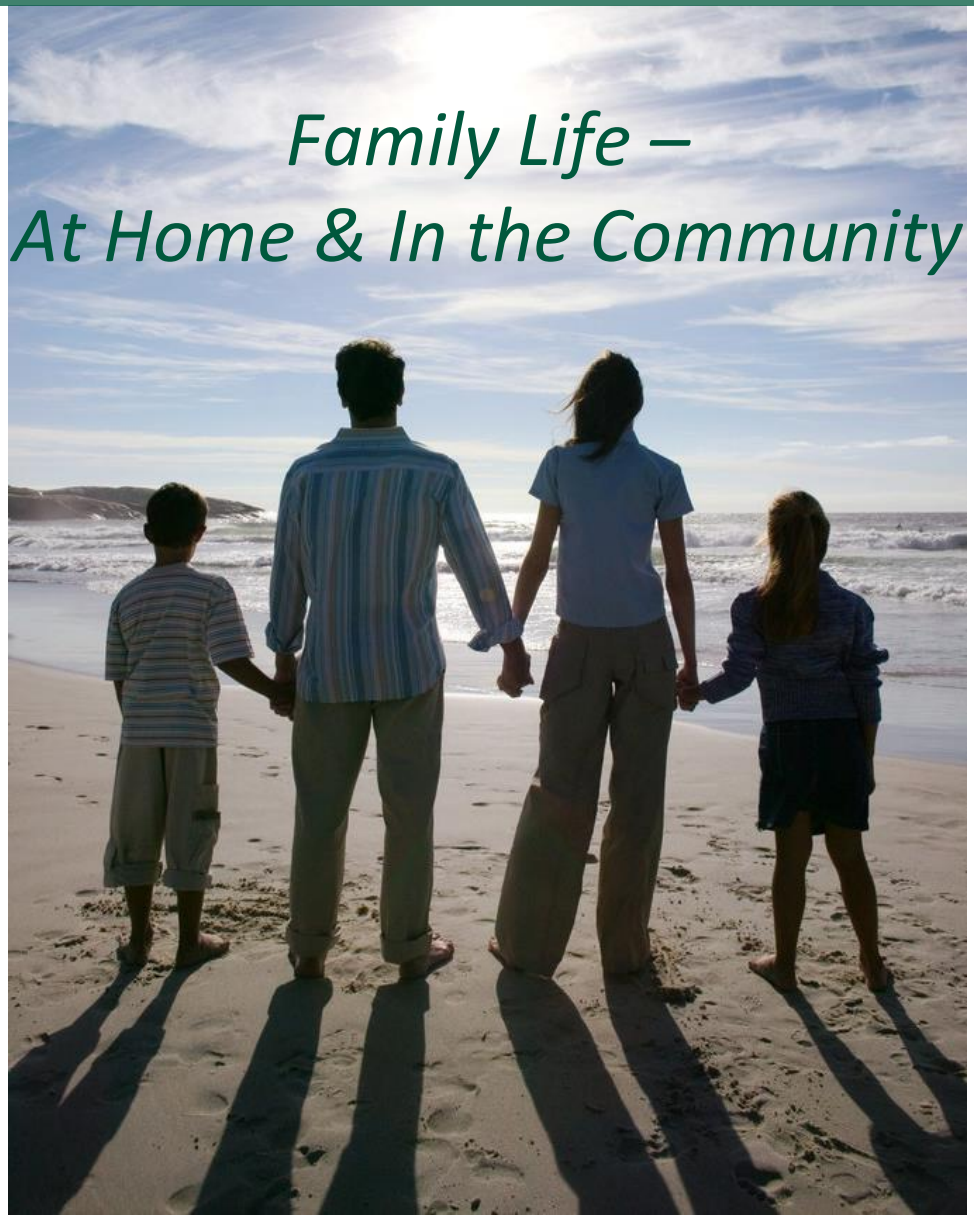
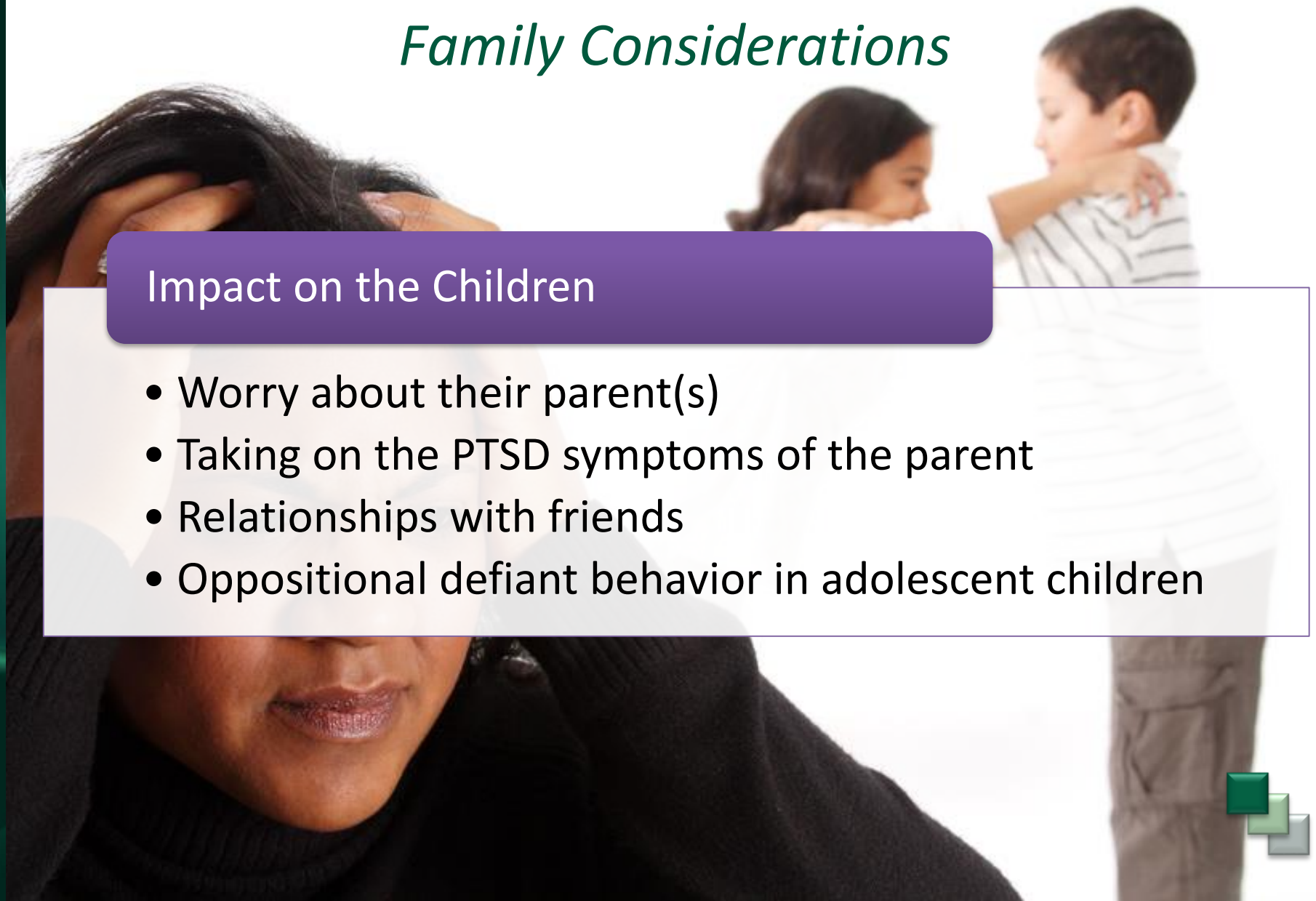


First Responder Family Life Impact

Family Considerations



Impact on the Children

- Worry about their parent(s)
- Taking on the PTSD symptoms of the parent
- Relationships with friends
- Oppositional defiant behavior in adolescent children

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Impact on Physical/Mental Health Issues

First Responder Health Impact

Police

Psychological Elements

- Depression
- Stress, acute stress, and PTSD symptoms
- Substance use
- Suicide/suicidal ideation

Schedule

- 10-hour shifts (Can vary depending on department)

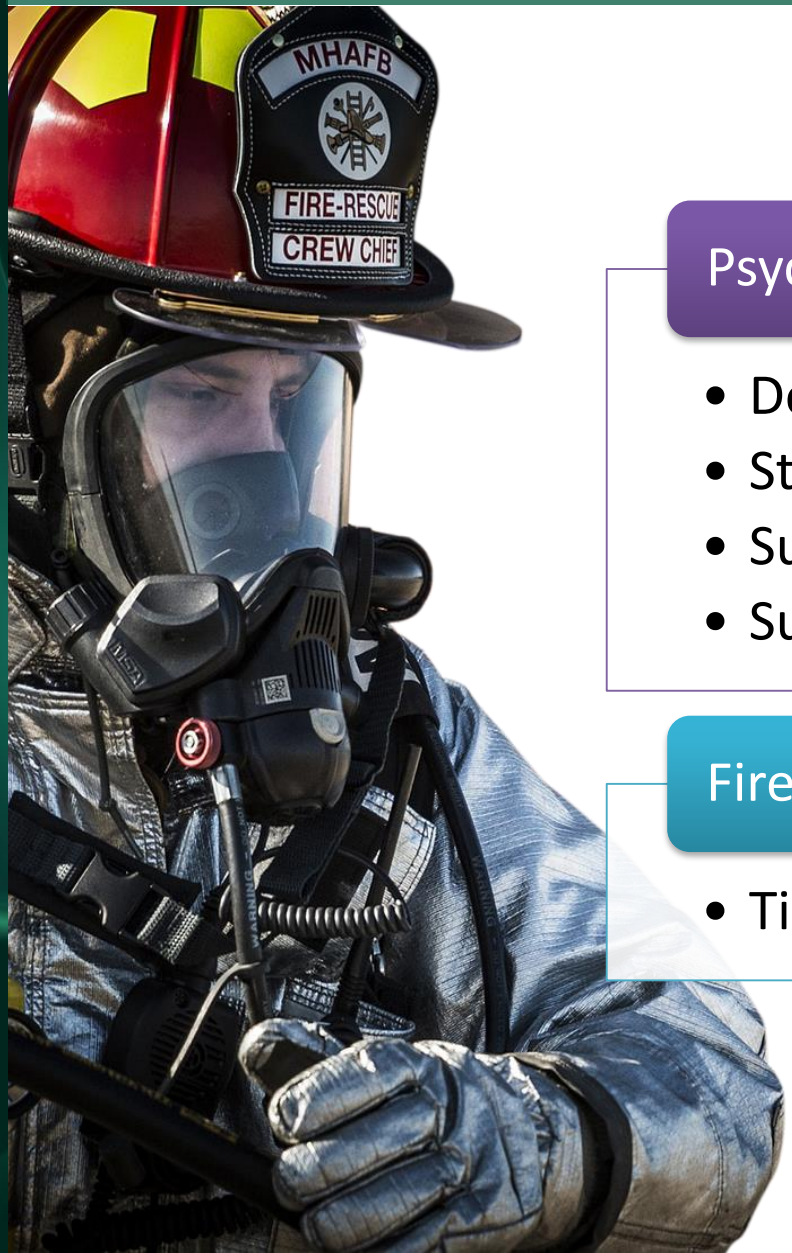
First Responder Health Impact

Police

Physical Health

- Insomnia, suicide, cancer obesity, hypertension, insulin resistance, stroke and type 2 diabetes
- Higher risk for lymphoma and brain cancer
- Being shot, assaulted, traffic accidents
- Death on the job from the above

First Responder Health Impact



Fire

Psychological Factors

- Depression
- Stress and PTSD symptoms
- Substance use
- Suicide/suicide ideation

Fire House

- Time away from home

First Responder Health Impact

Fire

Physical Health Factors

- Burns, smoke inhalation and crush injuries from collapsing structures
- Heath exhaustion
- Long-term job-related illnesses such as asthma, persistent coughing, heart disease, cancer and lung damage
- High stress levels
- Exposure to disease, Hepatitis B and C, Covid-19 and others
- Heart Disease (45% of work-related deaths for fire fighters)
- Cancer: colon, brain, bladder, kidney, and Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Chronic respiratory disease

First Responder Health Impact

EMS

Psychological elements

- Depression
- Stress, acute stress and PTSD symptoms
- Substance use (not discussed in SAMSHA report)
- Suicide/suicidal ideation

Work pace

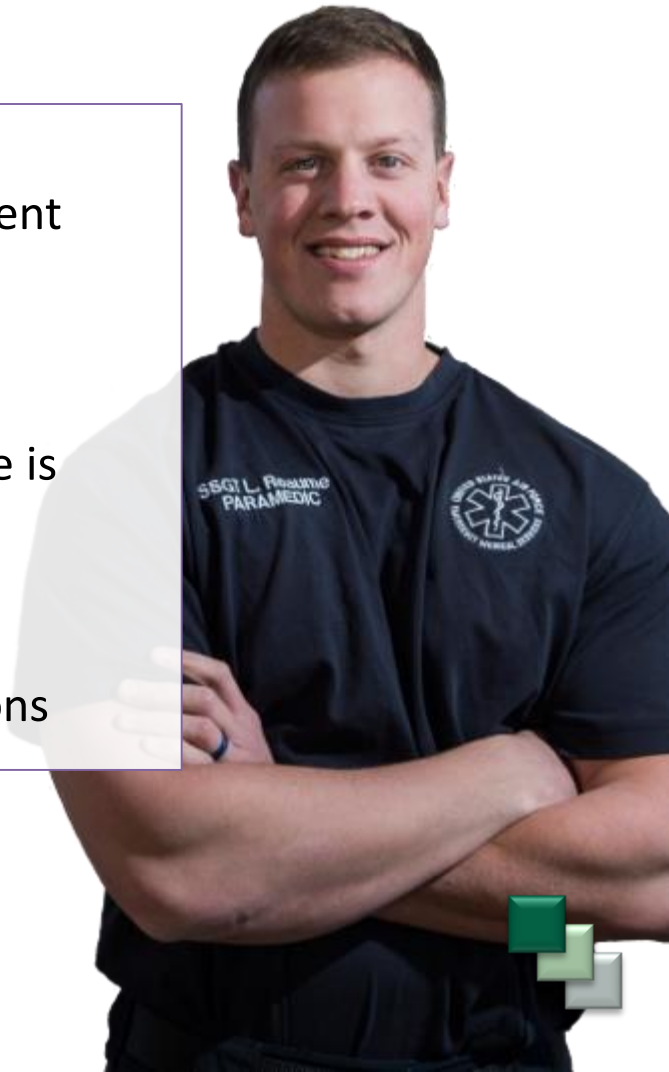
- First responders are always on the front line facing highly stressful and risky calls. This tempo can lead to an inability to integrate work experiences.

First Responder Health Impact

EMS

Physical Health

- Injuries from lifting patients and carrying equipment
- Exposure to harmful substances and hazardous materials
- Vehicle accidents
- Exposure to patient illnesses, hepatitis C exposure is a serious problem, covid-19 (blood and air born pathogens, bodily fluid exposure)
- Being stuck with needles from patients
- Assaults, 22 times higher than all other occupations



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Financial Impact

First Responder Financial Impact

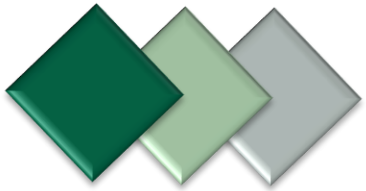
Commonalities Across All First Responder Groups

- Not enough money
  - (EMS/EMTs make between 28k-42k per year)
- Potential for resentment of other occupations making more when they are putting their lives on the line everyday
- Working multiple jobs
- Retirement support varies among the occupations

Questions or Comments?

Contact providerinfo@minesandassociates.com for more information, comments, questions, or requests for resources mentioned in this presentation.

THANK YOU!!!



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