First Responder Training for Providers:
Suicide Awareness: Working with First Responders

First Responder Training for Providers: Suicide Awareness

Presenters

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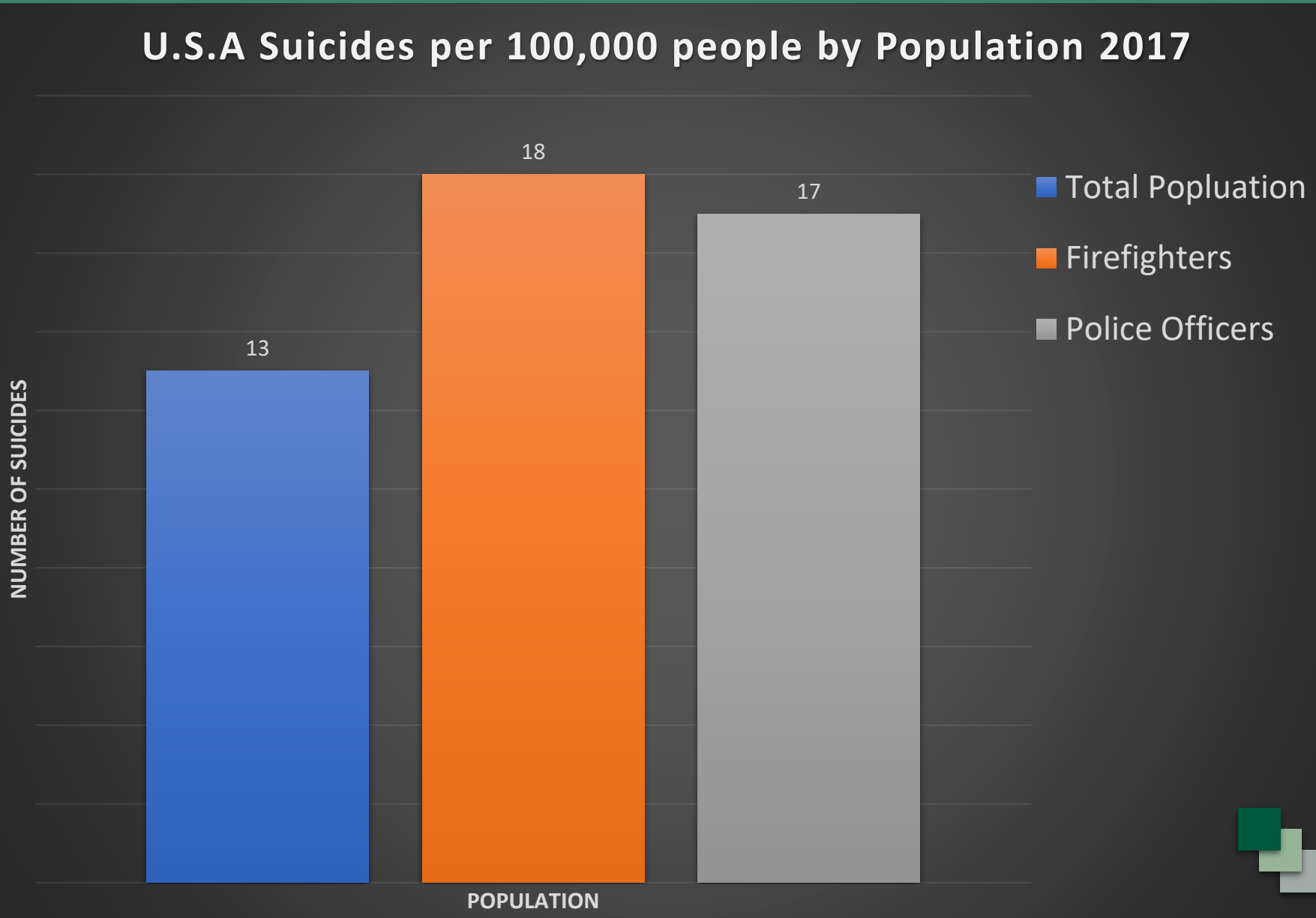
First Responder Training for Providers: Suicide Awareness

Objectives

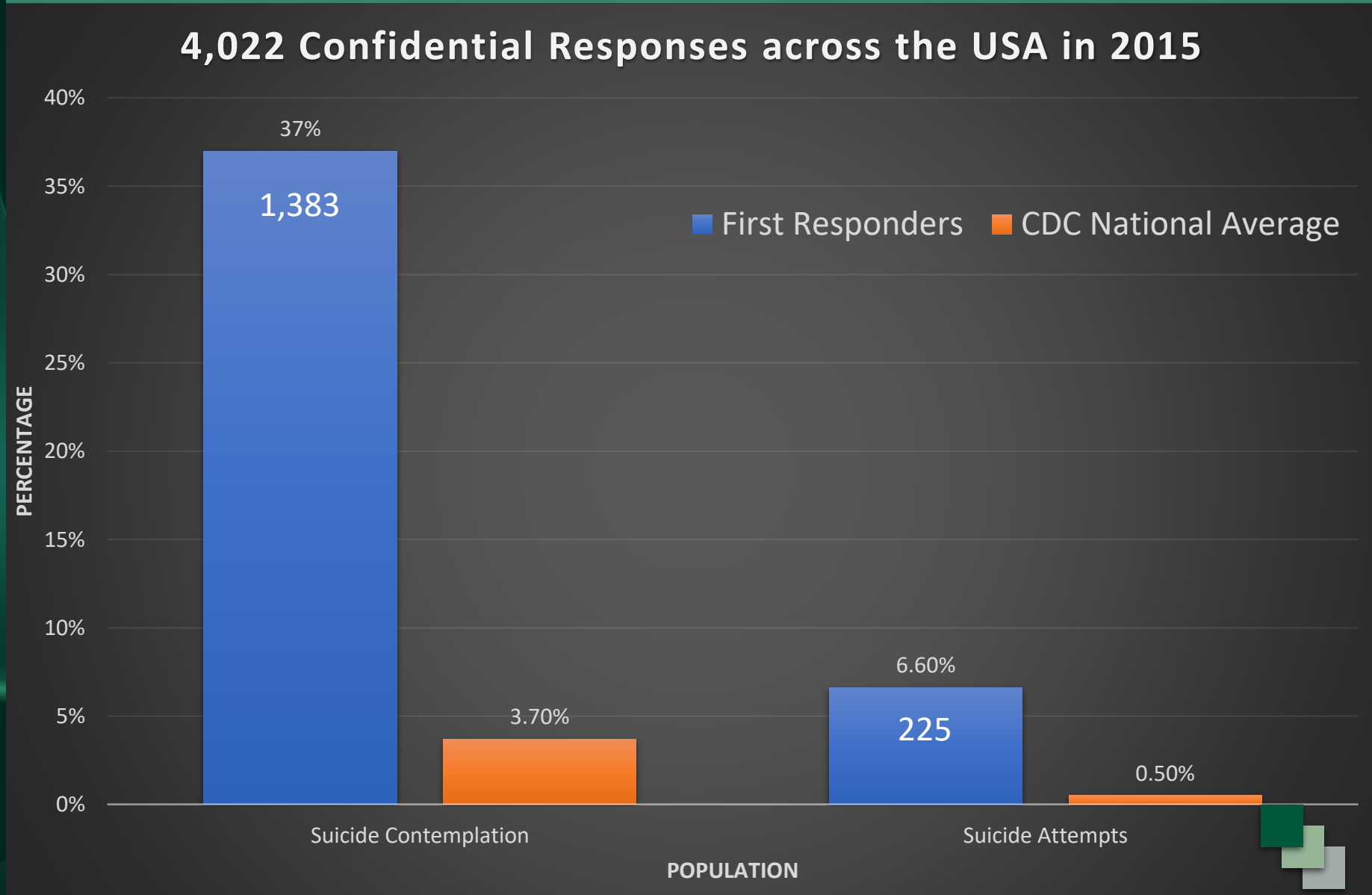
- Identify common behavioral health concerns for first responders
- Discuss the prevalence of suicidality in first responders
- Identify risk & protective factors for suicide for first responders
- Discuss effective therapeutic approaches to treating suicidality in first responders
- Present suicide prevention Resources for first responders

Context

Rates by Population



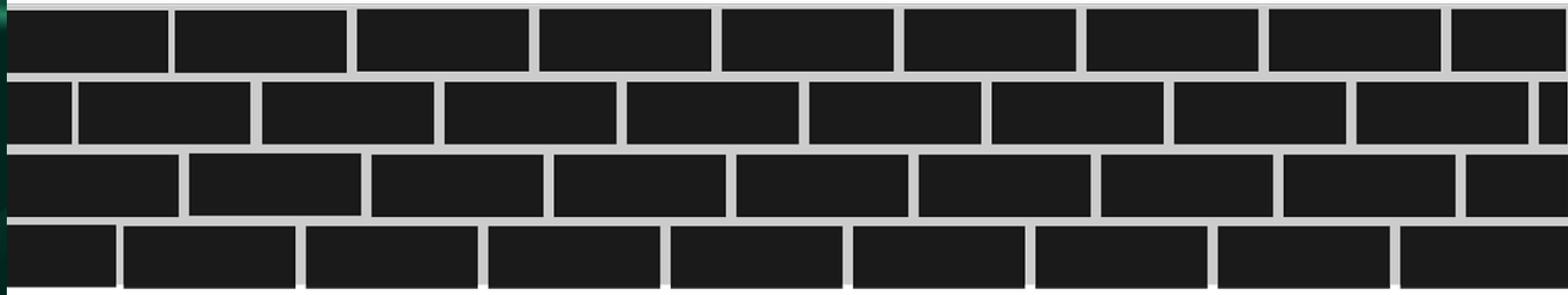
Rates by Contemplation



BARRIERS to Mental Health Treatment for First Responders

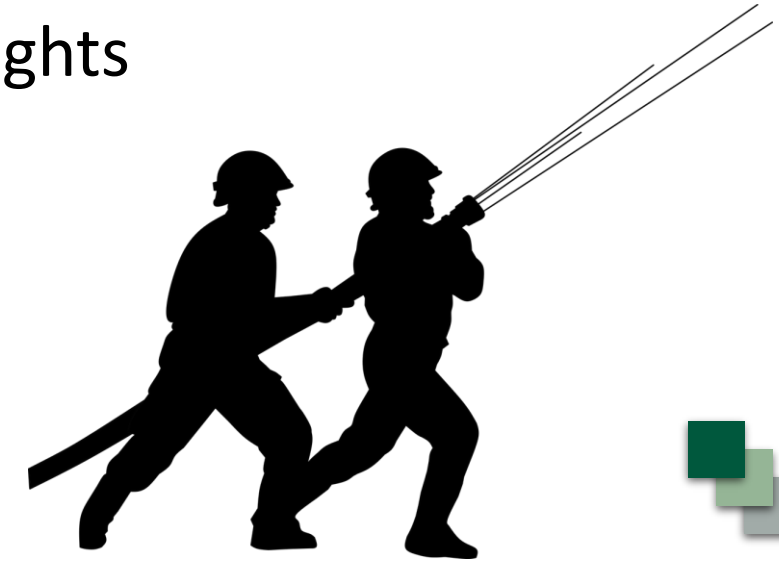
- Strength, bravery, and resilience are revered.
- Silence about mental health issues leaves responders feeling isolated.
- Responders perceive their colleagues to be more judgmental than they are.
- Responders fear speaking out will limit career advancement.

https://counseling.northwestern.edu/blog/first-responders-suicide-help/



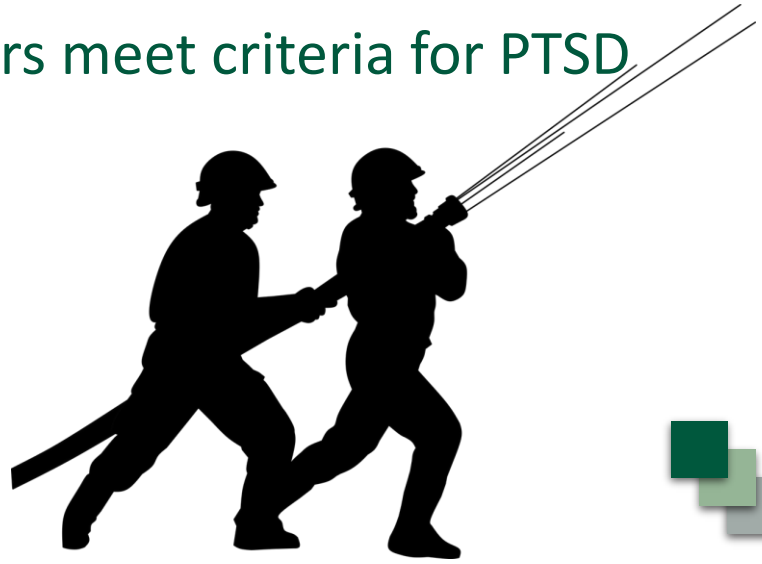
Common Behavioral Health Concerns in the Fire Service

- 65% experience unwanted, recurring memories
- 66% report easily angered/withdrawn from others
- 71% experience sleep problems
- 26% reported substance abuse
- 59% report relationship problems
- 19% experience suicidal thoughts



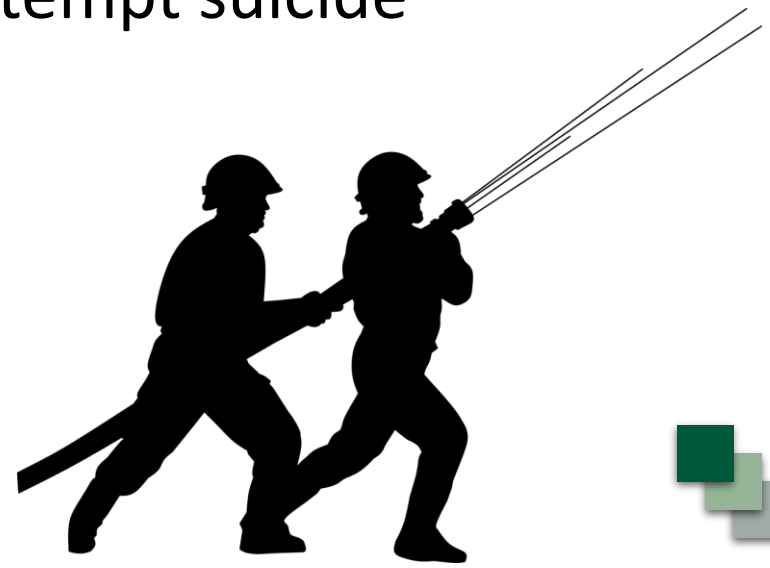
Co-Occurring Issues in the Fire Service

- Between 7-11% of firefighters suffer from clinical depression
  - Someone with MDD is 20 times more likely to attempt to suicide
- 45% of individuals with untreated SUD die by suicide
  - In one large study, 30% of firefighters met criteria for alcohol dependence
- Individuals with PTSD are six times more likely to attempt suicide
  - Approximately 22% of firefighters meet criteria for PTSD during their career



Suicide & the Fire Service

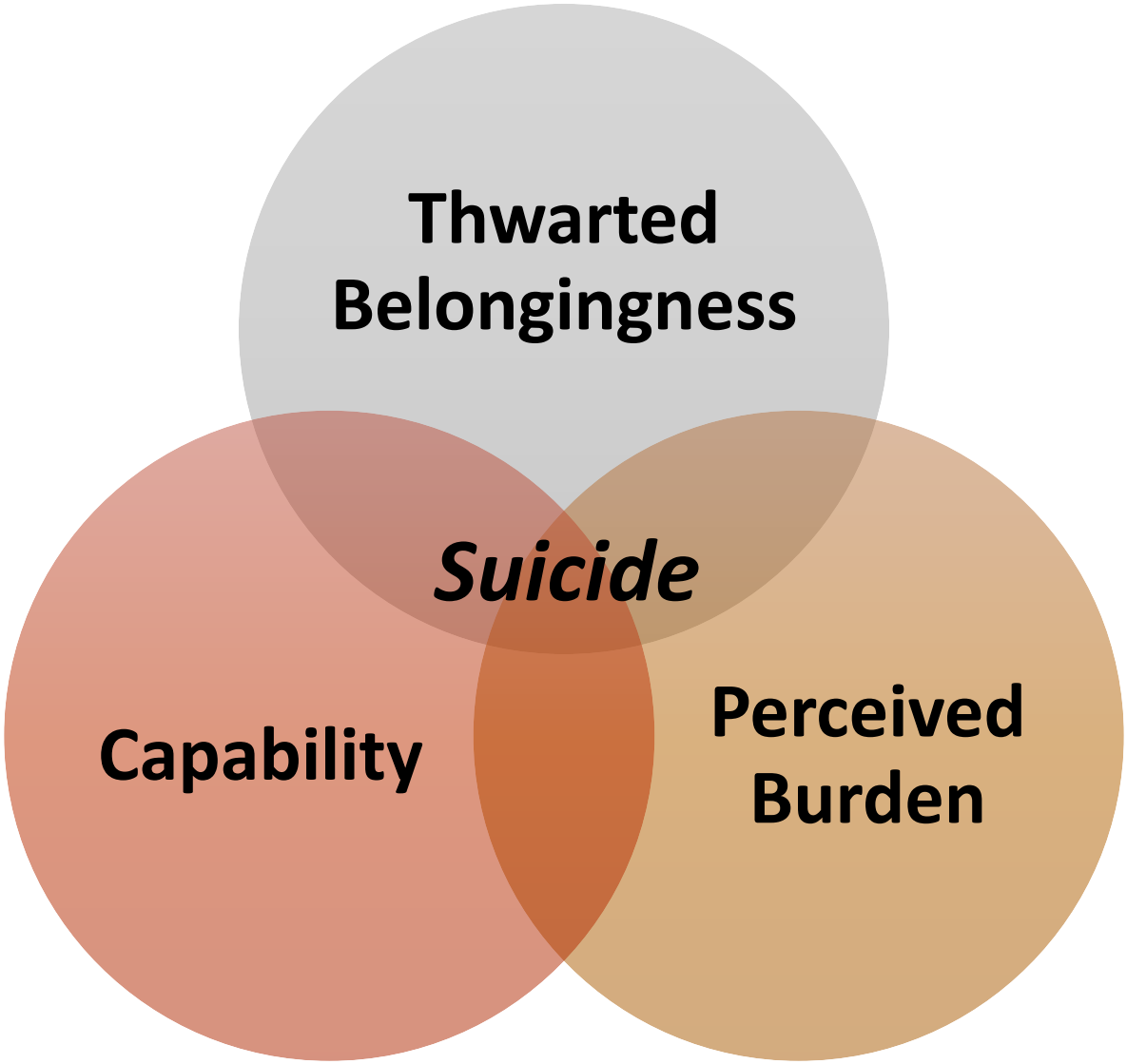
- It is not uncommon for firefighters to consider suicide at some point during their career
  - 46.8% have had suicidal ideation
  - 19.2% have made suicidal plans
  - 15.5% have made suicidal attempts
- Fire service members with Major Depression Disorder are 20 times more likely to attempt suicide



VIDEO

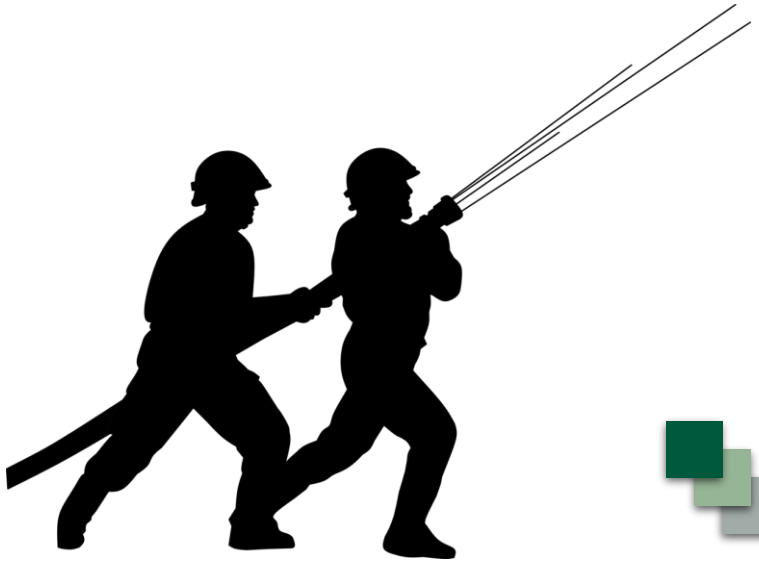
https://www.facebook.com/yorktownfiredepartment/videos/1435509953246764/

Interpersonal Theory of Suicide



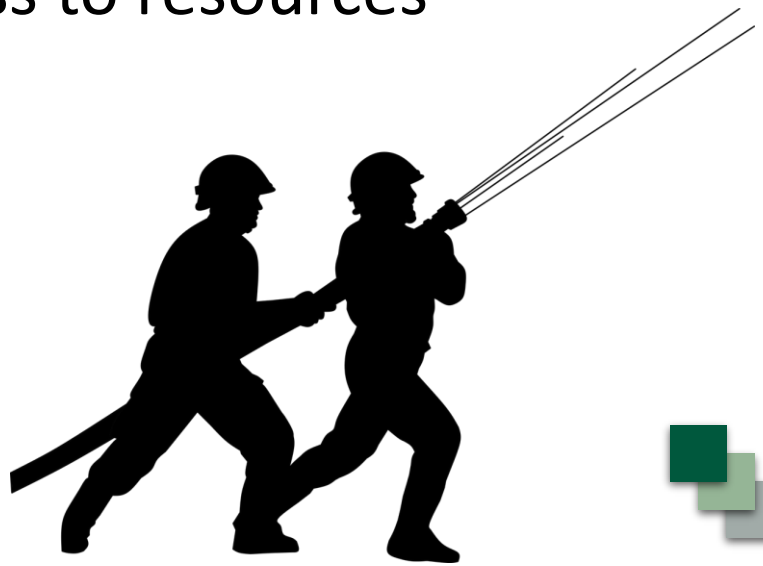
Risk Factors for Suicide with First Responders

- Loss of connection
- Trauma
- Stress
- Sleep habits
- Illness and/or injury
- Retirement or loss of employment
- Financial problems
- Legal problems
- Sexual assault and/or domestic violence
- Sexuality concerns
- Substance abuse
- Undiagnosed mental health disorder
- Avoidance of thoughts/feelings
- Culture of the workplace



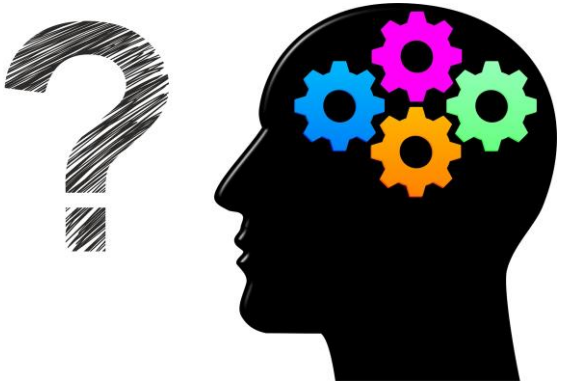
Protective Factors for Suicide in the Fire Service

- Strong problem-solving skills
- Sense of connectedness
  - Brotherhood & sisterhood
  - Peer support
- Resiliency & a will to live
  - PTG
- Improved awareness & access to resources



Therapeutic Approaches

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Psychopharmacological treatment
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy
- Cognitive Therapy
- Problem Solving Therapy
- Seeking Safety
- Mindfulness, grounding, stress reduction-techniques
- Person-centered, holistic approach
- PTSD - PE, CPT, EMDR, biofeedback



Recommended Screening Instruments

- Suicidality:
  - Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale Screen with Triage for Primary Care (CSSR-S)
  - Primary Care Evaluation of Mental Disorders Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)
- PTSD:
  - Primary Care PTSD Screen for DSM-5 (PC-PTSD-5)
  - PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5)
- Depression:
  - Primary Care Evaluation of Mental Disorders Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-2 & PHQ-9)
  - Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)
- Substance Use Disorder:
  - CAGE Adapted to Include Drugs (CAGE-AID)
  - Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)
  - Drug Abuse Screen Test – 10 (DAST-10)

Resources

http://minesandassociates.com/provider_resources/SuicideDepressionResourcesFirstResponders.pdf

Role of the Peer Support Program

IAFF Center of Excellence

- Exclusive to IAFF members, active or retired
- 1,300+ members served
- Mental health, substance abuse, & trauma recovery
  - PTSD, Major Depressive Disorder, Alcohol Use Disorder
- Full continuum of care
- Holistic treatment, evidence-based modalities, alternative therapies, mindfulness, psychiatry, primary care, MAT, individual therapy, group therapy, & family therapy

Sources

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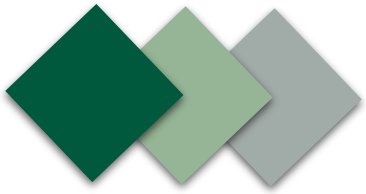
Questions or Comments?

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

THANK YOU!!!



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