

# The tired side of service

Sleep isn't just personal – it's relational. In public safety and military families, sleep shapes and is shaped by the entire family system. Here's what we learned examining sleep from a family-centred lens.



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## Why sleep matters

Sleep challenges are widespread among public safety personnel (PSP), and can include conditions like sleep apnea, insomnia, and shift work disorder – issues often tied to occupational factors like shift work, trauma, and stress. Poor sleep is linked to serious health and wellbeing consequences such as burnout, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), slower reactions, workplace injuries, and long-term health risks.

## Family realities

Sleep challenges create ripple effects touching many aspects of family life.

**Logistical struggles** – kids, pets, noise, and family routines can clash with restorative sleep

**Reduced connections** – misaligned schedules and routines erode family time

**Constant 'project management' and the emotional load** – families must work hard to protect sleep and maintain stability

**Life stage challenges** – babies, teens, retirement – each brings new sleep demands



Watch the discussion



## Family impact research

The Family Impact lens examines five dimensions: **family responsibility, stability, relationships, diversity, and engagement.** What it can tell us about sleep challenges:

**Research is limited** – often focused only on PSP, overlooking diverse family types and the impact of sleep disruption on routines, relationships, and wellbeing

**Bidirectional relationships** – family factors can influence PSP sleep, and PSP sleep shapes family dynamics



## What can help

**Recognizing sleep as a FAMILY issue** – sleep patterns and disruptions affect the whole family, not just the individual

**Normalizing flexible sleeping arrangements** – adapting where and how family members sleep—like separate beds or rooms—can be a health-protective strategy, rather than a sign of relationship problems

**Generating family-centred research** – to inform tailored supports for PSP and families

**REFERENCES**  
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Garnet Families (2025, September 25) Garnet Families Interactive Series: The tired side of service. Available at: <https://youtu.be/5JDyZlZ365Q>  
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