

SUPPORTING FIRST RESPONDERS AND PUBLIC SAFETY FAMILIES AFFECTED BY SUICIDE

In support of Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month (September), and World Suicide Prevention Day (September 10), we gathered a panel with lived expertise, and clinical experience in trauma and suicide prevention to discuss the impacts of suicide on the families of public safety personnel (PSP).



Suicide in relation to public safety personnel is a complex issue that can be influenced by trauma, organizational culture, and the persistence of stigmas around mental health. Death by suicide has a profound impact on families. Insights from individuals with lived and clinical expertise suggest that healing can be facilitated by timely, appropriate, and family-led supports.

If you are in immediate distress **call or text 988**. Canada's Suicide Crisis Helpline is available **24 hours a day, every day of the year**. If your safety is at risk, call 911.



The impacts of suicide on families

- Post-suicide, families must navigate complex feelings of grief, and life after loss.
- Loved ones may experience complicated feelings of shame, guilt, anger, and confusion.
- Grief is complex, and is experienced very differently by individuals. There is no singular experience of grief.

Supporting PSP Families

- Families are a crucial source of support to their PSP loved ones, and deserve support for their own mental health challenges and needs
- PSP family members have distinct and varied support needs, highlighting the need for responsive, individual- and family-led supports.
- The process of 'recovery' from grief varies for each individual; for some, it may mean adapting to a new sense of 'normal' or others may experience a sense of posttraumatic growth - a positive personal change in the aftermath of trauma.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to suicide prevention. Individuals have unique identities, needs and challenges. PSP sectors have unique cultures and pressures.

Supporting PSP families and what may help decrease stigma and risk

We can support families of PSP by:

- Recognizing families are a crucial source of support to their PSP loved ones, and deserve support for their own mental health challenges and needs.
- Highlighting the need for responsive, individual- and family-led supports.
- Recognizing the process of 'recovery' from grief varies for each individual.

We can confront stigma and reduce risk through:

- Open and non-judgemental conversations about suicide and by normalizing discussion about mental health.
- Normalizing help-seeking behaviours and accessing mental health supports proactively.
- Expansion of benefits covering evidence-based mental health services.
- Proactive education and training to prepare for and help mitigate the impacts of trauma exposure.
- Inclusion of families within organizational policies around mental health and recovery.

Watch the discussion

CIPSRT (2025, September 10) Supporting first responder and public safety families affected by suicide.

View the panel: <https://youtu.be/z-nh7F7JKDI>

CIPSRT gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Dilnaz Garda, Dr. Andrew Ekblad, and Colleen Kamps

