Dear colleagues,

Every year across our nation, communities come together to recognize **Suicide Prevention Week (Sept. 8-14, 2019).** During this time, our community partners will be hosting events to promote mental health and raise awareness about suicide prevention. We as first responders play a key role in preventing suicide in our community, from recognizing risk, to responding to individuals in distress, providing care and referring to appropriate resources.

It is also vital that we recognize that we as first responders are not immune from mental health distress or suicide. Due to the trauma and stressors that are inherent to our service to our community, we need to remain especially vigilant of our own and our colleague’s mental health.

*The phrase “fit for duty” for first responders has historically only accounted for good physical health for the duties related to one’s job. However, recent evidence-based research indicates that maintaining one’s behavioral health is equally important.*

-First Responder Center for Excellence

Taking care of our mental health, is necessary for our effectiveness and success in honoring our service to our community, our families, and each other. Mental health is a component of officer safety, and it is imperative that we treat it as such.

[Research](file:///D:\Full%20one%20drive%20docs\EMM\SP%20Toolkit\2019\First%20Responders\Materials%20for%20Toolkit\o%09https:\www.researchgate.net\publication\247744783_A_Conceptual_Model_and_Implications_for_Coping_with_Stressful_Events_in_Police_Work) suggests that working as a law enforcement officer is in fact one of the most stressful occupations in the world. However, it is not just the rigors of our profession that brings stress into our lives. In fact, a [survey](http://cop.spcollege.edu/INHARMSWAYResourceOnline/toolkit/SUICIDE_AND_LAW_ENFORCMENT_FBI_ACADEMY_QUANTICO.pdf) regarding police suicide listed the top 18 contributing risk factors of suicide attempts by law enforcement officers, in order of importance. Purely occupational issues did not surface until the 13th item.

As part of our commitment to this family, we must be courageous to reach out for support when we need it, and to reach out to our brothers and sisters when they are facing difficult times.

We often use the phrase “watch your six”, or “I got your six”.

*“If your back is six, your front is twelve. Your heart, your face, your head. Your twelve. We’ve got your twelve. So do your friends, co-workers and family. More importantly, you’ve got your twelve.*

*Watch your head and heart. Look at yourself in the mirror and be honest with your emotions. Ask for help when you need it. Believe that things will get better. We’re here to remind you that all is not lost and you can complete a law enforcement career with your heart and mind intact.”*

*-BlueHelp.org*

Below, you will find information on available resources within our agency and in our community. We ask that you not hesitate to ask for support, and that you maintain your commitment to your colleagues and ask them directly if they are thinking about suicide if you are worried and connect them to the appropriate help.

**Resources for mental health, suicide prevention and crisis support:**

* [Cop Line](http://www.copline.org/): 24-hr hotline that offers telephone support to officers and their families via a trained team of retired law enforcement professionals able to provide on-site debriefing and other Critical Incident Stress Management. Call (800) 267-5463
* [Safe Call Now](https://www.safecallnow.org/get-help-1.html): resource for first responders and other public safety employees to talk with officers, former law enforcement officers, and/or other mental health care providers who are familiar with the line of work. Call 206-459-3020 or visit <http://www.safecallnowusa.org/>
* [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/): answered locally by trained counselors and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Lifeline is also available in Spanish and offers a prompt for veterans, or those concerned about a veteran, to connect to specially trained counselors.
  + **Call 1-800-273-8255**
  + Chat <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>
* [Crisis Text Line](https://www.crisistextline.org/): Text “Blue” (for law enforcement officers) to 741-741 to connect 24/7 with a trained crisis counselor via text messaging
  + Anyone can text “HELP” to 741741 to be connected to crisis services via text messaging
* For more information on warning signs, risk factors, and how to talk to someone you are worried about, visit: [www.SuicideIsPreventable.org](http://www.SuicideIsPreventable.org)

***NOTE: Add agency specific resources (Examples: wellness unit, peer support program, psychological services program, etc.)***

We’ve got your 12,

(signed by leadership/supervisor)