



A Cost-Effective Solution to First Responder Wellness

Law enforcement officers, firefighters, dispatchers and other public safety personnel are tasked with handling the most high-risk, urgent and dangerous events in our communities. They respond routinely to incidents most people never experience firsthand—suicides, murders, accidents, natural disasters, violence committed against children, sexual offenses, violent individuals, noncompliant suspects, people in the throes of crisis. The job carries the constant potential for injury and risk to safety and security.

Public safety and local government leaders and elected officials have a great opportunity to support the wellness of the first responders we trust to provide the most urgent, critical and high-stakes service to the community. The key lies in delivering confidential, immediately accessible resources that are customized for the issues first responders face.

Fortunately, doing just that is not only possible, it's surprisingly cost-effective.

First Responder Wellness Challenges

First responders pay a price for their dedication to their profession. They experience high rates of suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress and depression; in nationwide surveys, firefighters and officers overwhelmingly report stress on the job has impacted their mental health.^{1,2,3} The effects are physical, too; 70% of firefighters are obese or overweight; 40% of police officers are obese and 80% are overweight.^{4,5} Complications from shift work compound the issues: Nearly 40% of firefighters screen positive for sleep disorders,⁶ while fatigued police officers are quicker to fire their weapons and show more implicit bias against Black subjects.⁷

¹Ushery D, Manny D, Stulberger E. (11/20/18). Nearly 1 in 5 cops has considered suicide amid stigma around mental health issues. <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/i-team-nearly-1-in-5-cops-has-considered-suicide-amid-stigma-around-mental-health-issues/1817436/>

²Wagner E, Bott M, Villarreal M et al. (3/1/18) National data shows firefighters' mental, emotional health not getting enough attention. <https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/national-data-shows-firefighters-mental-emotional-health-not-getting-enough-attention/196910/>

³Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (May 2018) First Responders: Behavioral Health Concerns, Emergency Response, and Trauma. <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/dtac/supplementalresearchbulletin-firstresponders-may2018.pdf>

⁴Wilkinson ML, Brown AL, Poston WS, et al. (2014) Physician Weight Recommendations for Overweight and Obese Firefighters, United States, 2011–2012. *Preventing Chronic Disease*. 11:140091. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd11.140091>

⁵Can SH, Hendy H. (May 2014) Behavioral variables associated with obesity in police officers. *Industrial Health*. 52(3):240–247. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4209580>

⁶Brigham and Women's Hospital. (11/13/14) Sleep disorders found to be highly prevalent in firefighters. *ScienceDaily*. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/11/141113085220.htm>

⁷James L. (9/21/17) The Stability of Implicit Racial Bias in Police Officers. *Police Quarterly*. 21(1)30–52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611117732974>

While many municipalities and counties offer wellness services through an Employee Assistance Program, these are often inadequate for the unique stressors of a public safety career. First responders overwhelmingly report cultural stigmas that create a barrier to most seeking help for emotional and behavioral issues. And when they do seek help, 60% of officers and firefighters say the wellness resources provided to them through Employee Assistance Programs are not helpful.^{1,2}

Hidden Costs of First Responder Mental Health Issues

Simply knowing that we are taking good care of our personnel—doing the right thing to support them—is motivation enough for most agency and local government leaders. But there also are strong qualitative reasons to proactively address first responder wellness.

In fact, there are five areas where your agency may be spending large sums of money related to first responder mental health without realizing it:

1. **Overtime costs** that rack up when personnel are out on sick leave or disability as a result of untreated mental health issues
2. **Worker's compensation** costs involving post-traumatic stress syndrome (many states now consider PTSD as presumptive for first responders)
3. **High healthcare costs** as a result of the physical impacts of stress, which can include cardiac issues, diabetes, obesity, substance abuse and sleep issues
4. **Costs associated with personnel complaints, lawsuits and settlements** that may be a result of poor decision-making by personnel suffering from lack of sleep, burnout or compassion fatigue
5. **Turnover costs**—including recruiting, training and equipping new personnel—when first responders choose to leave the agency due to chronic stress or feeling unsupported

As noted above, current support mechanisms for first responders are largely insufficient. Municipalities remain at significant financial risk if relying upon existing support resources.



The Wellness Solution for Public Safety: Cordico

Cordico's mobile wellness app provides a complete range of self-assessments as well as continuously updated videos and guides on more than 60 behavioral health topics. This unique wellness solution meets three critical criteria necessary to overcome the stigma of asking for help and address the cumulative effects of chronic stress on first responders:



Confidential – First responders must have trust that they can access resources in a completely confidential manner that will not have an impact on their careers. Cordico's apps work through a generic link and generic password. There is no personal data tied to app (although we can provide aggregate data to help

leaders judge overall use or identify trends in resource usage).



Customized – Resources provided to first responders must reflect the realities of their jobs. Cordico’s assessments, articles and videos are developed by first responder psychologists and are specifically tailored for public safety personnel. We also help agencies tailor their apps with agency-specific content or training and links to local resources.



Accessible – Public safety is a 24/7 business; first responders must be able to access resources quickly, easily and at any time of day. By delivering our content through an app, we provide one place for personnel to access all the wellness content the agency offers, available 24/7. Options include one-touch access to peer support and chaplains, teletherapy and a therapist finder.



The many benefits of implementing the Cordico app include:

- Demonstrating strong city/county support for the wellness of their first responders
- Providing in-hand, on-demand, easy access to a multitude of high-quality wellness tools and confidential resources specifically for public safety personnel

- Providing easier access to existing support mechanisms (e.g., peer support, therapists and local healthcare resources)
- Increasing utilization of a wide range of wellness support resources to promote a healthier workforce
- Improving recruitment, retention and morale and reducing absenteeism

Implementation of the Cordico apps has been associated with higher rates of utilization of support resources, the development of stronger wellness support options, and strong positive feedback regarding the program at all organizational levels.

Cordico Wellness App Investment

First responder wellness requires an investment, but the costs of the Cordico app are projected to be more than offset by savings in the form of improved employee wellness, lower employee stress, improved morale, decreased absenteeism and increased retention.

The annual subscription covers:

- App build, design, licensing, maintenance, technical support and ongoing updates (iPhone and Android)
- Unlimited use to all personnel employed by the agency
- Unlimited use at no cost to all spouses, significant others and children of personnel employed by the agency
- Unlimited use at no cost for all department retirees
- Implementation and support for promoting the app to agency personnel, including posters, QR codes for easy phone installation, and a customized PowerPoint presentation for shift briefings or roll call. These resources have resulted in a 90% app installation rate.

Unqualified Support

“If you do one thing for your agency this year, get this app. It will show that employee wellness is a priority, you truly care, and you want to make the best tools and resources accessible to your officers 24/7.”



Kimberly A. Miller, Ph.D.
Chair, National Sheriffs’ Association,
Psychological Services Committee
Police Psychologist, Consultant,
Coach & Trainer

“The Cordico team provided exceptional customer service and went out of their way to make the development process smooth and fast. The finished product far exceeded my expectations and those of my command staff. We need our emergency responders to be at their peak performance levels, and the Cordico wellness app gives them the tools and resources to do just that.”



Captain Eric Dayley
MA District Commander
Idaho State Police District Five

“I was looking for a way to inform our officers about the numerous resources that are available to support their emotional health and well-being. I also wanted to provide them with a roadmap to those resources. The Cordico wellness app is a confidential tool that hosts all of their wellness resources in one location, which allows our officers to have 24/7 access in the palm of their hands.”



Lynnette Hall-Lewis, Esq., CWPC
Health Engagement Manager
City of Memphis

“The Cordico app has been a game changer for our fire department. This app puts a wealth of information and—most importantly—personal help at our firefighters’ fingertips to keep them mentally healthy.”



Fire Chief Kris Concepcion
Vacaville (CA) Fire Department



Ready to put your agency at the forefront of wellness? Request a demo today.

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