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University of Regina paper reveals more help needed for first responders suffering from PTSD and other traumas

A newly released paper, developed by University of Regina researcher, Dr. Nick Carleton, in partnership with members of the Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment (CIPSRT) and supported by the Canadian Association of Police Governance (CAPG), the Paramedic Association of Canada (PAC) and the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police (CACP), finds that more needs to be done to help Canada's first responders and other public safety personnel who are dealing with trauma often associated with their work.

Peer Support and Crisis-Focused Psychological Intervention Programs in Canadian First Responders: Blue Paper, evaluates the peer support and psychological intervention programs already being offered to help those who often confront death, violence, and threats to their own lives at work, sometimes on a daily basis.

"We found that there is a drastic need for more research assessing the impact of the programs that are currently offered to our police, paramedics, and fire and rescue personnel," says Carleton. "Currently there is very little, if any evidence available proving the effectiveness of any specific program. This is harmful to the well-being of our first responders."

Carleton says his team found that while first responders and other public safety personnel appreciate the programs that are available to them, having evidence-based, consistent programming across the country will provide greater benefits.

"The mental health of our people is at risk. This year alone, 26 Canadian first responders have taken their own lives. At the current rate this may be the worst year for suicides, surpassing the 40 first responders who died last year," says Mario Harel, president of CACP. "This has to change."

Rob Stephanson, president of CAPG, says the release of the *Blue Paper* is a first step in a long-term commitment to supporting Canadian first responders and other public safety personnel. "The pending Prevalence Survey being released in September is the critical next step."

Carleton's next step is to release a national survey which will help his team gain a better understanding of the impact that work stress and symptoms have on first responders and their families. They aim to create supports for the mental health of all public safety personnel.

"The work of Dr. Carleton and his team sets the stage for the creation of more uniform supports for the mental health of all our public safety personnel," says Pierre Poirier, executive director of PAC. "The recommendations in the *Blue Paper* are necessary as the effects of daily traumas put our first responders at risk for psychological challenges, including post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety, and anger. It's my hope that the survey will help researchers better understand the impacts this work can have, and move forward in identifying what is required to support the recognition, prevention, intervention and treatment of mental health concerns facing Canadian first responders."

Access the *Blue Paper* at: <http://www.justiceandsafety.ca/> or [directly](#)