



State of Delaware Emergency Medical Services

INFORMATION FOR EMS PROFESSIONALS

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Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

▶ Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a disorder that develops in some people who have experienced a shocking, frightening or dangerous event.

▶ It is natural to feel fear during and after a traumatic situation.

▶ Fear triggers many split-second changes in the body that help defend against or avoid danger.

▶ This "fight or flight" response is a typical response to protect a person from injury.

▶ Almost everyone experiences a range of reactions after trauma, but most people recover naturally from the initial symptoms.

▶ Those who continue to have problems may be diagnosed with PTSD. People who have PTSD may feel stressed or scared even when they are not in danger.

[\(NIMH » Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder nih.gov\)](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml)

First Responders who suffer from secondary traumatic stress and substance problems often find it difficult to admit what's happening and ask for help. Several factors help explain this reality including:

- The desire to maintain an appearance of professional invulnerability
- The desire to maintain the confidence needed to act in emergency situations
- The fear of not measuring up to the expectations of being a first responder
- Fear of the cultural stigma that can come from admitting to the presence of mental health problems
- Fear of experiencing workplace repercussions for mental health issue and/or substance use

Why is dealing with PTSD so difficult?

It's hard to understand why your family member or friend with PTSD is so volatile and hard to get along with. It's also common to feel anger towards your loved one, and frustration about how their PTSD is changing and affecting the entire family. Perhaps your loved one is going through one of the consequences of PTSD such as drug or alcohol abuse or job loss. There's no doubt it: PTSD takes a heavy toll on relationships.

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What can you do when your family member or friend has PTSD?

- Realize that your feelings are completely normal
- Try not to take their behavior personally
- Let them know you are here to listen to them, but don't force them to talk
- Learn as much as you can about PTSD
- Practice self-care for your own mental and emotional health

Friend Has PTSD | Family Member Has PTSD | Family PTSD

Emotional PTSD Symptoms

- Lower than normal sense of self-worth
- Depression or misplaced guilt
- Inability to specifically remember or talk about the trauma
- Feeling numb emotionally
- Dissociation (not aware of the present moment)
- A feeling of disconnection from their everyday lives
- Feeling hyper-aroused and vigilant for danger all the time
- Lashing out in irritability or unexplained anger
- Feeling jittery, or unable to concentrate on tasks at hand
- Other anxiety disorders, such as panic or intense distress

Physical PTSD Symptoms

- Chronic pain that has no medical explanation
- Fibromyalgia
- Heart problems
- Chronic fatigue
- Severe headaches
- Eating disorders
- Sleep issues such as insomnia or sleep apnea
- Asthma or other breathing issues
- Muscle aches and pains
- Poor or painful digestion
- Racing heart, panic, or chills when reminded of the traumatic event

Relational PTSD Symptoms

Loss of interest in activities they used to find enjoyable (known as *anhedonia*)

- Feeling like they are emotionally detached from friends and family
- Life-threatening actions such as reckless driving
- Lack of a sex drive
- Higher than normal rates of divorce or separation, unemployment, or domestic abuse

Self-destructive actions such as: drug or alcohol abuse, suicide, or risky sexual actions

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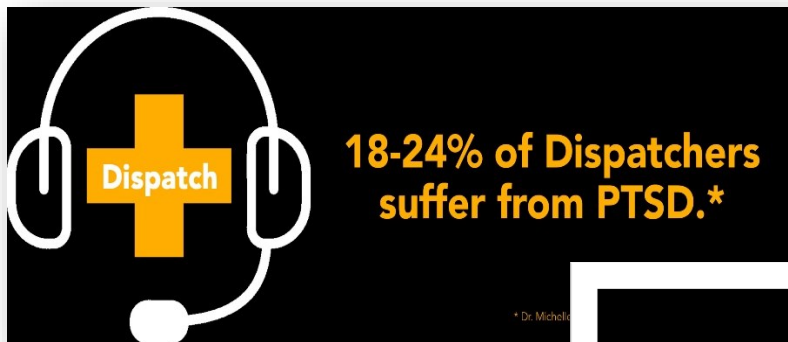
PTSD911 Documentary

PTSD911 is a documentary film about **real people**: normal, average human beings who have chosen to work in professions that require **above average heroism**, fortitude, and resolve. These men and women have jobs that require a willingness to face things that most of us can't even imagine yet maintain a high level of dignity and professionalism. First responders in fact **repeatedly see and experience** things that most of us will never see, causing compound issues related to post-traumatic stress injuries and disorders.

<https://youtu.be/iRq6rOy6qLM>

Coping With PTSD As A First Responder

<https://youtu.be/yX4g-b255YA>



35% of Police Officers suffer from PTSD*

* The Ruderman White Paper on Mental Health and Suicide of First Responders

37% of fire and EMS professionals have contemplated suicide*

* SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center Supplemental Research Bulletin
First Responders: Behavioral Health Concerns, Emergency Response, and Trauma

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DELAWARE HOPE LINE

Free 24/7 counseling, coaching, and support as well as links to mental health, addiction, and crisis services.

833-9-HOPEDE

CRISIS INTERVENTION SERVICES

Free 24/7 crisis counseling by phone, or when needed by mobile response, to address urgent and emergency behavioral health needs.

Northern De: 800-969-4357

Southern DE 800-345-6785



New Castle County

DSAMH Central Office
14 Central Ave, New Castle, DE 19720
302-255-1650

Hope Center
365 Airport Rd, New Castle, DE 19720
302-544-6818

Kent County

James W. Williams State Service Center
805 River Road, 3rd floor, Dover, DE 19901
302-857-5060

Sussex County

Thurman Adams State Service Center
546 S. Bedford St., Georgetown, DE 19947
302-515-3310