



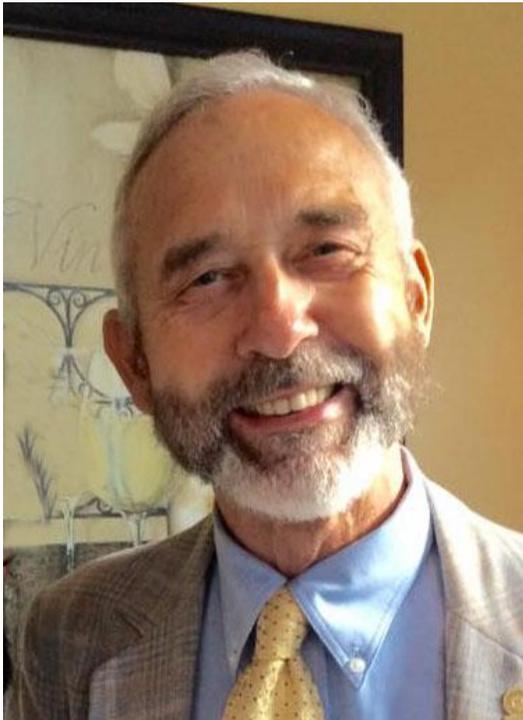
BADGE OF LIFE

POLICE MENTAL HEALTH Quarterly Newsletter July 2016

THE SOBERING TRUTH:

Police Officers died as the result of suicide in **2012: 126**
Police Officers died as the result of gunfire in **2012: 49**
Police officers (est.) in US with symptoms of PTSD: **150,000**

*For every police suicide, almost **1,000 officers** continue to work while suffering the painful symptoms of PTSD.*



Badge of Life began tracking police suicides again on January 1st as a part of its fourth study on this topic. We continue to need your help—police personnel, private citizens, dispatchers, teachers, clinicians and others—in identifying and classifying these law enforcement deaths as they happen.

For those who need reassurance in reporting, we do not include the names of departments in our study, nor do we include the names of individuals. Suicides are reported by state only.

If you hear of or read about a police suicide (active duty), don't assume we know about it--unfortunately, too many of these are "hidden." Write us and let us know by contacting me at badgeoflife@gmail.com, or simply look us up on [our website](#).

This issue of our newsletter focuses on several key issues, one the reluctance of officers to make that first visit for psychological assistance; we suggest a novel approach to this problem. Progress, albeit slow, is being made in the recognition of PTSD as a malady that commonly affects police officers in the line of duty. Kudos most certainly go to the Norwalk, Connecticut Police Department for its recognition and memorializing of officers lost to suicide. Also out of Connecticut is a new DOJ/NAMI report that is worthy of review.

--Ron Clark, RN, MS, Chairman of the Board

One of the hardest things for officers to overcome is taking that “first step” towards seeing a licensed therapist or psychologist. There is the ever-present fear of confidentiality and a discomfort borne of a fear of the unknown. This is particularly challenging when officers are encouraged to visit a therapist for something as simple and, ideally, routine, such as the [“annual mental health check.”](#) One novel approach that has been advanced by Dr. Marla Friedman is what she calls a [“BUDDY SYSTEM,”](#) in which an officer, such as one from peer support who has undergone the experience already, offers to accompany the fledgling on that all-important first visit. Often, this is just to introduce the officer, but also serves the purpose of eliminating much of the stigma that goes along with walking through that door.



Nightmares are dreams that are threatening and scary. Nearly everyone has had a nightmare from time to time. For trauma survivors, though, nightmares are a common problem. Along with flashbacks and unwanted memories, [nightmares](#) are one of the ways in which a trauma survivor may relive the trauma for months or years after the event. Among the general public, about 5% of people complain of nightmares. Those who have gone through a trauma, though, are more likely to have distressing nightmares after the event. This is true no matter what type of trauma it is.

A police board approved disability benefits for the family of [Craig Tiger](#), a former Phoenix officer whose suicide became a rallying cry for changes in how PTSD is handled. Members of the five-person Phoenix Police Pension Board agreed to the measure in a 3-1 vote, with one member absent from the afternoon hearing. Tiger’s supporters say the move validates PTSD as a real and serious injury in an industry that values unflappable mental health.

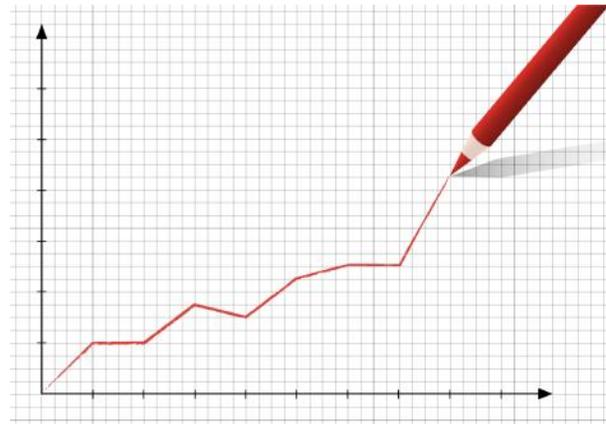


[The On-Site Academy](#) is a non-profit residential treatment and training center in Massachusetts for critical incident stress management. They serve emergency service workers who are in distress. The program is for all law enforcement, fire service, EMS, or other human service personnel who are themselves temporarily overwhelmed by the stress of their jobs, what they have seen, and what they have been through.



To have a big influence on another person's life, [therapists should make sure their skills](#) are strong, sharp, and up to the challenge. When we say skills, we're not referring to experience or age of the therapist. Skill level involves the preparation, commitment, and willingness to become a better therapist. A therapist should never assume they know it all, or that they should know it all. This can be a terrible trap and one that can make people in therapy feel like they are wasting their time.

Evidence suggests suicide rates among middle-aged adults in the United States have grown. [An investigation](#) by the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention revealed that the annual age-adjusted suicide rate among persons aged 35-64 years increased 28.4% between 1999 and 2010. Though suicide rates historically are higher among men, the suicide rate for women in this age group increased more (31.5%) than did the suicide rate for men.

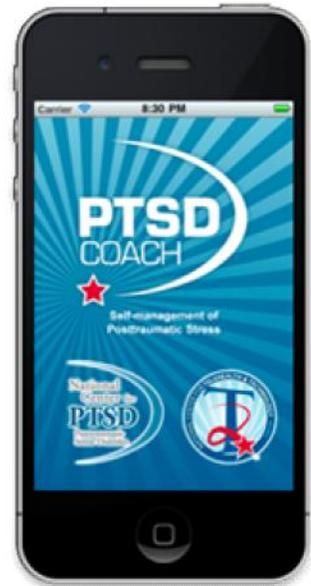


The kind of stress that 911 dispatchers experience is not the garden-variety stress the average person experiences. The stress experienced by dispatchers is what develops with listening to someone else's absolute worst day — every day. Just like other members of any emergency response team, a [dispatcher can handle a hundred situations](#) effortlessly, yet there may be one that triggers him or her. Even in that one moment when the one call gets under your skin, the 911 dispatcher must carry on.

The PTSD Coach app can help you learn about and manage symptoms that often occur after trauma. Features include:

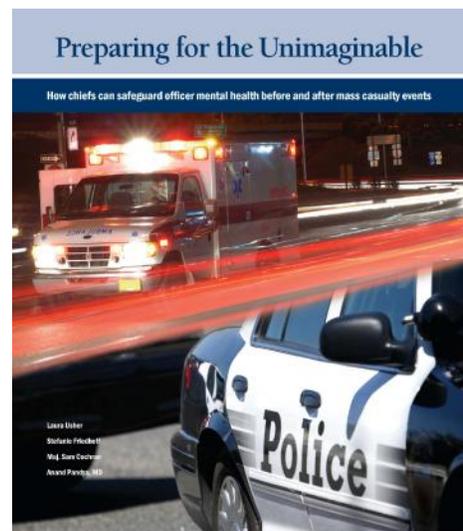
- Reliable information on PTSD and treatments that work
- Tools for screening and tracking your symptoms
- Convenient, easy-to-use tools to help you handle stress symptoms
- Direct links to support and help
- Always with you when you need it

The app can be downloaded at [iOS and Google Play](#).



The Norwalk, Connecticut Police Department broke from tradition at its annual memorial service on Wednesday. In addition to its established practice of paying tribute to four Norwalk PD officers who died in the line of duty, this year the department also recognized eight of its officers [who took their own lives](#). This is a rarity and, certainly, an example that should be followed by agencies and departments nationwide.

A US Justice Department and National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) report prompted by the Newtown murders and other high casualty events urges police chiefs around the country to put mental health programs in place to help officers cope with on-the-job trauma, including the aftermath of mass shootings. The report, [Preparing for the Unimaginable: How chiefs can safeguard officer mental health before and after mass casualty events](#), released on May 25, is offered as a best practices guide. It was prepared with help from officials including retired Newtown Police Chief Michael Kehoe, who led the response for the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting and reportedly worried during the following weeks that some of his officers might kill themselves.





An interview with Bruce Sokolove: A former marine, police officer and patrol commander, Bruce Sokolove (“Coach Sok”) is a member of the State of Michigan’s Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES) *Curriculum Advisory Task Force* and serves as the President of the Michigan State University's School of Criminal Justice Alumni Advisory Board. Coach Sok has published in *Police Chief* and *Law and Order* magazines and served on their Combat Veteran Reentry Task Force which published three manuals: *Employing Returning Combat Veterans as Law Enforcement Officers*, *Combat Veterans and Law Enforcement* and *Law Enforcement Leader’s Guide on Combat Veterans*. He has presented at the International Association of Chiefs of Police annual conference and at the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Academy at Quantico, Virginia.



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