

LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT



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FIRE CHIEF

February 19, 2020

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS
FILE NO. 20-021

TO: Board of Fire Commissioners

FROM:  Ralph M. Terrazas, Fire Chief

SUBJECT: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROGRAM REPORT ON THE EMS MENTAL
HEALTH RESPONDER TRAINING PROGRAM

FINAL ACTION:	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved w/Corrections	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn
	<input type="checkbox"/> Denied	<input type="checkbox"/> Received & Filed	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

SUMMARY

As requested by the Board of Fire Commissioners on November 19, 2019, the Behavioral Health Program (BHP) is providing this report on the recommended Mental Health Awareness (MHA) program, supplemental training module for Chief Officers.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board:
Receive and file this report.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Department does not anticipate any fiscal impact at this time.

DISCUSSION

The MHA supplemental training module is designed as an active training experience to be delivered to Chief Officers of the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD). Training schedule to be determined by the LAFD Training Department.

CHIEF OFFICERS SUPPLEMENTAL TRAINING MODULE

Course Description:

Being a Chief Officer is a major accomplishment that holds many levels of responsibility. Chief Officers must manage the wellbeing of LAFD members while maintaining a supportive environment and upholding departmental standards. This represents a set of unique challenges which often leaves Chief Officers feeling incapable of successfully managing the mental health wellbeing of their members. Given these unique circumstances inherent with being a Chief Officer, it is recommended that a supplemental training module be created to address these concerns.

Course Delivery: The supplemental module is an active training experience that requires approximately two hours of instruction time in a classroom setting.

Target Audience: This training is geared toward Chief Officers.

Learning Design, Goals, and Objectives: Course will be presented as live instruction in a classroom setting, with the following learning goals and objectives.

Goals:

Goal 1: To provide Chief Officers with basic skills on effective communication, empathic engagement and active listening to help develop environment of support for their members.

Goal 2: To understand when to intervene with other sworn members when mental health concerns are observed.

Goal 3: To develop adherence to accountability for members' actions and behaviors in line with departmental standards.

Objectives:

Objective 1: Discuss and identify factors that promote stigma and how these factors prevent members from seeking help; learn how mental health and fire culture myths play a role in stigma, and discuss how this can negatively impact members.

Objective 2: Learn to identify useful skills needed to engage in an appropriate discussion with peers experiencing mental health concerns.

Objective 3: Provide an understanding of the role in adhering to expected departmental standards by maintaining accountability of their members by building trust, improving performance, promoting ownership and inspiring confidence.

Section	Topic	Lessons
Unit 1:	Stigma	Provide rate of mental health conditions among first responders by debunking the myths Chief Officers have about mental illness. Identify how perpetuating myths and own belief systems actively impedes members from seeking help.
Unit 2:	Fire Culture	Address how stigma, ignorance and avoidance enable a culture of silence and un-wellness resulting in discouragement for seeking out treatment. Discuss the positive impact of management embracing MHA wellness.
Unit 3:	Leadership Skills	Develop awareness on how behaviors can impact organizational outcomes. Learn effective communication skills on how to provide social support and recognize when members need MH intervention and address comfort level in delegating and keeping members accountable for their behaviors.

If approved, the supplemental module will be conducted and monitored by the BHP. The program will be regularly evaluated by the BHP using formal and informal evaluations from the members. As part of the evaluation process, BHP will also identify and include any future recommendations provided by the membership as well as adapt the training to highlight any evolving trends within the fire service.

CONCLUSION

The efforts of the Los Angeles Fire Department Behavioral Health Program in creating the above programming represent a significant push forward in terms of increasing awareness, accessibility, and promotion of a cultural shift from a top down perspective regarding mental health and wellness within the fire service.

Board report prepared by Dr. Krystle Madrid, Fire Psychologists, LAFD Behavioral Health Program.