



people **prevent** suicide

An open letter to Law Enforcement and Emergency Services Professionals

Welcome to QPR training!

Like CPR training, QPR training will prepare you to assist someone in a suicide crisis.

While this training program may be useful in your professional work, our primary goal here is to train you to prevent suicide among your colleagues, co-workers, friends and family members.

Because of your exposure to trauma, violence, assault, murder, suicide, and death, research has shown that law enforcement and emergency services professionals are at greater risk for suicide than their equally educated and experienced counterparts in other lines of work.

According to experts, law enforcement professionals are:

- ◆ 8 times more likely to die by suicide than by homicide
- ◆ 3 times more likely to die by suicide than by accident
- ◆ More likely to die by suicide than be killed by a felon or in a line of duty accident

While accurate statistics are difficult to find, it is estimated that between 200 and 450 police officers kill themselves each year compared to 150 lives lost in the line of duty. The risk of suicide among police officers is approximately 7 times as great as the average American worker according to the Department of Labor. Police officers have the highest risk among 10 different occupations cited.

But please note.

Despite these findings, most law enforcement and emergency services professionals are healthy, well-functioning people and are not at increased risk for suicide. Because of psychological screening requirements in many settings, first responder professionals are among the most mentally fit adults in the world.

The work can be very stressful.

Demands are great.

Shift work, sleep deprivation, multiple and accumulating exposure to traumatic incidents, and maintaining high levels of vigilance while on duty can wear down one's reserves, leading to symptoms of stress and distress.

The most common causes for thinking about suicide among law enforcement and emergency services professionals include the onset of symptoms of depression, drinking too heavily, possible exposure to public humiliation, legal difficulties related to the job, and relationship conflicts.

While this training program is designed primarily to help you help someone you know, it is also designed to help you help yourself.

If you are having even passing thoughts of suicide, please learn more about depression and take the free depression screening provided to you in this program. Or talk to your chaplain, your peer support colleague, or whomever your agency has designed as the "go-to" person when the going gets tough.

One officer death by suicide is one too many.

Learn QPR and make a difference.

Thanks for all you do and be safe.

The staff and faculty of the QPR Institute

Recommended reading:

- ◆ Police Suicide, 2nd edition (2007) Charles C. Thomas, Publishers, Springfield, Illinois
- ◆ Under the Blue Shadow (2007). Charles C. Thomas, Publishers, Springfield, Illinois
- ◆ Police Suicide: Tactic for Prevention (2005). Charles C. Thomas, Publishers, Springfield, Illinois