

First Responders: When our HEROES Need Help

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Describe two aspects of the culture of First Responders.**
- **List three barriers to getting treatment or help that First Responders face.**
- **Identify two next step strategies to implement to bring Problem Gambling Awareness and Education to First Responders in your community.**

WHO ARE FIRST RESPONDERS?

EMTS

EMS

FIREFIGHTERS

POLICE

ER NURSES

ER DOCTORS

911 DISPATCHERS

ORDINARY PEOPLE DOING EXTRAORDINARY THINGS



WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT FIRST RESPONDERS AND GAMBLING?

► Little research exists

A 2020 study out of Australia looked at Firefighters and Gambling:

- results showed that 12.3% of firefighters reported gambling problems as measured by the Problem Gambling Severity Index
- rates were comparable to other mental health disorders
- gambling rates were high compared to other addictive behaviors
- problems may be a hidden issue among emergency service workers

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONCERNS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

► HIGHER RATES OF DEPRESSION AND POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

estimated 30% of First Responders develop behavioral health conditions compared to 20 % of general population

► HIGHER RATES OF SUBSTANCE USE

estimated heavy or binge drinking occurs in up to 50 % of male firefighters and up to 39.5% of female firefighters compared to 12-15% in the general population

higher levels of smoking also reported

► HIGHER RATES OF IDEATION AND ATTEMPTS OF SUICIDE

estimated fire and EMS professionals have contemplated suicide 10x the rate of American Adults—6.6% of Fire and EMS professionals reported having attempted suicide compared to 0.5% of civilians

estimated between 125 and 300 police officers commit suicide every year- lifetime prevalence rates for suicide ideation in police officers in 2016 study was 25% female officers and 23.1 % of male officers

Impact of Gambling w/ SU and MH Disorders

- ▶ **Problem Gambling is Associated w/ Higher Rates of:**
 - Depression**
 - Alcohol-related Problems**
 - Legal Problems**
 - Unemployment**
 - Utilization of MH TX**
 - Suicide Attempts**



- ▶ **A first responder's schedule can be disruptive. It is harder to maintain a normal home life**
- ▶ **They can suffer post-traumatic stress disorder, which puts a strain on romantic and family relationships.**
- ▶ **A first responder could be physically injured at work. This also increases stress, both emotional and financial.**

SPEAKS LAW FIRM

Family Member's Perspective

FIRST RESPONDERS AND OTHER HEALTH CONCERNS

- ▶ ***...exposure (direct or indirect) to death, grief, injury, pain, or loss as well as direct exposure to threats to personal safety, long hours of work, frequent shifts and longer shift hours, poor sleep, physical hardships, and other negative experiences (Botha, Gwin, & Purpora, 2015; Heavey et al., 2015; Marmar et al., 2006; Patterson et al., 2012; Quevillon, Gray, Erickson, Gonzalez, & Jacobs, 2016).***
- ▶ 19% of US Law enforcement are Veterans *us Census*
- ▶ Veterans who work as police are more vulnerable to self-destructive behavior, addiction, suicide attempts *the Marshall Project*

**WHAT MAKES
GETTING
HELP SO
HARD??**



BARRIERS TO SEEKING HELP AMONG FIRST RESPONDERS

Being afraid that confidentiality will be broken

Lack of knowledge

Unwillingness to admit weakness

Negative experiences with a therapist in the past

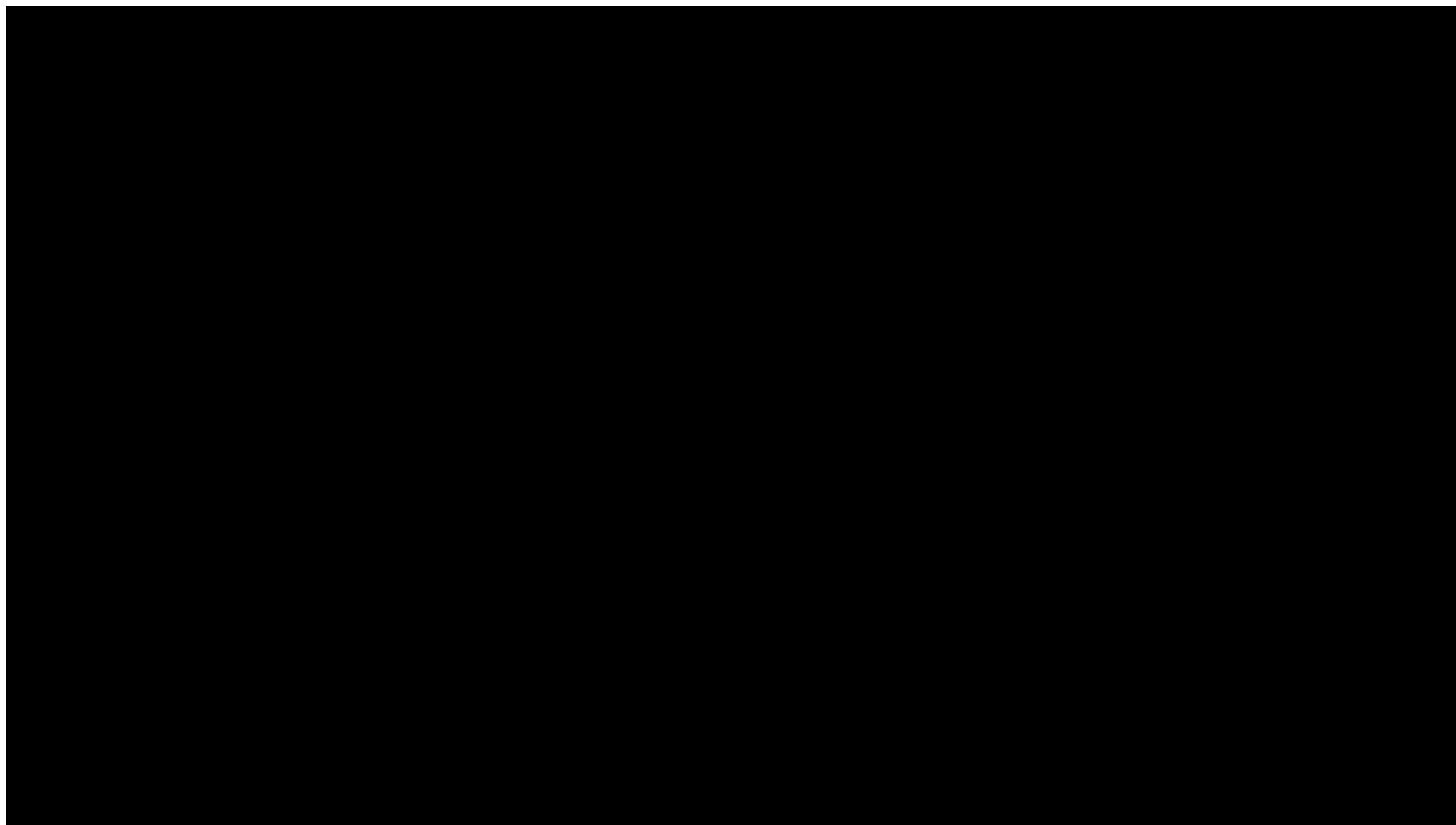
Being seen as a burden to family

Having a lack of access to treatment services

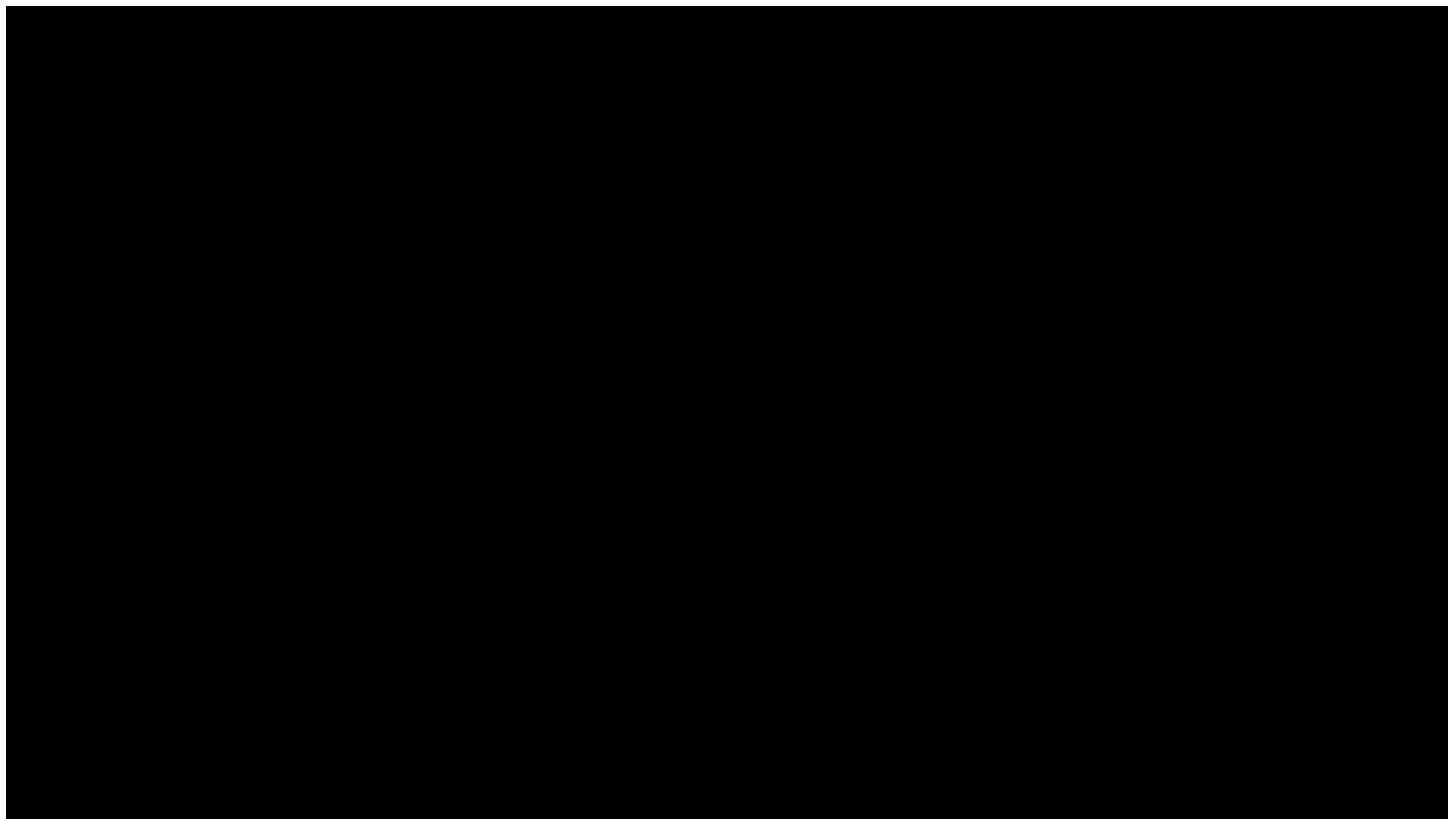
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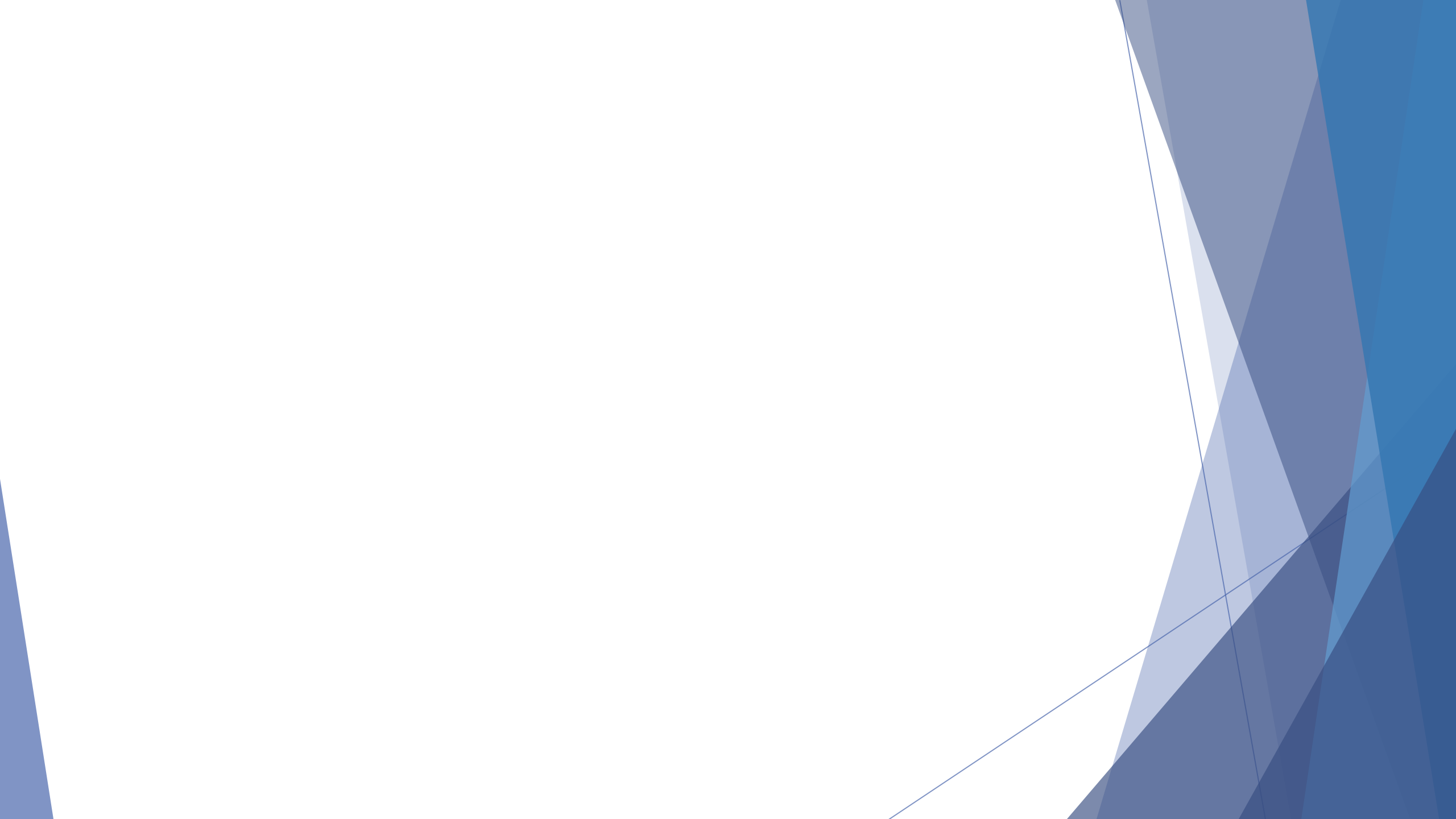
Judgement from Co-workers and Community

FIRST RESPONDERS TELL THEIR STORIES



First Responder





NEXT STEPS

- ▶ Establishing connections with First Responders and/or infrastructure that supports them and is responsible for work environment
 - station house visits
 - union reps
 - EAPs and other HR
- ▶ Share materials
 - develop short video to show
 - share “All In “ Podcast
 - create PSAs for this target group
- ▶ Data Collection
 - PGSI
 - Sample size
- ▶ Analyze Data and Share Results
- ▶ Develop programming and information to deliver to the First Responder Work Force

SOME “NON-ORDINARY RESOURCES” FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

- ▶ **YOGA FOR FIRST RESPONDERS**

<https://www.yogaforfirstresponders.org>

- ▶ **KRIPALU – RISE FOR FIRST RESPONDERS**

<https://kripalu.org/content/rise-first-responders>

- ▶ **THRESHOLD GLOBAL WORKS-SOCIAL RESILIENCE
MODEL FOR FIRST RESPONDERS**

<https://www.thresholdglobalworks.com>

Thank You!

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