Dear colleagues,

Every year across our nation, communities come together to recognize **Suicide Prevention Week (Sept. 8-14, 2019).** During this time, our community partners will be hosting events to promote mental health and raise awareness about suicide prevention. We as first responders play a key role in preventing suicide in our community, from recognizing risk, to responding to individuals in distress, providing care and referring to appropriate resources.

It is also vital that we recognize that we as first responders are not immune from mental health distress or suicide. Due to the trauma and stressors that are inherent to our service to our community, we need to remain especially vigilant of our own and our colleague’s mental health.

*The phrase “fit for duty” for first responders has historically only accounted for good physical health for the duties related to one’s job. However, recent evidence-based research indicates that maintaining one’s behavioral health is equally important.*

-First Responder Center for Excellence

Taking care of our mental health, is necessary for our effectiveness and success in honoring our service to our community, our families, and each other. Mental health is a component of safety, and it is imperative that we treat it as such.

As part of our commitment to this family, we must be courageous to reach out for support when we need it, and to reach out to our brothers and sisters when they are facing difficult times.

Below, you will find information on available resources within our agency and in our community. We ask that you not hesitate to ask for support, and the you maintain your commitment to your colleagues and ask them directly if they are thinking about suicide if you are worried and connect them to the appropriate help.

**Resources for mental health, suicide prevention and crisis support:**

* [Safe Call Now](https://www.safecallnow.org/get-help-1.html): resource for first responders and other public safety employees to talk with officers, former law enforcement officers, and/or other mental health care providers who are familiar with the line of work. Call 206-459-3020 or visit <http://www.safecallnowusa.org/>
* [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/): answered locally by trained counselors and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Lifeline is also available in Spanish and offers a prompt for veterans, or those concerned about a veteran, to connect to specially trained counselors.
  + **Call 1-800-273-8255**
  + Chat <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>
* [Crisis Text Line](https://www.crisistextline.org/): Text “HELP” to 741741 to be connected to crisis services via text messaging
* For more information on warning signs, risk factors, and how to talk to someone you are worried about, visit: [www.SuicideIsPreventable.org](http://www.SuicideIsPreventable.org)

*NOTE: Add agency specific resources (Examples: wellness unit, peer support program, psychological services program, etc.)*

We’re here for you,

(signed by leadership/supervisor)