

**CAREER SURVIVAL AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS**

The Career Survival and Emotional Wellness training provides field-tested safety techniques and emotional wellness strategies to better prepare public safety workers for actual on-the-job experiences they face every day and the support mechanisms necessary for survival. The program is comprised of two main components: Career Survival and Emotional Wellness for Police Officers and Peer Support. **Career Survival and Emotional Wellness program provider is 2 The Rescue. LLC, <https://twotherescue.com/>, 616-262-8455. Company owners are Terry Bykerk and Mike Wierenga.**

**The program is designed as a one-day 8-hour training covering:** (1) the stressors, trauma, and effects of being a law enforcement officer; (2) signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, suicidal tendencies, and destructive behavior; and (3) peer to peer support (formal and informal). The intent of the training is to educate officers on the emotional health dangers of police work, provide officers with tools to assist in recognizing common warning signs of dangerous behavior related to job stress, present positive alternatives to deal with stress, and offer strategies for assisting coworkers who may be suffering from stress and trauma.

**Training Objectives:** At the conclusion of this training, participants will be able to (1) recognize warning signs in themselves and others; (2) make appropriate decisions on who, when, how they should respond to signs of stress and trauma; and (3) assist, intervene, and support others that need care, with the overall goal of improving the emotional health and wellbeing of all officers within their department.

Course Details			
Course Title Career Survival and Emotional Wellness for Law Enforcement Officers			
Training Location TBD			
Maximum Participants 40	Minimum Participants (2/3 of Max) 27	Hours of Training Per Session 8	Number of Sessions 4

**Understanding the Heavy Toll of Working with Violence and Trauma (0800-1200 hours):**

Officers will be taught and become familiar with the effects that working in law enforcement can have on their body, mind, emotions, behavior, and family life. Some of the effects include alcoholism, PTSD, suicide, and divorce. This first area of instruction will cover the lifestyle of a police officer and discuss disturbing facts related to police work. Officers will be shown emotional dangers of working in law enforcement. Understanding that this type of work will have an influence on an officer's emotional and physical wellbeing is a key factor to preventing or minimizing the negative effects

stress and trauma. Discussion topics include:

- Understanding the lifestyle change
- Recognizing the heavy toll of police work
- Assessing the disturbing facts and acknowledging career realities
- Managing acute critical incident and post-traumatic stress
- Understanding the “Terrible 10” stressors
- Learning the good, bad, and ugly of adrenaline
- Controlling the adrenaline roller coaster
- Differentiating core values vs. situational values
- Staying ethically sound
- Identifying normal vs. abnormal behaviors

### **Recognizing Signs and Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress, Suicidal Tendencies, and Destructive Behavior (1300-1500 hours):**

One step to living a healthy lifestyle is to identify the signs and symptoms of destructive behavior in an officer’s life. This second area of instruction will help officers recognize warning signs of dangerous and unhealthy behavior in themselves and others, so that proactive steps can be made to eliminate or minimize the effects of stress and trauma related to the job. Instruction will include practical ways steps that officers can take to deal with stress in a health manner, as well as providing options to seek help. Discussion topics include:

- Maintaining the proper priorities to build a healthy resilience
- Recognizing the symptoms of post-traumatic stress
- Vicarious and secondary trauma for the officer’s family
- Becoming aware of and recognizing suicidal tendencies
- Knowing crisis referral options
- Recognizing personal destructive behavior
- Addressing the stages of an officer’s career
  - 0-5 years
  - 5-15 years
  - 15-20 years
  - 20 years into retirement

### **Peer Support - Formal and Informal (1500-1700 hours):**

Many agencies within the West Michigan Criminal Justice Training Consortium have either formal or informal peer support teams. This third area of training will further enhance the knowledge of attendees and provide them with practical steps to assist, encourage, and support their peers. Training will prepare the officers to make appropriate decisions on when to intervene, what type of intervention is needed, and when to refer a peer for help. The goal is to teach attendees best practices that can be used to help other officers prevent harmful behaviors including substance abuse, depression, unethical behavior, and suicide. By intervening early and appropriately, attendees will be able to provide support to their coworkers before they suffer from many of the

negative consequences from stress in their job. Discussion topics include:

- History of First Responder Peer Support
- Basic training needs and support
- Advanced training needs
- How to educate the new recruit
- Policy, procedure, and SOPs
- State Laws - privacy of peer to peer conversations
- What is a CISM Debriefing vs. Defusing, when is it time for one-on-ones?
- Mindset of an organization and its personnel
- Building awareness and trust, how to make your team visible
- Who is on this team and how to keep them active?
- Where does CISM fall when dealing with first responder family members?
- References, resources, and support

### **Contractor/Training Provider/Instructors:**

1. Mike Wierenga is a co-founder of Two The Rescue L.L.C. He has over 25 years of law enforcement experience, 18 years as a firefighter, and nearly 5,000 hours of classroom and practical skill instruction for public safety agencies, colleges, universities, hospitals and security agencies. Mike's training and experience includes over 320 hours of critical-incident stress management programs combined with an immeasurable number of front-line applications in line-of-duty deaths, officer-involved shootings, suicides, violent tragedies and deaths. Mike is an active team leader with his department's peer support Cop to Cop Critical Incident Stress Management Team and was instrumental in the creation and implementation of a pre-incident wellness educational program for new recruits and their families. Mike's passion for the emotional wellness and the safety of emergency responders is readily apparent in his professional presentation skills. Mike is currently assigned to the Training Bureau at the Grand Rapids Police Department.
2. Terry Bykerk has over 25 years of law enforcement experience in patrol, vice, S.W.A.T., field training, investigations and street undercover operations. He has extensive experience in standard operating guideline liability and implementation, training program development and adult learner advancement – including over 5000 hours of classroom and practical skill instruction in area colleges, universities, hospitals and security agencies as well as fire and police departments. Terry has a unique way of sharing his personal successes and pitfalls not just as “war stories,” but in an educational way that will get you thinking.