

Interactive Resource



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Preparing for the Unimaginable: How Chiefs Can Safeguard Officer Mental Health Before and After Mass Casualty Events

This interactive publication provides expert advice and practical tips that law enforcement executives can implement to safeguard officer mental health before and after a mass casualty event.

To help the Newtown, CT Police Department cope with the murder of 26 people, including 20 children, at Sandy Hook Elementary School, the COPS Office partnered with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) in 2013 to provide guidance. This publication is the result of NAMI's work with Newtown's then police chief, Michael Kehoe. With his leadership, NAMI convened an expert advisory group of police chiefs who had experienced mass casualty events in their communities, along with the mental health professionals who advised them, to gather lessons learned and guidance for other chiefs. NAMI also sought guidance from numerous police leaders, mental health professionals, and trauma and media experts. The result is this e-Guide, which educates chiefs and command staff about officer mental wellness, provides steps to preparing for the mental health impact of a mass casualty incident, and walks them through the crisis and the aftermath.

While events like Sandy Hook have raised awareness of the challenges that officers face, the day-to-day impact of police work is much greater. Fortunately, there are many steps that law enforcement leaders can take now to build resilient agencies, whether or not they ever experience a mass casualty incident. There are also ways to prepare for the possibility of such an incident. This guide can serve as a resource for agencies interested in getting started.



Target Audience:

Community stakeholders interested in safeguarding the mental health of law enforcement professionals.

Cooperative Partners:

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