Combating Traumatic Mental Stress

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Traumatic Mental Stress (TMS), including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), is a significant risk to the health and well-being of police officers, firefighters, correctional services staff, emergency medical services and transit services workers, who regularly face, or are affected by, traumatic situations.

Along with the work by the Roundtable on Traumatic Mental Stress, the province has implemented a number of initiatives to address mental health in the workplace.

Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services

Operational Stress Injuries (OSI) have been defined as: “any persistent psychological difficulty that police personnel experience as a result of operational duties including but not limited to: depression, anxiety, addictions, and PTSD.”

To better support members, the Ontario Provincial Police has:

- Established an Employee Wellness Section to provide dedicated resources to address OSI and support members, retirees and their families. This is funded by a $4.4 million allocation in the 2014 budget,
- Enhanced its Critical Incident Stress Response/Peer Support Team to provide consistent and effective support for members involved in critical incidents.
- Extended support for counselling sessions for retired and former members for up to one year after termination of service.
- Improved education and training to help officers recognize and address OSI.

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is also consulting with other government ministries and agencies and with its partners in the policing community. Several initiatives are underway across government to respond to OSI among public sector workers. Among them:

Policing

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services co-chairs the PTSD Working Group, along with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). Membership also includes representatives from the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards (OAPSB), the OPP, municipal police services, and police associations across Ontario.

The working group’s mandate is to identify and develop comprehensive occupational strategies to respond to police personnel who have incurred, or are at risk for OSI/PTSD.
Correctional Services

Joint union and management initiatives

- **Health and Productivity Programs** – to manage workplace accommodations for employees with PTSD, who might need special accommodations and
- **Operational Stress Injuries** – to develop training to help staff recognize and address and respond to signs of operational stress injuries.

Critical Incident stress management program (CISM) – provides education regarding critical incident stress to minimize the harmful effects of stress resulting from crisis or emergency situations by using trained CISM volunteer teams.

Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management (OFMEM)

OFMEM has provided PTSD training to staff in its Fire Investigation Services unit on numerous occasions dating back to 2001 and remains committed to including PTSD awareness as part of routine staff training.

The Ontario Fire College will implement a mental health awareness course as part of the 2015 course calendar.

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has supported a number of initiatives to help people with traumatic mental stress:

- Counselling programs in locations across Ontario for people with PTSD.
- Specific counselling programs to help people with PTSD return to work, through the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.
- Workplace supports and outreach targeted to employers, provided through community organizations, including Canadian Mental Health Association local branches and Public Health Units.
- Funding ConnexOntario, which provides free and confidential health services, including connecting those experiencing crisis to appropriate services.

Ministry of Children and Youth Services

Stress management is an integral part of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services’ Justice Services’ crisis response in its secure and open custody facilities as well as in its probation offices. Support, counselling and advice are provided to staff, young persons, their families and others who may have been emotionally or psychologically affected by a crisis.