

Direct Support for Officers During Crisis, Trauma and Personal Struggles

New Jersey State Policemen's Benevolent Association Peer Response Team (PRT)



Law enforcement officers are routinely exposed to *trauma, critical incidents, organizational stress, and cumulative emotional strain*. Officers involved in shootings, struggling with alcohol misuse, experiencing suicidal thoughts, or facing disciplinary and career-related stress often suffer in silence due to stigma, fear of judgment, or concerns about confidentiality.

The **New Jersey State Policemen's Benevolent Association (NJSPBA) Peer Response Team (PRT)** exists to ensure officers never face those struggles alone. The PRT provides confidential, culturally competent support from trained peers, chaplains, and clinicians who understand the realities of policing and can intervene early before a crisis escalates.

The **NJSPBA PRT** is available at no cost to officers or departments as a membership benefit.

1. Officer-Involved Shootings and Critical Incidents

An officer-involved shooting or other critical incident can have immediate and long-term psychological effects, including hypervigilance, sleep disruption, anxiety, guilt, anger, depression, isolation, and family strain.

The **NJSPBA PRT** provides:

- Immediate peer response and on-scene support after critical incidents
- Follow-up support during investigations and administrative leave
- Assistance normalizing trauma reactions and reducing isolation
- Connection to confidential clinicians experienced in police trauma
- Guidance for spouses and family members impacted by the incident
- Support throughout the return-to-duty process

The goal is to help officers stabilize emotionally, reduce the risk of long-term trauma reactions, and ensure they feel supported rather than abandoned during one of the most difficult periods of their career.

2. Support for Officers Struggling with Alcohol or Substance Use

Many officers turn to alcohol or other unhealthy coping strategies to manage chronic stress, trauma exposure, sleep disruption, and emotional exhaustion.

The **NJSPBA PRT** helps officers by:

Providing confidential peer support without fear of departmental exposure

- Connecting officers to vetted inpatient and outpatient treatment programs
- Assisting officers and families during the treatment and recovery process
- Reducing stigma associated with asking for help
- Encouraging early intervention before problems impact careers, relationships, or safety

Peer supporters understand the unique culture of policing and can often reach officers who would never initially approach a clinician or supervisor.

3. Suicide Prevention and Emotional Crisis Support

Law enforcement officers face elevated rates of depression, hopelessness, burnout, and suicidal thoughts due to cumulative trauma, organizational stress, sleep deprivation, and personal pressures.

The **NJSPBA PRT** provides: **(continued on next page...)**

- Immediate confidential support for officers in emotional crisis
- Suicide risk intervention and safety planning
- Ongoing check-ins and peer follow-up
- Assistance connecting officers to culturally competent clinicians
- Support for family members concerned about an officer's well-being
- Coordination of higher levels of care when necessary

The **PRT's** mission is simple: intervene early, reduce isolation, and help keep officers alive.

4. Officers in Trouble with Their Departments

Officers facing internal affairs investigations, disciplinary action, career setbacks, public scrutiny, or organizational conflict often experience overwhelming stress, shame, anger, anxiety, and fear regarding their future.

The **NJSPBA PRT** provides support by:

- Helping officers manage emotional reactions during investigations
- Providing confidential peer support outside the chain of command
- Reducing isolation and hopelessness
- Connecting officers with mental health and wellness resources
- Supporting officers whose personal struggles may be impacting performance
- Helping officers maintain stability during high-stress professional situations

The PRT recognizes that officers under investigation or discipline are often at heightened risk for depression, substance misuse, family conflict, and suicidal thinking.

5. Confidentiality and Trust

Officers are far more likely to seek help when they trust their conversations will remain confidential.

The NJSPBA has been instrumental in securing legal protections for confidentiality between officers and peer supporters. This confidentiality helps remove barriers to seeking support and encourages officers to ask for help before situations worsen.

6. A Statewide Network of Support

The **NJSPBA PRT** consists of trained peers, chaplains, and clinicians throughout New Jersey who understand the realities of police work because many have lived them themselves.

The team provides:

- Peer support
- Chaplain support
- Referrals to trauma-informed clinicians
- Wellness training
- Critical incident response
- Family support resources
- Guidance navigating treatment options and recovery

Conclusion

The **NJSPBA Peer Response Team** is more than a wellness resource—it is a lifeline for officers facing trauma, crisis, emotional distress, addiction, or career-related stress. Whether an officer has been involved in a shooting, is struggling with alcohol, experiencing suicidal thoughts, or facing difficulties within their department, the PRT provides confidential support, practical guidance, and direct access to care from people who understand the law enforcement profession. By intervening early and supporting officers through their most difficult moments, the **NJSPBA PRT** helps protect officer wellness, preserve careers, strengthen families, and save lives.

For additional information about the **NJSPBA Peer Response Team**, contact **Luke Sciallo at 732-904-5660**.



<https://njspba.com/clinical-services/>