

Amanda Price
Commissioner

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STATE OF ALASKA



Department of
Public Safety

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DPS Expands Training to Bolster Employee Wellness

Mental Health First Aid courses now being offered to spouses of DPS first responders

January 24, 2020 (ANCHORAGE) – In furthering its commitment to employee wellness, the Department of Public Safety has partnered with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, the Mat-Su Health Foundation, and the University of Alaska Anchorage's Center for Human Development Alaska Training Cooperative to bring Mental Health First Aid Training for First Responders to Troopers and Dispatchers, as well as their spouses.

The eight-hour Mental Health First Aid course educates participants on various mental health problems, how to recognize conditions and coping mechanisms, and first aid for those mental crises. The skills are crucial for first responders as they attempt to deescalate situations involving people in mental health emergencies.

Spouses of first responders are now offered the course because law enforcement officers and dispatchers regularly find themselves in the middle of traumatic, life-altering events. The aftermath of repeated exposure to trauma can manifest in unhealthy ways and impact a first responder's professional and personal life. Spouses can help their first responder identify if and when to seek help.

"Nationally, there is a crisis. More law enforcement officers are dying by suicide than are killed in the line of duty. We train troopers and dispatchers how to best serve the public, but we have historically overlooked how serving the public can cause mental duress to officers and their families," said Commissioner Amanda Price, Department of Public Safety.

"Offering this training not only improves our service to the public, it also gives us an opportunity to address possible mental turmoil in our first responders before it is damaging to their lives on and off

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the job. Serving the members of DPS, who serve Alaskans, is a core mission of DPS in this administration.”

The DPS’s Advanced Training Unit is coordinating with the individual trooper detachments to schedule classes for law enforcement and courses for law enforcement spouses during 2020. In 2019, the DPS held 12 eight-hour Mental Health First Aid Training classes.

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