

The Interim Study Commission on PTSD in First Responders

Communication Plan to Promote and Distribute PTSD Information & Resources for Alabama's First Responders

The Interim Study Commission on PTSD in First Responders is charged with identifying effective ways to connect first responders with existing resources to address the growing need for PTSD education, treatment, and support.

Throughout the committee's work to strengthen mental health support, awareness, and communication for Alabama's first responders, it has received research, resources and information from state leaders, reviewed newly developed communication materials and affirmed its strategy to distribute critical information through strong partnerships with state, municipal and county associations.

To ensure all resources reach the first responders who need them most, the committee is working closely with the Alabama League of Municipalities (ALM) and the Association of County Commissions of Alabama (ACCA). Information will also be distributed to the Local Government Insurance Board and law enforcement agencies.

The communication plan outlines coordinated strategies to promote PTSD education, crisis resources, and veteran mental health programs to Alabama's first responders. It leverages statewide partnerships, targeted outreach, multi-format materials, and event engagement to reduce stigma, increase awareness, and connect responders with lifesaving support.

1. Communication Objectives

1. Increase awareness of PTSD symptoms, risk factors, and available crisis and treatment resources among first responders across Alabama.
2. Normalize help-seeking behaviors by reducing stigma associated with mental health challenges in high-stress professions.
3. Connect law enforcement and first responders to the Connect Alabama app, crisis centers, first responder toolkits and training, and veteran mental health programs—including newly funded telehealth and recovery programs.
4. Distribute consistent, accessible information through trusted state, county, and municipal partner networks.
5. Reach frontline responders directly through conferences, associations, local PIOs, and agency leadership.
6. Support responders experiencing trauma and post-traumatic stress through tailored, practical tools designed to reduce burnout.

2. Key Audiences

Primary Audiences

- City and county officials
- Local Government Insurance Board
- Municipal police, fire, and EMS personnel
- County sheriffs' offices and deputies
- Volunteer fire departments
- Emergency management agencies
- Veterans working in public safety roles
- Dispatchers and communications personnel
- Veteran-serving organizations
- Healthcare and mental health providers

3. Core Messages

PTSD Is Common—and Treatable

- PTSD is a natural psychological response to traumatic events, not a sign of weakness.
- First responders face higher risks due to repeated exposure to critical incidents.
- Mild traumatic brain injuries can double PTSD risk; early screening matters.

Confidential Help Is Available 24/7

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline connects responders to trained crisis counselors who understand trauma, high-stress jobs, and local resources.
- Calls are confidential and do not trigger workplace reporting.

Alabama Offers Robust Crisis and Treatment Resources

- Connect Alabama App: one-tap access to treatment locators, hotlines, Naloxone info, and behavioral health supports.
<https://vitalalabama.com/resources/find-help/connect-alabama/>
- Statewide 24/7 Crisis Centers: walk-in stabilization, mobile crisis teams, and local follow-up services. <https://mh.alabama.gov/crisis-centers/>
- First Responder-specific flyers, QR codes, and toolkits created by ADMH.
<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1aPxzGLSnFVCE2uGrIttdO9nwXDK8oIH>
- VitAL First Responder Resources: videos, training modules, and specialized support. <https://vitalalabama.com/resources/first-responders/>

New Veterans' Mental Health Programs are available

- Opioid Settlement Fund Grants supports free or low-cost telehealth therapy and residential recovery programs.
- <https://mh.alabama.gov/veterans-mental-health-steering-committee/>

4. Communication Channels & Distribution Strategy

Strong partnerships will serve as the primary distribution pathways:

Committed organizations:

- Alabama League of Municipalities (ALM)
- Association of County Commissions of Alabama (ACCA)
- Local Government Insurance Board

Communicated and Following up:

- Peace Officers Association
- Sheriff's Association
- Fire Chiefs Association
- ALEA and local law enforcement agencies
- NAMI Alabama (Johnny Hollingsworth)

Partner Deliverables

- Digital toolkits
- Print-ready flyers (8x10, color + B/W versions)
- Newsletter blurbs
- Social media graphics and tags
- App and video links (including the Connect Alabama 30-second explainer)

Direct First Responder Engagement

Information can be shared through:

- Roll-call materials
- Department newsletters
- Internal training
- Peer-support teams
- Alabama Veterans Resource Center
- Posters in stations and break rooms

Events and Conferences

Support with Materials or Participation in:

- NAMI AL CIT trainings through Johnny Hollingsworth
- Sheriff's Winter Conference – Jan 18–21 (Birmingham)
- Municipal Mayors & Council Members Conference – Apr 28–May 1 (Montgomery)
- ACCA Statewide August Conference
- Mental Health Awareness Month (May)
 - ALM Podcast spotlight
 - Social media postings
 - Resource highlight videos

Event Activities

- Staffing resource tables
- Distributing printed flyers, QR code cards, and brochures
- Demonstrating the Connect Alabama app
- Providing vicarious trauma resources
- Promoting veteran telehealth and recovery programs

5. Marketing & Content Development

Deliverables (by EOY)

1. Short promotional text on PTSD, 988, crisis centers, Connect Alabama, veteran programs
2. One longer article summarizing committee work and statewide improvements
3. 8x10 flyers (color + black/white)
4. Program-specific graphics for social media
5. Link to Connect Alabama tutorial video

Creative Principles

- Plain-language, stigma-reducing messaging
- Trauma-informed tone
- Clear calls to action (scan, click, call)
- Adaptable layout for digital or print use
- Compatible with non-color printers

6. Collaboration Framework

Open Content Sharing

- Partners may adapt, or brand materials.
- Mutual social media tagging to increase reach.
- Consistent messaging across all associations.

7. Implementation Timeline

Preparation	Create newsletter blurbs, flyers, graphics; compile toolkits; share Connect Alabama video.
Initial Distribution	Send materials to ALM, ACCA, Fire Chiefs, Peace Officers, Sheriffs, and other audiences
Event Activation	Staff conference booths, distribute materials, provide demos, gather feedback.
Ongoing Engagement	Newsletter reminders, social media posts, podcast segments, resource refreshers.
Evaluation & Adjustment	Review outreach impact, update messaging, adjust distribution channels.

8. Success Metrics

- Increase in 988 call volume from first responder-identified callers
- Downloads and usage of Connect Alabama app
- Attendance at conference resource tables
- Number of partner associations distributing materials
- Engagement on shared social content (shares, tags, impressions)
- Participation in veteran telehealth/recovery programs

9. Expected Impact

Through unified messaging and strong collaboration with statewide associations, Alabama's first responders will gain:

- Easier access to mental health and crisis tools
- Greater understanding of PTSD and TBI risks
- Reduced stigma around seeking help
- Increased utilization of veteran services and crisis centers

This comprehensive approach strengthens responder well-being, enhances public safety, and builds a culture of resilience across Alabama.