



Report To: DSB Program Planning Committee  
From: Robert Smith, Chief of Paramedic Services  
Date: April 26, 2017  
Re: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - Prevention Plan

## Purpose

The Ministry of Labour requires all Paramedic Services to have a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Prevention Plan. Each plan must include a Prevention component, an Intervention component and a Recovery and Return to Work component. PTSD Prevention Plans are subject to submission by April 2017.

## Background

On April 5, 2016, the Ontario legislature passed into law Bill 163: Supporting Ontario's First Responders Act. This legislation amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to make any diagnosis of a first responder a presumptive work related illness. Additionally, an amendment was made allowing the Minister of Labour to direct included employers to produce, and subsequently have published a PTSD Prevention Plan.

On April 23, 2016, the following notice was made in the Ontario Gazette Volume 149, Issue 17: Notice of Direction Made Pursuant to Subsection 9.1(1) of the Ministry of Labour Act

*"Pursuant to the authority granted to me in subsection 9.1(1) of the Ministry of Labour Act, as the Minister of Labour, I hereby direct, all employers who employ workers to whom section 14 of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 applies, to provide me information relating to their plans to prevent posttraumatic stress disorder arising out of and in the course of employment at the employer's workplace, which may include a workplace prevention plan. I am directing those employers to provide me with information on their workplace posttraumatic stress disorder prevention plans no later than April 23, 2017, one year from the date of the posting of this notice. The information shall be provided in an electronic Word file and shall be submitted to: [ptsdprevention@ontario.ca](mailto:ptsdprevention@ontario.ca)."*

There are several components of the PTSD Prevention Plan being simultaneously worked on to meet this requirement. This report focuses on the mitigation and intervention component of the plan.

Organizationally, our WSIB NEER rating is quite substantial and is causal to recent WSIB claims for diagnosis of PTSD and occupational mental illness.

### **Current Strategies**

Both the employer and bargaining unit recognize the impact of occupational stressors on the health and wellbeing of Paramedics. Given the desire to promote an organizational culture of ongoing wellness, the parties agreed, during the recent round of collective bargaining to establish a collaborative working committee tasked to explore opportunities to mitigate occupational stressors, promote staff resiliency, support personnel needs, and challenge mental health stigmas. Additionally, the collective agreement sets out that within the first six (6) months following ratification a Peer Support program be developed to meet the needs of the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB Paramedics.

As an organization, staff have taken this requirement seriously and have already implemented several strategies, including submission of our PTSD Prevention Plan.

### **Resiliency Education**

A generic mental resilience education program was shared with all paramedics in the second quarter of 2016, while formal the Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) program was delivered to all paramedics in the fall of 2016.

### **Peer Support Team**

The Paramedic Service's R2MR instructors have been extremely engaged in the design of a peer support team, and while not formally designated a peer support members, these two instructors have taken on a supportive role for their counterparts, fielding an average of one contact per week from Paramedics seeking information or connections to assistance. The Peer Support Team implementation comprises a significant piece of the Service's intervention plan. A peer support team membership consists of service members who are available to provide peer led interventions for coworkers who have experienced a risk event. The goal is to support the individual through the effects of the stressor to mitigate the potential of the onset of PTSD.

Through investigation of what others are doing, staff discovered Canuckcare, a husband and wife team. Dr. Paulette Laidlaw, a Psychologist specializing in depression, anxiety and reactions to trauma and abuse, and her husband Kent, a retired police officer and a certified Trauma Responder.

Canuckcare has developed a Peer Support Training Program designed specifically for First Responders and provides ongoing consulting and support for the teams. They come highly recommended. They have provided their services for six paramedic services in the province including the City of Greater Sudbury of whom the DSB share many staff. Best practice would be consistent programs, to share resources and support in time of need. The recommendation is to engage in a service agreement with Canuckcare to train and support our Peer Support Team.

## **Paramedic Hiring Process**

Paramedic Services have, over the last decade, evolved testing processes to determine suitability of candidates for the position of paramedic. The hiring process now includes both academic and physical testing in most services. There has not yet been implementation of psychological and resilience testing in Ontario. With the recent deference for issues of PTSD in the profession, the service has recognized the risks due to lack of resilience to manage a career as a Paramedic. Canuckcare has confirmed their capacity to deliver bona fide pre-employment psychological screening as a final component piece for hiring Paramedics. This system used to identify personality traits, clinical symptoms, and/or psychological vulnerabilities that are likely to impair a candidate's performance, and core personality traits that influence a person's behavior and performance. This tool while specific to challenges faced by Paramedics, would mirror the current process utilized by RCMP and OPP.

## **Next Steps**

A PTSD Prevention Plan has been submitted to the Minister of Labour. A number of prevention plans from other paramedic services have been reviewed to ensure industrial consistency.

The service has met with the Joint Health and Safety Committee to review plans and associated DSB policies to ensure compliance with the Ministry of Labour and organization success.

## **Summary**

The legislative requirements clearly indicate a PTSD Prevention Plan is required. A Peer Support Team comprises a large component of the plan. The DSB, as a proactive employer is fully committed to the mental health of staff and is well under way to meet those requirements. The recommendation proposes engaging with Canuckcare to design, implement and support our peer support team and to conduct pre-employment psychological screening. Through engaging Canuckcare to fulfill the peer support component of our PTSD Prevention Plan, the mental health of our personnel will be positively influenced. Additionally, staff expect that the DSB could realize many benefits from a healthy workforce.

<b>2017 Implementation Peer Support Team Cost Estimates</b>			
Initial Consultation	Fee	Program Design	\$ 1,500
	Mileage	487	\$ 506
	Meals	\$60 x 2 x 2	\$ 240
	Accommodations	\$98 x 2	\$ 196
Recruitment/ Screening	Fee	Team Selection	\$ 4,500
	Mileage	487	\$ 506
	Meals	\$60 x 5 x 2	\$ 600
	Accommodations	\$98 x 5	\$ 490
Training Delivery	Fee	Management 1 day	\$ 2,000
	Fee	Peer Support Team 2 day	\$ 4,500
	Mileage	487	\$ 506
	Meals	\$60 x 3 days x 2 persons	\$ 360
	Accommodations	\$98 x 3 days x 1 persons	\$ 294
Support for 2017	Fee	7 Months X \$1,000	\$ 7,000
<b>Vendor Start Up Costs</b>			<b>\$ 23,198</b>
<b>Peer Support Team Member Education Cost Projection</b>			
Staff Expenses	Payroll	@ \$37 x 12 hrs./day	\$ 10,656
	Lunch	Staff lunch (12)	\$ 250
	Breakfast/Dinners	B/D x 3 from north	\$ 150
	Accommodations	3 from north x 2 nights	\$ 360
<b>Total Initial Training Costs</b>		<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 11,416</b>
<b>Pre-Employment Screening Cost Projection</b>			
Pre-Employment Screening	Fee	\$500/person 8 people	\$ 4,000
	Mileage	487	\$ 506
	Meals	\$60 x 5 x 2	\$ 600
	Accommodations	\$98 x 5	\$ 490
<b>Pre-Employment Screening</b>		<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$ 5,596</b>
<b>Grand Total for 2017</b>			<b>\$ 40,211</b>

<b>Annualized Peer Support Team Costs</b>			
Vendor Training Delivery	Fee	Peer Support Team 2 day	\$ 4,000
	Mileage	487	\$ 506
	Meals	\$60 x 3 days x 2 persons	\$ 360
	Accommodations	\$98 x 3 days x 1 persons	\$ 294
Support	Fee	Monthly Support	\$ 12,000
Staff Expenses	Payroll	@ \$37 x 12 hrs./day	\$ 10,656
	Lunch	Staff lunch (12)	\$ 250
	Breakfast/Dinners	B/D x 3 from north	\$ 150
	Accommodations	3 from north x 2 nights	\$ 360
Pre-Employment Screening	Fee	\$500/person 8 people	\$ 4,000
	Mileage	487	\$ 506
	Meals	\$60 x 5 x 2	\$ 600
	Accommodations	\$98 x 5	\$ 490
<b>Ongoing Annualized Total</b>			<b>\$ 34,172</b>

### **Recommendation**

Staff are recommending that the Program Planning Committee endorse the following recommendation for Board approval:

- Support the PTSD Prevention Plan submission to the Minister of Labour.
- Approve the in-year expenditure for the implementation of the Peer Support Team Prevention Plan at a cost of **\$40,211** which will be reallocated from the approved 2017 budget.
- The future annualized operational costs for the Peer Support Team Prevention Plan estimated at **\$34,172** be dealt with by the Finance Committee as they deliberate the 2018 Budget.