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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

VIDEO: Attorney General Moody Fights for First Responders, Congratulates Graduates of Florida's Law Enforcement Mental Health Certificate Program



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody continues to advocate for mental health support for Florida law enforcement officers. Today in St. Petersburg, Attorney General Moody addressed the first graduates of Florida's law enforcement Mental Health Certificate at St. Petersburg College. The novel pilot program is funded through a 2023 state budget allocation supported by Attorney General Moody. The 14 graduates are now certified to help officers struggling with mental health issues in the law enforcement agencies where they serve.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Florida is the most pro law enforcement state in the nation because we support our officers. My first year in office, we traveled the state to discuss the mental health challenges facing our heroes. Since those early conversations, Florida continues to find new ways to support the physical and mental health needs of our officers. This inaugural class is now equipped to support those they serve alongside and help them deal with the invisible scars that often accompany the heroism of sacrifice and service."

A 2022 study found that one in three law enforcement officers experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder during their careers. The same study also revealed a higher suicide rate for police officers than deaths in the line of duty.

The inaugural graduating class is comprised of 14 police officers, detectives, sergeants, commanders and corporals from the Clearwater, Gulfport, St. Petersburg and Tampa police departments. The Applied Mental Health Certificate for Law Enforcement is a year-long program designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to manage job-related stressors effectively, as well as assist fellow officers and community members facing mental health challenges. The graduating class is now qualified to act as mental health liaisons within respective agencies.

Apart from advocating for the pilot program budget allocation, Attorney General Moody:

- Served on the Presidential National Law Enforcement Commission: In 2020, Attorney General Moody was appointed to the commission tasked to explore modern issues affecting law enforcement, including dealing with mental health challenges.
- Hosted Mental Health and Criminal Justice Round Table Discussions: In 2019, Attorney General Moody hosted a series of round table discussions to identify best practices and innovative strategies. To learn more, click here.
- Supported Funding to Expand Hero Help Line Statewide: This past Session, Attorney General Moody supported legislative efforts to expand the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay's Hero Help Line. Law enforcement officers dealing with mental health challenges from throughout the state can now call 1(866) 4FL-HERO to receive confidential, immediate support.
- Urged Congress to pass the Public Safety Officer Support Act of 2022: Attorney General Moody, joined by 52 other attorneys general, urged Congress to pass the Public Safety Officer Support Act of 2022. The legislation addresses gaps in support for public safety officers who suffer from PTSD associated with the high-risk nature of their jobs. To learn more, click here.
- Presented a Back the Blue Award to an Officer for Supporting Mental Health Awareness: Attorney General Moody presented a Back the Blue Award to a Tallahassee Police Department officer who co-wrote a book with information on mental health awareness and treatment strategies for first responders. Officer Sean Wyman co-authored *Going Beyond the Call: Mental Health Fitness for Public Safety Professionals*. The book focuses on social-emotional trauma, stress impacts and communication strategies to reduce the number of suicides within the public safety industry. To learn more, click here.
- Recognized Program for Providing Law Enforcement with Service Dogs: Attorney General Moody recognized K9s For Warriors for its efforts in providing service dogs to Florida law enforcement agencies to help mitigate stress factors of support staff and officers.

Law enforcement officers who are suffering and need help should immediately contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741741. Law enforcement officers wishing to speak to someone can also call the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay's helpline at 1(866) 4FL-HERO to be connected to an individual for immediate and confidential support. To learn more about the help line, visit LastToAsk.com.

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