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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Encourages Officers Struggling to Seek Help on PTSD Awareness Day



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—In recognition of National Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day, Attorney General Ashley Moody is urging law enforcement officers who may be struggling to seek help. Supporting law enforcement is one of Attorney General Moody's top priorities—and that includes highlighting resources available to officers in need of support. In 2019, Attorney General Moody presented a cabinet resolution to the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay for its regional law enforcement mental health support line, "First to Respond, Last to Ask For Help." This help line is now available to officers statewide.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "As we recognize National PTSD Awareness Day, I want to encourage anyone struggling, to seek help—especially our brave law enforcement officers. These officers are exposed to traumatic events while protecting and serving the public, and these experiences can affect their mental health and leave them suffering in silence. No one should have to bear these burdens alone. There are caring professionals who want to help and are available around the clock—so any law enforcement officer struggling with PTSD, please seek help—it may be the bravest act of your career."

Crisis Center of Tampa Bay President & CEO Clara Reynolds said, "First responders show up without hesitation when we are experiencing our most terrifying and stressful moments, but have to carry those traumatic events with them long after the 911 call is complete. It is time for our communities to support this population to the extent that they have supported us, and that begins with providing free, confidential assistance to first responders who are struggling to cope with the impactful situations they see every day on the job. Help is available 24/7 at 1-866-4FL-HERO (1-866-435-4376)."

Approximately 100,000 active police officers in the U.S. suffer from PTSD, and many also live with depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation. According to a recent study, police officers and firefighters are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty. BlueHelp.org claims that more than 250 law enforcement officers, firefighters, correctional officers and first responders nationwide committed suicide since 2021—including 22 in Florida.

Attorney General Moody wants all law enforcement officers and first responders to know that there is no shame in seeking help. There are caring people available 24/7 who understand the struggles and challenges that often accompany protecting the public from danger and violence.

Since taking office, Attorney General Moody worked to support mental health programs and policies for law enforcement. A few actions during that time include:

Serving on the Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice: In January 2020, former U.S. Attorney General William Barr appointed Attorney General Moody as the sole state attorney general on the Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. The commission explored modern issues affecting law enforcement that most impact officers' ability to reduce crime, including the physical and mental health of police officers. The commission also issued recommendations to help assist law enforcement officers struggling with mental health challenges, such as: requiring mental health training both during law enforcement academy and as recurring in-service training for personnel, ensuring that mental health resources and services are accessible and confidential, and establishing mandated annual mental health checks for sworn officers and relevant civilian staff. To read the final report, click here.

Urging Congress to pass the Public Safety Officer Support Act of 2022: Earlier this year, 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.

Hosting statewide roundtable discussions on law enforcement mental health issues: During the summer of 2019, Attorney General Moody hosted roundtable discussions regarding mental health and the criminal justice system. Part of the discussions focused on identifying best practices and strategies to improve mental health within Florida's law enforcement ranks. For more information on these roundtables, 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.

Recognizing CCTB's Law Enforcement Suicide Help Line: Attorney General Moody presented a Florida cabinet resolution recognizing National Suicide Prevention Month in Florida in September

2019. Attorney General Moody then visited the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay to recognize the then pilot program called “First to Respond, Last to Ask For Help.” At the time, the program served officers in Hillsborough County with a help line to call for immediate, confidential support. Now, the help line is extended statewide—any officer in the state needing assistance can call 1(866) 4FL-HERO. To learn more about the law enforcement help line, visit LastToAsk.com.

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 1(866) 4FL-HERO to be connected to immediate and confidential support.