



CITY OF HAMILTON
HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT
Hamilton Fire Department

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	October 19, 2023
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Hamilton Fire Department Agreement with Wounded Warriors Canada (HSC23070) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Ryan Coburn (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3356
SUBMITTED BY:	David Cunliffe Chief, Hamilton Fire Department Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the Fire Chief of the Hamilton Fire Department, or their designate, be authorized to enter into and execute any required agreement and any ancillary documents required to give effect thereto with Wounded Warriors Canada, the Hamilton Firefighters Association IAFF Local 288, and the Greater Hamilton Volunteer Firefighters Association, CLAC Local 911 to provide an additional layer of mental health support for all Hamilton Fire Department personnel with content acceptable to the General Manager of Community Services, and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor; and
- (b) That the Fire Chief of the Hamilton Fire Department, or their designate, be authorized to execute amendments and any ancillary documents related to these Agreements and any new agreements as required for access to mental health support services offered by Wounded Warriors Canada with content acceptable to the General Manager of Community Services and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hamilton Fire Department is seeking the authority to formalize an agreement with Wounded Warriors Canada to provide an additional layer of mental health support for Hamilton Fire Department personnel. Wounded Warriors understands that given the complexity of operational stress injuries, no single Service, Association, or Organization will ever have a 100% solution when it comes to mental health and wellness for Canadian First Responders. This agreement will augment the City of Hamilton's Employee and Family Assistance Program through Homewood Health.

Programs offered at no cost by Wounded Warriors include trauma resiliency for individual members, their partners, as well as couple's trauma resiliency. COPE (Couples Overcoming PTSD Everyday) is a leading clinical facilitated couple's program in Canada. Additionally, there are Warriors Kids Camps and virtual programs for children and youth as well as Service Animal placement and support for those who qualify. The Hamilton Fire Department would publicize the services offered by Wounded Warriors to all members.

All programs are evidence-based and facilitated by professional clinicians. Wounded Warriors' programming is free of charge and would provide supports in concert with the City's Return-to-Work Services Division should any member require assistance.

Wounded Warriors Canada will be included as an additional mental health resource for assistance of employees/members and their families. Where applicable, the parties will work collaboratively to support each other's efforts to advance the health and wellness of their employees/members. Wounded Warriors Canada is permitted to display the Hamilton Fire Department logo on their "Service & Association Partners" section of the Wounded Warriors Canada website.

This partnership has been endorsed by both the Full-time and Volunteer Firefighter Associations: Hamilton Firefighters Association IAFF Local 288, and Greater Hamilton Volunteer Firefighters Association, CLAC Local 911, the Hamilton Fire Department's Peer Support Team and City of Hamilton's Return-to-Work Services.

Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: N/A

Staffing: N/A

Legal: The agreement has been reviewed by Legal Services.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The City of Hamilton is committed to the protection and promotion of mental health and wellbeing of all employees and recognizes that mental health is fundamental to overall health. Good mental health allows individuals to cope with normal life stress, work productively and make positive contributions to the workplace and community. The City strives to establish and maintain progressive workplace practices that promote positive mental health and wellbeing of all employees.

Workplace promotion and prevention of anti-stigma initiatives, mental health training for management, and employee assistance programs all play a role in maintaining mental health and wellbeing.

The Hamilton Fire Department recognizes that our personnel are at an ongoing risk of developing Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries because of the nature of their work and the long and short-term effects of exposure to traumatic events. Preventing Post-Traumatic Stress Injuries, providing access to trauma supports and facilitating stay-at-work and return-to-work programs are a priority within our Workplace Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

Occupational Health and Safety Act

Hamilton Fire Department Policy: 0215.00 Critical Incident Stress Services

City of Hamilton Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Hamilton Fire Department: PTSD Prevention Plan (April 2017)

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Staff have consulted with Return-to-Work Services, Legal Services, Hamilton Firefighters Association IAFF Local 288, and Greater Hamilton Volunteer Firefighters

Association CLAC Local 911 and Wounded Warriors Canada. Their recommendations have been incorporated in this report.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

If identified and treated early, mental health impacts in first responders can be temporary and reversible. Employees and leaders who understand normal reactions to stress and how to manage these reactions are more resilient. They can recover from stress, traumatic events, and adverse situations. It is possible to train people to recognize changes in their own mental health and become more resilient (Mental Health Commission of Canada).

Following any incident involving an employee(s) that could be considered traumatic and/or potentially excessively stressful, that person or crew is temporarily removed from service to allow the Peer Support Network team to respond and interact. Such incidents could include fires or other events with fatalities, serious injuries involving children, extended media coverage events, violent crime situations, prolonged time rescues, etc. These peer-led interventions are referred to as defusing's and are facilitated by Peer Team members who have been trained in a peer support role. Firefighters participate voluntarily, either individually or in a group to discuss, as a group or individually, about what occurred and how it is affecting them.

Peer Team members attempt to validate what the employee has seen, done, thought, and felt and offer strategies that promote resistance, resilience, and recovery. They also talk about internal and external referral options. This partnership with Wounded Warriors would add another external referral option for individuals to consider along with the Employee and Family Assistance Program.

SERVICES AVAILABLE FROM WOUNDED WARRIORS:

1. Trauma Resiliency (TRP) program is a clinically facilitated program that helps Veterans and First Responders acquire the necessary tools to overcome the natural and understandable effects of traumatic exposure based on a clear understanding of the physical and social effects of traumatic injury.
2. The Spousal Resiliency Program is designed for Veteran and First Responder spouses who have been exposed to operational stress injuries, such as PTSD, in their relationships.

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3. The COPE (Couples Overcoming PTSD Everyday) program is Canada's leading couples-based trauma program for Veterans and First Responders affected by Operational Stress Injuries (OSI).
4. The Couples Resiliency Program (CRP) has been developed to assist couples impacted by Post Traumatic and Operational Stress injuries to improve their relationship with their spouse/partner.
5. Warrior Kids Camp and Virtual Program - An evidence-informed program that builds resilient children and youth impacted by a parental Operational Stress Injury (OSI)
6. The Surviving Family Program is designed to assist immediate family members who have lost their service member loved one in the line of duty or to suicide.
7. PTSD Service Dogs and Operational Stress Intervention Dogs Programs. PTSD Service Dogs to clients who are approved for service animals. The Operational Stress Intervention Dogs provide preventative mental health care to organizations utilizing an Operational Stress Intervention Dog.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

N/A

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None