



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Governor Newsom Signs Legislation to Prioritize Behavioral Health Prevention and Intervention for California’s First Responders

(Sacramento, CA) – Yesterday, Governor Newsom signed Assembly Bill (AB) 662, authored by Assemblymember Freddie Rodriguez (D – Pomona), into law. This legislation requires the State Fire Marshall to establish additional training standards, including criteria for a curriculum developed in collaboration with the Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee involving peer-to-peer suicide prevention training. These programs will enable participants to recognize the suicidal thoughts of their peers in order to connect them with mental health services and provide them with necessary help.

“Being a life-long first responder, I am devastated at the suicide epidemic plaguing our firefighters and EMS professionals. It is hard to understand the demands first responders face daily unless you have lived it, so these peer-to-peer approaches implemented by this bill will help our community recognize changes in each other and find solutions together,” **stated Assemblymember Rodriguez.**

[The CDC reports](#) that law enforcement officers and firefighters are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty. EMS personnel are 1.39 times more likely to die by suicide than the general public. First responders may be at an elevated risk of suicide due to their work environments, culture, and stress. During emergencies and crises, this stress can become magnified due to the uncertainty of the situation. Furthermore, first responders are five times more likely than the general public to suffer from symptoms of PTSD.

General mental health practitioners may not understand what first responders experience daily, having difficulty relating to them in a culturally competent manner. Research shows that programs such as peer-to-peer assistance, mental health checkups, and time-off after particularly traumatic calls can lead to improvements in the overall wellness of our first responders.

There is a perceived stigma around mental health issues leading first responders to believe they may be labeled “unfit” for duty if they report suicidal thoughts. The new training standards implemented through this legislation will normalize these feelings, so that first responders no longer have to suffer alone and can receive the help they need.

“I want to empower my fellow first responders to prioritize their mental health. We must break the stigma surrounding the discussion of our struggles so that we can help each other overcome these negative feelings, and this legislation is the first step in doing so,” **added Assemblymember Rodriguez.**

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Assemblymember Rodriguez ([Twitter](#)) represents the 52nd Assembly District which includes the cities of Chino, Montclair, Ontario, Pomona, and portions of unincorporated Fontana. He is Chair of the Assembly Committee on Emergency Management.