

# Newsletter

March 2022

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Volume 6, Edition 3



## Helping public safety meet communications challenges in a Pandemic

From rugged devices to connectivity in quarantine to testing sites, first responders have faced unique communications needs during the pandemic. Hear how FirstNet has helped them meet these challenges.

[WATCH VIDEO](#)

## Lessons learned after 2 years of COVID-19; adapting to new normal

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the way the world functioned. People had to find new ways to adapt to an unknown and changing situation. And others had to find a way to adapt to a life centered on staying home. Dr. Anna Courie writes about the challenges first responders faced and the coping strategies put into action to help them through difficult times.”

[READ MORE ON PAGE 2](#)



## Mission-ready solutions for emergency response

As public safety's partner with FirstNet®, AT&T\* is launching innovative public safety-centric solutions to modernize communications for first responders – for emergencies and normal operations. These include in-building solutions; additional disaster response assets; enhanced Mission-Critical Push-to-Talk and more. [LEARN MORE ON PAGE 4](#)

## New MC solutions to support you: FirstNet Push-to-talk, Rapid Response for FirstNet

FirstNet Push-to-Talk and Rapid Response for FirstNet – both built on the standards of Mission Critical Push-To-Talk and designed by Third Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) – define the level of service public safety needs for group communications over mobile networks. Learn more about FirstNet Push-to-talk and Rapid Response for FirstNet. [LEARN MORE](#)

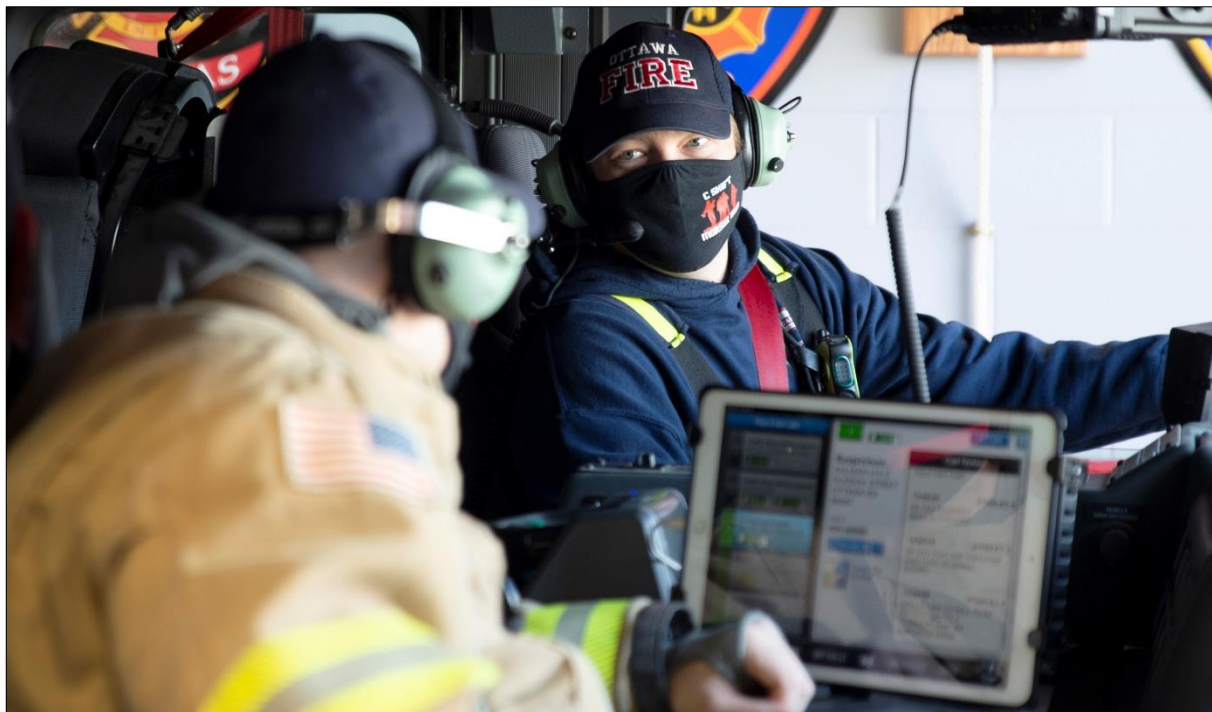


# RESPONDER HEALTH AND WELLNESS

## Lessons learned after 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic

*The pandemic shifted the way we perceive the physical and mental health of first responders.*

*While physical health has always been on the radar, mental health has moved to the forefront the last two years.*



### By Annie Patterson

Project Management Specialist, FirstNet Program at AT&T

### and Dr. Anna Fitch Courie

Director, Responder Wellness, FirstNet Program at AT&T

The COVID-19 Pandemic dramatically changed the way the world functioned. People had to find new ways to adapt to a changing situation. And others had to find a way to adapt to a life centered on staying home.

First responders continued to show up and help those who needed it most. We've learned many lessons as a result of the pandemic. But the ones that focus on the health and wellness of first responders help ensure that those who protect us will receive the help they need to be able to do their jobs.

### Physical, mental health matter

The pandemic shifted the way we perceive the physical and mental health of first responders. While physical health has always been on the radar, mental health has moved to the forefront the last two years. The increased demands and operational tempo of responding to the pandemic has led to both physical and mental exhaustion among public safety.<sup>1</sup> And responding to COVID-19 helped to identify critical strategies for coping with this exhaustion. Some of these strategies include:

- **Moving daily:** Physical activity and exercise can have a positive impact on your physical and mental health<sup>2</sup>. Something as simple as a 10 minute walk every day gets the body moving and helps decrease levels of anxiety. Many places provide a variety of at-home exercise programs geared towards different activities and varying experience levels. So, you can try out different activity types and determine what works best for you. The [O2X Human Performance app](#), which is FirstNet Verified™, also can help public safety find physical activity training solutions. O2X strives to improve first responders 1% better every day.

**Seeking out peer support:** Addressing mental health concerns is not the same for everyone, but peer support groups can have a positive impact on those who participate<sup>3</sup>. These groups allow you to share experiences with others who can understand what you're going through. They've been in similar situations and understand the unique stressors of the job. And while peer-to-peer support can be challenging in a socially distant world, the [ResponderRel8 app](#) can connect you with an anonymous peer-to-peer connection, wherever you are.

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# RESPONDER HEALTH AND WELLNESS

## Lessons learned after 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic

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- Practicing mindfulness and gratitude: Mindfulness and gratitude can increase certain aspects of brain function and help reduce stress<sup>4</sup>. Focusing on the tangible aspects of your life can help center you at an overwhelming time and help you reduce stress. Simple acts, such as daily guided meditation or creating a gratitude wall can help to provide emphasis to these simple ways to help boost mental health.
- Taking care of your body: In addition to daily movement, ensuring that you're eating right and getting proper rest is crucial to staying healthy<sup>5</sup>. Making sure that the body has the right nutrition can help boost immune system response, energy, and overall brain function. And getting adequate sleep provides similar benefits. Being in a sleep debt can put you at an elevated risk for slow thinking, confusion, and making mistakes<sup>6</sup>.
- Seeking professional help if needed: Many departments have a crisis resource center and a place to post contact information and resources for those who wish to seek professional help<sup>7</sup>. Plus various helplines, such as the Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) or COPLINE (1-800-COPLINE) or Safe Call Now (206-469-3020), and a variety of telehealth services can provide counseling. Two years into the pandemic, and you're still encouraging others to call for help when they need it. You should do the same.

### Move to thrive

While stress undoubtedly existed in the first responder community before the pandemic, the dramatic shift in the world's dynamics compounded the stress. First responders experienced burnout at a higher rate than in previous years due to an increased workload and constant exposure to the devastating impacts of COVID-19<sup>8</sup>.

Recognizing the signs of stress and burnout is the universal starting point for identifying the proper treatment. Most commonly, symptoms include feelings of irritation, anger, denial, uncertainty, nervousness, anxiousness, helplessness, or powerless. A lack of motivation, feeling tired or overwhelmed, feeling sad or depressed, having trouble sleeping, or having trouble concentrating<sup>9</sup>. And individuals do not have to be



*Whether addressing physical or mental health; seeking meaning, purpose, or personal growth, responders need to know what resources can help them.*

experiencing all of these symptoms to be experiencing stress or burnout.

Actively working to build resilience and focusing on opportunities for personal growth can help protect against burnout and increased levels of stress. The concept of turning traumatic stress into an opportunity for growth and meaning is called posttraumatic growth. The overall concept of building resilience or growing from traumatic experience may seem daunting. But adding or altering a few simple tasks in your day-to-day life can help enhance your sense of well-being<sup>10</sup>.

By teaming up with the [Boulder Crest Foundation](#), FirstNet®, Built with AT&T is working to bring Posttraumatic Growth training to first responder departments around the country. By shifting the culture of organizations towards growth and wellness, we have an opportunity to facilitate thriving behaviors.

### Know your resources

Whether addressing physical or mental health; seeking meaning, purpose, or personal growth, responders need to know what resources can help them. The pandemic isn't going away. There isn't going to be a miraculous return to pre-COVID times. Too many things have changed.

But communities continue to need public safety to be ready and responsive in times of need. So, it's important you know where to go for help when their situation is something they are unable to handle on their own. Having

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# MISSION-READY SOLUTIONS

## Launching solutions to enhance emergency response

*FirstNet Rapid Response expands Mission-Critical Push-to-Talk suite; dedicated FirstNet fleet grows to 150 assets*

As public safety's partner with FirstNet®, AT&T\* is launching innovative public safety-centric solutions to modernize communications for first responders – for emergencies and normal operations. These include:

- **In-Building Situational Awareness**

- Public safety organizations can now enhance their in-building wireless communications with the **Cell Booster Pro** – an enterprise-grade mini cell tower that provides reliable connectivity for public safety on FirstNet.
- We've also **enhanced Z-Axis for FirstNet** to give public safety an "altimeter view" or vertical visualization that shows the relative positions of first responders and incidents, as well as the ability to mark important areas within the building.

- **Disaster Response**

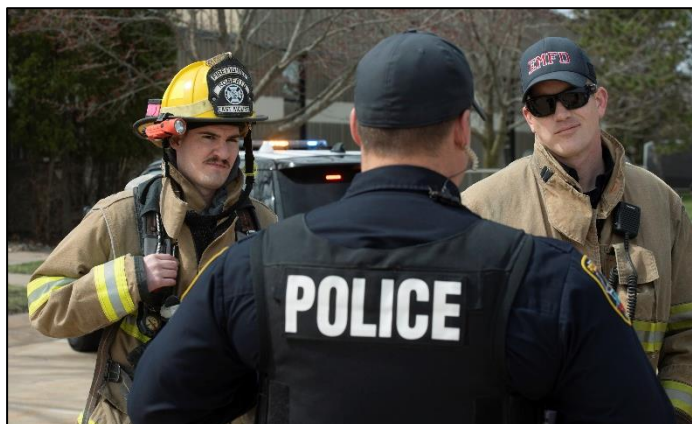
- Public safety's FirstNet fleet now has **150 dedicated deployable assets** – including 50+ Compact Rapid Deployables (CRDs) – available to support first responders in all 56 U.S. states and territories.
- The new **FirstNet Emergency Response Kit** equips public safety agencies with a cache of 20+ FirstNet Ready® devices in a protective case to simultaneously recharge and immediately disperse to responders in the field following a major incident.

- **Mission-Critical Push-to-Talk**

- With the launch of **FirstNet Rapid Response**, public safety now has 2 choices for mission-critical push-to-talk (PTT) solutions, plus enhanced land mobile radio (LMR) interoperability capabilities
- FirstNet Push-to-Talk now supports **mission-critical video streaming** and PTT calling over Wi-Fi.

- **Next Generation 9-1-1 Services**

- AT&T ESInet™ is now integrated with the commercial AT&T wireless network to provide faster and more accurate location of wireless



*Since many first responders are "career tactical athletes," there is a significant focus on implementing changes that will help first responders finish their career as strong as (or stronger than) they started – mentally, physically, and emotionally.*

9-1-1 callers through device-based hybrid precise location technology.

- ADT is the first home security provider to integrate with FirstNet and now, PSAPs using AT&T ESInet can receive verified text alerts when an alarm is triggered. It's just 1 more way we're supporting public safety from the initial call until their mission is complete.

"We've made remarkable progress in only 5 years, working alongside the first responder community to deliver FirstNet and its entire ecosystem of mission-centric tools – all designed specifically for them," said Jason Porter, President, Public Sector and the FirstNet Program at AT&T. "As technology rapidly evolves, we'll continue to create innovative solutions and equip public safety to further strengthen their situational awareness and incident response in any emergency. We're moving fast, prioritizing this vital community, not just because it's what they asked for, but because it ultimately helps people across the country stay safe. And we'll continue to lead the industry, providing interoperable, end-to-end emergency communication solutions for decades to come."

### Why is this important?

Information is everything in an emergency. Before FirstNet, public safety officials found it hard to communicate and work together due to congestion on commercial networks and interoperability challenges.

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# MISSION-READY SOLUTIONS

## Launching solutions to enhance emergency response

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Now, through an unprecedented public-private partnership in 2017 with the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority) – an independent agency within the federal government – public safety has [FirstNet, Built with AT&T](#). It is not a commercial network. FirstNet is the **only** nationwide, high-speed broadband communications platform built with and for America's first responders.

"It is encouraging to see FirstNet continue to innovate and expand based on public safety's needs," said Edward Parkinson, CEO, FirstNet Authority. "Public safety has identified these capabilities and solutions as critical to advancing the FirstNet network, so we are excited to see the marketplace deliver on them. FirstNet users can continue to count on their network to provide them with mission-ready solutions for emergencies of all types and sizes."

Plus, AT&T is the only public safety carrier that can provide end-to-end emergency communication solutions to support 9-1-1 telecommunicators, dispatchers, first responders in the field and other emergency personnel from the moment they get a call until their mission is complete.

AT&T leads the NextGen 9-1-1 industry with over 1,400 PSAPs having adopted AT&T ESInet. This means we are serving 64 million people across the country. And more than 19,500 agencies and organizations – accounting for more than 3 million connections nationwide<sup>1</sup> – are using the FirstNet network, which now [covers more first responders](#) than any wireless network in the country.

We continue to grow within the public safety market because of our distinct advantages from competing commercial offers. And these mission-ready solutions demonstrate our continued commitment to drive purposeful innovation to best support public safety – no matter the emergency.

### Improving situational awareness

With 80% of wireless calls taking place indoors, public safety needs dedicated in-building connectivity. It's critical to their safety – especially in stairwells, basements and other hard-to reach places.

That's why we're launching the [Cell Booster Pro](#) to help public safety organizations enhance their in-building



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wireless communications. The Cell Booster Pro acts as a mini cell tower that transmits high-quality Band 14 spectrum and AT&T commercial LTE. And with the ability to mesh 3 devices within a building, agencies and businesses can increase coverage by up to 45,000 square feet, supporting nearly 200 users. Agencies will be able to purchase the Cell Booster Pro starting April 1.

Providing mission-critical organizations with timely and quality location information is vital to making decisions more quickly and accurately. And [Z-Axis for FirstNet](#) – designed to assist with identifying the vertical location of a first responder when inside a building – is helping with exactly that. We've enhanced [FirstNet Locate Pro and Locate Standard](#) to provide an "altimeter view" or vertical visualization. Using geospatial technology, users can remotely see the location of team members in the field based on their z-axis (or height). As first responders scale the building the altimeter view will dynamically adjust based on their movements. Plus, users can "mark" significant locations within the building to help reduce response times and eliminate unnecessary voice traffic.

### Helping improve disaster response

After the U.S. experienced more than 60 extreme weather and climate events in 2021 – coupled with increasing instabilities in the commercial power infrastructure landscape – AT&T is going above and beyond its contractual commitment with the FirstNet Authority to grow the [dedicated FirstNet fleet](#). Now, public safety has access to 150 dedicated assets, including **50+ Compact Rapid Deployables**. [CRDs](#) are an extremely nimble

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# MISSION READY SOLUTIONS

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portable asset that can be deployed and dispersed across impacted regions. Strategically stationed across the country, these assets are at-the-ready to support first responders battling wildfires, hurricanes and other major disasters. These assets are also available for agencies to own and deploy themselves, giving public safety more control over their network. These assets are also dedicated to public safety and are in addition to the 300+ assets within the AT&T Network Disaster Recovery fleet that aid commercial network restoration in areas affected by disasters.

We're also launching the new FirstNet Emergency Response Kit. These kits are ideal for use following a major disaster. Devices can be stored and tucked away until an emergency strikes that requires surge device distribution, or agencies can use the devices for daily operations and recharge the equipment at the end of each shift. Kits are available for purchase starting next month and can hold up to 21 FirstNet Ready® smartphones, 2 Mi-Fi devices, wall chargers and additional space for cords.

### How does mission-critical push-to-talk further interoperability for public safety?

For over a decade, we have supported public safety and businesses with mobile broadband PTT solutions. But in critical moments, first responders need a standards-based *mission-critical* solution designed specifically to meet their needs to reliably communicate – regardless of factors such as location, jurisdiction, discipline or device. That's why FirstNet is leading the public safety industry with a suite of mission-critical PTT solutions, which now includes [FirstNet Rapid Response](#). This new voice, video and data solution gives public safety greater situational awareness and more informed emergency response. It further enables public safety agencies to use Motorola Solutions' cloud-based Critical Connect for essential interoperability with LMR. Plus, it's ideal for agencies familiar with AT&T Enhanced Push-to-Talk but looking for the added strength and performance of a mission-critical standards-based solution.

FirstNet Rapid Response joins FirstNet Push-to-Talk – the first-ever nationwide mission-critical, standards-based PTT solution to [launch](#) in the U.S. – which now also supports PTT calling over Wi-Fi, mission-critical video



*"In critical moments, first responders need a standards-based mission-critical solution designed to meet their needs to communicate."*

streaming to further first responders' situational awareness and enhanced mutual aid features for easy cooperation with other agencies. That means all mission-critical PTT users on FirstNet can now stream what they are seeing on the ground with command and other first responders in the field, share images or send documents, enhancing their situational awareness and helping keep them mission ready.

### Integrating solutions for emergency response

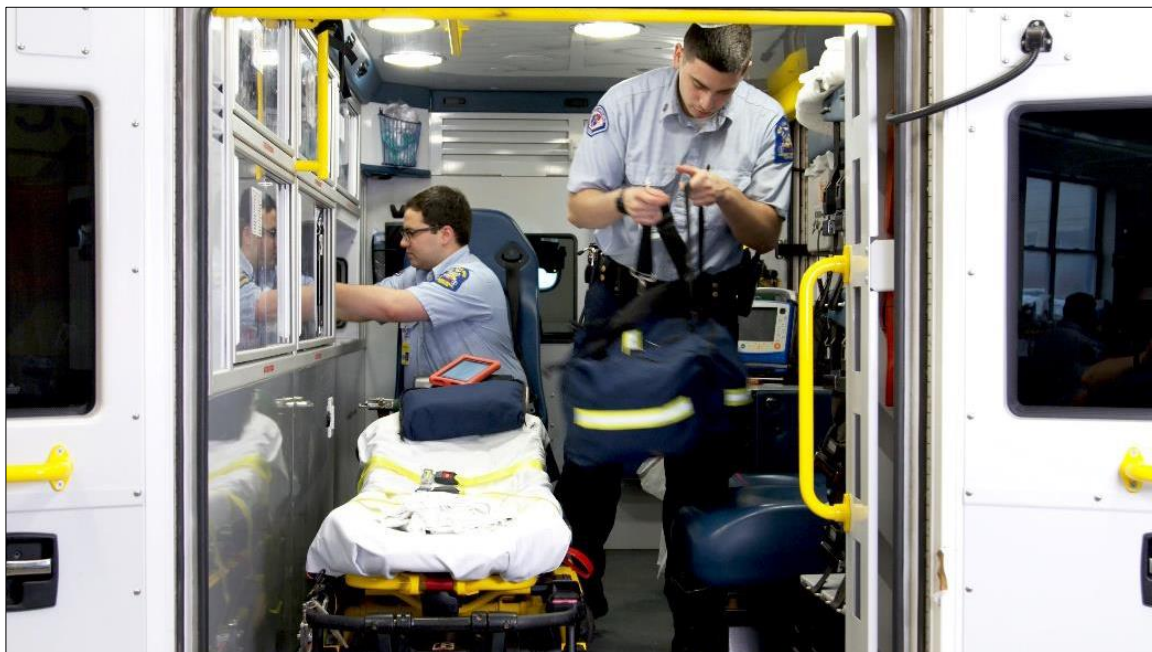
When AT&T [worked with the FCC](#) to establish the first 9-1-1 systems over 50 years ago, landline communications reigned supreme. But communications technology has come a long way. Now, 68% of adults do not have a landline in their homes according to the [CDC](#). Today, 80% of 9-1-1 calls come from a mobile device<sup>2</sup> – and PSAPs need technology that is compatible with what the majority of 9-1-1 callers use today. That's why AT&T ESInet is the first NextGen 9-1-1 solution to integrate with both FirstNet and the commercial AT&T wireless network. This integrated solution takes advantage of device-based hybrid technology so PSAPs can identify a more precise wireless caller location, route calls quicker and reduce emergency response times. In fact, the FCC estimates that over 10,000 lives could be saved each year if public safety were able to reach callers just 1 minute faster. Device-based hybrid technology uses a combination of satellite GPS, Wi-Fi and a wireless network to track a caller's location more accurately, even when a wireless call is coming from inside a building.

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# MISSION READY SOLUTIONS

## Launching solutions to enhance emergency response



*As the only public safety carrier to deliver end-to-end emergency communication solutions, we're helping public safety cut down response times, with ADT security systems leveraging the Emergency Data Broker from Intrado Life & Safety. ADT is the first home security provider to integrate with FirstNet, protecting public safety's critical communications from commercial congestion.*

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And now, PSAPs using AT&T ESInet can receive verified text alerts when an alarm is triggered. By seamlessly integrating home alarm information into AT&T ESInet, 9-1-1 telecommunicators can quickly assess information and provide critical information to fire, law enforcement, ambulances and other first responders on-scene. It's just 1 more way we're supporting public safety from the initial call until their mission is complete.

North Carolina is the first state to successfully implement and benefit from these integrated solutions. The City of Lumberton has successfully integrated its PSAP with the AT&T wireless network and The City of Raleigh is already receiving important incident information from ADT.

"Our mission is to enhance our statewide 9-1-1 system so we can increase efficiencies and keep our communities connected, especially during an emergency," said L. V. Pokey Harris, Executive Director, North Carolina 911 Board.

"We are proud to have successfully launched the integration of the statewide AT&T ESInet with the commercial AT&T wireless network and FirstNet in the City of Lumberton and the integration with ADT in the City of Raleigh as part of our commitment to improve public safety capabilities throughout the state. This critical launch opens doors for future wireless 9-1-1 technology and we are eager to continue to work with AT&T as our managed service NextGen 9-1-1 partner to bring innovative solutions to more communities throughout North Carolina."

These initiatives come as FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel stated it's time for a nationwide digital upgrade of 9-1-1 and proposed a plan to dedicate proceeds from upcoming spectrum auctions toward a nationwide investment in NextGen 9-1-1 services. And by integrating AT&T ESInet with the AT&T network, we've set the foundation for PSAPs to support the future exchange of multimedia. This means 9-1-1 callers will have the ability to send photos and videos to help improve public safety's situational awareness during critical times.

<sup>1</sup> As of EOY 2021

<sup>2</sup> Source: [National Emergency Number Association](#).

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# RESPONDER HEALTH AND WELLNESS

## Lessons learned after 2 years of the COVID-19 pandemic

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resources readily available and providing support to those who need them is an instrumental way to help mitigate the effects of stress and burnout within the department.

Public safety agencies can create their own custom health and wellness resource app to have a one-stop shop for health and wellness resources on their mobile devices. Through a partnership with [Lighthouse Health and Wellness](#), FirstNet is helping to deliver solutions that make health and wellness resources available on public safety phones.

While these three lessons are some of the more important ones learned as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we've learned many others as the situation continues to evolve and new information is discovered.

In a time of mass panic, it is important for first responders to know their departments and communities are focusing on them and doing what it takes to slow down and mitigate the impacts of the virus. First responders have continued to show up for the duration of the pandemic. And implementing changes that focus on improving their overall health and wellness helps them and has a positive impact on their communities. As the situation continues to evolve, we'll learn other lessons as people adapt to an ever-changing environment.

**Annie Patterson** is a Project/Program Management Specialist with the FirstNet Demo Program. She is a 2020 graduate of Roanoke College with a major in Sociology concentrating in crime & deviance and a minor in Spanish. Annie is a passionate advocate for first responders because she has seen first-hand how selfless and willing to help others they are and believes that it is important to advocate for those who dedicate their lives

to helping others in difficult circumstances.

**Dr. Anna Fitch Courie**, Director of Responder Wellness, FirstNet Program at AT&T is a nurse, Army wife, former university faculty, and author. Dr. Courie has worked for over 20 years in the health care profession including in the bone marrow transplant, intensive care, public health, and health promotion practices. Dr. Courie holds a Bachelor's in Nursing from Clemson University; a Master's in Nursing Education from the University of Wyoming; and a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from Ohio State University. Her area of expertise is integration of public health strategy across disparate organizations to achieve health improvement goals.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ems1.com/health-wellness/articles/protecting-the-mental-health-of-first-responders-during-a-pandemic-U1LTkVxHYf09u8QI/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://medicine.umich.edu/dept/psychiatry/michigan-psychiatry-resources-covid-19/your-lifestyle/importance-physical-activity-exercise-during-covid-19-pandemic>

<sup>3</sup> <https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/responders.asp>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Frontline-Wellness/2020/How-to-Take-Care-of-Yourself-When-You-re-a-First-Responder-During-the-Coronavirus-Pandemic>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.firstwatch.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/DHS-Comprehensive-First-Responder-Pandemic-Guide-Pandemic.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/emres/longhourstraining/risks.html>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/healthcare-workers-first-responders/index.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Fmental-health-healthcare.html](https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/healthcare-workers-first-responders/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Fmental-health-healthcare.html)

<sup>8</sup> <https://dps.alaska.gov/getmedia/d8580635-ad42-4ac2-b97b-996155b7dd8e/covid-19-mental-health-support-for-first-responders.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/healthcare-workers-first-responders/index.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Fmental-health-healthcare.html](https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/healthcare-workers-first-responders/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Fmental-health-healthcare.html)

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/healthcare-workers-first-responders/index.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Fmental-health-healthcare.html](https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/healthcare-workers-first-responders/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fhcp%2Fmental-health-healthcare.html)