

# Promoting Mental Health for British Columbia Emergency Health Services

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# WHO ARE WE?

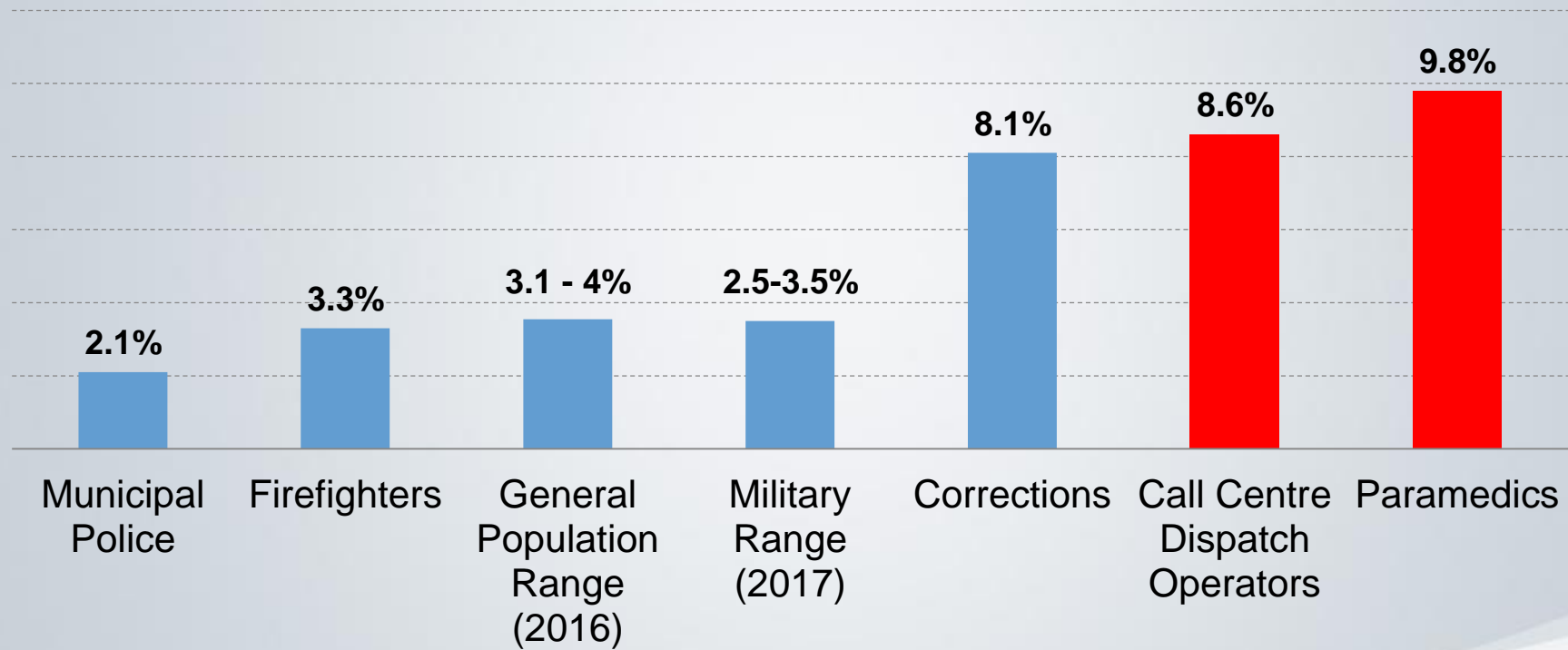
- Provide public ambulance and pre-hospital services *throughout* BC under the authority of BC Emergency Health Services
- Employs > 4,213 paramedics & dispatchers
- 182 ambulance stations
- 3 Dispatch Centers
- Serves an area almost 1,000,000 km<sup>2</sup>

# WHY WE CARE ABOUT OCCUPATIONAL STRESS INJURIES

- PTSD: Often quoted at **23%** for paramedics (9% gen pop.)
- There are many other illnesses:
  - Major depressive disorder
  - Panic disorder
  - Generalized anxiety disorder
  - Social anxiety disorder
  - Substance use disorder or alcohol use disorder

# SELF REPORTED SUICIDE ATTEMPTS

(Carleton, 2018)



# FORCES OF CHANGE

- **2014** Provincial Health Authority adopted the new CSA “*Psychological Health and Safety Standard*” 1003. We were a designated trial area.
- **2015** BCEHS starts its first Patient Safety Accreditation review (includes Critical Incident Stress Management)

**March 2015** We started to set up our **first** quality evidence-based Critical Incident Stress Program

- **2016** We joined the First Responder Mental Health Committee

# OUR CHALLENGES IN 2015

- Some of the highest injury rates!
- BCEHS had no internal SMEs  
Paramedics have no profession based mental health education
- Almost no research on mental injury and resilience for this occupational group
- A time crunch to meet the expectations for our organization
- We wanted to do the right thing!

# GETTING UP TO SPEED – QUICKLY A STORY OF COLLABORATION

## Our Steering Committee:

Clinical Advisors: Clinicians and CIS Educators

Union representatives: APBC, BCGEU, BCNU

Work safe Critical Incident Response Program Manager

Front line Leadership reps rural and urban

Program Peer/Coordinator

Program Manager/ Psych–Safety Advisor from HR

Executive Sponsor

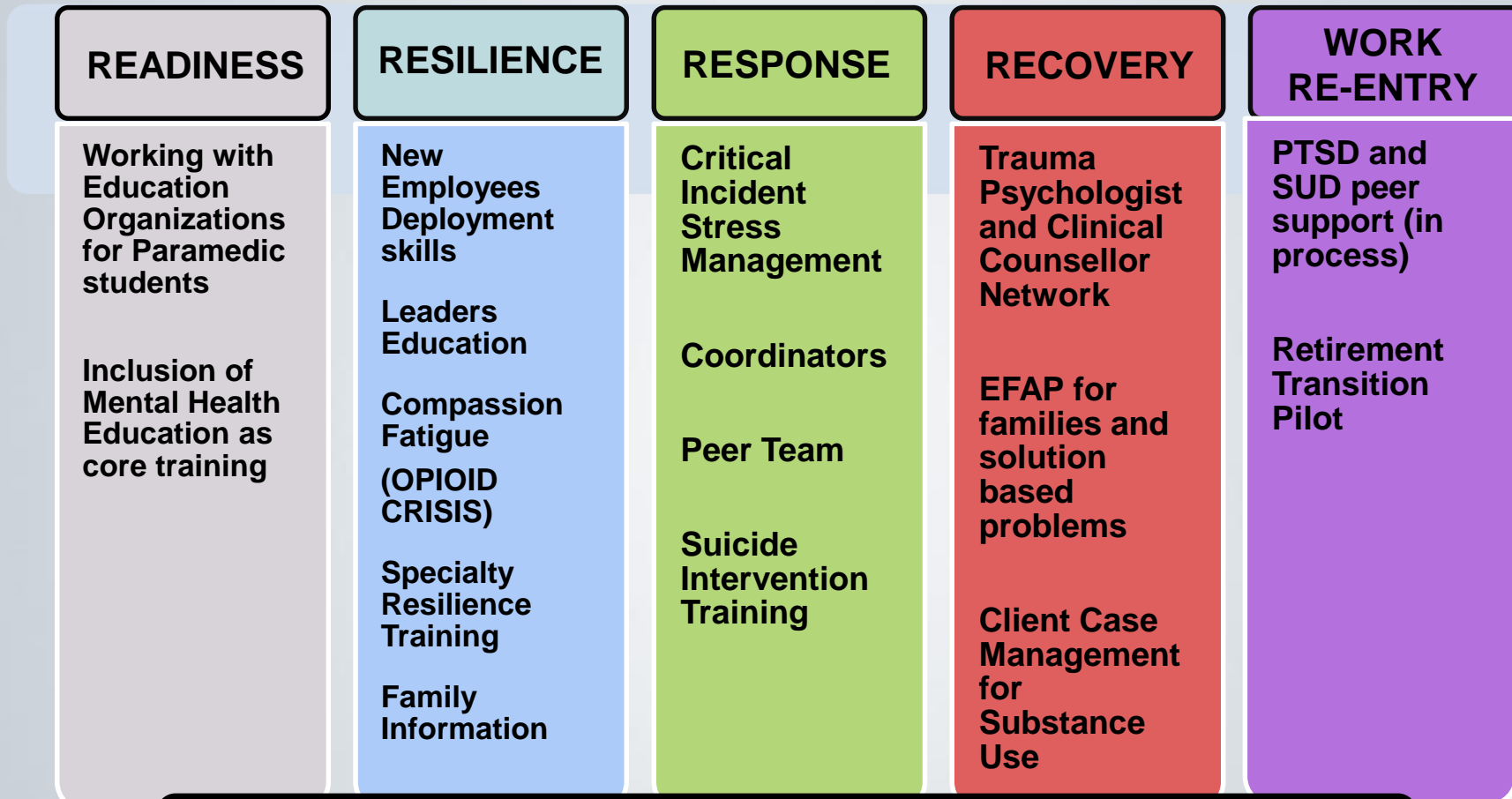
## Project Partners:

Clinical Researchers

Min. of Health, Min.of Mental Health & Telus Health

St John Ambulance - Therapy dog program

# ADOPTED A FIVE PILLAR PROGRAM DESIGN



**RESEARCH & CSA STANDARDS 1003 and 1003.18**



# OUR STRATEGY – START IN THE MIDDLE!

- Start with the Peer Team development and educate your Leadership
- Follow that quickly with early access to trauma informed certified counsellor services
- Then .... develop a customized Resilience program

# CISM PEER RESPONSE

We adhere to International Critical Incident Stress Foundation Standards for training, procedures and ethics requirements. The practice is modified slightly:

<b>Match Peers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BEING IN A SAFE PLACE</li></ul>
<b>Phone Check-ins</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Psycho education &amp; referring (within 24 hrs)</li></ul>
<b>Defusings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• IN PERSON PEER SUPPORT ONLY AFTER LOSS (within 2-4 hrs)</li></ul>
<b>Debriefings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 72 hrs to 5 days (infrequent)</li></ul>

# NEW RESEARCH ON PARAMEDIC RESILIENCE

*Rational, Evidence-Based & Customized and through out the career* Bilsker, Gilbert (Sept 2018)

## Balanced Self-Care

- Work-Personal Life Balance
- Relaxation Training

## Self-Acceptance

- Imaginal Exposure Skill
- Self-Compassion

## Trusted Social Support

- Social Activation
- “Resilience Teams”

## Meaningful Work

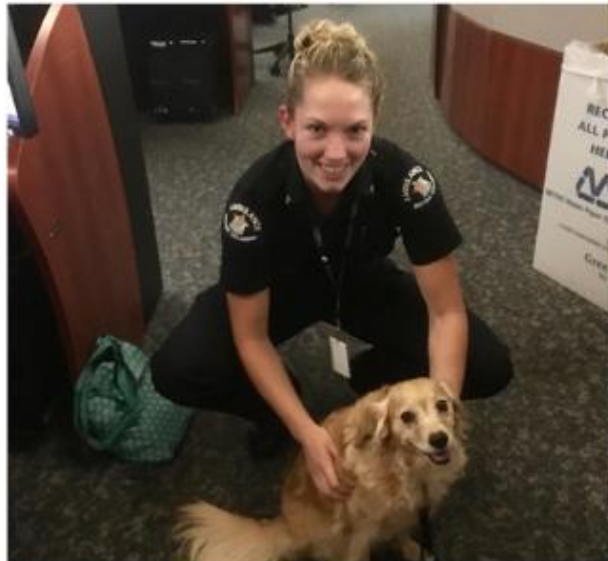
- Values Clarification
- Protection from Moral Injury

## Physical Health

- Exercise Planning
- Eating Habits



Mitigating  
Stress Can  
Be FUN!



# OUR PRACTICES ARE REALIGNING



## EDUCATION

- **Orientation** includes general and deployment stress management  
“Brain training for the Paramedic marathon” lecture
- **OPIOID Resilience course** continues 1 day  
“BCEHS’s Best course ever!” (from 20+ year Veterans)
- **Palliative Care and Resilience** for Community Paramedics
- **New Procedures** for Leadership and Dispatchers
- **Caring for Patients with Mental Health presentations** (2 day professional education)



**VOLUNTEER PEER TEAM** has developed as a 130 strong team with ongoing training and a recognition program

**NEW Roles** - 3 RPT Coordinators and 6 After-hours on call coordinators - new roles for paramedics



## RESULTS

**30%** increase in Peer Team activations each year since 2015

**30%** increase in referral to counsellors each year

“Red” Clients started to emerge in 2018

# NEXT STEPS IN THE JOURNEY

- Figure out how to incorporate resilience training through out a paramedic's or dispatcher's career
- Start involving families in education
- Improve leadership training
- Continue advocating for early access to occupationally appropriate health professions for all employees regardless of the illness
- Improve support for injured workers returning to the workplace

# CARE TO DISCUSS FURTHER?



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CISM 1-855-969-4321



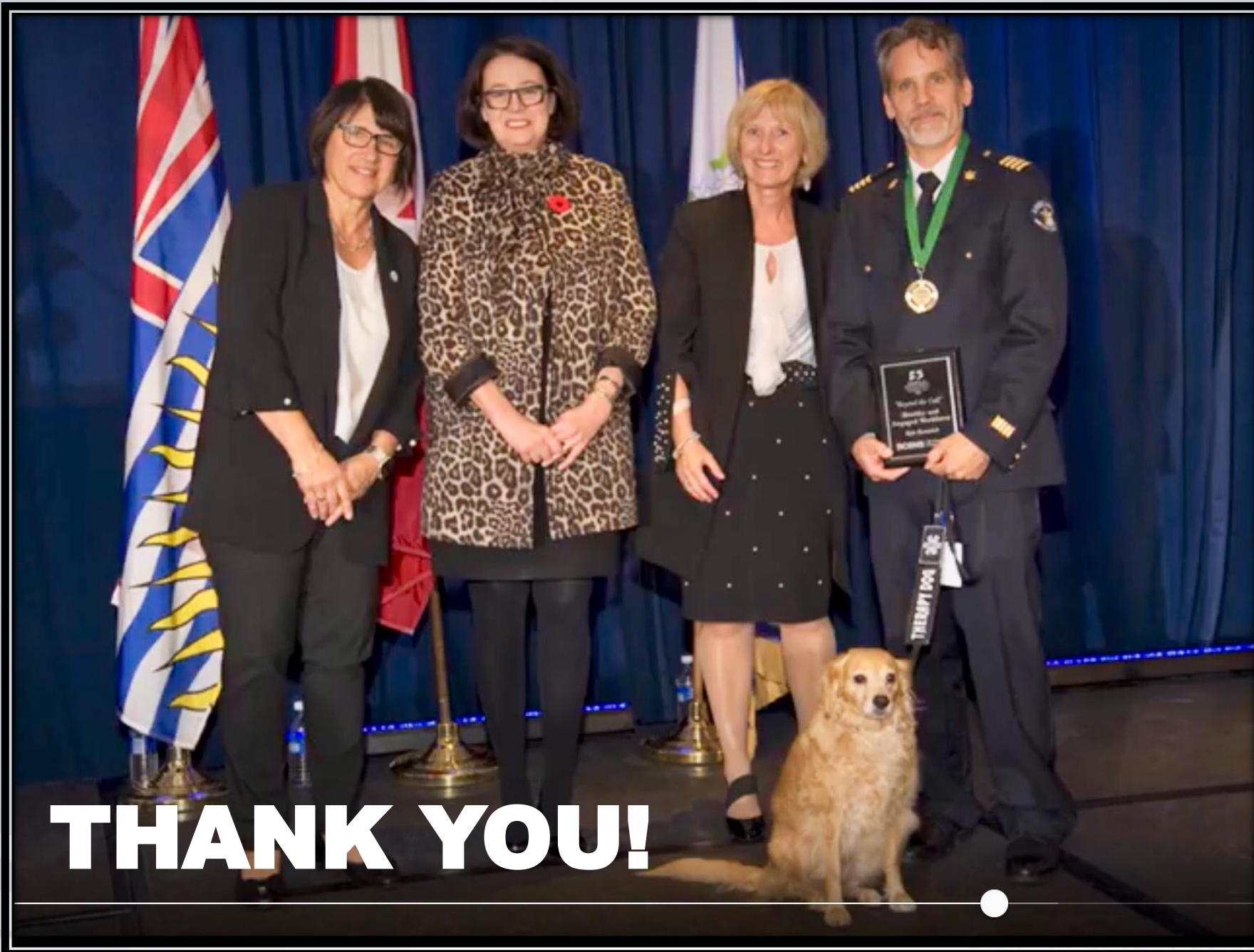
# IT'S OK TO ASK FOR HELP

YOU DON'T HAVE TO FIGHT YOUR BATTLE ALONE



CONFIDENTIAL  
PEER  
SUPPORT

FREE  
TRAUMA  
COUNSELLING



**THANK YOU!**