



Public Safety Personnel

# Overview of the Complexities of Operational Stress Injuries among Public Safety Personnel

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# Mitigating Potential Bias

- The information presented in this program is based on recent information that is explicitly “evidence-based”.
- This Program and its material is peer reviewed and all the recommendations involving clinical medicine are based on evidence that is accepted within the profession; and all scientific research referred to, reported, or used in this CE/CPD activity in support or justification of patient care recommendations conforms to the generally accepted standards



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# Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe factors which might influence the development of an Operational Stress Injury (OSI) among PSP
2. Understand how systems can influence the well-being of PSP

# About Elizabeth

American  
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Paramedics, police and firefighters work to get a seriously-injured driver to the hospital last Wednesday. Her car is seen behind the emergency crew. Photos by Sandi Beare

# Who are Public Safety Personnel (PSP)?

- *PSP* include, but are not limited to,
    - border services officers,
    - operational intelligence personnel,
    - public safety communicators,
    - correctional workers,
    - Indigenous emergency managers,
    - firefighters (career and volunteer),
    - paramedics,
    - police (municipal, provincial, federal), and
    - search and rescue personnel
- } Tri-services

# What is an Operational Stress Injury (OSI)?

Any mental disorder or other mental health condition resulting from operational stressors experienced while serving in a professional capacity, especially in military or other public safety professions.

The term does not replace any individual diagnoses or disorders, but rather describes a category of mental health concerns linked to the particular challenges that these military members or public safety personnel encounter in their service.

There is not yet a single fixed definition.



# Identified\* OSIs in PSP

	Total sample
PTSD (PCL-5)	23.2 (1304)
Major depressive disorder (PHQ-9)	26.4 (1419)
Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD-7)	18.6 (975)
Social anxiety disorder (SIPS)	15.2 (783)
Panic disorder (PDSS-SR)	8.9 (439)
Alcohol use disorder (AUDIT)	5.9 (292)
Any other self-reported mood disorder <sup>a</sup>	1.7 (80)
Any positive screen for a mood disorder <sup>b</sup>	29.0 (1460)
Any positive screen for an anxiety disorder <sup>c</sup>	30.3 (1433)
Any positive screen for any mental disorder <sup>d</sup>	44.5 (1998)
Total number of positive screens <sup>d</sup>	
0	58.2 (2495)
1	15.1 (648)
2	8.7 (371)
3 or more	18.0 (771)

Carleton RN, Afifi TO, Turner S, Taillieu T, Duranceau S, LeBouthillier DM, Sareen J, Ricciardelli R, MacPhee RS, Groll D, Hozempa K, Brunet A, Weekes JR, Griffiths CT, Abrams KJ, Jones NA, Beshai S, Cramm HA, Dobson KS, Hatcher S, Keane TM, Stewart SH, Asmundson GJG. Mental Disorder Symptoms among Public Safety Personnel in Canada. *Can J Psychiatry*. 2018 Jan;63(1):54-64. doi: 10.1177/0706743717723825. Epub 2017 Aug 28. PMID: 28845686; PMCID: PMC5788123.

# Identified Stresses for PSP

- Potentially Psychologically Traumatic Events (PPTEs)
  - Significant threats of harm to the self or loved ones, exposure to war as a combatant or civilian, threatened or actual physical assault, threatened or actual sexual violence, being kidnapped, being taken hostage, torture, natural or human-made disasters, or other mechanisms of severe physical injuries such as motor vehicle accidents and industrial accidents.
  - Direct or indirect exposure may lead to a PPTe.
  - PPTEs are NOT the same as a Critical Incidents.



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# Identified Stresses for PSP

- Chronic Stresses
  - Operational Stress
  - Organizational Stress
- Violence
- Fatigue
- Concurrent physical health concerns



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# Complexities in helping PSP

- Stigma
- In group/Out group cohesion
- Cultural literacy
- Social capital

# Resources

- Canadian Institute for Public Safety Research and Treatment (<https://www.cipsrt-icrtsp.ca/>)
- Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families (<https://atlasveterans.ca/PSP/>)
- Each PSP group has professional advocacy organizations



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# Key Takeaways

- PSP are NOT PSP – they don't identify with that label
- Operational Stress Injuries are diverse
- PSP are exposed to both traumatic and chronic stresses
- Creating a helping relationship with PSP requires cultural literacy



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