The lack of mental health crisis services across the U.S. has resulted in a need for first responders to serve in mental health situations. It is important for first responders to form effective strategies and partnerships with local mental health services.

First Responder Culture
- Lifespan averages 10 years less than the general population
- Higher rates of heart disease than the general population
- 4x more likely to develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) than the general population
- First responders often find it difficult engaging in mental health treatment

Strategies
- Providers are encouraged to get involved in the Mobile Crisis Teams. You get a unique lens on what it's like being a first responder.
  - Ride Along and be present with first responders
  - Attend ICISF training
- Peer support programs are important. Always be a good listener but also be able to recognize when someone needs additional help.
- First Responders are encouraged to understand who the providers are. Ask questions that increase the understanding of how the relationship between first responders and clinicians work.

Future Planning
- Mental health check-ups, the same way physical health is often annually done
- An increase in therapeutic and support groups
- More training
- Combatting the stigma among first responders:
  - Attend more training/classes that teach mental health first aid
  - Be open to the discussion surrounding mental health with others
  - Be open about telling others about therapists

Best Practices
- Flexibility
- Fluidity
- Practicality
- Logistics
- Training
- Peer support/Clinician competency

Data adapted from "Bridging the Gap: Effective First Responder & Mental Health Care Partnerships, a webinar originally held on 2/8/2021. Presented by Lt. Steve Thomas & Steve Plummer, LCPC."