



**Supporting Mental Health in
First Responders**

Overview of Workplace Training Programs

BCFirstRespondersMentalHealth.com

Introduction

In order for an organization to successfully support mental health in the workplace, those in the workplace need to have some knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) to fulfill their roles. Some of these relate to knowledge about mental health, while others relate to how people perform their workplace duties.

The following workplace groups are included in this document:

- Senior leadership
- Managers and supervisors
- Employees
- Recruits and trainees
- Family members

General mental health KSAs have been identified for each of these workplace groups. These do not address the training needs of those in the organization with specific mental health roles such as peer support or critical incident stress management team members. Available training courses have then been matched to these KSAs to see whether a course will address them.

Organizations can choose to use training courses that cover all of the KSAs, develop their own custom training to cover some or all of them, or prioritize certain KSAs and not provide training for all of them. Some training providers may also add custom material to their courses to help fill in the gaps, particularly ones that relate to how to navigate your own organization's processes. This allows organizations to determine what best suits their needs based on available resources.

In the tables on the following pages, the KSAs for each working group have been matched to four available training courses:

- Resilient Minds — provided by the Canadian Mental Health Association
- R2MR — Road to Mental Readiness, based on the courses developed by the Canadian Armed Forces and provided by selected trainers
- MH First Aid — Mental Health First Aid Basic, provided by Mental Health First Aid Canada
- AMHI — Accommodating Mental Health Issues, provided by the BC Federation of Labour Health & Safety Centre

No training course as currently designed covers all of the KSAs identified for each workplace group. Organizations should consider providing additional training or resources, such as information pamphlets, to cover these gaps. While this document has attempted to match the KSAs to the outlines of each of these courses, it does not guarantee how in-depth each KSA is covered. Additionally, to what extent a KSA is covered may vary depending on the trainer delivering the course.

KSAs and selected training courses

Senior Leadership

KSAs

	Resilient Minds	R2MR	MH First Aid	AMHI
General knowledge of the most common types of mental health conditions in first responders (i.e., PTSD, depression, anxiety, substance use disorder)	X	X	X	
General knowledge of the benefits of a mentally healthy workplace				
General knowledge of how to improve mental health in the workplace	X	X		
General knowledge of preventative measures that are effective at supporting mental health in the workplace	X	X		
General knowledge of how to support those with mental health conditions	X	X	X	
Knowledge of the legal obligations related to mental health conditions (e.g., workplace health and safety, disability discrimination, privacy)		X		X

Managers and supervisors

KSAs

	Resilient Minds	R2MR	MH First Aid	AMHI
General knowledge of the most common types of mental health conditions in first responders (i.e., PTSD, depression, anxiety, substance use disorder)	X	X	X	
General knowledge of the signs and symptoms of mental health conditions (including risk of suicide)	X	X	X	
General knowledge of stress-related risk factors and stress-reducing activities and practices	X	X	X	

Managers and supervisors

KSAs

	Resilient Minds	R2MR	MH First Aid	AMHI
General knowledge of the model of stressors leading to stress and eventually to strain (i.e., events in the organization, reaction to the event, and long-term consequences)	X	X		
General knowledge of the biomedical factors that influence mental health				
Knowledge of how chronic stress can result in attitudinal and behavioural changes, and their impact on client interactions				
Knowledge of the legal obligations related to mental health conditions (e.g., workplace health and safety, disability discrimination, privacy)		X		X
Knowledge of the mental health resources available to employees (e.g., employee assistance program, employer benefits, community supports)	X	X	X	
Knowledge of how to provide workplace accommodations for an employee, particularly those related to mental health				X
Knowledge of alternative duties available in the workplace and how to keep employees functional and successful in the workplace				X
Knowledge of how the workplace is performing in relation to mental health goals and other indicators				
Ability to develop stay-at-work and return-to-work plans, managing the different phases of disability				X
Ability to have difficult conversations with an employee about their performance and their mental health	X	X		
Ability to deal with difficult situations such as conflict proactively, decisively, promptly, and objectively		X		
Ability to provide constructive feedback on worker strengths and areas of improvement		X		
Ability to give clear direction and advice and clarify role requirements and expectations		X		

Managers and supervisors

KSAs

	Resilient Minds	R2MR	MH First Aid	AMHI
Ability to provide positive direction and assist workers in identifying opportunities during times of change		X		
Ability to be understanding, supportive, compassionate, and empathetic	X	X		
Ability to use practical language and behaviours to reduce mental health stigma in the workplace	X	X		
Ability to practice self-care and positive coping strategies	X	X		
Ability to practise psychological first aid		X	X	
General knowledge of the connection between physical health and mental health, including sleep deprivation, poor nutrition, excessive alcohol and caffeine consumption, changes in adrenaline, and lack of exercise		X		

Employees

KSAs

	Resilient Minds	R2MR	MH First Aid	AMHI
General knowledge of the most common types of mental health conditions in first responders (i.e., PTSD, depression, anxiety, substance use disorder)	X	X	X	
General knowledge of the signs and symptoms of mental health conditions (including risk of suicide) in themselves and in others	X	X	X	
Knowledge of how chronic stress can result in attitudinal and behavioural changes, and their impact on client interactions				
Ability to practice self-care and positive coping strategies	X	X		
Ability to practice psychological first aid		X	X	

Employees

KSAs

	Resilient Minds	R2MR	MH First Aid	AMHI
Skills in managing conflict		X		
Ability to have a conversation with a co-worker who may be struggling with mental health or at risk of suicide	X	X		
Knowledge of what to do if a co-worker shows signs and symptoms of mental health conditions (including risk of suicide)	X	X		
Ability to use practical language and behaviours to reduce mental health stigma in the workplace	X	X	X	
General knowledge of their legal roles and responsibilities regarding mental health in the workplace (including discrimination)		X		X
Knowledge of the mental health resources available to employees (e.g., employee assistance program, employer benefits, community supports)	X	X	X	
General knowledge of the connection between physical health and mental health, including sleep deprivation, poor nutrition, excessive alcohol and caffeine consumption, changes in adrenaline, and lack of exercise		X		

Recruits and trainees

KSAs

	Resilient Minds	R2MR	MH First Aid	AMHI
Knowledge of the physical and psychological impacts of the role of a first responder				
Knowledge of the situations most common or relevant to their role as a first responder, particularly those that may be traumatic				

Family members

KSAs

	Resilient Minds	R2MR	MH First Aid	AMHI
General knowledge of the most common types of mental health conditions in first responders (i.e., PTSD, depression, anxiety, substance use disorder)	X	X	X	
General knowledge of the signs and symptoms of mental health conditions (including risk of suicide) in themselves and in others	X	X	X	
Knowledge of the mental health resources available to employees and their families (e.g., employee assistance program, employer benefits, community supports)	X		X	