

# Newsletter

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## Addressing unique stressors facing corrections officers

While sworn corrections officers are considered first responders, they are often not separated as a distinct category. Yet, studies show corrections officers face some of the same physical and mental health issues as others in public safety. Dr. Anna Courie talks about some of the tools officers can use to handle and address those stressors.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 2](#)

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

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](#)



## Transforming emergency response with FirstNet

Global Medical Response (GMR), an industry-leading air, ground, specialty and residential fire services and managed medical transportation organization, is connecting first responders and paramedics with FirstNet® – the only network built with and for America’s first responders and the extended public safety community. [LEARN MORE ON PAGE 4](#)

## Your Network: Helping keep you mission ready, whatever the call

Over 19,500 agencies and organizations across the country – accounting for more than 3 million connections – count on FirstNet for their communications needs. Their reasons vary: It's highly secure. It provides reliable connectivity and mission-critical tools. And it gives them peace of mind. Hear some of our responders talk about why they chose the only network built with and for first responders and those who support them. [WATCH VIDEOS](#)



# RESPONDER HEALTH AND WELLNESS

## Addressing unique stressors facing corrections officers

*While sworn correctional officers are considered first responders, they are often integrated into law enforcement in general and not separated as a distinct category.*



### By Dr. Anna Courie

Director, Responder Wellness, FirstNet® Program at AT&T

### and Mostafa Sanati

FirstNet Health and Wellness Intern

When we first socialized the framework and goals of the FirstNet Health and Wellness Program to leadership in the public safety community, one of our key leaders called me after the meeting and gently said, “Anna, you’ve forgotten sworn correctional officers in your model.”

While sworn correctional officers are considered first responders, they are often integrated into law enforcement in general and not separated as a distinct category. This created a glaring gap in the population we were trying to serve through the [FirstNet Health and Wellness Coalition](#), and we needed to address correctional officers in a meaningful way.

The general public doesn’t typically think of correctional officers as first responders. But studies show that correctional officers face some of the same physical and mental health issues as others in public safety. They struggle to maintain an appropriate work-life balance, deal with burnout, emotional stress, and other mental health issues. Plus, they face environmental challenges that differ from other law enforcement professions.

These include cramped working conditions, high ratios of offenders to officers, lack of windows and fresh air, and social isolation within the facility itself.

### Battling burnout

Overwhelmingly, burnout is a leading problem in corrections. Burnout contributes to adverse personal and organizational outcomes such as high turnover rates, absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, and lack of productivity. Burnout syndrome manifests itself with different signs and symptoms<sup>1</sup>. Poor work-life balance, emotional instability, reduced coping skills, anger management issues, depersonalization, and a sense of low personal accomplishment are some of the signs of workplace burnout. In addition, emotional stress is common among occupations that interact with the vulnerable population such as nurses, social workers, and correctional officers<sup>2</sup>.

Bryan Stirling, director of the South Carolina Department of Corrections, has seen this first-hand. That’s one of the reasons he is an advocate for including correctional officers in the discussion about first responder health and wellness. Their jobs require both mental and physical strength and well-being.

“Right now, correctional officers go to work, are enclosed

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# RESPONDER HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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in facilities with no access to wellness services, then go home and start the pattern all over again,” Stirling said.

### Stressors of the job

The service correctional officers provide is not just to the incarcerated population but also to society. And they’re expected to conduct themselves professionally – all while handling conflict, de-escalating situations, defending themselves against manipulation and aggression, and providing first aid and basic life support if necessary<sup>3</sup>. They must keep both prisoners and their local communities safe.

Like other first responders, correctional officers face major occupational stressors, such as mandatory overtime, lack of schedule flexibility (due to high turnover and inadequate staffing), mental and physical trauma, and critical incidents<sup>2</sup>.

This constant exposure to conflict and dangerous working conditions can lead to mental distress if not addressed. Correctional officers face higher rates of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than those reported to the general public and suicidal ideation. Dr. Fuscom and colleagues report that exposure to traumatic events had a direct correlation with higher incidents of PTSD and mental trauma among correctional staff<sup>4</sup>. These are the risk factors that contribute to the burnout facing the corrections profession.

### Addressing the issues

But there are things you can do to address burnout. The recent FirstNet First Responder Needs Assessment revealed a need for leadership engagement in officer health and wellness. Many first responders desire an open dialogue and activity that support wellness efforts within their departments.

“We need to provide information on resources and tools that correctional officers can engage in for their wellness both on and off the clock,” Director Stirling said. “There are actions individuals can take at home that facilitate stress management and healthy behaviors. And tools, such as applications that they can use at work to develop their individual wellness.”

In addition to leadership engagement, correctional officers would benefit from access to reliable mental health and suicide-prevention applications, the literature



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shows.<sup>5</sup> In an effort to support these recommendations, FirstNet, Built with AT&T has expanded the FirstNet App Catalog to include apps that support the wellness and safety of first responders including correctional staff.

- The [ResponderRel8](#) app provides peer-to-peer support for responder health and wellness needs.
- The [Lighthouse Health and Wellness](#) app identifies culturally competent resources and training that address public safety wellness needs. And the app is free for departments to use and tailor to meet their local needs.
- Finally, [the Better App](#) and the [Better Stop Suicide App](#) provide evidence-based approaches to mental health support, directly addressing the risk factors faced by the corrections population.

Correctional officer health is a complex problem rooted in many factors. But we can start with raising awareness, identifying resources, and engaging leadership in the conversation so that correctional officers become a more readily apparent part of the public safety dialogue. And we are grateful to be a part of that conversation.

*Mr. Mostafa (Moe) Sanati is a Doctorate in Nursing Practice student at the Ohio State University. He is an intern to the FirstNet Health and Wellness Program. Moe currently works as a trauma nurse and prior to his nursing career, Moe served as a volunteer firefighter and EMT for the village of Versailles. Moe lives in Ohio with his wife, and two children. Moe has a master's in business administration (MBA) from SolBridge International School of Business in South Korea*

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# NEW TECHNOLOGIES

## Transforming emergency response with FirstNet



*A U.S. government contractor, GMR helps communities and citizens after individual incidents and widespread disasters like hurricanes, floods and fires.*

### **New technologies expand Global Medical Response's capabilities to better serve paramedics and first responders across the country**

Global Medical Response (GMR), an industry-leading air, ground, specialty and residential fire services and managed medical transportation organization, is connecting first responders and paramedics with [FirstNet®](#) – the only network built with and for America's first responders and the extended public safety community. With this tech advancement, GMR can equip first responders across the country with new capabilities and reliable access to critical information while in the field.

FirstNet, Built with AT&T is designed to improve interoperable communications across public safety entities nationwide. It allows first responders to communicate with one another easily and quickly during everyday situations, big events or [emergencies](#).

A U.S. government contractor, GMR helps communities and citizens after individual incidents and widespread disasters like hurricanes, floods and fires. It provides a full array of ground and air ambulance, paratransit services and medical personnel to supplement the government's military response to a disaster or public health emergency. Recently, GMR used its network of subcontractors to help with COVID-19 testing at military bases and other government entities.

GMR is using FirstNet across its entire ecosystem of

mobility devices and services nationwide, helping local first responders, paramedics and other disaster response team members connect in times of need. During crises deployments, GMR will use 1,200 Sonim XP8 devices, military-grade android smartphones, with FirstNet capabilities. GMR is also using FirstNet-powered customer-owned and maintained (COAM) deployable assets with Band 14 specific equipment that will work on the FirstNet network to provide service to the devices in the field.

"As a government contractor, it is vital for us to stay connected during every scenario our responders are deployed to nationwide," said Jeffrey E. Marani, National Director of Field Technologies and OEM Communications Section Chief at GMR. "With FirstNet, we are able to maintain contact with our first responders across the country during everyday crises and large disasters."

Global Medical Response joined FirstNet to provide first responders unthrottled access to an entire public safety ecosystem of mission-ready tools and capabilities, including:

- The only nationwide communications platform that allows them to coordinate emergency responses efficiently and effectively across agencies and jurisdictions.
- Always-on priority to give GMR reliable access to the connection it needs
- A separate, dedicated and highly secure network core purpose-built for public safety's sensitive communications.

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## Global Medical Response transforms emergency response with FirstNet

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- Innovative tools – like public safety-centric applications, mission-critical solutions and connected devices – to give GMR more actionable information for heightened situational awareness.
- A dedicated fleet of 150 deployable network assets that public safety agencies can call upon for additional connectivity at no extra charge. This is unique in the industry.
- Access to holistic safety health and wellness tools and resources that go beyond network connectivity – driven by the [FirstNet Health & Wellness Coalition](#), which represents more than 1.3 million first responders.

GMR and AT&T announced last year that they are collaborating on the FirstNet Health & Wellness Coalition's [ROG the Dog](#) program, a fleet of trained Labradoodles that specialize in animal assisted therapy for first responders. The dogs, provided by GMR, can be

deployed to customers during times of crises, following natural or man-made disasters.

“We’re honored that Global Medical Response chose FirstNet to elevate their communications and disaster response capabilities across the country,” said Stacy Schwartz, VP for Public Safety and FirstNet at AT&T. “It’s our mission to give first responders the cutting-edge tools they need to effectively keep their communities safe. FirstNet will help GMR connect with those in need and to each other to provide the best emergency response.”

“FirstNet, Built with AT&T, is the exclusive communications platform, built with and for public safety, inspired by public safety. There is no substitution for this purpose-built network,” said FirstNet Authority CEO Edward Parkinson. “We look forward to supporting Global Medical Response and the public safety community with FirstNet, making sure it delivers what they need, when they need it.”

Visit <https://www.globalmedicalresponse.com/home> to learn more about Global Medical Response.

## Addressing the unique stressors facing corrections officers

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and a bachelor's degree in engineering. Moe is passionate about public health, especially that of first responders and Veterans.

Dr. Anna Fitch Courie, Director of Responder Wellness, FirstNet Program at AT&T is a nurse, Army wife, former university faculty, and author. Anna 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. Anna's area of expertise is integration of public health strategy across disparate organizations to achieve health improvement goals. Anna is a passionate Clemson football fan; loves to read, cook, walk, hike; and prior to COVID19, was an avid traveler.

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<sup>1</sup>Jaegers, L. A., Vaughn, M. G., Werth, P., Matthieu, M. M., Ahmad, S. O., & Barnidge, E. (2020). Work-Family Conflict, Depression, and Burnout Among Jail Correctional Officers: A 1-Year prospective study. *safety and health at work*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shaw.2020.10.008>

<sup>2</sup>Harizanova, S., & Stoyanova, R. (2020). Burnout among nurses and correctional officers. *Work*, 65(1), 71–77. <https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-193059>

<sup>3</sup>Useche, S. A., Montoro, L. V., Ruiz, J. I., Vanegas, C., Sanmartin, J., & Alfaro, E. (2019). Workplace burnout and health issues among Colombian correctional officers. *PLoS ONE*, 14(2), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0211447>

<sup>4</sup>Fuscom, N., Ricciardelli, R., Jamshidi, L., Carleton, N., Barnim, N., Hilton, Z., & Groll, D. (2021). When Our Work Hits Home: Trauma and mental disorders in correctional officers and other correctional workers. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2020.493391>

<sup>5</sup>Karcher, N. R., & Presser, N. R. (2018). Ethical and legal issues addressing the use of mobile health (mHealth) as an adjunct to psychotherapy. *Ethics & Behavior*, 28(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10508422.2016.1229187>

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