Finding the Right Provider

Questions for Responders and Family members to Ask

If you are a first responder or family member of a first responder coping with post-traumatic stress from the job, finding the right provider who can help can be very difficult.

For firefighters, paramedics, police officers and dispatchers who are brave enough to seek help, finding a local provider who is culturally and clinically competent in the unique needs of responders can be a challenge. Often, there is a short window of time in seeking help that can be the difference between prolonged suffering or gaining practical skills to manage symptoms and restore your quality of life.

If you are looking for a culturally competent clinician for yourself, a colleague, or a family member, here are a list of questions that will help guide you in finding the right one:

1. **Do you have experience working with First Responders; Firefighters, Police/LE, EMS or Dispatch? Please share your work experience.** The life of a responder and responder family are unique. It is necessary to find a provider who understands the service, who understands the effects from the career on the responder and family, and who is culturally competent to treat it.

2. **What evidence-based modalities do you use to treat post-traumatic stress, depression, anxiety and/or substance use issues***?* A few top modalities we look for in a provider are **EMDR** (Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing), **CBT** (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy), **DBT** (Dialectical Behavioral Therapy), and **ART** (Accelerated Resolution Therapy).

3. **Take some time to do a "life look back" to identify any underlying issues that may not be apparent.** Past issues can often be a part of present-day struggles, if unaddressed in the past.
   Some things to consider:
   - Childhood trauma, abuse, injury, loss, grief
   - Relationship – death, divorce, infidelity (yourself, parents, etc.)
   - Life issues – TBI, eating disorder, job loss, suicide by loved one, military trauma, injury or illness
   - Spiritual
   - Financial issues

4. **What are your specialties?** Any that you identify in a "life look back" should be addressed by the provider.
   - Anxiety
   - Depression
   - Trauma/PTSD
   - Relationship
   - Substance use
   - Any others identified in a "life look back".

5. **What insurances do you accept?**

6. **How soon can you schedule an in-patient appointment?** While we recommend in-person visits with a provider for the most effective therapy, there is great value in telehealth sessions (virtual) if in-person can not be accommodated.

   Therapy sessions usually start with a weekly cadence and will be revised by the provider according to the needs of the client. A responder who has 30 years of responder experience, may likely have many things to work through and may take many months to work through with the provider. You did not get to this place overnight, there is no magic pill to make it all go away. Add in any other "life issues" and more time will need to be added to the treatment plan.

7. **What is the process to see you?** Consultation (length/fee)

8. **Where are you located?** Set yourself up for success by finding the best provider closest to you. It is extremely important not to miss appointments.

9. **If a responder has a mental health emergency and needs in patient care, what facility or hospital do you refer to?**

10. **Bring people to your "Table of Healing" –** a spouse, partner, family member, colleague or friend who will help you stay on track in your healing journey. We are much more successful when we are accountable to someone other than ourselves. Consider who these people are in your world and let them know how they can help you.

The Blue Peak Team is always here to help guide you and answer questions. Please feel free to reach out to us at any time so we can make this process as easy as possible for you!

Frankie Jo McNallan
Program Manager
612-388-5990
fjmcnallan@bluepeak.one

Dr. Margaret Gavian
Director/Founder
612-924-1911
Dr.Gavian@bluepeak.one