



## **Nevada Peer Support Network**

November 2, 2024

### **Dear Grant distributor/sponsor:**

Thank you for considering a donation/grant of \$25,000 to Nevada Peer Support Network (NPSN). Your generous support will significantly impact the well-being of our first responders, law enforcement officers, EMS personnel, firefighters, veterans, and healthcare professionals—many of whom face unique mental health and resilience challenges due to the high-stress nature of their professions. Substance use disorders (SUDs), including opioid addiction, are significant concerns among first responders and healthcare professionals due to the high-stress nature of their work. While specific data on opioid addiction rates within these groups are limited, available research provides some insights:

### **First Responders (EMS, Firefighters, Law Enforcement Officers):**

- **Alcohol Use:** Studies indicate that alcohol abuse among first responders ranges from 16% to 40%. For instance, research on female firefighters found that 40% reported binge drinking in the previous month, with 16.5% screening positive for problem drinking behaviors.

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- **Substance Use:** While comprehensive statistics on opioid addiction are scarce, the high prevalence of alcohol misuse suggests a potential risk for other substance use disorders, including opioids. Factors such as exposure to traumatic events, high-stress environments, and physical injuries may contribute to this risk.

### **Nurses/Doctors:**

- **Prescription Drug Misuse:** Nurses/Physicians have access to controlled substances, which can lead to misuse. Estimates suggest that 10% to 15% of nurses may misuse drugs or alcohol at some point in their careers. However,

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specific data on opioid addiction rates among nurses and physicians are not well-documented.

### **Challenges in Data Collection:**

Accurate statistics on opioid addiction among these professionals are challenging to obtain due to factors like stigma, underreporting, and fear of professional repercussions. Additionally, many studies focus on substance use disorders in general, without isolating opioids specifically.

### **Conclusion:**

While precise incidence rates of opioid addiction among first responders and nurses are not readily available, the demanding nature of their professions, combined with access to controlled substances, underscores the importance of targeted support and intervention programs to address potential substance use disorders within these groups.

Below is an executive summary of how your donation would be strategically allocated to maximize support for this community:

**1. Peer Support Training and Certification – \$10,000**

Funds will be used to train and certify peer support specialists in mental health first aid, crisis intervention, opiate/substance use identification misuse and resilience-building strategies tailored for first responders. This will increase the availability of peer-based mental health resources statewide.

**2. Community Resilience and Awareness Initiatives – \$5,000**

These funds will enable us to conduct community outreach programs focused on mental health education, peer support via the mobile NPSN incident team, PTSD/PTSI awareness, Substance Misuse resource outreach and suicide prevention. We vet trauma informed clinicians/therapists to work with our special populations, host webinars, and distribute resources to educate and support those we serve.

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**3. Emergency Support Fund – \$10,000**

This fund will provide immediate assistance to first responders/healthcare professionals facing acute mental health crises, including funding for counseling, assistance with inpatient/outpatient therapeutic services, access to opiate/substance misuse rehabilitation programs or other urgent needs. It ensures quick access to help during critical moments.

**4. NVPSN Resilience Center and Wellness Programs – \$Seeking funding**

These funds will be used for resilience-building workshops, access to use the confidential space for CISDs (Critical Incident Stress Debriefings). The programs will focus on coping mechanisms, mindfulness, and mental wellness practices to strengthen long-term resilience. Assist hosting AA/Substance Misuse confidential meetings.

**5. Evaluation and Outreach Materials – \$Seeking funding**

This will fund the creation of outreach and evaluation materials, including surveys and printed resources, to better engage our community, gather feedback, and continually improve our program offerings to align with the evolving needs of those we serve.

Your support will play a crucial role in empowering Nevada's frontline heroes by enhancing their access to vital mental health/substance misuse resources. On behalf of Nevada Peer Support Network, thank you for your commitment to their resilience and well-being.

Warm regards,

*N. Lukasiewicz*

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