



SDML Work Comp Fund and SDPAA to continue Mental Health Benefit for First Responders and Families

The SDML Workers' Compensation Fund Board of Trustees is happy to continue the partnership with the SDPAA Board of Directors to provide this benefit for all of our first responders, their spouses, and their dependents in 2026. First responders include over 13,000 law enforcement officers, firefighters, ambulance personnel, 911 dispatchers, correctional officers, emergency management and members of search and rescue teams and their dependents.

We understand the challenges and stress that can be placed on employees/volunteers and the families of first responders. The First Responder Assistance Program provided by Connections EAP, Inc. of Rock Valley, Iowa is an important benefit available to first responders and their families. You do not have to sign up for this benefit. As long as your department is a member of the SDML Workers' Compensation Fund or the SDPAA, you are automatically eligible for this benefit.

This program was created in response to the growing recognition that stress and trauma experienced by first responders places an emotional and mental health cost on them and at times, family members. **One of the unique benefits is the Critical Incident Stress Debriefings coordinated by Connections EAP.** Trained peer support first responders and credentialed mental health professionals will conduct Critical Incident Stress Debriefings in response to tragic events at your request.

There are many more personal benefits available as well including:

FREE and CONFIDENTIAL access to information and professional assistance for first responders and dependents* includes 3-sessions "in person" or via telehealth assessment and solution planning with a local credentialed professional counselor at no out-of-pocket cost to the first responder. First responders and dependents can also talk to experts, browse for information, and access services for:

- Emotional problems
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Post-traumatic stress
- Marital or family conflict
- Drug or alcohol issues
- Grief
- Caregiving responsibilities
- Legal or financial problems

These services are CONFIDENTIAL and you are entitled to 3 FREE sessions: per incident, per year. You may use this benefit for incidents that occurred in the past, both related or unrelated to your experience as a first responder.

Additionally, first responder employees, volunteers and dependents* can access the following experts through a variety of communication modes. Phone, email, web, and some in-person support include:

- 24/7 Phone Access – Toll-Free Hotline
- Local Credentialed Counseling Professionals – Nationwide Network
- Local Credentialed Addiction Counselors
- Elder or Adult Consult and Care/Find in 50 states
- Child Consult and Care/Find
- Special Needs Child Consult
- Pre-Natal support
- Summer Care Consult/Find
- Access to Attorneys for Legal Help
- Consumer Credit Counseling
- Family Budget Planning
- Adoption Information and Support Services
- Access to web-based self-help information and assessments
- Webinars, & Additional Work-life Information
- ...AND MORE!

Connections EAP counselors may recommend various services or treatments beyond the 3 sessions of assessment/solution planning. Costs for treatments beyond those provided by Connections are the first responder's responsibility but *may* be covered in part by a regular health insurance benefit or another EAP program.

The service is CONFIDENTIAL – Connections Inc. EAP reports only the number of people who use services. NO ONE from the SDML Work Comp Fund, the employer or department will be informed of your call or visit unless you specify in writing that an EAP professional contact us.

Different locations for in-person assessment and solution planning are available in your area. Connections EAP, Inc. will authorize your sessions at a location near you and you can arrange an appointment at a date and time that is convenient and comfortable for you.

The toll-free phone is personally answered by trained professionals 24/7.

Research clearly shows that people are at their best when they are confident that they are doing something positive to resolve personal and family stressors. If you are a first responder and have considered using consultation, counseling or related support services, but cost or other unknowns have discouraged you, please take advantage of this **FREE** and **CONFIDENTIAL** resource available to first responders, their spouses, and their dependents* that are members of the SDML Workers' Compensation Fund.

Personal and family stress is treated most effectively when you do not wait to make the call. Connections EAP, Inc. would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Simply call **800-779-6125** or go to their website at www.connectionseap.com or visit www.sdmlwcfund.com for a link to their website. If you are a first responder member of the SDML Workers' Compensation Fund or the SDPAA, Connections EAP, Inc. will provide you with a username and password for full access to their web resources. There is also a 12-minute video available that explains the program in detail. You can watch the video in the privacy of your own home or play it at department meeting [FRAP Video Presentation - YouTube](#). Feel free to contact us with any questions.

*Dependent defined as per Federal IRS standards.

SDML WORKERS COMPENSATION FUND

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