

EVALUATION OF THE NFFF'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH STRESS FIRST AID INTERVENTION



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PROJECT KEYWORDS: Firefighter, behavioral health, stress first aid

Purpose & Aims: Behavioral health interventions implemented to mitigate negative outcomes linked to trauma in the fire service have had limited or iatrogenic effects on firefighters. The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) and the national fire service community have invested considerable resources developing a new behavioral health model to address exposure to traumatic events. The proposed randomized controlled trial will be the first to determine the efficacy of the NFFF's *Consensus Protocol on Firefighter Behavioral Health Stress First Aid Intervention* (SFAI), as well as evaluating its implementation and acceptability.

Relevance: The SFAI was the result of one of the 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives developed in consultation with leading fire service organizations in the United States and experts from the traumatic stress research community. Failing to effectively address grief and trauma incidents or symptoms can have devastating effects for firefighters, fire departments, and families. The SFAI was developed to be a national model of department level intervention to ensure that evidence-based cost-effective care is available to all firefighters.

Methods: Using a cluster randomized clinical trial design (CRCT), experienced scientists and fire service personnel will evaluate the implementation, acceptability, and initial efficacy of the SFAI compared with usual care (i.e., delayed intervention) with both career and volunteer firefighters located across the country. Study outcomes include measures assessing implementation of SFAI components, acceptability among firefighters and department leadership, changes in knowledge about and self-efficacy for managing trauma, changes in department morale, and individual firefighter behavioral health outcomes such as symptoms of PTSD and personal growth through coping with traumatic events.

Projected Results & Conclusions: Findings will provide the empirical basis for the newly developed SFAI.