

Trafalgar Addiction Treatment Centres

Local Heroes Support Program

Press Release

Trafalgar Addiction Treatment Centres offers more than \$1 million in free care to first responders suffering from addiction and mental health disorders

Nearly half of first responders in Canada suffer without access to proper care

(Toronto, November 20, 2019). Trafalgar Addiction Treatment Centres today announced it is launching its **Local Heroes Support Program**, which will provide up to 50 – 30-day intensive, residential concurrent disorder treatment spaces each year to first responders who currently do not have access to care, **at no cost**. This represents more than \$1 million in care over the course of one year.

With this program, Trafalgar Addiction Treatment Centres aims to raise awareness for the growing prevalence of concurrent addiction and mental health disorders within the first responder community. Most of these issues stem from a career and life of exposure to traumatic events causing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Studies have shown that nearly half of first responders in Canada have symptoms consistent with at least one mental health disorder – four times higher than in the general population¹.

With a lack of access to proper support in an overburdened health care system, many turn to drugs or alcohol to self-medicate and subsequently develop an addiction that compounds their disease. Because of the stigma associated with mental health on the job, the true numbers of those affected are unknown and likely underestimated.

“First responders are there when we need them, facing situations that are unimaginable to most of us. These heroes put their lives and emotional wellbeing on the line for our collective benefit, and far too many are suffering without support.” says Shane Saltzman, CEO of Trafalgar Addiction Treatment Centres. “We are committed to assisting those in the first responder community, and we hope the Local Heroes Support Program increases the dialogue on this important and urgent issue.”

While many great resources are available in Canada, there are barriers to care that prevent many thousands who are suffering from getting the support they need. Many first responders who clearly suffer from addiction and mental health issues are unable to prove that they suffer from PTSD, and are unable to secure funding for support. For those who do qualify for funding, the process can be difficult to navigate and there is a significant wait of up to a year, which is an eternity for someone suffering from what can be a debilitating illness for them and their families.

¹ [Mental Disorder Symptoms among Public Safety Personnel in Canada](#)

“After years of cumulative exposures and stress, it is no surprise that some first responders can suffer from depression, anxiety, PTSD, suicidal ideation, and substance abuse,” says Staff Sergeant Wendy Sims, Organizational Wellness Unit, Peel Regional Police. “First responders who suffer from these health conditions need intensive and extensive treatment in order to keep them healthy mentally, emotionally and physically, so a program like Trafalgar’s is life changing. It breaks barriers and is a tremendous first step in what needs to be a long-term, community-wide strategy to help those who are being underserved.”

Trafalgar Addiction Treatment Centres is an experienced and trauma informed clinic, with a proven history of effectively treating first responders with addiction and mental health issues. The Trafalgar person-centric program includes three individual sessions per week with a Master’s level therapist, access to a psychiatric consult and follow-up, PTSD specific programming, three skills groups per day, combined family therapy, family support programming and aftercare programs that provide clients with counselling and support long after they leave Trafalgar’s care.

With the launch of this initiative, Trafalgar Addiction Treatment Centres is calling on the broader mental health and addiction community to join in better serving the complex needs of this population.

“Imagine if treatment centres across the country committed to providing even one free treatment spot per month, how many hundreds or thousands of first responders we could help. Imagine how much money we could save the health care system and the economic impact that would have by reducing time lost due to illness,” added Saltzman. “Ultimately, we are trying to ensure that people are looking after the needs of first responders, the way they continue to look after our needs.”

To apply for a Local Heroes Support placement, first responders can visit www.trafalgarresidence.com/localheroes

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About Trafalgar Addiction Treatment Centres

Trafalgar Addiction Treatment Centres is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) as a provider of addiction and mental health treatment in Canada. Trafalgar Addiction Treatment Centres has revolutionized the way care is provided by offering an intensive, highly individualized approach that focuses on treating concurrent disorders and by providing industry-leading aftercare support. Since its founding in 2013, it has provided care to approximately 2,000 individuals, and their families, from across the country through its two residential facilities and outpatient clinic in the GTA.