

Wildland Firefighter Behavioral Health Program

Orientation and Training for Network Providers/Affiliates

Background

The Joint Department of Interior (DOI) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Fire Service Wildland Firefighter Behavioral Health Program provides counseling services for firefighter and dispatch personnel. Employees in retirement-eligible positions working in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the DOI U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the USDA Forest Service are eligible for the program.

Program Scope

Eligible participants may receive up to 16 counseling sessions in addition to an initial assessment. Counseling services will address acute stress reactions, anxiety, complex grief, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and substance use concerns related to traumatic events or cumulative emotional strain of wildland fire work. For needs outside the scope of the program, participants will receive assistance with the appropriate referrals. Examples of concerns outside the clinical scope of care would include assessment for medication, partial or day hospitalization programs, and work-life issues managed by and referred to employee assistance programs.

Accessing Services

All interested participants will call or chat (through the designated Wildland Behavioral Health website link) to the Magellan Contact Center to determine eligibility, have clinical triage and receive assistance with referral for counseling services if they meet the program requirements. Eligible participants will receive a case/MAT number for accessing counseling services via the Magellan Wildland Firefighter Behavioral Health network.

Program Orientation

The orientation links on the following pages will acquaint you with the unique job demands of wildland firefighters and dispatchers. **Note the [mandatory resources](#) you must review before accepting participants** (takes about 1 hour to complete), and [additional resources](#) that while not required are encouraged to increase your understanding of this population and their needs.

Behavioral Health Network Affiliate Self-Study Resources

To open a link in a new tab, press CTRL on the keyboard while clicking the link.

Introductory resources (mandatory)

All practitioners serving Wildland participants must review introductory resources 1-5 below before seeing Wildland participants. Total time to complete these resources is less than one hour.

1. Video: [The Heart of a Firefighter](#) (7 minutes)
2. Video: [The Wild Land](#) (25 minutes)
3. Video: [VICE News - California Hotshots](#) (12 minutes)
4. Wildland Firefighters roles/job descriptions – position descriptions: [Careers in Wildland Fire | US Forest Service](#) (5-minute read)
5. Wildland Firefighter Dispatchers/BLM website: <https://www.nifc.gov/about-us/our-partners/blm/blm-dispatchers>. Includes BLM Fire Dispatcher video. (5:30 minutes)

Self-paced trainings (resources not listed in order of importance)

While not required, practitioners also are encouraged to complete the self-paced trainings below to increase understanding of this population and their needs.

1. Opinion article: [Wildland Firefighters Face up to \\$20,000 Pay Cut if Congress Doesn't Act – That's Taking a Toll on a Workforce Already Under Stress](#) by Robin Verble. (2-minute read)
2. Video: TEDx Talks - [Unveiling Resilience: Burnout and Resilience for Wildland Firefighters](#) with Robin Verble. (11:30 minutes)
3. Federal Wildland Firefighter Health and Wellbeing Program Webinar Series
Series link: [Federal Wildland Firefighter Health and Wellbeing Program](#)
Recommended recordings:
 - Episode 4: Dispatcher Mental Health and Wellbeing (1 hour, 11 minutes)
 - Episode 6: Navigating Fire Season Transitions (1 hour)
4. Documentary film: [Hotshot](#) - Filmed over six years amidst wildfires in California. Available to rent or purchase on various streaming services. (1 hour and 40 minutes)
5. Research article: [Mental Health and Traumatic Occupational Exposure in Wildland Fire Dispatchers](#). By Robin Verble, Rachel Granberg, Seth Pearson, Charlene Rogers and Roman Watson. May 1, 2024. (30-minute read)
6. Multimedia website: [Wildland Fire Metareview | US Forest Service Research and Development](#). This Metareview examines multiple wildland fire incidents, allowing themes to be detected in a

way that a single accident review would not. This review examined accidents and incidents, including fatality incidents, in the U.S. Forest Service over a 10-year period (2007–2016).

The Metareview webpage is extensive and includes PDF text chapters, audio book chapters of the PDF texts, focus group participant interviews, and multiple webinars focusing on specific areas of the Metareview.

Chapter 10 of the Metareview, *Mental Health and Suicide*, is six pages (10-minute read; 15-minute audiobook version of the chapter is available) and includes multiple hyperlinks to allow for a deeper dive into this topic.

7. Abstract: *Wildland Firefighter Psychological and Behavioral Health: Preliminary Data from a National Sample of Current and Former Wildland Firefighters in the United States* [Conference session] [WFF Psychological and Behavioral Health Preliminary Data](#) (2-minute read). Authors: Patricia O'Brien and Duncan Campbell.
8. Podcast: *Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center*, Episode 35. [Mental Health: First Steps to Getting Help](#) (May 24, 2024). A panel of wildland firefighters discusses considerations about when to seek counseling services, how to find a provider, and how to get the most out of the experience when working with a provider. (1 hour and 16 minutes)
9. Podcast: *On The Line*, an episode on [Survey Says...](#) (April 21, 2020). This podcast includes Dr. Patricia O'Brien, the author of the abstract and research listed above (resource #7) and is also a hyperlink from Chapter 10 in the Metareview resource (resource #6). It is a valuable stand-alone resource discussing the research of Dr. O'Brien. (45 minutes)

Wildland Firefighters Internal Guides/Resources

1. [A Preparedness Guide for Firefighters and Their Families](#) (PDF, 20 pages)
2. [Reset: Firefighter and Family Members' Reintegration Guide](#) (PDF, 14 pages)