



## Interventions for the prevention and management of occupational stress injury in first responders

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### Summary

This rapid overview of reviews was conducted for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services of Ontario to summarize strategies for preventing and managing occupational stress injury (OSI) among frontline workers. It included 14 systematic reviews covering 47 unique primary studies. Some prevention strategies studied were potentially effective; however, due to variability in the prevention and management methods used, the data could not be combined to draw strong conclusions. A full systematic review of primary studies is warranted to identify effective strategies for preventing and managing OSI among frontline workers.

### What does this mean?

Prevention strategies such as resilience training and health promotion activities showed positive effects on OSI. Rehabilitation strategies had mixed results. A future systematic review could provide stronger evidence to help design and implement effective programs to support frontline workers.

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### What is the current situation?

First responders are at risk of OSI, including anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, due to the stressful nature of their work. Although many studies have focused on OSI among military personnel, there has been less attention on frontline community safety workers such as police officers, firefighters, correctional officers, and coroners.

### What questions did we aim to answer in our research?

The objective of this rapid overview was to summarize the prevention and management strategies for OSI among frontline workers and assess the effectiveness of those strategies.

### How did we approach these questions?

Major public health databases were searched for systematic reviews that examined interventions and rehabilitation strategies to improve mental health among frontline community safety personnel (e.g., police officers and firefighters, coroners, and correctional service employees). Two reviewers screened studies for inclusion. One reviewer extracted data on study characteristics, interventions, and outcomes, and a second reviewer verified the data. The quality of all included systematic reviews was assessed. The results of the included reviews and the primary studies within them were summarized and compared across populations, interventions and outcomes.

### What answers did we find from our research?

This rapid overview included 14 reviews with 47 unique primary studies. Prevention strategies included suicide prevention, resilience training, stress management, and physical, mental, and emotional health education. Resilience training and health promotion activities showed positive results, especially among police officers. Rehabilitation strategies, such as psychotherapy, drug therapy, and other treatments, showed some reduction in OSI symptoms, but overall, results were mixed.

### How confident are we in these findings?

A rigorous method was used to conduct this study. However, due to time constraints, some limitations were unavoidable. Only English-language systematic reviews published in the last 10 years were included. Due to the variability in the interventions and outcomes studied, the results of the included studies could not be combined to draw firm conclusions.