




INFORMATION BULLETIN

TO: All Fire Department Personnel
FROM: Joel G. Baker, *Fire Chief* 
DATE: March 30, 2021
SUBJECT: Access to Internal and External Behavioral Health Resources

The overall wellbeing of our employees and family members is critically important to us. We want each of you to be able to receive the help, support, and assistance that you deserve. As a department and employer, we provide access to a variety of both internal and external behavioral health resources for you to choose from.

Internal Resources: Our employees and their immediate family members are encouraged to seek behavioral health assistance from our two staff psychologists, our Peer Support Team members, and our doctoral student intern from the University of Texas at Austin. These services are provided at no cost to the individual, and the content of these sessions is protected by all applicable state laws and ethical guidelines related to confidentiality. Employees and their families are also encouraged to seek pastoral counseling at no cost from one of our department Chaplains. In addition, the City of Austin provides access to behavioral health (and other) resources for all employees through the Deer Oaks Employee Assistance Program. Contact information for each of these resources is provided below:

- **Staff Psychologists**

Marc Kruse, Ph.D.
512-974-0225 (office)
512-294-8092 (cell)
Marc.Kruse@austintexas.gov

Ebony Butler, Ph.D.
512-974-0200 (office)
512-953-3525 (cell)
Ebony.Butler@austintexas.gov

- **Doctoral Student in Counseling Psychology Intern**
(under supervision of Dr. Kruse)
Marlon Bailey, L.C.S.W.
512-373-2705 (cell)
Marlon.Bailey@austintexas.gov
- **Peer Support Team**
Point of Contact: Lt. Dana Dieterich
512-974-0230
(888) 4-AFD-HELP
firepeersupportteam@austintexas.gov
- **Chaplains**
Point of Contact: Andrew Fox
512-897-7886
andrew.fox@austintexas.gov
- **Insurance/Medical Benefits: Blue Cross Blue Shield**
www.bcbs.com
- **Employee Assistance Program – Deer Oaks**
866-228-2542
<https://www.deeroakseap.com/member-login/>
Username: austintexas.gov
Password: austintexas.gov

External Resources: If you prefer to seek care from external behavioral health resources, there are a number of options available for you to consider.

First Responder Mental Health Program. The City, Fire, Police, and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Departments have partnered to provide grant-funded, community-based behavioral health resources for all public safety sworn personnel who have been impacted by their exposure to criminal and/or traumatic events. All services are provided by contract clinicians in the local community who adhere to strict confidentiality rules. As is the case with our in-house resources, no identifying information of first responders who seek treatment from this program will be shared with the City of Austin or the Austin Fire Department. Sworn personnel can receive up to 17 sessions at no cost. To learn more about this option, contact Allison Roper at austinFRMH@gmail.com.

Blue Cross Blue Shield Insurance. In addition to the resources provided above, you can also utilize your insurance benefits to help pay for sessions from external behavioral health resources. There are a number of ways in which you can find a provider who

accepts Blue Cross Blue Shield. Here are two of the most common methods:

- Visit the Blue Cross Blue Shield website at <https://www.bcbs.com/find-a-doctor> or call them at 1-800-810-2583. The search engine or insurance representative will be able to assist you in locating a provider who is in your network.
- Visit <https://www.psychologytoday.com>. After entering your city or zip code in the search bar, you will be able to select providers who accept our insurance by clicking on the Insurance filter and selecting Blue Cross and Blue Shield. You may also then further narrow your search by using the filters on this website (Issues, Gender of the Provider, Types of Therapy, Age of Client, Price, as well as Ethnicity Served, Sexuality, Language, and Faith which are located under the “More” tab). The clinicians who match your criteria will be listed and you will be able to view their credentials, an introduction, and in some cases a photo or video introduction, as well as their contact information.
- If you have a specific provider that you would like to seek treatment from, but they are not currently covered by our Insurance Provider, you may consider reaching out to Blue Cross Blue Shield directly to determine if they will provide partial reimbursement for services.

If you have difficulties navigating these sites or have questions about this process, please don't hesitate to reach out to either of our psychologists or a member of our Peer Support Team using the contact information provided above. They are happy to help you through this process to find a good resource for your care.

Thank you again for all that you do for our community.