

# 2026 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

## Mental Health Awareness Training

**The VPFF urges the Virginia General Assembly to modify existing legislation to direct the Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) to develop and provide mental health awareness training.**

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### **Background:**

In 2020, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation encouraging fire departments to develop mental health awareness training for their members. By code (§9.1-203.1), the legislation must include understanding the signs and symptoms of stress, fighting stigmas around seeking help, responding appropriately to aggressive behaviors, accessing mental health treatment/resources and managing stress.

Studies have shown firefighters develop post-traumatic stress at levels similar to military members returning from combat. In addition, approximately 20% of firefighters meet the criteria for PTSD at some point in their career, as opposed to just 6.8% lifetime risk for the general population.

This legislation directs the Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) to develop an online module that is available to all firefighters, emergency medical service providers and communication officers across the Commonwealth. By providing this information in a central and established manner, greater compliance and participation will be achieved.

### **Needed Action:**

The General Assembly should pass this legislation which directs the Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP) to develop and implement this online module for all firefighters. This will ensure a cohesive program that is available to all firefighters, emergency medical providers and communications officers across the Commonwealth.

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The Virginia Professional Fire Fighters proudly represents nearly 11,000 firefighters, emergency medical providers and communications officers in over 60 localities across the Commonwealth of Virginia.