

**T-6 OFFERS FIRST RESPONDER TRAINING IN HELENA, KALISPELL, BILLINGS;  
SETS UP NATION'S FIRST PEER SUPPORT NETWORK**

BIG TIMBER, MONTANA—T-6 Advanced Training and Career Development Group, a nonprofit that helps first responders navigate job and related life stressors, is expanding its programming to Helena and Kalispell and returning to Billings this fall.

Its workshop, "Getting through the Grind," is offered free to all first responders—including police, fire, EMT, dispatch, and corrections professionals—and their spouses. Programs are scheduled as follows:

- Helena, September 29-October 1, hosted by the Montana Highway Patrol
- Kalispell, October 3 and December 5, hosted by the Kalispell Police Department
- Billings, November 3-5, hosted by the Billings Police Department

The curriculum examines Organizational Stress, Occupational Stress, Societal (External) Stress, and Individual (Internal) Stress, according to Brian Regan, T-6 cofounder and president and a 15-year veteran of the Brevard County (Florida) Sheriff's Office. "This program provides mental and emotional training for those who need it the most," Regan says. "It's successful and credible because it's led by first responders who have walked the walk."

T-6 is also developing a peer support program, the first of its kind in the nation, according to Regan. The new Montana Law Enforcement Peer-Support Network will be operational in January 2023, serving all law enforcement officers in the state and their families.

Regan says, "We are setting up seven geographic districts in Montana with trained peer support officers in each area so that first responders receive immediate, accessible help when faced with traumatic situations on the job that may have long-term, mental health consequences." The new peer support network is being funded through a grant from the Gianforte Family Foundation.

Regan is working with law enforcement agencies across the state to identify peer mentors who will receive training on the neurobiological effects of stress and trauma, basic professional therapies to assist with mental health and substance use issues, and proactive stress management techniques.

Jessie Holton, lead instructor and cofounder of T-6, explains, "Suicide is the number 1 killer of law enforcement officers, divorce rates are between 60 and 80 percent, alcohol abuse is high, and retention of officers is low. Occupational and traumatic stress are principal factors driving these statistics."

"Additionally, the law enforcement culture has a history of reluctance in asking for help," Holton continues. "Not only do peer-support programs lead to treatment success, but they help remove stigmas and shift cultural perceptions. Individuals are more likely to open up about issues to their peers, enter professional programs with open mindsets, and sustain long-term recovery goals."

For more information on the organization, upcoming programs for Montana first responders, or the peer support network, contact Regan at 321-848-1974 or bregan79@gmail.com.

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