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## **T-6 LAUNCHES NATION'S FIRST PEER SUPPORT NETWORK FOR LEOS**

BIG TIMBER, MONTANA—T-6 Advanced Training and Career Development Group is officially launching its peer support program for law enforcement officers (LEOs), believed to be the first of its kind in the nation. T-6, a nonprofit organization founded by LEOs, helps first responders navigate job and related life stressors through programming aimed at improving mental health.

The new Montana Law Enforcement Peer-Support Network (MLEPSN) will serve all law enforcement officers in the state and their families. Its first official meeting takes place January 25-26 in Helena.

Newly appointed officers will discuss 2023 training programs for first responders, outreach to state and municipal agencies, continued education and preparation of volunteer facilitators, coordinators, and peer counselors, and funding opportunities to sustain the group, long term. T-6 and MLEPSN have been supported through grants from the Gianforte Family Foundation, among other donors.

T-6 has offered its free Getting through the Grind program to Montana first responders and their spouses the past several years, expanding from the Gallatin Valley to Billings, Glendive, Great Falls, Helena, and Kalispell. This past year the group recruited and trained peer support mentors, trainers, and program coordinators, creating a statewide network.

Brian Regan, T-6 president and cofounder, says, “The new network of trained peer support officers will provide immediate help to any officer in Montana faced with a traumatic incident that may have long-term mental health consequences.”

Peer support minimizes the stigma of seeking treatment, according to Jessie Holton, lead instructor and cofounder of T-6. “The law enforcement culture has a history of reluctance in asking for help,” Holton says. “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.”

The mental health challenge for first responders is real, Holton says. “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.” These statistics are particularly staggering in Montana, which historically ranks among the top three states in the nation for suicide.

Members of the network will present the T-6 Getting through the Grind training program at the annual Montana Narcotics Officers Association conference February 28-March 1 in Bozeman, and in Cascade County later this winter. More information on the MLEPSN is at: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100086385703617>.

For more information on T-6, upcoming programs for Montana first responders, or becoming involved in the peer support network, contact Regan at 321-848-1974 or [bregan79@gmail.com](mailto:bregan79@gmail.com). All Montana LEOs are welcome to join.

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