“Mile In Our Boots” Clinicians Academy Agenda
April 22 - 25, 2027
1118 Thunderbolt Drive
Walterboro, SC

Thursday	14:00	Registration / Gear Sizing	Everyone
	15:30	Welcome	Chief Greene
		Who is SC FAST	Patti Graham
	16:00	“When Help Hurts”	Mitch Stewart

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) play a crucial role in ensuring positive outcomes for patients during critical situations. However, challenges arise when individuals facing mental health crises call for help but do not receive adequate support, leading to deteriorating conditions. Limited training for EMS personnel in handling mental health cases can result in ineffective treatment and a lack of control at the scene, further exacerbating the situation. This underscores the need for improved training and resources within EMS to better address the complexities of mental health emergencies.

Examine the impact of poor patient care on mental health by providing an overview of how inadequate responses to behavioral emergencies can adversely affect patient's mental health outcomes, leading to longer-term issues, and discuss how this situation creates stress, anxiety, and burnout for the healthcare providers who feel ill-equipped to manage these emergencies.

Highlight the role of staffing shortages in care quality by discussing potential consequences, such as increased response times, reduced patient satisfaction, and heightened risk of adverse events

Facilitate understanding of the vicious cycle of training gaps by exploring how limited initial education on behavioral emergencies can lead to inadequate care, affecting patient outcomes & provider stress levels.

	17:30	Supper / Briefing	Everyone / Christan McConnell
Friday	09:00	Welcome / logistics	Christan McConnell
	09:30	“Crisis Control Center”	Ti Bryson Smith

Communication specialist (911 operators) is the calm and steady voice in emergency situations, adept at handling 911 calls and efficiently delegating the appropriate resources to each incident. Despite facing challenges such as short staffing and the demands of long hours, they excel as a multitasker, ensuring that critical needs are met while maintaining composure under pressure. Their role is essential in navigating the complexities of emergency response, where every decision matters.

Highlight the critical role of 911 operators as the primary point of contact for emergency callers, emphasizing their ability to remain calm & composed while handling complex situations, & their expertise in efficiently dispatching the right resources to each incident.

Discuss the operational challenges faced by 911 operators, including staffing shortages & long working hours, & how they adapt to those demands while maintaining their composure & multitasking skills, ensuring that critical needs are met in emergency situations.

	11:00	H.O.T. (hands on training) Tracks	
		Fire	Chief Graham

Donning full bunker gear, step into the challenging competency course, the weight of the equipment a reminder of the stakes at hand. Navigate through

a smoke-filled environment, the intense heat enveloped you, making each breath feel labored amidst the limited visibility. A test of both skill and resilience, forcing you to stay focused and composed in a situation that mirrors the unpredictable nature of real-life emergencies.

Highlight the physical demands of the course, including the weight of full bunker gear, the intense heat, and limited visibility which requires firefighters to stay focused, composed and resilient in a high pressure environment

Emphasize the purpose of the competency course as a rigorous evaluation of firefighters skills and abilities to respond effectively in emergency situations, with the goal of ensuring they are adequately prepared to face unpredictable challenges.

EMS Ame Kellum

Face the uncertainty of a call, responding to unpredictable situations that demand swift action. This unique dynamic necessitates a seamless blend of verbal and physical intervention, all while the vehicle continues to move through the chaotic environment. The demands of this high-stress environment call upon you to adapt and respond with precision, combining verbal reassurance with hands-on care to stabilize and care for patients amid chaos.

Navigate unpredictable situations highlighting the importance of being prepared to face uncertainty in emergency calls, emphasizing the need for swift and decisive actions in response to rapidly changing situations.

Emphasize the demands for adaptability and precision in the high stress content of emergency response, noting how responders must remain focused and composed while managing both the chaos of the surroundings and the needs of the patients they assist.

Communications / 911 Ti Bryson Smith

Answering phones in a high-stress environment requires quick thinking and efficient communication skills. Each call presents unique challenges, demanding the ability to assess situations rapidly and delegate the appropriate resources effectively. Balancing urgency with clarity, the role involves not just responding to inquiries but also ensuring that the right assistance is dispatched, all while navigating the pressure of real-time crises and maintaining composure under stress.

Understanding of secondary traumatic stress by walking in the shoes of a 911 responder. Gaining a deeper understanding of the cumulative impact of secondary traumatic stress on first responders, including the long-term effects on mental health and well-being.

Develop stronger connections by navigating the complexities of crises response firsthand, so that one may facilitate referrals, consultations, and collaborations to promote more effective, coordinated care

LEO Capt. J Chapman

Every fraction of a second counts when responding to a critical situation. The decisions you make in those split seconds can mean the difference between life and death, not just for you, but for others. Whether it's deciding to use non-lethal means to de-escalate a situation or employing

lethal force to protect yourself or others, you must act swiftly and with precision. The use of K-9s can also be a game-changer, providing an additional layer of control and safety.

Emphasizing the importance for quick decision making for emergency responders in high pressure situations, as the decisions made in mere fractions of a second can significantly impact the outcomes for themselves & others involved.

Highlighting the essential skill of assessing when to use non-lethal means versus lethal force, underscoring the responsibility of responders to act with precision and judiciousness to protect themselves and others while managing potential volatile situations.

Friday	13:00	Lunch & Learn	Everyone
		A word from our sponsors……. learn about resources available to you and your responder.	
	14:00	H.O.T. Tracks	
		Fire	Chief Graham
		see above	
		EMS	Ame Kellum
		see above	
		Communications / 911	Ti Bryson Smith
		see above	
		LEO	Capt. J Chapman
		See above	
	16:00	“Chaplain’s role in Wholeness”	Patti Graham

A chaplain plays a significant role in supporting first responders who are seeking help from mental health clinicians. Their presence can also assist in bridging the gap between spiritual care and psychological support, offering holistic healing that addresses both mental and spiritual well-being.

Integration of spiritual support into care plans by recognizing the intricate relationship between and individual's faith, values, and mental health. Considering the spiritual dimension of clients' experiences, fostering more comprehensive and compassionate care that addresses the whole person.

Create safe spaces for emotional as well as spiritual expression for the responder to explore both their emotional struggles and spiritual questions.

	17:30	Supper & briefing for tomorrow	Everyone
Saturday	09:00	Recap from yesterday	Christan McConnell
	09:30	“The Ripple Effect”	Chrissy Walser

Traumatic events significantly impact first responders, leading to profound challenges in their mental wellness that extend beyond the individuals themselves. The collateral damage often infiltrates their families, creating a ripple effect that disrupts family dynamics and emotional stability. Research indicates that the complexity and severity of traumatic incidents faced by first responders not only exacerbate their own struggles but also adversely affect their loved ones, highlighting the need for comprehensive support systems that address both the responders and their families

Enhance mental health support for first responders by developing & implementing tailored mental health programs specifically designed for first responders, focusing on trauma informed care.

Create family support systems by implementing family counseling

		treatment plans to help loved ones of first responders understand and cope with the unique challenges posed by their partner's profession **Encourage** open communications about experiences & emotions in families through facilitated discussions & family therapy	
	11:00	H.O.T. (hands on training) Tracks	
		Fire see above	Chief Graham
		EMS see above	Ame Kellum
		Communications / 911 see above	Ti Bryson Smith
		LEO see above	Capt. J Chapman
	13:00	Lunch & Learn Here is your opportunity to ask questions that you may have unable to do so creating a barrier to understanding and growth	Everyone
Saturday	14:00	H.O.T. Tracks	
		Fire see above	Chief Graham
		EMS see above	Ame Kellum
		Communications / 911 see above	Ti Bryson Smith
		LEO see above	Capt. J Chapman
	16:00	"Ground Zero" BIOGRAPHY **Reflect** on the personal impact of the traumatic experience, including mental, emotional, and physical health effects **Identify** specific coping mechanisms & mental health routines that have been effective in managing trauma related symptoms (e.g. therapy, mindfulness, and well-being). **Engaging** in advocacy efforts to raise awareness about mental health issues within the first responder communities emphasizing the importance of sharing stories and seeking support.	Steve Sampollo
	17:30	Supper	Everyone
Sunday	09:00	Recap from Saturday Safety briefing for MCI	Everyone
	9:45	MCI (Multiple Casualty Incident) A multi-agency response to an emergency situation brings together various responders to provide a comprehensive and coordinated effort. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) teams provide patient care and medical treatment, while firefighters offer assistance and may engage in fire suppression if necessary. Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) take control of the scene, ensuring safety and order, and flight teams are available to transport critical patients by air to receive further medical attention. This collaborative effort allows for a seamless and effective response to emergencies, ensuring the best possible outcomes for those in need.	Everyone

Facilitate a comprehensive overview of the roles and responsibilities of each responding agency (dispatch, LEO, fire, EMS) during a multi-patient scenario. Illustrate the importance of effective communication & coordination among agencies to ensure efficient patient care & resource management on scene
Facilitate a structured feedback process for clinicians to evaluate the collective strengths & weaknesses observed during the multi-agency response.
Encourage clinicians to explore research opportunities that analyze the outcomes of multi-agency responses to inform evidence-based practice.

11:30	Hot wash (debrief)	Everyone
12:00	Graduation	Everyone

Patti Graham Retention & Statewide SC FAST Coordinator

With 15 years of dedicated experience in the first responder community, she has established herself as a vital leader in promoting behavioral wellness among her peers. As the Retention and Statewide SC FAST Coordinator, she spearheads a dynamic team focused on supporting the mental health of first responders statewide. Her commitment to service is underscored by her background as both a firefighter and a chaplain, where she has provided crucial emotional support and guidance during challenging times. In addition to her current role, she co-coordinated the Mile in Our Boots Clinicians Academy, further enhancing resources and training for those who serve on the front lines. Her unwavering dedication to fostering a culture of wellness not only strengthens her team but also significantly impacts the greater community she serves.

Mitch Stewart EMS Section Manager SC Dept of Public Health SC FAST

An accomplished first responder with over 4 decades of experience, Mitch has dedicated his career to emergency services since 1979, serving as both a firefighter and EMT/Paramedic. Beginning with his hometown rescue squad, he advanced to the role of director of an EMS service and currently holds the position of EMS section manager at the state level. A passionate educator, he has been actively teaching various classes throughout the state, with a particular expertise in extrication. Mitch's significant achievements include a BS in Business Administration from USC, being certified as a flight paramedic and was honored as the EMS World Paramedic of the Year. His extensive experience and commitment to EMS profession continue to make a significant impact on the field.

Tinish Bryson Smith Hampton County 911 Director, EMT SC FAST

With 17 years of extensive experience in emergency response and management, Ti serves as the Director of Hampton County 911 agency, where she leverages her expertise as a certified EMT and Class 4 TCO E911 professional to enhance operational efficiency and community safety. Her role encompasses a commitment to excellence in emergency communications, where she oversees training initiatives and implement best practices to ensure her team is prepared for any situation. As a dedicated peer support advocate, she prioritizes the mental well-being of our responders, fostering a culture of resilience and support. Her leadership is guided by a deep understanding of the critical intersection between emergency medical services and coordinated communication, driven by a passion for serving our community and advancing the standards of emergency response.

Chief Steve Graham Chief, Boiling Springs FD – Greenville, SC

Chief Graham has made an indelible mark on the safety and well-being of his community as a dedicated and influential leader with 41 years of service. Having proudly served as president of both the Greenville County Fire Chiefs Association and the South Carolina State Fire Chiefs Association, he has demonstrated a continual commitment to advancing the fire service. As the founder and executive director of Emergency Services Ministries, he has furthered his mission to support and uplift those in emergency services, focusing on their spiritual and emotional well-being. Additionally, his extensive involvement with various curriculum committees and subject matter expert groups for the South Carolina Fire Academy underscores his commitment to fostering education and enhancing the professionalism of firefighters across the state. His enduring passion and dedication continue to inspire and shape the next generation of fire service professionals.

Ame Kellum Paramedic / Operations Supervisor, Greenville County EMS SCFAST

Ame Kellum brings 26 years of experience in the EMS field, currently serving as an Operations Supervisor. She is a dedicated instructor, teaching multiple EMT-related courses to help prepare the next generation of emergency medical professionals. As a peer member of SC FAST, Ame plays an active role in supporting first responders facing mental health crises, offering critical assistance and understanding from a place of experience.

Capt. Jason Chapman Captain Colleton County Sheriff's Office

With a career spanning over three decades, Capt. Chapman began as a firefighter 32 years ago before transitioning into law enforcement 27 years ago. He currently serves as the special operations commander for the CCSO, where he oversees critical units including SWAT, search and rescue, marine operations, and narcotics. Renowned for his expertise, he is an experienced instructor in various disciplines such as firearms, less-lethal munitions, active aggressor response, and taser use, reflecting his dedication to both operational excellence and community safety.

Jay Ortiz Chaplain for North Myrtle Beach Public Safety SCFAST / SCLEAP

Jay Ortiz is a Public Safety Chaplain and Associate Pastor dedicated to supporting first responders and their communities. With 18 years of experience as a firefighter and fire inspector, he brings a practical understanding of emergency services to his ministry. An active member of SC FAST and SC LEAP, he serves on peer teams focused on helping first responders navigate mental health crises with compassion and care.

Chissy Walser SC FAST Family Support Coordinator

Chrissy Walser has spent the last 29 years as a supportive fire wife. While her husband, Dave, has faithfully served with the City of Myrtle Beach Fire Department, Chrissy has been raising their three children. She also serves as the SC FAST Family Support Coordinator. However, Chrissy works beyond supporting her local fire family and is currently working to further her own education with a goal of using her career to help bring further awareness to the impact that the first responder's lifestyle has on both the first responders and their families. She just recently graduated from Coastal Carolina University with a major in Sociology and a minor in Public Health. She has given several presentation supporting her research and personal experiences regarding Living and Loving a First Responder as well as presentations on Crossover Stress and the Impact on Work Life Balance. She has given guest lectures at CCU on the class topic of First Responder Mental Health, Community Engagement, and a research methods topic on the IRB process. Her current IRB certified researcher topic is Crossover Stress and the Impact on First Responders and their Families.

Steve Sampollo Firefighter / Paramedic, Horry County Fire Rescue SC FAST

With 27 years of dedicated service in the field of emergency response, Steve has had a distinguished career as a paramedic with FDNY EMS and a police medic, providing critical support as a SWAT medic. His expertise extends to the skies as a flight paramedic, ensuring rapid medical care in high-stakes situations. Beyond frontline response, he has also made significant contributions as an instructor in various training programs, sharing his knowledge and experience with the next generation of first responders. Additionally, his role as a medical training captain highlights his leadership skills and commitment to cultivating excellence in emergency medical services.