

It could be a fire where people get burned, or just the fire in itself can be traumatic because our own lives are on the line when we go into a house and we can't see anything. We feel heat, and all we have is the senses of being able to feel where we are. ... We're a unique group, but we are normal people."

At the sheriff's office, they also vet clinicians to see who should be talking with their officers.

"We started a few years ago, we would look at the ones that like [Employee Assistance Program] and our insurance uses and refers us to," Vawters explained. "We had a set of questions we would ask, and that became very time consuming—because there's a significant list. So, then we started going off referrals from people who had utilized EAP or various insurance services for mental health, and saying, 'Hey, this person really worked for me. This person really didn't work for me.' So, it's really been word of mouth. And we do a lot of collaboration with other teams to see who've they've vetted."

At RFD, Mandell said he's pleased with the list of "six or seven clinicians that are trauma trained, trauma experienced and can handle that stuff and handle talking to a firefighter" that his department has put together. Something the agencies have also been working on is ensuring insurance or worker's compensation payments when emergency

"Peer support,' makes it way easier for officers to feel even OK talking about it," said Reno Police Department Officer Tasheeka Clairborne, seen here with public information officer Travis Warren.

responders need care after a traumatic event—which hasn't been entirely easy.

"They're used to seeing injuries—broken legs, broken arms," Balaam said. "This was mental health, and so we had to pull in the county because [officers] had to start paying for some of those sessions by themselves. And so that's a learning curve for peer support. We're having to say to the county, 'When we come to you with individuals who don't have obvious physical injuries, it's because it's mental ... And just like if you broke your arm, we're going to provide those services to you.' So, the county has been very good, and peer support has been awesome at creating that environment where, 'I know if I come forward it's not coming out of my pocket.'"

On Oct. 15, agencies across the valley—including the sheriff's office, RPD, RFD, TMFPD, the coroner's office and others—met to share some of their insights during a four-hour peer support workshop. Going forward, Balaam wants to see this type of cross-agency cooperation continue.

"This is a critical need," he said. "And it's not just the sheriff's office. It's all of us pooling together, and that's something we're dedicated to—changing the culture." □



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