

Resolution No. 26

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT: Occupational Health & Safety

Re: Suicide Death Reporting

1 WHEREAS, IAFF Behavioral Health Committee
2 (formerly the Standing Committee on
3 Labor/Employee Assistance Programs)
4 recommended, and the IAFF developed and
5 implemented, a web based behavioral health training
6 program that addresses suicide prevention and
7 intervention; and

8 WHEREAS, the IAFF Behavioral Health
9 Committee recommended, and the IAFF developed, a
10 peer support training program; and

11 WHEREAS, the IAFF began developing the peer
12 support training program in 2015; and

13 WHEREAS, the IAFF Peer Support Training
14 Program is a two-day interactive course taught by
15 experienced peers from the fire service and
16 behavioral health clinicians that focuses on active
17 listening skills, suicide awareness and prevention,
18 crisis intervention, referrals to local resources and
19 relationships with local behavioral health providers;
20 and

21 WHEREAS, as of September 2020, the IAFF has
22 completed 241 Peer Support Training deliveries
23 which resulted in more than 6,153 IAFF members
24 trained; and

25 WHEREAS, the Safety Planning Intervention for
26 Suicide Prevention is an effective, evidence-based
27 intervention to reduce suicide, and was shown by one
28 study to reduce suicidal behaviors in military

29 veterans by up to 45 percent; and

30 WHEREAS, the IAFF partnered with researchers
31 from Duke and Columbia Universities to adapt the
32 Safety Planning Intervention for fire fighters and to
33 create an online training to teach IAFF-trained Peer
34 Supporters how to conduct the Safety Planning
35 Intervention with members experiencing thoughts of
36 suicide; and

37 WHEREAS, the IAFF believes behavioral health
38 issues, including suicide, are just as important as
39 physical health issues; and

40 WHEREAS, each year more than 48,000
41 Americans and almost 4,000 Canadians die from
42 suicide and the demographic groups most likely to
43 die by suicide mirror the demographics of the fire
44 service in gender, age, and ethnicity; and

45 WHEREAS, risk factors for suicide include
46 psychiatric illnesses such as Post-Traumatic Stress
47 Disorder (PTSD), and studies estimate up to 30% of
48 all fire fighters experience PTSD at some point in
49 their careers; and

50 WHEREAS, one study found that, at some point
51 during their careers, 46.8% of fire fighters surveyed
52 had suicidal ideation, 19.2% had a plan to die by
53 suicide, and 15.5% attempted suicide; and

54 WHEREAS, there are no reliable statistics on
55 suicide deaths among fire fighters and the
56 understanding of suicide among IAFF members will
57 contribute to its prevention; and

58 WHEREAS, losing brothers and sisters to suicide
59 takes a tremendous emotional toll on our members;
60 and

61 WHEREAS, the term postvention refers to

62 activities following a suicide to help alleviate the
63 suffering and emotional distress of the survivors, and
64 prevent additional trauma and contagion; and

65 WHEREAS, the IAFF has developed a system to
66 track information about deaths by suicide among all
67 current and former IAFF members and endeavors to
68 determine the rate of suicide among members;
69 therefore be it

70 RESOLVED, That all affiliates report to the IAFF
71 in a timely manner using the established system
72 when a current or former member dies by suicide to
73 facilitate postvention and better understanding of fire
74 fighter suicide; and be it further

75 RESOLVED, That the International Association
76 of Fire Fighters provide informational assistance to
77 locals that lose a member to suicide about
78 postvention and how best to support members in
79 dealing with the loss.

Submitted by: IAFF Executive Board

Cost Estimate: None

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

CONVENTION ACTION: