



## ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED SAN JOSE POLICE OFFICERS & FIREFIGHTERS

July 30, 2021

Andrew Lanza,  
Chair, Board of Trustees  
San Jose Police and Fire Retirement Board of Administration

Chair Lanza,

The Association of Retired San Jose Police Officers and Firefighters is dedicated to protecting the benefits of retired San Jose police officers and firefighters. We were formed in 1975 to address those instances where retirees may be excluded from certain programs that affect our lives. Of particular concern is that retirees are not included in the City of San Jose's Employee Assistance Plan (EAP).

In 1997, the San Jose Police Officers' Association and San Jose Firefighters, Local 230 collectively sought to include retirees in the EAP. However, during arbitration, the arbitrator ruled that she did not have jurisdiction, and the matter was never resolved. We are seeking the Board's endorsement of the concept of extending EAP benefits to retirees. Further, we request the Board to investigate how current and future retirees can continue to receive this life-saving benefit.

Over the course of several years, the EAP has developed into a comprehensive program that addresses a wide variety of health issues such as psychological trauma and - stress disorder (PTSD). Many of our members were actively seeking assistance and treatment through the EAP. However, upon retirement, eligibility ceased, and treatment was discontinued, leaving them without help.

While PTSD and suicide have recently received some public attention as issues that impact first responders, they are both realities that have affected our professions for decades. According to the Ruderman Family Foundation's White Paper on Mental Health and Suicide of First Responders, "PTSD and depression rates among firefighters and police officers have been found to be as much as 5 times higher than the rates within the civilian population, which causes these first responders to commit suicide at a considerably higher rate (firefighters: 18/100,000; police officers: 17/100,000; general population 13/100,000). Even when suicide does not occur, untreated mental illness can lead to poor physical health and impaired decision-making."<sup>1</sup>

The service our members provided to San Jose's residents greatly increased their risk of physical and mental health issues, including increased PTSD and suicide rates. Out of respect for their service and with compassion for them as our brothers and sisters, we seek assistance in better serving them in retirement.

The mental and physical impacts of the job do not end at the separation of City employment. Retirees continue to struggle to live with the collective trauma experienced while serving San Jose residents. Intuitively, it seems the treatment an individual receives as an active employee should not terminate due to retirement, but that is precisely the case. Morally, it would seem the City would want to take care of the employees that took care of its residents at great expense to their

<sup>1</sup> *The Ruderman White Paper on Mental Health and Suicide of First Responders*, Ruderman Family Foundation, M. Heyman, PhD; J. Dill, MA, NBCC; R. Douglas, DCC; 2018; [https://rudermanfoundation.org/white\\_papers/police-officers-and-firefighters-are-more-likely-to-die-by-suicide-than-in-line-of-duty/](https://rudermanfoundation.org/white_papers/police-officers-and-firefighters-are-more-likely-to-die-by-suicide-than-in-line-of-duty/)

personal health.

The impacts of job-related trauma have affected and haunted our members for decades. Now that quality programs exist to assist employees, we are hopeful you will assist us in ensuring your former police officers and firefighters can get the help they deserve. If you have any questions, or wish to discuss further, please contact me at (510) 507-1136.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ray Storms", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Ray Storms