



SUMMER 2025

Vital Signs

Essential News from Your HealthCare Trust

The Mental Wellness Issue

Meet Your Dedicated Mental
Health Therapists

The Power of Peer Support

Prioritizing Sleep



Meet Your New Station 2 Clinic Mental Health Providers

The Station 2 Clinic is excited to introduce two new members of our growing team of healthcare professionals: Jamie Epting (left) and Laura Takacs (right).



Laura Takacs, LICSW, MPH

Program Director, Mental Health Program
Areas of Specialization: Adult trauma, loss, and grief
Training: University of Washington

Originally from Michigan, Laura relocated to Seattle in 1998 after working in the Peace Corps in Russia. She loves the outdoor access that Seattle offers and enjoys hiking in the mountains, relaxing on a ferry ride, and snowboarding. What Laura values most about her work with clients is the change in self-perception many of them experience as they process their traumatic experiences, along with the compassion they often develop for themselves and others. "Dealing with trauma," she says, "especially trauma caused by other people, and cultivating compassion for yourself and others can dissipate toxic negative emotions and energy, such as anger, resentment, jealousy, and guilt. Letting go of negative emotions that hold us back opens the door to the joys of the present moment, allowing us to participate more fully in the lives we want to lead."

Jamie R. Epting, MA, LMHC

Mental Health Therapist
Areas of Specialization: Families & Relationships, Trauma Integration /PTSD
Training: University of Washington

Born and raised in Seattle, Jamie enjoys spending time with family and friends, outdoor activities, practicing yoga, writing, and solving puzzles. In her client sessions, Jamie focuses on creating a space where clients feel safe and seen in their healing journey. "In a trusted therapeutic relationship with me," she writes, "you will be gently challenged in areas where I see potential for growth, and I will hold you accountable for the goals you set. That's what therapy should be about: setting meaningful goals, creating a plan to reach them, following through, and giving yourself credit when progress is made—because that's real, hard work, and it deserves to be honored."

SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY: (206) 971-1365



Season 2 of the Listen Up 27 Podcast is Now Online

The new season features episodes with mental health experts, fire fighters, retirees, and Dr. Marcie Hamrick. Episodes are focused on resilience, burnout prevention, and stress management.

Catch the Episodes



The Power of Peer Support

Our Peer Support Teams in Seattle provide essential mental health support to fire fighters facing the intense stress and trauma inherent in their profession, regardless of rank. These teams consist of trained peers who understand the unique challenges fire fighters encounter on the job. They offer confidential, nonjudgmental listening, emotional support, and resources for coping with traumatic events, such as debriefings after critical incidents or ongoing counseling for PTSD and other mental health issues.

By fostering a culture of openness and support, our Peer Support Teams ensure that all fire fighters can manage the emotional toll of their work and promote overall well-being within the fire fighting community.

Visit the Behavioral Health section of the Trust website to learn more about this essential resource.

The Impact of Sleep on Your Safety and Health

The consequences of sleep deprivation for fire fighters can be severe and far-reaching. These include reduced alertness and slower reaction times, impaired decision-making abilities, and an increased risk of accidents, both on the job and during commutes.

Over the long term, sleep debt and regular sleep deprivation can lead to:

- A weakened immune system, leading to increased susceptibility to illness and risk for cancer.
- Long-term health risks, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity.
- Mental health impacts, including increased risk of anxiety, depression, and PTSD.

Strategies for Improving Sleep

Given the critical nature of sleep for firefighters' health and performance, implementing effective sleep strategies is paramount:

- **Prioritize sleep:** Recognize that getting adequate rest is as important as any other aspect of job preparation.
- **Create a sleep-conducive environment:** Ensure your bedroom is dark, quiet, and cool. Consider using blackout curtains, white noise machines, or earplugs if necessary. Ideally, remove technology from the bedroom as well.
- **Establish a consistent sleep schedule:** Aim to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on days off, to regulate your body's internal clock.
- **Limit caffeine intake:** Avoid consuming caffeine at least 6 to 12 hours before bedtime to prevent interference with sleep onset.
- **Practice relaxation techniques:** To help wind down after a shift, engage in activities such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or meditation. Try apps that provide guided relaxation techniques, such as Calm (calm.com), Insight Timer (insighttimer.com), or Headspace (headspace.com).
- **Communicate with family and colleagues:** Ensure your loved ones and fellow firefighters understand and respect your sleep needs and try to nap after a shift.
- **Use strategic napping:** During long shifts, short naps (20 to 30 minutes) can help combat fatigue without causing sleep inertia.
- **Address sleep disorders:** If you suspect you have a sleep disorder such as sleep apnea, seek professional medical advice promptly.





Seattle Fire Fighters HealthCare Trust
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SFFHealthCareTrust.org

MDLIVE®

Virtual Care, Anywhere.

Did you know that members on a Regence healthcare plan can access MDLIVE virtual care 24/7 through online video, mobile app, or phone? Their Board Certified doctors help treat non-emergency conditions. They can diagnose symptoms, prescribe medications, and send prescriptions to your preferred pharmacy.

You can also get support for behavioral health issues from MDLIVE's licensed behavioral health therapists through HIPAA-compliant teletherapy sessions.

Visit the MDLive website at members.mdlive.com to learn more about their services.

Your Retirement Security Fund (RSF) Is Growing Stronger

In just a few years, the quarterly distribution has doubled—from \$300 to \$600! Thanks to prevention efforts and over 700 members participating in the AFFME, costs are staying down—and your RSF keeps growing.

This is a good time to review your retirement accounts, consult with your financial advisor, and implement necessary changes before the year-end rush.

