



## Internet-delivered Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Public Safety Personnel

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Public safety personnel (PSP), comprising first responders and others responsible for citizen safety, experience significant rates of mental health disorders in Canada. They also unfortunately face distinctive treatment obstacles like limited time, geographical constraints, and stigma. Internet-delivered cognitive behavioral therapy (ICBT) has emerged as a promising solution, offering private, accessible mental health treatment that can be utilized at one's convenience and from virtually any location. ICBT involves providing clients with treatment strategies through online courses, optionally supported by therapist guidance through secure messaging or phone calls. Numerous randomized controlled trials affirm the efficacy of ICBT in alleviating symptoms of anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress, and other mental health issues.

To enhance PSPs' access to mental health support, the Canadian government funded PSPNET, a clinical research unit. PSPNET tailored evidence-based ICBT courses for Canadian PSP through stakeholder engagement and subsequent feedback from clients. Initially offering therapist-guided ICBT for diverse mental health concerns (PSP Wellbeing Course), PSPNET later introduced a specialized course targeting PTSD symptoms (PSP PTSD course). Subsequently, self-guided ICBT options were extended to PSP and their spouses. Courses are available in English and French.

PSPNET courses consist of five core lessons covering symptom understanding, and various cognitive behavioral treatment skills. Lessons incorporate multimedia elements and supplementary resources addressing a spectrum of challenges and skills. These additional resources allow clients to further tailor treatment content to their needs such as managing anger, sleep concerns, and receiving assistance with supporting colleagues and improving relationships at home. PSP stories and examples are provided throughout ICBT to facilitate learning.

As of March 2024, PSPNET has enrolled >1,800 clients. Most clients present clinically significant symptoms, with a notable proportion seeking proactive symptom management. Work-related channels primarily drive PSPNET awareness among clients. Primary reasons for seeking services include:

- 1) being curious and wanting to try ICBT;
- 2) wanting to be more independent in their mental health care; and
- 3) convenience of ICBT compared to other services.

PSPNET's peer-reviewed research underscores substantial symptom reductions in depression, anxiety, and PTSD among clients in therapist-guided courses. Additionally, clients express high treatment satisfaction, with nearly unanimous endorsement for PSPNET's efficacy and recommendation to others. Clients value PSPNET's format, content, accessibility, and therapist guidance, highlighting its efficacy in managing work-related stressors and PTSD symptoms.

PSPNET offers therapist-guided ICBT in six provinces (listed in order of roll-out: Saskatchewan, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Ontario) covering 70% of Canada's population, and offers self-guided ICBT nationwide. PSPNET has distributed promotional materials 2,300 times to various PSP organizations Canada-wide.

**FOR FURTHER INFO PLEASE VISIT [WWW.PSPNET.CA](http://WWW.PSPNET.CA)**