

First Responder Mental Health

Psilocybin as a Breakthrough Therapy?



Exploring Psilocybin-Assisted Therapy for First Responder Mental Health

First responders – paramedics, firefighters, police officers, corrections, EMS, and dispatchers – are the backbone of our communities, consistently facing traumatic events and high-stress situations. This constant exposure takes a significant toll on mental health, leading to higher rates of PTSD, depression, anxiety, sleeping disorders, substance abuse, and suicide compared to the general population. Even normal daily activities can be a struggle for first responders.

Traditional therapies and medications often fall short in providing adequate relief for these dedicated individuals. The stigma surrounding first responders and mental health makes it even more difficult for them to reach for help.

Emerging research suggests that psilocybin-assisted therapy offers a promising new avenue for healing and recovery. Research shows [psilocybin increases neuropathways](#) and [reduces aging in cells](#). Psilocybin has also been shown to be less harmful than numerous substances including alcohol, tobacco, and most pharmaceutical drugs.

In 2025, New Mexico became the third state to legalize medical psilocybin therapy. NMDOH is developing the rules and regulations to launch the [Medical Psilocybin Program](#) by early 2028.



Psilocybin is found in over 200 fungi and the FDA has called it a “breakthrough therapy”. [Ancient knowledge of psilocybin](#) and other natural psychedelics have been used in religious and spiritual practices for thousands of years.

The Johns Hopkins Center for Psychedelics is a leader in advanced psilocybin research. [Click here for more information about the Johns Hopkins Center](#)

Psilocybin-assisted therapy involves the administration of psilocybin—a naturally occurring psychedelic compound found in certain mushrooms—and has gained attention in recent years for its potential therapeutic benefits. This approach combines traditional psychotherapy with the profound effects of psilocybin to facilitate healing and personal growth.

One of the most significant benefits of psilocybin-assisted therapy is its effectiveness in treating mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD. Research has shown that psilocybin can lead to significant reductions in symptoms for individuals who have not responded to conventional treatments. Research also suggests psilocybin may be helpful in overcoming addiction by disrupting habitual behaviors and promoting self-awareness. The experience of altered consciousness induced by psilocybin can help patients confront and process difficult emotions, leading to insights and breakthroughs that may be elusive in traditional therapy.



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Psilocybin-assisted therapy has been found to enhance emotional well-being and foster a sense of connectedness, and is often associated with lasting changes in attitudes and behaviors. Many participants in clinical studies report experiences of unity and interconnectedness with others and the world around them. This sense of connectedness can be particularly beneficial for individuals struggling with feelings of isolation, providing a renewed perspective on their relationships and enhancing their overall quality of life for extended periods of time after one treatment.

Studies have indicated that a single session can lead to long-term improvements in mental health, suggesting that the insights gained during the therapy can have enduring effects.

In a [five year study after psilocybin therapy](#), 67% of participants were in depression remission and retained other mental health benefits with no side effects. This contrasts with conventional medications that typically require ongoing use—and enduring their side effects—to maintain their benefits. Many have used the analogy of achieving twenty years of talk therapy in one psilocybin-assisted therapy session.



This photo of a psilocybin assisted therapy session is from an episode of [Therapist Uncensored](#).

The therapeutic context in which psilocybin is administered is crucial. The presence of trained therapists with high ethical standards along with the set and setting provides a safe and supportive environment for individuals to navigate their experiences. Therapist, guides, and facilitators need specific training on first responders in order to best reach and treat our public servants. Having appropriate preparation, integration, and support networks is crucial for any psilocybin-assisted therapy to work long term. PEER support guides and/or sitters are a great benefit to the preparation process and journey experience, and is extremely important for an integration support system. This therapeutic alliance can enhance the overall effectiveness of the treatment, helping patients to integrate their experiences into their daily lives. This is particularly crucial to overcome therapy barriers for first responders and to provide ongoing support for those who are returning to work post-treatment and potentially facing additional trauma-exposure. It is also essential for the patient to have a positive intent and be open to having a healing experience.

There is no magic pill; psilocybin-assisted therapy still takes work and desire to change. With the right use, this ancient medicine can help people more effectively and rapidly achieve their mental health goals.

As the NMDOH develops the rules and regulations for the state psilocybin therapy program, Firefighters for Plant Medicine (FFPM) is advocating for first responder inclusion in the program in order to make it accessible and affordable. FFPM is also bringing awareness of the barriers to therapy such as the stigma that first responders face, and the benefits of both psilocybin-assisted therapy sessions and of a [microdosing](#) program.

First responders are often the last to seek help or admit they are struggling while they suffer along with their family. The stigma and fear of looking weak, vulnerable, or showing emotion is a major barrier to help. There is also additional stress and anxiety over the potential of adverse employment actions for seeking alternative therapy or plant medicine options. For many people, but particularly with first responders, it is very difficult to let go of control, open up, and allow oneself to be vulnerable. This is where microdosing can play a huge beneficial role as a therapy treatment option.

[MRI imaging that demonstrates the “more intercommunicative mode of brain function” associated with a psychedelic state.](#)

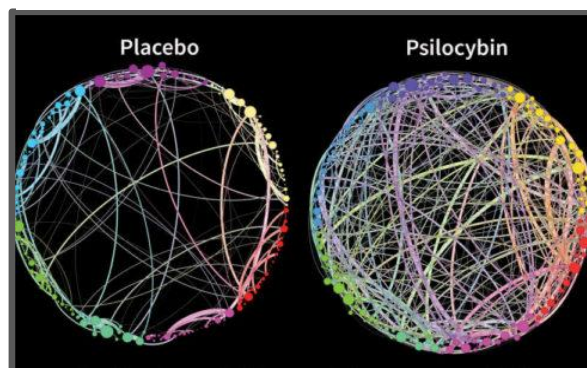
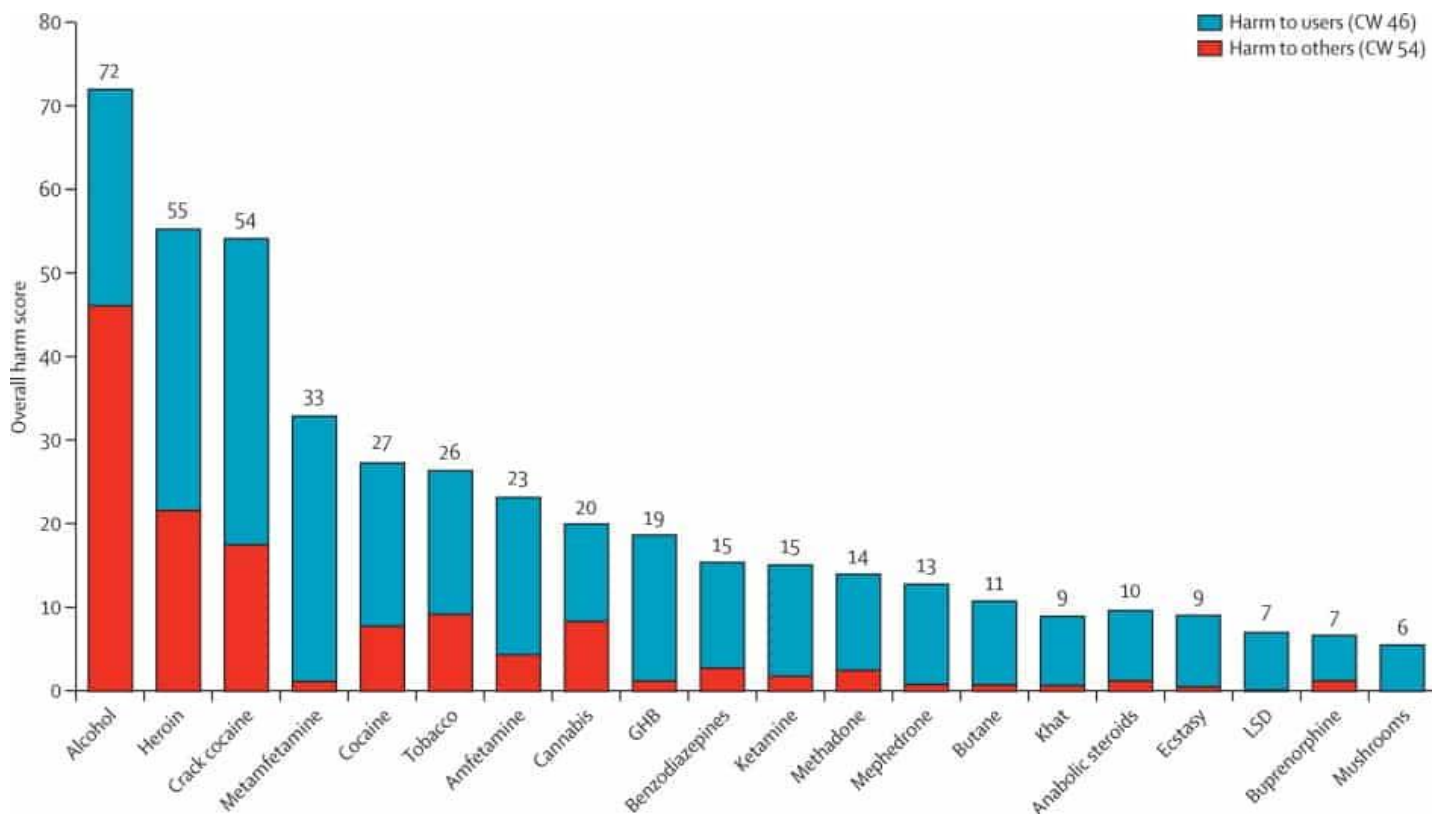


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<https://www.cannamd.com/scientists-rank-most-dangerous-drugs/>

Psilocybin microdosing is use of a small non-psychoactive dose, much like taking a pharmaceutical medication for depression or anxiety without any of the side effects. A psilocybin microdose program has two major roles in therapy for first responders. The first role is in preparing for a macro session, which is a larger therapeutic-level dose. This can help those who are more resistant to letting go of control start to have a relationship with the medicine and dissolve barriers that might inhibit a therapeutic macro experience. The second role of microdosing is for the integration process and longer-term treatment. A first responder can have a life-changing mental health healing session with psilocybin-assisted therapy, but they still have to return to work and deal with additional trauma exposure for the rest of their career. Microdosing can play an important role in an ongoing mental health treatment plan to help with future trauma.

First responders can greatly benefit from therapeutic macro and micro psilocybin-assisted therapy with less harm than standard pharmaceutical drugs and longer-lasting benefits. In studies done that compare the harm of medications and drugs, psilocybin is shown to be the least addicting and the least harmful. Additionally, psilocybin assisted therapy has been proven to have much faster and longer lasting results compared to traditional talk therapy and similar modalities. Healing our public servants not only benefits them, but also their families and the community. Firefighters for Plant Medicine is dedicated to bringing this safe and effective therapy to all first responders.

First Responders are the first to help others, but the last to help themselves.

**Help protect the protectors by allowing First Responder access to
safe and legal plant medicine!**



Please [help us](#) in the mission! Thank you!

