

Consent Form

Project Title: Assessing Scaled Implementation of a Public Safety Personnel Mental Health Self-Monitoring Program

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1. Background and Purpose

The current consent form contains information about a research study in which you are invited to participate. The current consent form includes important information that will help you to make an informed decision about whether you wish to participate; for example: 1) why the current study is being done; 2) what you will be asked to do if you agree to participate; 3) the time commitment involved; 4) potential benefits and risks; and 5) how we will protect your privacy. You may take time to consider whether or not you wish to participate, and you are encouraged to discuss your decision with others, such as your family. Please read the information in the current consent form carefully. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to use the contact information above.

Exposure to potentially dangerous, harmful, or stressful situations can be an inherent part of the work done by public safety personnel (PSP). The stressful exposures mean that PSP are more likely to experience symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or other mental health injuries than the general population. There is very limited research on the long-term relationships between symptoms of PTSD and risk factors (e.g., broadly defined as things that make enduring or recovering from stressful events more difficult) and resiliency factors (e.g., broadly defined as things that make enduring or recovering from stressful or upsetting events easier). The lack of sufficient research data makes developing effective programs to reduce risk or increase resiliency for PSP extremely difficult. The current study builds on the RCMP Study (www.rcmpstudy.ca) and the PSP extension study (www.saskptsistudy.ca) to extend that success to develop research data for other PSP.

We are inviting you to participate in the current study because you are a PSP who will be actively serving during the study period. The current study is being conducted by a team of researchers led by Dr. R. Nicholas Carleton at the University of Regina. A full list of team members can be found at [About the PTSS Lab: Advancing PSP Mental Health Research & Support](#). Leaders from diverse PSP organizations have been actively engaged in designing, approving, supporting, and deploying the current study; however, your participation in the research study is completely voluntary and **not** a requirement of your employment.



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The current study is designed to test whether many different factors believed to help protect mental health despite exposures to stressful events are in fact helpful. To understand how different factors interact with mental health, researchers need to collect data at several different time points from many different people who are exposed to various stressful events.

There is limited PSP research on the long-term relationships between various factors and mental health; however, there is research on such short-term relationships within the general population. The available evidence suggests that some specific factors are particularly important and may be modifiable to help manage symptoms of mental health injuries. The current study will measure many different factors thought to be associated with PSP mental health using surveys. The current study has been approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the University of Regina (File #2024-1093, Approved February 7, 2025).

2. Procedures

Frontline PSP will be recruited thanks to help from the PSP leadership teams who have been actively engaged in designing, approving, supporting, and deploying the current study. If you choose to participate, you will complete an initial assessment (~90 minutes to complete; details below) and three yearly follow-up assessments (~90 minutes to complete), as well as the daily surveys (~1 minute/day) and monthly surveys (~20 minutes/month).

2.1 Initial and Yearly Assessments

Should you agree to participate, you will be invited to an initial and three yearly assessments. Each yearly assessment includes a self-report survey administered by computer (~90 minutes) designed to comprehensively assess factors and symptoms related to mental health. The surveys will be administered through a Moodle smartphone application which is also accessible through



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a web-based browser. You are not required to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer; however, the more components you complete, the more beneficial your data will be for yourself, the research study, and ultimately, all PSP members.

Your individual results from the initial and yearly assessments will not be transmitted or otherwise made available to anyone outside of the research study team. The information you provide will not be used by anyone to evaluate any part of your work. Only aggregated summary information will be used to help the researchers understand the overall psychological profile of participants and to accomplish the goals outlined for the study.

If the survey results indicate that you might benefit from mental health support, you will be informed and provided with information on how to access such support if you choose to access support. PSP employers will not be provided with any individual results of the research team's contact with you.

2.2 Monthly and Daily Surveys

You will be invited to complete short monthly surveys consisting of a series of self-report questionnaires administered by smartphone or computer (~20 minutes/month) to screen for mental health injury symptoms and provide you with regular feedback about your mental health. You will also be invited to complete brief daily surveys administered by smartphone or computer (~1 minute/day) to help you monitor and reflect on your experiences and activities during the previous 24 hours. The monthly and daily survey data will be provided to you so that you can track your own mental health. We have evidence that regularly tracking your mental health, experiences, and activities can be beneficial to you personally for several reasons, including allowing you to actively engage with and support your own mental health by making changes to your activities and, if necessary, seeking help early to support faster recovery. The surveys will all be administered through the Moodle smartphone application and will also be accessible through a web-based browser. You are not required to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer; however, the more components you complete, the more beneficial your data will be for yourself, the research study, and ultimately, all PSP members.



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Your individual results from the monthly and daily surveys will not be transmitted or otherwise made available to anyone outside of the research study team. The information you provide will not be used by anyone to evaluate any part of your work. Only aggregated summary information will be used to help the researchers understand the overall psychological profile of participants and to accomplish the goals outlined for the study.

If the surveys indicate that you might benefit from mental health support, you will be informed and provided with information on how to access such support if you choose to access support. PSP employers will not be provided with any individual results of the research team's contact with you.

3. Potential Risks

Any potential risks associated with the study are expected to be minimal. Some of the survey questions are sensitive in nature and could produce some uncomfortable feelings (e.g., sadness, worry, stress). If this happens, we expect those feelings to be temporary and manageable. If troublesome emotions surface and persist while answering the questions, and you would like to talk to someone about the emotions, the following resources are available to you:

- **Access mental health treatment (for SK, ON, QC, and Maritimes residents only):**
<http://www.pspnet.ca/>
- **Find a therapist in Canada:** <http://www.cpa.ca/public/findingapsychologist/>
- **Find Suicide Crisis Resources in Canada:** <http://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/>
- **Call for help 24/7 with suicide right now dial 9-8-8**
- **Call for help 24/7 with suicide right now 1-833-456-4566**
- **Assaulted Women's helpline 1-866-863-0511**

The self-report surveys are not monitored by a real person in real time. In some cases, the software will provide you with a notification that your self-reported responses indicate you may benefit from accessing additional mental health support and various options may be suggested;



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however, in the current design of the study, there is no real-time monitoring by a human and we have prioritized your confidentiality above other considerations. In cases where you believe you need additional support, you will be responsible for deciding to reach out to available resources to access care.

4. Potential Benefits

No direct benefit can be guaranteed; The study results are expected to substantially increase our understanding of risk and resiliency factors related to symptoms of PTSD and other mental health injuries. Improved understanding of such factors is expected contribute to the development of future assessment, training, treatment, and supports for PSP mental health.

5. Compensation

There is no compensation.

6. Confidentiality

The study involves several self-report surveys. We recognize that participants will be asked to share sensitive information. Your privacy is very important to you and to us; therefore, we have incorporated multiple safeguards to protect your privacy. The research has been designed such that the identity of participants is kept confidential. This means that research team members may have access to your data, but no identifying information will be attached to that data; as such, you will remain unknown to them. All data collected as part of the study will be kept strictly confidential within the legal boundaries of consent as described below in the Limits to Confidentiality section. The study team members will not confirm or deny your participation without your written consent. Please also note that everyone involved has received training in research ethics. Further, all team members are required to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement, indicating their requirement to protect the confidentiality of all participants and participant data.



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Individual results from the initial, yearly, monthly, and daily surveys will not be transmitted or otherwise made available to anyone outside the research study team. The information you provide will not be used by anyone to evaluate any part of a participant's work. Only aggregated summary information will be used to help the researchers understand the overall psychological

profile of participants and to accomplish the goals outlined for the study. The research results from the study will be analyzed and presented in summary fashion that do not allow individuals to be identified.

Participant data will be stored securely on Canadian servers in password protected, multi-factor authentication (MFA) enabled files within a secure facility at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, Canada or a secure cloud environment within Canada.

Some demographic information will be requested by the research team to characterize the participants (e.g., age or employment status). If you believe providing a piece of information will allow you to be identified, you may choose not to provide that information; however, you may be asked to confirm that you do not wish to provide the information to avoid accidental omissions.

7. Other Privacy Precautions

Several additional steps have been taken to ensure the confidentiality of your participation and your information. Specifically:

- A privacy impact assessment was completed on all information gathering technology and the Saskatchewan Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner was consulted in designing the original RCMP Study used to design the current study.
- The study team members do not include PSP.



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- During the study, the data collected will be accessible only to the study team or a qualified independent researcher for the purpose of auditing statistical assessments, but not available to PSP employers.
- No member of the study team will attempt to compromise your confidentiality except as required by law, and the legal limits to confidentiality.

8. Limits to Confidentiality

If evidence of a mental health disorder is flagged by the surveys, you will be notified and encouraged to access health resources through your PSP employer, your health care system, or through a third-party provider; however, your mental health status will not be reported to your employer and you will not be compelled to access support.

In the event that a member of the research team becomes concerned that there is an imminent risk to your own safety or the safety of someone else, we may be legally required to contact you

to ensure your own safety or that of others. We will attempt to discuss alternatives with you to ensure your safety or others' safety without compromising your confidentiality (e.g., by encouraging you to reach out for help on your own). In the event that we are still concerned about your safety or another person's safety, we will report this concern to the relevant authority (e.g., emergency services for self-harm or harm to others, Ministry of Social Services for child harm).

9. Data Security and Storage



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9.1 Storage of Data during the Study

Data being transferred from one device (e.g., your phone) to another (e.g., the secured servers located in Canada) is protected using Transport Layer Security (TLS), which provides cryptographically secure communications between a client (e.g., a web browser) and the server. The TLS protocol provides both privacy and data integrity, securing traffic between a website and the web browser using the protocol. We employ a PKI Class 3 SSL Certificate, the highest level of online trust and assurance, with a 2048-bit digital signature and 256-bit encryption.

The study data in the secured servers will reside in Canada on Canadian servers. All stored data on the servers are automatically encrypted using server-side AES-256 (Advanced Encryption Standard) encryption before being saved to disk and decrypted before data is downloaded.

9.2 Storage of Data After the Study is Over

All data for the study, including the consent form, will be presented and stored electronically. Data will be stored securely for a period of no less than seven (7) years after data collection stops and the study has been completed. Once the data is no longer needed, electronic copies will be deleted using methods that ensure that the data is non-recoverable.

Approximately one month after all the data has been collected and analyzed (e.g., in approximately 3 years), all participants will be notified that within five months their software access will be discontinued. Discontinuing access will be done as part of our effort to ensure that your confidentiality is protected and to even further reduce the risk of any possible privacy breach. The warning will also provide participants with another opportunity to export their clinical information for their own records.

Other researchers may obtain copies of the anonymized data (i.e., data that does not have any identifying information) by request, but for verification and/or research purposes only. Due to the unique nature of data and its large scope and size, the researchers may decide to conduct numerous secondary analyses of the data, but under no circumstances will the data be used or shared for commercial purposes. The PSP employers and individual PSP members will not have access to individual participants' responses (other than their own data, where applicable) to the



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individual surveys (except for the Limits to Confidentiality outlined above). Results from the current study will be published in peer-reviewed journals and other academic forums, but those results will only be presented in aggregate form so that no individuals can be identified.

10. Further Use of Data

There is a possibility that your responses could be used in future studies, research presentations, and journal articles by the current research team members or their future students and, pending a second ethics approval, to other researchers inside or outside of Canada. The data may also be linked to other data sets examining similar information. The data will be anonymized and there would be no way to identify you or your responses or for you to withdraw your information. If data is accessed for further use, data will be stored securely on Canadian servers in password protected, multi-factor authentication (MFA) enabled files within a secured facility at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, Canada or a secure cloud environment within Canada. Accordingly, there will be no way for a research team member or the partner organization to link a participant's responses with their email or IP address which could be identifying.

11. Right to Withdraw

As with any University of Regina research study, participants have the right to refuse to answer any or all of the questions. Participants may also change their mind about participating at any time and leave the study. Participants who wish to leave the study are directed to complete the Exit Form available in the web portal. You are not required to fill out this form, but we appreciate any feedback you have concerning the project. Please note that failure to complete the surveys does not constitute formal withdrawal from the study and your data will remain in the study.

You may also request that the data you have provided up until that point in time be removed and not used for future analyses or reporting. If you request your data be removed, the researchers



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will do so as quickly as possible, typically within 30 calendar days of receiving your request. You also have the right to download your survey results before they are erased. Once you have downloaded your data, you have sole responsibility for the security of your data. Please note that if your data has been made part of a summary set of data that has already been reported, we have no way to remove your data after the summarizing and reporting has occurred.

12. Removal of Participants

There are certain conditions under which the researchers may need to remove a participant from the study. If you choose to participate in the current study, you understand and accept that you will be removed from the study if any of the following occur:

- you move away from a PSP employer in the study area; and,
- you leave your PSP employer and are no longer a PSP.

13. Follow up

A summary of study results will be available once all data have been collected and analyzed. Data collection and analyses will be ongoing for three years. For this information, or any further questions regarding research results, you may contact the researcher using the information at the beginning of the current form.

14. Access to Research Results

Results produced from the current data will be made available through several channels, including but not limited to summaries presented on the lab website (www.ptss.com), at academic research conferences, in peer-reviewed articles and, where practical, in publicly-accessible conference formats. When new aggregated research results are made available, PSP leadership will be made aware and will be provided with details on how to access those results and encouraged to share the results with all PSP.



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15. **Questions or Concerns:**

The current study has been approved by the University of Regina Research Board (File #2024-1093, Approved February 7, 2025). Please note there are inherent security issues when using email as a communication tool. By default, emails are not encrypted and are vulnerable to interception by outside sources or someone may see that you are involved in this research if you leave your browser open. We will use the phrase, “MHM Information” in the subject-line of all email correspondence so you will know the email is from us and recommend you submit any email queries using the same term.

If you have any questions before or during participation about the survey, please feel free to ask by contacting Dr. R. Nicholas Carleton, at nick.carleton@uregina.ca. You may also contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the University of Regina at (306) 585-4775 or by e-mail: research.ethics@uregina.ca

Please consider printing a copy of this information form for your records.

Checking the yes box below indicates that you:

- **have read and understand the description of the study provided;**
- **have had an opportunity to ask questions and those questions have been answered;**
- **understand you can receive a copy of this Consent Form for your own records;**
- **agree not to share or disclose copyrighted material and/or other intellectual property (e.g., educational materials);**
- **consent to participate in the current study.**

By continuing to submit the self-report surveys, participate in the interviews, and/or use the provided technology, your ongoing free and informed consent is implied and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in the current study. Please note that a copy of this consent form will be available in the web portal.

- Yes, I consent to participate.**
- No, I do not consent to participate.**



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