



Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor, City of New York  
Salvatore J. Cassano, Fire Commissioner

JULY 2010

# HEALTH CONNECTIONS



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE BUREAU OF HEALTH SERVICES • COUNSELING SERVICES UNIT • FDNY

## Help with Substance Abuse Issues in a Zero Tolerance Setting

The FDNY remains committed to offering confidential, non-punitive assistance to our members who are struggling with alcohol and substance abuse. This commitment recognizes that early intervention with appropriate treatment, whether inpatient or outpatient, can help individuals and prevent the medical and employment consequences that often accompany substance abuse.

As you know, the Department has a zero tolerance policy toward substance abuse in the workplace. Each and every day, FDNY Fire and Emergency Med-

ical Services (EMS) personnel respond to life-threatening emergencies. The public depends on our expertise. Our co-workers depend on our reliable presence. The use of illegal and illicit substances alters consciousness and impairs work performance. It threatens our health, the safety and well-being of our colleagues and the trust that the public places in us.

The purpose of the drug testing policy is to deter members from drug use that impairs their work performance. The results from the FDNY random drug testing program demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of our members value their well-being and are committed to a drug-free work environment. Since its inception, the Department has tested more than 11,000 Fire personnel with 99.6% negative results, and tested 1,691 EMS personnel with 99.0% negative results. For those few who have

tested positive, the consequences have included loss of their FDNY job.

The Department urges members who have substance abuse issues to immediately seek the services of the experienced professionals in our Counseling Service Unit (CSU). CSU has offered services to FDNY personnel and their families since 1966. The unit began primarily as an alcohol treatment program for members recovering from substance abuse addictions. Its role has been expanded over time — especially in response to the challenges of 9/11 — to include treatment for stress and mental health and grief counseling for firefighters, EMS members, civilian workers and their families.

Since 2001, CSU has treated 11,134 clients, 2,700 of those for addiction treatment. CSU has referred 724 clients to in-patient addiction treatment programs.

*(Continued on back page)*

**FDNY\*BHS**  
 9 MetroTech Center, Brooklyn  
 251 Lafayette Street, NY

**Dr. Kerry Kelly**  
*Chief Medical Officer*

**Dr. Viola Ortiz**  
*Deputy Chief Medical Officer*

**Malachy Corrigan**  
*Director, FDNY CSU*

**Mary T. McLaughlin**  
*Director, FDNY BHS*

Produced by FDNY Office of Public Information/Publications



### Why get help?

Studies demonstrate that approximately 10 percent of employed Americans will have difficulty with substance abuse during their careers. Substance abuse impacts the employee as well as his or her family and co-workers. Health issues related to substance abuse include toxicity to the brain, which slows reflexes, balance and intellect, and impairs judgment. Alcohol and drug use damages organs, such as the liver and the heart, impairing heart function (cardiomyopathy) or heart rhythm and destroying the liver (cirrhosis).

Drugs and alcohol also affect the blood by impairing clotting and changing platelet counts. Also common is gastrointestinal bleeding due to stomach irritation and ulcers. Depression can co-exist as an illness, and may worsen over time. Alcohol and drug abuse may also impair or impede an individual's response to medications.

At work, inattentive behavior, slowed reflexes and inappropriate responses make an employee less reliable. There is no question that work colleagues are placed at risk in an environment such as the FDNY where a member can be called upon at any time to handle

life and death situations.

With intervention and appropriate treatment, we can address the medical and psychological issues that accompany substance abuse. The ongoing availability of treatment for FDNY members represents our commitment to those who are struggling with substance abuse problems. Substance abuse is a treatable disease. Our goal is to assess and treat, restore well-being and, by early intervention, prevent both medical and employment consequences.

### How can members access care?

FDNY members can reach a trained counselor 24/7 at 212.570.1693. A counselor can speak to FDNY members, their families and concerned friends. CSU has sites in the communities

where our members live throughout the Metropolitan area. Our Manhattan site, on Lafayette Street, has an extensive five-day-a-week out-patient treatment program for employees in the early stages of alcohol and substance abuse recovery.

FDNY Officers can contact CSU to make a referral or discuss the best way to assist a member. Family members can also call to make referrals. FDNY members can seek confidential help or assistance that — depending on their treatment plan — will not affect their duty status.

Keep yourself safe and those you live and work with safe as well.

**For CSU assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, call 212.570.1693.**

<u>Counseling Service Units</u>		
<u>Site</u>	<u>Phone Number</u>	<u>Address</u>
Manhattan CSU Site	212-570-1693	251 Lafayette Street, 3rd Floor New York, NY 10012
Staten Island CSU Site	718-815-4111	1688 Victory Blvd. Staten Island, NY 10314
Fort Totten (Queens) CSU Site	718-352-2140	Fort Totten Building 413A Bayside, NY 11364
Orange County CSU Site	845-695-1029	2279 Goshen Turnpike Middletown, NY 10941
Brentwood (L.I.) CSU Site	631-851-6888	Suffolk County Community College Crooked Hill Road Brentwood, NY 11717