



# WHAT TO EXPECT

A Guide for New CFARS  
Members and Their Families





## WELCOME TO THE CLINTON FIRST AID & RESCUE SQUAD FAMILY!



The decision to become a Clinton First Aid & Rescue Squad Emergency Medical Technician, Rescue Associate, or Water Rescue Associate is one that will touch both volunteers and their families.

CFARS volunteers fill a much-needed role in our community, protecting the lives of many people. To do so, they must train, attend meetings, serve scheduled duty shifts, and sometimes respond when not scheduled.

When someone volunteers, his or her whole family makes adjustments, said Clinton volunteers Matt and Emily Stiff.

### SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS' EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

#### PHYSICAL FITNESS EASES DEMANDING WORK

The emergency situations EMTs, Rescue Associates, and Water Rescue Associates face often require physical strength and stamina. Staying in good physical condition can save a volunteer first responders' life, as well as allow him or her to better support people in need and the other first responders on the scene.

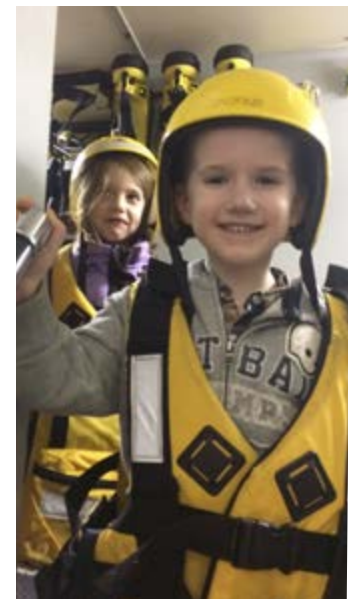
Since eating right and being physically active are good for everyone, cooking healthy meals and being active can become fun family activities, as well as a way to support the volunteer.

#### REWARDING WORK WITH EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES

Some calls involve life and death situations. Volunteers may need to talk to their family members or members of their Squad about what they have seen. They may need a little alone time or a break.

"It's the cumulative effect of what we see," said Chris Ryan, CFARS EMT and a volunteer firefighter. "There was a time where I needed to take a step back. I just cut back the number of times I responded for a month to reset, and then I came back full-force."

Anytime there is an especially serious call, CFARS brings in counselors who specialize in working with first responders,



"When the pager goes off in the middle of dinner, it takes a lot of understanding to know that the volunteer is running out to help somebody, and not to get upset with it," said Matt, CFARS Deputy Chief of Rescue.

The understanding and support of families that allows volunteers to respond when someone needs help is itself a huge contribution to the community, said Emily, an EMT and Rescue Technician. CFARS first-responders simply couldn't volunteer without their family's support.

said CFARS Deputy Chief of Rescue Matt Stiff. These same professionals are available as-needed, anytime, he said.

Sometimes, volunteers may need someone else to point out that something is wrong. Please talk to the volunteer, and encourage him or her to talk to the Chief or a Deputy Chief.

#### Ignoring an issue can lead to longer-term challenges. Here are some warning signs:

**ANXIETY:** Excessive worry, trouble concentrating, irritability, sleep problems

**DEPRESSION:** Isolation, lack of interest; changes in sleeping or eating habits, unusual or out of character sadness, anger, irritability or fatigue

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE:** Heavy use of alcohol or drugs, missed work or school due to alcohol or drug use, impaired relationships

**POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER:** Inability to relax; mental replays or dreams in which the volunteer hears, feels, sees, smells or tastes aspects of a traumatic event; being constantly on the look-out for danger



### THE "NEW NORMAL" OF A VOLUNTEER FIRST AID & RESCUE FAMILY

It is exciting that you or your family member is able to serve and care for the community in times of need! It is also a great source of pride. That doesn't mean there won't be an adjustment period. Here are some hints to help you through:

#### THE PAGER, CELL PHONE, RADIO

When help is needed, on-shift volunteers know immediately - the alarm literally shakes the building! If additional assistance is required, other volunteers will be notified by pager, radio or text. These alerts can go off any hour of any day, in any weather condition.

Lives depend on a quick response, so there is really only time for a quick exchange before the volunteer must go. It is important to not take this personally. Someone is in urgent need. Families often find it helpful to learn to associate the buzzing of an alert with that need.

#### THE TIME COMMITMENT

Your family calendar will now contain periodic meetings and/or training events that volunteers must attend. Many volunteers will stop by the squad at other times, just to visit with other members. Eventually, volunteers may take on additional roles, such as becoming an officer, which come with even more responsibilities and meetings.

#### WHEN FAMILY DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT A CALL

Volunteers may be called to respond when they are not with family. Some will alert their family by text, when possible. Discuss expectations ahead of time.

#### MANAGE YOUR WORRY AND FEAR

Worrying about the first-responder you love is completely normal, said Clinton volunteers and partners-in-life Stacey Elliott and Chris Ryan.

It helps to remember that CFARS has equipment, policies and procedures all designed to keep volunteers safe, said Stacey, an EMT and Water Rescue Associate. When the ambulance crew responds to a vehicular accident, the rescue truck is parked to shield victims and responders from oncoming traffic. Special devices allow CPR to be performed more effectively and safely.

Regular training for both new and seasoned volunteers ensures everyone knows how to use the equipment and follow procedures, said Chris, an EMT course instructor.

No volunteer is ever alone on a call. "You always have somebody watching your back," Stacey said. "We protect each other."

Here are some simple techniques to help you manage your anxieties:

- Talk to your volunteer about your concerns.
- Trust in the training he or she has received AND in his or her ability.
- Focus on the facts.
- Have a network of friends or family members who you can call if you get anxious when your volunteer is at a scene.

#### AGREE ON SCHEDULES AND PLANNING

Being able to talk openly about schedules to balance volunteer time with family needs can minimize the impact.

- Have realistic expectations on duty days. If a volunteer's shift ends at 6 p.m., don't make plans for 6:30 pm
- New volunteers must determine how much time they can spend with the squad without negatively impacting work or school performance.

#### EASE THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Kids are usually very interested in our work - CFARS volunteers help people and have some pretty neat equipment and vehicles! Yet it can seem the pager always sounds the night of the big game or dance recital. Involving children in the volunteer life helps.

Because he's spent so much time with the squad, Shane VanNatta, 12, doesn't worry when his big sister Stacey responds to a call.

Alex Stiff, 4, and Savannah and Chris Ryan, who are 7 and 5, respectively, are also frequent visitors.

"He is already obsessed with the rescue squad, and wants to be there anytime he can to go on pretend calls in what he calls the 'woo-woos,'" Deputy Chief of Rescue Matt Stiff said of his son.

"We have shown them the equipment we use and talked to them about what we do so it is second nature to them," the elder Chris said of young Chris and Savannah, his children from a previous marriage. Stacey sums it up succinctly: "Daddy is their hero."

Here are some other ideas:

- Show them the pager or cell phone application and explain what happens when someone calls 911 in an emergency.
- Assure them their parent or other family member is safe while serving, thanks to the training received and the equipment used.
- Have a routine "goodbye" for when a call comes in and the volunteer must respond.



## BEING A PART OF YOUR NEW CLINTON FIRST AID & RESCUE SQUAD FAMILY

While not every spouse or kid of a first responder chooses to get involved, there are plenty of options for those who do.

“Clinton has a family-oriented view on how we run our house,” EMT/Rescue Associate Stacey Elliott said. “There are banquets, picnics, baseball games, hockey trips – lots of good opportunities for family members.”

There are also plenty of volunteer opportunities for family members. Consider Deputy Chief of Rescue Matt Stiff’s dad,

George, who decided to check out this place where his son spent so much time, and is now himself a volunteer EMT!

Family members can volunteer without going on emergency calls – whatever skill you have, the Squad could use your help.

While there are many challenges that come with being a volunteer EMT or Rescue Associate, there are also many rewards for both volunteers and their loved ones. One of them is being a part of a new community that can also feel like family.



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