



A Union of Professionals

## Frequently Asked Questions AFT Trauma Counseling

March 26, 2020

### **Q: What is Trauma Counseling?**

A: Trauma Counseling is an innovative form of mental health care that provides immediate and confidential therapy at any time in the one-year aftermath of a traumatic incident. It matches you with a therapist and uses the latest communication technologies—phone, video, text and even AI (artificial intelligence)—to provide help when you need it, wherever you may be.

### **Q: Who is eligible?**

A: All AFT members who are either actively employed or on a leave of absence are eligible to receive this benefit. Retired members and those who pay a fee for service (agency fee payers) are not eligible for this coverage.

### **Q: Do members in merge states (Florida, Minnesota, Montana, New York and North Dakota) and merged locals have access to this program?**

A: Yes.

### **Q: I am a member from Puerto Rico. What about me?**

A: Working members from Guam, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Department of Defense Dependents Schools are all covered by this benefit.

### **Q: I thought I already had this benefit.**

A: No, this is an *additional* and unique benefit beyond any provided by your insurance, employer, an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or workers' compensation.

### **Q: What does this cost?**

A: There is no cost to you; it is an AFT-paid benefit for eligible members.

### **Q: What is covered, and when?**

A: You are covered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, if your incident involves any of the following: domestic violence, aggravated assault, sexual assault, mass shooting, terrorism, or you are infected, injured or traumatized by a disease during a major disaster. Coverage also includes incidents in your place of work if you are traumatized by contracting an infectious disease, witnessing a violent incident, bullying, harassment, threats or secondary traumas.

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The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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**Q: Does the traumatic incident have to occur at work to be eligible to receive the benefit?**

A: No. Your coverage is much broader than your employment, as detailed in the previous question. Some incidents are specific to the workplace, others are broader.

**Q: How do I sign up? How can I trust that this service is confidential?**

A: You do not have to sign up for the service until you need it. Members will gain access to the program through the AFT Member Benefits portal. This requires registration with a member ID; after that, you will work directly with the provider. AFT member verification is an internal AFT function; there is no computer or data connection to any employer.

**Q: Am I required to produce a police report of an assault or incident?**

A: Depending on the nature of the traumatic incident, you may be required to provide either a workplace incident report (either one you submitted to your employer or through your local union) or a police report as part of your claim for benefits.

**Q: Is this different from an Employee Assistance Program?**

A: Yes, the counselors in this program have all received specialized training in post-traumatic care. The benefit offers up to 21 hours of therapy, personally customized to stretch across three months in short and long sessions, and staged to include a diagnosis, a midway update and a final summarizing session.

**Q: What if I don't have access to a computer?**

A: Please call the program's toll-free number, **855-631-1421**, to speak with an authorized representative about different ways to access this form of therapy.

**Q: If I use trauma counseling, can I also receive benefits from workers' compensation, my employer and/or counseling through my insurance?**

A: Yes, this trauma benefit is in addition to those benefits.

**Q: Is trauma from contracting the coronavirus disease covered?**

A: Yes, contracting the coronavirus is a covered incident if contracted while at work. A workplace incident report from your workplace or your union that verifies workplace exposure to the coronavirus will be required.

**Q: When is this benefit not available?**

A: Coverage ends if you are no longer an AFT member actively employed or on leave of absence.

**Q: Do I need to enroll?**

A: Working AFT members are automatically enrolled.

**Q: Is there a waiting period?**

A: No. Once you successfully register at the AFT member portal, you are immediately eligible to receive this benefit.

**Q: How do I find a therapist who is covered by the Trauma Counseling benefit?**

A: You don't have to find a therapist. The Trauma Counseling program will connect you. It has identified high-performing therapists across the United States. Each is licensed, has earned a master's or higher degree, is trained in post-traumatic incident mental health care and has undergone an extensive background check.

**Q: What if I don't have time to see a counselor?**

A: Because this counseling is facilitated by today's technology, you have great flexibility in setting up your sessions, which can occur 24/7 from anywhere. Of course, sessions must be scheduled at times agreeable to both parties.

**Q: What if I don't seek trauma counseling right after an incident?**

A: Trauma Counseling can be provided within one year from the date of a covered incident. Counseling must begin within one year following an incident.

**Q: Do I have to be an AFT member to get access to this program?**

A: Yes. This program is exclusively for AFT members who are actively employed or on leave.

**Q: Can I extend my coverage and/or add my family?**

A: Yes, the insurer also offers a long-term, comprehensive trauma care program, available for purchase. AFT members pay a substantially reduced cost for this coverage, which includes recovery care, income replacement, a death benefit and family coverage. For details, visit [www.aft.org/members-only](http://www.aft.org/members-only) and click on the Trauma Coverage portal or call Trauma Coverage toll-free at **855-631-1421**.

**Q: Where can I find more information about the paid trauma coverage benefit?**

A: You can learn more at the Trauma Coverage website, accessible through the portal at [www.aft.org/members-only](http://www.aft.org/members-only), or call Trauma Coverage toll-free at **855-631-1421**.