

# Before a crisis

*Activities for Building Organized Resilience*

## Crisis Preparation Checklist

**Use this checklist to prepare your team for times of crisis.**

### ☐ ENHANCE PLAYER INTERACTIONS WITH CLUB AND OTHER SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

- ☐ Encourage players, former players, and staff to interact regularly with support professionals.
- ☐ Develop and strengthen relationships with local mental health professionals and clergy.

### ☐ PROMOTE RESILIENCE AND WELLNESS AMONG PLAYERS, STAFF, AND FAMILIES

- ☐ Provide regular training for players, former players, staff, and their families on topics related to life skills and mental wellness.
- ☐ Designate individuals to periodically review wellness information and resources with the team.

### ☐ FOSTER PEER LEADERSHIP

- ☐ Cultivate “peer supports” to assist in times of crisis.

### ☐ DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM

- ☐ Assemble a Crisis Management Team.
- ☐ Define the Crisis Management Team members' responsibilities.
- ☐ Conduct a comprehensive risk analysis and discuss mitigation approaches.
- ☐ Hold regular Crisis Management Team meetings.
- ☐ Create clear crisis response protocols.
- ☐ Instruct all members of the Crisis Management Team to formulate a personal self-care plan to follow in the event of a crisis.

### ☐ CREATE A COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSE PLAN

- ☐ Establish a communications plan and maintain a list of internal and external contacts.

### ☐ ADOPT MEMORIALIZATION PLAN

- ☐ Adopt policies for memorializing the lives of deceased team members.
- ☐ Prepare to treat all deaths the same way.
- ☐ Be ready to meet with the close colleagues and family of the deceased.
- ☐ Plan safe memorial activities.

Appropriately managing a crisis requires significant planning and preparation. Crisis situations, such as a death or the emotional crisis of a player, former player, or staff member, can have profound effects on individuals, the club, and the community at large. Deliberate and thoughtful preparation will make crisis response more effective and minimize potential negative effects. Review the following steps to help your organization prepare for a crisis and build organizational resilience.

### **ENHANCE PLAYER INTERACTIONS WITH CLUB AND OTHER SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS**

- ✓ Encourage players, former players, and staff to interact regularly with support professionals including clergy, mental health clinicians, Transition Coaches, and the Director of Player Engagement. Support services should be embedded into the organization's fabric and culture.
- ✓ Develop and strengthen relationships with local mental health professionals and clergy. These professionals typically have training and expertise in promoting positive coping skills ("psychological resilience"), encouraging organizational mental health, and managing mental health crises.

### **PROMOTE RESILIENCE AND WELLNESS AMONG PLAYERS, STAFF, AND FAMILIES**

- ✓ Provide regular training for players, former players, staff, and their families on topics related to life skills and mental wellness. Topics might include: financial planning and management, healthy relationships, parenting, coping with stress, caring for and supporting extended family, preventing domestic violence, and treating substance abuse.

- ✓ Designate individuals, including members of the Crisis Management Team, to periodically review with players, former players, and team staff the signs and symptoms of mental health challenges commonly experienced by those in professional sports, as well as local and NFL resources available to help address these issues.

### **FOSTER PEER LEADERSHIP**

- ✓ Cultivate "peer supports" to assist in times of crisis. Peer supports should be players who are well-respected by their teammates, embody total wellness, and commit to serving as role models to their peers.

### **DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM**

- ✓ Assemble a Crisis Management Team to include the Director of Player Engagement, General Manager, peer supports, clergy, mental health professionals, and representatives from key departments such as Communications/Public Relations, Security, and Human Resources (*see Appendix A: Crisis Management Team Personnel*). The Crisis Management Team may also include a Transition Coach.

- ✓ Define the responsibilities each Crisis Management Team member will have before, during, and after a crisis (*see **Appendix B: Responsibilities in Crisis Preparation and Response***).
- ✓ Conduct a **comprehensive risk analysis** and discuss mitigation approaches.

After gathering this information, an analysis is conducted by the Director of Player Engagement to estimate the probability and severity of each potential event. Questions around the team's vulnerability to these events include:

- How likely is the event to occur?
- How often might the event occur?
- How many people in the organization would be affected by the event?
- What type of impact would it have on the organization—its people, product, reputation, etc.?

**Comprehensive risk analysis.** To appropriately plan for and be able to respond to crises impacting the organization, it is important to conduct an annual risk analysis. This analysis includes a query of employees and management on potential events, review of the organization's history of events, review of industry trends (i.e., events impacting other NFL teams), review of "near misses," in which a crisis was averted, and an examination of geographic location.

The Foreseeable Risk Analysis Grid is used for this analysis. Particular attention and planning are devoted to those traumatic events that are considered to be in the Medium/High Probability and Medium/High Severity categories. In planning for these events, the Director of Player Engagement will also begin to plan for the response to other identified events that are seen as having Low/Medium Probability and Low/Medium Severity.

<b>Low Probability</b> <i>High Severity</i>	<b>Medium Probability</b> <i>High Severity</i>	<b>High Probability</b> <i>High Severity</i>
<b>Low Probability</b> <i>Medium Severity</i>	<b>Medium Probability</b> <i>Medium Severity</i>	<b>High Probability</b> <i>Medium Severity</i>
<b>Low Probability</b> <i>Low Severity</i>	<b>Medium Probability</b> <i>Low Severity</i>	<b>High Probability</b> <i>Low Severity</i>

- ✓ Maintain the Crisis Management Team by holding regular meetings, annually reviewing and revising the Crisis Management Plan, and practicing its operation in annual crisis drills.
- ✓ Create clear protocols for responding to players, former players, and staff members in a psychological or emotional crisis. The protocols must define what constitutes a crisis, who responds, and how they should manage the situation.
- ✓ Instruct all members of the Crisis Management Team to formulate a personal self-care plan to follow in the event of a crisis.

During challenging situations, members of the Crisis Management Team may forget to take care of themselves in the rush to make sure others are taken care of. The best time to plan for self-care is before a crisis begins. Thinking about strategies for self-care ahead of time can help members of the Crisis Management Team internalize what their own responses will be when a crisis does occur (*see Appendix D: Self-Care for Members of the Crisis Management Team*).

## **CREATE A COMMUNICATIONS RESPONSE PLAN**

- ✓ Establish a communications response plan and lists of internal and external contacts to be notified in case of a crisis. Maintain a list of emergency contact information for staff and players, including those on injured reserve and the practice squad. (*see Appendix B: Responsibilities in Crisis Preparation and Response*).

## **ADOPT A MEMORIALIZATION PLAN**

- ✓ Adopt policies for memorializing the lives of deceased members of the team family that honor them and their contributions to their family, friends, community, and team, but be mindful of the risk of inadvertently glorifying the cause of death.

- ✓ Treat all deaths in the same way. Having one approach for memorializing a player, former player, or staff member who died from cancer or in a car accident and a different approach for those who died by suicide reinforces misperceptions and stigma associated with suicide and may be painful to the family members and friends of the deceased. It is equally important to memorialize the deceased in a way that doesn't inadvertently glamorize or romanticize a death by suicide. In the case of a suicide, teams must consider how to appropriately memorialize the deceased without risking suicide contagion among others who may be at risk.
- ✓ Meet with the close colleagues and family of the deceased to identify a meaningful, safe approach to acknowledging the loss. The recommendations made here focus on keeping the regular work environment intact to the maximum extent possible for the benefit of the entire organization, including those who may not have known the deceased.
- ✓ Plan safe memorial activities. The team plays an important role in channeling the energy and passion of players, former players, staff members, and the greater community in a positive direction, balancing the community's need to grieve with the impact that proposed activities may have. Teams can offer specific, constructive suggestions for safe memorialization for those who wish to participate, such as:
  - Holding a day of community service in honor of the deceased
  - In cases of suicide or a mental health-related death, putting together a team to participate in an awareness or fundraising event sponsored by a national mental health or suicide prevention organization, or holding a local fundraising event to support a local crisis hotline or other suicide prevention program

- Sponsoring a mental health or health/wellness awareness day
- Making a book or cards available for colleagues to write messages to the family, share memories of the deceased, or offer condolences

### **Permanent Memorials and Scholarships**

Some communities wish to establish permanent memorials (either physical, such as planting a tree or installing a bench or plaque; or commemorative, such as funding a scholarship) to those who have died. While there is no research to suggest that permanent memorials create a risk of contagion after a suicide death, they can be upsetting reminders to bereaved colleagues. Moreover, the team should bear in mind that once it plants a tree, puts up a plaque, installs a park bench, or establishes a named scholarship for one deceased individual, it should be prepared to do so for others. This can become a difficult precedent to sustain.

Further guidance on memorialization after a suicide can be found at <http://www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/library/aftersuicide.pdf>.

# Crisis Management Team Personnel

## Appendix A

### Crisis Management Team Matrix

Create a contact list for your Crisis Management Team for use during crisis preparation and mitigation.

Crisis Management Team	Office	Cell	Home
Director of Player Engagement			
General Manager			
Peer Support(s)			
Director of Security			
Director of Human Resources			
Vice President of Public Relations			
Head Trainer			
Team Physician			
Mental Health Professional			
Team Chaplain			

# Responsibilities in Crisis Preparation and Response

## Appendix B

### Crisis Responsibilities Matrix

Assign responsibilities to your Crisis Management Team or other identified individuals to aid in crisis preparation and response.

Steps	Responsible Party	Relevant Resources	Target Date
Before a Crisis			
Build Organizational Resilience			
Develop relationships with local mental health professionals	Lead: Backup:		
Provide trainings on life skills and mental wellness	Lead: Backup:		
Review signs of mental health problems and resources	Lead: Lead: Lead: Lead: Lead:		
Cultivate peer supports	Lead: Backup:		

Steps	Responsible Party	Relevant Resources	Target Date
Develop and Maintain Crisis Management Team			
Create Crisis Management Team	Lead: Backup:		
Hold regular meetings and revise crisis plans	Lead: Backup:		
Practice crisis drills	Lead: Backup:		
Create and revise protocols for emotional crises	Lead: Backup:		
Form a self-care plan	All Members	Self-Care for Members of the Crisis Management Team	
Maintain lists of internal and external contacts	Lead: Backup:		
Adopt memorialization policies	Lead: Backup:		



Steps	Responsible Party	Relevant Resources	Target Date
After a Crisis			
Activate the Crisis Management Team			
Verify the death and/or facts of the case	Lead: Backup:		
Notify members of Crisis Management Team	Lead: Backup:		
Hold immediate Crisis Management Team meeting	Lead: Backup:	Sample Agenda for Activated Crisis Management Team Meeting	
Schedule crisis response services (e.g., counselors on scene, staff briefings)	Lead: Backup:		
Internal Communication			
Reach out to next of kin	Lead: Backup:	List of Grief and Bereavement Resources	
Notify players, former players, and staff	Lead: Backup:	Sample Talking Points for Notifying Players and Staff, in Person, of a Death  Sample Internal Memo for Notifying Staff of a Suicide or Homicide	
Distribute printed resources	Lead: Backup:		

Steps	Responsible Party	Relevant Resources	Target Date
External Communication			
Notify NFL Player Engagement and NFL Life Line	Lead: Backup:		
Notify other teams, if necessary	Lead: Backup:		
Provide statement to the media	Lead: Backup:	<p>Sample News Release for Notifying the Media of a High-Profile Suicide</p> <p>Sample News Release for Notifying the Media of a High-Profile Death, Manner Undetermined</p> <p>Sample News Release for Notifying the Media of a High-Profile Death by Other Manner, Including Natural, Accident, Homicide</p> <p>Sample Talking Points for Working With the Media</p>	

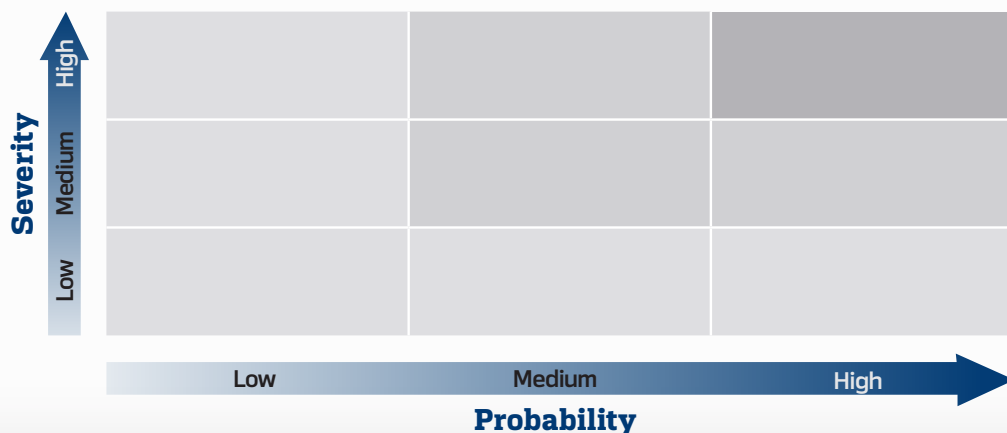
Steps	Responsible Party	Relevant Resources	Target Date
Ongoing Support and Follow-Up			
Identify high-risk individuals	Lead: Backup:	High-Risk Identification Form	
Hold end-of-season team meeting	Lead: Backup:	Sample Talking Points for End-of-Season Meeting  Sample Internal Memo for End-of-Season Support	
Distribute printed resources	Lead: Backup:		
Conduct player survey	Lead: Backup:	Crisis Response Player Feedback Survey	
Conduct Crisis Response Review	Lead: Backup:		
Follow high-risk individuals through off-season	Lead: Backup:		

### Risk Analysis Worksheets

#### Risk Analysis

Some potential risks to an NFL team might be:

- Unexpected death (by natural causes, suicide, or homicide) of a current player, former player, coach, or team staff
- Expected death of a current player, former player, coach, or team staff
- Serious injury of a current player, former player, coach, or team staff
- Accidents causing injury on team property
- Domestic violence involving a current player, former player, coach, or team staff
- Workplace violence involving a current player, former player, coach, or team staff
- Stalking/threats of violence against a current player, former player, coach, or team staff
- Aviation accident or incident involving team aircraft
- Natural disasters impacting the team facility or home of anyone within the organization
- Illegal activity by a current player, former player, coach, or team staff
- Acts of terrorism at a team facility



## Mitigation

Key to preparation for a crisis is mitigation. Each risk must be examined individually to identify potential ways in which the probability or severity of the event might be reduced. Where applicable, strategies may be identified to reduce or eliminate the risk. Annually, the Crisis Management Team will review all identified risks and:

- Develop strategies to reduce or eliminate risk
- Identify responsible risk reduction staff
- Develop timelines for completion of each risk reduction task
- Identify needed resources to reduce risk
- Conduct training (when applicable) on changes to procedures and other risk reduction methods
- Implement mitigation strategies

Some strategies that assist in risk mitigation are:

- A process for the release of players, coaches, and team staff that is respectful and assistive
- A safety review of the team's physical locations
- A new-hire orientation and presentation for current players, former players, coaches, and team staff on the team's philosophy of seeking assistance and preparation/response to traumatic events
- Dissemination of the Crisis Management Plan throughout the organization (starting with leadership and the Crisis Management Team and then trickling down)
- Securing of identified necessary external resources
- A comprehensive training program within the organization on topics such as suicide prevention, conflict resolution/violence, preventing domestic violence, treating substance abuse, managing stress, maintaining general mental health and physical wellness, dealing with stalkers, etc.

Event	Probability (low, medium, high)	Severity (low, medium, high)	Mitigation
Unexpected death (accidental, natural causes, suicide, or homicide)			
Expected death			
Serious injury			
Accidents causing injuries on team property			
Domestic violence			
Workplace violence			
Stalking/threats of violence against team personnel			
Aviation accident or incident involving team aircraft			
Natural disasters impacting team facility or home of anyone within the organization			
Illegal activity committed by team personnel			
Acts of terrorism at a team facility			

# Self-Care for Members of the Crisis Management Team

## Appendix D

### Stress and Self-Care Strategies

At one time or another, your important role on the Crisis Management Team may leave you feeling overwhelmed and pushed to your limit. As an important resource to your team, you may also feel vulnerable, especially when dealing with highly stressful or traumatic events. These feelings are normal responses to challenging situations, and it is important that you practice good self-care so that you can be your best for your team, your family, and yourself.

#### Causes of Increased Stress

- Increased demand for your time (often during significant events)
- Limited resources
- Juggling multiple tasks
- Lack of control over a situation
- High expectations placed on you
- Difficulties maintaining balance of team needs and self-care needs (e.g., not enough time in the day to be with family, eat well, sleep, or exercise)

#### Signs of Being Overwhelmed

- Anger
- Depression
- Mental/physical exhaustion
- Irritability
- Sleep and/or appetite disturbance
- Unreasonable personal expectations
- Reluctance to take time off
- Feelings of not being caught up/not having enough time
- Feeling there is more work than you are able to do
- Headaches
- Difficulty concentrating

#### Self-Care Strategies

- **Rely on your support systems.** Spend time with supportive people in your life. Talk about your concerns; enjoy sharing common interests and conversation with them for a while.
- **Make time, several times a day, to take a break.** Leave work for lunch or a walk, find a quiet place to meditate, listen to relaxing music, or practice breathing exercises.
- **Get enough rest and nourishment.** Do your best to maintain regular, routine sleeping and eating habits. Put away work materials or highly stimulating reading, turn off the television, or stop other activities at least an hour before bedtime. Include fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in your diet.
- **Take time to engage in activities you enjoy, even if only briefly.** Take part in personal creative pursuits, athletic activities, attending a show or event, or eating out with friends. Don't forget that play is an important balancing factor against work, even if it is in small doses during high-demand times.
- **Practice good stress management in your personal life.** Avoid increased use of alcohol or misuse of drugs. Schedule time to practice relaxation methods, engage in physical exercise, and spend time with friends or family.



## Independent Confidential Support for the entire NFL Family

- **Set realistic goals and expectations.** Focus on what's important and keep perspective of the big picture. Determine the one or two most critical, achievable tasks for you to accomplish each day and focus on achieving those goals.
- **Delegate when you can.** When your stress or workload is high, it can be difficult to let go and rely on others to complete tasks. Whenever possible, assign tasks to others on your team so you can focus on those tasks that require your expertise.
- **Stay organized.** Arrange to-do lists and categorize tasks by high, medium, and low priorities. Keep a calendar of deadlines so that you can plan your schedule.
- **Set good boundaries.** Remember that saying “no” to some requests allows you to say “yes” to the things that are most important.
- **Ask for resources you need.** Some demands may be beyond your area of expertise or are more than you can handle alone. It is OK to recognize and acknowledge that you need additional assistance and support to responsibly meet your team's needs.

If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed and struggling to cope, **support is here for you** 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Members of the NFL family—current and former players, coaches, team and league staff, and their family members—can call the independent, confidential NFL Life Line at **(800) 506-0078**, or go to [www.NFLLifeLine.org](http://www.NFLLifeLine.org) to chat online or take a self-check quiz. Members of the NFL family can also access counseling and mental health support through the NFL's Employee Assistance Program by calling Cigna at **(866) 421-8628**.

# High-Risk Identification Form

## Appendix K

### Identification Form for High-Risk Individuals

#### CONFIDENTIAL

Please complete this form and return it to the appropriate Crisis Management Team member for following up with high-risk individuals. He or she may contact you with additional questions.

#### Who initiated the referral?

Name:

Title/Position/Department:

Contact Number:

Date:

Time:

#### About the individual

Name:

Title/Position/Department:

Contact Number (if known):

#### Please check all that apply, if known:

- ☐ Had a history of suicide attempts
- ☐ Had a history of mental health problems, emotional difficulties, or substance abuse, or is in treatment
- ☐ Had personal experience with the manner of death (e.g., recently lost a family member to homicide or suicide, was in a serious car crash himself)
- ☐ Is dealing with stressful life events such as a death or divorce
- ☐ Was an eyewitness to the death
- ☐ Was in a romantic relationship with the deceased
- ☐ Was a close friend or colleague of the deceased
- ☐ Received a phone call, text, or other communication from the deceased just prior to the death
- ☐ Fought or had a contentious relationship with the deceased

Shows:

- ☐ Irritability
- ☐ Inappropriate emotional response
- ☐ Anger
- ☐ Agitation
- ☐ Confusion
- ☐ Shortened attention span
- ☐ Preoccupation with the event
- ☐ Social withdrawal
- ☐ Emotional outbursts, loss of control
- ☐ Changes from typical behavior





**Independent Confidential Support**  
*for the entire NFL Family*

**Additional reason(s) for concern (please describe in detail and provide any information relevant to checked boxes):**

**Actions taken, if any:**

What:

When:

By whom:

Outcome:

**Recommendations:**

**Follow-up**

**Actions taken:**

What:

When:

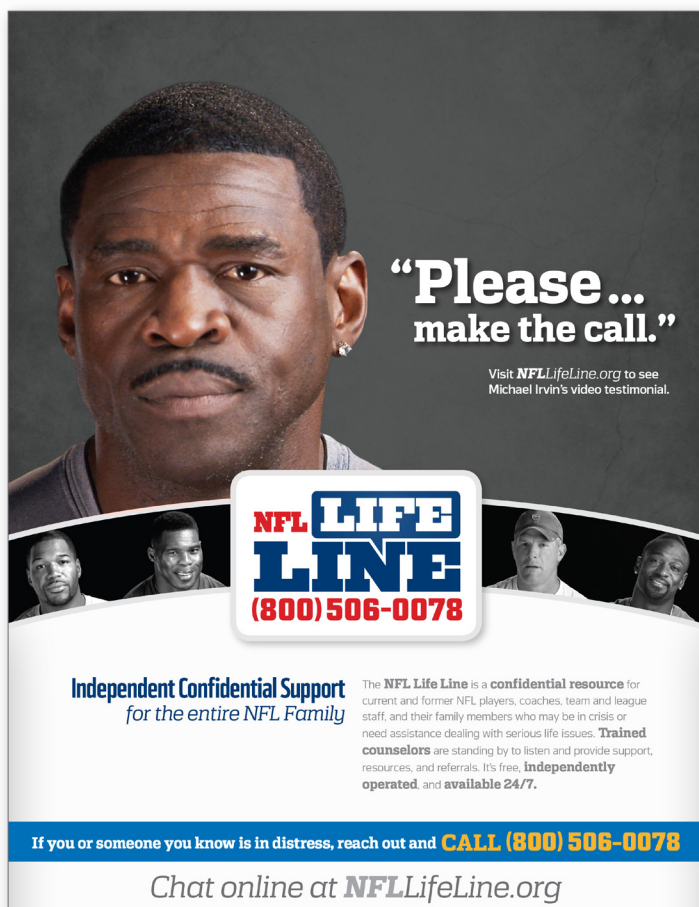
By whom:

Outcome:

### NFL Life Line Resource Materials

#### NFL Life Line two-page information sheet

8.5" x 11"



**“Please... make the call.”**

Visit [NFLLifeLine.org](http://NFLLifeLine.org) to see Michael Irvin's video testimonial.

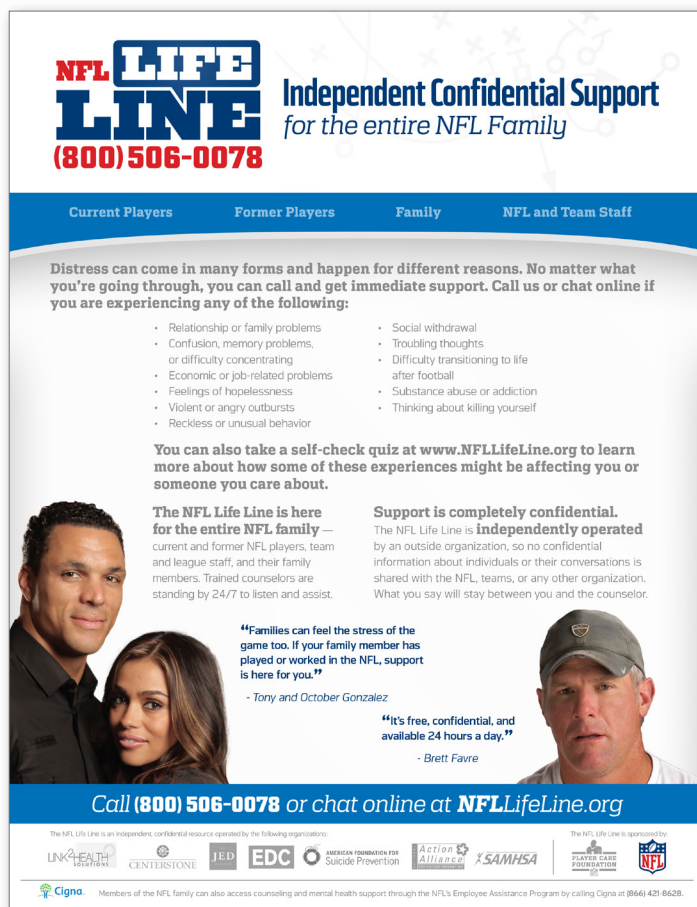
**NFL LIFE LINE**  
**(800) 506-0078**

**Independent Confidential Support**  
for the entire NFL Family

The NFL Life Line is a confidential resource for current and former NFL players, coaches, team and league staff, and their family members who may be in crisis or need assistance dealing with serious life issues. Trained counselors are standing by to listen and provide support, resources, and referrals. It's free, independently operated, and available 24/7.

If you or someone you know is in distress, reach out and **CALL (800) 506-0078**

Chat online at [NFLLifeLine.org](http://NFLLifeLine.org)



**NFL LIFE LINE**  
**(800) 506-0078**  
Independent Confidential Support  
for the entire NFL Family

Current Players    Former Players    Family    NFL and Team Staff

Distress can come in many forms and happen for different reasons. No matter what you're going through, you can call and get immediate support. Call us or chat online if you are experiencing any of the following:

- Relationship or family problems
- Confusion, memory problems, or difficulty concentrating
- Economic or job-related problems
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Violent or angry outbursts
- Reckless or unusual behavior
- Social withdrawal
- Troubling thoughts
- Difficulty transitioning to life after football
- Substance abuse or addiction
- Thinking about killing yourself

You can also take a self-check quiz at [www.NFLLifeLine.org](http://www.NFLLifeLine.org) to learn more about how some of these experiences might be affecting you or someone you care about.

**The NFL Life Line is here for the entire NFL family** — current and former NFL players, team and league staff, and their family members. Trained counselors are standing by 24/7 to listen and assist.

**Support is completely confidential.** The NFL Life Line is independently operated by an outside organization, so no confidential information about individuals or their conversations is shared with the NFL, teams, or any other organization. What you say will stay between you and the counselor.

**“Families can feel the stress of the game too. If your family member has played or worked in the NFL, support is here for you.”**  
- Tony and October Gonzalez

**“It's free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day.”**  
- Brett Favre

**Call (800) 506-0078 or chat online at [NFLLifeLine.org](http://NFLLifeLine.org)**

The NFL Life Line is an independent, confidential resource operated by the following organizations:

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN HEALTH SYSTEM    CENTERSTONE    JED    EDC    AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION    ACTION ALLIANCE    SAMHSA    NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH    NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR SUICIDE PREVENTION    NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DRUG ABUSE    NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The NFL Life Line is sponsored by:

PLAYERS CARE PRODUCTION    NFL

Cigna    Members of the NFL family can also access counseling and mental health support through the NFL's Employee Assistance Program by calling Cigna at (866) 421-8628.



**Independent Confidential Support**  
*for the entire NFL Family*

### NFL Life Line wallet card

3.375" x 2.125"



#### Independent Confidential Support **CALL (800) 506-0078**

**Distress can come in many forms and happen for different reasons.  
Call if you or someone you know is experiencing any of the following:**

- Relationship or family problems
- Social withdrawal
- Confusion, memory problems, or difficulty concentrating
- Troubling thoughts
- Economic or job-related problems
- Difficulty transitioning to life after football
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Substance abuse or addiction
- Violent or angry outbursts
- Thinking about killing yourself
- Reckless or unusual behavior

**CALL (800) 506-0078 or chat online at [NFLLifeLine.org](https://NFLLifeLine.org)  
for 24/7 confidential support.**

*Call (800) 506-0078 or chat online at **NFLLifeLine.org***