**Public Information Officer
COVID-19 Pandemic**

***Support Group***

**Vision:** PIOs will be recognized and appropriately utilized in every possible way in managing COVID-19 for their significant work during
COVID-19 and provided the same level of emotional support afforded to other emergency responders.

**Mission:** Provide supports to and celebrate PIOs during COVID-19.

**Structure:**

* Weekly meetings (at least – more frequent if needed)
* Thursdays
* 9 PM Eastern Time Zone (flexible as needed)
* 1.5 hours allotted – come & go as you wish
* Zoom-based with security admission
* Active until?
* Participants:
	+ PIOs
	+ Alumni of
		- APIO
		- MPIO
	+ Instructors of
		- APIO
		- MPIO
* Independent website for PIO Resource Collection
	+ Collection of PIO resources
	+ Maintained & controlled for PIOs independent of any agency or organization
	+ PAR Partners International, Inc
		- <https://parpartnersinternationalinc.com/pio-materials>
* Agenda:
	+ Welcome
	+ Overview of Meeting Rationale & Structure
	+ Participant Check-In
	+ (Emergency Issues)
	+ (Education Segment)
	+ Sharing Time
	+ Self-Care Planning

**Expectations:**

* Validated PIOs only
* Voluntary participation
* Civility and professionalism
* Ask for the help you need and deserve
* Share resources, ideas, and perspectives
* Speak for yourself and avoid gossiping
* Ventilate rumors but communicate truths
* Give and receive support
* Actively participate in personal and family self-care
* Celebrate being a PIO during COVID-19
* We will get through this pandemic together

**Benefits:**

* A safe environment
* Vent frustrations/anger/anxiety/sadness/guilt/grief/etc…with others who understand
* No judgments
* Share your needs and get other’s support and perspectives
* Share resources
* Discuss personal and/or professional related COVID-19 issues as needed
* Feel the welcome and warmth of the PIO family like you did by the end of class
* Acquire new helpful and healthful coping knowledge, skills, perspectives

**Rationale:**

* PIOs are a recognized member of the NIMS Incident Command Structure,
* PIOs have a unique set of knowledge and skills that are valuable during emergent events,
* PIOs have been selected to function in the PIO capacity due to unique personality characteristics that include their ability to:
	+ Communicate effectively with people,
	+ Lead and motivate people,
	+ Understand their agency’s response abilities and expectations,
	+ Understand the communication processes,
	+ Network,
	+ Get the right information to the right people via the right channel at the right time so they can make the right decisions.
* PIOs may experience isolation during “blue-sky days”,
* PIOs may experience being “siloed” during the COVID-19 response,
* PIOs may be tasked with “do as you are told” – without the freedom to address the informational needs of their customers,
* PIOs may be stifled in the utilization of their education and creativity to address the needs of their customers,
* PIOs may not have other local trusted colleagues who they feel comfortable confiding in,
* PIOs, like other emergency responders, typically “filter” what they share with their families in an attempt to protect their loved ones from the contaminants they have already experienced,
* PIOs who have completed the APIO/MPIO course(s) have developed a unique camaraderie that provides support by someone who “gets it” because they too are a PIO,
* MPIO graduates have skills and abilities to mentor other PIOs during both “blue sky” and “gray sky” days,
* The job of PIO can be uniquely stressful by having one foot in emergency management and the other with the public,
* PIOs are people too, and need a safe place/space to vent and both get and give support to other PIOs,

*A free service of Sam D. Bernard, PhD / PAR Partners International, Inc / PAR Foundation*

**NOTES:**