

24th Anniversary

# NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2025



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## A Letter to our WTC First Responders

Dear Members of the WTC First Responder Community,

As we mark the 24th anniversary of September 11th, the WTC Health Program at Rutgers University stands with you in solemn remembrance, deep gratitude, and unwavering support.

September 11, 2001, was a day that forever changed our world — but it also revealed the extraordinary courage and selflessness of those who answered the call. You were among the first to run toward danger, to search for survivors, to care for the injured, and to begin the long, difficult work of recovery. You carried more than physical burdens — you carried this nation's grief, its hope, and its determination to heal.

Today, and every day, we honor your sacrifice and your service.

As we reflect on the nearly two and a half decades since that day, we recognize the lasting impact 9/11 has had on the health and lives of responders like you. Your strength, resilience, and continued presence in our community are the reasons we remain committed to providing the care, advocacy, and research that you deserve.

At the WTC Health Program at Rutgers, we are privileged to serve you and to walk alongside you in this journey. We are reminded daily of the meaning of true bravery — and we will never take that for granted.

On this solemn anniversary, we remember those we lost, we stand with those still carrying the weight of that day, and we reaffirm our promise: We will never forget.

With deep respect and gratitude,  
The WTC Health Program at Rutgers University CCE

### Mental Health Check-In

Anniversaries can be hard. You're not alone.  
Call or email us if you're in need of support.



(848)-445-0123



[wtchp-help@eohsi.rutgers.edu](mailto:wtchp-help@eohsi.rutgers.edu)

## Taking Care of Yourself Around the 9/11 Anniversary

As we approach another anniversary of September 11, we at the WTC Health Program at Rutgers want to acknowledge the profound impact this time of year can have — especially for those who responded to the call that day and in the days, weeks, and months that followed.

For many 9/11 first responders, the anniversary can bring a mix of emotions: grief, pride, anxiety, sadness, and even anger. These feelings are not only understandable — they are human. You carry memories and experiences that changed the course of history, and changed your life. During this time, it is vital to prioritize your mental health and well-being with compassion, patience, and purpose.

### Practicing Mindfulness and Grounding

Mindfulness doesn't require silence or stillness — it simply means paying attention to the present moment. If painful memories begin to surface this month, consider small, grounding practices to reconnect with the here and now:

- **Take 5 deep breaths** — in through your nose, out through your mouth.
- **Tune in to your senses.** Name 5 things you can see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, and 1 you can taste.
- **Walk or move gently**, focusing on how your body feels with each step.

Even just a few moments of mindful awareness can help ease stress and bring clarity.

### Self-Care Isn't Selfish

Many responders are used to putting others first — it's who you are. But caring for yourself allows you to be there for those you love and continue your own journey of healing. Self-care can look different for everyone:

- Reaching out to a friend or family member
- Attending a counseling session or support group
- Taking time for a hobby or activity you enjoy
- Getting outside for fresh air or exercise
- Saying no when you need to rest

This isn't about "fixing" anything — it's about supporting your well-being in whatever ways feel right for you.



### You Are Not Alone

If this time of year feels heavy, please remember: you don't have to go through it alone. The WTC Health Program at Rutgers is here for you — not just during anniversaries, but year-round. Whether you're looking for mental health support, medical care, or simply someone who understands, we are committed to standing with you and honoring your service.

### Support Is Available

If you are experiencing distress, we encourage you to reach out:

**WTC Health Program at Rutgers**  
**Mental Health:** (848) - 445 - 0230

**National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:**  
Call or text 988 – This is 24/7,  
confidential, and free

**Vet2Vet Helpline** (for veterans in NJ):  
1-866-838-7654

*You have already carried so much. As this anniversary approaches, give yourself permission to take care of your body, your mind, and your spirit.*



## Fall 2025 Virtual Groups

### 9/11 Support Group

A space for first responders to share their unique experiences with the support of their peers in a safe, therapeutic environment.

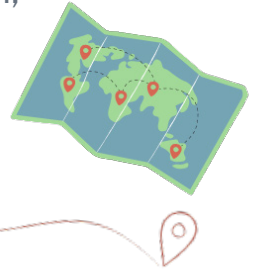
**Fridays 2PM-3:30PM (Zoom)**



### The Out-of-Towner's Group

A 9/11 support group. This is for WTC responders who have left the NY-NJ area. You are still part of our community! Join us over Zoom for connection, conversation and support.

**Fridays 10AM-11:30AM (Zoom)**



### Blue Line Support Group

This support group is for individuals who are active/retired law enforcement officers. It is designed to be a safe environment to discuss and share concerns, stories, and experiences with other officers. The goal of the blue line support group is to provide a place for law enforcement officers to process their experiences together, offer comfort and comradery, strengthen interpersonal support, and increase resiliency and well-being.

**Thursdays 1:30PM-3PM (Zoom)**

### Firehouse Kitchen

The firehouse kitchen has long been a place of bonding for firefighters. This support group is for both current and retired firefighters to discuss various aspects of this profession and to engage in honest conversations about any current stressors you are facing. Connect with peers and discuss professional topics.

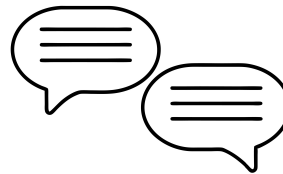
**Mondays 1:30PM-3PM (Zoom)**



### Retiree Social Support Group

This group provides support related to life transitions such as retirement and other events. The focus is on sharing coping strategies to deal with stress, personal experiences and building a sense of community.

**Mondays 6PM-7:15PM (Zoom)**



**If you are interested in participating in any of our virtual group offerings, please call us at (848)445-0227**



### Project Uplift

This program teaches mental health skills along with mindfulness and meditation to help cope with stress, anxiety, depression or chronic health problems. This program runs for eight consecutive weeks.

**Thursdays 1PM-2PM (Zoom)**



## Fall 2025 Virtual Groups (Continued)

### Grief Support Group



We all experience loss, but that does not mean we have to grieve alone. Join us as we further explore the nature of grief and come together to support each other through a difficult loss. The group is structured to last eight weeks in which we explore a particular aspect of grief each week, and in doing so learn more about ourselves and advance in the healing process.

All are welcome. Remember, *"No loss too small, No pain too great."*

**Wednesdays 2PM-3PM (Zoom)**

### Inner Peace Group

This group is designed to help individuals rediscover and tap into their spirituality, values, and principles at the heart of living a well-balanced life. Members will identify how to foster spirituality in their life. Topics will include "meaning making", purpose finding, and building resilience. We will examine the 3 C's: Connection to something greater than yourself, Compassion for others, and Contribution to your community.



**Tuesdays 3PM-4PM (Zoom)**

### Health and Wellness Group



This is virtual group will focus on a holistic approach to well-being through presentations and discussion focused on the health-related domains of food and diet, working/moving the body, sleep hygiene, stress management, social connections, relationships, and spiritual well-being.

**Mondays 12PM-1:30PM (Zoom)**



### Women's Cancer Support Group

A supportive space for women enrolled in the WTC Health Program who have been diagnosed with 9/11-related cancers. This group offers an opportunity to connect with other women navigating similar experiences, while learning to manage stress and support your emotional well-being throughout your cancer journey. Our women's group can be a means of support for one another in creating lives of greater meaning and connection

**Wednesdays 6PM to 7:15PM (Zoom)**



### Couple's Workshop

This group will provide skills and support for you and your partner, focusing on topics such as improving communication, managing stress and increasing fun and play! The workshop is comprised of four 2 hour-long sessions through a secure video platform. Both individuals must be available for all 4 sessions to participate in the group.

**Thursdays 6PM-8PM (Zoom)**

If you are interested in participating in any of our virtual group offerings, please call us at **(848)445-0227**

## Social Work Team Updates

*Hello from the social workers at the WTC Health Program at Rutgers!*

The social work department is a great resource for many things. If you have questions about Program benefits including medical, pharmacy, mental health or external benefits such as the Victims Compensation Fund, you can reach out to us for assistance. If you need documents completed by a WTC Health Program doctor, we can assist you. All mental health referrals are done through this department, so if you would like to see a mental health provider or need an updated referral, please send us an email. Our email is [wtc-benefits@eohsi.rutgers.edu](mailto:wtc-benefits@eohsi.rutgers.edu).

We offer monthly workshops which review internal and external benefits. Typically, these meet on the first Wednesday of the month at 4:30pm. To receive a Zoom link, email [wtc-benefits@eohsi.rutgers.edu](mailto:wtc-benefits@eohsi.rutgers.edu)



We host other groups throughout the year. If interested in finding out more about those offerings, just let us know.

During your yearly monitoring visit, a social worker will reach out to you but you don't have to wait until your visit to contact us!

### **Attention PFRS, SPRS, and PERS LEO/EMT Members and Retirees:**

Registration under the Bill Ricci World Trade Center Act (Chapter 157) has officially **reopened**. If you participated in rescue, recovery, or cleanup operations at the WTC between September 11th and October 11th, 2001, and are now totally and permanently disabled from that participation, you may now apply for Accidental Disability Retirement, even if you missed the original 2021 deadline.

Visit the New Jersey Division of Pensions & Benefits website to access the Eligibility Registration Form and learn about required documentation. This is an important opportunity, don't miss your chance to register. For additional questions, please contact [wtc-benefits@eohsi.rutgers.edu](mailto:wtc-benefits@eohsi.rutgers.edu).

## Pharmacy Benefits

### Express Scripts

The World Trade Center (WTC) Health Program provides prescription coverage for members with certified WTC-related health conditions. Members with certified WTC-related health conditions can fill prescriptions used to manage these conditions at no cost as long as they are prescribed by a Program provider and meet Program criteria. With access to over 56,000 retail pharmacy locations nationwide and home delivery options, members have many choices to get their WTC-related prescriptions filled.

To be eligible for WTC Health Program pharmacy benefits, a member must have a health condition certified by the WTC Health Program. These benefits are administered and accessed through the Program's Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM), Express Scripts.

**You can contact Express Scripts at 1-800-935-7179 with any questions you may have and to request a pharmacy card if you have not received one.**

### Member Portal

The Express Scripts Member Portal allows you to check your prescriptions status, find your local in-network pharmacies, and track any home deliveries you may have.

Visit the Express Scripts website for the latest news and to register for the Express Scripts Member Portal.

<https://www.express-scripts.com/>

### Mobile App

The Express Scripts® mobile app is like a pharmacy in your pocket. You can order refills, manage prescriptions, and even set up reminders to take your medication.

Available in the  
Apple App Store  
and Google Play



If you have WTC-related specialty prescriptions, these are generally filled by Accredo. You should have received a letter from Express Scripts with instructions. To fill specialty prescriptions online, track shipments, and access your plan information, visit the Accredo website: <https://www.accredo.com> or call 1-855-540-1780.



## Pharmacy FAQs

### **Will I have access to my medications if I am not yet certified for a WTC-related condition?**

Prior to WTC certification for a condition, Program members are set in the system as inactive for pharmacy benefits. If treatment needs to start while certifications are being processed, please communicate with the clinic so a request could be sent to the Program to activate the diagnostic benefit, which covers certain medications per Program guidelines. Members under the diagnostic benefit are limited to use local pharmacies and will be able to receive up to a 30-day supply of covered medications for up to 3 fills.

### **Do I need the WTC pharmacy card and how do I get one?**

All members with a WTC certified condition are advised to have a WTC pharmacy card when filling prescriptions through the WTC Health Program. This card is issued by Express Scripts when you get your first certified health condition and is sent to your home address. If you have a certified health condition and have not received this ID card, please call Express Scripts WTC Member Services at (800) 935-7179. Certified members can also register an account online at Express-Scripts.com or by downloading the Express Scripts app to obtain a digital copy of the pharmacy card.

### **Where do I have my prescriptions sent?**

Please have your prescriptions for WTC medications sent directly to your pharmacy for processing. If sending to Express Scripts home delivery, please remind the prescriber to note your WTC ID number (indicate after the instruction on how the medication is to be taken, or in the Note to Pharmacy section) as requested by Express Scripts to facilitate proper billing. Your WTC ID number can be found on your WTC pharmacy card, or you are always welcome to call the clinic to ask for this number if needed. For help finding an in-network pharmacy, you can call Express Scripts WTC Member Services at (800) 935-7179.

### **I had to pay out of pocket for my WTC medications, how do I get reimbursed?**

The Program covers WTC-related prescriptions that are prescribed by a Program provider for certified WTC-related conditions. There may be coverage guidelines on certain medications that require a Prior Authorization to be submitted and approved before the medication can be processed. The best way to receive all covered prescriptions is to have them processed at the pharmacy. You should not pay for any WTC Health Program prescriptions out-of-pocket. However, sometimes billing can be a complicated process in the Program. If there are issues and you decide to pay out-of-pocket for a prescription that should be covered under the WTC Health Program, you can submit a Direct Claims form with Express Scripts for reimbursement. This can be submitted online in the Express Scripts Member Portal or by mail. All prescriptions that you submit a Direct Claims form for must meet all program requirements for coverage to be reimbursed. Please note that reimbursement is through Express Scripts. The WTC Health Program is not a part of this process and cannot guarantee reimbursement. For questions about this process, please contact Express Scripts at 1-800-935-7179.

### **My medication claim was blocked for Prior Authorization, what do I do?**

In general, you should have no copay for medications covered by the WTC Health Program for a WTC certified condition. When a medication claim is blocked for Prior Authorization needed, it means the medication requires coverage review to be done by the **prescribing** doctor (not necessarily the WTC clinic). The prescribing office needs to attest professionally how the needed medication is related to the member's WTC certified condition(s) and answer certain clinical questions. Prior authorizations can be done by having the prescribing office call the Express Scripts Coverage Review Department at (844) 431-9672.

### **When do I need to call the clinic for medication refills?**

Members do not need to contact the clinic for refills unless your pharmacy has confirmed that there are no more refills available on the current script. A different prescription number will be issued for newly sent prescriptions even if it is the same medication that you have been taking. The prescription number is unique to each pharmacy and cannot be used outside of the issuing pharmacy. If you need to contact the clinic for a refill, please have medication name and strength on hand in order to help expedite the process.

### **Do I need to keep my WTC medication labels?**

Members are advised to always keep the most recent pharmacy label for their WTC medications. The medication label provides important information to remind you of the pharmacy where the medications were obtained, the clinician who prescribed the medication, and the numbers of refills available before the prescription expires.

## Important WTC Health Program Reminders

### Annual Monitoring Exams

Have you been putting off your annual monitoring exam? We know life can be busy, but the WTC Health Program encourages you to schedule your exam!

Early detection of certified WTC-related conditions is key to successful treatment. The annual monitoring exam helps ensure that your health is monitored properly over time and that any new conditions are diagnosed early.

### Contact Information

Be sure to update your contact information if there have been any changes since we last saw you. Let us know the best phone and email to reach you, and if you have had any changes in mailing address. You can update this in your Robert Wood Johnson Barnabas Health (RWJBH) MyChart Patient Portal or give us a call and we can update it over the phone.

Please visit

<https://mychart.rwjbh.org/mychart/Authentication/Login?>

to sign up or sign in to your Patient Portal

For MyChart Support you can call  
**1-833-764-3570**



### Follow up with Referrals

After your visit with our doctors, they may choose to refer you to a specialist - for example an ENT, Gastroenterologist, Pulmonologist or Dermatologist.

It's very important for your health that you don't forget to schedule these appointments. This is a huge component for early detection of health concerns and maintenance of your overall health.

Our doctors may choose to order follow up lab work or imaging for you as well. Please ensure a copy of these exams is sent to us so our doctors can review the results with you.

**Contact our office at (848)-445-6160 to schedule your annual monitoring exam.**