

Promising Strategies for Strengthening Police Department Wellness Programs

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OFFICER
SAFETY AND WELLNESS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT



COPS

Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice



POLICE EXECUTIVE
RESEARCH FORUM





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PERF would like to offer special recognition to the chiefs of police at our three project sites: Chief Javaro Sims, Delray Beach (Florida) Police Department; Chief Mike Zaro, Lakewood (Washington) Police Department; and Chief Howard Hall, Roanoke County (Virginia) Police Department. This project would not have been possible without the commitment these leaders demonstrated to improving the safety and wellness of all their employees. At every step of this process, these police chiefs and their personnel were generous with their time, candid, and glad to discuss new ideas.

Finally, PERF would like to acknowledge the members of the project assessment team: Daniel Blumberg, Nancy Bohl-Penrod, Christopher Chew, Sarah Creighton, Mike Kehoe, Gary MacNamara, Brian Nanavaty, and John Violanti. These experts, along with PERF staff members Jessica Toliver, Director of Technical Assistance; Elizabeth Miller, Senior Research Associate; Madeline Sloan, Research Associate; and Hyla Jacobson, Research Assistant, were responsible for conducting assessments and developing recommendations for the three project sites. Thanks also goes to Jessica Toliver, Craig Fischer, Communication Director, and Alexa Daniels-Shpall, Senior Principal, for drafting and editing this publication, which is a summary of the findings and recommendations identified in the three separate site reports drafted by the project teams.

Letter from the Acting Director of the COPS Office

Colleagues:

The Officer Safety and Wellness (OSW) Group, a joint effort by the COPS Office and the Bureau of Justice Assistance, has worked since 2011 to raise awareness, increase knowledge, and encourage law enforcement agencies to adopt practices to improve the health and well-being of their employees, sworn and unsworn. In 2020, the combined impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and mass demonstrations around the country has created an escalating potential to affect officers' physical and mental safety as well as that of the communities they serve and protect. Many agencies are now faced with the realization that they must expand (or in some cases initiate) their programming focused on employee wellness and need guidance on how to do so.

In this publication, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) presents findings and discusses recommendations for agencies in need of employee wellness guidance. It is a valuable tool in the officer safety and wellness toolbox, and we thank them for their management of the OSW Technical Assistance Project and encourage agencies to consider incorporating these recommendations into their wellness programming efforts.

Sincerely,



Robert E. Chapman
Acting Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Letter from the Executive Director of PERF

Colleagues:

On any typical day, sworn and civilian law enforcement personnel face stressors that are unique to policing. Policing inherently involves working with people in crisis, people who need help, and people who are dangerous.

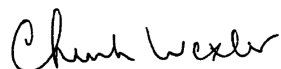
For many police chiefs and officers, the year 2020 was probably the most stressful in their entire careers. The COVID-19 pandemic upended almost every aspect of how police do their jobs. Next, the summer and fall of 2020 brought nonstop protests and demonstrations and, in some locations, rioting and physical attacks on officers. Many police departments also saw budget cuts stemming from the COVID recession or the “defunding” movement. Then, in the fall, we began to see sharp increases in homicides and shootings across the nation.

As we put the difficult year of 2020 behind us, officers continue to experience stress about their future in policing and other issues. To help their employees cope, police agencies in recent years have developed holistic wellness services for officers and other staff members. **It is critical that officers have access to comprehensive services to ensure their physical, emotional, and mental health.**

This report provides a roadmap to creating a wellness program in your law enforcement agency, encouraging participation in the program, and normalizing the routine use of mental wellness services in policing. It includes details about how to build a comprehensive structure for a program; how to develop services promoting physical, mental, emotional, financial, and spiritual wellness; how to include peer support systems and officers’ family members in wellness programs; and many other aspects of a wellness initiative.

I hope you will find this report useful. We owe it to our officers to provide them with resources and assistance that will help them do their work while remaining healthy and well.

Sincerely,



Chuck Wexler

Executive Director

Police Executive Research Forum

Executive Summary

While there are clear benefits to creating comprehensive officer safety and wellness initiatives, many departments remain unsure of where to start or how to expand their wellness programming. The field needs guidance on how to provide effective support to officers and civilian staff members who have experienced trauma, promote employees' long-term physical and mental health, equip officers with emotional survival skills, and overcome stigma and other cultural and psychological barriers to seeking treatment.

To help meet this need, in 2017 the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) was selected by the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) to implement and manage the Officer Safety and Wellness Technical Assistance Project. As part of this project, PERF provided hands-on support and expertise to three law enforcement agencies as they developed or expanded their holistic officer safety and wellness programs. This report is based largely on PERF's experience with those agencies.

The purpose of this publication is to provide departments across the country with a roadmap for creating their own wellness programs. The information contained in this practitioner manual includes promising strategies for creating and improving wellness programs, encouraging participation in such programs, and normalizing the routine use of mental wellness services.

Summary of findings and recommendations

This publication reflects the findings from PERF's three site assessments and existing research on effective officer safety and wellness programs. The goal of this publication is to provide guidance to police agencies on how to build and strengthen their employee wellness programming.

Each chapter in this publication presents findings and recommendations regarding a topic that emerged as a common area of focus during the site assessments. The recommendations in this report reflect common challenges faced by the project sites and other agencies across the country.

Chapter 1 discusses the building blocks of a comprehensive wellness program, including how to identify wellness needs and create a wellness committee. Key recommendations include the following:

- Conduct an anonymous survey of employees to identify the needs of sworn and nonsworn staff members with respect to wellness programming.¹

1. A copy of the San Diego (California) Police Department's wellness survey can be found in appendix B.

- Develop a strategic plan.
- Establish a wellness committee that is diverse in terms of rank, assignments, and demographics.
- Seek volunteers who are “informal leaders” or who have an interest in or knowledge of wellness issues rather than appointing committee members arbitrarily.

Chapter 2 focuses on developing programming for different kinds of wellness, including physical, mental and emotional, financial, and spiritual wellness. Key recommendations include the following:

- Assess various methods for incentivizing participation in physical fitness programs, and determine which ones are likely to have the greatest success with the workforce.
- Provide training on mental wellness to all new recruits. Starting training early is key to eliminating stigma associated with mental health care and to promoting the use of support services. This training should provide tools and strategies for managing
 - stress;
 - nutrition;
 - maintaining healthy relationships;
 - substance abuse issues;
 - mental health issues;
 - identifying and assisting fellow officers who may be in crisis.
- Create a mentoring program in which veteran officers are assigned to new employees to assist them and serve as a resource during their academy training, their field training, and throughout the remainder of their probationary period.
- Train supervisors on how to identify early indicators of acute stress or mental health issues.
- Incorporate wellness and resiliency into promotional testing to increase supervisors’ knowledge about identifying and addressing ineffective coping behaviors such as alcohol abuse, identifying suicide risks among officers, promoting healthy forms of stress management, and providing health strategies to prevent illness.
- Provide financial wellness information (e.g., budgeting, retirement benefits, and financial saving plans) and training to all new and current employees.

Chapter 3 provides a discussion of mechanisms for delivering support (e.g., peer support and employee assistance programs), and how an agency's wellness programs can be strengthened with strong communication and inclusion of employees' family members. Key recommendations include the following:

- Include sworn and civilian employees, individuals from diverse backgrounds, and personnel from different divisions within the agency as peer support program members. This facilitates selection of peer supporters who have much in common with the persons seeking support, in terms of shared experiences and perspectives.
- Require all peer supporters to undergo an initial training course and to receive additional training annually.
- Develop a directory of peer supporters and make it available to all agency personnel.
- Include employee assistance program (EAP) clinicians in new officer orientation, agency orientation, or in-service training. EAP clinicians should also routinely attend roll call briefings to discuss the services that are available and should participate in ride-alongs to get to know officers.
- Conduct formal debriefings following a critical incident such as an officer-involved shooting or in-custody death.
- Include police chaplains and EAP clinicians in debriefs to provide a resource to officers who may want to speak to someone outside their chain of command or seek professional counseling services.
- Provide family members with access to all department help resources to the extent possible.
- Begin outreach and communications with family members immediately when employees are hired.

Chapter 4 outlines strategies for encouraging and increasing participation in wellness programming. Key recommendations on these topics include the following:

- Ensure that command staff members (including the chief of police, as feasible) attend all wellness training, events, and roll call or team discussions about employee wellness to communicate that the department is serious about wellness. This will encourage employee participation.
- Use multiple communication channels such as all-staff emails, fliers placed in employees' mailboxes, and roll call discussions to raise awareness of the various wellness programs available.

- Collect non-identifying information regarding the use of the EAP, peer support, and other wellness programs on a continuing basis, with analysis conducted monthly or quarterly, so department leaders can determine whether efforts have been effective in increasing awareness of the program and destigmatizing its use.
- Consider incentivizing participation by compensating employees for attending (e.g., offering compensated time off, points for promotion, positive evaluation notes).
- Emphasize that the use of mental health or EAP services will remain confidential to the fullest extent possible.

Moving forward

By taking steps to implement the recommendations outlined, police agencies can use the talent and commitment of their personnel to strengthen employee wellness and to better protect and serve their communities.

Introduction

The physical and mental well-being of police agency employees is a central concern for law enforcement leaders.² Police officers have a higher risk of adverse job-related health outcomes than the general population.³ Furthermore, officer wellness has a direct impact on officers' job performance and interactions with community members.⁴ Unaddressed physical and mental health issues among officers are associated with impaired decision-making abilities, increased agency costs,⁵ and lower quality of life for officers.⁶ High stress levels in officers can lead to absenteeism, increased use of workers' compensation and sick days, increases in early retirement, and even suicide.⁷

As a result, many police departments have established officer wellness programming that is specially designed to identify and address the physical and mental health concerns of police officers.⁸ Although researchers caution that further research is needed to draw strong conclusions about wellness program effects,⁹ early evaluations have associated wellness programs with positive mental and physical health outcomes such as improved participation in exercise programs,¹⁰ healthier eating habits,¹¹ and reductions in officer stress.¹² These positive outcomes benefit not only individual officers but also the organization as a whole.

While there are clear benefits to creating comprehensive officer safety and wellness initiatives, many departments remain unsure of where to start or how to expand their wellness programming. The purpose of this report is to provide guidance on how to provide effective support to officers and civilian staff members who have experienced trauma, promote employees' long-term physical and mental health, equip officers with emotional survival and effective interactions skills, and overcome cultural and psychological barriers to seeking treatment.

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2. This issue was also identified by Congress as a priority with the passage of the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act of 2017. For information on related program resources, see "Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness [Act] (LEMHWA) Program Resources," Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, accessed January 7, 2021, <https://cops.usdoj.gov/lemhwareources>.
 3. Hartley et al., "Health Disparities in Police Officers."
 4. Fox et al., "Mental-Health Conditions, Barriers to Care, and Productivity Loss;" Rajaratnam et al., "Sleep Disorders, Health, and Safety in Police Officers;" Covey et al., "The Effects of Exposure to Traumatic Stressors;" Vila et al., "Improving Shift Schedule and Work-Hour Policies."
 5. Andersen et al., "Applying Resilience Promotion Training;" Fox et al., "Mental-Health Conditions, Barriers to Care, and Productivity Loss."
 6. Amendola et al., *The Shift Length Experiment*.
 7. Fox et al., "Mental-Health Conditions;" Andersen et al., "Mental Preparedness;" Garner, "Police Stress."
 8. Kuhns, Maguire, and Leach, *Health, Safety, and Wellness*; Church and Robinson, "How State Police Agencies are Addressing;" Garner, "Police Stress;" Fiedler, "Officer Safety and Wellness: An Overview."
 9. Peñabla, McGuire, and Leite, *Psychosocial interventions*; Rachele, Heesch, and Washington, "Wellness Programs."
 10. Kuhns, Maguire, and Leach, *Health, Safety, and Wellness*.
 11. Kuehl et al., "The Safety and Health Improvement."
 12. Arnetz et al., "Trauma Resilience Training;" Chopko et al., "The Relation Between Mindfulness;" Christopher et al., "A Pilot Study;" Garner, "Police Stress."

In 2017, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) was selected by the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) to implement and manage the Officer Safety and Wellness Technical Assistance Project to help meet this need. As part of this project, PERF provided hands-on support and expertise to three law enforcement agencies as they developed or expanded their holistic officer safety and wellness programs. This report is based largely on PERF's experience with those agencies.

The purpose of this publication is to provide departments across the country with a roadmap for creating their own wellness programs. The information contained in this practitioner manual includes promising strategies for creating and improving wellness programs, encouraging participation in such programs, and normalizing the use of mental wellness services (i.e., reducing any stigma associated with mental health care).

Project overview and methodology

The goal of the COPS Office's Officer Safety and Wellness Technical Assistance Project is to bring attention to the safety and wellness needs of law enforcement officers and encourage agencies to adopt practices that promote wellness. PERF's work on this project involved several different components, including assessments of three police agencies' programs, development of tailored recommendations to overcome each agency's challenges and identify resources, and ongoing support and guidance to assist with implementation of recommended initiatives.

This publication is based on the findings and recommendations that emerged from the project, and it reflects the promising programs and efforts as well as common challenges faced by the project sites and other agencies across the country.

Site assessments

PERF conducted comprehensive assessments of the officer safety and wellness programs at three police departments: the Delray Beach (Florida) Police Department, Lakewood (Washington) Police Department, and Roanoke County (Virginia) Police Department. The project sites were chosen based on criteria that included a demonstrated need for technical assistance, support from department leaders, and PERF's ability to support the department's needs.

The site reviews were conducted by assessment teams of PERF researchers and other subject matter experts, including several current and former police executives, including chiefs, an assistant chief, and a captain; a police psychologist with 30 years of experience; a professor of public health who has focused on police programs; and a clinical psychologist with 25 years of experience working with police.

Document and policy review

For each site, the assessment team reviewed the existing policies, training, and programs addressing officer safety and wellness. “Wellness” was defined broadly to include physical health and fitness, emotional health, financial health, nutrition, safety, and related issues.

Interviews

At each site, the team conducted in-person interviews with between 25 and 50 stakeholders, including police department personnel, police academy instructors, health care service providers, and human resource professionals.

Overall, the personnel interviewed by the PERF assessment teams were talented, forthcoming, and clearly committed to improving the wellness of the agencies’ employees.

Overview of publication

This publication reflects the findings from the site assessments and existing research on effective officer safety and wellness programs. The goal of this publication is to provide guidance to police agencies on how to build and strengthen their employee wellness programming.

Each chapter in this publication presents findings and recommendations regarding a topic that emerged as a common area of focus during the three site assessments. The recommendations in this report reflect common challenges that are faced by the project sites and other agencies across the country.

Chapter 1 discusses the building blocks of a comprehensive wellness program, including how to identify wellness needs and create a wellness committee.

Chapter 2 focuses on developing programming for different kinds of wellness, including physical, mental and emotional, financial, and spiritual wellness.

Chapter 3 provides a discussion of the mechanisms for delivering this support (e.g., employee support programs), and how an agency’s wellness programs can be enhanced through family inclusion and effective communication with employees.

Chapter 4 outlines strategies for encouraging and increasing participation in wellness programming.

The recommendations in this report are scalable and should be adapted to fit each agency's unique needs and resources. It is also important to recognize that city governments and external providers often offer additional programming and services, and these services should be incorporated into the police department's programming. As will be discussed, the duty of coordinating these efforts should be assigned to the wellness committee or other entity that is responsible for management of the overall wellness program.

1. Building Blocks of a Comprehensive Wellness Program

An agency executive's ultimate goal is to create a "culture of wellness" within the organization. To create this culture, everyone must be involved. That requires having programs and service providers who can support the needs of sworn and nonsworn employees at all ranks, as well as their families. Everyone should be able to find what they need.

The success of safety and wellness programming depends on (a) leadership, (b) buy-in, and (c) destigmatization. To this end, a police chief who wants to make significant progress in this effort must be vocal in supporting the program, demonstrate that it is a personal and organizational priority, and direct command staff members to serve as leaders and mentors to their teams.

In practice, this means the following:

- **Educating** commanders' teams on available wellness programs (including those already available, such as the employee assistance program (EAP), as well as those to be implemented in the future)
- **Emphasizing** that using these services will not result in any negative consequences
- **Using** the services themselves when offered (for example, through critical incident debriefs)

The first step in building a wellness program is determining the wellness needs of an agency's employees, both sworn and nonsworn. While some programming may be applicable to all audiences, other program elements will be more effective if they are specially tailored to particular employee groups.

This chapter provides findings and recommendations to assist agencies with establishing a solid foundation from which to build a comprehensive wellness program.

Identifying wellness needs

Finding. Wellness programming is most effective when it is tailored to meet the specific needs of police department employees.

Conducting an initial anonymous survey to identify needs has proven to be an efficient and effective method to gather employee input. Survey results can be used to inform programming and the specific goals and objectives of a wellness committee (discussed in the next section).

- **Recommendation 1.** Conduct an anonymous survey to identify the needs of sworn and nonsworn staff, with respect to wellness programming.¹³

Prior to sending out the survey, the chief of police and command staff should attend roll calls or host a department-wide meeting to outline the goals of the survey and emphasize how this critical information will be used in shaping the employee wellness program.

Follow-up surveys can be conducted on a regular basis to ensure that programming continues to meet employees' needs, and the results of surveys can be reported back to employees to demonstrate the department's responsiveness.

Wellness committee

Finding. A wellness committee can assist in developing programs and coordinating wellness efforts. To succeed, a wellness committee should establish a clear vision statement and list of goals. In addition, the different aspects of wellness programming (e.g., physical, sworn vs. nonsworn, financial) should be represented in the diversity of the committee's membership.

Strategic wellness plan and committee mission statement

- **Recommendation 2.** In coordination with department leaders, the wellness committee should develop a strategic plan to clearly define the department's vision, mission, and goals for all wellness programming.

The plan should take a holistic approach to all aspects of wellness, and it should be designed to include services for all department employees and family members.

When the plan has been finalized, it should be shared with all personnel and service providers to ensure that everyone is aware of the department's goals and resources.

- **Recommendation 3.** The wellness committee should create a mission statement that clearly defines the vision, goals, expectations, and responsibilities of the committee.

The mission should be informed by the results of the wellness needs survey.

Like the strategic plan, the mission should be shared throughout the department to ensure that everyone understands the role of the committee.

13. A copy of the San Diego Police Department's wellness survey can be found in appendix B.

- **Recommendation 4.** As part of this process, the wellness committee should also conduct a review of the department's policies to identify any practices that may be having a harmful effect on employee well-being and organizational culture.

The employee survey (see **recommendation 1**) should include questions about whether police department policies or practices have a detrimental effect on employees' well-being.

Committee membership

- **Recommendation 5.** Members of the Wellness Committee should include both sworn and nonsworn members of the department. It should also be diverse with respect to rank, specialized units, race, gender, and union members.

Ideally, all committee members will be informal leaders within the department who are respected by their peers to achieve maximum participation from their fellow employees.

This recommendation also applies to citywide wellness committees that include representatives from different departments. In that instance, police department representatives on a citywide committee should act as a liaison, communicating the needs of police personnel to the committee and disseminating information about citywide initiatives and events to police employees.

- **Recommendation 6.** Agencies should seek volunteers to join the wellness committee. From that pool of applicants, the chief of police should choose members who exhibit the following characteristics:
 - An ability to effectively convey the committee's message to the chief of police, command staff, and frontline officers
 - A background in or special interest in different aspects of wellness
 - Demonstrated understanding of wellness issues and the specific needs of agency personnel
 - Qualities of empathy and trustworthiness (including an ability to maintain confidentiality if provided sensitive information by employees)

- **Recommendation 7.** Consider including stakeholders from outside of the department who can provide additional resources and perspectives, such as representatives from the agency's EAP (discussed later in this publication) or the city's human resources department.

Wellness committee members should be knowledgeable about wellness programs offered by other entities (e.g., EAP, external resources) to ensure that police can use all the resources available to them.

- **Recommendation 8.** The wellness committee should select a chairperson who has a direct relationship with the chief of police to ensure that proposed initiatives are reviewed, approved, and implemented in a timely manner. This singular point of contact can help ensure fluid lines of communication throughout the department with consistent messaging from top to bottom.

Committee activities

- **Recommendation 9.** The wellness committee should meet on a regular basis (at least quarterly or semiannually) to discuss employees' wellness needs, ongoing projects, and the program's challenges and successes. The information gathered during these meetings should be documented in a memorandum and provided to the chief of police, to ensure that any issues or concerns are being addressed.
- **Recommendation 10.** The wellness committee should be tasked with developing and delivering messages that resonate with officers. Phrases such as "wellness is your business" can signal the importance of the messaging. These reminders can be placed throughout department buildings, on patrol cars or pool cars, and on stationery.
- **Recommendation 11.** The wellness committee should recruit subject matter experts to deliver educational seminars and workshops on wellness-related topics that are important to employees.
- **Recommendation 12.** The wellness committee should create a monthly wellness calendar with wellness events scheduled for each month to post around the department.

The committee also can disseminate online newsletters or bulletins with information about the committee's goals, activities, new programs, and achievements, to be distributed to all department members.

- **Recommendation 13.** Committee members should continually assess wellness-related needs and should solicit input from peers (e.g., asking for feedback at roll calls, asking whether officers would use new programs or services that are being considered).

This continual assessment includes identifying new resources to use for referrals.

- **Recommendation 14.** The committee should ensure that all service providers (e.g., peer supporters, contractors, chaplains, EAP providers) are educated about the department's wellness strategy and the capabilities and limitations of other resources and providers. This practice will ensure that each provider understands the department's vision for wellness and is committed to reinforcing a consistent message.

The committee should also collaborate with these providers in developing wellness messaging and programming.

2. Specific Types of Wellness Programming

Comprehensive wellness programming should address four main areas of well-being: (1) physical, (2) mental and emotional, (3) financial, and (4) spiritual.

- Physical wellness includes physical fitness, nutrition, and healthy sleep habits.
- Mental and emotional wellness includes topics such as managing stress, building resiliency, and treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Financial wellness includes practical advice for establishing good patterns of saving and spending to ensure that financial problems do not become a source of constant worry and conflict.
- Spiritual wellness includes chaplaincy programs.

Military deployment

On a related note, police agencies should have adequate policies and procedures for reintegrating employees who return to police work after military deployment. The experience of being deployed can have many impacts on an employee's wellness. The resources described in this publication should be incorporated into any military reintegration program, as well as the support plan for the employee's family during their absence.

Physical wellness

Finding. A comprehensive physical wellness program includes a variety of programming for different interests and skill levels and ensures that employees have adequate facilities and time available to engage in these programs.

A large proportion of officer injuries and deaths stem from poor physical health. Physical wellness programs can help keep officers healthy and safe, as well as simply feeling well and strong, which can have positive effects on their mental and emotional well-being.¹⁴

14. President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, *Final Report*.

Police officers are subject to a wide array of physical health risks, including sleep disorders and associated fatigue,¹⁵ poor nutrition,¹⁶ obesity,¹⁷ heart disease,¹⁸ and poor physical fitness.¹⁹ For instance, officers report sleep disorders at nearly twice the rate of the general public,²⁰ which may be caused in part by shift-work scheduling practices.²¹ Sleep disorders are associated with higher rates of other physical and mental health issues, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and depression.²² Sleep disorders, which are both a cause and effect of poor mental health in officers,²³ have also been linked to decreased performance and may be a significant contributor to poor police-community relationships.²⁴

For these reasons, it is imperative that agencies develop a wide array of opportunities for employees to improve their physical health.

- **Recommendation 15.** Agencies should explore the possibility of using wellness coaches to deliver individualized advice and recommendations to employees and help them with setting and achieving their personal goals. An initial consultation can help to motivate employees who do not know where to begin.

Wellness coaches could evaluate employees' overall fitness and dietary needs and also provide individual workout and diet plans, along with basic health screenings such as blood pressure checks.

Wellness coaches can be brought in under a contract from an outside agency, or police staff members can be selected and given the necessary training to fulfill this role.

15. Violanti, *Shifts, Extended Work Hours, and Fatigue*; Rajaratnam et al., "Sleep Disorders."

16. McCormick, Cohen, and Plecas, *Nutrition and General Duty Police Work*.

17. Kuhns, Maguire, and Leach, *Health, Safety, and Wellness*.

18. Zimmerman, "Cardiovascular Disease and Risk Factors."

19. Boni, *Exercise and Physical Fitness*; Fiedler, *Officer Safety and Wellness*; Kuhns, Maguire, and Leach, *Health, Safety, and Wellness*.

20. Charles et al., "Shift Work and Sleep."

21. Pearsall, "Sleep Disorders."

22. Rajaratnam et al., "Sleep Disorders."

23. Violanti, *Shifts, Extended Work Hours, and Fatigue*.

24. Rajaratnam et al., "Sleep Disorders;" Violanti, *Shifts, Extended Work Hours, and Fatigue*.

- **Recommendation 16.** Agencies should also assess various methods for incentivizing participation in physical fitness programs and determine which ones are likely to have the greatest success with their workforce.

For example, some agencies have an on-duty workout policy that gives employees a certain number of paid hours to work out. The viability of this type of program may depend on staffing levels and how shifts are allocated.

Other examples of incentives include compensation time, points for consideration of promotions, and positive evaluation notes. Police agencies also can consider creating different types of physical fitness competitions.

- **Recommendation 17.** Physical fitness programs should be aimed at all employees, including civilian staff members, and at all fitness levels. Providing a variety of options enables employees at all different levels to make physical fitness a priority.

For example, employees who are already interested in physical fitness may participate in a “workout of the day” program that includes high-intensity interval training, weightlifting, and cardiovascular exercise.²⁵

For those looking for a lower-intensity option, walking programs are popular. There may also be significant interest in more holistic types of fitness training, such as yoga and chiropractic education.

Agencies also can consider bringing in certified instructors for other types of classes (e.g., kickboxing) to appeal to different employees.

- **Recommendation 18.** Adequate facilities must be accessible to employees at times that are convenient for them.

To the extent that an agency provides access to physical fitness facilities, it should ensure the offerings are sufficiently advertised to employees and that the facilities are meeting their needs. To evaluate these factors, a survey could be administered to determine what equipment is most needed and desired.

Police departments also can explore opportunities for employees to use local fitness facilities, so personnel have access to a wide range of fitness classes and equipment that motivates them. Sometimes, it may be simpler to help officers pay private health club membership fees than to build physical fitness facilities for employees.

25. While these programs promote good physical health and camaraderie, agencies should ensure that they allow officers who are interested in hosting workouts to become certified fitness instructors to mitigate liability concerns for the agency.

- **Recommendation 19.** Agencies should provide broader physical wellness programming that complements physical fitness programs.

In addition to physical fitness programs, agencies should adopt other types of programs that also promote physical health, such as hydration challenges, meditation, mindfulness, or other techniques officers can use in dealing with job-related (and other) sources of stress.

Departments should offer training on topics such as sleep, hygiene, and nutrition, which also promote physical wellness.

Police agencies should coordinate with other local government agencies that offer physical wellness/fitness programs.

- **Recommendation 20.** To ensure optimal performance by first responders, agencies should develop a policy that places restrictions on the number overtime shifts an employee can work without a break or set a minimum number of hours employees must have off prior to starting a shift.

Mental and emotional wellness

Finding. Mental and emotional health are at the core of most wellness programming. A comprehensive program addresses the day-to-day stress that employees experience, the cumulative effects of such stress over time and the high levels of stress and trauma that may result from being involved in a critical incident. Training and services in this area are best delivered by mental health experts who also have an understanding of policing and the particular issues that occur in this profession.

The World Health Organization defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”²⁶ Officers endure long-term stress on the job caused by repeated exposure to high-stress incidents.²⁷ This accumulation of stress can cause police officers to experience anxiety, depression, and PTSD at disproportionately high rates.²⁸

26. WHO, “Mental Health.”

27. Piazza et al., “Affective Reactivity.”

28. Hartley et al., “Health Disparities in Police Officers.”

For agencies

- **Recommendation 21.** Police agencies should provide training on mental wellness to all new recruits. Starting training early is key to eliminating any stigma associated with mental health care and to promoting the use of support services. This training should provide tools and strategies for managing
 - stress;
 - nutrition;
 - maintaining healthy relationships;
 - substance abuse issues;
 - mental health issues;
 - identifying and assisting fellow officers who may be in crisis.
- **Recommendation 22.** Agencies should create a mentoring program in which veteran officers are assigned to new employees to mentor them and serve as a resource during their academy training, during their field training, and throughout the remainder of their probationary period.
- **Recommendation 23.** Ongoing training should also be provided to department employees on topics related to mental wellness, including
 - suicide prevention;
 - resilience;
 - effective communication;
 - emotional intelligence;
 - stress inoculation techniques;
 - meditation;
 - mindfulness.

- **Recommendation 24.** Be sure to review on an ongoing basis all stress management, wellness, and resiliency training provided to officers from the beginning to the end of their careers.

Consistently reviewing and reinforcing the curricula will help to ensure continuity in course materials with concepts that build upon one another. Consistency in messaging and development of a common language and culture regarding self-care help to increase understanding of wellness and participation in wellness programs.

- **Recommendation 25.** Conduct research to contract with a counselor, social worker, or psychologist who has comprehensive knowledge of the stress and trauma that many police officers experience. Such external resources can (a) fill gaps in the department's programming and (b) serve as a resource for personnel who may be uncomfortable taking advantage of internal resources.

Any outside partners should be vetted and briefed so their services will align with and support the department's wellness program, including the employee assistance program (EAP), peer support, critical incident debriefs, and wellness messaging from the wellness committee.

External experts also can provide trauma-informed, in-house training for department personnel so they will be better equipped to identify and manage their own needs, as well as identify peers who may be in crisis.

Training should address wellness topics such as critical incident stress management, primary and secondary trauma, suicide prevention, and identifying "red flags" or ineffective coping behaviors.

Along with other wellness resources, consider offering access to counselors and social workers to employees' family members.

For supervisors

- **Recommendation 26.** All supervisors should be trained in how to identify signs that one of their officers may be experiencing mental health issues.

The topics to be included in this training include recognizing ineffective coping skills, identifying "red flag" behaviors, and understanding suicide prevention.

Supervisors should be educated on all available help resources and should understand how and when to refer officers to various service providers.

- **Recommendation 27.** In agencies that have an Early Interventions System (EIS), supervisors and command staff members should be trained in how to use the system and how it can serve as a powerful tool to help identify possible behavioral issues before they become problematic for the officer and the agency. At a minimum, the training should include the following:
 - When to make an entry in the EIS
 - What information to include
 - How frequently supervisors should review employee files
 - What action or actions should be taken when indicators of potential problems trigger a system notification
- **Recommendation 28.** To ensure that supervisors are held accountable, appropriate and consistent use of the EIS should be incorporated into supervisors' annual performance reviews.
- **Recommendation 29.** Consider incorporating wellness and resiliency into promotional testing. This will increase supervisors' knowledge about identifying and addressing ineffective coping behavior, preventing suicides among officers, promoting healthy forms of stress management, and providing health strategies to prevent illness.

Financial wellness

Finding. Both sworn and civilian employees can benefit from financial wellness training and resources throughout the course of their careers.

Financial wellness can be defined as a level of satisfaction with one's financial situation and confidence that one's future will remain secure financially. A lack of understanding of how to manage finances can be a major cause of stress for police officers. Research indicates that people who are financially stable are more successful professionally because they are more productive, use less sick leave, and have higher morale.²⁹

Financial wellness information is often delivered by the city's human resources department as part of a new employee orientation, and in some cases employees have the option of setting up an appointment to ask follow-up questions of the human resources staff. This option may be limited by the time employees have to seek this advice and by the level of comfort the employee has in seeking out financial guidance.

29. IACP, *Financial Literacy*.

Some agencies have the capacity to deliver a training more tailored to their employees and the employees' families.

- **Recommendation 30.** Agencies should provide financial wellness information (e.g., retirement benefits and financial saving plans, flexible spending accounts [FSA]) and training to all new and current department employees regardless of their position in the department.

The training should be open to both sworn and nonsworn personnel during the same time frame so it is equally accessible to all employees.

This effort should be coordinated with any similar efforts by the local government's human resources department.

- **Recommendation 31.** Particularized financial wellness information should be incorporated into key stages of police employment, including
 - during training at the Academy for new recruits;
 - during the probationary/initial training process;
 - throughout in-service training for tenured officers;
 - for veteran officers as they near retirement.
- **Recommendation 32.** Under the umbrella of financial wellness, the following topics should be included in trainings and materials provided to employees:
 - Tax withholding, medical benefits, retirement planning options, deferred compensation, pension information, IRAs, life insurance, financing education, wills, etc.
 - Other topics that may also be of interest to employees, such as budgeting after pay reductions, retirement investing, debt consolidations, eldercare, and avoiding bankruptcy³⁰
- **Recommendation 33.** Where possible, agencies should consider partnering with local financial advisors or other certified professionals to deliver specialized information.

30. See appendix A for a list of financial training resources.

Spiritual wellness

Finding. Establishing a chaplaincy program can provide an added level of support to agency employees and their families. A program with chaplains from many different faiths and denominations is best positioned to address the needs of a diverse workforce as well as to reflect the community the agency serves. In addition, chaplains can complement the agency's efforts in strengthening its relationship with the community.

Generally, a chaplain may be responsible for providing a range of services to department employees and their family members, including spiritual counseling; offering support during times of crisis or stressful situations; responding to critical incidents; and assisting with death notifications, bereavement counseling, and pastoral support.³¹

- **Recommendation 34.** In making chaplain selections, agencies should carefully research each individual's background, standing in the community, and credentials.

Ideally, chaplains will have demonstrated counseling experience relevant to policing.

Chaplains should also represent many different faiths and denominations to address the needs of a diverse workforce.

- **Recommendation 35.** Chaplaincy services should be nondenominational so that personnel feel comfortable in seeking these services, regardless of their own religious affiliation or lack thereof. Chaplains must not proselytize.
- **Recommendation 36.** Chaplains should receive the same training and information on the department's wellness-related programs that department personnel receive. It is important for chaplains to understand what resources are available, as well as the capabilities and limitations of each type of programming, to ensure they can direct employees to the appropriate services.
- **Recommendation 37.** Formal and informal interactions between chaplains and employees should be encouraged and facilitated by the agency. These interactions enable the chaplains to form relationships with department personnel.

For example, chaplains can be invited to meet with department employees, speak at roll calls, attend critical incident debriefs, and participate in ride-alongs.

31. When a chaplain is performing counseling duties, communication between the chaplain and the counseled are typically privileged per state statute. Each agency should research their state law and verify this confidentiality clause.

- **Recommendation 38.** The chaplaincy program should be well advertised throughout the organization, and employees should be familiar with who the chaplains are, what they offer, and how to connect with them if they wish.

Agencies should create a directory that provides a picture of each chaplain, contact information, and a schedule for when that chaplain is available to meet with police employees.

Efforts should also be made to provide chaplain contact information to employees' family members. Providing additional options increases the chance that someone in need will reach out for assistance—or contact a chaplain should they think a family member is in need.

- **Recommendation 39.** Chaplains should be provided with a work area on agency premises so officers can seek out their assistance in person if needed. A designated office or meeting room will provide chaplains a space to announce their services and to make themselves more visible and available to staff. This also serves to “normalize” the use of their services.

If a space is not provided for on-site consultations, chaplains should make themselves available on certain days and times to meet at local coffee shops, church facilities, or other mutually agreed-upon locations.

3. Mechanisms for Providing Wellness Programming

Police agencies have developed a variety of employee support programs to deliver wellness services, including peer support, employee assistance programs (EAP), and critical incident debriefs.

Finding. Offering a combination of services provides maximum impact as each option will appeal to a different set of employees. Some will feel more comfortable approaching a peer, while others will prefer speaking with a professional; and, sadly, many will not seek any assistance despite needing it, which is why critical incident debriefs are essential.

Employee support programs

Peer support

In police peer support programs, specially trained current or retired employees provide confidential counseling to fellow employees who request it. Peer supporters are trained to provide knowledge, emotional support, and other assistance to employees who are experiencing a variety of issues (e.g., trauma from a critical incident, substance abuse problems, and mental health or stress-related concerns). This support also includes linking employees to professional counseling and treatment services if needed.

Peer support programs are popular because officers often are more willing to seek guidance from a fellow officer who understands the nature of police work and the stresses it can cause than from someone who does not share their experience.

Training of peer support counselors should include how to identify signs of an officer in crisis and how to properly intervene. These programs are not a substitute for professional counseling. Rather, they supplement such services for employees.

Finding. The essential elements of a peer support program are as follows:³²

- Easy access to responsive counselors
- Confidentiality
- Providing a safe environment for frank conversations

32. COPS Office, *Officer Health and Organizational Wellness*, 15.

- Careful selection and training of peer supporters
- Partnering with mental health professionals for referrals
- Monitoring of and care for peer supporters themselves

Peer supporters

- **Recommendation 40.** Members of a peer support program should be representative of the department. Members should include sworn and professional (nonsworn) employees and individuals from diverse backgrounds and divisions within the agency. This facilitates selection of a peer supporter who has a great deal in common with the person seeking support in terms of shared experiences and perspectives.
- **Recommendation 41.** Consider establishing a separate group of peer support officers who have been involved in an officer-involved shooting or other types of critical incidents so they can use that experience to help support officers in similar situations.
- **Recommendation 42.** Agencies should also consider adding family members who will serve in a limited capacity by supporting family members of agency personnel. Many family members prefer connecting with other spouses or family members of officers rather than with a sworn officer. The addition of carefully vetted and trained family members to peer support could assist the program, especially after significant critical incidents when family care and support may be overlooked or neglected.
- **Recommendation 43.** To be considered for a peer support position, an individual must have been with the department for a certain period of time (e.g., three years) and must possess qualities that are essential for the role. Some of these qualities include the following:
 - A reputation for trustworthiness and respect for confidentiality
 - Strong listening skills
 - Good rapport with fellow officers
 - Qualities of being nonjudgmental and compassionate
 - Attending to their own wellness and serving as a model for others

- **Recommendation 44.** All peer supporters should undergo an initial training course and receive additional training annually.
- **Recommendation 45.** Peer supporters should be required to seek mental wellness services for themselves, such as meeting with an EAP provider, on a regular basis, because serving in the role of peer counselor can take an emotional toll. Routine counseling services will help ensure that the health of the peer support team is being monitored and maintained.

Establish a process for rotating peer support counselors to prevent burnout. This can mean limiting the amount of time they can serve in these roles or ensuring there is a process for them to ask to be removed from wellness-related duties or leave the program without question.

Visibility and access

- **Recommendation 46.** Peer support should be available to all department employees 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This can be accomplished by having a rotating on-call schedule.

Consider adopting a protocol for dispatching a peer supporter to the scene of a critical incident to provide immediate support to the involved personnel. While they should not discuss the details of the incident, they will be able to see to the employee's basic needs as well as explain the next steps in the process and what to expect in the aftermath of the event.

Timely follow-up is also an important component of peer support. Depending on the circumstances, such follow-up may need to occur according to the employee's schedule, rather than during regular business hours.

- **Recommendation 47.** Develop a directory of peer supporters and make it available to all agency personnel.

Profiles should include a photo, contact information, and a description of the particular issues with which each peer supporter has experience, such as divorce or death of a loved one. This allows employees to reach out directly to supporters who have experience with their issues or concerns.

- **Recommendation 48.** Peer supporters should address the members of various police units and squads on a regular basis (e.g., every six months) to ensure that officers are aware of the availability and purpose of peer support services.

Peer supporters also can use these opportunities to remind officers about other types of assistance they can receive for dealing with personal issues. They should provide concrete examples to encourage use of these resources.

- **Recommendation 49.** Departments should encourage employees to contact peer support any time they believe a coworker needs assistance. Not all employees feel equipped or comfortable offering help to fellow employees themselves, but they can perform a valuable service by alerting peer support to a colleague who may need services.

Department leaders and members of the peer support team should encourage peer referrals by frequently disseminating information about peer support services (e.g., speaking at roll calls) and educating department personnel about early warning indicators of distress.

Supervisors should be trained in how and when to engage with peer support.

- **Recommendation 50.** Individual employees should be able to initiate contact with the peer support program to receive personal support. In addition, peer supporters should be allowed to contact an employee when a request is made by a peer, supervisor, or command staff member.
- **Recommendation 51.** For smaller agencies, it may be wise to partner with other law enforcement agencies in the area to build a larger support network. This arrangement could benefit officers who would like to talk to someone but are concerned about speaking with someone inside the department.

Employee assistance programs

The Federal Government defines an EAP as a “voluntary, work-based program that offers free and confidential assessments, short-term counseling, referrals, and follow-up services to employees who have personal and/or work-related problems.”³³ An EAP is often offered through the city human resources department. Typically, supervisors may refer employees to the EAP, or employees may voluntarily seek out EAP services.

- **Recommendation 52.** Where an EAP currently exists, agencies should conduct a thorough review of the EAP program to determine its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities to expand.

The command staff should work to learn more about the EAP and examine ways it can support employees and make the department healthier overall.

Evaluate the feasibility of adding a police psychologist to the EAP contact list. This will allow officers to seek assistance from a specifically trained professional who can help employees to process and cope with issues they face as police officers.

- **Recommendation 53.** EAP clinicians should have experience working with police employees or should attend training about the law enforcement experience to ensure they can adequately address department employees’ needs.
- **Recommendation 54.** EAP clinicians should be part of any new officer orientation, agency orientation, or in-service training. They should also routinely attend roll call briefings to discuss the services available and participate in ride-alongs.

These interactions enable clinicians to form relationships with employees and develop a better understanding of the nature of police work.

- **Recommendation 55.** To help reduce any stigma associated with an EAP, emphasize that the program is a positive resource that benefits employees and their families and is available outside of mandatory referrals. It should also be emphasized that the use of EAP services will remain confidential. This should be publicized at roll calls on a regular basis.

33. OPM, “What is an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)?”

- **Recommendation 56.** All supervisors should receive training on the EAP and how it can be used (e.g., employees voluntarily seeking assistance or making referrals for someone else). This will allow them to take advantage of EAP resources and educate their officers about them.

This training should also encourage supervisors to be proactive, rather than reactive, by using EAP referrals as an early intervention tool for employees displaying indicators of acute stress or mental health issues.

This proactive strategy is preferable to waiting for a negative incident to occur and then disciplining an employee.

Critical incident debriefs

Many agencies conduct formal debriefings following a critical incident such as an officer-involved shooting or in-custody death. Other events that may result in the need for a debrief include a line-of-duty death, serious injury to officers, or a traumatic accident scene. Typically, these incident debriefs are attended by the personnel involved in the incident; in some cases, this includes nonsworn employees such as dispatchers.

Finding. The employees involved in a critical incident often have wellness needs (physical or emotional) in the aftermath of such an event.

- **Recommendation 57.** Agencies should establish in policy which types of incidents require a debrief, who should attend, who can request a debrief, and how soon after an incident the debrief should be held.

At a minimum, a formal protocol should be developed to require a debrief after every officer-involved shooting incident.

- **Recommendation 58.** Attending these debriefings should be mandatory for all agency personnel involved in the incident, including nonsworn employees (dispatch, crime scene investigators, etc.).

Routinely scheduling debriefs after critical incidents can help “normalize” the debriefs, minimize stigma, and ensure that all employees are receiving assistance.

- **Recommendation 59.** Train all supervisors (patrol and investigations) so they can recognize when a debrief should be conducted and to ensure that they can facilitate or co-facilitate these debriefings with their own teams. This will help ensure that the debriefings reflect the needs of specific divisions and units.
- **Recommendation 60.** Consulting the EAP should be mandatory for anyone involved in an officer-involved shooting or other major critical incident.

The benefits of mandatory appointments should be discussed with employee unions (in agencies that have unions) and officers prior to implementing this policy.

These appointments should be distinguished from any return-to-work or fitness for duty requirements or assessments.

- **Recommendation 61.** Police chaplains and EAP clinicians should be included in debriefs to provide a resource to officers who may want to speak to someone outside their chain of command or seek professional counseling services.
- **Recommendation 62.** Agencies should also develop a support plan for employees' family members who are affected by serious incidents (e.g., line-of-duty deaths, officer-involved shootings, or serious injuries).

Family inclusion

Finding. Because the well-being of an employee's family is an important component of the employee's wellness, comprehensive wellness plans often offer support services to family members of employees. Including employees' family members in wellness-related programming is also essential to building and sustaining a culture of holistic wellness.

- **Recommendation 63.** Provide family members with access to all department help resources to the extent possible.

- **Recommendation 64.** Communications with family members should start immediately when employees are hired.

Wellness information should be included in a “welcome” letter to the families of new employees with other information about the department, such as

- what the policing job is like;
- financial benefits;
- medical and insurance benefits;
- how to access wellness resources (e.g., EAP, peer support, chaplaincy).

Spouses and significant others can also be invited to new employee orientations so they can be educated on the city’s programs and benefits and have the opportunity to ask questions.

- **Recommendation 65.** Agencies should establish ongoing methods of communication with family members to ensure they are continuously informed of resources and opportunities and are engaged in departmental events. The wellness committee should be charged with this task. Examples of outreach include the following:
 - Producing quarterly newsletters that highlight employees’ professional achievements or personal milestones (e.g., promotions, commendations and awards, birth announcements, engagements) and promote upcoming, family-inclusive events (e.g., a holiday party).
 - Hosting family resource days where information on wellness, EAP, retirement planning, and other resources and presentations are made available to families.
- **Recommendation 66.** Consider organizing family-based seminars where a police-trained psychologist or other clinician can share with families some of the stressors that their loved ones experience and how to be aware of and address any issues that may manifest over time.

- **Recommendation 67.** Another way to increase family participation in department events is by hosting an annual Chief's Night. This is a good opportunity for the chief of police to share the mission of the agency, make the families feel closer to the organization, and demonstrate that the department cares about family members.

Department leaders can also use this event to have discussions with family members about the challenges and stressors associated with policing, provide information about support programs, and discuss strategies for dealing with these stresses and building healthy partnerships at home.

- **Recommendation 68.** Agencies should consider implementing a spouse/partner police academy, which could be run similarly to a Citizens Police Academy. Use this as an opportunity to discuss issues with family members, such as the unique challenges and experiences associated with the job, information on support programs, and strategies for building strong partnerships at home. A spousal support network is a possible outcome of this program whether it is generated formally or informally.

Wellness communication and training

Finding. To be successful, information about wellness programs (e.g., what the programs are, what services are provided, who may use them, how to access services, and confidentiality policies) should be communicated to all department employees frequently and via multiple methods.

- **Recommendation 69.** Advertise all available wellness resources throughout the department, using a variety of channels, so that employees can access what they need.

This can include posters in every work area, brochures or fliers for officers and their families, all-staff email messages, and frequent reminders from supervisors and wellness committee members in roll calls and team meetings.

Such publicity should include all programming available to employees, including services provided by the city for all city employees.

- **Recommendation 70.** The department should ensure that new employees have a solid understanding of the benefits they receive as city and department employees.

If the city does an initial new employee orientation, the department should coordinate with the city's human resources department to host a follow-up orientation specifically for police department personnel. This orientation would allow new hires to ask follow-up questions once they have had time to read over the various materials they were given and to discuss questions with their families.

- **Recommendation 71.** The department should address important wellness topics again at the end of the field training program (with spouses in attendance).
- **Recommendation 72.** Information about important wellness topics should be repeated annually for officers as well.
- **Recommendation 73.** Supervisors should share information disseminated by the wellness committee at roll call to emphasize the availability of services and ensure that the information is being received by officers.

4. Encouraging and Increasing Participation

Finding. Participation in wellness initiatives among department employees sometimes is minimal because of a lack of knowledge about events, officers' lack of available time, and general disinterest in the programming. In addition, some employees may decline participation because of concerns about confidentiality.

In some instances, employees do not have a clear understanding of the programs and services provided or the number of sessions available per year. In addition, many express a lack of confidence that such programs meet the specific needs of employees in the law enforcement profession. In many police agencies, officers also fear being perceived as weak or subject to negative employment outcomes if they seek assistance.

- **Recommendation 74.** Identify the specific barriers to participation that may exist in your department by disseminating an anonymous survey.

Encourage participation in the survey by making it quick and easy to complete by email or other online mechanism.

Wellness committee members also should informally solicit feedback and suggestions from department employees regarding what types of wellness programming they want from the city on a continuing basis. This feedback should be shared with the other committee members during their meetings.

- **Recommendation 75.** To the extent possible, have command staff members (including the chief of police) attend all wellness training, events, and roll call or team discussions about employee wellness. This visibility sends the message that the department is serious about wellness and will help encourage participation by employees.

Department leaders should affirmatively demonstrate their support for these programs and encourage participation. Support from the top is a key component of any successful wellness program.

Awareness and messaging

- **Recommendation 76.** Agencies should endeavor to raise awareness about various wellness programs through multiple communication channels such as all-staff emails, fliers placed in employees' mailboxes, and roll call discussions.

This information should include what services are available and where and how to access them.

It may take time to develop interest in certain types of programs; therefore, agencies should not necessarily abandon new programs before they are able to develop such interest.

- **Recommendation 77.** Collect nonidentifying information regarding the use of the employee assistance program (EAP), peer support, and other wellness programs on a continuing basis. Conduct analysis monthly or quarterly so department leaders can determine whether efforts to increase awareness of the program and destigmatize its use have been effective.

This information should include the following:

- Number of individuals served
- Type of services received
- General demographic information
- How contacts were initiated (i.e., self-initiated or by referral)
- General description of the issues for which employees sought assistance (e.g., personal relationships, trauma, depression, financial concerns)

Privacy must be strictly protected; this tracking would count only the raw numbers of individuals using various services. There should be no identifying information about the employees who use peer support, EAP, or chaplaincy services. The purpose is to assist the department in identifying issues and trends; to support outreach, events, and training protocols; and to keep track of how many department members are using support services.

Accessibility and incentives

- **Recommendation 78.** To increase participation, consider allowing employees to attend wellness activities while they are on duty, and host such events at police department facilities. When feasible, trainings and events should be offered at various times so that all employees have the opportunity to attend, regardless of their shift.
- **Recommendation 79.** Consider incentivizing participation by compensating employees for attending (e.g., offering compensated time off, points for promotion, positive evaluation notes).
- **Recommendation 80.** Ensure that mental health support and counseling resources are available to officers when they need it. This availability can be achieved by building in flexibility to counseling schedules or locations and by ensuring that enough resources are available that employees do not have prolonged delays in being seen.

Confidentiality

- **Recommendation 81.** Have a clear, written confidentiality policy, communicate it to department members, and adhere to it. Ensure that reporting requirements and exceptions are understood, such as information indicating that an employee may be a danger to himself or herself or to others or that domestic violence or child abuse may be occurring. Some providers, such as clinicians, may be bound by more stringent confidentiality rules than police department employees. Ensure that employees understand these differences and understand the confidentiality rules that bind each category of provider.
- **Recommendation 82.** Any publicity about the EAP or other mental health services should emphasize that their use will remain confidential to the extent possible.

Conclusion

The physical and mental well-being of police agency employees is a central concern of law enforcement leaders, especially during times of community unrest and upheaval. Police officers have a higher risk of adverse job-related health outcomes than the general population.³⁴ And officer wellness has a direct impact on officers' job performance, interactions with community members, and decision-making abilities.³⁵

Early evaluations of officer wellness programs have been associated with positive mental and physical health outcomes, including reductions in officer stress. Importantly, as noted in our 2019 publication *An Occupational Risk: What Every Police Agency Should Do to Prevent Suicide among its Officers*,³⁶ police leaders and researchers who attended the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) national conference stressed that implementation of wellness programming—including peer support, wellness checks, and access to psychological services—is a promising approach to preventing suicide among law enforcement officers.

The research is clear that by making employee wellness a top priority, police executives can help ensure the mental and physical health of their personnel, and also promote positive police-community interactions.

The recommendations in this report reflect common challenges that are faced by the agencies PERF evaluated as well as other agencies across the country. The recommendations in this report are scalable to agencies of various sizes and should be adapted to fit each agency's unique needs and resources. It is also important to recognize that additional wellness programs and services often are offered by the city government and external providers, and these services should be incorporated into a police department's programming.

The success of wellness programming depends on three key factors: (1) leadership, (2) acceptance by employees, and (3) destigmatization. A police chief who wants to make significant progress in this effort must be vocal in his or her support of this program, demonstrate that it is a personal and organizational priority, and direct command staff members to serve as leaders and mentors to their teams. This practitioner manual provides a blueprint to improve officers' well-being while also creating a department culture of wellness.

34. Hartley et al., "Health Disparities in Police Officers."

35. Fox et al., "Mental-Health Conditions;" Rajaratnam et al., "Sleep Disorders;" Covey et al., "The Effects of Exposure to Traumatic Stressors;" Vila et al., "Improving Shift Schedule and Work-Hour Policies."

36. PERF, *An Occupational Risk*.

Appendix A. Resources

This appendix collects additional resources that agencies can look to for free model policies, trainings, and other programs to benefit officer safety and wellness.

Educational campaigns

BLUE (International Association of Chiefs of Police);

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHhy-PFMLk&feature=youtu.be>

BLUE is a docudrama that was created to increase public awareness of suicides by law enforcement officers, and to serve as a catalyst for mental and emotional health training programs in police departments.

Making Officer Safety and Wellness Priority One: A Guide to Educational Campaigns

(Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and Major Cities Chiefs Association);

<https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P300>

This publication provides tools for developing effective campaigns regarding the most common safety and wellness issues facing law enforcement officers.

Establishing an officer safety and wellness unit—Case studies

Building and Sustaining an Officer Wellness Program: Lessons from the San Diego Police

Department (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and Police Executive Research Forum); <https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-W0864>

This report documents the results of a PERF case study of the San Diego Police Department's (SDPD) wellness programming. The report outlines the SDPD's Wellness Unit and highlights promising practices for other agencies to use in creating wellness initiatives.

Health, Safety, and Wellness Program Case Studies in Law Enforcement (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and Major Cities Chiefs Association);

<https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P332>

This report documents the results of the MCCA's case study of officer safety and wellness programs at four law enforcement agencies: (1) Boca Raton, Florida; (2) Prince George's County, Maryland; (3) Fairfax County, Virginia; and (4) Reno, Nevada. The report provides recommendations on the implementation of officer health, safety, and wellness initiatives.

Practices in Modern Policing: Officer Safety and Wellness (International Association of Chiefs of Police and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services);

https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/IACP_PMP_SafetyandWellness.pdf

This report documents the results of IACP's case study of officer safety and wellness programs in San Antonio, Texas; Camden County, New Jersey; and Columbia, South Carolina. The report discusses how officer safety and wellness programs, such as mental health initiatives, support for exercise and nutrition, occupational safety measures, and combating fatigue, help officers to do their jobs.

Financial wellness

Trainings

Prudential Pathways Financial Wellness Series;

<http://www.prudential.com/media/managed/producer-prupathways.pdf>

Prudential Pathways offers a series of financial wellness seminars delivered at your worksite by experienced financial professionals. These seminars are easy to understand and are designed to boost employees' confidence and financial wellness skills. They offer seminars on a wide range of financial topics, ranging from basic financial literacy to taxes and estate planning.

Resources

Firefighters First Credit Union Financial Literacy Resources;

<https://firefightersfirstcu.org/Financial-Literacy-Home-Page>

The Firefighters First Credit Union has a database of financial literacy information on money management, retirement planning, protection against scams and identity theft, financing vs. leasing vehicles, and more. Videos and downloadable guides for each topic are available.

International Association of Chiefs of Police Financial Literacy Graphic; <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/Axon%20Family%20Wellness-%20Financial%20Literacy.pdf>

This graphic offers budget basics as well as hints and tips for achieving financial stability. It is a general resource that any agency can use to increase financial awareness.

Police1.com Financial Planning Resources; <https://www.policeone.com/financial-planning/>

Police1.com's website offers numerous articles and videos about financial planning and financial wellness for law enforcement officers.

Funding resources

Ongoing grants

Bureau of Justice Assistance Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG)

Program; <https://www.bja.gov/jag/>

The JAG Program provides states, tribes, and local governments with funding for law enforcement, prosecution, indigent defense, courts, crime prevention and education, corrections and community corrections, drug treatment and enforcement, planning, evaluation, technology improvement, and crime victim and witness initiatives. This includes mental health programs, behavioral programs, and crisis intervention teams.

Motorola Solutions Foundation Public Safety Grants; https://www.motorolasolutions.com/en_us/about/company-overview/corporate-responsibility/motorola-solutions-foundation.html

The Motorola Solutions Foundation offers grants to support public safety programs, which includes offering grants to support wellness programs for first responders.

Office of Justice Programs Bulletproof Vest Partnership (BVP) Program;

<https://ojp.gov/bvpbasi/>

The BVP program awards federal funding to state and local law enforcement agencies to purchase bulletproof vests.

Panasonic Public Sector Grants; <http://grantsoffice.com/Portals/0/pdf/PGSP-Partners.pdf>

Panasonic offers grants to agencies in the public sector, specifically public safety agencies.

Target Community and Store Safety Grants;

<https://corporate.target.com/corporate-responsibility/safety-preparedness/community-store-safety>

Target offers grants specifically to law enforcement agencies. Target has a secure website with further information on these opportunities. Using your government agency email address, request access by emailing ap.nic@target.com.

Grant/Funding solicitation pages

Bureau of Justice Assistance; <https://www.bja.gov/funding.aspx>

Grants.gov; <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html>

Harley-Davidson Foundation;

<https://www.harley-davidson.com/us/en/about-us/responsibility/foundation.html>

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health;

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/oep/funding.html>

National Institute of Justice; <https://www.nij.gov/funding/pages/current.aspx>

National Institutes of Health; <https://grants.nih.gov/funding/searchguide/index.html#/>

Office of Community Oriented Policing Services; <https://cops.usdoj.gov/grants>

Verizon; <https://www.verizon.com/about/responsibility/grant-requirements>

Mental health / Resiliency

Help hotlines

Cop 2 Cop help line (866-COP-2COP)

Cop 2 Cop is a free, confidential, 24-hour telephone help line available for law enforcement officers and their families to deal with personal or job-related stress. The calls are taken by retired law enforcement officers who are trained to help others in law enforcement.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-TALK)

The Lifeline provides 24-hour, free, confidential support for people in distress.

Safe Call Now (206-459-3020)

Safe Call Now is a 24-hour crisis referral service for all public safety employees and their families.

Resources

Breaking the Silence on Law Enforcement Suicides (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and International Association of Chiefs of Police);

<https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-P281>

This report outlines strategies for police departments to include officers' mental wellness as a core element of officer safety and to reduce the threat of officer death by suicide.

Developing a Law Enforcement Stress Program for Officers and Their Families (National Institute of Justice); <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/163175.pdf>

This report reviews law enforcement stress programs that help departments, individual officers, civilian employees, and officers' families cope with the stresses of a law enforcement career. The publication is based on nearly 100 interviews of mental health practitioners, police administrators, union and association officials, and line officers and their family members.

Trainings

Traumas of Law Enforcement Training;

<https://www.concernsofpolicesurvivors.org/tleoverview>

Traumas of Law Enforcement is a three-day training course by Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.). It consists of 21 hours of instruction on how to appropriately respond to officers and their families affected by line-of-duty traumas. Instructors provide information on appropriate responses to line-of-duty death, disability, critical incidents, and police suicide. C.O.P.S. provides this training without charge, but participants are responsible for their own travel costs.

VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Program;

<https://www.valorforblue.org/VALOR-Training/Training-Descriptions>

The Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability (VALOR) initiative offers safety and wellness training designed for law enforcement, including an in-person “Survive & Thrive” training that provides officers at all levels with guidance on the importance of being physically and mentally prepared, maintaining situational awareness, combating complacency, and remaining vigilant. VALOR also offers eLearning opportunities through online training.

Military re-integration resources

Military One Source (U.S. Department of Defense); <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/military-life-cycle/deployment/returning-home-from-deployment>

Provides resources and coming-home guides for service members returning to civilian life post-deployment.

Reconnection Workshops (American Red Cross); <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/military-families/deployment-services/register-reconnection-workshops.html>

Free and confidential workshop developed by the Red Cross for service members transitioning back into civilian life.

The Comfort Crew; <http://www.comfortcrew.org/militaryheroes.html>

The Comfort Crew provides military families and their kids with free resources to help them through the difficulties of having a parent in the military and the reintegration process.

Model policies

California Peer Support Association Sample Peer Support Policies;

<http://www.californiapeersupport.org/Resources/Documents/Sample%20Peer%20Support%20Policies.pdf>

IACP Model Officer Safety and Wellness Policies;

<https://www.theiacp.org/policycenter?topic=22>

Model Peer Support Team Policy;

http://jackdigliani.com/uploads/3/4/5/1/34518973/model_pst_policy_2017.pdf

Urbana (Illinois) Police Department Chaplains Policy;

<https://www.urbanailinois.us/sites/default/files/attachments/335-chaplains.pdf>

Peer support and critical incident resources

Law Enforcement Critical Incident Handbook;

http://www.jackdigliani.com/uploads/3/4/5/1/34518973/le_critical_incident_handbook_3.pdf

This handbook provides information to officers who have experienced a critical incident. It also includes information about developing critical incident protocols.

Police and Sheriff Peer Support Team Manual;

http://jackdigliani.com/uploads/3/4/5/1/34518973/pst_manual_6.3.pdf

This Police and Sheriff Peer Support Team Manual offers resources for establishing a peer support team, including discussion of writing confidentiality rules, peer support team interventions, risk factors for suicide, and police officers' marriages.

Physical fitness

Trainings

VALOR Officer Safety and Wellness Program;

<https://www.valorforblue.org/VALOR-Training/Training-Descriptions>

VALOR offers safety and wellness training designed for law enforcement, including an in-person "Survive & Thrive" training that provides officers at all levels with guidance on the importance of being physically and mentally prepared, maintaining situational awareness, combating complacency, and remaining vigilant. VALOR also offers eLearning opportunities through online training.

Resources

Fitness and Nutrition Discounts for Police;

<https://www.badgediscounts.com/fitness-and-nutrition.html>

This link provides a comprehensive list of health- and fitness-related stores, products, and events that offer discounts to officers.

National Sleep Foundation; <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene/healthy-sleep-tips>

The National Sleep Foundation offers resources to help people sleep better, including resources for shift workers.

Nutrition.gov; <https://www.nutrition.gov/>

Nutrition.gov offers credible information on nutrition and healthy eating.

Resources for family members

Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.); <https://www.concernsofpolicesurvivors.org/>

C.O.P.S. is a nonprofit organization that helps the families and coworkers of officers killed in the line of duty. The resources include various camps for family members and coworkers, family retreats, peer support, and financial assistance for family members' counselling costs. C.O.P.S. also has local chapters across the country.

First Responders Children's Foundation; <http://nleafcf.org/>

The First Responders Children's Foundation supports children of first responders who have died or been permanently injured in the line of duty. The Foundation provides emergency grants and college scholarships, as well as special experiences to support the well-being of line-of-duty families after their tragedy. The organization also facilitates educational activities and programs created by first responder agencies and affiliates to benefit the children in their communities.

National Alliance for Law Enforcement Support (NALES); <https://nalestough.org/>

NALES is a nonprofit organization that provides resources and emotional support to law enforcement families. The resources include a program for children of officers, an online community for spouses of officers to connect with each other, scholarship programs for children of officers, and a library with extensive reading materials for families. NALES also has local chapters across the country.

Police Wives of America; <https://www.policewivesofamerica.org/>

Police Wives of America is an organization that brings together law enforcement wives to create a supportive community for each other. The organization has "wives' groups" across the country, and provides resources on how law enforcement wives can support their spouse's department.

Spiritual wellness

Chaplains Reference Guide;

<https://www.sheriffs.org/sites/default/files/tb/ChaplainsResourceManual.pdf>

The Chaplains Reference Guide outlines sheriff's department needs that can be met through a chaplaincy program. The guide includes information on the chaplain's role in the department, suggested training requirements, and other useful information.

International Conference of Police Chaplains; <http://www.icpc4cops.org/>

The International Conference of Police Chaplains is a membership organization for police chaplains of various faith groups and law enforcement agencies. The IAPC website includes a number of resources for chaplains to use.

The Law Enforcement Chaplain Handbook;

<http://www.mdivs.edu/m3/olbooks/The%20Law%20Enforcement%20Chaplain.pdf>

The Law Enforcement Chaplain Handbook gives an overview of the information a chaplain should know to work in law enforcement and provides tools for being an effective chaplain.

Appendix B. San Diego Wellness Survey

Wellness 360 Survey

This survey has been reformatted to conform with COPS Office publication standards.

Please read each item and check the box that best describes how satisfied you are at this time.

Please answer each item even if you do not currently participate in an activity or have a relationship.

You can be satisfied or dissatisfied with not doing the activity or having the relationship.

	Exceptional	Satisfied	Indifferent	Dissatisfied	Terrible
Financial well-being, debt, assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health—being physically fit and vigorous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helping and encouraging others, volunteering, giving advice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Independence, doing for yourself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hobbies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning, improving knowledge and education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Living in the moment—mindfulness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Material comforts, home, food, conveniences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participating in active recreations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participating in organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationship with children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationships with coworkers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationships with other relatives, parents, siblings etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationship with spouse or significant other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self-worth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socializing—meeting other people, going to events, gatherings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stress management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Time management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding yourself	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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About PERF

The **Police Executive Research Forum (PERF)** is an independent research organization that focuses on critical issues in policing. Since its founding in 1976, PERF has identified best practices on fundamental issues such as police use of force; developing community policing and problem-oriented policing; using technologies to deliver police services to the community; and evaluating crime reduction strategies.

PERF strives to advance professionalism in policing and to improve the delivery of police services through the exercise of strong national leadership, public debate of police and criminal justice issues, and research and policy development.

In addition to conducting research and publishing reports on our findings, PERF conducts management studies of individual law enforcement agencies; educates hundreds of police officials each year in the Senior Management Institute for Police, a three-week executive development program; and provides executive search services to governments that wish to conduct national searches for their next police chief.

All of PERF's work benefits from PERF's status as a membership organization of police officials, who share information and open their agencies to research and study. PERF members also include academics, federal government leaders, and others with an interest in policing and criminal justice.

All PERF members must have a four-year college degree and must subscribe to a set of founding principles, emphasizing the importance of research and public debate in policing, adherence to the Constitution and the highest standards of ethics and integrity, and accountability to the communities that police agencies serve.

PERF is governed by a member-elected President and Board of Directors and a Board-appointed Executive Director.

To learn more, visit PERF online at www.policeforum.org.

About the COPS Office

The **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem-solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community policing officers and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than \$14 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing. Other achievements include the following:

- To date, the COPS Office has funded the hiring of approximately 130,000 additional officers by more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies in both small and large jurisdictions.
- Nearly 700,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations and the COPS Training Portal.
- Almost 500 agencies have received customized advice and peer-led technical assistance through the COPS Office Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center.
- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than eight million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs and flash drives.
- The COPS Office also sponsors conferences, round tables, and other forums focused on issues critical to law enforcement.

COPS Office information resources, covering a wide range of community policing topics such as school and campus safety, violent crime, and officer safety and wellness, can be downloaded via the COPS Office's home page, <https://cops.usdoj.gov>.

In 2017, the COPS Office selected the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) to implement and manage the Officer Safety and Wellness (OSW) Technical Assistance Project, an initiative that included providing support and expertise to law enforcement agencies with respect to their employee wellness services. This publication presents findings based on PERF's work with a preliminary group of agencies and recommendations that will be valuable to other agencies seeking to develop or grow their own wellness programming.



COPS
Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
145 N Street NE
Washington, DC 20530

To obtain details about COPS Office programs,
call the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Visit the COPS Office online at cops.usdoj.gov.



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