

Officer Health, Wellness & Resiliency Policy Framework

For Oregon Law Enforcement Agencies

*Oregon Officer Wellness
Task Force*

OREGON ASSOCIATION CHIEFS OF POLICE AND
OREGON STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION



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Executive Summary

Law enforcement is an inherently hazardous profession. Some of the risks are quite obvious, while others are more subtle. Physical injuries and deaths of officers related to assaults, vehicle crashes, training injuries, and other line of duty incidents are among the more obvious. However, risks associated with exposure to traumatic incidents and the cumulative effects of stress (which can include Post Traumatic Stress, cardiovascular disease, depression, and even suicide) are arguably much more prevalent and should be of greatest concern to law enforcement executives.

Every law enforcement officer is uniquely situated in terms of their own personal medical status, fitness levels, exercise habits, negative event histories, familial and social support systems, and many other factors that can impact their overall health, wellness, and resiliency. Consequently, there is no specified *standard* response for mitigating negative outcomes. However, there are a number of industry best practices that can help provide all law enforcement professionals the best opportunity for realizing a full and satisfying career, and the ability to enter the next phase of life without significant negative repercussions from their work. This working group recommends a statewide minimum amount of annual health, wellness, and resiliency training hours be established, and public safety agencies provide sufficient training to meet that minimum. Lastly, the working group further recommends each agency place an emphasis on training or education that encompasses the families of our law enforcement officers to educate them on the services provided or available within individual agencies. The listed amount of training hours may seem a large task however, each agency should remember information can be delivered through multiple options including, in person training events, webinars, roll call videos, unit managers, direct supervision, or other means of communication. It is also important that training topics prioritize genuine and substantiated training needs of the agency as opposed to reacting to individual suggestions or events.

The Oregon Law Enforcement Employee Wellness Task Force has crafted the following policy framework for all Oregon law enforcement agencies to use in creating their own policies. We recognize not all agencies have the capacity to implement all of these recommendations; therefore, we have endeavored to provide options that agencies may adopt.

The following language is presented so that it may be adopted by Oregon public safety agencies with only minor modifications.

Policy Framework Recommendations

Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline the agency's commitment to and promotion of employee health and wellness. In addition to our commitment to our members, this policy complies with Oregon Senate Bill 424 (2019) requiring all Oregon law enforcement agencies to have a policy for addressing issues related to the mental health wellness of their law enforcement officers.

The agency is committed to promoting and allowing officers to participate in evidence-based and culturally relevant worksite wellness programs and activities that:

- Raise awareness among officers regarding the importance of behaviors that promote health and provide officers with information and resources on how to reduce risk for chronic diseases;
- Promote changes to workplace policies and environments that support employees in nutrition, physical activity, mental health, sleep, and stress management;
- Provide programs and activities at the workplace that offer employees opportunities for improved nutrition, physical fitness, mental health, sleep, and stress management;
- Elicit ongoing feedback to plan and implement programs to meet the needs and interests of employees.

Definitions

Critical Incident: An incident that is unusual, violent, or involves a perceived threat to, or actual loss of, human life which may overwhelm an individual's normal coping mechanism and cause extreme psychological distress.¹

Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT): A team within the agency tasked with providing immediate and ongoing support for employees involved in duty-related, emotionally traumatic critical incidents.

Duty Related Trauma Exposure: An experience that causes physical, emotional, psychological distress or harm. Exposure is common among workers who deal directly with victims of disasters, trauma, or illness, which could include all public safety professionals.

Emotional Health: The ability to regulate one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP): Confidential mental health and wellness services, maintained by a third party.

¹ See the IACP Policy Center documents on Critical Incident Stress Management available at <https://theiacp.org/resources>

Mental Health Services: Services provided by an agency-employed and/or agency-contracted qualified mental health professional.

Oregon Knowledge Bank (OKB): A resource for and created by the public safety community in Oregon. OKB strives to be the go-to resource for public safety practitioners statewide for evidence-based practices and problem solving inspiration.

Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP): An individual who is licensed as a mental health professional and has an in-depth understanding of trauma-related disorders and the public safety culture.

Resiliency: The ability to cope with and recover quickly from crisis, traumas, illness, loss, and general adversity.

Wellness: An active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life. Wellness is more than being free from illness; it is a dynamic process of change and growth.

Program Options Promoting or Encouraging Wellness

In recognition of the fact that all law enforcement professionals have unique needs and respond differently to available activities and programs, this agency will endeavor to make available the following programs for encouraging the successful health, wellness and resiliency of our employees:

- Employee Assistance Programs
 - Marriage and family counseling
 - Mental health counseling (general)
 - Financial advice
 - Legal services
 - Critical Incident Response Teams (CIRT)
 - PEER support team

- Physical Health Programs
 - Yoga classes
 - Flexibility classes
 - Walking or step counting program
 - Weightlifting or strength training classes
 - Exercise classes
 - Tobacco cessation programs
 - Alcohol cessation programs

- Sleep management
 - Stress management
 - Lead exposure program
 - Hearing protection evaluation program
 - Tsunami evacuation training program (if applicable)
- Mental Health Wellness Programs
- Pre-employment psychological screening exams
 - Mental health services provided by a qualified and culturally competent mental health professional employed by, or contracted by or in partnership as a provider to employees of the agency.
- Nutrition Health Programs
- Weight Watchers
 - Nutritionist employed or contracted by the agency
 - Portion control education
 - Fluid intake education
- Spiritual Health Programs
- Chaplaincy services
- Resiliency Programs
- Mindfulness study programs
- Financial Health Programs
- Retirement Planning
 - Budgeting Guidance

Additional resources covering a variety of available activities or programs related to employee health, wellness and resiliency are available online in the Oregon Knowledge Bank (OKB).

Procedures

- A. The agency will establish a Wellness Committee and ensure that it is prioritizing and promoting wellness strategies using evidence-based best practices.
- B. Public safety agencies will establish and ensure the agency's Safety Committee is prioritizing and promoting safety strategies using evidence-based best practices to ensure working environments and conditions for employees.

- C. Access to Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) shall be provided to all agency employees and their families.
- D. Confidential mental health services shall be available to all employees of the agency and their families as allowed by insurance coverage or agency policy. Employees shall be provided a sufficient number of sessions with a Qualified Mental Health Provided (QMHP).
- E. Chaplains shall be identified for those employees who may prefer an alternative avenue for support. Depending on the licensing or credentials of the chaplain, this contact may or may not replace contact with a Qualified Mental Health Provided (QMHP).
- F. Peer Support
 - a. A peer support program shall be established.
 - b. Peer support persons (PSPs) shall be trained to provide both day-to-day emotional support for agency employees, as well as participate in the agency's comprehensive response to critical incidents.
 - i. PSPs shall be selected from experienced personnel who have earned the respect and confidence of their fellow employees.
 - ii. PSPs shall demonstrate excellent listening and interpersonal skills.
 - iii. PSPs shall be removed from the program for violating the program's confidentiality policy and/or engaging in other behavior that is considered detrimental to the program.
 - iv. The peer support program shall be supervised by a senior agency employee and overseen by a QMHP familiar with peer support operations.
- G. Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)
 - a. The agency shall establish a CIRT program with the following elements:
 - i. Mental health wellness consultations also known as "Debriefings or Defusings" shall be offered to all employees affected by critical incidents.
 - ii. CIRT members shall be selected from experienced personnel who have earned the respect and confidence of their fellow employees.
 - iii. CIRT members shall demonstrate listening and excellent interpersonal skills.
 - iv. CIRT members shall be removed from the program for violating the program's confidentiality policy and/or engaging in other behavior that is considered detrimental to the program.
 - v. The CIRT program shall be supervised by a senior agency employee and overseen by a QMHP familiar with CIRT program operations.
- H. Policies and Collective Bargaining Agreements related to employee fatigue management will be reviewed periodically. The agency will strive to ensure best practices are in place to allow employees the ability to have time to rest and recover between work shifts or assignments.

- I. Ongoing in-service training and education shall be provided and offered to agency employees to promote mental health well-being and overall wellness, to include training related to resiliency, mindfulness, and retirement planning.
 - a. The agency shall provide 1 hour of training or education to all newly hired employees regarding the agency's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). At least once every three years, all employees will receive additional training or education on the agency's EAP program.
 - b. The agency shall provide the following training or education to all employees each year:
 - i. 1 hour in the area of Physical Health Programs
 - ii. 2 hours in one or more of the following areas:
 1. Mental Health Wellness Programs
 2. Nutrition Health Programs
 - iii. 1 hour in one or more of the following areas:
 1. Resiliency Programs (Mindfulness)
 2. Spiritual Health Programs
 3. Financial Health Programs

Rules

- A. The agency shall have a policy that any food or beverages purchased or provided during meetings or events at worksites shall offer healthy options.
- B. The agency shall ensure all vending machines located in worksites will contain a selection of healthy options for employees to purchase.
- C. The agency shall support lactation and breastfeeding compliance at all worksites.