

**Importance of Officer Wellness**

Team Wolves

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### **Abstract**

It is essential to police officers' efficiency and safety to keep their health in good condition. The well-being of cops should be a primary concern, as police work is innately upsetting and includes possibly horrible occurrences. According to research, resilient police officers who have developed coping strategies and support networks can handle the demands of their jobs and achieve better mental and physical health outcomes. Putting resources into leader advantages can decrease burnout, non-attendance, and turnover and further develop work fulfillment and resolve. Finally, focusing on official well-being can improve the nature of administration cops and emphatically influence networks. It is our goal with this project to address the 6 resilience factors in officer wellness. They are sleep & recovery; exercise, nutrition & hydration; connectedness at home & support at work; mindset & attitude; hobbies & activities and professional care as needed.

### **Introduction**

When a law enforcement leader communicates the agency's vision, mission and core values in an actionable manner, officers can identify the right choices and tactics needed to handle problems rationally. Simon Sinek's "Golden Circle" concept identified the "why" as the center of the circle for identifying purpose and inspiring others. The "what" and "how" are important to an organization, but for an organization to be inspired they need to first identify the "why" (Scott, 2017). The golden circle creates loyalty within the police department and inspires ownership at every level. The message needs to start with why we do what we do as a police agency. If we apply that to the importance of officer wellness and start with the "why" it becomes exceptionally apparent. The average life expectancy of a police officer is 57 years old. Law enforcement officers have a life expectancy 25 years less than the average citizen. Law enforcement officers are 25 times more likely to die from heart disease than from any other causes resulting in line of duty death. The average heart attack age for a police officer is 49 years old compared to 65 for a civilian (Rhodes 2024, Residency).

We as leaders recognize that continuous training in a wide variety of skills in law enforcement are effective in protecting officers from harm and risk by constantly developing skills until an officer is proficient. Law enforcement officers spend countless hours each year training to be more proficient throughout their entire career. Adaptive leadership is about recognizing that something is ineffective and making the correction to affect positive change (Spain, 2017). Officer wellness is a significant issue affecting law enforcement and indirectly the community it serves. We as leaders need to have the courage to affect change and recognize that there is no difference from training officers to be proficient in a skill as it is to train officers in wellness.

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By applying a mission which identifies the importance of officer wellness daily will lead to a vision of legacy leadership where officer wellness is an embedded practice with full department participation with a goal of improved officer health thereby creating a healthier, more productive police force. A clearly articulated vision of officer wellness from the agency's leader starts to identify why they want an officer wellness program to succeed and why they want the employees to want to participate. A clearly defined mission statement for an officer wellness program helps to drive sense of purpose and opens "buy in" for officers through incentives of increased health awareness which will lead to a healthier lifestyle and increased job performance.

Detective Rosalyn Harrington (2017) stated, "Human Factors is defined as how our brain interacts with our body and decision-making ability during stressful work." Human factors play a significant role in how law enforcement performs their job. Physical conditioning is directly linked to physical and mental health for law enforcement officers. When law enforcement officers become complacent and do not maintain an appropriate level of physical fitness there is a higher potential for injury and health problems. Fatigue is a negative side effect caused by insufficient sleep and relaxation. Fatigue can negatively affect human performance and place officers at risk. Officers suffering from fatigue will likely have slower reaction times and impaired judgment, which can contribute to poor performance and unsafe behavior.

### **Sleep and Recovery**

More than one half of all police officers do not get enough sleep. More than 40% of all police officers have reported falling asleep while driving. A recent comparison equated sleep deprivation to impairment comparable to driving under the influence of alcohol. An individual with 18 hours without sleep has equal impairment as a blood alcohol content of .05%. An

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individual with 21 hours without sleep has equal impairment as a blood alcohol content of .08%. An individual with 24 hours without sleep has equal impairment as a blood alcohol content of .10% (Rhodes 2024, residency). Sleep and recovery are foundational to your physical and mental health and performance. The ability to fall asleep and stay asleep for an average of 7+ hours most nights allow for your body to recover efficiently.

Sleep hygiene is defined by Dr. Michael Breus as habits and behaviors that influence sleep. Practicing healthy sleep hygiene can help individuals fall asleep more quickly, remain asleep throughout the night, and feel refreshed in the morning. There are several guidelines of activities and habits during the day that impact sleep. Follow a consistent sleep-wake schedule to include days you are not at work. Carefully time your naps for less than 30 minutes to not allow your brain to enter deep sleep which can lead to confusion and a sense of tiredness for an extended amount of time. Exercise daily several hours prior to sleep to allow your body to feel more tired at bedtime. An individual should avoid nicotine products as it can disrupt sleep patterns. Spend more time in the sunshine which allows for a circadian rhythm reset. Avoid caffeine late in the day as it can remain in your system for up to six hours. Refrain from alcohol before bed as it can cause drowsiness but leads to fragmentation of sleep patterns. Avoid heavy meals at night, which can limit your ability to fall asleep and disturb effectiveness of sleep. Practice relaxation techniques such as listening to music, light stretching, and yoga to promote a healthy sleep. Limit your screen time, such as cell phone, tablet, computer screens and television, as the blue light emitted suppresses melatonin production. Create a sleep-friendly bedroom which consists of ideal conditions of 66 -70 degrees, dark and quiet. Get out of bed if you cannot sleep and engage in relaxation activities or listen to music until you feel sleepy again (Breus, 2024).

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As transformational leaders, we need to set aside the mentality of “it has always been done this way”, to develop the mindset that we need to protect our officers. We can develop a wellness program as it relates to sleep and recovery which starts with education through training and program implementation. Everyone has a circadian rhythm which is defined as biological patterns that shift across each 24-hour period most noticeable as the sleep-wake cycle. Law enforcement officers are shift workers by default. Most agencies have rotating schedules with night shift hours at some point of a particular officers’ career. By limiting change, we can accept the recommended practice of maintaining consistency in hours worked by making permanent shifts available. This will allow officers to develop a routine and consistent schedule which can alleviate a portion of stress related to shift adjustments and allow for a consistent sleep-wake cycle. We can also offer a new program allowing for a small period of sleep while on shift. Using the data that one ½ hour nap can promote rest, and alertness which can lead to increased productivity.

### **Exercise, Nutrition, and Hydration**

The work an officer performs daily is dangerous and stressful. Patrol shifts are commonly ten to twelve hours long and many officers work night shift. To mitigate the damage caused by stress and fatigue, good nutrition, routine exercise, relaxation, and restful sleep need to be a part of an officer’s lifestyle. It is recommended that to maintain a healthy lifestyle, the average individual should exercise 150-180 minutes (about 3 hours) per week consisting of a mix of cardio and resistance training (Ridgeway & Associates, 2019). Police officers should be encouraged to participate in at least one-half hour of exercise a day even if it is simply going for a walk.

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Few agencies offer programs to maintain a level of health commensurate with the physical requirements of the job for the length of their officers' career. Due to lack of physical fitness and wellness, the average life span of male law enforcement officer after retirement is only between two to five years. This lack of fitness makes officers prone to on-duty injuries and illnesses, increases their exposure to liability, and engenders a loss of respect from the community based on their appearance (Quigley, 2008). Studies have shown repeatedly that physical fitness has a direct impact on reducing injuries and improving personal well-being as well as work performance. Statistically, law enforcement officers have an increased risk of heart disease and obesity with almost half of police officers obese. The FBI conducted a study where eight out of ten police officers were overweight (Kristian, 2015). Most agencies leave the responsibility of exercise up to each of their officers.

It is a progressive agency through transformational leadership that takes on the responsibility to educate its officers on wellness and provides incentive and opportunity to exercise. The Rochester, MN Police Department currently allows its officers to utilize a daily workout schedule on duty led by a professional trainer. Officers are also allowed to attend a nearby Jiu-Jitsu gym for programmed workouts and sparring. The department also creates opportunities for free weekly training at two of the local CrossFit gyms allowing officers multiple exercise training programs. The Rochester, MN Police Department has also moved progressively to send officers to become trained nutritionists.

Teaching officers to value the importance of nutrition is a steep hill to climb. With shift work, specifically night shift, there are limited opportunities to eat healthy. Most law enforcement agencies have only convenience stores open providing unhealthy food choices available. Community members also show their appreciation by bringing in baked goods such as

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cookies, cakes and donuts, pizza, and other non-nutritious meals. As a result of unhealthy eating comprised of high levels of sugar, it is no surprise that 70% of law enforcement officers are insulin resistant (Garrison 2022). Being insulin resistant results in the body's inability to burn fat leading to obesity.

To combat unhealthy eating habits, The Rochester, MN Police Department has implemented an educational program of training new officers on meal preparation of healthy meal choices. The department public information officer has also developed a "push out" to media sources to educate about our wellness objective for the department. The department has also hired a small local business that provides meals prepped weekly for purchase for officers in the department's breakroom. Officers also have healthy snacks available for purchase through its breakroom.

Hydration is extremely important to officer wellness and health. Alcohol abuse among police officers is double the one in 12 Americans (17 million). Also, one out of four officers have an alcohol/drug problem (Rhodes 2024, Residency). How does that relate to hydration? Most officers start their day/night dehydrated. It is common that coffee, soda, and caffeinated sports drinks are regular beverages for officers on shift. All these drinks do not aid in hydration. To be properly hydrated, an individual needs to consume half their body weight in ounces of water. If they consume any of the above beverages, they will need to add ounces of water to hydrate as most of the above are diuretics which causes an increase in urination.

In conclusion, we as leaders determined to protect our officers must value with the same emphasis as training officers to do their job, also train their officers to live healthy lifestyles filled with proper sleep and recovery, exercise, nutrition, and hydration. By taking the time to care about the wellness of officers that serve and protect their communities, it will lead to the

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functionality of more productivity, cohesive teamwork and comradery, and lower injuries and health related illnesses.

### **Connectedness at Home**

Emotional tuning with loved ones is paramount for having a positive work & life balance. Law enforcement officers often face high-stress situations. The ability to emotionally connect with loved ones is crucial. This involves effective communication and understanding of each other's emotions.

There are many books and programs that support better police / family relationships. One such book is, *I Love a Cop: What Police Families Need to Know*. Dr. Ellen Kirschman focuses on providing information with “practical ways to manage the stress of the job and create a healthy, supportive home environment” (Kirschman, 2018).

Building a strong support system at home is vital as reciprocal love and support is essential to good well-being. Officers need to feel they can rely on their family for emotional support, understanding, and encouragement. Reciprocal love ensures a two-way exchange of support. In addition to family, officers should have friends outside of law enforcement where they can share other experiences, they both enjoy such as hunting, fishing, or other hobbies.

### **Support at Work**

A sense of camaraderie within the law enforcement team is crucial for team cohesion. Team members should trust each other and work cohesively. This mutual support enhances resilience and creates a feeling of having each other's back. This culture needs to be properly created within the agency to properly distinguish between trust vs. enabling bad behaviors.

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Strong support from leadership is essential in creating a supportive atmosphere. Leaders should actively listen to officers' concerns, provide guidance, and ensure that the workplace is conducive to both professional and personal well-being. The entire leadership team needs to be on the same page and to ensure this, training and policies are crucial.

Establishing mental health programs within law enforcement agencies is vital. These programs can include counseling services, stress management workshops, and resources to help officers cope with the challenges of their job. An option to consider is mandatory mental health counseling services after any major critical incident. This allows officers to attend without any stigma as it is mandatory so they can say, "I don't need this, but I have to go."

Incorporating training programs that focus on emotional resilience can be beneficial as this will improve your ability to respond to stressful or unexpected situations and crises. This helps Officers develop coping mechanisms and emotional intelligence, enabling them to navigate challenging situations more effectively.

Regular recognition and appreciation of officers' hard work and dedication fosters a positive work environment. Feeling valued and appreciated contributes to job satisfaction and resilience. Officers and all members of the agency should have their good deeds acknowledged when they occur. We do a great job of disciplining quickly and should do the same with pats on the back, letters of acknowledgement, etc. vs. waiting until the end of the year awards ceremony.

Clear communication channels are important. Open and transparent communication channels within the organization ensure that officers are aware of any changes, policies, or resources available to them. This reduces uncertainty and stress. Hearing directly from the Sheriff or Chief at least every couple of weeks can be easily accomplished via online or

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attendance of training sessions. This helps to set the tone at all levels and clearly demonstrates support for such programs at the highest level. Dr. Long taught on adapting as needed by changing processes to meet challenge(s) (Long, 2017).

Creating a holistic approach that addresses both home and work environments is crucial for the resilience of law enforcement officers. It involves building strong relationships, fostering a supportive workplace culture, and providing resources for mental well-being.

### **Attitude and Mindset**

"George A. Bonanno, a professor of clinical psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University, wrote about how resilience is actually very common. Bonanno's research has shown that resilience in officers can create tremendous positive wellness outcomes by preventing or minimizing negative effects from constant exposure to potentially traumatic incidents" (Thorton & Breakall, 2023, para.3). Bonanno identified four areas or pathways that assisted in becoming a resilient officer. Those pathways are hardiness, self-enhancement, repressive coping, and positive emotion.

Hardiness means being able to withstand stressful situations and being brave in the face of challenges. In many stressful situations, resilient people approach the task with energy and enthusiasm. Hardy people strive to find meaningful meaning in life, believe they can influence the outcome of their environment and events, and learn from positive and negative life experiences. The three characteristics of a resilient person are control, commitment, and challenge. As leaders, we can help LEOs become resilient by monitoring and influencing these traits in our officers. Control refers to feeling in control and the actual control in a particular situation. As leaders, we can remind executives to focus on what they can control and let go of what they cannot.

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Proactive measures such as continuous training, role-playing, and scenario-based training improve police officers' confidence in their abilities, increasing their sense of control in real-life situations. Commitment leads to resilience when law enforcement officers develop meaningful goals and can focus on those goals. As agents of change, we can influence our subordinates' understanding of these obligations in our daily face-to-face communications and team meetings before and after their shifts. Officials who regularly face new challenges view problems and failures as learning opportunities. When faced with inevitable trauma, they will ultimately emerge as trauma survivors rather than helpless victims. Law enforcement leaders can contribute to this positive recovery by viewing the trauma experienced by officers as a challenge worth addressing to achieve law enforcement goals. (Thornton & Breakall, 2022, para.3)

Explanations of self-improvement can remind you of the negative aspects of disliked people that sound like narcissism. In moderation, this kind of thinking can be beneficial in building resilience and preventing trauma. A positive example of self-improvement is the ability to be honest with you. The officer did his best based on his abilities. Self-improvers are highly self-confident and believe they will find a path to success. When this confidence comes from training and experience, police officers are more adaptable and have better coping skills. Self-improvement is often a form of self-defense when dealing with trauma-related mistakes. Self-improvement can manifest itself in both public and private ways. Leaders have responsibilities when it comes to self-improvement. Leaders should encourage this kind of speech from their followers and speak out about it while at the same time providing the necessary instructions or corrections to rectify the flaws. Second, leaders need to ensure that these comments lead officers to believe they are better than they are, lose their ability to criticize themselves constructively

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after an incident, and deprive them of all the positive things they and everyone can bring. (Olson & Wasilewski, 2017)

Repressive coping, or suppressing emotions, is an excellent technique for building resilience and living in the moment. Research on aggressive trauma, sexual assault, and child abuse shows that oppressive police officers experience less long-term trauma with subsequent clinical treatment. For many people, repressive coping is automatic and self-deceptive. Oppressive officers believe they are handling things better than they are. Unless these thoughts, feelings, and memories are eventually addressed, oppressive interactions can cause serious long-term mental and psychological problems.

As law enforcement leaders, if we start from the beginning to respond to potentially traumatic events and provide examples of how to avoid and ignore these negative thoughts and feelings, we can reduce suppression. It can have a positive impact on a believer's ability to cope. However, when we ask for advice, we must follow it and lead by example. This will also gradually impact the culture and negative stigma associated with seeking help in this profession. (Angela, 2023)

Over the last few years, two different terms have been coined regarding mindsets for law enforcement. These two terms are known as the warrior mindset and the guardian mindset. In an article in *The Havok Journal*, Ayman Kafel described the warrior mindset as "The officer who adopts a warrior's mindset is not one to fear but one to be admired. That officer has compassion for their fellow man. The officer has traits like honor and love. The officer, when afraid, pushes past that to help their fellow man" (Kafel, 2023, para.10).

When the word "warrior" was used in law enforcement, it was called a mindset. It was demonized by political correctness and associated with the militarization of police. The warrior

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mindset is much more than that. The fundamental beliefs of someone adopting the warrior mindset include discipline, respect and selflessness, honor, courage, and integrity. The more profound level of a warrior mindset is recognizing that the enemy is not the external but the internal forces.

On the other side are the ones who believe in the guardian mindset. Both Warriors and Guardians are committed to protecting the communities they serve. However, the guardian mindset has a short-term and a long-term perspective on accomplishing that goal. The guardian mindset emphasizes service over crime fighting. It values the dynamics of one-on-one encounters to build long-term relationships with community members. Therefore, it teaches officers that their interaction with community members must be legally justified, empowered, fair, respectful, and considerate. The guardian mindset emphasizes communication rather than commands, cooperation rather than compliance, and legitimacy rather than authority. In using force, the guardian emphasizes patience and restraint rather than control and stability rather than action. We need to incorporate both mindsets into our professional culture. According to Stoughton (2015) "Law enforcement training and tactics reflect the warrior concept, identifying aspects of modern policing that, if not addressed, will continue to prevent or undermine efforts to improve public perceptions of police legitimacy"(para.13).

### **Hobbies and Activities**

Basich (2014) "Law enforcement is a profession that many use to define themselves, but allowing your identity to be based solely on your job is not a good idea. Even for someone who loves this line of work, the stress, difficult schedules, and continued contact with society's bad seeds can take a toll. Pursuing an activity outside of policing gives the mind and body a much-needed breather" (para.1)

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As a law enforcement officer, getting consumed by the job's demands can be simple. Extended periods, high-pressure circumstances, and the strain of being cautious can negatively affect your physical and emotional well-being. That is why it is important to have hobbies and other interests outside law enforcement that help you relax, recharge, and have fun. Whether playing a game, rehearsing an instrument, or perusing a book, carving out a margin for yourself can assist you with feeling revived and restored. When you go back to work, this could help you focus and be more productive. Side interests and exercises give a feeling of satisfaction and inspiration beyond work.

Law Enforcement is significantly more stressful compared to most occupations, but on the other hand, it is vital to have outlets that permit you to seek your advantages and interests. Police officers frequently structure close bonds with their partners; however, having friends outside of law enforcement is important. Having something that lets you relax and disconnect from work in a job with high demands and even higher stakes is essential. This can help forestall burnout and guarantee you are ready to keep a sound point of view at work. Finding time and energy to do things you enjoy outside law enforcement can be challenging. In any case, focusing on it is significant. Regardless of whether it is only a couple of moments daily, reserving a margin for yourself can immensely affect your general prosperity. (Basich, 2014)

### **Easy Access to Professional Care**

The law enforcement profession is challenging, with officers facing a myriad of stressors daily. Shiftwork, call load, and exposure to traumatic events can all add to an officer's bucket of stress. Practicing healthy habits in the five previously mentioned resilience factors can contribute to stress reduction, but when self-help efforts aren't enough, it is important that officers have unhindered access to confidential and quality professional care.

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Stress for a law enforcement officer can come at you from all angles. In one day, an officer can have a supervisor be critical of their work, be assigned to their least favorite patrol zone, face a busy shift where they don't get time for a lunch break, and be forced to stay late to finish reports. When the officer gets home, they might have to jump right into helping with kids and family issues when all they want to do is to relax and decompress from their day. It is important for an officer to be able to self-evaluate and recognize when their stress bucket is nearly full. The "stress bucket" metaphor is used by professionals to help you visualize the cumulative effects that stress can have on an individual. Imagine everything you do in your life that is stressful as water, then you are the bucket. If you have a stressful call, a busy shift, a fight with your wife before work, those are all things that fill up your bucket. Your bucket can only hold so much before overflowing. The overflowing of your bucket results in a stress response that is often disproportionate to the current situation. Unhealthy management of stress by law enforcement officers can lead to alcohol abuse, isolation, rage, or other forms of self-sabotage. Often, if coping mechanisms aren't present, previous issues can remain in your bucket, meaning that your ability to handle new stressors is reduced. As wellness author Dr. Robyne Hanley-Defoe states, "An optimal stress bucket experience includes a manageable stress level, adaptive release strategies, and a generous buffer zone. Stress is all around us, yet we can take actions that provide us with relief from the stressors." (Hanley-Dafoe, 2023).

A major stressor for law enforcement officers is repeated exposure to trauma in their work. The average citizen may experience one or two traumatic events in their lifetime, but a law enforcement officer will likely be exposed to multiple traumatic events every year of their career. Supervisors and officers must learn to recognize the symptoms that a stressful event might be traumatic for the individual exposed to it. Stress symptoms can be physical, emotional,

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behavioral, or thoughtful. Some physical symptoms of stress are chest pain, rapid breathing, headaches, or upset stomach. Emotional stress symptoms can include anger, guilt, irritability, feeling hopeless, or wanting to isolate. Some behavioral stress symptoms are withdrawal from social situations, being overly vigilant to your environment, or excessive or unexplained anger. Thoughtful stress symptoms include memory problems, difficulty making decisions, distressing dreams, and seeing troubling images repeatedly in thoughts and dreams. Cumulative Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD) is a result of the buildup of trauma over time. One study surveyed 800 officers about their exposure to suicide incidents. 95% of all participants had responded to at least one suicide scene, averaging 31 responses to suicide over their career. One in five of these officers reported that the incident triggered nightmares and half reported being able to visualize vivid details of the scene. (Ramsland, 2021). Symptoms of CPTSD can include intrusive thoughts, sleep disorders, adverse mood shifts, withdrawal from loved ones, irritability, and changes in physical appearance.

Law enforcement officers have a 54% greater risk of dying by suicide than the public. In fact, the numbers show that officers are three times as likely to take their own life than to be killed by gunfire in the line of duty. (McClam Liebengood, 2023). We have always emphasized training related to surviving violent attacks but are just scratching the surface when it comes to recognizing and addressing officers struggling with suicidal ideations.

Knowing that law enforcement professionals are subjected to higher rates of stress, frequent exposure to trauma, and higher rates of PTSD and suicide, what responsibility do agencies have? Who are the stakeholders that can make a difference? Everyone working at a law enforcement agency has a responsibility to take the steps necessary to observe and intervene when a fellow human is in crisis. Line staff often have the most direct contact with their partners

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and can make a difference by checking in with them, sharing observations, and lending a listening ear. If necessary, line staff can share their observations with a peer support team member or front-line supervisor who can suggest available resources necessary to help support the individual in need. If resources are lacking, supervisors can request command staff for additional funding and offer to spearhead efforts to improve wellness programming. Department heads can seek out support from their budgeting entities stressing the importance that employee wellness plays in retention and productivity. They should also work to ensure that wellness is stressed in department communications, including mission statements and goal setting. Non-sworn support staff in corrections, dispatch, and records should be included in wellness programming and training which leads to increased engagement department wide.

There are many law enforcement agencies that are modeling excellent wellness-based programming. For agencies struggling with how to get wellness programming started, the agencies with excellent programs are always willing to share their successes along with what they tried that didn't work. It is important that law enforcement moves away from the expectation that cops are tough and should be able to handle anything and strive to create a culture that humanizes law enforcement officers and focuses on their physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Simply put, a healthy officer is better equipped to provide their communities with positive, high-quality, and empathetic service. A high-quality law enforcement wellness program will include several aspects. Examples of these include a peer support team with specialized training, a critical incident debriefing team, wellness incentives for staff, a counseling service, and yearly wellness check-ins. A hand-selected peer support team is comprised of individuals who have an interest in learning more about how to recognize signs that a partner is struggling. Peer support members show a willingness to reach out to those

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individuals with active listening, a knowledge of what resources are available, and help coming up with a plan to address issues. Peer support members receive training to help them navigate tough situations and maintain confidentiality. Several studies show that having a good support network constitutes the single most powerful protection someone has against becoming traumatized. (Van der Kolk, 2014). A complete wellness program must provide easy and confidential access to high-quality counseling for staff. Not all therapists are trained to adequately deal with the level of trauma that an officer might have been exposed to. A department must select a counselor that can handle the needs of an agency based on their size and have a proven record of providing care specific to the law enforcement profession. Often agencies will rely on the Emergency Assistance Program (EAP) that is attached to their risk or health insurance. These programs often delay services and the list of available counselors do not include any with training to provide law enforcement officers the specialized services they need. Another important aspect of a wellness program is yearly wellness check-ins, sometimes referred to as “check-in from the neck up”. These one-on-one sessions are administered by the agency’s counselors. These short sessions are mandatory for staff once a year, and outline the services offered by the department. The sessions also address coping with stress and trauma and reiterate the benefits of counseling when officers are struggling. Providing these check-ins to the entire department helps even the most hesitant officers have access to the services provided, and several officers end up scheduling additional therapy sessions because of the check-in.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, prioritizing officer wellness is paramount for law enforcement agencies, benefiting not only the individual officers but also the agencies and the entire profession. By addressing key aspects such as sleep and recovery, exercise, nutrition, hydration, connectedness at home, support at work, mindset and attitude, hobbies and activities, and professional care, law enforcement agencies can significantly enhance the overall well-being of their officers.

Firstly, focusing on officer wellness directly contributes to the physical and mental health of individual officers. Secondly, a wellness-centric approach fosters a positive work environment within law enforcement agencies. Officers who feel supported in their personal and professional lives are likely to experience increased job satisfaction and morale. This, in turn, can lead to improved team dynamics, communication, and collaboration within the agency. Lastly, the benefits extend to the agency's overall performance. Healthy and well-supported officers are better equipped to handle the challenges of the job, reducing the risk of burnout and turnover.

Therefore, investing in officer wellness is a strategic imperative for law enforcement agencies, yielding benefits at the individual, organizational, and professional levels. It is a holistic approach that not only enhances the quality of life for officers but also strengthens the fabric of law enforcement. As agencies recognize and prioritize the well-being of their personnel, they are poised to create a healthier, more resilient, and more effective law enforcement community.

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