

OFFICER **HEALTH**  
AND **WELLNESS**

**AGENCY ASSESSMENT TOOL**  
and **ACTION PLANNING**  
**ROADMAP**



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# Introduction

Compared to the general public, police are at a higher risk for negative physical and mental health outcomes, including early death, injuries and illnesses, obesity, heart attacks, and sleep disorders.<sup>1</sup> During the average officer's career, they will witness and respond to 188 "critical incidents"<sup>2</sup> which, without appropriate preparation, follow up support, and mental health care, can have dramatic effects on short- and long-term physical and mental health.

In response, police agencies have begun to establish, expand, and sustain officer safety and wellness (OSW) programming to address challenges commonly faced by officers. All agencies, no matter the size or geographic location, should ensure officers have access to resources and services promoting safety and wellbeing.

A comprehensive strategy to promote safety and wellness requires a multi-faceted approach addressing a variety of essential topics, including physical fitness, mental health, emotional wellness, stress management, financial wellness, peer support,

and family support, as well as tactical and operational safety considerations. This tool focuses on physical and mental wellbeing. The comprehensive strategy reinforces that officers who are mentally and physically well, will in turn be more likely to operate safely. This strategy requires a cultural shift in which health and wellness is more openly discussed and accessing services becomes an accepted and commonplace practice. Understandably, developing an OSW program not only takes time, but requires buy-in from a wide array of internal and external stakeholders.

From obtaining leadership buy-in to determining program priorities, agencies have a lot to consider when developing or updating a program. The following information is intended to serve as a guide for law enforcement executives or wellness program personnel who seek to establish or enhance an officer wellness program. Recognizing the diversity that exists between departments and among wellness initiatives, agencies should consider a variety of approaches in order to determine which will work best for their agency and personnel.



1 Kuhns, Joseph B., Maguire, Edward R., and Leach, Nancy R. Health, Safety, and Wellness Program Case Studies in Law Enforcement. (2015) COPS Office. Retrieved on May 18, 2019 from <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/lbrr/archives/cnmcs-plcng/cn36413-eng.pdf>  
2 Herman, Miriam, Dill, Jeff and Douglas, Robert. The Ruderman White Paper on Mental Health and Suicide of First Responders. (2018) The Ruderman Family Foundation. Retrieved on May 18, 2019 from [https://issuu.com/rudermanfoundation/docs/first\\_responder\\_white\\_paper\\_final\\_ac270d530f8bfb](https://issuu.com/rudermanfoundation/docs/first_responder_white_paper_final_ac270d530f8bfb)

# 10 Steps for Building a Comprehensive Officer Health and Wellness Program

## 1 Obtain Necessary Buy-In

- A. Identify those whose support is vital to the success of the program and obtain buy-in for development or enhancement of programming.
  - i. Engage internal and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders may include executive leadership, field training officers, academy directors and their staff, and front-line officers. External stakeholders may include local government agencies, union and/or other employee organizations, local financial experts, officer family members, personal trainers, nutritionists, mental health practitioners, substance use counselors, and occupational therapists.
  - ii. Pinpoint the strongest supporters and toughest critics of these efforts and bring them together to discuss the importance of these efforts. Organize a meeting with stakeholders and present recommendations for wellness programming, to include a current assessment of the agency's wellness efforts and an outline of needs and where the agency could improve.
  - iii. Present research and stories of impact on the importance of officer health and wellness programming to inform stakeholders of the value in providing health and wellness services to officers. Research is available at [www.theiacp.org/OSW](http://www.theiacp.org/OSW).

## 2 Develop Program Team and Distinguish a Team Leader

- A. Identify an individual to lead this effort who will have dedicated time to devote to the initiative. The Team Leader should be well respected and trusted by his/her peers. Ideally, agencies would identify an officer who can serve as a Team Leader as a part of their standard duties and position description.
- B. Recruit a diverse group of members for the team.
  - i. Identify representatives of multiple levels within the agency, including union/guild representation, who are passionate about health and wellness, well connected, and relied upon by others.

- ii. Request feedback from command staff on individuals they believe would be a good fit. Agencies may consider recommendations from officers for who would make good and trusted peer supporters. Qualities of a Team Leader may include, but are not limited to, an officer who:
  1. Has at least five years of service.
  2. Demonstrates leadership skills, whether formal or informal.
  3. Exhibits excellent communication skills and strong interpersonal skills.
  4. Demonstrates an interest in health and wellness.
- iii. Ensure the program team is representative of the agency members accessing these services. This should include minority officers, female officers, and members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- iv. Include all ranks and professional backgrounds, such as corrections officers, patrol, civilian staff, and communication dispatchers, in the wellness program team. Allow officers to self-nominate or apply for a role on the wellness program team.

## 3 Review Research and Connect with Agencies That Have Similar Programs

- A. Research relevant resources to help develop or enhance the program. Build a catalogue for quick reference. Agencies can find more information on health and wellness programming at [www.theiacp.org/OSW](http://www.theiacp.org/OSW).
- B. Cultivate relationships with agencies similar in demographics who have implemented health and wellness programs to understand areas of both struggle and success.
- C. Investigate established regional/state Critical Incident Support Management (CISM) organizations to partner with for training and supplemental manpower for CISM debriefings.

## 4 Identify Priority Areas

- A. Create working groups to explore areas of health and wellness concerns within the department. This effort should be led by the officer wellness Team Leader and consist of personnel who the program will serve.
  - i. Announce the effort department-wide in a way that engages staff and supports a culture of wellness.
  - ii. Demonstrate support from executive level, command staff, and front-line officers.
  - iii. Defer to expertise, no matter a person's rank, to promote open input.
  - iv. Record all ideas and establish priorities.
  - v. Track progress of the working group through regular meetings, conference calls, and email correspondence.
- B. Collect formal and informal feedback from agency stakeholders. Formal feedback can be gathered through a survey that identifies critical wellness issues facing the department. For example, if the agency has a lot of senior officers without retirement transition assistance, this may come through in a survey as a gap the agency needs to fill. Similarly, if a significant number of officers provide feedback about physical fitness needs, the agency may consider developing an on-duty physical fitness program. For informal feedback, identify a wellness representative for officers to provide feedback on agency wellness efforts.
- C. Consider the current agency environment. What is the relationship (real or perceived) between leadership and line-level officers?
- D. Reflect on past or current traumatic incidents and how the agency supported impacted officers. How did the agency support personnel to ensure their wellbeing was prioritized following a traumatic event? No matter the outcome of the incident, was there a consistent effort to document what support was well received, and what steps require improvement? Was there a system in place to effectively act upon lessons learned?

## 5 Define Program Mission/Goals and Develop a Plan

- A. Develop a mission statement and determine program goals.
  - i. Create a mission statement that clearly defines the program's purpose and value. This mission statement should briefly explain to

agency personnel and the public the agency's commitment to overall mental health and wellness of its officers.

- ii. Tie goals directly to the mission statement, making sure they are specific, measurable, attainable, and relevant.
- B. Build a program plan and document standard operating procedures (SOPs).
    - i. Consider how the program will align with the department's organizational structure.
    - ii. Allow department needs to drive priorities as it relates to the OSW program.
    - iii. Detail service components to be included (i.e. peer support, physical fitness, family wellness).

## 6 Build a Referral Network

- A. Identify local health and wellness entities, including personal trainers, physical therapists, nutritionists, and mental health clinicians including psychiatrists and substance abuse counselors.
  - i. Agencies are encouraged to identify, vet, and enlist qualified mental health professionals trained in traumatic incident response. This may include working with Human Resources to identify counselors who are familiar with the public safety community to ensure officers have a positive experience when accessing EAP resources.
  - ii. Agencies are also encouraged to vet counselors provided through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
  - iii. Consider confidentiality protections that applicable laws may provide. When establishing a referral network, agencies should consider the laws that may be applied to the referral network and the information that an entity may or may not be able to provide.
- B. Develop relationships with wellness organizations and treatment centers and call/visit to ensure legitimacy of services.
- C. Maintain an updated referral list and distribute department wide. Input from officers on the quality of services is critical when referring others to providers.



## 7 Provide Training for Program Team

- A. Proper training should be provided to all team members prior to the launch of the program and should be delivered on a continuous basis to both team members and agency members.
  - i. Ensure training provided to the program team is accredited and routinely evaluated.
  - ii. Provide different types of training, including virtual, seminars, in-service, scenario-based, and in-person instruction.
  - iii. Establish whether specialized training for supervisors and administrators will be provided. This may include training regarding identifying physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral reactions to traumatic incidents and suicide prevention.
  - iv. Decide who should receive the training. Ideally, it should be all personnel.
  - v. Determine when training should be provided, such as during the academy, at a promotion, during major life events, as they prepare for the retirement transition, as well as during regularly scheduled in-service training.
- B. Provide training on a continuous basis after program launch.

## 8 Launch Program and Conduct Regular Outreach

- A. Ensure ample visibility of program.
  - i. Designate physical space if able, to include an office or meeting room. Using a general OSW office that offers a variety of services can reduce negative perceptions for going to the meeting space.
  - ii. Market the program to outline benefits of officer health and wellness, gain interest, and highlight expected date of launch.
  - iii. Understand that it may take time to receive agency-wide buy-in due to necessary culture shifts.
- B. Conduct ongoing outreach after launch that:
  - i. Targets internal and external stakeholders.
  - ii. Uses a wide array of platforms (i.e. roll call, flyers, social media, word of mouth, presentations, email).

- iii. Occurs at various points in an officer's career, during major life events and following traumatic incidents.
- C. Consider promoting different topics for different parts of a career. For example, a retirement transition class should occur 2-3 years out from retirement, with additional support provided as an officer nears the end of their tenure with the agency.
- D. Include Human Resources representatives to explain available employee benefits and services and an overview of co-pays and out-of-pocket expenses.
- E. Provide information to all agency personnel outlining privacy and confidentiality concerns.
  - i. Educate officers on confidentiality and limits to confidentiality to demystify any unknowns about seeking help.
- F. Conduct regular family outreach.
  - i. Consider providing family orientations, at a minimum, to new employees and their families. Additional outreach may occur during major life events, such as a promotion or following a traumatic event; or during a marriage, divorce, or the welcoming of a new baby.
  - ii. Engage existing law enforcement family members and active police personnel.
  - iii. Provide a mechanism whereby family members may confidentially seek services/ assistance for agency members and/or themselves.
  - iv. Topics covered during family orientations may include existing information on available mental health and wellness resources, psychological services, insurance programs, and other supportive programs.
  - v. Refer to IACP's [How to Start a Law Enforcement Family Support Group](#) considerations guide for additional guidance.

## 9 Maintain Officer Wellness Programming

- A. Schedule recurring meetings with program personnel to share positive outcomes and explore challenges. This can include quantitative data collected as well as qualitative data such as sharing stories of success.
- B. Consider developing a health and wellness advisory committee made up of stakeholders including health experts, chaplains, union representatives, and personnel for additional guidance and feedback.
- C. Partner with the Human Resources division to voice any concerns of available benefits, such as the Employee Assistance Program.
- D. Regularly update internal resource materials.

## 10 Evaluate Impact

- A. Collect data and stories of success to support the need for additional resources or continued funding. Data collected may include the number of officers who accessed the program, the number of officers referred by a supervisor or colleague, and the number of family members who accessed the program throughout the course of a fiscal quarter or year, and more. It is important for agencies and team leaders to be familiar with local, state, and federal privacy considerations.
- B. Expand and enhance available programming based on agency needs.
- C. Create an anonymous feedback loop for officers to provide feedback to wellness programming and resources. This feedback should assess program effectiveness, keeping both state and federal laws in mind as it may relate to confidentiality.
  - i. Ensure the feedback process is easily accessible and well promoted.
  - ii. Maintain follow-up and two-way communication so respondents know their feedback is valued.
  - iii. Consider utilizing shared stories and lived experiences to demonstrate the impact of the program.
- D. Actively evaluate department policies related to shift lengths, shift turn around, rest periods, and total number of hours worked.

# Conclusion

Law enforcement agencies and leaders have a responsibility to identify and provide support to personnel from the time they join the agency through retirement. By using the steps outlined in this tool, wellness representatives can better ensure that available programming, resources, and services are designed and deployed to meet the needs of those who need it most.

To further assist agencies, this resource also includes a Program Planning Checklist, Program Development Timeline, and Action Planning Template to better determine the next steps needed to begin assessing and enhancing available services.

Agencies may also consider administering an Assessment Survey to determine the perception of health and wellness within their agency, with the goal of meeting the needs of agency personnel. It is recommended that agencies administer this survey on an annual or bi-annual basis to ensure that available resources and services meet the evolving needs of officer health and wellness.

# Health and Wellness Program Planning Checklist

*Use the following checklist to determine current strengths and gaps in health and wellness efforts. For each Program Component, rate the current status based on the scale provided. Utilize the Action Planning template on the next page to put the steps into action.*



The agency has not yet specifically focused on this area. No significant actions have been implemented in this area.



Initial actions toward improvement have been taken for this item. The agency has taken some preliminary steps but has not advanced much at this time.



Several actions have been taken towards addressing and/or improving this area. The agency has several items built in to routine or standard procedures.



The agency has a nearly comprehensive approach to this area. The agency has made significant advances.



Comprehensive practices are in place at this agency for this area. The agency has built this into SOPs where appropriate and practices to address this area are sustaining.





Program Components	Rating	Next Steps
Mentor Program		
Peer Support Services		
Resiliency Training		
Suicide Prevention Training		
Physical Fitness Facilities		
Nutritional Information		
Financial Wellness		
Employee Assistance Program		
Family Services/Outreach		
Retirement Planning		
Retiree Services/Outreach		
Alcohol/Substance Use Resources		
Chaplaincy Services		
Family Support Services		
Critical Incident Support Management Training for Peer Supporters		

Use the following checklist to determine current strengths and gaps of your OSW program. Utilize the Action Planning template on Page 13 to put the steps into action.

Critical Questions	Yes	In Progress (anticipated date of completion)	No	Next Steps Short-Term (3 months)	Next Steps Mid-Term (6 months)	Next Steps Long-Term (12 months)
<b>Prepare</b>						
Did you survey your agency to determine awareness and use of current services?						
Did you survey your agency to assess any unique needs?						
Does your department have funding allocated to health and/or wellness services and training?						
Do you have methods of evaluating the program and collecting feedback? If yes, see next question.						

Critical Questions	Yes	In Progress (anticipated date of completion)	No	Next Steps Short-Term (3 months)	Next Steps Mid-Term (6 months)	Next Steps Long-Term (12 months)
Is this feedback being used?						
Have you incorporated diverse staff input into your health and wellness program?						
Are you actively updating department policies in response to lessons learned from the health and wellness program?						



Critical Questions	Yes	In Progress (anticipated date of completion)	No	Next Steps Short-Term (3 months)	Next Steps Mid-Term (6 months)	Next Steps Long-Term (12 months)
<b>Train</b>						
Do you currently offer periodic health and wellness training or seminars to officers, recruits, retirees, and families?						
Are there standard operating procedures in place for behavioral health issues?						
Is there sufficient program buy-in from diverse stakeholders, including leadership?						
Is there wide-spread engagement in wellness services?						
Are varied marketing strategies being used to promote services to officers, staff, and families?						

Critical Questions	Yes	In Progress (anticipated date of completion)	No	Next Steps Short-Term (3 months)	Next Steps Mid-Term (6 months)	Next Steps Long-Term (12 months)
<b>Connect</b>						
Do you have a process in place to deploy wellness resources following a critical incident?						
Do member insurance plans cover mental health and substance abuse treatment services?						
Is your referral network up to date and widely dispersed?						
Are service providers receiving proper training on a consistent basis?						
Have you vetted employee assistance program providers?						

# Action Planning

*Building a comprehensive health and wellness program requires strategic planning, leadership, and teamwork. Use the table to record next steps identified on the previous page. Identify why this step is important, who is best to take the lead, and when it should occur.*

Next Step	Why is this important?	Who will take the lead?	Resources needed for completion (staff time, meetings, funding)	Target date of completion



Next Step	Why is this important?	Who will take the lead?	Resources needed for completion (staff time, meetings, funding)	Target date of completion

# Sample Agency Officer Health and Wellness Assessment Survey

## Sample Agency Officer Health Wellness Assessment Survey

Developing an officer health and wellness program requires buy-in from all levels within an agency. A survey can help understand the unique needs of an agency, as well as officers' perceptions and knowledge of available services. Agencies can use this survey during the development or assessment of officer health and wellness programming.

This survey contains 19 questions for an officer to complete. There is a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions to allow for easy data collection and space for officers to share thoughts on a given topic.

### [Agency Name] Officer Health and Wellness Survey

**1. I am informed of the health and wellness programming at this agency.**

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

0

1

2

3

4

5

**2. Have you ever received information or resources from a representative of your agency's health and wellness program?**

Yes

No

**3. How often do you participate in health and wellness services in your agency?**

At least weekly

Monthly

Quarterly or less

I do not participate in health and wellness programs

**4. I would participate in future health and wellness programming at this agency.**

Yes

No

**Why or Why not?** *[short answer]*

**5. Do you believe that a health and wellness program is or would be a benefit to you? Why or why not? [short answer]**

**6. What do you believe is the most essential part to officer health and wellness and why? [short answer]**

**7. What areas of health and wellness would you want covered by a Health and Wellness Program? [select all that apply]**

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Peer Support                              | Retirement Planning/Transition |
| Suicide Prevention                        | Family Wellness                |
| Resilience and Mindfulness                | Other please specify:          |
| Physical, Sleep, and Nutritional Wellness |                                |
| Stress Management and Vicarious Trauma    |                                |
| Financial Assistance                      |                                |

**8. As a result of agency efforts and resources, what areas of health and wellness are you most aware of? [select all that apply]**

- |   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Peer Support                              | Retirement Planning/Transition |
| Suicide Prevention                        | Family Wellness                |
| Resilience and Mindfulness                | Other please specify:          |
| Physical, Sleep, and Nutritional Wellness |                                |
| Stress Management and Vicarious Trauma    |                                |
| Financial Assistance                      |                                |

**9. What areas of health and wellness are you least knowledgeable of or have you not received enough information on? [select all that apply]**

Peer Support

Financial Assistance

Suicide Prevention

Retirement Planning/Transition

Resilience and Mindfulness

Family Wellness

Physical, Sleep, and Nutritional Wellness

Other please specify:

Stress Management and Vicarious Trauma

**10. Have you ever missed work to care for your mental wellbeing?**

Yes

No

**11. Have you ever missed work due to a work-related physical health issue or injury?**

Yes

No

**12. How many hours a week do you believe an officer should dedicate to his/her health and wellness?**

0-1 hours

5-10 hours

1-2 hours

10 or more hours

2-5 hours

**13. How many hours a week do you dedicate to your health and wellness?**

0-1 hours

5-10 hours

1-2 hours

10 or more hours

2-5 hours

**14. How likely are you to speak with other officers about health and wellness?**

Not Willing

Very Willing

0

1

2

3

4

5

**15. Do you believe that your agency is doing enough for your family's health and wellness?**

Yes

No

**16. What programming, activities, or resources would you like access to? [select all that apply]**

Handouts

Training

Presentations

Other please specify:

Professional Planning (ex: family, financial, etc.)

Group Activities

**17. What areas of health and wellness do you think your agency is doing well? [short answer]**

**18. What areas of health and wellness do you think your agency could improve upon? [short answer]**

**19. What other thoughts do you have about a health and wellness program in your agency? [short answer]**

**If your agency has an EAP provider, consider asking the following questions:**

**1. Are you aware that your organization has an Employee Assistance Program?**

Yes

No

**2. If you are, have you ever used/accessed the EAP?**

Yes

No

**3. If you have used the EAP, how helpful did you find the services?**

Not Helpful

Very Helpful

0

1

2

3

4

5

**4. What resource(s) of the EAP did you find most helpful? Select all that apply.**

Crisis, family, or individual counseling

Other please specify:

Self-assessments online

Elder or childcare assistance



# Survey Key

When administering a survey, it is important to understand what certain answers may indicate.

- **Question 1** may speak to how well wellness programming currently operates. If an officer responds “no” to this question when the agency does have a wellness program in place, it may indicate that increased marketing and outreach of services is necessary. The same can be assumed if a person answers “no” to Question 2.
- **Questions 1 and 3** on this survey may provide insight to officers’ feelings on health and wellness as a whole. If a respondent answers “no” to both of these questions, that may reveal that they do not see the use or necessity of a health and wellness program which could require a cultural shift in the agency before introducing wellness programming.
- **Questions 4-9** may aid in identifying officers’ interests and knowledge in particular topics. These answers will provide insight into the areas officers feel are either covered well, lacking, or in which more education is desired. These results may be used to appropriately steer the direction of the programming.
- **Questions 10 and 11** will show how many officers have missed work as a result of a physical or mental health injury or issue. This can be an important measure in tracking the budgetary impact of officer days missed for mental and physical injuries. When tracked over time, these data points can help demonstrate the growth and benefit of the program.
- **Questions 12 and 13** may provide cultural information for the agency as well as a moment of reflection for the officer completing the survey. If respondents answer questions on the lower scale of “0-1 hours” then there may need to be a shift in the organizational culture before moving forward with wellness programming.
- **Question 14** may assist in showing how productive a peer-to-peer program could be. A higher answer shows officers are comfortable talking with each other. A lower answer may indicate interest in mental health service options from an outside agency source. These responses may also provide insight on how comfortable officers are in talking about health and wellness.
- **Question 15** can provide information on how well the officer feels their family is included in health and wellness considerations.
- **Question 16** provides options for officers to explain what style of information and training is helpful. This could serve as a guide for how the department disseminates information about/within the health and wellness program.
- **Questions 17-19** will give respondents an opportunity to give more detail regarding their answers to several of the questions above (short answer).

It is important to remember that this survey serves as a template and can be adjusted to better meet agency needs. Some areas that can be added are demographic questions (gender, race, age, etc.) as well as questions that focus more on the health and wellness program the agency is trying to create or already has in place.



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