

Law Enforcement Agency Action Items

CONDENSED VERSION OF CULTURE CHANGE & PROTOCOL ARTICLES

There are numerous strategies outlined in the reports addressing officer mental wellness and suicide prevention, and they are most effective if implemented by every federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agency along a continuum of prevention, intervention, and post-vention objectives:

- **Prevent** the disastrous effects of mental illness and officer death by suicide on officers, their families, and police agencies
- Effectively **intervene** in those cases where officers are in a mental health crisis, suffer from mental illness, or demonstrate suicidal behavior
- Establish effective **post-vention** policies to help support the families and the department when an officer dies by suicide

Prevention

- Start at the top and recruit leaders who care about the mental wellness of their officers, and who unequivocally endorse physical and mental wellness parity as critical to a resilient and healthy police force.
- Recruit and hire resilient officers who have demonstrated a commitment to public service and proven stress management skills.
- Institutionalize mental wellness and suicide prevention policies and practices. Formalize in writing, provide training on, and conduct recurring audits of relevant policies and practices, such as whether the agency encourages annual mental check-ins with peer support counselors, department psychologists, mental health professionals, or other providers.
- Audit the existing psychological providers and determine whether they are effective in identifying early warning signs of mental crisis or illness, and suicidal behavior and ideation.
- Initiate an agency campaign to raise awareness of mental health and wellness, particularly in identifying the warning signs and how to intervene. Use pre-vetted, ready-made model training and awareness campaigns to cut down on costs and resources, but tailor the campaign to the agency's needs and routinely update materials so they don't become stale.
- Invest in training agency-wide and throughout officers' careers on mental wellness and stress management. Include both routine resiliency training and critical incident training, with a particular emphasis on training first-line supervisors.

- Provide family training and events to reinforce and invest in family connections. Ensure that family members are able to identify signs of emotional trauma and make appropriate referrals when necessary

Intervention

- Similar to prevention protocols, establish intervention protocols tailored to assist officers at-risk for mental health crisis and illness, as well as suicidal behavior or ideation. Again, ensure that these protocols are institutionalized via established written policies, training programs, and agency awareness campaigns.
- Audit psychological service providers to ensure that they effectively intervene when officers are having emotional problems, suffering from mental illness, or demonstrating suicidal behavior or ideation. For example, ensure that a peer support group is formally trained to identify signs of depression, anxiety, and other disorders, and to whom to refer at-risk officers. Train supervisors on the “words to say” when they encounter an officer in emotional trauma.
- Pay closer attention to at-risk groups and develop specially tailored intervention programs, including programs for retirees, veterans, and disabled officers.

Event response

- Develop formalized and routinely published protocols specifying actions to take when an officer dies by suicide. Include in these protocols:
 - Funeral policies
 - Family, agency, and community notification
 - Media relations
 - Post-incident counseling and agency wide mental health awareness actions

Resources

Question Persuade Refer (QPR) for Law Enforcement, Crisis Intervention Training, Psychological First Aid for First Responders

Trainings that are offered on the South Dakota Suicide Prevention page that give First Responders tools to cope with traumatic events.

<https://sdsuicideprevention.org/professionals/first-responders/>

“Preventing Law Enforcement Officer Suicide: A Compilation of Resources and Best Practices.” In 2009, the IACP, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), and EEI Communications partnered to produce a valuable set of innovative resources to help law enforcement agencies prevent and respond to officer suicide. This product is a collection of materials from leading agencies around the country. This interactive CD-ROM contains sample suicide prevention print materials, presentations, training videos, reference publications, and much more. The purpose of this CD-ROM is to provide the law enforcement community with samples and resource materials to initiate a suicide prevention program. All materials were compiled and vetted by the IACP Police Psychological Services Section. EEI Communications and BJA volunteered to design and reproduce the CD-ROM at no cost, allowing the IACP to bring this much-needed product to the field quickly. Order your copy online through NCJRS at www.ncjrs.gov/App/shoppingcart/ShopCart.aspx?item=NCJ%20224436&repro=0

CD-ROM Content Summary:

1. Developing a Law Enforcement Suicide Prevention Program – five steps for initiating a campaign using public health principles.
2. Sample Suicide Prevention Materials – examples of brochures, posters, wallet cards, and program summaries.

3. Sample Training Materials – examples of training presentations, videos, and brochures used by law enforcement agencies.
4. Sample Presentations – examples of PowerPoint presentations on a wide range of suicide related topics, both for the general public and law enforcement-specific.
5. Sample Funeral Protocols – examples of funeral protocols, death notifications, and other similar procedures.
6. Additional Reading – a wide range of supplemental reports, research, articles, and links to related online resources.
7. About this CD – acknowledgements and valuable contact information for key content contributors.
For more information, please contact Kim Kohlhepp at 703-836-6767 ext. 237 or kohlheppk@theiacp.org. For additional police psychological resources, visit the IACP Police Psychological Services Section website at www.theiacp.org/psych_services_section.

“In Harms Way: A Law Enforcement Suicide Prevention Toolkit.” This law enforcement suicide prevention toolkit was developed by the Florida Regional Community Policing Institute and distributed to all Florida law enforcement agencies in October 2007. It was designed by law enforcement as well as subject-matter experts to assist departments in providing suicide prevention training, reducing the stigma associated with seeking help, and encouraging officers to support one another. It includes PowerPoint presentations, model policies and procedures, best practices, research, and recommendations. By clicking on the link below, the user is guided to digital copies of printed materials that are provided in the Toolkit for download and printing. These materials can be customized with each agency seal, logo, name, phone numbers, and contact information. Agencies are permitted to reproduce copies free of charge for distribution within law enforcement agencies provided that agencies do not change the text or delete the credit