



Date: June 17th, 2022

To: Chief Reeves

From: Investigator Citta

Subject: Employee Wellness Policy

One out of 15 officers is experiencing depression now or will at some point in their career, and 25% of officers nationwide are battling a severe problem with alcohol, according to a Police Executive Research Forum study from 2019. Noted in the same survey is that 15% of officers will be affected by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in their career. Add depression and alcohol issues to those affected by PTSD, and the likelihood of those officers committing suicide increases by 10 percent (PERF).

While officer suicide prevention should be at the forefront for all of us, creating a culture of wellness at the North Platte Police Department isn't just about preventing suicide. North Platte PD has not experienced the grief of losing a fellow officer to suicide; however, statistics show many of our officers are suffering from PTSD and depression, likely silently.

The culture of policing is changing. Departments all across the country are working to break the cycle of police officer suicides and the stigma surrounding depression of officer mental health wellness.

Creating a culture of wellness will give our officers the tools and ability to become resilient to the constant stressors of the day-to-day job. Resiliency makes officers a sounder mind to make critical decisions in stressful situations.



Peer-to-peer support is one of the best ways for officers to be able to express themselves and seek help and guidance. I recommend we adopt an "Employee Wellness Policy."

Employee Wellness Policy:

Asher Model (Gang):

The Asher Model is a 7 Step model for creating awareness and peer support for our officers. This model will be the core of implementing a peer support wellness culture. We will create a peer support team to lead the department toward a culture of mindfulness and wellness.

Employee Assistance Program (E.A.P.):

An E.A.P. program already exists; however, there is no information readily available to staff on how to utilize this. Specific details outlining how and where the team can use this program will be available to employees in the policy.

Online and phone resources:

Nationwide there are many cop-to-cop resources and hotlines available. These resources will be posted throughout the department and also outlined in this policy:

1. Project 109- this is a first responder to first responder crisis line and online wellness resource. <https://www.project109.org/>
2. CopLine- Peer support crisis line. Trained retired law enforcement officers answer hotline calls. This hotline is anonymous and provides officers an outlet to talk to a peer about the daily stressors of the job and family issues. 1-800-COPLINE or <https://www.copline.org/>

3. BLUE H.E.L.P.- The goal of this organization is to reduce mental health stigma education for law enforcement. In addition to many resources, Blue H.E.L.P. can assist in finding emotional, financial, and spiritual assistance for first responders through "1st Help". <https://bluehelp.org/>

Regional Psychologist

Due to our remote area and relatively limited number of police officers, having a law enforcement-specific psychologist on staff is unreasonable. I recommend creating a regional wellness task force with other agencies in our region to staff a psychologist and cost-share that expense. This psychologist will have specific occupational experience in the military or law enforcement.

Mindfulness:

Modern-day policing and the number of trauma calls for services officers respond to is a "corrosive drip" on officers' minds and bodies (Moir). In mass, these drips can "core a hole in the soul of a police officer" (Moir). Training and encouraging mindfulness will help officers create resiliency and better handle the day-to-day stressors of the profession. This approach must be from the top down. Providing officers a single minute after a traumatic call to stop and breathe or the opportunity to debrief with a peer coach to collect their thoughts and calm their nerves.

Providing annual training to coach officers on mindfulness, meditation and wellness are crucial. Officers must see the support for this from the command staff to be open to the change and understand the power of awe.

Creating the new Employee Wellness Policy will require training. The department will need to train peer coaches to support the success of these programs. Annual wellness training to remind officers of the available resources and normalize employee wellness and the benefits of peer support and mindfulness.



References:

Police Executive Research Forum. 2019. An Occupational Risk: What Every Police Agency Should Do to Prevent Suicide Among Its Officers.

Gang, Neil. Retrieved 2022. Asher Model 2022.

Project 109. Retrieved 2022. <https://www.project109.org/>

CopLine. Retrieved 2022. <https://www.copline.org/>

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Moir, Sylvia. 2019. The Potential of Mindful Policing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtnwYaNy5dU>