

Mental Health in Law Enforcement

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Introduction

Law enforcement and detention officers are not only uncommonly stressful jobs, however there is immense trauma related to working in this field. A crucial flaw in the system is that law enforcement, detention, and correction agencies are in dire need of programs and collaborations for mental health wellness, support, and crisis teams.

Who does the low enforcement community consist of?

The low enforcement community consists of:

- Command staff
- Police officers, Investigators
- Corrections officers/Jailers
- Forensic technicians
- Administrative Staff
- Families of low enforcement



What are the causes of trauma and stress?

- Vehicle accidents with serious injuries and often fatalities
- Hostage situations sometimes with fatalities
- Dangerous drug busts that may involve shootings and fatalities
- Domestic violence
- Sexual assault and rape with victims that may include children
- Sex and human trafficking
- Hostile attitudes toward law enforcement from the community
- Engaging with violent individuals and gangs
- Other violent crimes and fatalities
- Peers being injured or fatally injured
- Lack of support and resources in the agency
- Recruitment shortages, staffing issues, exhaustive overtime hours

What issues arise when mental health is not addressed?

➤ Mental health issues

- Burnout
- Compassion fatigue
- Mental health disorders including PTSD
- Substance use and abuse
- Suicidal thoughts

➤ Family conflict, domestic violence and divorce

➤ Physical health issues

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Ulcers
- Heart attack
- Other stress related illnesses including sleep issues
- Shorter life span

What are the suicide statistics among officers?

In 2020, 119 police officers died by suicide while 113 died in the line of duty. In 2021 the number rose to 150 officers completing suicide.

- 35.3% have reported PTSD
- 26.5% of police officers suffer from depression

In 2018 it was estimated that 156 corrections officers died by suicide each year and 10 die in the line of duty.

- 34% of corrections officer have been diagnosed with depression
- 54.3% report PTSD

How do most law enforcement agencies navigate mental health support for their employees?



Does the US Government take any responsibility for this crisis?

In January 2018, the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act of 2017 (LEMHWA) was signed into law . The acknowledgement of this act is to recognize that the law enforcement community deserves to manage the mental health and well-being of their employees.

Furthermore, the US Department of Justice announced, in October of 2021, funding designated to promote law enforcement mental health and wellness programs. The programs are implemented through technical assistance, demonstrated projects, peer mentoring, mental health wellness, and suicide prevention programs.

Are there other options for agencies?

- National Consortium on Preventing Law Enforcement Suicide Toolkit support agencies to address mental health concerns and suicide prevention.
- The Voice of Texas Law Enforcement lists many resources on their website.
- SAFLEO is a National Suicide Awareness Program for law enforcement officers where help may be obtained via their website.
- Traumatic Incident Stress Management Program by the state of Michigan where officers are offered support after a critical incident.
- Fort Worth (Texas) Police Union offering free and discreet mental health counseling for officers.

What are some better options not yet available?

- Ideally, each agency would have a staff of licensed mental health professionals for the following services:
 - Face to face sessions, text support, phone and video support
 - Psychoeducation and workshops for officers and families focused on stress management, communication, conflict resolution, problem solving, budgeting and coping skills, self-care
 - Monthly mental health assessments for employees and follow-up communication from the counseling staff
 - On site crisis support and trauma informed care
 - Support groups for various issues for both family and staff



As counselors, what are some ideas of how we can help in this much needed area?

Resources:

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