



**Training Advisory  
Council Official  
Recommendation**

**Establishing an Effective  
Wellness Program**

**May 8, 2019**



## Table of Contents

1.	Team .....	3
2.	Recommendations .....	3
3.	High Level Summary.....	3
4.	Challenges.....	4
5.	Opportunities .....	4
6.	References and Sources .....	6

# ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE WELLNESS PROGRAM

May 8, 2019

## 1. Team

Shawn Campbell, Lead  
Walter Hull  
Richard Mohle  
John Pahkle  
Kezia Wanner  
Sylvia Zingesser

## 2. Recommendations

The Training Advisory Council (TAC) strongly recommends that the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) explore and study existing wellness programs in order to establish its own as soon as possible. The establishment of a comprehensive wellness program is felt to be of the greatest importance to both the bureau and the community.

## 3. High Level Summary

The stressful nature of police work can lead to significant physical and mental health issues if left unmanaged; including poor job performance, impaired decision making ability, and higher agency costs. The need for effective police wellness programs is becoming increasingly recognized nationwide, and it is time to move forward on implementing a similar program for the Portland Police Bureau (PPB).

The implementation of such programs has been shown to have significant beneficial results; including improved officer health and well-being, better public interactions, and budget and organizational improvements. In addition, these direct benefits often lead to many indirect long-term benefits; including a higher quality officer pool and improved public support and trust.

In order to be effective, it is believed that a wellness program must include initiatives targeted towards officer physical health, officer mental health, and spouse and family support. Such programs must be implemented throughout an officer's career, and it is important to include participation as a major factor when choosing those to fill leadership and training positions.

The implementation of a wellness program is most likely the most significant opportunity for the PPB to implement wide reaching change that will positively affect both the bureau's officers and the people they serve.

## 4. Challenges

The duties of the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) put officers in situations every day that endanger their health, safety, and at times even their lives. Additionally, even when not at personal risk, officers are required to be witness to challenging and disturbing events. Over time, the stressful nature of their work can take a toll on their well-being, straining both their physical and mental health. However, internal culture and a lack of organizational support mean that these issues often go ignored both by the individual and by the bureau as a whole.

The implications of not addressing these issues are well understood by experts. Numerous studies indicate that unmanaged officer physical and mental health issues lead to poor job performance, impaired decision making ability, and higher agency costs. Whether it is the bureau itself, city leaders, or the public, all have a stake in making sure that the PPB can carry out its duties as effectively as possible.

The monitoring and tending to officers' health and wellness is increasingly being recognized nationwide as an important pillar of 21st century policing. Officer retention, the use of force, complaints issued against officers, the use of sick days, officer injuries, officer recruitment, and issues of implicit bias can all be tied directly to the effects of unmanaged or mismanaged stress. However, despite this, current PPB wellness initiatives lack the scope needed to fully address the problem. It is imperative that this be rectified.

## 5. Opportunities

The Training Advisory Council (TAC) strongly recommends that the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) explore and study existing wellness programs in order to establish its own as soon as possible. Wellness programs implemented by the police bureau's in San Diego, Indianapolis, and Bend are widely considered some of the best in the nation, and would all make excellent templates for a program focused on the unique needs of the PPB.

A review of these programs has shown beneficial results for the following:

- **Officer health and well-being.** Including improved physical health, increased job satisfaction, lower rates of injury, fewer sick days taken, reduced fatigue and sleeplessness, greater officer retention, an increased feeling of being supported, and an improved sense of well-being.
- **Better public interactions.** Including a decrease in the use of force and fewer complaints against officers. Helping officers manage their stress makes them better able to put into practice trained techniques, such as de-escalation and procedural justice, and is also expected to help reduce issues of implicit bias.
- **Budget and organizational improvements.** Including fewer sick days taken, lower rates of injury and less severe injuries, greater employee retention, and an increase in the number of recruit and lateral applications.

In addition, these direct benefits also lead to many indirect benefits in the long term, including a higher quality officer pool and improved public support and trust. Overall, few other initiatives provide the opportunities for improvement in so many areas as the implementation of an effective wellness program.

The TAC believes that in order to be effective, any wellness program must include initiatives focusing on the following:

- **Officer physical health.** Evaluations should be carried out to gain a better understanding of officer physical functionality, overall health, diet, and sleep patterns. Officer physical health should include paid time for directed work outs focused on the specific needs of the officers both as a group and individuals. Half of this available time should be for classes in yoga, modified to better fit the internal cultural needs of the PPB. Aside from the physical benefits, yoga is also an excellent gateway for the introduction of mindfulness techniques and training. Additional training should focus on nutrition and tips for maintaining a good diet both while on duty and at home. Efforts should be made to make healthy food and drink options more available to officers prior to and during their shifts. The importance of officers taking personal/vacation time when possible should also be emphasized in relation to their physical and mental health.
- **Officer mental health.** The focus should be on improving officer mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and coping strategies. Support should come in the form of peer supporters directed by a permanent position filled by a sworn officer, who also acts as the main resource for the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). In addition, the EAP and its coordinator should be holistically integrated into the wellness program. In order for support networks to succeed, officers need to feel that using such a service will not have a negative effect on their career. Mindfulness training should be a key part of both academy and in-service training, along with the normalization of recognizing and dealing with mental health issues related to police work. In the carrying out of their duties, officers should be given the opportunity, time and space, to put mindfulness techniques into practice when needed. Efforts should also be made to introduce short guided mindfulness practice at the beginning and/or end of each shift.
- **Spouse and family support.** An officer's home life is just as important as their on-duty life. One important area is to provide training to help spouses and families better understand the stresses related to police work with a focus on the mental health aspects. Opportunities should also be created for training in financial management, which should be done in a fashion to allow the participation of spouses. Additionally, work should be done to better create and organize family support groups.

In order to be effective, a successful wellness program must be implemented throughout the officers' time of service. It must factor into and be included in academy training, in-service trainings, pre-shift briefings, and time on duty. As well, participation in the wellness program must be an important factor in the choosing of officers to fill leadership positions and training positions.

In creating a Wellness Program, the bureau should gather input from sworn and non-sworn officers of all ranks regarding the stresses they currently deal with, how they currently deal with those stresses, and how well they feel their strategies work. Consideration should be given for differing stresses based upon job type and rank. Input should also be gathered from family members regarding the related stresses that they face.

The above is only a basic outline of the hopes TAC has for the establishment of a wellness program within the PPB. The TAC looks forward to working further with the PPB as the process of creating an effective wellness program moves forward. While the creation of a wellness program faces many hurdles and challenges; such as

leadership support, officer buy-in, and budgetary concerns; it is strongly felt that none of these are insurmountable. The implementation of a wellness program is most likely the most significant opportunity for the PPB to implement wide reaching change that will positively affect both the bureau's officers and the people they serve.

## 6. References and Sources

### **List of Individuals**

Captain Erica Hurley, Training Division  
Lieutenant Jacob Clark, Training Division

### **Documents and Summaries**

*Videos describing Bend Police Department Wellness Program*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-E5YAQm6R8g>

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqfjMVtns1M>

*Overview of Indianapolis Metropolitan Department Wellness Program*

<http://www.nleomf.org/assets/pdfs/destination-zero/resources-wellness/Executive-Summary.pdf>

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/destination-zero/2017/DZ%20Conf/Indianapolis-Metropolitan-Police-Department.pdf>

*Overview of San Diego Police Department Officer Wellness Program*

<https://www.policeforum.org/assets/SanDiegoOSW.pdf>

### **News Articles**

*Articles related to Bend Police Department Wellness Program*

<https://www.ktvz.com/news/bend-pd-wellness-program-earns-national-award/745034716>

<https://www.saif.com/safety-and-health/the-latest-crime-fighting-weapon-warrior-pose.html>

<https://www.opb.org/news/article/bend-police-yoga-wellness-mindfulness/>

<https://melmagazine.com/en-us/story/to-protect-serve-and-meditate>

*Articles related to Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department Wellness Program*

<https://www.wfyi.org/news/articles/nations-top-cop-lauds-impd-for-officer-wellness-program>

<https://www.indystar.com/story/news/crime/2016/04/13/attorney-general-loretta-lynch-meet-impd/82971390/>

<https://www.policeone.com/chiefs-sheriffs/videos/242938519-Officer-wellness-and-resiliency-The-IMPD-model/>

*Articles related to San Diego Police Department Wellness Program*

<https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/Study-Police-Officers-3-Times-More-Likely-to-Die-from-Suicide-Than-in-the-Line-of-Duty-482432481.html>