

Atlanta Police Department – Standard Operating Procedure		
	APD.SOP.2165 Behavioral Health Wellness Effective Date: August 27th, 2024	
Chief Darin Schierbaum	Signature by: DS	Date Signed: 8/27/2024

New Policy

APD.SOP.2165 Behavioral Health Wellness

APD Staff,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reports that police officers experience higher rates of depression, burnout, PTSD, and anxiety than the general population.

The City of Atlanta Police Department recognizes that the exposure to daily stress as well as traumatic incidents is an expected part of the job in public safety and has established steps to provide all personnel with access to mental health wellness services.

These steps include a preventative approach that can help employees to maintain wellness and resilience and assist in avoiding problems that may impair job performance and break down the barriers to seeking such services. Wellness visits are such an approach. In accordance with the *IACP Police Psychological Services Section Guidelines for Wellness Visits for Law Enforcement*, the Public Safety Behavioral Health Wellness Unit Chief Public Safety Psychologist and clinical staff will utilize, conduct, oversee, and manage employee safety and wellness programs involving wellness visits for law enforcement personnel.

It is a priority of the Chief of Police and this department to ensure that our officers receive the attention and care that they deserve. The Public Safety Behavioral Health Wellness Unit has partnered with Atlanta Police Department to provide training, resources, educational measures, wellness visits, and access to supervisor/command consultations necessary for mental health services to ensure overall wellness needs are provided proactively. **Therefore, effective January 1st, 2025, Sworn Personnel, E911 and Crime Scene Technicians will be required to attend a minimum of one wellness visit annually. Civilians will be required to attend biennially.**

Thank you and stay informed!

**Policy and Standards Section
Planning, Research, and Accreditation Unit**



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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to have the Public Safety Behavioral Health Wellness Unit (PS-BHWU) provide preventative mental health and wellness services.

2. POLICY

The PS-BHWU will provide employees with access to mental health and wellness services to help them understand and resolve emotional difficulties and take those measures necessary to ensure their wellness and safety.

City of Atlanta Public Safety Division will maintain mental health and wellness programming under the leadership of the Chief Public Safety Psychologist through:

- A. Psychoeducation, training, consultation, and wellness visits
- B. Collaboration and referral to PSEAP for their core services
- C. Contractual services of approved external qualified mental health professional(s) (QMHP)

Effective January 1st, 2025, Sworn Employees, E-911 and Crime Scene Technicians will be required to attend annual wellness visits with PS-BHWU. Civilian employees will be required to attend biennially (once every two years).

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 THE CITY OF ATLANTA POLICE DEPARTMENT WILL:

- 3.1.1 Ensure the Chief Public Safety Psychologist identify, vet, and enlist the necessary resources and qualified mental health professionals who are trained in public safety culture, traumatic incident response, police officer wellness and resilience, as well as cumulative stress/trauma; and plan and supervise psychological research efforts specific to the public safety culture.
- 3.1.2 Make confidential mental health services available to all employees as allowed by policy.
- 3.1.3 Ensure that all employees participate in a mandatory annual wellness visit, which will include a psychoeducational consultation with a qualified mental health professional.
- 3.1.4 Ensure that all employees have access to, and are provided opportunities to, participate in post-incident mental health wellness consultation with the Public Safety Behavioral Health Wellness Unit.
- 3.1.5 Offer ongoing in-service training and education for employees to promote mental health and overall wellness.
- 3.1.6 Ensure Executive Command Staff and Officers engage in consultation with the Chief Public Safety Psychologist regarding mental health and wellness related issues.
- 3.1.7 Support and educate employees about the importance of their rights and responsibilities specific to their health and wellness.

3.2 The Chief Public Safety Psychologist will:

- 3.2.1 Engage in mental health wellness and psychological consultation services that meet standards of accreditation, professional ethics, and guidelines.
- 3.2.2 Work directly with the Behavioral Health Wellness Unit staff and provide psychoeducation training to all public safety personnel, sworn and civilian, related to wellness, resilience, and prevention.
- 3.2.3 Coordinate with Institutional Review Boards in regard to psychological research specific to public safety.
- 3.2.4 Collaborate with qualified mental health professionals to develop comprehensive psychological prevention, consultation, and psychological support services.

4. PROCEDURE

4.1 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1.1 All supervisory personnel will monitor their employee's wellbeing.
- 4.1.2 The supervisor will take the initiative and discuss any concerns with an individual or group to educate them on behavioral health and wellness services available.
- 4.1.3 The supervisor will be cognizant of discretion and confidentiality of identified individuals, disclosing concerns regarding the individual only when relevant to the health and welfare of the employee or when required by policy.
- 4.1.4 The supervisor will routinely observe employees for stress related signs which are, but not limited to:
 - 1. Social withdrawal
 - 2. Angry outbursts/insubordination
 - 3. Increase in citizen complaints
 - 4. Apparent changes in behavior, personality, or physical appearance
 - 5. Increase in alcohol consumption
 - 6. Intensified fatigue and/or sleep deprivation
 - 7. Reckless behavior and/or ideas
 - 8. Employee disclosure of interpersonal relationship discord
 - 9. Any employee disclosure that would be a cause for concern

Such concerns regarding an individual brought forth by another employee must be considered and explored by the supervisor. At any time, but particularly following a critical incident, the supervisor or other employee may recommend the need for post-incident or stress related wellness consultation.

4.2 SCOPE OF SERVICES

- 4.2.1 City of Atlanta Public Safety Division promotes a proactive response to mental health and wellness by requiring all personnel, sworn and civilian, to attend an annual wellness visit and consultation.
- 4.2.2 Supervisors and Executive Command Staff are also recommended to engage in ongoing consultation regarding programming needs and personnel of concern

4.3 WELLNESS VISIT

- 4.3.1 The wellness visit will include a confidential 30-minute screening and psychoeducational training and discussion with a Behavioral Health Wellness Unit Clinician.
- 4.3.2 Record of attendance will be maintained and will be the only information made available to the department.
- 4.3.3 Any Protected Health Information (PHI) will be maintained via an external HIPAA compliant medical electronic database and will not be accessible to the department, except for imminent threats to oneself or others.
- 4.3.4 During visits, employees will engage in dialogue regarding psychoeducation and recommendations.
- 4.3.5 The following employees are required to attend a minimum of one wellness consultation and visit each year.
 - 1. Sworn Employees
 - 2. E-911 Employees
 - 3. Crime Scene Technicians
- 4.3.6 Civilian employees, with the exception of E-911 and Crime Scene Technicians, will be required to attend once every two years.
- 4.3.7 Additional wellness training is encouraged through the Behavioral Health Wellness Unit, which offers training, workshops, wellness activities, and other programming throughout the year.

4.4 POST-INCIDENT

- 4.4.1 The Public Safety Behavioral Health Wellness Unit will be notified by EAP and supervisory personnel in the event additional support services and resources are needed to assist EAP with the following:
 - 1. Post-Incident Mental Health De-Briefing
 - 2. Post-Incident or Stress related critical incident follow up consultation.
 - 3. Individual case consultation
- 4.4.2 Attendance in a post-incident EAP de-briefing session may be voluntary or mandatory depending on the individual's degree of involvement and other factors being weighed. Attendance will be mandatory for all directly involved personnel (i.e., dispatcher(s), responding officer(s),

supervisor(s) on duty, etc.) when the call for de-briefing is identified and ordered by the Command Staff.

- 4.4.3 Following the EAP De-briefing, the Behavioral Health Wellness Unit will create training and prevention programming, which will address main concerns and priorities from the critical incident.
- 4.4.4 An individual employee may need an additional wellness consultation in response to a critical incident (i.e., post fire-fatality, officer involved shooting) or based on identified stressors or concerning behaviors.
- 4.4.5 The consultation regarding return-to-work status will be completed by PS/EAP or by a qualified mental health professional provider; separate from the initial debriefing and wellness consultation.

4.5 MAINTAINING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WELLNESS

- 4.5.1 Any employee may request an initial contact wellness visit or consultation at any time for any reason.
- 4.5.2 Upon completion of the initial wellness visit and consultation, additional therapeutic support should be provided by an external qualified mental health professional or PS/EAP.
- 4.5.3 Annual wellness visits, consultations, post-incident or stress related sessions, are confidential services offered as a benefit to public safety employees.

4.6 MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS GROUP TRAINING

- 4.6.1 On-going education and training on topics related to mental health wellness are essential to creating and maintaining a culture that validates and supports the wellness needs of its employees.
- 4.6.2 Both in-person/live and virtual/online trainings by experts will be provided to all employees throughout the year, both mandatory and voluntary. Supervisors will ensure the participation and attendance of their employees on and/or off duty.
- 4.6.3 Off-site training opportunities will be considered and/or arranged at the discretion of the Command Staff.
- 4.6.4 All employees will be compensated when attending mandated training outside of duty hours.

5. DEFINITIONS

Mental Health and Wellness Services: Services provided by or promoted by a qualified mental health professional (QMHP) to include but not limited to psychoeducation, outreach initiatives, wellness visits, resources, and referrals.

Psychoeducation: Evidence-based intervention that provides resources, education and information related to mental health and wellness.

Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP): An individual approved by the Department of Human Resources via the vetting process by the Chief Public Safety Psychologist and PS/EAP



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Director, who is licensed as a mental health professional and has an in-depth understanding of trauma-related disorders in public safety personnel and overall public safety culture.

Traumatic Incident: An incident that overwhelms normal coping mechanisms and causes extreme psychological distress.

Screening Form: Documents (privacy statement and confidential questionnaire) provided by the BHWU prior to the Behavioral Health Wellness Visit. [Initial Paperwork and Wellness Screen Form](#)

Behavioral Health Wellness Visit: An opportunity for employees to meet with a qualified mental health professional for a 1-on-1 mental health psychoeducation discussion upon completing their screening form.

Wellness Consultation: An opportunity for employees to discuss areas of concern with a member of the Behavioral Health Wellness Unit and receive guidance and recommendations specific to behavioral health resources.

6. CANCELLATIONS

New Directive

7. REFERENCES

- International Association Chiefs of Police: Police Psychology Section - *Guidelines for Wellness Visits for Law Enforcement Personnel* (2023).

https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/IACP%20PPSS%20Wellness%20Visit%20Guidelines_0.pdf

- Department of Justice Report on Best Practices to Address Law Enforcement Officer Wellness: *Practices to Foster a Culture of Wellness and Psychological Health and Well-being Of Law Enforcement Agency Personnel* (2023).

https://www.justice.gov/d9/2023-05/Sec.%204%28a%29%20-Report%20on%20Best%20Practices%20to%20Advance%20Officer%20Wellness_FINAL.pdf

- APD.SOP.2022 – Early Intervention and Early Warning System