

	ELGIN POLICE DEPARTMENT 151 Douglas Avenue Elgin, Illinois 60120	
Effective Date: 05/30/18	STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE	Revised Date: 12/19/23
Chief of Police: 	Employee Wellness, 16.7	
Cross Reference: 50 ILCS 705/6		Policy Sections: 16.7.1 Peer Support Program 16.7.2 Northern Illinois Critical Incident Stress Management Team (NICISMT) 16.7.3 Healthy Minds Program 16.7.4 Mandatory Regular Mental Health Screenings for Probationary and Permanent Police Officers 16.7.5 Employee Assistance Program (EAP) 16.7.6 Family Support Appendix A: ILETSB Mental Health Screening Recommendations Appendix B: Wellness Conversation Resources

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the department's employee wellness initiatives.

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the department to ensure the safety and well-being of all employees. Employees experiencing personal difficulties that impact their personal and/or professional lives are encouraged to secure quality professional and confidential assistance. Confidentiality is crucial to the department's ability to create an environment for employees to receive support without fear of any negative consequences or reactions. The department shall take the necessary precautions to ensure the highest degree of confidentiality is maintained when an employee participates in any of the employee wellness initiatives.

Employees may seek voluntary services that include professional counseling services either independently through the city's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or the Healthy Minds Program. The police department also provides all employees an opportunity to receive peer support through times of personal or professional crisis through the Peer Support Program. The Peer Support Program is also available to all retired employees. Peer support is not a professional service regulated by the State of Illinois. Peer support does not claim to be or practice any regulated service and is not a substitute for specialized services but serves as a liaison between peers and needed professionals in complex cases. Peer supporters are trained to listen, refer, and support.

The overall health and wellness of the department is an integral component in the department's continued ability to serve the community. As required by law (50 ILCS 705/6), the department ensures all officers attend a brief wellness conversation with the Healthy Minds Program Coordinator to ensure familiarity with the support systems available to them.

DEFINITIONS

Employee Assistance Program (EAP): Professional support services coordinated through the city's employee assistance provider which offers a wide spectrum of services.

Healthy Minds Program: Employee mental health program coordinated by the healthy minds program coordinator, in conjunction with the Training Division, which is designed to offer voluntary mental health visits for employees.

Healthy Minds Program Coordinator: Employee of the police department who is responsible for implementation of the department's voluntary Healthy Minds Program and mandatory annual mental health screening of police officers.

Peer Support Chairperson: Supervisor appointed by the chief of police to oversee the activities of the department's Peer Support Program and provides administrative assistance when required or needed to the peer support program coordinator.

Peer Support Program: Program coordinated by the peer support program coordinator which is designed to provide current and retired employees with peer support during times of a personal or professional crisis.

Peer Support Program Coordinator: Employee appointed by the peer support chairperson, with approval from the chief of police, to manage and direct the Peer Support Program.

Peer Support Advisory Committee: Consists of the chairperson, program coordinator and current peer supporters. Collectively, committee members establish the procedures of the Peer Support Program, team membership, and the direction of the program with approval from the chief of police.

Peer Supporter: Employee (active or retired) or a department volunteer selected by the Peer Support Advisory Committee tasked with the role of responding to peer support requests, as soon as practical, on a voluntary basis.

Peer Support Counseling: A form of self-help offered by a peer supporter to assist an employee during a time of need.

We Never Walk Alone: A web-based platform for law enforcement officers to obtain wellness treatment options, educational material, external sources, and real time interaction with advisors and peers during a time of professional or personal crisis.

PROCEDURES

16.7.1 PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

- A. The Peer Support Program is not meant to replace professional counseling services or the city's Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The department recognizes that some employees are more comfortable seeking support from a trained law enforcement employee who understands the challenges associated with a career in law enforcement or prefers to confer with someone they are familiar with or have established a trust based relationship or existing relationship. Communication between the peer supporter and the requesting employee is confidential provided it does not violate any law or department policy. Refer to Section 16.7.1 (F) to review additional information on confidentiality guidelines.
- B. The program objectives are, but not limited to:
 - 1. Provide support for a personal or professional crisis to employees who request assistance.
 - 2. Promote trust, allow appropriate anonymity, and preserve confidentiality for persons using the Peer Support Program within the program guidelines.
 - 3. Develop peer supporters who can compassionately provide peer support, identify personal conflicts, and provide guidance or referral to professional/alternate resources, as appropriate.
 - 4. Ensure peer supporters receive the appropriate training to effectively implement the program objectives.
- C. All members of the Peer Support Advisory Committee may serve in the role of Peer Supporter. The specific responsibilities of committee members are outlined below:
 - 1. The Peer Support Chairperson shall:

- a. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Peer Support Program.
 - b. Identify and/or develop available resources for employees seeking assistance.
 - c. Coordinate training with the Training Division.
 - d. Ensure employees serving on the Peer Support Advisory Committee adhere to program guidelines and confidentiality rules.
 - e. Receive feedback on any part of the program, process, and delivery of support; this information shall be provided to advisory committee members, as appropriate.
 - f. Confer with command staff to obtain approval of new peer supporters, as recommended by the Peer Support Advisory Committee.
 - g. Collaborate with the Peer Support Program Coordinator on the above responsibilities and assist the coordinator, as needed.
2. The Peer Support Program Coordinator shall:
- a. Assist the Peer Support Chairperson with the above-listed responsibilities.
 - b. Handle the daily activities of the program and the overall supervision of the program.
 - c. Delegate tasks to the peer support members and provide assistance as needed; ensure peer support members address situations in a timely manner and use resources appropriately.
 - d. Coordinate and/or provide peer support training and maintain training records; ensure the Training Division has access to training records.
 - e. Review complaints, conflicts, and issues; provide an appropriate resolution and consult with the peer support chairperson, as appropriate.
3. Peer Supporters shall:
- a. Respond to assigned peer support requests and work directly with the requesting employee to provide support and facilitate the appropriate resources.
 - b. Follow program and training guidelines; adhere to the applicable laws and confidentiality rules.
 - c. Successfully complete the required training as specified in Section 16.7.1 (E).
 - d. Remain available for additional follow-up support.
 - e. Consult with the program coordinator or designee in the event there are questions pertaining to federal, state, or local laws, or department policy.
- D. All employees who are interested in serving as a peer supporter must submit a letter of interest to the Peer Support Chairperson.
- 1. The Peer Support Advisory Committee will review the letters of interest and conduct applicant interviews. Recommendations will be forwarded to the Chief of Police for approval through the Peer Support Chairperson.

2. Candidates must meet the following criteria:
 - a. Demonstrate the ability to maintain confidentiality.
 - b. Ability to be empathetic and compassionate.
 - c. Possess strong interpersonal and communication skills.
 - d. Self-motivated and ability to work independently.
 - e. Possess time management skills to allow minimal impact on his/her normal job duties.
- E. The Peer Support Program adheres to the training requirements established by We Never Walk Alone. [Click here to learn about Peer Support training options.](#)
 1. Selected candidates must successfully pass an approved peer support training class. Upon successful completion of this training, employees attain the status of a voluntary member of the We Never Walk Alone Peer Support Team.
 2. Annually, the department requires Peer Supporters to successfully complete authorized training to maintain peer support status. The Peer Support Chairperson must ensure this training is completed each year and forwarded to the Training Division for inclusion in the employee's training records.
- F. The acceptance and success of the Peer Support Program is dependent on the Peer Supporter's ability to maintain confidentiality.
 1. It is imperative that Peer Supporters and other committee members maintain strict confidentiality of all information surrounding an employee's situation within the guidelines of the Peer Support Program.
 2. Communication between the Peer Supporter and requesting employee is confidential, except for matters involving the following:
 - a. Danger to self.
 - b. Danger to others.
 - c. Suspected child abuse.
 - d. Suspected domestic violence.
 - e. Suspected elderly abuse.
 - f. Serious criminal offenses.
 - g. Cases where the law requires divulgence.
 3. A general principle for the Peer Supporter is to inform the person prior to discussion what the limitations and exceptions are regarding the information revealed. In those cases where there is a concern or question about confidentiality, the peer supporter must contact the Peer Support Team Coordinator or designee.
- G. There may be situations where the Peer Supporter is assisting a peer who is or becomes the subject of an internal investigation.
 1. The Peer Supporter shall follow the confidentiality guidelines of the Peer Support Program subject to the requirements of subsection (F) (2) above.

2. Peer Supporters shall not volunteer any information received in confidence; however, he/she shall not hamper or impede the investigation or attempt to act as a representative for the employee.
 3. The Peer Supporter's role in disciplinary situations is one of support and assisting the peer through the disciplinary process. If Peer Supporters have any questions during these situations, they shall consult with the Peer Support Program Coordinator or designee.
- H. Peer Supporters who wish to separate from the Peer Support Program are asked to submit their separation in writing to the Peer Support Chairperson.
1. Failure to fulfil the duties of a peer supporter, breach of confidentiality, or failure to adhere to department policy and applicable laws shall result in removal from the program and or discipline.
- I. Peer support may be requested by:
1. Visiting the We Never Walk Alone website, [click here to visit the website](#), and logging into the officer's account or utilize the mobile app to contact a peer support team member outside the Elgin Police Department. This page is also accessible through the department's internal mobile app.
 2. Contacting any department peer support team member.
 3. Third party request – employees can request peer support for a co-worker by contacting a department peer support team member.
- J. The assigned Peer Supporter will make contact with the requesting person.
1. He/she is authorized to use department facilities or an agreed upon outside location to meet.
 2. When the meeting is conducted on duty time, the Peer Supporter shall obtain permission from his/her supervisor, unless exigent circumstances exist. No names or personal identifiers will be given to the supervisor.
- K. Participation by the peer supporter and requesting person is voluntary; no overtime or compensatory time will be authorized during the performance of peer supporter duties unless authorized by the Peer Support Chairperson, Chief of Police, or designee.

16.7.2 NORTHERN ILLINOIS CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT TEAM (NICISMT)

- A. The Elgin Police Department is a participating member of NICISMT.
- B. NICISMT provides a source for critical incident stress debriefings for all first responder agencies in Northern Illinois. [Click here to learn more about NICISMT](#)
- C. The Chief of Police may designate a department member as a participant on the NICISM Team.
- D. A department member may participate in a critical incident debriefing after an unusually traumatic event. The decision to request a critical incident debrief will be made by the incident supervisor in conjunction with the Peer Support Chairperson, Chief of Police, or designee.

16.7.3 HEALTHY MINDS PROGRAM

- A. The Healthy Minds Program is designed to offer voluntary mental health visits for employees. The purpose of the program is to encourage employees to receive preventative psychological care, which will enhance their overall wellness.
- B. The program is administered by the Healthy Minds Program Coordinator in conjunction with the Training Division.
- C. The program offers four one-hour visits with a department mental health professional. The visits will occur quarterly or as determined by the employee and the Healthy Minds Program Coordinator.
 - 1. The employee's participation shall be recorded for the purpose of documenting that the employee's received a personal day.
 - 2. The department shall not receive any medical information about the employee except information that requires mandated reporting by law.
 - 3. Refer to Section 16.7.4 to view information pertaining to the mandatory annual wellness conversation for sworn police officers and the Healthy Minds Program Coordinator. Completion of this conversation will count towards one of the four one-hour visits.
- D. Employees may also see their own mental health professional and provide a signed doctor's note to show proof of attending four counseling sessions to the Training Division. Employees will be responsible for the cost associated with using their own mental health professional.
- E. A supervisor designated by the Chief of Police is responsible for the overall administration of the program. The Training Division is responsible for tracking participation.
- F. The police department also recognizes First Responder Mental Health Day, which falls on the third Friday in May. Associated initiatives or events in support of this day shall be coordinated by the Healthy Minds Program Coordinator.

16.7.4 MANDATORY REGULAR MENTAL HEALTH SCREENINGS FOR PROBATIONARY AND PERMANENT POLICE OFFICERS

- A. Pursuant to 50 ILCS 705/6, the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board (ILETSB) provides statewide standards for regular mental health screenings for probationary and permanent police officers. Refer to Appendix A to view the ILETSB mental health screening recommendations.
- B. Departmental compliance to these standards is described below:
 - 1. Psychological evaluation of newly hired recruit officers
 - a. A psychological evaluation of police officer candidates is coordinated by the city's Human Resources Department.
 - b. The evaluation contains a battery examination of characteristics of the candidate to include personality traits that support resiliency to the challenges of a career in law enforcement.
 - c. Candidates passing the examination are eligible to move onto the next phase of the testing process for probationary police officer.
 - 2. Screening of new recruit officers while they are at the law enforcement training academy
 - a. The Training Division maintains weekly contact with recruits who are undergoing

training at the law enforcement training academy and monitors their general growth and development.

- b. When concerns are identified, the Training Division shall work with the law enforcement training academy and recruit to ensure more specific testing and education is given in the identified areas, to include skillsets that strengthen the resiliency of the recruit.
- c. Supplemental training may occur at the law enforcement training academy or during the in-house and field training program at the department.

3. **Mandatory Annual Wellness Conversation**

- a. Annually police officers are required to attend a wellness conversation with the Healthy Minds Program Coordinator. The purpose of this conversation is to provide a list of resources available to them. Completion of this conversation fulfills one of the four Healthy Minds Program sessions needed to receive a personal day; refer to Section 16.4.3 for more information on the Healthy Minds Program.
- b. Costs associated with the screening will be covered by the department with no financial costs being passed onto the employee unless services were provided by a third party.
- c. Wellness conversations shall be general and brief but allow for more detailed questions to be asked if certain metrics are displayed, such as a majority or substantial number of responses indicating the negative impact of trauma, signs of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or other negative outcomes related to the officer's career. Refer to Appendix B to view the list of resources that are discussed during the wellness conversation.
- d. In the course of any wellness conversation, confidentiality is paramount. The content of the officer's conversation with the Healthy Minds Coordinator shall remain anonymous and confidential.
- e. The content of the discussion shall not be used for any fitness or promotional matters.
- f. Annually, the Healthy Minds Program Coordinator shall prepare a written summary of the overall health and wellness of the department which will be forwarded to the Chief of Police through the chain of command.

16.7.5 EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)

The city's confidential Employee Assistance Program is monitored by the Human Resources Department and administered through the authorized employee assistance provider. Employees may access support services through use of the following link: <https://www.cityofelgin.org/740/Employee-Assistance-Program>.

16.7.6 FAMILY SUPPORT

Families play a crucial role in the employee's overall health and wellness. The department coordinates a family support day on an annual basis. Family members are provided with material related to mental health, resiliency, mindfulness, and other resources.

APPENDIX A: ILETSB MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS



Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board

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MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS

Public Act 101-652 requires the Board to establish statewide standards for minimum standards regarding regular mental health screenings for probationary and permanent police officers, ensuring that counseling sessions and screenings remain confidential. In response, the Board has approved the following recommendations:

- A. All law enforcement agencies should perform a psychological evaluation on newly hired recruit officers. This evaluation should contain a battery examination of several characteristics. This evaluation should focus on personality traits that support resiliency to the adverse environment that law enforcement responds to. Assessment protocols will focus on assessment tools to assess the overall resiliency of officers so as to take a proactive response to the psychological health of the law enforcement community. It is a well-documented reality that law enforcement are up to 4 times more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty. While there are many options that serve this purpose, agencies should conduct this examination to the extent of their available resources.
- B. Agencies should screen new recruit officers while they attend the basic academy, specifically at the beginning and end of their training. This screening should identify the general growth and development of the recruit. If concerns are raised as to the health of the recruit, more specific testing and education on officer resiliency is recommended. These screening tools are a natural process to the development of systems within law enforcement to reduce the negative impact of lateral trauma and chronic hypervigilance.
- C. Agencies should screen all officers at least once annually to evaluate the overall health of the agency. These annual screenings should be general and brief but allow for more detailed questions to be asked if certain metrics are displayed, such as a majority or substantial number of responses indicating the negative impact of lateral trauma, signs of depression/PTSD, or other negative outcomes related to the officer's career.
- D. Knowing the well documented negative impact of the stress of law enforcement are exposed to, instances where the overall health of the agency is a concern, programs, training, and in more intense situations; Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)/counselors or counseling options should be made available to the officers. All officers should be encouraged to attend sessions with a CISM/counselor and there should be no stigma, negative outcome, financial burden, socially, or professionally, for attending a counseling session.

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- E. In the course of any mental health screening, confidentiality is to remain paramount. Responses to all screening questions shall remain anonymous/confidential when conducted internally by the employing agency. These screenings should not be used for any fitness or promotional matters. In the event that the screening of any single officer reveals items of serious concern, the agency may not attempt to ascertain the identity of the responding officer.
- F. Agencies should consider partnering with a third-party to conduct these screenings. Agencies should also consider partnering with a third-party vendor to provide overall follow up of trends that may be identified by the screening outcomes to improve officer wellness and wellness of the agency. The role of a third-party screening entity allows for greater confidentiality and trust, therefore increasing the likelihood of accurate and thorough responses.

The Board believes that these screening measures will better allow police agencies to understand the health of their new and experienced officers as they move through their career and will help identify trends and concerns that are present within an agency. These recommendations will also allow specific officer concerns to be identified and addressed by third-party screeners who can preserve the highest degree of confidentiality and assist officers to better serve their communities.

(Initial Draft – September 2021)

APPENDIX B: WELLNESS CONVESATION RESOURCES



Wellness Conversations

Brief Introduction of the Importance of Wellness

Wellness Checkups can reduce stress and provides foundational support to an already stressful profession.

Resources Available

1. Employee Assistance Program (EAP) SUPPORT LINC

- Mental Health
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Marriage & Relationship Problems
- Grief & Loss
- Substance Abuse
- Anger management
- Work Related Pressure
- Stress

2. Additional EAP Benefits

- Legal Assistance
- Financial Assistance
- Family Assistance
- Travel Information

3. WeNeverWalkAlone

4. Peer Support Group

5. Culture of Honor

6. Healthy Minds Program

7. Chaplain Program

8. Private Insurance Program

Brief Review and Encouragement of Follow-Up

This Wellness conversation counts as the first of (4) Sessions as part of the Healthy Minds Program.