



OFFICER WELLNESS			
✓ new: rescinds: amends: All previous		cross-reference:	
effective date: December 2023		update date: July, 2024	
		accreditation standards: NYSLEAP Standard(s): 4.1	

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Office’s response to ensuring and promoting the resiliency of its employees by providing trauma-informed leadership and creating a culture that supports wellness through education, peer and family support systems, a critical incident stress management (CISM) program, police chaplaincy, and counseling.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Office that all employees are able to safely and effectively perform their essential job functions. Services will be provided to help employees preempt and resolve emotional difficulties associated with acute or chronic exposure to trauma in policing or family crises. The Office encourages employees to seek resources outside of this policy to ensure their wellness, and their family’s wellness.

The acceptance and success of this policy will be determined, in part, by observance of confidentiality. It is imperative that strict confidentiality govern all procedures, except when required by federal or state law. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that stigmatization linked to “asking for help” exists within police culture. Therefore, in order for the application of this policy to be successful, it is equally imperative that the Office cultivates a culture of education, understanding, and acceptance, in order to create an environment in which its employees feel supported and encouraged when reaching out to access necessary services.

III. DEFINITIONS

Chaplain: An individual with theological training and experience to offer spiritual and emotional care to the Office, its families, and the community.

Critical Incident: An incident that is unusual, violent, or involves a perceived threat to, or actual loss of, human life that may overwhelm an individual’s normal coping mechanisms and cause extreme psychological distress.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP): Confidential mental health services maintained by a third party, provided to employees and family members for assistance with issues including, for example, stress, emotional or mental health issues, marital or family difficulties, financial

troubles, alcohol and drug problems, work-related difficulties, critical incident stress, grief, and/or other problems.

Resilience: A measure of how well employees can accept a changed reality following acute or chronic trauma and thrive in the new possibilities offered.

Substance Use Disorder: Alcoholism and drug dependence and addiction, known as substance use disorders, are complex problems. Such a disorder is defined as the use of alcohol or drugs that is compulsive or dangerous (or both). One of the most important signs of substance addiction or dependence is continued use of drugs or alcohol despite experiencing the serious negative consequences of heavy drug or alcohol use.

Wellness Plan (Blue4U): All employees, including their spouse/domestic partner, shall have the option to voluntarily participate in the wellness program to earn financial incentives for meeting wellness targets. The wellness program targets are established within the health insurance plan and outlined in each participant's personal health report. *Updated July 2024.*

IV. **PROCEDURES**

Trauma-informed leadership requires knowledge and awareness to recognize stressors in employees' lives and take proactive, positive actions to mitigate negative effects. Trauma-informed employees embrace the idea they are not immune to the effects of acute and cumulative stress resulting from trauma. Many risk factors exist in professional policing that contribute to higher rates of suicidality, which must be acknowledged. All employees must move from awareness to action to intervene and prevent the impacts of trauma, thus ensuring their resilience. Achieving resilience requires a conscious effort.

The Office's conscious efforts will include, but not be limited to education; wellness orientation packets for new employees and their families; peer and family support systems; a CISM program, Police Chaplains; annual wellness checks and confidential mental health consultations.

A. Education:

The Office will utilize in-service trainings and other resources to regularly communicate about resiliency, including but not limited to emotional intelligence and wellness, de-escalation, substance use, suicide prevention and critical incident stress. The Office, in conjunction with the Human Resources Department, will communicate regular programs and plans to encourage wellness. <https://tompkinscountyny.gov/personnel/benefits>

B. Peer and Family Support Systems:

Employee wellness is not only a management issue, but it is ultimately everyone's responsibility, including family members and all peers. Instead of training select peers in the organization and expecting all employees to approach them, the Office places peer responsibility with all employees and will provide ongoing training to better ensure mitigation of organizational and family stressors. Peers often will talk to each other long before expressing concerns to supervisory staff, so all employees must recognize their role in resiliency. Talking about trauma and stress is foundational to the health of our Office. The goal of such dialogue is to normalize the stress responses experienced by employees, help employees through crises, and reduce suicide in the police profession, so as to ensure

greater services are engaged. Such communication is confidential with the following exceptions, which will require supervisory notifications: danger to oneself or others; suspected child abuse or domestic violence; or other serious criminal conduct. An employee can request the information he or she shared be divulged to others in the Office to ensure greater services are engaged.

The Office will have a team of select officers that are routinely educated and trained on available officer wellness resources/services. Members of this team will be identified so that office personnel can utilize them as a resource to obtain guidance and information regarding resources/services available to them, and to assist them with navigating those resources/services if asked to do so. Such interactions shall remain confidential and private. *Update July 2024.*

C. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM):

The Office will schedule debriefings within a reasonable amount of time following critical incidents. Supervisors will be responsible for requesting a review of incidents that may necessitate a debriefing. Group debriefings will be mandatory for involved personnel unless otherwise directed by the Sheriff. The Tompkins County CISM team is managed by the Department of Whole Health.

D. Police Chaplains:

Chaplains are available for members of the Office, their immediate family members, retired members of the Office in times of serious injury, illness, and death of loved ones, upon request, and other circumstances when needed. Police Chaplains shall be notified when employees suffer serious injury or death. The content of the communication between the Chaplain and the person being counseled is confidential. If deemed necessary by the Chaplain, an individual seeking counseling may be referred to other professional services.

E. Supervisory Expectations:

Supervisors shall visit an employee when they become aware of suicidality, work or family related stressors that may overwhelm the employee, substance use disorders, or other stressors that affect an employee's wellness. Supervisors will recognize that the primary reasons associated with suicidality relate to finances, relationships, substance use disorders, retirement (loss of role), and access to firearms. When behaviors manifest that result in administrative corrective action or discipline, supervisors should already be evaluating any underlying wellness issues that may be triggering such behaviors.

F. Annual Wellness Checks:

Annual wellness checks are provided by the County during the Blue4U period at no cost to the employee. The purpose of Blue4U is first to help you understand your current health status, then to provide the tools that can help you reach and maintain your wellness goals. These tools may help prevent illness based on an employee's current health and risk factors. Additionally, the Blue4U Wellness Incentive program was developed by Tompkins County in order to add a financial incentive component to the traditional Blue4U Wellness Screening. Further information regarding the incentive program is memorialized in the

collective bargaining agreements. *Updated July 2024.*

G. Employee Assistance Program:

The Employee Assistance Program shall be administered pursuant to the Tompkins County Employee Policy Manual. The number for the Public Safety EAP program is 800-337-1060. If an employee calls the number, they need only identify themselves as a Tompkins County employee. If they use the website (<https://www.theeap.com/public-safety-eap>) they must create a membership login and use **Tompkins County PS** as the Organization Name:

1. Self-Referral: An employee who desires to use the EAP may call the toll-free number available 24 hours a day. The following guidelines apply to an employee attending EAP counseling during work hours:
 - a. The employee may attend an EAP counseling session through self-referral without using leave (sick leave, vacation leave, etc.) if the employee notifies the supervisor about the EAP session and the supervisor determines that staffing levels would allow. The employee will be required to sign an attestation letter.
 - b. An employee attending an EAP counseling session through self-referral who wishes not to notify the supervisor that the absence is for EAP reasons shall use leave for any EAP counseling sessions.
2. Informal Supervisory Referral: A supervisor who feels that an employee's wellness may benefit from the use of the EAP may make an informal referral by suggesting to the employee that he or she consider accessing the program at the employee's discretion. If the employee decides to act on the supervisor's suggestion, he or she would follow the provisions listed above in 'Self-Referral.'
3. Formal Supervisory Referral: A supervisor who feels that an employee's personal issues may be affecting and/or hindering job performance and may benefit from use of the EAP may make a mandatory referral of an employee with the prior approval of the Sheriff and the Director of Human Resources. Following the employee's formal supervisory referral to the EAP, Human Resources will be notified regarding the employee's attendance and progress with counseling. The failure of an employee to attend or successfully complete the EAP program as directed under this section may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. An employee who is formally referred to mandatory EAP will not be required to exhaust any applicable leaves (sick leave, vacation leave, etc.). Time spent in EAP counseling is "hours worked" for purposes of computing overtime.

H. Wellness Orientation Packets for New Employees and Family

The Office recognizes that families are a critical resource in ensuring resiliency and will engage families throughout an employee's career. Wellness orientation packets will be provided for new employees and their families. As part of this packet, new employees will

be provided with a copy of Dr. Kevin Gilmartin's book *Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement: A Guide for Officers and Their Families*. Additionally, family days will be scheduled periodically to provide ongoing awareness and training for employees and their families, while also enhancing mutually supporting relationships.

V. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Safe Call Now: Is a confidential, comprehensive, 24-hour crisis referral service for all U.S. public safety employees, all emergency services personnel, and their family members. You can contact Safe Call Now by calling 206-459-3020 or by visiting www.safecallnow.org.

Serve & Protect: A confidential crisis hotline for all first responders 615-373-8000. Will put the first responder in touch with a therapist. www.serveprotect.org

Code-4-Alpha: Local (Based in Rochester) resource for outreach to professional first responders, retired, former, active with personal, or other challenges incurred in the performance of their duties. <https://code4alpha.org/>

Copline: Crisis hotline for law enforcement and their families. Calls are answered by officers who have been through 40-hours of peer support training for crisis intervention. They will also refer out to mental health professionals for follow-up and continued assistance. <https://www.copline.org/>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA's) National Helpline: Is a free, confidential, 24/7, treatment referral and information service (in English and Spanish) for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders. Their number is 800-662-4357.

Financial Cop: Is a resource that offers specific financial planning for first responders and their families, as well as financial crisis counseling utilizing certified Dave Ramsey Master coaches. <https://financialcop.com/>

WNY Law Enforcement Helpline: The Western New York Law Enforcement Helpline provides 24/7 confidential assistance, information, and referrals by trained Law Enforcement Peers and Family Member Peers to working and retired law enforcement officers, dispatchers, and their families. The helpline assists with any issues that may impact work and family life. You can contact them by calling (716) 858-COPS or <https://www.wnylawenforcementhelpline.org/>

NYLEAP Lighthouse App: Confidential health & wellness portal for first responders. NYLEAP Lighthouse Health & Wellness was designed to provide our first responders, public safety agencies and those that support them anonymous access to existing health and wellness programs, along with a growing library of the latest educational health and wellness information and tools that have been tailored to the unique needs of those working in public safety.

Attachments:

A. *Fitness and Weight Management Program Reimbursement*

B. *Public Safety EAP-Employee Brochure*

C. *Public Safety EAP Slides*

By Order Of

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Derek Osborne".

Derek Osborne
Sheriff