

Officer Wellness

<Name>

<University Name>



**MyPaperWriter**

## Officer Wellness

First responders occupy some of the most stressful positions in society. Police officers, among other first responders, experience significant job-related stress on a daily basis, caused by repeated exposure to violence and crime. Statistics show that police officers experience much higher rates of depression, PTSD, burnout, and anxiety-related mental health disorders than does the average citizen in the general population. Police officers are more than four times more likely to commit suicide than are firefighters, and more police officers commit suicide on an annual basis than are killed in the line of duty (National Alliance on Mental Health, 2020). 25% of officers report having suicidal thoughts at some point during their service, yet the percentage who actually seek mental health supports and services is low (Tuttle & Blumberg, 2019). Governmental agencies, community healthcare organizations, and health insurance agencies have come together in various forms to create space for officer wellness and programs that can address these worrisome issues facing the individuals upon whom Americans most depend.

Working with the Newton, CT police department in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook Elementary school shooting, the National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) convened an advisory group to be studying the phenomenon of officer mental health and to devise approaches that can support officer wellness. NAMI, in conjunction with several mental health organizations and governmental agencies, issued a report on how leaders in the police force can support officer wellness and safeguard the mental health of the individuals on the front line.

The report concluded that officer wellness depends on recognition of both the short and long-term impacts of trauma encountered in the field (Usher, Friedhoff, Cochran, & Pandya, 2016). It discussed psychological resilience and how officers and health care professionals must work together to build structures that promote such resilience from the

earliest days of an officer's career. It asks that police leaders take a personal interest in the well-being of officers on their forces and be proactive in seeking solutions that will address trauma, both recognized and unresolved.

Unresolved trauma, the report notes, is one of the most difficult areas of officer wellbeing to address. When an officer fails to recognize that they have experienced trauma, or fails to understand the impact that trauma has on their mental state, they are more likely to internalize their feelings and create stress that will result in compounded issues in the future (Tuttle & Blumberg, 2019). NAMI concluded that peer support groups and officer work groups that promote wellness education are the most effective means of addressing these and other wellness issues facing those on police forces around the country (Usher, Friedhoff, Cochran, & Pandya, 2016).

It is critical that officer leaders select appropriate mental health professionals to staff their departments and support officers who have encountered trauma in the workplace. Additionally, mental health supports and policies must be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure they make use of the most current information in the area of officer wellness and mental health. Doing so may be the key to supporting individuals who work in a profession where wellness is always on the line.

## References

National Alliance on Mental Health. (2020). *Law Enforcement Officers*. Retrieved from

NAMI: <https://www.nami.org/find-support/law-enforcement-officers>

Tuttle, B. M., & Blumberg, D. M. (2019). Critical Challenges to Police Officer Wellness. In

*Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*.

Usher, L., Friedhoff, S., Cochran, S., & Pandya, A. (2016). *Preparing for the Unimaginable*.

COPS & NAMI.



MyPaperWriter