



Officer Suicide Prevention and Wellness Programs

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A recent study looked at the suicide prevention or wellness programs offered by law enforcement agencies across the United States. Researchers then compared the mental wellness of officers whose departments had such programs and those whose departments did not.

Using a random sample of city police departments and sheriff's offices nationwide, researchers interviewed 55 agencies to determine whether they offered suicide prevention and/or wellness programming. Suicide prevention programming was defined as programs to reduce suicide and suicidal thoughts among officers. Wellness programming was defined as programs related to officer mental health.

Over one-tenth of participating agencies reported having no programs related to suicide prevention or wellness. The most common agency programming was employee assistance programs. Others included peer support programs, resiliency trainings, and critical incident response teams. Suicide prevention and wellness programs were not always widely offered—some were only available to commanding officers, agency mental health teams, or during initial training academies.

After the initial interview, 144 officers from the participating agencies were interviewed about operational and organizational stress and current and past suicidal thoughts and behavior. Officers were also asked about their use of and perspective on agency-offered suicide prevention and wellness programming. Officers who felt supported in their mental wellness reported significantly less stress and higher overall well-being.

To decrease suicide rates among law enforcement personnel, prevention practitioners need a better understanding of existing resources and officer perspectives on suicide prevention and wellness programming.

Tohen, M. A., Dodson, L. E., Manzo, G., Piña-Watson, B., & Trejos-Castillo, E. (2019). Agency-offered and officer-utilized suicide prevention and wellness programs: A national study. *Psychological Services*. Advance online publication. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ser0000355> [1]

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[1] <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ser0000355>

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