

	Abilene Police Department Operating Procedures		
	Subject: <i>Employee Wellness/Resiliency</i>	Issued:	TBP:

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Department’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.

Policy

It is the policy of the Department 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 Department 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 Department 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.


Definitions

Chaplain. An individual with theological training and experience to offer spiritual and emotional care to the Department, 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.

Early Warning System (EWS – Guardian Tracking). A system designed to assist supervisors and managers in identifying employees whose performance warrants review and, where appropriate, outline intervention procedures in circumstances where the employee’s behavior may have negative consequences for the employee, family, coworkers, and/or the community.

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.

	Abilene Police Department Operating Procedures		
	Subject: <i>Employee Wellness/Resiliency</i>	Issued:	TBP:

Family Orientation. An opportunity for family members to tour Department facilities, participate in a police ride-a-long, meet with chief executives, chaplains, and peer and family support teams; and, learn about available support services, including those related to mental health and wellness.

Mental Health Services. Services provided by a Department-contracted qualified mental health professional.

Mental Health Wellness Consultation. An opportunity for employees to meet with a qualified mental health professional for a confidential mental health session.

Peer and Family Support Systems. A comprehensive program designed to provide wrap-around services for all employees, wherein families and peers alike are fully engaged regarding the effects and solutions related to stress and trauma.

Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP). An individual who is licensed as a mental health professional and has an in-depth understanding of trauma-related disorders and the law enforcement culture.

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.

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 Department's conscious efforts will include, but not be limited to: education; family orientations 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 Department will utilize in-service, VINCIBLE and other resources to regularly communicate about resiliency, including but not limited to emotional

	Abilene Police Department Operating Procedures		
	Subject: <i>Employee Wellness/Resiliency</i>	Issued:	TBP:

intelligence and wellness, de-escalation, substance use, suicide prevention and critical incident stress. Additionally, the new fitness facility will be available to all employees at all hours, and the Department’s Fitness Committee will communicate regular programs and plans to encourage wellness.

- B. Family Orientations. The Department recognizes that families are a critical resource in ensuring resiliency and will engage families throughout an employee’s career. Family orientations will be provided for new employees and their families. For the basic peace officer academy, such orientations will occur in the second week of employment. Ongoing meetings and dialogue are encouraged, with consideration of using Dr. Kevin Gilmartin’s book *Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement: A Guide for Officers and Their Families*. Additionally, family days will be scheduled throughout the year to provide ongoing awareness and training for employees and their families, while also enhancing mutually supporting relationships.
- C. 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 Department 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 Department. 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 Department to ensure greater services are engaged.
- D. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM): The Department will schedule debriefings within a reasonable amount of time following critical incidents. Supervisors or Chaplains 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 Chief of Police.
- E. Police Chaplains. Chaplains are always available for members of the Department, their immediate family members, retired members of the Department and volunteers 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.



Abilene Police Department Operating Procedures

Subject:

Employee Wellness/Resiliency

Issued:

TBP:

Number:

C-7

- F. Supervisory Expectations. Supervisors shall visit with 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.
- G. Mental Health Wellness Consultations. Employees in sensitive positions within the Department, which expose them to chronic trauma, are required to attend biannual mental health wellness consultations. These positions shall include members of the Special Victims Unit, Cyber Crimes, Child Advocacy Center, and Youth Division Detectives. Other members of the Department may also be referred for a consultation to ensure their wellness and resiliency. These consultations shall be with a mental health professional designated by the Chief of Police. Employees required to attend a consultation under this section will incur no cost for the consultation. Such consultations are strictly confidential and are not part of the EAP process. Consultation records are confidential except as required by federal or state law. Such consultations shall not be confused with a "Fitness for Duty Determination," which is a formal, specialized process codified under Texas Local Government Code, Section 143.081.
- H. Annual wellness checks. Annual wellness checks are provided by the City of Abilene at no cost to the employee. The goal of this annual wellness visit is a yearly appointment with an employee's primary care provider to create or update a personalized prevention plan. This plan may help prevent illness based on an employee's current health and risk factors.
- I. Employee Assistance Program. The Employee Assistance Program shall be administered pursuant to the City of Abilene Employee Policy Manual. The number for the EAP program is 800-343-3822. If an employee calls the number, they need only identify themselves as a City of Abilene employee. If they use the website (awpnow.com), they must use this code: AWP-COAB-867. The program has three methods for referral:
- a. 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:
 - i. 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.
 - ii. 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.
 - b. 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

	Abilene Police Department Operating Procedures		
	Subject: <i>Employee Wellness/Resiliency</i>	Issued:	TBP:

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.’

- c. **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 Department Director 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.

Resources

Hotlines:

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 – confidential crisis hotline for all first responders 615-373-8000. Will put first responder in touch with a therapist. www.serveprotect.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. <https://financialcop.com/>. This resource offers specific financial planning for first responders and their families, as well as financial crisis counseling utilizing certified Dave Ramsey Master coaches.



Abilene Police Department Operating Procedures

Subject:

Employee Wellness/Resiliency

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TBP:

Number:

C-7

Post Critical Incident Seminar (PCIS) at LEMIT is a three-day wellness program that provides peer support to first responders and their families. PCIS promotes self-care, encouraging recovery and resilience.