

Destination Zero 2018 – PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

With the alarming trend of mental health, diabetes, obesity, and other health concerns related specifically to first responders nationwide, Prince William County sought to provide employees with the tools necessary to recognize, combat, and ultimately prevent these wellness-related issues. In response to several difficult years within the Police Department, as well as the Department of Fire and Rescue, the Police Department's Wellness & Resiliency Unit was established in 2016 and given a mission to assist employees in maintaining and/or improving their overall wellness by providing a multi-faceted approach that offers educational opportunities, peer support groups, and a variety of other tools.

The Police Department's Wellness & Resiliency Unit supervisor is responsible for overseeing the coordinated efforts of all wellness initiatives. This supervisor not only manages the Chaplain Program, the Peer Support Team and the Peer Fitness Team, but also acts as a liaison to the County's Public Safety Resilience Program and George Mason University's Athletic Training professors, with whom a partnership has been formed. The Unit also designs and distributes a quarterly wellness-related newsletter based on topics pertinent to public safety.

Prior to the implementation of the Wellness & Resiliency Unit, the Police Department began coordination of a county-wide Health and Wellness Fair in conjunction with other County agencies. The goal was to move toward a culture of awareness of healthy lifestyles in the workplace by providing educational opportunities, hands-on experiences, small group presentations, and keynote speakers to address a large array of health and wellness-related topics for all employees in an effort to deliver practical information, as well as to highlight County resources. The first Wellness Fair was held in November 2014 and has continued to be held each year thereafter.

Continuing in this forward-thinking trend regarding holistic wellness for employees, the County recognized the importance of providing public safety staff with easily-accessible, quality mental health care in a way that both protected confidentiality of staff while also providing strong opportunities for rapport-building and law enforcement cultural awareness by the mental health provider. The Police Department, in partnership with the County's Department of Fire and Rescue and Public Safety Communications, developed an idea for a Public Safety Resilience Program. The idea was implemented by the County in September of 2016. All four staff positions are filled to include the Director and a behavioral health specialist for the Police Department, one for the Department of Fire and Rescue, and one for County Communications (dispatch center). The program is a stand-alone unit within the County government and does not report up the chain of command to any of the involved Department heads. This structure creates more comfort for employees regarding confidentiality of treatment. Each of the three Departments are assigned a behavioral health specialist and a director oversees the program. While the County does have an established Employee Assistance Program, this PSRP is offered in conjunction with the EAP services. This idea was implemented by the County in September of 2016 and has met with positive feedback to this point. The therapists not only provide staff and immediate family members with unlimited therapy sessions, they also offer other options for stress management such as acupuncture. The therapists are embedded in each agency, frequently going on ride-alongs with officers and attending roll calls in an effort to constantly build relationships. They provide training to basic

recruit classes on wellness and emotional survival and work hand-in-hand with the Department's Peer Support Team.

In 2017 as the Department continued to push forward the wellness initiative, the Chief of Police approved a program to allow on-duty officers up to one hour per day for physical training as staffing and calls for service allow. The Wellness & Resiliency Unit supervisor oversees the program. However, first line supervisors for each squad and unit are responsible for scheduling staff for physical training based on their needs and the Department mission. Numerous stories have been collected from officers who utilize the program, several losing over 60 pounds each and saying "I now feel like I have more energy, am more present at work and with my family, and feel better able to cope with the caseload and stress of the job." The Department currently has 13 ACE-certified personal trainers who are a part of the Peer Fitness Advisor Team. These team members play a vital role in providing guidance and support to members looking to make healthy lifestyle changes.

In concert with the physical fitness policy, the Department also recently implemented a Work Hardening Program in partnership with County Risk Management, Department of Fire and Rescue, and George Mason University's Athletic Training Program. Both the Police Department and DFR have a part-time certified athletic trainer assigned to work with staff who are on light-duty status and/or injured on duty. The goal is to address post injury rehabilitation while working with Employee Health, Peer Fitness Advisors, and the employee to get the employee returned to full duty while providing the best chances of a long-term fulfilling career without re-injury. In the Fall of 2018, GMU's Athletic Training Professors and students began to conduct research on officer fitness and mobility levels. Volunteers were led through a series of mobility and functional movement screenings to assess fitness levels. Based on individual results, the officers were provided with feedback and programs designed to assist them with muscular imbalances and mobility concerns in order to reduce the propensity for injuries. There is a plan in place to continue to grow that program and offering.

As the County and the Department have a goal of focusing on opportunities that are inclusive of all aspects of wellness, the Wellness & Resiliency Unit is responsible for not only acting as liaison for the Public Safety Resilience Program, but also managing a robust volunteer Chaplain Program, the Department's Peer Support Team, the Total Money Makeover group which focuses on financial wellness, and the Peer Fitness Advisor Team. All of these teams together have the tools to address a variety of wellness-related issues for staff including spiritual, social, financial, and physical wellness.

The Department's Peer Fitness Advisor Team is responsible for meeting with staff in a group setting to provide training on fitness and nutrition. They also meet one-on-one with individuals who have an interest in goal-setting, program design, and accountability partnership. The team members are responsible for conducting applicant physical testing, as well as leading the Department's Pre-Hire Physical Training program. The Police Department team has partnered with the Department of Fire and Rescue team to efficiently and effectively train in a collaborative environment and maintain the highest standard by utilizing cutting edge trade information and techniques. Grant money was obtained to ensure each Peer Fitness Advisor was a certified personal trainer through the American Council on Exercise.

As has been practice for years, the County continues to mandate age-based physical check-ups for all public safety staff. These physicals include vision and hearing screenings, pulmonary testing, EKG monitoring, blood pressure check, cholesterol screening, weight/body fat, and blood work to test glucose and hormone levels.

As a good majority of the Police Department staff is younger in age (just out of college, single, newly married, and/or young families), there was recognition of the need to provide support in the area of financial wellness. Staff set up the "Total Money Makeover Sharing Group," an email-based group that is open for all County employees. Participants receive weekly emails which include tips on managing finances/paying off debt, success stories from other group members, and suggested reading material on financial management. The group coordinator conducts training for each of the Police and Department of Fire and Rescue basic training classes. To date, the group has grown to over 1,000 members and paid off over \$10 million in debt.

Another valuable wellness-related tool, and part of the County's overall focus on employee well-being, is the Police Department's Peer Support Team. When the department suffered their line of duty deaths and suicides between 2012 and 2016, the Peer Support Team was instrumental in reaching out to staff and providing support at a level that was comfortable for employees. In response to those difficult times and recognizing the need, the department has grown the team from 4 up to 20 diverse employees, both sworn and civilian, with an end goal of growing the team to 30. Call-outs for the Peer Support Team continue to rise as both supervisors and officers recognize the value of immediate peer support in traumatic incidents.

Since the inception of the Wellness & Resiliency Unit, each year the Department has hosted mandatory in-service wellness-related training for all sworn staff in the areas of stress management, suicide awareness, proper nutrition, hormone levels and sleep. Financial wellness and investing smartly for retirement will be featured in this coming year's training.

As stated above, the overall goal of the Wellness & Resiliency Unit is to provide employees with the tools necessary to recognize, combat, and ultimately prevent wellness-related issues through the use of a multi-faceted approach that offers educational opportunities, peer support groups, and a variety of other means. The County aims to offer inclusive support to public safety personnel covering all aspects of wellness to include physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and social. Through a coordinated effort, the above programs have been implemented and are proven successful. Continuing forward, more program growth is planned to include increasing the variety of wellness-related training available to staff.