

# San Francisco County (CA) Sheriff's Department

## Officer Wellness

The San Francisco Sheriff's Department is comprised 790 sworn officers and 203 professional staff serve a population of 889,360 citizens under the leadership of Sheriff Paul Miyamoto.

Understanding the stressors his staff faced on a daily basis, Sheriff Miyamoto sought a resource that recognized stress as a whole life journey. **The sheriff applied for and received a grant from California POST to provide 16 hours of wellness training and resources to assist all staff including dispatchers.** The department contracted with Navigating Adversity. This wellness resource was created specifically with public safety in mind. Overcoming the stigma that surrounds wellness efforts - particularly in the law enforcement profession - requires an acknowledgement of the reasons first responders refuse mental health treatment: (1) concerns about confidentiality, (2) they do not recognize their symptoms for what they were, (3) they do not believe a psychologist would be able to understand the profession's unique challenges, and (4) they fear their peers' discovery and subsequent loss of faith in their abilities on the job. In developing Navigating Adversity, the creators - first responder wellness experts - built a training and mentorship resource that overcomes each of these objections.

**All of Navigating Adversity's coursework was delivered on-line and confidentially.** The curriculum addressed the topics of identifying, understanding and healing in the areas of depression, anxiety, Occupational stress, compassion fatigue, post-traumatic stress, substance addiction and organizational stress. In January, 2021, the Sheriff sent out invitations to participate in the training to all staff. **836 department members participated in the program and were compensated for their time. Spouses were also encouraged to use their spouse's ID and password to participate in the wellness training.**

The first element in the curriculum is the 250 question pre-training wellness survey. Dr. Renee Thornton, the program's director assured the confidentiality of the participants by sending out emails and videos stating that she would be the only one to have access to the survey results and that all identifying information would be purged from the system once the statistics were calculated. **According to Dr. Thornton, current therapeutic practices such as Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Positive Psychology (tools from each are integrated into the Navigating Adversity program) seek at least a 5% reduction in survey scores in order to be considered significant. Listed below are the percentages of staff who admitted experiencing symptoms as compared to how the employees rated themselves after attending the wellness program:**

	Program Pre-Launch	30 Days Post-Training Completion	Decrease in Distress from Pre-Launch	6 Months Post-Training Completion	Decrease in Distress from Pre-Launch
Depression	38%	9%	76%	8.3%	78%
Anxiety	36%	22%	39%	18%	50%
Post-Traumatic Stress Injury	26%	7%	73%	7%	73%
Occupational Stress	40%	29%	28%	26%	35%
Compassion Fatigue	45%	26%	42%	22%	51%

**SFSD now has a robust peer support program to further employee wellness options. Though they do not have a psychiatrist on staff, Members are encouraged to reach out to Dr. Thornton, who listens to their concerns and**

**pairs up the employee with a mental health specialist who can provide the best treatment that coincides with their needs.**

**The City of San Francisco has an Employee Assistance Program, which is made available to the entire workforce.** The EAP offers a variety of confidential counseling, consultation, coaching & education services as well as culturally-competent licensed therapists with many years of diverse experience in mental health, business and as City employees. Employee Assistance Counselors are available for individual confidential telephone counseling and consultations 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**The SFSD does provide workout rooms for the staff and encourages their regular use. Two of the gym/workout rooms are in the jails. Deputies can work out there on their paid lunch time but must be able to respond if needed.** Each year, employees are encouraged to show their wellness progress. **Up to 40 hours of extra time off each year is awarded to employees with exemplary physical fitness scores. Not only are a larger number of uniform employees participating in the Department's physical fitness program, but a larger number are accruing the maximum hours of paid time off. In FY 2013-2014, 313 employees accrued 40 hours of paid time off and in FY 2016-2017, 435 employees accrued 40 hours of paid time off, a 39% increase.**

**The department also provides suicide prevention, mental health and financial wellness programs to their members.**

One of the most remarkable outcomes of this endeavor has been the impact of the wellness initiative on the culture at the SFSD. When the project started, the culture could easily be described as toxic. The wellness initiative has been an excellent first step. While not a cure-all, the separation felt between the line staff and leadership is fading. There is a shared experience for the whole workforce that has been accepted as a positive first step forward. The leaders are more open and expressive about their own struggles, which makes it easier to trust and relate to them. Communication has become more transparent, and the challenges and adversity of the job feels like a shared burden that together, the team can overcome.

**\*\* This summary is only a brief overview of many of the agency's programs. In the actual submission you will see that the agency has other programs and incentives to benefit its members. Please review their entire submission and its associated documents to gain a complete understanding of their program.**