

West Palm Beach (FL) Police Department Officer Wellness

WPB Police Department serves a population of 113,000 citizens over 58.1 square miles. The Chief of the department is Frank Adderley who oversees 290 sworn officers and 98 civilian employees. With Florida having the second most line of duty deaths in 2021 (52) they believe it is their "obligation" to provide necessary training and resources to ensure officer safety and wellness.

The West Palm Beach Police Department realizes that studies have clearly shown that divorce, suicide and substance abuse issues are more prevalent in law enforcement jobs than almost any other career. **To reduce those occurrences and allow employees to better deal with on/off duty stressors they face, they created a peer-to-peer counseling program (Police Officer Support Team (POST)) that utilizes trained employees to provide counseling services to their fellow employees. Dispatch and Crime Scene Investigator personnel are also part of the POST team in order to be all inclusive.** Discussions occurring during the peer-to-peer counseling remain confidential unless suicidal or homicidal thoughts or illegal activity is discovered. POST Team members walk employees through the process and ensure they are receiving appropriate mental health care as soon as issues are discovered. EAP acts as a resource, providing professional, confidential help to employees and their families, through their own initiative or supervisor referral. **Although the program is in its relative infancy due to its implementation in April of 2020, the POST Team members have conducted over 124 one-on-one sessions.** EAP also provides referrals to community resources and services for childcare, pet care, and senior care, along with financial and legal assistance for financial services, identity theft and legal consulting. Members of the POST team are also trained in Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM). CISM debriefings are held after major or particularly sensitive incidents and all employees involved are required to attend.

WPBPD has mental health clinicians they can call 24-7 that will respond to the location of critical incidents and assist any officer in a time of crisis if it goes beyond the POST team's training and education. This resource has been utilized several times now, and in those cases the mental health clinicians were successful in helping employee(s) overcome their crisis.

To help maintain physical fitness and reduce employee stress, a fully equipped fitness center is located at the Police station and is available to employees 24/7/365. To make it more user friendly, male and female locker rooms, complete with shower and restroom facilities, adjoin the fitness center. All employees are strongly encouraged to utilize this free facility before, after, and/or during working hours as well as on their off-duty time. One of the WPBPD trainers provides workouts and instructions to officers on the correct use and form while using the equipment.

The department also offers free weekly Jiu Jitsu training in the police station. Two of these trainers are Gracie certified and two officers are world champions, one being a two-time black belt gi world champion and the other being a one-time black belt gi world champion.

The department also features a wellness room which includes a massage chair, waterfall scenery and a sound machine. Officers can take off their shoes and duty belt in order to sit in the massage chair and pick from a variety of stress relieving massages. The room can also be used for meditating if the officer chooses to do so. Employees can access this room 24/7/365 on or off-duty and most do during their lunch breaks. This room provides employees with a private relaxing space where they can seek respite after going through a tough call or from off the job issues.

In order to provide confidential and easy access to all of their services for department staff, the WPBPD used grant money to pay for a wellness app. This wellness app puts immediate help and many other resources at the fingertips of our officers

24 hours a day 7 days a week. The department chose this app because it makes all resources available right on the officer's phones. The app has our EAP number in it along with a crisis line called Cop line, which offers vetted and trained retired law enforcement officers to talk to when you are in a time of need. Also included is the national suicide prevention lifeline and a free confidential crisis text line, which gives access to professional crisis counselors. Officers can access any of these services with just a touch of their phone screen. The app includes an officer wellness tool kit that contains information and tips to better yourself in 60 topics like suicide prevention, anger management, resilience development, marriage, work-life balance, financial wellness, sleep optimization, burnout, mindfulness, PTSD, etc. This app also 12 assessments officers can take to see if they are struggling with a certain issue like PTSD, depression, compassion fatigue, sleep, etc. and will advise them if they need to seek help or not. Officers can also access peer support team members on the app along with our chaplain, with just a touch of the screen. The app has videos for yoga, physical therapy, and injury prevention. The app also offers workout programs, nutritional guides, guided meditations and sleep sounds. The book Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement by Kevin Gilmartin is partly on the app.

Newly recruited officers are provided mental health training and are given a presentation of the entire officer wellness program before starting the FTO program. Officers are provided a letter to give to their spouse or significant other which provides what services are available as well as contact information and a book for their spouse or significant other to read. Officers receive "Shield of Resilience" training biannually. This course helps law enforcement officers learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of stress, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and suicidal thoughts and actions. The city of West Palm Beach started City fit wellness which started a program called Wellness Wednesdays for all employees which cover physical, mental, and financial wellness.

On each Wednesday employees have a wellness activity, wellness give away, or they get wellness information along with wellness seminars. The wellness seminars cover a multitude of topics that include stress relief, caring for the caregiver, sleep apnea, virtual yoga, budgeting and saving money management, saving early in your career/young investors, estate planning, retirement readiness, obesity, healthy life tips for men and women, estate planning, beating burnout, mental health topics, etc. **As part of this program, employees must complete a quarterly challenge and attend three activities/classes per quarter to be eligible for a \$25 gift card and if the employee complete this each quarter of the year, the employee will be entered into a raffle for a \$500 gift card during each quarter.** To be eligible, employees must complete a biometric screening and do a health risk assessment. City fit also offers yoga classes for all employees. Employees are advised and reminded of what city fit offers weekly via email. Also, we partnered with Empower retirement, which offers three free financial seminars a month and covers topics such as budgeting, getting to know your Roth options, investment basics, etc.

The city of West Palm Beach funds an account that is used to help of set medical and pharmacy costs for employees and/or dependents. Additional funds can be earned yearly by employees and/or spouse or domestic partners, upon completion of a blood draw at the city health center and completing a physical or health assessment. To give an example, for those employees that are under the employee only coverage, \$1,000 will be placed in that account plus another \$400 if the employees use the city health center. All of this is voluntary, and many employees go to the city health center to complete their health risk assessment to earn these funds. As part of their yearly physicals, the City Health Center just started offering free ultrasound quick scans of employee's internal organs in order to early detect problems/diseases and implement an early and successful intervention for employees. Flu, hepatitis and other vaccines are also offered to employees free of charge.

In response to the COVID outbreak, the department implemented a COVID mitigation plan to keep all employees safe. Measures implemented included outside and remote briefings utilizing Microsoft Teams, issued N-95 masks, extra gloves and extra hand sanitizer to all personnel, and mandated officers to wear masks when interacting with the public. The department also purchased an aerosol battery operated disinfectant machine to sanitize all areas in the station, all offices and vehicles. Through the city emergency management, **free COVID vaccinations were offered to all employees and the city offered monetary incentives to those who received the vaccination.**

From the beginning of 2020 throughout the end of 2021, the use of officer sick time for occupational injuries and self-medical issues dropped over 900 hours from 3,472 hours in 2020 to 2,568 hours in 2021. The department also expects to see a drop in paid out worker's comp claims from 1.2 million dollars in 2020 to a projected 1 to 1.1 million dollars in 2021.

**** This summary is only a brief overview of many of agency's programs. In the actual submission you will see that 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.**