



SUBJECT: Officer Health and Wellness  
Policy 2-35.3

EFFECTIVE DATE: April 4, 2019

REVIEW DATE: Biennial retraining

AMENDS/SUPERSEDES:

APPROVED:

A rectangular box containing a signature, likely of the Chief of Police.

Chief of Police

PERSONNEL: All

CALEA STANDARDS: 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 12.1.3, 26.1.1, 26.1.4, 26.1.6

CHAPTER: Law Enforcement Role and Authority

ATTACHMENTS: Attachment A – Destination Zero Agreement

NOTE: This general order is for internal use only, and does not enlarge an officer's civil or criminal liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violations of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

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**I. POLICY:**

To proactively identify the link between officer safety and an officers physical and mental wellness. To establish guidelines designed to support physical fitness and mental wellness for all law enforcement personnel. To provide proactive efforts in the area of suicide awareness and prevention. To establish a program designed to enhance personal wellness, officer safety and professional performance for all employees.

**II. PURPOSE:**

To establish beliefs and conduct expected of all law enforcement personnel that are designed to proactively address the physical and psychological threats confronting law enforcement professionals. This policy is not designed to impose discipline; but to provide guidance and support in an effort to keep our staff fit to serve as police professionals and better support the District's values and mission.

**III. DEFINITIONS:**

None.

**IV. PROCEDURES:**

A. Physical Fitness

Physical fitness is an essential component in a law enforcement officer being able to perform his/her professional responsibilities. The fitness standard required for hiring is a baseline establishing that an officer is physically fit for duty at the beginning of his/her career.

As an officer is exposed to the physical and psychological challenges of the profession, staying physically fit becomes essential to ensuring an officer is able to perform his/her professional duties. McHenry County Conservation District Police Department recognizes it takes commitment from both the individual officer and the agency to ensure physical fitness maintenance remains a priority.

Maintaining health and wellness require a proactive approach. Individual officers have the responsibility to make healthy choices on a daily basis to support a state of wellness. This included a commitment to an active lifestyle. Diet and nutrition are components that can either enhance or detract from physical health. Officers are asked to remain cognizant that without intentional effort to remain healthy and strong, the body's abilities will naturally decrease. In order to best serve the law enforcement profession, Officers are expected to maintain the level of cardiovascular endurance and physical strength required to perform their duties.

The Police Department commits to providing a work environment that promotes and encourages an officer's commitment to personal health and wellness. This will include training efforts and initiatives designed to enhance physical fitness and education in functional fitness and workplace wellness,

## B. Mental Health and Psychological Resiliency

The psychological stressors of police work are unavoidable. Repeated exposure to negative events and critical incidents can begin to change an Officer's perception of the world. This can result in a compromise in the healthy state of psychological functioning. Awareness and intentional management of this phenomenon can help contribute to a state of wellness.

It is important that Officers are aware of the proactive steps that can be taken to help build psychological resiliency. Exercise and good nutrition are two core elements that contribute to being able to maintain resiliency during challenging times. Ensuring the Officer maintains a healthy work-life balance and allows time for friends and social activities is also important. Identifying a sense of purpose through volunteerism or connection to a higher sense of purpose is another way to create a healthy perspective in challenging times. These things, coupled with a physical fitness program can help ensure psychological resiliency is maintained.

### C. Nutrition

Nutrition is an area where the personal wellness of an officer can be enhanced or diminished rapidly. Officers will be encouraged to make healthy nutritional choices both on and off duty. Taking care of one's body is a factor that can contribute to psychological health.

Cardiovascular incidents, both on and off duty, are consistently amongst the leading causes of untimely death in police professionals. The connection between elevated stress levels and cardiovascular disease cannot be ignored. Nor can the healing power a healthy diet can have to reduce or reverse cardiovascular risk. Knowing this, the agency is committed to providing officers information on healthy eating habits, creating an environment where healthy options are offered as an option and where healthy choices are encouraged.

### D. Stress Management

Police professionals are exposed to a higher than average level of psychological stress. This stress must be proactively managed to ensure psychological resiliency is maintained throughout an officer's career. To assist each officer in ensuring stress management is accomplished, the agency will provide support in the following ways:

- i. Provide training designed to educate officers on proactive stress management techniques.
- ii. Encourage open dialog addressing stress and how stress can impact both family life and professional performance.
- iii. Provide debriefing and access to psychological services after a critical incident or officer involved shooting.
- iv. Provide an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) free of charge to all officers.
- v. Identify and provide other resources officers can use to seek assistance if needed

While the agency is committed to creating an environment where stress management is proactively addressed, every employee must recognize their personal responsibility to recognize stress when it presents in their personal/professional lives and take appropriate action to manage stress as it occurs. Employees are expected to manage stress and seek intervention if the stress level occurring in their lives overwhelms their individual coping skills.

### E. Suicide Prevention

The McHenry County Conservation District Police Department takes a holistic approach toward suicide prevention. Suicide is a complex issue that is present at an alarming rate within the law enforcement profession. Suicide prevention is both the responsibility of the agency and each and every officer employed by the department. Successful prevention will involve the intentional implementation of multiple, proactive efforts. The agency commits to providing:

- i. Suicide prevention training, including the identification of both risk factors and warning signs
- ii. An environment where seeking help is viewed as an expected behavior and a courageous act.
- iii. Resources for 24/7 suicide intervention as well as an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offered confidentially and free of charge to all officers.
- iv. An awareness campaign within the agency to ensure this phenomenon is understood and openly discussed amongst all levels of staff.
- v. Family outreach efforts designed to welcome the family into the workplace and educate family members to the unique risks and stressors experienced by police professionals.  
A retirement transition program designed to help retiring agency members to continue to have peer support and agency relationships as they adjust to the retirement lifestyle.

Officers are expected to know the risk factors associated with police suicide. Each Officer should be able to identify behaviors associated with suicidality in both themselves and in their peers. If an employee is concerned about suicide in a co-worker they are expected to report their concern to a supervisor immediately and take corrective action. A proactive plan of action will then be implemented to ensure all officer safety concerns are addressed.

The agency recognizes access to a weapon as one of the contributing risk factors associated with suicide. If identifiable risk factors begin to present in any agency member, the department reserves the right to require the affected officer to leave his/her service weapon at the station while not on duty.



## Destination Zero Agreement

I acknowledge that I received a copy of the Officer Health and Wellness Policy (2-35.3 and the Employee Assistance Information (from the personnel policy manual). I have read the aforementioned policy and understand the contents. I will comply with the Officer Health and Wellness Policy and I commit to keep myself physically and psychologically prepared to meet the demands of the law enforcement profession.

I understand physical and psychological fitness is a requirement of my professional role. I understand law enforcement stress can compromise an officer's physical health and mental wellness if not proactively managed. I understand that health and wellness are holistic concepts and involve the body, mind and spirit. I understand that exercise, nutrition, emotional support and effective communication are vital components to an effective stress management program. I understand that both the officer and the agency must make an effort to actively support the health and wellness of all employees.

I am aware the law enforcement profession has a higher than average suicide rate. I received information on the free and confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provided as a service to all employees. I also understand there are resources such as COPLINE (1-800-276-5463) and the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (1-800-273-HELP) available to me 24/7. It is an honorable, courageous act for a member to seek help regarding their own suicidality or other mental health issues. I understand it is the expectation of the police department that I seek intervention if I begin to have thoughts of suicide.

I understand the use of an agency issued weapon is strictly regulated by policy. I also understand it is prohibited to use my weapon(s) for purposes of self-harm.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Employee's Name (Print)

