

# NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

## NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS MEMORIAL FUND OFFICER SAFETY AND WELLNESS AWARDS

### OFFICER WELLNESS

The New York City Police Department (NYPD) is the largest and one of the oldest municipal police departments in the United States, with approximately 36,000 officers and 19,000 civilian employees.

The NYPD was established in 1845, and today, is responsible for policing an 8.5-million-person city, by performing a wide variety of public safety, law enforcement, traffic management, counterterrorism, and emergency response roles. In the past 25 years, the department has achieved spectacular declines in both violent and property crime, ensuring that New York City has the lowest overall rate of major crimes in the 25 largest cities in the country.



The NYPD is divided into major bureaus for enforcement, investigations, and administration. It has 77 patrol precincts with patrol officers and detectives covering the entire city. The department also has 12 transit districts to police the subway system and its nearly six-million daily riders, and nine police service areas (PSAs) to patrol the city's public housing developments, which are home to more than 400,000 residents. Additionally, uniformed civilians serve as traffic safety agents on the city's busy streets and highways, and as school safety agents, protecting public schools and the over-a-million students who attend them.

## OVERVIEW

Employee wellness has long been a priority of the NYPD. Billion dollar budgets and a bevy of unlimited resources notwithstanding, the NYPD recognizes its greatest resource is now and will always be the men and women who make up “New York’s Finest”, its dedicated personnel. Many of the programs designed to maintain and enhance wellness have a long and storied history, others are new to the game, but the seed is planted early and reinforced often – wellness matters. From physical fitness standards in the Police Academy to retirement preparation seminars in the twilight of an officer’s career, the NYPD has placed a spotlight on holistic wellness initiatives that often serve as a model for partner law enforcement agencies across the globe.

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS SECTION



In 2019, the NYPD experienced incalculable grief when 10 uniformed officers took their own life in a 12-month span. These deaths were the unfortunate spark to a **top-down** wellness refocus within organization. In August, 2019 a new division dubbed the Health and Wellness Section (HWS) was created and placed under the command of the Deputy Commissioner of Employee Relations’ office. This section was created with the sole mission of centralizing current mental health and wellness resources and crafting proactive and holistic wellness initiatives for both sworn and non-sworn (“civilian”) members of the Department. Existing subsections with a mental health and/or wellness focus, such as the Employee Assistance Unit and the Sports Unit, were placed under the Health and Wellness Section umbrella while new subsections, such as the Health and Wellness Outreach Unit, were created and staffed.

Currently, the Health and Wellness Outreach Unit reach focuses on educating members of the Department on available internal and external mental health and wellness resources, the “healthy mind-healthy body” connection, reducing stigmas associated with seeking mental health care and maintenance, and providing interim mental health care while on-going private mental health resources are established. In order to meet these goals, it was deemed imperative that the Health and Wellness Section provide independent clinical support. The clinical arm of the Unit is under the direction of Director Dr. Adria Adams, PsyD and Assistant Director Dr. Belinda Carrasco, PsyD. Additionally, five (5) Psychologists have been hired, thus far, to provide support, advocacy, and resources to the more than **54,000** members of the NYPD as well as their families. The Psychologists, accompanied by Employee Unit Peer Counselors, conduct Critical Incident Stress Management Debriefings daily with officers exposed to on-the-job incidents that have the propensity to overwhelm traditional coping mechanisms. This program has been very well received by the attending officers and continues to be part of the Health and Wellness Section’s comprehensive and holistic wellness approach. Below, NYPD wellness outreach and ongoing priorities existing in multiple Department units are further detailed.

**Stigma Free NYPD Campaign:** In furtherance of the mission of the Health and Wellness Section to combat the stigma against seeking help for mental illness, the “Stigma Free NYPD Pledge” was introduced in May of 2020. Mental illness stigma is a significant barrier to people seeking treatment due to shame, fear, or embarrassment. The HWS seeks to combat the stigma through education, respect, inclusion, acceptance, and compassion. Members of the Department were invited to take the pledge by filling out a Survey Monkey form which was advertised on the HWS’ Instagram page, the Department Intranet Announcements Section, and through targeted Department email blasts. **400** members thus far have taken the pledge.



**Peer Support Program:** The Health and Wellness Section, then only one month into its inception, launched the Peer Support Program in September 2019. The Peer Support Program was created to further support uniformed and civilian members of the service by training members in commands throughout the Department in how to aid their colleagues in times of crisis should they need it. The role of a Peer Support Member is to be available and proactively check in with colleagues who are experiencing stressful or difficult moments in their professional or personal lives by “asking, listening, encouraging, and following up.” As of this writing, **22** total cohorts (more than **400** precinct/unit-level personnel) have been trained allowing for ground-level, readily available members who are able to offer co-workers confidential and informal guidance and support in almost every operational command in the City. Members trained as Peer Support Members attend an initial four-day class where they learn the “Ask, Listen, Encourage, and Follow-Up” guidelines as well as hear presentations from the various mental and physical resources available to members of this Department. Once trained, all Peer Support Members attend quarterly refresher training in order to remain up to date and immersed in their roles as Peer Support Members. The Health and Wellness Section adapted the refresher training in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, holding the training via Zoom for **392** members from **192** commands. This format received rave reviews from participants who stated that it exceeded their expectations of what virtual training could accomplish. One of the Peer Support Refresher trainings held over Zoom was a partnership between the Department and Columbia University Psychiatry Department and Medical Center. The “Police Resilience Symposium,” gave Peer Support Members an opportunity to be part of a **3100**-person audience residing in **32** countries and were able to hear more than **40** speakers over the three-day event.



**Policy Suggestions:** The Health and Wellness Section routinely receives feedback and suggestions from members of the Department regarding desires for change in Department policy. The Section researches the subject matters in an effort to determine whether the members of the Department and the Department as a whole would benefit from the suggested change in policy. In the year 2020, three separate policy changes suggestions were carefully researched and subsequently formal suggestions submitted to the Police Commissioner for review:

- Change in Pregnancy Sick Policy to increase the post-partum sick leave from 6 to **12** weeks. This policy suggested was approved and made a part of the Medical Division policy in 2021.
- Consideration of five adoption leave days for prospective adoptive parents to utilize during the adoption process
- Consideration of the Department’s adaptation of New York State Paid Family Leave

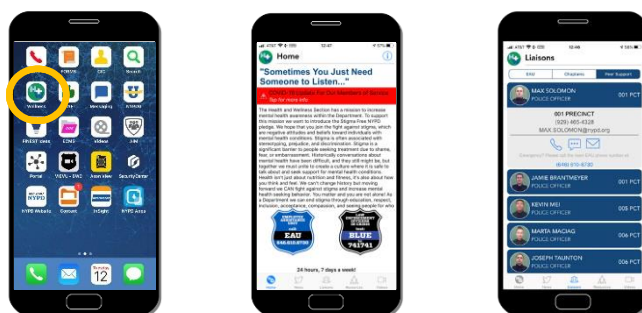
**Operational Outreach:** The Health and Wellness Section utilizes numerous mediums in order to reach members of this Department utilizing both in person and print materials. For example:

- An internal department-wide order titled “Creation of Department Locker Sticker Entitled ‘Health and Wellness’” was released in July of 2020 mandating that a locker sticker advertising Department and external resources be placed on every locker in

locker rooms throughout the Department. The HWS personally delivered the stickers to commands explaining the resources featured on the stickers.

- The HWS created a business card sized card made of plastic called a “Lifesaver Card,” featuring contact information of Department resources and distributed these cards throughout the Department.
- Packets of materials relevant to increasing awareness of resources available to members of this Department as well as supporting physical and mental wellness were assembled and sent to Training Sergeants throughout the Department for them to share with the members of their commands.
- Roll Call Visits: **1804** total visits
- Instagram Posts: **530** total posts
- Emails direct to Department email accounts
- Push notifications regarding wellness initiatives and outreach or training opportunities to Department cell phones
- Quarterly Newsletter entitled, “The Wellness Times,” first edition in January 2021

**Department Smartphone and Intranet Applications:** Health and Wellness information and resources are available on every “smart” device issued by the NYPD to employees as well as all desktop computers. From this application members may access employee “help” resources with one touch – providing an immediate connection to an Employee Assistance Unit Peer Counselor, a precinct level Peer Support Officer, or a member of the Chaplains Unit, as well as a variety of vetted external mental health and crisis resources. Historical Health and Wellness training videos are also housed within these applications. Since its creation in October, 2019, this application has been opened over **119,113** times with a total of **36,560** calls generated from the application. The application was opened **41,294** times and registered **9,719** new users in 2021 alone.



**Mental Health and Wellness Coordinator:** The Health and Wellness Section counts a Mental Health and Wellness Coordinator as part of the staff. In this the role, the coordinator organizes various programs, initiatives, and outreach campaigns in collaboration with internal and external partners. This includes the above mentioned creation and implementation of the Peer Support Program. Additional initiatives are further discussed below.

- The aforementioned “Resilience Symposium” was held in partnership with Columbia University Psychiatry Department (CUPD) over the course of three days in September, 2020. More than **3,100** registered from 32 countries for this virtual event which features world-renowned experts in police, resilience, positive psychology, and neuroscience.



- The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual AFSP-NYC HOPE Awards were held in partnership with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention New York City Chapter. This event highlights the extraordinary work done by members of the service helping the public when they are suicidal and in a mental health crisis.



- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual NYPD Survivors of Suicide Loss Day was held in partnership with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention New York City Chapter. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic disrupting many events, this function was able to pivot and be successfully held via Zoom where more than 50 people participated from across the country. Many of the participants were family members of officers who died by suicide. The event is a day of healing and promotes strength for people who have been impacted by the suicide of a member of the Department.

- A “Rookie Resilience Training” was held in collaboration with our partners at CUPD. This one-day class took place over the course of seven days in October, 2020 for the March and June 2020 graduating Police Academy classes with the understanding that COVID-19 and the protests calling for police reform had an impact on many members of this

Department while recognizing that our recent graduates may have been uniquely impacted by not having a traditional graduation and shortly thereafter being faced with possible stress resulting from the civil unrest and ongoing COVID-19 crisis. As a way to “re-charge” and recover, nearly **1,000** officers attended the full one-day event that shared information and practices in evidence-based, practical tips on how to increase one’s resiliency through financial literacy, proper nutrition, physical fitness and yoga. The class also provided an overview of Health and Wellness resources including the Employee Assistance Unit, Critical Incident Stress Debriefing, as well as information about external resources. CUPD’s Dr. John Mann provided a suicide prevention module on each date.

- Through collaboration with Columbia Psychiatry, the Department began utilizing the “warr;or21 Resilience Program” in the Police Academy curriculum as a pilot program in January 2020. This program provides recruits with evidence-based, neuroscience research-backed resilience practices created for police officers. It is a 22-week program, which has been used across the world in policing, first responders, and beyond and which provides Department Police Academy recruits with weekly lessons and strategies for the entirety of their time in the Academy. Program evaluation data from recruits who completed the program demonstrated an overwhelming approval of the program stating that it helped them immensely in situations both professional and personal. The program was formally adopted into the curriculum following the successful pilot.
- The Coordinator created the Law Enforcement Psychological Autopsy, a protocol designed to assist with the investigation and understanding of law enforcement suicide. Through collaboration with the Department’s Medical Division, the training was provided by American Association of Suicidology for select NYPD personnel in January, 2020.
- The Coordinator has spoken at numerous global policing, psychology, neuroscience, and other related areas’ conferences, webinars, and functions offering insight into the groundbreaking work being done in the NYPD. The Coordinator continues to raise awareness and further demonstrates the continued leadership role the NYPD continues to have with respect to resilience, suicide prevention, resilience, and the overall wellbeing of the police workforce.
- Through this coordinator role, numerous partnerships and working collaborations where information initiatives have been created and on-going information-sharing occurs has been established with the numerous research institutions, organizations and agencies. In addition to the previous mentioned organizations and institutions, this also includes: Los Angeles Police Department, Metro Nashville Police Department, Denver Police Department, Scotland Police, New Zealand Police, Queensland

Police Service (Australia), Australian Federal Police, Netherlands National Police, Griffith University, Fraternal Order of Police, United Kingdom National Police Wellbeing Service (Oscar Kilo), United Kingdom National Police Suicide Prevention Working Group, Police Executive Research Forum, and Crisis Text Line.

**Yoga and Meditation:** When forming the Health and Wellness Section, best practices in the field of wellness were studied to determine how the Section could best serve the members of this Department. The practices of both yoga and meditation were prominent in leading opinions of how human beings can achieve overall physical and mental wellness. The Health and Wellness Section heeded this advice and absorbed two members of the Department who were collaterally trained/certified in Yoga and mindfulness techniques. They immediately set to work in exposing members to both yoga and mindfulness in a number of ways. In a successful effort to create interest in yoga and meditation, the HWS hosted a one-day event at the Police Academy in December 2019 where members from commands falling within Queens were assigned to the Academy to participate in these disciplines for an entire tour. Participants were chosen by their commands and the great majority had no prior exposure to either yoga or meditation and did not know the inherent benefits to the mind and body. The event was widely successful garnering attention for the Section and increased interest in having the HWS Yoga instructors provide a la carte yoga classes at commands throughout the Department. On average, **4** in-person yoga classes were conducted during the first part of the year. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the Section to adapt to a hybrid online and in-person format utilizing Zoom, the HWS Instagram page and Blue Karma Yoga's Instagram Page. The Section was able to provide members weekly classes and/or content for the entire year of 2021, boasting **48** in-person classes with **489** participants and an average of 10 participants per class. In addition, **44** virtual classes were conducted with **8,493** views and an average of **193** views per class.



**Physical Fitness and Nutrition:** Research has shown that proper nutrition and regular physical exercise greatly contribute to overall healthy physical and mental wellness. To that end, the HWS designated several uniformed members of the Section as physical fitness trainers and nutritional coach respectively. These members joined the aforementioned yoga instruction in a quest to improve the physical fitness and nutrition opportunities of members of this Department through a multi-faceted approach. The team utilizes the Section's Instagram page in order to provide content about best practices in their respective fields of concentration. The team also conducts in person outreach by visiting commands throughout the City, taking note of precinct gyms in need of equipment and repair. In partnership with the Police Foundation and the Medical Division, the team coordinates delivery of needed equipment in an effort to better equip members of commands in achieving their physical fitness goals. The team developed an eight-week fitness and nutrition program for members interested in a structured plan. This program was launched in October 2020 and has to date served 28 members over three sessions. A fitness and nutrition webinar series was also developed where members can log on via Zoom to listen to and interact with the fitness team regarding the topic of the day. Over the course of the year commencing in May, **1554** members of the service logged on either to live or archived webinars created by the team. In addition to the various programs both virtual and in person that have been and continue to be offered, several

printable and downloadable documents have been created to serve the members of the Department. A digital exercise guide detailing styles and types of exercises focusing on programs for both gym or at home workouts was developed as a companion for the in-person instruction. Detailed instruction guides in yoga and nutrition were also developed to provide immediate reference and a tangible follow-up for those seeking personal instruction. All of these instructional materials can be downloaded via department intranet and are also being distributed by members of the section during roll call visits and upon request.

**Retirement Services:** In recognition that the mental and physical health of our members is best achieved through a multi discipline approach, the position of Retirement Coordinator was included in the staffing model for the Section. The Retirement Coordinator, added to the team in 2020, has immersed himself in the position by liaising with the NYPD's Pension Section, unions who represent our members, and outside sources pertaining to financial security and retirement needs. The Health and Wellness Section offers twice monthly educational webinars via the Zoom platform addressing the concerns of the membership specific to retirement tier level. The webinars are tailored to feedback received from members of the Department through surveys and roll call presentations. In total, **20** retirement themed webinars were conducted in 2021. The HWS also incorporates retirement education into roll call visits and has conducted **8** retirement specific visits to commands upon their request.

**USDA Partnership:** The Health and Wellness Section partnered with the United States Department of



Agriculture in a first ever use of a smartphone application developed by the USDA. In August of 2020, all Department smartphones were equipped with the application 'Start Simple with MyPlate.' This free application is designed to encourage our membership to meet healthy eating goals one step at a time by assisting them in picking simple daily food goals, track progress, receive tips and award them with badges to celebrate success. The application sends push notifications to members with helpful tips to achieve nutritional goals. In order to help

make members aware that this application is available and to help members understand how the application works, the Section created a tutorial which is available for download on the Department Intranet Portal.

**Continuous professional development:** The field of wellness is constantly fluid with best practices adjusting in order to better increase overall wellness. The Health and Wellness Section seeks to stay abreast of best practices in part by ensuring that staff are constantly immersed in up to date training in their individual field of expertise. Members of the Health and Wellness Team participated in the following professional development in calendar year 2020 and 2021:

- Myer-Briggs Type Indicator Training
- Personal Trainer Certification
- Critical Incident Stress Management Training
- Mindful Resilience for Trauma Recovery Training
- International Sports Science Association Strength and Condition Certification
- International Sports Science Association Nutrition Certification
- Precision Nutrition Level 1 Certification
- Sexual Offense Trauma Informed Response Training
- The University of the State of New York Office of the Professions: Licensed Master Social Worker

**Participation in Conferences:** The Health and Wellness Section has been embraced by the law enforcement community at large for the progressive work the Section is doing in the field of health and wellness. As such, the Section's representatives have been asked to participate in several conferences held throughout 2020, 2021 and 2022:

- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) 2020 National Conference: In October, 2020, Assistant Chief Matthew Pontillo, Commanding Officer – Office of the First Deputy Commissioner, Dr. Adria Adams, Director of the Health and Wellness section, Deputy Inspector Mark Wachter, Commanding Officer of the Health and Wellness Section and Lieutenant Janna Salisbury, Commanding Officer of the Employee Assistance Unit presented on the *“NYPD Mental Health Strategy: The NYPD’s Approach to Increasing Mental Health Awareness, Reducing Stigma, and Supporting Its Members”* at the International Chiefs of Police (IACP) 2020 National Conference. The module introduced the NYPD’s multi-dimensional effort to place a focus on employee wellness and outlined the Health and Wellness Section’s innovative initiatives that can be used as a model for those seeking guidance in establishing a wellness-centered approach.
- Pearls in Policing: Deputy Inspector Wachter and Det. Thompson presented on behalf of the Health and Wellness Section and the Department as a whole at the annual Pearls in Policing conference in June of 2020. This conference brings together law enforcement executives from around the world who meet to address the future challenges of policing.
- The 2021 Resilience Symposium was dedicated to the topic on Awe and how it is related to resilience and wellbeing for law enforcement personnel. More than 30 experts in research and policing were featured during the multiple panel discussions that took place virtually over two days in May. The event had over 2,000 people registered from 30 countries. The event was co-hosted by the NYPD's Health and Wellness Section and the Psychiatry Department at Columbia University Medical Center.
- The HWS will be presenting the benefits of the newly established Therapy K9 Unit at the International Chiefs of Police Officer Safety and Wellness Symposium in March, 2022.

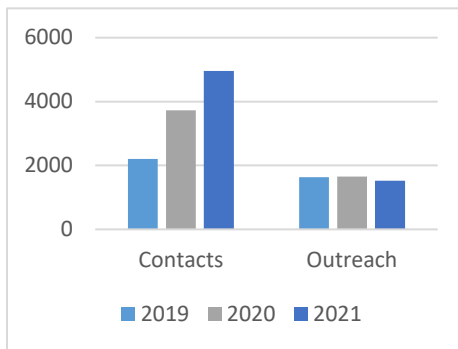
### **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE UNIT**

Initially formed in 1973, the Employee Assistance Unit (EAU) is one of law enforcement’s first formal peer support programs. Presently, the EAU is staffed by 23 sworn and non-sworn members of the NYPD in all ranks and many civilian titles whose principal assignment is to provide 24-hour **CONFIDENTIAL** peer-to-peer support, respond to on and off-duty critical incidents involving NYPD employees, provide suicide intervention to employees in acute crisis, and career-long resiliency education. It is no secret pervasive mental health stigmas often prevent law enforcement professionals from seeking necessary treatment. The EAU, as part of the greater Health and Wellness team, works to break down those barriers through proactive outreach and education. Members of the EAU are in the Department’s precincts, transit districts, housing service areas, and





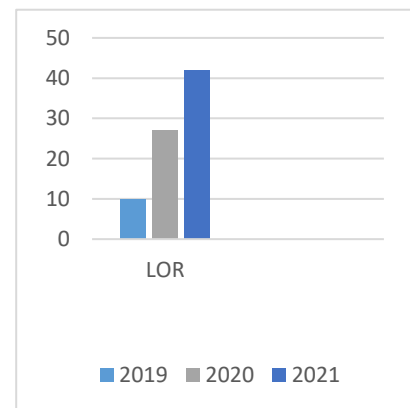
support units daily speaking about the availability of internal and external mental health resources and building personal bonds that break down barriers.



When the EAU was realigned in the organizational chart from the Personnel Bureau to the newly created Health and Wellness Section in 2019, the staffing allotment was doubled, from 12 to 24 positions. With that, the Unit's self-initiated and colleague/supervisor referral contacts saw a marked increase. Although Command and Unit visits suffered due to COVID-19 pandemic related in-person outreach/training restrictions, the Unit was able to quickly shift to on-line modes of outreach and training models. The EAU utilized Zoom and Microsoft Teams platforms to host monthly support "check-ins", provide virtual

support groups for grief and bereavement and financial wellness, and maintain training commitments through remote training technology in precinct and command muster rooms citywide.

Likewise, the EAU's proactive mental health outreach program, entitled the Line Organization Referral (LOR), saw an exponential increase in participation. The LOR program provides a confidential and non-punitive means for uniformed members of the NYPD to access professional mental health services and, in some cases, a temporary change in duty status, when personal or professional stressors become overwhelming. This program is voluntary and the dramatic increase in member participation can most assuredly be associated with the NYPD's fervent focus on employee mental health and wellness and the EAU's proactive outreach, training, and critical incident response initiatives as well as stigma reduction initiatives.



**24 Hour Peer Support:** EAU counselors are on-call 24 hours a day. Members of the service are encouraged to call and speak or arrange to meet with an EAU counselor at any time, day or night. Counselors offer peer support through some of the most trying times an officer can experience: change in duty status due to disciplinary action, hospitalization due to illness or injury of themselves or a loved one, domestic discord, financial strife, bereavement, general career guidance and, most importantly, counseling in the wake of critical incidents or acute psychiatric crisis. A change in duty status may be one of the most professionally traumatic events a law enforcement officer will experience. That stress, often amplified in the officer's personal life with the shame associated with the loss of identity and the financial considerations of a suspension, is often a turning point in the member's career. EAU is notified of suspensions, modifications and demotions and takes affirmative measures to ensure that the employee's questions are answered, thereby alleviating the uncertainty, acknowledging the stress, and providing as transparent a process as possible. Additionally, EAU's peer counselors routinely visit ill or injured members of the service admitted to the hospital, at locations both in and outside of the confines of New York City. In all cases peer counselors remain in contact with the member to the extent they are comfortable, following up as necessary and acting as a conduit to internal and external resources. In some of the most extreme of cases, when an officer is in an acute mental health crisis or experiencing suicidal ideation, EAU Peer Counselors are available to provide immediate intervention and guide the member through the often traumatic and isolating process of emergency mental health care and the ensuing fitness for duty evaluation/change of duty status process. EAU Counselors will accompany the officer through every stage of the process (resulting in either restoration or separation from the Department) – thereby attempting to alleviate stressors and provide support. EAU conducted **4960** such individual "interviews" in 2021, the

**most recorded** in the Unit's history, all while maintaining the utmost confidentiality and navigating COVID concerns.

**Suicide Prevention and Education:** The EAU's primary mission of suicide prevention and education is chiefly achieved through precinct and unit site visits. In 2021, EAU counselors made **1519** visits to precincts, districts, service areas, specialized units, and civilian commands to address roll calls, civilian staff and unit debriefings, on all tours and throughout all boroughs. EAU counselors use this time to address suicide awareness and illuminate behavioral indicators that they may see both in themselves and in their partners or subordinates. The EAU stresses the need for members of the service to take care of each other and to take affirmative action by reaching out to the EAU should they observe characteristics indicative of someone in acute stress.

**Employee Assistance Unit Training:** One of the ways EAU aims to effect employee wellness is through unit and precinct trainings. Peer counselors use these opportunities to explain the mission and function of the EAU, available Department resources, symptoms of PTSD and Cumulative Traumatic Stress Syndrome (CTSS), and proper stress mitigation techniques to keep members of the service emotionally healthy for the duration of their career. Supervisors are instructed on the specific EAU programs that can benefit their subordinates and reasons they should refer members of the service to the EAU. The EAU recently added a Financial Literacy course that provides financial fundamentals for both personal growth and retirement investments. The Financial Literacy course has seen much success, as indicated by the substantial wait list and glowing post-training reviews. The EAU conducts in-service trainings at venues that include:



- Recruit and Cadet Police Academy orientations
- Commanding Officer's supervisor's meetings
- Civilian new hire and promotional classes
- Civilian in-service/supervisory training
- Sergeant, Lieutenant, and Captain uniformed promotional classes
- Uniformed borough orientations
- Citywide Command Level Training (CLT) for training personnel
- Critical Incident Team (CIT) training
- Firearms Tactical Requalification Cycles
- Fraternal organization and Benevolent Association monthly meetings

**Critical Incident Response:** Research has shown that a debriefing immediately following a traumatic incident demonstratively improves the ability of the officer to emotionally process the event and thus produces a better prognosis for integration and a return to normal functioning. EAU peer counselors are dispatched to hospitals, precincts, crime scenes, and in some cases, personal residences immediately after being notified by Citywide Operations of a member of this Department involved in a critical incident. The EAU counselor explains some of the normal reactions to stressful events that the officer may experience in the future, thereby validating those emotions and mitigating any feelings of loneliness, fear or shame. When an EAU peer counselor responds to a scene, a rapport is established that opens vital lines of

communication and facilitates future interactions, not only with that individual, but with the command as a whole. In cases of traumatic deaths (line of duty deaths, suicides, traumatic family deaths, etc.), the EAU counselors respond to hospitals and commands to address civilian and uniformed members of the service. EAU Counselors help the member work through the stages of the grieving process and reiterate Department and outside resources available should they so require. Liaison peer counselors attend the subsequent wake and funeral services and follow up with the command on a regular basis, paying special attention to anniversaries and memorial services. The members of the EAU responded to **115** critical incidents in 2021, involving hundreds of uniform and civilian members of the service. EAU Peer Counselors provided professional peer support to the members of this Department 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, sacrificing weekends and holidays with their own families to deliver an immeasurable service for the Department's most vital resources, its personnel. Some of the critical incidents the EAU responded to in 2021 include:

- Line of Duty Deaths
- MOS Suicides
- Officer Involved Shootings
- Family trauma
- Mass casualty/traumatic deaths
- Serious injuries to MOS incurred both on and off duty

**On-Line Support Groups:** COVID brought an overwhelming amount of grief and compassion fatigue to public service personnel. Not only did members of the NYPD experience incalculable loss due to colleagues succumbing to the virus, but many members experienced personal loss in their families and communities. The EAU responded to this growing need by hosting a monthly Grief and Bereavement support group through the online Zoom platform. EAU Peer Counselors certified in grief and bereavement moderate the free-form sessions where participants, who may remain anonymous, are encouraged to discuss any loss (relationship, financial, spiritual, death) in a confidential platform. One-on-one follow-up is available, with either an EAU Peer Counselor or a Health and Wellness Section clinician.

**Therapy K9 Program:** In late 2021 and 2022, the EAU received three (3) trained and certified Therapy K9s from Puppies Behind Bars, a local New York 501 (c)(3) non-profit. Puppies Behind Bars leverages partnerships with New York and New Jersey correctional



Therapy Dog in 2022.

facilities to train both inmates and the K9s in service animal techniques. As part of the Employee Assistance Unit, Therapy K9s attend Health and Wellness Section critical incident debriefings, outreach opportunities, critical incident responses, and funerals/wakes with their EAU Peer Counselor handlers to provide stress reduction in times of crisis and help to break down barriers that have traditionally prevented uniformed and civilian members from seeking Department mental health resources. The Therapy K9s have been extremely well received by Department members and have become a vital tool in the EAU's member outreach initiatives. The EAU plans to expand the Therapy K9 program by adding a fourth certified



## **HEALTH AND WELLNESS OUTREACH UNIT**

**COVID-19 Pandemic Response:** The COVID-19 Pandemic thrust the nation and indeed the world into territory arguably no one living today had previously experienced. Members faced stress concerning the physical health of themselves, their families, colleagues, and friends and at the same time were challenged mentally and social as societal norms fell by the wayside in an attempt to combat COVID-19 infection rates. The Health and Wellness Section immediately reacted to the needs of members of the Department, tailoring the response to the need for social distancing. The following were actions taken specific to the COVID-19 crisis:

- Weekly newsletters emailed to all Department email accounts as well as distributed in hard copy form to Training Sergeants throughout the Department. Topics included:
  - Handling Stress, Anxiety and Fear
  - Resilience and Self-Care
  - We Are All in this Together
  - Sleep Practical Tips for Resilience
  - Grief and Coping
  - Understanding PTSD
  - COVID and Family Stress
  - Reality Check
  - The Science of Social Distancing
  - Adapting to Go Forward
  - Stigma Free NYPD and “Fitness From a Distance”
  - Acceptance, Resilience, and Unity
- The Health and Wellness Section hosted weekly “Virtual Social Hour” Zoom sessions weekly commencing in early April 2020. The Virtual Social Hours were open to all members of the service and prompted open discussion about challenges facing members unique to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Virtual Social Hours met through the end of August 2020.
- The Section hosted three sessions of a virtual book featuring *The Body Keeps the Score*, *The Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement*, and *Trauma Stewardship*.
- A Special COVID-19 Edition of SPRING 3100, the NYPD’s internal quarterly magazine, was created by the Department in coordination with the Health and Wellness Section and released to **90,000** active and retired members of the service. This special edition magazine featured articles covering all aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic and how the pandemic effected our members and allowed the HWS to make vital outreach to the families of our members.
- In recognition that members’ children were either in virtual learning or largely out of daycare and at home, the Section hosted a virtual story time where members of the Department read children’s book on the Section’s Instagram page.

**Critical Incident Debriefing:** HWS Director, Dr. Adria Adams, heads a team of Health and Wellness Section members who have been trained in Critical Incident Stress Debriefing, or CISD, which is a specific small group supportive crisis intervention process. The CISD was developed exclusively for small, homogenous groups who have encountered a powerful traumatic event and is aimed at reducing distress and restoring group cohesion and unit performance. The Critical Incident Debriefing Team identifies critical incidents throughout the City and arranges for members to come meet with the Critical Incident Stress Management team. The first officers served by a CISD through the Health and Wellness Section was in





July 2020 and a total of **1500** members from **79** commands were seen through the end of the 2021. Instances which may be identified as critical incidents include but are not limited to:

- Fatal Motor Vehicle Accidents
- Infant or Child Death or Injury
- Officer Involved Shootings
- Suicides
- Situations where Members Perform CPR
- Homicide

**Finest Care:** The FINEST CARE program at New York-Presbyterian, established through collaboration with the Health and Wellness Section and the Medical Division, offers uniformed members of service access to free, confidential mental health services. The program allows officers to speak with a psychologist and psychiatrist within their expansive network of clinicians. FINEST CARE is available for all kinds of emotional challenges, and all uniformed members of service who are experiencing challenges are encouraged to call. With this confidential no-cost service, FINEST CARE clinicians can offer:

- 24-hour telephone-based counseling services
- Comprehensive evaluation and mental health assessments
- Medication management and psychotherapy services
- Counseling referral services

## **SPORTS UNIT**

The NYPD Sports Unit manages the Department's **35** NYPD sponsored sports teams as well as the Police Commissioners Sports League. The sports teams are a vital avenue for members of the Department to build and foster camaraderie while also promoting overall physical and mental wellness. Despite challenges, in 2020, the Sports Unit facilitated the formation of the Women's Lacrosse Team and also a Golf Team adding these teams to its growing list of sports teams available to members of the Department.

As state and local relaxed, the Sports staff members match between the baseball teams in event was unique as the ensuring a safe and while in the midst of a from both Departments duty families present at resumed its community annual Sports Unit Golf given to the NYC Police providing assistance to officers and the Ronald



regulations on gatherings Unit's three permanent facilitated the annual NYPD and the FDNY Rockland County, NY. The Unit was tasked with enjoyable experience pandemic for executives as well as fans and line of the event. The Unit also outreach efforts via the Outing with funds raised Relief Fund which Department police McDonald House of New

York City. The outing was an overwhelming success raising \$31,000 in 2020 as compared with \$28,000 in 2019. The Unit continued its outreach to commands throughout the City sharing with members the value of playing on Department teams and also in participating in the Police Commissioner Sports League teams (PCSL) including roller hockey, ice hockey, and football which the Unit has been able to continue to facilitate despite the challenges of the pandemic. The PCSL games are coordinated directly by the

members of the Unit who ensure that hundreds of our members have a serviceable area to train and conduct games on including an ice rink, football field, roller hockey rink and softball fields across Queens and the Bronx.

## PERSONNEL BUREAU



The NYPD Personnel Bureau houses many of the Department's traditional and longest-standing Wellness Resources: the Medical Division, Cardiovascular Fitness Unit, Psychosocial Evaluation Section, Mobile Health Van and the Counseling Services Unit. The NYPD Medical Division, under the direction of a Supervising Chief Surgeon, acts as the Department's primary resource for advisement on medical policy and preparedness issues affecting the Department. The Supervising Chief Surgeon duties also include:

- Supervising a cadre of police surgeons and honorary police surgeons, and overseeing the activities of medical districts in five department health care facilities
- Collaborating with the Legal Bureau, the Deputy Commissioner of Public Information, the Deputy Commissioner of Training and various other bureaus on issues of departmental concern, and providing expert medical testimony for legal cases involving the NYPD
- Coordinating various health and well-being initiatives, campaigns, and clinical studies, including the activities of the Mobile Health Van at precincts, transit districts, and PSAs, as well as cardiovascular screenings for membership to department fitness facilities
- Providing topical medical information via print and digital media, and;
- Advising, upgrading and drilling the department's Emergency Medical Disaster plan

**Mobile Health Van:** The Medical Division Health Van provides cost-free health assessments for all active members of the Department. Although it is not a replacement for yearly check-ups with a personal Doctor, it is a cost effective and easy way for members of the service to monitor their health. Too many members pass away after retiring due to health related illness that were preventable with proper health screenings. The Medical Division's Mobile Health Van responds to Department facilities to offer an array of on-site medical tests performed by Medical Division Doctor and Nursing staff. Over the years, there have been many instances where a member's life may have been saved due to Mobile Health Van medical health personnel identifying a previously undetected potentially life threatening illness. Below is a list of just some of the things the van has to offer:

- Blood Pressure Testing
- Electrocardiogram
- Blood-Work
  - Cholesterol/Triglycerides
  - Glucose/Protein (Diabetes)
  - Red/White Blood Count
  - Liver & Kidney Function
  - Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA)
- Seasonal Flu/H1N1 Vaccinations
- MMR Vaccinations
- Smoking Cessation Kits: nicotine gum, patches, lozengers
- Health-Related Counseling & Guidance



In 2021, The Medical Division's Mobile Health Van saw **1167** members of the Department, preformed **5470** tests and identified **857** abnormalities that required medical follow-up with the member's private physician. Since the on-set of the NYPD response to COVID-19, the Mobile Health van has been offering COVID vaccines as well as continuing to offer yearly cost-free flu vaccination.

**COVID-19 Response:** Within days of receiving the approved vaccine, Medical Division staff administered more than **17,000** COVID vaccines to members of the Department. The Medical Division also had the opportunity to vaccinate over **700** Auxiliary Police Officers, **1,304** residents of the New York City Housing Authority, and more than **700** members of other law enforcement agencies. The vaccination effort was expanded to include eligible retirees and family members of active duty personnel and retired members of the service. In less than one week, the Medical Division was able to inoculate over **5,000** eligible retirees and family members of active and retired members.

**Cardiovascular Fitness Unit:** The Cardiovascular Fitness Unit (CFU) was instituted in 1989 as part of the



Department's philosophy of keeping the Finest fit, both physically and mentally through health, exercise, and nutrition counseling. The unit currently has fourteen **14** fitness centers throughout the five boroughs of New York City, in addition to the precinct/unit-level gyms. The annual membership fee is forty dollars \$40.00, which gains the member access to all of the fitness center locations, citywide. All of the fitness centers have various fitness, aerobic, and strength equipment. There are Fitness

Instructors assigned to each of the fitness centers to perform assessments, evaluations, exercise prescriptions, training, orientations, and nutrition counseling. Our professional Exercise Physiologists (Fitness Instructors) hold Bachelors Degrees, Masters Degrees and various fitness certifications. The Cardiovascular Fitness Unit's Fitness Instructors design fitness programs, instruct on proper exercise techniques and train members to help them achieve their individual fitness goals.

**Counseling Services Unit:** The primary function of the Counseling Services Unit (CSU) is to assist in the recovery and return to full and productive service those members of the service who are experiencing difficulties with alcohol, prescription medication, gambling or finances. The Department's objective, at all levels, is the early detection and referral of its personnel for evaluation and treatment, either as a self-referral or through a direct supervisory referral. Counseling Services Unit personnel can be contacted 24-hours a day, 7 days a week when an officer has been identified as requesting or requiring services. The Counseling Services Unit has established relationships with in and out-patient treatment providers that allow them to place members of the Department for immediate addiction treatment. The Counseling Services Unit adheres to all HIPAA regulations regarding confidentiality and disclosure, creating an environment where members are comfortable proactively contacting the CSU for assistance.

**Honorary Department Surgeons:** The Medical Division bestows Honorary Surgeon status to medical providers across New York City and the surrounding counties in various disciplines and specializations. Honorary Surgeons may be affiliated with local hospitals or practice privately – but all remain ready as a resource for members of the department seeking private healthcare options, or as a second opinion, when warranted. Members of the department need only to contact the Office of the Chief Surgeon to be directed to an Honorary Surgeon participating in the member's health insurance benefits package and practicing in the specialization of interest.

**Psychological Evaluation Section:** Although primarily responsible for fitness for duty evaluations of active duty members of the Department, the Psychological Evaluation Section, staffed by Psychologist, is also a

part of the Departments Trauma Response Team and the Trauma Counseling Program. The Trauma Team responds to the scene of shooting incidents, disasters, or other violent occurrences resulting in death or injury to make contact with officers and provide immediate support, when necessary. The officers are notified they will be required to participate, within 48 hours, in a Trauma Counseling Program meeting where immediate counseling needs are met and further resources may be provided.

The above should provide an overview of the comprehensive and holistic wellness approach adopted by the NYPD for its personnel. Many units work side-by-side to provide a menu of health, wellness and support resources. From career-long financial literacy, to retirement planning, to immediate suicide intervention, the NYPD medical and wellness resources remain ready to address the concerns of its personnel on a moments notice. Hundreds of dedicated NYPD employees work tirelessly towards a healthier and happier work force with the end goal of achieving the NYPD's goal of a safer New York City. There still much work to do but the NYPD, as always, is up to the challenge.

