

ASHER MODEL

1 AWARENESS

Create an environment where, "It's OK to not be OK." Have open, honest discussions with employees by bringing these conversations out of the shadows and into the open.

2 SOLUTION-FOCUSED APPROACH

Focus on solutions and not the problem. Cordico Shield Employee Wellness App. www.cordico.com/shield/ 24/7/365 access to powerful resources, all confidential and anonymous.

3 PEER SUPPORT

Create a proactive, trained Peer Support Team, along with CISM and a police therapy dog program.

4 RESILIENCY

Educate employees on Resiliency, Mindfulness, PTSD, Emotional Intelligence and solutions such as yoga, breathing exercises.

5 HEALTHY HABITS

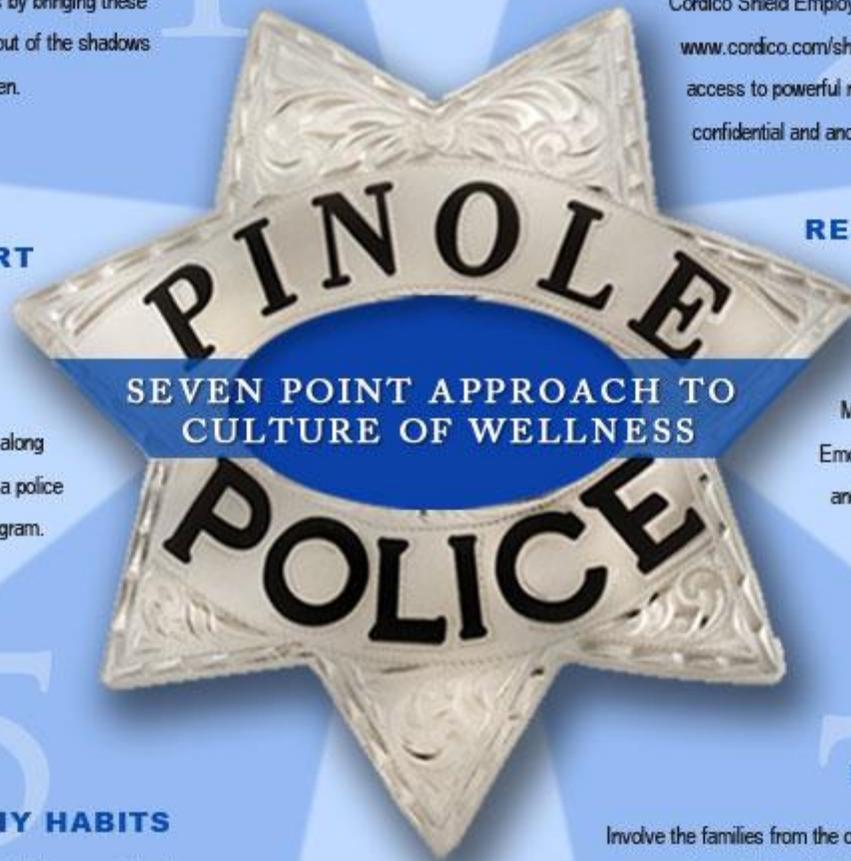
Encourage physical fitness and healthy eating habits. Allocate budget funds to build or update a fitness facility and discourage candy and unhealthy snacks around the department. Also remove unhealthy choices from vending machines and substitute healthier options.

6 SPIRITUALITY

Develop a Police/Clergy Coalition, Chaplain Program and programs such as "Pray with the Police."

7 FAMILY

Involve the families from the orientation process forward. Provide books on key topics for employees and families (i.e. Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement by Dr. Gilmartin). Provide relationship, financial wellness and retirement preparation resources; from rookie to retirement all available via Cordico Shield.



Submitted by: Neil H. Gang, Chief of Police, Pinole Police Department, California

Asher Model 7-Point Approach to a Culture of Wellness

The City of Pinole is a community of approximately 19,573 residents situated in Western Contra Costa County on the east side of San Francisco Bay. Pinole is approximately 30 miles northeast of San Francisco, 20 miles north of Oakland and just 7 miles south of Vallejo along Interstate Highway 80. In addition to the natural setting, Pinole is noted for its architectural heritage and historic past. The Pinole Police Department is comprised of 28 sworn employees and approximately 25 civilian/non-sworn employees. We are a full service, municipal organization that provides exemplary police services to the Community of Pinole, 24/7/365.

At the Pinole Police Department we believe that Officer Wellness is at the core of everything we do and everything else is secondary. Every employee is immersed in a culture of wellness and all employees and spouses are provided with the Cordico Officer Wellness App. Our model includes educating our employees in all aspects of wellness both on and off duty, to include: financial wellness, relationship/marriage wellness and preparing for retirement. Everything from rookie to retirement, hire to retire.

Although the collection of data for an Officer Wellness program can be challenging, we have many antidotal stories of our program's success. Our program has been recognized nationally in national publications such as Police One, Calibre Press and Law Enforcement Today, as well as the local news media:

Asher Model in the news:

- <https://www.kron4.com/news/bay-area/one-bay-area-police-chief-taking-proactive-approach-to-stopping-officer-suicides/>
- <https://www.policeone.com/health-fitness/articles/a-7-point-approach-to-developing-a-culture-of-wellness-in-law-enforcement-fFUTFHhAvKDcHsom/>
- <https://www.calibrepress.com/2019/06/the-asher-model/>
- <https://www.lawenforcementtoday.com/chief-stopping-officers-from-taking-own-lives/>
- <https://www.cordico.com/2019/06/04/asher-model-7-point-approach-to-a-culture-of-wellness/>

The inspiration behind the Asher Model:

It's the early morning hours of May 2nd, 1993 and I was awoken by the jarring sound of the phone ringing; on the other end was a friend of mine and fellow squad member. Sounding distraught he declared "Asher is dead!" referring to another squad member of ours and an academy classmate and friend of mine. Immediately my thoughts turned to Asher being shot and killed in the line of duty. Police Suicide never crossed my mind, why would it? This man was a six year veteran of our agency and a decorated U.S. Marine; so many thoughts, so many unanswered questions. The next morning, the headlines in the Sun Sentinel newspaper read:

PINES OFFICER KILLS HIMSELF IN HIS CRUISER

Just before sunrise, Police Officer Asher Rosinsky parked his cruiser along the edge of the Florida Everglades and alone in the darkness, he held his .40-caliber semiautomatic duty weapon to his chest, and then pulled the trigger. A fellow officer and friend of mine observed the parked cruiser and found Asher dead with one bullet hole center mass. How could this have happened? Why didn't we see the red flags that, in reflection, were right in front of our eyes? What could I have done to prevent this from occurring? Why didn't he just reach out before taking this drastic and devastating action? This man was married and had two young sons; one was three and the other just 18 months.

What ensued in the days after will prove to have the most profound impact on my professional career. So what occurred immediately afterward that was so impactful? NOTHING. Asher was buried the next day and as in any traditional Jewish burial ceremony; we all took turns grabbing a shovel and literally proceeded to bury our brother in blue, by shoveling the dirt onto his casket. No big fanfare, no well-publicized traditional police memorial service, NOTHING. When we returned to work it was business as usual, "25 Alpha 4, I'm 10-08." I mean, we are mentally tough warriors, sworn to protect and serve, what would we need? NOTHING!

Back in those days, Peer Support, CISM, Critical Incident Stress Debriefings or EAP programs weren't really a part of the law enforcement landscape. If you needed assistance or wanted to speak to someone, you were considered weak or

maybe even unfit to be an officer. EAP, you mean “Expose and Punish,” no thank you, I’m not getting labeled or sent to the “Rubber-Gun Squad.”

Fast forward to 2019, so much technology, so much awareness, yet more officers still die by suicide than all other “in the line-of-duty” deaths combined. The numbers are staggering and the experts estimate the numbers are being underreported by up to a factor of 2.5. These numbers fail to even address our retired brothers and sisters, or support staff such as dispatchers, crime scene techs, etc. Something drastic needs to be implemented to stop this epidemic from continuing. Every 44... A recent study discovered that every 44 hours an officer dies by suicide.

Then it happened, an epiphany. I was blessed with an introduction to Dr. David Black, President and Founder of Cordico. Dr. Black was presenting his CordicoShield Officer Wellness App; a tool that would provide 24/7/365 access to powerful resources right at our employees fingertips with total anonymity and confidentiality. Finally, something of merit that targets solutions, not just addresses the problem and as Chief John Carli of the Vacaville Police Department stated, “This is a game-changer, and there’s nothing else like it.”

In April, I traveled to New York City to attend the Police Executive Research Forum Symposium on Law Enforcement Suicide, hosted by the NYPD. The symposium was very well attended with over 350 attendees from all over the world; from subject matter experts to practitioners to law enforcement executives.

Finally these conversations are being brought out from the shadows and into the open. So much great work and effort is being done in the area of officer wellness. As a result of the symposium, there were many great takeaways; the most impactful for me, the need to have a multifaceted approach for any chance of being impactful and successful. We must have a call to action, a paradigm switch; where innovative, action-focused, problem solvers take a stand to focus on solutions and not just address, or raise awareness, to the problem. We need partners who are willing to make a concerted effort in creating a culture of wellness within our organizations. Create an environment of, “It’s OK, to not be OK”; along with a multifaceted approach that provides resources from all angles and targets solutions.

At the Pinole Police Department we developed the “Asher Model – A Seven Point Approach to Creating a Culture of Wellness.” This was developed as a multifaceted approach to the police suicide epidemic; it correlates to the seven point star badge that is worn in the Bay Area and each of the seven points on the star correlate to a point in our proactive approach to employee wellness. We feel the most crucial point in our model is providing our employees with the CordicoShield Employee Wellness App.

Here are the seven points of our approach as it relates to creating that culture of wellness:

AWARENESS – Creating an environment where, “It’s OK to not be OK.” Open and honest discussions with our employees; bringing these conversations out of the shadows and into the open. Creating a culture where having these conversations does not create any stigma. Ensuring that this is a top down philosophy where even the Chief shares experiences and stories with all employees.

SOLUTION FOCUSED APPROACH – Focus on solutions and not the problem. Raising awareness is great, but we wanted to take this one step further and not just raise awareness but provide a solution as well. CordicoShield; Employee Wellness App by Cordico, 24/7/365 access to powerful resources, all confidential and anonymous. Ensuring that all our employees are equipped with this powerful tool and also equipping the employees’ spouse or significant other. Normalizing the need for such resources and sharing experiences about the app and its usage.

PEER SUPPORT – Create a proactive, trained Peer Support Team along with CISM and police therapy dog program. Not just wait for the “big one” per se, but having a Peer Support Team made up of members from all aspects of the organization that pro-actively look for opportunities to reach out to our employees on any call that they may feel our employees may face trauma. So interaction from the team members not when advised to do so, but when they feel that an employee may be facing some signs of trauma, and not just before or after a formalized debriefing. We have also created the areas, first, police therapy dog program which complements our Peer Support Team and is utilized as a regional resource.

RESILIENCY – Educate employees on Resiliency, Mindfulness, PTSD, Emotional Intelligence and solutions such as yoga and breathing exercises. Proactively sending out articles about these topics to our employees and looking for training opportunities to educate all our employees on a variety of topics regarding resiliency.

HEALTHY HABITS – Encouraging physical fitness and healthy eating habits. We allocated budget funds to build or update our fitness facility capabilities. We discourage candy and unhealthy snacks around the department and have removed unhealthy choices from vending machines and substitute healthier options. We have been unable to develop an on duty fitness program, but we encourage workouts prior to and after the employee’s shifts and currently researching ways to incentivize this healthy habit.

SPIRITUALITY – We develop a Police/Clergy Coalition, Chaplain Program and community outreach programs, such as “Pray with the Police.” Just building those important relationships with our community and meeting once a quarter to have open and honest discussions and a variety of topics.

FAMILY – Involve the families from the orientation process forward. Provide access to books to key topics for employees and families (i.e. Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement by Dr. Kevin Gilmartin). Provide relationship, financial wellness and retirement preparation resources; from rookie to retirement, hire to retire. We now instituted a new family orientation. When a new employee is hired on, on the day of their swearing in ceremony, we bring the employees family and friends to the Public Safety Building where they meet with a family host. The host will then provide the family with a tour of the department. The family will then be brought in to experience our Virtual Reality training simulator and then lastly, all families meet with the Chief. In that meeting, we discuss about the effects of a career in law enforcement and answer any questions they may have. We encourage the families to be our champions and report any red flags or signs that their family member may be suffering, or showing effects of trauma. We share with them the alarming data that officers are dying by suicide at twice the rate of all other on-duty related deaths combined. At the conclusion, the spouses are brought to a personalized Cordcio poster with a UC code and they are able to download the Cordcio App right on their phone before they leave the office. They are also all

provided a copy of “Emotional Survivor for Law Enforcement by Dr. Kevin Gilmartin.

We certainly understand that our model represents a way, not necessarily, “The Way,” in creating that important Culture of Wellness for our employees; hopefully our efforts will ultimately save one of our brothers or sisters in blue and we truly believe this program will change outcomes. The Asher Model is turning tragedy into HOPE.

Thank you for your consideration and God Bless.