

Stanislaus County (CA) Sheriff's Office

2022 Winner Officer Wellness

Stanislaus County is one of 58 counties in California. The county has a population of approximately 550,660 citizens and the size of the county is approximately 1,515 square miles. Interstate 5 and Highway 99 pass through the county making it a huge thoroughfare between Mexico and Oregon. The Stanislaus County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) oversees contracted law enforcement services in four incorporated cities in addition to most of the unincorporated communities. The Sheriff, Jeff Dirkse, oversees 250 sworn deputies, 270 non-sworn correctional officers and a staff of over 300 civilians and volunteers.

The SCSO has taken great strides to make officer wellness a top priority by creating and maintaining a series of important wellness programs and initiatives. A robust Peer support Team has been in place for years and supports not just officers in critical incidents but their families as well. The SCSO Peer support Team has a strong track record for helping its deputies with emotional problems, substance abuse and debriefing after traumatic incidents.

SCSO has had a Chaplain program since its inception in 1854. There are currently 5 Chaplains officially employed with the agency. On any critical call or public death, Chaplains are immediately available and on call to assist the public or any employee needs that arise. The Chaplains also employ an emotional support dog who tours facilities and can be used to help officers and employees who have suffered a loss or emotional trauma.

A department psychologist is kept on retainer and is available for to provide confidential counseling at no cost. Their services are also available for SCSO family members.

Recognizing the high rate of suicide in the police profession, SCSO has taken great steps to educate their staff how to understand or identify symptoms and take steps to enhance knowledge of suicide prevention and post-traumatic stress injury. All new employees attending the academy are given a copy of the book Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement by Dr. Kevin Gilmartin

The department also works to keep their deputies fit. The SCSO has a CrossFit gym at their training center large enough for 50 people to train simultaneously. The facility is available to all employees twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Patrol deputies are allowed and encouraged to exercise on duty during their twelve-hour shift. The department also has incentives for working out, which offer financial rewards for completing various levels of fitness.

One of the most popular cost-free services introduced as part of the wellness program is a hosted yoga course twice a week. The Sheriff and command staff regularly attend this class as an example to all.

Another service provided to all department employees is the availability of private physical therapists on contract with the agency.

The SCSO also focuses on nutrition. The agency worked with a local company, *Fresh Fork*, which is owned by a former peace officer and specializes in providing access to healthy meals, fresh ready-made healthy meals available for purchase.

The SCSO also embraced the Cordico Wellness application. All patrol officers are issued a cellular phone for work and the app is designed for peace officers to have on-demand access to relevant, trusted, and effective wellness resources.

In response to the introduction of COVID in 2020, the SCSO made countless adjustments to maximize the safety of its employees and the public. The department issued countless supplies of hand sanitizer, masks, sanitizing chemicals, sanitizing devices and other PPE to assist the deputies. SCSO also implemented mask protocols, social distancing, briefing locations, calls for service protocol and alteration of public encounters.

SCSO also offers their members a deferred compensation, 457 supplemental retirement plans through Nationwide financial services.