

Butte County (CA) Sheriff's Office 2023 Officer Wellness Summary

Butte County is a medium sized county located 70 miles north of Sacramento, California. With a population of 208,309 residents (2021 Census), the community is made up of five primary law enforcement agencies, two fire departments, and one regional EMS provider. The county is also home to California State University, Chico which has over 13,000 students enrolled year. Sheriff Kory Honea was sworn in as the 31st Sheriff in May of 2014. The agency employs 80 sworn corrections staff, 93 sworn in patrol/operations, and 95 civilians totaling 268 full time staff. They are also supported by approximately 100 volunteers and extra-help staff members.

Over the last 6 years, the community has experienced devastating natural disasters, the likes of which had never been seen in one location in California. The Lake Oroville Spillway Incident in February of 2017 was caused by heavy rainfall that damaged the main and emergency spillways. This resulted in over 180,000 residents being evacuated from their homes with less than one hours' notice due to a potential catastrophic failure of the tallest dam in the United States.

The "Camp Fire" in November 2018 was the deadliest wildfire in California state history and the most expensive natural disaster in the world in 2018 in terms of insured losses. It burned for almost 3 weeks with 18,000 structures destroyed and 85 lives lost. Hundreds of those working in our local agencies were impacted both personally and professionally, and many first responders lost their homes and all their possessions yet, continued to tirelessly serve and protect the entirety of the community.

Recognizing that first responders were stretched to their psychological and physical limits because of these two disasters, The Butte County Sheriff's Office applied for and was awarded \$1m in grant funding from the Butte Strong Fund, administered by the North Valley Community Foundation. The goal was to provide trauma and recovery services to a first responder community who had been deeply impacted by these major incidents. These events continue to leave a lasting impact on those serving on the front lines. Since funding was originally awarded, Butte County has experienced additional fires, including the North Complex Fire in 2020, which resulted in the loss of 16 additional lives of residents

In November of 2021, the Butte Strong First Responder Wellness Unit was formed. This multi-agency unit is based in the Butte County Sheriff's Office and is dedicated to the overall wellness of the staff, volunteers, and families serving in local first responder agencies located in Butte County. A key component to the development of this Unit was the hiring of the Wellness Unit Program Manager. The Unit Manager oversees all programs, contracts, and services that previously existed, as well as the expansion into many of the programs featured in Butte's submission. The Unit focuses on three primary areas of wellness including Physical Fitness, Mental/Emotional Wellness, and Family Support and Outreach.

During Weekly Functional Fitness Programming, the department's vetted and contracted Physical Therapist provides weekly fitness programming that can be used onsite, at other fitness centers, or at home. For onsite physical therapy, staff and volunteers can schedule appointments directly with the physical therapist. These services are offered outside private health insurance and workers comp. By providing this service onsite, staff can be seen and treated when the initial issue arises. This has led to a decrease in work related absence due to injury. In 2022, BCSO also added their physical therapist as a provider to staff out on workers comp, allowing them to receive PT services onsite at the Sheriff's Office. In 2022 BCSO offered 179 Individual Physical Therapy Sessions.

The Wellness Unit prioritized purchasing fitness equipment for participating agencies to ensure all staff have access to tools for wellness. At BCSO, all staff are encouraged to work out. As an incentive, staff are allowed to do so while on duty. The unit recently began offering classes for staff, volunteers, and family members, through a local gym. Participants can select from 6 class times per day/5 days a week. The department's physical therapist also provides onsite coaching for numerous weekly fitness classes at BCSO. These classes are open to staff and volunteers from all LE, Fire, and EMS agencies in Butte County. In 2022, 501 Group Functional Fitness Classes were held.

Through a contract with a local Brazilian Jujitsu instructor with a LE background, BCSO offer six-week sessions of Intro to BJJ that is taught with current laws and techniques in mind. In 2022 they offered 49 Brazilian Jujitsu Classes. The Jujitsu instructor also offers two annual sessions of self-defense for our civilian staff and spouses.

The Yoga program is taught by an ER Nurse and former Army Medic. She created this program not just to provide fitness opportunities to our First Responders, but also to share the benefit of mindfulness with those on the front lines. In 2022 she offered 41 Yoga Classes. Participants in this class range from civilian staff to those on the street. Many report increased flexibility and high awareness of the use of breathwork for stress relief.

The department offers fitness/nutrition education. Tips are shared via a closed Facebook group and in their cell phone Wellness App on a weekly basis. All staff are eligible to receive Flu Vaccinations through Butte County Staff clinics.

There are currently seven agencies participating in the County Wide Peer Support Team. Due to the nature of the community, and the multitude of disasters they have faced, the department realized it is rare that a single agency responds to a call for service. Therefore, the best way to change the culture is to saturate the field and partner across agencies. The peer support team currently has 45 members from LE, Fire, and EMS. They include sworn and civilian, paid and volunteers.

With Peer Support members of all ranks and roles, the wellness unit often has boots on the ground for the day to day and larger scale events. Peer Support Team members have responded onsite to scenes of critical incidents, facilitated defusing's back at the office immediately following a critical call, and provide one on one follow up in the weeks following a call out.

BCSO Chaplains serve sworn and non-sworn personnel, their families and members of the community. Chaplains also respond to critical incident scenes

Incident Based Therapy – The original intent of this program was to provide therapy for processing the mass casualty incident, the Camp Fire. The team of eight contracted therapists have been vetted to ensure they are culturally competent to provide supportive care to our First Responders. This program is also open to volunteers and to spouses and children of our staff. In 2022 BCSO provided 226 hours of Individual Mental Health Therapy Sessions and 42 hours of Group Therapy.

The wellness unit also makes available Inpatient Alcohol/Drug and PTSD Services through the organization First Responder Wellness. FRW offers inpatient detox and recovery services exclusively to first responders. Their services are often handled through private insurance, allowing staff to receive the support they need without having to wait for workers comp.

Mental Health training has become a priority for all agency partners. The Butte County Sheriff's Office provided 3 training days on the topic of Psychological First Aid which included Suicide Prevention. One of the contracted LCSW's provided training to all agency supervisors and patrol staff.

Informational lunches are held quarterly to provide all staff, sworn and civilian, with updates on programs and services available to them through the Wellness Unit. The Wellness Unit Manager also attends the quarterly trainings to brief agency staff.

Massage Therapists – In the Fall of 2022, BCSO contracted with a local massage school to provide 15 minute back and shoulder massages to staff onsite. Supervisors were supportive of staff taking time to participate while on duty.

Victor is the BCSO in-house Emotional Support Dog. He regularly visits staff throughout the department and brings smiles to staff and volunteers, especially on holidays as he is never too shy to wear a costume. Victor came to BCSO through a partnership with the SPCA.

The wellness unit also hosts events for staff and their families such as, an outdoor ice skating night, a rib and chili cook off, family artwork painting nights and family picnics. In January of 2023, Butte Strong First Responder Wellness Unit began producing a monthly newsletter to highlight the upcoming programs and services. The newsletter is emailed out to all our agency partners and our family email list. Family events are a popular part of the Wellness Programs. In 2022, they had 865 participants in five County Wide Events.

In 2020, BCSO contracted with Cordico to secure their wellness app. The Unit Manager has highly customized the app to focus on local county wide information and resources to ensure that all staff, volunteers, and spouses can access program information in the palm of their hand.

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