

Orange County (FL) Sheriff's Office 2023 Officer Wellness Summary

Orange County is the fifth largest county in the State of Florida with a population of approximately 1.4 million citizens. The county has a total of 903 square miles. The Orange County Sheriff's Office is a full-service law enforcement agency with 2,253 total employees. A total of 1,620 agency members are sworn officers.

The Sheriff's Office has provided 15 locations around the county with fitness equipment. These gyms/fitness spaces are available for employees to use for training and exercise. They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week so that all employees have access to a gym. Our largest gym in Central Operations is 4800 square feet with a cardio floor, weight floor, a functional fitness area, a group fitness studio, and a mat room. We also have additional gyms/fitness spaces at five sector substations, the Communications Center, the Range, Aviation Hanger, LEVO, K9 Office, Marine, SWAT Facility, the Courthouse, and our Special Operations Building. All employees are allotted 90 minutes per week of paid, on duty exercise. This 90 minute/week paid exercise time is available to sworn and civilian employees. OCSO values health and wellness and recognizes that healthier employees are happier, more productive and safer. Employees can use this 90 minute of paid, on duty exercise in three, 30 minute increments. This allows them the benefit of space out workouts while still managing their daily workload.

The agency offers free, weekly Group Fitness Classes (around 15-20 classes per week) and free Personal Training lead by certified instructors/trainers. Group Fitness formats include: CrossFit, Cycle, Zumba, Circuit Training, Core, Yoga, and more. As a registered CrossFit affiliate, the agency is able to provide employees with the Comp Train Fitness Program for free and host CrossFit events. Additionally, CrossFit certified employees lead weekly workout sessions. Mid-year in 2022 OCSO completed the construction on an obstacle course that is designed to set a minimum fitness standard for sworn personnel. Deputies will begin to be introduced to the course early 2023.

Sheriff Mina kicked off a special program that was started this past year, "Bootcamp with the Boss." He participated in the first group workout and since then, we have had many members of our General Staff (Lieutenants and above) assist in leading a group workout. The goal of this program is for staff to work out as a team alongside of agency leaders. The workout will highlight the interest of the General Staff Member who is participating. It is a great way to connect with others and have our leadership demonstrate their commitment to Wellness! In addition to large Group Fitness Classes, our Wellness staff also offers Small Group Classes for 2-6 participants. This is an ideal service for people who like to exercise with the friends they feel comfortable with and/or for people who have similar goals, interests, and/or schedules.

In the event that a person couldn't leave their work station to come to the gym, or they were unable to come together as a group during the pandemic, virtual workouts were made available to them through OCSO Wellness Staff. For instance, a stretching video is on the department portal, and is designed for people to do while at their work station or in their own space. The portal can be accessed from home if they use their agency computer.

In an effort to bring Fitness outside of department walls, the agency has partnered with the Orange County Government to provide free access for employees to the Orange County Recreation Centers. All employees, retirees, and spouses have access to eight additional recreation centers around the county.

OCSO has partnered with Cigna to offer employees and their spouses a credit towards their health insurance premiums by completing three annual wellness activities. This program encourages physical wellness by motivating employees to stay current with annual checkups to maintain their numbers for diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol.

The agency has a Mental Health Committee which researches and promotes mental health support programs and initiatives. The agency works to raise awareness during yearly scheduled trainings as well as written communications to employees. Supervisors and managers have received training on behaviors that may indicate an employee may need assistance and the resources available for them.

All new hires receive the book “Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement, A Guide for Officers and their Families” by Kevin Gilmartin. A short introduction to his concepts are provided at Family Orientation for spouses and loved ones of the new hires. This book is also reviewed at annual sworn block training so concepts are reinforced and prioritized.

During Mental Health Awareness Month Sheriff Mina communicated his “Its OK not to be OK” campaign. There are a variety of resources available year-round to support employees’ mental health.

Employees have access to the agency’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through Aetna. Aetna offers 6 free sessions per issue for employees and all members of the household. Aetna offers a list of providers who have experience working with first responders, which is made available to employees. These services are also offered to our retirees.

Additionally, employees have free mental health support through Cigna. In addition to using Aetna’s resources, Cigna members can access free mental health support for up to 3 visits. Cigna also offers many mental health resources for covered employees and their covered spouses such as self-service tools like the Happify app and iPrevail, and Ginger (which is virtual mental healthcare). This is also available to agency retirees who are Cigna members.

Supervisors and managers, as well as employees, have been educated on resources available outside of the agency such as UCF Restores. Through UCF Restores, employees have access to a treatment clinic right across town that provides clinical services to veterans, active duty military, first responders, survivors of trauma, and community members experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder and trauma-related concerns. This comprehensive treatment program can include components of trauma management therapy, exposure therapy, group therapy, relaxation training, and programmed practice. At this time, UCF Restores is able to provide these treatment programs at no charge.

The agency’s Critical Incident Stress Management Team also supports the mental and emotional wellness of OCSO employees. The CISM Team is requested when there is a difficult incident and debriefing may be useful. They provide on scene support to help agency members cope with stress reactions. There is also off scene support. Defusing occurs within a few hours of a critical incident to educate and inform personnel about possible stress reactions and the need for proper care of themselves. A formal debriefing occurs within 72 hours after an incident.

While the agency does not have a department psychologist on staff, it does partner with outside mental health professionals who are experienced working with law enforcement. One mental health provider serves as an active member of the agency’s CISM team. Her experience with the law enforcement culture gives her the ability to connect with deputies and assist with their well-being.

The agency currently has 14 Chaplains to offer guidance, counseling and spiritual wellness to employees as well as their family members, including spouse and dependents. The community also benefits from our Chaplain service as they are an active part of victim assistance and hostage negotiations.

OCSO offers Yoga Nidra group fitness classes at least once a month. This class includes deep slow stretching with poses that are held for an extended period of time to help with flexibility. Yoga Nidra is intended to induce full-body relaxation and a deep meditative state of consciousness. A variety of techniques, including guided imagery, are used for relaxation.

Registered Dietitians at Advent Health are brought to the agency to provide one-on-one nutrition information to employees. Employees have the opportunity to go over specific nutrition information with a registered dietitian and can ask specific questions geared towards their goals and situation. Popular subjects include: weight management, sports nutrition, vegetarian nutrition, and nutrition for healthy pregnancy. Advent Health also puts on Healthy Cooking Demonstrations for OCSO employees. Chef Edwin comes to a variety of our locations during lunch time and prepares a meal for the attendees. While preparing the meal, he is educating the class on healthy food options and tips on how to prepare it.

When hired, agency members are provided a Tactical Lunch Box. It provides each new employee a cooler and the informational tools for health eating. The agency offers nutritional advice on eating and meal prep through different presentations throughout the course of the year.

Financial Wellness is also an important pillar of the agency's wellness program. One OCSO Sergeant heard about the Wellness program's emphasis on financial education. As an experienced Dave Ramsey course facilitator, she saw that Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace Course could be a very valuable for employees. The Wellness program offered to facilitate our first Dave Ramsey Financial Peace Course in the spring of 2015 and these courses have continued with our most recent course that started in January 2023. In addition to offering these classes, all new hires receive the Dave Ramsey Complete Guide to Money book.

The Sheriff's Employee Assistance Trust, Inc. (SEAT) was founded in 1999 to aid law enforcement personnel in time of critical need. The program provides financial assistance to employees during a personal crisis; gives support to the families of slain officers; and recognizes officers killed in the line of duty. All Orange County Sheriff's Office employees -- both sworn and civilian -- are covered under the SEAT program.

The Women of OCSO Mentoring & Enrichment Network, or WOMENS group meets once a month to discuss items that will support the growth and development of the females of OCSO. The mission of W.O.M.E.N. is to bring together a diverse group of both Certified and Civilian Orange County Sheriff's Office women and to provide opportunities to help themselves and others grow personally and professionally. W.O.M.E.N. provides an environment where women can come together to gain career development while being influenced and mentored by other successful, professional females who really care.

The agency also has an onsite Wellness Center, staffed by a full time Cigna Nurse who has virtual access to Advent Health doctors using a health cart. The Wellness Center can assist employees with a variety of items including infections, bloodwork, minor wounds, muscle pains, and more. This center opened in November 2019 and utilizes the Cigna Telehealth Connection. This center is for all full time employees and their spouses.

OCSO is also has two comfort dogs, Daisy and Saffron, within the Victim Advocates Unit. In addition to serving the community, these comfort dogs are there for OCSO employees as well! Regardless if the employee is coming from a tough call or just having an off day, the OCSO comfort dogs can provide a little comfort and maybe even a smile.

In 2015, Orange County Sheriff's Office won the first ever Destination Zero Comprehensive Safety Award. They have made positive changes to their wellness program and are therefore submitting in the officer wellness category for the 2023 awards.

**** 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.**