

ULSTER POLICE DEPARTMENT
GENERAL OPERATIONS MANUAL

Wellness Program

Sec. 400.80

Date Issued: 04/ /22
Date Reviewed:

Date Effective: 04/21/22

Page 1 of 3

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on establishing and maintaining a proactive wellness program for department members.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Ulster Police Department to prioritize member wellness to foster fitness for duty and support a healthy quality of life for department members. The department will maintain a wellness program that supports its members with proactive wellness resources, critical incident response and follow-up support.

III. WELLNESS COORDINATOR

The Chief of Police should appoint a wellness coordinator. The coordinator should report directly to the Chief of Police or the authorized designee and should collaborate with advisers (e.g., Personnel Department, legal counsel, licensed psychotherapist, qualified health professionals), as appropriate, to fulfill the responsibilities of the position, including but not limited to:

A. Identifying wellness support providers (e.g., licensed psychotherapists, external peer support providers).

(a) Selected providers should be trained and experienced in providing mental wellness support and counseling to public safety personnel.

(b) When practicable, the Department should not use the same licensed psychotherapist for both member wellness support and fitness for duty evaluations.

B. Developing management and operational procedures for department peer support members, such as:

(a) Peer support member selection and retention.

(b) Training and applicable certification requirements.

(c) Deployment.

(d) Managing potential conflicts between peer support members and those seeking service.

(e) Monitoring and mitigating peer support member emotional fatigue (i.e., compassion fatigue) associated with providing peer support, as appropriate.

C. Verifying members have reasonable access to peer support or licensed psychotherapist support.

D. Establishing procedures for CISDs, including:

(a) Defining the types of incidents that may initiate debriefings.

(b) Steps for organizing debriefings.

E. Facilitating the delivery of wellness information, training, and support through various methods appropriate for the situation (e.g., phone hotlines, electronic applications).

IV. DEPARTMENT PEER SUPPORT

PEER SUPPORT MEMBER SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection of a department peer support member will be at the discretion of the coordinator. Selection should be based on the member's:

- Desire to be a peer support member.
- Experience or tenure.
- Demonstrated ability as a positive role model.
- Ability to communicate and interact effectively.
- Evaluation by supervisors and any current peer support members.

PEER SUPPORT MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of department peer support members include:

A. Providing pre- and post-critical incident support.

B. Presenting department members with periodic training on wellness topics, including but not limited to:

- (a) Stress management.
- (b) Suicide awareness.

C. Providing referrals to licensed psychotherapists and other resources, where appropriate.

- (a) Referrals should be made to department-designated resources in situations that are beyond the scope of the peer support member's training.

PEER SUPPORT MEMBER TRAINING

A department peer support member should complete department-approved training prior to being assigned.

V. CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFINGS

A Critical Incident Stress Debriefing should occur as soon as practicable following a critical incident. The coordinator is responsible for organizing the debriefing. Notes and recorded statements shall not be taken because the sole purpose of the debriefing is to help mitigate the stress-related effects of a critical incident.

The debriefing is not part of any investigative process. Care should be taken not to release or repeat any communication made during a debriefing unless otherwise authorized by policy, law, or a valid court order.

Attendance at the debriefing should only include peer support members and those directly involved in the incident.

VII. PEER SUPPORT COMMUNICATIONS

Although the Department will honor the sensitivity of communications with peer support members, there is no legal privilege to such communications.

VIII. PHYSICAL WELLNESS PROGRAM

The coordinator is responsible for establishing guidelines for an on-duty physical wellness Program, including:

- Allowable physical fitness activities.
- Permitted times and locations for physical fitness activities.
- Acceptable use of department-provided physical fitness facilities and equipment.
- Making physical wellness information and education (e.g., nutrition, sleep habits, proper exercise, injury prevention) available to members.
- Standards for fitness incentive programs.
- Maintenance of physical wellness logs (e.g., attendance, goals, standards, progress).

IX. WELLNESS PROGRAM AUDIT

At least annually, the coordinator or the authorized designee should audit the effectiveness of the department's wellness program and prepare a report summarizing the findings. The report shall not contain the names of members participating in the wellness program, and should include the following information:

- Data of the types of support services provided.
- Wait times for support services.
- Participant feedback, if available.
- Program improvement recommendations.
- Policy revision recommendations.

The coordinator should present the completed audit to the Chief of Police for review and consideration of updates to improve program effectiveness.

X. TRAINING

The coordinator or the authorized designee should collaborate with the Chief of Police to provide all members with regular education and training on topics related to member wellness, including but not limited to:

- The availability and range of department wellness support systems.
- Suicide awareness.
- Recognizing and managing mental distress, emotional fatigue, post-traumatic stress, and other possible reactions to trauma.
- Alcohol and substance abuse awareness.
- Countering sleep deprivation and physical fatigue.
- Anger management.
- Marriage and family wellness.
- Benefits of exercise and proper nutrition.
- Effective time and personal financial management skills

Training materials, curriculum, and attendance records should be forwarded to the Lieutenant as appropriate for inclusion in training records.