Wellness Program

1021.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Best Practice

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

The wellness program is intended to be a holistic approach to a member's well-being and encompasses aspects such as physical fitness, mental health, and overall wellness.

Additional information on member wellness is provided in the:

- Chaplains Policy.
- Line-of-Duty Deaths Policy.
- Drug- and Alcohol-Free Workplace Policy.

1021.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Best Practice

Definitions related to this policy include:

Critical incident – An event or situation that may cause a strong emotional, cognitive, or physical reaction that has the potential to interfere with daily life.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) – A standardized approach using a discussion format to provide education, support, and emotional release opportunities for members involved in work-related critical incidents.

Peer support – Mental and emotional wellness support provided by peers trained to help members cope with critical incidents and certain personal or professional problems.

1021.2 POLICY

Best Practice

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

1021.3 WELLNESS COORDINATOR

Federal

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

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(a) Identifying wellness support providers (e.g., licensed psychotherapists, external peer support providers, physical therapists, dietitians, physical fitness trainers holding accredited certifications).

1. As appropriate, selected providers should be trained and experienced in providing mental wellness support and counseling to public safety personnel.
2. When practicable, the OPS should not use the same licensed psychotherapist for both member wellness support and fitness for duty evaluations.

(b) Developing management and operational procedures for OPS peer support members, such as:

1. Peer support member selection and retention.
2. Training and applicable certification requirements.
3. Deployment.
4. Managing potential conflicts between peer support members and those seeking service.
5. Monitoring and mitigating peer support member emotional fatigue (i.e., compassion fatigue) associated with providing peer support.
6. Using qualified peer support personnel from other public safety agencies or outside organizations for OPS peer support, as appropriate.

(c) Verifying members have reasonable access to peer support or licensed psychotherapist support.

(d) Establishing procedures for CISDs, including:

1. Defining the types of incidents that may initiate debriefings.
2. 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).

(f) Verifying a confidential, appropriate, and timely Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available for members. This also includes:

1. Obtaining a written description of the program services.
2. Providing for the methods to obtain program services.
3. Providing referrals to the EAP for appropriate diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up resources.
4. Obtaining written procedures and guidelines for referrals to, or mandatory participation in, the program.
5. Obtaining training for supervisors in their role and responsibilities, and identification of member behaviors that would indicate the existence of member concerns, problems, or issues that could impact member job performance.

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(g) Assisting members who have become disabled with application for federal government benefits such as those offered through the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program (34 USC § 10281 et seq.).

1. The coordinator should work with appropriate OPS liaisons to assist qualified members and survivors with benefits, wellness support, and counseling services, as applicable, when there has been a member death (see the Line-of-Duty Deaths Policy for additional guidance).

1021.4 OPS PEER SUPPORT

Best Practice

1021.4.1 PEER SUPPORT MEMBER SELECTION CRITERIA

Best Practice

The selection of a OPS 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.

1021.4.2 PEER SUPPORT MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Best Practice

The responsibilities of OPS peer support members include:

(a) Providing pre- and post-critical incident support.

(b) Presenting OPS members with periodic training on wellness topics, including but not limited to:

1. Stress management.
2. Suicide prevention.
3. How to access support resources.

(c) Providing referrals to licensed psychotherapists and other resources, where appropriate.

1. Referrals should be made to OPS-designated resources in situations that are beyond the scope of the peer support member's training.

1021.4.3 PEER SUPPORT MEMBER TRAINING

Best Practice

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

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1021.5 CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFINGS

Best Practice

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.

1021.6 PEER SUPPORT COMMUNICATIONS

State

Although the OPS will honor the sensitivity of communications with peer support members, there is no legal privilege to such communications, unless authorized by law (e.g., peer support communications pursuant to a Law Enforcement Peer Support and Crisis Referral Service Program).

1021.7 PHYSICAL WELLNESS PROGRAM

Discretionary

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

(a) Voluntary participation by members

(b) Allowable physical fitness activities

(c) Permitted times and locations for physical fitness activities

(d) Acceptable use of OPS-provided physical fitness facilities and equipment

(e) Individual health screening and fitness assessment

(f) Individual education (e.g., nutrition, sleep habits, proper exercise, injury prevention) and goal-setting

(g) Standards for fitness incentive programs. The coordinator should collaborate with the appropriate entities (e.g., human resources, legal counsel) to verify that any standards are nondiscriminatory

(h) Maintenance of physical wellness logs (e.g., attendance, goals, standards, progress)

(i) Ongoing support and evaluation

1021.8 WELLNESS PROGRAM AUDIT

Best Practice

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At least annually, the coordinator or the authorized designee should audit the effectiveness of the OPS'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 on 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 Law Enforcement for review and consideration of updates to improve program effectiveness.

1021.9 TRAINING

Best Practice

The coordinator or the authorized designee should collaborate with the Training Coordinator to provide all members with regular training on topics related to member wellness, including but not limited to:

- The availability and range of OPS wellness support systems.
- Suicide prevention.
- Recognizing and managing mental distress, emotional fatigue, post-traumatic stress, and other possible reactions to trauma.
- Alcohol and substance disorder 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 Training Coordinator as appropriate for inclusion in training records.

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