



CREATING A CULTURE TO COMBAT OFFICER SUICIDE



STRESSORS COMMON TO LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL¹

Work-related: Frequent rotating shifts, overtime, personality conflicts, bureaucracy, different styles of communication, inadequate or broken equipment

Personal: Lack of sleep, problems with finances, health, or family



SIGNS OF EXCESSIVE STRESS²

Change in normal behavior, isolation, increased substance use/abuse, tardiness, missing work, frequent illnesses, being hungover, irritability, snapping at others, aggression, excessive use of force or accidents

A SURVEY OF AMERICAN
OFFICERS FOUND
THAT **37.6%** OF THE
RESPONDENTS HAD ONE
OR MORE PROBLEM
DRINKING BEHAVIORS.³

Researchers have long debated the reasons for elevated alcohol consumption among officers, but most agree that underlying patterns include social and stress-related problem drinking behaviors.⁴ Suicide is an escalating public health problem, and alcohol use has consistently been implicated in the precipitation of suicidal behavior.⁵

CREATE A CULTURE THAT ENCOURAGES OFFICERS TO GET THE ASSISTANCE THEY NEED

- Educate all agency personnel on the issues facing officers
- Plan on how to address such issues and how to respond to officer-crisis situations

How should the organization respond? What is the communication strategy? How should the organization interact with the family? What type of service or recognition should the organization plan? What are the ongoing services available to the family?

Identify all available resources for officers

Support network (e.g., EAP, peer support)
Suicide prevention and awareness training
Hotline information
Media sensitivity training
Communication strategies

Remove the stigma that seeking and accepting help is a sign of weakness





REFERENCES

- 1. https://www.nij.gov/topics/law-enforcement/officer-safety/stress-fatigue/Pages/causes.aspx.
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- 4. Lindsay, V., & Shelley, K. (2009). Social and stress-related influences of police officers' alcohol consumption. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 24(2), 87–92.
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Scan the QR code for more wellness resources on the VALOR website.



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