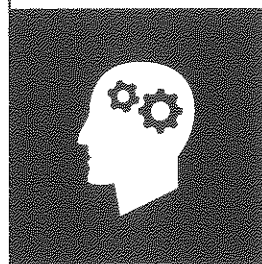




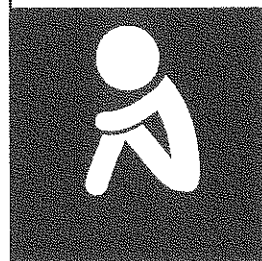
## CREATING A CULTURE TO **COMBAT OFFICER SUICIDE**



### STRESSORS COMMON TO LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL<sup>1</sup>

**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 STRESS<sup>2</sup>

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

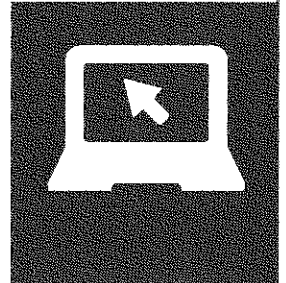
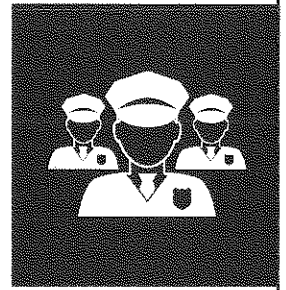
A SURVEY OF AMERICAN OFFICERS FOUND THAT **37.6%** OF THE RESPONDENTS HAD ONE OR MORE PROBLEM DRINKING BEHAVIORS.<sup>3</sup>

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.<sup>4</sup>

Suicide is an escalating public health problem, and alcohol use has consistently been implicated in the precipitation of suicidal behavior.<sup>5</sup>

## 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>.
2. <https://www.nij.gov/topics/law-enforcement/officer-safety/stress-fatigue/Pages/impact.aspx>.
3. Swatt, M. L., Gibson, C. L., & Piquero, N. L. (2007). Exploring the utility of general strain theory in explaining problematic alcohol consumption by police officers. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 35(6), 596–611.
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.
5. Pompili, M., Serafini, G., Innamorati, M., et al. (2010). Suicidal behavior and alcohol abuse. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 7(4), 1392–1431.

Scan the QR code for more wellness resources on the VALOR website.

