

ALBANY COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE			
General Order	Date Issued November 10, 2022	Effective Date November 10,2022	Order Number 58-SO-22
Subject: Officer Wellness Program		Distribution: All Agency Personnel	
Reviewed: August 2023			
Reference: Accreditation Standard 4.1			

PURPOSE: To outline the Albany County Sheriff's Office's response to ensuring and promoting the resiliency of its employees by providing trauma informed leadership and creating a culture that supports wellness through education, peer and family support systems, critical incident stress management response, chaplaincy, and an employee assistance program. Moreover, this policy will outline the opportunities and procedures by which employees can seek assistance, guidance and support through this agency's Officer Wellness Program. This directive does not supersede, but serves to consolidate various existing policies detailing specific programs and procedures into a single easily accessible resource.

POLICY: It is the policy of the Albany County Sheriff's Office to support and promote employee wellness for all agency employees. Mental health is just as important as physical health for law enforcement officers. This agency remains committed to lessening the stigma associated with mental health conditions and substance abuse disorders including PTSD, depression and suicide in order to reduce barriers to communication and treatment. This commitment extends beyond just law enforcement and corrections personnel to include the EMS, emergency management, tele-communicators and civilian support staff of this multi-disciplined agency who experience their own stressors and traumas. It is also recognized that employee health, well-being and performance are impacted by non-work related factors as well as those experienced while working.

I. Access to Resources

A. The Albany County Sheriff's Office maintains digital networks and systems which enable the sharing of information including but not limited to legal and policy updates, training modules, official directives, and health and wellness information as well as the electronic acknowledgment of the same by employees. These systems currently consist of:

1. Power DMS, which is accessible via computer and can also be downloaded for access on mobile phones should employees wish to do so, and
2. SharePoint which is accessible via agency computers.

B. This Agency and the County of Albany offer an employee assistance program

through Capital EAP.

1. Information relative to the programs and services offered as well as how to access said services is listed on the County's internal internet server, ALCONET accessible via agency computers.
 2. Information for Capital EAP is also listed in section II of this policy as well as in the Frequently Used Forms folder of the Agency General Orders accessible via the Power DMS and SharePoint digital information programs.
- C. All agency employees have access to Capital EAP services and new hires receive pre-employment orientation provided through the Human Resources Department.

II. Prevention and Intervention

- A. The Director of Officer Wellness shall coordinate the agency's wellness program including wellness initiatives, trainings, and research in conjunction with the Training Unit Coordinators and PEER/Critical Incident Response Team members.
1. The director shall develop strategies and instruction which foster the mental and physical wellbeing of agency employees
 2. The director shall ensure that information is regularly updated and employees are kept aware of the services available. This shall be done by posting offerings for employee review and electronic acknowledgement on Power DMS as well as providing material for the in-service training as conducted throughout each year by the Training Unit.
 3. The director will coordinate with the Grant Management Unit to seek sources of funding to ensure that the wellness program, its strategies and methods, remain current and pertinent to the issues being faced by agency employees.
 4. The director will coordinate and inform the expansion of the Sheriff's Office's longstanding efforts to tend to the wellbeing of its employees. While not superseding existing policies or programs which tended to employee wellness, the Wellness Director and this policy will consolidate all of those assets into a single, easily accessible written directive. This will enable employees to better find and acquaint themselves with these resources as defined herein. Further information on specific topic areas may be found in the following policies:
 - a. 39-SO-93 *Sexual Harassment*
 - b. 35-SO-93 *Personnel Complaints*
 - c. 31-LE-06 *Drug Testing*
 - d. 69-LE-09 *Workplace Violence*

- e. 40-LE-06 *Performance Evaluations*
- f. 34-SO-19 *Discipline & Non-Disciplinary Counseling*

B. An Early Detection and Preventative Process seeks to help identify and support agency employees who may demonstrate symptoms of job stress, training deficiencies, and/or personal problems affecting their job performance. Timely identification of such issues and proper corrective action and/or support services are essential in resolving such issues before they become worse or impact job performance in a critical manner. This process also seeks to provide services and initiatives in support of employee wellness to help prevent such issues.

1. Supervisory expectations:
 - a. First line supervisors are essential to the referral process as they have the most day to day contact with employees under their supervision.
 - b. Supervisors shall notify the commander of their station/unit when they become aware of suicidality, work, or family related stressors that may overwhelm an employee, substance abuse disorders or other stressors that affect an employee's wellness. Supervisors are to be aware that suicidality can be affected by finances, relationships, substance abuse disorders, and access to weapons.
 - c. It is recognized that agency personnel are not mental health professionals and that seeking treatment or counseling is generally voluntary. However, station/unit commanders shall advise the Sheriff via the chain of command and make referrals as necessary to the County Employee Assistance Program (EAP), ACCORD Program, Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)/PEER Teams, or other qualified mental health or care providers in an effort to ensure employees receive proper evaluation and services which may benefit their wellbeing.
 - d. If behaviors manifest that may result in or require administrative corrective action, including non-disciplinary counseling or discipline, supervisors and commanders should utilize the agency policy as set forth in General Order 34-SO-19 *Discipline and Non-Disciplinary Counseling*.
2. The Albany County Sheriff's Office has written directives which establish procedures for administering corrective action as noted above as well as for receiving and processing complaints against personnel as set forth in General Order 35-SO-93 *Internal Affairs-Personnel Complaints*. These processes are also conducted in accordance with pertinent collective bargaining agreements.
3. All agency use of force incidents are reviewed by the Office of Professional Standards as set forth in General Order 31-SO-19 *Use of*

Force and 35A-SO-01 *Professional Standards*. Such reviews are a proactive means of ensuring proper conduct and job performance. The States advanced reporting requirements relative to specific types of incidents further increases awareness and tracking of employee behavior. As with other areas of job performance, issues discovered during use of force reviews, recognizing an excessive number of use of force incidents or patterns arising from the same may be early indicators of other underlying employee problems.

4. Written evaluations are conducted by this agency to assess the work performance, identify deficiencies, and document the same. Such evaluations not only seek to improve work performance but can also identify areas such as tardiness/unexcused absences or behavioral/inter-personal issues, which may be early indicators of other non-work related issues. These are outlined in General Order 40-LE-06 *Performance Evaluations* and include:
 - a. special evaluations as needed or for newly hired members leaving probation,
 - b. evaluations for members upon transferring to a new assignment/duty, and
 - c. annual performance evaluations.

III. Peer Involvement and Support

A. Peer Team

1. The Albany County Sheriff's Office PEER Team was formed following an officer suicide in 2013 out of general concern for the well-being of the staff of the Correctional Facility.
2. The Sheriff's Office PEER Team has trained with Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS), NYS DCJS, and other regional law enforcement agencies. Training courses completed include the following:
 - a. Hostage negotiation & awareness
 - b. Instructor development
 - c. Suicide prevention
 - d. C.O.P.S. Trauma
 - e. Behavioral clues to suicide
 - f. Capital EAP
 - g. TRAUMA
 - h. Crisis intervention training
 - i. Stress management / BARS
 - j. Needs of justice involved veterans
 - k. Emotional survival for law enforcement
 - l. Assisting individuals in crisis
 - m. FBI Crisis negotiation workshop
 - n. Group crisis intervention

- o. Crisis intervention advanced (Epilepsy and seizure response)
 - p. OMH suicide prevention refresher
 - q. NYLEAP PCIS
- 3. The PEER Team consists of sworn members, some of who are also NYSP and FBI trained crisis negotiators, who have worked within the Sheriff's Office as well as with other outside entities. Although originating out of the correctional facility the team provides assistance to all agency employees regardless of division as needed.
 - a. The PEER Team is there to support and educate with the primary role of preventing critical incidents. However, they still assist and work with Critical Incident Response Team members to respond in the event such incidents occur. While two separate teams, they are complimentary and mutually supporting, often responding to the same incidents or requests for assistance.

B. Chaplain

- 1. The Albany County Sheriff's Office has chaplains whose services can be utilized as needed. They have proven beneficial in the past to provide assistance upon the death of members. The pastor serving as the primary chaplain for the agency attends agency events and speaks at major ceremonies including swearing in of new members and graduations from the Sheriff's Public Safety Institute.
- 2. In addition to partnerships with religious leaders in the community, there are chaplains from the Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim faiths active at the Albany County Correctional Facility and Rehabilitative Services Center for assistance to both employees and those remanded to the custody of the Sheriff.

C. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

- 1. Albany County has for many years partnered with the Capital Employee Assistance Program (EAP), through which it provides professional counseling and referrals for services that can help with problems that may affect the quality of employees' personal lives.
- 2. EAP offers
 - a. Individual, relationship and family professional counseling;
 - b. Depression screening;
 - c. Financial and legal referrals;
 - d. Professional and personal workshops; and
 - e. Eldercare / childcare resources referrals and counseling.
- 3. EAP services are completely confidential and free of charge to

employees and their family members. Employees are also entitled to four hours of paid leave each year to use EAP services.

4. EAP may be contacted in the following manners:
 - a. Phone: (518) 465-3813 or (800) 777-6531 and notifying them that you are an Albany County employee,
 - a. via ALCONET on a County computer and scrolling down to Capital EAP on the lower left of the page, or
 - b. <https://capitaleap.org/>
 - c. A summary of EAP services and benefits has been attached to this directive as Appendix A. Employees and supervisors are encouraged to print this and use it as a discreet quick reference guide should they or a colleague need assistance.

IV. General Wellness & Additional Support

- A. The Albany County Sheriff's Office offers numerous other benefits and programs which seek to foster the mental and physical wellbeing of employees and engage the broader community in a positive manner. The agency recognizes that reducing stressors on employees involves not only maintaining a harmonious and healthy work atmosphere for employees, but also a positive and harmonious relationship with those we serve.
 1. The agency has a Community Relations Unit which coordinates and staffs community and public service events. This includes many which are designed to not only bring together the community but also the families of employees.
 2. The Albany County Correctional Facility and Rehabilitative Services Center has long offered gym equipment for its officers and the same is now available for deputies at the Public Safety Building.
 3. The Sheriff's Public Safety Building includes a gymnasium and an athletic field which are utilized for training and authorized community recreation. A new playground is also being installed on the grounds of the Public Safety Building which will be available to employee's families as well as the local community.
- B. Parenting / Maternity & Lactation Support
 1. It is recognized that the nature of the job duties for certain employees of this agency including but not limited to sworn law enforcement members, sworn corrections members, emergency medical technicians and paramedics as well as support staff who may interact daily with offenders, arrestees, or incarcerated individuals, can create a safety

concern for pregnant employees.

2. To best protect the safety and wellness of our employees and their families, pregnant employees may request a light duty assignment upon notification to agency administration that they are pregnant. Employees of the law Enforcement Division, including the Emergency Medical Services Unit, seeking such reassignment shall submit an official request on agency letterhead addressed to the Executive Undersheriff seeking such reassignment. Employees of the correctional facility shall submit such request on an Albany County Correctional Facility "Light Duty Position Authorization Form" to the attention of the Superintendent. Said requests should be accompanied by a note or supporting documentation from the employee's physician which need not document anything more than the name of the employee and the fact that they are pregnant.
 - a. This policy compliments and does not supersede or replace any other applicable Agency or County policy relative to FMLA, parenting leave, or other leaves of absence.
3. In accordance with Albany County Resolution 101, dated April 11, 2022, this Agency shall make reasonable efforts to provide employees who are nursing mothers a room or other location so that they may express their breast milk in privacy.
 - a. Per the resolution the location must not be a restroom and must be private, shielded from view, sanitary and equipped at a minimum with a chair, power outlet, a surface on which to place the breast pump and other personal items necessary to express breast milk, have access to running water, and be in the proximity of a refrigerator in which the breast milk can be stored.
 - b. If said location is a mixed use space, notice shall be given to other employees that the location is being given preference as a designated lactation rom for the time that the employee is utilizing it to express their breast milk.

(Rev. 08/2023)

V. Critical Incidents

A. Critical Incident Response Team

1. The Albany County Sheriff's Office has several members specially trained in critical incident management response located at both Public Safety Building and Headquarters.

2. Current members include a deputy and two supervisors who have both attended NYS DCJS training courses sponsored by NYLEAP. The supervisors are also certified to instruct on the topic and have done so at the Sheriff's Public Safety Training Institute.
 3. While based in the Law Enforcement Division, these members are available to assist any agency employee or unit requiring assistance. As with the PEER Team, they are complimentary to the other support services and programs offered by this agency including PEER, ACCORD, and the third party EAP.
- B. Albany County Crisis Officials Responding and Diverting (ACCORD)
1. The ACCORD program partners Albany County Sheriff's Office Emergency Medical Services Unit personnel with social workers provided by the Albany County Department of Mental Health into two person teams.
 2. ACCORD teams are available to assist with mental health calls throughout the agency's patrol zones and to all County buildings or facilities. There services supplement Albany County Mobile Crisis Teams which are not always available to respond.
 - a. Teams can respond to any call for service involving mental health issues or concerns be they for a member of the public or an employee of this agency.
 - b. Teams can be deployed directly via requests from members on scene or can be dispatched by Sheriff's Tele-communicators as needed and determined by their emergency medical dispatch (EMD) protocols.
 3. The ACCORD Program not only provides timely and efficient responses to mental health calls, but delivers qualified professionals to those scenes as well ensuring both medical and mental health care.
 - a. Aside from the benefit to the patient, this also reduces stressors on deputies or investigators responding. While well trained, law enforcement officers are not qualified mental health providers. By sending appropriate personnel to these incident scenes to accompany the first responders, it relieves them of the stress of having to address matters for which they are not intended.

General Order

58-S0-22

SO ORDERED:

Craig D. Apple, Sr.
Sheriff