



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2022.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: _____

Program Title: _____

Program Category: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: _____

Title: _____

Department: _____

Telephone: _____ Website: _____

Email: _____

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature:  _____

Chesterfield County Sheriff's Office Wellness Program

Abstract

On April 1, 2021, a core group of personnel that represented the makeup of the Sheriff's Office had its first Wellness Committee meeting. Our goal was to create a wellness program that not only addressed the obvious and unspoken effects COVID-19 was having on our staff, their families, and our communities, it also would address the health concerns that arise from service as a Law Enforcement professional. Our policy statement is:

The Chesterfield County Sheriff's Office wellness program is designed to enrich the lives of its employees by improving the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health of all employees.

Through education, collaboration, and participation employees will develop a balanced lifestyle that enhances their personal and professional lives.

Need for the Program

On Sunday March 15, 2020, I spent the day in my office preparing emergency action plans for a virus, COVID-19, that was sweeping across our nation and the world. It soon became evident that what I thought would be a short-term response was going to be much longer in duration. As the days turned into weeks, months and then a year it soon became evident that there was no end in sight. What was also becoming very clear was that no one was immune from the effects of the virus. The physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual toll on our staff and their families was relentless. I wanted to somehow intervene and offer some level of reassurance, or comfort that would make a difference.

COVID was not the only area of concern facing law enforcement in 2021. Line of duty deaths, officer suicides, public unrest, political ramifications and loss of staffing and funding were all hitting the career at the

same time. The stress associated with anyone of these topics can be overwhelming, but to be faced with them all at the same time called for immediate action. Officer suicides were higher in 2019 and 2020 than officers being killed in the line of duty. This fact alone requires law enforcement leaders to step up and respond to the reality that our personnel need our help.

Description of the Program

Members of the wellness committee began researching, attending, and evaluating training opportunities and resources that we could adopt into our wellness plan. As a result of our efforts and by collaborating with other agencies we developed a wellness model for the Sheriff's Office.

Our goal was to create and present our wellness model to all Sheriff's Office employees during our 2021 annual in-service block training. The initial class was two hours in length and served as the formal introduction of the Sheriff's Office Wellness Plan to all employees.

The components of our wellness program are broken down through a six-point wellness model.

- **AWARENESS** – Creating an environment where “It’s OK to not be OK.” Open and honest discussions with our employees; bringing these conversations out of the shadows and into the open.
- **PEER SUPPORT** – Build on our proactive, trained Peer Support Team. Expand Therapy Dog program.
- **RESILIENCY** – Educate employees on resiliency, mindfulness, PTSD, emotional intelligence, and solutions such as yoga and breathing exercises.

- **HEALTHY HABITS** – Encourage physical fitness and healthy eating habits. Provide free access and use of a contracted strength and conditioning coach located at the Eanes-Pittman Training Center through Chippenham and Johnston Willis Health systems. Provide healthier options in our vending machines and Sheriff's Office store.
- **SPIRITUALITY** – Encourage spiritual wellness, finding meaning and balance in the world we live in. Expand our Chaplain Program and encourage community outreach programs, such as prayer breakfasts, worship opportunities and other programs.
- **FAMILY** – Involve our families from the orientation and Basic Academy process forward. Provide access to resources, books to key topics for employees and families (i.e., Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement by Dr. Kevin Gilmartin). Provide relationship, financial wellness, and retirement preparation resources; from hire to retire and beyond.

One of the Guiding Principles of Chesterfield County is to Promote healthy, active lifestyles while fostering self-sufficiency and quality of life. Our wellness program compliments this principle, and we encourage the use of several county resources to meet our wellness goals. One resource is the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The EAP offer a multitude of resources and services such as individual and family counseling and financial and legal services. They also offer assistance in the preparation of a will, planning events (such as a wedding) and other everyday needs that an employee may need assistance with.

As noted above our wellness team attended many in-persona and virtual training and awareness opportunities related to employee wellness. The Chesterfield Police Department, The International Association of Police Chiefs, and the Pinole County Police Department (California) are just a few of the organizations we collaborated with in developing our wellness model.

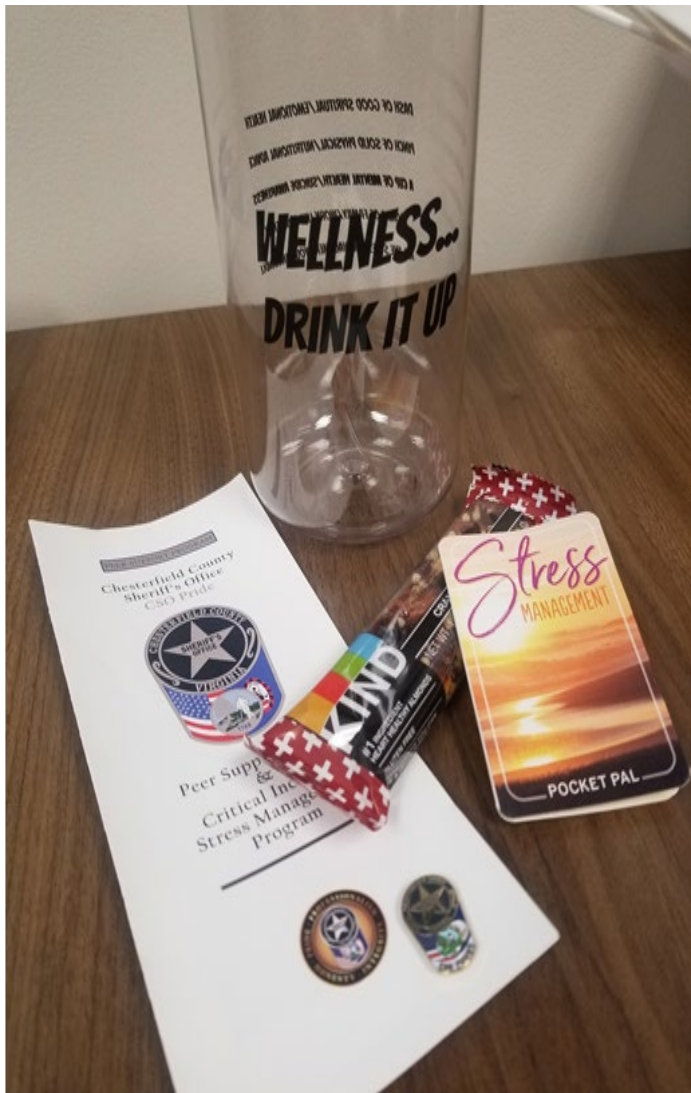
Cost of the Program

The cost of our wellness program consisted of expenditures for resources, such as a “Wellness Kit” as well as costs associated with attending training conferences and seminars and agreement with physical trainers.

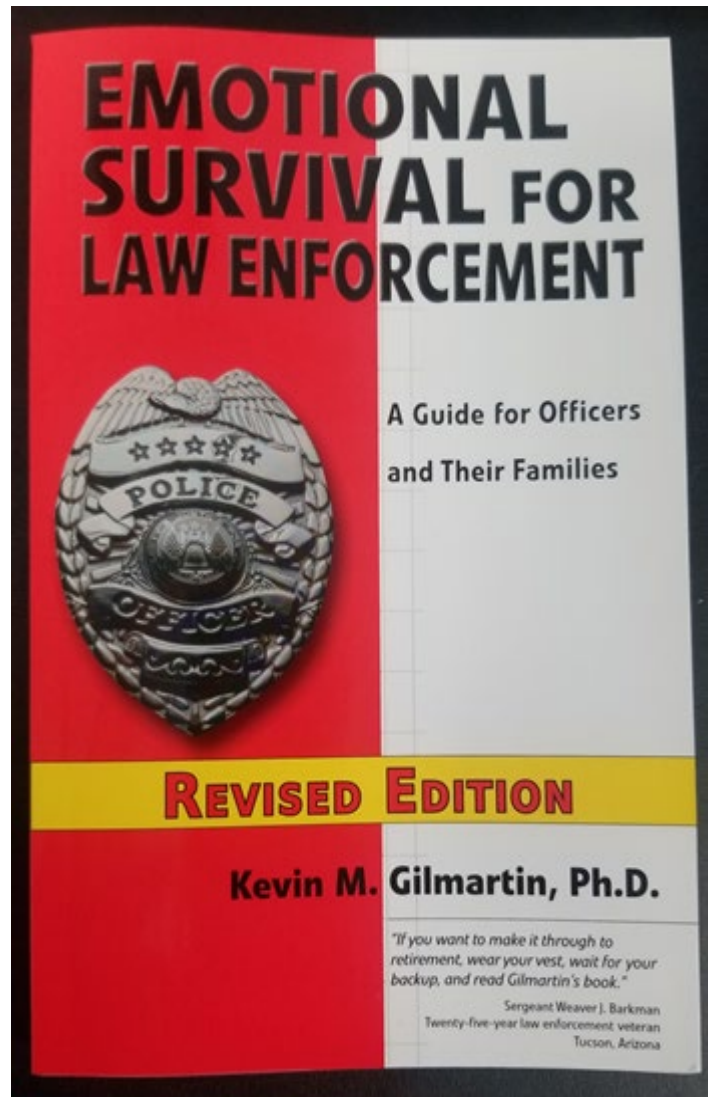
After developing our wellness model, the committee wanted each participant to leave the training they had just received with a tangible that served as a reminder about what had been discussed, why it was important and to keep wellness in the forefront of their daily routines. We created a “Wellness Kit” consisting of the following items: Each kit cost approximately \$23.00, and we issued 300 wellness kits.

- A Water Bottle – Hydration/Ingredients of wellness
- Family Pin – Sheriff’s Office lapel pin with the word “Family” featured
- Peer Support Pamphlet – Contact information and program description
- Nutrition Bar – Keep up the physical and nutritional efforts
- Stress Card – Wallet size quick reference card
- Book – Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement – For staff and family

The only other associated costs of the program are an annual contract agreement of \$10,000.00, which is our part of a three-way agreement with our local police and fire departments for the services of a certified strength and condition coach. This person is available daily to all our personnel and can provide guidance on physical training, injury reconstitution and other aspects of physical activity.



Wellness Kit



The Results/Success of the Program

Our wellness program has provided the space for employees to discuss the aspects of our wellness model. It has promoted employee awareness and knowledge related to health and wellness programs and resources. We have also provided information about accessible and cost-effective health and wellness programs specific to employee needs.

Employees are now more apt to participate in wellness programs and we have already seen a growing number

of personnel who utilize many of the resources we discussed in our presentation. This includes the EAP program, the certified strength and condition coach as well as the various wellness training session seminars that are offered internally and externally.

We also publish a quarterly wellness message to all employees highlighting one aspect of our wellness model. The message can be informative or provide a new resource for employees to take advantage of and incorporate into their everyday wellness activities.

Worthiness of Award

Wellness programs are designed to inform, educate, and provide resources to those who participate in them. They are often linked to reductions in employee absences, use of sick leave and an overall healthier workforce. They are good for the employee and the employer. The law enforcement career, unlike most, has the potential to shorten the life span of those who spend their career serving others.

According to the FBI from January 1 to November 30, 2021, there have been 67 line of duty deaths in law enforcement, a 55.8 percent increase from the 43 officers killed during the same period in 2020.

Fortunately, and due to the increased awareness and proactive measures by Law Enforcement agencies across the nation, suicide rates among law enforcement officers have fallen from 228 in 2109, to 174 in 2020 and an initial report for 2022 reveals as many as 158 offices died because of suicide.

The drop in these numbers is promising, but truthfully there is no acceptable number for this area. Wellness programs like ours are being created and implemented across the nation and preventing just one suicide makes our efforts worth it.

We can measure sick leave usage and the overall health and participation of our employees in each wellness initiative. We may also encourage a change in behavior such as having an annual physical, being tested for high blood pressure or developing a healthier diet, but we may never know if something that was shared, or a resource was provided during a wellness class was the one thing that prevented a suicide.