

Fresno Police Department Wellness Programs

The Fresno Police Department Employee Services program has had a long commitment to Officer wellness. The three pillars of the program are the Fresno Police Department, the Fresno Police Officers Association (FPOA), and the Fresno Police Chaplaincy. The key components of the wellness program are the Department managed Employee Assistance Program (EAP), the FPOA managed Companion Officer (peer support) Program, and the Chaplaincy managed Resiliency Program. In addition, Fresno has recently implemented a web based mobile application, Companion, Awareness, Resources, Education, Support (C.A.R.E.S.), www.supportingpeers.com to support our wellness program including the Companion Officer program. The app allows better support of Officers and gaining insight into key metrics of the wellness program such as use of wellness resources, number and type of peer support incidents, and other key performance indicators of the program.

The Department

The first pillar of the wellness program is the Department. To provide Officers healthy ways of dealing with stress, the Department provides all employees with access to resources like the Employee Assistance Program, Health Care and Legal information, the Companion Officer Program, hotline phone numbers, stress management tools, and information on what to expect if they are involved in a critical incident. Through the mobile application these resources can be confidentially accessed on the Officer's cell phone at any time.

Department Staff is key to the success of this wellness program. Implementing policies and procedures that show staff support has helped gain the trust of the Officers. Departments can also help by providing funds for training, education, peer support programs, chaplaincy, the employee assistance program and the web based mobile application. Fresno created a full-time position, the Employee Services Coordinator, to act as a liaison between the Department and the department members while coordinating their peer support.

The FPOA

The Fresno Police Officer Association (FPOA), the second pillar in the Fresno Wellness Program, in collaboration with the Department, manages the Companion Officer Program (C.O.P). The Companion Officer Program provides peer support to Officers for traumatic events. The C.O.P. is made up of volunteers trained to assist members through a time of crisis. Each companion officer receives approximately 28 hours of training in peer support, coping with stress, and resiliency training, and receives on-going in-service training.

In addition to the C.O.P., the FPOA has launched a new mobile application (www.supportingpeers.com) branded as FPD C.A.R.E.S. (Companion, Awareness, Resources, Education, Support). This new application will be used to facilitate wellness for all department

members by providing resources accessible to them via their cell phone. These services are offered to assist department members in dealing with the challenges of working in the public safety profession. Also, Companion Officers have their own area within the app that provides additional resources and information as well as checklists for Officer Involved Shootings / In Custody Deaths, other traumatic events, and Officer Debriefings.

The Chaplaincy

The third pillar of the Fresno Police Wellness Program is the Fresno Police Chaplaincy (FPC). The FPC has several programs to support law enforcement Officers.

- Patrol Chaplains are available to Officers as a confidential listening ear, offering counsel and resources to assist with the emotional hazards of being in law enforcement. They are also in the field during critical incidents supporting both the Officers and community members during times of crisis.
- The Support Blue campaign was developed several years ago during the height of the anti-policing narrative in our society. A related event, the Support Blue Run, drew over 4,000 participants and several thousand other supporters last year. The community support for this event is an encouragement to Officers and fosters continued trust between them and the community in which they live and serve.
- The NEST (Neighborhood Emergency Support Team) is a fully outfitted RV that travels to the scene of a critical incident, providing a safe shelter for involved department members. Staffed by Chaplains, the NEST also provides beverages and snacks to on-scene personnel for the duration of the incident.
- The FPC has also conducted critical incident debriefings when called upon, because they understand the unique challenges that Officers face.
- 24/7 Access: Due to the physical and emotional demands sometimes placed on officers, the Chaplaincy has made their offices available to the Officers 24/7. Officers can take a break, write reports and get snacks and beverages, free of charge.

Resiliency Center

To meet the needs of the community, the Chaplaincy created The Resiliency Center, a mental health clinic composed of teams of professional, trauma-informed Clinicians and Case Managers.

The Resiliency Center offers mental health counseling services to children, families, and couples that is safe, promising and offers hope. The uniqueness of the Resiliency Center is that it works with the Officers to ensure no interference is made with any ongoing investigations.

A key component of this partnership between the Fresno Police Department and Resiliency Center is the new app that has been developed. While on a scene where a child has been impacted by trauma or violence, the Officer can input the event number on that App, and the information will be emailed directly to the Case Manager of the Resiliency Center for follow up. Additionally, officers can use the app to seek mental health clinicians for victims of crime.

The Chaplaincy is currently working on its future goal of having an on-duty clinician available at the Resiliency Center so officers in need of immediate assistance can stop in and meet one-on-one with a clinician.

The Chaplaincy understands that Officer mental health is often overlooked as a component of Officer safety and wellness, and they are committed to raising awareness around the importance of this issue.

The FPD Employee Services program relies on support from the Fresno Police Department, the Fresno Police Officers Association, and the Fresno Police Chaplaincy to provide mental health support for Officers. Each component of the program works together to maintain wellness programs that can be utilized to support wellness in a traumatic work environment and C.A.R.E.S application has been incorporated to help facilitate communication between all three areas.