

San Leandro Police Department Wellness Program

In late 2017, the San Leandro Police Department Administration noticed an unsettling trend where lateral assignment transfers were held up due to patrol shifts running short-staffed. The department conducted a staffing strength analysis to look for clues. The primary culprit turned out to be Worker's Compensation claims which were both on the rise and taking longer to resolve. The department saw a 141% increase in Worker's Compensation leave over a 5 year term—139% increase in Patrol exclusively.

In early 2018, the department introduced a trial-phase wellness program consisting of internal employees—both sworn and professional staff—teamed up with a consultant who tailors individualized public safety wellness programs for every fitness level—everything from mobility and conditioning to blood work and nutrition. The wellness program staff crafted four pillars for a successful program: fitness, nutrition, sleep, and stress management. The key to a successful program, the team quickly learned, was gaining buy-in at all levels—city management, department management, and the unions. Chief Tudor and city executives agreed to allow a “flex hour” whereby all staff at the police department could voluntarily workout on-duty. The department made available to staff everything from yoga, mindfulness, sleep deprivation training, nutrition seminars with individualized plans, group exercise, a walking group, and a prepared meal program with a local vendor who serves only first responders (paid for by the employee). The consultant sets baselines for staff through various screening options, including blood panels and bio-marker tests, mobility and dexterity assessments. These screenings already logged unqualified success: a couple potentially catastrophic illnesses and looming injuries were discovered during the screening. The employees were treated and returned to work without delay.

The wellness program offers an online portal filled with videos, guides, resources on injury prevention, and scalable workouts to all fitness levels. The department is fortunate to be nearing the end of a remodel project where a new, state-of-the-art facility will be available, including an exterior functional fitness gym, internal state-of-the-art gym, day use showers and lockers being built for all city staff and separate card-key access for security.

Wellness staff continue to look for ways to fold existing programs into one comprehensive department wellness strategy. Moving forward, the team looks to further integrate mental health into the program by bolstering the department's peer-support team (known as “Crisis Intervention and Stress Management, or “CISM”), expand efforts related to stress management, and partner with the SLPOA on a funding model for meal delivery service as an employee perk.

The goal is simple: reduce the risk factors (“stressors”) contributing to the sidelining of staff by emphasizing the importance of overall wellness and community building, both on-duty and off. Although the program is just one and a half years old, the department remains optimistic with the outcomes reported thus far by the staff who participate. The San Leandro Police Department will make available generalized program information for those agencies interested in learning more about the pre- and post-implementation data.