

-- Title Page --

Thank you for your participation in the Law Enforcement Mental Health Task Force survey. The survey has been designed to gather the viewpoints and feedback of the law enforcement workforce community from across Washington State. In 2020, Substitute Senate Bill 6570 established the Task Force to review the unique factors that affect the emotional wellness and suicide rates of those persons working in law enforcement, as well as to provide options that could realistically address and improve the burden of these challenges.

The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete and is a total of five pages. It is designed to examine perspectives on contributing factors to emotional wellness, program and support options, and associated barriers and solutions. All personnel within the law enforcement occupation field are welcome to complete the survey, including sworn and non-sworn staff.

The survey is anonymous and voluntary. Aggregate data from all survey responses will be used to inform the development of a Task Force legislative report, which will be submitted in December 2021. The report will provide recommendations on essential best practices, policies, programs, resources, and technical assistance needs to improve the emotional wellness of law enforcement officers and their families, as well as to prevent suicide and other adverse health outcomes.

Each year, more officers die by suicide than in the line of duty. Job-related impacts and stressors have been found to impact the quality of life, wellness, and happiness of the law enforcement workforce. The Law Enforcement Mental Health Task Force, with your support, is working to address these challenges in the State of Washington.

-- Title 2 --

This page is designed to gather information about the contributing factors that are known to uniquely impact those working in law enforcement. Questions additionally assess whether your perceptions and experiences while working in the field. There is also room for you to provide additional information, if desired. Any question can be skipped.

To what degree (0 = not at all; 5 = severely) do you believe the following risk factors negatively impact the mental health and wellbeing of *persons working in the law enforcement community*?

Risk factors are characteristics present in an individual's life that might make them more vulnerable to suicide or otherwise negatively impact emotional wellbeing in a significant manner.

Q1: Exposure to traumatic events (e.g. domestic violence, death of a coworker, child abuse)

Q2: Exposure to suicide-related events

Q3: Shift work or irregular work hours

Q4: Social isolation from friends and/or family

Q5: Impacts of community tension and policing social dynamics

Q6: Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnosis or symptoms

Q7: Presence of another behavioral health condition (such as depression or anxiety-related disorders)

Q8: Diagnosis of serious physical health condition

Q9: Excessive alcohol use

Q10: Use of non-alcoholic drug or substance

Q11: Access to firearms

Q12: Access to other methods of lethal means

Q13: Challenges associated with department and organizational structuring (i.e. hierarchical organizational chart, rigid structure, authoritarian leadership)

Q14: Challenges associated with department and organizational leadership (i.e. lack of leadership support, poor working conditions, limited opportunities for growth, poor leadership practices, arbitrary policies, lack of communication)

Q15: Challenges associated with job-associated cumulative stress and expectations (i.e. required paperwork and/or court appearances, threats to personal safety, needing to work an additional job for necessary income)

Q16: Interpersonal relationship challenges in personal life

Q17: Family challenges in personal life

Q18: Financial and/or legal problems in personal life

Q19: Are there additional risk factors that are important to include in survey findings? *blank text box*

To what degree (1 = not at all; 5 = severely) do you believe the following protective factors positively impact and protect the mental health and emotional wellbeing of persons working in the law enforcement community?

Contrary to risk factors, protective factors are characteristics present in an individual's life which aid in defending against suicidal thoughts and/or a negative impact on emotional wellbeing.

Q20: Family support and strong family relationships

Q21: Presence of supportive spouse or partner

Q22: Resilient personality

Q23: Strong coping skills, particularly for stress and trauma exposure

Q24: Reasons for living (e.g. future goals, relationships, responsibility for children/parents)

Q25: Access to mental health care and support

Q26: Organizational support: procedural fairness; workers being treated with respect and dignity

Q27: Organizational support: control over work scheduling/hours

Q28: Organizational support: access to mental health and wellness services that address stigma and are trained in the unique needs of the law enforcement culture

Q29: Organizational support: support for positive social connections with peers

Q30: Organizational support: Encouragement and support for time away from duties and/or sabbatical

Q31: Are there additional protective factors that are important to include in survey findings? *blank text box*

Please answer the following questions about *your* experiences during the past year and your perceptions about job-related stress: *yes/no*

Q32: During the past 12 months, has your position in law enforcement, regardless of job satisfaction, negatively impacted your emotional health?

Q33: During the past 12 months, have you considered leaving the law enforcement occupation field to address stress or other emotional wellness concerns?

Q34: If you were to seek support for job-related emotional stress, would you have concerns about possible professional consequences or repercussions?

Q35: If you were to seek support for job-related emotional stress, would you have concerns about stigma and peer perceptions of weakness or leadership perceptions of being unfit for duty?

Q36: During the past 12 months, have you sought support, whether internally or externally to the workplace, for job-related emotional stress?

Q37: If a peer you work with were to seek support for job-related emotional stress, would you support possible professional consequences or repercussions as a result of their revealing these challenges?

Q38: If a peer you work with were to seek support for job-related emotional stress, would you judge or think of them as weak or unfit for duty as a result of revealing these challenges?

Q39: What additional feedback is important to consider in the context of law enforcement emotional wellness and associated concerns?

Q40: What additional feedback is important to consider about job-related stress?

The Law Enforcement Mental Health Task Force is examining data on how the emotional wellbeing and suicide risk are impacted in the law enforcement workforce, as compared to the general state population. The questions below will assist the Task Force in determining the degree to which law enforcement personnel are disproportionately impacted in Washington State.

Please remember, any question can be skipped, and the survey is fully anonymous and cannot be tracked.

Q41: During the past 12 months, did you seriously think about suicide?

Q42: During the past 12 months, did you make any plan to die by suicide?

Q43: During the past 12 months, did you try to die by suicide?

Q44: Are you aware of a peer trying to kill themselves?

Q45: Are you aware of a peer making a plan to kill themselves?

Q46: Have you been impacted by a peer who died by suicide?

This segment gathers feedback on available programming for law enforcement to more appropriately support emotional health and wellness. The next two pages will complete the survey by asking about barriers and possible solutions that are associated with programming options; for the questions on this page, please indicate programming preferences regardless of possible barriers or department structural concerns.

Q1: From the list below, please select program options that you feel *would realistically benefit law enforcement mental health and overall emotional wellbeing*, if implemented in an appropriate manner:

Individual strategies:

- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)
- Contracting with community-based mental health care providers
- Embedded chaplains within law enforcement agencies/departments
- Embedded availability of mental health care within law enforcement agencies/departments
- Programs to address substance misuse
- Routine wellness checks to support mental health and prevent suicide
- Physical fitness strategies (exercise while on duty, yoga, exercise with peers)
- Sleep (sleep training, sleep accommodations)
- Diet (nutritional support, meals with peers, training to support nutritional wellness)
- Scheduled time for sabbaticals and/or dedicated extended time away from work
- Comprehensive approaches to law enforcement wellness services and programs (support for overall physical and emotional wellbeing)

Training and screening strategies:

- Mental health and suicide prevention training for law enforcement personnel
- Mental health and suicide prevention training for agency and department leadership
- Resiliency training
- Mindfulness training
- Gatekeeper training (identify and appropriately respond to suicide risk)
- Formal law enforcement personnel screening programs (using administrative data to identify law enforcement personnel at risk)

Peer strategies:

- Peer support and mentoring, implemented independent of agency/department leadership, and intended to provide support in the context of responding to personal stressors
- Peer support and mentoring, implemented in partnership with agency/department leadership, and intended to provide support in the context of responding to personal stressors

Family strategies:

- Providing family support training to promote officer overall health and wellness
- Providing family support programming to promote officer overall health and wellness

Intervention strategies:

- Crisis line services that are confidential, available 24/7 and culturally informed about the unique experiences of law enforcement/first responders
- Limiting access to lethal means through the availability of temporary storage options during times of extreme emotional distress or suicidal crisis

Postvention (in the aftermath of a suicide) strategies:

- Traumatic incident response, including creation of policies and procedures that mobilize trained debriefing teams following the incident of an officer-involved shooting or a community response that resulted in a fatality
- Postvention protocols following a suicide-related incident or death in the community
- Postvention protocols following a suicide-related incident or death of an officer or family member of a law enforcement employee

Q2: Are there additional programming or prevention approaches to support law enforcement emotional wellness that you'd like to see implemented?

Q3: The above list of programming can be subcategorized into general classifications and categories of programming options. These have been summarized below. Please select the *top three* categories you feel would be most effective in supporting law enforcement emotional wellness and preventing suicide:

- Leadership and culture (i.e. leadership education; policy/procedure development; structural changes)
- Access to culturally competent and confidential in-house mental health services
- Peer support options and programming
- Suicide prevention training and awareness (to including warning signs and sources of help)
- Event response protocols (to include critical incident response in the aftermath of a suicide)
- Law enforcement family support training and engagement
- Limiting access to means of suicide during a period of ideation or an acute mental health crisis
- Safe and effective messaging (to include increasing awareness of risk, resources, wellness programs, and support options)

Q4: From the list below, please select program options that you feel *would not work* in support of law enforcement mental health and overall emotional wellbeing:

Individual strategies:

- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)
- Contracting with community-based mental health care providers
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- Embedded availability of mental health care within law enforcement agencies/departments
- Programs to address substance misuse
- Routine wellness checks to support mental health and prevent suicide
- Physical fitness strategies (exercise while on duty, yoga, exercise with peers)
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- Postvention protocols following a suicide-related incident or death in the community
- Postvention protocols following a suicide-related incident or death of an officer or family member of a law enforcement employee

Q5: Is there additional information you'd like to provide about programming or strategies you believe wouldn't be effective to address law enforcement emotional wellness and suicide risk? *text field*

Research has identified several barriers, specifically relevant to the law enforcement community, that prevent help-seeking actions to address emotional wellness and suicide ideation. This page seeks to identify the top barriers and concerns of law enforcement personnel in Washington.

Q1: From the list below, please select the *top five* barriers you believe would prevent law enforcement personnel from seeking help or support for emotional wellness or suicide risk.

- Lack of trust due to limited or no effective agency/department training in suicide prevention
- Lack of trust due to limited or no effective agency/department emotional wellbeing training
- Limited support strategies for personnel that authentically address needs for emotional wellness
- Cultural norms associated with masculinity
- Stigma associated with emotional health needs
- Stigma associated with suicidal ideation
- Concerns about disciplinary outcomes or repercussions due to disclosing emotional wellness challenges or suicide ideation
- Concerns about disciplinary outcomes or repercussions due to seeking help or support to address emotional wellness challenges or suicide ideation
- Concerns about impacts or repercussions on job and performance expectations
- Concerns about reassignment
- Concerns about rescinding authorized use of firearm
- Concerns about termination of employment
- Concerns about confidentiality laws and policies within the agency/department
- Lack of department leadership knowledge around suicide prevention or genuine support of law enforcement emotional wellbeing
- Lack of department leadership or support in the context of suicide prevention or supporting law enforcement emotional wellbeing
- Limited department resources available, even if an individual were to seek help
- Limited trusted community resources available, even if an individual were to seek help
- Limited access to technology or telehealth options, even if an individual were to seek help

Q2: What additional barriers to law enforcement personnel accessing help or support are important to include?

There are several subpopulations within the law enforcement personnel community that might be at a heightened risk for impacts on emotional wellbeing or suicide.

- Female officers
- Dispatch staff and other non-sworn staff
- Officers and personnel of color
- Transitioning and recently retired officers
- Veteran officers
- LGBTQ+ officers

- Law enforcement personnel spouses and family members

Q3: What considerations or potential solutions would you recommend to adequately and appropriately support a member (or members) of the above subpopulation(s) within the law enforcement community?

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Below are potential solutions that, if implemented, would support the improvement of emotional wellbeing and address suicide risk for personnel working in law enforcement. From the list below, please select the options that you feel would be most effective and are most needed. Additional space has been provided at the bottom for further feedback and guidance.

Q1: Pre-employment

- Pre-screening and assessment during personnel onboarding and training, to structure a plan of support and preventative measures that will promote emotional wellbeing
- Support the identification, development, and delivery of successful resiliency training programs for the academy
- Early establishment of peer-based programming at the imitation of a career in the law enforcement community

Q2: What additional pre-employment solutions do you suggest to appropriacy address emotional wellness and suicide risk concerns for law enforcement?

Q3: During employment support considerations:

- Support the development of resources for community-based clinicians who interact with law enforcement and their families to help them better understand some of the unique risks facing their clients and what resources may be available to them as members of the first responder community
- Support programs for law enforcement family readiness
- Support the expansion of crisis lines for law enforcement that are staffed with call-takers and counselors with a law enforcement background or knowledge
- Consideration of methods for establishing remote access or regional mental health check programs
- Support the expansion of peer support programs to ensure all officers have access
- Support the expansion of peer programs to include broader health and wellness, not just critical incident stress
- Support alternative methods to agency specific peer programs, such as through regional collaborations or labor organizations
- Completion of occasional in-service comprehensive health check screenings for emotional wellness and suicide risk, to identify personnel at risk and refer for appropriate support services
- Support the expansion of training programs for peer mentors for peer support programs
- Support the identification, development, and delivery of successful resiliency training programs for periodic in-service settings
- Support training programs that promote the universal application of preventative interventions, including skills to manage stress

Q4: What additional solutions for employed personnel do you suggest to appropriacy address emotional wellness and suicide risk concerns for law enforcement?

Q5: Post-employment support considerations:

- Encourage departments to allow retired law enforcement officers to make use of departmental peer support programs for a select time period post-retirement or separation
- Support the identification, development, and delivery of successful resiliency training programs for a select time period post-retirement or separation
- Support the expansion of peer programs to include transitioning personnel
- Support the development of resources for community-based clinicians who interact with clients who have served in the law enforcement community
- Completion of a comprehensive health check screening for emotional wellness and suicide risk during retirement or separation, to identify personnel at risk and refer for appropriate support services

Q6: What additional post-employment solutions do you suggest to appropriately address emotional wellness and suicide risk concerns for law enforcement?

Q7: Structural solutions

- Support programs to embed mental health professionals in law enforcement agencies
- Support the development of model policies and implementation guidance for law enforcement agencies to make substantial efforts to reduce suicide
- Support research to determine the efficacy of mental health checks, establish which approaches are most effective, and provide resources that move law enforcement toward best practices
- Encourage departments to make support available to nonsworn employees on the same teams as their sworn colleagues
- Improve legislative privacy protections for officers seeking assistance from peer crisis lines and other peer-support programs

Q8: What additional structural, leadership, or department-level solutions do you suggest to appropriately address emotional wellness and suicide risk concerns for law enforcement?

Q9: Universal solutions

- Support the creation of a public service campaign around law enforcement officer mental health and wellness in conjunction with National Mental Health Month
- Support rigorous research that can evaluate the efficacy of crisis lines and, if supported, provide data toward considering them an evidence-based practice

Q10: What additional universal or widespread solutions do you suggest to appropriately address emotional wellness and suicide risk concerns for law enforcement?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey and for helping the Law Enforcement Mental Health Task Force identify key areas of need, barriers, and potential solutions. *Dropdown selection*

Q11: What is your state region of employment?

- Great Rivers (Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific, Wahkiakum)
- Greater Columbia (Asotin, Benton, Columbia, Franklin, Garfield, Kittitas, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima)
- King County
- North Central (Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Okanogan)
- North Sound (Island, San Juan, Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom)
- Pierce County
- Salish (Clallam, Jefferson, Kitsap)
- Spokane (Adams, Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens)
- Southwest (Clark, Klickitat, Skamania)
- Thurston-Mason (Mason, Thurston)

Q12: What gender do you identify as?

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Q13: What is your age?

- 18 – 24 years old
- 25 – 34 years old
- 35 – 44 years old
- 45 – 54 years old
- 55 – 64 years old
- 65 years old or older

Q14: Please specify your race

- Asian
- Black or African American
- Latino or Hispanic
- Native American
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Two or more
- Prefer not to say

Q15: Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community? *yes/no*

Q16: Have you served in the armed forces? *yes/no*

Q17: How many years of service have you provided to the law enforcement field?

- Less than 3
- 4 years – 5 years
- 5 years – 9 years
- 10 years – 14 years
- 15 years – 19 years
- 20 years or longer

If you'd like to confidentially discuss any of the components of the survey further, or learn more about the work being accomplished, please contact Law Enforcement Task Force Co-Chair, Chief Scott Behrbaum (ScottB@issaquahwa.gov) or Department of Health's suicide prevention team member, Lizzie Cayden (elizabeth.cayden@doh.wa.gov). A representative from the Law Enforcement Mental Health Task Force will contact you; neither your identity nor the information you discuss in a follow-up discussion will be shared beyond the context of this discussion. The Task Force cannot link anyone back their survey or know whether an individual has participated.

More information on Second Senate Bill 6570 can be found [here](#)

If you or someone you know needs immediate support for emotional wellness, please contact 1-800-273.8255 or click [here](#)