

Wisconsin Department of Justice: AG Schimel Recognizes National Suicide Prevention Month, Continues to Focus on Officer Wellness

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MADISON, WI. – Today, in recognition of National Suicide Prevention Month and as part of his continued focus on law enforcement officer wellness, Attorney General Brad Schimel released a message to all law enforcement and the public on the issue of mental health for law enforcement officers.

“The deadly truth is: a police officer is far more likely to die of suicide, than homicide[1],” said Attorney General Schimel. “At DOJ, we realize this troubling reality, which is why we are supporting Wisconsin’s law enforcement through a strong commitment to officer wellness – both in body and mind.”

Under Attorney General Schimel’s tenure, the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) has increasingly focused on efforts to improve law enforcement officer physical and mental wellness, from recruit to senior level executive. Details of these efforts are below:

Suicide Prevention:

DOJ personnel trained as Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention Program instructors;

Added 4 hours of suicide prevention to the recruit academy.

Trained 270 incumbent officers and 600 recruits in suicide prevention.

1,400 officers trained in compassion fatigue during sexual assault and domestic

violence investigation training.

Law Enforcement Executives Training:

Suicide prevention materials developed for executives and leaders, in order to help them assist their officers in a time of need.

Wellness training incorporated into all new chiefs, sheriffs, and jail administrator training programs.

Physical Wellness:

Added 34 hours of physical fitness to the recruit academy.

Added requirement of both an entrance and exit Physical Readiness Test to the recruit academy.

\$150,000 provided in grant funding to train instructors in safe and effective physical fitness training.

Videos made available online for officers to enhance their physical readiness.

Stress Management:

Added 8 hours to the recruit academy on:

Living a healthy lifestyle;

Stress management;

Maintaining healthy relationships, and;

Maintaining financial stability.

Officer wellness instructor training under development for the recruit academy.

Training modules under development for law enforcement agencies to cover these topics with existing officers.

Officer wellness programming is also now included in all DOJ-run training seminars and conferences, including the Attorney General's Summit, the Executive Training Series, and the Command College.

In the future, DOJ will continue to place an emphasis on suicide prevention and general officer wellness within preparatory training and with existing officers. DOJ is also working to expand the chaplains program and is working with the International Conference of Police Chaplains to develop a first-of-its-kind statewide training resource. Wellness training is also being expanded to the jail academy.

Internally, DOJ has a support team available to Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) staff to offer assistance and appropriate support resources, and Internet Crimes Against Children staff have mandatory wellness reviews twice per year.

Plans are also under way to establish a chaplain program at DOJ and to expand wellness sessions for all DCI staff at in-service trainings.

Wisconsin DOJ is considered a national leader in officer wellness. Multiple states have requested the agency's officer wellness curriculum, in order to duplicate Wisconsin's best practice; and in May 2017, the agency was considered a top finalist in the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance's' National Officer Safety and Wellness Awards.

Attorney General Schimel encourages any law enforcement officer, dispatcher, or Wisconsin citizen who finds themselves struggling with suicidal thoughts to seek help from support systems around them, or receive free, confidential support at any time by calling 1-800-273-8255.

[1] <http://www.officer.com/article/12293261/police-suicides-in-2016>