Officer Wellness: Combining Six Dimensions of Wellness for law enforcement officers into the PTO program

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Officer Wellness: Combining Six Dimensions of Wellness for law enforcement officers into the FTO program

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When I started my law enforcement career I wanted to get my associate degree so I could get hired and start working faster than going for my bachelor’s degree. My uncle Andy Dewitt who is a detective in law enforcement provided me some advice. Go get your bachelor degree early in your career, the longer you wait the harder it will be to go back and get it. Well, not only did I do that I pushed forward and am completely my master’s degree. Thank you! Your insight has helped me in achieving my career goals.

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Purpose of Study:

The purpose and significance of this research is to highlight the health problems associated within the law enforcement profession. A close look at best practices and strategies of programs that have been developed raises awareness and understanding of these problems to combat these issues before they become problematic. Examining how officers receive their training in the FTO program provides areas of how additional training can be given. Implementing new/additional training concerning officer health and well-being is crucial for the health of an officer throughout their entire career and lives.

Research Methods:

The method of approach is to explore empirical studies, secondary resources, and literature reviews that analyze officer health. This information comes from credible internet sources, textbooks, and academic journals. Existing programs is to be analyzed to look at what police departments are using and to examine additional needs for those programs. The use of the transtheoretical model and health belief model is used to help support the recommendations.
**Key Findings:**

The key findings of this paper highlight how negative police stress affects the health of an officer and the benefits of having a focus on officer wellness. Officer wellness can be implemented within the Field Training Officer (FTO) program to ensure that healthy habits are formed early in an officer’s career. Recommendations to improve an FTO program to cover officer wellness issues can be done by including additional training tasks. These training tasks would include the Six Dimensions of Wellness. Police Chaplains will train new recruits on the topics of emotion, spiritual, and social health. Meeting with the City’s FIT Assessment trainer will provide the new recruit options on how to stay physically healthy. The FTO will cover topics of occupational health and intellectual health on how a new recruit can benefit from these topics. Lastly, the new recruit can meet with an EAP representative so that the new recruit fully understands this program and how to use it when assistance is needed. Increased training tasks that focus on wellness will provide the new officer a solid foundation to build on in order to remain healthy throughout their entire career.
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Section I: Introduction

Statement of Problem
Law enforcement can be classified as a very stressful profession impacting the overall well-being of an officer. According to the Badge of Life (2017) an average lifespan for a police officer is 66 years of age or 10.6 years after retirement which is lower than the average for males in the United States which is 76 years of age. Improving on officer health and wellbeing can increase the likelihood of a longer life.

A police department’s most important resource is its personnel. Officers are provided ample opportunities for training through police academies, the Field Training Officer Program (FTO), and continued education. Mandated trainings generally revolve around tactical aspects of the job such as firearms training, defense and arrest tactics (DAAT), and emergency vehicles operation course (EVOC). These trainings ensure that officers have the skills necessary to perform their jobs effectively and safely. Officer health and well-being needs to be added to this list as it is just as important for officer survival in law enforcement.

This paper will provide recommendations of how officers’ health can be improved and implemented within a new recruit’s FTO program. Improved health and wellbeing will provide officers and agencies less problems during their career and retirement concerning their individual health.

Purpose of Study
The main purpose of this study is to develop options for agencies of how to be proactive in the area of officer wellness. Officers have stressful jobs and their individual health is greatly affected as indicated by having a high number of suicides, increased likelihood of alcohol or
substance abuse, high risk of chronic diseases, high divorce rates, and other detrimental issues. This does not have to be the case; officers can change from being reactive to health issues to a more proactive stance. Officers can take action now to prevent future negative outcomes. This study will focus on implementing training of officer wellness within their agencies FTO program. By receiving this training early in the officer’s career it can instill the importance of individual health throughout his/her entire career.

**Methods**

The methods of approach will be to explore scholarly sources that analyze officer health. This information will come from credible internet sources, textbooks, and academic journals. Existing programs will also be analyzed to look at what police departments are using and to examine additional needs for those programs. The use of the transtheoretical model and health belief model will be used to help support the recommendations.

**Limitations**

According to the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (2017) in order to establish a vision of change for people within a community or organization, it can only be possible if the people within the organization work together to change conditions for better health. Officers have to understand how police work can have a negative effect on their health and wellbeing, but ultimately it is up to the individual to put forth the effort to improve their health and to live a healthy lifestyle.
Section II: Literature Review

The following review is divided into three parts. The first part looks at stress and how police officers can be affected by it. The second part breaks down the six dimensions of wellness and how it is related to law enforcement. The third section looks at what programs are being used to help officers deal with stress.

Stress

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2017) stress is a physical and emotional reaction that people experience as they encounter changes in their life.

Police officers encounter stress on a daily basis. Stress for police officers can be from exposure to critical incidents of danger to horrific scenes of death and injury to other things such as “department politics”, poor leadership skills, coworker uncooperativeness or incompetence, poor equipment, shift work, limited opportunities for advancement, and harassment or discrimination. Police officers receive stress from what they see and experience on the street and responding to calls. They also have stress from within the department amongst coworkers and supervisors. In short, stress for police officers is coming at them from all angles. Due to all these risk factors that police officers encounter, there is a risk for negative physical, psychological and interpersonal outcomes, which produces a negative effect (Can & Hendy, 2014). Police stress has an effect on officer’s performance which in turn affects public safety, as well as poor productivity, high turnover rate, high absenteeism, and health-care utilization costs (Korre, Farioli, Varvarigoa, Sato, & Kales, 2014). Stress also comes from things that happens at home or in an officer’s personal life. Some examples of home-work conflicts could be an argument with a spouse over late work hours or disappointments about missed events (Can & Hendy, 2014).
Stress can have a negative effect on an officer’s health. Health problems like cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, depression, and maladaptive and anti-social behaviors are common results from stress in law enforcement (Korre et al., 2014). Chronic stress affects the key structures of the body, the brain, the heart, adrenal glands, and pituitary gland (Scullin, 2015). No matter what the cause of stress is unmanaged stress can have a negative impact, the most severe being death. The Community Oriented Policing Services in the U.S. Department of Justice (2017) states that “the occupational fatality rate for law enforcement is three to five times greater than the national average for the working population. The officers who protect us must also be protected—against incapacitating physical, mental, and emotional health problems as well as against the hazards of their job.”

**Six Dimensions of Wellness**

The National Wellness Institute (2017) developed a model of wellness referred to as the Six Dimensions of Wellness that can be applied to law enforcement. The National Wellness Institute (2017) describes wellness as “an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence.” It does the following:

- Wellness is a conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential.
• Wellness is multidimensional and holistic, encompassing lifestyle, mental and spiritual well-being, and the environment.

• Wellness is positive and affirming (National Wellness Institute, 2017).

Police officer’s wellness is effected by the stress they encounter working in this profession. The six dimensions of wellness include: social health, occupational health, intellectual health, physical health, emotional health, and spiritual health. They are further highlighted below.

Social Health

According to the School of Health and Promotion of Human Development (2017) at the University of Stevens Point (UWSP) the social dimension of health is described as the ability to relate to and connect with other people in the world. In this dimension it will describe how police officers connect with people in their lives to form relationships with their family, friends, co-workers, and other people within the community and how stress of their job effects this dimension. When a police officer gets hired their life begins to change, because they experience things that they never have before. These experiences begin to affect relationships that they use to have. Old friends from high school or elsewhere start to become distant friends. Police officers start to feel distant from friends who are not fellow police officers. Gilmartin (2002) says that these relationships start to become boring to the new officer who has a bunch of new stories and adventures. Non-cop friends complain about why they were stopped by police and asked a bunch of questions that the new officer does not want to explain. This begins the drift away from friends who are not fellow cops and begins to isolate the officer to only having friends that are cops Gilmartin (2002).

The social structure at home is also affected by the stress of law enforcement. After a long shift when an officer gets home they naturally want to relax and unwind. Their desire to
withdraw from family activities turn into isolation that puts strain on the family. Some spouses begin to see this withdraw as laziness, kids feel as if their police parent does not care about them or want to do things with them, and overall the family starts to feel that they are not important to the officer anymore (Gilmartin, 2002). The stress of the job can build up within a police officer to the point they take out the stress on their family. Can, Hendy, and Imbody (2013) conducted a study that found police officers experience high levels of repressed anger associated with stresses from their profession which causes them to have aggression towards their home family.

Beyond the family issues, police officers may feel let down by society and their community. According to a presentation by Chief Kent Williams (2016), police officers deal with 10% of the population who are bad 90% of the time. This then turns the perspective of the officer to make them believe that 90% of the population is bad and only 10% of people are good. This is a bad rut to fall into, but police deal with the same people on a daily basis which causes them to form this perspective.

Police officers form strong bonds with their co-workers and other fellow police officers. This is done because officers believe other officers are the only ones that can be trusted (Gilmartin, 2002). Officers are constantly lied to by people they deal with on the street, so they start to feel let down by the community and form false assumptions. The consequences of this type of thinking with family, friends, and loved ones is felt years later resulting in failed marriages, broken friendships, and even broken parent-child relationships that may never recover (Gilmartin, 2002).
In order for police officers not to fall victim to these stresses it is important that they learn how to live well. According to the School of Health and Promotion of Human Development at UWSP some tips and suggestions for optimal social wellness are:

1. Cultivate healthy relationships.

2. Resources for social anxiety

3. Strengthen current friendships, contact an old friend, or discover new friendships.

4. Get involved.

5. Contribute to your community.

6. Share your talents and skills.

7. Communicate your thoughts, feelings, and ideas.

**Occupational Health**

Occupational health within the six dimension of wellness is how an officer feels about their job and department. According to the School of Health and Promotion of Human Development at UWSP (2017) this dimension measures personal satisfaction and enrichment in life though work, by receiving personal fulfilment within their job. At the beginning of an officer’s career these feelings and attitudes are highly positive. Over time the stress builds and feelings begin to change. In a study conducted by Pagon, Spector, Cooper, and Lobnikar (2011), they found that police managers perceive more work related pressures compared to those in the private sector. As a result of these work pressures police officers often contemplate quitting their jobs more frequently than others in the private sector (Pagon et al., 2011). Some work pressures can come from supervisors that are not very good leaders or role models. Supervisors that are
disconnected or unfocused on what is taking place during a work day can cause frustration to officers (Pagon et al., 2011). Officers at times need direction and someone to answer questions that they have. When a supervisor is unavailable or the officers lack trust in them, it can be the cause of great strain on the officer.

Another form of occupational stress for officers can be from limited opportunities for advancement/promotion or change in work schedule. Officers in certain departments can get stuck working the night shift for many years. This can cause the officers stress in other areas such as family and friends because of shift work. An officer can start to feel stressed by wishing they worked normal day shift type hours. Officers start to strategize how they can get to day shift. When this officer retires or if this day shift officer goes back to nights then there will be a position open that they could get. This type of thinking can cause anxiety and depression if it does not work out the way they had hoped. Officers can feel stressed when they see that advancement opportunities are also limited. When an officer who has hopes to move up the chain of command by being promoted can see that the next person with rank will not retire for 10 years can cause the officer to feel discouraged. This could also cause the officer to look to other departments to transfer that have more opportunities.

In order for police officers not to fall victim to these stresses it is important that they learn how to live well. According to the School of Health and Promotion of Human Development at UWSP (2017) some tips and suggestions for optimal occupational wellness include:

1. Explore a variety of career options.

2. Create a vision for your future.
3. Choose a career that suits your personality, interests and talents.

4. Be open to change and learn new skills.

**Intellectual Health**

According to the School of Health and Promotion of Human Development at UWSP (2017) the intellectual health dimension encourages creative and stimulating mental activities. Police work is a very mentally exhausting job. Everyday officers are tasked with making decisions and processing information. Alpert, Mcdonald, and Dunham (2005) describe officers having a lot of discretion when it comes to making decisions. There are many factors that officers consider when forming a decision. Some questions they may ask themselves include. Was a crime or offense committed? What evidence is there to support individual statements? Was anyone hurt? Does a victim want to press charges? Did the suspect admit to actions? There are so many questions and outcomes that an officer needs to examine when making a decision on what action to take. Constantly making decisions and thinking all day is very mentally exhausting. At the end of a shift when an officer goes home the officer is tired of making decisions and shuts down. They do this by relaxing or doing things that do not require much thinking. Family members are affected by this type of behavior and lose connection with the officer. Similar to losing connection they start to see the officer as lazy, uninterested in family time, and isolated. Mental stress can be very damaging to an officer and his/her family and friends.

In order for police officers not to fall victim to these stresses it is important that they learn how to live well. According to the School of Health and Promotion of Human Development at UWSP (2017) some tips and suggestions for optimal intellectual wellness are:
1. Take a course or workshop.

2. Learn or perfect a foreign language.

3. Seek out people who challenge you intellectually.

4. Read.

5. Attend museums, exhibits and theater.

6. Learn to appreciate art.

**Physical Health**

Physical health for law enforcement officers is an area of health that is talked about frequently. Officers understand that their job can get physically demanding at a moment’s notice. Officers could have to go from being completely calm, sitting in their patrol vehicle to a burst of energy sprinting after a fleeing suspect or to the aid of a victim in need. The phrase that is commonly used is “going from 0 MPH to 60 MPH”. Lagestad, Ragnar, and Dillern (2014) describe police work as requiring high physical exertion during daily activities that include running, jumping, balancing, climbing, vaulting, crawling, lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling, fighting and dragging. The physical activity that may be required could be any type of activity. Officers should take physical health seriously because it could be their individual life, the life of their partner, or life of someone in the community that the officer may have to fight for. Officers do not have to train as if they are Olympic athletes but they should have a sense of physical health that would provide them with the opportunity to win and survive when their physical health is called upon. Strandberg (2014) says that fit and healthy officers will feel better and will perform their job better.
Job performance should not be the only reason physical health is encouraged for police officers, but also for officers to live healthy lives outside of work and being healthy into their retirement years (Standberk, 2014). Fitness and well-being has an effect on having better moods, increased cognitive functions, and less sick days all which can benefit a police officer (Strandberg, 2014). It can further lead to enhanced self-esteem, self-control, determination and a sense of direction (School of Health and Promotion of Human Development at UWSP, 2017).

Combatting obesity is also important for physical health. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2016) more than one-third of U.S. adults are obese. Obesity can lead to other health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, cancers, stokes, and other causes of preventable deaths (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016). Even though obesity is a problem for everyone in the United States, police officers must take extra precautions against obesity. An obese officer mixed with the other stressful factors of the profession is a recipe for self-disaster.

According to the School of Health and Promotion of Human Development at UWSP (2017) the physical health dimension covers physical fitness, diet and nutrition, and discourages tobacco, drugs and excessive alcohol consumption. Police officers at times do not deal with the stress of the job appropriately which causes depression, rage and other emotions making the officer self-medicate with alcohol or other substances (Scullin, 2015). Officers may turn to alcohol to relax and unwind to take the stress away but excessive drinking has damaging effects on individual health and well-being.

In order for police officers not to fall victim to these stresses it is important that they learn how to live well. Some tips and suggestions for optimal physical wellness are:
1. Exercise daily.

2. Get adequate sleep.

3. Prevent injuries by using seat belts, wearing helmets, and other protective equipment.

4. Learn to recognize early signs of illness and prevent diseases.

5. Practice safe sex, if sexually active.

6. Eat a variety of healthy foods and control meal portions.

7. Use alcohol in moderation if at all.

8. Quit smoking or continue to refrain from smoking and protect from second-hand smoke.

9. Strive to reach and maintain a healthy weight (School of Health and Promotion of Human Development at UWSP, 2017).

**Emotional Health**

Emotion health deals with individual feelings that an officer experiences. These feelings would include happiness, hope, love, joy, anger, fear, sadness, as well as optimism, self-esteem, and self-acceptance (School of Health and Promotion of Human Development, 2017). Some parts of emotional health that this section will look at include hypervigilance, substance abuse, divorce, suicide, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

**Hypervigilance**

Gilmartin (2002) goes into depth about hypervigilance in law enforcement officers in his book Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement. Gilmartin (2002, p.35) states hypervigilance “is the necessary manner of viewing the world from a threat-based perspective, having the mindset to see the events unfolding as potentially hazardous.” Officers are constantly on guard or on edge.
to make sure that they remain safe. When an officer is vigilant they are on high alert and very focused. When officers are working their performance levels are at their highest. This is higher than what normal activity requires. When an officer is off work and returns home they sink below the normal range and become lazy and isolated. This is the time when officers just want to relax and unwind, which can translate into risky behaviors. This up and down and up and down cycle Gilmartin (2002) is called the hypervigilant biological roller coaster. See figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Every action has an equal and opposite reaction.

![Diagram](image)


During this low peak is when officers become most at risk to stresses of their job. At this level officers are the most vulnerable and susceptible to substance abuse, divorce and family problems, and suicide. Scullin (2015) says that an officer’s brain has to process information at a frantic rate. Their brain is more vigilant because of the fast paced and unpredictable job. If officers do not protect their brain, over time it can be damaging to the body.
**Substance abuse**

Substance abuse could also fit well into the physical health dimension because excessive drinking or abusing any type of drug whether prescriptions or street can have damaging effects on a person’s body. It fits well into the emotional dimension because a reason that officers turn to alcohol or substances is to drown out or lessen the pain they are experiencing. People who have PTSD or other stress disorders that do not have appropriate coping strategies tend to turn to alcohol or drugs as a way of dealing with their symptoms (Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, 2017).

**Divorce**

Wasilewski and Olson (2015) wrote an article about police marriages estimating that the divorce rate was 75%. Marriage is a difficult enough in a healthy relationship, but when you add in all the work stress and other factors with police work, marriages can be damaged. Officers should understand how police work can play an effect on their relationships and beware of the negative aspects. Gottman (2000) wrote that within a marriage power needs to be shared and when a person is not willing to share that power there is an 81 percent chance that the marriage will fail. Officers become cynical and controlling to be successful in their duties but if that is taken into the marriage divorce is likely to occur.

**Suicide**

According to the Badge of Life (2017) there are two to three times as many officers who commit suicide than are killed by the guns of felons. Suicide is taking the lives of many police officers. Deal (2014) describe officers being at a heightened risk for suicide due to being exposed to violence, suicide, or other job related stressors such as anxiety, depression or other mental illness such as substance abuse, domestic abuse, and having access to means to kill oneself with their firearm and by having poor physical health. Studies have been done to try to
explain why cops commit suicide, but there is very limited information that link police suicides to the effects of the job. Officers do not want to admit that they are having a problem in fear that they will be seen as weak. Officers are also worried that if they seek out help for an issue and the Department finds out about it that they will lose their job by being labeled as un-fit to perform their duties.

**PTSD**

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2017) define post-traumatic stress disorder as a mental disorder that can occur when a person has seen or lived through a trauma. Police work has a high tendency for officer to witness or experience something traumatic. Events that could trigger PTSD could be officer involved shootings, witnessing a suicide, gruesome accidents, or other life threatening situations.

In order for police officers not to fall victim to these stresses it is important that they learn how to live well. Some Tips for optimal emotional wellness are:

1. Tune-in to your thoughts and feelings.

2. Cultivate an optimistic attitude.

3. Seek and provide support.

4. Learn time management skills.

5. Practice stress management techniques.

6. Discover your specific stress relievers.

7. Generalized anxiety resources
8. Accept and forgive yourself (School of Health and Promotion of Human Development at UWPS, 2017).

**Spiritual Health**

Spiritual health is similar to emotional health in that the scars it produces are not visible, but can be very damaging and deadly (Friedman, 2005). In this context, spiritual health refers to having sense of a higher power or purpose outside of oneself (Friedman, 2005). Within law enforcement police officer are described as having a spirit inside of them. When they get hired their spirit is full of wanting to help other people and to make a difference within the community. Overtime the stress of law enforcement starts to beat that spirit out of the officer. This manifests itself when officers become cynical, depressed, and angry (Friedman, 2005).

**Cynicism**

Gilmartin (2002) describes being cynical as contemptuously distrustful of human nature and motive. Officers are constantly lied to by suspects they encounter. Overtime officers start to think that everyone is lying to them all of the time. Officers see people at their worst and are exposed to horrible criminal acts. Officers start to form views of people based on past experiences. Officers are reluctant to let their kids buy ice cream from the ice cream truck because the driver is probably a sex offender. Cynical officers become negative and untrusting of others.

**Depression**

Depression can become a quick problem for a police officer if they are not aware of the potential of depression. Husain and Sajjad (2012) found that police officers are exposed to traumatic situations which cause police officers to reflect moderate and extremely severe levels of depression, extremely severe levels of anxiety, and moderate levels of stress. The U.S.
National Library of Medicine (2017) describes depression as being more than sad or blue for a few days and can be a serious medical illness.

Some signs and symptoms of depression include:

- Feeling sad or "empty"
- Loss of interest in favorite activities
- Overeating, or not wanting to eat at all
- Not being able to sleep, or sleeping too much
- Feeling very tired
- Feeling hopeless, irritable, anxious, or guilty
- Aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems
- Thoughts of death or suicide (U.S. National Library of Medicine 2017).

**Rage**

The Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention (2017) state that rage is not a disorder that can be diagnosed. People with rage might show signs by excessive verbal or physical aggression. This would include yelling, screaming, and cursing to physical signs of hitting, kicking, and throwing things. Rage is a common symptom for those with other behavioral disorders such as ADHD, ODD, or CD (Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention, 2017). Officers with severe stress and behavior problems could display episodes of rage. Rage could be an unhealthy way of how officers handle their stress or problems.

**Faith**

Officers who are in their darkest hour because of all the stress and problems that they are experiencing find that their faith is inexisten. Faith is tempered in the fires of difficulty and challenge, by encountering the worst of humanity but faith will prevail (Friedman, 2005). Faith and hope resides within every human soul, which also motivated every officer in the beginning
of their career (Friedman, 2005). It is important for officers to use faith as an option for their wellness. Some benefits of having a strong faith include positive support from community, encouraging beliefs during hard times, having a power larger than yourself, and restores your strength and joy (Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, 2016).

In order for police officers not to fall victim to these stresses it is important that they learn how to live well. Some tips and suggestions for optimal spiritual wellness are:

1. Explore your spiritual core.

2. Spend time alone/meditate regularly.

3. Be inquisitive and curious.

4. Be fully present in everything you do.

5. Listen with your heart and live by your principles.

6. Allow yourself and those around you the freedom to be who they are.

7. See opportunities for growth in the challenges life brings you.

8. Volunteer (School of Health and Promotion of Human Development at UWSP, 2017).

**Current programs**

Stress is not going to go away on its own, therefore certain programs have been established in law enforcement organizations to help reduce stress and to increase officer wellbeing. Below highlights a few programs that are used to help reduce stress.
Chaplain program

Police Chaplain Programs are used within police departments for officers to have someone to talk to that understands what officer deal with on a daily basis. These programs improve the overall function of law enforcement, correctional facilities, community-policing, line-of-duty-deaths, death notifications, burial service facilitations, crisis intervention and officer and department well-being (Braswell, Steinkopf, & Beamer, 2016). Chaplains ride along with officers during their shift to get to know them by talking with them and building a relationship of trust between each other. The primary role of a chaplain is to provide spiritual support, insight, and encouragement to officers who seek help (Rinchich, 2015). Chaplains help in fostering officer well-being by providing spiritual and psychologic hope by establishing rapport and offering counseling to officers (Braswell et al., 2016). Chaplains are a great way for departments to help with officer wellness. Officers make a connection with police chaplains because the chaplain sees and experiences what the officer does while on ride alongs. It is easier for an officer to reach out to a chaplain when an officer has a problem because the chaplain understands what they are experiencing. Chaplain programs prove invaluable for strengthening an officer’s spirituality (Braswell et al., 2016).

Annual Physical Test

Strandberg (2014) says that exercise is a deliberate attempt that will not happen by accident. Making physical fitness a priority for law enforcement officers will help motivate officers to work at it. Police departments have implemented annual physical testing to maintain a level of fitness that will help officers stay healthy. Physical testing consists of tests that are or would be commonly used during the course of duty. Some of these tests consist of running, lifting, climbing, crawling, pushing, pulling, ascending and descending stairs, and other type of activities. Having an established test the department will hold officers accountable for
maintaining a level of physical fitness that will keep them healthy throughout their career. If an officer fails the test, he/she should have to retake the test after remedial training with a personal trainer.

**FIT Assessments**

Functional Integrative Training (FIT) is a program that improves officer health. FIT assessments are a time when officer can meet with a physical trainer to go over and make health goals. These goals could be fitness or nutrition. During the assessment the officer is given a score of health so that they can track their progress. Some of the areas that are measured in these assessments are blood pressure, body composition, weight, functional movements, and step test for cardio.

**EAP**

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) are offered to officers. EAP are a free and confidential assessments or counseling services provided to employees (U.S. Office of Personal Management, 2013). Some services that EAP provides could be topics of emotional and mental well-being such as alcohol and substance abuse, family problems, stress, grief, and other mental disorders. EAP sometimes assist officers after a major critical incident by officering debriefing and counseling.

**Critical incident debriefs**

Critical incident stress debriefs (CISD) are meetings with personnel involved in a traumatic event, the goal is to lessen the impact of the event by promoting support and encouragement to talk through the incident (Richards, 2001). These incidents occur after a catastrophic event that an officer or officers were involved in. Events could be officer involved shootings, attacks against officers, severe vehicle accidents, suicides, or any other major incident. Debriefs give officers an opportunity to talk about what happened and how that is
affecting them. Debriefs allow for officers to know that the feelings they are experiencing are natural and are given support during these situations.

**Conclusion**

Section two examined negative stress factors that affect police officers. The stresses that police officer encounter attack the six dimensions of wellness. As stated prior, officers can make small changes to prevent negative stress from overpowering their lives. Officer can use the six dimensions of wellness to improve their overall health and wellbeing. Certain programs have been implemented to help officers remain healthy during their career. The next section will apply two different theories of wellness and how officers can use these theories as a model to follow to achieve officer wellness.
Section III: Theory Application

Theory application is a process that can be used to help explain why a problem occurs. Hayden (2014) describes theory as a set of statements or principals that will explain a group of facts or phenomena. This section will describe the transtheoretical model and the health belief model and how they relate to officer wellness.

Transtheoretical model

The transtheoretical model was developed in the early 1980s as a way to understand how people change behavior (Hayden, 2014). The research that was done found that there were commonalities in how people went about change regardless of what behavior they were trying to change (Hayden, 2014). Within transtheoretical model self-efficacy is one’s own belief in their ability to do something. The transtheoretical model has five stages of change which are pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. The stages of change happen in succession of one another, but in order for change to occur one needs to understand the “how”. The process of change helps one understand how the change happens by using ten process of change. These ten processes are divided into two groups, cognitive and behavioral (Hayden, 2014). Cognitive changes are consciousness raising, dramatic relief, environmental reevaluation, social liberation, and self-evaluation. Behavioral changes are stimulus control, counter conditioning, helping relationships, reinforcement management, and self-liberation. This section will explain each stage of the transtheoretical model, the process of change being used, and provide examples of how officers fall into each stage.

Pre-contemplation stage

This stage starts six months before a person is even thinking about making a health change. People believe they are healthy just the way they are and that there is no need for a
change in their lifestyle or they are just not ready to make a change. People in this stage are usually uniformed about their negative health behaviors and are uniformed of the benefits of a positive health change. People in this stage are held up on failed past experiences of trying to change and may fear attempting to try again.

Officers usually start their career in good all-around health. Overtime they may think that they do not need to do anything different because they will stay the same way. As officers progress though their career they experience change. The stress of the job can unknowingly affect the officer. An officer who had a bad day at work and comes home and yells at his wife or kids for something minor could be an example of a problem occurring when the officer is still unaware there is a problem. Another example could be an officer is now eating more fast food because of constantly being on the go or shift work making meal times hard to plan and be consistent. This will cause the officer to gain weight and the officer might not see the problem until they have gained twenty pounds.

**Contemplation stage**

In this stage a person recognizes they need to make a change. They are thinking about it, but have not yet took any action to change. This is usually sparked by a suggestion to change or cue to change. Some cues that could trigger change thinking could be comments by a family member or friends, TV commercials, social media, doctor, health coach, trainer, coworkers or supervisors. All these people could trigger a thought to change that will make the person decide if it is worth it. Hayden (2014) describes the decisional balance as the process of weighing the perceived pros and cons or cost and benefits of the new behavior against the old. A person could be in decisional balance for years constantly battling the pros and cons. Once a person begins thinking about change within six months they will attempt the next stage.
The process of change that will help within this stage and examples are:

- **Consciousness raising.** An example could be when an officer goes to a class or training for health that changes their mindset. It provides them with a new outlook on their own health and changes that could be made. Officers who attend the presentation by Chief Williams (2016) often have a new outlook on emotional survival for law enforcement. After the presentation officers are more informed on the risks of the job and are given options on how to prevent them. Officers who meet with health trainer during a FIT assessment will become more equipped with options of how to achieve their health goals.

- **Dramatic relief.** Some examples could be the cons the officers formulate such as they are too busy and do not have the time to work out. Officers may not have money for healthy foods, gym membership, and exercise equipment.

- **Environmental reevaluation.** Examples of this could be any cue that makes the officer feel they need to make a change. An officer could have a foot pursuit of a suspect and was unable to catch the suspect. The officer was completely out of breath and took a while for them to recover and control their breathing. An officer who carries their duty gear up a flight of stairs is tired and breathing hard.

**Preparation stage**

During this stage a person makes the decision to make a health change. A person starts preparing themselves for changes. They determine the tools they need to make the necessary changes. This could be scheduling time for exercise or meal preparation, budgeting for extra costs that may be required, or any other lifestyles that need to be reorganized for this change to happen. This stage could last approximately one month.
The process of change that will help within this stage is:

- Helping relationships. These are the people that will support the choice to change. These people could be officer’s coworkers. When the officers have crew meals at work they pick healthy food instead of getting pizzas.

**Action stage**

During this stage the plan that was formed in the preparation stage is put into action. Just because people are in the action stage does not mean that the behavior will change 100%. People could fall of track and fall back to the preparation stage. This is an active process of action to maintain health behavior change.

The process of change that will help within this stage and examples are:

- Social liberation – is the process of showing that they are changing habits to better their health. Some examples could be an officer not going out for a few beers with coworkers but instead they go for a run or kayaking (healthy behavior). This could be when an officer goes home for meal instead of going through the drive through.

- Self-evaluation – is an awareness of how positive change affects them. Officers are realizing the good you feel from the change they made.

- Stimulus control – is the removing of the cues or triggers that create the problem. This could be by not going through drive-thru or by not filling candy dispenser in the office.

- Counter conditioning – is an act of substituting unhealthy behavior for healthy behavior. An example could be an officer who buys water instead of soda, or goes for a run before work instead of watching TV.
**Maintenance stage**

This is the final stage of the transtheoretical model. This stage usually begins after six months of the action stage. People are constantly working to move forward but could fall backwards and relapse. Maintenance stage can go on for years. This is the change of their old behavior for a new lifestyle of health.

The process of change that will help within this stage and examples are:

- **Reinforcement management** – is the reward for making the healthy change. Officers are happy now that they caught the suspect in the foot chase. Officers are not out of breath after short bursts of energy.
- **Self-liberation** – is when a person is freed from bad past behavior. Officers are committed to a new healthy lifestyle. Officers now say no to unhealthy habits and yes to healthy choices by continuing to move forward.

The stages within the transtheoretical model help form an understanding of when people change their behavior and the process of change that helps people understand how those changes occur (Hayden, 2014). The transtheoretical model and process of change can be used to explain the change an officer goes through when an officer decides to become more oriented in officer wellness.

**Health belief model**

Health Belief Model originated in the 1950s by the U.S. Public Health Service (Hayden, 2014). This theory is said to be the most used theory in health education and promotion. Hayden (2014) describes that individual beliefs or perception are what determine behavior. The four main constructs that make up the health belief model include perceived seriousness, perceived susceptibility, perceived benefits, and perceive barriers. Over time three more constructs were
added which are modifying variables, cues to action, and self-efficacy. This section will describe how the constructs within the Health belief model relates to the law enforcement profession.

Perceived seriousness is one’s own belief of how they as an individual perceive the actual seriousness of something specific. Police officers may view their individual health differently than each other. One police officer may be perfectly happy being out of shape and poor health habits when another police officer could be upset if they have not exercised in two days. Each police officer perceived the seriousness different based on their knowledge, information, personal history, and personal experiences.

Perceived susceptibility is how a person perceives whether or not they are susceptible to a specific risk. Police officers are faced with many risks during the course of their duties. Police officers that know what the risks are, take action to lessen the chance of that risk happening to them. A risk could be knowing that they could get shot so they wear their protective vest and carry a tourniquet. Police officers know that they could have to run after or fight with a suspect to gain control of them so they choose to stay physically fit to lessen the risk involved. Hayden (2014) says that a perception of increased susceptibility or risk is linked to healthier behaviors, and perception of decreased susceptibility to unhealthy behaviors. Perception of susceptibility explains behavior in some situations but not all (Hayden, 2014).

Perceived benefits are when a person believes there is a value or usefulness of a new behavior that will decrease the risk of the old behavior (Hayden, 2014). An example of this could be when a police officer realizes that by being healthy and physically fit it will likely increase their lifespan after retirement. Officers perceive the benefit of a long, healthy, and happy retirement as a positive change.
Perceive barriers are when a person recognizes the obstacles that are in one’s way to achieving the new behavior. Of all the constructs in the health belief model perceived barriers are the most significant in determining behavior change (Hayden, 2014). Barriers that police officers might encounter could be that they do not have the time for exercise because they are too busy. Officers who work 12 hour shifts and then have to take the kids to their activities may find it hard to schedule time for their own exercise.

The four previous construction of perception are all modified by other variables that make up the modifying variables which are culture, education level, past experience, skill, and motivation (Hayden, 2014). These characteristics make up a person’s individual perception. A police officer who has experienced an officer involved shooting or a traumatic vehicle accident may react or respond differently than a police officer who is experiencing this situation for the first time.

Cues to action are the events, people, or things that influence people to change their behavior (Hayden, 2014). This could be the police officer’s supervisor ordering all officers to take a fitness test or participate in a health assessment. Officers who witness someone else’s mistakes or even successes may encourage them to change.

Self-efficacy is the belief in one’s own ability to do something (Hayden, 2014). When the perceived benefit outweighs the perceived barrier having more pros than cons the person will attempt to make a change. Officers who know that by making the change will have a benefit towards their health and lower the risks involved will make a step towards that change behavior.
Health belief model in action

Police officers know that they are faced with many risks of danger when on duty. Responding to calls, conducting traffic stops, and directing traffic all have the risk of something bad to happen (perceived seriousness). Police officers take certain precautions to lower the risk of danger involved. They wear their seat belts when driving, wear their reflective vest when directing traffic, wear their bullet proof vests every day, and wear medical gloves to prevent contact with bodily fluids (perceived susceptibility). The benefits the officer receives by doing these things are not getting hurt, not contracting a disease, or staying healthy so they can continue to do their job (perceived benefit). Barriers that get in the way of officer doing healthy behaviors could be forgetting to put on protective gear, or saying it’s too hot to wear that protective vest (perceived barriers). An officer that experienced a car almost hit them while they were directing traffic was thankful that they were wearing their reflective vest otherwise the car would have definitely struck them (modifying variable). The officer’s supervisors observes the bad behavior of the officer and tells them to put on their bullet proof vest on for duty or reminds them to make sure they are wearing their reflective vest when directing traffic so cars can see them (cues to action). The officer believes that by taking certain steps the level of their health and safety will remain high (self-efficacy).

The health belief model can be used as a guide for officers to see how their everyday activities can explain their health behaviors. Combining the transtheoretical model and health belief model into officer wellness could be a great way to apply theory into the change for officer wellness.
Section IV: Field Training Officer (FTO) Program

The field training program originated out of the San Jose Police Department in 1971 by Lt. Robert Allen. The FTO program paired new officer with a veteran officer to establish the framework for the new officer to build and develop their skills in the organization under the direction of an FTO (San Jose Police Department, 2017). This model was soon adapted as a state standard and was utilized across the county by other police departments.

FTO programs have been implemented in many agencies as a way to ensure new police recruits receive adequate training so that they are able to effectively perform their job. The FTO process is a nationally accepted training process designed to assist recruits in making the transition from the classroom environment to the application of learned skills in “field environments” (Wisconsin Rapids Police Department (WRPD), 2017). FTO programs continue to improve to adapt with the changing functions of police work. Officer wellness is an important area that should be given additional training. This section will use the FTO program at the Wisconsin Rapids Police Department as a model of how small sized agencies can improve and provide recommendations of how to implement officer wellness training within the FTO program. The FTO program at WRPD is similar to other FTO programs in police agencies across WI.

Case Example of FTO Program

In Wisconsin, the Training and Standards Bureau is responsible for certification requirements for police officers in the state (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2017). Newly hired recruits that have graduated from police academies have received basic training in police
work. Recruits are certified in defense and arrest tactics (DAAT), emergency vehicle operation (EVOC), firearms, vehicle contacts, and professional communication skills (PCS). It is the agencies responsibility to provide more in depth training to make sure new recruits understand and can perform the duties of the job. The ultimate goal of all training is to produce a desired result (WRPD, 2017).

The FTO program at the Wisconsin Rapids Police Department (WRPD) consists of a 12 week training period. The entire FTO program consists of 5 steps throughout the recruits 12 month probationary period. Steps 1-3 the recruit is paired with an officer who is responsible to teach the new recruit tactical skills to be successful at their job. This officer is called the FTO. The recruit will work and learn from three different FTOs during their FTO program. FTOs will change from step one, two, and three. Step four the recruit is paired again with the step one FTO. The changing of FTOs allows the recruit to see different styles of policing and to learn from different FTOs.

- Step one. The recruit is assigned their primary FTO. The FTO is responsible for teaching the recruit basic skills. The recruit observes how the FTO performs their job. The recruit is given 30% of the workload and the FTO is coaching the recruit how to perform job. Upon the completion of this four week period the recruit goes onto step two with a different FTO.

- Step two. During this step the recruit is assigned to a new FTO and a new shift. As the recruit progresses their workload increases. The recruit is now given 60% of the work load. The FTO continues to coach and train the recruit through their duties. Once this four week period is complete the recruit goes onto step three with a new FTO and new shift.
Step three. In this step the recruit should have a good handle on how to do the job. Their workload is at 90%-100% and the FTO is fine tuning the recruit’s skills. After completion of this 4 week period, all training tasks and requirements should be completed and the recruit is ready for solo patrol. The recruit then advances to step four shadow phase.

Step four, shadow phase. The recruit is assigned to the same FTO as in step one. This allows the primary FTO to see the recruit’s progress throughout their training. The FTO is now riding with the recruit wearing civilian clothes and is simply observing the recruit. It is called shadow phase because the FTO hangs back and does not get involved unless they necessarily have to. The recruit is expected to perform 100% of the workload. The recruit shows that they have learned the skills necessary to successfully perform the job. Upon completion of this two week period the recruit moves onto the final step.

Step five, solo patrol. This step last for the remainder of the recruits 12 month probationary period. This step the recruit is on solo patrol. The FTO supervisory monitors the recruits work to ensure that no mistakes are being made and that the recruit is progressing well.

During the FTO program in steps 1-3 the FTO is responsible for teaching the recruit a series of training tasks. These training tasks are the minimum tasks that should be mastered before the recruit can move onto solo patrol. Figure 3 shows the list of training tasks:
Figure 3: WRPD FTO Training Tasks.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Squad equipment –inventory</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Routine vehicle operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Tele-communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Juvenile procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Vehicle stop procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Searches – seizures</td>
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During the FTO program the FTO evaluates the recruit’s performance and offers continual feedback. The goals of the FTO program are to have:

- A systematic approach to in-the-field training
- Consistent and standardized training
- The means of assisting recruits develop their ability to perform the tasks necessary for competent operation of a solo patrol officer assignment
- An introduction to all areas of a police officer’s role and its responsibilities
- The opportunities to learn from a number of WRPD FTOs who will assist the recruit learn the department’s procedures (WRPD, 2017).

The FTO program has been designed to prepare the recruit with the information and tactical tools necessary to perform their duties as a police officer (WRPD, 2017). Successful completion of an FTO program allows the recruit to build on their newly acquired skills so that they have a successful career. Advancements in recruit training should be given to the area of
officer wellness. The next section will provide some recommendation of how to implement officer wellness training within the FTO program.

**Recommendations for additional training**

FTO programs are not static and have room to add/modify what is covered. Adding an officer wellness program and education to the existing FTO program is a way to ensure wellness throughout the officer’s entire career. As illustrated in the FTO Program for WRPD, there is no training required for officer wellness. This is an oversight. As described in section two of this paper stress of police work can be detrimental to an officer’s career. The following recommendation could be added to FTO programs to ensure officer wellness is covered.

**Recommendations for adding training task topics:**

1. **Chaplain Program functions.** During this training task new recruits will meet with the chaplains of the department. The chaplains will get to introduce themselves and begin the process of relationship building with the new officer. Chaplains can explain to the recruit what their role is within the department and how officers can utilize the chaplain program when needed. Chaplains will provide a day of training covering the topics of emotional, spiritual, and social health to the new recruit. Chaplains are able to instruct on these topics and are a good fit due to their pastoral care training and experience.

2. **Physical fitness coaching.** Within this training task recruits will be given ways on how to stay physical fit and healthy. Recruits will have to meet with the city’s physical trainer. The trainer will explain the FIT assessments and what they consist of. The trainer will cover topics of physical health by providing work out plans and dietary options for eating healthy. Departments must maintain high expectations for officer’s fitness level throughout their careers and should be regularly tested (Marx, 2016). For agencies that
have an Annual physical fitness. Provide a test procedure training task. This task will explain the fitness requirements and the reasoning for them. Throughout the training program recruits should have time to work out. This will provide recruits who are unfamiliar with consistently working out to change and create a daily workout routine. This will provide officers a plan that they can use throughout their career.

3. **Occupational and intellectual health.** The FTO can cover both of these topics. FTO can explain to the recruit all the career opportunities that they could have within the department. The FTO can help set up some career goals and future visions. FTO can also explain the importance of continuing education and training. FTO can explain what benefits the city offers to officers who wish to go back to school. Training courses will be explained to recruit and the process the department has when sending officers to training courses. FTOs can be used in this area to motivate the recruit of future opportunity that they can take advantage of to keep their occupational and intellectual health at a high level.

4. **EAP procedures.** This task can also be covered by the FTO. It will explain in more depth what and how the EAP can be used to help officers. Recruits will be provided information on how to reach out to an EAP if and when they need to.

With these suggested recommendations, the FTO program would provide a new recruit the knowledge, understanding, and ability to recognize the impacts that stress has in police work and provide them with healthy ways to combat stress. These recommendations would include the tips presented in section two on how to achieve optimal wellness in each of the six dimensions of wellness. Providing healthy options early in a police officer’s career will help them from falling victim to the stress of police work later in their career.
Proactive approach

After FTO these recommendations need to be reinforced throughout the entire career, it can happen via several strategies. Even though the benefits of wellness should be enough for officer to want to participate in them, wellness programs should be used as incentives for officers. Officers who actively participate can be awarded by receiving a wellness day off or a reduction on how much they contribute to health care insurance.

Wellness programs can be used as a points scale. When an officer participates in that wellness program they would receive points. If an officer receives a certain amount of points in a year then they are awarded a wellness day off to use the following year.

Another incentive could be to offer a lower employee contribution to their health care insurance. Officers who participate in wellness programs to improve their health would be awarded by paying less than those who choose not to participate.

For officers who wish not to participate in wellness programs will not be given any incentives. Hopefully by observing other officers who participate and have success at these programs will be another example to show positive gains when using wellness programs.

Leaders of departments should ensure that wellness programs are in place to promote a positive culture so that officers will provide top-notch services (Marx, 2016). A proactive approach is necessary in order to make officer wellness successful and minimizing potential health problems to occur. Creating healthy habits early in an officer’s career will set them up for future success. Like Strandberg (2014) mentioned that exercise will not happen on its own and individuals need to make deliberate attempts at it, so it can also be said for officer wellness.
Agencies need to implement wellness programs so that officers can live healthy lives. If agencies fail to take the proactive approach by requiring and encouraging officers to have a healthy lifestyle, officers will not make it a priority until they experience a problem.

Agencies that take a proactive approach to officer wellness force officers into the action stage of the transtheoretical model. This helps officers because they do not have to wait for a problem to occur before they make a change. The plan of action is laid out for them to take and use. Officers can get into the maintenance stage sooner and experience the benefits of a healthier lifestyle.
Section V: Conclusion

The outcome of this paper highlighted some contributions to the field of study in criminal justice. Research found that stress in law enforcement can lead to serious health concerns if ignored. Stress can affect different areas of our well-being. This paper explained how stress affects police officers, how officers can overcome stress in a healthy way, and how officer wellness can be implemented within a department field training (FTO) program to ensure officers create a healthy lifestyle throughout their law enforcement career. A successful program that covers officer wellness will ensure that officers have a long, healthy, and successful career (Friedman 2005). Officers must partner with the agencies they serve to perform their duties at the best of their ability to survive the stress of a long career in law enforcement (Marx, 2016). Together officers and agency can experience a successful career.

Agencies should take a proactive approach concerning officer wellness. Agencies that focus on excellent service to the public will benefit by having and maintaining healthy officers (Marx, 2016). Officers that receive training early on wellness will have the knowledge of how to prevent problems with work related stress in their career. Agencies that not only care about the success of their officer’s careers but the success of their officers personal lives concerning wellness will experience rewarding returns by having an employee who is highly motivated, happy, and healthy. Marx (2016) states when officers embrace wellness, they can serve the public most effectively. “Healthy agencies cultivate healthy officers, who in turn, build healthy communities” (Marx, 2016).
Section VI: References


