Law Enforcement Resiliency Training: Recommendations
For Reducing Law Enforcement Suicide

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For Reducing Law Enforcement Suicide

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Abstract
Law Enforcement Resiliency Training: Recommendations for Implementing Officer Wellness Programs

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Purpose
More law enforcement officers commit suicide every year than are killed in the line of duty. Law enforcement officers are at a significant risk for developing mental illnesses that are precursors for suicide attempts. Many law enforcement officers do not seek out treatment for their mental health concerns for a variety of reasons, including stigma, worries about being deemed unfit, and concerns with how receiving treatment will affect their career and their image among their peers (Henderson & Gronholm, 2018; Hilliard, 2019). As such, the focus of this paper is largely on reviewing the factors associated with suicide and mental health problems affecting law enforcement officers, as well as reviewing treatment programs combating wellness decline in order to provide law enforcement agencies with information to make informed decisions on implementing resiliency programs within their departments.

Methods
This research consists of a review of secondary research and statistics related to officer wellness and suicide. Further, the current Wisconsin Police Officer Standards and Training curriculum and requirements is reviewed to show an example of how one state prepares law enforcement officers for the stressors of the job. In addition, this paper reviews current resiliency and officer wellness training programs as well as other resources available to law
enforcement officers to improve mental wellness. This is done to provide recommendations for law enforcement in order to reduce officer suicide.

Findings

Law enforcement officers are vulnerable to suicide and mental health problems due to the nature of police work. Many law enforcement officers, however, do not seek out treatment due to the stigma surrounding getting mental health help. Law enforcement agencies should reduce the stigma surrounding getting help for mental health by providing training for their officers which focuses specifically on reducing suicide and improving mental wellness. They should also provide law enforcement officers with information on resources available to them to turn to in times of need. Lastly, law enforcement agencies should continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the programs and services offered in order make adjustments as needed.
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Section I. Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Law enforcement officers in the United States have one of the most dangerous professions in the world and are often face to face with some of the worst circumstance’s humanity has to offer (White, Dario, & Shjarback, 2019). Fatal incidents in law enforcement are far more common than that of most other occupations (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). Far too often the law enforcement officers who are called upon to protect their communities are killed while performing their duties. In 2018 and 2019 there were 108 law enforcement officers killed as the result of a criminal act (FBI, 2019). Luckily, as a result of improved policing techniques the number of law enforcement officers killed as a result of a criminal act has declined during the past 50 years (Maguire, Nix, & Campbell, 2019; White, Dario, & Shjarback, 2019).

Although the number of law enforcement officers being murdered is decreasing, the number of law enforcement officers taking their own lives is concerning. In 2019 alone it was reported 228 law enforcement officers took their own lives by committing suicide which is nearly two and a half times more officers than were killed in the line of duty (FBI, 2020; Shannon, 2020). Despite law enforcement officers being trained to handle some of the most stressful and dangerous situations a person can face, extraordinarily little time, training, or attention is focused on officer resiliency or mental health. Even though law enforcement officers are frequently put into incredibly stressful situations, little training and few tools are provided to law enforcement officers to assist them in coping with workplace stressors.
Law enforcement officers are asked to investigate monstrous crimes and regularly come in to contact with people on the worst days of their lives. Law enforcement officers are expected to do their duties professionally and not show emotions or “let their emotions get the best of them.” This machismo attitude in law enforcement and among law enforcement officers may have unintended negative side effects. Many law enforcement officers that could benefit from resiliency and stress management training are deterred from doing so because of the stigma surrounding getting help for their mental health (Thompson & Drew, 2020).

Research has shown that mental health training can be effective in reducing suicide and stress related diseases in law enforcement officers (Cohn et al., 2013; McCratty & Atkinson, 2012; Viser et al., 2016; Weltman et al., 2014). By identifying the underlying conditions that are associated with law enforcement suicide, law enforcement agencies can develop plans and training to combat the epidemic that is law enforcement suicide (Roberts, 2019). Subsequently, by implementing mental health training to reduce rates of law enforcement suicide, other mental health issues may diminish as well.

Previous literature on the topic of officer wellness shows that law enforcement officers are susceptible to stress, job dissatisfaction and suicide because of several factors that are specific to law enforcement. Such factors include organizational stress (Violanti, 2007), shift work and erratic hours (Vila, 2006), long periods of repetitive work and with lack of training (Shane, 2010), critical incident trauma and workplace exposure (Violanti, 2004; Violanti et al., 2006), personal relationship problems (Violanti & Samuels, 2007), and poor coping skills (Lindsay & Shelley, 2009). Additionally, research has shown law enforcement officers who do not get help in addressing these job factors place themselves at a higher risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and self-harm (Vecchione, 2019).
All law enforcement officers are trained to shoot firearms, drive vehicles in emergency situations, apprehend dangerous criminals, and interview victims of horrible crimes. Not all law enforcement officers are trained in how to cope or process the stressful and often times terrible things they see on a daily basis (Thoen, et al, 2020). Law enforcement agencies would benefit in knowing what causes a high number of law enforcement officers to take their own lives. Law enforcement agencies would also benefit even more by knowing what they can do to reduce law enforcement suicide.

There are only a few programs such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police Officer Resiliency Program and Law Enforcement Mindful-Based Resiliency Training, that are designed specifically for law enforcement professionals. These trainings range from a single training session that lasts a couple of hours to a program that takes place over several weeks. Attending these programs on top of other time restraints placed on law enforcement for other mandatory training they are required to receive such as firearms, emergency vehicle operations, defense and arrest tactics (DAAT) training to name a few. The amount of training in a year that officers must receive could make it difficult to introduce more training while still having adequate staffing on the roads to respond for calls for service.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study will be to review the literature on the effectiveness of resiliency and officer wellness training programs on law enforcement officer’s mental health. This research will examine currently used wellness and resiliency training programs in order to make recommendations for their implementation. In addition, the research completed in the study will help to examine causes of law enforcement officer suicide and ideally discover methods for
reducing law enforcement officer suicide while improving mental health and overall quality of life.

**Significance of the Study**

Is it important that law enforcement officers be provided with the resources to remain mentally fit. It is also fiscally responsible for law enforcement agencies to ensure they are keeping their officers working. It costs upwards of $100,000 to hire, train, and equip just a new law enforcement officer (Meade, 2016). It is extremely important that law enforcement agencies focus on training and providing resources that will keep officers from experiencing fatigue, stress, or suicide which would ultimately result in the loss of that officer from the agency.

**Methodology**

This research will consist of a review of secondary research and statistics. Data from already completed research on the subject will be analyzed as well as statistics from other sources such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and national law enforcement mental health organizations such as Blue H.E.L.P. will be reviewed. The current Wisconsin Police Officer Standards and Training curriculum and requirements will be examined in respect to officer wellness programs provided during initial training in order to show an example of what one state is doing to prepare law enforcement officers for the stressors of the job.

The research will also examine several current resiliency and officer wellness programs being offered to law enforcement agencies such as the Stress and Resilience Training System (SRTS) program, Coherence Advantage Training program, Mindful Based Resilience Training (MBRT), and Disaster Worker Resilience Training (DWRT) program. The effectiveness on reducing law enforcement officer suicide while increasing wellness will be compared and
contrasted between the programs. Issues will be identified in regard to problems with the programs as they relate to law enforcement (time constraints, intended audience of training, and others).

**Limitations**

This study is being conducted through secondary research. As such, only published research will be able to be drawn upon to further the discussion on how to improve officer wellness within law enforcement agencies. Additionally, many resilience and stress management programs do not publicly post their curriculums with step-by-step guides for how the programs are administered and what specific skills are trained. To obtain all of the training material one would have to pay for and attend the specific training programs mentioned in this study. Furthermore, the recommendations of this study will be theoretical and there will not be the ability to test the results of the recommendations made.

**Assumptions**

Law enforcement officers frequently deal with high stress and potentially traumatic incidents that may put them at an increased risk for developing mental health conditions that could have an adverse effect on their lives and careers. There is a stigma associated with mental health and mental health treatment in the general population, as well as in law enforcement, for individuals to talk about their own struggles with their mental health problems as well as their decisions in pursuing treatment options.

It is assumed that law enforcement officers would benefit from the implementation of officer wellness programs and mental health treatment provided by their agencies. Law enforcement officers would also be more inclined to participate in programs if they were certain
their participation would not have a negative effect on their career or the way their partners view them.
Section II. Literature Review

The following literature review is divided into four sections. The first part will focus on statistics associated with suicide and suicide among law enforcement officers. The second section will discuss reasons for mental health decline within law enforcement officers. The third section will examine the need for law enforcement officer mental health treatment programs as well as explore common reasons why law enforcement officers do not get treatment for their mental health and the stigma surrounding mental health. Finally, the last part of this section will provide information on what Wisconsin law enforcement officer recruits are being trained on in regard to mental health as well as what the current Wisconsin statutory requirements are for providing law enforcement officers with mental health specific training. As Wisconsin has a higher-than-average rate for suicide among law enforcement officers, it is worth noting what Wisconsin is doing in regard to mental health training in order to assess shortcomings with Wisconsin law enforcement agency training priorities (Alltucker & Price, 2018, Blue H.E.L.P, 2021; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

Suicide Statistics

Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the United States with nearly 50,000 people committing suicide each year (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2021; Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2021; National Institute of Mental Health, 2021). Of those who commit suicide every year some of the prominent factors present are poor mental health, not receiving treatment for mental health problems, or not following through with treatment (Chesney, Goodwin, & Fazel, 2014; O’Connor, 2006). Studies have shown that nearly 60% of all people who commit suicide have a mental health disorder such as depression or they abuse
substances such as alcohol or drugs. Law enforcement officers are particularly susceptible to committing suicide due to their increased risk of depression, stress, posttraumatic stress disorder, and substance abuse (McCalasin et al., 2006; Price, 2017; Violanti et al, 2016).

Research into suicide demographics has shown that middle aged white males are most likely to commit suicide than any other demographic (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2021). Additionally, over 50% of all suicides completed are done so with a firearm (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, 2021). Furthermore, 82% of law enforcement suicides were completed by white male officers (Blue H.E.L.P., 2021). These statistics suggest that law enforcement officers are at a predisposed increased risk for committing suicide as approximately 87% of all law enforcement officers are male and all law enforcement officers in the United States carry firearms (Duffin, 2020).

Although there is a belief that retired law enforcement officers are at the greatest risk for committing suicide, studies have shown that active law enforcement officers are actually 8.4 times more likely to commit suicide than separated officers (Violanti, Kook Gu, Charles, Fekedulegn, Andrew, Burchfiel, 2011). Recently retired law enforcement officers, however, did commit suicide at rates higher than that of law enforcement officers who were terminated, resigned, or suspended, but still completed suicide less than active law enforcement officers (Blue H.E.L.P., 2019).

By comparing the statistics on suicide and law enforcement demographics, it can be concluded that male law enforcement officers who are still working within law enforcement are at the highest risk for completing suicide.
Risk Factors Associated with Law Enforcement Mental Health Decline

When evaluating the reasons why people take their own lives it can be difficult to pinpoint one specific cause. Working in law enforcement, however, has been attributed to higher rates of suicide, stress, posttraumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, hopelessness, and depression than for people employed in most other fields (Asmundson & Stapleton, 2008; Chae & Boyle, 2013; Thompson & Drew, 2020; Violanti et al., 2016). Subsequently, some of the leading causes of suicide are posttraumatic stress, substance abuse, hopelessness, and depression which is especially concerning for law enforcement officers (Mayo Clinic, 2018).

This section will discuss three mental health problems that frequently lead to suicide among law enforcement officers. These include stress (posttraumatic stress disorder), trauma, and depression as they are among the most common mental health problems associated with suicide in law enforcement officers (Chesney, Goodwin, & Fazel, 2014; Mayo Clinic, 2018; McCalasin et al., 2006; Turecki & Brent, 2016; Violanti et al., 2016).

Stress

No law enforcement officer is immune to mental health disorders or from experiencing trauma in the workplace, however, some law enforcement officers are better at managing stress and have better coping skills than others. (Maguen et al., 2009). There are many factors that influence a law enforcement officer’s mental health that range from viewing horrific crime scenes to lack of trust within the organization (McCalasin et al., 2006; Price, 2017; Turecki & Brent, 2016; Violanti et al., 2016, Violanti, 2007).

Law enforcement officers are frequently exposed to unexpected and sudden stressful situations that put them at an increased risk for developing stress disorders (McCalasin et al.,
2006; Price, 2017; Violanti et al, 2016). Such experiences can lead to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and hopelessness which are all leading causes of suicide (Mayo Clinic, 2018; McCalasin et al., 2006; Turecki & Brent, 2016; Violanti et al., 2016).

Aside from the strains of sudden and unexpected calls for service experienced by law enforcement officers during the course of their daily duties, law enforcement officers experience organization stressors as well (Violanti, et al., 2016, Violanti, 2007). Examples of such stressors are interpersonal conflicts, erratic work hours, large workloads, and the feeling of not belonging (Violanti et al., 2016). Stress and trauma experienced while on duty combined with organizational stressors can lead to decreased job satisfaction and performance, and decreased mental health (Maguen, et al., 2009; Molines, Sanseau, & Adamovic, 2017; Violanti et al., 2016).

Identifying law enforcement officers who are suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder may be more difficult as many of the symptoms might not be as outwardly visible as they may be with other mental health diagnoses (Miao, Chen, Wei, Tao, & Lu, 2018). Law enforcement officers who have recently experienced a traumatic or life changing incident, however, are more at risk for posttraumatic stress disorder than those who did not (Fox et al., 2009; Hartley et al., 2013). Typical signs of posttraumatic stress disorder exhibited by law enforcement officers include the officer reliving the traumatic event, avoidance of activities that remind the officer of the precipitating event that led to the trauma, difficulty sleeping, and trouble concentrating (Hartley et al., 2013).
Trauma

Nearly all law enforcement officers will encounter some sort of traumatic event during the course of their career (Hartley et al., 2013). Of those officers who experience a traumatic event approximately 24% will develop posttraumatic stress disorder, 9% will become depressed, and 19% will start to abuse alcohol (Fox et al., 2009; Hartley et al., 2013). The development of these mental health and substance abuse problems is startling as they are significant factors that commonly lead law enforcement officers to commit suicide (Detrick, Rosso, & Chinball, 2001; Leigh Wills & Schuldberg, 2016). Further, law enforcement officers who are exposed to traumatic incidents are at an increased likelihood to experience depression and have a decline in mental health (Leigh Wills, & Schuldberg, 2016; Martin, Marchand, & Boyer, 2009).

Identifying what is traumatic for one person and is not traumatic for another can be difficult. Examples of incidents that could cause a law enforcement officer to experience trauma and develop post-traumatic stress which in turn that may lead to suicide may include the investigation of a particularly heinous crime such as a homicide or sexual assault, having to discharge a firearm and cause death or serious injury to another, or being attacked/injured while on duty (Miller, 1999). Given the nature of law enforcement and their frequent responses to crimes and disasters, the average law enforcement officer witnesses 188 critical incidents during their career (Hilliard, 2019). The high rate at which law enforcement officers put themselves into critical incidents may be why law enforcement officers experience depression and post-traumatic stress disorder at a rate five times higher than that of the average citizen (Hilliard, 2019).

Depression
Depression disorder is one of the most common mental health disorders in society with over 17 million people in the United States being diagnosed as depressed (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021). Law enforcement officers are at a high risk for developing depression due to work-place stressors and exposure to trauma (Wang, Inslicht, Metzler, Henn-Haase, McCaslin, Tong, Neylan, & Marmar, 2010). Depression is thought to be so widely prevalent among law enforcement officers as it is commonly associated with other mental health problems such stress and posttraumatic stress disorder which law enforcement officers are susceptible to as well (Violanti, Charles, McCanlies, Hartley, Baughman, Andrew, Fekedulegn, Ma, Mnatsakanova, & Burchfiel, 2017).

Depression is also one of the leading mental health problems that is commonly associated with suicide (Chesney, Goodwin, & Fazel, 2014; Mayo Clinic, 2018; McCalasin et al., 2006; Turecki & Brent, 2016; Violanti et al., 2016). Research has shown that depression can be caused by a multitude of different things to include prolonged stress, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and substance abuse (Khalsa, McCarthy, Sharpless, Barrett, & Barger, 2011; Mayo Clinic, 2021).

Symptoms of depression, trauma, and post-traumatic stress disorder are difficult to identify sometimes but, not impossible to see in first responders. In some cases, people who suffer from depression will have a change in their work behavior that may be identifiable by others (Putnam & McKibbin, 2004). A law enforcement officers who has a sudden lack of interest in work, decreased productivity, or low self-confidence may be showing signs of depression (Greenberg, 1993; Putnam & McKibbin, 2004).

**Need for Law Enforcement Mental Health Programs**
Law enforcement officers who do not receive the proper assistance and services needed to overcome workplace stressors and personal mental health crises are at increased risk for suicide attempts (Berg et al., 2003; Carlson-Johnson, Grant, & Lavery, 2020; Griffin et al., 2010). Recent studies have shown that one of the largest factors in decreasing feelings of stress, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideations is to get treatment. (Johnson & Brookover, 2020). Furthermore, as to be expected, decreased availability of treatment options significantly increased the likelihood of suicide and suicidal ideations (Johnson & Brookover, 2020). Unfortunately, less than half (46.7%) of all law enforcement officers who suffer from a mental health diagnosis or substance abuse problem ever seek counseling or treatment in an effort to get better (Fox et al., 2009).

**Pre-Employment Screening**

Many law enforcement agencies require their prospective law enforcement officer applicants to undergo psychological testing and evaluation prior to being hired which may help prevent hiring of individuals who are at a greater risk of developing stress disorders (Detrick, Rosso, & Chibnall, 2001; Price; 2017). A common evaluation tool used in law enforcement hiring is the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) (Simmers, Bowers, & Ruiz, 2003). The MMPI is an over 500 question true or false assessment that assesses personality traits and psychopathology (Simmers, Bowers, & Ruiz, 2003). The MMPI can be used to identify potential indicators that a person is more susceptible to developing personality disorders or other mental health problems that could make them less than ideal for law enforcement (Simmers, Bowers, & Ruiz, 2003).

In addition to the MMPI, many law enforcement agencies use the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) to screen prospective law enforcement officers. Like the MMPI
the CPI uses a series of over 400 true and false questions that can provide insight on the respondent’s behavior (Roberts, Tarescavage, Ben-Prath, & Roberts, 2018). Data collected from the CPI about prospective law enforcement officers can be used to assess how a person will react to certain situations (Roberts, Tarescavage, Ben-Prath, & Roberts, 2018).

Previous studies on the results of these evaluations and assessments have shown that many prospective law enforcement officers are characterized as confident, not depressed, and have good interpersonal control (Detrick, Rosso, & Chinball, 2001). It should then be noted that research conducted on officers after they have been hired has shown that veteran officers had an increase in mental health problems and increased substance abuse problems after working as a law enforcement officer (Detrick, Rosso, & Chinball, 2001; Leigh Wills & Schuldberg, 2016).

As many departments screen for issues such as these prior to hiring, it can be theorized that these issues formed after being hired and after working as a law enforcement officer. This coincides with findings that direct and indirect exposure to traumatic and high stress incidents has been shown to be directly related to changes in mental health which could explain the onset of these disorders after working as a law enforcement officer (Leigh Wills & Schuldberg, 2016).

**Barriers to Treatment**

Although such a large percentage of law enforcement officers experience trauma, depression, or other mental health related problems which are directly related to their duties as a law enforcement officer, a low percentage of those officers ever attempt to get treatment (Fox et al., 2009; Hilliard, 2019; Leigh Wills & Schuldberg, 2016). It is crucial that law enforcement officers receive mental health treatment and training as research has shown that treatment and counseling are among the largest factors in reducing depression and preventing suicide (Johnson & Brookover, 2020). Despite the research showing the overwhelming benefits to law
enforcement officers mental health by receiving treatment very few law enforcement officers seek out treatment themselves (Fox et al., 2009; Hilliard, 2019; Jetelina, Molsberry, Reingle-Gonzalez, 2020; Leigh Wills & Schuldberg, 2016).

Stigma surrounding mental health problems and getting treatment for mental health related issues is not specific to law enforcement, however, is among the largest barriers preventing law enforcement officers from getting treatment (Henderson & Gronholm, 2018; Hilliard, 2019). Many law enforcement officers believe that by getting mental health treatment it is going to have an adverse effect on their law enforcement career (Karaffa & Koch, 2016). In one study it was found that many of the law enforcement officers who did not seek out treatment had concerns about their coworkers finding out, did not think treatment providers would understand them, and believed they if they got treatment they would not be fit for duty (Jetelina, Molsberry, Reingle-Gonzalez, 2020).

Every individual law enforcement officer may have their own specific reasons for not wanting to disclose mental health issues to their agencies and get treatment. Two common reasons that many law enforcement officers refuse to tell others about their problems is that they believe it could affect their chances of getting promoted or getting assigned to specific assignments with their agency (Karaffa & Koch, 2016; Shearer, 1993). Another significant factor in preventing many law enforcement officers from seeking mental health treatment or disclosing mental health problems is that by doing so they believe their fellow law enforcement officers are going to view them as unfit (Fair, 2009).

Even though law enforcement officers are hesitant to seek treatment and admit their own mental health problems, many law enforcement officers recognize that mental health treatment is needed and important in overcoming mental health obstacles (Karaffa & Koch, 2016). Stigma
surrounding mental health treatment seems to play a significant role in preventing law enforcement officers from receiving treatment (Hilliard, 2019).

Stigma also plays a role in assessing the true number of law enforcement officers who commit suicide. Law enforcement officers are usually the ones who investigate deaths which could lead to them investigating a co-worker’s death or a fellow law enforcement officers’ death. Previous research on this topic has shown that law enforcement officers may change or alter aspects of their investigation to suggest deaths of fellow law enforcement officers are not suicide (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2001; Violanti, 1996). A possible explanation for this is that law enforcement officers believe they and their partners are not vulnerable to committing suicide and they do not want to disgrace their fellow officer’s name by saying they committed suicide (Violanti, 1995). Literature on this issue is limited and additional current research is recommended to see if this is still true in law enforcement today.

**Wisconsin Law Enforcement Mental Health Training**

In Wisconsin prospective law enforcement officers are required to attend a training academy where they learn the skills necessary to become a law enforcement officer. Law enforcement academy recruits are also provided with a minimal amount of training on wellness and suicide prevention during these academies. Additionally, after becoming a law enforcement officer, officers are required to do continuing training, however, there is no requirement for law enforcement officers to receive any information or training on mental health or suicide prevention.

**Wisconsin Law Enforcement Academy**
The current Wisconsin Law Enforcement Training Academy is 720 hours and is designed to prepare recruits for a future career in law enforcement. The current academy curriculum is broken down into several different sections each with their own allotted time of instruction. The 720-hour academy spends ample amount of time training recruits in topics such as foundations of professional policing (94 hours), police patrol procedures (119 hours), investigating crimes (66 hours), tactical procedures such as firearms and arrest practices (172 hours), legal procedures (62 hours) and 34 hours of physical fitness training (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021). The current law enforcement academy provides recruits with minimal training on topics such as officer wellness, resiliency, coping strategies, and how to manage stress. The current 720-hour law enforcement academy only provides recruits with 8 hours of training on officer wellness, stress management, suicide prevention, and coping skills (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021).

The Wisconsin 720-hour law enforcement academy breaks down officer wellness training into two four-hour blocks of training instruction completed at different times throughout the academy (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021). The first four-hour block of instruction is titled “Officer Wellness – 1.” Officer Wellness – 1 is designed to provide recruits with instruction on what the components of a healthy lifestyle are, stress relaxation techniques, and how to incorporate healthy habits into their own life (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021). During this training block recruits are trained using the “three-legged stool concept.” This concept stresses that physical fitness, mental health, and emotional stress are three of the main influencers that determine a person’s overall wellness (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021).

During Officer Wellness – 1 recruits are provided with instruction on what stress is and on stress reduction techniques. Recruits are trained to deal with stress through the use of
cognitive restructuring (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021). Cognitive restructuring techniques are a way to manage stress by restructuring the way a person thinks (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021). Cognitive restructuring uses a step approach to change how a person thinks: step 1 – calm yourself, step 2 – identify the stressful situation, step 3 – analyze your current mood, step 4 – identify automatic thoughts, step 5 – identify objective supportive evidence, step 6 – identify objective contradictory evidence, step 7 – identify fair and balanced thoughts, and finally monitor your present mood (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021). The goal of this method is to have recruits think about what is causing their stress and how they can actively change the way they view the stress and how they are responding to the stress.

The second four-hour block of officer wellness training in the Wisconsin 720-hour Law Enforcement Academy is titled, “Officer Wellness 2: Suicide Prevention.” During this block of instruction recruits are provided instruction on recognizing the signs of a crisis in themselves or others that may lead to suicide (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021). Recruits learn about the reasons that law enforcement officers commonly commit suicide, at-risk behaviors that are commonly associated with suicide, depression, and they learn about triggers, signs, and events that may cause posttraumatic stress disorder (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021). In addition to learning about suicide and posttraumatic stress disorder, recruits are provided with instruction aimed at reducing the stigma that surrounds mental health, substance abuse, and suicide topics within law enforcement (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021).

Although recruits learn about depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and suicide reduction during this training section, the content of the training is geared more towards teaching recruits how to identify issues their coworkers may be experiencing and how to intervene to get their coworkers with mental health help rather than how to help themselves (Wisconsin
Little instruction is given to law enforcement academy recruits on coping skills or techniques they can use on themselves (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021). The current Wisconsin 720-hour law enforcement academy model spends a significant amount of time teaching potential law enforcement officers tactical, legal, and investigative skills. Law enforcement recruits, however, are only provided with eight hours of instruction on officer wellness, how to reduce stress, and prevent suicide (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021). Of those eight hours of instruction only four hours are designed to provide recruits with strategies to use on themselves and remain mentally and emotionally healthy while the other four is designed to help recruits watch out for their partners (Wisconsin Department of Justice, 2021).

**Legislative Training Requirements**

Although law enforcement academy recruits only receive four hours of instruction on stress reduction and coping techniques, that is four more hours than they will likely ever be required to receive again. In the state of Wisconsin, certified law enforcement officers are not required to receive any sort of annual or biannual instruction or remedial training on officer wellness topics (Wisconsin State Legislature, 2021). Law enforcement officers in Wisconsin are only required to receive annual recertification in firearms and biannual recertification in pursuit driving and emergency vehicle operations (Wisconsin State Legislature, 2021).

While firearms and emergency vehicle driving are the only two topics mandated by state statute for law enforcement officers to be recertified in on an annual or biannual schedule, law enforcement officers are still required to receive 24 hours of recertification training every year (Wisconsin State Legislature, 2021). There is no additional statutory requirement, however, in what training law enforcement officers must receive and is up to the individual law enforcement
agencies to decide how that 24 hours of training will be conducted (Wisconsin State Legislature, 2021). Topics typically covered during this yearly requirement include defense and arrest tactics (DAAT), CPR recertification, legal updates training, or other specialized training the law enforcement officer specifically requests to attend.

**Wisconsin Law Enforcement Suicide Statistics**

Wisconsin had four law enforcement suicides in both 2018 and 2019 tying Missouri and Wyoming to be seventh in number of suicides by law enforcement officers per year (Blue H.E.L.P, 2021). With four law enforcement suicides in 2019, Wisconsin made up approximately 1.75% of the 228 reported law enforcement suicides in the United States (Blue H.E.L.P, 2021). It should be noted, however, that although Wisconsin law enforcement officer suicides made up just under 2% of all law enforcement officer suicides in the United States, law enforcement officer suicides per capita in Wisconsin were higher than in most other states (Alltucker & Price, 2018, Blue H.E.L.P, 2021; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Additionally, the percentage of law enforcement officers who committed suicide in Wisconsin in 2018 (0.02%) was higher than that of non-law enforcement suicides during the same time period (0.01%) (Alltucker & Price, 2018, Blue H.E.L.P, 2021; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

Law enforcement officer suicides in Wisconsin are both higher than that of non-law enforcement officer suicides and higher than rates of suicide in other states (Alltucker & Price, 2018, Blue H.E.L.P, 2021; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Because of that, additional time and resources should be allocated to law enforcement officers in order to address this problem. Current training practices do not appear to be sufficient.
Section III. Officer Wellness Programs and Resources

There are many different programs and resources that are available for law enforcement to utilize to improve well-being and resiliency, and for suicide prevention. While some resiliency training programs allow participants to learn virtually and in a self-paced format, most programs require in-person instruction led by an instructor. The length of many of the training programs that are available for law enforcement officers vary greatly from a couple of hours sessions over the course of several weeks to full day sessions that are completed in just a couple of days. This section will provide an overview of four wellness and resiliency training programs that are offered to law enforcement agencies, Stress Resilience Training System, Coherence Advantage Resilience Training, Law Enforcement Agency and Officer Resilience Training Program, Mindful Based Resiliency Training Program, and the In Harm’s Way: Law Enforcement Suicide Prevention training program. This section will also discuss other resources available to law enforcement officers such as peer support teams, chaplain programs, and employee assistance programs.

Stress Resilience Training System

The Stress Resilience Training System is a program that is currently being used by both the United States Military and law enforcement agencies to train participants in how to manage stress and build resilience (Weltman, Lemon, Freedy, & Chartrand, 2014). The program was originally developed for the United States Military but, its applications can be applied to law enforcement to have the same positive effect on stress reduction and improved resilience among participants who use the program (Weltman, Lemon, Freedy, & Chartrand, 2014).
The Stress Resilience Training System is a self-paced, mobile, comprehensive program that is delivered via an iPad application (Weltman, Lemon, Freedy, & Chartrand, 2014). It provides users with information about the physiology of stress and its effect on the body. The initial introductory training is provided in the form of videos on the application and cover topics such as resiliency, spiritual fitness, recognizing stress, performance, and recovery (de Visser et al., 2016).

The next section provides information to the user on techniques and strategies to use to improve resilience and stress management (de Visser et al., 2016). It also completed through the use of videos similar to the introduction section of the program. Users are instructed on how to self-regulate their heart rate and physiological state when stressed to bring themselves back to their normal state which naturally lowers the level of stress the user feels (de Visser et al., 2016; Weltman, Lemon, Freedy, & Chartrand, 2014).

Finally, the program uses a series of five games to test the user on their ability to use the strategies they learned (de Visser et al., 2016; Weltman, Lemon, Freedy, & Chartrand, 2014). The games are biofeedback driven with the user connected to the iPad application through the use of a biofeedback device that measures the users heart rate. As the user plays the games the program measures the user’s heart rate (de Visser et al., 2016; Weltman, Lemon, Freedy, & Chartrand, 2014). As the user plays the game the system senses the users heart rate and becomes more difficult as the user’s heart rate and stress go up, however, if the user is able to use the techniques taught during the training sections and are able to lower their heart rate and stress, the games automatically become less difficult (de Visser et al., 2016; Weltman, Lemon, Freedy, & Chartrand, 2014). With the games’ difficulty being based on the user’s heart rate and stress level, it allows the user to quickly see firsthand if they are using the techniques taught correctly.
and shows the user how those techniques have a real work application (de Visser et al., 2016; Weltman, Lemon, Freedy, & Chartrand, 2014).

In studies conducted to gauge the effectiveness of the Stress Resilience Training System, it was found to effectively in reduce stress, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorders (de Visser et al., 2016). Users who completed the program also saw improvements in their job performance, personal life, and interpersonal relationships (Weltman, Lemon, Freedy, & Chartrand, 2014).

Since this is a self-paced and mobile application it is ideal for law enforcement officers as they can conduct the training while in squad cars when time permits. This allows law enforcement officers to remain on duty and does not take away from available officers to respond to calls for service and keep the community safe. Consequently, is not taught via an instructor and progress is not monitored by anyone other than the user and the saved data on the mobile application. Because of this, therein lies the potential that the user does not fully comprehend the material and does not get the full benefit of the techniques trained.

**Coherence Advantage Resilience Training**

Coherence Advantage is similar to the Stress Resilience Training System as it also focuses on changing a person’s physiological response to adapt to a stressor (Heartmath, 2021; McCraty & Atkinson, 2012). This program is designed to teach participants how to maintain inner balance, mental clarity, and how to rapidly recover and reset physiologically and psychologically after a stressful incident (Heartmath, 2021; McCraty & Atkinson, 2012).

Unlike the Stress Resilience Training System, the Coherence Advantage training program is classroom based and instructor led (McCraty & Atkinson, 2014). During classroom instruction
students are provided training on heart focused breathing, freeze frame, inner ease, and prep shift and reset techniques to reduce stress and bring the body back to homeostasis (McCraty & Atkinson, 2014). The techniques learned during the training program to reduce stress primarily focus on focused breathing to calm the body down and positive thinking to reshape how someone looks at a stressful situation (Anderson, Papazoglou, Arnetz, & Collins, 2015; Heartmath, 2021). One of the primary beliefs with the program is that by bringing the body to a more natural state during a stressful situation or after experiencing a trauma, the mind will be clearer allowing a person to make more informed decisions (Anderson, Papazoglou, Arnetz, & Collins, 2015; Heartmath, 2021).

The program has been proven to reduce organizational stress and emotional stress while improving emotional wellbeing and overall health (McCraty & Atkinson, 2014). Generally, the results of those who went through the training showed a positive correlation between the program and improvements in quality of life and in the reduction of mental distress (Anderson, Papazoglou, Arnetz, & Collins, 2015; Heartmath, 2021).

Although the Coherence Advantage and the Stress Resilience Training System both focus on changing the physiological response to a stressful situation, the two programs are remarkably different in their approach. The Stress Resilience Training System was a mobile self-paced program while the Coherence Advantage training program has a classroom method of instruction. This classroom delivery model does not allow students to work at their own pace and takes students away from their everyday duties while getting the training. The more formal classroom instruction model, however, allows for students to ask questions, practice techniques with a trained instructor, and clarify issues.
Law Enforcement Agency and Officer Resilience Training Program

The Law Enforcement Agency and Officer Resilience Training Program is a resilience training program backed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police that is based on the teachings of the Penn Resilience Program (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2021) designed specifically to reduce suicide among law enforcement officers. The program focuses on improving participants mental thinking, physical energy, and professional and personal relationships (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2021; University of Pennsylvania, 2021).

The Law Enforcement Agency and Officer Resilience Training Program provides classroom instruction on skills that are meant to reduce and prevent depression and anxiety as well as substance abuse (University of Pennsylvania, 2021). Further, it is specifically designed to increase wellness and optimism both on and off duty (University of Pennsylvania, 2021). The program is derived from the Penn Resilience Training program focuses on goal setting, communication, resisting external pressures, as well as focused and deliberate breathing to improve wellness (Brunwasser, Gillham, Kim, & La Greca, 2009). This three-day training program provides students with techniques and practice in overcoming adversity and adapting to challenges as they are presented through the use of scenario-based evaluations (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2021).

Like the Coherence Advantage training program, this program is delivered in a classroom format with an instructor presenting the information. The classroom instruction model does allow students the opportunity to receive the information from a trained instructor rather than through a mobile application. The drawback with this mode of instruction is that it removes law enforcement officers from their regular duties and is time consuming.
Studies have shown the Penn Resilience Program and the Law Enforcement Agency and Officer Resilience Training Program are effective in reducing depression symptoms in participants (Brunwasser, Gillham, Kim, & La Greca, 2009). Although the Law Enforcement Agency and Officer Resilience Training Program was adapted from the Penn Resilience Training program, there is little empirical data available about its success specifically as its own stand-alone program separate from the Penn Resilience Training Program. Further research is needed on the effectiveness of the program to make an accurate comparison to the other models.

**Mindful Based Resilience Training Program**

Many Mindful Based Resilience Training programs are designed specifically for law enforcement officers and have been proven to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression in law enforcement officers while simultaneously improving job satisfaction and personal and professional relationships (Christopher, Bowen, & Witkiewitz, 2020; Christopher, Hunsinger, Goerling, Bowen, Rogers, Gross, Dapolonia, & Pruessner, 2018). This program is also delivered via a classroom format, instructor led, training program (Christopher, Bowen, & Witkiewitz, 2020; Christopher et al., 2018).

Mindful Based Resilience Training focuses on managing stressful situations that are specific to law enforcement and law enforcement officers (Christopher, Bowen, & Witkiewitz, 2020; Christopher et al., 2018). The training provides students with instruction on conducting body scans (purposely noticing the way your body feels), sitting and walking meditation, mindful movement, and mindful breathing (Christopher, Bowen, & Witkiewitz, 2020; Christopher et al., 2018; Joyce, Shand, Bryant, Lal, & Harvey, 2018).
Research into the effectiveness of Mindful Based Resilience Training programs have shown that those who have gone through the program were better equipped to handle stress following a traumatic incident (Christopher et al., 2018). By providing law enforcement officers with the tools needed to manage stressful and traumatic incidents before they occur, law enforcement officers will be better prepared to cope with those stressors when they are presented (Christopher, Bowen, and Witkiewitz, 2020; Christopher et al., 2018).

While law enforcement specific Mindful Based Resilience Training programs have proven to be beneficial to law enforcement officers, they are time consuming. The training typically take place over a course of several weeks with the participants meeting for approximately two hours per week (Christopher, Bowen, & Witkiewitz, 2020; Christopher et al., 2018; Joyce, Shand, Bryant, Lal, & Harvey, 2018). While each session lasts only two hours, having the full course taking place over a several week period presents law enforcement officers with additional challenges. Those challenges including changing schedules and not being able to complete the full course, forgetting material between sessions, and losing interest prior to completion of the course (Christopher et al., 2018). The in-person sessions also require law enforcement officers to be pulled away from their regular duties, however, with sessions lasting only two hours at a time, the absence from their regularly scheduled duties is not as pronounced as compared to the Coherence Advantage Training and the Law Enforcement Agency and Officer Resilience Training Program.

**In Harm’s Way: Law Enforcement Suicide Prevention**

In Harm’s Way: Law Enforcement Suicide Prevention is a program that trains law enforcement officers to provide suicide prevention training to their coworkers within their respective law enforcement agencies. The program is a free 8-hour “train-the-trainer” program
that takes a holistic approach to reduce suicide in law enforcement officers (Park et al., 2020; Suicide Prevention Resource Center, 2021). The program was developed by the St. Petersburg College’s Florida Regional Community Policing Institute with the sole purpose of informing, educating, and providing resources to law enforcement officers and law enforcement agencies to reduce law enforcement suicide (United States Department of Justice, 2018).

The program is designed to train law enforcement officers on topics such as the warning signs of depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and suicide. The training also focuses on topics such as how to reduce the stigma surrounding law enforcement officers seeking help for mental health problems and in how to develop departmental policies to implement mental health programs (Milner, Page, Spencer-Thomas, LaMontagne, 2015; Suicide Prevention Resource Center, 2021).

Although the training requires law enforcement officers to attend an eight-hour class with an instructor taking them away from their other police duties, law enforcement officers are taught how to take that training back to their agencies and teach other law enforcement officers about suicide reduction strategies. This “train-the-trainer” model provides law enforcement officers with the tools and training necessary to instruct the course material at a later time. By having law enforcement officers within their own agencies who can train the material, law enforcement agencies have flexibility in scheduling to reduce the impact of taking law enforcement officers away from their other duties.
Alternative Law Enforcement Officer Support Programs

In addition to specific training programs that are meant to focus on teaching law enforcement officers how to manage stress, develop healthy coping mechanisms, improve wellness, and reduce suicide there are many different resources available for law enforcement officers to utilize in getting mental and emotional help. Programs such as peer support teams are meant to provide law enforcement officers with informal counseling sessions with fellow law enforcement professionals to work through problems they may be experiencing in their personal or professional lives. Law enforcement chaplain programs are also available to law enforcement officers as a resource for getting assistance with counseling and referral services. Finally, many law enforcement agencies have employee assistance programs specifically designed to help law enforcement officers with getting mental health and substance abuse treatment when those things are having a negative impact on the law enforcement officers work performance and personal life.

Peer Support Teams

Many law enforcement agencies have peer support teams that can be used as resources for law enforcement officers who are struggling with different problems (Papazoglou, McQuerrey, & Tuttle, 2018). Peer support teams are made up of law enforcement officers and law enforcement support staff who understand the world of law enforcement and understand problems that law enforcement officers and law enforcement support staff typically experience (Gurule, 2021; Milliard, 2020; Papazoglou, McQuerrey, & Tuttle, 2018). Law enforcement professionals who make up a peer support team provide law enforcement officers in need with one-on-one peer counseling to assist law enforcement officers with working through problems
they are experiencing (Gurule, 2021). Peer support teams are confidential and are used as a means for getting law enforcement officers in crisis connected to additional resources and help (Gurule, 2021;). Papazoglou, McQuerrey, & Tuttle, 2018).

Law enforcement professionals who make up peer support teams are typically provided with additional training to better prepare them for providing guidance to their partners (Gurule, 2021). Peer support team members may be given additional training in areas such as suicide prevention, crisis intervention, resiliency, substance abuse prevention, and training in how to recognize the signs of others who may be experiencing issues in their professional and personal lives (Gurule, 2021). Research into peer support teams has shown that peer support teams are particularly useful for officers when having organizational problems (Milliard, 2020).

One of the main reasons that peer support teams are beneficial and successful in helping law enforcement officers is that the teams are made up of law enforcement professionals who understand the issues law enforcement officers face (Gurule, 2021). A common reason that law enforcement officers never seek help for mental, emotional, or work problems is that they do not think that those outside law enforcement will understand their issues (Papazoglou, McQuerrey, & Tuttle, 2018). Through the use of peer only support, law enforcement officers know that there is a better chance the people they are reaching out to will understand the issues they are experiencing.

Another reason that many law enforcement officers do not receive treatment or help for issues they are facing is that they are concerned about confidentiality and people finding out they have a problem (Fox et al., 2012; Gurule, 2021). Peer support teams are not required or obligated to share any information that law enforcement officers divulge unless there is an imminent danger present for the law enforcement officer or others or if a crime was committed
Law enforcement chaplains are another resource available for law enforcement officers to consult with when experiencing personal or professional problems that is meant to supplement peer support teams and other services (San Diego County Sheriff’s Department, 2019). Law enforcement chaplains are usually clergy members from within the community who have received additional, law enforcement specific, training to assist law enforcement officers in many different ways (Braswell, Steinkopf, & Beamer, 2016; Fond Du Lac Police, 2021; Sheboygan Police, 2021). Law enforcement chaplains are available to law enforcement officers to provide counseling and resources for referrals to other services such as mental health providers (Braswell, Steinkopf, & Beamer, 2016, Fond Du Lac Police, 2021; Sheboygan Police, 2021).

Although law enforcement chaplains are usually required to be licensed clergy, law enforcement officers with any religious denomination or spiritual beliefs are able to utilize law enforcement chaplains (Fort Lauderdale Police, 2017; San Diego County Sheriff’s Department, 2019). Law enforcement chaplains are also prohibited from pushing their own religious beliefs on law enforcement officers and from trying to convert law enforcement officers to have the same religious beliefs that the chaplains do (San Diego County Sheriff’s Department, 2019).

Law enforcement chaplains provide services to law enforcement officers and their families in the form of counseling sessions, educational services, referrals, and religious services (Hickley & Dent, 1985). Law enforcement chaplains also frequently conduct ride-alongs with
law enforcement officers as a way to engage with the officers and to provide information about the chaplain program (San Diego County Sheriff’s Department, 2019).

Like peer support teams, law enforcement chaplains are completely confidential services for law enforcement officers to utilize in getting help for problems they are facing (Braswell, Steinkopf, & Beamer, 2016; San Diego County Sheriff’s Department, 2019).

Employee Assistance Programs

Many law enforcement agencies also have free and confidential employee assistance programs available to their law enforcement officers as a way of getting help for personal and professional issues (Chicago Police Department, 2021). Employee assistance programs are workplace based programs designed to assist employees with issues that could negatively impact their well-being and job performance (Levy Merrick, Volpe-Vartanian, Horgan, & McCann, 2007; Office of Personnel Management; 2021). It should be noted that employee assistance programs are not specific to law enforcement agencies, however, there are law enforcement specific employee assistance programs that are available (Access EAP, 2021).

Employee assistance programs provide services to employees both outside of the workplace and within the workplace (Levy Merrick, Volpe-Vartanian, Horgan, & McCann, 2007). Referrals to employee assistance programs can be made in two ways, referrals by an employee’s supervisor or by the employee referring themselves to get services through the program (Levy Merrick, Volpe-Vartanian, Horgan, & McCann, 2007). Services that are typically provided by employee assistance programs include short term counseling and peer support (Chicago Police Department, 2021; Levy Merrick, Volpe-Vartanian, Horgan, & McCann, 2007; Office of Personnel Management, 2021). Most employee assistance programs provide services
in the form of counseling for behavioral, emotional, or substance abuse problems that are negatively effecting job performance and satisfaction (Levy Merrick, Volpe-Vartanian, Horgan, &McCann, 2007; Office of Personnel Management).

Like peer support teams and law enforcement chaplain programs, employee assistance programs are completely confidential so that employees feel comfortable opening up about problems they are experiencing without fear of reprisal from their employer (Mistretta & Inlow, 1991, Office of Personnel Management, 2021). Although they are free and confidential for employees, many employees do not utilize the programs offered by their employers to get assistance (Azzone, McCann, Levy Merrick, Hiatt, Hodgkin, & Horgan, 2009). Studies have suggested that this could be because of limited knowledge by employees about what employee assistance programs are and how they are beneficial to employees (Azzone, et al., 2009).
Section IV. Recommendations to Law Enforcement Agencies and Conclusion

This section will focus on providing law enforcement agencies with recommendations on implementing officer wellness and suicide awareness training to reduce suicide among law enforcement officers.

Research conducted on the mental health of law enforcement officers frequently shows that many law enforcement officers have mental health conditions that have a negative impact on their personal lives, job performance, and job satisfaction. (Fox et al., 2009; Violanti, Charley, Hartley, Mnatsakanova, Andrew, Fekedulegn, Vila, & Burchfiel, 2008). Despite so many law enforcement officers having mental health conditions that are detrimental to their wellness, very few law enforcement officers seek out treatment for problems they are experiencing (Fox et al., 2009). The key concerns for law enforcement officers as it relates to getting treatment are fears of confidentiality, concerns about being considered unfit for duty, stigma surrounding mental health, and not knowing where to go for services (Azzone et al., 2009; Fox et al., 2009).

Although prospective law enforcement officers in Wisconsin are provided with training while in the academy on how to remain mentally fit, little attention is given to the subject afterwards. Law enforcement officers in Wisconsin are required to conduct 24 hours of recertification training every year in order to maintain certification as a law enforcement officer. Law enforcement agencies should consider allocating time from this yearly requirement towards providing mental health, wellness, and suicide awareness training.

Law enforcement agencies should approach mental health and suicide related problems within their agencies in steps. First, reduce the stigma surrounding mental health related disorders, second provide law enforcement officers with information regarding their options for
seeking help, third provide training programs to their law enforcement officers so that they may improve their mental wellness, and fourth evaluate the programs implemented for effectiveness and adjust, as necessary.

**Reduce Stigma**

Many people, both within law enforcement and outside of law enforcement, are concerned about what other people will think of them if they divulge that they have a mental, emotional, or substance abuse problem (Corrigan & Watson, 2002; Mannarini & Rossi, 2018; Pederson & Paves, 2014). In fact, 13.3% of law enforcement officers in one study reported that the stigma surrounding mental health problems and getting mental health treatment prevented them from seeking out services (Fox et al., 2009).

Improvements in reducing stigma surrounding mental health and getting treatment for mental health problems has been made through the use of educational outreach and training programs such as “Time to Change” and “Bring Change to Mind” which focus on public awareness and social media campaigns to normalize talking about mental health (Stuart, 2016). While individuals may feel ashamed or embarrassed about getting mental health help, generally society is accepting and approves of people seeking professional help for mental health problems (Parcesepe & Cabassa, 2013).

Law enforcement agencies should take note that people are generally accepting of mental health treatment and that by providing information and training on mental health it is possible to reduce stigma surrounding mental health within their agencies (Parcesepe & Cabassa, 2013; Stuart, 2016). Law enforcement officers should consider providing information to their law enforcement officers on mental health and encourage open discussions within their agencies to
show that mental health problems are not something to be ashamed of. This is a topic that is extensively discussed and analyzed during the previously mentioned In Harm’s Way: Law Enforcement Suicide Prevention program. By reducing stigma within their agencies, law enforcement officers may be more prone and open to engaging in dialogue about mental illness and may be more open to seeking treatment for problems they might be experiencing.

**Inform**

One of the reasons other than stigma that prevents law enforcement officers from receiving help for their mental or emotional problems is that they do not know where to turn for help (Azzone et al., 2009; Merrick, Hodgkin, Hiatt, Horgan, & McCann, 2011). Law enforcement agencies should recognize that many law enforcement officers might be willing to accept help and get treatment for issues they are facing but, they need information on where to go or what services are available to them. This is where peer support teams, chaplain programs, and employee assistance programs can be most beneficial as they all are designed to aid with connecting law enforcement officers with services. With the advertisement of these programs within agencies, law enforcement officers have a better chance of being exposed to programs and resources available to them which could lead to improvements in wellbeing and a reduction in suicides.

Confidentiality is another frequent concern of law enforcement officers that stops them from seeking out treatment (Azzone et al., 2009; Fox et al., 2009). Law enforcement agencies should provide their law enforcement officers with information about the many programs available to them and should reassure their law enforcement officers that many of the available services are confidential and will not affect their career. The more law enforcement officers know about the services available to them, the greater chance there is that someone will utilize a
program or a service to get help. Law enforcement officers can not use programs or services that they do not know about.

**Train**

There are many programs available for law enforcement agencies to use that train law enforcement officers how to reduce stress, improve their mental wellness, and how to live healthy lives. Self-paced programs such as the Stress Reduction Training System allow for the most flexibility as it allows users to conduct the training whenever they have the time and as quickly or slowly as they wish. This type of training, however, does not allow for students to ask questions and clarify with instructors which could lead to confusion and misinformation. In-person programs such as the Coherence Advantage Training System and Mindful Based Resilience Training program allow for a greater interaction between the instructor and student but are time consuming and take officers away from their regular duties. Programs that focus on train-the-trainer style instruction such as the Law Enforcement Agency and Officer Resilience Training Program and the In Harm’s Way: Law Enforcement Suicide Prevention program are the most beneficial to agencies as they prepare law enforcement officers to teach fellow law enforcement officers skills and techniques that can improve wellness and reduce suicide. By having trained personnel within law enforcement agencies that can instruct on the material it allows for greater flexibility in scheduling training times and also the opportunity for participants to ask questions and gain a better understanding of the material.

Although training is not always free and takes law enforcement officers from their regular duties, there are several grants available for law enforcement agencies to utilize that offset the costs of providing their employees with mental health training (U.S. Dept. of Justice,
Law enforcement would benefit greatly in receiving mental health training that prepares them to positively deal with inevitable stressful and potentially traumatic incidents as they arise.

In Wisconsin, law enforcement officers are required to complete 24 hours of recertification training every year in order to remain a certified law enforcement officer (Wisconsin State Legislature, 2021). Law enforcement agencies are given the freedom to choose how their law enforcement officers utilize that training time. It would be beneficial to both the law enforcement agency and the law enforcement officers who work for those agencies to receive mental health training so that they may be better prepared to deal with the stressors that come with being a law enforcement officer.

**Evaluate**

Once law enforcement agencies have implemented training programs to help their officers improve their mental health and reduce feelings of suicide, they should evaluate the effectiveness of the programs. If the programs and resources do not appear to positively impact their officers, law enforcement officers should try to implement different approaches until they identify one that works best for the law enforcement officers within their agencies. For example, if an agency implements a mobile self-paced resiliency training program but, are finding that their law enforcement officers are not retaining information from that instruction style they should consider implementing in-person training programs instead.
Conclusion

Depression, anxiety, and suicide are not law enforcement specific problems; however, they are problems that are highly prevalent in law enforcement (McCalasin et al., 2006; Price, 2017; Violanti et al, 2016). Law enforcement officers are frequently and often called upon to assist those within the community that they serve with their problems, emotional and otherwise. Studies have shown that frequent exposure to stressful and uncertain situations can lead to an increase in mental health decline to include increased incidents of depression and suicide.

There are many options available to law enforcement officers in getting treatment and assistance in dealing with mental health problems. Several programs are available to law enforcement officers to teach them how to reduce their stress such as the Stress Resilience Training System, Coherence Advantage program, Law Enforcement Agency and Officer Resilience Training Program, and Mindful Based Resilience Training. There are also several services available to law enforcement officers to seek help and treatment for mental health and substance abuse problems such as peer support teams, chaplain programs, and employee assistance programs.

Law enforcement officers are often hesitant to seek out treatment as they are concerned with the stigma that surrounds mental health and are afraid of being viewed not fit for duty. Law enforcement agencies can reduce stigma within their agencies and improve their law enforcement officers mental health by providing training and information to their employees and by encouraging law enforcement officers to participate in said programs.

Law enforcement agencies can greatly improve the overall wellness of their law enforcement officers by providing them with information about services available to them and by
offering training programs that can provide law enforcement officers with crucial skills and techniques for improving their mental health and resilience.
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