



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Indianapolis Wellness Model

The Indianapolis Wellness Model: Executive Summary

In 2002 Kevin Gilmartin published *Emotional Survival for Law Enforcement*. Gilmartin's book was a watershed moment for law enforcement in that it introduced the challenges of the cumulative effects of the stress and trauma that officers experience. In his book Gilmartin asks,

Why are the predictable changes and difficulties in an officer's life not prevented? Why aren't law enforcement organizations attempting to prevent the destructive effects on employees brought on by years spent as officers? Although many agencies have dedicated employee assistance programs available, these traditionally have been focused on resolving issues once they develop, not on preventing them.

In 2010 the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) in cooperation with the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #86 created the Office of Professional Development and Police Wellness (OPDW) to partner with officers on issues of employee health, wellness, resiliency and professional career development. The ultimate goal was developing a practice of hiring healthy applicants and having them arrive at retirement healthy and fulfilled. The theme of this endeavor was "Healthy Hire-Healthy Retire: Wellness is more than just an annual physical."

The mission of the office was designated as follows:

- To create a program whereby the agency and the officer are held accountable; the agency for providing a program, resources and support, and the officer for being proactive about maintaining healthy practices; physical, spiritual, emotional and family,
- To facilitate a culture whereby attaining and maintaining individual and organizational health was paramount and supported by top management and the union, and
- To create a culture of health through trust and support based on strict confidentiality.

To accomplish the mission the following methodology was adopted:

- To identify major areas of distress that police officers experience,
- To develop wellness resources in response to the identified areas of distress,
- To triage officers needing intervention, assign them to a resource, case manage their treatment and recovery, and if necessary arrange organizational accommodation, and
- To create development programs to assist officers in maintaining and practicing healthy habits throughout their career ex: the creation of a formal mentoring program.

By the end of the first year every member of the agency was trained on the specifics of the program and made aware of distress identifiers and available resources. By the third year of the program disciplinary (mandatory) referrals dropped 40% while voluntary interventions and peer referrals increased 300%.

To date over 500 veteran officers and over 100 recruits have participated in the program with almost 100 officers having been trained as mentors and assigned to mentor applicants, recruits and veteran officers. In recognition of advances in police wellness the IMPD OPDW has been requested to present at the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), International Law Enforcement Educators and Trainer Association (ILEETA), and International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST) conferences.