



NARRATIVE:

The Indianapolis Wellness Model

The Indianapolis Wellness Model: Program Narrative

The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) is an agency of approximately 1600 officers serving a metropolitan area of 365 square miles and almost one million citizens. The IMPD is the result of a 2006 merger between the Marion County Sherriff's Department road patrol and the former Indianapolis Police Department.

The merger of the two agencies brought several organizational issues to light that had a direct impact on officer development, wellness and the issue of personal and career resiliency. Some of the issues were the different policies of the agencies- including separate but distinct hiring practices, disciplinary policies, how discipline was administered (punitive vs. corrective), and how the agencies responded to officers involved in critical or traumatic incidents including police involved shootings and off duty issues.

In 2010, the IMPD, in cooperation with the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Lodge 86 (Indianapolis), and in response to an unacceptable number of officers involved in high profile disciplinary actions, below standards performance appraisals and criminal activity; created the Office of Professional Development and Police Wellness (OPDW). The office was initially tasked with working with officers with patterns of transgression and disciplinary issue or failed appraisal, by identifying a remediation plan- including identifying resources to assist the officers to get healthy and return back to work.

Within a year the program morphed into a full time full agency development, wellness and resiliency program. In the five years the program has been operating, data has been collected concerning officer distress and extrapolated, allowing the agency to take a fresh look at hiring philosophy and practices in an effort to promote applicant health as equally important as other hiring issues and as integral to long-term agency and officer success.

Initial Program Challenges:

The challenge of building the development and wellness program was accepted by Captain Brian Nanavaty, an IPD/IMPD veteran and former adjunct faculty in criminal justice with Indiana

and Purdue Universities. Nanavaty, who had been working with officers with long-term issues at the district operational level, agreed to take the program agency-wide in the fall of 2010.

Captain Nanavaty identified the initial goals of the program:

- Identify the stakeholders; agency executives, supervisors, peers, officers, clinicians, and union representatives, etc., and procure support ,
- Identify a dedicated staff and budget,
- Provide education and data to the agency as to the true cost of officer distress to the officer and the organization, and identify red flag distress warnings, available clinical resources, and a departmental and program methodology, and
- Build a culture of confidentiality and trust between officers and the program, build credibility between supervisors and the program, and ensure with agency executives officer and program accountability, and
- Eliminate the culture of suffering in silence and the stigma of weakness historically associated with officers needing or asking for help.

Stakeholders were quick to come on board. Both the IMPD administration and the FOP were very supportive. The administration- due in part to officers landing on the front page of the newspaper and evening news for unfavorable reasons, and the union- in part due to a recent six figure legal expenditure on behalf of handful of officers for criminal allegations.

While a budget has never been identified for the wellness office several area foundations jumped on board to fund the program in addition to financial support from the FOP. The program has enjoyed staff support ranging from 1-4 officers in addition to Captain Nanavaty.

Training was provided to supervisors on remediation and corrective discipline in early 2011 and the entire department received training and education on the program and distress issues in the summer of 2011, 2012 and 2013. This training stressed program goals and accomplishments and addressed issues of confidentiality and trust. A culture of confidentiality and trust was bolstered by agency commitment supported by Indiana state law which protects the confidentiality of employee communication when engaged in employee assistance programs.

The First Year: The Evolution of Wellness: Performance vs. Behavior:

The IMPD and OPDW identified four main goals for the first twelve month period:

1. Design and implement training for supervisors on effective discipline; focusing on the corrective, to rehabilitate and remediate employees and return them to work healthy,
2. Identify resources; clinical, professional and educational from both within and outside the agency as direct or referral sources to help officers in their endeavor to get healthy,
3. Direct programs and resources and case manage:
 - a. Officers with a history and pattern of transgression, and
 - b. Officers receiving a "below standards" grade on the performance appraisal, and
4. Track officer progress and develop a tool for measuring program metrics.

Before the end of the first year the program expanded from working with officers with deficient performance appraisals or facing discipline and requiring remediation; and was made available to all officers. This was done after program specialists determined from working with numerous officers that *the root cause of distress and performance deficiency was personal or behavior related almost 90% of the time* as opposed to the prevailing belief employee discipline was a result of transgression that was performance based.

The results of year one:

- The focus of the program shifted from punitive to corrective and from performance to personal/behavior.
- After analysis of officer interventions a determination was made that resources utilized effectively by officers facing professional challenges (non-performance rooted) could be just as effective if offered on behalf of officers with personal issues who had not yet experienced performance problems.

Year Two: Development: Mentoring:

In the second year of the program the focus moved from Wellness to Development. While wellness resources were identified and applied to officers facing personal and professional challenges, it became apparent the wellness methodology was only a stopgap measure. It was proposed that the creation of development programs would assist the agency in offering a more effective, long term remedy for attaining personal and career health through personal goal accomplishment and career planning. By developing a partnership between the employer and employee and offering supportive developmental programs it was believed future generations of officers would arrive at retirement personally and professionally healthy.

The first developmental program offered by IMPD was a formal agency mentoring program. It was imperative the program be developed early in the timeline so mentors could be trained and assigned to work with officers identified as requiring development as well as wellness resources- officers with a history of issues and those with failing performance appraisals.

Mentors were recruited from officers receiving top evaluations on performance appraisals and who applied to be considered as mentors. Training involved two days of leadership training, DISC, problem identification, communication, etc., and one day of individual and team dynamics outside the classroom. The aim of this day was to allow the prospective mentor to gain insight into his mentee's challenges by learning to overcome his own shortcomings. The team building exercises stressed the value of advocating and utilizing support resources.

The value of mentors to the agency is many and varied. Mentors differ from supervisors, field training officers and peer support officers in that mentors are peer oriented, but are assigned long term whereas peer support is directed to officers involved in critical incidents. While some FTO's do attempt to mentor recruit officers they also perform daily evaluations. Mentors differ in that they are not judgmental, and their interaction- while long term- is not evaluative.

Due to the success of pairing mentors with veteran officers the program was expanded in 2013 to provide mentors to recruits during the recruit academy. This assignment of mentors to recruit officers has been an unparalleled success and has resulted in an increase in the number of recruits graduating from the recruit academy over previous sessions with no mentoring.

Year Three: The Data and the Survey:

By the end of year three much was accomplished from a knowledge base standpoint due to the accumulation and analysis of three years of officer distress data. In addition, results from a survey on distress issues administered to the entire agency during agency training garnered similar supporting data. From that data five core areas of distress that affect the long- term health of officers were identified:

- Addictive Issues: Substance and Process Abuse
- Behavioral and Mental Health Issues

- Personality Issues: Anger, Victimization, Narcissism, Immaturity, Control, Esteem
- General Health Issues: Diet, Exercise, Sleep, Pain Management
- Relationship Distress: Family, Financial

This information was important because it enabled the program to identify and solicit resources specific to addressing current and future officer challenges, in addition to being able to apply knowledge of distress experienced by veteran officers to the applicant selection process.

Year Four: Avoiding the 30 Year Mistake: The Influence of Wellness on Hiring:

As previously addressed, data mined from officers participating in wellness intervention and from the survey was invaluable in the procurement of resources to mitigate distress. Additionally, distress experienced before hire and distress that occurred while employed as an officer was differentiated between. This knowledge enabled program specialists to survey recruits and compare data on pre-hire distress issues with data from veteran officers.

After analysis it was apparent much of the core distress affecting veterans- especially distress that was rooted in pre-hire experiences- was similarly evident in the backgrounds of many of the current recruits. This information allowed the agency to take a hard look at traditional law enforcement hiring practices. Based on this information IMPD introduced resiliency into the applicant process and addressed pre-hire distress at the recruit academy through the use of education, resource identification and availability, and through the assignment of mentors.

Year Five: Measuring Success: The Impact of the IMPD OPDW

Impact and success of the IMPD OPDW program was measured in several ways. In the first three years of the program discipline vs. intervention were measured. From 2010-2013 *mandatory* disciplinary referrals to the program dropped over 40% while officers seeking *voluntary* assistance increased 300%. In the five years of program operation over 500 officers from IMPD have participated in the program representing almost one-third of the agency.

Captain Nanavaty and his staff have been invited to and have addressed most of the major law enforcement conferences on the specifics of the IMPD OPDW including, IACP, ILEETA, IADLEST, NOBLE, FOP, and the FBI NAA. In 2013 Captain Nanavaty was interviewed on wellness issues on *Police One* and was featured in the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* and *Law and Order* magazine.

In 2014 the IMPD OPDW was honored by Safe Call Now (safecallnow.org), a nationwide 24 hour confidential crisis and referral hotline for first responders, for efforts to identify and address law enforcement wellness and resiliency issues. To date, Captain Nanavaty and the OPDW have interacted with hundreds of police agencies throughout the US and Canada in an effort to promote awareness of officer distress and to replicate the IMPD OPDW model.