

## **Stakeholder Group to Examine and Improve the Recruitment, Retention, and Wellness of Law Enforcement Officers**

Senator Anne Beebe–Center, Chair  
Representative Tavis Hasenfus, Chair  
Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety  
State of Maine Legislature  
Augusta, Maine 04333

March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Honorable Committee Chairs,

The Chairs and members of the Stakeholder Group to Examine and Improve the Recruitment, Retention, and Wellness of Law Enforcement Officers are proud to present the Committee with the attached report as directed by the Committee and Maine Legislature by their enacted Resolve of April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

The members of the stakeholder group have worked in earnest to produce what we believe to be a first of its kind collaboration between law enforcement, medical, and data analyst representatives from within Maine. Including best practices nationally as well as within Maine, it also includes a hallmark survey of Maine Law Enforcement Officers in which we received 736 individual responses within a 30-day period.

This report reflects a unique insight into what law enforcement officers and their families are experiencing in and because of their service to the citizens and State of Maine. The attached report, in considering all the information received through the Stakeholder Groups collaborative efforts, statistical and analytical findings, as well as input from Maine’s Law Enforcement Community; active and retired, through the “State of the State” Survey, are reflected in its recommendations and supporting information.

In its work, the stakeholders recognized that given the critical issues affecting the recruitment and retention of qualified, consistent and long-term law enforcement officers, that there is no single solution or recommendation to be made. Maine Law Enforcement is experiencing the vicarious, long term cumulative effects of a national and political dialogue that has engendered concern, fear, fatigue and disenfranchisement by not only current law enforcement officers and their families, but a new generation of prospective candidates as well.

The recommendations made by the Stakeholder group represent a global view to address the pressing issues of the recent past, the current situation and effecting a long-term effort with cascading benefits to all three concerns of recruitment, retention and officer wellness going forward to ensure success in providing safety and security to Maine’s citizens. In short, the Stakeholder Group advocates for a “Hire through Retire” approach to attracting, retaining and protecting the public’s greatest asset; their first responders; doing so before, during and after their service. In short; without addressing all these interconnected issues, we cannot simply and only recruit our way out of this multi-faceted crisis.

In trying to make recommendations that will have the most immediate and long-term effects and benefits, the Stakeholder Group wrestled with the often-expected pitfall of recommending overtly “spending” our way out of a crisis. In being realistic that there would be recommendations that might require a financial commitment, the Group wanted to focus on a global picture of how we can look at, assess, and review existing resources and potential partners to achieve the greater goal. Although very real issues such as pay and both active service and retirement benefits were identified as pressing matters, the Group also took into account the effects of what types of financial considerations, such as unfunded mandates, would have on the larger pressing matters facing us. Though not contained within a specific recommendation, the Stakeholder group both asks, and urges the committee, through this report, to continue the effort to address with the help of Maine’s counties and municipalities, in depth discussions on a minimum compensation standard to attract new hires as well as a standardized twenty year retirement plan for first responders to encourage retention, reduce attrition and create new opportunities that are otherwise directly affected by the recommendations made in the Stakeholders report.

As an introduction, the following recommendations have been identified and a further outlined in detail in the report;

- Creating a standing advisory resource group to continue the work of the Stakeholder Group on Law Enforcement Recruitment, Retention, and Wellness
- Create and fund a permanent law enforcement wellness coordinator at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy
- Add a field to Maine's Electronic Death Registration System noting whether a decedent had ever worked in public safety
- Create best practice guidelines for implementing wellness visits, along with a list of culturally competent professionals qualified to perform them
- Support officer wellness on Day 1 of their career by promoting the use of best practices in pre-employment selection and assessment
- Enhance the Maine Criminal Justice Academy curriculum in a way that integrates, normalizes, and standardizes best practices for officer wellness
- Mandate a one-day training for all law enforcement officers related to the career-long maintenance of psychological readiness, physical, and financial health
- Develop, and implement a consistent, standardized Maine Criminal Justice Academy resource and training program for law enforcement executives and administrators
- Support the implementation of wellness programming at the departmental level
- Support efforts to increase the number of available, culturally competent mental health providers for law enforcement
- Refine administrative processes related to caring for officers once a physical or psychological injury has occurred
- Adopt a "Hire through Retire" approach for recruiting and retaining Maine law enforcement officers up to and through retirement
- Consider novel projects and partnerships to promote officer wellbeing

We are extremely proud to present the Committee this report and hope that it signals the beginning of continued discussion and effort to assess the needs of Maine's first responders, from hire through retirement, as an investment for the State of Maine and all its citizens.

Respectfully submitted,

*Paul D. Gaspar*

Paul D. Gaspar  
Chair

*Laura Feaga*

Laura Feaga, MSN, PMHNP, BC  
Co-Chair

REPORT OF THE STAKEHOLDER GROUP TO  
IMPROVE RECRUITMENT RETENTION AND  
WELLNESS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT  
OFFICERS

PRESENTED TO THE  
JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

JANUARY 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025

PAUL GASPAR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
MAINE ASSOCIATION OF POLICE  
CHAIR

LAURA FEAGA, MSN, PMHNP  
HEALING PARTNERS PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES  
CO-CHAIR

# DEDICATION

The members of the Stakeholder Group to Improve Recruitment, Retention, and Wellness of Law Enforcement Officers would like to dedicate this report to all current and former members of Maine's law enforcement, all those who have given their lives in the line of duty, and those members we have lost to suicide. For your lifetime of service and sacrifice, we thank you.

# REPORT OF THE STAKEHOLDER GROUP TO IMPROVE RECRUITMENT RETENTION AND WELLNESS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

## AUTHORITY

In 2024 the Maine State Legislature gave the authority for this body with passage of S.P 887-L.D. 2094- **Resolve, to Require the Establishment of a Stakeholder Group to Examine and Improve the Recruitment, Retention, and Wellness of Law Enforcement Officers**  
Please see **Appendix 1** for the full text of L.D. 2094.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDER GROUP

The Group was charged with studying factors related to recruitment, retention, and wellness among Maine's Law Enforcement community, developing policy recommendations based on findings, and reporting these findings and recommendations to the legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety.

Specifically, the group was tasked with conducting;

1. An analysis of how to incentivize and encourage the recruitment of Law Enforcement Officers and how funding could be provided to address vacant law enforcement positions;
2. An analysis of how to incentivize and encourage the retention of law enforcement officers and how funding could be provided to support this goal; and
3. An analysis of how to incentivize and encourage mental and physical wellness programs for law enforcement officers and how funding could be provided to support this goal.

## STAKEHOLDER GROUP DESCRIPTION

The group is composed of people having a vested interest in Maine's law enforcement community as described in the legislation:

- The Commissioner of Public Safety or the commissioner's designee;
- An individual representing the Maine Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police;
- An individual representing the Maine Association of Police;
- An individual representing a statewide association advocating for state troopers in the State;
- An individual representing the Maine State Law Enforcement Association;
- An individual representing the Maine Criminal Justice Academy;
- An individual representing a coalition of mental health providers in the State who specialize in treating first responders as their sole practice;
- An individual representing a postsecondary educational institution in the State with programs focused on law enforcement or mental health;
- An individual representing the Maine Chiefs of Police Association;
- An individual representing the Maine Sheriffs' Association;
- A student representing a secondary school program focused on law enforcement education in the State; and
- An individual representing retired Law Enforcement Officers in the State.

## INDIVIDUAL REPRESENTATIVES AND GROUPS

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Chair- Paul Gaspar: Executive Director, Maine Association of Police

Co-Chair- Laura Feaga, PMHNP: Owner, Healing Partners Psychiatric Services; Specializes in psychiatric care of public safety

Ryan Close- Sergeant, Franklin County Sheriff's Office; Co-author of Study on Suicide in Law enforcement in Maine, Representative for the Maine Sheriff's Association

Chief Paul Fenton- Cape Elizabeth Police Department, Maine Chiefs of Police Association

Chris Cloutier- Labor Specialist, Fraternal Order of Police

Jason Mills, LCPC- Adjunct Faculty at Southern Maine Community College

Director Jack Peck- Maine Criminal Justice Academy

Karessa Anderson- Student Representative, University of Maine System

Joseph Bureau- Maine Department of Public Safety

Michael Pulire- Attorney General's Office Detective, (Ret.) Retiree Designee

Kevin Anderson- Executive Director, Maine State Law Enforcement Association

Kris Kennedy- Maine State Troopers Association

### PARTNERS WHO PROVIDED ASSISTANCE TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE:

Kate Braestrup: Chaplain, Maine Warden Service

Don Finnegan; Training Coordinator, Maine Criminal Justice Academy

Karen Harman, PsyD: Law Enforcement Psychologist

Dominic Piacentini, PhD: Research Associate, Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, University of Maine

Jamie Wren PhD, MPH: Research Associate, Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, University of Maine & Project Director, Maine Violent Death Reporting System

## MEETINGS

Barring storms and major holidays, the Group held bi-weekly in-person meetings at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy, with an option to join via Zoom for those who could only join remotely. We also held meetings during the shoulder weeks that were utilized as work sessions during which we invited speakers to share specialty knowledge, shared research, and worked on tasks. Meetings were held on:

August 6, 2024

August 20, 2024

September 3, 2024

September 13, 2024

October 1, 2024

October 4, 2024

October 15, 2024

October 24, 2024

October 29, 2024

November 5, 2024

November 12, 2024

November 21, 2024

December 17, 2024

January 14, 2024



## TASKS AND EXPECTATIONS

We divided into subgroups to evaluate the specialty areas of retirees, wellness/clinical, leadership, and suicide. The group developed partnerships with key players in the community to assist our work from the areas of law enforcement wellness, academics, survey development and interpretation, medical/biometric research and development and public policy experts.

We determined there were critical data gaps to address before we could make recommendations. With the assistance of Dr. Jamie Wren and Dr. Dominic Piacentini the Group designed a survey to gather these pieces of information. The survey was electronically distributed to all active Maine Law Enforcement members as well as to cadets at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and retirees.

The Group reviewed the study on police suicide in Maine previously conducted by Sgt. Ryan Close and Dr. Jamie Wren. The Stakeholder group then identified gaps in the data and with collaborative relationships identified sources of information that could provide a more complete picture of law enforcement suicide.

The Group was able to access data that allowed for an assessment of attrition rates of Maine Law Enforcement. The Group also conducted a literature review of nationwide trends and best practices related to law enforcement wellness, recruitment, retention from the literature. The committee invited experts to give testimony and recommendations at our meetings and incorporated this input into our findings and recommendations.

Lastly, the Group compiled the results of this work into a report for presentation to the Legislature.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the entire Stakeholder Group and its partners, the co-chairs would be remiss in not acknowledging the incredible experience, both expected and unexpected, that took place within such a short amount of time in this endeavor. It became evident after our first meeting that a committed and dedicated group of individuals from many disciplines had been brought together, all carrying with them a varied but unified passion to affect a path to a high-order approach in protecting Maine law enforcement officers and their families. Most importantly, the individual experiences and relationships brought to the table by the Group's representatives opened doors to unexpected and welcomed partnerships with other individuals and entities that allowed for this report and the creation of future efforts beyond the Group's expectations. The end result represents the best efforts undertaken in our state to address law enforcement wellness and the committed fellow Maine citizens behind them.

Through this report, we represent the tremendous service and sacrifice of Maine's law enforcement officers and their families, but also the incredible people who support their efforts. Their legacies remain entrenched between the lines of this report as a testament to what makes Maine unique and worth serving.

We would like to recognize the following individuals and entities for their support of this project and show our respect and gratitude for their support and direction;

**Commissioner Michael Sauschuck, Maine Department of Public Safety**

**The Joint Standing Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice, Maine Legislature**

**Director Jack Peck Jr, Maine Criminal Justice Academy**

**Training Coordinator Don Finnegan and Support Staff, Maine Criminal Justice Academy**

**Dr. Karen Harman, Law Enforcement Psychologist, York Maine**

**Dr. Jamie Wren, Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, University of Maine**

**Dr. Dominic Piacentini, Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center, University of Maine**

**Kate Braestrup, Chaplain, Maine Wardens Service**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report represents a first of its kind overview of Maine Law Enforcement recruitment, retention and wellness. This is the product of collaborative partnerships with individual stakeholders, academic institutions, and agencies as well as the unprecedented engagement of Maine's law enforcement community. Our results represent an evaluation of nationwide trends, research and best practices, as well as personal interviews, a "State of the State" survey with 736 respondents from all areas of law enforcement in Maine, a groundbreaking study of law enforcement suicide in Maine.

This collaborative effort allowed exciting growth in our understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing Maine's law enforcement community. Our results confirm that it is difficult to recruit new officers at a rate that offsets attrition and we are also now able to put numbers to what we suspected about a statewide retention problem. We now know we will lose approximately half of our officers to attrition before the halfway point of their career. We also evaluated wellness and suicide data and this too confirmed much of what we knew, but gave concrete, actionable data that cannot be ignored. Our officers are ready for and asking for enhanced wellness programming to support and maintain their resilience. To add some urgency for this request we have data that shows that our officers are far more likely to die by their own hand than in the line of duty in addition to being more at risk for alcoholism, depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and cardiometabolic disease.

Our work also extended into the critical and often ignored retiree population. As a result, we are now able to quantify the difficulties facing our officers financially and emotionally after they provide a lifetime of service, as well as some core structural changes that could be made to remedy the most egregious areas of harm to our retired officers. We have also made some early steps into evaluating process related issues that are worsening outcomes for officers who do develop a work-related traumatic stress injury or other mental health related issue that require entering into either the worker's compensation process and/or retirement/disability.

Based on the work of this Stakeholder Group, we present the following recommendations for the Committee's consideration

- 1) Creating a standing advisory resource group to continue the work of the Stakeholder Group on Law Enforcement Recruitment, Retention, and Wellness
- 2) Create and fund a permanent law enforcement wellness coordinator at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy
- 3) Add a field to Maine's Electronic Death Registration System noting whether a decedent had ever worked in public safety
- 4) Create best practice guidelines for implementing wellness visits, along with a list of culturally competent professionals qualified to perform them
- 5) Support officer wellness on Day 1 of their career by promoting the use of best practices in pre-employment selection and assessment
- 6) Enhance the Maine Criminal Justice Academy curriculum in a way that integrates, normalizes, and standardizes best practices for officer wellness
- 7) Mandate a one-day training for all law enforcement officers related to the career-long maintenance of psychological readiness, physical, and financial health
- 8) Develop, and implement a consistent, standardized Maine Criminal Justice Academy resource and training program for law enforcement executives and administrators
- 9) Support the implementation of wellness programming at the departmental level
- 10) Support efforts to increase the number of available, culturally competent mental health providers for law enforcement
- 11) Refine administrative processes related to caring for officers once a physical or psychological injury has occurred
- 12) Adopt a "Hire through Retire" approach for recruiting and retaining Maine law enforcement officers up to and through retirement
- 13) Consider novel projects and partnerships to promote officer wellbeing

Full supporting prose for the Group's recommendation begin on page 31

# INTRODUCTION

Maine is at a critical crossroads in the effective delivery and provision of the service and protection of Maine's citizens and its communities. There are serious and necessary considerations that must be made to prevent an impending regression to bare-bones functions providing the basic protections for life and property. The Stakeholder Group on Law Enforcement Recruitment, Retention, and Wellness (referred to hereafter as "Group") is the first of its kind in Maine and brought together law enforcement executives, medical practitioners, law enforcement labor representatives, and the experience of our retired law enforcement community. Bringing together this multi-disciplinary group was an opportunity to view the security, health and welfare of Maine's law enforcement officers and their families, taking a "Hire Through Retire" approach and giving important consideration and voice to a very much overlooked demographic, the men and women who serve on the front lines to keep our state safe.

In the course of this Group's work, we were provided extraordinary opportunities to engage with other efforts underway to address the health and safety of Maine's law enforcement. These partnerships increased our scope of understanding and allowed us to make more informed recommendations.

Although we made good faith efforts to find parallel approaches to all Maine First Responder and Public Safety Groups, our limited time directed and necessitated a focus on law enforcement, however, we are extremely confident that this Group's work will serve as a blueprint for our fellow Maine first responder groups in the Fire, Emergency Medical Services, Dispatch, and Corrections Services.

The group recognized that there can be no singular "silver bullet" to the issues we were tasked with studying. We wrestled with attempting to look myopically at each critical issue to provide recommendations in each specific topic area. To do so would have potentially created a narrow view that resulted in the very real pitfall of "spending" our way out of a crisis. The stakeholder group, although realistic that there would be recommendations that might require a financial commitment, wanted to focus on a global picture of how we can look at, assess, and review existing resources and potential partners to achieve the greater goal. Although the Group considered the very real factors such as pay and both active service and retirement benefits, the Group was tempered by the knowledge and effects of what types of financial considerations, such as unfunded mandates, would have on the larger pressing matters facing Maine law enforcement. We strived to form recommendations and find opportunities that bring forward the most promising and hopeful practices. All while ensuring that Maine Law Enforcement has the highest standards of service and safety and that those who have served and those currently on the front line are the best prepared, best equipped, and above all, best cared for in terms of their physical safety and emotional wellbeing.

This report and its recommendations are considered to be an imperative base standard for both officers and their families, from their hiring and through the path into and following retirement.

For the support of this effort by the previous and current members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, the Group extends our grateful and eternal appreciation for your support of these findings and look forward to its continued support and efforts in this endeavor.

## CRITICAL ISSUES FACING MAINE LAW ENFORCEMENT

It is important to acknowledge that our report and findings deviate from our task slightly and to clarify reasons why. We cannot treat our findings and recommendations to address recruitment, retention, and wellness as single, siloed goals. The three issues are too closely linked. National trends and research, as well as our own survey findings, indicate that key issues related to retention and recruitment are linked to an emerging desire among law enforcement for “higher order needs” career focus. Higher-order needs are things related to department culture that focus on excellence, providing opportunities for advancement, cohesive group culture, and a sense of support and belonging. Our survey results indicate that Law Enforcement culture and leadership styles in Maine are still focused largely on “lower order needs,” which are the basic needs required to simply survive a shift. A focus on lower-order needs is expected to have restrictive impacts on the recruitment, retention, and wellness of officers. Higher-order issues such as moral injury, resilience, financial health, organizational support, opportunities for advancement and training, schedules, and pay are all heavily represented in our survey responses as factors relating to job satisfaction, wellness, and attrition (Orrick, n.d.)

Higher order needs also include preparing officers for an emotionally, physically and financially healthy transition to retirement. This also is represented in our survey results. Surviving a shift is no longer the only goal- officers and recruits want a reasonable chance of thriving throughout a rewarding career, with adequate pay and benefits, strong leadership support, opportunities to advance, and a system in place to compensate them fairly for a life of service and sacrifice when they retire. The average lifespan of a police officer in this country is 66 years, vs 78 years for civilians. This means an officer lives, on average only 6 years post-retirement (Violanti et al., 2013).

Wellness programming is an evidence-based way to meet these higher order needs and is also now being presented nationwide as a liability reduction strategy as well as a recruitment strategy. Sleep deprivation alone has clear and decisive links to automobile accidents, use of force incidents behavioral changes, and decrease in problem solving. Nationwide analysis of the Early Warning Signs (EWS) that precede disciplinary action or use of force incidents reveals that many warning signs are present in these officers long before their incidents occur. Many of the EWS are early physical and emotional changes associated with chronic unmanaged stress response or with PTSD. When we care for our officers well, they not only perform better, but they maintain commitment to their profession, their physical and emotional ability to continue to perform the job, and they encourage others to join policing. Healthy officers have more positive encounters with the people they serve and protect and are less likely to be involved in disciplinary actions (Dwyer, 2024).

### *RECRUITMENT- RETENTION*

Nationwide it is noted that “traditional and almost all current means of recruitment do not work. Fewer than three applicants out of every hundred are hired. This suggests that interest in policing exists but attracting the right people (who are actually qualified) and removing obstacles in the hiring process may be the key to success.” (Harrison, 2023).

Maine itself has not been immune from this national trend. As of December 31, 2023 the Maine Criminal Justice Academy reported that there were 320 vacant law enforcement positions throughout the state in all government segments. With a total number on average of approximately 2,590 full time certified For Maine law enforcement officers, this presents a critical shortage.

(NOTE: This is the most current information as the Maine Criminal Justice Academy is still compiling these numbers for 2024).

This lack of interested and viable candidates strains not only the ongoing shortage faced by departments, but represents a negative, exponential, long-term effect on the existing and currently serving officers throughout the state.

We have not begun to see the long-term effects of this strain on current staffing shortages, but it is clear, that in the short term, there are strong and compelling impacts based in the experiences of Maine law enforcement agencies across the board at their local levels.

In the short-term, we are seeing an ever-increasing number of impacts affecting our officers, including but not limited to;

Elevated stress and anxiety due to increased mandatory and irregular work hours.

- Adverse physical health outcomes such as high blood pressure, digestive issues, fatigue, irritability, lack of focus, “brain fog”, decrease in work drive, etc.
- Adverse effect on emotional health transferred to family, friends and coworkers resulting in personal stress and anxiety in all facets of an officer’s life.
- The demoralizing effects of excessive media attention on negative events involving law enforcement.
- Individual officer re-assessment of service commitment prior to financial dependence and/or (in)vestment in retirement plan, etc.
- “Punching Out”, or “Emergency Eject” Syndrome; officers either re-assessing their short-term career span, or those with a defined retirement date are increasingly electing to leave the profession, regardless of other considerations or out of service pride in committing to stay beyond their retirement date. This, coupled with the recent and continuing negative view of Maine law enforcement by certain political activists and their connected legislative/administrative platforms, the prospect of staying past an individual officer’s actual retirement date, creates a secondary effect in retaining qualified, highly trained and representative of a long term, significantly financial investment by their employer.
- This growing trend of Punching Out has now begun to create an imbalance in which even a concerted effort to recruit would be hampered by the growing number of vacancies created by those resigning or retiring, regardless of any financial inducement to remain. In creating a retention issue, it is difficult at best to stem the gaps created by attrition of currently serving officers.

The urgency of addressing recruitment challenges is clear. Effective strategies exist but are not as clear cut and involve more of a global, long term, higher order needs approach. Wellness programming has been determined to be one factor that improves recruitment and attracts strong quality candidates. The Bureau of Justice Assistance and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) produced a 2023 study and report on nationwide law enforcement recruitment and retention issues with several recommendations for best practices recruitment strategies that are in line with the findings of our survey and interviews. The following recommendations are excerpts from the nationwide study that provide best practice guidelines pertinent to Maine that could be models for our own program development:

- Develop public campaigns that highlight the service-oriented nature of policing and foster a sense of community.
- Introduce youth, beginning as early as elementary school, to law enforcement and public safety as a career and build key foundation skills through Cadet and Explorer programs.
- Consider working with local high schools to identify and develop opportunities for immersive and ad hoc experiences designed both to attract new candidates and to continue developing youth who have expressed interest in the law enforcement professional
- Evaluate current retirement options, with a potential shift away from traditional pension plans toward portable investments.
- Consider additional incentives that are attractive to the modern workforce, including increased paid time off, expanded health care options (including options specifically for retirees), and updated technology and equipment.”

The recommendations relating to expansion of community policing to develop more generational interest in law enforcement are particularly appealing. Ongoing partnerships with educational facilities and other community groups such as Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and the Cadet and Explorer programs would build on the strengths that we have identified in our committee’s work. Other options currently being used in Maine include DARE and School Resource Officers. Partnerships and collaboration have been consistently associated with positive outcomes of initiatives and garner more community support. Additionally, developing a youth program will accomplish goals of culture change and promote the desirable higher order work force characteristics.

We also strongly endorse further work to evaluate changes in the retirement structure that would not only benefit retirees but is also expected to enhance recruitment success. Today’s recruits are considering the long-term implications of joining law enforcement, including retirement. The Department of Justice’s findings demonstrate that improving retirements benefits enhance recruitment. This highlights the positive impact of not only the “hire through retire approach” but also the positive impact that a focus on “higher order” needs has on all levels of recruitment, retention, and wellness.



## *ATTRITION:*

Anecdotally, the rates of police officers leaving law enforcement before they reach retirement are well known. The Group was able to quantify the rates of attrition for our officers at different points throughout their careers, and this clarified the depth of the problem. We were not able to quantify a dollar amount that would capture fiscal impacts of this loss, but our data shows that any kind of recruitment-only solution to the attrition problem would be futile as well as financially irresponsible.

### **Data from the Maine Criminal Justice Academy**

The committee reviewed Maine Criminal Justice Academy data for all graduating Basic Law Enforcement Training Program (BLETP) classes since its inception in 2001. Approximately 100 to 125 Cadets graduate annually with their “Blue Pins” making them a State Certified Law Enforcement Officer.

The Group reviewed data from the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and found significant rates of attritions, which increased drastically for every five years spent in law enforcement.

- 1 to 5 years post-graduation had an attrition rate of **~5 to 15%**
- 6 to 10 years post-graduation had an attrition rate of **~23% to 30%**
- 11 to 15 years post-graduation had an attrition rate of **~34 to 42%**

In other words, within 15 years of starting their law enforcement career, which is well before retirement age and eligibility, over one-third of officers are leaving the field. Data from our State of the State Survey (below), show that two-thirds of respondents have considered leaving the profession at some point in their career. (See Figure 5)

We have not been able to quantify the average financial investment required to train and retain an officer through each of the career points at which we could identify attrition rates. However, the fiscal costs of hiring and training each Law Enforcement Officer is significant and includes but is not limited to physical examination, psychological examination, polygraph examination, background examination, sponsoring the Officer to go through the Maine Criminal Justice Academy, Field Training Officer costs, and other costs associated with training.

While increasing recruitment is a worthy goal and necessary to pursue, we cannot support ineffective attempts at increasing recruitment as a way to address attrition losses. This is simply not fiscally responsible or sustainable. Rather, studying and remedying the issues contributing to high attrition in Maine Law Enforcement would likely produce more fiscal savings. Reasons for staying or leaving the profession are discussed in **Appendix 2- Maine Law Enforcement Recruitment, Retention, and Wellness Survey: Narrative Survey Analysis**

## *SUICIDE AMONG LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS:*

In 2022, existing data from the Maine Violent Death Reporting System was used to conduct a first of its kind study into factors related to suicide among Maine law enforcement. Results indicated that Maine law enforcement and correctional officers were more likely to die by *suicide* than in the *line of duty*.

The following is an excerpt from Dr. Wren's report:

*“Between 2015 and 2022, 1,992 Mainers died by suicide within the State of Maine. Of these decedents, 26 were current or former members of Maine law enforcement or corrections. Twenty-one decedents were state, local or federal law enforcement, while four were correctional officers... The twenty-six members of law enforcement and corrections that died by suicide ... were significantly more likely to be over the age of 65, have ever served in the military, be experiencing a contributing physical health problem, and related crisis, but were less likely to be diagnosed with a mental health condition when compared to the general population of those who died by suicide.”*

As mentioned in Dr. Wren's full report, these twenty-six suicide deaths are an undercount of the true extent of suicide among Maine's law enforcement and correctional officers and do not account for Maine officers who died outside of Maine or were not identified as current or former law enforcement or corrections officer on their death certificate. Dr. Wren's full report is included as **Appendix 3**

Suicide is a “tip of the iceberg” symptom, connected to all issues related to recruitment, retention, and wellness that we are attempting to remedy. The recommendations of the Group are all intended to address structural and systemic factors that would support suicide prevention efforts. These recommendations are discussed in greater detail later in this report. Recommendations that increase the overall psychological readiness and wellness of our officers and help develop a higher order needs focus among leadership could decrease suicide rates over time. These changes optimize internal strengths of the officers as well as create external structural changes that are intended to minimize the cumulative effect of major triggers for officer suicide.

## FACTORS IMPACTING THE WELLNESS OF OUR POLICE FORCE

Individuals who choose law enforcement as a career are often high-performing, highly skilled individuals driven to the service and protection of others (Wells, 2016). They have developed a set of skills and a mindset that allows them to effectively operate in highly stressful and unconventional environments. Arguably, they come into this line of work in good physical and psychological health. Our survey results indicate that our police force is largely in this line of work for ideological reasons and is committed to serving their communities and the noble mission of the brotherhood of law enforcement.

The day-to-day of law enforcement is inherently unpredictable, involving the ever-present threat of death, violence, and exposure to life's most disturbing and unthinkable circumstances. The skills needed to do this job safely and effectively often do not translate well to life outside of work, and the cumulative exposure to these experiences can erode officers' sense of trust, hope, and safety in the world. These are some of the reasons that law enforcement officers are at a greater risk of adverse psychological, social, and behavioral health issues.

Law enforcement officers are also at much higher risk of physical issues including early death, chronic and acute illness and work-related injury than the general public (Jacobson, 2021). Law enforcement officers work in environments that require and exacerbate chronically elevated levels of stress chemicals such as cortisol and norepinephrine. These chemicals are meant to be mobilized for short bursts of time to help us fight or run from an acute threat. They have many negative impacts on health when they persist for long periods of time in the body. We know the risk of early death, suicide, cardiovascular disease, substance use, metabolic abnormalities such as diabetes and obesity, endocrine disorders such as testosterone and thyroid pathologies are all linked to working in law enforcement (Violanti, et al., 2006). Law enforcement officers frequently work changing shifts, and shift work itself has been identified by the World Health Organization as a carcinogen with enormous impacts on overall health (Kelly, 2023). Chronic job-related stress has significant physical and mental health consequences, including heart disease, depression, and a 36% higher suicide rate compared to the general population. Officers also face heightened risks of compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress. Frequent exposure to trauma negatively affects decision-making, emotional regulation, and interactions with the community. Unresolved mental health issues can lead to errors in judgment, aggression, and burnout, impacting both officers and public safety. Chronic understaffing and increased crime rates since 2020 have exacerbated stress levels, creating a perpetual cycle of overburdened officers leaving the profession and further straining remaining Staff (Craddock and Telesco, 2022).

Unfortunately, the barrier to mental health resources is considerable in the law enforcement community. Things like stigma, fear of reprisal and lack of adequate mental health resources contribute to this barrier. For these reasons, we need to make it as easy as possible for law enforcement officers to have access to adequate mental health support.

The concept of Psychological Readiness stems from athletic and military models of operational readiness. It refers to one's mental and emotional preparedness to meet the demands of their mission. Different from the traditional medical model of mental health, Psychological Readiness refers to "keeping them in the game" and focuses on prevention and early identification of problems in those who work in high-risk occupations. It includes factors like an individual's level of motivation, mental and physical health status, and current demands and stressors. Psychological Readiness assumes the belief that law enforcement officers are healthy and they can maintain their healthy lifestyle without compromising their safety or tactical performance. Through education, training, consultation, stigma reduction measures, awareness, and ease of accessibility, psychological readiness can minimize risk for psychological injury and harm, promote a faster recovery period, and overall, create a more effective and healthier police force (Martinez, 2020).

Wellness is inherently linked to recruitment and retention- a police force that is healthy, resilient, and feels cared for and valued will have lower attrition and better recruitment success (Dwyer, 2024). Healthy officers demonstrate improved performance, have reduced career incidents, communicate more thoughtfully and effectively with the public, and are more devoted to their careers in a sustainable way that lessens attrition, burnout, and incident (Dwyer, 2024). The following committee recommendations are made in the spirit of enhancing and maintaining the psychological, physical and financial readiness of our police force from day one of employment throughout their retirement, which will theoretically positively impact recruitment and retention.

# THE “STATE OF THE STATE” SURVEY

To address the knowledge gaps in the areas of recruitment, retention, and wellness that limited this Group’s ability to carry out its charge, the Group created a survey instrument. The survey was sent electronically to all active-duty Law Enforcement, retirees, and Academy Cadets in Maine. To accurately capture the individual concerns of special demographics, individual surveys were tailored to each demographic rather than trying to assess the needs of chiefs, cadets and retirees in the same question set. The survey investigated many areas including job satisfaction, retention and recruitment issues, retirement factors, and wellness topics. In our opinion, the survey was a resounding success, achieving 736 responses in only 30 days.

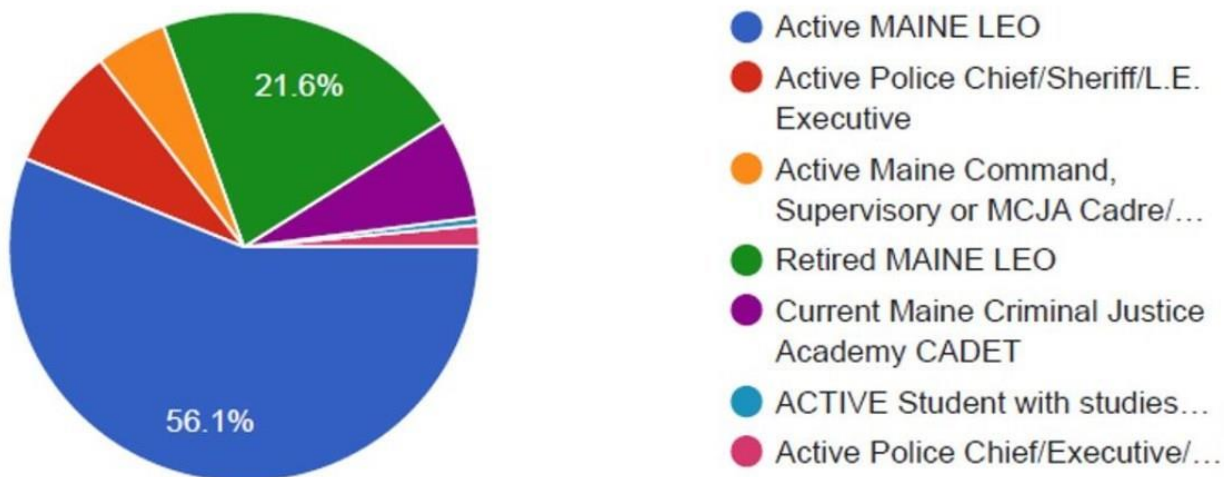
The committee established a collaborative partnership with Drs. Jamie Wren and Dominic Piacentini of the Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center at the University of Maine, who assisted with survey design and analysis. Qualitative and quantitative results of the survey are revealing. Below are excerpts from Dr. Piacentini’s analysis of the survey data.

(NOTE: Tables and Figures are numbered differently in the report body than in Dr. Piacentini’s report for clarity and continuity)

## Survey Demographics

Of the 736 respondents, the majority were active Maine law enforcement officers, followed by retired Maine law enforcement officers and active police chiefs, sheriffs, or law enforcement executives. This demographic breakdown, along with the other smaller respondent cohorts, is included in Figure 1, below.

**Figure 1 Survey Respondent Positions**



## Law Enforcement Officer Satisfaction

Law enforcement officers were asked to rank their overall job satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 10 being very satisfied. The overall average response was **6.8 out of 10**, indicating that the overall population was somewhat satisfied with their job. Some of those who were very satisfied were enthusiastic about their job, saying in comments:

“I love the job and wouldn’t want to do anything else” or

“I am very satisfied with my career choice in law enforcement.”

However, many couched their general satisfaction among other issues and concerns:

“Very satisfied with my work and agency. *just not our pay*”;

“Love the job. *hate the city political climate And lack of support*”;

“Love the work *hate the lack of support from the court system and legislation.*”

Several respondents expressed that they have experienced an overall decrease in job satisfaction and/or that the job itself has changed for the worse:

“The job used to be very different and a lot more enjoyable”;

“Overall satisfaction and enjoyment of the Job has decreased over the years consistently”;

“Dramatic decrease in job satisfaction after year 20.”

Among those who expressed some degree of dissatisfaction with their work, a handful of common themes emerged: (1) inadequate pay or benefits, (2) lack of support or follow-through from courts and local governments, (3) lack of support or awareness from their own department or agency, and (4) scheduling and workload burdens from being understaffed. These four themes and examples of each are summarized in Table 1, below.

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**Table 1 Job Dissatisfaction**

Major theme	Subthemes and topics	Example comments
Inadequate pay or benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient pay considering the nature of the work and risk</li> <li>• Lack of retirement insurance</li> <li>• Inconsistent benefits across agencies</li> </ul>	<p>“The only time I thought about leaving law enforcement was for more pay.”</p> <p>“HIGH STRESS. SACRIFICE. NO INSURANCE UPON RETIREMENT.”</p> <p>“Great career. high risk at times could have better consistency in benefits across agencies.”</p>
Lack of support or follow-through from courts and governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of effective prosecution</li> <li>• Unsupportive legislation</li> </ul>	<p>“Lack of accountability for prosecutors makes it seem like our job is not worth it.”</p> <p>“The lack of support and holding people accountable for their actions be it from our DA’s not prosecuting or the legislature changing laws to make crimes no longer crimes it makes what we do harder and lets more people get away with more things.”</p>
Lack of support or awareness from their own department or agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administration not listening to LEOs</li> <li>• Administration not trusting LEOs</li> <li>• Disconnect between management and patrol</li> <li>• Issues of agency leadership</li> </ul>	<p>“Pay and retirement could be better. Agency does not listen to the LEOs doing the work.”</p> <p>“Current Sentiment of Public/Our Own Administrators and Agency seems to mistrust us.”</p> <p>“serious disconnect between admin and field”</p> <p>“Lack of leadership. no encouragement from LT.”</p>
Scheduling and workload burdens of being understaffed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate staffing</li> <li>• Retention efforts</li> </ul>	<p>“Agency is involved in too many activities without adequate staffing. [...] Officers having to cover large areas with essentially no support.”</p> <p>“Departments need to promote from within as opposed to promoting from the outside...this will increase retention.”</p>

Additionally, many respondents felt that law enforcement officers were being asked to do too much, which contributed to their dissatisfaction. This sentiment was underscored by the following comment which pulls together several of the above themes as well:

*“This job has changed so much over the years. LE is being asked to do more. with less resources. Be a social worker. Be a parent. Be a teacher within the schools. Be a drug rehabilitation expert. Be more “present” in the community. Oh, and you have to do the jobs of the probation officers and court officials as well. We are tasked with MORE and have less manpower. This leads to burnout and an unappealing image of the job. This is all expected under administrations that are out of touch with reality and/or don’t care about their employees”*



## Changes to improve LEO job satisfaction

Survey respondents were then asked to comment upon what kinds of changes might improve their job satisfaction. Several common recommendations emerged from their responses: (1) pay changes and improvements, (2) benefits changes and improvements, (3) increased support from local government, and (4) changes and improvements to retirement planning. These four themes and examples of each are summarized in Table 2, below.

**Table 2: Changes to improve job satisfaction**

<b>Major theme</b>	<b>Subtheme and topics</b>	<b>Example comments</b>
Pay changes and improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay is incommensurate with expectations of the job</li> <li>• Pay is inconsistent across jurisdictions</li> </ul>	<p>“Pay is substantially low for the amount of work being done. In no way is the average pay rate for a police officer enough to live comfortably. Most officers have to work overtime to compensate, which burns them out.”</p> <p>“Pay increase to keep pace with other agencies.”</p>
Benefits changes and improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retirement insurance</li> <li>• Improved health insurance coverage, generally</li> <li>• Coverage for spouses, before and after retirement</li> </ul>	<p>“Health insurance after retirement would hugely help.”</p> <p>“Better pay and insurance will always be a factor.”</p> <p>“My wife of 33 years should be included in our retirement insurance. She survived this career as well.”</p>
Increased support from municipal, county, and state agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated support from courts and prosecutors</li> <li>• Change in public perception of law enforcement</li> <li>• Legislative support and awareness of law enforcement work</li> </ul>	<p>“More support from the courts, prosecutors. Cases are always plead out [sic]. Dealing with the same people over and over and they just get released.”</p> <p>“People hat [sic] cops because of us being used as political pawns.”</p> <p>“The problem is that laws and policies are created from people that have no idea what we do. The criminal justice system as a whole is collapsing on itself.”</p>
Changes to retirement planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modify the retirement system</li> </ul>	<p>“Modify the retirement system into a three tiers system 15/20/25 years system for officers who are looking to retire early from burned out.”</p>

Perhaps the most uniform recommendation among the responses to this question were numerous comments advocating for a 20-year retirement system statewide seen in the two following comments among others:

*“Today’s LEO’s must be on a 20- year retirement. 25 years is too long and mentally/emotionally destructive”;*

*“Facing the lack of public support, the insufficient pay for the job that we do, the horrible schedules that affect us physically and mentally makes a 25 -year retirement seem like it will be the biggest uphill battle and unattainable for many.”*

Another common theme among these responses was recommended changes to trainings and the culture of the police academy; however, these responses were greatly mixed and somewhat contentious. Some respondents believed that increased flexibility, more training in empathy, less hazing, and increased mental health training and support from the onset would improve their overall job satisfaction. One commenter said that the academy should strive for a more “college atmosphere.” Contrastingly, other respondents believed that the academy should return to a “stress academy” so that law enforcement officers are better prepared for real-life stressors of the job. Many of those that fell into this camp suggested that it is safer for everyone if cadets are first exposed to controlled stress at the academy before encountering stress on the job.

### **Stress from work and its impact on life and family outside of work**

Overwhelmingly, survey respondents identified their *schedules as the greatest source of stress from their work*, including the long hours, the unpredictable hours and being on call, and overtime, the latter of which was often framed as not an option due to the cost of living being out of pace with standard pay. A vast majority of respondents reported that their job caused problems with their personal life. The percent of respondents saying stress from their job impacted their personal life is shown in Figure 2.

The impacts of stress from work on life and family outside of work were widespread. The majority of respondents who provided additional comment said that *they are often unavailable to their families*:

“I’ve missed countless events, holidays, birthdays due to this job. I’ve been ‘called in’ on my own birthday and over events”;

“Schedule not the same as family, missing birthdays, holidays, special occasions, school events or trying to do stuff outside the job with friends or family”;

“I’ve missed my children growing up. Their sports, vacations, holidays.”

Eleven respondents even cited stress from work as the cause of their divorce.

Two other equally common themes were *increased irritability* and *withdrawal from social and public spaces*. Many respondents said that stress from work caused them to be short or angry with their family:

“Stress from work gets brought home and sometimes there is a short temper”;

“Makes me short with family”;

“I’m crankier easier, small things have started to bother me. I’m throwing stuff when I’m getting angry, and I’ve got a short fuse now.”

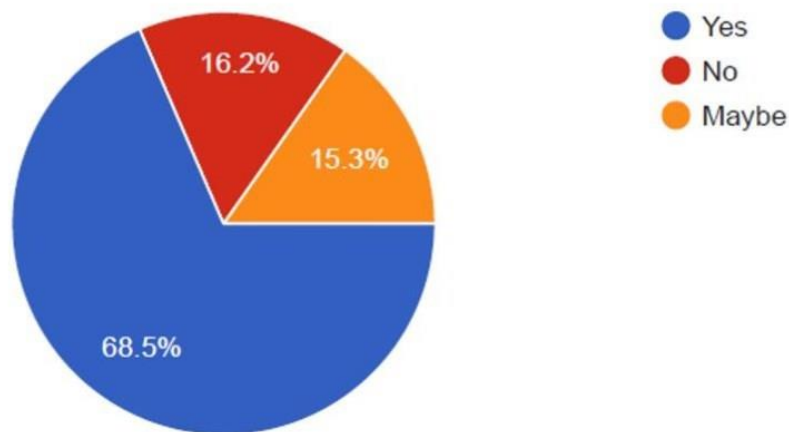
Other respondents said they would simply rather not be around people or socialize due to stress from work:

“Less likely to venture out to public places and engage in unknown settings”;

“I withdraw from people on my days off”;

“The frustration of the job and the drama of the department makes me not want to interact with anyone on my days off.”

**Figure 2: Has stress from your work as a law enforcement officer had a negative impact on your life/family outside of work?**



Another negative impact from stress that was discussed in comments was *tiredness, exhaustion, and loss of sleep*:

“At the end of the work day, I tend to be exhausted”;

“Currently struggling with insomnia and stress”;

“The biggest impact is lack of sleep. That just builds up over your work week and makes you not want to do physical activities on your day off.”

Lastly a smaller group of respondents said that they had received *mental health diagnoses (including PTSI/PTSD, depression, and anxiety) due to stress from their work* and said that they had *increased their alcohol use due to work*.

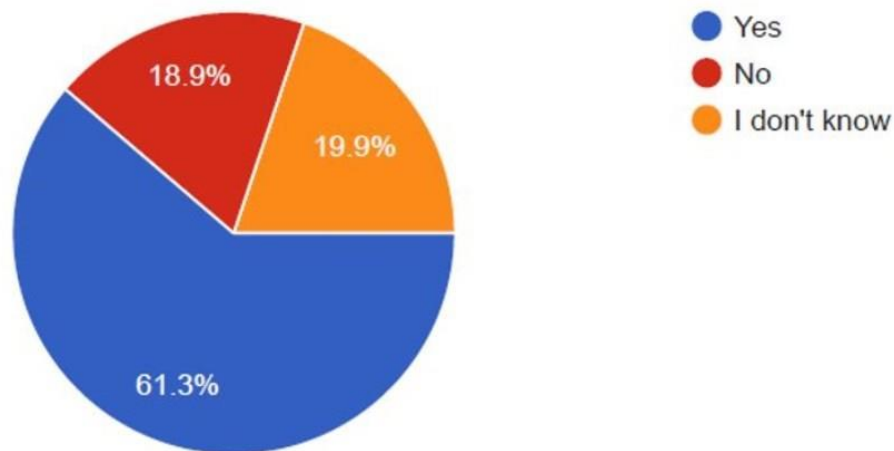
### Access to mental health treatment

When asked to provide comment on whether or not their employer-provided access to mental health professionals, most clarified that their *access is limited to either health insurance coverage or referrals to EAP*. A few respondents said that they were provided with *annual or semi-annual mental health or wellness checks*; however, these were often viewed as being inadequate:

“We are mandated to have a ‘wellness check’ once per year. The option for a second visit. I don’t believe only two times annually would qualify as a benefit”;

“It’s limited to only a handful of sessions each year, which is totally inadequate.”

**Figure 3 Does your employer provide access to mental health professionals as a benefit of employment?**



### Support from agency/department while experiencing PTSTI or another crisis/hardship

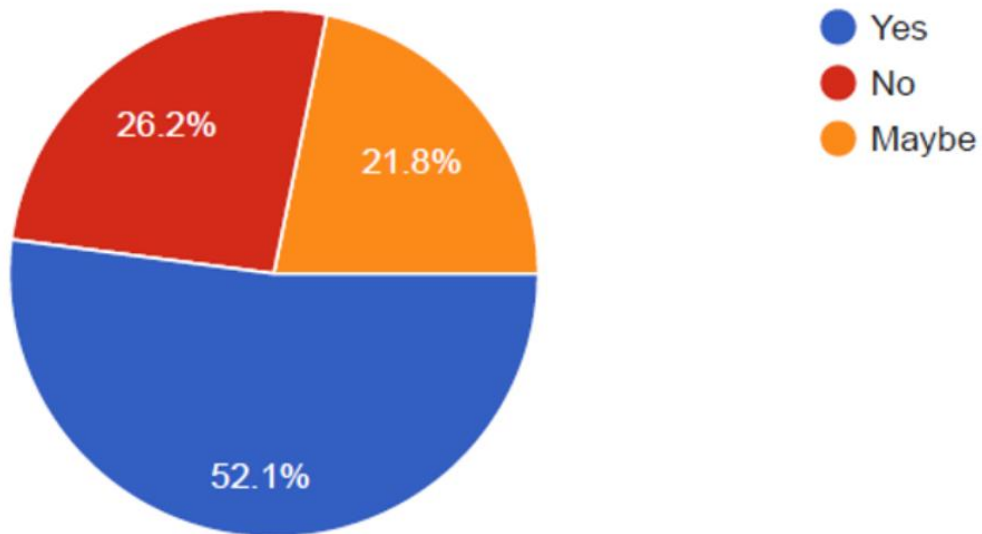
When asked if, in the current environment of their agency, they were experiencing a hardship, crisis or PTSTI, would they have the full support of their agency or employer, most respondents (n=215) affirmed that they would. 108 respondents said they would not have the support of the agency, and 90 respondents said they would maybe have the support of their agency (Figure 5). Among those who provided additional comment, it was frequently noted that *officers felt they would have the support of their immediate supervisors but not administration or management*:

“My supervisors yes, administration no”;

“From my mediate supervisors, Yes I feel supported. I don’t trust Central office administration”;

“My agency, yes. The state HR system, no.”

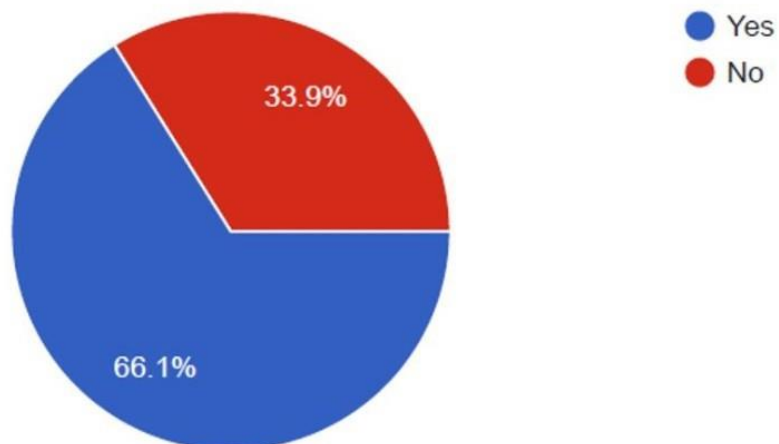
**Figure 4. In the current environment of your agency, do you feel that if you were experiencing a hardship, crisis, or PTSI, you would have the full understanding of your agency or employer?**



**Factors influencing LEOs decision to stay in or leave the career**

Survey respondents were asked if at any point they had considered leaving their career in law enforcement. Two-thirds of respondents (273 out of 413) confirmed that they had considered leaving their career (Figure 5)

**Figure 5: Have you considered leaving your career in law enforcement?**



Respondents were then asked to describe the factors impacting their decision to stay or leave. Of the factors impacting their decision to stay, *the most significant influence was LEOs' proximity to retirement*:

“The only reason I am staying is to reach my 20 pension”;

“I only have 1 year and a half before im eligible to retire and I likely will get done”;

“Too close to retirement.”

Interestingly, there were both positive and negative factors influencing LEOs decision to stay in their career. Positive factors influencing LEOs decision to stay included *enjoyment of the work and/or feeling a sense of purpose in the work* (Table 3); however, these factors were mentioned far less frequently than proximity to retirement.

**Table 3: Positive factors influencing LEOs decisions to stay**

<b>Enjoy the work</b>	<b>Feeling a sense of purpose from the work</b>
“I enjoy the job too much to leave.”	“I stay because law enforcement does give me some sense of purpose.”
“Still enjoy investigating crimes.”	“It took me YEARS in order to get into my dream job. I love my job and feel it is the calling god put on my heart.”
“I enjoy what I do and my family supports me.”	“The job is still rewarding to help my community.”

Several LEOs reported that their *perceived lack of skills* beyond law enforcement work influenced their decision to stay: “I am staying for the retirement. I also have few other marketable skills”; “Length of employment and lack of transferable skills/experience”; “stayed because i didn’t know what else I could do.”

Notably, among those who described factors that influenced their decision to stay, many used language to describe *feeling “trapped” by the job* (Table 4).

**Table 4: Feelings of being “trapped” by the job**

“ <i>Imprisoned</i> by investment of time in this job and loss of retirement benefits if I leave but I still look for jobs every day.”
“My decision to stay is because <i>I feel trapped</i> by the mediocre pay, benefits, and retirement.”
“Need money and benefits. skills aren’t transferable. <i>Tied to a pension</i> . Organizational Stress is a big concern and source of stress.”
“I need my retirement so <i>I cannot leave</i> .”

When LEOs described influences to leave, responses were much more spread and diverse, but some common themes included *feeling unsupported or unappreciated by the public and the legislature* (n=30), *stress* (n=28), and their *work schedule* (n=21).

Lastly, some factors could be positive or negative influences on LEOs’ decision to stay in or leave their career, notably *pay*, *leadership*, and *work environment*. For respondents, the quality of these factors could make or break their decision to stay, seen in the following quote and in Table 5: “Leaving because of the former Chief and low pay. Staying because of the new Chief and the substantial increase in pay.”

**Table 5: Factors that can be a reason to leave or to stay**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>To leave</b>	<b>To stay</b>
Pay	“Not enough pay for workload”	“I stay for the pay I make.”
Leadership	“Poor leadership, poor Communication and poor management. Has been a factor.”	“My current supportive administration is the only reason I am still in law enforcement.”
Work environment	“Wanting a better quality of life away from a toxic environment.”	“Good work environment in-house, but that could change quickly.”

## **Retirees**

The Maine Law Enforcement retiree community can be analyzed by their primary demographics based on timing of service and retirement. The first group can be generalized as those who began their careers in their twenties and retire in their forties after twenty to twenty-five years of service. The second group are officers who either started their careers late or who stayed in longer and who retire at age sixty-five or older. There is another group composed of officers who regardless of when they retired who are now over age sixty-five. Age of retirement has significant impact on health care needs, pension/retirement benefits and quality of life issues.

The first group appears to transition to private sector or a second government employment with an expectation of years of earning capacity. The second group has diminished earning capacity within the Law Enforcement profession simply based on age. This group is most exposed to fiscal sensitivities, is living primarily on fixed incomes in many cases based on decades old retirement benefit calculations and experience the residual physical/mental health impacts of their prior years of Law Enforcement service.

Retired Law Enforcement offered a robust twenty-one percent of our total survey responses. They presented many career-related issues across domains of physical, emotional and financial health. The suicide study shows that most of those completing suicide were of retirement age. Financial difficulties, health issues, and loneliness or loss of purpose are contributing factors to depression and suicide. Retirees don’t just leave the day-to-day routine when they sign off for the last time. They also are separating from their purpose, their brotherhood, their very identity in many cases has been tied to being a Law Enforcement Officer. The job takes a toll on physical

and emotional health. Many find themselves when they have retired not in a financially stable spot and struggling to make ends meet which further worsens any depression.

Of all survey respondents, only 16.4% reported that their retirement benefits sustain them financially. We know that Cost of Living Increases (COLAs) are an important issue to retirees and these bear further study to ensure that increases are adequate to sustain retirees.

- Of survey respondents, 86% report getting a COLA on their retirement benefits.
- Of those receiving a COLA nearly 60% report that they are restricted to a certain dollar amount.
- Almost 70% of respondent retirees report a need to work. Of those, 44% work full time and 31% work part time.
- 91 % of respondent received no training assistance for post-retirement private sector employment and only half of retirees report feeling they could use skills from their Law Enforcement Careers to transition to post retirement private sector employment.

Health care costs are particularly burdensome for retirees. We know that retirement is a time when the cumulative health effects of the career manifest with enhanced care needs. The average Law Enforcement Officer only lives 6 years post-retirement. Our survey results indicate that retirement benefits are not perceived as adequately addressing retiree's health care coverage costs.

- Nearly 30% of respondents receive no or very small contributions to post-retirement health insurance. 70% of respondents do not receive cost coverage of Medicare premiums in their retirement benefits.
- Only about 30% of retirees over age 65 receive a Medicare Supplement (Part C) Plan in their benefits package.

Quality of life issues for retirees include loneliness, loss of purpose, financial and health challenges and increased suicide risk. Our survey respondents report not having adequate access to mental health, peer support or family support resources in retirement.

- Less than 50% of respondents are provided with free First Responder mental health services post-retirement.
- 87% said they would consider using such services if available.
- Almost 60% of respondents said they received no support from their employing agency for career related PTSD while on the job or into retirement.

These findings are concerning and perhaps explain why less than half of retiree respondents would recommend a career in Maine Law Enforcement.



Dr. Piacentini's full analysis of the survey is attached to this report as **Appendix 2**. The full list of survey questions is attached to this report as **Appendix 4**.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This stakeholder group was given a very short time to complete a large body of work. Although we accomplished an enormous amount, the short time we had together constrained our ability to formulate detailed policy recommendations. Below, we offer solid preliminary suggestions based on our work and the survey responses, but they require further study before implementation. Based on the results of the State of the State survey, and review of data from the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and the Maine Violent Death Reporting System, the Group generated the below recommendations for the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety's consideration.

### 1. CREATE A STANDING ADVISORY RESOURCE GROUP TO CONTINUE THE WORK OF THE STAKEHOLDER GROUP ON LAW ENFORCEMENT RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND WELLNESS

To support the implementation of the following recommendations it is imperative to centralize the effort going forward. We strongly recommend the establishment of a permanent body of stakeholders to facilitate the continued the work of this Group.

The composition of the proposed standing advisory group would ideally be similar to this current Group- with all members, including medical practitioners, being stakeholders in the law enforcement community. This advisory group would continue to evaluate the state of knowledge regarding law enforcement wellness nationwide and in Maine as well as best practice guidelines. These would inform ongoing policy recommendations and directly assist the efforts of the requested Law Enforcement Wellness Coordinator, the Maine Criminal Justice Academy and the Department of Public Safety.

### 2.CREATE AND FUND A PERMANENT LAW ENFORCEMENT WELLNESS POSITION AT THE MAINE CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACADEMY

Survey results, interactions with stakeholders, and the clinical experiences of Group members indicate there is a strong desire statewide to better implement wellness initiatives but there is no centralized body or position to support individual departments or chiefs with information, training, and guidance about options and best practices. The efforts we see undertaken are often fragmented, piecemeal and ultimately not effective at enhancing overall wellness or reducing stigma. Therefore, we recommended creating a permanent Law Enforcement Wellness Coordinator position to serve a central coordinator and hub of information, to be housed at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy.

The knowledge gained from the groundbreaking review and analysis of law enforcement suicide in Maine by Sgt. Close and Dr. Wren cannot be ignored. As we implement initiatives to improve the wellness of our police force and reduce suicide numbers, it will be crucial to continue to work with the Maine Violent Death Reporting System to improve our understanding on suicide among law enforcement officers. This can help the proposed Wellness Coordinator monitor if suicide rates are improving or worsening in response to interventions.

While suicides are the tip of the iceberg, and a catastrophic indicator of our failure to provide a system that scaffolds the wellness of officers, we caution against focusing wellness efforts on suicide prevention alone. We also find that individual officers find ways to psychologically distance themselves from the idea of suicide and believe it is an outcome that would only happen to others. A focus on everything that happens “left of bang” or before the crisis happens is preferable. However, the suicide statistics for Maine do indicate that we are in a crisis and there is an urgent need for intervention at this point as well as at the proactive/preventative stage.

Analysis of the attrition rates also gives us a never before seen look at the certain points along a post-graduation timeline that we are losing the most certified officers to attrition. This presents opportunities to improve these trends and save the State of Maine millions of dollars. The proposed Law Enforcement Wellness Coordinator position would ideally work yearly with the Advisory Resource Group to review and analyze annual trends as they relate to attrition and whether the new programs, training, or efforts being implemented are working.

The proposed Law Enforcement Wellness Coordinator would also serve as a hub of the wheel to manage and disseminate resources that support best practice implementation and that coordinates and serves as a liaison between law enforcement and the many “spokes” or resources statewide. These resources should not be limited to, but include the following:

*A CONTINUOUSLY UPDATED INVENTORY OF PEER SUPPORT TEAMS AVAILABLE IN MAINE TO SUPPORT LAW ENFORCEMENT.*

This inventory should include key information about each team, such as contact info for the clinical supervisor and peer leader of each team and the particular evidence-based models each team uses. Early suggestions to use the law enforcement training regions with a coordinator of peer support resources for each region have been suggested. This model has promise, but the complexities of implementing it are beyond the scope of this committee’s resources and would be best analyzed by the standing committee.

*UTILIZE BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR PEER SUPPORT TEAM CREATION, IMPLEMENTATION, MANAGEMENT AND DEPLOYMENT.*

There are risks to using peer support resources if not designed and used appropriately. Evidence based structure, implementation, and chain of command are critical to maintaining the efficacy, safety, and statutory protection of peer support activities. There are nationwide resources and best practices that can guide teams and supervisors. Consumers of peer support should also be able to ensure that the team that supports them when they are vulnerable is using best practices to keep them safe.

*EVIDENCE BASED TOOLS AVAILABLE FOR USE IN PEER SUPPORT/CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE, EX: 3-3-3, CISM, ASAP.*

It is critical that we increase the accessibility of peer support teams and decrease the stigma about their utilization. We recommend that these teams function according to best practice guidelines. Again, it is our strong opinion that we should avoid creating a one size fits all approach or mandate specific methodologies that must be used by peer support. Each team should be able to be responsive to the individual culture and needs of the region and agencies they serve. People in need of peer support or critical incident response should be able to have a menu of peer support options to choose from that best fit their own preferences. However, there are evidence-based guidelines for models of safe, effective peer support and critical incident response and these should be followed. There are also statutory requirements that must be adhered to and evolving legal implications to ethically managing a peer support team. The proposed Wellness Coordinator at the Criminal Justice Academy would be ideal to assist in this.

A sample job description for this position can be found in **Appendix 5**.

3. ADD A FIELD TO MAINE'S ELECTRONIC DEATH REGISTRATION SYSTEM NOTING WHETHER A DECEDENT HAD EVER WORKED IN PUBLIC SAFETY

Having a check box added to Maine's Electronic Death Registration System that denotes whether a decedent had ever served in the field of public safety (to include first responders, correctional officers, and public safety dispatchers) would allow the Wellness Coordinator and the advisory resource group on Recruitment, Retention, and Wellness, as well as various public health entities and partners in the State of Maine better track mortality associated with these professions.

4. CREATE BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING WELLNESS VISITS, ALONG WITH A LIST OF TRAINED CULTURALLY COMPETENT PROFESSIONALS QUALIFIED TO PERFORM THEM

*BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES REGARDING FIT FOR DUTY EVALUATIONS AND A LIST OF PROFESSIONALS AVAILABLE TO DO THESE*

There is widespread confusion about what situations require a fit for duty evaluation. Fit for duty evaluations are to be ordered only when there is a reason to suspect the officer is impaired or unable to perform duties. Though fit for duty evaluations are considered a tool for wellness, in that the ultimate goal of the evaluation and subsequent recommendations are to get the officer back to a healthy state and back to work, theoretically, this should be the tool of last resort after other, more supportive and less intrusive interventions were deemed ineffective. We see these evaluations being ordered improperly when leadership actually intends to be seeking a supportive session for an officer who has been through a stressful event. This is a training issue. Leadership is not aware of the best practice guidelines for officer evaluations and the types of evaluations that can be offered or mandated or how to access and provide supportive mental health consults for officers who have been through stressful event.

*HELP DIRECT AGENCIES TO BEST PRACTICE TRAININGS FOR LEADERSHIP AND FOR OFFICERS RELATED TO WELLNESS*

The training for officers from day one should shift to a focus on surviving not just their shift, but to thriving throughout the career and into retirement. According to our qualitative survey results, current culture and leadership styles in Maine law enforcement are tilted towards “lower order survival needs” or- surviving each shift alive. Immediate survival/tactical skills are no doubt critical but we cannot overlook an equally important emphasis on helping officers survive beyond their shift, for their entire career into retirement with physical, psychological and financial health and intact relationships and identities. It does no good to have an officer avoid getting shot on shift only to succumb to cardiovascular disease at age 40, be unable to maintain a healthy marriage or friendships outside of law enforcement, to die suicide or to suffer with life altering depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder or substance use or to be unable to retire due to inadequate financial planning.

As shown above Comments from officers who responded to the Group’s survey noted many impacts from long term shift work and stress on both their own health and on their family.

Our survey data shows that we have a police force who serve for largely idealistic reasons and are committed to the mission. The majority report satisfaction with their choice in law enforcement as a career. The qualitative data shows where the threats, weaknesses and opportunities for growth exist. Most officers now desire a work place that values “higher order needs” such as enhanced training opportunities, self-actualization, sense of purpose/belonging to a cohesive group, and opportunities for

upward mobility and specialization. Failure to prioritize higher order needs in leadership training, academy curriculum development, and management structure will perpetuate recruitment, retention, and wellness problems. The committee’s survey results show that Maine’s police force is on the cusp of culture change. They want a shift to a “Higher Order Needs” focus but are unsure of how to implement or where to find the tools and resources to move forward.

We recommend a centralized training hub related to leadership and officer wellness.

5. SUPPORT OFFICER WELLNESS ON DAY 1 OF THEIR CAREER BY PROMOTING THE USE OF BEST PRACTICES IN PRE-EMPLOYMENT SELECTION AND ASSESSMENT

Selection criteria and pre-employment evaluation of candidates are the first steps to ensure the wellness and resilience of our police force. We recommend that pre-employment assessment/selection be guided by International Association of Chiefs of Police best practice guidelines (IACP, 2021).

We recommend continued autonomy for all chiefs in how they conduct hiring and pre-employment assessment. The needs of each department are radically different and guidelines for an officer who will be performing in a tactical team capacity in a busy department should be different than the criteria for an officer in a rural department. We do not recommend implementing one size fits all state mandates. We do strongly recommend coordinated dissemination of best practice guidelines along with training for leadership on implementation. A list of culturally competent examiners who provide these services in Maine should be maintained and disseminated.

This would allow for screening out candidates who are likely unfit for a career in law enforcement but could also allow a better process of “screening in” candidates who show the psychological characteristics known to lead to healthy adaptation to the rigors of a career in law enforcement.

6. ENHANCE MAINE CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACADEMY CURRICULUM IN A WAY THAT INTEGRATES, NORMALIZES AND STANDARDIZES BEST PRACTICES FOR OFFICER WELLNESS

The Maine Criminal Justice Academy is instrumental in integration, normalization and standardization of best practices. We know that the threats to officer mental and physical health are not just critical incidents, and in fact, more of an impact may come from the long-term exposure to the chronically activated biological stress response, sleep deficit, poor diet, narrowing of identity, financial stress, moral injury and organizational betrayal. We do a better job preparing officers for critical incident recovery, when, the impact of those critical incidents on an officer is largely determined by their resilience going into the incident. If they are financially struggling, their marriage is strained, or they are feeling betrayed by their organization they are far more likely to develop a

traumatic stress injury from a critical incident than if they feel supported and valued at work, are in a stable marriage, and are using healthy strategies to offload stress regularly.

The Maine Criminal Justice Academy plays a key role in training cadets on maintaining resilience and health throughout a career. The specifics of this policy change exceed the abilities of this committee and would be best managed with an ongoing advisory committee who could study best practices in a more in-depth manner and thoughtfully craft and oversee implementation of additions to curriculum.

Some preliminary ideas for this include additions that could be implemented without large budgetary or time demands. Normalizing wellness practices such as doing critical incident debriefs as standard parts of training scenarios could be an effective way of incorporating evidence-based wellness practices into the ways incidents are managed. If cadets are trained that debriefs are normal this will become an accepted evidence-based tool for wellness promotion. The importance of investing in training cadets at the BLETP level to address critical and traumatic exposure cannot be understated. The Group understands the possibility of this adding time to the length of training, however, balances that against the incalculable cost of time and resources in responding to an officer in crisis during their actual service career. It again notes the importance of creating an ongoing relationship between the recommended advisory group, the Maine Criminal Justice Academy, Department of Public Safety and the recommended Wellness Coordinator position.

Incorporating training proactively at the academy level on financial health and providing resources for officers to access throughout their careers would be also be a helpful goal. We know behaviors that officers begin early in their careers when they are eager and excited by their job will impact them into retirement. Young officers who create a lifestyle that is dependent on working lots of overtime are not in a financially sustainable position. Having access to financial training and resources throughout their career would foster career-long wellness and resilience.

#### 7. MANDATE A ONE-DAY, IN-PERSON TRAINING FOR ALL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS RELATED TO THE CAREER-LONG MAINTENANCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL READINESS, PHYSICAL, AND FINANCIAL HEALTH

One of the Group's strongest recommendations is that the committee mandate a one-day training for all officers to be attended sometime within the first three years of graduating the Maine Criminal Justice Academy. The specifics of this policy are beyond the scope of the Group's resources but preliminary suggestions based in best practice would include the following.

- Training should be in person and led by both a Law Enforcement Officer and a culturally competent clinician such as a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, or Psychologist.

- The training we propose should be designed to maximize psychological readiness by capitalizing on officer strengths and enhancing evidence-based, sustainable, resilience promoting behaviors. For example, early in the career officers tend to be very enthusiastic and often do overtime to excess. This can create issues with time management, identity, financial problems down the road, health problems and relationship difficulties. Training could focus on resilience, financial health, ways to avoid being dependent on overtime, the hypervigilance rollercoaster, managing addiction to dopamine or high intensity experiences and keeping themselves in prime physical and emotional shape while maintaining balance. Mastering these skills early in the career could be preventive against many of the cumulative factors that result in substance abuse, physical illness, burnout and suicide.

The current training requirements that are met by online courses are anecdotally ineffective. Officers report “clicking through to get it done” and not finding these required trainings to be helpful or a wise use of time or resources.

We recommend that this curriculum be the result of evidence-based assessment of effective early interventions for law enforcement to promote psychological readiness

The proposed Law Enforcement Wellness Coordinator at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy could serve as a repository for current, vetted resources for all types of officer wellness. This position could also be useful as a tool to organize and host trainings for departments on many topics including financial health and retirement planning.

The Academy should be the first step in stigma reduction. Preliminary recommendations include use of appropriate evidence-based stress inoculation strategies to build resilience as well as incorporation of peer support and critical incident debriefs as standard part of the scenario-based training model now used. This would normalize and integrate an effective wellness practice (debriefing after an incident) without investment of significant fiscal or time resources at the Academy.

The Maine Criminal Justice Academy should also begin to normalize awareness of and use of biometrics as a tool to understand and manage the stress response. Our understanding of stress has advanced greatly and we have the ability to use biological markers of the stress response to teach officers about the ways that their career and the choices they make to pursue resilience building practices will have on their long-term health. Heart rate variability and sleep quantity/quality are two of the most easily tracked with common devices such as smart watches, but more advanced, Law Enforcement specific devices are emerging that provide real time anonymous information on chemical and cardiovascular response and recovery to scenarios.

8. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A CONSISTENT, STANDARDIZED, MAINE CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACADEMY RESOURCE AND TRAINING PROGRAM FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT EXECUTIVES AND ADMINISTRATORS

Leadership plays a pivotal role in addressing these challenges. Leaders set culture and culture drives officer's behaviors. Leaders must create and foster a departmental culture that prioritizes officer wellness and de-stigmatizes help-seeking behaviors. It is incumbent upon law enforcement leaders to prioritize wellness by institutionalizing it as a core value, emphasizing its importance to operational effectiveness and officer retention. Leaders must promote a culture where seeking help is normalized. Officers often avoid seeking mental health assistance due to fears of negative repercussions, such as being perceived as weak or facing career setbacks.

Leaders must advocate and educate by providing ongoing education about mental health, stress management, and resilience-building at all stages of an officer's career, from academy training to retirement. Proactive leadership is essential, with leaders leading by example, prioritizing their own wellness, and demonstrating openness about seeking support.

To address systemic stressors within law enforcement agencies, leaders must reform organizational culture by addressing policies and administrative practices that contribute to internal stress. A supportive culture improves recruitment, retention, and overall morale. Leaders should encourage officers to maintain connections outside of work to build a sense of identity and support beyond their roles. Supervisory training should be enhanced to ensure sergeants and supervisors can identify and support struggling officers effectively. Leadership must foster trust by ensuring open communication channels where officers feel comfortable discussing mental health concerns without fear of penalty.

The mental health and wellness of law enforcement officers are critical issues that demand proactive leadership. Studies indicate that the average lifespan of a police officer ranges from 57 to 66 years, with heart disease and depression posing greater risks than felonious assault. Chronic exposure to stress, unhealthy coping mechanisms, and sleep deprivation contribute significantly to these outcomes. Leadership must prioritize the health and wellness of officers by fostering a supportive culture, providing necessary resources, and ensuring open discussions about mental health.

A holistic approach to wellness is essential. Comprehensive mental health services should include counseling, stress management classes, crisis intervention, and routine mental health check-ins with culturally competent clinicians. Mandatory annual mental health evaluations and resilience training at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy (MCJA) should be implemented. Early intervention systems should actively promote peer support programs, train supervisors to recognize signs of mental health challenges, and ensure confidentiality for officers seeking help. Flexible support options should allow officers time for physical exercise and mental health treatment during work hours to reinforce the importance of self-care. Wellness programs should be tailored to address the unique challenges officers face at different career stages, including retirement planning and transitioning to civilian life.



Investing in mental health and wellness programs yields numerous benefits. Improved job performance results from enhanced decision-making, reduced stress, and increased empathy. Operational efficiency is improved through reduced sick leave, lower rates of on-the-job injuries, and improved morale. Positive community relations are fostered as officers with better mental health engage more positively with the public, building trust and cooperation. Departments that prioritize wellness are more attractive to potential recruits and retain experienced officers longer. Addressing the mental health needs of law enforcement officers requires proactive and visionary leadership. By implementing comprehensive wellness programs, eliminating stigma, and fostering a supportive organizational culture, Maine's law enforcement agencies can ensure the long-term well-being of their officers. This investment not only enhances individual resilience and job satisfaction but also strengthens public trust and the overall effectiveness of policing efforts. Leadership must remain steadfast in their commitment to making officer wellness a priority.

## 9. SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF WELLNESS PROGRAMMING AT DEPARTMENT LEVEL

Wellness programs have demonstrated benefits to the health of individual officers as well as the fiscal health of their departments. They are evidence-based tools, effective for both liability management and recruitment. Wellness programming, including embedding culturally competent clinicians in departments, is also a key Department of Justice recommendation arising out of the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act of 2017. This act passed both the United States Senate and House unanimously in 2017 reflecting national concerns for the increasingly bleak physical and emotional health data for law enforcement. The act directed numerous bodies to study and present recommendations for relevant military and other federal programs that could be modified and implemented for civilian law enforcement.

Departments often want to implement wellness programming but do not know how to effectively do this. Departments may do small changes, such as installing a work out room or creating incentives for individual officers to get wellness checks. However, these pieces do not constitute a comprehensive program, do not address the critical aspect of changing overall department culture, and are not effective in improving overall wellness. Change requires following best practices to implement a coherent program that incorporates physical, emotional, financial wellness.

Implementing trainings for officers at key opportunities for wellness in years 1, 3, 5, and 10+ of their career. These trainings would be specifically targeted to the career stressors/psychological tasks known to dominate the specific stage of career. For example, the first few years of a career are known to be most often exciting, officers are "all in" – "I'd do this job even if they didn't pay me" and can be at risk for taking on lots of overtime, developing a narrower sense of self and neglecting hobbies, relationships and interests, and may develop a lifestyle that is dependent on high amount of overtime to financially sustain. Training at this point could be focusing on proactive ways to maintain resilience factors to help sustain through career in all key areas- financial, physical, emotional health.

At years 5-7 officers tend to have experienced more things that can lead to moral injury, resentments, or organizational betrayal. Trainings at this stage could focus on ways to manage burnout and departmental stressors. These trainings should be led by a seasoned Law Enforcement Officer with a culturally competent clinician.

Departments that create ongoing relationships with a culturally competent law enforcement clinician report positive results in breaking down stigma, engaging in proactive trainings that maintain operational readiness, create trust and rapport in stable times so that the officers feel comfortable if they need the clinician during a time of crisis.

We recommend ongoing exploration of ways to support agencies in developing relationships with culturally competent clinicians who can help them implement comprehensive, evidence-based wellness programming that is appropriate for the needs and budgets of their individual departments.

#### 10.SUPPORT EFFORTS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF AVAILABLE, CULTURALLY COMPETENT MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement have unique stressors, world views and psychological defenses that are not common among civilian patients. Law enforcement clients have a higher than typical level of mistrust of mental health workers. These patients also often bring significant trauma to their sessions with content that can be overwhelming or distressing to therapists not familiar with law enforcement. Incidents of an officer finally getting the courage to see a therapist only to begin to open up and have the therapist cry or express horror occur frequently unfortunately- and only serve to perpetuate the stigma about seeking help. Cultural competence in a therapist implies that the therapist has spent time with law enforcement, done ride-alongs, been in departments, and that the therapist is comfortable with the specific parts of law enforcement culture that set them apart from civilians. Officers often have dark humor and wear their weapons into appointments both of which have caused issues with non-culturally competent therapists. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of culturally competent mental healthcare providers for law enforcement in Maine.

There are numerous efforts going on by individuals at the grass roots level to organize lists of culturally competent clinicians who specialize in treating law enforcement. It is a piecemeal effort by several committed individuals who then share the list they make. This represents a higher level of organization of the specialty in Maine than there ever has been, but we need centralization and dissemination that follows the hub and spoke model to make it actually effective.

We recommend that the proposed Wellness Coordinator at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy keep a list of trainings for clinicians that can enhance cultural competence, and that they also maintain a list of mental health providers doing work successfully with law enforcement. The specific criteria or process to use to vet these clinicians is beyond the scope of this committee and should be explored in more detail by the proposed standing committee.

It is not the intent of our recommendation to in any way restrict access to clinicians or mandate specific trainings or credentials. Goodness of fit with the individual or department being served is the most important factor in success of the therapeutic relationship, not specific trainings. But it is critical to have some criteria and standards to guide a resource list for law enforcement.

We also recommend that the proposed standing committee investigate ways to support more trainings and department sponsorships of ride along programs to help interested clinicians to become culturally competent. This mirrors federal recommendations from the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act. “Congress already recognized this need in part in section 3 of LEMHWA when it directed the Attorney General and the Secretary of Health and Human Services to partner in producing law enforcement–

specific resources for clinicians and behavioral health providers. But the development of clinician training and toolkits of provider resources—including the identification of referral networks, family support options, and locality-specific information in connection with support for growing the network of embedded professionals—would help further extend the reach of informed clinicians, particularly in more rural or isolated parts of the country where there may not be an extensive clinical network of providers.” From the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act of 2017.

Developing more capacity to serve law enforcement is critical as we reduce stigma and see more demand for services. Having a centralized person to serve as the hub for mental health resources would be of enormous benefit.

## 11. REFINE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES RELATED TO CARING FOR OFFICERS ONCE A PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL INJURY HAS OCCURRED

When an officer develops an emotional condition or traumatic stress injury as a result of doing a job that puts them at enormously high risk of such injuries, the process that is there to help them often creates a worsening of symptoms. The Workers Compensation Board issues an automatic denial of benefits when an officer who files for workers compensation benefits as a result of a traumatic stress or emotional injury. For an officer who is already facing high levels of stigma about having such an injury to get to the point of reporting the injury and needing to go out of work, the situation is already typically quite dire. The additional stress and organizational betrayal when they are denied benefits and have to fight to get coverage is devastating. Financial stress compounds the other issues when benefits are delayed. We have seen mental health crisis in numerous cases arise because of the stress of the process of engaging with Workers Compensation.

The committee recommends that this process be reviewed and streamlined to better serve an officer who has been emotionally injured on the job. Rather than an automatic Notice of Controversy a supportive process to help these officers receive the care and benefits they deserve should be created.

## 12. CONSIDERATION & ATTENTION TO MAINE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS, UP TO AND THROUGH, RETIREMENT

The committee is advocating for an approach that starts on day one of a new hire's career to prepare them for a healthy stable retirement. Our approach until now has been more focused on getting them through their shift and through their active-duty years. This is no longer acceptable. We have too many men and women who have served admirably throughout a long career who struggle with mental, physical and financial difficulties in retirement with little support.

The diversity of agencies and retirement benefits retirees are coming from makes generalizing recommendations complex. There are vast differences in their retirement benefits, post-retirement services and agency commitment to their continued wellbeing, physically, mentally, emotionally and financially.

There is consistency with our group and the recommendations of the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness act of 2017 with respect to retirees. The federal recommendations include providing retirees with access to department peer support programs as well as investigating other ways to ease the transition to retirement. The federal recommendations are designed to shape a holistic scaffolding of retirement structures that provide for physical, emotional and fiscal well-being of retirees.

We recommend investigation into the following:

- Incorporating retirement planning into Maine Criminal Justice Academy curriculum and as trainings throughout career.
- Legislation to restore full Cost of Living Increases to State LEO retirees
- Payment of Medicare premiums for retired LEOs who participate in Medicare.
- Vocational transition training for retired LEOs.
- Establishment of low or no cost Retired First Responder Mental Health Services for those who do not have access to it through insurance.
- Establish a program to assist retired First Responders in locating and securing affordable housing.
- Establish a recognized body of LEOs who can negotiate ongoing benefits for retirees to help bind state, municipal, and county retirement programs to negotiated outcomes.
- Support "true retirement" for first responders over 65 in which the physical, emotional and fiscal wellbeing of those retirees is promoted and protected.

Societies are judged by how they treat their disadvantaged. We should also judge them by how they treat those who performed a lifetime of service in critical roles. Similar to military numbers, the ranks of Law Enforcement make up less than 1% of the population. This segment of the population may be small numerically, but their contribution to society is immeasurable to sustaining a free society and their efforts come with enormous sacrifices to these individuals and their families. Now that we can quantify more of these impacts on these individuals we have a societal obligation to reform our efforts to protect and care for them when they retire and join the ranks of our more vulnerable citizens.

### 13. CONSIDER NOVEL PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS TO PROMOTE OFFICER WELLBEING

The committee explored many areas of interest that were beyond the scope of its current task and resources to flesh out. They are worthy of investigation by those who continue the work of this body.

- Neurosmart partnership- This is an emerging partnership that bears follow up by the proposed standing committee. Neurosmart manufactures a wrist worn device that tracks biometrics of law enforcement primarily during training scenarios to assess biological stress response indicators. This device anonymously tracks the data, and there are numerous ways to customize and modify what is being tracked and how. An instructor can be set up to have access to entire class data, with no personal identifiers. This can be critical in assessing how cadets are biologically responding to and recovering from scenario stressors as well as the other rigors of the academy. There may be ways to use Neurosmart or other devices in limited scenarios to assess officer health and stress response anonymously and voluntarily.
- Following one academy class anonymously throughout academy, then at year one, year 3, year 5, year 10 to study stress, mental health, effects of interventions. Suggestions have been made to follow an academy class to intermittently check in on relevant metrics such as job satisfaction, attrition, biometrics, and routine screenings for burnout, PTSD, depression, alcohol use, and risk factors for suicide. This would be a data rich project and one that could inform exciting policy changes for our law enforcement community but the implementation requires much more time and consideration than we were able to give it during our short work period.
- Find a way to pick up on the work of the current grassroots group working on peer support- This group is attempting to coordinate teams around the state, investigating tools like "I Respond" or similar ways to track availability statewide of individual peers, teams, or clinical team leads for incidents. Facilitating cross training of peer support/CISM teams to assist in voluntary standardization and collaboration is an exciting area of interest.

## CONCLUSION

This report represents the work of the Stakeholder Group on Maine Law Enforcement Officer Recruitment, Retention, and Wellness, as established by LD 2094. The findings and recommendations presented above provide novel insight and potential solutions to the problems facing the men and women of Maine's law enforcement. This report demonstrates how closely linked the issues of recruitment, retention, and wellness are in Maine, and that none can be addressed without input from and acknowledgement of the others. This report shows that we cannot hire our way out of a retention problem, and that the issues facing our law enforcement officers can have dire consequences.

We believe that the implementation of our recommendations would greatly enhance all aspects of recruitment, retention, and wellness. The Stakeholder Group is proud of our work, and wishes to thank the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety for the opportunity to do this work.

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## APPENDIX 1

LEGISLATIVE DOCUMENT 2094- RESOLVE, TO REQUIRE THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF A STAKEHOLDER GROUP TO EXAMINE  
AND IMPROVE THE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND WELLNESS  
OF LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

STATE OF MAINE

—  
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD  
TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-FOUR

—  
S.P. 887 - L.D. 2094

**Resolve, to Require the Establishment of a Stakeholder Group to Examine and Improve the Recruitment, Retention and Wellness of Law Enforcement Officers**

**Sec. 1. Formation of stakeholder group; study. Resolved:** That the Department of Public Safety shall convene a stakeholder group composed of members as required by section 2 to study long-term solutions to improve the recruitment, retention and wellness of law enforcement officers in the State. The study must include, but is not limited to:

1. An analysis of how to incentivize and encourage the recruitment of law enforcement officers and how funding could be provided to address vacant law enforcement positions;
2. An analysis of how to incentivize and encourage the retention of law enforcement officers and how funding could be provided to support this goal; and
3. An analysis of how to incentivize and encourage mental and physical wellness programs for law enforcement officers and how funding could be provided to support this goal.

**Sec. 2. Stakeholder group membership. Resolved:** That the stakeholder group under section 1 consists of the following 12 members:

1. The Commissioner of Public Safety or the commissioner's designee;
2. An individual representing the Maine Lodge of the Fraternal Order of Police;
3. An individual representing the Maine Association of Police;
4. An individual representing a statewide association advocating for state troopers in the State;
5. An individual representing the Maine State Law Enforcement Association;
6. An individual representing the Maine Criminal Justice Academy;
7. An individual representing a coalition of mental health providers in the State who specialize in treating first responders as their sole practice;

8. An individual representing a postsecondary educational institution in the State with programs focused on law enforcement or mental health;
9. An individual representing the Maine Chiefs of Police Association;
10. An individual representing the Maine Sheriffs' Association;
11. A student representing a secondary school program focused on law enforcement education in the State; and
12. An individual representing retired law enforcement officers in the State.

**Sec. 3. Meetings; report. Resolved:** That the Department of Public Safety shall convene the first meeting of the stakeholder group under section 1. At the first meeting, the members of the stakeholder group shall elect a chair and vice-chair to oversee and administer the stakeholder group. The chair shall oversee the meetings of the stakeholder group, and the vice-chair shall assume the role of the chair in the chair's absence. The chair and vice-chair may not be representatives or employees of the department.

The stakeholder group shall develop a report with its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, that address the initiatives of the study in section 1. The Department of Public Safety shall submit the report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over criminal justice and public safety matters no later than January 2, 2025. The joint standing committee may report out a bill related to the report to the 132nd Legislature in 2025.

## APPENDIX 2

### MAINE LAW ENFORCEMENT RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND WELLNESS SURVEY: NARRATIVE SURVEY ANALYSIS

## **MAINE LAW ENFORCEMENT RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND WELLNESS SURVEY: NARRATIVE SURVEY ANALYSIS**

Dominic Piacentini, PhD  
Research Associate  
Margaret Chase Smith Policy Center  
University of Maine

### **Introduction and Methods**

The Maine Legislative Stakeholder Group on Maine Law Enforcement Recruitment, Retention, and Wellness survey received 736 *total responses*. Many of the questions in the survey were open-answer, text-based questions to support other quantitative inquiries. In these sections, law enforcement officers could provide more detailed information, personal experiences, and qualitative nuance than can typically be gleaned from quantitative, fixed-text answers. Paired together, the quantitative results point toward population-level trends and indicators while the qualitative results add a sense of lived reality for law enforcement officers. Due to the total number of responses, dense nature of the data, and the Stakeholder Group's working timelines, some of the qualitative data needed to be winnowed. Key topics and question areas were identified by the Stakeholder Group.

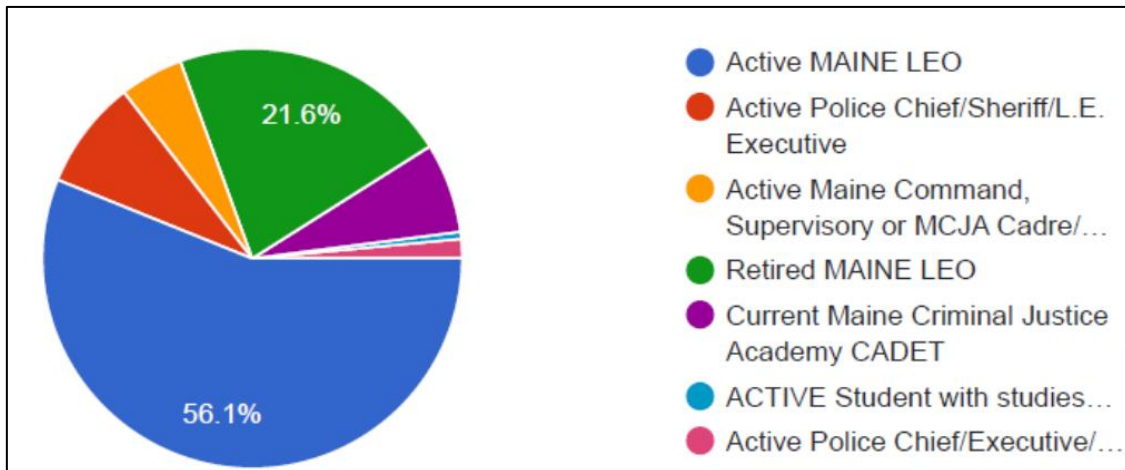
De-identified responses to these questions were then imported into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, for analysis. Responses were flagged and sorted into themes in an inductive process; that is, the data informed the codes and key themes throughout the analysis process rather than having a set group of codes to sort responses into at the onset, a deductive process. The inductive process allows for the most salient qualitative data to emerge numerically, as codes pile up, but this process also observes interesting and nonetheless notable perspectives that may conflict with the more conspicuous findings.

What follows is a brief description of the respondent demographics and then a narrative analysis, summarizing these findings. Demonstrative quotes are incorporated to support the findings and to highlight the voices of participants, who spent a considerable amount of time sharing their perspectives. Quotes are pulled directly from the survey responses, without editing, to preserve the voice of respondents and character of their comments.

### **Survey Demographics**

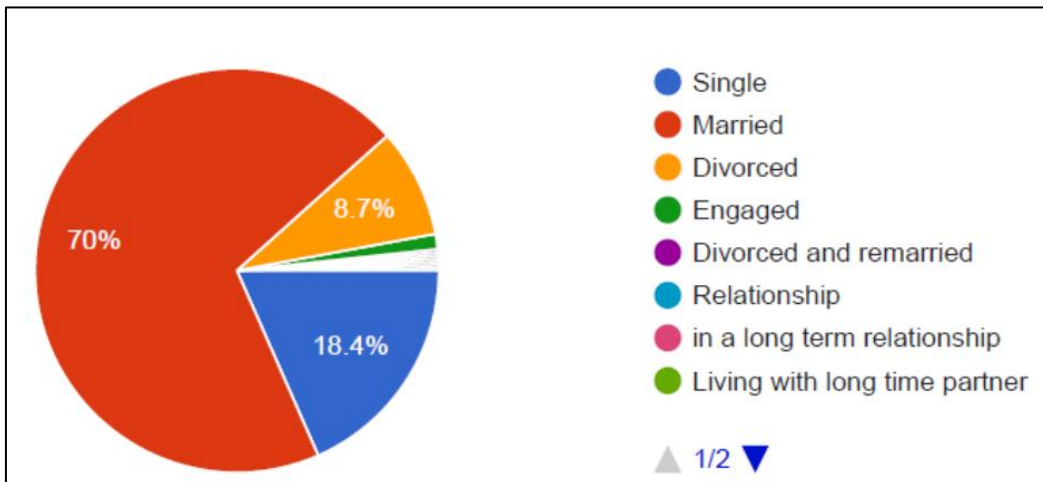
Of the 736 respondents, the majority were active Maine law enforcement officers, followed by retired Maine law enforcement officers and active police chiefs, sheriffs, or law enforcement executives. This demographic breakdown, along with the other smaller respondent cohorts, is included in Figure 1, below.

**Figure 1: Survey Respondent Positions**

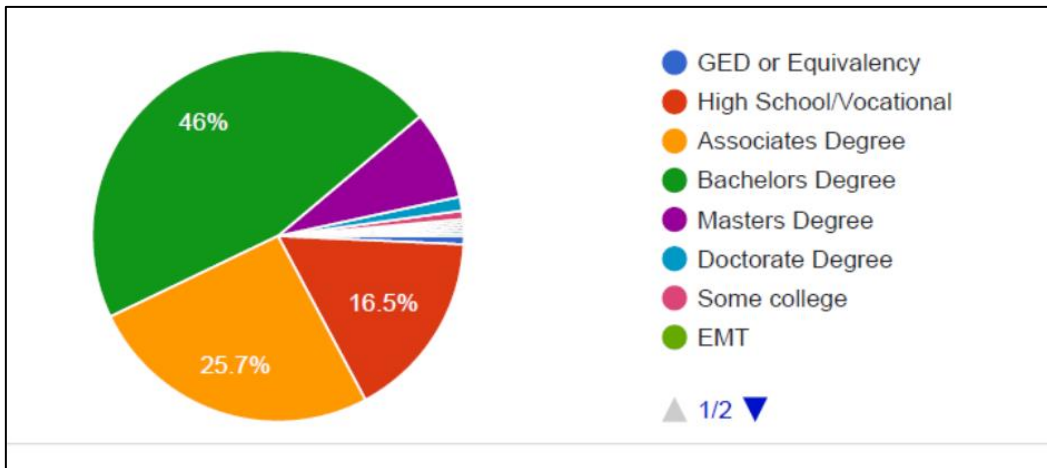


The age of respondents ranged from 21 to 70. Most respondents were married, followed by respondents who were single and respondents who were divorced, Figure 2.

**Figure 2: W**



Respondents were asked what their highest level of completed education was; 46% had completed a bachelor's degree program, 25.7% had completed an associate's degree program, and 16.5% had completed high school or a vocational school program, Figure 3.



### **LEO job satisfaction**

Law enforcement officers were asked to rank their job satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very dissatisfied and 10 being very satisfied. *The average response was 6.8 out of 10*, indicating that the overall population was somewhat satisfied with their job. Some of those who were very satisfied were enthusiastic about their job, saying in comments “I love the job and wouldn’t want to do anything else” or “I am very satisfied with my career choice in law enforcement.” However, many couched their general satisfaction among other issues and concerns: “Very satisfied with my work and agency. *just not our pay*”; “Love the job. *hate the city political climate And lack of support*”; “Love the work *hate the lack of support from the court system and legislation.*” Several respondents expressed that they have experienced an overall decrease in job satisfaction and/or that the job itself has changed for the worse: “The job used to be very different and a lot more enjoyable”; “Overall satisfaction and enjoyment of the Job has decreased over the years consistently”; “Dramatic decrease in job satisfaction after year 20.”

Among those who expressed some degree of dissatisfaction with their work, a handful of common themes emerged: (1) inadequate pay or benefits, (2) lack of support or follow-through from courts and local governments, (3) lack of support or awareness from their own department or agency, and (4) scheduling and workload burdens from being understaffed. These four themes and examples of each are summarized in Table 1, below.

**Table 1.1 Job Dissatisfaction**

<b>Major theme</b>	<b>Subthemes and topics</b>	<b>Example comments</b>
Inadequate pay or benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Insufficient pay considering the nature of the work and risk</li> <li>· Lack of retirement insurance</li> <li>· Inconsistent benefits across agencies</li> </ul>	<p>“The only time I thought about leaving law enforcement was for more pay.”</p> <p>“HIGH STRESS. SACRIFICE. NO INSURANCE UPON RETIREMENT.”</p> <p>“Great career. high risk at times could have better consistency in benefits across agencies.”</p>



Lack of support or follow-through from courts and governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Lack of effective prosecution</li> <li>· Unsupportive legislation</li> </ul>	<p>“Lack of accountability for prosecutors makes it seem like our job is not worth it.”</p> <p>“The lack of support and holding people accountable for their actions be it from our DA’s not prosecuting or the legislature changing laws to make crimes no longer crimes it makes what we do harder and lets more people get away with more things.”</p>
Lack of support or awareness from their own department or agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Administration not listening to LEOs</li> <li>· Administration not trusting LEOs</li> <li>· Disconnect between management and patrol</li> <li>· Issues of agency leadership</li> </ul>	<p>“Pay and retirement could be better. Agency does not listen to the LEOs doing the work.”</p> <p>“Current Sentiment of Public/Our Own Administrators and Agency seems to mistrust us.”</p> <p>“serious disconnect between admin and field”</p> <p>“Lack of leadership. no encouragement from LT.”</p>
Scheduling and workload burdens of being understaffed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Inadequate staffing</li> <li>· Retention efforts</li> </ul>	<p>“Agency is involved in too many activities without adequate staffing. [...] Officers having to cover large areas with essentially no support.”</p> <p>“Departments need to promote from within as opposed to promoting from the outside...this will increase retention.”</p>

Additionally, many respondents felt that law enforcement officers were being asked to do too much, contributing to their dissatisfaction. This sentiment was underscored by the following comment which pulls together several of the above themes as well:

*“This job has changed so much over the years. LE is being asked to do more with less resources. Be a social worker. Be a parent. Be a teacher within the schools. Be a drug rehabilitation expert. Be more “present” in the community. Oh, and you have to do the jobs of the probation officers and court officials as well. We are tasked with MORE and have less manpower. This leads to burnout and an unappealing image of the job. This is all expected under administrations that are out of touch with reality and/or don’t care about their employees.”*

**Changes to improve LEO job satisfaction**

Survey respondents were then asked to comment upon what kinds of changes might improve their job satisfaction. Several common recommendations emerged from their responses: (1) pay changes and improvements, (2) benefits changes and improvements, (3) increased support from

local government, and (4) changes and improvements to retirement planning. These four themes and examples of each are summarized in Table 2, below.

**Table 2: Changes to improve job satisfaction**

Major theme	Subtheme and topics	Example comments
Pay changes and improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Pay is incommensurate with expectations of the job</li> <li>· Pay is inconsistent across jurisdictions</li> </ul>	<p>“Pay is substantially low for the amount of work being done. In no way is the average pay rate for a police officer enough to live comfortably. Most officers have to work overtime to compensate, which burns them out.”</p> <p>“Pay increase to keep pace with other agencies.”</p>
Benefits changes and improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Retirement insurance</li> <li>· Improved health insurance coverage, generally</li> <li>· Coverage for spouses, before and after retirement</li> </ul>	<p>“Health insurance after retirement would hugely help.”</p> <p>“Better pay and insurance will always be a factor.”</p> <p>“My wife of 33 years should be included in our retirement insurance. She survived this career as well.”</p>
Increased support from municipal, county, and state agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Demonstrated support from courts and prosecutors</li> <li>· Change in public perception of law enforcement</li> <li>· Legislative support and awareness of law enforcement work</li> </ul>	<p>“More support from the courts, prosecutors. Cases are always plead out [sic]. Dealing with the same people over and over and they just get released.”</p> <p>“People hat [sic] cops because of us being used as political pawns.”</p> <p>“The problem is that laws and policies are created from people that have no idea what we do. The criminal justice system as a whole is collapsing on itself.”</p>
Changes to retirement planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Modify the retirement system</li> </ul>	<p>“Modify the retirement system into a three tiers system 15/20/25 years system for officers who are looking</p>

		to retire early from burned out.”
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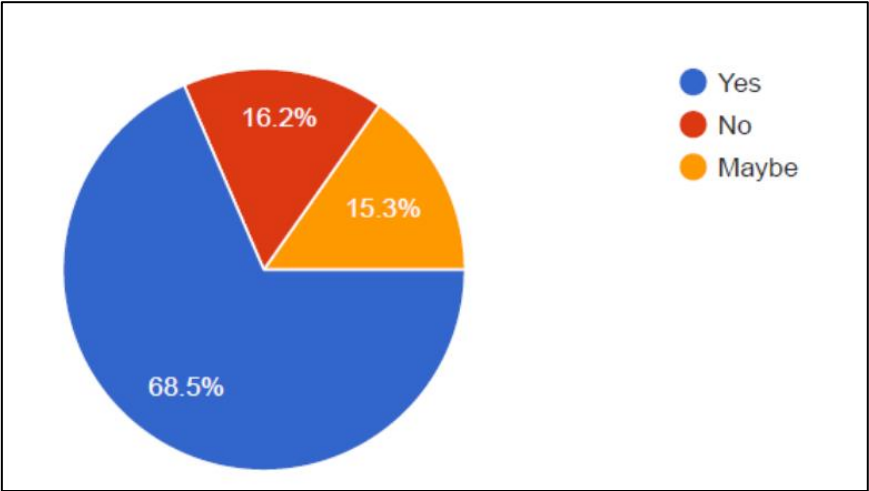
Perhaps the most uniform recommendation among the responses to this question were numerous comments advocating for a 20-year retirement system statewide seen in the two following comments among others: *“Today’s LEO’s must be on a 20 year retirement. 25 years is too long and mentally/emotionally destructive”*; *“Facing the lack of public support, the insufficient pay for the job that we do, the horrible schedules that affect us physically and mentally makes a 25 year retirement seem like it will be the biggest uphill battle and unattainable for many.”*

Another common theme among these responses was recommended changes to trainings and the culture of the police academy; however, these responses were greatly mixed and somewhat contentious. Some respondents believed that increased flexibility, more training in empathy, less hazing, and increased mental health training and support from the onset would improve their overall job satisfaction. One respondent said that the academy should strive for a more “college atmosphere.” Contrastingly, other respondents believed that the academy should return to a “stress academy” so that law enforcement officers are better prepared for real-life stressors of the job. Many of those that fell into this camp suggested that it is safer for everyone if cadets are first exposed to controlled stress at the academy before encountering stress on the job.

**Stress from work and its impact on life and family outside of work**

When asked whether stress from their work as a law enforcement officer had a negative impact on their life and family outside of work, most (68.5%, see Figure 4 below) affirmed that it had. Overwhelmingly, survey respondents identified their *schedules as the greatest source of stress from their work*, including the long hours, the unpredictable hours and being on call, and overtime, the latter of which was often framed as not an option due to the cost of living being out of pace with standard pay.

**Figure 4: Has stress from your work as a law enforcement officer had a negative impact on your life/family outside of work?**



The impacts of stress from work on life and family outside of work were widespread. The majority of respondents who provided additional comment said that *they are often unavailable to their families*: “I’ve missed countless events, holidays, birthdays due to this job. I’ve been ‘called in’ on my own birthday and over events”; “Schedule not the same as family, missing birthdays, holidays, special occasions, school events or trying to do stuff outside the job with friends or family”; “I’ve missed my children growing up. Their sports, vacations, holidays.” Eleven respondents even cited stress from work as the cause of their divorce.

Two other equally common themes were *increased irritability* and *withdrawal from social and public spaces*. Many respondents said that stress from work caused them to be short or angry with their family: “Stress from work gets brought home and sometimes there is a short temper”; “Makes me short with family”; “I’m crankier easier, small things have started to bother me. I’m throwing stuff when I’m getting angry, and I’ve got a short fuse now.” Other respondents said they would simply rather not be around people or socialize due to stress from work: “Less likely to venture out to public places and engage in unknown settings”; “I withdraw from people on my days off”; “The frustration of the job and the drama of the department makes me not want to interact with anyone on my days off.”

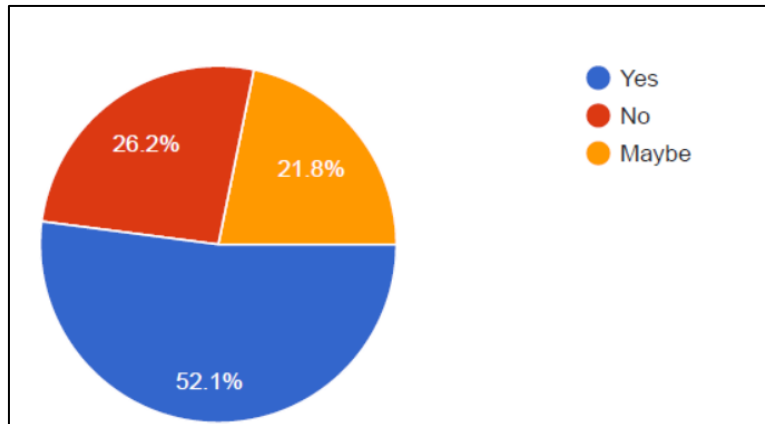
Another negative impact from stress that was discussed in comments was *tiredness, exhaustion, and loss of sleep*: “At the end of the work day, I tend to be exhausted”; “Currently struggling with insomnia and stress”; “The biggest impact is lack of sleep. That just builds up over your work week and makes you not want to do physical activities on your day off.”

Lastly a smaller group of respondents said that they had received *mental health diagnoses (including PTSI/PTSD, depression, and anxiety) due to stress from their work* and said that they had *increased their alcohol use due to stress from work*.

### **Support from agency/department while experiencing PTSI or another crisis/hardship**

When asked if, in the current environment of their agency, they were experiencing a hardship, crisis or PTSI, would they have the full support of their agency or employer, most respondents (n=215) affirmed that they would. 108 respondents said they would not have the support of the agency, and 90 respondents said they would maybe have the support of their agency (Figure 5). Among those who provided additional comment, it was frequently noted that *officers felt they would have the support of their immediate supervisors but not administration or management*: “My supervisors yes, administration no”; “From my mediate supervisors, Yes I feel supported. I don’t trust Central office administration”; “My agency, yes. The state HR system, no.”

**Figure 5: In the current environment of your agency, do you feel that if you were experiencing a hardship, crisis, or PTSD, you would have the full understanding of your agency or employer?**



Although fewer in number of responses, some respondents do not feel they have any support among their agency’s leadership: “They DO NOT CARE”; “We are a body to fill a position. They would cast us aside and hire somebody new, so they would not have to pay them as much money”; “They’ve already shown they don’t give a shit about me.”

There are also *cultural barriers to support*, as several respondents noted that *stigma of mental health treatment* continues in their work environment. Below Table 3 includes a list of example comments.

**Table 3: Stigma and Mental Health**

“Its a running joke in our agency/subculture. Its a weakness. Frowned upon. Embarrassment.”
“100% no. This has happened and the person was ridiculed.”
“I feel that if I disclosed that information, I would be ostracized.”
“There is always the stigma of ‘whats the matter with him?’ or ‘he’s just faking to get out of work.’”
“My department does not consider mental health issues to be a real thing. It would be frowned upon, and you would be looked down upon if you had to get help.”
“Yes only because admin has to follow the law. Stigma still exists.”

Lastly, several respondents felt that their department or agency gives *lip service about providing support during a crisis, without backing it up with action*: “Preach the support but bottom line is everyone worries about themselves”; “I think they put on a good front and there are a handful of my coworkers that would support me but I do not feel that they would stand behind me. I think the administration wholeheartedly believes they do/would but reality isn’t their perception.”

**Missed days due to stress, fatigue, or feeling “burned out”**

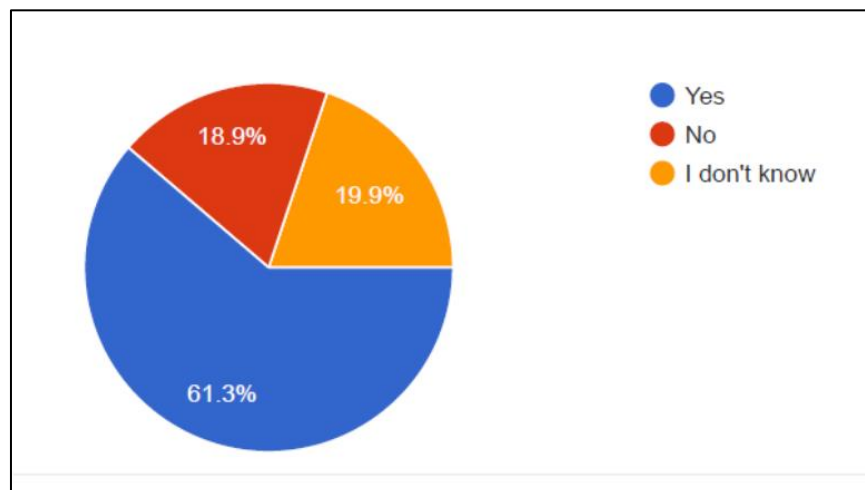
LEOs were asked approximately how many days of work they had missed in the last year due to stress, fatigue, or feeling “burned out.” *More than half of respondents that completed this question reported that they did not miss work for these reasons.* Respondents were given the opportunity to

elaborate, and *many said that they would not take of work for these reasons*: “Regardless of how I feel, I go to work”; “those aren’t sufficient reasons to warrant a day off work (my opinion)”; “I’m not weak. I don’t take the cowards way and call out because I’m burned out.” A smaller cohort of respondents were not philosophically opposed to taking days off for these reasons, but they felt as though they could not do so, as *it would place an undue burden on their coworkers*: “I feel bad for making extra work for the other guys if I miss work”; “We are typically too short handed for this”; “It would have been more but I did not want to screw over my coworkers.” Lastly, some respondents felt that they could not take days off work for these reasons as they *could not afford to*, saying that their family depended on them.

**Access to mental health treatment**

When asked to provide comment on whether or not their employer provided access to mental health professionals, most said that they do (see Figure 6, below), but many later clarified in comments that their *access is limited to either health insurance coverage or referrals to EAP*. A few respondents said that they were provided with *annual or semi-annual mental health or wellness checks*; however, these were often viewed as being inadequate: “We are mandated to have a ‘wellness check’ once per year. The option for a second visit. I don’t believe only two times annually would qualify as a benefit”; “It’s limited to only a handful of sessions each year, which is totally inadequate.” Additionally, one respondent said that while they received a referral to EAP, they found that EAP did not specialize in PTSD. One respondent said that they had an *in-house clinician* to provide mental health services but did not expand on this.

**Figure 6: Does your employer provide access to mental health professionals as a benefit of employment?**



**Aspects of police work that most impact physical health**

Survey respondents were also asked to comment on which aspects of their work as a police officer most impacted their physical health. The most common responses were their *schedules* (n=133) and *stress* (n=108). Their schedules and stress were often paired together: “the hours and stress”; “constant raised stress levels, always being on call, less time completely off than other jobs”; “Long days and high stress environment.” Other aspects of their work that impacted respondents’ physical health (in decreasing frequency) included *lack of sleep and/or exhaustion* (n=53),

extended periods of sitting at a desk or in a cruiser (n=49), poor nutrition and diet, due in part to the schedule (n=30), and exposure to violence and/or traumatic scenarios (n=22). Below are example comments of each.

**Table 4: Impacts on physical health**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Example comment</b>
Scheduling	“Lack of consistent schedule, long days and random hours, stress and hormones.”
Stress	“Stress from dealing with complaints, judicial system, not sure of what is required or expected in certain situations.”
Lack of sleep and/or exhaustion	“Lack of sleep on overnights, causes you to eat more. You’re tired all the time, so you stop working out because of how tired you are, and your overall physical health goes down the drain which causes your mental health to take a hit.”
Extended periods of sitting at a desk or in a cruiser	“I certainly do not get in as many steps as I would like. The patrol function involves a lot of sitting in the patrol vehicle and then sitting to type a report.”
Poor nutrition and diet, due in part to the schedule	“Long hours, having to eat not so healthy food due to lack of time.”
Exposure to violence and/or traumatic scenarios	“Emotional stress effects physical – exposure to critical incidents.”

**Barriers to maintain or improve physical health**

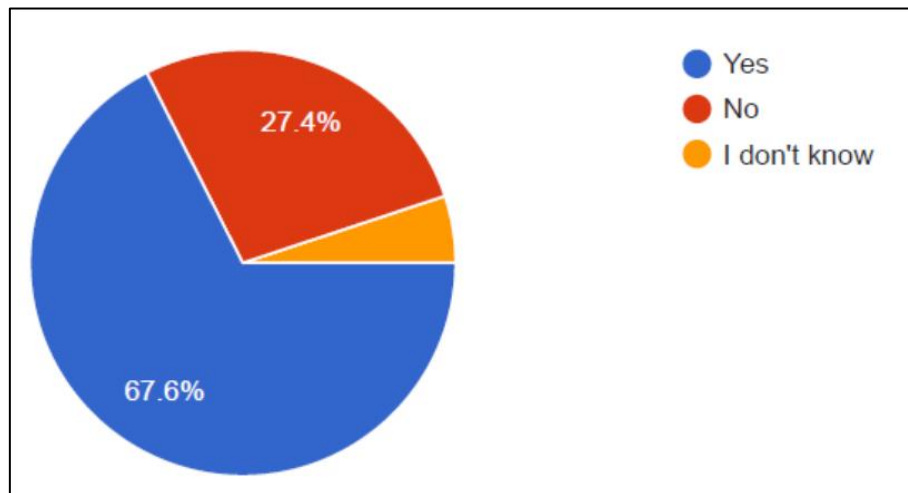
Overwhelmingly, respondents felt that *time was the greatest barrier to maintaining or improving their physical health* (n=174). Of those who elaborated, *their work schedule was the most time-limiting factor*: “Inconsistency of schedule – working out before versus after shift, being on call makes working out at times difficult”; “schedule restrictions, not being able to do so during work hours and long shifts are prohibitive”; “Work hours / lots of overtime / the extra effort it takes to eat healthier when time is already tight.”

Other common noted barriers included *self-motivation* (n=41) and *tiredness* (n=36). Lastly, fewer respondents indicated some other barriers including *rurality, a lack of education or awareness of physical health, and existing injuries or chronic conditions*.

**Access to physical fitness programs**

Survey respondents were also asked if their employer provided access to physical fitness programs/centers as a benefit of employment. Most respondents (n=279) said that their employer does provide access to physical fitness programs or centers, 113 respondents said “no,” and 21 respondents said they did not know, Figure 7.

**Figure 7: Does your employer provide access to physical fitness programs/centers as a benefit of employment?**



Even for respondents who replied “yes,” some factors limited their access, including rurality, poor departmental gym equipment, and inadequate stipends that cannot fully reimburse gym memberships.

Among those whose employers do not provide access to physical fitness programs or centers, some were able to arrange access through local schools and fire departments.

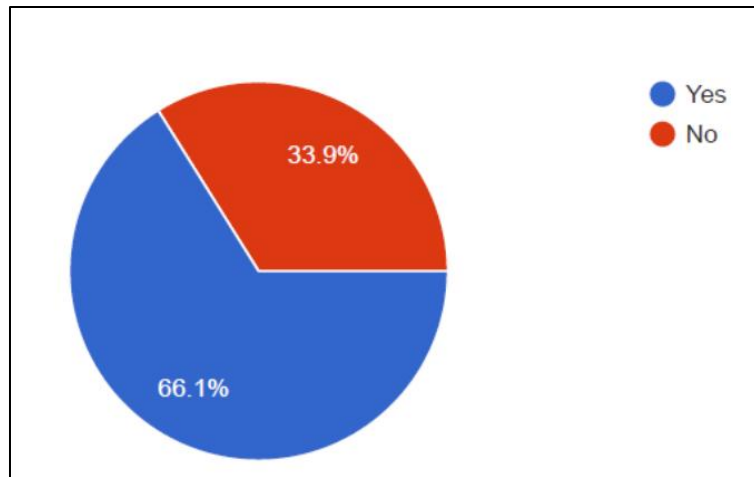
Lastly, several respondents provided recommendations to increase access to physical fitness programs and centers, including adapting departmental policy to allow exercise during their shift, more structured workout classes at the agency, and allowance for stipends to cover online exercise classes, especially in rural areas.

**Factors influencing LEOs decision to stay in or leave the career**

Survey respondents were asked if at any point they had considered leaving their career in law enforcement. Two-thirds of respondents (273 out of 413) confirmed that they had considered leaving their career (Figure 8)



**Figure 8: Have you considered leaving your career in law enforcement?**



Respondents were then asked to describe the factors impacting their decision to stay or leave. Of the factors impacting their decision to stay, *the most significant influence was LEOs’ proximity to retirement*: “The only reason I am staying is to reach my 20 pension”; “I only have 1 year and a half before im eligible to retire and I likely will get done”; “Too close to retirement.”

Interestingly, there were both positive and negative factors influencing LEOs decision to stay in their career. Positive factors influencing LEOs decision to stay included *enjoyment of the work and/or feeling a sense of purpose in the work* (Table 5); however, these factors were mentioned far less frequently than proximity to retirement.

**Table 5: Positive factors influencing LEOs decisions to stay**

<b>Enjoy the work</b>	<b>Feeling a sense of purpose from the work</b>
“I enjoy the job too much to leave.”	“I stay because law enforcement does give me some sense of purpose.”
“Still enjoy investigating crimes.”	“It took me YEARS in order to get into my dream job. I love my job and feel it is the calling god put on my heart.”
“I enjoy what I do and my family supports me.”	“The job is still rewarding to help my community.”

Several LEOs reported that their *perceived lack of skills* beyond law enforcement work influenced their decision to stay: “I am staying for the retirement. I also have few other marketable skills”; “Length of employment and lack of transferable skills/experience”; “stayed because i didn’t know what else I could do.”

Notably, among those who described factors that influenced their decision to stay, many used language to describe *feeling “trapped” by the job* (Table 6).

**Table 6: Feelings of being “trapped” by the job**

“ <i>Imprisoned</i> by investment of time in this job and loss of retirement benefits if I leave but I still look for jobs every day.”
“My decision to stay is because <i>I feel trapped</i> by the mediocre pay, benefits, and retirement.”
“Need money and benefits. skills aren’t transferable. <i>Tied to a pension</i> . Organizational Stress is a big concern and source of stress.”
“I need my retirement so <i>I cannot leave</i> .”

When LEOs described influences to leave, responses were much more spread and diverse, but some common themes included *feeling unsupported or unappreciated by the public and the legislature (n=30)*, *stress (n=28)*, and *their work schedule (n=21)*.

Lastly, some factors could be positive or negative influences on LEOs’ decision to stay in or leave their career, notably *pay, leadership, and work environment*. For respondents, the quality of these factors could make or break their decision to stay, seen in the following quote and in Table 7: “Leaving because of the former Chief and low pay. Staying because of the new Chief and the substantial increase in pay.”

**Table 7: Factors that can be a reason to leave or to stay**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>To leave</b>	<b>To stay</b>
Pay	“Not enough pay for workload”	“I stay for the pay I make.”
Leadership	“Poor leadership, poor Communication and poor management. Has been a factor.”	“My current supportive administration is the only reason I am still in law enforcement.”
Work environment	“Wanting a better quality of life away from a toxic environment.”	“Good work environment in-house, but that could change quickly.”

## APPENDIX 3

### SUICIDE AMONG MAINE LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS, 2015 TO 2022

# Suicide Among Maine Law Enforcement and Correctional Officers, 2015 to 2022

*Prepared by Jamie A. Wren, PhD, MPH  
Project Director, Maine Violent Death Reporting System*

## **Introduction**

Between 2015 and 2022, 1,992 Mainers died by suicide within the State of Maine. Of these decedents, **26** were current or former<sup>1</sup> members of Maine law enforcement or corrections. Twenty-one decedents were state, local or federal law enforcement, while four were correctional officers. This report provides an overview of the demographics and contributing life circumstances of the decedents.

## **Data Sources and Methodology**

Data used in this report comes from the Maine Violent Death Reporting System and is collected from death certificates, medical examiner reports, and law enforcement reports. If information is not presented in these source documents, the Maine Violent Death Reporting System cannot collect it. As such, these data represent a minimum count for circumstances. For privacy purposes, circumstances with counts fewer than five were suppressed.

Law enforcement and correctional officers were identified from the occupation listed on their death certificates. Individuals who left the field either mid-career or through retirement and went on to have a second career that was then reported on their death certificate could not be identified.

This report compares law enforcement and correctional officers to the general population of suicide decedents using a measure known as relative risk. Relative risk measures the risk of an outcome occurring in one group as compared to another. A relative risk of 1.5 means that an outcome in Group A is 1.5 times more likely to occur than in Group B. For example, law enforcement and correctional officers have a relative risk of experiencing a physical health problem that contributed to their death of 1.86 when compared to the general population who die by suicide, meaning that they are 1.86 times more to have a contributing physical health problem than the general population. Relative risks are presented with 95% confidence intervals. Statistically significant values are **bolded**.

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<sup>1</sup> This number only includes those law enforcement and corrections officers who died by suicide who were Maine residents and died within the State of Maine. Members of law enforcement dying outside of Maine are not included in this figure.

*Table 1 Demographics*

	<b>Public Safety Officers n=26</b>	<b>General Population n=1,966</b>	<b>Relative Risk (95% Confidence Interval)</b>
Male	26 (100%)	1,569 (80%)	1.25 (0.85 – 1.84)
Average Age	63.8 years	49.97 years	--
Age 65+	15 (58%)	454	<b>2.50 (1.50 – 4.16)</b>
Ever served in the military	14 (54%)	376 (19%)	<b>2.82 (1.66 – 4.78)</b>

All decedents were white males, 41 to 83 years of age (mean age, 63.8). Law enforcement and correctional officer decedents were significantly more likely to be over the age of 65 (**RR= 2.50**), and significantly more likely to have ever served in the military (**RR= 2.82**).

*Table 2 Circumstances Related to Law Enforcement and Correctional Officer Suicides*

<b>Circumstance<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Among Public Safety Officers Decedents n=26 (%)</b>	<b>Among General Population n=1,966 (%)</b>	<b>Relative Risk (95% Confidence Interval)</b>
Depressed mood	14 (54%)	942 (54%)	1.12 (0.67 - 1.90)
Physical health problem	12 (46%)	487 (25%)	<b>1.86 (1.06 - 3.29)</b>
<i>Physical health problem crisis</i>	5 (42%)	125 (26%)	<b>3.02 (1.24 - 7.36)</b>
Any Crisis (two weeks prior to death)	10 (38%)	625 (32%)	1.21 (0.65 - 2.25)
Intimate partner problem	5 (19%)	488 (25%)	0.77 (0.32 - 1.86)
Mental health diagnosis	5 (19%)	904 (46%)	<b>0.42 (0.17 - 0.98)</b>

Among law enforcement and correctional officers who died by suicide:

- 54% were reported by those around them to have been in a depressed mood at the time of their death.
- 46% were experiencing a physical health problem that appeared to contribute to their death.
  - Among these decedents, 42% were experiencing a physical health crisis, such as a cancer diagnosis or a debilitating stroke.
- 38% experienced any crisis in the two weeks prior to their death, e.g., exacerbation of a physical health problem, the end of a relationship, foreclosure on their home, or termination from their job.

<sup>2</sup> For privacy purposes any circumstance with a count less than 5 has been excluded.

- 19% were experiencing a problem with their intimate partner that contributed to their death, such as a breakup or argument.
- 19% had a diagnosed mental health problem at the time of their death.

### **Summary**

The twenty-six members of law enforcement and corrections that died by suicide in the State of Maine between 2015 and 2022, were significantly more likely to be over the age of 65, have ever served in the military, be experiencing a contributing physical health problem, and related crisis, and were less likely to be diagnosed with a mental health condition when compared to the general population of those who died by suicide.

### **About the Maine Violent Death Reporting System**

The Maine Violent Death Reporting System (MEVDRS) is a program administered by the Maine Office of Chief Medical Examiner and funded by a cooperative agreement from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. MEVDRS collects in-depth circumstantial information surrounding all deaths that result from the intentional use of force against oneself or another that occur within the State of Maine.

### **Limitations of the Data**

**Due to the small sample sizes, interpretation of numbers and data reported should be done with caution. Minor changes in the number of law enforcement and correctional officers could greatly alter this report's findings. Only significant values can be reliably compared with one another.**

## APPENDIX 4

### STATE OF THE STATE SURVEY QUESTIONS

**10-74! To our fellow MAINE Law Enforcement Officers:**

**Are you:**

- An Active **Maine** Chief, Sheriff, Command Staff, Supervisory Staff or MCJA Cadre/Staff
- An **Active** Federal, State, County, Municipal **Maine** Law Enforcement Officer?
- A **Retired** Maine Law Enforcement Officer?
- A **Current** Maine Criminal Justice Academy Cadet?
- A **Maine** Student who is currently enrolled in a post-secondary education track to pursue a career in Law Enforcement?



The Maine legislature in April passed LD2094; “A **Resolve, to Require the Establishment of a Stakeholder Group to Examine and Improve the Recruitment, Retention and Wellness of Law Enforcement Officers**”

The Stakeholder Group was convened on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024 and is comprised of representatives from police labor, LEO command staff, Dept. of Public Safety & MCJA staff, retirees, and first responder medical practitioners.

This is a first of its kind group in Maine and has committed to working collaboratively with all potential partners in addressing the urgent need for LEO wellness, recruitment and retention. We are asking for YOUR help in participating in a groundbreaking survey which will cross all demographics of the Maine Law Enforcement profession only. As fellow first responders, as well as those whose job it is to serve the wellbeing of Maine LEO's your participation is crucial in developing a current, “Boots on the ground” assessment of the state of you, your families and your brothers and sisters throughout the Maine law enforcement family!

The survey is brief, anonymous, and we ask that you provide your honest answers and opinions so that we can show the legislature to absolute imperative to protect and retain the valuable resource that is the Maine Law Enforcement Officer! This will serve as a State of the State when it comes to the health, safety and working conditions of ALL our fellow Maine law enforcement officers.

Follow the link below to take the survey; it is brief, easy to navigate and **completely anonymous!** The stakeholder group, along with your fellow brothers and sisters **THANK YOU!**

**Click on the link below to go to the Survey:**

**<https://forms.gle/FHubv83eq7BNFVER8>**

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEY ON OR BEFORE 11PM SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2024**



# State of the State: Maine Legislative Stakeholder Group on Maine Law Enforcement Recruitment, Retention and Wellness Survey

***COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS - BE HONEST - YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS NEED YOUR HELP - THANK YOU!***

**10-74! We Need Your Help! IF YOU ARE AN ACTIVE STATE, FEDERAL, COUNTY OR MUNICIPAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER IN THE STATE OF MAINE, A RETIRED MAINELAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER, A CURRENT MCJA CADET OR STAFF, OR A MAINE STUDENT IS CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN A POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION TRACK TO PURSUE CAREER IN MAINE LAW ENFORCEMENT - PLEASE CONTINUE ON!**

***PLEASE RESPOND AND COMPLETE THE SURVEY ON OR BEFORE 11:59 PM, SUNDAY NOVEMBER 24TH, 2024***

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, and your responses will remain absolutely anonymous. The purpose is to better understand the factors that impact recruitment, retention, and wellness within the law enforcement profession in Maine. This information is extremely valuable, so please be honest and respectful in your responses. Your responses will be used to make recommendations to the Maine Legislature to address the critical needs of Maine law enforcement for years to come, THANK YOU!

**1. I AM AN:**

Active MAINE LEO

Active Police Chief/Sheriff/L.E. Executive

Active Maine Command, Supervisory or MCJA Cadre/Staff

Retired MAINE LEO

Current Maine Criminal Justice Academy CADET

ACTIVE Student with studies leading to a career in law enforcement

**Active LEO's**

An Active Federal, State, County, Municipal Maine Law Enforcement Officer

2. What is your Age?
3. What is your current marital status?
4. Total Years in Law Enforcement? (Including prior, out of state experience, academy, retired in place or work after retirement)
5. Highest level of education completed?

6. What is your current rank?
7. Was law enforcement your first career? If not, what was your previous career(s) including military service?
8. If you had prior military experience, in which branch did you serve and what was the length of your service?
9. General Comment Section
10. How many law enforcement agencies have you worked for?
11. Please rank your overall job satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being “Very Dissatisfied” and 10 being “Very Satisfied”
12. General Comments Section
13. What possible changes would improve your job satisfaction? (Select all that apply)

- Increased pay
- More public/social/legislative support
- Changes to retirement benefits
- Changes to health insurance
- Changes to fringe benefits
- Changes to work schedules
- Changes/modifications to Academy Requirements
- Other:

14. General Comments

15. Would these changes impact your decision to stay in a law enforcement career?

16. General Comments

17. In your opinion, what barriers are keeping qualified and interested candidates from pursuing a career in law enforcement? –Select in numerical order of importance

- Pay
- Retirement plan/ Benefits
- Public Perception
- Media Coverage of Police
- Possible dangers/Risks
- Schedule
- Academy Training requirements/Structure
- 20–25-year Career commitment
- Work/Life/Family commitments & balance

18. General Comments

19. What behavioral/physical health programs are available to you through your department? (Check all that apply)

- Critical incident debriefs
- Access to Peer Support Team Members as Needed
- Clergy/Chaplain/other Faith Based resource
- EAP
- Family Counseling
- Non- departmental community resources
- Therapy/Comfort/Support animals
- Smartphone App
- In house clinician
- Trainings such as Struggle Well, Mental Armor, or Hypervigilance Roller Coaster
- Physical Fitness/Wellness Incentives
- On duty sleep room
- Technology like Early Intervention software or Guardian Tracking
- Dept. Library with Books on Mental Health
- I don't know
- Other:

20. Comments of Suggestions

21. How satisfied are you with the health/wellness programs offered by your department?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- My department does not offer wellness programs
- Other:

22. General Comments

23. Does your employer provide access to physical fitness programs/centers as a benefit of employment?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

24. General Comments

25. Does your employer provide access to mental health professionals as a benefit of employment?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

26. General Comments

27. Have you received training on how physical and emotional wellness affects job decision-making and performance?

Yes

No

28. If "Yes", please describe

29. In the last year, approximately how many days have you missed from work because of stress, fatigue, or feeling "burned out"?

30. General Comments

31. How have you managed or coped with that stress?

Dept. wellness program

Peer support

Professional counseling (outside of the department)

Exercise or physical activity

Taking time off

Other:

32. General Comments

33. On Average, how many hours of sleep do you get in a 24-hour period? (Select one)

More than 8

6-8

5-6

Less than 5

34. Has stress from your work as a law enforcement officer had a negative impact on your life/family outside of work?

Yes

No

Maybe

35. Comments/Explain

36. In the current environment of your agency, do you feel that if you were experiencing a hardship, crisis or PTSI (Post Traumatic Stress Injury), you would have the full understanding and support of your agency or employer?

Yes

No

Maybe

37. General Comments

38. What aspects of your work as a police officer do you feel impact your physical health the most?

39. Comments/Explain

40. What are the biggest barriers to taking steps to maintain or improve your physical health?

41. Comments/Explain

42. Have you considered leaving your career in Law Enforcement? Please describe the factors impacting your decision to stay or leave.

Yes

No

43. General Comments

44. What changes could be made that would improve recruitment, retention, and overall health and wellness for law enforcement in the state of Maine?

45. With your experiences now, would you recommend a career in law enforcement?

Yes

No

Maybe

46. General Comments

47. Are there any other comments or information you would like to add?

**Active Maine Chief, Sheriff or Chief Law Enforcement Officer**

An Active Maine Chief, Sheriff, Command, Supervisory or MCJA Cadre/Staff

48. What is your Age?

49. What is your current marital status?

50. Total Years in Law Enforcement? (Including prior, out-of-state experience, academy, retired in place or work after retirement)

51. Post Maine academy certification, how long have you been a full-time Maine law enforcement officer?

1-5 Years

5-10 Years

10-15 Years

15-20 Years

20-25 years

25 - 30 Years

More than 30 Years

52. Current Rank and/or Position?

Chief  
Deputy Chief  
Sheriff  
Chief Deputy  
US Marshall  
Special Agent in Charge

53. Highest level of education completed?

GED or Equivalency  
High School/Vocational  
Associates Degree  
Bachelor's Degree  
Master's Degree  
Doctorate Degree  
Other:

54. Was law enforcement your first career? If not, what was your previous career(s), including military service?

55. If you had prior military experience, in which branch did you serve, and what was the length of your service?

56. How many law enforcement agencies have you worked for throughout your career?

57. How large is your department (Sworn Officers)?

58. How long have you served as the Chief Law Enforcement Officer?

59. As chief, do you have a specific line item in your budget dedicated to officer wellness/mental health?

Yes  
No

60. Does your department provide any of the following wellness/mental health programs? (Check all that apply)

Employment Assistance Program  
Department Funded Mental Health Clinician  
Annual Paid Mental Health Check-Ups  
Peer Support  
Critical Incident Stress Management, or "CISM"  
Physical Fitness Incentives  
On-Duty Sleep Room  
Comfort/Support Animals  
Technology like Early Intervention software or Guardian Tacking  
Dept. Library with Books on Mental Health  
Educational opportunities for employees and significant others (family nights, classes onmental health)  
Other:

61. General Comments

62. What are the biggest obstacles to providing these programs or officers engaging them?  
Check all that apply.

- Funding
- Culture/Stigma
- Time off to attend/participate
- Unsure of what resources are available or what to offer
- Other:

63. General Comments

64. Have you received leadership-specific training regarding the impact officers' emotional and physical health has on the performance, safety, and fiscal health of a department, as well as how to protect officer health and wellness?

- Yes
- No

65. General Comments

66. Do supervisors in your department have specific training on how to identify and support officers under their command who may be experiencing compassion fatigue, cumulative stress, traumatic stress injuries, substance abuse or other mental health-related challenges?

- Yes
- No

67. General Comments

68. Do supervisors have training in how to identify a potentially traumatic event with protocols in place to lessen the impact of these events and help prevent stress injuries?

- Yes
- No

69. General Comments

70. Does your department have any mandatory policies for all personnel that highlight the importance of prioritizing mental health?

- Yes
- No

71. General Comments

72. How many officers have you lost in the last 5 years that left the profession all together?

73. General Comments

74. How many officers have you lost in the last 5 years due to substance abuse or officer misconduct?

75. General Comments

76. How many officers are you currently down?

77. How often are individual officers "forced" in to work per month? – Check One

1-3 times per month

4-7 times per month

7-10 times per month

Over 10 times per month

Other:

78. Does your department have an emergency plan in place that addresses an officer with urgent mental health needs?

Yes

No

79. General Comments

80. Do you think an employer managed "EAP" program adequately serves the needs of addressing officer wellness/mental health?

Yes

No

81. General Comments

82. Do you think benefit providers, such as Worker's Compensation or Maine Public Employees Retirement System, are equipped to address emergent and changing needs of officers injured in duty-related mental health injuries, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disease?

Yes

No

83. General Comments

84. Have you, as the chief law enforcement officer of your organization, utilized the wellness/mental health resources made available to your department's employees?

Yes

No

85. General Comments

86. In your opinion, what barriers are keeping qualified and interested candidates from pursuing a career in law enforcement? –Select in numerical order of importance  
Check all that apply.



Pay  
Retirement plan/Benefits  
Public perception of Police  
Media Coverage of Police  
Possible dangers/Risks  
Schedule  
Academy Training Requirements/Structure  
20–25-year career commitment  
Work/Life/Family commitments & balance

87. General Comments

88. Are there any other comments or information you would like to add?

**Active Maine Command, Supervisory or MCJA Cadre/Staff**

89. What is your Age?

90. What is your current marital status?

Single  
Married  
Divorced  
Other

91. Total Years in Law Enforcement? (Including prior out of state experience, academy, retired in place or work after retirement)

92. Post Maine academy certification, how long have you been a full time, Maine law enforcement officer?

1-5 Years  
5-10 Years  
10-15 Years  
15-20 Years  
20-25 years  
25 - 30 Years  
More than 30 Years

93. Current Rank and/or Position?

94. How long have you served in either a command, supervisory, or as a MCJA cadre?

95. Was law enforcement your first career? If not, what was your previous career(s) including military service?

96. If you had prior military experience, in which branch did you serve and what was the length of your service?

97. How many law enforcement agencies have you worked for?

98. What is the full complement of positions in the department that you lead or are a supervisor?

99. Have you received leadership-specific training regarding the impact officers' emotional and physical health has on the performance, safety, and fiscal health of a department, as well as how to protect officer health and wellness?

Yes  
No

100. As a supervisor/command staff or Cadre, do you have specific training on how to identify and support officers under their command who may be experiencing compassion fatigue, cumulative stress, traumatic stress injuries, substance abuse or other mental health related challenges?

Yes  
No

101. General Comments

102. Does your department have any mandatory policies for all personnel that highlight the importance of prioritizing mental health?

Yes  
No

103. General Comments

104. How many officers have you lost in the last 5 years that left the profession altogether?

105. General Comments

106. How many officers have you lost in the last 5 years due to substance abuse or officer misconduct?

107. General Comments

108. How often are individual officers "forced" in to work per month? – Check One

1-3 times per month  
4-7 times per month  
7-10 times per month  
Over 10 times per month  
Other:

109. Does your department have an emergency plan in place that addresses an officer with urgent mental health needs?

Yes  
No

110. General Comments

111. Do you think an employer-managed "EAP" program adequately serves the needs of addressing officer wellness/mental health?

Yes  
No

112. General Comments

113. Do you think benefit providers, such as Worker's Compensation or Maine Public Employees Retirement System, are equipped to address emergent and changing needs of officers injured in duty-related mental health injuries, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disease?

Yes  
No

114. General Comments

115. Have you, as a supervisor/command staff/cadre of your organization, utilized the wellness/mental health resources made available to your department's employees?

Yes  
No

116. General Comments

117. In your opinion, what barriers are keeping qualified and interested candidates from pursuing a career in law enforcement? (Select in numerical order of importance)  
Check all that apply.

Pay  
Retirement/Benefits  
Public perception of police  
Media coverage of police  
Possible danger/risks  
Schedule  
Academy training/structure  
Career commitment of 20-25 years  
Work/Life/Family commitments & balance

118. General Comments

119. Are there any other comments or information you would like to add?

**Retired Maine LEO's**

120. What is your Age?

121. What is your current marital status?

122. Total Years in Law Enforcement? (including prior, out of state experience academy, retired in place or work after retirement)

123. Post Maine academy certification, how long were you a full time, Maine law enforcement officer?

- 1-5 Years
- 5-10 Years
- 10-15 Years
- 15-20 Years
- 20-25 years
- 25 - 30 Years
- More than 30 Years

124. Your rank at your time of retirement?

125. Highest level of education completed?

- GED or Equivalency
- High School/Vocational
- Associates Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate Degree
- Other:

126. Was law enforcement your first career? If not, what was your previous career(s) including military service?

127. If you had prior military experience, in which branch did you serve and what was the length of your service?

128. How many law enforcement agencies have you worked for throughout your career?

129. I have retired from a;

- State Agency
- Municipal Agency
- County Agency
- Other:

130. What age were you when you retired?

131. How many years of service did you complete on retirement?

132. Was your retirement voluntary (As prescribed by your specific retirement plan), or medically necessary (Disability, etc.)?

- Voluntary
- Medical/Disability
- Other:

133. How many years of service were required for retirement under your specific plan?

134. Did you use military time to add towards your creditable years of service in your retirement system?

Yes  
No  
N/A

135. Comment/Explain (whether yes or no)

136. Was the process to calculate military time overly complex and/or cost prohibitive for you? Why? (Please explain in the "comments" section.

Yes  
No  
N/A

137. General Comments

138. Does your retirement plan provide you with access to either a paid or with a small retiree contribution access to health insurance until age 65 (Medicare age)?

Yes  
No

139. General Comments

140. Do you receive a Medicare supplement (Part C) plan through your retirement benefits when you turn 65?

Yes  
No

141. General Comments

142. Does your plan pay the current, per month Medicare premiums?

Yes  
No

143. Do you receive an annual COLA (Cost of living adjustment) on your retirement benefits?

Yes  
No

144. Is that COLA (Cost of living adjustment) restricted to a dollar amount of your overall retirement benefit?

Yes  
No  
I don't know

145. Is your retirement plan one of the following? (Select one)

Defined benefit (MPERS or similar)

Non-Defined (401K or similar)

Other:

146. General Comments

147. Do your retirement benefits alone sustain you financially?

Yes

No

148. General Comments

149. Do you need to work to maintain your pre-retirement lifestyle?

Yes

No

Maybe (Not currently working but re-evaluating because of economic concerns)

150. General Comments

151. Is that employment full or part-time?

Full time

Part-time

Other:

152. Were you able to acclimate your law enforcement career skills to your private-sector employment?

Yes

No

N/A

153. General Comments

154. Were you offered job training assistance by the organization you retired from, or did you seek job training after retirement to assist in finding private-sector employment?

Yes

No

155. General Comments

156. Are you subject to the Social Security Windfall Elimination Tax on Social Security benefits you earned?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

157. Are you currently also receiving Social Security disability (SSDI) payments along with your retirement benefits?

- Yes
- No

158. Are you provided free First Responder mental health services post-retirement such as EAP, Peer Support, Retiree support groups, or other counseling services?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

159. Does your spouse or partner have access to these services?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

160. Would you utilize such free services if they were made available to you and your spouse/partner?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

161. How have your years of service as a Maine LEO impacted your health (mental and physical) in retirement?

162. During the course of your career at your agency, do you feel that if you were experiencing a hardship, crisis or PTSI (Post Traumatic Stress Injury), you would have the full understanding and support of your agency or employer?

- Yes
- No

163. General Comments

164. Please list any challenges you have experienced in your retirement that you believe need to be addressed for current and future retirees.

165. Given your experience in both your career and in retirement, would you recommend a career in law enforcement to others?

Yes

No

Maybe

166. Are there any other comments or information you would like to add?

### **Current Maine Criminal Justice Academy CADET**

167. What is your age?

168. What is your current marital status?

Single

Married

Divorced

Other:

169. What was the primary motivation/reason that you pursued a career as a law enforcement officer?  
(Select only one)

Pay

Retirement/Benefits

Calling to serve

Family influence/tradition/legacy

Prior interactions with law enforcement

Prestige or authority

Other:

170. General Comments

171.

In your opinion, what barriers are keeping qualified and interested candidates from pursuing a career in law enforcement? (Select in numerical order of importance)

Pay

Retirement/Benefits

Public perception of Police

Media coverage of police

Possible danger/risks

Schedule

Academy training/structure

Career commitment of 20-25 years

Work/Life/Family commitments & balance

172. General Comments

173. What week are you currently in with your MCJA training?



174. On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being “Completely Unexpected” and 10 being “Met personal expectations” how would you rate your experience to date as a cadet at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy?

175. General Comments

176. From the start of your training to date, what if any time or material pertaining to officer wellness and/or mental health have you received?

177. General Comments

178. On a scale of 1-10, with one being “Not at All Important” and 10 being “Very Important,” how would you rate the importance of having resources/training relating to officer and family wellness?

179. General Comments

180. Do you feel there’s a connection to an officer’s physical fitness and their mental health over their career? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being “Not at All Important” and 10 being “Very Important”

181. General Comments

182. Would you access wellness resources if they were made available to you during your training at the Academy?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

183. General Comments

184. Does your employer (MCJA sponsor) provide access to physical fitness gyms/centers as a benefit of employment?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

185. Does your employer (MCJA sponsor) provide access to mental health professionals as a benefit of employment?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

186. Was there an emphasis made during your hiring process on the organization’s approach to an officer’s physical and mental wellness?

- Yes
- No

187. General Comments

188. What was the #1 factor in your decision to join your MCJA sponsor's law enforcement organization?

189. If any, what were any other factors that led to your decision? Please list them here)

190. Are there any other comments or information you would like to add?

**ACTIVE Student with studies leading to a career in law enforcement**

**A Maine Student who is currently enrolled in a post-secondary education track to pursue a career in Law Enforcement**

191. What is your age?

192. What is your current marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Other:

193. Are you currently enrolled in a course of study specifically geared towards a career in law enforcement?

- Yes
- No

194. What criminal justice related course of study are you majoring in?

195. What post-secondary school are you pursuing your degree?

196. What is your current level of education

- High School
- Technical or Trade College - Associate Degree
- Four-year college program - Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree Program
- Doctorate Degree Program

197. Please rank your overall experience in your post-secondary (college/technical college) thus far in preparation for a career in law enforcement on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being "Very Dissatisfied" and 10 being "Very Satisfied".

198. General Comments

199. What was the primary motivation/reason that you pursued a career as a law enforcement officer?  
(Select one)

- Pay and benefits
- Action or specialty training/units
- Commitment to public service
- Respect or recognition
- Authority
- Other:

200. General Comments

201. Have you participated in informational events or organizations geared towards law enforcement?  
Such as (Check all that apply)

- Citizen's Police Academy
- Ride Along
- Cadet, or Explorer Program
- Volunteer work with a law enforcement agency
- Grade or high school project
- DARE or other programs
- Other:

202. In your opinion, what barriers are keeping qualified and interested candidates from pursuing a career in law enforcement? (Select in numerical order of importance)

- Pay
- Retirement/Benefits
- Public perception of Police
- Media coverage of Police
- Possible danger/risks
- Schedule
- Academy training/structure
- Career commitment of 20-25 years
- Work/Life/Family commitments & balance

203. On a scale of 1-10 with 1 being "Not at All Important" and 10 being "Very Important" how would you rate the importance of having resources/training relating to officer and family wellness?

204. Do you feel there's a connection to an officer's physical fitness and their mental health over their career? Please rate on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "Not at All important" and 10 being "Very Important"

205. If you were hired as a law enforcement officer and were presently at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy as a cadet, would you access wellness resources if they were made available to you during your training at the Academy?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

206. General Comments

207. Does your school/college provide access to physical fitness gyms/centers as a student benefit?

Yes

No

I don't know

208. General Comments

209. Does your school/college provide access to mental health professionals as a student benefit?

Yes

No

I don't know

210. General Comments

211. Is there an emphasis being made in your specific curriculum focusing on an officer's physical and mental wellness?

Yes

No

I don't know

212. General Comments

213. Are there any other comments or information you would like to add?

## APPENDIX 5

### SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTION FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT WELLNESS COORDINATOR

## **SUMMARY OF POSITION**

<b><u>Recommendation:</u></b>	Create 1 (one) new full-time position.
<b><u>Department:</u></b>	Maine Department of Public Safety
<b><u>Division:</u></b>	Maine Criminal Justice Academy
<b><u>Classification:</u></b>	MCJA Law Enforcement Wellness Coordinator
<b><u>Type:</u></b>	Desk

### **BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION:**

The establishment of the MCJA Law Enforcement Wellness Coordinator is requested to assist in developing, fostering and enhancing initiatives within the Academy to strengthen. This role involves collaborative efforts with law enforcement, corrections personnel, and organizations to deliver top-tier training in the criminal justice system.

The coordinator is tasked with fostering a work environment built on mutual respect, support, and trust while advancing policies for public safety. Their responsibilities span training coordination for various programs, data entry, records management, ADA compliance, lesson plan development, and collaboration with computer program vendors. A crucial aspect is the ability to teach in MCJA courses and undertake travel as necessary.

The MCJA Law Enforcement Wellness Coordinator must possess a comprehensive situational awareness of the Academy's operations, training standards, certification requirements, and have proficient knowledge of Microsoft Office and the Academy Records Management System.

This position is pivotal in ensuring the Academy's commitment to excellence in law enforcement and corrections training – as the MCJA is the only law enforcement program in Maine that trains and certifies police officers.

### **Primary purpose of The Position (Why does it exist?):**

The MCJA Law Enforcement Wellness Coordinator works with the entire Academy staff as a team player, who, together with law enforcement and corrections personnel and organizations, peer support networks, clinicians and similar organizations, work to provide the highest level of training in the criminal justice system which promote leadership, individual officer, group and organizational wellness, advance policies and procedures developed in the interest of MCJA cadet, certified officer and executive resiliency in career health and wellness; encourage cooperation and coordination among criminal justice agencies and providers; and performs all training coordination duties for the BLETP, BCTP and in-service training programs specific to long term officer health and wellness, as well as handle all the data entry for any training or certification, handle records requests, ADA issues, lesson plan development, work with computer program vendors, and teach in MCJA courses when needed. This position also requires some travel as these duties may be needed in other parts of the State.

**List the types of decisions THE POSITION has authority to make:**

There are no responsibilities that are assigned to the MCJA Training Coordinator that involve supervision, however the responsibilities delegated to this position would fall into the same classification(s) as current MCJA Training Coordinators already established.

**In your own words, list knowledge and abilities essential to The Position:**

It is required that the MCJA Support and Resilience Coordinator have a situational awareness of the Academy's functions and operation, both on the law enforcement and corrections side, as it relates to training standards, Board of Trustees certification requirements, courses offered and a working knowledge of all training programs and Academy policies. It is also essential to have a situational awareness of all the operational guidelines for the Academy Records Management System, the filing system, and a very good grasp of Microsoft Office. It is essential to have a situational awareness of ADA rules and specifics to the criminal justice areas assigned, such as the BLETP, BCTP, in-service training programs, and all Board of Trustees Certifications, including the paperwork required for each of these programs.

**In your own words, list THE POSITION tasks & responsibilities:**

- 1 Schedules coordinates, and evaluates law enforcement and corrections training courses in order to ensure effective training programs.
- 2 Instructs students in specialty areas in order to deliver training courses.
- 3 Researches and identifies new and changing training materials and courses, including developing/enhancing peer support training programs, health and wellness best practices for cadets, law enforcement and corrections, supervisory, executive, their retirees and cadre in order to ensure course materials are current.
- 4 Administers and oversees a communication network of law enforcement, corrections, peer support, their retirees, chiefs, sheriffs, training districts and other providers, to create a cooperative, responsive and informed cadre of parties in addressing general wellness and trauma response and general wellness related resources.
- 5 Identifies and selects instructors for unit courses in order to provide qualified instructors and providers.
- 6 Evaluates instructor performance in order to ensure compliance with established instructional standards.

7 Monitors and assesses the training provided to cadets, law enforcement and corrections, supervisory, executive, their retirees and cadre in order to identify and implement updates, changes, or new best practices in addressing officer support wellness.

8 Designs program evaluation and performance methods for cadets, law enforcement and corrections, supervisory, executive, their retirees and cadre and other users in order to measure training effectiveness.

9 Develops and writes grant proposals for training programs in order to secure necessary funding.

10 Serves as the EEO/ADA officer in order to handle discrimination complaints and responds to request for accommodations.

11 Counsels and assists cadets, law enforcement and corrections, supervisory, executive, their retirees and cadre, individually and in groups in order to provide support, referrals to relevant providers, general guidance and serve as a mentor or first line of support.

12 Organizes, arranges, and coordinates with clinicians, other health providers and peer support networks to develop a standing and credible list of culturally competent resources for addressing ongoing and immediate needs for cadets, law enforcement and corrections offices and executives needing assistance in access to providers and services within their established network(s).

13 Serves as a resource's liaison to the Board of Trustees in matters concerning overall cadet, law enforcement, corrections, supervisory, executive and cadre health and wellness as it impacts the Board's duties and responsibilities.

14. Negotiates agreements with institutions of higher learning in order to provide Academy approved Law Enforcement Preservice (LEPS) courses and to train law enforcement officers off site (only minimal contact).

15 Enters into rental and leasing agreements with outside agencies in order to facilitate identification, negotiation, development, and occupation of leased space (only minimal contact).

16 Oversees the MCJA facility and makes operational decisions in order to provide coverage in the absence of superiors (only when the Director, Assistant Director, or Office Associate II Supervisor are away).

17 Create and use varied correspondence formats and compose standard business correspondence.