

# FITNESS *Program* DEVELOPMENT Considerations



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The IACP is known for its commitment to shaping the future of the police profession. Through timely research, programming, and unparalleled training opportunities, the IACP is preparing current and emerging police leaders — and the agencies and communities they serve — to succeed in addressing the most pressing issues, threats, and challenges of the day.

The IACP is a not-for-profit 501c(3) organization headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia. The IACP is the publisher *The Police Chief* magazine, the leading periodical for law enforcement executives and host of the IACP Annual Conference, the largest police educational and technology exposition in the world. IACP membership is open to law enforcement professionals of all ranks, as well as non-sworn leaders across the criminal justice system. Learn more about the IACP at [www.theIACP.org](http://www.theIACP.org).



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# **FITNESS** *Program* **DEVELOPMENT** **Considerations**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING A FITNESS PROGRAM</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>PROGRAM DESIGN AND STANDARDS</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Fitness Exercise Program Essentials .....	<b>6</b>
Health-Contingent Wellness Programs .....	<b>7</b>
<b>LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Workplace Legislation .....	<b>8</b>
Liability .....	<b>8</b>
<b>ASSEMBLING YOUR TEAM AND RESOURCES</b> .....	<b>8</b>
External Stakeholders .....	<b>8</b>
Local Government .....	<b>8</b>
Medical Professionals .....	<b>9</b>
Police Unions and Fraternal Organizations .....	<b>9</b>
Business Owners and Community Members .....	<b>9</b>
Internal Stakeholders .....	<b>9</b>
Officers .....	<b>9</b>
Fitness Coordinator .....	<b>10</b>
<b>EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT PLAN</b> .....	<b>11</b>
Leadership .....	<b>11</b>
Communication .....	<b>12</b>
Participatory Incentives .....	<b>12</b>
<b>DATA TRACKING AND EVALUATION</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Program Data Collection and Management .....	<b>13</b>
<b>PHYSICAL FITNESS TESTING AND ASSESSMENT DATA</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Employee Risk Assessment .....	<b>13</b>
Annual Fitness Evaluation .....	<b>14</b>
<b>MOVING FORWARD</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>RESOURCES</b> .....	<b>16</b>

# CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING A FITNESS PROGRAM

The IACP and BJA Reducing Officer Injuries study found that physically fit officers are less prone to injury and illness and miss less time on the job. Along with proper nutrition and other wellness programs, law enforcement agency fitness programs keep officers healthy and safe from recruitment to retirement. This checklist outlines the considerations and action steps recommended to start and maintain an agency-wide fitness program.

## PROGRAM DESIGN AND STANDARDS

- Review fitness essentials and health-contingent wellness program considerations
- Review liability considerations with legal counsel
  - Confirm fitness policy alignment with agency, local, state, and national policy
  - Create program liability forms
- Assemble team
  - External Stakeholders
    - Elected officials
    - Local government departments (i.e. health and recreation)
    - Medical professionals
    - Union/Fraternal Police Association
    - Business owners – especially fitness and wellness professionals
    - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Internal Stakeholders
    - Officers
    - Fitness Coordinator
    - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify resources
  - Who will lead the program internally \_\_\_\_\_
  - What is the budget and what sources will cover it \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - What facilities and equipment will employees use for workouts \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT PLAN

- Confirm leadership participation and support at all levels
- Develop a communication plan
- Set goals and benchmarks
- Plan for recognition of employee success



# INTRODUCTION

**L**aw enforcement working conditions and exposure to stress and trauma places officers at a greater risk for health-related injuries and illnesses than the general public. Research has shown that police officers are more likely to be obese and more likely to have metabolic syndromes, including high blood pressure, high blood sugar, and abnormal cholesterol<sup>1</sup>. They are also at an increased risk for heart attacks and sleep disorders<sup>2</sup>. These issues pose a serious risk to officers' personal health and wellbeing and can also affect officers' ability to do their job safely and effectively.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) are committed to providing law enforcement professionals with the resources they need to remain healthy and safe every shift, every day. In 2009, the IACP and BJA released the *Reducing Officer Injuries Final Report*<sup>3</sup> ([www.theiacp.org/ROI](http://www.theiacp.org/ROI)). This study found a critical link between officer weight, fitness, and risk of injury on the job:

- Officers who had reported healthy weights (as categorized by a healthy body mass index score<sup>4</sup>) missed almost half as many days of work after an injury as those who were overweight and almost four times fewer days than those who were obese.
- Officers who engaged in fitness training were much less likely to have an injury and less likely to have severe injuries (as defined by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.)

With reduced risk of injury, physically fit officers have better attendance, resulting in reduced personal and work-related medical costs for the agency. The IACP/BJA *Reducing Officer Injuries Final Report* found that the total salary cost of officer injuries, based on hours missed by injured law enforcement officers over the course of a year, averaged \$160,000 per agency. Physically fit employees show greater attention to personal and public safety, increased productivity, and an enhanced ability to perform job-related tasks.<sup>5</sup>

Physical fitness should be a priority in every law enforcement agency – from recruitment to retirement. Building upon the Reducing Officer Injuries study and promising practices from the field, the IACP determined the following considerations for agencies to address in order to start and maintain an agency-wide fitness program:

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- 1 Mark St. Hilaire, "Bcops Study Indicates Police Work May Have Adverse Health Effects," *Law Enforcement Today*, July 18, 2012, <https://www.lawenforcementtoday.com/bcops-study-indicates-police-work-may-have-adverse-health-effects/>
  - 2 Joseph B. Kuhns, Edward R. Maguire, and Nancy R. Leach, "Health, Safety, and Wellness Program Case Studies in Law Enforcement," 2015, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, [https://www.valorforblue.org/Documents/Publications/Public/Health\\_Safety\\_and\\_Wellness\\_Program\\_Case\\_Studies\\_in\\_Law\\_Enforcement.pdf](https://www.valorforblue.org/Documents/Publications/Public/Health_Safety_and_Wellness_Program_Case_Studies_in_Law_Enforcement.pdf)
  - 3 The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), *Reducing Officer Injuries Final Report* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). [http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/IACP\\_ROI\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/IACP_ROI_Final_Report.pdf)
  - 4 "Calculate Your Body Mass Index." National Institutes of Health. [https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose\\_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm).
  - 5 League of Minnesota Cities, "Information Memo Worksite Wellness Programs: Steps for Success," Worksite Wellness Programs Eight Steps, May 16, 2016, <http://lmc.org/media/document/1/worksitewellnessprogramsstepsforsuccess.pdf?inline=true> (accessed July 13, 2016).

- Program design and standards
- Legal and liability issues
- Internal and external stakeholder involvement
- Engagement plans
- Data tracking and evaluation

The ability of sworn officers and civilian staff to consistently perform critical and essential job functions to ensure the public's safety is at the core of policing. If an officer is not in good physical shape they cannot ensure the public's, their colleagues', or their own safety. Prioritizing physical fitness as an agency helps officers be healthier, happier, safer, and better able to perform law enforcement related tasks.

## PROGRAM DESIGN AND STANDARDS

**B**ecause officer fitness is in many ways a personal issue as well as a professional issue, implementing a fitness program is not as simple as opening the doors to a gym facility, rather it requires a mindset and organizational culture that values fitness and wellness. This means that it is essential to be thoughtful in the planning process, incorporate feedback from internal and external stakeholders, and carefully evaluate the program throughout planning and implementation. Ultimately, law enforcement agencies will need to design a program that will work for their specific departments, taking into consideration demographics, internal culture, and individual employee needs.

Setting a strong foundation in program design and standards will lead to easier implementation, increased buy-in, and sustained success. The following structural components should be considered:

- **Staff requirements** – Will the program be mandatory or voluntary for staff? Who will lead the program? What stakeholders, internal and external, will support the program?
- **Fitness access** – Where and when will employees work out?
- **Benchmarks** – What goals will you set – weight loss, level of staff participation, number of workout hours? How often will you assess these goals – weekly, monthly, annually?
- **Engagement and recognition** – What stakeholders, internal and external, will provide support and resources? How will you communicate about the program to employees and external stakeholders? How will you recognize and incentivize success?
- **Evaluation** – How will you track program participation and effectiveness? What data will you track? Will participants take a fitness test?



When starting a fitness program, you do not have to reinvent the wheel. Visit [www.theiacp.org/fitnessconsiderations](http://www.theiacp.org/fitnessconsiderations) for a directory of protocols, waivers, training materials, and other resources developed and shared by law enforcement agencies around the country. If your department has a successful program or sample document to share, contact [officersafety@theiacp.org](mailto:officersafety@theiacp.org).

## **FITNESS EXERCISE PROGRAM ESSENTIALS**

It is important for police executives and command staff members to have a fundamental understanding of the physical readiness of the officers under their command. Fitness programs should incorporate elements that officers need for their day-to-day working conditions, as well as situations that are more physically challenging. Some departments model their programs to reflect standards from national or state agencies, while many design their own standards based on functional fitness methodologies.

There are several key components of fitness training to consider when designing a program.

### **Aerobic Exercise**

A key component of any fitness program will be cardiovascular health, which is achieved through aerobic exercise. Aerobic exercise involves the heart, lungs, and blood vessels. These are the components of the human body that are actively engaged in the process of carrying needed oxygen to body tissue. Running is the activity most frequently associated with cardiovascular health, but there are many other ways to boost the heart rate into the target zone for 20 to 30 minutes. Examples of alternative cardiovascular exercises include rowing, swimming, elliptical, walking, jogging, and team sports. Varying activities keeps participants interested and engaged.

### **Anaerobic Exercise**

These exercises involve a short-term burst of energy rather than pronounced long-term exercise. Anaerobic exercises are explosive in nature, such as wind sprints, timed rowing, and other high intensity interval training. These activities engage the metabolic pathways through the body and build lean muscle mass. This becomes important in situations where police are required to respond quickly to a threat.

### **Strength Training**

Strength training is an important aspect of any fitness program, but it doesn't have to be traditional bench press, squat, and/or shoulder press exercises. Strength or weight training can also be more functional in nature, enabling officers to use the muscle set that would most likely be called upon during the course of a shift. Examples of additional weight training exercises include high-intensity interval training, body-weight exercises, resistance bands, and kettlebells. Muscular strength and muscular endurance are both vital to health, fitness, and overall officer safety.

### **Mobility**

Mobility fitness becomes important as it allows police officers to perform functional movements through a full range of motion. On any given day, police officers will perform a variety of work-related functions that require a vast range of motion and movements. For officers, these movements are second nature, but at times they can result in soft tissue injuries ranging from mild sprains to soft tissue tears. The field often uses the terms mobility and flexibility interchangeably, but mobility involves a degree of core strength, whereas flexibility does not necessarily. Flexibility is a facet of mobility. Exercises that increase mobility are yoga, stretching, and pilates to name a few.

All of the different exercises listed above are only one part of the fitness and wellness picture. Getting proper rest, nutrition, and stress reduction are very important to maintaining overall health. Law enforcement agencies should take a holistic approach to officer safety and wellness. This

means supporting healthy work-life balance by providing training on fitness, nutrition, sleep habits, and health; offering wellness programming that is accessible and meaningful; and emphasizing a culture that values safety, health, and wellness.

## HEALTH-CONTINGENT WELLNESS PROGRAMS

The agency may have officers and/or civilian staff members participate in a health-contingent program that goes beyond just physical fitness. Health-contingent programs reward participants for addressing weight loss, smoking cessation, and many other health-related issues.

Health-contingent wellness programs require an individual to meet a series of requirements related to overall health to obtain a reward. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) requires the following for health-contingent programming:

- Individuals eligible for the program must be given the opportunity to qualify for the program at least once per year.
- The maximum permissible financial benefit for a health-contingent program is 30 percent of the total cost of employee-only coverage under the plan, unless dependents may participate in the wellness program, in which case the maximum possible reward is 30 percent of the total cost of coverage for an employee plus dependents. For programs designed to prevent tobacco use, the maximum permissible reward is 50 percent of the total cost of coverage under the plan.
- The program must be designed to have a reasonable chance of improving the health of, or preventing disease in, participating individuals. The program must not be overly burdensome, cannot be a means for discrimination based on health factors, and must not be highly suspect in the method chosen.
- The full reward must be available to all similarly situated individuals and provide a reasonable alternative standard or a waiver of the otherwise applicable standard for all employees for whom it is unreasonably difficult or medically inadvisable to meet the standard due to a medical condition.
- Health-contingent plan information that describes the wellness program must disclose the availability of the reasonable alternative standard to the plan and, if applicable, the waiver of the otherwise applicable standard.<sup>6</sup>

Any agency thinking about starting a health-contingent wellness program should consult with the agency's legal division for specific guidelines from the Americans with Disability Act for program compliance.



For further information concerning wellness programs, please visit the United States Department of Labor's Wellness Programs website - <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ebsa/laws-and-regulations/laws/affordable-care-act/for-employers-and-advisers/wellness-programs>.

<sup>6</sup> Laine Sklar, "Legal Considerations in Adopting Officer Wellness Programs," Chief's Counsel, *The Police Chief* 81 (March 2014): 16–18 and Prohibiting Discrimination against Participants and Beneficiaries Based on a Health Factor. 45 CFR 146.121.

# LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

## WORKPLACE LEGISLATION

If an agency chooses to implement a fitness program, it is important that the programming does not violate national, state, or local workplace statutes and legislation. Leadership should engage the agency's legal division to make sure that all fitness policies and protocols also meet federal and state workplace guidelines. Agency leadership must keep in mind that there are differences in fitness and wellness programs and, therefore, different criteria are required. For example, if implementing a health-contingent fitness program, a wellness program that requires an individual to meet a series of requirements related to overall health to obtain a reward, there are very specific federal criteria that must be met.

## LIABILITY

Whether using a fitness center within the agency or whether the agency has contracted with a private or a community-owned facility, every agency should provide a usage agreement with a liability release or assumption of risk to each officer or civilian utilizing the fitness center. This agreement should outline facility policies and procedures that all fitness center users must strictly adhere to in order to ensure the safety of themselves and others. The agency's legal counsel can help draft standard liability language. The liability release form should be signed prior to using the fitness facility and kept on file within the department. It is incumbent upon each member to understand the risks involved with exercise and to ask questions if there is some portion of the release they do not understand or if they have any other concerns.

# ASSEMBLING YOUR TEAM AND RESOURCES

**I**nvolving internal and external stakeholders from the beginning is important when planning a fitness program. Partners can provide subject matter expertise, identify potential pitfalls, assist with accessing resources for the program, and support greater buy-in for the program. Beyond the planning stages, these partners can serve as an advisory group to sustain and evaluate the program.

## EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

### Local Government

Local government endorsement of fitness and wellness programs for agencies may benefit the project budget and help with navigating the political and legal landscape. Important advocates may include the mayor, city manager, city council, and other elected officials. The local government may be willing to provide dedicated funding to the efforts when made aware of the possible savings on insurance premiums. Municipal administrators can also help advise on legal issues of liability, program guidelines, and protocols.

Other local government agency partners can be a great resource when it comes to sharing expertise and resources. The local Health Department and Parks and Recreation Department, for example, may be able to assist with access to facilities and knowledge about fitness programming.

## Medical Professionals

For liability purposes, all fitness participants should seek formal medical clearance prior to engaging in physical fitness exercise. Even though many of the participants might already be exercising on a regular basis, the agency benefits by having all participants medically cleared. The IACP offers a [checklist](#) of recommended questions officers can pose to their physicians addressing common medical concerns affecting law enforcement personnel.<sup>7</sup> Engaging partners from, doctor's groups, universities, emergency medical services, fitness centers, community centers, and health insurance companies may aid in facilitating these medical screenings for the department.

Medical professionals might also be willing to help the department with any program data collection or testing oversight as the program continues. Data will ultimately show the success of the program's efforts, and medical or university partners can act as unbiased entities to collect and analyze the data for the department.

## Police Unions and Fraternal Organizations

It is important to include these organizations in the early planning discussions concerning the fitness program, regardless of whether the program that is being developed is voluntary in nature or not. Forging strong relationships with the unions and fraternal organizations will greatly improve support and participation in the program, particularly if the long-term goal is to make the program mandatory.

## Business Owners and Community Members

Community members and business owners be great partners in planning the program, offering training, and providing resources and donations. Those who are in the health and fitness industry may be able to provide training for staff on exercise routines, health risk prevention, and proper sleep habits. Given the critical connection between fitness and nutrition, community members and business owners in the restaurant and nutrition industry can be good partners to provide training on preparing healthy meals and snacks. The IACP [Eating Right on the Go](#) tip sheet<sup>8</sup> is a good starting point for learning about nutritional recommendations for officers.

If the department does not have access to a fitness facility, it may be able to contract with a local health club for facility use. If using an external source, engage the business owner in conversations early to keep all parties focused on the mutual needs for the program. Privately owned fitness facilities may have different or more stringent contracts that are necessary for use agreement. Agencies might have to develop more in-depth contract terms. Specifically, agencies should consider hours of operation, liability, instruction, and length of contract.

## INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

### Officers

The success of a fitness program depends on having officer engagement and participation, and the best way to support engagement is to have officers involved from the beginning. Selecting officers from various ranks will ensure that all perspectives and needs are incorporated when

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7 International Association of Chiefs of Police, "Health Watch: Checking in for Duty," August 2015. <http://www.theiacp.org/SearchResults/tabid/87/Default.aspx?Search=officer%20safety>

8 International Association of Chiefs of Police, "Health Watch: Eating Well On the Go – Officers' Guide," October 2014, [http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/ROI/HealthyWatch-trifold10\\_web.pdf](http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/ROI/HealthyWatch-trifold10_web.pdf)

determining the program design. It is helpful to engage officers who show a personal interest in fitness, as they will be a motivating force for the planning team and for the rest of the officers upon program implementation.

## Fitness Coordinator

Having a strong leader who can lead the planning and implementation of the fitness program is an important consideration. Many agencies have success with selecting an in-house fitness coordinator in a full- or part-time capacity. The agency may hire a professional with appropriate credentials to take on this role, or look within the department to choose an existing officer or supervisor with this interest and skill set.

Primary roles of a fitness coordinator may include:

- Developing, designing, and implementing the fitness program
- Serving as a program ambassador to help employees meet agency fitness goals and standards
- Providing individual personal training and motivation to assist employees with the proper nutrition, exercise techniques, and recuperative efforts
- Leading agency-wide trainings on health risks for officers and recommendations for improving diet, fitness, and sleep habits.
- Managing program and participant records
- Tracking baseline fitness evaluations of employees and ongoing fitness statistics to evaluate the impact of the program
- Sharing program successes with leadership and staff

The coordinator can encourage lifestyle changes with sworn members and civilian staff through direct interaction, education, fitness, and nutrition supervision. In choosing a fitness coordinator, leadership should make sure that the individual embodies the culture and attitude of what the department is trying to achieve with the fitness program. Staying current on fitness requirements and best practices is important, and agency leadership has the responsibility to provide the coordinator with the time and availability to continue fitness education to maintain certifications and annual training requirements.

Due to budget restraints, law enforcement agencies may feel as though a fitness coordinator is out of their price range. Research shows that it is often worth the investment, as physically fit officers save the department money by reducing injuries, medical costs, and overtime. According to the IACP/BJA Reducing Officer Injuries study, the average total salary cost of injuries based on hours missed by injured law enforcement officers over the course of a year was \$160,000 per agency.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), *Reducing Officer Injuries Final Report* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, 2009). [http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/IACP\\_ROI\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/IACP_ROI_Final_Report.pdf)

# EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT PLAN

**B**ecause fitness programs may require a shift in agency culture and, in some cases, the personal mindset of officers, special care should be taken to make the program inviting and engaging for all to encourage participation. Some successful program characteristics that departments have used include:

- **Ease of access** – Officers have long, busy days, and they often find it challenging to find time to work out. The easier agencies can make it for officers to participate, the more likely they are to do so. It is helpful to provide:
  - Gym and fitness resource availability during late night and early morning hours that accommodate all shift workers
  - On-duty time for officers to work out
  - A range of workout options, including one-on-one sessions and group classes
  - Internal employee wellness webpages, email blasts, or bulletin boards with fitness, wellness, and nutrition information and regular updates
- **Motivation** – Setting goals, providing incentives, and recognizing success are important considerations for getting staff invested in the goals of the program. Officers have personal and professional reasons for engaging in fitness activities, so it is important to account for these different levels of motivation. Consider providing:
  - Education on the unique health risks officers face and the benefits of wellness
  - Personal and agency goal setting
  - Fitness instruction training and certifications for those who want to teach other officers
  - Agency recognitions at roll call, special events, and on social media
  - Promotions, days off, or monetary bonuses for successfully meeting goals
- **Support and fun** – Exercise can often feel like an obligation for officers, especially through a workplace fitness program. With this in mind, fitness programs should aim to incorporate activities that are fun and engaging. These activities can promote wellness, while also supporting camaraderie amongst officers and enhancing job satisfaction. Consider:
  - Friendly competitions to keep personnel motivated
  - Workouts with the chief, mayor, or other notable locals
  - A buddy system with a fellow employee
  - Engaging officers' families and community members
  - Creating an advisory board, with external and internal members, to promote health and wellness

## LEADERSHIP

Getting staff to embrace a new policy, procedure, or task can be challenging. Designing a program that has attractive components to it and is led by a coordinator that is passionate and helpful to others will aid in changing the culture of the agency.

Agency executives must show full support of the program at all times. It is also important for leadership to actively participate in the fitness program and all safety and wellness efforts, as this can influence the acceptance of the programs overall and will begin to alter the culture of the agency to increase the focus of wellness throughout.

## COMMUNICATION

Agency communication, both internal and external, can have a significant impact on fitness programming. The fitness coordinator can work with leadership to develop strong messaging about the benefits of the fitness program to help ease the transition for all. It is important to take care in how wellness, health, nutrition, and stress management programs are presented, as labels and dissemination approaches can affect how receptive officers are to these programs. For example, research shows that officers may be more receptive to “wellness” programs than those labeled “stress management.”<sup>10</sup> Some departments report success with reframing fitness language to be more active and more aligned with performance and tactical advantage versus working out to “feel better.” Language about the fitness and wellness programs should be consistent and readily available in multiple formats. Flyers, brochures, and informational sessions are examples of messaging that can be developed to inform staff of the program and its elements.

Throughout the development and implementation of the program, it is important to keep the lines of communication open. Command staff, governing bodies, or insurance carriers may request input and feedback about the level of program participation; the details of program goals, successes, and shortcomings; and any perceived or proposed modifications. Details of the program should be well documented by either the fitness coordinator or the leadership developing and implementing the programming.

## PARTICIPATORY INCENTIVES

When implementing a fitness program, many agencies find it effective to reward those individuals actively participating. These rewards are designed to motivate officers and civilian employees and boost morale. Several examples of participatory wellness program incentives include but are not limited to the following:

- Reimbursement for all or part of the cost of membership to a fitness center
- Diagnostic testing program that provides a reward for participation and does not base any part of the reward on outcomes
- Donated gift certificates or items from local businesses and community members
- Leave or on duty hours for participation
- Bonuses for successful participation
- Eligibility for promotion

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10 Lum, C., Koper, C.S., Gill, C., Hibdon, J., Telep, C. & Robinson, L. (2016). *An Evidence Assessment of the Recommendations of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing – Implementation and Research Priorities*. Fairfax, VA: Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy, George Mason University. Alexandria, VA: International Association of Chiefs of Police.

# DATA TRACKING AND EVALUATION

## PROGRAM DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Data maintenance and collection is very important for the longevity and value of a fitness program. Data can show what areas of a department's fitness program are working and what may need improving. If the department maintains good data over the progress of a program, the importance of continuing a program can be easily conveyed to local budget managers, other funders, and agency personnel.

A good example of how vital and illuminating data can be is the IACP/BJA Reducing Officer Injuries study that analyzed officer injuries over a one-year period from 18 police departments across the United States.<sup>11</sup> Agencies participating in the study found there were several trends and patterns that caused injuries, and that knowledge informed prevention strategies, including updated trainings, better fitness training regimens, and an increased focus on seatbelt use by officers. Other agencies can use the tracking tool attached to the Reducing Officer Injuries report – [http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/IACP\\_ROI\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/IACP_ROI_Final_Report.pdf) – to discover similar trends within their agencies.

When working with data involving personnel, privacy and legal concerns must be addressed, particularly if working with an outside partner. If data is being collected and/or analyzed by a university or outside organization, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) should be developed and agreed upon by both parties. The MOU should include the background of the project, purpose of the MOU, roles and responsibilities of each party, and specifics on what data will be collected and how it will be shared and secured. Even when data is being collected internally by the police agency, those involved should be well aware of what data is being collected, the purpose of the data collection, and how specifically it gets used. Not only will data maintenance and collection benefit the specific department, but it could also be used by organizations, other agencies, and other fields to help identify trends, inform training and policy changes, and raise awareness and knowledge of law enforcement fitness requirements.

## PHYSICAL FITNESS TESTING AND ASSESSMENT DATA

### EMPLOYEE RISK ASSESSMENT

Pre-participation screening is important in fitness programming because it could identify individuals who have existing health factors or medical conditions that present an immediate risk or could be exacerbated by certain physical fitness activities. Pre-participation screening may also identify those individuals who have symptoms or risk factors for medical ailments that require further medical evaluation.

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<sup>11</sup> IACP, *Reducing Officer Injuries Final Report*

A physical activity readiness questionnaire can be used to identify the small number of adults for whom physical activity might pose some risks or danger. The questionnaire serves to identify those individuals that require more robust medical clearance from a physician prior to exercise and testing. Questions pertain to past or current medical conditions that could affect the individual's capacity for fitness activities, such as heart disease, chest pain, bone or joint problems, or a history of fainting. Agencies should consult with their local medical, human resources, and legal advisors to determine what questions should and should not be asked on the physical activity readiness questionnaire.

Agencies might have some officers or civilian staff members that have concerns or questions about pre-existing conditions. These individuals must go to a medical professional prior to engaging in fitness exercises to properly address such concerns. Partnerships or MOU's with medical professionals for this purpose will be extremely helpful.

It is important to consider those that are unable to exercise when designing a fitness program. Departments should address this scenario specifically and outline levels of participation in which those that are unable to exercise could be included. If the program is mandatory and/or incentive-based, departments need to address how these individuals will still qualify for benefits.

## **ANNUAL FITNESS EVALUATION**

Agencies engaging in a fitness program should consider conducting an annual fitness test or fitness evaluation/assessment. The initial assessment gives the fitness coordinator the baseline fitness level of those members to measure progress as the program continues. They allow for the employee and fitness coordinator to plan appropriate fitness and nutrition activities and track the quantitative changes in weight, strength, cardiovascular capacities, and mobility.

Ideally, the testing is the initial baseline tool used to monitor fitness improvement for the agency moving forward. The voluntary nature of testing and participation should not be used for work assignments, promotion, or for any purpose other than for program data collection and promotion of employee health and wellness. The data analysis can be utilized to improve program goals or to identify deficiencies that could necessitate program changes.

As the program moves forward, your agency might want to make fitness program testing mandatory. In doing so, having policies in place about participation can assist with the transition. Furthermore, keeping a log of the test scores might help ease any employee anxiety over testing and meeting agency standards.

Fitness coordinators should share the assessment results with agency management and the individual employee in accordance with data management guidelines. The dissemination of general fitness data can lead to greater participation for those that are not actively involved. Offering health risk assessments and conducting employee surveys can gather valuable information for agencies attempting to gauge employee interests and determine what possible health risks employees might be facing.

## MOVING FORWARD

**E**ach agency may approach fitness programming differently. While important, physical fitness is only one portion of wellness. Other types of programs can be implemented to provide a holistic wellness offering from the department. Utilizing a variety of different wellness programs encourages buy-in from those who are resistant to or unable to participate in fitness-focused programs.<sup>12</sup> Wellness programs may include intellectual, social, emotional, and occupational components to include things like meditation workshops, nutritional planning exercises, team-building activities, support groups, and daily or weekly wellness tips. Fitness program goals should be complementary and intertwined with the agency's overall wellness goals.

Changing the culture of a department to embrace physical wellness and integrate it into daily work life is not an easy or short process, but it is a crucial step to ensuring a healthier and safer department. Fitness and wellness are important aspects of every officer's job. A properly maintained program will help keep personnel healthier, happier, and less prone to injuries. A successful program is beneficial to the individual officers, the department as a whole, and the community the department serves.

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<sup>12</sup> Karen Pollitz and Matthew, and Matthew Rae. "Workplace Wellness Programs Characteristics And Requirements." Workplace Wellness Programs Characteristics and Requirements. May 19, 2016.

# RESOURCES

## ■ IACP Officer Safety and Wellness Resources

<http://www.theiacp.org/COSW>

The Center for Officer Safety and Wellness was created in 2012 to centralize all existing efforts by promoting resources and encouraging a cultural shift within law enforcement agencies by emphasizing the values of safety, health, and wellness as they impact officer performance. The Center focuses on all aspects of an officer's safety, health, and wellness, both on and off the job.

### □ Reducing Officer Injuries Final Report

[http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/IACP\\_ROI\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/pdfs/IACP_ROI_Final_Report.pdf)

This 12-month national study of 18 law enforcement agencies sought to examine and quantify the spectrum of injuries sustained by officers. The results documented nearly 1,300 reported injuries, nearly 6,000 missed work days, and nearly \$2 million in estimated overtime costs.

### □ Reducing Officer Injuries Infographic

[http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/documents/pdfs/IACP\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_Officer\\_Injuries\\_Study.pdf](http://www.theiacp.org/portals/0/documents/pdfs/IACP_Fact_Sheet_Officer_Injuries_Study.pdf)

This visual display presents findings from the Reducing Officer Injuries 12-month national study of 18 law enforcement agencies.

### □ Health Watch: Checking in for Duty

[http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/ROI/HealthyWatchCheckList-trifold11x9.5\\_web.pdf](http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/ROI/HealthyWatchCheckList-trifold11x9.5_web.pdf)

This pamphlet contains a list of recommended questions for law enforcement officers to pose to their physician to ensure that they're healthy and ready for the job as a law enforcement officer.

### □ Eating Well on the Go Officer Nutrition Leadership Guide Fact Sheet

[http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/ROI/IACP-FactSheet-HW-FINAL\\_Web.pdf](http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/ROI/IACP-FactSheet-HW-FINAL_Web.pdf)

This fact sheet provides information on how agencies can provide education and support to improve officer nutrition and well-being, highlighting the impact nutrition has on an officer's performance, ranging from long-term affects to shift-by-shift consequences.

### □ Eating Well on the Go Officer Brochure

<http://www.theiacp.org/SearchResults/tabid/87/Default.aspx?Search=officer%20safety>

This brochure gives officers nutritious options for meals on the go, including guidance on which items to choose and which to skip for breakfast, snacks, and a main meal.

■ **IACP Training Key® #633: Police Fatigue**

<http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/MembersOnly/Training%20Keys/633%20Police%20Fatigue.pdf>

This Training Key® provides information surrounding police fatigue, including possible sources of fatigue and suggestions on how to obtain quality sleep through proper sleep hygiene.

■ **IACP Training Key® #685: Health and Fitness: Importance to Law Enforcement Officers**

<http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/MembersOnly/Training%20Keys/685-Health%20and%20Fitness.pdf>

This Training Key® provides information on how physical health and fitness are vitally important to every law enforcement officer. Beyond the ordinary dangers to good health, such as heart disease and stress, situations may arise where a human life depends on the endurance, strength, and agility of a responding officer.

■ **IACP Training Key® #690: Exercise and Nutrition for Law Enforcement Officers**

<http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/MembersOnly/Training%20Keys/690-Exercise%20and%20Nutrition.pdf>

This Training Key® provides additional information on how to reach optimum levels of health and wellness through exercise and diet.

■ **Destination Zero: Collaborating to Advance Officer Safety and Wellness**

<http://www.nleomf.org/programs/destination-zero/>

The Destination Zero program is designed to help agencies improve the health and safety of law enforcement officers across the country. The primary goal of the Destination Zero program is to create a platform that provides all U.S. law enforcement agencies with the ability to research successful and/or promising officer safety and wellness programs and identify the resources necessary to begin their own risk management initiatives.

■ **BJA Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement Officers and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability (VALOR)**

<https://www.bja.gov/programs/valor.html>

The VALOR Initiative is designed to protect the safety, health, and wellbeing of our nation's law enforcement officers and agencies. The initiative provides up-to-date tactical-, skill-, and awareness-building education, technical assistance, and resources to our nation's law enforcement on officer safety and wellness that have a direct impact on their resilience and survival. It seeks to achieve its goals through a multifaceted approach that includes the delivery of training, research, resources, and partnerships that benefit 21st century law enforcement.



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