

# Law Enforcement Family Engagement Assessment Tool

## The Value of Supporting Officer Families

While an officer's individual health and wellness is important, the lifestyle and culture of policing affects far more than just the officer. Family support groups and services offer unique experiences for individuals who care for someone working in the policing profession. Spouses, partners, parents, children, siblings, and friends all play a valuable role in an officer's life, and they may each experience their own challenges and emotions related to the profession. Family engagement opportunities provide a space to discuss those challenges, share similar experiences, find comfort, and build supportive relationships.

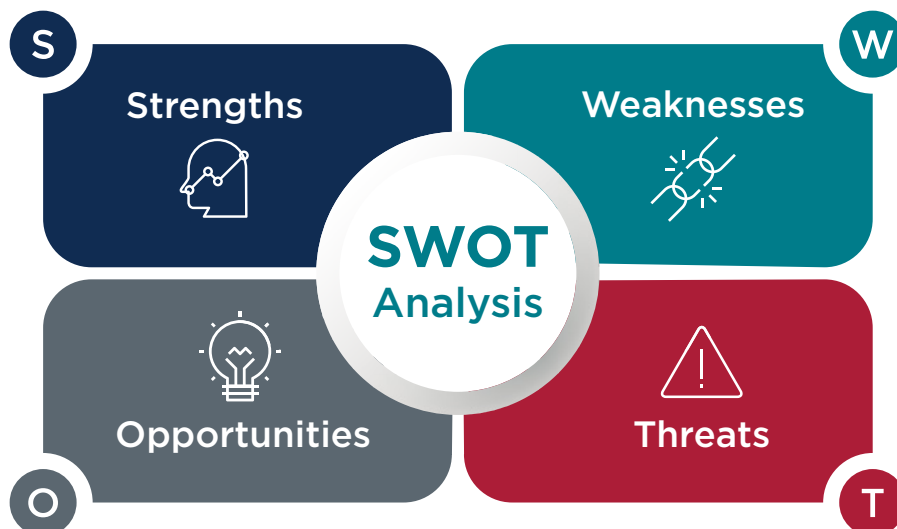
Family engagement can exist in many different formats. The goal is to shape services and activities to the needs of the agency, as well as to those who support officers. Family events can be hosted online, in-person, or through a hybrid mixture of both models. Activities can be directed to the general audience of policing families or dedicated to specific groups such as parents, children, or friends that have their own unique challenges and perspectives related to the profession.

This assessment tool is designed for leaders to develop a framework for a successful relationship between officers, their support network, and the department.

## SWOT Analysis

The SWOT Analysis stands for Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats. This is a valuable tool in project planning and can help provide the structure for getting your own family support group or activity off the ground. By identifying potential barriers and strengths in resources around you, these opportunities can be capitalized to help the group or activity launch and remain strong.

The following sample SWOT analysis includes some common topics and themes you may consider when completing your own comprehensive SWOT analysis. These examples are not exhaustive and may appear in different categories in your agency's analysis.



## Sample SWOT Analysis

 <b>Strengths</b>	 <b>Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Executive support</li><li>■ Existing events and resources</li><li>■ Existing peer support program</li><li>■ Strong need for a group and motivation to create one</li><li>■ Younger agency staff make it easier to change culture</li><li>■ Potential community or stakeholder buy-in</li><li>■ Tech resources</li><li>■ Support from neighboring agencies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Peer pressure</li><li>■ Geography</li><li>■ Lack of funding</li><li>■ Staffing shortages</li><li>■ Similar pre-existing groups</li><li>■ Keeping group focused</li><li>■ Officers may not see value</li><li>■ Lack of community</li><li>■ Generational differences</li></ul>
 <b>Opportunities</b>	 <b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Group collaboration</li><li>■ Association with local organizations and stakeholders</li><li>■ Training opportunities</li><li>■ Early contact during the academy</li><li>■ Group branding as a promotional tool</li><li>■ Meeting locations</li><li>■ Events and partnerships</li><li>■ In-service trainings and presentations</li><li>■ Increased support for families</li><li>■ Increased family resiliency</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Agency culture</li><li>■ Privacy and legitimacy</li><li>■ Sustainability</li><li>■ Change in command or administration</li><li>■ Continued recruitment</li><li>■ Funding</li></ul>

## Complete Your Own SWOT Analysis



**Strengths**



**Weaknesses**



**Opportunities**



**Threats**

## Next Steps: Looking at the Big Picture

After completing the analysis, begin translating those opportunities into action using your strengths, considering how you might overcome your weaknesses, and preparing for your potential threats.

### Short-Term Goals

Establish an immediate action item as a short-term goal. This should be something you believe you can accomplish in the next month to get your group started. Examples include:

- **DRAFT** a memo to agency leadership on why we need a support group, how much it may cost, and how it will be structured.
- **SCHEDULE** time to talk with fellow agency leaders about the need for family engagement and ideas to get started.
- **TALK** with spouses or family members about what they would find useful in a family support group.

### Long-term Goals

Set a long-term goal that helps guide your vision for the initial stages of family engagement. Examples include:

- **ESTABLISH** an active online page created for spouses and family members within the next six months.
- **HOST** a short, 10-minute presentation at the academy graduation day informing family members about the family support group or other opportunities to connect.
- **CONVENE** the first in-person family support group meeting in the station gymnasium.

These goals may change based on feedback you receive and additional challenges that arise. Remain flexible and open to new ideas that may support family members.

Use the space to the right to write down your potential short and long-term goals.



### Short-Term Goals

1

2

3



### Long-Term Goals

1

2

3

# Common Questions and Considerations When Creating Family Engagement Opportunities

Addressing the following questions and considerations when planning family engagement opportunities can help shape your goals and how you work towards them.

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## “ ***Do I have to be an officer to start a family support group?*** ”

Anyone associated with the agency can start a group. Hosting the group outside of the agency offers an independent, private space that may foster a sense of trust and vulnerability among family members. Groups started within the agency have internal marketing opportunities to help recruit members and build partnerships with other areas of the department.

## “ ***We don't know where to start. We had a group a few years ago but it fizzled out.*** ”

Research what made the previous group succeed and what made it fade. It may have lost its funding source or group members became disinterested. Consider this information as an opportunity to build upon the previous group's challenges as you focus on longevity of a future family support group within the agency.

## “ ***How do we engage group members online? We don't have a lot of engagement on our posts.*** ”

Look at the type of content you are sharing. Are you asking questions or prompting discussion in the posts you create? Encourage group members to share their thoughts or experiences with one another through commenting. Vary your posts to include videos, photos, links, and updates to broaden appeal. Consider asking group members what type of content they would like to see or what they would find useful to spark their interest.

## “ ***How can we recruit and sustain engagement with new family members and help our group grow?*** ”

Look for opportunities to present directly to family members such as academy graduation days, department open houses, or award banquets. Connecting with family members directly provides additional opportunities to share the purpose of the group and address any questions or concerns they may have about joining. Consider offering virtual and in-person engagement opportunities at a variety of different times to accommodate different schedules. Sustain engagement by surveying family members about the formats that will work best for them if there appears to be a plateau in participation.

## “ ***What role does a stakeholder have in a family support group?*** ”

Stakeholder partnerships are important to identify early on. They might include local community organizations you partner with for social service events or may include funding contributors. While important partners, agencies should try to avoid having stakeholders directly participate in group meetings or forums, as this could foster a lack of buy-in and participation from group members due to privacy concerns and potential discussion of sensitive information.

## Related IACP Resources

- I. The IACP's [Officer Safety and Wellness Page](#) contains various resources and tools on topics including family wellness, physical wellness, officer mental health and resiliency, law enforcement suicide prevention, and tactical safety.
- II. [Creating an Online Support Group: Digitally Connecting Officer Families](#) highlights key considerations for creating online engagement opportunities by leveraging social media platforms.
- III. [How to Start a Law Enforcement Family Support Group: Insights and Considerations](#) is an interactive booklet to help identify components of an officer family support group such as location, funding, membership, and purpose.
- IV. The [Support Officer Safety Through Family Wellness: Discussing Your Job with Your Teen](#) infographic offers suggestions for tackling potentially difficult conversations with your teenager about your career and tools you can both use to navigate these conversations.
- V. The [Supporting Officer Safety Through Family Wellness: Helping Your Young Child Understand Your Job](#) infographic includes conversation starters, suggestions of how to explain your daily duties, and answers to other questions your young child may have.

