A Law Enforcement Executive’s Approach to Vicarious Trauma in 2021

Vicarious Trauma (VT) in the form of both single incident and chronic trauma exposure, continues to affect police agencies and impact individual officers, organizations, and the communities they serve. Yet many jurisdictions are unsure of the necessary steps to mitigate it. IACP, together with the Office for Victims of Crime, has been working with police professionals to address work-related trauma exposure and provide solutions to help officers successfully navigate a 20-, 25-, or 30-year career.

This course will provide a clear understanding of VT, how it manifests, and the potential impacts on police agencies as experienced by the Great Falls, Montana, Police Department. This workshop will cover an officer’s journey, this agency’s strategy and 3-pronged approach, crisis intervention techniques, the importance of a peer support program and community collaborations, along with an introduction to the Vicarious Trauma Toolkit and how the GFPD utilizes it.

A Police Officer Stress Study: Sources, Impacts, and Supportive Organizational Policies and Programs

Occupational stress represents a severe threat to police officers’ wellness and safety. Understanding and managing officer stress are essential due to the increasing complexities that shape police work. Based on responses to qualitative questions in a survey of a United States state police agency’s officers, this study analyzes and synthesizes sources and consequences of occupational stress described by both female and male officers. Three major themes emerged: organizational challenges, the emotional impacts of being an officer, and the effects of stress on the officers’ support network. This presentation concludes with model resiliency practices and programs/policies to assist officers, organizations, and their families in mitigating stress, burnout, and work-family conflict.
An Introduction to Yoga For First Responders

This presentation addresses common misconceptions about yoga, sites research that shows the benefits of yoga, specifically for law enforcement, and introduces job-specific and culturally-informed exercises and techniques that have made yoga successful in law enforcement settings. Through tactical breath work, physical drills/mobility training, and mindfulness techniques, Yoga For First Responders teaches a tangible skill set to proactively protect from post-traumatic stress, sleep disorders, and common injuries, as well as how to effectively process stress, build resilience, and enhance performance. Proven benefits include reducing physiological and psychological stress in law enforcement, as well as increasing heart rate variability, resilience, and overall performance.


To fulfill their role of protecting citizens, police officers patrolling using bicycles must be in good physical condition to ensure the health and safety of themselves, as well as the public they serve. This type of patrol requires considerable physical effort and exposes police officers to develop musculoskeletal disorders while at work. Moreover, we know little about the conditions they are exposed to while riding their bikes, or how to train them for this specific job and its various demands. With a better understanding of their work contexts and a clear differentiation between the prescribed work and the work they really accomplish, we will be able to develop better preventive actions and promote occupational health and safety for these workers.

Breathing Techniques for Mental and Physical Performance and Resilience in Police Services

Participants will learn the benefits of functional breathing and simulated altitude training for health, fitness, mental and physical performance, and, most importantly, for their resilience. Highlights from up-to-date research emerging on the importance of the three components of functional breathing – biochemistry, biomechanics, and psychophysiology – will be covered. Participants will leave knowing how to incorporate the components of functional breathing into their daily life, during rest, sleep, work, and training, improving their ability to shift between a calm alert and rest and recovery state. They will learn how these techniques can be applied for stress and anxiety mitigation, and even form an important component of treatment for PTSD and OS injuries.

Building a Peer Support Team from a Prosecutor’s Perspective – Using Legal Guidelines as a Model

This presentation outlines the legal requirements of building and maintaining a peer support team within a law enforcement or fire department, utilizing the government code in California as a model. Only a small number of states have requirements codified, so it is beneficial to follow what can be considered best practices in another state. These areas cover essential pieces in team formation, implementation, confidentiality, exceptions to disclosure rules, training and liability protection of team members and agencies in potential lawsuits, and employment termination disputes. The speaker has
been trained in peer support leadership and substantive peer support member education, and provided a legal update at the 2019 Public Safety Peer Support Association Conference in San Diego, California.

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**Childhood Abuse of Police Officers: Impact on Future PTSD and Depressive Symptoms**

Childhood abuse is associated with a wide range of negative outcomes, including increased risk for psychological pathology. The present study examined associations between childhood abuse of police officers and their future risk of developing symptoms of PTSD and depression. Results demonstrated a hierarchy of adverse childhood experiences among the officers. Further analysis found a strong association between adverse childhood experiences, PTSD, and depression among male officers, but only depression among female officers. These findings suggest that police adverse childhood experiences should be noted in cases of PTSD or depression, and additional treatment indicated.

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**Clearing the Crash: Strategies to Increase Responder Safety at Traffic Incidents**

When responding to a scene of a traffic incident, responders are vulnerable to passing traffic and the possibility of being injured or killed. According to the National TIM Responder Training Program, the average annual line of duty deaths includes roughly 50-70 responders, encompassing fire and EMS workers, police officers, and tow operators (Federal Highway Administration, 2017). Speakers will present an overview of the latest research and innovative approaches to enhance responder safety at roadway incident scenes.

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**Clinician and Officer Remote Evaluation (CORE) Telehealth Program**

Policing for the 21st Century: The Clinician and Officer Remote Evaluation (CORE) Telehealth Program in Harris County, Texas, provides patrol deputies responding to persons in crisis with affordable, quick access to behavioral health clinicians via technology. Harris County has the largest program of its kind in the nation with 200 patrol deputies equipped with a computer tablet with which they can connect with a masters-level clinician. During this presentation, attendees will learn about the CORE Telehealth Program and the results of an evaluation conducted by the University of Houston-Downtown, funded by Arnold Ventures.

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**Developing a Peer Support Program for a Department: Small- and Medium-Sized Agencies**

As science and understanding of the mind increase, we are learning more about mental illness among first responders. We have learned that first responders may develop mental illness pre- or post-retirement due to repeated exposure while investigating traumatic events or acute exposure from direct involvement in critical incidents. These events have led to increased awareness and studies on mental illness and suicide among law enforcement officers. Studies have led departments across the country to implement peer support programs, which can be tailored to departments of all sizes. To create an effective peer support program, you must consider team and clinical selection, training and team utilization, policies and procedures, and other legal considerations.
Emotional Intelligence and the Public Safety Professional: The Nexus and Integration Imperative

Police are in the people business, and people are emotional creatures. Interacting with the public, from victims to suspects, requires empathy and other people skills from police professionals. Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is the ability to understand and control one's own emotions, as well as recognize and influence the emotions of others. EQ skills can be learned and applied both personally and professionally to help an officer be more resilient, happier at home and work, and better suited to deal with the negative aspects of the policing profession - along with preparing officers to enter the wonderful world of retirement.

Ensuring Law Enforcement Youth Thrive in Today’s Culture

Law enforcement is clearly fraught with numerous stressors, including civil unrest, public scrutiny, long hours, and trauma of death and carnage. These stressors have a huge impact on law enforcement youth, resulting in vicarious trauma, anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and even suicidal tendencies.

This workshop is designed to examine the impact of these stressors on law enforcement youth and provides an innovative plan to minimize their impact and build resilience. Officers and parents need to know the signs and symptoms of these stressful impacts and how to proactively build resiliency. You will learn 10 key ingredients to building youth resiliency, as well as how to enact a more supportive and resilient foundation for your law enforcement family.

Heart Disease as the #1 Killer of Law Enforcement

There is no question, coronary artery disease is the number one killer of law enforcement officers. However, only three percent of heart attacks are fatal, and by simply counting death from heart attack we are overlooking the thousands of cardiac events that result in significant disability and cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars per year. Over the last seven to ten years, incredible strides have been made to identify heart disease before it results in a heart attack.

This discussion will allow the attendee to understand the scope of the problem, become familiar with the mechanics and physiology of why this happens disproportionally to law enforcement officers, and, most importantly, learn how to implement a strategy to successfully reduce the frequency and rate of heart disease in their agencies.

How Police Tactical Medical Programs can Benefit an Entire Department and Community Relations

In this session, we will illustrate the value for departments to establish and support a tactical medical operations team (TACMED). Discussions will include the primary benefits of such a team, such as improved officer safety, improved morale, reduction of work-related injuries, and the operational value, as well as secondary benefits, including improved community relations and fiscal leverage for a
department. The session will also review barriers in the implementation of a TACMED team and strategies for overcoming these barriers, as well as how liabilities can be managed and reduced.

Impact of Resilience and Stress Management Training: Case Study within National Police of Columbia

The purpose of this presentation is to explain and socialize the research results obtained in a group of Colombian police officers, after attending a resilience and stress training using the techniques of the HeartMath Institute in association with our holistic model for police leadership. The methodological design used is of mixed type with sequential execution, through which qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed. The results obtained evidence of the impact of this type of training on the physical and mental health of police officers and its effectiveness during daily police duties.

Injury Prevention Strategies: From the Tactical Athletic Trainer’s Perspective

Athletic therapists, athletic trainers, physical therapists, and physiologists play an increasingly important role in officer safety and wellness. The number and types of these partnerships have increased in popularity in recent years, making it hard to know which variety may work best for your agency and why. Three athletic trainers from three different styles of program and agency size will discuss their unique contributions to their departments, different strategies they have implemented to decrease injury rates, and ideas for implementation of new programs.

Introducing SHIELD: A Biopsychosocial Approach to Officer Wellness at the Australian Federal Police

Police are tactical athletes who require stamina, strength, and flexibility of the mind and the body. To support tactical athletes, officer wellness must evolve beyond traditional and disparate “mental” and “physical” health programs. This presentation will introduce SHIELD – the new, one-stop-shop health capability for the Australian Federal Police. SHIELD integrates physical, psychological, and social health, with human performance optimisation. Underpinned by evidence, SHIELD reflects the biopsychosocial approach to health prevention and intervention. SHIELD is a game-changer, shifting our focus towards supporting police as tactical athletes who are required to sustain high performance at all times.

LAPD Officer Wellness Program, with Coronavirus Focus

This presentation will expand upon the content of our 2020 IACP Officer Safety and Wellness Symposium workshop, “How 250 LAPD Officers Lost & Kept Off 3,000 Pounds,” with a specific focus on the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Our presentation includes an emphasis on how certain habits and work conditions of police officers may mirror signs and symptoms that are analogous with those of the COVID-19 pandemic. Speakers will provide input on workers compensation strategies and considerations for presumptive injuries. Our goal is to help officers to improve their overall health, while reducing preventable municipal expenditures, in a stigma-free environment.
Law Enforcement Fitness Program Implementation Toolkit: Scalable Solutions for Measurable Success

From reduced risk of injuries and heart disease, to increased job readiness and improved mental health, research continually proves the valuable, meaningful, life-saving benefits of exercise for officers. However, while many agencies support the concept of fitness, they often find it difficult to implement an agency-wide fitness program. This toolkit helps agencies overcome the most common barriers to implementing a fitness program. It is user-friendly and scalable, to help agencies of all sizes and budget levels efficiently achieve measurable fitness success. Practical, step-by-step instruction helps agencies set custom fitness goals and metrics, then distribute corresponding science-based exercise training guides that gradually and systematically increase officer tactical athleticism.

Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) Programs – Regional and Statewide Approaches

Come hear about the Cleveland, Ohio, Division of Police Employee Assistance Unit’s experience in expanding and implementing a countywide police peer-mentoring program to serve officers from the 58 law enforcement agencies throughout Cuyahoga County, Ohio.

The Metro Nashville, Tennessee, Police Department has developed one of the most comprehensive Behavioral Health Services (BHS) divisions in the country. Learn how BHS updated and standardized best practices in peer support and expanded services to 21 additional agencies.

The Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection will discuss how they have combined the expertise and resources of the Municipal Police Training Academy and the State Police Training Academy to establish a statewide Connecticut Law Enforcement Peer Program.

Leveraging Family Feedback for Effective Wellness Programming

Family members and loved ones play a valuable role in their officer’s wellness, but they too may encounter their own challenges related to the profession. Sharing information and hosting agency events that meet the needs of families can strengthen relationships between the department and officers’ loved ones.

Family program representatives from Chula Vista, CA, and Kansas City, KS, Police Departments will share their experiences and methodologies of collecting feedback from officers and family members. Departments will discuss how they translated these results into concrete action items and goals for future family engagement.

Line-of-Duty Death and Police Suicide: An Agency’s Response to the Families and Coworkers

When a tragic event such as a line-of-duty death or law enforcement death by suicide occurs, it may be the most challenging event an officer or administrator may face during his or her career. While there are often policies in place for the handling of a line-of-duty death, guidelines on how to respond to police
suicide are largely missing. Yet the agency may have to respond in either tragedy, and the families and coworkers will need support. This presentation will discuss the interagency and family dynamics following both types of officer deaths, covering topics such as funeral planning, available benefits and resources, support for the families, and aftercare for coworkers.

Mass Public Demonstrations, Defunding Police, and a Pandemic: Impacts on Police Mental Health

Three co-occurring critical events have impacted law enforcement. Police have served in extraordinary times: mass public demonstrations, calls for defunding and a global pandemic. Even in isolation they are significant, but their concurrence drives an urgency to understand their impact on police wellbeing. We need immediate and urgent action to protect the physical and psychological safety of police. The panel explores the impact of public demonstrations and defunding police on police identity and what this means for policing. Drawing on survey data, we examine COVID-19 and the mental health of officers and their families. Specific proactive strategies and resources to promote healthy and productive police workplaces and to support officers are discussed.

Mindfulness and Resiliency Meets Community Engagement: Empathy, Awareness, & Procedural Justice

This session will explore a recently piloted training program with a cohort of officers from the Los Angeles Police Department, in which a non-profit organization teamed with a veteran law enforcement mindfulness trainer to implement a skills-based training program for officers, and to explore its impact on officer health and police-community relations. The session will describe effective methodologies and new approaches to training format, strategies for sustainability, and the connection between neuroscience, effective self-care, positive organizational culture, and constructive community relations.

Multi-Agency Police Peer Support (MAPPS) Program

In early 2020, Lt. Bill Walsh and Dr. Jennifer Kelly conceptualized a Multi-Agency Police Peer Support (MAPPS) team. The goal was to allow peer support personnel from similar agencies to be available to assist employees at their own agency and others through training, critical incident response, family support, and proactive engagement. The approach allowed for a reduction in anxiety surrounding speaking with a peer about sensitive events. Additional benefits included shared costs and a larger and more diverse applicant pool. Through a partnership with Nova Southeastern University, training and research components complimented the rollout and implementation of the program and allowed for ongoing evaluation. MAPPS consists of employees from Voorhees, Cherry Hill, and Gloucester Township, New Jersey.

Players Only Love You when You are Playing – Techniques for Surviving and Thriving in Retirement

The focus of this presentation will be on the issues and challenges facing officers taking their first steps into retirement, with an emphasis on the psychological footprint of the life change. The first portion of
the presentation will focus on the effects of identity, control needs, and self-esteem as they relate to transitioning from the identity of being a ‘cop’ to developing a ‘new normal.’ The second portion of the presentation will focus on coping and explore countermeasures for maintaining wellness and developing a resilient lifestyle. Special focus will be on the two main psychological retirement phases: the honeymoon phase and the reality phase.

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Prioritize Sleep

Sleep is one of the pillars of health – along with nutrition, exercise, and community – though it is not prioritized by culture, particularly in police culture. The detrimental effects of poor sleep are far more reaching than most people realize. This presentation has already been well-received by many law enforcement agencies in the Minneapolis metro area. It includes a summary of some of the worst health effects of poor sleep, a breakdown of what happens when we sleep, and practical and useful tips for improving sleep immediately.

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Reducing Officer Injury through Use of Force De-Escalation Training

This presentation will expand upon information presented at the IACP Annual Conference that demonstrated the impact of de-escalation training on changes in officers' attitudes and confidence, along with demonstrated reductions in officer and citizen injuries. The panelists will describe the types of officers who are most likely to embrace and use de-escalation tactics in the field, the types of situations where de-escalation tactics are most effective, and the resulting impact on officer safety. The panelists will also provide different training examples, research findings from multiple police agencies, and stress the importance of a holistic approach to successfully implementing de-escalation training, including the roles for first-line supervisors, middle managers, and police executives.

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Resiliency in the Digital Age: Effective Online Programming to Build Resilient First Responders

The presenters will discuss the adaptation of an experiential, peer support-based resiliency training to an effective and interactive digital format. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is still ever present. Along with the challenges of the pandemic is the real-time need to adapt programming to reach individuals when they need it most, while maintaining safe physical distance.

The presentation will discuss NATAL’s model for developing and adapting programming within the ‘Cycle of Resiliency’ and how to help communities overcome national events. Built in times of routine, the methodology is adaptable in content and technological needs, providing real-time resources in crisis, facilitating the process of post-traumatic growth, and improving professional result and a healthier return to routine.

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Strategies to Combat the Nutritional Link to Officer Safety, Health, and Wellness

Individuals make numerous decisions about nutrition every day. For many, the impacts of these decisions are not seen until much later. However, in law enforcement, each dietary selection made can
have an immediate impact on an officer’s safety and the safety of those around them. Nutrition impacts the performance and safety of officers because nutrition has a direct effect on mental capacity, performance, recovery, hormones, sleep, and several other components of health. In addition to delving into the relationship of nutritional decisions to officer safety, proven strategies implemented within the recruit population, in addition to programs utilized with incumbents, will be shared and available for participants to apply within their department.

Swift Water Rescue – Rules of Engagement

This course will prepare officers in both rural and urban environments who arrive first on the scene at a water rescue and is designed for all law enforcement personnel – non-water rescue trained members, as well as experienced water rescue team members. Lessons learned will provide the audience with a foundation to perform, including strategies for scene size-up, scene safety, assessing victims, hydrology, allocation of rescue resources, and decision-making. The presenter will identify proper protective equipment to use at water rescue emergencies and basic water rescue equipment that should be carried in law enforcement units. This workshop covers the rules of engagement that may be implemented in your own department or agency for response to water rescue emergencies.

Taking Care of the Caregivers – Health and Wellness in Online Child Sexual Exploitation Units

To better understand the unique stressors and impacts of working in online child sexual exploitation units, the Virtual Global Taskforce (VGT), an international alliance dedicated to protecting children from online sexual exploitation, commissioned the Psychological Care International Research Project. Led by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), this study resulted in the development of recommendations for promising practices which will be presented including how they have been operationalized within the RCMP’s Sensitive and Specialized Investigative Services (SSIS) Branch. An overview of the SSIS Employee Health and Wellness Project, which will develop and deliver a comprehensive health and wellness program will also be provided, with relevance to the pandemic and current landscape.

The Approved Provider Bulletin: Making Connections to Culturally Competent Services for Officers

The 2018 Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Survey of Police Officer Behavioral and Mental Health indicated that although 80% of respondents were aware of mental health resources provided by their agencies, only approximately 20% had actually used those services. Among top concerns cited by respondents was that mental health practitioners may not understand the nature of their work as law enforcement officers. In addition, with over 90% of respondents indicating that they believed stigma exists around asking for help, officers may be reluctant to use services within view or knowledge of their agency. Through an established vetting process, the FOP has created the Approved Provider Bulletin which will bridge gaps in service, providing a reference of culturally competent mental health and wellness services for officers.
The Lone Star Solution: A Bold Plan to End Law Enforcement Suicide in Texas

In 2019, there were 19 police suicides in Texas. This placed Texas in the top three states in the country in number of police suicides. To eliminate police suicide and increase the wellness and resiliency of Texas officers, agency and association leadership, police research and training institutes, and legislators have embarked on a bold statewide plan including peer intervention training initiatives, family programs, association programs available to all departments, and legislation proposing the Nation's first state-supported law enforcement peer support network open to all Texas officers. This presentation will provide the audience with insight, details, and hallmarks of how Texas leadership came together to develop the goal and plan to end police suicide in our state.

The Power of Two: Empowering Police Couples to Combat Conditioning and Increase Resilience

A 2019 research study showed that 40% of law enforcement officers surveyed reported a low level of compassion satisfaction, including satisfaction in helping others, appreciation, or value in their role. This along with conditioning from the job can spillover, negatively impacting relationships with spouses and children, an officer’s key source of resilience. Left unaddressed, the cycle can increase the likelihood of mental health issues for officers and their family. In this session, the audience will learn about key elements of conditioning that every officer and spouse need to understand, the impact on compassion satisfaction, relationships, and mental health, and research-based tools to empower officers and spouses to break the cycle and increase resilience.

To Sleep or Not to Sleep

Research demonstrates a connection between deficient sleep quality and poor health. The extreme levels of fatigue experienced in policing puts officers at risk of poor health. In a 2017 pilot study, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) demonstrated that a three-hour fatigue management training program resulted in increased sleep satisfaction and sleep quality, in addition to health and wellness benefits. In partnership with the Centre for Sleep and Human Performance, the RCMP Fitness and Health Promotion Unit developed a self-paced, online program to increase accessibility, allowing members access the course from any location and adapt the schedule to fit individual needs. The online version is an interactive learning tool, designed to appeal to members.

Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness Approaches Specifically Designed for Law Enforcement: Prepare, Perform, Recover

Prepare, Perform, Recover. There’s “mindfulness" and then there’s “mindfulness for law enforcement." Yes, they are different. What is the difference? Mindfulness for the general population is great, but it is much harder to sit and meditate during a traumatic or chaotic moment. In fact, you simply cannot. Instead of trying to force yourself into a mindfulness box, you will learn how to integrate mindfulness into your routine. We will discuss specific trauma-sensitive mindfulness tools to help you PREPARE for a
critical incident, PERFORM in the moment of chaos, and at the end of the day, RECOVER. This workshop will identify and implement individual mindfulness resources and tools to use in the moments that matter.

**Treating Substance Abuse among Police: Cultural Competence, Fitness-for-Duty, and Continuum of Care**

Providing culturally competent substance abuse treatment to members of law enforcement, that considers fitness-for-duty concerns while also addressing long-term continuum of care, represents a particular challenge. This presentation will offer practical guidance for agency principals and clinicians when seeking substance abuse treatment providers for police officers, explain the role that fitness-for-duty evaluations play in such scenarios, and recommend strategies for a continuum of care that simultaneously addresses both treatment and agency needs. This presentation combines a discussion of direct clinical experiences, an exploration of relevant fitness-for-duty issues, and lessons learned from the design of an effective law enforcement-specific substance abuse treatment model.

**Understanding and Applying Wellness in Your Police Department while Dealing with Today’s Challenges**

This presentation will discuss wellness domains, the importance of resiliency, and why you need a wellness and peer support program in your police department. Speakers will also provide an example of a wellness and peer support program from the Miami Beach, Florida, Police Department. The wellness program is called S.T.E.P.P, which stands for the established pillars of wellness: support systems, tactical knowledge and skills, emotional well-being, physical health, and personal and financial stability. The workshop will discuss several programs that have been initiated, including the peer support team, yoga, stress management, physical medical screening, nutrition, and therapy dogs. This presentation will examine the obstacles in starting a wellness program, lessons learned, and the successes resulting from the program.

**Utilizing Early Intervention Techniques to Assist Front-Line Officers after Exposure to Stress**

This workshop will discuss early intervention techniques utilizing psychological first aid and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) to assist front-line officers – due to work and personal stress, as well as trauma from calls for service and personal tragedies. Communication skills and the process for utilizing the skills will be discussed, along with specific peer support intervention processes, which can reduce suicidal ideation. Practical examples of early interventions will be discussed with lessons learned from efficiencies and deficiencies from numerous traumatic incidents, including the 2018 Capital Gazette Shooting in Annapolis, Maryland.