



**U.S. Department of Justice**  
**Federal Bureau of Prisons**

**P R O G R A M   S T A T E M E N T**

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## **Employee Wellness**

/s/

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1. **PURPOSE AND SCOPE.** The Bureau of Prisons' (Bureau) Employee Wellness program was developed in response to the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act passed by Congress in 2017. A January 2019 Department of Justice Report to Congress indicates the suicide rate for law enforcement officers is estimated to be 17 per 100,000 people. Historically, the Bureau's suicide rate has been higher than the average law enforcement rate. The Bureau recognizes the demands of correctional work and is committed to the safety and well-being of its workforce.

This Program Statement outlines standards and assigns responsibilities to implement a comprehensive Employee Wellness Program. Specifically, it establishes a leadership driven model of support to tie existing services such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Correctional Support Teams (CST) with new supports, such as education at key points in staff members' careers. It enhances the agency's focus on staff suicide prevention.

a. **Program Objectives.** The expected results of this program are:

- To prevent BOP staff suicide;
- To equip Bureau leaders with knowledge and tools to build a safe and supportive workplace culture;
- To establish expectations for local and national resources for Employee and support; and
- To make the BOP workforce aware of available wellness and support resources and promote their willingness to use them.

**Institution Supplement.** None required. Should local facilities make any changes outside the required changes in the national policy or establish any additional local procedures to implement the national policy, the local Union may invoke to negotiate procedures or appropriate arrangements.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

■ **Supportive Workplace Culture:** This refers to the agency's commitment to fostering a work environment which normalizes help-seeking and mutual aid. A supportive workplace culture improves employee well-being and reduces suicide and other harmful behaviors common in law enforcement settings (e.g., substance misuse; negative health behavior and consequent premature mortality).

Supportive workplace cultures assist the recruitment of staff, enhance the retention of staff, improve productivity, and increase job satisfaction. Supportive workplace cultures support effective stress management at work and in one's personal life.

■ **Agency Leaders:** These individuals are BOP Wardens/CEOs, agency executive staff, Branch Chiefs and Deputy Assistant/Regional Directors, as well as managers and supervisors. All agency leaders will receive training on their responsibility to shape the agency culture in support of staff safety, wellness, and support.

■ **Postvention:** Postvention refers to supportive services conducted following a staff suicide or critical incident to facilitate the healthy recovery of co-workers, monitor for signs of ongoing distress, and recommend additional activities to the local Warden/CEO.

## 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Chief Executive Officers (CEOs).** CEOs are responsible to promote a supportive workplace culture at their institutions through consistent formal and informal messaging to staff. CEOs direct subordinate level supervisors to foster a supportive workplace culture in their respective departments. In this Program Statement, CEO refers to:

- Wardens
- Directors, Staff Training Centers
- Residential Reentry Managers
- Branch Chiefs
- Regional and Deputy Regional Directors
- Assistant and Deputy Assistant Directors
- Director, Federal Bureau of Prisons

b. **Supervisors.** Supervisors are responsible to promote a supportive workplace culture in their departments and with their subordinates. In this Program Statement, Supervisor refers to any manager (e.g., department head) or staff member with supervisory responsibilities (e.g., Lieutenant).

c. **Union.** Elected Union Officials recognize their role in promotion of employee mental health.

d. **National EAP Coordinator.** The National EAP Coordinator is responsible for developing the training protocols referenced in this policy. With support by the Human Resource Management Division, the National EAP Coordinator monitors trends in staff suicides, to effectively guide the development of new employee wellness and support initiatives, trainings, and services. The National EAP Coordinator will collaborate with other law enforcement agencies to both identify and distribute best practices in employee wellness and support.

e. **Institution Psychologists.** Institution Psychologists provide consultation, provide training, and perform other functions to assist agency leaders in their goal of instilling a supportive workplace culture. Psychology staff may supplement, but not replace, the role of agency leaders as the primary messengers for promoting a supportive culture in the workplace.

f. **Correctional Training Officer.** Correctional Training Officers (CTOs) and other staff with similar duties, participate in initial training on employee wellness and make employee wellness a component of their interactions with new Bureau staff.

4. **THE THREE-TIER MODEL OF EMPLOYEE WELLNESS AND SUPPORT.** The Bureau has adopted a three-tier model for the agency's approach to workforce wellness and support. These tiers prioritize staff responsibilities in support of the model.

a. **Tier One: Leadership.** Agency leaders create a supportive workplace culture which instills expectations of trust in agency leaders, mutual support among co-workers, and encourages help-seeking for staff experiencing personal difficulties or emotional distress. All executive staff, managers, and supervisors share responsibility for promoting a supportive workplace culture with their direct and indirect subordinate staff.

(1) **Leadership Development.** Agency leaders instill a safe and supportive workplace culture. The following mandatory trainings provide agency leaders with the knowledge and skills to effectively achieve this objective.

**Executive Training.** CEOs and Associate Wardens must complete a training of up to two hours on creating a supportive workplace culture, both with their direct reports as well as down the chain of their subordinate supervisors. Developed by Psychology Services, this training is delivered at New Warden and New Associate Warden classes.

**Supervisor Training.** New department heads and supervisors must complete an initial one-hour training on their role in promoting a safe and supportive workplace culture. Developed by Psychology Services, this training addresses the role of supervisors in the identification and

management of staff with suicide risk. This training is ordinarily incorporated into the Principles of Leadership and New Lieutenant training.

**Refresher Training.** Department heads and Lieutenants receive at least one refresher training per year reestablishing the importance of leadership in enhancing staff support and identifying and responding to employees in distress. This training is provided by Wardens or Associate Wardens, typically in conjunction with a department head or Lieutenants meeting. Required lesson plans and other supports for refresher trainings are available on the Bureau's intranet. This mandatory training is tracked.

(2) **Messaging.** The Bureau's agency leaders are responsible for promoting a supportive workplace culture through consistent messaging to line staff and subordinate supervisors.

CEOs and supervisors are the primary messengers of the Bureau's culture of employee wellness and support. Staff in institution departments (e.g., Psychology Services) and institution teams (e.g., Correctional Support Teams) have designated roles defined below, but are not proxies for the role of agency leaders to communicate workplace culture.

**Formal messaging:** Presentations by agency leaders are opportunities to reinforce a supportive workplace culture. The meetings occur at least quarterly, and a record of the date, presenter, and topic is maintained by the Executive Assistant.

Ordinarily, the Warden will address the issue of supportive workplace culture in at least one large-scale staff event (e.g., staff recall, correctional worker's week, annual training) per quarter to promote a supportive workplace culture, increase awareness of suicide risk among correctional workers, and reinforce the importance of help-seeking.

The Bureau's intranet home page will serve as an entryway to employee wellness and support resources for all institution employees. The CEO of each institution will ensure their institution intranet pages contains local resources for their institution. The CEO will also ensure an icon is placed on each desktop to provide a direct link to this resource page.

Each Associate Warden and Captain should include information on supportive workplace culture in at least one staff event per quarter to promote a supportive workplace culture, increase awareness of suicide risk among correctional workers, and reinforce the importance of help-seeking by doing at least one of the following:

- Deliver a message at the Lieutenant's briefing or a department meeting about mutual support or work-life balance, or to remind staff about availability of support resources.
- Present information at a Correctional Support Team training event on correctional stress and unhealthy coping (e.g., substance misuse).

- Speak about self-care, EAP, or wellness at a staff recall.

Associate Wardens and Captains are encouraged to meet with Union representatives to discuss collaboration on staff support initiatives. Typically, a variety of events that emphasize employee wellness are spread throughout the quarter.

Informal messaging: Leaders actively promote a supportive workplace culture in their daily interactions in with staff. Examples include:

- Lieutenants visiting posts on non-routine duty shifts to check-in with Correctional Officers and inquire about their well-being (e.g., non-work activities such as family, health, hobbies, career planning).
- Captains talking one-on-one with probationary Correctional Officers twice in their first year exclusive of performance or disciplinary feedback.
- Institution Duty Officers maximizing staff interaction during weekend and evening hours to assess the morale of personnel with less frequent access to institution leaders.
- Department heads creating informal opportunities for staff in their work units to socialize, building cohesion and mutual support.
- All agency leaders interacting with staff in the workplace, demonstrating concern for their well-being on and off the job.

Department heads keep a log of when informal messaging occurs in their departments for purposes of tracking adherence to program requirements. It does not include a record of individual discussions or EAP referrals.

**Performance Work Plans (PWP)s.** PWP)s for CEOs and supervisors include at least one objective related to messaging regarding a supportive workplace culture. Examples can be found on the Bureau’s intranet pages devoted to employee wellness and support.

**b. Tier Two: Resources and Training.** The Bureau implements mental health and support resources to assist staff, and conducts training to teach staff how to identify a need for services, and how to access them.

■ **Mental Health and Crisis Resources.** A range of resources are made available to mitigate the stress of correctional work and prevent suicide.

(1) **Employee Assistance Program.** The Bureau maintains an EAP consistent with Department of Justice Requirements and best practices. See the Program Statement **Employee Assistance Program.**

(2) **Institution Support Visits.** These visits occur at the request of the Regional Director

when they believe staff could benefit from additional supports. The purpose of the Institution Support Visit is to support executive staff, provide training to leaders on how support to their staff (e.g., Stress First Aid), and share resources. A report with recommendations is provided to the Regional Director at the conclusion of this visit.

(3) Postvention support services. In the event of a staff suicide, the Regional Psychology Services Administrator must conduct an institution postvention visit to provide support and education to institution staff. The purpose of the postvention visit is to support executive staff, provide training to leaders on how support to their staff (e.g., Stress First Aid), and share resources. Data collection about the deceased staff member or review of institutional responses are not goals of the postvention support visit. Postvention services may also be appropriate following other critical incidents and may be individualized to the specific needs of an employee.

Within 24 hours of notification of a staff suicide, the Regional Psychology Services Administrator must contact the Warden to offer support and consultation on the institution's initial response to the event, such as the deployment of the Correctional Support Team, other resources, and strategies to support staff. Postvention support visits are typically scheduled no earlier than three weeks after the suicide.

The postvention team is led by the Regional Psychology Services Administrator, and ordinarily includes a Chaplain from the Chaplaincy Services Branch, a Psychologist from the Psychology Services Branch, and a central office or regional staff member from the impacted discipline.

Upon completion of the visit, the team sends the Warden a summary report offering recommendations for continued support. The National EAP Coordinator receives a copy of this report.

The National EAP Coordinator keeps institution EAP Coordinators informed of high-profile institution events that could require broad response throughout the Bureau to promote awareness, mutual support, and promotion of best practice. High profile events may include staff member deaths, including deaths by suicide, or natural disasters.

(4) Correctional Support Team. Correctional Support Teams are multidisciplinary units that provide peer support services as a component of an emergency response. CSTs may also be tasked with other functions related to a supportive workplace culture, as defined under Tier 3. See the Program Statement **Correctional Support Team**.

■ **Staff Training.** Staff receive training to foster a supportive workplace culture, to normalize help-seeking in times of need, and to identify signs of suicide risk in themselves and in co-workers. Training ensures staff are aware of support resources and how to access them.

(1) Introduction to Correctional Techniques Phase I (ICT I). Wardens/CEOs present a class to new employees on the stress of correctional work, the need for emotional and social support of co-workers, and the importance of seeking help when needed. This training must not be delegated beyond the level of an Associate Warden in the absence of the Warden. A Psychologist may attend to provide details regarding EAP.

Families of new staff members are invited to participate in a component of ICT I. This involves education about benefits and a welcome from the CEO. It will always involve discussion of how correctional work can impact staff and their families as well as EAP benefits for the staff person and the whole family.

(2) Introduction to Correctional Techniques Phase II. A training session is provided on correctional stress, staff suicide, signs of trouble, and how to self-refer and refer co-workers for services.

(3) De-escalation Training. Staff are provided with training that allows them to utilize new communication and intervention skills to reduce the likelihood of use of force with inmates by de-escalating incidents at the lowest level. Each staff will receive an 8-hour initial training in de-escalation in addition to annual training. Trainers will be individuals at each institution who have completed the Instructor Skills Training in de-escalation. Training cannot be delegated to those who have not received Instructor Skills Training. The de-escalation training curriculum must include at least one hour on the impact staff well-being has on the ability to effectively engage in de-escalation.

(4) Correctional Training Officer. A wellness component will be incorporated into the Correctional Training Officer Curriculum.

(5) Annual Training: Warden/CEO. The Warden/CEO provides training about correctional culture and the role of staff in creating a safe and supportive workplace environment. This training must not be delegated beyond the level of an Associate Warden, in the absence of the Warden.

Psychology Services. Staff receive training on how to use effective interpersonal skills to create a safe and supportive workplace, identify signs of trouble, and refer co-workers in need of professional services, EAP and/or other services available for each site.

(6) Bureau Intranet. The Bureau's intranet site, an internal webpage with resources for Bureau staff, serves as an entry way to wellness and support resources for all Bureau employees. The Bureau's intranet home page includes an easily-accessible identifier labeled Employee wellness and Support or Employee Assistance Program.

c. **Tier Three: Connection and Self-Care Programs.** Institutions develop and implement programs, activities, or trainings to increase cohesion in the workplace and/or to promote employee wellness.

- **Self-Care Programs.** Self-Care programs promote mental, spiritual, and physical wellness, improve quality of life, strengthen the ability to cope with job stress, and enhance engagement with the agency. Examples of these activities include resiliency training and mental health/physical health fairs. Some events may occur off duty such as athletic events and community aid events. Self-Care Programs may be implemented at the discretion of the Warden/CEO.

- **Staff Support Resources.** Staff support resources build connections between co-workers and their law enforcement peers inside or outside the agency. These connections encourage a supportive workplace culture by promoting cohesion and mutual aid networks. The Battle Buddy Program for returning veterans, required at all Bureau locations, is one example of a staff support resource. See the Program Statement **Battle Buddy Program**. Additional staff support resources may be developed and implemented, based upon local needs, at the discretion of the Warden/CEO (e.g., mental health and wellness campaigns in conjunction with a national commemorative month, programs to support Bureau staff members and their family members, education of community supporters about the needs of law enforcement officers).

- **Staff Physical Wellness.** The Bureau supports staff in their maintenance of physical wellness. See the Program Statement **Staff Fitness Centers**.

In order to encourage staff to engage in wellness activities, the National EAP Program will offer at least one Bureau-wide wellness program annually for all employees and their families. Additionally, each institution CST will organize at least one institution-wide wellness program annually for staff and their families. Bureau locations without a CST will use the local EAP Coordinator or work with a nearby CST to host a local event. These events may have incentives associated with their participation (e.g., celebration event, certificates, trophies, tangible incentives, or snacks).

## 5. MANAGEMENT OF HIGH-RISK SITUATIONS.

a. **Early Intervention.** A supportive workplace culture fosters opportunities for mutual aid within the work setting. Co-workers often observe early signs of emotional distress before it escalates. As a component of the training provided in Tier Two, staff learn practical skills to identify warning signs of emotional disturbance and direct their co-workers toward help.

b. **Incident Postvention.** Correctional work can expose staff to traumatic events. Traumatic events are events in which staff provide life saving measures in the workplace or provide the



primary response to an event involving a death or serious injury to another. In these situations, the CEO is authorized and encouraged to grant administrative leave for the duration of the work shift and up to the next scheduled shift following the incident.

If staff members experience such an event, the supervisor should ensure the staff member receives additional support which may include a referral to EAP, contact with CST, a call from the supervisor, or other supportive contacts.

c. **Employee Misconduct.** Many staff experience acute stress when notified they are under investigation or that they will receive discipline. Institutions will post at least one EAP poster in a highly visible area where investigation interviews take place and/or results are shared. If the staff member's work assignment is altered due to an investigation they have not yet been made aware of (e.g., they report to the computer lab daily), their supervisor must provide them with an EAP referral at the time they are notified of the change. In addition, the supervisor will contact the employee one time per month to discuss wellbeing (unless explicitly declined by the employee). Consideration should be given to whom the employee has the best rapport when making these contacts. The Institution EAP Coordinator ensures at least one representative from elected Union leadership is provided printed EAP resources. Union leadership is supported in sharing these materials with bargaining unit staff members.

d. **Wellness Checks.** In the event a staff member fails to report for duty for an extended period or notifies the institution they are in distress, efforts will be made to safely contact the employee and/or a family member. Prior to a request that local law enforcement initiate a wellness check, alternative options may be explored. Institution staff will not be required go to the residence, last known location, or community facilities to perform wellness checks.

6. **DATA COLLECTION AND SHARING.** The National EAP Coordinator is responsible for collecting and maintaining data on staff deaths by suicide as well as EAP utilization, effectiveness, and satisfaction. The data collected is consistent with the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act and any other requirements, taking into account community standards regarding risk factors and prevention. Data is collected through interviews, surveys, focus groups, and other methods of evaluation. The National EAP Coordinator maintains a roster of Bureau staff who died by suicide. When information is shared broadly, it is shared in group format; private information regarding individuals will not be broadly shared. The Employee wellness Report is shared with the field and agency leadership at least annually and will include information on EAP utilization as well as guidance to address emerging trends.

## REFERENCES

Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act

### *Program Statements*

3792.11 Employee Assistance Program (4/4/2023)  
3792.08 Staff Fitness Centers (3/27/2015)  
3792.09 Battle Buddy Program (7/12/2016)  
5337.01 Correctional Support Team (4/4/2023)

### *ACA Standards*

None

### *Records Retention*

Requirements and retention guidance for records and information applicable to this program are available in the Records and Information Disposition Schedule (RIDS) on Sallyport.