

“CHIEFS LEAD THE WAY”

A Top-Down Approach To Addressing Police Trauma and Suicide.

A 21st century approach to identifying cumulative stress and trauma by allowing chiefs to do what they do best, **lead** by training and example. Everyone has the responsibility to make sure they are fit for the difficult job of being a peace officer, but acceptance and permission from the chief relieves the officer of any doubts they may have about obtaining mental health support when needed.

In psychology we have a concept called, “**The Good Enough Parent.**” It means that perfection in the parent is not required to raise a healthy child. By the same token, Chiefs can and do have all the faults and problems that everyone has, and can still lead effectively. You only have to be, “**THE GOOD ENOUGH CHIEF.**”

Challenge the concept that the “police family” is more important than your departments’ real families. The **stigma** against pursuing a balanced life has to be confronted and changed. Seeking good physical, social and mental health has to **be directed from the top**. That’s the only way it works. Think of the **cost savings** of an emotionally healthy squad: **less sick leave**, less substance abuse, fewer overall complaints, less disciplinary problems, **fewer lawsuits**, fewer divorces, less grievances, **better morale**, fewer resignations. There is no down side to safety and wellness. The benefits are ongoing and help develop a stronger and more cohesive police force.

Chiefs must set a “**New Standard**”: This is a call out to all chiefs to have a Proactive Health Check-In and then **inspire all their sergeants’ and command staff to do the same**. Then, the 1st line supervisors meet individually with each officer, dispatcher and support staff member and give him or her the encouragement and support to go for their Proactive Health Check-ins too. It all makes natural sense. **Just try it.**

“THE PROACTIVE HEALTH CHECK-IN”

1. Visit a licensed mental health professional to **develop** a relationship that can be relied on later.
2. A confidential meeting that does **not** initiate a report.
3. It is **not** a Fitness for Duty Evaluation. It is a **Check-In** not a check-up.
4. There does not need to be a problem to go for the **Check-In**.
5. It’s just a discussion about what’s happening in your life.
6. Participation is fully **voluntary** and **encouraged** by the Chief.
7. It is the first step toward **building** and **maintaining** good mental health.

There are **multiple options** as to what kind of **licensed** mental health professional you choose.

There are multiple options as to **how** the sessions are **paid** for.

Every department can choose how they carry out the PHCI, it’s **flexible**.

Remember, we all have the constitutional right to, “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. Chiefs of Police throughout the U. S. **Must Lead The Way** and safeguard the lives of those who serve and protect us all.

For further information about the “Chiefs Lead The Way” program or how to set up a program in your city or state please contact: Marla Friedman Psy.D.PC, Chair-Police Psychological Services Section/ ILACP.

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