



# BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



**BERNARD C. "JACK" YOUNG**  
Mayor

**MICHAEL S. HARRISON**  
Police Commissioner

**TO:** The Honorable Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
**FROM:** Michelle Wirzberger, Esq., Director of Government Affairs, Baltimore Police Dept.  
**RE:** Senate Bill 565 Police Officers – Mental Health – Employee Assistance Programs  
**DATE:** February 20, 2020

## **POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore Police Department **supports** Senate Bill 565 with amendment.

Senate Bill 565 requires all law enforcement agencies to develop and implement an employee assistance program for all police officers that the agency employs and provide confidential mental health services.

The amendments being proposed by Senator Washington further strengthen the bill by clarifying the following requirements:

- ✓ Law enforcement agencies must provide access to an Employee Assistance Program and/or mental health program for all police officers that the law enforcement agency employs.
- ✓ In addition to requirements of § 3-516 of the Public Safety Article, agencies must also provide to all officers it employs, access to confidential and voluntary mental health consultation or counseling service before the officer returns to full duty following any incident involving a serious injury to the police officer; an officer-involved shooting; an accident resulting in a fatality or any use of force resulting in a fatality or serious injury.
- ✓ Law enforcement agencies must develop a policy to provide access to the services required by the bill at minimal cost to its officers.

Law enforcement officers leave their families every day to protect and serve others. On their best days, they experience trauma when arriving at crash scenes; addressing incidents of domestic violence; investigating shootings and murders; searching for lost children and vulnerable adults. If untreated, that trauma accumulates over time and can threaten the mental health and productivity of the officer.

Our officers deserve our support and assistance in relieving themselves of that trauma and ensuring that they are healthy. That is why the Baltimore Police Department has developed a comprehensive and well regarded Health and Wellness Program that is led by a professional who has experienced trauma when he served as a Maryland State Trooper and who all too well understands the shame, stress and pain of seeking mental health counseling to deal with that trauma. Included with this letter is a copy of the Officer Safety & Wellness Section Annual Report for 2018 that highlights the Baltimore Police Department's efforts to normalize self-care and make mental health treatment more accessible to all members of the Department.

In addition, you can watch this video that shows how our Health and Wellness Unit is working hard to ensure our officers feel comfortable accessing the behavioral health services that will help them to process the tough situations they deal with every day: <https://www.facebook.com/BaltimoreCityPolice/videos/446761396233012/>.

Senate Bill 565 prioritizes the mental health of police officers and seeks to reduce the negative stigma of seeking mental services commonly experienced by members of law enforcement. Therefore, we respectfully request a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 565 as amended.

# OFFICER SAFETY & WELLNESS SECTION Annual Report FY 2018

*Section I - Early Intervention Unit*  
*Section II - Health and Wellness Unit*

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**Section I: Early Intervention Unit**

**Mission Statement:** *The Early Intervention Unit recognizes problematic behavior and develops problem-solving strategies to assist members of the Baltimore Police Department in improving their performance.*

Since the beginning of 2018, there have been 99 Early Intervention Sessions completed by the Baltimore Police Department. Each of these sessions have been broken down into one of three categories, a Phase One, Phase Two and Phase Three Intervention. From January 1 to December 31, 2018 there have been 50 Phase One Interventions, (conducted by individual commands), 45 Phase Two Interventions and 4 Phase Three Interventions, conducted by the Early Intervention Unit staff.

In addition to Early Intervention-related responsibilities, the Officer Safety and Wellness Section has conducted 162 Support and Guidance Sessions. Support and Guidance Sessions are conducted when a member has been affected by a traumatic incident, which does not trigger an alert within the Early Intervention Unit's Database. These incidents include, but are not limited to, police-involved shootings, untimely deaths of family members and situations in which employees have been the victim of domestic violence.

In addition to Intervention and Support and Guidance Sessions, in 2018 members of the Early Intervention Unit revised the former Baltimore Police Department's Policy, 315, "Professional Enhancement Program Early Warning System," which is now found under Policy 1707, "Early Intervention System," These revisions reflect the Department's current guidelines pertaining to Early Intervention. The "Early Intervention Supervisory Response Form," was also created in 2018 and can be found as BPD Form 165 in Novell's Forms and Reports.

In 2018 the Early Intervention Unit documented an increase in supervisory referrals for Support and Guidance Sessions to be conducted by the Officer Safety and Wellness Section. The significant increase in individual supervisors taking more of an interest and giving more attention to the needs of their subordinates is a direct result of the growth, development and promotion of the departments newly designed Health and Wellness programs.

Continued interest in the Baltimore Police Department's Early Intervention System has peaked by publications from various media outlets, to include TIME Magazine and Baltimore's FOX 45 News, among others. TIME Magazine journalist conducted an interview with Director Vernon Herron and published an article related to the growth, development and awareness of Health and Wellness related initiatives in modern policing. Additionally, Baltimore's FOX 45 News conducted several interviews with Director Herron and members of the department, who have benefited from the Health and Wellness programs and initiatives created under Herron's leadership. As a result of these interviews and testimonies, a nationally televised 3 part series entitled *The Weight of the Badge* was broadcasted praising the work of the Section for assisting members of the Baltimore Police Department.

In an effort to improve productivity, members of the Early Intervention Unit have recorded plaguing issues. For instance, the current IAPro Alert Tracking Program, used by the Early Intervention Unit continues to draw scrutiny by analysts and has caused delayed or missed alerts on several occasions which have been reported to IAPro. The system is not capable of screening routine entries into the system and distinguishing them from actual alerts. The current process is time-consuming and requires an inordinate amount of hours be spent filtering through entries that are not useful when determining that an intervention is warranted.

Even though these issues persist, meetings with the Information and Technology Section to obtain new software have been encouraging. When the current technology system is enhanced, it will allow a more efficient process to identify alerts. In spite of the technological discords, interventions as well as Support and Guidance's continue to increase with direct clinical referrals to the BPD's employee assistance provider.

The Baltimore Police Department's 2017 partnership with BHS, a health and wellness organization, which offers a wide range of assistance for personal and professional challenges, has blossomed into a much needed and appreciated resource for many members and their families.

In 2018, the Officer Safety and Wellness Section absorbed the physical offices previously occupied by the department's Equal Opportunity and Diversity Section and brought on additional staff consisting of two civilian contract specialists. These extra minds and eyes work tirelessly to seek out members who may be displaying potential/problematic behavior in an ailing system of alerts.

## ***Section II Health and Wellness Unit***

***Mission Statement: The mission of the Health & Wellness Unit is to create the most robust health and wellness program in the nation, and in order to do so we had to identify important areas of focus based on the needs of the Baltimore Police Department.***

Areas of focus by the Health and Wellness Unit include:

1. Mental Health
2. Stress Reduction
3. Stress Induced Trauma Treatment
4. Suicide Prevention
5. Physical Fitness
6. Nutrition
7. Peer Support

The Health & Wellness Unit focus includes, but is not limited to providing resources for mental health, stress reduction, stress induced trauma assistance, peer to peer support, wellness partnerships, nutritional services and more. In 2018 the Health and Wellness unit was able to accomplish...

## **Mental Health**

At the beginning of 2018, mental health became a top priority following the increase of Support and Guidance's led by the Early Intervention team. The mistrust officers had in the department's previous EAP was at the forefront of conversations in the Health & Wellness Unit. To regain trust, the Officer Safety and Wellness Section began a campaign that placed our new mental health partner, BHS, in front of police officers by offering immediate confidential clinical support following all police involved shootings and other traumatic events or critical incidents. BHS serves as the voluntary and confidential program that provides free assessments, counseling, and referrals for personal and work-related concerns, such as stress, financial issues, legal issues, family problems, office conflicts, and alcohol and substance abuse disorders.

Additionally, members who are involved in certain critical or traumatic incidents are immediately referred to the EAP or the Officer Safety and Wellness Section (OSW). To further promote services provided by the new EAP (BHS) and OSW, posters were printed, framed, and placed on every floor of the Headquarters building and all nine police district stationhouses. Photographs of actual BPD members were used with their consent to affirm a sense of familiarity when seen by other members. The posters were enhanced with various taglines, such as "Policing Your Thoughts Comes First," "Protect Your Mental Health," and "For a free and confidential session, contact BHS at 1-800-327-2251."

Patrol officers were further introduced to BHS at roll call in each district, on all 3 shifts (Adam, Baker, and Charlie) through a series of roll call trainings. BHS flyers were handed out along with business cards at each district. Officers were assured that BHS is a voluntary, confidential, and trustworthy mental health provider. BHS flyers were sent to each member of the department (civilian and sworn) via email and PowerDMS.

As a result:

- 212 members utilized our EAP's General Services (i.e., Counseling, Legal, Daycare, etc.)
- 24 members utilized Substance Abuse Services.

## **Stress Reduction**

OSW has conducted weekly in-service classes on Managing Stress to include command members, new sergeants, new lieutenants as well as the general sworn membership and the civilian police academy class of 2018. More than half of the department was able to take part in this class which provided counseling, breathing and mindfulness during the 2018 in-service training session and Officer Safety and Wellness anticipates reaching everyone by end of 2019.

## **Stress Induced Trauma Treatment**

Onsite EAP consultation(s) for police involved shootings:

Ten (10) members.

- In 2018 the Officer Safety & Wellness Section collaborated with our EAP provider, BHS, to initiate a new response to traumatic/critical incidents. As stated, officers who were involved in police involved shooting immediately received a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing by a Mental Health Professional.

- Since the inception of this initiative, officers are returning to full duty 56% faster in 2018 compared to 2017.
- The institution of the EAP program has led to an average number of days on leave in 2018 of 48 days versus 110 days in 2017.

### **Peer Support Program**

In 2018, the Officer Safety and Wellness Section formulated the first ever Baltimore Police Department Peer Support Program and identified volunteers to be trained and participate as peer support mentors.

- Training was conducted by an ICISF approved instructors will teach “Assisting Individuals in Crisis & Group Crisis Intervention.”
- Outcomes of the training resulted in Peers’ ability to provide demobilizations, defusing, and Critical Incident Stress Debriefings.

\*\*ICISF = International Critical Incident Stress Foundation.

### **Wellness Partnerships**

To address additional physical and nutritional needs of officers, in spring of 2018, the Officer Safety and Wellness Section began to create partnerships with various physical and nutritional service providers. As of December 2018 there have been approximately 32 wellness provider partnerships created. These partnerships were marketed through a series of district pop-up fairs and an all-inclusive Family Wellness Fair, held on November 10, 2018.

### **Wellness & District Pop-up Days**

These health and wellness pop-up events were held in all nine districts as well as OPR and E&T placing our partners in direct communication with officers and civilian staff members.

- District pop-ups touched an average of 70 members per district (reaching at least 2/3rd of each district membership)
- Approximately 300 attendees (members & families).
- 32 wellness vendor/partners.
- 18 wellness donors (resorts, meal prep, hotels, fitness programs).
- Endorsed by the FOP, HOLEA, and The Vanguard Justice Society

As a result of these district wellness fairs:

- Approximately 4 officers have requested nutritional services.
- 18 members have signed up for Jimmy’s Famous Meals, a healthy meal prep service.
- 7 members have sought physical therapy both preventative and post-injury.
- 11 members have signed up for financial planning, including 3 cadets and 2 trainees

### **Nutrition**

OSW is aligned with several licensed nutritionists, as well as Jimmy’s Famous Meals, who provides meal prep services, both providing the opportunity to educate officers on how to

improve nutritional health while offering discounted nutritional meal-prep services. Jimmy's Famous Meals offers members a variety of healthy meals directly delivered to each district.

### **Fitness**

Fitness initiatives included the organization of the first ever BPD Hiking Club. The Hiking Club was initiated in August 2018 and ran through November 2018. Participants hiked a total of 14 trails and 81.15 miles. At the completion of the hiking season, of the 38 participants a detective was honored by the Director of the Officer Safety and Wellness Section and command with the "2018 BPD Hiking Club Wellness Award" for hiking the most miles in the season.

Additionally, the Officer Safety and Wellness Section, has created a pilot program with FX Well to initiate a comprehensive fitness program including preventative physical therapy, personal training, and nutritional incentives.

### **Conclusion**

2018 was a monumental year for the Officer Safety and Wellness Section, with an EAP at double the national average for utilization and referrals to the section steadily increasing. With that in mind, the Officer Safety and Wellness Section will continue its relentlessly efforts for the overall wellness of all members. In that, OSW will continue its 2019 planning to include numerous mental, physical and nutritional initiatives. These initiatives include the activation of the Peer Support Program, Lunch and Learn education series on techniques to reduce mental and physical stressors, and signs of addiction, PTSD, and recognizing mental distress. To ensure maximum awareness is reached, OSW will continue to include District Pop-Ups and Family and Wellness Health Fair for the BPD members and their families.

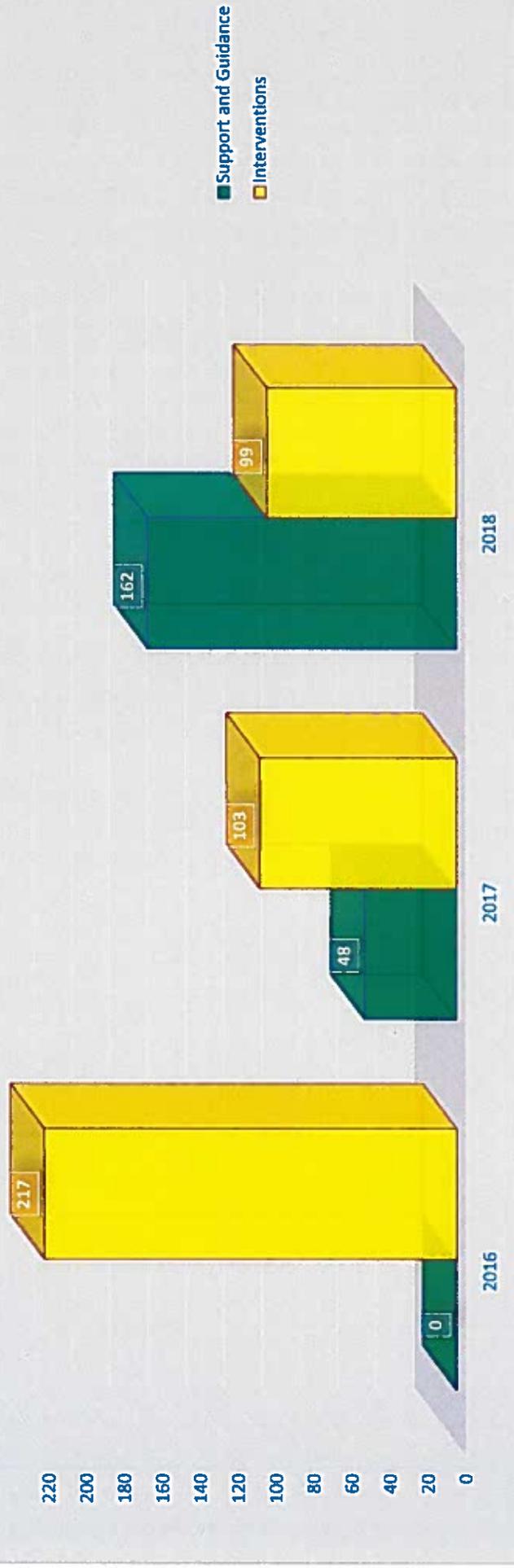
These monumental strides have been established with limited resources, but as awareness grows, additional resources become necessary for the optimal realization. One such recommendation is an increase in additional staffing to implement consent decree mandated requirements. The upgrade of technology for the Early Intervention Unit to more quickly review, access, and help members of the department is an essential need. An increase in funding to host and conduct necessary outreach and trainings is also imperative. In summary these changes would vastly improve the section's capability in accomplishing its mission of supporting our members by protecting their mental and physical health and supporting them in times of need while attempting to identify and correct potential problematic behavior.

YEAR

Support and Guidance  
Interventions

2016	2017	2018
0	48	162
217	103	99

## SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE RESULTS



Support an **Interventic** Progress!!!

0	217	-217
48	103	-55
162	99	63

YEAR  
2016  
2017  
2018

## Support and Guidance Results

