



Department of Justice

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BEND POLICE DEPARTMENT FEATURED IN JUSTICE DEPARTMENT REPORT ON IMPROVING SAFETY AND WELLNESS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

WASHINGTON – On April 17, 2019, the Department of Justice released two complementary reports focusing on the mental health and safety of the nation’s federal, state, local and tribal police officers. The Bend Police Department in Bend, Oregon was featured in the report as one of eleven law enforcement agencies demonstrating a range of innovative approaches to safeguarding the mental health of both sworn and nonsworn employees.

The reports, [*Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act: Report to Congress*](#) and [*Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Programs: Eleven Case Studies*](#), were published by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) as required by the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) of 2017.

The LEMHWA passed both chambers unanimously and without amendment and was signed by the President shortly thereafter. These actions show that its purpose and intended effects are uncontroversial among policymakers – law enforcement agencies need and deserve support in their ongoing efforts to protect the mental health and well-being of their employees. Congress took the important step in improving the delivery of and access to mental health and wellness services that will help our nation’s more than 800,000 federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement officers.

“Serving as a law enforcement officer requires courage, strength, and dedication,” Attorney General William P. Barr said. “The demands of this work, day in and day out, can take a toll on the health and well-being of our officers, but the Department of Justice is committed to doing our part to help. I want to thank the men and women of our COPS office for their hard work to support our officers every day, and specifically for these thoughtful and insightful reports, which detail both the challenges facing our officers and some specific ways we can give them the support that they deserve.”

“We are incredibly proud of everyone at the Bend Police Department for the innovative steps taken to protect the mental health of all employees. Not only does this protect officer and staff wellbeing, but it also bolsters public safety. I am grateful to Chief of Police Jim Porter for his leadership and commitment to supporting the men and women under his command.” said

Billy J. Williams, U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon. “I hope that Bend PD’s example will mark the beginning of a new era in policing where protecting the mental health of officers and staff is universally viewed as an essential element of effective law enforcement.”

“A damaging national narrative has emerged in which law enforcement officers – whether federal, state, local, or tribal – are seen not as protectors of communities but as oppressors,” said COPS Office Director Phil Keith. “In this environment, where an inherently stressful job is made more so by a constant undercurrent of distrust and negative public opinion, the risks to officer wellness are exacerbated. This report is an important measure and reflection in our ongoing commitment to protect those who protect us.”

Under the Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act, the COPS Office was required to submit reports to Congress that addressed:

- (1) Recommendations to Congress on effectiveness of crisis lines for law enforcement officers, efficacy of annual mental health checks for law enforcement officers, expansion of peer mentoring programs, and ensuring privacy considerations for these types of programs;
- (2) Mental health practices and services in the U.S. Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) that could be adopted by federal, state, local, or tribal law enforcement agencies; and
- (3) Case studies of programs designed primarily to address officer psychological health and well-being.

The first report, [*Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act: Report to Congress*](#), includes 22 recommendations to Congress ranging from supporting programs to embed mental health professionals in law enforcement agencies to supporting the development of model policies and implementation guidance for law enforcement agencies to make substantial efforts to reduce suicide.

The case studies report, [*Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Programs: Eleven Case Studies*](#), is designed to provide an overview of multiple successful and promising law enforcement mental health and wellness strategies with the joint aims of informing Congress, state and local government officials, and the law enforcement field. The report includes 11 case studies from a diverse group of sites across the United States.

The Department of Justice is pleased to respond to the LEMHWA as officer safety, health, and wellness is a longstanding priority of the agency. The reports released today address some of the most pressing issues currently facing our law enforcement community.

The COPS Office has a near 25-year history of supporting the efforts of state, local and tribal law enforcement, including the management of the National Blue Alert Network. The agency awards grants to hire community policing officers, develop and test innovative policing strategies, and provide training and technical assistance to community members, local

government leaders, and all levels of law enforcement. Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than \$14 billion to help advance community policing.

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