

Report to / Rapport au:

**OTTAWA POLICE SERVICES BOARD  
LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES POLICIERS D'OTTAWA**

27 March 2017 / 27 mars 2017

Submitted by / Soumis par:

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**SUBJECT: POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER PREVENTION PLAN**

**OBJET:**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Ottawa Police Services Board approve the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Prevention Plan as recommended by the Board's Human Resources Committee.

**RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**That the Ottawa Police Services Board approve the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Prevention Plan as recommended by the Board's Human Resources Committee.**

**BACKGROUND**

In 2012, the Provincial Ombudsman published a review of how the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services addressed Operational Stress Injuries (OSI) and included 34 recommendations to help police services understand the issues around mental health in policing.

On April 5, 2016, Bill 163, Ontario's Supporting First Responders Act, was passed enforcing a presumption that Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnosed in first responders is work-related. This act is part of the province's strategy to help keep our first responders healthy by providing them with better access to information and treatment. Following that, employers of workers covered under the PTSD presumption have been directed to provide

the Ministry of Labour with a *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Prevention Plan* by April 23, 2017.

The Ottawa Police Service Business Plans for 2013-2015 and 2016-2018 both outline our commitment to wellness. Today, we have put together a strategy which will guide us in obtaining our vision of a healthy, resilient and engaged workforce. The PTSD Prevention plan, set forth in this report, is just one part of OPS's overall Wellness Strategy which we will deliver to the Board in April 2017.

## DISCUSSION

**Wellness** represents a whole-person, balanced approach to being in good mental and physical health. It includes occupational, emotional, social, spiritual, intellectual, mental, physical, and familial wellness – all of which impact each other. Achieving a “well” state is not only life-affirming, but it allows people to reach their full potential.<sup>1</sup>

**Post traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** is a psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event<sup>2</sup> caused by witnessing or experiencing actual or threatened death, serious injury or violence.<sup>3</sup> This exposure can occur by directly experiencing the event, witnessing the event(s), learning that the event(s) occurred to a close relative or close friend and/or experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the event(s).

“Ways to prevent PTSD include keeping civilian and military populations out of harm's way and completely eliminating emotional traumas... Unfortunately, neither goal is possible to achieve.”<sup>4</sup>

Given our mandate in policing and the evidence supporting the First Responders First Act, we understand that exposure to stress or trauma is inevitable as a First Responder, and that PTSD may result from this exposure. However, we can only attempt to intervene on the complex development of any mental illness/injuries. While some illnesses may be concretely preventable, it is more realistic and effective for the Ottawa Police Service to focus on mitigating the impact of traumatic exposure rather than believing we can prevent it entirely. We are committed to better understanding this, its impacts on our members, their families and the community as well as the very serious results of neglecting signs and symptoms of mental illness or injuries, such as PTSD.

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<sup>1</sup> A collaborative definition created by the PRG working group in consultation with OPS members.

<sup>2</sup> DSM-5, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> First Responders First (n.d)

<sup>4</sup> Pomerantz, J.M, 2006.

## Current State

When reviewing occupational injury/illness data an upward trend has been noticed since 'The First Responders First Act' was adopted in 2016. In 2015, OPS had 4 lost time claims for the Traumatic Event category. In 2016, OPS had 20 lost time claims for the Traumatic Event category. This increase may be an indicator that the legislation has removed barriers for a First Responder to come forward with their PTSD diagnoses and has potentially improved awareness and a changing culture of acceptance by members. As awareness around mental health continues, we may see this upward trend continue before we see a decline in reported numbers.

## METHOD:

The Wellness Strategy is a clear, consistent and achievable system of health and wellness through cultural change, education, recognition, resiliency, and support from pre-hire to post-retire.

**Mission:** For OPS to position employees to optimally manage their wellness throughout their career and into their retirement.

**Vision:** A healthy, resilient and engaged workforce.

**Values:** Honor Courage Service

Our way forward focuses on three factors that have been shown to have an impact on the wellness of first responders: organizational elements (**workplace**), interpersonal environment (**culture**) and personal care (or **individual** self-care)<sup>5</sup>.

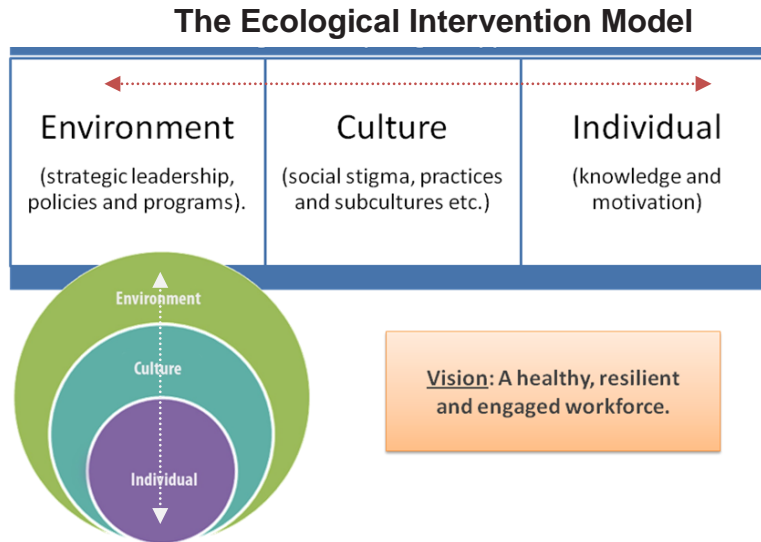
The **Ecological Intervention Model**, developed by Kelly (1966) and adapted by Spring (2015), focuses on the environment, the culture and the individuals using coordinated resources to demonstrate real change and long term prevention efforts. Research shows that, to date, society has generally focused on personal accountability and individual interventions<sup>6</sup> however, the Ecological Intervention Model depicted in *Figure 1* suggests that a multilevel approach can achieve greater momentum in workplace wellness and a more wide-ranging effect.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kleim & Westphal, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Spring, B. 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Spring, B. et al, 2015.



**Figure 1<sup>8</sup>**

The Ecological Intervention Model is depicted graphically above by a circle with three sub-circles that are layered and show impact on one another. Each layer is labeled from the bottom up: the individual (knowledge and motivation), the culture (social stigma, practices and subcultures) and the environment (leadership, policies, programs, etc.). An additional graphic box provides the vision of the Wellness Strategy: A healthy, resilient and engaged workforce.

## **GOAL 1 - Implement Early Intervention Measures**

### **Objectives:**

- Raise awareness and educate supervisors about signs and symptoms of PTSD
- Support programs that include prevention measures

## **GOAL 2 – Improve Culture**

### **Objectives:**

- Reduce stigma and barriers
- Foster early intervention, and an easier transition and return-to-work experience;

## **GOAL 3 – Support employees from pre hire to post retire**

### **Objectives:**

- Continue supporting members and families in managing their mental health
- Enhance our communication practices and access to resources

## **CONSULTATION**

This plan was created in consultation with the Wellness Committee, the Ottawa Police Association, the Senior Officers Association, the Joint Health and Safety Committee and other first responder services.

<sup>8</sup> Spring, 2016

Additionally, On March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the HR Committee was consulted and their recommendation was that the board approve this plan to be presented to the Ministry of Labour by April 23, 2017.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

All costs for this plan are within the approved resources of the Wellness initiative.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The Ottawa Police acknowledges that inaction on the issue of wellness and the mental health of its members could also result in several risks such as a potential increase in short and long term disability claims, decreased productivity, a decrease in employee satisfaction, and in the worst cases, possibly suicide.

As per the Ministry of Labour, anyone who contravenes the Act or any direction made under the Act, is guilty of an offence and on conviction is liable to a fine of not more than \$25,000 or to imprisonment for a term of not more than twelve months, or to both. R.S.O. 1990, c. M.29, s. 12.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1: References

Document 2: PTSD-Prevention Related Programs at OPS

Document 3: Ottawa Police Service PTSD Prevention Plan

### **CONCLUSION**

In law enforcement, we recognize that stress is part of the profession and resilience is tested every day. While the Ombudsman's report has addressed the very serious results of neglecting wellness - suicide, PTSD, OSI, etc., the direction given under the Ministry of Labour is only one of the motivators for this plan. When employers do more to focus on wellness, such as OPS is dedicated, employees' quality of life are known to improve. We need to support real change and let members know they are fully supported in their desire to not only be physically fit, but mentally fit as well. As such, this plan will be a living document which we will be updated as our organization advances our Wellness Strategy. Going forward, staff will inform the Board on issues related to PTSD prevention within Wellness initiative updates.

The PTSD prevention plan will be forwarded by staff to the Ministry of Labour by April 23, 2017.

## Document 1 - References

American Psychiatric Association (2013) Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders : DSM-IV. 5th edition. Retrieved from

<https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm>

Public Services Health & Safety Association (*n.d*) First Responders First, Retrieved from <http://www.firstrespondersfirst.ca/>

Kleim & Westphal (2011) Mental Health in First Responders:

A Review and Recommendation for Prevention and Intervention Strategies, In *American Psychological Association*, DOI: 10.1177/1534765611429079.

Spring,B. (2016) A Framework for Comprehensive Workplace Wellness, In *American Journal of Health Promotion*, Vol 30 (7): 569-571.

Spring, B. et. al., (2015) Fostering Multiple Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors for Primary Prevention of Cancer, In: *American Psychological Association Vol 70 (2)*, 75-90.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0038806>

Pomerantz, J.M (April 1, 2006) Can Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Be Prevented? *Psychiatric Times* Retrieved from <http://www.psychiatrictimes.com>

## **Document 2 - PTSD Prevention Related Programs at OPS**

### **Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)**

The Ottawa Police Service is partnered with Homewood Health to provide offsite emotional and mental health support for our Members.

Homewood's EFAP plans offers a complete suite of services includes organizational wellness, employee and family assistance programs, assessments, outpatient and inpatient treatment, recovery management, return to work and family support services customized to meet the needs of individuals and organizations. We are redefining mental health and addiction services to help Canadians live healthier, more productive and more fulfilling lives.

### **Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM)**

The Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team is a police peer-support network, offering members and their families guidance following a critical incident. Critical Incidents may cause a member to experience unusually strong emotional, behavioural, cognitive, emotional, spiritual, moral and/or physical reactions that have the potential to interfere with their ability to function normally. Responders may also have minimal or no reaction.

### **Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR)**

R2MR was originally developed by DND but has been adapted to police services and adopted by more than 40 police services in Ontario. It is a mandatory training program for all OPS members. The goal of the program is to reduce stigma around mental health issues and address and promote mental health and resiliency.

### **The Real You**

The focus of the Real You is to prevent chronic issues through lifestyle changes and education. It is a holistic, multidisciplinary program comprised of a team of health professionals, including psychologists, a medical doctor, naturopathic doctors, and registered physiotherapists. The Real You team's

mission is to help people heal from illness, prevent disease, and lead happier and more meaningful lives, while realizing their mental, emotional, spiritual, social and physical potential through lifestyle change. The achievement of this mission ultimately cascades positive benefits throughout our organization and the community.

### **Yoga**

Empowering Yoga is designed to alleviate symptoms of post-traumatic stress and increase the resilience of critical task performers working in high stress environments. Classes are specifically created for trauma survivors, military, veterans, and first responders.

### **Therapy Support Dog Program**

The OPS has partnered with Therapeutic Paws of Canada (TPOC) to provide therapeutic animal support to members of the OPS. The objective of the Therapy Support Dog Program is to take a progressive and proactive approach to wellness by introducing animal-assisted benefits to OPS members, as well as to victims or witnesses of crime to enhance the quality of support provided to those dealing with strong or stressful emotions.

### **Chaplaincy and Spiritual Program**

This program is intended to give members and their families' access to police chaplains/spiritual leaders for spiritual and emotional support during times of need. They will also be available to officiate at ceremonial functions, police funerals and other special events.

### **Respectful Workplace Program**

The Respectful Workplace Program aims to help make employees feel safe, equal, treated with dignity, and human rights. A respectful workplace is more than the absence of harassment, but places a positive duty on everyone to treat each other in a manner befitting an organizational culture of respect and free from stigma. A respectful workplace acknowledges that the physical, psychological and social well being of the participant is paramount. As part of the program, RespectNet is a web portal designed to



provide members with resources for creating and maintaining a respectful workplace.

**Coming soon:**

**The Resiliency and Performance Program**

The Resiliency and Performance Program focus on strengthening member resiliency post incident and on an on-going basis. The program is aimed at reducing mental health stigma, providing peer support initiative, post incident support and includes families and retired members. A Peer coordinator position (focused primarily on mitigating the impact of exposure to traumatic content) and a Resiliency coordinator (focused on the pre-hire to post- retire resiliency-building strategies) are in the process of being hired by the Ottawa Police.

**Family Night**

Family Night is an information and networking event aimed to educate members and their families about mental health issues and resiliency. Our first Family Night is scheduled for Q3.

**New programs as developed**

The Ottawa Police is committed to developing new programs and/or amending current programs to include prevention measures.