

**THE BILL BLACKWOOD
LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE OF TEXAS**

Mandatory Wellness/Fitness Program for Police Officers

A Policy Research Project
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Professional Designation
Graduate, Management Institute

by
Roger Alton Galyean

Harker Heights Police Department
Harker Heights, Texas
July, 1997

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
Abstract	
Introduction	
Historic, Legal and Theoretical	1
Review of Literature or Practice	3
Discussion of Relevant Issues	6
Conclusion/Recommendations	8
Bibliography	

ABSTRACT

This proposal of a Mandatory Wellness/Fitness Program for the Harker Heights Police Department is made to assist the Chief of Police in mandating the program, and assist the sworn officers in preparing themselves for the everyday law enforcement events they must face. The Program will be available for non-sworn personnel in the police department who may want to participate.

The benefits of a mandatory wellness/fitness program that each officer in the department may receive will increase their survival chances with endurance, speed, and strength with confidence required during emergency situations. These benefits will also improve officers' long term health. The program will be designed for Patrol Officers, Administrators, and Investigators.

Once the decision has been made to institute the wellness/fitness program it will have to be presented to the city council for budgeting and appropriation of funds. The funds will be utilized to purchase equipment and time to participate in the wellness/fitness program three to four hours a week. Officers will be required to also participate in the program on their own with an equal amount of time.

The officers and non-sworn personnel's input to the program and purchase of equipment is an important matter that managers must not overlook. In setting standards for the program, time must have a reasonable time for personnel to be able to work up to them.

Introduction

This proposal of a Mandatory Wellness/Fitness Program for the Harker Heights Police Department is made to assist the Chief of Police in mandating the program, and assist the sworn officers in preparing themselves for the everyday law enforcement events they must face. The program will be available for non-sworn personnel in the police department who may want to participate.

The benefits of a mandatory wellness/fitness program that each officer in the department may receive will increase their survival chances with endurance, speed, and strength with confidence required during emergency situations. These benefits will also improve officers' long term health. The program will be designed for Patrol Officers, Administrators, and Investigators.

A wellness/fitness program, when established, must have a set of standards in place for each officer. The standards must be designed according to their present physical condition, age, and short or long term handicaps that each member of the department may have. The program shall include a set of standards to help the officers in improving their physical condition that includes the type of exercise activities required, the frequency, and duration, or repetitions, of each activity. Other factors that must be included in the program are what kind of equipment will be utilized, and type of facility needed. The cost of equipment and facility will be budgeted in the annual budget presented to the city council. Police departments with exercise programs in place will be interviewed for additional information regarding their programs. This information will assist Harker Heights in establishing a successful wellness/fitness program within the police department.

Implementation of the program may begin with one on one briefings with the officers in the department. This should eliminate any misunderstanding regarding the purpose of the program, and encourage positive attitudes towards the program. All efforts will be made for better health and an increased feeling of confidence. Exercise will help to relieve some of the stress and tension associated with law enforcement. Exercise periods will be scheduled for on duty time, with additional exercise periods encouraged for off duty time. The type of exercises will be designed with input from all department personnel, for a program that members will feel comfortable with, and want to participate in.

Once the Harker Height's Police Department establishes the program's standards; officers will be tested on their minimum exercise ability, or physical fitness level. A medical examination from each officer's physician will be required before being enrolled in the physical fitness program. A list of exercises will be provided to the physician as options available for the officer to utilize. Additional exercises requested by the officer's physician will be allowed in the program. A six month evaluation will be conducted to measure advancement in each officer's physical fitness level. The annual physical fitness testing shall be conducted in combination with the annual weapons qualification. Officers will be required to display the ability to perform their exercises with an increase or maintenance in each testing period.

The intended outcome of this research project is to implement a mandatory wellness/fitness program for the department. The long term benefits will enhance both the officers individually, and the department as a whole.

HISTORICAL, LEGAL and THEORETICAL CONTEXT

During the past seventeen years, this officer has been employed with the City of Harker Heights Police Department, and there has been no standards or requirements to engage in a wellness/fitness training program. I personally have has experienced one heart attack and two difference types of cancer. The department has had three other officers that has had heart attacks, one officer having to medically retire. Uselinger (1990) writes, that heart disease and cancer are now the major worries.

The current Chief of Police, requested that a wellness/fitness program be established for the department, while I am attending the "Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas. Development of a wellness/fitness program must be cost effective for the department. To implement the program input from the officers, dispatchers, and other non-sworn personnel will have a direct effect on the success of the program. "The program should have officers input" (Akers 1996). Within the department, the injuries and sickness should reduce the amount of time an officer is away from duty. "A wellness/fitness program is becoming a critical role in job performance for all aspects of law enforcement (Arters and Aaron 62). John Johnson (1997) writes, factors along with poor nutrition, smoking, alcohol, and no physical fitness training has caused an increase in work related injuries and sick leave placing a burden on the department. The rights of employees to be required to exercise should only be enforced when standards are set and excepted by employees and managers. Shapaka (1996) writes, although court decisions suggest that administrators may enforce reasonable health and fitness standards.

The wellness/fitness programs being emphasized in today's society through completed studies continue to show that not only is physical fitness a healthy way to prolong one's longevity, physical fitness will also help to release the daily stress that law enforcement officers, dispatchers, and other non-sworn personnel in law enforcement come in contact with each day, "working out is one of the most common positive methods officers have to combat stress" (Morrow 4). Law enforcement officers are caught up in daily routine calls, delays between calls, boredom, and paper work.. John Johnson (1997) writes, studies as far back as the 1950's show law enforcement officer health and well being was affected by several negative indicators:

- A. habits and environments of the job
- B. the irregular hours
- C. the fast eating
- D. ups and downs of adrenal glands

Stressful events can contributor to the secretion of high levels of detrimental hormones. Thus leaving the officers not being able to perform at the physical level required of them in critical situations. "Over the last twenty years private business and industry have shown increasing concern for the health and fitness of the employees" (Harpole 2). The primary intention of the wellness program is to not only encourage attention to physical fitness improvement, but to discover possible harmful conditions that exist as well (Balmos, 1989).

Law enforcement managers and officers over look the stress that police dispatchers received during their shift. Dispatchers having received the initial contact with an

emergency event are often excluded from the conclusion of the emergency. While departments tend to debrief the officers, they fail to include the dispatchers on their part in the emergency, leaving them with adrenal flowing and stress. Dennis M. Payne (Internet) writes, that some have suggested that the telephone call for police service is the single most critical point in the entire criminal justice system. Yet the reality is that few police responsibilities can be carried out successfully unless the initial information, determinations, and transmissions are correct. Though much attention has been paid to the discretion of police officers, very little has been paid to the discretion that dispatchers exercise and to the ultimate impact that this can have on the overall police service.

Review of Literature or Practice

The Harker Heights Police Department as other departments with a mandatory wellness/fitness program should use standards that can be met over a period of time. Officers maybe tested semi-annual or on an annual basics, and must meet or be able to comply with the standards set. These standards should be required to assist the officer in promotion programs, assignments, special duty programs, and maintaining their health. Akers (1996) writes, fu the state of Kansas over 55 percent of all retirements since 1967 have been for disability rather than age. It is clear that the adverse effects of the lack of fitness are overwhelming, while the positive benefits are often overlooked. Being physically fit diminished stress, promotes self-esteem, improves firearms accuracy, increases an officers confidence in confrontation, makes him/her more effective with defensive tactics and generally improves his/her quality of life. From the agency's viewpoint, physical fit

officers use less sick time, have fewer on the job injuries and physical fitness tends to prevent premature retirement.

This same philosophy applies to the dispatchers in a department. The well being of dispatchers is important, the stress dealing with emergencies through telephone calls and personnel seeking assistance during a shift period is overwhelming. An officer on the other hand may only be involved with one or two of the calls, where the dispatcher has to contend with an of the calls. Thus leaving them with no stress relievers. The responsibility of supervisors to seek a wellness/fitness program should include all employees within the department During Module II (January - February 1998), I conducted a five question survey of the seventeen different departments represented to respond on mandatory physical fitness training program and stress.

Results of the survey are as follows:

Fifteen or 88% of the departments did not have a physical fitness program. Two or 12% had a program in place.

The second question asked, if the department would let you participate three or four hours a week while on duty, would you participate. Seventeen or 100% indicated they would participate.

Question three was on debriefing of officers after a major emergency. Eleven or 65% were debriefed, where six or 35% showed sometimes.

Question four asked if dispatchers were debriefed after a major emergency. Four or 24% indicated yes, two or 12% indicated no, eight or 47% showed sometimes the dispatchers

were debriefed, while three or 17% did not know.

The last question asked did they feel the dispatchers were overlooked, leaving them to deal with their stress. Ten or 59% indicated yes, four or 24% indicated sometimes, one or 6% was no, and two or 11% did not know. This indicates a health problem exist for dispatchers as it does for peace officers.

The problems of a wellness/fitness program must also be examined through the research. A review of other departments that have a wellness/fitness program in place is included. Johnson (1997) writes, the problems to be examined by research are: 1) to establish there is a need for a wellness/fitness program within the department; 2) address what legal guidelines and constraints must be considered before establishing a wellness program to avoid any employee discrimination under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Title n and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Also to be address is the issue of establishing an incentive program for employees based on their active involvement in a physical wellness program. Additional information regarding physical wellness in law enforcement will be collected and evaluated from law enforcement departments with established policies on employee wellness programs. In addition, Morrow (1997) writes, numerous studies, including those conducted by the United States Secret Service, Ohio Highway Patrol, Xerox Corp., Quasar Systems Ltd., Goodyear Rubber, and NASA, have shown the following evidence of cost savings after the implementation of fitness programs: eighteen (18) to forty two (42) percent drop in absenteeism; Four (4) to eleven (11) percent increase in productivity; improved moral; less employee turnover; and reduced health care cost.

Discussion of Relevant Issues

The feeling of most law enforcement supervisors is the safety and health of their department personnel. Keeping the patrol division and dispatch section with the amount of required personnel *to* service the community, is a requirement that demands the full attention of the supervisor. Of all the literature on physical wellness/fitness research, the best one to explain the relevant issues was written by Lt. John Johnson, LEMI, (July 1997). Johnson writes, It's obvious that law enforcement officers should be at a high level of physical fitness. Many health problems related to fitness are brought on by lifestyle, such as poor nutrition and lack of adequate exercise. People who don't exercise have 36% higher health care cost and 54% longer hospital stays than people who do. Over weight people have 7% higher health care cost and 85% longer hospital stays than people who are thin. Smokers have 25% higher health care cost and 114% longer hospital stays than non smokers (Chang,Boyle, 1989). The implementation of a physical wellness program would raise the level of fitness of employees and reduce illness and injuries. Employees however do not want to participate in physical training whether it is voluntary or compulsory. Administrators need to create ways to motivate employees to become fit and change their lifestyles. The benefits are many and the consequences of not having a wellness program can be both costly and disastrous. Some of the benefits can be increased productivity, improved morale, and better public image. The results of not having a wellness program can be staggering. Officers have lower life expectancy, are an increased risk of injury to themselves or the public, and can be a source of liability. In *Parker v. District*

of Columbia, under 42 U.S.C. Section 1983, Parker was awarded \$424,046.00 by the United States Supreme Court. Parker was shot twice a the District of Columbia Officer, while the officer was effecting an arrest. According to court records, Parker made a movement that the officer concluded Parker was reaching for a gun, however there was no gun. The plaintiff produced as expert witness who testified that the officer should have been able to subdue Parker without using deadly force. In addition the evidence revealed that the District of Columbia had provided no physical fitness to the officer in the four years prior to the incident. The court concluded: that the officer simply was not in adequate physical shape. This condition posed a foreseeable risk of harm to others.

Administrators have latitude to enforce health and fitness standards. These standards must not demonstrate disparate impact as defined under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, unless they are justified by proof of job relatedness. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 adds the handicap to the list of protected groups, and the Civil Rights Act of 1991 placed emphasis on documenting job relatedness of standards. The Civil Rights Act of 1991 also places greater importance on single standards and the validity on job relatedness. In order to have a fitness program that can withstand a legal challenge it must be validated. The standard must show that there is a direct correlation of the standard and the necessary skills required to perform the job. The data from several studies such as: Johnson and Johnson, and the United States Secret Service shows that in promoting a wellness program the cost of health care is lower. Also job related injuries and sick leave are reduced. In a smaller department such as Harker Heights Police Department

this would be a benefit, by reducing overtime pay when necessary to cover shift assignments due to absenteeism caused by sick leave or work related injuries. Also a benefit of a wellness program is a longer life expectancy of the trained veteran officer. Without the veteran officer having a healthier lifestyle, the life expectancy is reduced, thus the department would have the burden of retraining another officer, prematurely. Kyle (1996) also writes, an argument could be made that law enforcement officers, as well as the general population, should be maintaining physical fitness standards on their own. In view of the physical agility standards that typically exists in the majority of departments for applicants, one might assume that fitness standards are common across an agency despite length of service. Unfortunately, as reported by Reviere and Young (1994), increased length of law enforcement service generally finds older officers exhibiting less physical fitness standards. Though not totally related to exercise and diet, these are significant factors. Any potential to offset these sliding levels of physical fitness must be seriously considered by administrators.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The extent and purpose of this research for a wellness/fitness program was to compile information necessary to help the Chief of Police for the Harker Heights Police Department in making a decision as to develop and implement a mandatory wellness/fitness program.

Approximately half of the Harker Heights Police Officers are in physical good condition. The implementation of a wellness/fitness program should help to keep them

physically fit. For those who are overweight or have other illnesses the program will encourage them to better their health and reduce sick time. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 must not be disregarded.

The conclusion that was reached was that the Harker Heights police officers and other employees would benefit from a mandatory wellness/fitness program. The wellness/fitness program must be made mandatory for the employees to participate and benefit from the program.

The wellness/fitness program will assist the officers and other employees with an opportunity to become physically fit, reduce their stress, blood pressure and the opportunity to extend their longevity. Employees could see their health care cost reduced to a lower rate for them and the city. This will also reduce the civil liability for them and the city.

Once the decision has been made to institute the wellness/fitness program it will have to be presented to the city council for budgeting and appropriation of funds. The funds will be utilized to purchase equipment and time to participate in the wellness/fitness program, three to four hours a week. Officers will be required to also participate in the program on their own with an equal amount of time.

Police officers and other employees must have the understanding that the intentions of the wellness/fitness program will benefit them and the city, becoming healthier and physical fit. Their input to the program and purchase of equipment is an important matter that managers must not overlook. Time to meet the standards set should have a

reasonable time for personnel to be able to work up to them. Personnel that fail to meet the standards in a reasonable time should be assisted by their peers and supervisors to gain the benefits received from the program.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Akers, Gary L., "Physical Fitness Standards for Village Police Officers". Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, November 1996.

Arters, Linda and Aaron, Kris, "Fitness for Life". Law and Order, December 1989, Page 62.

Balmos, Fred N., "A Report on Physical Fitness Testing and Training in the San Antonio Police Department". Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, December 1989.

Braden, Steven K., "Requiring the Continued Physical Fitness of Police Officers". Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, November 1990.

Collingwood, Thomas R., Ph.D., "Implementing Programs and Standards for Law Enforcement Physical Fitness". The Police Chief, April 1988, Page 20.

Galyean, Roger A., "Survey Mandatory Physical Training Program and Stress". Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas Module II, February 1, 1998.

Getz, Ronald I. "You Can't Afford Not To Have A Fitness Program". Law And Order", June 1990, Page 44.

Harpole, Bobby J. "Mandatory Physical Fitness for Police Officers". Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, January 1994.

Johnson, John, "Wellness Program", Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, July 1996.

Kyle, Brain, "Mandatory Physical Fitness Program for Police Officers". Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, August 1996.

Ness, James J., Ph.D., "Mandatory Physical Fitness Standards: Issues and Concerns". The Police Chief, August 1992, Page 74.

Pollock, Michael L., Ph.D., Gettman, Larry R., Ph.D., Kent, Deborah, Morgan, W., and Price, Clifford S., "Development of Methods and Programs to Promote Physical Fitness Programs Among Police Officers: Report I - Nature of Specific Exercise Programs". International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1976.

Prentice, Michael C. and Tracy, Tom, "Are Your Personnel Fit for Duty". Law and Order, May 1992, Page 17.

Price, Clifford S. and Kent, Deborah, "Development of Methods and Programs to Promote Physical Fitness Among Police Officers, Report 3 - Physical Fitness Practices, Attitudes and Perceptions", International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1977.

Price, Clifford S., Pollock, Michael L., Ph.D., Gettman, Larry R., Ph.D., and Kent, Deborah, "Physical Fitness Programs for Law Enforcement Officers: A Manual for Police Administrator". National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, U.S. Department of Justice, 1970.

Shapaka, Mike, "Participating in a Mandatory Wellness/Fitness Program". Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, January 1996.

Slahor, Stephenie, Dr., "Focus on Fitness: The FBI Way". Law and Order, May 1990, Page 52.

Sweeney, Lawrence, "Strength Training: For Your Job, For Yourself". Law and Order, March 1992, Page 31.

Useldinger, Ron, "About Fitness". Law and Order, May 1990, Page 53.