

Officer Wellness- Physical Fitness

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Abstract

Law enforcement is a demanding job, both physically and mentally. Law enforcement officers often work long shifts and have their sleep interrupted by court or other work-related tasks such as being in an on-call status. Midnight shift officers often have no healthy choices for food establishments when they go on a meal break. Fatigue often limits the desire to participate in physical fitness. The Tallahassee Police Department is looking at ways to begin an established Wellness Program. This research is being conducted to determine what health problems most affect law enforcement officers. It also looks at the perception of employees on department standards for physical fitness and what interest employees have in a fitness standard. This research further examines what employees' needs are in a physical fitness program and what is the most effective way to begin one.

Introduction

It is no secret that law enforcement is a dangerous job. Every day law enforcement officers put on their gun and badge and answer the call to keep their communities safe. Unfortunately, for many reasons, this comes at a health cost. There are many reasons that law enforcement should have the best physical fitness standards of any profession. Unfortunately, there are just as many reasons why it does not.

Although law enforcement is a highly stressful job, officers can combat stress with physical fitness. It is well known that when people are active in aerobic or anaerobic activity, it increases their endorphins and helps to increase positive moods. It is difficult to measure all law enforcement across the country to get a standard of how stress affects their bodies. The simple reason is that not all law enforcement officers take the same path in their career. I would imagine that a homicide detective in Chicago would almost certainly face more stress than a law enforcement officer assigned to beach patrol on the beaches of Destin Florida. As a twenty-year law enforcement veteran, I understand that law enforcement officers face an increasing demand for calls for service without an increasing number of officers to help with that workload. We are expected to go from call to call, often with no breaks. Officers are expected to know every state statute in their state as well as all of their department policies, which often fill a book ten inches thick. As a law enforcement officer, I am expected to be an expert in the use of force. I am also expected to speak in a professional manner, no matter how substantial the beratement I receive from a suspect is.

Law enforcement officers who work the midnight shift are often without many choices for healthy food. In many smaller communities, the only food establishment open is a fast-food restaurant. Officers must rely on bringing healthy food from home. Unfortunately, with families to take care of, court to attend, and other necessities of life, there is not always time. It is common sense that people must eat healthy food to be in

good physical health. Even if officers have a necessary amount of physical fitness activity, a poor diet can still cause them to be physically unhealthy. I have personally watched an officer test at a high level for physical fitness but still have a heart attack because of a poor diet.

In my experience, officers often depend on off-duty employment and overtime for salary enhancement. One problem this is known to cause is that officers often work with only a few hours of sleep between shifts. One thing we are taught even at the academy level is that lack of sleep causes poor decision making and extra stress to the body. It is common among midnight shift officers to work all night long and then sit in a courthouse all day following their shift. When an officer is already exhausted from work, they are not likely going to make time for physical fitness.

Physical fitness is crucial for officers for so many reasons. It is essential for the reasons previously mentioned, but with law enforcement, it is important because it can save lives. Any law enforcement officer who has ever been in a street fight with a criminal knows how physically demanding it is. In a ground fight, it is crucial to be in equal or better shape than the opponent. When an officer becomes so overly taxed that they can no longer fight, they can lose weapons from their belt and be rendered incapacitated or killed. As a trainer, I have watched as overweight officers have difficulty breathing in high-stress environments. As a SWAT commander, I often teach that it is critical in decision making and accuracy that officers be able to control their breathing to keep their heart rate under control. Even in training scenarios, officers who become overly taxed in these areas get tunnel vision, which causes them to miss dangers outside of their immediate focus.

More departments than ever are developing officer wellness programs. How do we get officers to understand that physical fitness is directly related to better job performance and longevity of life? How do we get officers to take part in department programs voluntarily? Do wellness programs have to be incentive-based to have participation? Is it a good idea to make it mandatory to maintain a certain fitness level? If we make it mandatory to maintain a certain fitness level, who decides what that level is and how did they decide it? These challenges will be different for each department, but the important thing is that we accept the challenge for the health of our profession.

Literature Review

Many people refer to law enforcement officers as sheepdogs. They live to protect others and are constant servants. The stronger officers have a “warrior mindset,” which puts them mentally ahead in the game when it comes to realizing the dangers of the job. It is important, however, that officers understand their limitations both physically and mentally. The sheepdog mentality that officers carry causes them to put everyone else above themselves. Officers put their life focus on their family and those they serve, which often leads to very little time for themselves. Law enforcement officers often work more extended hours to supplement their income either through overtime or off-duty details. This causes them to sleep less than they should for optimal physical health. They stay late to help with cases so they can better their chance for promotion. They spend what time they have left with their families hoping to make life as normal as

possible for their children. All of these things push their physical fitness further and further down the list of what is important to them. (Partee, 2018)

Physical Fitness- Heart Disease

According to the Law Enforcement Officer Memorial website, the top three reasons law enforcement officers die are heart disease, traffic accidents, and shootings. In an article entitled “Heart Disease and the Law Enforcement Officer,” Doctor Jonathan Sheinberg stated, “There is a simple reason that law enforcement officers have some of the best pensions in the country – we do not live long enough after retirement to fully collect them.” (Sheinberg, 2015) It is difficult to understand why we still are not addressing this issue at the level we should be. According to Dr. Sheinberg, a police officer’s life expectancy is 20 years less than that of the working population. Perhaps the most staggering statistic he lists is the fact that police officers are twenty-five times more likely to die from heart disease than a violent attack. That begs the question, why aren’t we putting the same amount of focus on health as we do on defensive tactics? Departments can combat these issues by merely putting in place a wellness program. With wellness programs, departments can arrange for angio-screening and other preventative measures to show officers the physical condition of their heart. Heart disease is preventable. However, the fact that it is reversible is just as important. (Sheinberg, 2015)

Physical Fitness- Diet

Some people may feel that wellness programs equal mandatory fitness. That is not always the case. Wellness programs can cover a myriad of things to include diet, mental, physical fitness, financial, etc. Many officers still use dietary restrictions based on old data that said they should eat low fat. Recent studies have shown the opposite to be true. Higher fat diets may increase a specific part of LDL cholesterol; however, the type it increases can be filtered by the liver and does not attach to the arterial walls. On the opposite side of the spectrum; there are carbohydrates and sugar, which have a terrible effect on LDL cholesterol. They create a type of LDL that can pass through blood vessels and cause blockages. The facts are sugar, carbohydrates, and processed foods are causing an obesity pandemic. (Sheinberg, 2015)

More doctors are moving in the direction of higher fat lower-carb diets. Many doctors of patients with diabetes recommend lower carbohydrate diets. The reason is blood glucose levels. Carbohydrates raise blood glucose levels. Therefore, it only makes sense that lowering the intake of carbohydrates will reduce those same levels. Doctors have been able to lower the amounts of insulin prescribed to their patients just by following a lower-carb diet. Lower carbohydrate diets also coincide with lower body fat and lower blood pressure. (Forghan, 2019)

Physical Fitness- Sleeping Habits

Another strike towards the health of law enforcement officers is shift work. Most agencies either work three 8 to 10-hour shifts or two 12 hour shifts. Those who work the

midnight shift, more commonly referred to as the graveyard shift, are often the newer and younger officers. Officers that work the midnight shift are sleeping when the body naturally wants to be awake. It is known as the natural circadian rhythm. Our body wants to be awake during daylight hours and sleeping during night hours. When we do the complete opposite, it affects everything from cardiovascular health to our immune system. Studies have shown that long term shift work is directly associated with an increase in heart disease, diabetes, cancer, depression, fertility, gastrointestinal problems, and obesity. It is also mentally stressful because they are awake when their friends and family are sleeping, which often leads to feelings of isolationism. (Griffin, 2010)

An often-cited study done by Dr. John Violanti showed that officers working midnight shifts, who also had an increase in overtime and shorter sleep duration, had an increase in abdominal circumference, increase in blood pressure, higher blood sugar levels and higher cholesterol levels. What is even more interesting with the study was that it showed that although midnight shift officers were usually younger than their day shift counterparts, that advantage diminished as soon as sleep duration decreased. (Violanti et al., 2009)

Physical Fitness- Job-Related

Law enforcement officers have the same need to be physically fit when they have twenty years on the job as they do when they have three years. The job does not change. When an officer is 40 years old, they still need to be physically fit enough to endure a ground fight with a 20-year-old. Unfortunately, in most cases, law enforcement officers tend to decrease their level of physical fitness as they get older. There are so many advantages to being physically fit in law enforcement; it is hard to understand why departments do not have minimum physical fitness standards. Although law enforcement has changed dramatically over the years, there are still everyday tasks associated with the profession that requires some level of fitness. Some of these daily tasks include pushing a car out of the road, rescuing someone drowning, or fighting with a suspect on the ground. With the profession having these types of physical fitness demands, agencies should provide the fitness training needed. We provide officers with Use of Force training, but no fitness training needed to be able to maintain a lengthy ground fight. (Bonneau & Brown, 1995)

Building a Wellness Program- Cost

The first hurdle most departments must overcome when attempting to start any new program is funding. In law enforcement, sometimes unions can be a hurdle as well. That is why it is essential to show how a wellness program can save the local government money through health initiatives. It is also important to show the union that the wellness program is for the benefit of the members. Every year local governments incur increased costs related to injuries that could have been prevented if the officer was in better physical health. Poor physical health often leads to officers calling in sick more often as well. It is imperative that departments show how costs associated with sickness and injury can be lowered with effective wellness plans. Departments should

also seek out insurance companies who will offer lower rates for those companies that maintain a wellness program. (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2005)

Building a Wellness Program- Employee “Buy-In”

The evidence is overwhelming that departments must establish wellness programs. To begin, however, departments must get officer buy-in. The first thing most successful programs do is to send out a department survey. The survey is where departments can truly find out what the overall concerns of the employees are. Departments should tailor wellness programs towards their individual department needs, which can be found during the survey process. (US Department of Justice, 2018)

There should also be a clear confidentiality policy in place to give employees the comfort they need to bring forward their wellness issues. While physical fitness may not be a sensitive subject for officers, financial and mental stressors can be. (US Department of Justice, 2018)

It is important to launch a wellness campaign to explain to officers what services are available to them. This can be done with brochures, at shift roll call, or through inter-agency web portals. This part of the process is critical to gain interest from members of the agency. (US Department of Justice, 2018) Some agencies like the Vancouver Police Department have used a logo that officers recognize as being a link they can click on for wellness information. Officers also know if they see the logo on documentation, they can follow up with their wellness coordinator for further information. (US Department of Justice, 2014)

Creating the Physical Fitness portion of the Wellness Program

When creating the fitness program, departments should focus on individual officer health. Staying away from competition between members of the agency is important. Competition between employees will cause many officers not to participate. There should be an atmosphere of support among officers who encourage others to reach their individual goals. Cooper Fitness standards are one of the more popular fitness programs used by law enforcement agencies to test fitness levels. In this particular program, one officer may have a fitness goal of reaching the level of Superior, the highest level of achievement on the Cooper Fitness Standards. Another officer may have an individual goal of reaching a rating of Good, which is an average rating. Both goals are equally important, and the same level of accolades should be given to both officers who achieved their goal. (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2002)

Physical fitness should be tailored to the department needs. For instance, some agencies may be located in an area where strong swimming skills are needed. Others may be in a community that is entirely rural, and tracking suspects could lead through miles of terrain. The fitness standards should also be encouraging to all officers and not tailored to where only a few achieve success. In the police academy, fitness is sometimes used as a punishment which sends the wrong message. It does not encourage fitness but instead gives it a negative stigma. (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2005)

A question that must first be answered by an agency is whether they are going to make fitness a standard or voluntary. If an agency chooses to make it a standard, it must establish a standard that is fair to all. There are very clear laws that establish fitness standards cannot be tailored to the benefit of one race or sex. According to Title VII laws, any person of a protected group that feels a fitness standard discriminates against their protected status can file a lawsuit. The department must then be able to clearly show that the fitness standard required of the officer is needed to perform that officer's job duties. The courts have stated that we cannot make a fitness standard based merely on the fact that law enforcement is a dangerous and physical job. It is the individual department's responsibility to show that the standard is related to job duties. (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2001)

One aspect to look at when establishing the fitness protocols is to bring in outside experts. There are many valuable resources available to departments that have already done the research needed to establish a program. If the agency is going to make fitness a standard under "fitness for duty," they should consider an early warning program just as they do for other issues. In most agencies, if officers have sudden behavioral problems, alcohol problems, or other issues, they are put on an early intervention plan. Departments with wellness programs should consider this type of intervention for officers who have become vastly overweight or who are not meeting minimum fitness requirements. (Partee, 2018)

The benefit of bringing in outside experts for physical fitness is that they have the certifications and training needed to be able to put officers on a successful plan. Many private organizations are utilizing athletic trainers. The athletic trainers have shown to reduce health-related costs significantly. Employees of businesses utilizing athletic trainers are reporting that individuals spend less time on Workman's Comp and return to work physically ready to do the job tasks they are assigned to. Athletic trainers are not personal trainers but yet more of a complete package when it comes to overall wellness. They can assist with fitness training plans that are adapted to law enforcement, but they are also able to help with post-injury needs for faster recoveries. (Burke, 2015)

Some agencies establish voluntary fitness programs. When agencies make fitness standards mandatory, it just becomes one more thing for the "rank and file" to complain about. If the agency makes the program voluntary and offers incentives, it might prove more fruitful in the end. One way to get a voluntary program started is to form a focus group to come up with incentives for members who participate. This allows the employees to build the program how they want it. Many agencies have found success by just allowing employees to work out for one hour on duty. While this may not work for call driven agencies, it may still work for the non-sworn employees. Some agencies offer incentives for achieving fitness goals such as time off, gym memberships or pay incentives. Employees are much more likely to want to get physically fit if they want to do it rather than being forced to do it. (Ellifritz, 2014)

How do We Measure Success?

There are several ways that agencies can measure the success of their program. The most obvious is based on the number of participants. If the agency has five

hundred people, and only twelve people utilize the program, it is hard to count that as a success regardless of how much improvement those twelve people have made. That is why it is essential to begin the program with a campaign to get employees interested. (Grossmeier Ph.D., 2015)

Another category to analyze is how satisfied are the employees with the program. It does agencies no good to start a wellness program and then never find out from the employees if it needs improvement. It is likely that the program, especially in the fitness areas, will go through changes and modifications. These changes will likely be from input from employees through satisfaction surveys. (Grossmeier Ph.D., 2015)

The most obvious measure of success is performance-based. Are employees in the fitness program getting positive results? Are they losing excess fat? Are they changing their diet? Are they having better performance in their runs or obstacle course? Are they lowering bad cholesterol and getting blood pressure within normal limits? These are all measurable and will tell an agency if the program is getting the desired results. This will also be a key indicator of whether or not there needs to be a change in how the fitness of participants is addressed. (Grossmeier Ph.D., 2015)

It is crucial for the success of a program to have organizational support. Is the command staff involved with the Wellness Program? Are there agency policies written to ensure long term success? Even more important is do the employees feel that they have the organizational support to achieve their fitness goals. If the program is just "checking a box," and the department is not invested, the program will likely not enjoy success. (Grossmeier Ph.D., 2015)

There are financial impacts that can be measured as well. A department can look at comparisons between sick leave before and after Wellness Programs as well as Workman's Comp claims. Although financial results may not begin to show for two to five years, showing savings to the local government will likely keep the program budgeted. (Grossmeier Ph.D., 2015)

Measuring the success of the program allows the agency to make changes needed and adapt for improvement continually. The agency should have a schedule for evaluating the program. If an agency did a quarterly or bi-annual review of participants, it could use the performance measures to make necessary adjustments. These reviews are also important to show the impact of the program to the local government that likely funds it. (Grossmeier Ph.D., 2015)

Methods

The purpose of this research was to identify methods of developing a physical fitness program as part of a Wellness program. It was also done to determine the level of desire law enforcement officers have to participate in a program if offered.

The data utilized was gathered using an electronic survey provided to all sworn and non-sworn members of the Tallahassee Police Department. The survey grouped participants into gender, age, and tenure categories. This was done to see if there was any correlation in those categories and those who wanted to participate in a physical fitness program. Participants were asked if they wanted a fitness standard to be mandated within the department. They were also asked if they would participate if it were voluntary or incentive-based. The questions further identified those who currently

participate in physical fitness on their own outside of TPD and what type of fitness level they believe they are in.

The survey did not require participants to identify themselves in order to encourage more people to participate. A weakness in the data collected is that people who are likely to volunteer to complete a survey are generally those who go above and beyond what they are required to do at work. These also tend to be those who put in effort outside of work to be physically fit. Another weakness is that it does not capture data from an equal amount of genders such as one hundred males versus one hundred females. The same applies to age and tenure.

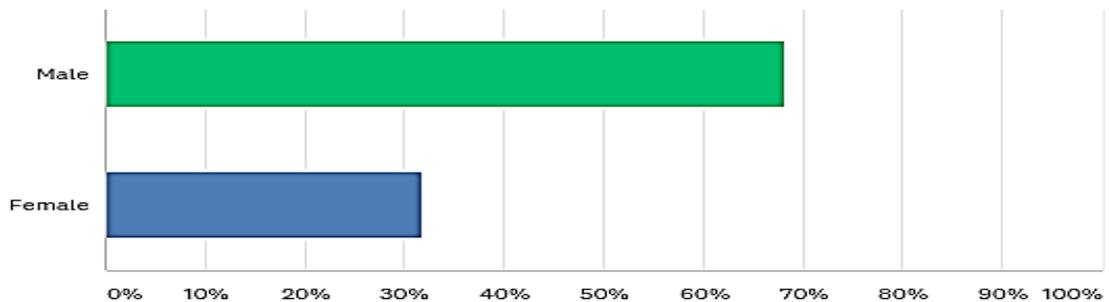
Results

The survey was sent to 494 recipients of the Tallahassee Police Department. The survey recipients were made up of both sworn and non-sworn personnel. I received a total of 246 responses for a response rate of 49%. Some of the 246 respondents chose to skip certain questions within the survey.

The first four questions were used to determine the age, gender, and experience of the participant as well as whether they were sworn or non-sworn.

The first question identified the gender of the participant. The results showed that 167 were male, 78 were female, and 1 did not answer. This is a ratio of 68.16% male and 31.84% female.

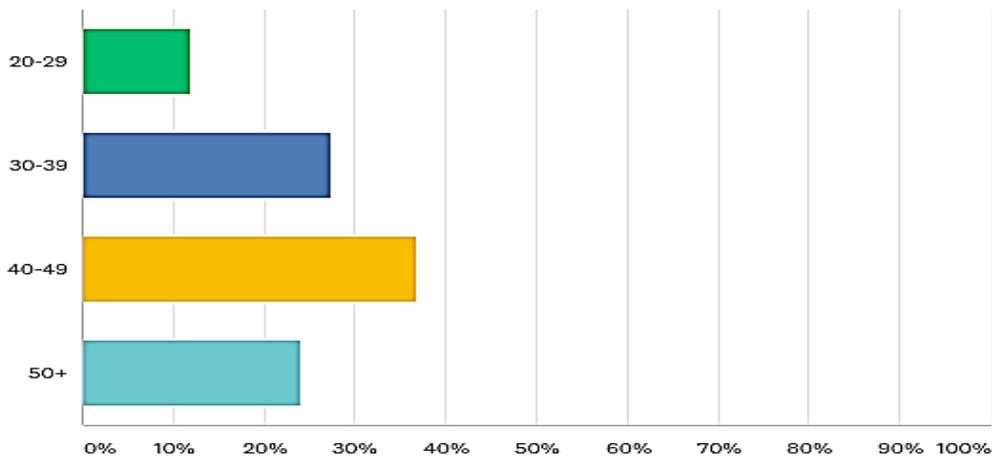
TABLE 1: Gender



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Male	68.16%	167
Female	31.84%	78
TOTAL		245

The second question asked what age group the participant was a part of. One person chose to skip this question. This question was broken down into age groups of the '20s, '30s, '40s, etc. Out of 245 responses, the largest group was age 40-49 with a total of 90 responses, or 36.73%. The second-largest group was age 30-39 with 67 responses or 27.35%. The third-largest group was age 50+ with 59 responses or 24.08%. The smallest group in the survey respondents was the 20-29 age group or 11.84%.

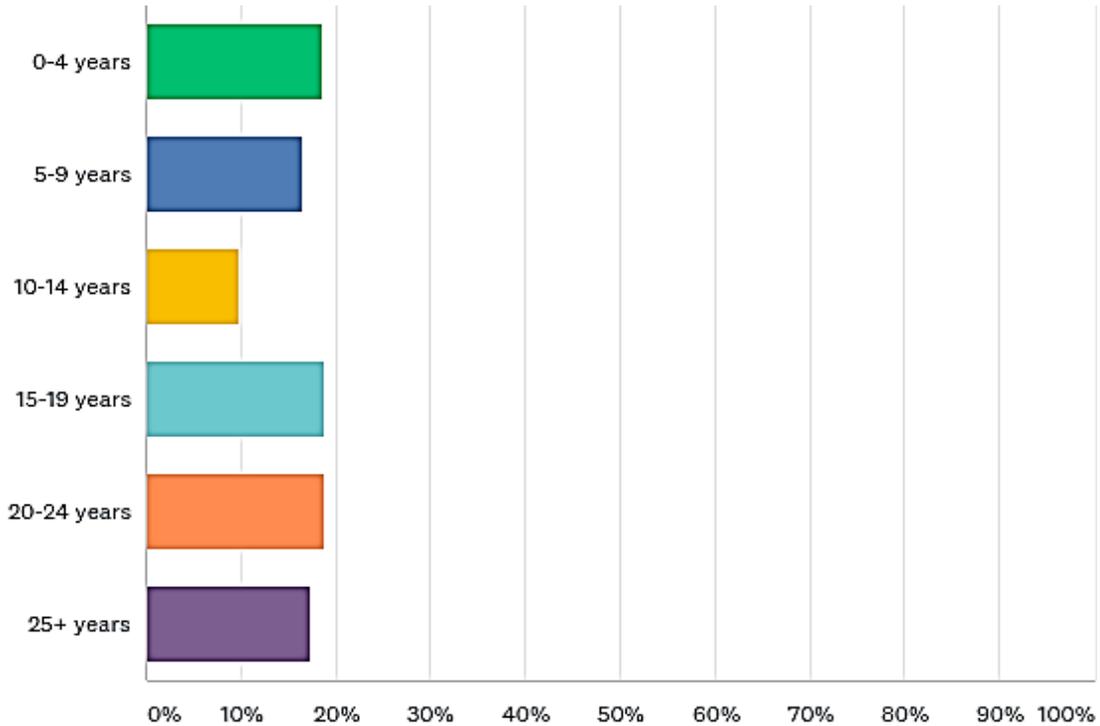
TABLE 2: Age



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
20-29	11.84% 29
30-39	27.35% 67
40-49	36.73% 90
50+	24.08% 59
TOTAL	245

The third question in the survey asked respondents how many years of service they had. Three respondents chose to skip this question. Two groups, 15-19 years and 20-24 years, had the same amount of responses with 46 each, representing 18.93% respectively. The third-largest group was 0-4 years of service with 45 responses, or 18.52%. The fourth-largest group was 25+ years of service with a total of 42 responses, or 17.28%. The fifth-largest group was the 5-9 years of service with a total of 40 responses, or 16.46%. The smallest group of respondents was the 10-14 years of service with a total of 24 responses, or 9.88%.

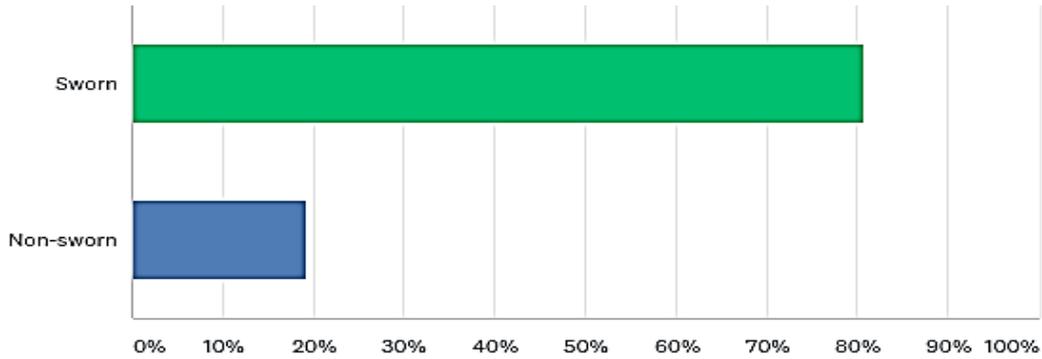
TABLE 3: Years of service



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-4 years	18.52%	45
5-9 years	16.46%	40
10-14 years	9.88%	24
15-19 years	18.93%	46
20-24 years	18.93%	46
25+ years	17.28%	42
TOTAL		243

The fourth question in the survey asked if the participant was sworn or non-sworn. The results were 198 sworn, or 80.82% and 47 non-sworn, or 19.18%. One respondent chose not to answer the question.

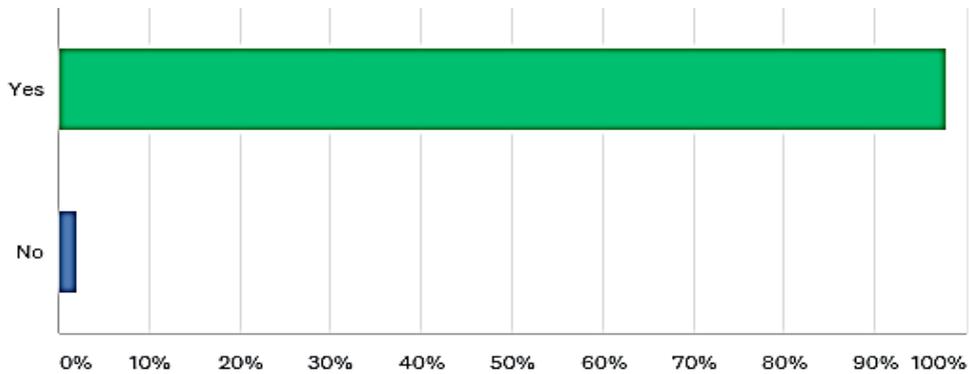
TABLE 4: Sworn vs. Non-Sworn



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Sworn	80.82%	198
Non-sworn	19.18%	47
TOTAL		245

Question number five asked participants if they believe officers should have a certain level of physical fitness. There was an overwhelming majority that answered yes. The number of respondents answering “yes” was 239, or 97.95%. The number of respondents that answered “no” was 5, or 2.05%. Two respondents skipped the question.

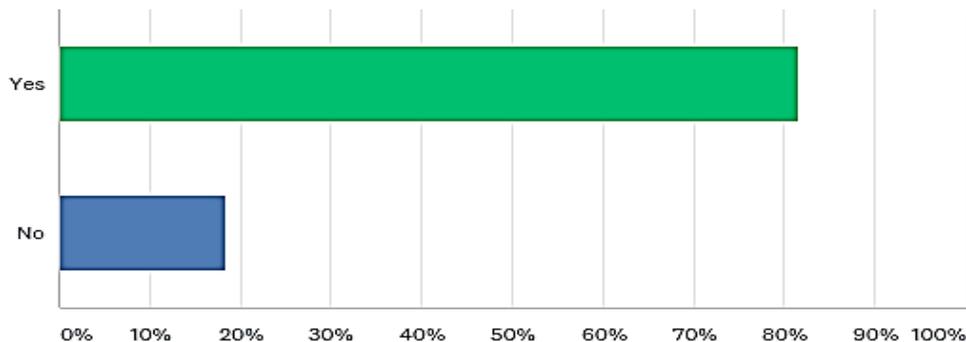
TABLE 5: Do you believe officers should have a certain level of physical fitness?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	97.95%	239
No	2.05%	5
TOTAL		244

Question six of the survey was only asked of sworn participants. The question asked sworn members if they felt they were in adequate physical shape to meet the potential demands of a law enforcement officer such as foot pursuits, ground fights, etc. The total number of persons that responded “yes” was 163, or 81.50%. The total number that responded “no” was 37, or 18.50%. Of the survey respondents, 46 chose not to answer this question.

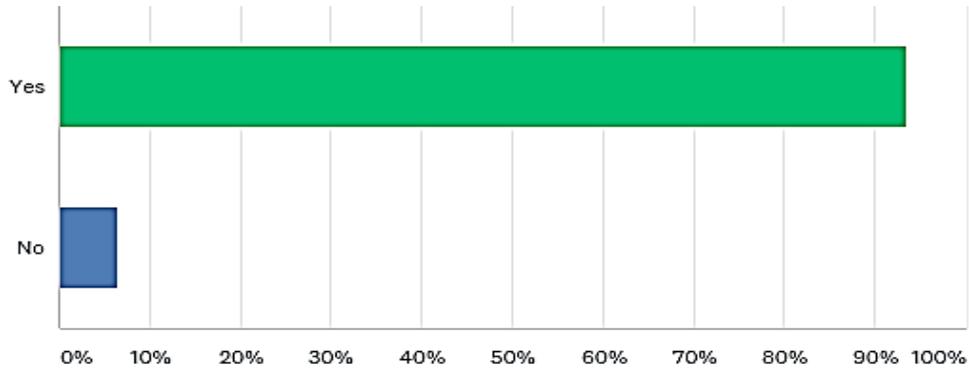
TABLE 6: Do you feel that you are in adequate physical shape to meet the potential demands of a law enforcement officer such as foot pursuits, ground fights, etc.?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	81.50%	163
No	18.50%	37
TOTAL		200

Question seven asked participants if they believe officers should be required to maintain a minimum level of fitness. The total that answered “yes” was 227, or 93.42%. The total that responded “no” was 16, or 6.58%. Three people chose not to answer this question.

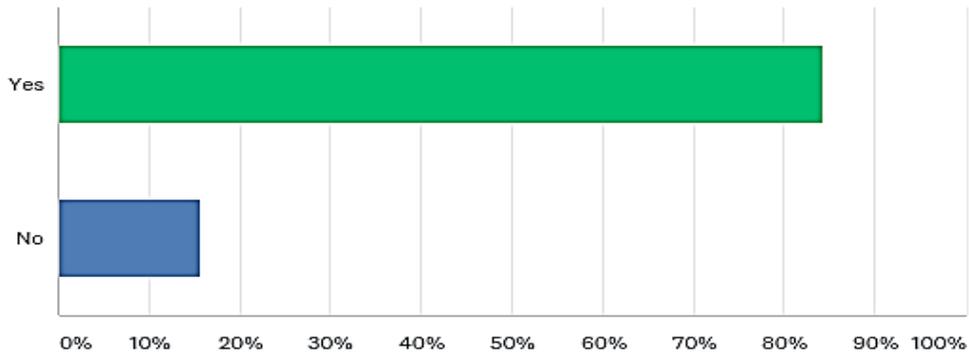
TABLE 7: Do you feel that officers should be required to maintain a minimum level of fitness?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	93.42%	227
No	6.58%	16
TOTAL		243

Question number eight asked participants if they would participate in a voluntary physical fitness program. The response for “yes” was high with 205, or 84.36%. The responses for “no” were 38, or 15.64%. Three people chose not to answer the question.

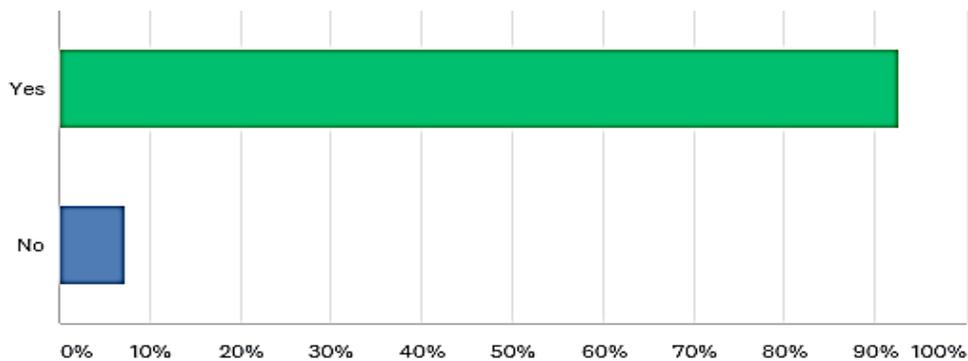
TABLE 8: Would you participate in a voluntary physical fitness program?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	84.36%	205
No	15.64%	38
TOTAL		243

Question nine asked participants if they would participate in an incentive-based physical fitness program. The response for “yes” was high with a total of 225, or 92.59%. The response for “no” was 18, or 7.41%. Three people chose not to answer the question.

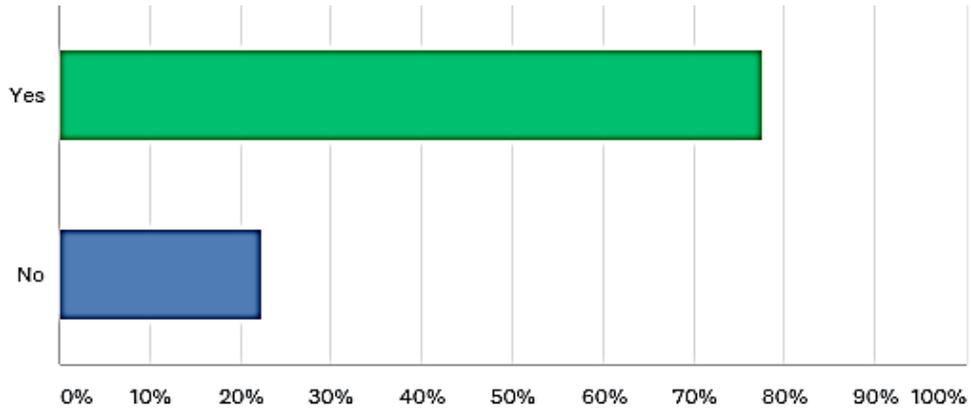
TABLE 9: Would you participate in an incentive-based physical fitness program?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	92.59%	225
No	7.41%	18
TOTAL		243

Question ten asked participants if they would be in favor of a mandatory minimum fitness standard. A total of 187 respondents, or 77.59%, answered “yes”. A total of 54 respondents, or 22.41%, answered “no”. Five respondents did not answer this question.

TABLE 10: Would you be in favor of a mandatory minimum fitness standard?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	77.59%	187
No	22.41%	54
TOTAL		241

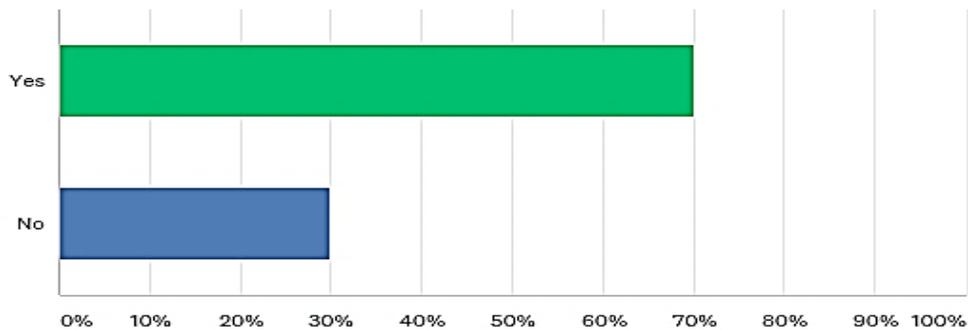
Question eleven asked participants if they have any of the following: Chronic back pain, sleep disorder, high blood pressure, digestive problems, chronic headaches, obesity, frequent colds/flu, diabetes, ulcers, or heart disease. On this question, 91 people chose not to answer.

TABLE 11: Do you have any of the following?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Chronic back pain	54.19%	84
Sleep disorder	36.77%	57
High blood pressure	29.68%	46
Digestive problems	20.00%	31
Chronic headaches	9.03%	14
Obesity	18.71%	29
Frequent colds/flu	4.52%	7
Diabetes	9.68%	15
Ulcers	2.58%	4
Heart disease	1.94%	3
Total Respondents: 155		

Question 12 asked participants if they participate in any physical fitness regiments outside of TPD. Out of the 244 that answered, 171, or 70.08%, answered “yes” while 73, or 29.92% answered “no”. Two people chose not to answer this question.

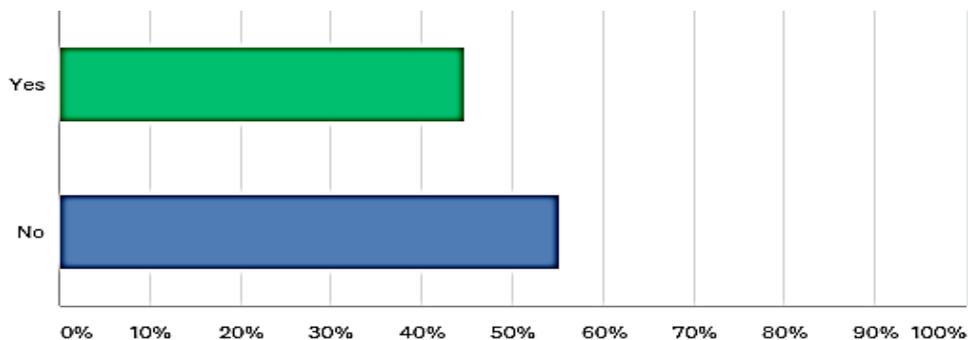
TABLE 12: Do you currently participate in a physical fitness regimen outside of TPD?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	70.08%	171
No	29.92%	73
TOTAL		244

Question 13 asked participants if they feel like they have adequate time to participate in physical fitness outside of work? Out of the 244 that answered, 108 of the respondents, or 44.81%, answered “yes”. The total number that answered “no” was 133, or 55.19%. Five people chose not to answer the question.

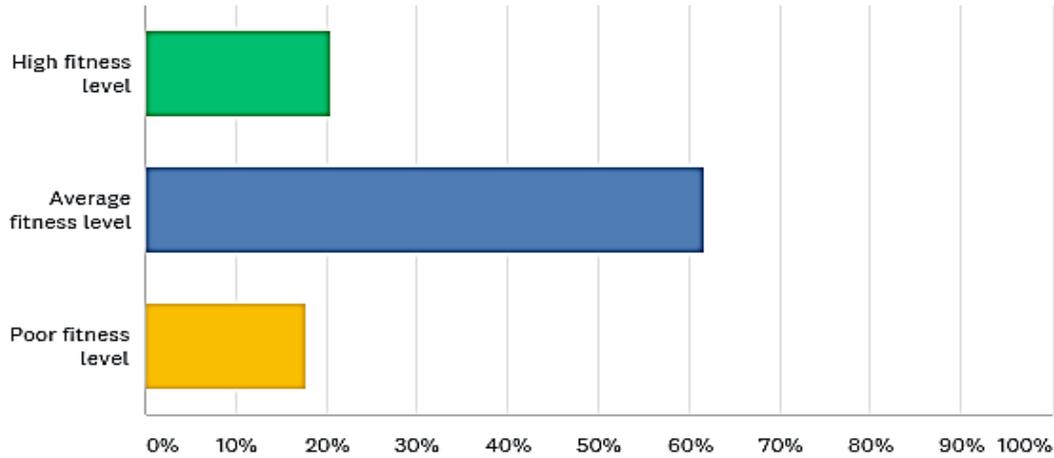
TABLE 13: Do you feel like you have adequate time to participate in physical fitness outside of work?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	44.81%	108
No	55.19%	133
TOTAL		241

Question 14 asked participants to describe what level of fitness they believed they were at. The choices were “high fitness level,” “average fitness level,” or “poor fitness level.” Three people chose not to answer this question. The “average fitness level” received the highest number at 150, or 62%. The second-highest total was for “high fitness standard” with a total of 50 respondents, or 20%. A total of 43 people, or 18%, responded with “poor fitness level.” Three people chose not to answer the question.

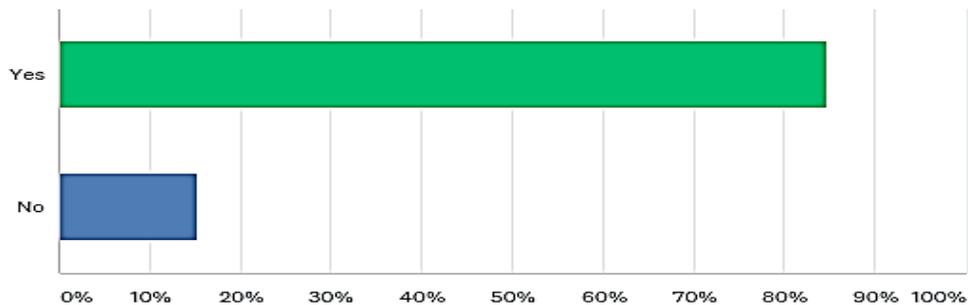
TABLE 14: What fitness level would you say you currently operate at?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
High Fitness Level	20%	50
Average fitness level	62%	150
Poor fitness level	18%	43
Total		243

Question 15 asked participants if they believe officer injuries would decrease if more officers were in better physical condition? A total of 204 respondents answered “yes,” or 84.65%. A total of 37 respondents answered “no,” or 15.35%. A total of five people chose not to answer the question.

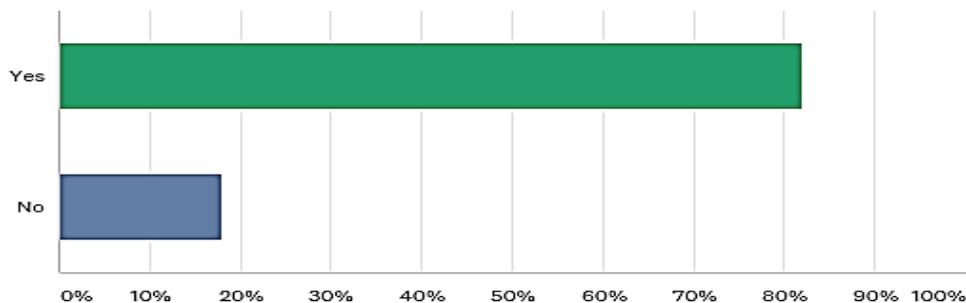
TABLE 15: Do you feel that officer injuries would decrease if more officers were in better physical condition?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	84.65%	204
No	15.35%	37
TOTAL		241

Question 16 asked participants if they would feel comfortable working with "in-house" wellness program coordinators if a wellness program existed at TPD? A total of 197 respondents answered "yes," or 82.08%. A total of 43 people answered "no," or 17.92%. Six people chose not to answer this question.

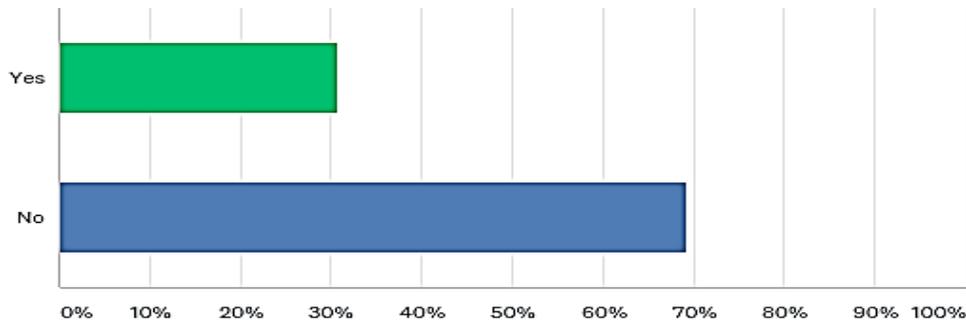
TABLE 16: Would you feel comfortable working with "in-house" wellness program coordinators if a wellness program existed at TPD?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	82.08%	197
No	17.92%	43
TOTAL		240

Question 17 asked participants if they currently participate in the Cooper incentive-based run/walk that occurs on May and November? A total of 166 people responded "no," or 69.17%. A total of 74 people responded "yes," or 30.83%. Six people chose not to answer this question.

Table 17: Do you currently participate in the Cooper incentive-based run/walk that occurs in May and November?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	30.83%	74
No	69.17%	166
TOTAL		240

Discussion

The results of this survey clearly show that the employees believe that physical fitness is important. The survey represented a wide variety of ages and years of experience. There was almost equal representation in years of service for those that answered the survey. Most categories, including 0-4 yrs., 5-9 yrs., 15-19 yrs., 20-24 yrs., and 25+ years, had roughly 18% of the total responses making it a more diverse group as far as experience is concerned. There was some conflicting information in the results of those surveyed. For instance, the age group with the least responses to the survey was the 20-29 group. However, the smallest “years of service” group was the 10-14 years of service. Typically law enforcement officers with an age range of 20-29 would be employees that have less than ten years of service. Although the survey was anonymous, it is possible that those who took the survey misrepresented their age or years of service to further conceal their identity.

The survey showed that almost every respondent, 239 out of 244, believed that officers should maintain a certain level of physical fitness. That is roughly 98% of all respondents. One of the more interesting results, however, is that although 98% felt that officers should maintain physical fitness, only 81.5% said their fitness is adequate. That equates to almost 20% of respondents that believe they are currently not in adequate physical shape to do their job. That indicates that some employees know how important maintaining a fitness level is but something is keeping them from achieving what they

believe is a standard for their position. That is in direct correlation with the research found in the literature review. The review showed that there were several reasons for employees not maintaining this basic level of fitness. These reasons included long shifts causing fatigue, job stress, unhealthy diets due to shift work, and many other causes. When the respondents were asked if they believed officers should be required to maintain a minimum level of fitness, the number went back up to 227 out of 243, or 93.42%.

There was also a large discrepancy found when it comes to voluntary fitness programs. The survey asked if the respondent would participate in a voluntary physical fitness program. 84.36% of respondents said, "yes." The survey also asked if the participant would participate in an incentive-based program. That number was even higher, at 92.59%. However, the discrepancy came when the participants were asked if they participated in the voluntary incentive-based Cooper run/walk program which currently exists at the Tallahassee Police Department. This program is both voluntary and incentive-based. The results for this question were completely opposite with 69.17% of respondents saying they did not participate. From a managerial standpoint, that would give reason to speculate if respondents would say they want a program but then not participate once it begins.

A positive result of the survey showed that 70.08% of respondents participate in a physical regiment outside of work. That again shows that employees understand the benefits of physical fitness.

Another result that showed a direct correlation to the literature review was when the participants were asked if they felt they had enough time to participate in fitness outside of their work hours. The majority of respondents, 55.19%, answered "no". This supports the literature review, which showed that with the demands of the law enforcement profession work week, it is difficult for employees to have the energy to participate in fitness or the time to do so.

In this survey, 200 people out of 243 responded that they were at an average fitness level or higher. Only 43 people, or 17.70%, stated that they were in poor physical condition.

Out of 155 respondents, 54.19% stated that they had chronic back pain. That is a high number that could be associated with many things from heavy-duty belts, standing long periods, or the type of vehicle they drive. 36.77% stated that they have a sleep disorder. Another correlation with the literature review was that 29.68% admitted to high blood pressure, while another 20% have digestive problems. This particular question was also abnormal in that 91 people chose not to answer it.

The survey allowed for comments to be made by the participants. In a majority of the comments, respondents asked that there be a time during their workday that they are allowed to participate in physical fitness. This again correlates with research and survey data that shows employees do not feel as if they have enough time outside of work. There were also several comments in which the respondents wanted health screenings offered as well as nutritional planners.

Recommendations

The survey, in many ways, supports information from the literature review. Employees understand the value of physical fitness. The problem is that they cannot find the time to do it outside of their demanding work schedule. A majority of the comments referenced wanting the ability to work out during their workday. It is apparent that in any Wellness Program established by TPD, managers should work towards including a time slot for fitness as part of the employees workday. The issue will be with those employees working shiftwork. While much of the department, both sworn and non-sworn, are working regular hours with the freedom to take breaks when they need to, others are not. Patrol officers are call driven. It is almost impossible to select a time of day for the patrol officer to report to the station to workout. As managers, you cannot allow patrol officers to pick their own time because there are minimum staffing levels that have to be maintained for patrol while working calls for service. It seems the logical approach may be for officers to request permission from a supervisor to go on their fitness break. The supervisor can then make sure the staffing is adequate to allow it. However, the department determines it needs to be done; one thing is for sure, it should be a priority.

The department will also need to look at the incentive-based options to determine if the incentives are effective. The survey clearly showed that members of the Tallahassee Police Department are not taking advantage of the current incentive-based Cooper Program already established. Roughly 69% of respondents said they do not participate. As managers, we need to conduct a focus group to determine the reason employees are not participating. With 93% of respondents of the survey answering "yes" that they would participate in an incentive-based program, clearly something is wrong with the current program.

Several people commented in the survey that they would like free health screening. Over 54% of respondents have chronic back pain. A simple solution could be to offer free chiropractor exams and treatment. However, with a number that high I believe the department needs to look at the problem more closely. Is it related to heavy-duty belts? Is it the type of car we drive? TPD K-9 officers began suffering major back pain when the department switched over to a certain vehicle. When they moved away from that vehicle, the back pain went away. Some issues may be able to be resolved just by looking at what equipment we are issuing employees to determine if it is a cause of the chronic back pain.

Over 36% of respondents stated that they have a sleep disorder. Employees would need to meet with a sleep practitioner to determine the root cause of their disorder. The city of Tallahassee has a contract psychologist now. It may be necessary to have a physician that specializes in sleep disorders on contract as well. Many of the issues respondents have such as high blood pressure can certainly be screened in house and referrals given for medical care.

As a department, we need to look at the potential cost savings of preventative care. Can we reduce insurance rates by showing a strong preventative care program? We will almost certainly save money in Workman's Comp related claims based on what was found in the literature review as well as survey results. When asked if the respondent believed officer injuries would decrease if the officers were in better shape,

204 out of 241, or 84.65% said yes. It is obvious the officers recognize that injuries will likely decrease with a wellness program. A conscientious effort should be made to determine the overall projected cost savings to the city with a wellness program in place.

Through the literature review and comments in the survey, I believe it is very important to have a focus group made up of employees to help determine what they would like to see in the program. Without employee buy-in, the program will likely fail. The employees also need to feel that their information is secure and that it will not be used as a method of firing them but instead as an informational guideline to help them reach a physical fitness goal. It is imperative that the program is seen by all employees as a resource for them and not as a program used to evaluate them in order for them to keep their jobs. The program should be inviting with constant advertisements and health-related documents sent out on a monthly or quarterly basis. A program that the employees ask for and help establish will almost certainly be more successful.

Lieutenant Shane Porter has been in law enforcement for 21 years. He began his career as a Reserve Deputy with the Leon County Sheriff's Office in 1998. He worked as a patrol officer at FSUPD for just over a year before being hired by the Tallahassee Police Department in 2000. He began as a patrol officer before being assigned to the US Marshall's task force where he spent just over 7 years. He then worked as an investigator in Burglary, Auto Theft, Robbery, and Homicide. He has been a part of the TAC Team for 16 years with the majority of it being an Entry Team member before being named Entry Team Leader followed by Team Commander. As a Sergeant, he started the first Violent Crimes Response Team street unit as well as the first Southside COPPS unit. He was the Burglary Sergeant just before making the rank of Lieutenant. He is currently the High-Risk Offender Bureau Section Commander in charge of the Career Criminal Unit and both Violent Crimes Response Teams.

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Appendix A

Development of Wellness Program: Mental, Financial & Physical Survey

May 29, 2019

1. What is your gender?
Male or Female
2. What is your age group?
20-29
30-39
40-49
50+
3. How many years of service do you have?
0-4 years
5-9 years
10-14 years
15-19 years
20-24 years
25+ years
4. Are you sworn or non-sworn?
Sworn
Non-Sworn
5. Do you feel officers should maintain a certain level of physical fitness?
Yes No
6. (Sworn only) Do you feel that you are in adequate physical shape to meet the potential demands of a law enforcement officer such as foot pursuits, ground fights, etc.?
Yes No
7. Do you feel that officers should be required to maintain a minimum level of fitness?
Yes No
8. Would you participate in a voluntary physical fitness program?
Yes No
9. Would you participate in an incentive-based physical fitness program?
Yes No
10. Would you be in favor of a mandatory minimum fitness standard?
Yes No

11. Do you have any of the following? Check all that apply:
- Chronic Back Pain
 - Sleep Disorder
 - High Blood Pressure
 - Digestive Problems
 - Chronic Headaches
 - Obesity
 - Frequent Colds/Flu
 - Diabetes
 - Ulcers
 - Heart Disease
12. Do you currently participate in a physical fitness regimen outside of TPD?
Yes No
13. Do you feel like you have adequate time to participate in physical fitness outside of work?
Yes No
14. What fitness level would you say you currently operate at?
High Fitness Level
Average Fitness Level
Poor Fitness Level
15. Do you feel that officer injuries would decrease if more officers were in better physical condition?
Yes No
16. Would you feel comfortable working with “in-house” wellness program coordinators if a wellness program existed at TPD?
Yes No
17. Do you currently participate in the Cooper incentive-based run/walk that occurs on May and November?
Yes No