



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

PROMOTING EMPLOYEE WELLNESS TO
COMBAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Certain studies indicate a potential link between job-related stress and exposure to violence in law enforcement and correctional settings, and a higher incidence of domestic or family violence. While these findings may not be universally applicable to all police and correctional officers, it is crucial to recognize and confront the possible impact of workplace stress and violence exposure on the personal lives of our employees.

Factors contributing to domestic violence in families of law enforcement and corrections officers:

- Stressful work environments
- Alcohol
- Substance use
- Burnout

According to studies cited in a 2018 article, domestic violence among correctional and police officers appears to occur at rates approximately 40% higher than in the general public.

HCSO PERSONNEL STUDY CONDUCTED IN LATE 2021 THROUGH THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

- 640 HCSO employees participated, with approximately half of the responses coming from licensed peace officers.
- Detention officers reported the highest levels of mental health symptoms, including symptoms of depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and insomnia than the general public.
- Communications staff had the highest rates of insomnia than other personnel in the study.
- Peace officers had the highest rates of problematic substance abuse.
- 23.9% of all employees in the study met the criteria for a probable PTSD diagnosis.
- 32.7% of all employees met the criteria for probable insomnia diagnosis.
- 24.6% of employees met the criteria for probable problematic alcohol use.
- 54% of law enforcement personnel in the patrol division reported alcohol use disorder.

** These rates are significantly higher than those found in the general public and align with other research on law enforcement professionals. These findings highlight the critical need for comprehensive mental health support, resources, and interventions tailored to the unique challenges faced by our employees.*

FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

Physical		Sexual	
Emotional		Stalking	
Economic		Cyberstalking	



CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF STRESS

A study in the Journal of the American Heart Association revealed that law enforcement officers experience their first heart attack at an average age of 49 years. Additionally, research from the National Institute of Justice indicated that police officers have an average life expectancy roughly 22 years shorter than that of the general population.

The demands of your job and the stress it entails can extend into your personal life, affecting relationships with your significant other, children, relatives, friends, and others.

10 WARNING SIGNS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Does your partner:

- 1. Put you down or call you names?
- 2. Control where you go or who you spend time with?
- 3. Hurt you by hitting, kicking, or strangling you?
- 4. Blame you for their violent or abusive behaviors?
- 5. Threaten to take your children away?
- 6. Treat you like a servant or make all the decisions in the relationship?
- 7. Prevent you from getting or keeping a job?
- 8. Make or carry out threats?
- 9. Make you afraid using looks or gestures?
- 10. Pressure or force you into unwanted sex?

Source: stepsVT.org

Resources

Harris County Sheriff's Office Behavioral Health Division: Open Monday - Friday, 8 am - 4 pm. Call 346-286-3150 to schedule a clinic appointment or to consult with BHD staff. In a life-threatening situation, do not hesitate to call 911 and explain the nature of the emergency.

HCSO Peer Support Network: Confidential and anonymous support from specially trained HCSO Peers to address stressors, trauma, fatigue, and other needs. Email HCSOPeerSupportAdmin@hctx.net or call 281-381-8563.

EAP Services through AETNA Resources for Living: 1-833-657-2111.

Domestic Violence Hotline: You can call the 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline at 713-528-2121 or 800-256-0551.

Rape Crisis Hotline: For assistance related to sexual assault, call the 24-hour Rape Crisis Hotline at 713-528-7273 or 800-256-0661.

Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse (AVDA): AVDA provides support and resources for victims of domestic violence. You can contact them at 713-224-9911.

Suicide and Crisis Hotline: 988

National Domestic Violence Hotline: Chat at www.thehotline.org or 1-800-799-SAFE or text START to 88788.

Confidential Law Enforcement Officer Hotline: 1-800-422-COPLINE

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Domestic violence within law enforcement occurs at rates comparable to or even higher than those in the general population. This issue often goes unreported or underreported due to fears of retaliation, stigma, or concerns about the impact on an officer's career. For employees of the Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO), it is crucial to recognize and address these barriers to provide appropriate support and resources. By fostering a culture of trust, confidentiality, and zero tolerance for domestic violence, the Behavioral Health Division (BHD) can empower employees to seek help. Through specialized training, education, and confidential mental health services, we can work together to prevent domestic violence and promote overall well-being.

As a Marriage and Family Therapist, I can assist individuals and couples with addressing the issues inherent to domestic violence whether it be addiction, unhealed trauma, affairs, ineffective communication, or burnout. Together, we can examine the issues and create healthy, adaptive coping skills to reduce the risk of domestic violence. By providing mental health services and resources, BHD clinicians, like myself, can support the agency's efforts to address domestic violence and create a safer, healthier environment for law enforcement personnel and their families.

The BHD is staffed with a multidisciplinary team specifically trained to cater to the unique needs of law enforcement personnel. This ensures that officers receive the most effective and tailored care to manage stress and other issues that may contribute to domestic violence. By fostering an environment that values mental health and well-being, the HCSO aims to promote resilience and public safety, ultimately benefiting both its employees and the communities we serve.