



NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE®

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NATIONAL PRESIDENT

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NATIONAL SECRETARY

April 2, 2024

To the Nevada Interim Finance Committee and Other Interested Parties:

My name is Sherri Martin, and I serve as the National Director of Wellness Services for the Fraternal Order of Police, the largest organization of police officers in the world, with a membership of over 374,000 active and retired peacekeepers. A retired police officer myself, with 23 years of sworn service, I hold a master's degree in counseling psychology, and now work full-time with officers all over the country to preserve and strengthen their wellbeing.

I write today at the request of leaders of the Nevada State Fraternal Order of Police, in support of their efforts to develop widespread peer support for members of Nevada law enforcement and their families. The National Fraternal Order of Police has conducted research into the benefits of peer support, and we know from these efforts that peer support is repeatedly indicated as a preferred resource among officers, and for this reason and others, it works.

As the profession has begun to recognize rates of suicide among officers, the development of a variety of wellness resources and services has increased. For decades, officers have had access to the services of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). However, the results of a 2018 survey of nearly 8,000 officers across the country indicated that although 82% of officers were aware of their EAP, only 20% had accessed the service. In the same survey, far fewer officers at the time had peer support available to them, but among those officers that had peer support available and had accessed it, over 90% indicated that it was helpful. Since that time, national surveys of active and retired police officers conducted in 2021 and 2023 continue to indicate that among all wellness services provided to officers, they continue to rate peer support as the most effective service available.

Based on this and other research being conducted in the field, there has been a widespread nationwide increase in the development of peer support programs within police agencies. In areas where agencies are smaller and lack considerable resources, regional peer support programs have provided opportunities for agencies to pool resources to increase training and access to peer support. Regional and statewide programs serve an additional benefit of combatting help-seeking stigma often applied in first responder professions. According to the aforementioned 2018 survey, one key source of stigma preventing officers from seeking help is a fear of being seen as weak or unfit for duty. Thus, officers are sometimes reluctant to use peer support even when it is provided by their own small agency, but regional and statewide programs provide an opportunity to sidestep this fear when officers are able to engage with a trained peer outside of the jurisdiction where they work.

The Voice of Our Nation's Law Enforcement Officers®



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Due to the findings of our ongoing national research which indicate that peer support is a service most desired by our men and women in blue, the National FOP has dedicated resources to developing and providing training in law enforcement peer support. In 2023, we finalized development of the *Power In Peers* curriculum, a national standard training program in law enforcement peer support, developed by our organization in cooperation with the US Department of Justice COPS Office. Our organization and the federal government have recognized the need for this type of service to be widely available, and we have deemed it an important priority.

As first responder agencies across the nation have realized the benefits of providing access to trained peer support for their personnel, this is a service that has thankfully become more widespread. However, we know that some may still not have access to trained peer support, and we see this as a gap that must urgently be filled if we wish to adequately support our first responders. We welcome any opportunity to be of further assistance or information as you consider this effort in Nevada.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sherri Martin'.

Sherri Martin, MA, LPCA
National Director of Wellness Services



Citations:

- Martin, S. & Drew, J.M. (2023). Critical issues in Policing Survey: Comprehensive Report of 2021 Survey Findings. A collaboration between the National Fraternal Order of Police and Griffith Criminology Institute, Griffith University. <https://files.fop.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2021-Survey-Report-202309.pdf>
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- Martin, S., Stulberger, E., Ushery, D., & Manney, D. (2019). Report on FOP/NBC survey of police officer mental and behavioral health. Retrieved from <http://www.fop.net>.