When the Badge Comes Off
An Informative Analysis of Side Effects of Careers in Law Enforcement

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Section 1: Introduction and Thesis

John 15:13 reads “There is no great love than for a man to lay down his life for another.” This passage found in the Book of John, is often read during the funerals for Law Enforcement Officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. As of March 2013, 22 Law Enforcement Officers were killed in the line of duty to date. For the past decade, over 100 Law Enforcement Officers on average were killed in the line of duty annually. The National Law Enforcement Officers’ Memorial Fund [NLEOMF], stated “On average, one law enforcement officer is killed in the line of duty somewhere in the United States every 57 hours. Since the first known line-of-duty death in 1791, more than 19,000 U.S. law enforcement officers have made the ultimate sacrifice.” These deaths are caused by a wide range of incidents that Law Enforcement Officers face on an almost daily basis. Such examples are gunshots, stabbings, traffic accidents, and other on the job incidents. Statistics and Line of Duty Deaths do not reflect however deaths caused from the side effects of the job.

In the United States, the Criminal Justice System is interconnected but separated into three major aspects. Law Enforcement, Court System, and Corrections are the primary groups of the United States Criminal Justice System. The best numbers show that there are approximately eight-hundred-thousand sworn law enforcement officers and roughly half a million agents working in the field of corrections. These numbers equate to about one in three hundred American Citizens are sworn officers in the Criminal Justice System. These Law Enforcement Officers are working on the federal, state, local, and tribal levels; it includes Police, Parole, and Probation Officers; Federal Agents, prison and correctional facility personnel. These numbers do not necessarily reflect auxiliary staff and the court system within the United States.
At any moment all across the United States there are men and women who have taken an oath or whom have been hired to protect the citizens of the United States. This paper will focus on Criminal Justice Professionals in particular Law Enforcement and Corrections, but must mention and give credit to the Fire and Rescue Personnel who are there round the clock to help when called and whose careers face similar risk factors for Line of Duty Death, injuries, and side effects outside of their shift work.

There is no question to the fact that Law Enforcement Officers face an inherent danger on a daily basis. As stated, over 100 Law Enforcement Officers are killed in the line of duty every year in the United States. In addition to just Line of Duty Law Enforcement Officer deaths, there are just fewer than 150 documented Law Enforcement Officers who commit suicide annually. For every officer that does commit suicide there are numerous others that suffer from severe side effects of the job.

Despite all of the risk factors and stressors involved with Law Enforcement Careers, it is one of the most sought after career paths. Not all careers within Law Enforcement require any post high school educations to begin work, but all across the United States and around the world, there are numerous Criminal Justice programs offered from different colleges, universities, and centers for higher education. With proper understanding and acknowledgement that these side effects when the badge comes off are real, if the proper initiatives are set in motion, we can hopefully one day minimize them.

Section 2: Analysis of Side Effects of Law Enforcement Careers

Ask any group of children what they want to be when they grow up; among numerous responses one of the most popular is to “be a Police Officer.” When you ask them why they wish to be a Police Officer the answer is frequently, “because I want to help people” or varying
answers of such extent. The question remains for those seeking careers in Law Enforcement or are currently in Law Enforcement, why they choose such a career path? The answers seem unanimously similar. But why would individuals seek a career that is known for inherent danger and to be stressful. A career in Law Enforcement is neither the way to seek popularity nor the fastest way to become very wealthy in the United States. So what draws these men and women to careers in Law Enforcement? Law Enforcement Officers are known for having careers that involve large amounts of stress (more than other careers), high risk of divorce/relationship problems, alcoholism, and high potential for suicide. Ask any group of Law Enforcement Officer why he or she choose this career path: the most common answers reflect, a family member who was in law enforcement, many individuals felt it was the normal transition after being discharged from the armed forces, or most commonly “I can’t explain it, it just felt right.” Various sources state that individuals who seek careers as Law Enforcement Officers have it in their blood to seek this career path.

For whichever reason an individual chooses a career in Law Enforcement it is important to remember that they, like ourselves, are human beings. From the television series Dragnet, Sgt. Friday stated, “…maybe he said it best we’ll always have incidents like this because we have one big problem in selecting police officers…. we have to recruit from the human race.” Officers in Law Enforcement are not robots; they do have feelings, emotions, and lives when the badge comes off. It is important to remember the humanism aspect of Law Enforcement as we look into stressors of the job and the effects those have on the mental health of Law Enforcement Officers. No matter how much a Law Enforcement Officer thinks they can handle stress wisely, or that it “doesn’t bother them,” everyone has their breaking point. Unfortunately, these
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breaking points in Law Enforcement Officers often are not realized and lead to the high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, job turnover, alcoholism, divorce, and suicide in the field.

The root of all Law Enforcement Officer mental health issues come from on the job stress. In Ronald Constant’s essay, “Not So Obvious Police Stress” (1984) he stated, “Police stress is not always unique nor obvious. Almost any single stressor in police work can be found in another occupation. What is unique is all the different stressors in one job.” “Stress is defined as an organism's total response to environmental demands or pressures.” “Hans Selye, the foremost researcher in stress in the world, said that police work is "the most stressful occupation in America even surpassing the formidable stresses of air traffic control." The debilitating effects of stress on law enforcement personnel are readily observable. In addition to the toll on physical and mental health, the effects of stress can be seen in the incidence among law enforcement personnel of alcoholism, divorce, and most tragically, suicide.”

In the recent decade, the Law Enforcement community has begun to really open up their eyes and lift this “veil of silence.” Not enough research is being done in the area of mental health of Law Enforcement Officers, but each year a few more studies are conducted bringing more light onto the situations that Law Enforcement Officers face both on the job and when the badge comes off.

So what exactly causes mental health issues amongst Law Enforcement Officers? The list of every possibility is quite endless. The factors of mental health issues arise just from the nature of police work. In general, Police Officers are usually working 12-hour shifts rotating between days on and off and constant switching between nights and days. The human body is pretty resilient to the abuses of daily life, but for Law Enforcement Officers the rotating shift work often prevents the body from developing any type of natural sleep pattern, which
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continuously stresses a person’s biological clock and could wear down the body over time. One officer who will remain anonymous stated,

“Rotating shift work will never disappear, it is part of this job, any real challenge to change it won’t happen because it is an administrative nightmare. When I work nights, I go home and sleep while my wife and kids are up; by the time they go to bed, I am awake because my body thinks I am going to work. Days between shifts just drag and often blur together switching from nights to days, and days to night.”

Rotating shift work in Law Enforcement will never really disappear at the Patrol Level. For these positions do not encompass a traditional 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, 40-hour workweek, they are omnipresent 24-hours a day, 7-days a week, 365-days a year.

For police officers, in particular, the rotating shift work can take drastic tolls on an officer; each officer’s biological clock never finds any sort of consistency. Not only the biological clock becomes affected by shift work but also overall health. Meals are often unhealthy and eaten quickly when time permits for a meal break. Poor nutrition does not let the body properly heal itself and can cause numerous short and long term health effects for officers. One officer stated, “It doesn’t matter if it is the busiest 12 hour shift or the lowest; even shifts where I literally have no calls, I go home exhausted. For 12 hours I am alert, always watching and waiting for the hammer to drop, it takes a lot on your body.” “It’s called Hyper-Vigilance,” another officer told me, “whether I am at work or at home, I can’t turn it off, I am always anticipating the unlikely to happen. You see that car over there, if that guy was to get out with a gun, I’d draw my gun without thinking, because I am expecting it to happen, the chances of it actually happening are more than unlikely. It’s like ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder), it’s not that you can’t think; it’s that your brain is always just watching and waiting.”

“Kevin Gilmartin, a former Arizona police officer turned clinical psychologist, wrote a book... His main message is that cops can never let their guard down, that the very things that make cops safe and effective on the job can cause great harm in their personal and family life, and in some cases, destroy them. Gilmartin writes vividly of the dangers of the "hypervigilance biological roller-coaster," where officers on duty are "alive, alert, energetic, involved and humorous," but when off
duty, are "tired, detached, isolated and apathetic." He points out that hyper vigilance on the job produces a healthy amount of cynicism and mistrust, which is necessary for street survival, but off the job, can be destructive for emotional survival and relationships with family and loved ones.\textsuperscript{xii}

Careers in Law Enforcement are inherently stressful and at any given time could be extremely dangerous. Every day Law Enforcement Officers face individuals who are causing some sort of issues, going into situations such as traffic stops or entering houses where a wanted criminal or weapons could exist to harm the officer. In addition to those factors there is constant scrutiny from the public watching the actions of Law Enforcement Officers, the guilt of sometimes not being able to help quick enough, and endless paperwork. “Constantly, they are exposed to the backside of humanity with all of its sordid and quality secrets. To keep their sanity, and even to survive, most of them build up a protective shield of cynicism around themselves as insulation against this human misery.”\textsuperscript{xii} “Your view on the world and people can definitely alter, as a Police Officer, 90% of the time you see 10% of the bad people out there; my friend in corrections sees bad people 99.99% of the time at work.”\textsuperscript{xiii} With this feeling in Law Enforcement many officers feel an overall disgust or cynicism toward society in general. Truth is that the world is really not full of all bad people or things but for these officers’ day in and day out all they do is see the bad, rarely the good.

The largest issue now for Law Enforcement Officers is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). “…one must remember that the average member of the public experiences one, perhaps two traumatic incidents in a lifetime. For the police officer, traumatic incidents are routine, whether they be dramatic incidents like a shooting or, more typically, of a cumulative nature (multiple incidents built up over the years). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is common in police work.”\textsuperscript{xiv} “Nothing can possibly prepare a police officer for what he or she might encounter on the job. They are first on scene when a child dies, a woman is raped, a senseless homicide, a
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teenager’s suicide, a car ablaze with victims trapped, drug overdoses, and domestic violence
calls. These calls have an effect on even the most seasoned officers. The calls add up. “xv

In the recent decade PTSD has really come into the light of the media. The media often
takes this disorder and creates a stigmatism to anyone who has or thinks they may have this.
“PTSD is clearly defined as an injury. It is not genetic. It is not a disease. It is the one
and only psychiatric disorder in the Diagnostic Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV) that
is caused by an external source. It is not “caught,” and it is not the fault of the victim.”xvi “It
can result from one catastrophic event or from an accumulation of traumatic events over time.
Contrary to popular opinion, cumulative PTSD can be deep and long lasting and prove a greater
challenge to overcome than single-event PTSD.”xvii PTSD has been shown to cause decrease in
mass of the hippocampus in the brain which controls the human bodies’ emotional and stress
responses. In addition to the hippocampus shrinking in size, the part of the brain that controls
fear, the amygdala, becomes overactive. Further scientific study into what happens to the brain
during PTSD shows that those who are suffering from PTSD have lower levels of cortisol and
higher levels of epinephrine and norepinephrine. The combination of these three hormones work
in the body to activate the “Fight or Flight response.” With the imbalance of these hormones a
person suffering from PTSD does not relax and whose body is unable to deactivate the “Fight or
Flight response”. Between imbalanced hormones and physical damage to parts of the brain,
individuals who suffer from PTSD have a higher chance of depression and potentially suicide.xviii
“For every police suicide, however, we estimate there are a thousand officers still working and
suffering from symptoms of PTSD (15-18 percent of police officers). This again makes the
career fertile turf for alcohol (and drug) abuse.”xix
Every piece of the job builds upon this overall balancing act that Law Enforcement Officers face every day attempting to maintain a healthy life. Many officers and even stress management programs recommend moderate alcohol use to help relieve some end of the day stress for officers. The word used is moderation, which leads to the possible overuse of alcohol as a method to relieve stress, where alcoholism, substance dependence, or the abuse of Law Enforcement Officers may start to develop. “When I first became a cop, I never really drank much, now I drink every single day, I have to.”

“A note on drug abuse: officers in the routine performance of their duties endure a variety of physical injuries, making prescription painkillers easy to obtain.”

Andy O’Hara who is a retired California Highway Patrol Officer started A Badge of Life Police Mental Health Foundation and coordinates Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) programs for Law Enforcement all across the country. The Law Enforcement Alcoholic Anonymous page lists about 50 different meetings nationwide that Mr. O’Hara is aware of. When asked about how many Law Enforcement Officers are present at these meetings, Mr. O’Hara replied,

“As far as the number of AA groups for police officers, the list I provided you has all that we are aware of. There may be more, but they have to come out of the "closet" for us to know about them. Attendance varies within each group and it would be impossible to put a number on it. I have seen meetings with two people, and the next week it is 15. A matter of possible interest is that most law enforcement AA groups encourage new members to attend public groups, as well. There is some unfounded fear in that regard that has to be overcome.”

“Family and other personal relationships are forced to the back seat. They want to protect their families from the horrors they have to deal with routinely, refusing to discuss their work with significant others. Family members may feel left out, confused, neglected. Resentments often build.”

“The spouse begins to dwell in the shadow of ‘the job.’ Nothing the spouse does seems to be as important, as exciting, or as timely as the police occupation. The job becomes the topic of conversation at all family and social functions. Police department rules and regulations
overpower the most cherished family occasions and, gradually, fundamental family relations take second place.”xxiv “Every time I come home for the past 13 years and my wife asks me ‘How was work?’ I’ve told her the same thing ‘fine.’ I don’t talk about what I do at work and don’t want to bring it home. My wife and I still talk just not about my job.”xxv “I’ve lost quite a few friends and girlfriends because of the job, those outside of Law Enforcement don’t understand I just can’t take a day off as I please, that I have to work Friday nights or weekends.”xxvi In addition to not only the stress that is placed on family members of Law Enforcement Officers, adding PTSD conditions can often add much more conflict to these situations and lead to a higher divorce rate. The job appears to alter some through developing this view of cynicism towards society, dependence upon alcohol and drugs, without help or realization divorce and inter-relationship problems can also be the source of incident of PTSD.

Despite much evidence in the field of psychology in regards to PTSD, many states do not even consider that it has taken effect on s, and even states that do have an often skewed version of it. Further, with the low numbers of the acceptance of Law Enforcement related PTSD, even lower numbers reflect that PTSD and work in Law Enforcement could lead to potential long-term mental health side effects and even the most severe, suicide. When statistics are released annually about the number of Law Enforcement Officers killed in the line of duty, the number reflects barely half of the deaths caused by the job. “Most Americans are aware of the high rate of suicide among soldiers. Less attention has been paid to those who protect us on the home front.”xxvii There has been research done into this area, however, similar to other statistics there is a lower number of not only suicides but also other mental health concerns in Law Enforcement.
“Unfortunately, police departments refuse to accept the possibility that law enforcement work can lead to suicide.”xxviii “Let’s look more closely at this issue of suicide, the myth of choice, and our perception of police suicides. Are we in the 21st century- or still in the Middle Ages?”xxxix Our society today in the 21st century still lives in fear of this dreaded term of suicide. As a society it appears that it is easier to blame the victim for making that choice, rather than seeing what caused it to happen or what could have been done to stop it. “It was in 1984 that Phil Donahue coined the unfortunate phrase, “Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.”xxx Since Donahue made that statement almost 3 decades ago, it has become intertwined in almost every presentation since, continuing the blame being pointed toward the victim and no other possibilities.

Retired Sergeant Andy O’Hara, Founder of Badge of Life Mental Health for Police Officers, has written extensively on this subject. His work centralizes on this fact of looking beyond the act of suicide that it not always the victim’s fault.

This is how stigma begins– by shaming the victim for ‘screwing up’ and ‘making the wrong decision.’ If only we have been sitting on the veranda, sipping lemonade with them when they were going through the ‘plusses and minuses’ of committing suicide, we might have been able to slip a bit of logic into the rational discussion. But the victim didn’t invite us, damn them—another ‘bad choice!’xxx

These individuals who decided to end their lives are not in the best frame of mind when they go to make these “long term” choices, they were altered because of their jobs and more than likely did not seek help. Who knows somebody better than themselves or the ones around them? Why didn’t their family notice that they were sick? “…bear in mind that law enforcement officers are highly experienced in maintaining and hiding their feelings. Sadly, we’ve trained them to be good at it. This makes the spotting of traditional signs and symptoms even more difficult and may explain a great many of the ‘surprise’ suicides that seem to plague law enforcement today.”xxxii
“Nobody wants to go ahead and admit it. I know the job has affected me, but it takes a lot to go ahead to ask for help.”

Law enforcement officers note that suicide is just the tip of the iceberg of the problem below. Of the documented suicides by Law Enforcement Officers, an officer is 3 times more likely to shoot themselves then be fatally killed in the Line of Duty. The issues arise from the stress and anxiety brought on by a career in Law Enforcement. It becomes difficult for a society to accept it.

It is understandably difficult for a “warrior culture” like law enforcement to accept that something “in the mind” could be an injury. The prevailing thought is that the PTSD victim should simply realize he is “in trouble,” see a counselor, take medications and “get better.” One, two and three. Would we ask the same of an officer who has been beaten on the head by a suspect with a hammer? Of course not. We can see the telltale signs of a concussion in the officer’s eyes and gait and perhaps see blood. We will send him to the hospital and pray for his survival. If he dies, no matter how much later, we will honor him and place his name on a memorial wall as a hero.

If, however, that same officer makes a complete recovery from the concussive injuries but is psychologically traumatized by the incident and commits suicide a few months later, we will bury him secretly without honors, refusing to recognize the injury that killed him, and we will cast away his family in disgrace.

Section 3: Look into the Advantages of Stress Management Programs in Probation and Parole (From previously performed research)

Employees in the correctional system often face a short career lifespan due to the stresses related to their work. Most jobs within law enforcement experience stress because of the inherit danger of the work, but the sources of the stress extend beyond just the dangers of the job. An employee’s work related stress does not only affect that employee, but their family and organization as well. In the past decades much overdue research is finally being done to understand the stress that is involved with careers in Law Enforcement and what can be done. Employee Assistant Programs have become a mirage on the horizon of the desert. “Through the development of employee assistance programs and the implementation of new policies, probation and parole officers have noticed a difference in the ongoing problem of job related stress.”

From the realizations and research being done into Law Enforcement related stress
and officer suicide we can work to extend the career lifespan of officers and lower the side effects of the career.

Corrections, probation and parole, often are great way to save money versus incarcerating an individual in the already overcrowded prisons. “…reasons include the expense of maintaining large facilities compared with the affordable economy of scale offered by large probation and parole caseloads.”xxxvi A study in 2010 by the United States Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics showed that the correctional population to be just over seven million individuals. This figure showed that there were two million individuals in prison or jail.xxxvii An article from a June 2005 study by the National Institute of Justice stated, “The latest figures show more than 60,000 probation officers and 11,000 parole officers in the United States.”xxxviii

In the recent decades more individuals are being placed on community supervision or supervisory release. These individuals have caused the workload and stress for Probation and Parole Officers to grow exponentially. Probationers are often non-violent individuals who are not a public safety issue to the community. With the attempt in the recent decades to alleviate prison populations to help budget concerns, more individuals who are convicted felons are being placed on parole, which increases concerns in the community for public safety.xxxix With the increase of these high-risk clients being placed in the community, community correctional officers must spend more time checking on them and ensuring public safety.xxxix With the increased population of offenders entering community correction programs, the caseload of correctional officers has increased greatly. “The average supervision caseload of a probation officer is very high – 139.”xl Not every person on a Probation Officer’s caseload requires constant supervision however there is a great deal of work involved with an officer’s caseload.
Careers within Law Enforcement all pose a general inherit physical danger to the officer on the job. “According to surveys performed in four states (New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Virginia), between 39 percent and 55 percent of officers have been victims of work-related violence or threats.”xli Careers in Law Enforcement are notably some of the most stressful; however, when Probation and Parole officers were interviewed many did not mention stress as one of their top risk factors. Drawing from the collective survey answers, the causes of the high rate of officer turnover were mostly derived directly from the stress of the job.

Studies interviewing Probation and Parole Officers of stress factors of their jobs, three major factors were found. The first source of stress was the high caseloads. The average caseload was stated as 139 for probation officers and parole officers experience a similar number. From a high caseload comes a great amount of paperwork for officers. Paperwork is listed as the second source, despite technological advancement of information systems, hassles still occur.xlii The third most common factor of stress is deadlines for community correctional officers. This third source of stress leads to an imbalance of proper and adequate supervision for individuals on community supervision. “As a result, some officers prioritize their cases into offenders they supervise closely and those they partially, largely, or even completely ignore.”xliii

Besides the three major factors of on the job stress, several other factors were noted. Officers who were surveyed in studies about work-related stress stated they did not like their supervisors because they are not rewarded, emotionally or physically, for their actions in the line of duty. Community corrections receive the lowest budget and this seems to remain unchanged despite a good or bad economy and even with the influx of more individuals under supervision. In addition to the stressors, is the low salary of community correction officers, just around forty thousand dollars. The danger of their work dealing with some violent offenders is stressful to
employees. One of the last notable sources of stress is the blame they hold for themselves if an offender on their caseload re-offends.

With all of the factors of stress for probation and parole officers it has become ever more important to research and implement programs to help officers deal with stress.

Stress and burnout can have deleterious consequences. For the individual officer, stress and burnout can ultimately lead to illness, mood changes, alcohol use, and sleep disturbances in the short-term and perhaps even to cardiovascular disease and psychological disorders in the long-term. Heightened levels of stress and burnout can also affect relationships with family and friends, and hurt officers’ overall quality of life. For the organization, research has revealed that elevated levels of stress and associated burnout can increase citizen complaints and lead to rapid employee turnover.

All research on stress of Probation and Parole Officers focused on mechanisms of coping for the officers. “However, more officers cited exercise-some type of physical activity- than any other technique as the way they attempt to cope with stress.” Officers often noted reactive and proactive methods to their coping. “Reactive methods: Some officers take extra sick leave-mental health days- simply to relieve the pressure. Others take sick leave to cope with stress-related health problems such as lower back pain or headaches. Some request transfers; others apply for early retirement.” One officer stated when asked about coping, “Yes, I take mental health days. I use them and I get in trouble a lot, but it’s a case of self-preservation.” Officers’ consciously or unconsciously realize the amount of stress in their jobs and often have to take coping measures into their own hands. In addition to reactive methods, many officers use “Proactive methods. Most officers cited physical exercise as the most positive way to relieve stress. Others mentioned discussing cases with fellow officers, using religion, venting, and talking to relatives.”

For probation and parole officers, as their jobs create work related stress it can create a vicious cycle that will increase the stress and worsen the situation an officer experiences in their personal and professional life.
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"The job creates a lot of stress, and it’s brought home. This has a negative impact on the family, so the officer returns to work with another problem. So the stress [of the job] is compounded [by the tension that officers’ stress may create at home]" - a probation officer.

One study showed that of 700 community correction officers surveyed that nearly a quarter of them have been victimized by their work, which usually leads to issues at home. The studies do not show that all the officers that show signs of job related stress go home and take it out on their family. The problem is often amplified when families do not support the stress exhibited by the officer. Spouses will express concerns about job safety, struggle with the family member having to work nights and weekends in their field of work, and say how upset they get when the officer takes that stress home and cannot keep it at work. Some officers are fortunate enough that their home life can help reduce the effects of work related stress. “My spouse is a godsend - calm, doesn’t overact, tells me to calm down- ‘You can’t change the idiot client,’ reported one officer.”

For community correction agencies it is crucial to realize that most if not all of the officers will experience stress from the nature of the job. This realization and acceptance needs to come from all levels. It is important for supervisors to admit to their subordinate officers that they too have or had stress on the job. The lack of supervisory support is a factor that can increase stress levels in an officer. All research into what programs are the most effective to help control and limit stress within an agency show that there is no one universal model that will work in all agencies. Across the United States, the community correction agencies vary in structure and in the way they operate from place to place.

There is no model program and will never be one, every agency is different, and they must develop one that will best suit their agency. “…agencies should design programs that incorporate the entire panoply of stress services that make up a comprehensive program-individual counseling, in-service and new employee training, supervisor training, a peer support
component, and critical incident response." When a program is being developed for an agency, it is important to have key points to give support to why a program should and must exist for an agency.

As an agency goes to develop a program it is essential that they understand the benefits of developing and putting such a program into action. A stress management program within an agency will create long term financial savings by reducing money spent hiring new officers to replace those that have left because of the stress of the job or burnout in addition to lower insurance rates from stress related incidents. The second major reason is increasing the performance of an agency. With lower levels of stress, employees will be less likely to take mental health days. Employees will be able to work proficiently without lack of concentration often caused by levels of stress. Staff members with lower levels of stress are less likely to have confrontations with co-workers. A reduction in work related stress will increase the safety of community correctional officers in addition to general public safety. Work related stress often forces officers into early retirement or quitting the job, with this constant turnover there are more and more new inexperienced officers who are more likely to be harmed in the line of duty. In addition the reduction of stress on the job will allow officers to work with a much clearer mindset to concentrate on the issues they are faced with.

The development of stress reduction programs and policies should be done in a manner that is proactive to help show moral support for the officer. “Prevent a crisis before it occurs. Then, if one occurs, the program can minimize consequences. In addition, employees may see a post-crisis program as a management public relations move.” Simply putting or stating that an agency has methods or programs in place are not often enough, it is important for an agency to develop and properly implement and attract officers into the programs. Any program should not
be simply set in stone, it is especially important in the beginning to allow the program to be very fluid in nature. Allow for the expansion of the program and sometimes for major changes to occur.

Any program that is implemented should not be limited to just the officers; a department program should include all members of the department, from the head of the agency all the way down to the clerical staff. “As one officer said, ‘There is definite stress for clerical staff; officers are all over them- I need this warrant NOW, this court appointment NOW, and so on.‖ Employees within the agency can be stressed when their co-workers show serious incidents and signs of stress. Expanding beyond just the individuals who are on the payroll of an agency, families and even friends should be included or have ways to participate. Spouses of community correction officers experience stress because of the stress from their significant other. It is important for mechanisms to be in place to help reduce unintended consequences in an officer’s personal life due to work related stress such as personal conflict, which can play into a cycle of increasing stress on the officer and the agency as a whole from its side effects.

Agencies who are developing a stress management program must decide if management programs should be composed of agency employees who are properly trained or to use outside companies to help in stress management. It can be beneficial and more successful if an officer is counseled by a co-worker about ways to cope with stress from the job and how these ways to cope have been successful. Often the case with having outside stress management teams is the inability to connect with the officers and relate to the perils they are going through in the line of duty to allow their coping strategies to be more successful. Another important aspect is to ensure confidentiality when an individual is in a stress management program, lack of this concept can cause major problems to the success of the agency program.
In these fiscally challenging times, a huge factor when developing and implementing a stress management program is the cost involved. Though the initial startup costs of a stress management program may be high, evaluation costs can later be reduced; the long term implementation of a program will reduce spending elsewhere beholden to the reduction of employee stress. When looking to establish a program “Rather than reinvent the wheel, adapt the materials that other programs have developed and telephone program coordinators and experts for advice.” Startup costs are often high because of the initial training that needs to be done to set up such programs.

As agencies look to implement such programs, they must look at not only the counseling side of the program but also the administrative, if these programs are to be mandatory. From research of different agencies programs, most do not require mandatory seeking of help through the implemented program; unless a critical incident occurs in an agency. “Pennsylvania’s Board of Probation and Parole definition is ‘…any situation that forces a person to face vulnerability and mortality or what potentially overwhelms a person’s ability to cope.’” The policy for that agency requires employees to go through their chain of command to refer themselves or co-workers encountering stress. In addition, when a critical incident does occur a team will be requested to help workers manage the stress related to that incident.

With the concern of costs in starting up such a program, providing adequate funding is necessary to ensure a level of success for the program. One study demonstrated that after a baseline for various different health concerns had been implemented, three months later results showed that officers in that group showed reductions in anger and fatigue as well as better cholesterol levels, often attributed to healthier bodies. “The reduction in health risk factors among the trainees was projected to save $699 annually for each trained officer…” Taking
these numbers into consideration in addition to other factors, the initial startup costs are only a short term financial drain compared to the long term benefits from implementing stress management systems and policies.

Harris County, Texas Probation Officers have a program entitled “Stomp Out Stress” which has had success for that agency.

One trainer called the participants ‘a tough, tough, paranoid audience.’ Afterward, participants said they believed the sessions provided practical advice. More than half had been ‘burned out’ before training. A month later, burnout was significantly reduced in the same participants. Six months later, some burnout returned but was still less than before training.\textsuperscript{ix}

Another program “Comprehensive Wellness” of the Cuyahoga County Ohio Juvenile Probation Officers have shown great signs. “The result was a significant drop in physical and psychological stress among participants. Almost 90 percent reported favorable changes, and more than 80 percent said they were better able to cope with work-related stress.”\textsuperscript{xix}

Daily life creates levels of stress for individuals and management of those stressors becomes important to remain a healthy life. Careers in the field of law enforcement rank statistically higher than most other occupations when it comes to stress. In the past few decades many law enforcement agencies had begun to notice stress within their employees that linked to other problems within those agencies. It wasn’t until the past two decades that research had been conducted into what causes stress and what can be done to lower levels of stress.

For officers in the field of community corrections stress is a daily occurrence for most of them. Community corrections in recent years have greatly expanded as the legal system looked to lower budget costs of prisons and return offenders to the streets. Initially offenders on probation were only non-violent offenders. As budgets have tightened over the past years many violent offenders had been placed onto the streets for rehabilitation and supervision from
correctional officers. This high turnover rate of offenders onto the streets has caused high burnout rates for United States’ Probation and Parole Officers.

As previously mentioned, for community correction officers their job related stress comes from three prominent sources: high caseloads, paperwork, and deadlines. In addition to these factors are the always-prominent dangers of the job when working with offenders, family life, and supervisory stressors. Studies have shown that the average community correctional officer has around 140 offenders on their caseload at any given time. For these officers they often need to pick cases that are of higher public safety concerns, often leaving other cases to fall through the cracks. The high levels of stress in probation and parole officers lead to not only physical and emotional stress but strains on agencies from high officer turnover rates and looking for coverage of an officer taking mental health days.

Agencies had become aware of the high levels of stress and have begun implementing new policies and programs to help employees. Each agency will vary for what program and policies will fit their agency. Many agencies focus on either a proactive or reactive methodology to assist their officers. Programs have expanded from not only being available to officers but also to also include the staff of the agencies, supervisors, and family members to help lower levels of stress and to work as a team. Many concerns arise as an agency looks to implement programs, such as cost. Studies have shown that initial startups can be costly, but this is just a short-term issue compared to the long-term results that other agencies have experienced.

With the development of these employee assistance programs and policies, probation and parole officers have noticed a difference in the levels of work related stress. There is no cure to eliminate work related stress but proper preparation and implementation of such programs has been shown to reduce the levels of stress. With the benefits from such programs the community
corrections agencies have retained officers who are able to handle the caseloads and properly do their jobs, proving much benefit to themselves, their agency, and the community in which they serve.

Section 4: Taking the Strive to Alleviate Mental Health Issues of Law Enforcement

It is obvious that work in Law Enforcement is inherently stressful and takes a toll on each and every officer whether they admit it or not, or even realize that it did. Work in Law Enforcement will not change, there will always be individuals who break the law and require justice to be served; Law Enforcement will always be needed to protect and serve. A popular saying is that without struggle there is no progress. Unfortunately, struggle comes in the form of elevated levels of Law Enforcement Officer stress with a high potential of suicide. The struggle for Law Enforcement is present and needs to be brought into the light for progress to be made on the subject.

From the studies of stress management programs for Probation and Parole officers’ it has come to light that a problem does exist. From the studies done, programs that are put into place can be beneficial to the officer, the agency, officer’s family and friends, and the general safety of the public overall. Despite the success rates of such programs, there are large obstacles that need to be overcome before they can be put into place. The largest is that society needs to become aware and more receptive of the side effects that happen from a career in Law Enforcement. As a society we need to alleviate the stigma that is associated with suicide or officers who ask for help. A March 2013 CNN news article talked about a father who lost his son to suicide. “Only after losing my son did I learn how susceptible cops are to suicide.” Brian Cahill, father of Officer John Cahill, has become a police officer suicide prevention trainer after his son committed suicide in 2008.
“I tell them John’s story … and stress that asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength.” Brian Cahill advocates for Law Enforcement to seek help if they need it.

Sgt. Andy O’Hara of the Badge of Life states in one publication:

The practice of “blaming the victim” in a suicide is an old one, going back to the Middle Ages and based on a deep, visceral fear of suicide. Behind this fear is a deeply rooted need to distance oneself from the act by proclaiming it to be shameful and even sinful act, dooming one for eternity and blackening the family name forever. We still practice this custom in the 21st century, but in more “sophisticated” ways. Rather than burning down the victim’s home and family with it, we employ pseudo-scientific platitudes like, “Suicide is a cowardly act,” or “Suicide is an angry act.” This is fear at work. We don’t want to believe PTSD, depression or suicide could happen to us. So we build up our defense.

We need to no longer view suicide as an act of poor judgment by these officers who “choose” to do so.

The media has even begun to bring to light onto PTSD of Law Enforcement Officers.

Eric Wahgren, in Business Week, wrote,

“In some ways, a cop’s work may be even more traumatic than that of a soldier sent into a war zone, experts say. ‘The police officer’s job, over many years, exposes and re-exposes them to traumatic events that would make anybody recoil in horror.’

The key phrase in the above quote is “over many years.” The exposure of a combat soldier for 12-18 months is intense and often terrifying. The police officer, however, gets no break—he is not "rotated home" for relief. The trauma referred to continues, unabated, for 15, 20, 30 years.

Law Enforcement Officers are exposed to PTSD causing stimuli over a longer period of time than that of a deployed soldier in combat. Soldiers often get a leave after serving a tour of duty giving them reprieve from the environment in which the stimuli occurs. Officers are continually exposed to the stimuli over the course of their entire career. Over time the stimuli Law Enforcement Officer experience in the field could lead to PTSD with catastrophic consequences.

The organization Badge of Life promotes the idea of not looking just necessarily at suicide prevention, but also before that possibility could be even conceived of. The Badge of Life says that Police Suicide is just the “tip of the iceberg” of overall Police Mental Health.

“Officer suicide rates are at least double of the general population. Any law enforcement suicide
**Life When the Badge Comes Off**

is one too many. $^{l_{xvi}}$ Badge of Life realizes that they will not be able to stop all of the almost 150 police suicides each year but prevention of not just suicide, but when the concept of mental health is addressed, more individuals can be helped. The implications of continuously focusing on overall officer mental health can lead to a decrease in suicide, general officer deaths, sick time, alcoholism/substance abuse by officers, injuries on and off the job, divorce, etc. By bringing this topic into the spotlight and completely comprehending the issues that plague our Officers of Law Enforcement this will not just be about stopping suicide but protecting our Law Enforcement Officers state of well-being comprehensively. The Badge of Life completed a National Study of Police Suicides and stated a comment:

This national study of police suicides (NSOPS) was a massive undertaking, requiring the review of almost 50,000 emails, the monitoring of news and websites and the voluntary contributions from many of you in the field. In spite of this encouraging news, the fact is that police suicides continue at a rate much higher than the number of police officers killed by felons. This alone reminds us of the need to redouble our efforts, not only at suicide intervention, but on the maintenance of mental health in law enforcement. We cannot lose sight of the fact that the officer whose mind is on other problems, be they at home or at work, is a danger to himself and other officers who are relying on him. Much remains to be done.$^{l_{xvii}}$

The Badge of Life has done a great amount of work to begin some of the initial footwork toward finding solutions for these concerns about mental health of Law Enforcement Officers. They look to bring not just reactive measures to officers but proactive measures to help maintain Law Enforcement Officer Mental Health in check. As some stated earlier, employee assistant programs are slowly seeping their way into different law enforcement agencies, it remains important to understand that smaller departments may never get a chance to truly develop these programs and a phone number to call may not be enough.

As progress is being made from the administrative side and higher ranking officers of departments emphasis needs to be put on the constant need to continue the development of these programs. “In 2010, at its conference, the International Association of Chiefs of Police emphasized that stress in law enforcement can contribute to police suicide, even presenting a
class on how “how critical incidents and prolonged stress can affect and alter a law enforcement officer”.

The Badge of Life promotes psychological survival of police officers. The founders have done extensive research into Law Enforcement suicide and are working to prevent it. They have established a program that needs to be implemented and instigated to reduce Law Enforcement suicide, if not eliminate it entirely. They concentrate on beginning such programs by placing the emphasis on the officer as self-preservation in his or her career. The program is never intended to replace the usual suicide awareness programs but as a supplement to help promote overall officer mental health well-being.

The Emotional Self-Care (ESC) training must begin at the academies and continue, annually. It cannot be emphasized enough that the primary mechanism for "making this entire program work" is the Peer Support Officer. Peer Support Officers are the "army" of mental health in law enforcement and this is the opportunity to utilize them to their fullest capacity. They must be fully engaged in: 1. Academy Education 2. The selection of Field Training officers 3. In-Service Training 4. Annual training for squads 5. Pre-retirement training. 6. Modeling and encouraging annual mental health checks.

The Badge of Life encourages a completely voluntary and confidential annual mental health check. “Simply put, this is an annual process in which we suggest an officer visit a licensed therapist once a year for at least one visit as a “checkup,” in the same way one visits a doctor for an annual physical or a dentist for a cleaning and check for cavities and other problems.

In conclusion, it becomes crucial for our society in the 21st century to begin to lift the veil of silence that has encompassed Law Enforcement. Law Enforcement Officers are human beings at the end of the day; they have feelings and emotions but are trained to suppress them to “survive” in their careers. It has often been hidden in the background that careers in law enforcement have large potentials for and causes of stress. Over time that stress can build up and cause catastrophic damage to the mental health of an officer. Officers spend their entire careers seeing differing traumatic events repeatedly, where a normal person may only experience one or
two in a lifetime. This constant exposure to these events can lead to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in officers. The job can often lead an officer to become dependent on alcohol or substance abuse to help “erase” what they have seen in their careers. In addition to alcohol and the stress at work, many officers face marital problems because of a cynical personality or attitude derived from the constant exposure to traumatic events and high levels of stress while conducting the duties of their job. The message is clear that development of stress management programs is effective when it is done in good faith and not rushed. For officers it is also important to realize that it is okay to come out and admit when something bothers them. In the 21st century we should not banish people for coming out but support them when they do.

Continuing research and advocacy for law enforcement mental health awareness will bring many benefits to Law Enforcement Officers. There is no reason to hide the problem that these officers face, by making others aware of the issue we can begin to fix the problem and bring it to a more tolerable level. No police suicide should happen, however we will never truly eliminate it, but through the proper channels of awareness and programs we can take the 150 annual police suicides down drastically. Not only can we decrease the number of law enforcement suicides we can promote better mental health of law enforcement officers and help thousands who suffer daily the side effects of when the badge comes off.

Section 5: Implication of Salesian Spirituality into Law Enforcement Mental Health

Some research within the field of mental health of and stress relating to law enforcement mentions one possible source for stress management comes from religion. For officers who are practicing Catholics and non-Catholics, church and worship can answer many of the questions that they face on a daily basis. For these officers, religion can help them alleviate or lower the amount of work related stress and possibly limit some of the mental health side effects of the job.
It would be easy to say that if every law enforcement officer were to become religious and go to church, that all their problems will just go away. But that would be a quick solution to a complex problem; nothing in life is that easy. An officer’s religious denomination notwithstanding, the teachings of St. Francis DeSales and Salesian Spirituality can be beneficial in this area. Through the application of the teachings of De Sales, we can attempt to look at this situation from a different point of view and bring help to those who need it and prevent as much suffering as possible.

In one publication, “Is There ‘Happiness’ in Police Work? Badge of Life Suicide Police Prevention,” Andy O’Hara addresses spirituality:

A sense of spirituality. It need not be religious. It need only recognize that someone or something is running the universe – but it ain’t you. For some it could be God, but for others it could be physics, gravity, the Big Bang or an old shoe in their closet. Another word for it is “humility,” something we never get enough of.

It’s true that, if we’re ever to say “a policeman’s lot is a happy one,” we’d have to qualify it by saying happiness for a cop comes at a price, with the heartache and sorrow that only a policeman knows from seeing and hearing far too much. That will never change. What we can change is how you come out of it all - we want it to be with a longer lifer, with the ability to smile and sleep well and enjoy your great-grandchildren swinging on the playground. You have the tools.

O’Hara mentions about how the world is not being run by “you,” the responsibility for the actions of others does not to fall back on that person, in this case, the law enforcement officers. For in law enforcement, they do all they can in attempt to help the public.

St. Francis De Sales talks about a universal call to holiness whether you are a law enforcement officer, doctor, teacher, or common lay person. De Sales often talked about a secret to holiness through little virtues:

He reminded those that he guided that most ordinary people rarely have the opportunity to practice the ‘bigger’ virtues such as ‘fortitude, magnanimity, and great generosity.’ He therefore wisely encouraged them to practice the little virtues “that mark all our actions in life.” These virtues include: “meekness, temperance, integrity, humility, patience, self-mortification, obedience, poverty, chastity, tenderness toward our neighbors, bearing with their imperfections, diligence, and holy fervor”…”Little virtues,” he explained, are like table salt. Because we frequently use salt to season our foods, we are careful to always have a good supply of it. Similarly, “we must always have on hand a good supply of these general virtues since we must use them almost constantly” in daily life.
For the virtues that De Sales talks about most, if not all, can directly be related to work in law enforcement. They can apply to the job, itself, or to the concerns of mental health and how we as a society can work to alleviate such problems.

DeSales talks about bigger virtues: fortitude, magnanimity, and great generosity. Fortitude is a huge virtue to law enforcement officers; unfortunately it could also be deadly one. Fortitude is “strength of mind that enables a person to encounter danger or bear pain or adversity with courage.” For law enforcement officers, fortitude is embedded into their most daily actions, they are taught to hide their feelings and persevere through pain as mentioned previously. Through their fortitude, a problem has developed. Officers are continually over exposed to traumatic stimuli, which may induce a hyper vigilance state increasing the amount of stress placed upon the officers and leading to altered mental state of well-being and mental health.

Magnanimity is another great virtue that DeSales talks about; it is also reflected in the work of law enforcement. “Loftiness of spirit enabling one to bear trouble calmly, to disdain meanness and pettiness, and to display a noble generosity.” This could be challenging at times, for officers, especially during encounters with certain individuals during their day-to-day interactions with the public. Officers must be able to remain calm and think clearly in any situation. Unfortunately, this virtue may not always be present in an officer’s daily encountering’s, for example, in dealing with repeat offenders whom an officer has encountered numerous times prior. Magnanimity is often lost on officers in situations such as this.

The final spoken of virtue is generosity, a synonym for magnanimity. “The act characterized by a noble or forbearing spirit.” Similar to fortitude and magnanimity, generosity is usually always present in officers, but the effects of it may quickly fade away. For
situations such as encountering repetitive offenders, generosity for the perpetrator is sometimes lost. For officers, these three virtues mentioned can often be their guiding hand or their biggest vice. With fortitude, an officer has to develop and enter a hyper vigilance state, which while a great importance to the safety of an officer often alters the person they once were. When it comes to an officer’s overall career, this becomes a vice that works to change the officer from whom they originally were, into someone entirely different.

A discuss about St. Francis De Sales would not truly be possible with including one of his most famous sayings and the “motto” of De Sales University. “Be who you are and be that well.” Law enforcement officers put on badges their everyday and set out to protect, serve, and bring justice to those who have been wronged; and most, if not all, of them look to follow this saying of De Sales. Unfortunately without the help or realization of the side effects of their careers, these officers can unknowingly change from who they originally were into someone else completely, taking their most sacred virtues and turn them into their most dangerous vices.

De Sales wrote of a more feasible list of little virtues that can be applied to our devotion to the devout life, or call to holiness. He includes virtues of meekness, temperance, integrity, humility, and patience. Each of these virtues is rooted in the larger virtues that De Sales discussed. Law enforcement has connection to each of these virtues in some way, shape, or form. In general, officers need to be patient with individuals while also remaining humble when dealing with those individuals that they come across. In addition, they must have integrity in their work to serve others. Officers must be obedient and have some sense of self-mortification or boundaries in their work. They must be diligent in the work that they do; putting good effort into the cases they work on. For many officers, the job can often become discouraging and they often develop cynicism because of it.
The crux of De Sales teachings related to law enforcement and mental health comes from two of his little virtues; tenderness toward our neighbors and bearing with their imperfections. “Tenderness toward our neighbors,” is a two way street in this topic. At the end of the day, law enforcement officers are human beings; sometimes the general public often forgets this. The lack of publicity on law enforcement mental health awareness comes from the stigmatism that is often placed on individuals who come out and talk about their issues. One officer stated, “It’s hard to come out and tell someone that you want to see a shrink about the stuff you see on the job, people start to think you are weak." This is the most common reason why officers do not come out about the situations they encounter, because they are often seen as weak and helpless. So as officers should be gentle or tender towards the “neighbors” that they encounter, society must have open arms toward law enforcement officers to feel comfortable about coming out about the struggles that these officers face.

Humility leads us GENTLENESS towards our neighbor. Because one is so aware of his/her own needs and weaknesses, one extends to another person similar understanding and compassion. Gentleness is not weakness, but rather controlled, directed and loving strength. It might also be described as knowing how to react to life appropriately and proportionately. To quote DeSales: "There is nothing so strong as gentleness and nothing so gentle as real strength." De Sales is known for teaching, “Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections.” As the last of the little virtues that De Sales teaches about, it becomes even more important for law enforcement officers, agencies, families, friends, and the general public to become aware of the side effects of when the badge comes off. Officers first need to grasp and realize that the job creates stress; that overtime of not being properly dealt with can because long term physical health, psychological damage, and may even lead an officer to suicide. They must become aware of these “imperfections” and be willing to admit them and get help. It is not a sign of weakness as the stigma may make it seem, but it is a sign of strength that an officer has the respect for him or herself. From society and law enforcement agencies, we must realize and
open our arms and minds to help our fellow neighbors. Though, we may never be able to fully eradicate the side effects of the job since they are intertwined into the very nature of law enforcement.

With proper awareness on all levels, from the officer, to the agency, to the public, we can take steps to move forth in the right direction. If we can always keep the teachings of De Sales in our minds, Catholic or non-Catholic, we can help these men and women who are struggling. The side effects of the job can be limited and prevented to some extents, but action must happen on all levels. The more willing people become to accept the harsh side effects of the job, the more research can begin to better understand it and look for ways to help correct it.

If we take actions gently in the right direction, we can help lower the number of law enforcement suicides that happen when the badge comes off. Officers in the past have sadly died by internalizing the stress of the work with no place to seek out help. In this, the 21st century, there is no reason that an officer’s suffering should be so drastic, that they have to contemplate ending their own life to escape from it. We may not be able to prevent every law enforcement officer suicide, but with awareness and understanding the side effects of the job, we may be able to lower the cases of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, alcoholism, divorce, and ultimately decrease the number of officer suicides. “There is no great love than for a man to lay down his life for another” (John 15:13). No officer should have to lay down his own life because he or she cannot find a way to cope with the side effects of their career.
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