

# Wellness Provider Vetting Guide

Fraternal Order of Police Division of Wellness Services



## Overview

The National Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Division of Wellness Services is committed to identifying culturally competent wellness services for members of the law enforcement profession and their families. The National Officer Wellness Committee, comprising active and retired law enforcement professionals, applies vetting practices to services and providers to identify the most competent and specialized services.

Based on survey research conducted by the National FOP, our organization has determined that a key concern among members of law enforcement is that mental health providers may not understand the unique nature of police culture and the job and work of a law enforcement officer. Thus, this guide was created for the purposes of addressing those concerns and as a means to increase awareness of those providers and programs that provide specialized, culturally competent, and occupationally aware wellness services.

Created with the advice and guidance of professional police psychologists, this guide also serves as a tool for law enforcement agencies and officers to assist with examining and selecting mental health service providers in their own geographic area. It is suggested that agency wellness program coordinators and departmental wellness managers use this guide as a tool for locating services for agency personnel. It focuses on ensuring the provider has a requisite level of cultural competency and familiarity with law enforcement and other public safety professions. Our vetting process is multifaceted and seeks to examine various aspects of wellness services as outlined in the following sections.

Practitioners and programs deemed to meet the expectations delineated in this guide are then considered for inclusion in the FOP *Approved Provider Bulletin*, a nationwide directory of culturally competent and specialized wellness services for members of law enforcement and their families.

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The internet references cited in this publication were valid as of the date of publication. Given that URLs and websites are in constant flux, neither the author(s), the contributor(s), nor the COPS Office can vouch for their current validity.

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# Vetting Wellness Programs and Providers Checklist

## Inpatient treatment facilities and programs

Things to consider and questions to ask when evaluating a treatment facility or treatment programs include the following:

- Billing procedures and cost
  - Which insurances, if any, are accepted and in network?
  - What forms of payment are accepted?
  - What subsidies and payment plans are available?
  - What is the policy for working with clients who are unable to pay?
- Credentials of staff
  - Assess staff members' formal education and credentials.
  - Verify staff members' professional licenses, including license numbers.
  - Have any complaints been filed against the facility or has the facility or any practitioner's license previously been revoked for any reason? If yes, describe circumstances.
  - How are staff members connected to or experienced with the first responder or law enforcement community?
  - What experience do staff members have with providing services to law enforcement professionals?
- Dedicated programming
  - What specific programming exists that is dedicated to or attended by only members of law enforcement?
  - How frequently is this specialized programming offered?
  - What programs are available for families of law enforcement clients?
- Age of facility or program
  - How long has the facility been in operation?
  - How long has the first responder program been in existence?
- Treatment modalities offered
  - What types of therapy are offered?
  - How is a client's time spent within the facility?
- Unique treatment(s) offered
  - Describe any specialized treatment programs or options available that are unique to the facility.
  - Are any off-campus activities included in programming? If so, describe these activities. How often are these available? How are they managed?

- Accessibility

- Where is the facility located?
- How is travel to and from the facility handled?
- Is the facility compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act? If not, will clients with disabilities be able to access and use the facility?

- Confidentiality and privacy practices

- What steps are taken to ensure that confidentiality and privacy of the client are preserved?
- How are demands or requests from police agencies to review client records handled?
- Under what, if any, circumstances would the facility breach confidentiality?
- How are inquiries about a client's fitness for return to duty handled?

- Intake process

- Provide thorough description of the client intake process, including walkthrough.
- How long is the usual time between first call to the program and complete intake of the client?
- What is the procedure and timeline for detox? (if applicable)
- Is detox located in a separate facility from treatment? Are detox services subcontracted by the facility? If so, how does the facility evaluate the detox provider?

- How is the transition from detox to treatment handled?

- How is the determination made whether a client needs detox services?
- If a client does not need detox, how is the intake procedure different from that of a client who does need detox?

- Housing

- What style of housing is provided?
- Are first responders housed in a separate area from others?
- Conduct an in-person visit and tour of housing.

- Living options

- Are clients permitted to leave campus during their treatment period?
- What dining and nutrition options are available to clients?
- What options are available for leisure time?
- What access do clients have to physical exercise opportunities?

- Aftercare

- What process does the program have for aftercare and discharge?
- What family programming, if any, is included?

## Individual practitioners

Things to consider and questions to ask when evaluating an individual provider include the following:

- Overview of clinical practice
  - How long has the practitioner been in clinical practice?
  - How long has the practitioner worked with law enforcement or first responder populations?
  - What percentage of the practice is dedicated to law enforcement or first responder populations?
- General office policies
  - Assess the office setup for safety of location.
  - Assess the office setup for accessibility.
  - Assess the office setup for privacy.
- Licenses and education
  - Confirm practitioner's licensure, including state and license number.
  - Which educational institution(s) did the practitioner attend and what level of education was achieved?
  - Have any complaints been filed against the practitioner or has the practitioner's license previously been revoked for any reason? If yes, describe circumstances.
- Education on first responder culture
  - What steps has the practitioner taken to familiarize themselves with law enforcement culture, training, and practices?
  - Does the practitioner hold any special certifications related to working with law enforcement or other first responders? If yes, please describe.
- Rapport building
  - Rate the clinician's ability to establish rapport with wellness committee interviewer (on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 indicating "poor" and 10 indicating "superior").
  - Consider recommendations received from law enforcement clients, if applicable.

- Confidentiality and privacy practices

- Describe office policies in place to ensure confidentiality and privacy of client.
- Under what circumstances would the practitioner breach confidentiality?
- How are demands or requests to review client records from police agencies or human resources divisions handled?
- Describe how working with peer teams is navigated. For example, what information might be shared with peer support teams working with a client?
- How are inquiries about a client's fitness for return to duty handled?

- Relationships and affiliations with law enforcement organizations

- Does the practitioner have a professional relationship or affiliation with any law enforcement or first responder agency or organization? If so, what is the length of that relationship? What is the nature of the relationship, and what responsibilities are included? (Provide references if available.)
- Review available ratings and reviews from previous clients, focusing on those from law enforcement or first responder clients.

- Methods and modalities of treatment offered

- What types of therapy are offered?
- Is teletherapy offered?
- What is the philosophy of practice?
- Are there any issues or clients that the provider does not feel competent or comfortable addressing?

- Availability and accessibility

- What are the office hours?
- What is the provider's availability outside regular office hours?
- Generally, how quickly are phone calls or other communications returned?
- What is the average wait time to get an appointment with the provider?
- What is the provider's procedure for handling clients during a provider absence? (For example, what measures are in place should a client need services while the provider is on vacation, out sick, etc.?)
- If the provider's practice is full, to whom do they refer clients?
- Is the provider's office, including the building in which it is located, compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act? If not, will clients with disabilities be able to access the provider's office?

## Wellness training programs

Things to consider and questions to ask when evaluating a wellness training program include the following:

- Curriculum and course content
  - Describe the basis of the course content. What evidence or research exists to support the course content?
  - In what capacity is the course related to officer wellness?
  - What is the duration of the training course?
  - When was the course created?
  - How is the course specific to law enforcement populations?
  - Does the curriculum contain experiential components?
  - What practical takeaways does the training provide for law enforcement?
- Instructors
  - What are the credentials of the instructors?
  - How are instructors selected?
- Evaluation and certification
  - Describe the process by which the course is evaluated.
  - How often is curriculum reviewed and updated?
  - Is this training course credentialed by any outside authority?
  - Provide any endorsements from entities or agencies who have received the training.
  - Is certification available to participants upon completion?
  - Are any continuing education credits offered for completion?

## Hotlines

Things to consider and questions to ask when evaluating crisis hotlines include the following:

- Security and confidentiality
  - What procedures or practices are in place to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the user?
  - How are calls ended prematurely by the user handled?
- Expertise and competence
  - What training do operators undergo in preparation for staffing hotlines?
  - How is staff familiarity with law enforcement populations ensured?
  - Is this hotline specifically geared toward law enforcement populations? If not, what other populations are included?
- Ability to refer
  - How are referrals to follow-up services accomplished?
  - To what additional resources is the hotline equipped to provide access?
- Client experience
  - Is this hotline available 24/7/365? If not, what days and times is it available and staffed by a live individual?
  - What staffing procedures are in place for holidays?
  - Upon contacting the hotline, what will the user experience?

## Wellness products

Things to consider and questions to ask when evaluating a wellness product (e.g., wellness-related smartphone applications, computer programs or websites) include the following:

- Security and confidentiality
  - What procedures or practices are in place to ensure confidentiality and privacy of the user?
- Specific content
  - What type of product is this?
  - How is the content specific to or focused on law enforcement?
  - How is this product unique from other products?
- User experience
  - Rate ease of use of the product.
  - How valuable or useful is the product?
  - How is consumer feedback collected?
  - Review available ratings and reviews from previous users, focusing on those from law enforcement or first responder consumers.
- Quantity of information offered via the product
  - Which facets of wellness are covered with this product? (e.g., mental health, physical fitness, diet and nutrition)
- Quality of information offered via the product
  - How is content researched?
  - How often is content updated?
  - How often is the product modified or improved?

## Conclusion

The Fraternal Order of Police National Officer Wellness Committee and National Division of Wellness Services encourages the use of this guide for identifying wellness products and programs specialized in assisting law enforcement officers and their families. Through our *Approved Provider Bulletin*, the Division of Wellness Services strives to provide connections to programs and providers that have been examined within the parameters of our vetting framework and have been deemed Vetted and Approved by the Division of Wellness Services. For additional information on the *Approved Provider Bulletin*, the vetting processes of the FOP Division of Wellness Services, or further guidance concerning the use of this guide, contact us at [officerwellness@fop.net](mailto:officerwellness@fop.net) or at 615-878-2620.

## About the FOP

The **National Fraternal Order of Police (FOP)** is the world's largest organization of sworn law enforcement officers with more than 356,000 members in more than 2,100 lodges. We are the voice of those who dedicate their lives to protecting and serving our communities. We are committed to improving the working conditions of law enforcement officers and the safety of those we serve through education, legislation, information, community involvement, and employee representation. No one knows the dangers and the difficulties faced by today's police officers better than another officer, and no one knows police officers better than the FOP.

## About the COPS Office

The **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

The COPS Office awards grants to hire community policing professionals, develop and test innovative policing strategies, and provide training and technical assistance to community members, local government leaders, and all levels of law enforcement. Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than \$14 billion to help advance community policing.

Law enforcement is a unique occupation whose members have unique needs. It can be difficult to find mental health and wellness practitioners who clearly understand the nature of the law enforcement profession. As stressors facing law enforcement increase, identifying culturally competent wellness professionals to meet the needs of sworn and nonsworn employees and their families has become a national priority.

The FOP Wellness Provider Vetting Guide provides recommended guidelines for identifying and selecting wellness providers for law enforcement professionals and their families. With step-by-step checklists, the guide lists topics for consideration when choosing a provider, program, or wellness product. Not only for the individual officer, this publication will also provide law enforcement agencies and leaders with a path to providing the best services for their personnel.



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To obtain details about COPS Office programs, call  
the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Visit the COPS Office online at [cops.usdoj.gov](https://cops.usdoj.gov).



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