MENTAL HEALTH AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

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NAMI St. Louis
On average there are approximately 125 to 150 police suicides per year
Police Suicide Statistics

- 2008 police suicides: 141
- 2009 police suicides: 143
- 2010 police suicides: 145
- 2011 police suicides: 147
- 2012 police suicides: 126
- 2016 police suicides: 108
- 2017 police suicides: 140
- 2018 police suicides: 159
# 2018 Law Enforcement Suicide by State

as of January 1, 2019

Prepared by Blue H.E.L.P.

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[www.bluehelp.org](http://www.bluehelp.org)
Profile of suicide cases:

- Average age: 42
- Average number of years on job: 16
Many suicides by police go unreported to avoid stigmatizing families and to allow them to collect insurance claims and other compensation.

Officers have admitted to seeing reports that list suicides under a broad classification such as "accidental discharge of a weapon" that was anything but accidental.
Why Police Officers Die By Suicide?
Reasons

- Legal troubles
- Depression
- Relationship problems
- Fear of a secret getting out
- Feeling alone
Only the person whom completes suicide really understands why they took their own life.
Understanding Depression
Depression...

- The #1 cause of completed suicide
- Very highly treatable if detected and acknowledged
- Wishing to be dead is a frequent symptom of untreated depression
Alcohol dissolves the “wall of resistance” that often keeps suicidal individuals alive.

Alcohol is found in the blood of most completed suicides – whether or not they were problem drinkers.

ALCOHOL MAKES DEPRESSION WORSE!
Signs

- Poor appetite
- Weight loss
- Sleep disturbances
- Loss of interest
Behavior Changes

- Diminished interests
- Quiet/detached
- Considering career change
Physical Changes

- Loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Repeated thoughts of suicide
“You know, the ghosts, they will always be with you”
Trauma happens

Trauma is part of your job!!!
Police officer suicide prevention

Here are a few tips that could hopefully alleviate the problem.

- 1) Spot risk taking. Officers who have ceased to care about themselves may take unnecessary risks on the job.

- 2) A rise in use of force incidents. Officers under pressure may become overly aggressive and take out their anger on arrestees.
3) A rise in vehicle collisions. Similarly, officers may start to drive in a reckless manner resulting in more cruiser crashes.

4) Substance abuse. Stressed officers may resort to an increased intake of alcohol or engage in substance abuse in order to "numb" their pain.

5) Downsizes. Officers that suddenly downsize by giving away valued possessions are giving a red flag indicator.
Helping yourself
Barriers

- Confidentially concerns

- Stigma

- Job reassignment and or loss of firearm privileges

- Possible requirement to report all prescription medications including Antidepressants
For the average officer possibly the hardest job of staying healthy is to admit that he/she has a problem.

The second hardest feat is the willingness to get help.

Your careers are centered on helping others, but we have so much trouble accepting help.
Suicidal Officers

- peer support within the agency

- Allow the officer to vent their emotions, fears, anger and encourage them to talk about their motives for suicide

- Time is on your side, use it!
Psychiatric Medication Side Effects

- Headache, double vision, dizziness, anxiety, or confusion.
- Nausea
- Nervousness and insomnia (trouble falling asleep or waking often during the night)
Where to find help

- Family doctors
- Mental health specialists - such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, or mental health counselors
- Your health insurance plan
- Community mental health centers
- Hospital psychiatry departments and outpatient clinics
- University- or medical school-affiliated programs
- State hospital outpatient clinics
- Family service, social agencies, or clergy
- Private clinics and facilities
- Employee assistance programs
The Cop 2 Cop hotline 1-866-COP-2COP is staffed by retired officers who are licensed Clinical Social Workers.
Resources

- [Officer.com](http://www.officer.com/article/10232405/2009-police-suicide-statistics)
- [PoliceSuicideStudy.com](http://www.policesuicidestudy.com/id5.html)
- [PoliceSuicidePrevention.com](http://www.policesuicideprevention.com/id62.html)
Don’t let the stress get the best of you.

Ask for Help
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