



State of New Jersey
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY
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JON S. CORZINE
Governor

ANNE MILGRAM
Attorney General

May 27, 2009

Dear Chiefs of Police and Police Directors:

It is our pleasure to provide you with the New Jersey Police Suicide Task Force Report, which has been accepted by Governor Jon S. Corzine.

Suicides outnumber deaths in the line of duty among law enforcement officers in New Jersey and nationwide. Law enforcement officers face a unique set of stressors placing them at above-average risk for suicide – including stress stemming from the nature of their jobs, frequent exposure to critical incidents, shift work which can result in relationship and family stress, and the critical factor of access to lethal means.

On October 5, 2008, Governor Corzine announced the formation of the Governor's Task Force on Police Suicide, which examined the problem of law enforcement suicide in New Jersey. We were proud to chair this fourteen-member Task Force, which included representatives from various branches of law enforcement, mental health professionals, and service providers. The Task Force, with input from national experts, developed a comprehensive set of recommendations to address the unique risk factors facing law enforcement officers.

Specifically, the Task Force's recommendations focus on:


- Providing substantive suicide awareness training to law enforcement officers and supervisors;
- Improving access to and increasing the effectiveness of existing resources including Cop2Cop and Employee Assistance Programs;
- Recommending the adoption of best practices including implementing policies mandating counseling after traumatic events, policies for critical incident response teams, and policies to address officers' reluctance to seek assistance for fear of disciplinary consequences and loss of their weapon; and
- Combating the reluctance of officers to seek help through an anti-stigma poster campaign aimed at the law enforcement community.



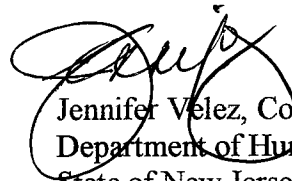
Working together with the Police Training Commission, Cop2Cop – a nationally recognized, confidential peer counseling program – and the Governor’s Council on Mental Health Stigma, we are working toward implementing these recommendations. You play a critical role in the implementation, and we look forward to collaborating with you in this important work. We will reach out to you with updates as we carry out these recommendations and make resources available. In addition, we post information on the Department of Law and Public Safety and Department of Human Services websites.

We are committed to working with you and the mental health community to implement the Task Force strategies and recommendations for suicide prevention. The impact of suicide cannot be measured by the number of deaths alone, because suicide has devastating consequences for loved ones, coworkers, and society. We owe it to our law enforcement community to do more to prevent this tragic loss of life. We hope you find the information in this report useful, and look forward to working with you on the implementation of these very important recommendations.

Sincerely,



Anne Milgram
Attorney General
State of New Jersey



Jennifer Velez, Commissioner
Department of Human Services
State of New Jersey

Cc: New Jersey Mayors

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