



Kevin Ward
Interim Mayor

Tracey E. Douglas
City Administrator

PRESS RELEASE
City of Hyattsville Police Department
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 2, 2021

Contact: Cindy Zork
Communications Manager, City of Hyattsville
(301) 985-5004 | czork@hyattsville.org

**The City of Hyattsville Police Department Proposes Robust
Mental Health and Wellness Program for First Responders**
A key component is a required, quarterly Mental Wellness Check-in Program

(Hyattsville, MD) – The City of Hyattsville Police Department has laid out a comprehensive, multi-year mental health and wellness plan with required education and training for officers and dispatchers. The proposed HCPD Mental Health and Wellness Program includes law-enforcement-focused Mental Health First Aid training, a Mental Illness 101 education program, Crisis Intervention Team training, and a required, quarterly Mental Wellness Check-In Program.

“Data shows that one in five adults in this country will experience a mental health condition, and statistics indicate law enforcement officers are more than twice as likely to die by suicide than by homicide,” said Adrienne Augustus, Media Relations/Mental Health Programs Manager for the City of Hyattsville Police Department. “It’s clear we must do more to support our first responders as they work to support us.” Augustus presented the HCPD Mental Health and Wellness Program to the Hyattsville City Council’s March 1 meeting.

The proposed program offers a variety of educational opportunities to train officers and dispatchers in engaging people who are in emotional distress or experiencing a mental health crisis. The program also supports first responders’ mental wellness through meditation sessions and mental wellness check-ins with licensed psychologists.

“This is an incredibly progressive department when it comes to embracing concepts like mental health and wellness, so this is the right agency to pilot such a ground-breaking program,” said Acting Chief of Police Scott Dunklee. “This will provide life-saving tools our officers and dispatchers can use for the community and themselves, right now.”

The proposal includes a Mental Wellness Check-in Program designed to provide first responders with the opportunity to discuss work/life stressors during required, quarterly, one-





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on-one sessions with licensed psychologists who have experience working with first responders. Requiring all officers and dispatchers to participate eliminates any stigma associated with someone having to choose to see a mental health clinician.

“I immediately embraced this proposal- it is both innovative and necessary,” said City Councilmember Daniel Peabody, who presented the wellness check-in program at a February City Council meeting and received a unanimous show of support from the Council. “Our residents deserve law enforcement first responders who are able to bring their healthiest selves- in mind and body- to work. We ask a lot of them, and they deserve our investment in their mental wellness as they do the intense work of promoting safety in our community.”

Other mental wellness components of the HCPD Mental Health and Wellness Program include PTSD and autism awareness training, and self-care strategy sessions. Additional programming including social service outreach with emergency referral services and a food pantry are projected for summer 2023 with the opening of Hyattsville’s new Police and Public Safety building.

“This is incredibly exciting because we are creating this from the ground up,” said Augustus, who began developing the Mental Health and Wellness Program late last year. “We hope this proposed pilot program will have a positive impact on our officers and dispatchers, and become the blueprint for how other law enforcement agencies will support their first responders too.” Augustus, who holds the dual job of Media Relations and Mental Health Programs Manager at the City of Hyattsville Police Department was hired last August. She joined the department in September.

“We were fortunate to have been able to bring such an experienced and passionate mental health advocate to the Department,” said Hyattsville Interim City Mayor Kevin Ward. “Ms. Augustus’ vision and commitment to ensuring our first responders have the best tools and training to support our residents experiencing a mental health crisis, along with a larger plan to provide residents with information and access to mental health support services is transformative. These efforts with our City’s investment in training, programs, and services will create a positive ripple effect that will be felt throughout our city.”

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