

Analysis

Department of Corrections

Impact of Stress on Corrections Officers Study

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Request: Approval to apply for \$750,000 from the US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, to research the impact of acute and/or chronic stress on corrections officers and their families.

Recommendation: Approve the request.

Analysis: The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has made \$4.5 million available nationally for research in one of three areas:

- Causes and effects of stress and trauma on: (a) law enforcement and corrections officers or (b) individuals in violent communities;
- Impact of parental jail incarceration on children; and
- The efficacy of services, strategies, policies, and processes within the criminal or juvenile justice system that serve as responses to children exposed to violence.

Because it has limited means of conducting research on the family members of adults in its custody, the department has focused its grant application on the first topic area, above.

The NIJ notes that while it is well established that high stress can have precipitous negative effects on the health and wellness of police officers, frequent exposure to stress and traumatic events by correctional officers remains largely unexamined. NIJ is seeking science-based proposals for research into the impact of acute stress on physical and mental health, the long-term effects of chronic stress, and the effectiveness of programs aimed at treating stress and stress-related disorders.

Employee wellness is a top priority for the Department of Corrections. Employee stress is a cost to the agency in the form of sick leave usage and medical expense, turnover, and reduced productivity. The Department of Corrections' ten-year strategic plan includes a data-driven approach to improving employee wellness, with the goal of gathering baseline employee wellness data over the next two years. The agency proposes to use grant funds to study its mindfulness-based emotional intelligence staff interventions by tracking physiological stress markers (such as heart rate), and by evaluating absenteeism. The grant award period is for up to three years, depending on project length, and there is no match requirement.

Grant proposals are due on March 23rd, 2017, with award announcements anticipated by September, 2017. If awarded, the agency may return to the legislature to request additional federal funds expenditure limitation.

The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends approval of the grant application request.