TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: POLICE

DATE: JUNE 19, 2006 CMR:262:06

SUBJECT: PALO ALTO POLICE DEPARTMENT WELLNESS PROGRAM

This is an informational report and no Council action is required.

BACKGROUND

The Palo Alto Police Department recognizes that its most valuable assets are its employees. The Department also recognizes that the physical well being of employees is critical in order to successfully achieve the Department’s goals and objectives. Therefore, in April 2004, the Department launched its first Wellness Program. The program was designed to educate, motivate and assist officers in achieving and maintaining optimal health so they could be more effective. Additionally, the goal was to reduce sick leave usage and worker’s compensation injuries. The purpose of this report is to provide the Council with information on the components of the Wellness Program, and an overview of the first two years’ results.

DISCUSSION

The Wellness Program is currently available to sworn employees on a voluntary basis. Officers who do participate must follow the conditions set forth in the Wellness Program Policy.

The Department contracts with Sequoia Hospital who conducts similar programs in other law enforcement agencies. Officers who participate in the Wellness Program first take part in a fitness evaluation and orientation. Officers must complete a confidential medical history packet, and are then given a confidential examination which is known as the “Wellsource Personal Wellness Profile Comprehensive Assessment” that includes:

- Blood pressure and pulse
- Lipid profile
- Height/weight; waist-hip ratio
- Body composition analysis
- Fitness testing (3 minute step test)
- Strength, flexibility, cardiovascular and endurance test
• Confidential individual employee report

All medical records generated in this program are confidentially maintained by Sequoia Hospital. The Department does not receive, have access to or review any medical information regarding any of the participants in this program, respecting the confidentiality of the doctor-patient relationship. If, after the comprehensive assessment, it is determined that an officer requires further medical attention, he/she is referred to his/her own physician. The employee bears the financial responsibility associated with any other treatments or tests.

Sequoia staff provide individual follow-up meetings to discuss assessment results and make recommendations for personalized exercise and nutritional programs. Participants are strongly encouraged to follow the recommended exercise/lifestyle regime. After the initial assessment process and follow-up meetings, the Sequoia staff provides the Police Department with the names of the employees that are authorized to participate in the Wellness Program.

Participating officers are afforded one hour of on-duty time for the purpose of exercise. For patrol officers, supervisors must approve the time to ensure that adequate coverage is provided to handle calls-for-service. During this hour, the officer must factor in changing clothes, exercise and shower time. The following exercises are authorized under the Wellness Program:

- Stationary Bike
- Jogging/Walking (Treadmill)
- Jogging/Walking (Within one block of the police station while carrying a police radio)
- Rowing Machine
- Stair-Stepper
- Free Weights
- Universal Machine
- Elliptical Trainer/Stretching/Calisthenics

All employees participating in the program must complete the health screening assessment every 12 months. Participation in these assessments is required in order to continue participation in the on-duty workout program.

Initial Results

On April 1, 2004, the Police Department conducted its first Wellness Profile Comprehensive Assessment. Seventy-four sworn employees participated in the initial assessment and Sequoia staff ultimately cleared 68 employees. Based upon the results of the assessment, several officers were encouraged to see their personal physicians regarding potentially serious health situation that they previously were not aware of. In April 2005, employees participated in a second comprehensive assessment. Sequoia staff was able to compare the results of the first assessment with the results of the second. The following comparisons were made:

Nutrition: Based on interviews by the Wellness Program staff as well as a comprehensive questionnaire, high nutrition risk factors for the participating officers decreased substantially.
The amount of fast food consumed by the participants decreased (from 91 percent to 77 percent). Overall fat intake was also down and the amount of fruits and vegetables increased. *Overall, there was a 14 percent increase in good nutrition.*

Cancer Risk: Police officers are 300-400 percent more at risk to develop cancer than the rest of the general public. Comparing the first year of this program to the second year, Palo Alto police officers who participated in this program reduced their risk of cancer from 78 to 58 percent. According to medical professionals, this 20 percent decrease is a significant reduction, especially for police officers.

Body Fat: Of those officers considered “overweight” (according to established guidelines by leading health organizations) during the first year of this program, 63 percent of the participants had higher fat ratios than the recommended. This number dropped to 58 percent during the second year of this program. This five percent decrease was directly related to exercise.

Cholesterol: Overall, cholesterol improved during the second year. The “good” cholesterol (HDL) increased dramatically from 15 percent to 23 percent. This also was directly related to aerobic exercise. The decrease in body fat and the increase in HDL levels were two of the primary reasons the on-duty work out program was initiated.

Blood Pressure: Blood pressure was taken on the day of the health screening. At the health screening this past year there was a rise in blood pressure compared to the test day last year. In 2004, 24 percent of the participants had elevated blood pressure; in 2005, 33 percent of the participants had elevated blood pressure. Staff from the Wellness Program felt this was probably due to “situational stress.” At the time of the test, the trial of two Palo Alto police officers had just ended in a hung jury and there was talk of a possible re-trial. Every member of the Police Department was negatively impacted by this event.

Quality of Life Issues: This area was broken down into two areas. Specifically it dealt with how people felt about themselves physically as well as emotionally. Information for this category was taken from assessments by the Sequoia medical staff, as well as the comprehensive questionnaire. In relation to how the people participating in this program felt about themselves compared to the National Norms, the participants were above the norms in both areas.

Economic Impact of Major Health Risks: A number of health risk factors have been shown to be associated with higher medical claims. Risk factors include, but are not limited to, smoking, sedentary lifestyle, being overweight by 20 percent or higher, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, occasional seat belt use, excess alcohol consumption, etc.

The presence of multiple risk factors provides a better prediction of future claims than any single factor. Recent scientific research reveals significant cost savings can be achieved by reducing health risks. Additional benefits include job satisfaction and increased productivity from decreased lost time from due to work absence. In comparing this year to the previous year, the risk factors that would result in higher medical claims decreased in four out of five risk level categories.
Aerobic Fitness: Comparing the first year of the program with the second, the number of officers that were aerobically unfit was reduced from 13 percent to 4 percent. Staff from the Wellness Program felt that this was due in large part to the follow-up assessments which increased the officers’ awareness of the impact of exercise, the counseling intervention, adherence to the exercise guidelines and the on-duty workouts, which facilitated the officer actually committing to doing the exercise.

Officers who participated in the program made significant improvements in wellness as indicated by the testing. During the first and second quarters of 2003 before the Wellness Program was instituted, participating officers used 897 hours of sick leave. During the first and second quarters of 2004, when the Wellness Program was first instituted, participating officers used 794 hours of sick leave. During the same time period in 2005, officers used 518 hours of sick leave. This represents a 42 percent drop in the use of sick time with participating officers. The reduction of sick leave usage is clearly a benefit to both the employee as well as the City. The reduction in sick leave reduces the cost of medical benefits as well as overtime costs, since overtime is often needed to backfill for patrol officers.

Although it is difficult to determine if there was a direct correlation associated with the Wellness Program, the number of reported workers compensation injuries (during this same time) from those officers who participated in the Wellness Program dropped from two to zero.

In July 2006, the staff from Sequoia Hospital will return to the Police Department for the third annual health screening. In addition to the goals achieved during the first two years, the third year will be to increase the number of officers participating in this program, achieve a lower overall blood pressure (for those who had an elevated blood pressure) and show a reduction in cholesterol.

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