Corrections officers play a vital role in the reentry success of the people they supervise. Effective interactions between corrections officers and people in prison or jail can reduce recidivism and improve overall long-term outcomes related to a successful transition back to the community. But the role of these officers can be hindered by the job-related stresses and challenges they often experience, including traumatic stress as a result of secondary exposure to violence, injury, and death. These high-risk job factors can lead to a negative impact on the quality of life of corrections officers. Research shows that corrections officers have higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, work-related injuries, and suicide, in comparison to other professions.

Prioritizing Wellness for Corrections Officers

The risk of suicide is 39% higher for corrections officers than all other professions combined. The number of work-related injuries or illnesses per 10,000 full-time corrections officers in 2011 was 544. The approximate number of corrections officers in the U.S. as of 2016 was 431,600.

HALF of respondents in a 2011 survey of corrections officers reported experiencing some signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and an elevated risk of suicide.

A recent study of officers at a correctional facility in Connecticut found that, of corrections officers who worked in a prison environment for 15 years or more, 50% were affected by obesity and 39% suffered from high blood pressure.

20% of respondents in a survey of Oregon Department of Corrections staff said they experienced mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and traumatic stress.


11. Oregon Health Authority & Multnomah County Health Department, Program Design and Evaluation Services, Measuring Worksite Wellness at Oregon Department of Corrections: Results from the 2016 Employee Survey (Salem, OR: Oregon Department of Corrections, 2017).

This project was supported by Grant No. 2016-MU-BX-K011 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Office for Victims of Crime, and the SMART Office. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

For more information, visit www.csgjusticecenter.org/nrrc/face-to-face/.