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.

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.

The number of work-related injuries or illnesses per 10,000 full-time corrections officers in 2011.

431,600

The approximate number of corrections officers in the U.S. as of 2016

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.

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### What Policymakers Can Do

**Consider backing legislation** that requires a study of the impact of the correctional environment on officers’ mental and physical health.

**Meet with corrections officers’ unions** to find out about their concerns and what resources they need to be safe and successful in their jobs.

**Encourage state corrections agencies to work with the National Institute of Corrections** to develop training programs that help combat “corrections fatigue”—the accumulation of such job-related problems as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

**Honor corrections officers** during National Correctional Officers Week to provide support to the workforce.

**Support the development of programs** that address the well-being of corrections officers and issues of vicarious trauma.

**Create a task force** of state and local corrections agencies to help develop peer support programs for corrections officers.

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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).

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