



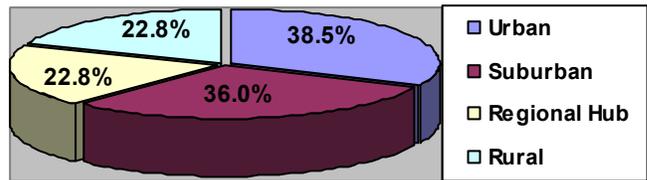
**Law Enforcement
Family Support Network**

**Officer and Family Survey
Executive Summary
December 2007**

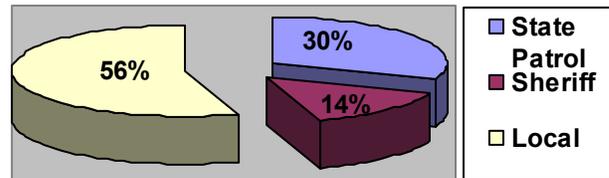
Survey Details

The 2007 MN Law Enforcement Family Support Network *Officer Survey and Family Surveys* were the product of multi-level collaborations that resulted in 1255 police and peace officer responses and 234 law enforcement family member responses. The survey asked for officer & family perspectives in five key areas; *general stressors, accidents and injuries, disaster preparedness, mental/emotional health, and access to resources.*

Department Location



Law Enforcement Agencies



Data conclusions

General Stressors

Officers experience job-related stress that is unique to the profession of law enforcement. While both officers and their family members agree that law enforcement job-related stress has impacts their home and lives together, the information and support they need to address those stresses vary between officers and their families.

Accidents and Injuries

The data identify the need for family training and information related to critical incidents. Both officers **and families** indicated a strong desire for each of their emergency preferences to be on file. This training and/or information should be considered a high priority, as it is stated as a significant need and desire of officers and family members.

Disaster Preparedness

Officers and families are aware of the potential threats that pose challenges in today's environment. Preparedness assists both officers and families in their respective responses. Seventy-five (75.6%) percent of the officers were not certain of their community emer-

Key Findings

1. Both law enforcement officers and family members see the need for increased education, resources, and support for families.
2. Officers have more knowledge and resources for law enforcement job-related stressors and emotional survival skills than families do.
3. The need for emergency and disaster family plans was a top priority for officers and family members surveyed.
4. Officers indicated that their families needed education, resources and/or support about the following priorities:
 - a. Law enforcement job-related stress
 - b. Home/family life issues
 - c. What it means to be a law enforcement officer and how an officer's life is impacted by the work he/she performs and the situations he/she encounters.
5. Education, resources, and support for law enforcement families needs to be delivered through a variety of vehicles.

Executive Summary: Family and Officers Survey

gency and disaster protocol. Seventy-four percent (74.2%) of family members did not have any disaster-related training passed down to them. The data strongly indicate a need for greater officers and family preparedness.

Mental Emotional Health

The data indicate that there is a greater awareness of the issues and impact of job-related emotional stressors among law enforcement officers than among their family members. The same applies to law enforcement family members who were less likely to be able to identify mental health issues, did not feel educated on suicide awareness and prevention, and over half were not confident that could identify the unique issues that impact children's health and well-being in a law enforcement family. Lastly, a majority of family member respondents identified a lack of resources to talk to their children about issues specific to growing up in a law enforcement family.

Access to resources

Both the officer and family data indicate the need and support for providing family education and resources. Family members themselves indicated an overwhelming interest (87.7%) in having education and support. In addition, both officers and family members identified an interest in learning more about topics related to sustaining healthy and connected law enforcement families. A majority of the respondents (families and officers) agreed that information and currently existing resources for law enforcement families were either limited or non-existent.

Overall, officers are comfortable with their families accessing education, resources and support (87.7%). Family members report little resistance from their officer if they choose to access these services.

In addition, both officers and family members identified an interest in learning more about topics related to sustaining healthy and connected law enforcement families. A majority of the respondents (families and officers) agreed that information and currently existing resources for law enforcement families were either limited or non-existent.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1

Provide information and education to family members on law enforcement related stress and how to deal with it. Create opportunities for family members to talk about law enforcement related stress and how it affects their families.

Recommendation #2

Provide essential family education, information, protocols, and tools to address the potential injury, accident, or death of an officer.

Recommendation #3

Provide essential training and tools to ensure families know how to respond and are prepared for a disaster.

Recommendation #4

Provide training for family members (parents, spouses, partners, and children) related to family and individual stressors in law enforcement careers and the emotional survival skills needed to address those stressors.

Recommendation #5

Develop and implement a Minnesota Law Enforcement Family Support Network that can deliver education, resources, and support to families of law enforcement officers, based on the key issues identified in this survey. Deliver this content in a variety of ways.

We are especially grateful for the numerous individuals who volunteered to assist MN LEFSN with the process of this survey. This was a significant undertaking! The following individuals went above and beyond the call of duty and should all be acknowledged and congratulated. Heartfelt thanks goes to:

Myra Harris, Fridley PD, **Jessica Schlieman**, Saint Cloud PD, **Mike Walsh**, Rochester PD, **Peggy Hepp**, Mental Health Professional, **Anna Schwartz**, T.E.A.M., **John Sanchelli**, T.E.A.M., **Pat Kane**, St. Paul PD, **Steve Wickelgren**, Minneapolis PD, **Jeff Beahen**, Elk River PD, **Lee Folstead**, Brooklyn Park, PD, **Mark Pettit**, Ramsey County Sherriff's Office, **Richard Peterson**, Minnesota Department of Commerce and **Bill Gillespie**, and the **Delegates** from the Minnesota Peace and Police Officers Association.

A special thanks to the MN State Patrol's **Gary Schloesser** and **Mike Asleson** for supporting their patrol officers' participation. By supporting this data collection process they have provided an invaluable contribution and will help all of us to better understand law enforcement family needs.

A final thank you to the over 1200 peace and police officers and over 200 families who provided their time and perspectives.

For additional information:

Sue Dion, M.Ed.

MNLEFSN

Concordia University

dion@csp.edu

651.603.6155