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From: egg@dca.state.nj.us [mailto:egg@dca.state.nj.us]
Sent: Friday, June 05, 2009 9:23 AM
To: Lashway, Lisa
Subject: State Report on Police Suicide in New Jersey

Municipal Clerks are asked to forward the following message and the attached letter to their Mayor and governing body members.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Susan Jacobucci, Director
Division of Local Government Services

Dear Mayor and Governing Body Members:

In October 2008, Governor Corzine established a task force to study police suicide in New Jersey. The task force report, completed in January 2009 is completed and can be found in its entirety at www.nj.gov/oag/library/njpstf-report.html. This is an important report for Mayors, Governing Bodies, and Police Chiefs throughout the State. As noted in the Executive Summary, "The stress of law enforcement work as well as access to firearms puts officers at an above average risk for suicides. The impact of suicides in the law enforcement community has led many to call for a more concerted effort to improve prevention."

Some of the task force recommendations include: provide more suicide awareness training to law enforcement officers and supervisors; improving access to and increasing the effectiveness of existing resources; recommending the adoption of best practices; and combating the reluctance of officers to seek help. The report analyzes the suicide rates of law enforcement personnel including retired officers and those on disability. It finds that the suicide rate is slightly higher for those law enforcement officers than the average male population of a similar age.

Mayors and governing body members are aware that law enforcement and the health, safety and welfare of their residents are vital in providing a safe, vibrant community. Please read the linked report and the attached letter to Police Chiefs from the Attorney General and the Commissioner of Human Services, and open a dialogue in your community regarding the results and the recommendations.

THIS E-MAIL HAS BEEN SENT TO THE FOLLOWING OFFICIALS: Municipal Clerks

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State of New Jersey
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY
PO Box 080
TRENTON NJ 08625-0080

JON S. CORZINE
Governor

ANNE MILGRAM
Attorney General

May 27, 2009

Dear Chiefs of Police and Police Directors:

It is our pleasure to provide you with the New Jersey Police Suicide Task Force Report, which has been accepted by Governor Jon S. Corzine.

Suicides outnumber deaths in the line of duty among law enforcement officers in New Jersey and nationwide. Law enforcement officers face a unique set of stressors placing them at above-average risk for suicide – including stress stemming from the nature of their jobs, frequent exposure to critical incidents, shift work which can result in relationship and family stress, and the critical factor of access to lethal means.

On October 5, 2008, Governor Corzine announced the formation of the Governor's Task Force on Police Suicide, which examined the problem of law enforcement suicide in New Jersey. We were proud to chair this fourteen-member Task Force, which included representatives from various branches of law enforcement, mental health professionals, and service providers. The Task Force, with input from national experts, developed a comprehensive set of recommendations to address the unique risk factors facing law enforcement officers.

Specifically, the Task Force's recommendations focus on:

- Providing substantive suicide awareness training to law enforcement officers and supervisors;
- Improving access to and increasing the effectiveness of existing resources including Cop2Cop and Employee Assistance Programs;
- Recommending the adoption of best practices including implementing policies mandating counseling after traumatic events, policies for critical incident response teams, and policies to address officers' reluctance to seek assistance for fear of disciplinary consequences and loss of their weapon; and
- Combating the reluctance of officers to seek help through an anti-stigma poster campaign aimed at the law enforcement community.



Working together with the Police Training Commission, Cop2Cop – a nationally recognized, confidential peer counseling program – and the Governor’s Council on Mental Health Stigma, we are working toward implementing these recommendations. You play a critical role in the implementation, and we look forward to collaborating with you in this important work. We will reach out to you with updates as we carry out these recommendations and make resources available. In addition, we post information on the Department of Law and Public Safety and Department of Human Services websites.

We are committed to working with you and the mental health community to implement the Task Force strategies and recommendations for suicide prevention. The impact of suicide cannot be measured by the number of deaths alone, because suicide has devastating consequences for loved ones, coworkers, and society. We owe it to our law enforcement community to do more to prevent this tragic loss of life. We hope you find the information in this report useful, and look forward to working with you on the implementation of these very important recommendations.

Sincerely,



Anne Milgram
Attorney General
State of New Jersey



Jennifer Velez, Commissioner
Department of Human Services
State of New Jersey

Cc: New Jersey Mayors