



Officer Wellness in the Pandemic

CCSO announces rollout of training on officer wellness and crisis management from Falcon, Inc.

Collin County Sheriff Jim Skinner and Dr. Elizabeth Falcon

In the months since Gov. Greg Abbott declared a public-health disaster related to COVID-19 in March, sheriff's offices across the state have worked hard with the courts, police, and prosecutors to control the inmate population in the county jails to reduce the risk of spreading the disease to inmates and staff. And as the state opens up, many will see their jail populations increase.

Because of these pandemic issues, the Collin County Sheriff's Office, in concert with Falcon, Inc., is rolling out a new 10-hour training program on officer wellness and crisis management as part of a continuing response to the pandemic. The program is both for county jailers and deputy sheriffs—line officers, supervisors, and other staff who work with inmates or the public.

Falcon, Inc. has designed the program to meet three goals. First, it aims to help the corrections staff who work on the floor of the jail and the deputy sheriffs who work in patrol and investigations to develop and maintain a healthy and resilient mindset in the face of the pandemic. The program teaches skills to manage stress, anxiety, isolation, and fatigue. Second, the program is designed to equip officers with new skills to maintain mental health in the pandemic, including skills in coping with stressful situations and managing emotions. Third, aspects of the program focus on leadership, including a course in improving interpersonal communication. One of the program's key goals is to improve our ability to care for inmates by increasing awareness and the ability to assess inmates for at-risk medical conditions and behaviors. As you would expect, the program is eligible for certification by TCOLE for continuing-education credit.

The Collin County Commissioners Court approved the use of federal CARES Act funds to help finance this training. Currently, a county may use CARES Act funds to complete a project by Dec. 30, 2020. But senators have introduced S. 4494, the State and Local Coronavirus Relief Fund Extension Act, to amend the statute to extend the deadline to Dec. 31, 2021.