



Item No. 10.3.1

Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality November 12, 2025

TO: Chair Greg O'Malley and Commissioners of the Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality

FROM: Bill Moore, Commissioner of Public Safety

DATE: October 20, 2025

SUBJECT: Annual report on HRP actions to enhance psychological safety and trauma supports

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

This is a staff-initiated report to fulfill a Board of Police Commissioners (BoPC) 2025-2026 Work Plan deliverable.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The wellness, engagement, and retention of employees is a priority for Halifax Regional Police (HRP) and how we approach this is central to our workplace culture. The healthier and more engaged our workforce, the better it is for the individual employee, their loved ones, and the better positioned HRP is to deliver optimal service to the public and our partners.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) BoPC on actions taken by HRP in relation to the enhancement of psychological safety and trauma supports which are available to employees.

HRP has established programs and positions in place to support the health and well-being of all employees, including those on long-term leave due to health reasons. Additional resources have been added over the last several years, which has allowed HRP to build on its existing health and well-being framework.

BACKGROUND

The 2025-2026 BoPC Work Plan¹ contains four key pillars:

- Develop
- Engage
- Adapt
- Evolve

Included within the “Evolve” pillar is the strategic priority “Oversee the development of a people-focused policing strategy.” This priority includes the action item of an annual report from HRP on our actions to enhance psychological safety.

This Information Report is the second annual update related to this request. A copy of the initial report, titled “Update on HRP Actions to Enhance Psychological Safety and Trauma Supports Including Consideration of Budgetary Implications” can be found in **Attachment 1**.

DISCUSSION

HRP has a number of existing programs and initiatives available to employees which enhance psychological safety and trauma supports in the workplace, including:

- Employee and Family Assistance Program
- Reintegration Program
- Wellness Program Specialist
- Health Specialists
- Safeguarding Program
- Critical Incident Debriefs and Assessments
- Rainbow Internal Support Network

There are also several initiatives either being explored – or in the early stages of implementation – which will provide supports, including the Early Intervention (EI) program.

HRP Employee & Family Assistance Program

The HRP Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) provides confidential support for employees and their families who are experiencing personal, professional, or health-related challenges, including psychological health.

The goal is to provide early intervention, support, and encourage employees to seek the assistance they may need. Sometimes, initial contact with the EFAP may be all that an employee or their family member needs, but others may require further follow-ups, or a full EFAP referral to connect them with the services they may require. Referrals can be made for any type of challenge the person is experiencing. These can include mental health concerns, traumatic incidents, grief and loss, marital difficulties, illness, etc.

Since the beginning of 2025, the top three concerns reported by people seeking EFAP assistance were mental health, operational stress, and marital/relationship issues.

Prior to 2024, there was one permanent EFAP Coordinator position. As part of the 2024/25 operating budget process, a second position was approved. The new EFAP position is titled the Peer Team Lead and will focus on managing EFAP peer support volunteers, the on-call phones, and data collection as well as supporting members through Critical Incident and Stress Management activations.

¹ <https://cdn.halifax.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-hall/boards-committees-commissions/250521bopc1021.pdf>

This position was posted internally in late August. The competition is currently in progress.

The EFAP Coordinator and Peer Team Lead are HRP employees, and the EFAP program is peer-led. This is important and offers the substantial benefit that the Coordinator and Peer Team Lead understand the unique nature of the policing environment and its challenges. This is also a critical component when assistance is provided to an employee's family member, as the family member may be struggling with their loved one being affected by the policing environment, even though they themselves are not directly involved in it.

The responsibilities of the EFAP Coordinator include the delivery of internal training in specialist trauma-informed subject areas, including Applied Suicide Intervention, Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), CIS Debriefing, and Strategic Resiliency. These types of crisis intervention are acute emergency mental health interventions², sometimes referred to as "emotional first aid," which require this specialized training. The EFAP Coordinator also delivers an overview of the EFAP program to the Police Science Program (PSP)³, so recruits are aware of the supports in place prior to being hired as a police officer with HRP.

Other responsibilities of the EFAP Coordinator include coordination and communication with internal and external stakeholders, such as the Chaplaincy Program, HRM support services, and external service providers, such as counsellors, social workers, and psychologists. The EFAP Coordinator is also responsible for processing invoices from external stakeholders to ensure confidentiality is maintained for those utilizing the program.

To better support HRP employees and the EFAP Coordinators, peer referral agents have been trained to respond to the needs of employees requiring assistance. Currently, there are over 20 peer referral agents who are trained in key areas, including Suicide Intervention, CIS, and CIS Debriefing.

Peer referral agents are all HRP employees who work on a volunteer basis and are on call 24/7. There is a waitlist of people who have expressed an interest in becoming a peer referral agent and are waiting for training.

Between January 1, 2025, and July 23, 2025, peer referral agents were activated 20 times to provide support to members either during or after a major incident. These activations include everything from attending scenes and divisions, to CIS debriefs. During this same period, peer referral agents also logged approximately 50 hours of their own time outside of work to support members either by fielding phone calls or assisting the EFAP Coordinator with debriefs.

Figure 1 shows the total annual referrals between 2014 and 2025 year-to-date. In 2024, the program completed 140 referrals to mental health providers. Between January 1, 2025, and July 23, 2025, the EFAP has already completed 112 referrals, which is a markable increase in engagement and usage of the program. Should this trend continue, the program will far exceed the number of referrals from 2024.

It is important to note that these numbers simply reflect each time a referral is made. They do not reflect the nature and extent of the work that is subsequently required, nor do they include the number of occasions where advice, information, or support is provided by EFAP, but did not result in a referral.

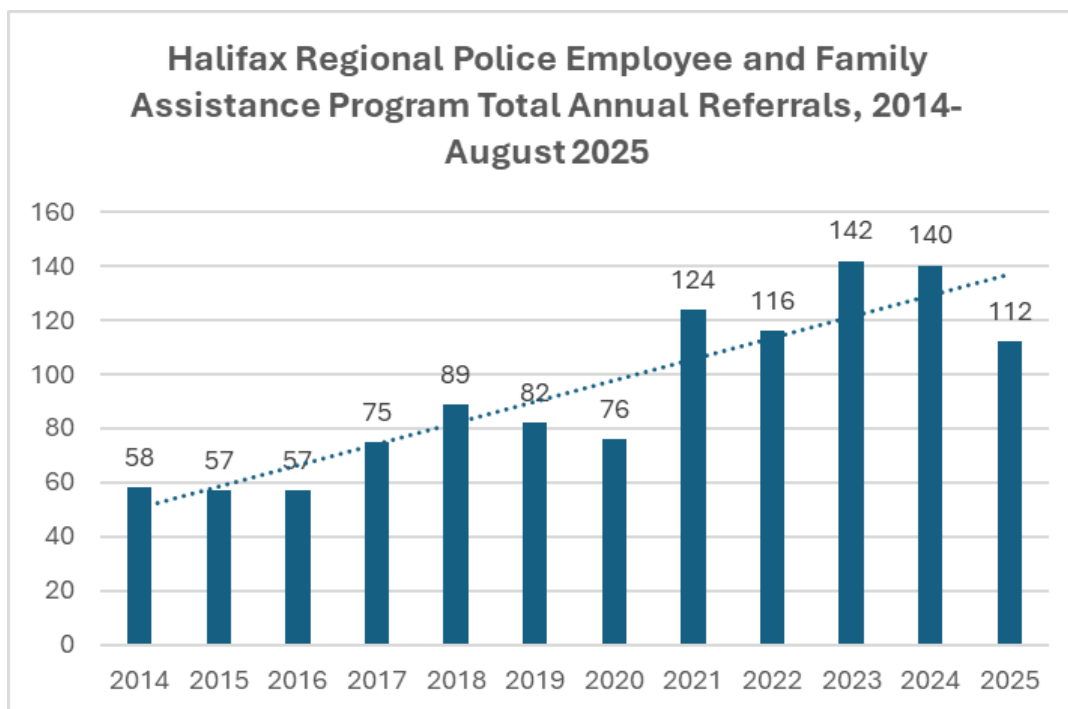
Of the 112 total EFAP referrals made to date in 2025, 86 of those were made in relation to an employee, and 26 in relation to an employee's family member.

² This is different to Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) which is separate police training, intended to enhance skillset and provide the most effective police response to individuals who are experiencing mental illness

³ The Halifax Regional Police (HRP) Police Science Program is a 38-week training program which prepares recruits to become police officers with HRP

Of the referrals made for families, the emerging theme is people looking for support with marital/relationship struggles, and general mental health support. Families and relationships are a critical part of a person's support network, so it is important to recognize the role the EFAP plays in that wider support.

Figure 1 – Annual Referrals to the HRP Employee & Family Assistance Program, 2014-2025 (YTD: July 23, 2025)



Moving forward, plans are in place to engage the 2026 PSP class with Applied Suicide Intervention Techniques, and possibly Strategic Resilience for First Responders, a program developed by first responders for first responders. The goal is to help shift police culture and provide tools to recruits to maintain wellness and be more self-aware of their mental health as they progress in their careers.

Additionally, there is ongoing discussion surrounding bringing mindfulness and wellness training to different areas of the department to help build resilience through breathing techniques and other aspects of Eastern Practices.

EFAP also plans to coordinate with HRP Human Resources (HR) to put out an expression of interest for additional peer referral agents to join the team. The goal is to have approximately 30 volunteers attached to EFAP to help cover the 24/7 phones and support HRP employees through in-person contacts.

With the support of the second role, Peer Team Lead, EFAP can continue to grow and engage more employees in an effort to provide the necessary support for members to have a long and healthy career with HRP.

HRP Reintegration Program

Returning to work after a long-term absence can be overwhelming, and members may need assistance with building their confidence and skills to ensure readiness to resume their regular duties.

The HRP Reintegration Program is a confidential, peer-driven, multi-faceted program which provides support and training for members who have experienced a critical incident and those returning to work following an absence, for any reason, including but not limited to an occupational stress injury (OSI) (persistent psychological injury resulting from operational stress), physical injury, suspension/police act investigation, or anyone who is still working but having concerns and/or doubts about their skills and abilities. The program also works with members who have experienced a critical incident such as an officer-involved shooting, serious motor vehicle collision or use of force incident involving serious injury or death.

The Reintegration Program is staffed by a full-time Reintegration Coordinator and supported by a team of volunteer peer supporters. The Reintegration Coordinator and eight initial peer supporters received a five-day training course delivered by Edmonton Police, which was the first agency in the country to implement a Reintegration Program.

In May 2024, the Reintegration Coordinator delivered the first ever HRP Reintegration Program Peer Supporter course to 22 HRP employees. The training is designed to provide employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to become a peer supporter with the Reintegration Program. Of those attendees, 16 were selected to join the Reintegration Team as volunteer peer supporters. A second Reintegration Program Peer Supporter course is scheduled to take place in December 2025. Once the training is complete, the participants could potentially become volunteer peer supporters.

The Reintegration Program is designed to support a member's specific needs. Members can self-refer, or they may be referred by another person such as their supervisor, a co-worker, a Health Specialist, the Wellness Specialist, or the EFAP Coordinator.

As each individual and their experience is unique, the employee will lead the pace, scope, depth, length, and direction of their individual reintegration. This allows them the opportunity to work through the sensitivities an operational event has created in the safety of a confidential environment. This approach may require a partnership approach, involving other agencies such as medical providers and the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB). The internal HRP Health Specialists may also be involved. The goal is to provide the best treatment available to ensure the members return to work when they are healthy and ready to do so.

Since its inception in Fall 2022, 65 people have officially participated in the Reintegration Program in some capacity.

The Reintegration Program has recently undertaken several key initiatives which are aligned with fostering a physically and mentally healthy workplace for its members. These efforts support both the continued development of the program and the well-being of those it serves.

In April 2025, a one-day team meeting was held with the entire Reintegration Team to reflect on positive experiences, discuss challenges and concerns, and collaboratively develop solutions and strategic plans to support the ongoing growth and evolution of the program.

A Reintegration Program Facilitators Course, designed to introduce external police and public service agencies (e.g., Canadian Border Service Agency, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Military, fire officials and paramedics etc.) to the HRP-model, was developed. This one-week course will equip participants with the knowledge and tools needed to establish and sustain a Reintegration Program within

their own organizations. The inaugural course is tentatively scheduled for mid-to-late November 2025 and will include ongoing support from the HRP Reintegration Coordinator, as needed.

A team training and building event for volunteer peer supporters is scheduled for October 2025. This two-day event will provide an opportunity for team members to share experiences, strengthen interpersonal bonds, and learn from each other.

The Reintegration Program information brochure has been revised and is now available on the HRP Intranet. The Reintegration Coordinator is collaborating with the HRP Public Relations & Communications Section on new ways to enhance internal awareness of the program and share testimonials from past participants and peer supporters, with the goal of making the information more accessible to all HRP employees.

Additionally, the Reintegration Coordinator conducted a presentation for over 20 WCB case coordinators and employees, outlining how the Reintegration Program and WCB collaborate to support members returning to the workplace. This session helped strengthen partnerships and improve coordinated care for employees who are navigating the return-to-work processes.

The Reintegration Program volunteer peer supporters did a presentation to all four watches and the Criminal Investigation Division, which provided information about the program, how it supports employees and how to access its services. The coordinator is currently working with the new IES supervisor and the two IES peer supporters to determine the best method to provide a similar presentation to all IES employees.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate HRP's continued commitment to supporting the mental and physical well-being of its members through meaningful, peer-driven reintegration support.

HRP Wellness Program Specialist

The HRP Wellness Program Specialist (WPS) is responsible for implementing health and wellness programs across HRP, through education, training, prevention, intervention, and recovery strategies, which focus on holistic lifestyle approaches to health and wellness. This position employs a comprehensive health promotion approach to the development and implementation of initiatives and programs that encompasses psychological, physical, and emotional components, with the objective of empowering and motivating employees to make positive personal choices that improve their overall health and well-being.

The WPS is a member of the Reintegration team and helps support members returning to work by doing exposures on and off-site. Where employees have experienced occupational stress injuries, need accommodations, or are returning to work, the WPS is a collaborative partner with the Health Specialists, the Reintegration Coordinator, and the EFAP Coordinator, in identifying and implementing the required supports to help the individual.

The WPS is consulted as a subject matter expert when relevant policies and procedures are developed and is often called upon to deliver training.

The WPS delivers a day of health and wellness training to the PSP class, as well as new Experienced Police Officers and Emergency Response Communicators. This training includes part of "Road to Mental Readiness" (a mental health program designed by the Canadian Armed Forces), stress management, fatigue management and nutrition.

The WPS also acts as a consultant on the physical training component of the PSP, and delivers fitness training to employees as required, often as a support for members going through the Reintegration Program.

In 2023, the WPS delivered refresher training to existing employees in block training^[2] to remind sworn and civilian employees of the supports available at HRP.

An initiative identified a couple of years ago by the WPS is the Early Integration (EI) Program. This is designed to intervene where there are early signs of psychological struggle for an employee, where otherwise they might be missed. The WPS has worked steadily and tirelessly to research the program, analyze its capability and fit with HRP programs and operations, and raise awareness.

The benefits of this program have been recognized by HRP and the software necessary to enable the EI program was approved by Regional Council as part of the HRM IT Business System 2025/26 Capital Budget. HRP will be moving forward with the project in partnership with HRM IT.

HRP Culture and Support Manager

As part of the 2025/26 HRP Operating Budget, Regional Council approved a Culture and Support Manager.

This new position will manage the positions of Reintegration Coordinator, Wellness Program Specialist, and EFAP Coordinators and volunteers.

The Culture and Support Manager will also have responsibility for the creation of an overarching strategy and policies in this area, as well as other business and strategic programs and initiatives such as the Safeguarding and Early Intervention programs.

This position is currently being evaluated through HRM Talent and Rewards and is expected to be posted in the near future. Once this position is filled, it is expected to alleviate some of the direct reporting demands on the Inspector within the Administration Division and allow them to focus more attention on the Training Section.

HRP Health Specialists

The HRP Health Specialists are responsible for delivering effective case management services to ill, injured, and absent workers. The Health Specialists offer support and provide guidance to members to ensure they get the care and assistance they need while off work and to assist with an employee's return to work.

The Health Specialists act as a coordinator in facilitating return to work and will liaise with the Nova Scotia Worker's Compensation Board (WCB), Blue Cross Long-Term Disability, and individual treatment providers.

They also work with the Reintegration Coordinator, the Wellness Program Specialist, the EFAP Coordinator and any other services they deem necessary to support and facilitate the employee's full and successful return to the workplace. As with the Reintegration Program, there is no one-size fits all solutions, so Health Specialists work to develop a plan tailored to the needs of each individual employee.

The Health Specialists also provide support and guidance to workers who may be struggling with illness, injury, or other absence but who want to stay at work, by connecting workers with the services and support they need, based on their individual requirements.

^[2] Block training occurs on an annual basis and consists of training delivered to all sworn and some civilian employees, which is either mandatory or identified as a priority by the organization

The Health Specialists assist our employees with pre-maternity planning and maternity and parental leave absences to ensure accurate information and paperwork is obtained and confirm proper coding for these leaves.

Health Specialists maintain ongoing and continuous communication with the employees, supervisors, management, and payroll to ensure awareness of leave durations, return to work dates, any changes to return to work plans, and proper coding requirements.

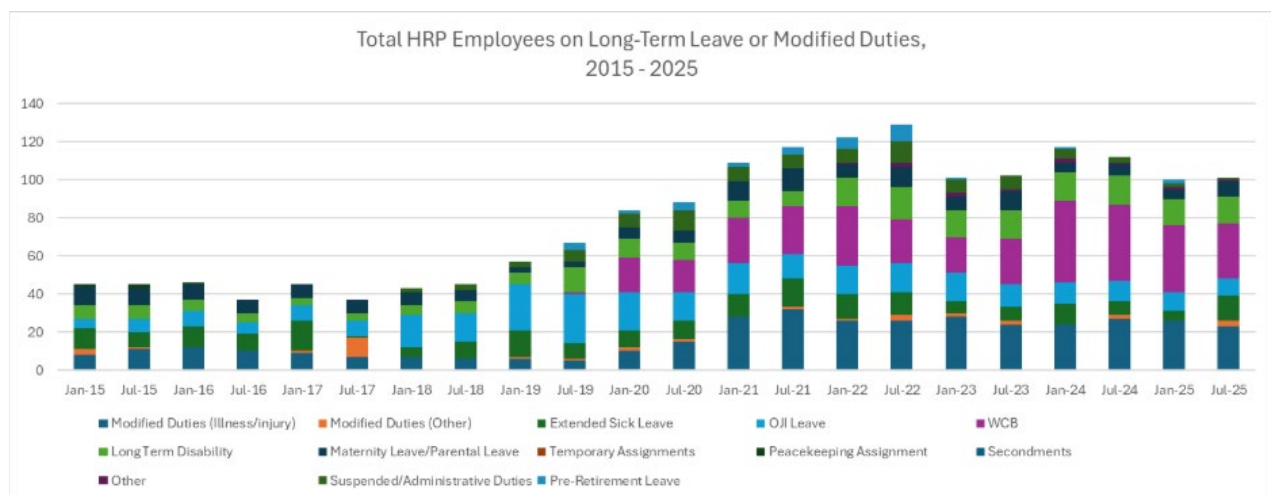
The Health Specialists play a vital role in the accommodation process as medical restrictions and limitations are essential to this process.

The Health Specialists also arrange for Critical Incident Assessments (outlined below) making contact with supervisors to determine all workers involved and making necessary contacts to schedule assessments. They will review the resulting report and make any contact with the worker as necessary based on the recommendations.

The Health Specialists are also responsible to review the reports from the Safeguarding Program (outlined below) and connect with each employee if there is any concern noted in the report.

The Health Specialists met with the latest PSP class to discuss their role, services offered, and how they can assist the members if there might be an injury, illness, or other absence. The Health Specialists encouraged recruits to reach out early if there is any indication of physical or psychological injury to assist with facilitating the appropriate supports.

Figure 2 – Total HRP employees on leave or modified duties, 2011 – 2025



Safeguarding Program

There are certain positions within HRP which are at a higher risk of significant and/or prolonged exposure to situations and material with an increased likelihood of having an adverse impact on the employee, such as child abuse, sexual assault, and homicide.

Employees who work in these positions participate in an annual assessment with a psychologist to assess whether they are coping with the demands of the role and are safe to continue working in that position, or whether they may need additional support or treatment, such as counselling or a period of leave.

A private psychologist is contracted to carry out these assessments. A private psychologist also conducts pre-employment assessments of applicants for the PSP, and post-critical incident assessments, where required.

Critical Incident Debriefs and Assessments

Where there has been an incident of a particularly traumatic nature, the EFAP Coordinator will arrange for a debrief to be held with the employees exposed to the trauma, either individually or as part of a group.

Participation in Critical Incident Debriefs is voluntary - but strongly encouraged. During the debrief, the EFAP Coordinator will assist the participants in normalizing the feelings they are experiencing and help them understand potential reactions they may feel and experience, as well as educate them on available resources and support if they do experience such reactions.

The exposure can take different forms, such as officers directly attending and witnessing the event, the call-takers and dispatchers hearing and witnessing the event over the phone and radio, or the forensic identification members attending the scene to capture and document the forensic evidence.

Psychologist assessments are scheduled for six weeks post-incident, and beyond. If the psychologist identifies that an employee has been significantly impacted by the incident, the Wellness Program Specialist will connect with the employee to see if they would benefit from support and assistance. Where they would, a claim is submitted to the Workers' Compensation Board, and the employee will be supported through that process by the Health Specialists.

Respectful and Safe Workplace (RSW) Working Group

The Respectful and Safe Workplace (RSW) Working Group is an employee group committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all employees.

The RSW's mandate emphasizes inclusion and diversity. The group aims to empower those who have experienced or witnessed disrespect, harassment, or bullying to be part of meaningful change.

The RSW aspires to drive cultural transformation within HRP by reviewing and improving the current complaint process, consulting with senior management and internal leaders to provide informed recommendations, developing an HRP-specific Respectful and Safe Workplace Policy and conducting focus groups and research to better understand employee concerns and experiences.

The RSW is also focused on creating opportunities for HRP employees to learn about respectful and safe workplaces and how to foster them within the policing environment.

As its first major endeavor, the RSW will host an inaugural HRP Respectful and Safe Workplace Symposium. This employee-focused symposium will take place on October 27, 2025. The full-day event will feature a number of speakers who will discuss topics related to HRP police culture, creating and fostering inclusive and respectful workplaces, human rights, the Nova Scotia Police Act and current HRM policies available to help support and inform employees.

The event will also include a leadership panel featuring Chief Don MacLean and Sgt. Darla Perry, president of the Halifax Regional Police Association, and a leader from HRM. Attendees will have the opportunity to visit information tables to learn about some of HRP's internal supports, including EFAP, the Reintegration Program, HRP, WCB, R-ISBN, and a general wellness table.

Rainbow Internal Support Network (R-ISON)

The Rainbow Internal Support Network (R-ISON) is an employee-led confidential support group which was established to support employees who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+.

Formally recognized in 2023, the R-ISON has supported 2SLGBTQIA+ employees in several ways; providing advice and support on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues, supporting members through complaints processes, creating and rebuilding relationships with HRM's 2SLGBTQIA+ community, driving internal change with new initiatives, and creating safer spaces and resources for 2SLGBTQIA+ identifying employees.

In 2023, the R-ISON delivered block training on the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to employees and the management team. Annually, the R-ISON delivers the 2SLGBTQIA+ presentation to the PSP recruits as part of their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Training. This presentation is in the process of being updated in collaboration with a 2SLGBTQIA+ community consultant and will be delivered to the 2026 PSP class with R-ISON and community member representative for the first time, showing the work being accomplished in rebuilding community relationship. The R-ISON remains available as a resource and subject matter expert to all levels of the organization and continues to build relationships and work towards an inclusive workplace for all.

Employees can contact the group at any time for advice on investigations, and the group has seen a significant level of outreach from officers. While there is no official measure of the impact from this, there is little doubt that this collaborative way of working will positively contribute to policing operations and investigations, as well as HRP's relationship with HRM's 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

Examples of initiatives which were initiated by the R-ISON include, but are not limited to:

- HRP has waived the fee for people to obtain fingerprinting as part of a name change or gender change process. The R-ISON advocated for this initiative after hearing calls from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to reduce fees around legal name and gender change across all levels of government
- The Rainbow Name Tag project, where employees can wear a name tag with the rainbow symbol, or a rainbow lanyard, to show allyship to the community and colleagues
- For the last two years, the R-ISON has hosted a Pride BBQ at HRP headquarters during Pride week. The event is for HRP employees, their families, friends, and the public, and provides an opportunity for HRP employees to celebrate Pride and feel included

The creation and implementation of the R-ISON should be recognized as an enormous step forward for HRP. Where employees' psychological safety can be impacted if they feel they don't fit in with the majority, the R-ISON is a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment which provides support both personally and professionally.

HRP Employee Engagement Working Group

In January 2024, the HRP Employee Engagement Working Group (EEWG) was re-established, and consists of committed volunteers who feel passionately about making the workplace better for their colleagues. As of the date of this report, the group has over 20 members. The level of activity of each member varies due to some members' working 24/7 shift patterns, but there is good representation from several areas across HRP.

Following the results of the 2022 Employee Engagement Survey, three key areas of focus were identified, and sub-committees were established to look at each area: (1) internal communication, (2) personal development, and (3) workplace culture, well-being and environment. All areas involve intertwined

elements that both individually and collectively contribute to psychological safety.

Effective, regular and timely internal communication is essential for employees to feel involved and engaged with their organization. Not being informed about key information, or even non-essential but nice-to-know information, can make employees feel sidelined. The Internal Communication sub-committee worked hard to brainstorm and develop ideas, including the launch of the first bi-weekly HRP communication (The Dispatch Newsletter) on November 21, 2024. The communication was developed in partnership with the HRP Public Relations and Corporate Communications Section and is designed to provide regular organizational and operational updates, such as staffing moves, hires, and departures. Some information was previously delivered in alternative ways, however, this communication has consolidated it, streamlined the process, and provided a mechanism for all employees to both receive and deliver information in a regular and timely manner.

Personal development is another area of focus. Those who work in management may be familiar with the theory behind Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs^[1], where 'self-actualization' is the highest level of need, and is met when people are fulfilled and doing all they are capable of. People are most motivated and engaged when they feel they have a purpose, they are clear on that purpose, and when they feel what they are working towards has meaning. Although the general work purpose of those who are employed in policing may appear obvious, there is a multitude of policing roles, held by both civilian and sworn members, all with different objectives and priorities. And all individuals have their own goals and aspirations. There is a real need for a structured internal personal development framework. The personal development sub-committee has been working to identify how best to achieve and optimize this, as well as a review of current training opportunities and potential leadership training offerings, as these link heavily to employees' personal development. These areas of work will be significant long-term projects.

The third area of focus is workplace culture, well-being, and environment. Where culture is essentially the workplace's values and way of life, employees who do not feel they fit in, or that their way of life is different, may be more likely to experience psychological stress and injury. They must come to work; they cannot simply avoid this stressor. Significant changes in culture will not happen overnight, but the sub-committee for this area has been working to identify and prioritize potential actions and initiatives. The sub-committee recently concluded a pilot initiative called "The Little Things," which recognizes that little things can have a significant impact on an employee's well-being. The initiative allowed employees to apply for one-time funding of up to \$250 to purchase an item which would directly benefit their workplace. In total, nine projects were approved as part of the project. Some of the items which were purchased include a wall mural for a drab kitchen area, an extra-large picture frame to showcase a unit, an air fryer for Patrol, a coffee machine for Prisoner Care Facility staff, and an under desk elliptical for IES members who are unable to move from their desk for extended periods of time. Several other initiatives, which require further exploration, have also been identified by the sub-committee.

In May 2025, the EEWG conducted a survey with questions specific to HRP. The results of the survey have generated additional action items and suggestions for initiatives which the group continues to explore.

HRP Chaplaincy Program

The HRP Chaplaincy Program provides spiritual support to sworn and civilian HRP members. Chaplains answer directly to the Chief of Police and hold the rank of honorary Inspector.

HRP currently has two Chaplains. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to, visiting divisional offices, going on patrol, attending death notifications, providing resources in areas such as addictions, family counselling, critical incident stress and grief counselling, as well as meeting with members and/or

^[1] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383241976_Maslow's_Hierarchy_of_Needs

their families about personal issues.

In the coming months, EFAP plans to work in conjunction with the Chaplaincy Program to onboard two additional Chaplains. This would bring the complement of Chaplains available to HRP employees to four.

Therapy Dog Program

Through a partnership with community volunteers, HRP has participated in a therapy dog program for the last seven years.

Therapy dogs typically visit various HRP offices six times per month to help provide stress relief. The dogs provide employees with a distraction from the negativity they see on a daily basis and can be therapeutic for some members.

HRP currently has two volunteer therapy dog teams who are both certified through Saint John Ambulance⁴.

Wellness Rooms

HRP currently has four official wellness rooms. The wellness rooms are located within Central Division, West Division, the Criminal Investigation Division and Integrated Emergency Services (IES). A fifth wellness room is currently under construction at the Northbrook Training Center in Dartmouth.

Wellness rooms are meant to be a private space where employees can go if they need a few minutes alone to rest or decompress.

Additional Supports

Psychological First Aid

In March 2025, several HRP members took part in the Psychological First Aid program.

The two-day course is developed and maintained by the Canadian Red Cross⁵, with the objective of equipping people with the skillset to help both themselves and others during a mental health emergency, through building up resiliency to stress and establishing coping strategies.

HRM Policies and Resources

It is also important to note the HRM policies in place. In April 2024, the HRM Respectful Workplace and Whistleblower policies were implemented.

The purpose of the Respectful Workplace Policy is to support the provision of a work environment free from disrespectful behaviour, harassment, discrimination and violence. The purpose of the Whistleblower Policy is to ensure that all employees have access to an anonymous method of reporting allegations of waste and/or wrongdoing within the Municipality when there is fear of reprisal or discomfort with using the regular process for reporting a specific concern.

Taken together, these contribute significantly towards employees feeling psychologically safe in the workplace. The policies are directed at increasing respectful interactions and opportunities for employees to have meaningful dialogue and intervention and reduce workplace conflicts.

⁴ https://sja.ca/en/community-services/therapy-dog-program?srsId=AfmBOorDBDoJ59M7AwVmiI9Jbt6XAego1idYptMvGKauU_7feL26v

⁵ <https://www.redcross.ca/training-and-certification/course-descriptions/psychological-first-aid>

There is also an HRM EFAP. Full-time HRP employees who are non-union or members of the NSGEU are eligible to seek assistance from the HRM EFAP program.

Similar to the HRP EFAP, it offers confidential, short-term counselling, advisory and information services designed to encourage employees and their family members to voluntarily seek assistance with issues that may impact their well-being.

As part of the 2023/24 budget process, HRP requested two new positions, and these were approved: Psychologist and Occupational Health Nurse. These requests highlighted a need for such capability and capacity across HRM, so the positions were transferred to HRM Human Resources to create the HRM positions of Director of Employee Wellbeing and Occupational Health Practitioner.

The Director of Employee Wellbeing is focused on foundational work guided by a current state assessment of the corporate occupational health and safety program completed in the fall of 2024. An internal audit of existing policies and practices is ongoing which highlights current strengths and opportunities compared against the national standard of Canada for Psychological Health & Safety in the Workplace.

The Director of Employee Wellbeing manages strategic partnerships with the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration to ensure alignment with current programs and legislative requirements. This includes, but is not limited to, recent updates such as the September 2025 Occupational Health and Safety Act regulations addressing workplace harassment, and the September 2024 amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act concerning Gradual Onset Psychological Injury.

The Occupational Health Practitioner collaborates with business units to identify injury prevention opportunities, support work connectedness through the promotion of early intervention best practices, provide dedicated coaching to employees and business unit leadership following extended absence from the workplace, support temporary and permanent work accommodations when required, and champion other general health & wellness related programs and benefits provided by HRM.

HRP recognizes the benefits of these new positions and is committed to a collaborative partnership for the benefit of all employees. It is felt that HRP would still benefit from an in-house psychologist who would complete all psychological assessments during the hiring process for both new and experienced police officers rather than this process being contracted out. The position would also be readily available for advice to the existing health and wellness team, and to act as liaison with other treatment providers, thereby reducing potential delays in the return to work or recovery process. This will be a potential consideration in future budget discussions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No financial implications were identified when creating this report.

The report itself outlines a number of initiatives currently underway or in exploration at HRP to improve the psychological safety and trauma supports available to members.

As new positions are identified which may assist in the progression of this work, they will be brought before the BoPC for consideration during the annual budget and business planning process.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was required for the purpose of creating this report.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Nova Scotia *Police Act*, 2004, c. 55:

Section (3), states:

(3) Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), a board shall...

(c) ensure that community needs and values are reflected in policing priorities, objectives, goals, programs and strategies;

(d) ensure that police services are delivered in a manner consistent with community values, needs and expectations;

(e) act as a conduit between the community and the police service providers;

Section 53(1), states:

53(1) The Board shall annually cause the chief to prepare a budget for the police department.

Halifax Charter, section 35(1), states:

35(1) The Chief Administrative Officer shall (b) ensure that an annual budget is prepared and submitted to the Council.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Update on HRP Actions to Enhance Psychological Safety and Trauma Supports Including Consideration of Budgetary Implications

Report Prepared by: Natasha Pace – Coordinator, Halifax Regional Police

Report Approved by: Chief Don MacLean – Halifax Regional Police
Supt. Stephanie Johnson – Administration Division, Halifax Regional Police



Item No. 2

Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality December 4, 2024

TO: Chair Kent and Commissioners of the Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality

FROM: Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: November 21, 2024

SUBJECT: Update on HRP Actions to Enhance Psychological Safety and Trauma Supports Including Consideration of Budgetary Implications

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

December 13, 2023, Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality (Item No. 10.2.2):

MOVED by Commissioner Giles, seconded by Commissioner Smith

THAT the Board of Police Commissioners for the Halifax Regional Municipality approve the action items and timeframes in the Board of Police Commissioners' 2024-2025 Workplan, as outlined in Attachment 1 of the staff report dated November 29, 2023.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Board of Police Commissioners ("the Board") on steps taken by Halifax Regional Police (HRP) in relation to the enhancement of psychological safety and trauma supports for HRP employees, including consideration of budgetary implications.

Over recent years, HRP has taken significant steps to build on its existing health and well-being framework, to provide support to all employees in several areas of health and wellness, including psychological safety and trauma support.

These steps include the official formation of a Reintegration Program, the creation of a Reintegration Coordinator position, the hiring of a second Health Specialist, the creation of an internal support network for employees who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+, and the approval of a second Employee and Family Assistance (EFAP) Coordinator position. These additional resources build on the existing framework and are essential to address the demand in this area, which has been steadily increasing.

Other steps include the identification and initiation of an Early Intervention (EI) Program designed to intervene where there are early signs of psychological struggle for an employee, where otherwise they might be missed.

The proposed HRM IT Business System 2025/26 Capital Budget includes a request for the IT system which is necessary to enable the EI Program. If approved by Regional Council, the project will move forward in partnership with HRM IT, in 2025.

BACKGROUND

On December 13, 2023, the Board of Police Commissioners (BoPC) for the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) passed motion 10.2.2 in relation to the Board of Police Commissioners 2024-2025 Work Plan.

Included in this plan is the strategic priority “Oversee the development of a people-focused policing strategy” under one of its four pillars; Evolve. This priority is described as ensuring “*our police develop a clear plan (including policies, practices, and systems) that will enable them to attract, retain, and develop the people in their services.*”¹

The work plan approved by the Board includes an action item under this pillar and priority of an update on the actions of Halifax Regional Police (HRP) to enhance psychological safety and trauma supports, including consideration of budgetary implications. This report is provided in response to that action item.

DISCUSSION

The health and well-being of our people is a priority for HRP. This includes feeling safe in the workplace and during their work. Support in this area benefits the individual employee, the organization, and the public they serve. There are existing and planned HRP programs and initiatives which enhance psychological safety and trauma supports in the workplace, including:

- Employee and Family Assistance Program
- Reintegration Program
- Wellness Program Specialist
- Health Specialists
- Safeguarding Program
- Critical Incident Debriefs and Assessments
- Rainbow Internal Support Network

Additional work and supports in this area include focus areas being addressed by the HRP Employee Engagement Working Group, and recently implemented HRM policies.

¹ <https://www.halifax.ca/media/84632>

Employee & Family Assistance Program

The HRP Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) provides confidential support for employees and their families who are experiencing personal, professional, or health-related challenges, including psychological health. The goal is to provide early intervention and support, and encourage employees to seek the assistance they may need. Sometimes, initial contact with the EFAP may be all that an employee or their family member needs, but others may require further follow-ups, or a full EFAP referral to connect them with the services they may require.

Referrals can be made for any type of challenge the person is experiencing. These can include mental health concerns, traumatic incidents, grief and loss, marital difficulties, illness, etc. Since the beginning of 2024, the top three concerns reported by persons seeing EFAP assistance were mental health, operational difficulties, and traumatic incidents.

Prior to 2024 there was one permanent EFAP Coordinator position. As part of the 2024/25 operating budget process, a second position was approved, which HRP is working to fill. EFAP Coordinators being HRP employees offers the substantial benefit that they understand the unique nature of the policing environment and its challenges. This is also a critical component when assistance is provided to an employee's family member, as the family member may be struggling with their loved one being affected by the policing environment, even though they themselves are not directly involved in it.

The responsibilities of an EFAP Coordinator include the delivery of internal training in specialist trauma-informed subject areas, including Applied Suicide Intervention, Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM), CIS Debriefing, and Strategic Resiliency. These types of crisis intervention are acute emergency mental health interventions², sometimes referred to as "emotional first aid", which require this specialized training. The EFAP Coordinator also delivers an overview of the program to the Police Science Program (PSP) cadet class, so they are aware of the supports in place prior to being hired as a police officer.

Other responsibilities of the EFAP Coordinator include the coordination and communication with internal and external stakeholders, such as the Chaplaincy Program, HRM support services, and external service providers, such as counsellors, social workers and psychologists.

To better support HRP employees and the EFAP Coordinators, peer referral agents have been trained to respond to the needs of employees requiring assistance. Currently, there are over 30 referral agents, who are trained in key areas, including Suicide Intervention, CIS, and CIS Debriefing. Referral agents are all HRP employees, they work on a volunteer basis and are on call 24/7. There is also a waitlist of people who have expressed an interest in becoming a peer referral agent and are waiting for training.

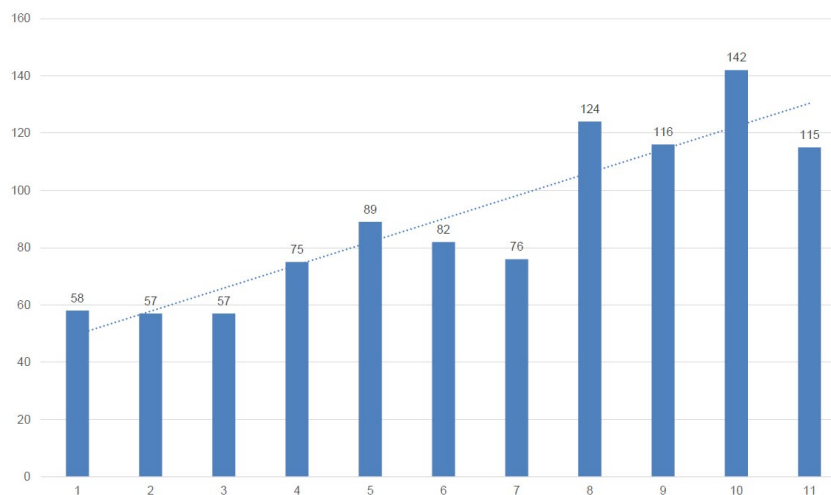
Figure 1 shows the total annual referrals between 2014 and 2024 year-to-date (November 1), which illustrate how these have been steadily increasing.

It is important to note that these numbers simply reflect each time a referral is made. They do not reflect the nature and extent of the work that is subsequently required, nor do they include the number of occasions where advice, information, or support is provided by EFAP, but does not result in a referral.

² This is different to Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) which is separate police training, intended to enhance skillset and provide the most effective police response to individuals who are experiencing mental illness

Figure 1 – Annual Referrals to the HRP Employee & Family Assistance Program, 2014-2024 YTD (Nov 1)

**Halifax Regional Police Employee and Family Assistance Program
Total Annual Referrals, 2014-2024 (ytd)**



In 2023 there were 142 EFAP referrals. 91 of those were made in relation to an employee, and 51 in relation to an employee's family member. Families and relationships are a critical part of a person's support network, so it is important to recognize the role the EFAP plays in that wider support.

Reintegration Program

The HRP Member Reintegration Program was officially launched in Fall 2022. It is a confidential peer-driven, multi-faceted program which provides support and training for members who have experienced a critical incident and those returning to work following an absence, such as occupational stress injury (OSI) (persistent psychological injury resulting from operational stress). Returning to work after a long-term absence can be overwhelming, and members may need assistance with building their confidence and skills, to ensure readiness to resume their regular duties.

The program is staffed by a full-time Reintegration Coordinator, and supported by a team of volunteers. The coordinator and volunteers have all received a 5-day training course delivered by Edmonton Police, which was the first agency in the country to implement a reintegration program and has since been established as the source of best practice and training.

The training is designed to provide employees with the knowledge and skills necessary to become a peer support Reintegration Program team member. The demand for this training is high. It was delivered to 22 employees in May 2024, from which 12 more volunteers were selected, including three from Integrated Emergency Services (IES), which includes the frontline positions of Emergency Response Communicators. The intention is to continue training people to ensure there is sufficient representation across the organization. The coordinator and volunteers will also avail themselves of other relevant training opportunities as they arise, these are often organized by the EFAP Coordinator, who will let the Reintegration Coordinator know.

The Reintegration Program is designed to support a member's specific needs. Members can self-refer, or they may be referred by another person such as their supervisor, a co-worker, a Health Specialist, the Wellness Specialist, or the EFAP Coordinator. As each individual and their experience are unique, they will lead the pace, scope, depth, length and direction of their individual reintegration. It allows them the

opportunity to work through the sensitivities an operational event has created, in the safety of a confidential environment. The approach may require a partnership approach, involving other agencies such as medical providers and the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB). The internal HRP Health Specialists may also be involved. The goal is the best treatment to ensure the member returns to work when they are healthy and ready to do so.

The program was active prior to its official launch in Fall 2022 but was more of a side project for those who were invested and recognized the need for it. Its official formation demonstrated the commitment of HRP to supporting the health and wellness of its members. Since then, 45 people have officially participated in the program, and the Reintegration Coordinator also deals with regular requests for information, assistance, and support.

From the perspective of HRP, the Reintegration Program is flourishing, and members are feeling its benefits. Testimonials from members who have gone through the program include the following: *"The program has provided a huge confidence boost; not only performance wise but also in providing a benefit, mental health wise"*, and *"Putting on my uniform and adjusting... in a safe, nonjudgemental environment is crucial to me."*

Wellness Specialist and Programs

The HRP Wellness Program Specialist (WPS) is responsible for implementing a health and wellness program across HRP, through education, training, prevention, intervention, and recovery strategies, which focus on holistic lifestyle approaches to health and wellness. The position employs a comprehensive approach to the development and implementation of initiatives and programs that encompasses psychological, physical, ergonomic and emotional components, with the objective of empowering and motivating employees to make positive personal choices that improve their overall health and well-being.

Where employees have experienced occupational stress injuries, need accommodations or are returning to work, the WPS is a collaborative partner with the Health Specialists, the Reintegration Coordinator, and the EFAP Coordinator, in identifying and implementing the required supports to help the individual.

The WPS is consulted as a subject matter expert when relevant policies and procedures are developed, and is often called upon to deliver training. They deliver a day of mental health stress management to the PSP cadet class, and act as a consultant on the physical training component of the PSP. A shortened version of the training is also delivered to Experienced Police Officers (EPOs) and Emergency Response Communicators (ERCs) when they are hired. The Road to Mental Readiness (R2MR) is a separate two-day course delivered to the PSP class, which is a performance and mental health training, and education program developed by the Canadian Armed Forces, designed to improve well-being and short-term performance, while mitigating any long-term mental health problems.³

In 2023, the WPS delivered refresher training to existing employees in block training⁴, to remind all employees of and signpost to the supports available.

An initiative identified a couple of years ago by the WPS is the Early Integration (EI) Program. This is designed to intervene where there are early signs of psychological struggle for an employee, where otherwise they might be missed. They have worked steadily and tirelessly to research the program, analyze its capability and fit with HRP programs and operations, and raise awareness.

³ <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/health-support/road-to-mental-readiness.html>

⁴ Block training occurs on an annual basis and consists of training delivered to all sworn and some civilian employees, which is either mandatory or identified as a priority by the organization

The benefits of this program have been recognized by HRP and the HRM IT Business System 2025/26 Capital Budget includes a request for the software which is necessary to enable the EI Program. The approximate cost is estimated at \$66,000 for the first year, then \$31,000 annually thereafter – these will be funded from the HRM IT budget. This request will move forward within the budget process, for consideration by Regional Council. If the request is approved, HRP will move the project forward in partnership with HRM IT, in 2025.

It is not possible to predict with precision the savings this program would realize but, when compared against the salary range of a full-time constable, it would only need to divert one officer from being on a leave of absence for a few months each year, to pay for itself.

Health Specialists

The HRP Health Specialists are responsible for delivering effective case management services to support the reintegration of ill or injured employees back into the workplace. They act as the coordinator in facilitating the return to work, liaison with the Nova Scotia Workers' Compensation Board (WCB), as well as support services for employees who stay at work during their recovery.

The Health Specialists will work with the Reintegration Coordinator, the Wellness Program Specialist, the EFAP Coordinator, and any other support services they deem necessary to support and facilitate the employee's full return to the workplace. As with the Reintegration Program, there is no one-size-fits-all solution so they work to develop a plan tailored to the individual employee.

There are two full-time permanent Health Specialists at HRP. The second position was introduced in late 2021 and created more capacity to deal with the increased workload of complex health files (see Figure 2, below)

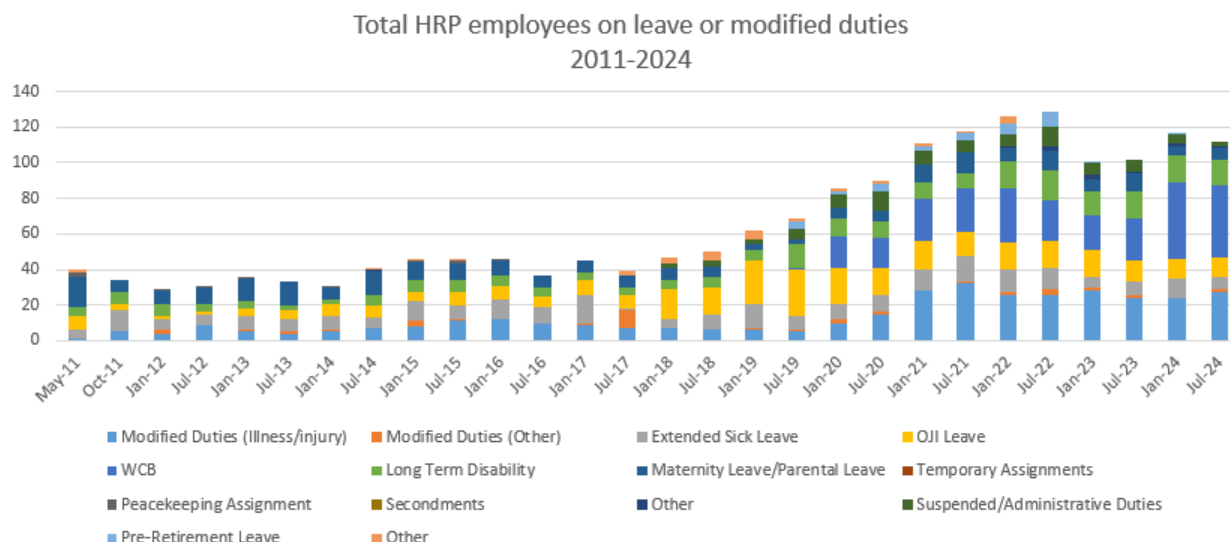
In 2014, psychological injury coverage was introduced in Nova Scotia under the WCB. There was a further change in 2018 when presumptive psychological injury coverage was introduced, whereby emergency services first responders who suffer a psychological injury are presumed to have incurred the injury due to their work. This was a recognition that they are at a higher risk of such injury than the general population.

On September 1, 2024, the law changed to include Gradual Onset Psychological Injury under the WCB process. A work-related gradual onset psychological injury is caused by repeated significant stressors at work. Most often, these kinds of injuries happen because of ongoing bullying or harassment in the workplace, and they are injuries that build up over time.⁵ For a claim to be accepted there would have to be a clinical diagnosis that the injury is directly related to these repeated significant stressors within the workplace.

Due to the recency of its introduction, it is too early to assess the impact of this legislative change on HRP, but the expectation is claims will be increasingly received as it becomes established.

⁵ <https://www.wcb.ns.ca/claims/gradual-onset-psychological-injury/what-is-GPI>

Figure 2 – Total HRP employees on leave or modified duties, 2011 – 2024



Safeguarding Program

There are certain positions within HRP which are at a higher risk of significant and/or prolonged exposure to situations and material with an increased likelihood of having an adverse impact on the employee, such as child abuse, sexual assault, and homicide. These employees participate in an annual assessment with a psychologist to assess whether they are coping with the demands of the role and are safe to continue working in that position, or whether they may need additional supports or treatment, such as counselling or a period of leave. HRP is currently exploring the expansion of this program to the Patrol division through an initial pilot.

A private psychologist is contracted to carry out these assessments. They also carry out pre-employment assessments of applicants for the PSP cadet class, and post-critical incident assessments where required.

Critical Incident Debriefs and Assessments

Where there has been an incident of a particularly traumatic nature, the EFAP Coordinator will arrange for a debrief to be held with the employees exposed to the trauma, either individually or as part of a group. Participation is voluntary but strongly encouraged. During the debrief the EFAP Coordinator will assist the participants in normalizing the feelings they are experiencing, and help them understand potential reactions they may feel and experience, as well as educate them on available resources and supports if they do experience such reactions.

The exposure can take different forms, such as officers directly attending and witnessing the event, the call-takers and dispatchers hearing and witnessing the event over the phone and radio, or the forensic identification members attending the scene to capture and document the forensic evidence.

Psychologist assessments are scheduled for six weeks post-incident, and beyond. If the psychologist identifies that an employee has been significantly impacted by the incident, the Wellness Program Specialist will connect with the employee to see if they would benefit from support and assistance. Where they would, a claim is submitted to the Workers' Compensation Board and the employee will be supported through that process by the Health Specialists.

Rainbow Internal Support Network (R-ISON)

The R-ISON is an employee-led confidential support group which was established to support employees who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+. The need for such a group was identified by several employees, including the HRP Diversity Officer, who went on to work on its design, development, and implementation. With the full support of the HRP, Chief MacLean, and other members of the HRP management team, the R-ISON was formalized in 2023.

Since then, the R-ISON has supported 2SLGBTQIA+ employees in several ways; providing advice and support on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues in both their personal and professional lives, whether they involve the employee directly, or someone they care about, or where the employee is just looking for some general information. The R-ISON was heavily involved in the 2023 block training on the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, which was delivered to all employees and the management team, and remains available to share their knowledge at any time.

The R-ISON is also there to bridge the gap between policing and community. Employees can contact the group at any time for advice on investigations, and the group has seen a significant level of outreach from officers. While there is no official measure of the impact from this, there is little doubt that this collaborative way of working will have positively contributed to policing operations and investigations.

The R-ISON held its inaugural Pride BBQ event at Police HQ on July 20, 2024, during Pride week. The event was for HRP employees plus their family and friends, to allow them to celebrate Pride and feel included. Another R-ISON initiative is the Rainbow Name Tag project, whereby employees can wear a name tag with the rainbow symbol, or a rainbow lanyard, to show allyship to the community and colleagues.

The creation and implementation of the R-ISON should be recognized as an enormous step forward for HRP. Where employees' psychological safety can be impacted if they feel they don't fit in with the majority, the R-ISON is a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment which provides support both personally and professionally.

Employee Engagement Working Group

In January 2024, the Employee Engagement Working Group was re-established, and consists of committed volunteers who feel passionately about their colleagues, and making the workplace better for them. As of the date of this report, the group has 24 members.

Following the results of the 2022 Employee Engagement Survey, three key areas of focus were identified, and sub-committees were established to look at each area: (1) internal communication, (2) personal development, and (3) workplace culture, well-being and environment. All areas involve intertwined elements that both individually and collectively contribute to psychological safety.

Effective, regular and timely internal communication is essential for employees to feel involved and engaged with their organization. Not being informed about key information, or even non-essential but nice-to-know information, can make employees feel sidelined. The Internal Communication sub-committee has worked hard to brainstorm and develop ideas, including the launch of the first bi-weekly HRP communication on November 21, 2024. The communication was developed in partnership with the HRP Public Relations and Corporate Communications team, and is designed to provide regular organizational and operational updates, such as staffing moves, hires, and departures. While some information is currently delivered in alternative ways, this communication will consolidate it, streamline the process, and provide a mechanism available to all employees to both receive and deliver information in a regular and timely manner.

Personal development is another area of focus. Most who work in management will be familiar with the theory behind Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs⁶, where 'self-actualization' is the highest level of need, and is met when people are fulfilled and doing all they are capable of. People are most motivated and engaged when they feel they have a purpose, they are clear on that purpose, and when they feel what they are working towards has meaning. Although the general work purpose of those who are employed in policing may appear obvious, there is a multitude of policing roles, held by both civilian and sworn members, all with different objectives and priorities. And all individuals have their own goals and aspirations. There is a real need for a structured internal personal development framework. The personal development sub-committee has been working to identify how best to achieve and optimize this, as well as a review of current training opportunities, as these link heavily to employees' personal development. These areas of work will be significant long-term projects.

The third area of focus is workplace culture, well-being, and environment. Where culture is essentially the workplace's way of life, employees who do not feel they fit in, that their way of life is different, may be more likely to experience psychological stress and injury. They must come to work; they cannot simply avoid this stressor. Significant changes in culture will not happen overnight, but the sub-committee for this area has been working to identify and prioritize potential actions and initiatives. They have identified two initiatives which are in the development phase – short wellness briefings to be delivered to frontline officers, and reintroduction of the HRP Family Program, which recognizes the importance and benefits of an employee's family having an enhanced understanding and involvement in their professional life.

Additional Supports

HRP is in the very early stages of exploring the potential implementation of Psychological First Aid (PFA) training, which is about self-care and caring for others, during challenging times. It is a two-day course, developed and maintained by the Canadian Red Cross⁷, with the objective of equipping people with the skillset to help both themselves and others during a mental health emergency, through building up resiliency to stress and establishing coping strategies. HRP has a PFA instructor who is able to instruct and certify others, and the program can be tailored to any team within the department.

It is also important to note the HRM policies in place. In April 2024, the HRM Respectful Workplace and Whistleblower policies were implemented. The purpose of the Respectful Workplace Policy is to support the provision of a work environment where all persons are treated with respect, fairness, and dignity. The purpose of the Whistleblower Policy is to ensure those who bring forward concerns in good faith are protected from retaliation. Taken together, these contribute significantly towards employees feeling psychologically safe in the workplace. The policies are directed at increasing respectful interactions and opportunities for employees to have meaningful dialogue and intervention, and reduce workplace conflicts.

There is also an HRM EFAP. Full-time HRP employees who are non-union, NSGEU or CUPE, are eligible to seek assistance from the HRM EFAP program. Similar to the HRP EFAP, it offers confidential, short-term counselling, advisory and information services designed to encourage employees and their family members to voluntarily seek assistance with issue that may impact their well-being.

In the 2023/24 budget process, HRP requested two new positions, and these were approved: Psychologist and Occupational Health Nurse. These requests highlighted a need for such capability and capacity across HRM, so the positions were transferred to Human Resources to create the HRM positions of Director of Employee Wellbeing and Occupational Health Practitioner. The Director of Employee Wellbeing is focusing on foundational work by completing a current state assessment of the corporate occupational health and safety program and an audit of existing policies and practices, to understand gaps and opportunities and where HRM is in terms of a psychologically healthy workplace, compared against the national standard.

⁶ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383241976_Maslow's_Hierarchy_of_Needs

⁷ <https://www.redcross.ca/training-and-certification/course-descriptions/psychological-first-aid>

This work is underway but is complex and long-term. The Occupational Health Practitioner has recently been hired and will be working with all business units to support management from both a frontline and prevention perspective.

HRP recognizes the benefits of these new positions and is committed to a collaborative partnership for the benefit of all employees. It is felt that HRP would still benefit from an in-house psychologist, including that they would complete all psychological assessments during the hiring process for both new and experienced police officers rather than this process being contracted out. The position would also be readily available for advice to the existing health and wellness team, and liaison with other treatment providers, thereby reducing potential delays in the return to work or recovery process. This will be a potential consideration in future budget discussions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No financial implications were identified when creating this report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was required for the purpose of creating this report.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Nova Scotia *Police Act*. 2004, c. 55:

Section (3), states:

(3) Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), a board shall...

(c) ensure that community needs and values are reflected in policing priorities, objectives, goals, programs and strategies;

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ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments to this report.

Report Prepared by: Joanne Smith – Research & Development Coordinator, Halifax Regional Police

Report Approved by: Chief Don MacLean – Chief of Police, Halifax Regional Police
