

CORRECTIONAL OASIS

BECAUSE ALL ROADS GO BACK TO STAFF WELLNESS

VOLUME: 22

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A NON-PROFIT FOR THE HEALTH OF CORRECTIONAL & OTHER PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES, STAFF AND FAMILIES

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

As we begin 2025, and our 22nd year of service to correctional and other public safety staff, families, and agencies, we are excited to introduce one of our most significant offerings to date: SafeHaven Wellness Programming™. This program was developed in response to our observations of common challenges faced by correctional and public safety agencies when exploring wellness initiatives for their staff. Frequently, these programs stall or are abandoned after initial efforts, as agencies struggle to identify the right approach and underlying rationale.

Extensive research consistently reveals that correctional and public safety personnel experience mental health challenges at rates far exceeding those of the general population. These agencies also struggle with high turnover rates, often tied to wellness concerns. The situation resembles a town battered by a hurricane, bracing for more storms ahead. Given the urgency of these challenges, implementing comprehensive wellness programs is vital—not only to enhance operational efficiency and retention but also to mitigate risks effectively.

Effective wellness programming must be proactive, addressing both prevention and intervention. It should be data-driven, comprehensive, profession-specific, and adaptable to evaluation. These elements are complex, and the suitability of any program may evolve as new research emerges and budget constraints fluctuate.

At Desert Waters, we are committed to supporting your agency through the SafeHaven Wellness Programming™. We guide you in building a tailored, incremental wellness program that aligns with your agency's specific needs, wellness resources, and budget. For more information, please contact us at admin@desertwaters.com.

May the year 2025 bring you experiences that cultivate true wisdom and kindness in every aspect of your life.

Caterina Spinaris

Towards Corrections Fulfillment: For New Staff™ (TCF)

Prepare your new employees
for their journey in corrections
right at the beginning!

**Increase resilience,
improve retention, and
invest in employee
wellbeing now.**

New online Academy Instructor
Training coming in January 2025.

Limited seats available. Secure your
spot now!

January 13-17, 2025

Next live online training for Academy Instructors
to be certified to teach the 4-hr TCF course:

Register Today!

\$1,395 per
Instructor Candidate



Instructor Candidate Comment

*"Useful for myself but will be very useful for new hires to try to prevent Fatigue,
or if it does happen, some ways to bounce back from it." Corr. Sgt.*



THE CASE FOR INCREASING INVESTMENT IN CORRECTIONS STAFF WELLNESS PROGRAMS

BY CATERINA SPINARIS, PHD, LPC, AND STEPHANIE RAWLINGS, MSC

In recent years, wellness programs for corrections staff have emerged as a critical component of healthy correctional systems. While these programs gained popularity during the pandemic, it is clear that their importance has not diminished. In fact, in the face of ongoing challenges—such as staff shortages and heightened Corrections Fatigue concerns—it has become increasingly evident that corrections agencies must prioritize staff wellness with even greater urgency and investment.

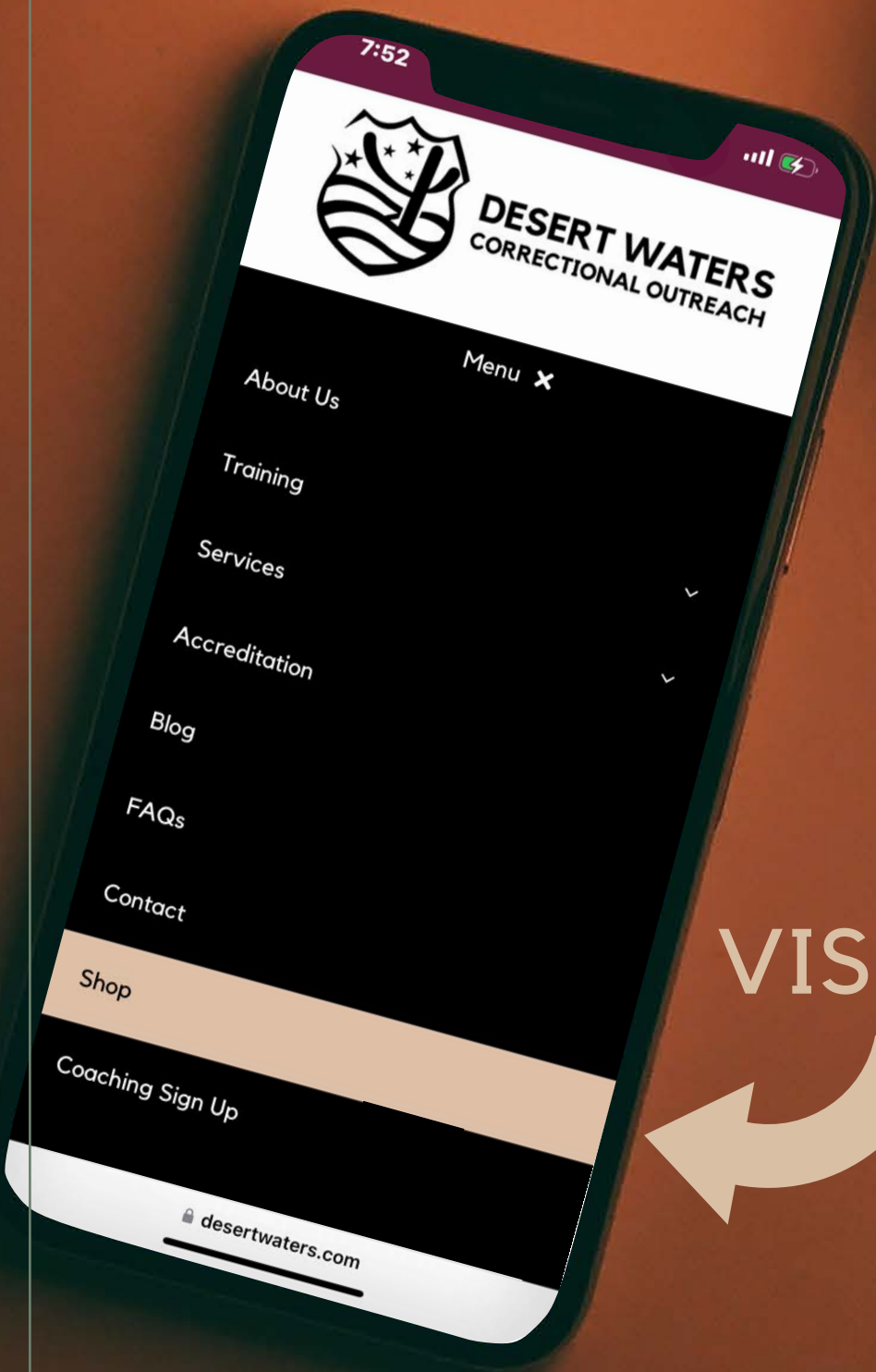
Despite these growing concerns, lawmakers who are tasked with funding agencies may be unaware of the increased need to appropriately fund staff wellness programs, overlooking the direct link between staff support and the fulfillment of the agency's mission.

The old adage “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” has never been more relevant to corrections. Research has shown that when agencies invest in wellness programs that support staff resilience and mental health, the results can be far-reaching and beneficial. Essentially, by investing in the well-being of corrections staff, agencies can directly enhance the overall functioning of the agency. Wellness programs can help reduce the strain on the system by promoting staff retention, lowering turnover, and decreasing the overall cost of staffing and training new personnel. With corrections departments across the country struggling to maintain adequate staffing levels, it is vital to provide employees with

the support they need to remain in their roles long-term.

Such programs should go beyond simple stress management workshops, and instead offer comprehensive strategies for combatting Corrections Fatigue, and promoting emotional health and resilience. The employees' experiences at the agency can either be the agency's biggest recruiting and retention assets or can very easily be their biggest liability. Allowing employees to express their needs and share their feedback can also assist agencies in procuring the right programs and resources to address their agency's unique needs.

Now, more than ever, it is imperative for correctional agencies to recognize the direct connection between staff well-being and the success of the system. The time to act is now. By providing high-quality comprehensive wellness programs, agencies will not only improve the quality of life for their staff but also contribute to the long-term effectiveness and safety of correctional agencies. **When wellness programs are properly applied, the return on investment is clear: Healthier staff, reduced turnover, improved morale, and safer environments for both employees and those with whom they are working directly. The well-being of corrections staff is not a luxury—it is a necessity for the future of corrections.**



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SAFEHAVEN WELLNESS PROGRAMMING™

Program Overview

Through SafeHaven Wellness Programming™, Desert Waters Correctional Outreach offers a comprehensive, data-driven approach to help correctional and other public safety agencies build or enhance their employee wellness programs. We guide agencies in creating a healthy, engaged workforce culture that contributes to better retention, recruitment, and overall agency performance.

Vision & Mission

- **Vision:** Help correctional and other public safety agencies improve mission fulfillment through a focus on staff well-being.
- **Mission:** Assist agencies in developing or expanding wellness programming tailored to the unique challenges of correctional and other public safety and professionals.

Why Wellness Matters

Investing in staff wellness delivers a significant return on investment (ROI), as indicated by corporate studies. Benefits of a well-supported workforce include:

- Improved staff health and morale
- Enhanced retention, loyalty, and engagement
- Increased staff performance and productivity
- Reduced healthcare costs and absenteeism
- More constructive interactions between staff and justice-involved individuals
- Lowered liability risks from misconduct or legal issues
- A forward-thinking approach to managing challenges in corrections

Why Act Now?

Correctional and other public safety agencies face critical challenges in staff engagement, recruitment, and retention. Inaction is no longer an option. Wellness programs not only improve retention and morale, but also significantly enhance agency performance and reduce operational risks. Start your staff wellness journey today—because every small step adds up and leads to bigger rewards.

The Challenges

- Balancing effective wellness strategies with budgetary constraints, limited resources, and individual and organizational readiness to address staff well-being in data-driven, comprehensive and systematic ways.
- Overcoming barriers such as low awareness of wellness needs, and low retention and recruitment.

The Solutions

- **Wellness Culture:** Establish a foundation for a wellness culture, even with modest beginnings.
- **Needs Assessment:** Identify and prioritize immediate wellness needs for staff.
- **Actionable Steps:** Provide agencies with clear, affordable steps to enhance wellness, with a roadmap for future improvements.
- **Sustainability:** Develop a long-term, scalable wellness infrastructure.
- **SafetyNet Accreditation™ Standards:** Align wellness initiatives with SafetyNet Standards for agencies pursuing accreditation.

How It Works

1. Educate & Include Stakeholders

- **Decision Makers:** Highlight the ROI of wellness programs and the consequences of inaction.
- **Engage Stakeholders:** Involve administrators, staff, unions, retirees, and families in program development.

2. Assess Wellness Needs

- **Staff Wellness Surveys:** Gather baseline data on staff needs, perceptions, and preferences.
- **Family & Retiree Surveys:** Assess wellness needs beyond current staff.
- **Agency Self-Assessment:** Evaluate current wellness policies and resources based on industry standards (SafetyNet Accreditation™, SAMHSA's 8 Dimensions of Wellness).

3. Identify Target Programs

- **Small Beginnings:** Help agencies identify quick-win wellness initiatives, such as fitness programs, wellness education, or mental health support, to demonstrate commitment and to start the wellness journey.
- **Gradual Expansion:** Develop a roadmap for expanding wellness offerings over time as feasible and needed.

4. Identify Additional Resources

- Tap into external resources like grants, community partnerships, volunteers, and free services to support wellness initiatives.

5. Build Your Action Plan

- **Program Structure:** Establish a wellness committee and designate a wellness coordinator.
- **Scope & Phases:** Define program scope, timeline, and phases for implementation.
- **Budgeting:** Design program within budget constraints while prioritizing key wellness needs.

6. Implement Your Action Plan

- **Policies & Procedures:** Develop internal wellness policies and operating procedures.
- **Programming:** Develop training curricula, train special teams, build other wellness programs.
- **Communication:** Regularly update staff on progress and upcoming wellness initiatives.

7. Evaluate Success

Track progress through measurable metrics, such as:

- Staff wellness surveys and satisfaction rates
- Participation in wellness offerings
- Healthcare claims and absenteeism
- Incident reports (use of force, violence, etc.)
- Staff evaluations and productivity
- Exit interviews to identify areas of improvement
- Modify the wellness program based on evaluation results

8. Pricing

Desert Waters offers flexible pricing options:

- **Consultation:** Initial assessments and planning.
- **Policy Review & Development:** Review existing resources and develop wellness policies.
- **Ongoing Support:** Technical assistance and program refinement.
- **Cost Structure:** Pricing based on tasks or block hours for services.

Questions? Contact us at admin@desertwaters.com.



FROM CORRECTIONS FATIGUE TO FULFILLMENT™

Online Instructor Training

Send your vetted staff to become certified CF2F instructors to offer **staff healthy, research-based, career-long coping skills.**

February 18-21 & 24-26, 2025

October 21-24 & 27-29, 2025

[MORE INFORMATION](#)



Click or scan the code to register.



NAVIGATING NEW YEAR'S CHANGE

BY STEPHANIE RAWLINGS, MSC

The arrival of a new year often brings with it a wave of optimism—talk of fresh beginnings, resolutions, and the potential for transformation. For me, working in a correctional facility, this time of year presented a paradox. While the broader narrative emphasized change and growth, the daily reality on the frontlines of corrections often felt stagnant. The institutional environment, steeped in rigid routines, seemed impervious to the ideals of renewal that January promised.

Each year, I would feel an overwhelming urge to “clean up” my life—purging unnecessary items from my home, committing to healthier eating habits, and crafting plans for self-improvement. Yet, as I clocked in for my shifts, the unchanging routine of the correctional facility seemed to undermine these efforts. The monotony of the job made my personal changes feel insignificant, as though they were swallowed by the weight of institutional sameness. This

internal conflict left me restless, often searching for a more profound change that I mistakenly believed could only come from external sources.

Looking back, I realize that this restlessness wasn't about the job itself but about my reaction to the lack of change within my daily environment. Shift work and the structured nature of corrections made maintaining a healthy lifestyle—better sleep, cleaner eating, and organization—feel almost impossible. Every year, I found myself browsing job listings right after Christmas, convinced that an overhaul of my career would be the solution. I didn't understand then that I was chasing an illusion. The root issue wasn't the job or the environment; it was my perspective on change and my inability to reconcile personal growth with professional routine.

Over time, I learned to approach this annual season of reflection differently. **I began to shift my focus inward, seeking changes that were within my control**

rather than trying to escape the routine that defined my work. Instead of looking for external transformations, I focused on deep-rooted growth—how I reacted to challenges, how I communicated with others, and how I approached relationships. By concentrating on my “internal locus of control”—what I had power over—I discovered that meaningful change didn't require upheaval but rather a more thoughtful, deliberate approach to my daily life.

Some changes were still external, such as decluttering my home, but I learned to stop purging aspects of my life that truly mattered. I no longer felt the need to discard my career, distance myself from friends who enriched my life, or abandon hobbies that brought me joy. Change became a tool for improvement, not a compulsion to reinvent myself entirely.

To anyone in a similar position, particularly those working in structured environments like corrections, I offer this advice:

Be mindful of the urge for sweeping change. Instead, **take an honest inventory of your life. Identify areas for improvement, but balance them with gratitude for what is already working. Seek feedback from trusted friends or mentors, and set realistic goals with achievable milestones to foster**

a sense of progress and fulfillment. Most importantly, **connect with others who might share your feelings. Building a community of understanding and support can be profoundly transformative.**

The new year is a time for growth, but not all change

needs to be dramatic. Sometimes, the most meaningful transformations come not from altering your external circumstances but from nurturing your inner self.



SUPPORT CORRECTIONAL STAFF: SHARE YOUR INSIGHTS BY COMPLETING THIS SURVEY

Researchers funded by the National Institute of Corrections are seeking resources to address corrections job stress and trauma through input from officers, community corrections workers, probation and parole officers, case managers, educators, healthcare professionals, and chaplains to gather best practices and learn more about resources for trauma, critical incidents, and corrections work-related stress.

The survey takes about 20 minutes to complete, and **your responses are appreciated by February 28, 2025**. You will be asked about your facility's resources as well as some optional questions describing your age, gender, racial identity, years of work in corrections and educational degree. **Please consider taking the voluntary survey** to inform the work under this cooperative agreement with the NIC (23PR11GLP2) and the broader NIC training and educational resources on stress and trauma.

The new survey of corrections workplace stress and trauma resources is open for your input. Please share your experiences and ideas to improve corrections work for ALL involved in the correctional workplace by filling out this survey and sharing it with your corrections colleagues: <https://bit.ly/NICsurvey2>



See the findings from Phase 1 of the project on NIC's website including a recorded webinar and brief report at <https://bit.ly/NICresources>

If you have any questions about this research, please contact Mazen_ElGhaziri@uml.edu

UMass Lowell Institutional Review Board reference IRB #21-148-ELG-EXM (9/12/2024).

Thank you.

Mazen El Ghaziri, PhD, MPH, RN, Assistant Professor and Associate Chair, UMass Lowell

Lisa Jaegers, PhD, OTR/L, Associate Professor, Saint Louis University

ONLINE COUPLES' TRAINING FOR CORRECTIONAL STAFF & FAMILIES

Are you and your partner navigating the unique challenges of life in the correctional profession? Join us for a groundbreaking **2-day online training** designed specifically for correctional couples—staff members and their adult family members. This training is based on Desert Waters' well-regarded courses, **Correctional Family Wellness—For Staff™ (CFW-S)** and **Correctional Family Wellness—For Adult Family Members™ (CFW-F)**. The training is crafted to describe the possible impact of corrections work on relationships, and present possible ways that couples can enhance their interactions, with the ultimate goal over time being relational resilience.

What to Expect:

- **Day 1:** Two separate tracks—one for the correctional staff member and one for the adult family member—each tailored to address the unique needs and experiences of each role.
- **Day 2:** A collaborative roundtable discussion, where we'll explore the material in depth, share insights, and answer your questions in an interactive Q&A session.

When:

This training will take place during **National Correctional Family Appreciation Week** in the first week of June—an ideal time to invest in your relationship and well-being.

Limited Space:

Maximum 16, minimum 8 will be able to attend, ensuring personalized attention and meaningful engagement.

Fee:

\$240 per couple for the entire 2-day training.

This is a unique opportunity to gain practical tools and

strategies for enhancing your relationship while navigating the stresses of working in corrections. Don't miss out—reserve your spot today!

Dates & Times: Sat the 7th & Sun the 8th of June, 2025, 9am-3pm MT

Location: Online (from the comfort of your home)

Sign up now to secure your place for this one-of-a-kind training event!

And contact us to let us know if you're interested in this training!

<https://desertwaters.com/contact/>

Note: This training is not couples' counseling or psychotherapy, and it is not designed or intended to replace seeking professional help from mental health professionals and/or medical professionals.

SafeHaven Wellness Programming™

Improve Retention & Engagement, Lower Costs & Liability, & Strengthen Agency Performance.

Desert Waters' Customized Wellness Solutions for Your Organization

Wellness Culture

Stakeholder Engagement

Needs Assessment

Program Selection

Action Plan Building

Sustainability

Success Evaluation

Option of SafetyNet Accreditation™

Flexible Pricing

"If you build it, more will stay."



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

I have never looked upon ease and happiness as ends in themselves The ideals that have lighted my way, and time after time have given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been Kindness, Beauty, and Truth.

Albert Einstein



IN MEMORIAM

Nick Alexander

Correctional Officer
Oregon Department of Corrections

Isaiah Bias

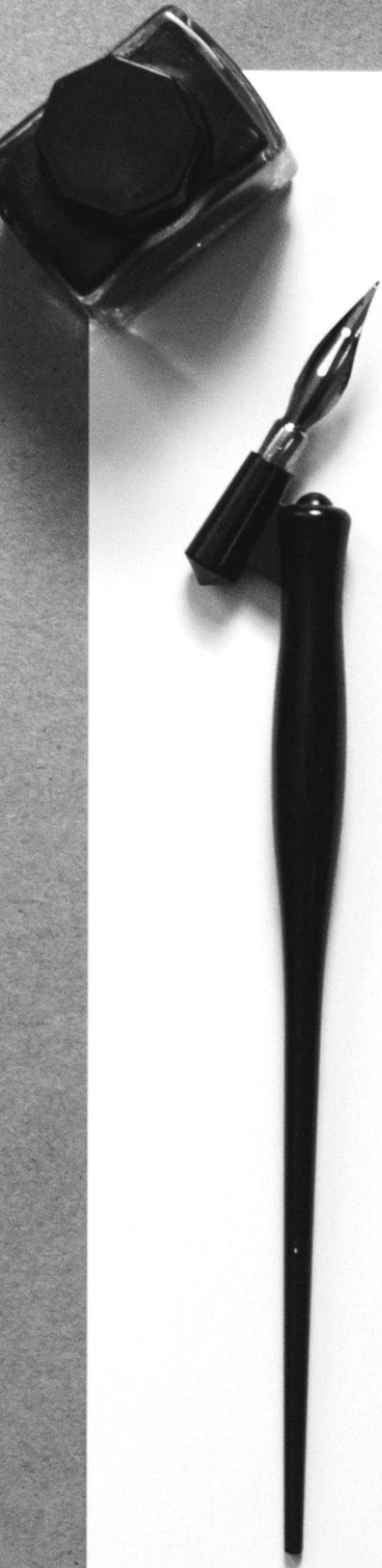
Detention Officer
Ellis County Sheriff's Office, Texas
Line of duty death

Elio Diaz

Corporal
Charlotte County Sheriff's Office, Florida
Line of duty death

Andrew Lansing

Correction Officer
Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction
Line of duty death



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Mission

Improving the wellbeing of corrections and other public safety professionals through training, consulting, and other essential resources to foster resilience, mental health, and overall wellness in these challenging professions

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Support Desert Waters Correctional Outreach

We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing the well-being of corrections staff and other public safety professionals, and to also assist their families. Contributions by individuals like you enable us to offer some services at no cost, and to keep our products affordable for agencies. Consider joining us in our mission by making a tax-deductible **donation** today. Thank you for your support!

Desert Waters Correctional Outreach is a non-profit corporation which helps correctional and other public safety agencies counter Corrections Fatigue in their staff by cultivating a healthier workplace climate and a more engaged workforce through targeted skill-based training and research.

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