



Porter County Sheriff's Office

Jeffrey A. Balon
Sheriff

Timothy Manteuffel
Chief Deputy

February 02, 2024

Re: Funding Assistance for Police Psychoanalyst

Dear Porter County Health Board,

As Sheriff, I spend a lot of time focusing on how to address our mental health issues within Porter County. Mental health issues contribute to a substantial amount of crime, so it is vital that we address the issue. I have been a police officer for over 32 years and I am pleased to see how the approach to mental health has evolved during that time.

When I became the Chief of Police at the Valparaiso Police Department, we created the very first Police Social Worker (PSW) position in Porter County. The PSW addressed mental health, substance dependency, homelessness, children and elderly needs, and many more topics. However, we also realized that there was a group of individuals who needed mental health assistance that were over-looked more times than not, our public safety personnel (PSP).

Statistics show that the average person is exposed to 3-4 traumatic incidents in a lifetime; however, the average PSP are exposed to that 3-4 traumatic incidents in a month. So with that being said, why would we not put a priority to provide our PSP with the help they need to make sure they are okay? After all, we need our PSP to be healthy if they are helping a citizen during one of the worst times in their life.

Therefore, when I was the Chief of Police, we also created an internal program to help the police officers. We hired psychoanalyst, Dr. Dennis Shelby to help our officers who are exposed to traumatic incidents. However, he did much more than debriefs with the officers, he also provided the officers with help dealing with issues within their own homes. I believe first responders and public safety personnel have the same personal issues and struggles as the average person, so compounding those issues with the fact they are exposed to so many other traumatic incidents, we need to give them all of the help that they need.

At the Valparaiso Police Department, I had contracted Dr. Shelby for \$10,000.00 per year as a Mental Health Consultant. When I became Sheriff of Porter County, I was able to secure funding to hire a Police Social Worker, which has been working wonderfully. However, I was unable to secure funding to contract with Dr. Shelby. Graciously, Dr. Shelby provided a lot of services in 2023 to the Porter County Officers without being compensated. When I attempted to fund Dr. Shelby's \$10,000.00 consulting fee through the Porter County Council during the 2024 budget process I was unable to, it was recommended to me by the Porter County Council to ask the Porter County Health Department to fund this project, which is why I am writing this letter to you. It is my hope that the Porter County Health Department would be willing to fund the annual \$10,000.00 consulting fee for Dr. Shelby's services.

It is my vision to enhance Dr. Shelby's role at the Porter County Sheriff's Office even more than what it was at the Valparaiso Police Department. I foresee Dr. Shelby being available to all PSP in Porter County. There are so many



Porter County Sheriff's Office

agencies within the county that cannot afford to have access to Dr. Shelby's expertise and I foresee him helping police, fire, dispatch, EMA, EMS, health dept., etc.

Dr. Shelby is not only a psychoanalyst, he also served as a Porter County Reserve Deputy for a dozen years, so he has the ability to connect to police officers through job related experiences. Over the last year, we have had multiple members of the Sheriff's Office work with Dr. Shelby on professional and personal issues going on in their lives and it has made a huge difference.

Dr. Shelby does not work with the jail population, instead he specifically focuses on the mental health and training of public safety personnel and the civilian employees who perform the support services for public safety. Dr. Shelby's role at the Porter County Sheriff's Office would be attached to our newly restructured Wellness Division. The division has several moving components that consist of peer support, religious support, grief support, financial investment consultation, physical fitness training, LOSS Team (suicide response unit), Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) and Crisis Intervention Team (CIT).

One of the questions that I have been asked multiple times over the years is, why not just use the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The answer is simple, I don't believe they are very effective for PSP. Public safety is very prideful, very much like military and often times the people who need help will not reach out to a stranger on the other end of the telephone. Dr. Shelby will build relationships and trust with the person and that is what makes the difference.

Dr. Shelby has also helped design training to help PSP deal with people in mental crisis by training our PSP the latest techniques in identifying and dealing with people in crisis which could save injuries and the lives for those who are involved.

I have attached Dr. Shelby's credentials and the overview of what he does as a consultant at the Porter County Sheriff's Office.

I hope you see the importance that he will play across the entire county and approval the funding of \$10,000.00 per year.

I am available for any questions or concerns that you may have. Please feel free to contact me at 219-241-2010.

Very best,

Jeffrey A. Balon
Porter County Sheriff