



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John W. Mannion

## Onondaga County Sheriff's Office receives \$100,000 for mental wellness

SENATOR JOHN W. MANNION January 9, 2024

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According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, police officers report much higher rates of depression, post-traumatic stress and anxiety than the public. As state leaders continue to try to address a mental health issues, one upstate county sheriff's office received \$100,000 in funding to enhance its wellness program.

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*"They witness these events, some of the most horrific situations that exist out in our communities," state Senator John Mannion said.*

Law enforcement's goal is to serve and protect communities, but members also need to protect their peace of mind.

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*"We know that no one is immune," Mannion said.*

That's why on Friday Mannion announced the funding for the Onondaga County Sheriff's Office of Mental Health and Wellness.

"Whether it's a deputy that has some type of depression, has some type of issue, whether it's an officer-involved shooting. Regardless of what the issue is, we'll have a person on staff that will deal with that," said Onondaga County Sheriff Toby Shelley.

The program is modeled after a similar initiative at the Rochester Police Department. Shelley believes it's a big step toward breaking the stigma around law enforcement and mental health.

"In our time that's how we were treated," Shelley said. "Nobody really cared about how you felt about something."

"Back in those days, you might talk to your wingman," said Steve Rotunno, chief of the Cicero Police Department. "Then it became police chaplains. There's a Cordico app that's out there now. And now we have this program. So things evolve over time."

According to a 2020 survey by the National Institute of Health, just 17% of police officers that participated sought mental health services in the previous 12 months.

"We care," Rotunno said. "We care about the deputies, we care about the police officers and we care about the troopers. We're in this together, and this is just another tool that the sheriff and the senator brought to the table for us to use. And it's an important tool."

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*"It can just be small, obvious but evidence-based intervention can occur, and it can make a tremendous impact on that individual," said Mannion.*

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