

NYSACP Magazine Article:



Law Enforcement is an incredibly difficult profession that, by its nature, places officers face to face with some of the darkest elements of society, along with some of the most historically tragic events. Over the last four years, the number of reported LEOs who have taken their own lives has exceeded the number of on duty deaths. In 2016, 143 suicides were reported to Blue Help ([bluehelp.org](http://bluehelp.org)). In 2017, 168 suicides were reported to Blue Help. In 2018, 172 suicides were reported to Blue Help, and in 2019, 228 suicides were reported to Blue Help.

OpOverwatch seeks to join the battle for those who wear the badge and provide an outlet of hope in Jesus that will improve the lifestyle of all officers who, daily, deal with the effects of accumulated trauma in so many forms.

The mission of OpOverwatch Inc. (OpO) is to provide repeated opportunities for all Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) to hear about the identity that can be found through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

OpOverwatch is a nonprofit ministry, headquartered in WNY. We are a unified group of Christ centered LEO and Chaplains striving together in order to minister to all those who wear the badge. OpOverwatch is made up of law enforcement officers and chaplains from Western NY to Albany, with leaders in other states. Amongst the LEO in OpOverwatch are several active & retired NYSP, sheriffs, federal agents, and many local officers.

OpOverwatch was founded in 2019 with the vision of providing all LEO with the opportunity to hear about a new identity In Christ that is greater and more fulfilling than

an identity that is built on the badge. OpOverwatch will stand on the belief that our identity in the badge serves our identity In Jesus.

In March of 2019, local officers and chaplains organized an initial vision casting, attended by approximately 75 chaplain and LEO representatives. Soon after, an OpOverwatch communication platform was developed on WhatsApp, consisting of a diverse group of LEO and Chaplains who make up OpOverwatch. This platform was used for informative purposes, as well as encouraging and exhorting one another. In less than one year, more than 100 chaplains and LEOs joined the OpOverwatch communication platform.

Leadership of OpOverwatch has a proven track record of working with numerous local, county, state, and federal law enforcement departments, as well as churches, ministries, and benevolent organizations. Relationships have been built and exercised over the hundreds of combined years of law enforcement, and chaplaincy, experience found in OpOverwatch.

OpOverwatch leadership has established, and is currently building, community partners, to include the New York State Association of Chiefs of Police, Word of Life Ministries, Kingdom Bound Ministries, Crawford Broadcasting, as well as multiple local, county, and state law enforcement agencies.

Since March of 2019, OpOverwatch has organized two fellowship events, and we are in the process of planning and leading the Fall LEO Identity Conference & Retreat, hosted by Word of Life Lodge in the Adirondack Mountains, Schroon Lake, NY, on September 18-20, 2020. A link to Register can be found at the end of this article.

OpOverwatch has a clear plan to help our fellow LEO in need and our approach is unique, in that we desire to help our hurting brothers and sisters through leveraging the relationships of those who already work in the same profession. OpOverwatch will supplement the mission by remaining obedient within four distinct strategic paths. The four paths are as follows:

**EDIFICATION** – This is the building up of those who make up OpOverwatch. Growing in Christ, through fellowship in The Word, is the foundation by which all of the activity of OpOverwatch will flow. OpOverwatch participants will engage in a variety of fellowship activities that are centered on an understanding of our identity as taught in the Bible. This peer focus includes men’s groups, women’s groups, as well as time spent together as couples.

**BENEVOLENCE** – We seek to display God’s common grace by loving on all LEO within the reach of OpOverwatch. OpOverwatch is devising tangible ways in which we can reach those who have been through trauma on the job and provide that knowledge that they are loved and not alone. OpOverwatch benevolence will manifest itself in various ways, such as meals provided by fellow law enforcement families.

**OUTREACH** – OpOverwatch will foster relationships, and create environments, at which all LE can gather with one another and expand their peer relationships, the gospel of Jesus

Christ can be heard, and LEO can grow into a greater identity in Jesus. These outreach events will be located in various venues across Western New York, and they will always be designed around food, fun, and encouraging testimonies from fellow officers. OpOverwatch will organize and lead these events so that officers are serving officers.

TRAINING – We will use the God given skills & assets within OpOverwatch to raise up the absolute highest level of chaplains and chaplain liaisons, properly equipped to bring the hope of Jesus Christ into every department/barracks in which they are assigned. OpOverwatch is currently writing a chaplaincy curriculum that will be offered to those who qualify as potential OpOverwatch chaplains. Additionally, OpOverwatch leadership has years of classroom experience and field service experience to law enforcement in the areas of trauma health, trauma recovery, trauma response, trauma stress, peer counseling, Biblical counseling, post shooting/critical incident counseling, Crisis Intervention, and a variety of field training instruction.

The problem of hopelessness in the ranks of LE is getting worse. The law enforcement officers, and chaplains, that make up OpOverwatch have one resolute desire to make Jesus known, and bring relief, identity, and hope to those who are lost in their pain, among the ranks of LE.