



Austin Public Safety Wellness Center

517 S. Pleasant Valley Rd. Austin, TX 78741 (512) 974-0200 phone / (512) 974-0222 fax



Frequently Asked Questions and Answers (FAQs)

1. Why do we have to do this?

In efforts to reduce barriers to mental health resources and to take a more proactive approach to the safety and overall wellness of public safety personnel, behavioral health check-ins will provide the opportunity to address any concerns or issues that could potentially impact quality of life and work performance.

2. Will I be taken off the rig?

The only time anyone will be taken away from their job is if they are an immediate danger to themselves or anyone else. Even in these instances, the first course of action would be to get help with any serious issue that would pose a threat to self or others. The behavioral health check-in is not intended to try to “catch” anyone doing anything that will take them away from their job. The primary focus is to provide access to mental health resources to help you perform better in your work.

It is important to note that, any decisions to be removed from work (taken off the rig) that involve PSO, are separate from Behavioral Health and Behavioral Health Check-Ins. In these instances, this would be a PSO issue, and not a behavioral health issue.

3. Do I have to do this?

Yes, everyone is required to complete the annual wellness exams, which now includes a behavioral health check-in. However, any recommendations for further behavioral health treatment beyond the check-in is voluntary and is not required.

4. Do I have to do this every year?

Yes, everyone is required to complete the wellness exam each year, which now includes a behavioral health check-in.

5. What if I say I have anxiety, medication, suicide, depression, alcohol, or drugs?

There is no penalty for disclosing any mental health condition such as anxiety, depression, OCD, PTSD, etc. We welcome you to be honest about any concerns that you have that potentially impact your quality of life! We welcome open, honest conversations about these areas because that is the only way we are able to provide the help that you need to do your job well. Should you disclose the use of medication, we will want to make sure that you are connected to the best resources to monitor your use of these medications. Should you disclose thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts, we will most likely recommend connecting with Dr. Butler, Dr. Kruse, or a provider of your choice to work through issues that might be leading to such thoughts and behaviors. In the same way, should you disclose the use of alcohol and/or drugs, we will most likely recommend connecting with Dr. Butler, Dr. Kruse, or a provider of your choice to work through such issues.



Austin Public Safety Wellness Center

517 S. Pleasant Valley Rd. Austin, TX 78741 (512) 974-0200 phone / (512) 974-0222 fax



We are currently reviewing the protocol for alternative duty and will include specific wording about using leave time for medically related issues, included mental health services.

6. Are there going to be records kept?

For the purposes of being consistent, thorough, and adherent to state laws and requirements, some form of records will be kept for each individual. At a minimum, records will include date of appt, time of appt, provider seen, and a brief summary of the check-in. The records will be kept electronically on Dr. Butler's computer, where only she has access, on a secured drive. Paper copies of the surveys will be kept in a locked file cabinet in Dr. Butler's office.

7. Do I have to see Dr. Butler or Dr. Kruse for therapy?

No. You do not have to see either of them for therapy. Seeing Dr. Butler or Dr. Kruse for therapy is optional. And, you have a choice to see a provider in the community or someone who is on your insurance panel. However, you will meet with Dr. Butler for the check-ins.

8. Who will be conducting the check-ins?

Dr. Butler will be conducting the check-ins.

9. Are there circumstances under which my confidential information might be disclosed?

Yes, there are 4 circumstances under which confidential information might be disclosed.

- **If you are an imminent danger to self or others:** If it is determined that you are in danger of causing injury or death to yourself or someone else, Dr. Butler is compelled by state and local laws as well as ethical guidelines for psychologists to take steps to ensure the safety of those at risk which may require the violation of your confidentiality. In these instances, Dr. Butler may need to report pertinent information to other medical and mental health treatment providers, members of law enforcement, as well as other specific individuals and/or agencies in order to help you obtain additional treatment and ensure your and others' physical well-being.
- **Child, dependent adult, & elder abuse:** In accordance with state and local laws as well as ethical guidelines, psychologists must report to the appropriate agencies all cases of physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and/or exploitation of an individual who is a child (under age 18), dependent adult (18-64 who has mental or physical limitations that restrict his/her ability to carry out normal activities), or the elderly (over age 65). Prior instances of abuse (for example, if you report that you were abused as a child) may not meet the threshold for mandatory reporting unless there is suspicion that the abuser continues to abuse others.
- **Medical/psychiatric emergency:** In the event that you are in need of emergency services, Dr. Butler may be required to provide pertinent information including, but not limited to, current medications and relevant diagnoses/symptoms to appropriate medical personnel involved in your treatment.



Austin Public Safety Wellness Center

517 S. Pleasant Valley Rd. Austin, TX 78741 (512) 974-0200 phone / (512) 974-0222 fax



- **Legal subpoena:** Medical records, including mental health records, are subject to subpoena by a court of law for either criminal or civil proceedings. If your records are subpoenaed, Dr. Butler will comply with the law and provide the specific information requested by the court.

It is the policy of Dr. Butler to inform you of the need to break confidentiality prior to doing so and/or work with you to make the appropriate reports whenever appropriate and feasible.

10. Where can I find more information on resources available to me?

You can find general contact information for Wellness Center Staff and articles related to behavioral health issues on the website at www.atxpublicsafetywellness.com.

For your convenience, listed below is direct contact information and resources:

- Dr. Ebony Butler, Staff Psychologist – ebony.butler@austintexas.gov or 601-559-7886
- Dr. Marc Kruse, Staff Psychologist – marc.kruse@austintexas.gov or (512) 974-0225
- Lt. Dana Diedtrich - dana.dieterich@austintexas.gov or (512) 974-0230
- Blue Cross Blue Shield – find a provider at <https://healthselect.bcbstx.com/content/medical-benefits/mental-health>