



Denver Fire Department's Wellness & Resilience Program

Health & Safety Committee Presentation

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

Kathleen Vredenburg

Deputy Chief

Mission Statement:

The Denver Fire Department is dedicated to:

- Our **Desire to Serve**; committing to those we serve with integrity, accountability, and inclusivity.
- Our **Courage to Act**; providing quality, timely and professional emergency services to protect life and property.
- Our **Ability to Perform**; working together to maintain the highest standards of mitigation, preparedness, prevention, and community engagement.

Vision Statement:

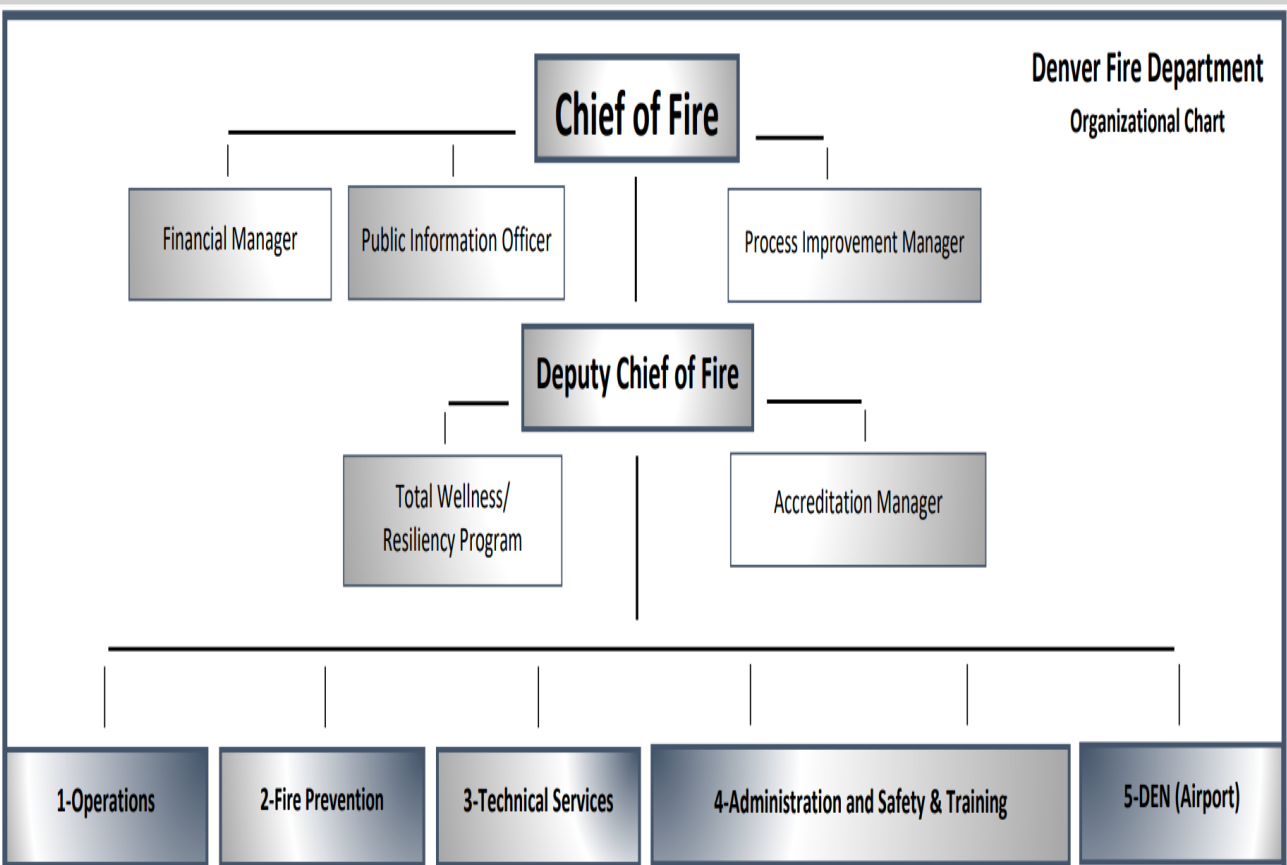
The Denver Fire Department is a nationally accredited organization built on a rich history of tradition, continuously leading through emergency response, community engagement, and wellness. Embracing a caring culture built on a foundation of respect, inclusion, and trust. Continuously leading the fire service through innovative practices with a focused attention to our family and yours.

Value Statement:

How we serve our community:

- **Integrity** - Ethical actions with honesty and respect
- **Compassion** - Caring for each other and those we serve
- **Excellence** - Striving to be the best in all we do

Denver Fire Department
Organizational Chart

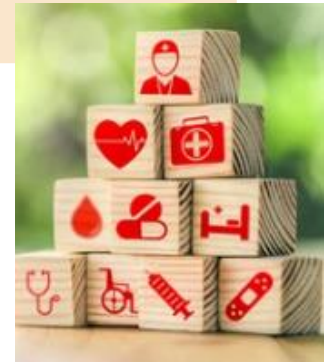




2025 Priority Projects & Initiatives

Maintain Employee Wellness and Incumbent Training

- Continued focus on Firefighter Safety, including Physical & Mental Wellness
- Bolster employee resilience programming and maintain emergency preparedness and necessary certification through incumbent training.
- Find sustainable funding to support overall wellness.





Total Wellness

The Denver Fire Department embraces a comprehensive “Total Wellness” philosophy for all members. To support this approach, the department organizes its wellness initiatives into three key areas: a Wellness Coordinator, a Resiliency Coordinator, and a team of medical professionals. This structure enables each group to focus on best-practice services within their expertise while working collaboratively. Together, they function as an integrated unit, ensuring holistic support and promoting continuous improvement across the department.

Key Areas

- Wellness Coordinator
- Resiliency Coordinator
- Medical Professionals: Wellness Physician & Denver Fire Physical Therapists

Denver Fire Data

Annual Wellness Screenings

Annual Wellness Screenings saw an increase of 30% in 2024 with nearly 555 DFD members with an 85% participation rate. This total includes scheduled fire company screenings for those assigned to operations AND individual screenings with Dr. Koval.

As of December 8th, Wellness has completed 493 screenings for members assigned to operations with a 92.8% participation rate. This does not include separate screenings with Dr. Koval. Participation continues to trend upward, reflecting strong member engagement.



Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT)

In 2024, Wellness proctored 650 tests, a 25% increase from the 521 tests in 2023. As of December 8th, we've had 325 people participate in the mentorship program, while 908 candidates took the test. This represents a 39% increase from the 650 candidates that tested in 2024.



Eng Mark Burley educating CPAT candidates



FF Santillanez proctoring CPAT

Denver Fire Data (continued)

Kaiser Blood Draw Events

The Kaiser Permanente (KP) Blood Draw Events are designed to provide members with a comprehensive firefighter-specific blood panel and urine analysis, conveniently conducted while they are on duty. KP Blood Draw Events (On-site Screenings on the table below) experienced an increase in participation of 421 members in 2023 to 510 members in 2024 as detailed in the chart below - representing a year-over-year increase of 21.14%.

To date in 2025, 519 members have participated. As a result, we're expecting another significant increase in onsite participation.

Screenings	January	March	May	June	September	Total
2023						Annual
Onsite Screenings	128	168	88	37	NA	421
In-Office Lab Screenings						241
Total						662
2024 Year to Date						Year to Date
Onsite Screenings	173	132	125	37	43	510
In-Office Lab Screenings						196
Total						706
2025 Year to Date						Year to Date
Onsite Screenings	166	150	133	39	32	519
In-Office Lab Screenings						230 (as of 11.5.25)
Total						749

Denver Fire Data (continued)

What the Data Shows

Participation in the DFD Wellness Program continues to grow significantly each year. We are proud to provide support to an increasing number of members and view this steady rise as a positive indicator of trust in the program and the value it delivers. However, dedicated funding for personnel and/or program support would allow us to further expand our reach and enhance the quality of care and resources available to our members.



2024 Peer Support Class

Adjustments to Mental Health Services Resulting from Budget Reductions and Newly Enacted Legislation

Our Observations

Although it is still early to fully understand the impact of changes in available EAP resources, we have observed a clear increase in requests for mental health support. Specifically, Resilience Coordinator Tech Happ and Wellness Coordinator Lt. Byxbe have noted a significant rise in member outreach, with approximately 10 individuals per week now seeking mental health resources—up from 3–4 members per week in 2024. As a result, the wellness team is constantly looking for creative methods to support the member’s mental health needs through provider partnerships, donors, foundations, and the development of a robust peer support program, which has been a highly utilized and effective resource for our members

There was a data driven decision based off usage by public safety personnel which standardized the allocation of available visits to EAP providers. The City, being committed to the mental health and resilience of first responders now allows additional visits for those who communicate the need for more. For those already engaged in treatment, continuity is essential, and for those considering support in the future, knowing resources will remain available is equally important. A statement of continued commitment from City leadership to protect these resources would provide meaningful reassurance and demonstrate strong support for the well-being of our firefighter family.

DFD Wellness provides 24/7 support to our fellow firefighters. When needed, Wellness team members have responded to firehouses, hospitals, and other locations at a moment’s notice. There are usually costs associated with these high acuity events. In the future, a dedicated funding source would help fund those who are responding to help fellow firefighters.

We appreciate our partnership in supporting the following initiatives:

Overall Wellness: Continued advocacy for programs that support the physical, emotional, and mental health of our firefighters and civilian staff.

Incumbent Training & Wellness: Ongoing support for robust training and wellness initiatives that ensure our workforce remains skilled, healthy and mission-ready.

Key Initiatives for 2026

Comprehensive Mental Health Survey - This survey will be rolled out to all members in 2026. The survey will tie into a comprehensive, de-identified dashboard of data that can provide trends and common mental health concerns on both a local and national level specific to first responders as a whole or by discipline. This will help individual members easily navigate both internal and external resources while giving the department a clear snapshot of where resource allocation or member education can be improved.

Department Physician - The Department Physician will conduct in-house Hazmat and Dive Team physicals to enhance quality and improve fiscal efficiency for both the department and the City.

Peer Fitness Trainer Program - We will reinstate this program within the department to provide peer trainers in the firehouses who can help distribute fitness-related resources such as training programs, educational materials, nutrition guidance, and preventive health initiatives. This will expand resource availability and strengthen our preventative efforts.

Wellness Screenings - We will continue offering in-house, on-duty, comprehensive wellness screenings for all members. This approach has significantly improved participation—blood draw involvement increased from approximately 20% in 2022 to 80% in 2023 and has remained at that level for the past two years. These screenings are coordinated in partnership with the Wellness Physician, departmental divisions, and our contracted healthcare provider, Kaiser.

EMR-Utilizing new EMR system to identify population health priorities to make data driven decisions

Lung Cancer Screenings - We will continue the grant-funded lung cancer screening program in partnership with St. Joseph's Hospital.

Wellness to the Stations - This pilot program will bring our wellness services directly to the stations to enhance understanding and increase participation.

Questions...

Contact:

Kathleen Vredenburgh, Deputy Chief

(720) 913-3445/office

(720) 403-4423/mobile

Kathleen.Vredenburgh@denvergov.org