

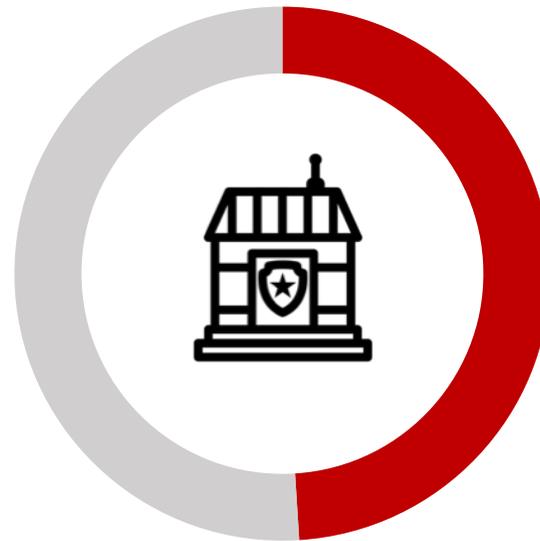
A line of police officers in dark blue uniforms and caps, saluting with their right hands raised to their foreheads. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting at night or in a large arena.

Suicide Prevention Strategies in Law Enforcement Agencies in the United States

Rajeev Ramchand, Lucy Strang, Virginia Kotzias, Jessica Saunders,
Elizabeth Thornton, Karen Osilla, and Patricia Ebener

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18,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States



of agencies employ fewer than 10 officers



of sworn officers are on a force with 100+ officers

We conducted an environmental scan of efforts to prevent law enforcement suicide



What policies, programs, and practices are U.S. law enforcement agencies adopting to prevent suicide?



What services are nonprofit agencies offering to prevent law enforcement suicide?



What policies, programs, and practices are non-U.S. law enforcement agencies adopting to prevent suicide?

Our approach derives from maximum-variation sampling



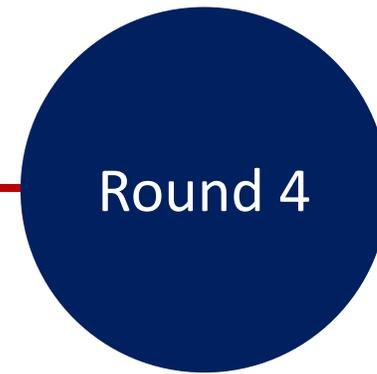
Contacted and randomly selected agencies in 4 U.S. regions



Referenced in Round 1 and random selection



Referenced in prior rounds and random selection from 9 census areas

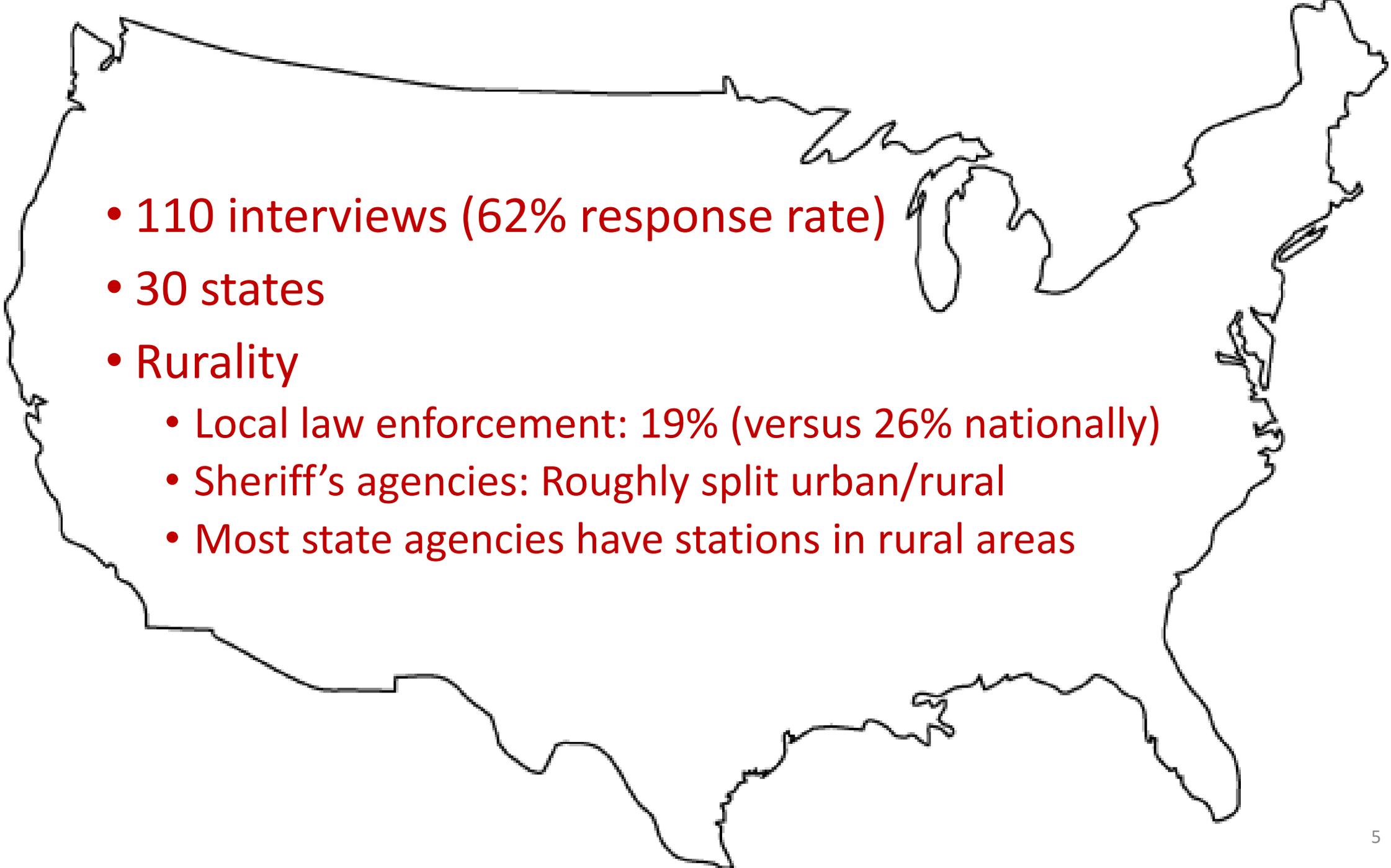


State agencies with highest and lowest general suicide rates and largest local agencies not already interviewed



Sheriff's departments with largest jail populations

Restricted to agencies with 10+ sworn officers

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- An outline map of the United States, showing the 48 contiguous states. The map is positioned in the background of the slide, with the text overlaid on the western and central parts of the country.
- 110 interviews (62% response rate)
 - 30 states
 - **Rurality**
 - Local law enforcement: 19% (versus 26% nationally)
 - Sheriff's agencies: Roughly split urban/rural
 - Most state agencies have stations in rural areas

What are agencies doing to prevent suicide?

Mental health services available through an EAP available to all local government employees and/or health insurance; none tailored to law enforcement

Minimal services
N=11

“There aren’t any formal policies because it doesn’t seem to be that big of an issue for us.”

– Representative from a smaller agency

“We’re all friends, we go out after work or go to each other’s houses, we talk off duty. It’s a small town.”

– Representative from a smaller agency

“Until something really bad happens, it’s not on the forefront of our minds. . . . We had 5 in-line deaths, so during that period, everyone was hot on addressing [mental health] as an issue. But once things quiet down, it’s easy to get pushed to the backburner.”

– Representative from a state agency

What are agencies doing to prevent suicide?

Mental health services available through an EAP or contracted community provider

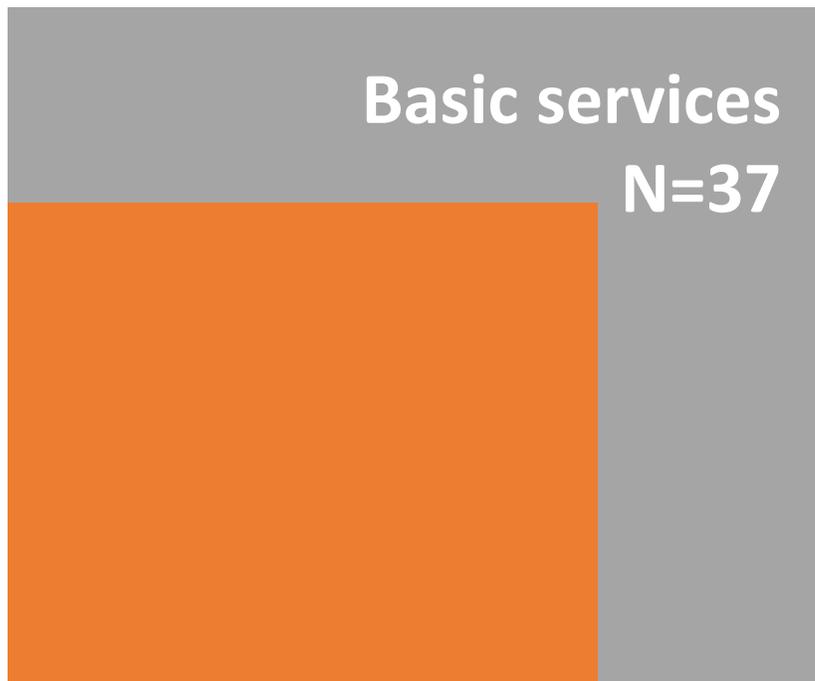
Volunteer chaplains

Critical traumatic/incident stress management programs

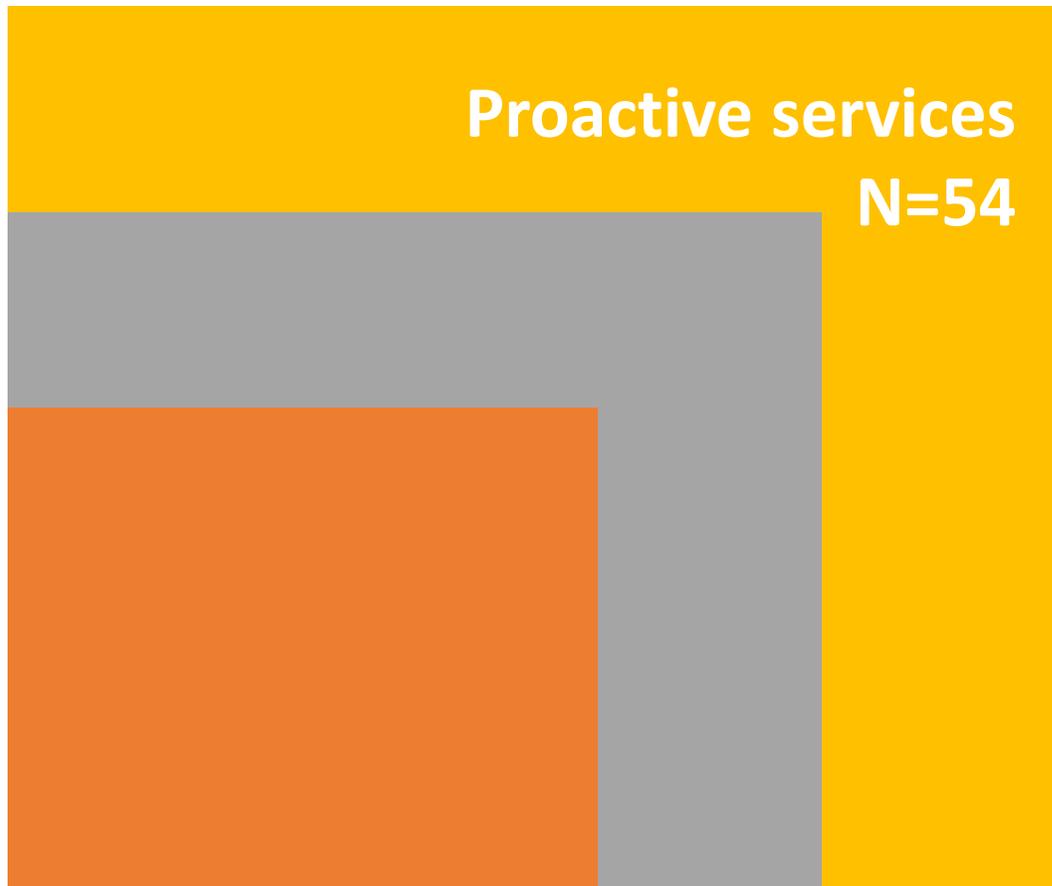
- Smaller agencies rely on external teams
- Larger agencies rely on trained peers

Training

- In-service trainings on stress reduction
- Academy training on stress reduction and/or resource availability



What are agencies doing to prevent suicide?



In-house mental health care

Embedding mental health care providers or chaplains

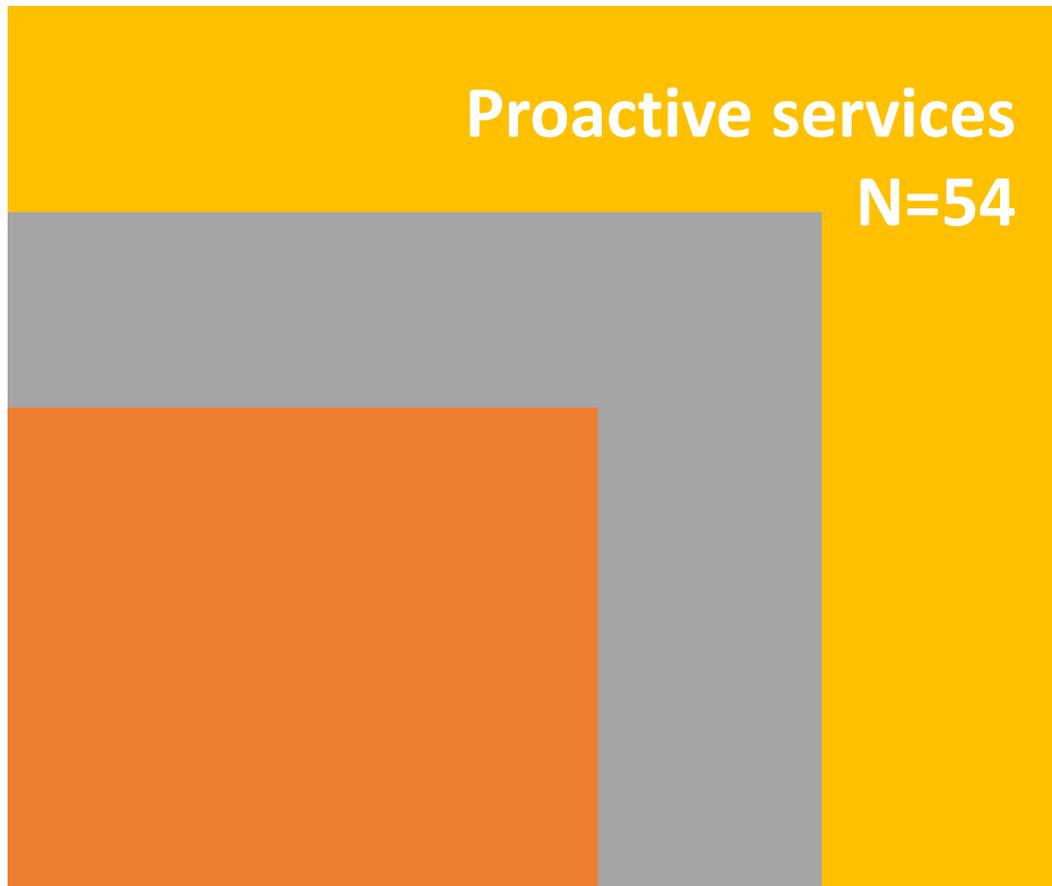
Programs to address substance misuse

Peer support program

Screening procedures for identifying high-risk personnel

Official health and wellness program

What are agencies doing to prevent suicide?



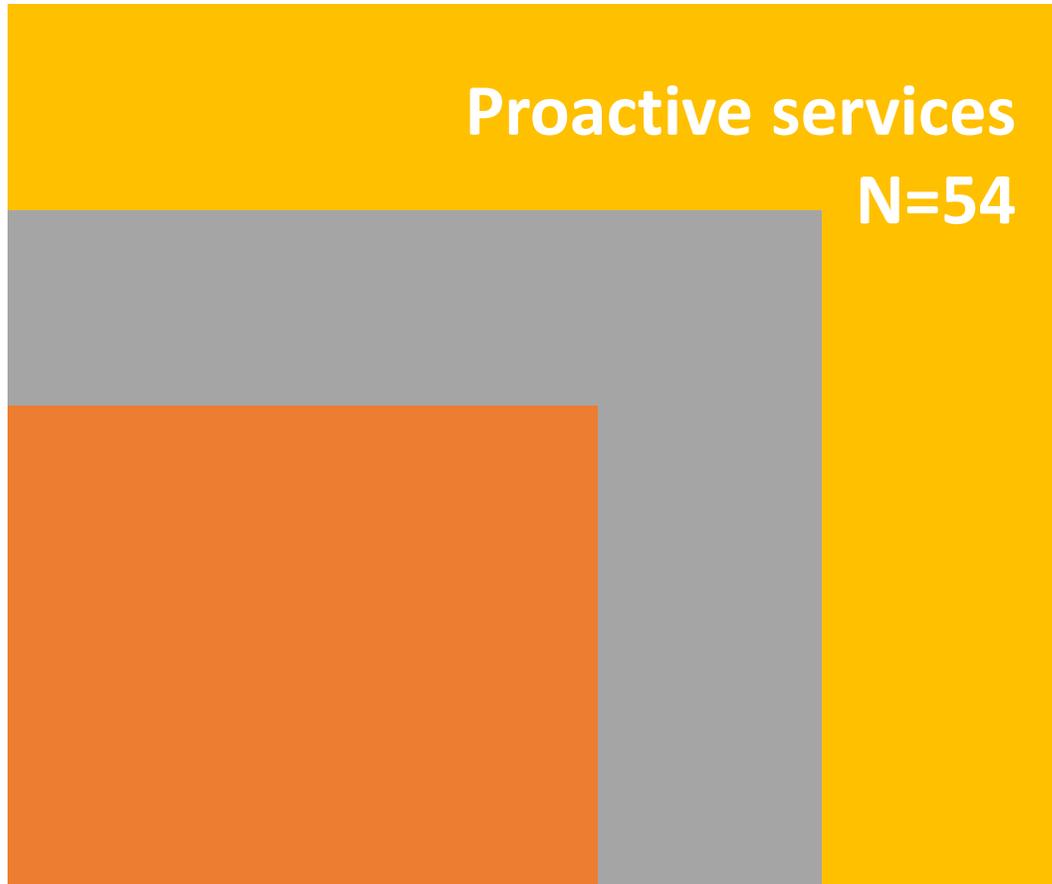
In-house mental health care

- Generally larger (>1,000 officers)
- Some offer short-term counseling, some offer “therapy”
- Providers often assume other responsibilities (hostage negotiation, training, return-to-duty investigations)

Peer support program

- Use of peers as para-professionals
- Officers apply and are vetted, or selected, and trained
- Ratio of peers to officers: 1:10 – 1:50
- Alternative models (veterans) exist

What are agencies doing to prevent suicide?



Most agencies in this group have only one program, and it's mostly peer support

16

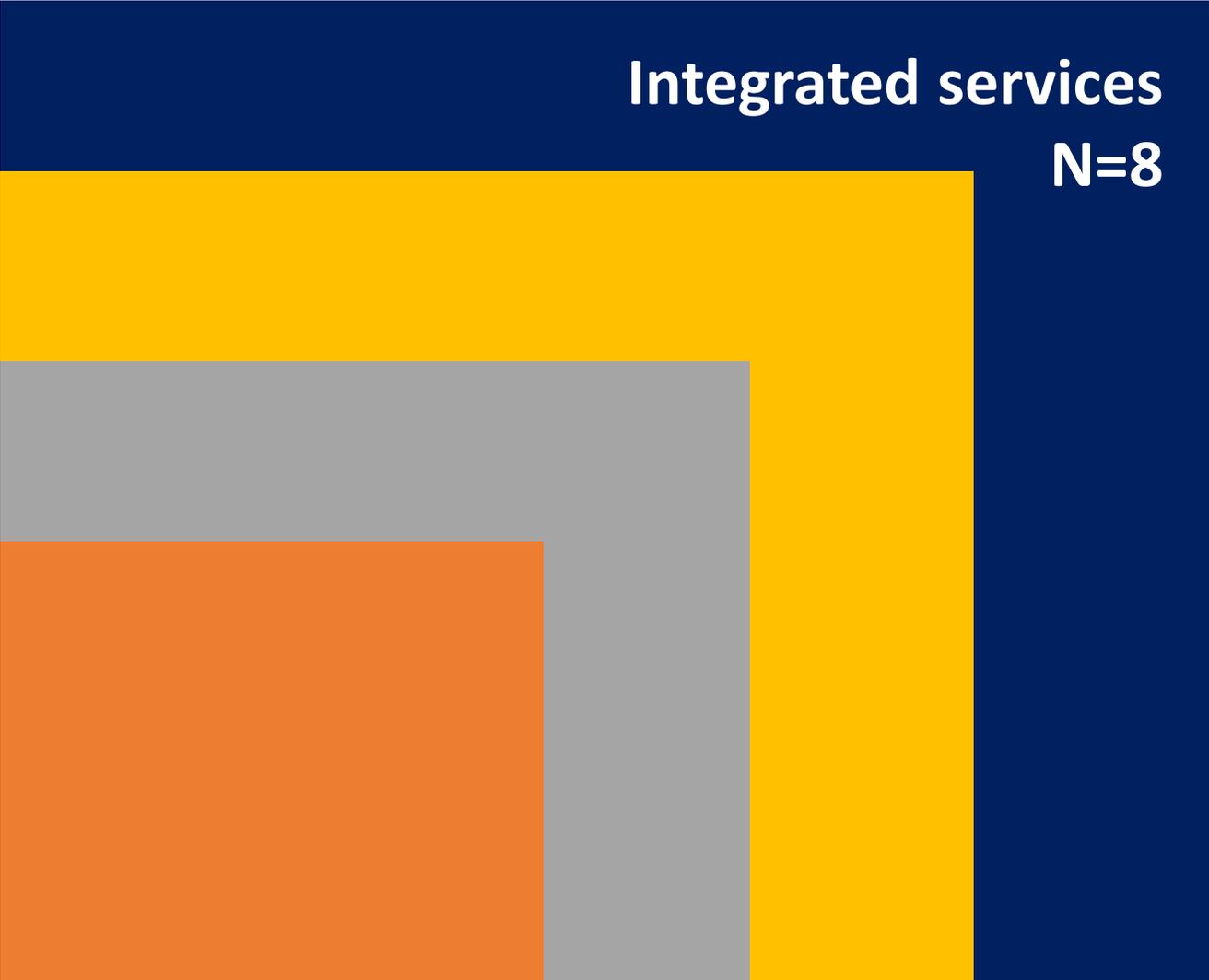
agencies offered 2 proactive services (pairings varied)

3

agencies offered 3 proactive services

What are agencies doing to prevent suicide?

Integrated services N=8



Suicide prevention and mental health promotion services are integrated into day-to-day operations

Policy

- Restorative sleep

Health and wellness units

- Oversee activities already mentioned
- Additional duties akin to a CAO
- Mental health units that dually function for officer and family wellness



Law enforcement does not need to be convinced that mental health and suicide prevention among officers is important



Researchers need to go “under the hood” to assess quality:

- In-house mental health counseling and EAPs
- Critical incident response
- Peer support
- Screening



What are “best practices” for smaller agencies?

- Model programs
- Shared programs (fire department)
- Community partnerships



Rajeev Ramchand
Ramchand@rand.org