I. Purpose
The Austin Fire Department recognizes that the health, safety, and wellness of its firefighters are of the utmost importance to the organization. The creation of the Austin Fire Department Wellness/Fitness Center demonstrates the department’s commitment to its workforce. The Wellness/Fitness Center will strive to increase firefighters’ physical performance levels while encouraging each member to embrace the ideas of personal wellness and fitness, leading to a healthy and productive career and retirement. The Wellness/Fitness Center medical examination will focus on the early detection of life-threatening injuries and illnesses, the timely referral for treatment of the discovered condition, and the return of the firefighter back to work as soon as possible.

II. Background
When compared to the general population, firefighters suffer disproportionately higher rates of heart attacks and cancers. During the mid-1990s, the Austin Fire Department, along with nine other cities and in partnership with the IAFF and IAFC, joined together to form the IAFF/IAFC Joint Labor Management Wellness-Fitness Initiative (WFI). The WFI shifts the focus of fire departments to improving the quality of life for its firefighters. This in turn provides better service to the citizens of Austin by ensuring its firefighters are in peak physical health. Medical examinations, fitness maintenance and assessments, rehabilitation, behavioral health, and data collection make up the five components of the WFI. The culmination in Austin of the WFI, with support from both labor and management, is the creation of the Wellness/Fitness Center that incorporates these five components under one roof.

III. Policy

A. All civil service personnel will participate in this program.

B. The AFD Wellness/Fitness Center is the central facility that will provide medical examinations and fitness assessments to all uniformed AFD employees.
C. Medical examinations and procedures set by the Wellness/Fitness Center physician or staff will be performed on duty. As an employer, the City has authority to determine duty status and assignments, and to perform job-related medical examinations to assist in making those determinations. This authority is exercised by the Chief and falls within the scope of the management rights reserved by the City in the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

D. Medical examinations will be job-related and the content will be determined with guidance from the IAFF/IAFC Joint Labor Management Wellness-Fitness Initiative and NFPA 1582. Fitness assessments will be consistent with the WFI and the existing AFD fitness assessment program.

E. Duty status determination as a result of the medical exam will be handled as follows, and in accordance with existing leave policies:

F. Medical data will be collected during the medical exams in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). Information collected during the medical exams may be shared in a collective and anonymous format with the International Association of Fire Fighters’ Office of Health and Safety. This data will be used to demonstrate, and ultimately to mitigate, the epidemiology of firefighters. It may also be utilized to improve safety and prevention techniques. The physician’s duty status recommendation and the medical basis for the recommendation will be provided to the Fire Chief for use in making a final duty status determination. Neither physician nor medical staff will share a participant’s medical information with any other member of AFD.

IV. Procedure

A. Medical examination frequency will be determined by age:
   - Ages 20-29: Every three years
   - Ages 30-39: Every two years
   - Ages 40+: Annually
   Medical examination content might vary based on age, gender, and job specific duties (i.e. heavy metal screening for Haz-Mat technicians and Water Rescue technicians).
B. The fitness assessments will be conducted annually for all members and will be scheduled on the same date as the medical examinations where appropriate.

C. The Wellness/Fitness Center will schedule all medical examinations and fitness assessments in coordination with the Division Chiefs and the Special Projects officer.

D. AFD personnel shall wear appropriate athletic apparel, as per AFD uniform policy, while performing the medical examinations and the fitness assessment.

E. Initial Duty Status Determination as a result of Medical Examination:
   1. Full-Duty: Individuals remain medically qualified for combat operations and continue to receive required annual medical examination and fitness assessment.
   2. Conditional Full-Duty: Individuals remain medically qualified for combat operations if they comply with additional monitoring and treatment requirements to ensure that they maintain the capacity to safely perform their essential job tasks
   3. Alternate Duty: Individuals will be temporarily assigned to a non-operations position while further medical evaluation is conducted to determine duty status.

Note: Wellness Center BC notifies individual’s BC and/or DC that individual cannot return to active duty for remainder of shift.

Individuals assigned to alternate duty will report for duty from 07:45 to 16:45, Monday through Friday to the Wellness Center or other designated non-operations assignment. Any request for leave while on alternate duty will be handled in accordance with existing leave policies.

F. Case Management:
   The Wellness Center physician will develop a Medical Action Plan that will outline the necessary steps to control or resolve a medical condition impacting duty status. The case manager will facilitate treatment and track progress or changes to the MAP.
   1. Medical Action Plan (MAP) and case management are initiated. The Wellness Center Physician directs and reviews (with Case Manager) the Medical Action Plan with the individual. Terms of medical action plan and compliance are established at this time.
   2. Medical Treatment and Follow-Up. As Medical Action Plan progresses, the Wellness Center Physician and Case Manager review plans, consult with outside medical entities, and revises MAP as appropriate.

G. Duty Status Determination. After full evaluation and treatment of the medical condition and after the individual has reached maximum medical improvement the final duty status will be determined. The Wellness Center Physician will make the final duty status recommendation to the Fire Chief after consultation with private physician(s). The Fire Chief will then make a final duty status determination. There are two possibilities for final duty status:
   1. Full Duty Status. An individual may returned to full duty or conditional full duty. If they are returned to full duty status, then they are able to perform combat operations and are only required to perform their annual medical examination and fitness assessment. If they are returned to conditional full duty, then the clearance to perform combat operations is conditional. These individuals will have
additional monitoring and treatment requirements to ensure that they maintain the capacity to safely perform their essential job tasks.

2. Alternate Status. If a firefighter is unable to perform combat operations because of a medical condition, the department will determine the firefighter’s duty status. In making that determination, the department will consider all options available and will seek information and input from the firefighter.

H. Participation in this program is mandatory for all civil service firefighters. A member may choose, at their own expense, to have their physical examination or any component of the medical examination performed by a physician other than the AFD Wellness Center physician. The medical examination content performed by a private physician must be the same as the examination performed by the AFD Wellness Center physician. If a firefighter has their own primary physician perform the required medical examination, then the results must be faxed to the AFD Wellness Center physician prior to their annual appointment. Any components that are not performed by the primary physician can be completed at the Wellness Center. Forms outlining these requirements will be available at the Wellness Center.