

# POLICE CHIEF



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AND RESILIENCE

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# 2025 CALENDAR

Are you looking forward to reading about a certain issue in law enforcement or thinking about submitting an article to **Police Chief**? Look below to see some of the topics we are covering in 2025!

JANUARY	Youth-Focused Policing
FEBRUARY	Contemporary Issues in Policing
MARCH	Roadway Safety
APRIL	Connectivity for Public Safety
MAY	Officer Safety and Wellness
JUNE	Investigative Techniques
JULY	Navigating the Drug Crisis
AUGUST	Contemporary Issues in Policing
SEPTEMBER	Transnational Crime Trends
OCTOBER	Pivotal Policing Moments: 2010–2025
NOVEMBER	Addressing Violent Crime
DECEMBER	Translating Research into Action

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*Cover: Law enforcement officers from multiple agencies work the scene on Bourbon Street after at least ten people were killed when a person allegedly drove into the crowd in the early morning hours of New Year's Day on January 1, 2025, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Dozens more were injured after a suspect in a rented pickup truck allegedly drove around barricades and through a crowd of New Year's revelers on Bourbon Street. The suspect then got out of the car, opened fire on police officers, and was subsequently killed by law enforcement. (© Photo by Michael DeMocker/Getty Images)*

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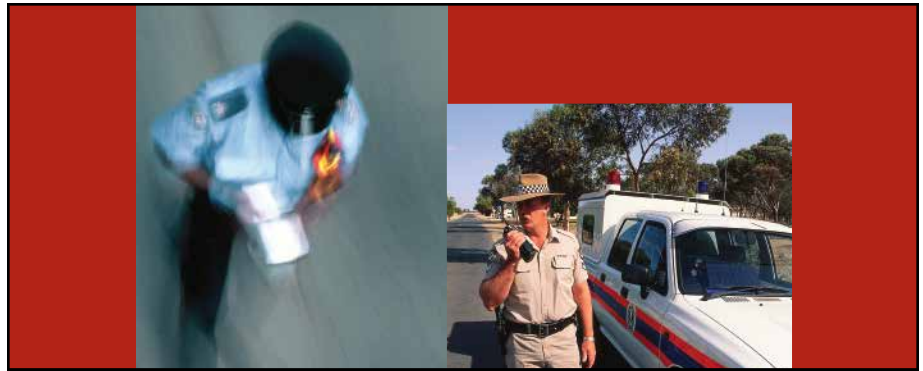
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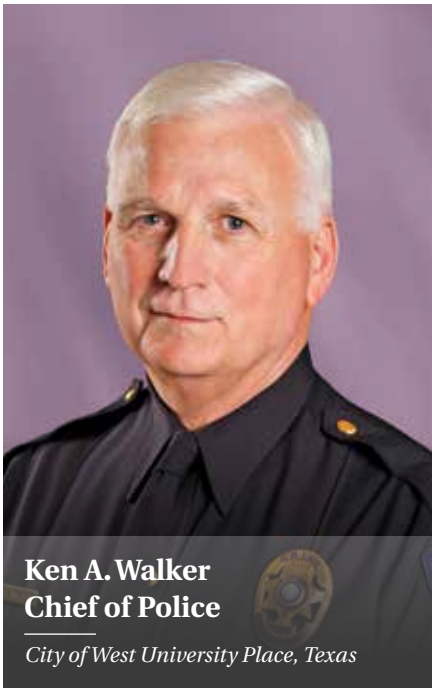
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“  
**We must work together to address the social shortcomings that deteriorate lives and perpetuate cyclical involvement with the criminal justice system.**  
 ”

## A Collective Responsibility

**WHEN WE HEAR ELECTED OFFICIALS, THE MEDIA, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS DISCUSS THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM, ALMOST ALWAYS, THESE DISCUSSIONS FOCUS ON THE POLICE. HOWEVER, AS WE KNOW, THE REAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM IS MUCH BROADER, ENCOMPASSING COURTS, PROSECUTORS, COUNTY AND ELECTED OFFICIALS, SCHOOLS, PROBATION, PAROLE, PRISONS, COUNTY JAILS, AND COMMUNITIES.**

As police leaders, we know that if any part of a system breaks down, the whole system fails. When we attempt to address crime issues, it is imperative that we also talk about the other parts of the criminal justice system that are failing us.

When the criminal justice system fails, it is law enforcement that is expected to deal with the consequences. One of the most serious issues is the failure of institutions that deal with mental illness, which have too few resources. The history of this problem dates back centuries, although the current resource shortfalls are often attributed to U.S. President John F. Kennedy's 1963 special message to Congress that emphasized the need to treat patients in their own communities and return them to "a useful place in society." However, too many beds have been cut at state hospitals, leaving many with nowhere to turn, resulting in homelessness, substance abuse, or incarceration. This will come as no shock to you, but, today, some of the largest mental health providers are our jails.

Communities and police leaders must demand improvements from their elected leadership to address social shortcomings that deteriorate lives

and perpetuate cyclical involvement with the criminal justice system. These include poverty, education, substance abuse, and mental health. Police officers, as the most visible form of government, are increasingly expected to deal with the social ills that plague society but often lack the authority, training, or expertise to proactively address them. These collective societal failures have pushed problems such as homelessness, drug addiction, and mental illness to the streets for the police to handle.

It is unrealistic and unsustainable to expect law enforcement to manage the underlying social conditions such as mental illness, substance abuse, and homelessness that often precede or precipitate criminal behavior.

While police agencies will always have some role in addressing social problems that impact public safety, for too long, we have been forced, as a result of cuts to other agencies, to shoulder the burden of the failures of the criminal justice system where other public institutions would be better equipped and suited to address many of the social ills we encounter on our streets and in our communities.

We need federal, state, and local governments to invest in systems and enhanced programing that will reduce the reliance on police as the first provider of social services. That is why the police, community, and elected officials must jointly shoulder the responsibility to share expectations and offer solutions. This responsibility includes listening and weighing the outcomes of potential decisions and policies that are evidence based and represent the best interests of all involved.



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Photo by Justin Sullivan/Staff/GettyImages

The decisions and practices of prosecutors and the judiciary directly impact public safety, particularly the trust and confidence communities have in the police. While there are multiple ways to hold offenders accountable, prosecutorial and judicial discretion is an important tenet of the justice system. As a result, there needs to be alignment between the police and prosecutors to ensure agreement on the enforcement and prosecution of offenses. Police are the arm of the government that enforces the law, but they do not make the laws. If legislators, prosecutors, and the judiciary are disconnected from the police and the laws they are enforcing, the public loses faith in the police.

Effective criminal justice is a collective responsibility. We must work together to address the social shortcomings that deteriorate lives and perpetuate cyclical involvement with the criminal justice system. That is why I

encourage you to read the *President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice* report and recommendations. It was the result of the commitment by hundreds of working group members and testimony from over 200 individuals with a criminal justice nexus. Although the report was released in 2020, many of the recommendations are still very relevant and needed today with action from Congress, the federal government, state and local governments, and law enforcement—particularly when it comes to alleviating the impact of societal problems on public safety. By advocating for and working to implement many of these recommendations, we can create a more effective, cohesive, and just criminal justice system that addresses the root causes of crime and reduces the reliance on the police to manage social issues. ♡

# Navigating Crisis and Resilience

From a Mass Violence Attack to Everyday Policing



“  
[Policing] is about building a culture of resilience, where we take care of ourselves, so we are prepared for the constant challenges.”

**IN AN 18-MONTH PERIOD, MY AGENCY IN DAYTON, OHIO, FACED A SERIES OF UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES: A SIGNIFICANT WATER EMERGENCY DUE TO A MAJOR PIPE BREAK, A LARGE-SCALE WHITE SUPREMACIST RALLY REQUIRING THE MOBILIZATION OF 700 POLICE OFFICERS, 16 TORNADOES HITTING THE REGION WITH THREE DIRECTLY IMPACTING DAYTON, A MASS VIOLENCE ATTACK IN THE OREGON DISTRICT WHERE 27 PEOPLE WERE SHOT—NINE OF WHOM WERE KILLED—AND THE TRAGIC LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH OF DETECTIVE JORGE DELRIO.**

The string of challenging events continued with the COVID-19 pandemic and protests following the death of George Floyd. And, to top it off, these events were compounded by day-to-day operations and crises we all face as police professionals.

I have often been asked to talk about lessons learned from the Oregon District mass violence attack, but, in reality, while it's important to stop and dissect every critical incident, the dynamics of policing are so much more than just the critical incidents. The reality is, in everyday policing, there are always other things happening simultaneously, so it's about building a culture of resilience, where we take care of ourselves, so we are prepared for the constant challenges inherent in both policing and everyday life.

#### LEARNING FROM INCIDENTS

No matter the incident, it's important to emphasize a culture in which we are not going to “eat our own.” In any critical incident response—an officer-involved shooting, line-of-duty death, mass casualty attack response—we cannot allow rash judgment and unthoughtful comments to inflict more pain and suffering on the officers who have been through these incidents. We must try to learn what we can from these incidents, but we must not attack each other. At times, policing can be an extraordinarily chaotic

environment—such as trying to stop an assailant with precision under the complex environmental conditions that exist—but, police officers strive to act decisively, professionally, and competently even in horrible environmental situations, which is exactly what I always witnessed with my officers in Dayton during that chaotic 18-month period.

#### COLLECTIVE GRIEF AND HEALING

I vividly recall the grief and anguish in my commanders' eyes when my agency suffered the loss of Detective Jorge DelRio in the line of duty. Incredibly competent commanders, who have been through all kinds of difficulties in their careers, were visibly pained. I said, “I know you're grieving. I'm grieving, too. We need to take care of each other here. We need to be checking in with each other. We need to be seeking support.”

The funeral was an opportunity for us to come together with one heart and one mind. One of the greatest gifts during that horrific time was a firefighter who created a video using my eulogy for Detective DelRio as a voiceover for images of the funeral. I have watched that video countless times. Until that video, I did not realize how many officers across the United States were also grieving, because my experience was just in Dayton. I was so grateful for that video; not only did it help me heal personally, but it also helped us heal as an agency and as a profession. Creating opportunities for collective healing, such as memorial videos or ceremonies, can help officers process grief and build a sense of unity and pride within the department.

#### THOUGHTFUL COMMUNICATION

When it comes to critical incidents, being thoughtful and intentional about what we share or don't share is crucial. In Dayton, we consistently held roundtable discussions with all senior commanders, homicide investigators, and criminalists—anyone

with key information—to decide what to tell and what to withhold. Ultimately, it's the chief's decision, but it's a democratic, participative, and collaborative process. I never want to make those decisions in a vacuum. We evaluate all information and decide what to release, ensuring it doesn't adversely impact the investigation.

### PROMOTING WELL-BEING

There's psychological, physiological, and spiritual well-being to consider. Find that support system and be prepared to grieve. After long, exhausting days, I would sit in my office and cry. We must make room for our grief and honor it. Seeing the video of Detective DelRio's funeral with my voiceover helped me rest and grieve. I shared it with the entire police organization and our colleagues from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to help everyone heal and feel proud of who they are and what they do.

### REBUILDING PRIDE

Rebuilding organizational and personal pride starts with taking care of our own. We need to promote physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being and cultivate wellness. We are impacted by both professional and personal tragedies, and it's easy to

become overwhelmed. At the end of the day, we're human, and there's only so much chaos we can handle. It's the strength between us, among us, that will help us get through.

### COMMUNITY SENTIMENT

Community sentiment will impact us, and we need brave leadership to bring balance to issues involving police. In the absence of those voices, the blame often unfairly falls on law enforcement. But, if we stay strong together, as we did through the chaos, the strength of our bonds will carry us through. What an amazing profession we all belong to.

### MOVING FORWARD

For any agency experiencing a mass violence incident or an incident that catches the spotlight of the media, community, and others—New Orleans is the recent one that comes to my mind—my advice is to be truthful and acknowledge what happened. Own any gaps in police practices and tell the public what you're doing to prevent such events in the future. Improve readiness, own any errors, correct them, and move forward. Continually replaying what happened isn't beneficial. Learn from the experience and apply it, because for all of us in this noble profession, the

challenges and complexities don't stop. Just think of New Orleans having to jump from the attack on New Year's Day, right into Mardi Gras and Super Bowl preparations.

### COMPASSION AND HONESTY

We're all going to experience tragedy in this imperfect world with its complex threat environment. We need to start with compassion and kindness toward ourselves, being honest about what we do well and what we don't. This isn't about self-punishment but about learning and moving toward excellence.

### CONCLUSION: LESSONS FROM DAYTON

The experiences in Dayton have taught us invaluable lessons about resilience, leadership, and the power of unity. In the face of overwhelming challenges, we learned that our strength lies in our ability to support one another, to communicate thoughtfully, and to foster a culture of well-being and collective healing. By embracing these principles, we can navigate crises with courage and compassion, ensuring that we emerge stronger and more united as a profession. The bonds we forge in times of adversity are the foundation upon which we build a resilient and dedicated police force, ready to face whatever challenges lie ahead. ♡



*Healing in the Wake of Harm*

## MASS VIOLENCE ADVISORY INITIATIVE

The Mass Violence Advisory Initiative (MVAI) provides peer-to-peer assistance for law enforcement leaders following a mass violence event to maximize the safety and wellness of officers, first responders, and the community.

Assistance includes:

- Leadership/Crisis Management
- Public Information/Media Relations
- Criminal Investigation Considerations
- First Responder and Community Wellness
- Victim/Witness Assistance Services
- Policy Considerations



## Education Opportunities

- **Beyond the Boardroom—Insights from IACP’s Volunteer Leaders (Podcast)**

Join us for a candid conversation with the IACP’s volunteer leaders where we will dive deep into discussions on what motivates them, critical issues in policing, and strategic decision-making. In this episode, the Vice President Treasurer Ron Sellon will share his unique perspective on the state of finances at the IACP, financial decision-making, and what’s on the horizon for 2025 and beyond. *Free for members and nonmembers*

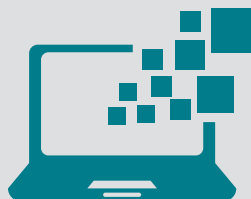
- **Hope After Tragedy: Post-Traumatic Growth for Police Professionals (Webinar)**

This webinar addresses the impacts of tragedy and introduces a transformative process called post-traumatic growth. Mental health and policing professionals share their personal stories of tragedy and growth and provide practical strategies of how individuals can work toward post-traumatic growth in their own lives. *Free for members and nonmembers*

- **Elevate Blue (Virtual Training Series)**

Elevate Blue is a virtual training suite designed to address contemporary issues law enforcement faces today. In collaboration with six partner agencies, Elevate Blue virtual training modules deliver best-in-class training rooted in an evidence-based design process and delivered using adult-learning principles. *Free for members and nonmembers*

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## Police Chief Bonus Articles

### DECEMBER 2024 ARTICLES

Every week, a new bonus article is published at Police Chief Online to give our readers additional content throughout the month. These online-only articles present the relevant, applicable, and high-quality content you expect from *Police Chief*.



#### Mapping Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services

By Susan Smith Howley & Diba Rouzbahani

The IACP’s commitment to police-based victim services has reached new heights with a comprehensive study supported by the Office for Victims of Crime. This research explored the scope, successes, and challenges of victim services programs in police agencies.



The findings highlight the value of integrating trauma-informed care at the police level. While most agencies assist victims of violent crimes, many also provide resources for a broader range of offenses, offering flexible and compassionate responses.



#### A Brighter Future in the Fight Against Child Sexual Abuse Material

By Heather Barnhart

The passage of the bipartisan REPORT Act represents a pivotal step in combating child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and online predators. This landmark legislation transforms how U.S. police investigate exploitation by streamlining reporting, empowering victims, and modernizing tools to identify and stop offenders. Discover how legislation, advocacy, and technology are reshaping the fight against child exploitation.



#### The Six Facets of Holistic Wellness

By Jennifer A. Wessels & Chief Ronald Davis

The well-being of police officers is a multifaceted and interconnected challenge that extends beyond physical fitness. Police officers face immense physical, emotional, and mental demands daily. Holistic wellness is essential for ensuring they thrive on and off the job. Police professionals must also prioritize emotional, intellectual, financial, social, and spiritual health to manage their roles’ unique demands effectively.



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## Q: What do you think will be the most critical issue facing policing in the next year?



**A:** Personnel will continue to be a critical issue. The traditional 25- to 30-year employee who works for their pension and views policing as their sole passion no longer exists in today's workforce. Employees want to see their job taking care of them and their families in the present. Incentives such as job rotation, evidence-based training, and internal procedural justice are vital, as are investments in education reimbursement, scheduling flexibility, wellness programming, physical fitness facilities, parental leave, and childcare. Finally, personnel look for performance metrics that align with the agency's mission and community expectations with a genuine focus on employee development and enrichment. Acknowledging and accepting this paradigm shift will aid in successful recruitment and retention, while making team members feel seen and valued.

William D. Walsh, Captain  
Voorhees Police Department, New Jersey



**A:** Member wellness will be one of the most critical issues facing policing in the next year. Police officers and support staff regularly face a wide array of trauma and stressors, often at high frequencies. Many agencies worldwide are investing in member care and wellness, employing creative and innovative approaches. However, funding constraints remain a significant barrier, as wages and other fixed costs dominate policing budgets, leaving limited resources for staff support.

As police leaders, we must raise awareness and advocate for increased resources in this area. While recruiting often takes center stage in discussions about policing priorities, I believe the focus should be on caring for and retaining our current members. Their experience and well-being are invaluable to the profession's future and stability.

Raj Mander, Inspector  
Surrey Police Service, British Columbia



**A:** The most critical issue affecting every police organization around the globe will be the rising threat of digital crimes. Criminals are increasingly exploiting technical advancements for committing digital crimes. According to *Cybercrime Magazine*, with cybercrime costs projected to exceed \$10.5 trillion by 2025, up from \$3 trillion in 2015, the impact of digital threats is huge. It has introduced a totally new array of crimes, which were unknown a decade ago.

To address this challenge, police leadership must be proactive and innovative, focusing on resource allocation for advanced investigative tools, adaptation to changes, acquisition of new skills, and collaboration with technology experts.

Faisal Mukhtar, Senior Superintendent of Police  
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, Pakistan



**A:** In the next year, the most critical issue facing law enforcement will be ensuring robust support for personnel. Police officers face immense stress, from minor incidents to major crises. Establishing strong resiliency support staff and peer assistance programs is essential. These programs provide a support network for officers to address personal and professional stressors, enhancing their resilience and effectiveness. Agencies with limited resources should network with neighboring ones to share resources. By investing in mental health and well-being, agencies demonstrate their commitment to their workforce, ensuring officers remain focused, engaged, and ready to serve their communities effectively. Maintaining a healthy workforce is crucial not only for current operations but also for improving retention and recruitment, as a supportive environment attracts and keeps resolute professionals.

Patrick E. Orender Jr., Watch Commander - Chaplain  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

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# Providing Equal Access During Police Interactions with Individuals with Disabilities

**BY**  
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San Diego County  
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**THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990 (ADA) IS A U.S. CIVIL RIGHTS LAW THAT PROTECTS THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES. TITLE II OF THE ADA PROHIBITS PUBLIC ENTITIES FROM EXCLUDING ANY QUALIFIED INDIVIDUAL WITH A DISABILITY FROM PARTICIPATING IN OR DENYING THEM BENEFITS OF THE SERVICES, PROGRAMS, OR ACTIVITIES OF THE ENTITY, OR SUBJECTING THEM TO DISCRIMINATION, BASED ON THEIR DISABILITY.<sup>1</sup>**

This law applies to all services, programs, and activities that state and local law enforcement agencies provide to the public, regardless of the entity's size or receipt of federal funding.<sup>2</sup> Law enforcement services, programs, and activities include, but are not limited to, interactions with the public such as taking and responding to calls for service, stops, detentions, interviews, and arrests, and custodial interactions with incarcerated persons.

ADA litigation against law enforcement agencies by the U.S. Department of Justice and private attorneys has increased in recent years. These actions can lead to costly attorney's fees, construction alterations, and detailed settlement agreements or injunctions.

## QUALIFIED INDIVIDUAL WITH A DISABILITY

The ADA broadly defines a "qualified individual with a disability" as "an individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable modifications to rules, policies, or practices, the removal of architectural, communication, or transportation barriers, or the provision of auxiliary aids and services, meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or the participation in programs or activities provided by a public entity."<sup>3</sup>

A disability is "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment."<sup>4</sup>

The ADA does not include an exhaustive list of disabilities, but the following are some examples of physical and mental impairments that can be a covered disability under the ADA: visual, speech, and hearing impairments; epilepsy; diabetes; intellectual disability; emotional illness; dyslexia and other specific learning disabilities; HIV infection; drug addiction or alcoholism; and gender dysphoria.<sup>5</sup>

### REASONABLE MODIFICATIONS TO POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROCEDURES

Public entities are required to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures when necessary to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability.<sup>6</sup> The law does allow exceptions if the public entity can demonstrate that making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the service, program, or activity.<sup>7</sup> This includes denying or removing a modification for individualized safety or security reasons.<sup>8</sup>

Reasonable modifications are a primary component of providing access to persons with disabilities. The following are some examples of modifications that law enforcement may need to make:

“  
*Routine policies and procedures may require modification to ensure that persons with disabilities are not denied effective communication.*  
”

- Modifying restraints, use of force, and search methods during the arrest of an individual with a mobility disability. This includes providing the individual with access to their mobility device during arrest, transport, and holding.
- Allowing persons with service animals to access all areas of a facility where members of the public, participants in services, programs or activities, or invitees, are allowed to go.<sup>9</sup>
- Providing access to mobility devices and other health care appliances in detention facilities.<sup>10</sup>

### EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

The ADA includes specific requirements related to ensuring that communications with persons with disabilities are as effective as communications with persons without disabilities.<sup>11</sup> One requirement is that agencies are required to provide auxiliary aids and services to qualified individuals with disabilities in order to provide them with an equal opportunity to participate in and enjoy the benefits of a service, program, or activity of a public entity.<sup>12</sup> The type of auxiliary aid or service necessary varies based on the method of communication used by the individual; the nature, length, and complexity of the communication involved; and the context of the communication.<sup>13</sup>

Effective communication requirements generally apply to persons with disabilities that impact a person's ability to receive, process, or convey information to another person, including but not limited to vision, hearing, speech, learning, or cognitive disabilities. Providing access to in-person or virtual qualified sign language interpreters is just one example of providing effective communication to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing and use sign language.

Adopting an effective communication policy is one way to ensure that employees are aware of and comply with effective communication requirements. Additionally, routine policies and procedures may require modification to ensure that persons with disabilities are not denied effective communication.

One example is modifying handcuffing policies and training to ensure that individuals with hearing disabilities who communicate with their hands are handcuffed in a manner that permits them to communicate, absent an individualized safety concern.

The September 2024 settlement agreement between the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (WDOC) provides an example of common allegations and settlement terms related to providing effective communication in a detention facility.<sup>14</sup> The U.S. DOJ Civil Rights Division conducted an investigation after receiving complaints from incarcerated individuals at three WDOC facilities, alleging that WDOC failed to provide auxiliary aids and services, effective communication, and timely repair and return hearing aids to incarcerated individuals with hearing disabilities, preventing them from participating in programs. The U.S. DOJ and WDOC agreed to settle without litigation. The settlement agreement includes a \$15,000 monetary payment and identifies specific ways in which WDOC will provide effective communication, including but not limited to maintaining contracts to ensure that qualified interpreter services are available 24/7; screening every incarcerated individual for hearing disabilities as part of the intake process; creating a communication plan for every incarcerated individual with a hearing disability; creating a centralized database of incarcerated individuals with hearing disabilities that is available to all custody and program staff; policy modifications; and annual staff training. The agreement also requires WDOC to send the U.S. DOJ status reports at specific intervals and identifies a process for the U.S. to enforce the agreement in federal court in the event of noncompliance.<sup>15</sup>

### CONSTRUCTION

Agencies are required to follow specific architectural standards when building new construction or altering existing buildings.<sup>16</sup> The specific standard that applies relies on the starting date of the construction. All newly

constructed or altered public buildings that began physical construction on or after March 15, 2012, must comply with the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.<sup>17</sup>

As it relates to existing buildings, a public entity is required to operate each service, program, or activity so that, when viewed in its entirety, it is readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.<sup>18</sup> Agencies may be required to make construction modifications to ensure service, program, or activity accessibility.<sup>19</sup>

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that law enforcement agencies review their policies, practices, procedures, and training to ensure that employees know how to provide reasonable modifications during interactions with persons with disabilities. It is also recommended that law enforcement

agencies evaluate their physical buildings and transportation methods for accessibility. States and local entities may have additional laws that provide greater or equal protections to persons with disabilities. ◊

#### NOTES:

<sup>14</sup>2 U.S.C. § 12132; 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(a).

<sup>24</sup>2 U.S.C. § 12131(a); 28 C.F.R. §§ 35.103, 35.104.

<sup>34</sup>2 U.S.C. § 12131(b); 28 C.F.R. § 35.104.

<sup>42</sup>28 CFR § 35.108 (a)(1).

<sup>52</sup>28 C.F.R. § 35.108(b); Jane Doe v. Georgia Department of Corrections, 1:23-cv-5578-MLB, Statement of Interest of the United States, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/media/1333226/dl>; U.S. v. The State of Utah, The Utah Department of Corrections, and The Utah Department of Health and Human Services, 2:24-cv-00241, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/media/1346436/dl>.

<sup>62</sup>28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(7).

<sup>72</sup>28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(7).

<sup>82</sup>28 C.F.R. § 35.130(h).

<sup>92</sup>28 C.F.R. § 35.136(c).

<sup>102</sup>28 C.F.R. § 35.152.

<sup>112</sup>28 C.F.R. § 35.160.

<sup>124</sup>2 U.S.C. § 12103; 28 C.F.R. § 35.160.

<sup>132</sup>28 C.F.R. § 35.160.

<sup>14</sup>Settlement Agreement between the United States of America and Wisconsin Department of Corrections Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, DJ# 204-85-131, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/media/1371371/dl>.

<sup>15</sup>Settlement Agreement between the United States of America and Wisconsin Department of Corrections Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, DJ# 204-85-131, <https://www.justice.gov/crt/media/1371371/dl>.

<sup>162</sup>28 C.F.R. §§ 35.151-35.152; 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, <https://www.ada.gov/law-and-regs/design-standards/2010-stds>.

<sup>172</sup>28 C.F.R. §§ 35.151.

<sup>182</sup>28 C.F.R. §§ 35.150.

<sup>192</sup>28 C.F.R. §§ 35.150.

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BY

Hussien Jabai, MS, CSCS, TSAC-F, CPT, Physical Fitness Instructor, East Texas A&amp;M Law Enforcement Training Academy

# Integrating Effective Physical Fitness Screening Methods into the Academy

**THE FRONTLINE TO JOB-TASK BASICS AND FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE HAPPENS WITHIN THE ACADEMY SETTING. RECRUITS LEARN BASELINE SKILLS, LAWS, PROCEDURES, AND INFORMATION THAT BECOMES MORE DEFINED AND ESTABLISHED AS THEY ENTER THE FIELD AS ACTIVE PERSONNEL.**

With this said, the academy setting may play a vital role in shaping the way that future officers view fitness training methods, longevity of health practices, stress management skills, and nutritional strategies.

Lead physical fitness instructors at the East Texas A&M Law Enforcement Training Academy (AMLETA) embrace the principles of assessment, education, integration, and empowerment within the development of the academy's physical fitness program. Police academies, such as AMLETA, designate subject matter experts to facilitate efforts with physical fitness preparation, assessment, and training programming and instruction. To effectively prepare recruits, the program must introduce and administer effective testing methods to identify key performance indicators (KPIs) and evaluate the best approach to assist in the improvement of physical fitness attributes being tested or monitored. Effective testing methods will also provide instructors with insight into the efficacy of the academy program in preparing recruits for the demands of the workforce.

## ATTRIBUTES VERSUS SKILLS

Effective physical preparation is an ongoing discussion among academy instructors; they work nonstop to reevaluate KPIs for sustaining and thriving against occupational demands and stressors within the field. For the academy environment to evaluate the necessary progression of recruit abilities for occupation readiness, the program must assess all individuals on a pre-established battery. Law enforcement training academies must organize the assessment of recruits into two categories: (1) skills associated with the profession (competencies learned in curriculum) and (2) physical fitness attributes that assist with the efficiency and longevity of performing job tasks. While tactical skill-based assessments fall into the scope of practice of law enforcement trained professionals, the fitness-based attributes side should be placed into the hands of exercise science and strength and conditioning professionals. Strength and conditioning subject matter experts play a vital role in the selection of testing methods when evaluating recruits. If these professionals are not the sole individuals to select the tests, they should at least be involved

in the discussions regarding testing selection and administration.

The following indicate physical fitness attributes that fitness programs should consider implementing into their academy schedule:

1. Movement can be defined as the amount of movement and quality of movement of the body.

Some potential field tests for movement analysis could incorporate things like functional movement screenings or movement-competency models. At AMLETA, lead instructors incorporate the East Texas A&M Health and Human Performance Department to utilize Dari Motion for movement analysis, while additionally utilizing a movement-competency model to address progressions and regression of training exercises.

2. Strength can be defined as the total amount of force produced in a maximal effort.

Potential tests for analyzing strength could incorporate higher tech methods like grip strength or force plates, while lower budget field tests could include various rep maxes on compound-based movements. An isometric pull with force plates, pull-up test (for relative strength), and grip strength is often included within the AMLETA program.

3. Endurance can be defined as the ability to sustain lower-intensity work for a long period of time.

Muscular endurance testing could include field tests such as the 1–2-minute push-up or sit-up test. Instructors will incorporate a 60-second push-up test, with the inclusion of a 60-second horizontal row test into the AMLETA program to evaluate pulling and posterior chain muscular endurance (which can also evaluate relative grip strength).

4. Power can be defined as the ability to produce force very rapidly.

Power testing could incorporate field tests, such as the standing broad jump, vertical jump, or medicine ball throw (overhead, lateral, or chest pass based on muscular focus).

5. Cardiovascular fitness can be described as the ability to sustain work over a period while allowing the body to supply muscle tissue with oxygen to fuel that work

Cardiovascular, or aerobic, testing may include field tests such as the 2,000-meter row test, 1- or 2-mile run test, or the Cooper test (12-minute run).

6. Anaerobic capacity can be defined as the measurement in which an individual can sustain a high intensity of work.

Anaerobic capacity testing could include tests such as a 300-yard shuttle, 300-meter run, or various sprint distances based on internal decisions. The 300-yard shuttle has been incorporated into the AMLETA testing battery.

7. Physical agility/ability testing can be defined as a series of obstacles, tasks, or exercises conducted in a manner to replicate the stressors of in-field performance.

Physical ability tests should be designed to observe performance metrics identified in the field of the specific job descriptions being tested. This can vary based on terrain, infrastructure, tactics, and overall policies. AMLETA Director Louis Lufkin has worked alongside the author in bringing to fruition a physical ability test that incorporates a series of tasks, such as the transition of stance/position, jumping over and crawling under objects, pushing objects, sprinting around objects, recalling critical information, dragging a weighted object, crawling in various directions, and sprinting in a direct line.

#### STRATEGIC PLANNING AND SCHEDULE

The strategic planning of a physical preparation program incorporates the evaluation of occupational training while adjusting training variables (such as intensity, volume, etc.) to manage fatigue and encourage adaptations. Academy instructors must consider the following:

- Physical fitness training should possess organized training blocks with a specific focus (e.g., strength, endurance, movement).
- Testing protocols should consist of recovery days prior to the day of physical fitness testing.
- Tests should be scheduled based on the energy systems taxed and amount of stress within the session.
- Training programs should incorporate periods of recovery to allow fatigue to dissipate.
- Instructors should manage accumulated strain (overall strain of the day or week) by reducing training

volume or intensity during high impact/stress curriculum days.

- Tests can be administered over a period, such as a testing week or series of days.
- Duration between administered tests should be long enough to allow fatigue to dissipate and not impact the results of the next test.

#### DATA USAGE AND ACTION ITEMS

Unless utilized in a way that helps facilitate decision-making and action items, data are just data. Physical fitness instructors within the academy setting must collect data from assessments, analyze the data, and use the data to support continuation of program efforts or adjustments in program development. Data can be analyzed to evaluate efficacy (or effectiveness) of a specific training program, comparison between academy classes, trends of recruit profiles that enter the academy, entrance readiness and departure training status, individual recruit deficiencies, and run correlative trends between performance data variables.

Physical fitness training programs at police academies, like AMLETA, are taking the initiative in pursuing and integrating a science-based approach to cadet physical preparation. ♡

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Academies should identify KPIs that are unique to their demands.
- Programs should assess recruits in multiple areas of physical performance.
- Instructors may perform assessments periodically and adjust accordingly.
- Academies should utilize assessment data to make evidence-based decisions.

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# Automatic License Plate Recognition

## A Force Multiplier for Police

BY

Phil Malencsik, Strategic Account Executive,  
Genetec - Public Sector

**AUTOMATIC LICENSE PLATE RECOGNITION (ALPR) CAMERAS ARE SOLVING MORE CRIMES THAN EVER BEFORE. THE INCREASE IS DRIVEN BY TECHNOLOGY GOING BEYOND READING LICENSE PLATES. INVESTIGATORS CAN NOW SEARCH FOR THE MAKE, MODEL, AND COLOR OF VEHICLES, PLUS OTHER BEHAVIORS LIKE DIRECTION OF TRAVEL AND SPEED.**

These data-driven insights and investigation tools provide the information needed to solve crimes, close cases, and make communities safer.

### ENHANCING POLICE EFFICIENCY

Officers dedicate substantial time to tracking vehicles that are reported stolen, involved in criminal activities, or linked to individuals with outstanding warrants or unpaid fines. Advancements in ALPR technology provide a critical edge in solving these crimes and serve as a force multiplier for agencies.

By unifying ALPR with other systems, such as video surveillance feeds, computer-aided dispatch (CAD), gunshot detection, and offender history databases, agencies gain a more comprehensive view of an incident. Officers can gather ALPR data and information from various sensors across the city to more effectively respond to an incident or speed up an investigation.

Different law enforcement agencies can also share ALPR data to enhance their ability to catch suspects

who cross jurisdictional lines. For example, if a vehicle linked to a recent crime is on a hotlist, collaborative tools allow operators to alert officers if the vehicle is detected by ALPR systems in neighboring areas. This real-time coordination enables police to quickly locate and apprehend the suspect before they travel further.

### USES OF ALPR WITHIN POLICING

One of the top uses for the ALPR system is often locating a stolen vehicle or a vehicle associated with a theft or burglary. However, there are many other use cases.

*Locating missing persons:* One of the significant uses of ALPR is locating missing persons. For example, AMBER Alerts for missing children often include vehicle descriptions and license plate numbers. ALPR systems can generate automated alerts for these vehicles, significantly aiding in their recovery. Across the globe, numerous cases highlight the success of ALPR in finding missing children and individuals of all ages.

*Tracking known criminals:* ALPR systems help police track down individuals wanted for various offenses, including outstanding warrants and parole violations. These systems can also help ensure that known criminals comply with their release terms, enhancing community safety.

*Assisting investigations:* ALPR cameras capture not only license plate numbers but also vehicle images, dates,

times, and locations. This information can provide crucial leads in investigations of homicides, burglaries, and drug-related crimes. The detailed data collected by ALPR systems can also be used to establish patterns and connections that might not be immediately apparent.

*Enforcing traffic:* ALPR solutions also aid in traffic enforcement by identifying vehicles with expired registrations or unpaid fines. ALPR systems can enforce regulations in high-demand areas by ensuring that vehicles comply with the designated use of the space, whether it's a short-term parking zone for deliveries or a no-parking bus lane.

*Streamlining parking:* With ALPR cameras mounted on vehicles, enforcement staff can scan thousands of license plates each shift, managing permits, overtime regulations, or other parking rules simultaneously.

*Public-private collaboration:* As more communities recognize the power of public-private collaboration, some large venues and organizations are syncing their ALPR technology with local law enforcement. If an organization's ALPR system detects a vehicle on a police watchlist, the proper authorities can be notified immediately.

#### **MOVING BEYOND THE LICENSE PLATE**

Some ALPR systems don't even need investigators to know the license plate number to search for a vehicle. With a vehicle-characteristic investigation system, investigators can find vehicles of interest even if they don't have the exact plate number. Innovative ALPR software goes beyond reading license plates to identifying vehicle color, type, speed, and direction of travel.

If a witness to a crime reports that they saw a black pickup truck speed away, police search the database for images of black pickup trucks captured by ALPR cameras within a certain radius and time of the event. This helps generate a list of potential suspects. The list may be further narrowed using other search parameters.

Advanced ALPR analytics also assess vehicle behavior, allowing for quicker response times and better identification of suspicious vehicles. These analytics provide valuable insights that can be used to predict and prevent criminal activities, further enhancing the role of ALPR in proactive policing.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS WHEN SELECTING AN ALPR SYSTEM**

During your search for the right ALPR technology, here are some things to consider.

**Reliable license plate reads**—It is imperative to ensure the apprehension of the right person when looking for a suspect on a most wanted list. A solution that provides highly accurate reads to get the most value from an ALPR investment is necessary.

**Comprehensive analytics**—Look for solutions that allow a user to filter searches using partial or complete

“  
*Innovative ALPR software goes beyond reading license plates to identifying vehicle color, type, speed, and direction of travel.*  
”

plate numbers and get information on the vehicle's make, model, and color, as well as the date, time, and location of the image capture.

**Mobile capabilities**—Modern ALPR systems offer applications that allow users to access their ALPR technology from a mobile phone or device. Information captured can be encrypted and securely sent to a cloud-based system.

**Quality images, day and night**—Even in a busy environment, at night, or in a storm, cameras should decipher all license plates in the field of view and read embossed lettering, digital license plates, and various plate designs.

**Easy to deploy and install**—Spending hours setting up a new solution and learning its software isn't efficient. Look for solutions that are easy to install and manage.

**Flexible connectivity**—Depending on the physical security infrastructure, it's important to choose a product suitable for wired connections or built-in LTE connections. A cloud-ready solution will also allow an organization to scale as its needs evolve.

**Unification**—When the agency's ALPR system can be unified with other technology, data will flow seamlessly between solutions.

**Emphasis on data privacy**—Reputable security manufacturers adopt a privacy-by-design approach, integrating privacy considerations throughout the development process. These measures help balance the benefits of ALPR technology with the need to protect individual privacy.

#### **ALPR AS PART OF A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH**

As police agencies face challenges such as staffing shortages, infrastructure demands, and growing populations, ALPR technology offers a significant opportunity. Advancements in ALPR technology are making crimes involving vehicles easier to solve. When unified with other systems, such as CAD, video surveillance, and digital evidence management systems, an ALPR can be a force multiplier for the whole team. ♡



# All Bark and No Empirical Bite

## Rethinking Received Narratives About K9 Policing

**RECENT RESEARCH HAS PLACED ONE OF POLICING'S MOST VENERABLE TOOLS—THE K9 UNIT—UNDER FRESH EMPIRICAL SCRUTINY. THE FINDINGS OF A NEW STUDY RUN COUNTER TO LONG-HELD CONVICTIONS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE: FOR DECADES, ONE CAMP HAS INSISTED THAT K9S DETER CRIME, REDUCE OFFICER HARM, AND BOLSTER LAW ENFORCEMENT'S PUBLIC IMAGE, WHILE THE OTHER HAS CONTENDED THAT K9 DEPLOYMENT LEADS TO UNDUE INJURY, VIOLATES CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS, AND PERPETUATES RACIAL DISPARITIES.**

Yet evidence from a natural experiment in a mid-sized U.S. city suggests that neither camp's arguments are fully substantiated. With more than 4,100 people in the United States hospitalized annually due to police K9 bites, it is time to reexamine this storied policing tool with renewed rigor and care.<sup>1</sup>

The modern police dog traces back to 1899 in Ghent, Belgium, from which the practice soon traveled the globe.<sup>2</sup> By the early 20th century, U.S. police departments also began incorporating K9s, championed by anecdotal reports of dramatic crime reductions—some as high as 50 percent. These tales, likely embellished, nonetheless gave K9 units an aura of near-magical efficacy and inspired their rapid adoption across the United States. Many practitioners still uphold a version of these claims, arguing that the sheer presence of a K9 dissuades criminal resistance, and lowers the physical risks to both officers and suspects. Proponents further maintain that dogs can enhance community relations—a point at odds with recent scientific evaluations of public sentiment regarding K9 use.<sup>3</sup>

Some legal scholars opposing K9 deployment contend that officers lack legal or tactical restraint when deploying K9s and that this approach results in unnecessary and excessive injury to suspects. However, there is significant

case law demarcating how and when K9s can be deployed. Additionally, some scholars view deployment of K9s as racially disparate and, as such, de facto illegitimate. Again, there is scant empirical research supporting this argument, and there is a clear need for additional evidence.

Researchers saw a rare opportunity to test these competing assertions when a 600-officer agency serving a population of roughly 200,000 abruptly discontinued its K9 program. Focusing on felony arrests—since the department had restricted K9 deployment to more serious crimes—researchers tracked changes in three critical outcomes: officer injury, suspect injury, and suspect resistance.

The results are striking and fly in the face of the narratives outlined above: suspending K9 operations did not lead to a significant increase in officer injuries. Further, it also did not lead to a decrease in suspect injuries, nor did it lead to an increase in suspect resistance. Notably, the conclusions drawn from this analysis can answer the posed research questions only in the aggregate. The level of analysis cannot speak to individual interactions where a patrol dog could prevent a specific officer's injury. The authors caution against interpreting the findings as dismissing officers who believe their K9 partner has saved them from severe injury or even death.

### BY

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On the one hand, these findings challenge generations of police lore and highlight a fundamental knowledge gap. If K9s do not appreciably improve officer safety or lower suspect hostility, it is worth asking whether the time-honored justifications for their deployment hold up under present-day conditions. On the other hand, the study also indicates that K9 deployments may not generate substantially greater harm to suspects, undercutting the key arguments of certain K9 critics.

However, neither agencies nor policymakers should hastily draw sweeping conclusions based on a single study. This preliminary evidence was limited in scope and duration, and it does not capture the intricate societal and operational variables that shape the broader policing environment. Rather than use these results to vindicate or condemn K9 deployments outright, police leaders should strengthen data collection, promote additional scientific inquiry, and incorporate the experiences of officers, community members, and legal experts.

Moving ahead, departments would do well to balance the potential benefits of K9 units with measured restraint—particularly given the historical tendency for policy decisions to rest on anecdotal over empirical data. Indeed, police agencies once championed the “find and bark” model of K9 training, only to later confront studies showing a correlation with higher bite rates relative to “bite and hold.”<sup>4</sup> This mismatch between prevailing belief and empirical reality underscores the urgency of further research.

In support of this approach, suggested action items for police leaders and researchers include the following:

- **Support Robust Research:** Police organizations should champion large-scale, multi-agency studies to examine K9 deployment thoroughly. This commitment entails investigating how police dogs influence agency objectives—including crime reduction and officer safety—as well as community concerns regarding excessive force or racial inequities.

“  
*Suspending K9 operations did not lead to a significant increase in officer injuries ... it also did not lead to a decrease in suspect injuries [or] an increase in suspect resistance.*  
”

- **Enhance Data Collection:** Agencies must improve the scope and precision of their data on K9 deployments. Partnerships with academic researchers can help refine data gathering and analysis techniques, ensuring that future policy decisions draw on reliable, evidence-based insights.
- **Prepare for Community Engagement:** Leaders should anticipate public queries about the new evidence, particularly the lack of support for claims that K9 units reduce officer injury. Transparent communication strategies, open forums, and well-articulated policy explanations can maintain trust even as long-cherished practices come under scrutiny.
- **Constrain K9 Deployments:** Given the intrusive nature of a dog bite, agencies may consider limiting deployments to only serious violent offenses. Such an approach tempers the inherent risks while retaining K9 utility in high-stakes situations.
- **Implement Pilot Programs:** Pilot initiatives that refine or reduce K9 usage in line with these findings could yield indispensable data for future policy frameworks. Systematic monitoring and rigorous analysis of these trials can then inform broader adoption or revision.

This study arrives at a moment of heightened interest in policing practices, as several jurisdictions weigh partial or complete bans on the use of K9s for suspect apprehension and crowd control. While the study’s results are striking, they are far from definitive proof of what would happen if departments across the United States shuttered their K9 units. Instead, they prompt a more measured conversation, urging policymakers to forgo rapid, anecdote-driven reactions in favor of disciplined, multifaceted decision-making. Engaging the best available data, practitioner insights, and community voices is the surest path to crafting K9 policies that are both effective and just.

Like many historic turning points in the evolution of policing—whether the introduction of fingerprinting, motorized patrols, or the adoption of body-worn cameras—this present reappraisal of K9 use rests at the intersection of institutional tradition and empirical scrutiny. By embracing further research and dialogue, police leaders can ensure that a practice that first took root in 19th-century Belgium remains fit for a 21st-century democracy. ♡

NOTES:

<sup>1</sup>Randall T. Loder and Cory Meixner, “The Demographics of Dog Bites Due To K-9 (Legal Intervention) in the United States,” *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine* 65 (July 2019): 9–14.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel G. Chapman, *Police Dogs in North America* (Charles C. Thomas, 1990).

<sup>3</sup>Ryan Sandrin, Rylan Simpson, and Janne E. Gaub, “An Experimental Examination of the Perceptual Paradox Surrounding Police Canine Units,” *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 19 (2023): 1021–1031; Ryan Sandrin, Rylan Simpson and Janne E. Gaub, “Working Like a Dog: A Mixed-Method Study of Public Support for Police Dogs and Their Utilities,” *Anthrozoös* 37, no. 5 (2024): 939–958.

<sup>4</sup>Charlie Mesloh, “Barks or Bites? The Impact of Training on Police Canine Force Outcomes,” *Police Practice and Research* 7, no. 4 (September 2006): 323–335.

This article is adapted from Ian T. Adams, Scott M. Mourtgos, Kyle McLean, and Geoffrey P. Alpert, “De-fanged,” *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 20 (2024): 695–716.

# Fostering Support for All

**WHEN A PUBLIC SAFETY CENTER IN OREGON CHOSE TO PARTNER WITH THE CLATSOP COUNTY ANIMAL ASSISTANCE, THEY HAD PLANNED TO OBTAIN A DOG THAT WOULD IMPROVE THE MENTAL HEALTH OF THEIR EMPLOYEES.**

What they did not anticipate at the time was that a mutually beneficial relationship would form between human and dog.

Senior Dispatcher Jodie Frost originally had a plan to start a certified therapy dog program inside the dispatch center, which is colocated in a public safety building with police and fire. However, knowing that the local animal shelter was constantly over capacity and seeking foster homes, Frost pivoted away from a therapy dog program and focused her sights on a foster program.

The goal became to help shelter dogs find a permanent home while taking advantage of the dog's positive impact on the workplace. After speaking with her communications manager, Frost presented the idea of fostering shelter dogs to the chief of the Astoria Police Department. As a former K9 handler,



Chief Stacy Kelly supported the idea, gained approval from the city manager, and started a trial period.

The Clatsop County Animal Assistance (which is operated by the Clatsop County Sheriff Department) works closely with Astoria's public safety center to ensure that dogs selected for the program have the proper temperament. Due to the nature of police work and the emotional support the program is meant to provide to employees, dogs that show aggression to humans or have proven destructive are not chosen.

Kalani was the first dog the public safety center received on July 2, 2024. She was four years old and had spent three years in a shelter. When she started to show signs of kennel aggression, employees of the Clatsop County Animal Assistance knew Kalani needed a better environment if she was ever going to be adopted. When she arrived at the center, Kalani was very shy, but she slowly came out of her shell to become more affectionate. "This initiative is crucial because it improves the mental and physical health of our public safety employees and helps find permanent homes for dogs that might otherwise not be adopted," said Chief Kelly.

Although the program helps to get dogs ready for adoption, it also plays a major role in the emotional and physical well-being of the center's employees. During stressful calls, dispatchers would often find Kalani leaning against their legs even though she had not received formal therapy training. The dispatchers reported that having her in the center was soothing during difficult times. As a result, Kalani was invited to attend various events and meetings, such as peer support debriefs, to help put first responders at ease. Similar scenarios have been recounted for the center's foster dogs following Kalani. The dogs also promote physical fitness within the dispatch, fire, and police agencies. Although employees



were encouraged to take breaks and work out if staffing was sufficient, very few previously took advantage of this incentive. Now, dispatchers, police officers, and firefighters often take the dogs on walks or runs throughout the neighborhoods surrounding the public safety building.


During these walks, the dogs are equipped with a bandana that reads "Adopt Me." The goal is to talk to as many people as possible to inform them of the foster program. The foster dogs are brought out of the dispatch center any time there is an event happening. Social media has also played a major role in the adoption of the dogs, with the Astoria Police, Astoria Fire, and Clatsop County Animal Assistance Facebook pages highlighting the program.

There are several risk factors that came with the adoption of the foster program, including financial expenses, vet responsibilities, and human phobias. The Astoria Dispatch Center entered a memorandum of understanding with the Clatsop County Animal Assistance outlining that they were responsible for all dog costs, including food and veterinary expenses. Because the dogs would be primarily held in the

dispatch center, it was ensured that no employees had any allergies or phobias of concern. Before starting the program, a policy was created outlining employee responsibilities and expectations.

Since its start in July 2024, the program has successfully found families for four dogs. The fifth will continue working within the public safety center to ensure that employees are maintaining their physical and mental health. ♡



 Follow Foster Dogs of APD Dispatch on Facebook to learn more about the foster dogs and program benefits.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Astoria Public Safety Center provides the following advice on implementing a foster dog program:

- Do research on why the program is important and which temperament is best for the environment.
- Prepare a draft policy outlining employee responsibilities and expectations.
- Engage with internal stakeholders as soon as possible.



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# Engagement

## from Day One

Building Community-Focused Officers

*Image courtesy of  
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**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT HAS BECOME A CENTRAL FOCUS OF MODERN POLICING, PARTICULARLY IN THE WAKE OF HIGH-PROFILE INCIDENTS IN RECENT YEARS AND GROWING PUBLIC SCRUTINY.** The traditional enforcement-centric model of policing is rapidly giving way to a community-centered approach. This shift is not just about improving public relations; it represents a fundamental reimagining of the role of the police in society.

Studies have shown that public trust is crucial to effective policing. A 2023 report by the *Journal of Participatory Research Methods* found that neighborhoods with higher levels of police-community trust experienced lower crime rates and greater cooperation in investigations. These findings underscore the importance of cultivating strong, positive relationships between police and the communities they serve. However, accomplishing this requires more than policies or occasional outreach—it demands a shift in how we train officers, beginning on their very first day.

## THE GENESIS OF A NEW APPROACH

During his tenure as commander of Recruitment and Training at the Alexandria, Virginia, Police Department (APD), Lieutenant Marcus Downey recognized a disconnect between his agency's training methods and the real-world needs of modern policing. While the academy did an excellent job preparing recruits in technical skills—such as enforcing laws and responding to emergencies—it fell short in fostering the community engagement skills that are essential in today's policing landscape.

This realization grew over time. Through years of observation, conversations with both new recruits and veteran officers, and listening to community feedback, Lieutenant Downey realized that the training approach needed to evolve. A pivotal moment occurred during a conversation Lieutenant Downey had with a resident who expressed her desire for officers to be more than just enforcers of the law; she and her fellow residents wanted officers to be engaged, active members of the community.

In response, Lieutenant Downey initiated a program that, at the time, was groundbreaking for the department. APD mandated that new recruits participate in community engagement events before they even entered the police academy. These activities included delivering Meals on Wheels to homebound residents, collecting and distributing groceries to disadvantaged families, or preparing meals at local homeless shelters. The goal was simple: teach new officers that the department is relationship-focused and that their role extends beyond enforcement.

## THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE PROGRAM

The decision to integrate community engagement before recruits even began formal police training was deliberate. Psychological research supports the idea that first impressions and early experiences shape long-term attitudes and behaviors. Studies show that early exposure to positive community interactions can prime individuals to view their role through a community-oriented lens, which has lasting effects on decision-making and behavior.

By placing community service at the forefront of a new recruit's career, APD sets clear expectations that relationship-building and service are core to the job. This early "priming" was not only about shaping behavior—it was about fundamentally altering the way new officers perceive their roles within the community. The goal was to ensure that officers viewed themselves not just as law enforcers but as guardians of the community who engage with residents in meaningful, positive ways.

The agency emphasized that community service and engagement were not optional add-ons to policing, but integral to officers' duties. This message was reinforced through the interview process, academy training, and ongoing professional development, creating a culture where officers internalized these values from the outset.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND INITIAL RESULTS

Implementing this new approach required careful coordination with community partners and thoughtful integration into the recruitment process. APD worked with local nonprofits, schools, and shelters to design a structured schedule of volunteer opportunities that each new recruit would complete before beginning their formal training at the academy.

The recruits' responses were overwhelmingly positive. While some were surprised at the unconventional start to their careers, many found the experience deeply rewarding. One recruit, reflecting on his time volunteering at a local food bank, said,

*I signed up to be a police officer to help people, but I always imagined that would mean responding to emergencies or solving crimes. This experience showed me that there are so many other ways we can make a difference in our community.*

This sentiment was shared by many. The agency observed a notable shift in recruits' attitudes even before they set foot in the academy. They began speaking more about community needs

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and how they could be part of the solution. As they progressed through the academy, these recruits displayed a heightened interest in community policing strategies, often considering the broader impact of their actions during scenario-based training exercises.

## EXTENDING THE APPROACH TO PATROL

The success of this program with new recruits prompted a natural question: Could this philosophy be extended to veteran patrol officers? When Lieutenant Downey transitioned back to patrol, he saw an opportunity to test this idea.

Traditionally, community engagement had been the responsibility of a specialized unit. While effective, this structure reinforced the notion that community outreach was a separate function from regular policing duties. To challenge this notion, APD began involving patrol officers in the same types of community programs as the recruits.

One of the initiatives involved having patrol officers read to elementary school students. This initiative served dual purposes: it provided a valuable service to the schools, and it allowed officers to interact with children in a positive, non-enforcement setting. Additionally, patrol officers took tours of school buildings to familiarize themselves with the layouts, preparing for any emergency situations that might arise.

The reaction to these initiatives was mixed at first. Some officers embraced the opportunity, while others were skeptical, seeing it as a departure from their traditional duties. However, over time, attitudes began to shift. Officers reported feeling more connected to the communities they patrolled, and many noted that these positive interactions made their routine duties more effective.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUOUS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It became clear that community engagement should not be relegated to a specialized unit or limited to occasional outreach events. Instead, it needed to be woven into the fabric of everyday policing. This shift reinforced a simple but powerful message: community engagement is not just a public relations tool; it is an essential component of effective policing. Research shows that when individuals perceive police as legitimate and fair, they are more likely to cooperate and engage positively with law enforcement efforts. As psychology and law professor Tom R. Tyler explains in *Why People Cooperate: The Role of Social Motivations*, people are more inclined to cooperate with authorities when they feel respected and treated fairly.

When all officers participate in community engagement, the public sees a department-wide commitment to service and partnership. A study by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2008 found that increased positive interactions between police and community members led to improved perceptions of police legitimacy and increased cooperation with the police. This finding aligns with APD's experience—communities

were more likely to trust and collaborate with officers whom they also saw involved in nonenforcement roles.

Additionally, many officers found that community engagement activities provided a welcome reprieve from the stresses of patrol work. A veteran officer shared that participating in the reading program at a local elementary school gave him a renewed sense of purpose. "It reminded me why I became an officer in the first place," he said, echoing the sentiments of many of his colleagues.

## CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Despite the positive outcomes, the transition to a community-focused model was not without its challenges. Some officers, particularly those with years of experience in traditional policing, viewed community engagement as "soft" policing, a distraction from their core responsibilities. This resistance was understandable but needed to be addressed.

The agency tackled these challenges through a combination of education, leadership, and communication. First, the evidence-based benefits of community policing were explained, showing officers that engagement isn't just about feeling good—it leads to more effective policing. Next, the

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING SIMILAR PROGRAMS

For police agencies considering a similar community engagement program, several best practices emerged from APD's experience:

1. **Start Early:** Introduce community engagement at the earliest stage of an officer's career—ideally before formal police training begins. Early exposure sets the tone for an officer's entire career.
2. **Interview Process:** Inform potential recruits during their hiring interviews to assess their openness to the idea. In many ways, it can become a litmus test for finding candidates who are aligned with the department's vision of community-oriented policing.
3. **Leadership Commitment:** Leadership must visibly support and participate in community engagement activities. When officers see leadership involved, it reinforces the program's importance.
4. **Integration into Daily Duties:** Community engagement should not be seen as a separate task. Officers should be encouraged to integrate engagement into their regular patrol activities.
5. **Ongoing Training:** Provide officers with training in communication, cultural sensitivity, and conflict resolution to ensure effective community interactions.
6. **Measure and Adapt:** Continuously assess the program's effectiveness through data collection and feedback and be willing to make adjustments based on the results.



“This is not just about changing individual behaviors—it’s about reshaping the culture of policing.”

department leaders, including Lieutenant Downey, participated in community engagement activities to demonstrate their commitment. Finally, leaders shared success stories, highlighting instances where community interactions led to positive outcomes in enforcement situations.

Balancing community engagement with traditional policing duties was another challenge. Officers are often overextended, and adding engagement activities to their workloads seemed daunting. To address this, officers were encouraged to view every interaction—whether responding to a call or patrolling a neighborhood—as an opportunity for positive engagement. APD also implemented a flexible scheduling system to ensure that engagement activities didn’t interfere with critical law enforcement responsibilities. Additionally, leadership identified programs in advance so that officers did not have to do so; instead, their role was to attend the event and engage the community.

## MEASURING SUCCESS

Evaluating the success of the community engagement initiatives has been both encouraging and insightful, though less focused on hard data and more on the feedback the agency has received from community partners and officers. The response from schools, nonprofits, and individuals who have interacted with APD officers has been overwhelmingly positive. Teachers and school administrators frequently express their gratitude for the officers’ presence in schools, particularly in roles outside of traditional law enforcement. Nonprofit partners have also shared their appreciation, noting that the officers’ involvement helps build stronger relationships between the police department and the community.

For the officers themselves, the shift in perspective has been profound. Many patrol officers have noted that community engagement has brought a new sense of purpose to their work. One officer described the program as a way to “finally see that patrol work is about much more than just going [from] call to call or writing reports.” Officers now recognize the importance of building relationships with the community in a variety of ways, such as participating in events that allow them to engage with residents in a nonenforcement capacity.

This change in outlook has had a noticeable impact on officer morale. Officers report feeling more connected to the neighborhoods they patrol and are finding unique opportunities to engage with residents that go beyond their routine duties. This sense of fulfillment is evident in their day-to-day work, with many officers becoming more proactive in seeking out ways to contribute to their communities outside of enforcement.

## THE LONG-TERM VISION

The ultimate goal of this approach is to create a new generation of police officers who see community engagement and relationship-building as integral to their roles. This is not just about changing individual behaviors—it’s about reshaping the culture of policing.

In the long term, the APD team envisions a police force that is viewed not as an occupying force but as an integral part of the community fabric. Officers who are trained from day one to prioritize community relationships are more likely to approach their duties with empathy, understanding, and a genuine commitment to public service. Research routinely shows that communities with higher levels of engagement-focused policing report significantly greater trust in the police.

To achieve this vision, sustained commitment from department leadership is essential. Community engagement cannot be treated as a temporary initiative. It requires ongoing investment in training, resources, and leadership participation to remain effective.

## CONCLUSION

Shifting from an enforcement-focused model to a community-oriented approach requires time, effort, and a rethinking of how agencies train and develop officers. By instilling community-focused values from day one and reinforcing them throughout an officer’s career, police departments can foster stronger relationships with the communities they serve.

The successes experienced at APD demonstrate that this approach works. Officers who engage with their communities are more effective, more satisfied with their work, and more trusted by the public. While every department is unique and will need to adapt this model to its own needs, the core principle remains engagement from day one.

The future of policing depends not on more aggressive enforcement but on deeper relationships. From the first day on the job, every officer has the opportunity to build trust; foster understanding; and create safer, more connected communities. ♡

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# MODERNIZING Patrol Operations

**BY**  
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**IN THE FALL OF 2022, THE VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, POLICE DEPARTMENT (VPD) EMBARKED ON AN INITIATIVE TO MODERNIZE ITS PATROL OPERATIONS IN A DRIVE TO BECOME A MORE INTELLIGENCE-LED ORGANIZATION.** For most police services, similar projects typically involve the creation of a high-tech operations command center (OCC) and other management oversight initiatives. While not debating the value of an OCC, what is often overlooked are efforts to enhance the core capabilities of frontline patrol officers and the implementation of technology that can empower these same officers with the tools necessary to be proactive in addressing issues within the

community. Patrol police officers are often the first point of contact when a situation arises, and they must manage a range of problems, often with limited resources and time. Patrol officers must deal with emerging situations as they develop. Considering this reality, the VPD sought to bring mission-critical resources to the police vehicle, as this is the primary “office” from which most police officers operate. The challenge was to implement a modernized system that could bridge information gaps and provide critical intelligence in real time, without overwhelming officers with information.

## IDENTIFYING PATROL CONSIDERATIONS

The initial step in this process involved gathering feedback from patrol officers to gain information and perspective. This could not be a top-down initiative, but rather, it needed to operationalize a range of needs and wants into an actionable plan. During

the feedback and engagement process, several key themes emerged. First, officers were already inundated with competing stimuli such as smart radios, cellphones, records management systems (RMS), and computer-aided dispatch systems (CAD)—to name the greatest drivers for attention. These systems require substantial training and the required record keeping, a byproduct of modern policing, often dominates an officer’s time. Therefore, it was critical that the new system did not add to the existing bureaucracy—it had to be easy to use and require minimal training.

Second, the information provided must be relevant to the circumstance. In practical terms, what this means is that results cannot cover a broad geographic area necessitating the officer to vet and parse the results to requirements at their current location. For example, general bulletins on crime trends are of little value when an officer is dealing with a rash of residential burglaries within their patrol area.





The system must display mission-critical information in easily digestible segments that can be skimmed in seconds and used to formulate a plan of action. Any solution required substantive context and operational utility framed in a manner that facilitates officer-initiated problem-solving.

Third, the resource provided must be relevant to a wide range of possible scenarios and not limited to select situations. The dynamic nature of policing means that a different set of tools is needed to help resolve each call and situation.

Given these key themes, it became apparent to the VPD project team that it would be extremely difficult to develop a system that contained a wide range of information yet was also narrowly focused enough to be relevant to emerging issues.

## IDENTIFYING MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

The same solution that fulfilled patrol's requirements had to meet the needs of management and address the requirements necessary to support an OCC. From a management perspective, the goal was to improve the coordination of police resources at a citywide level and to create an infrastructure able to respond to evolving situations in real time. Management's range of uses and requirements somehow had to fit within the framework of a system designed for patrol officers.

### OCC Models

To put into context, real-time operations centers have a very specific purpose and function—to provide centralized, real-time operational control for improved operational function and

efficiency. While administrators are responsible for fiscal responsibility and transparency, the technology needed to support frontline officers does not always coincide with improved productivity and accountability. The approach used to examine the requirements and capabilities needed for the VPD management team was quite different from that used for patrol. The systems used within these environments are generally built with oversight as a primary consideration and to create a mechanism for tracking various metrics on the performance of patrol teams. The dichotomy between the complexities of organizational planning and advancement and the real-time unique circumstances patrol officers face were primary considerations.

In order to “get it right” and learn from the past experiences of other police services, the project team examined a range of successful implementations noted in academic and law enforcement publications. While the literature review proved valuable and contextualized some of the challenges and strengths of the various approaches and models, the next step involved direct engagement with police services across Canada. York Regional Police, Ontario; Calgary Police Service, Alberta; Toronto Police Service, Ontario; and Peel Regional Police, Ontario, stood out as aspirational. Each of these police services had some form of an OCC and their own customized version of an operations dashboard that supported a range of functions and capabilities.

Depending on the police service, there appeared to be two methodologies for OCC operations, which in turn influenced the technology that was implemented to support each model. One approach tended to focus on the command center supporting patrol units and managing priority calls. The technology to support this model relied on geographic information systems (GIS) technology to display police units and calls for service (911 calls), in order to provide real-time situational awareness. This big picture awareness, in turn, assisted operations command staff in making informed decisions, such as reallocating resources for serious incidents and providing real-time tactical assistance to patrol units.

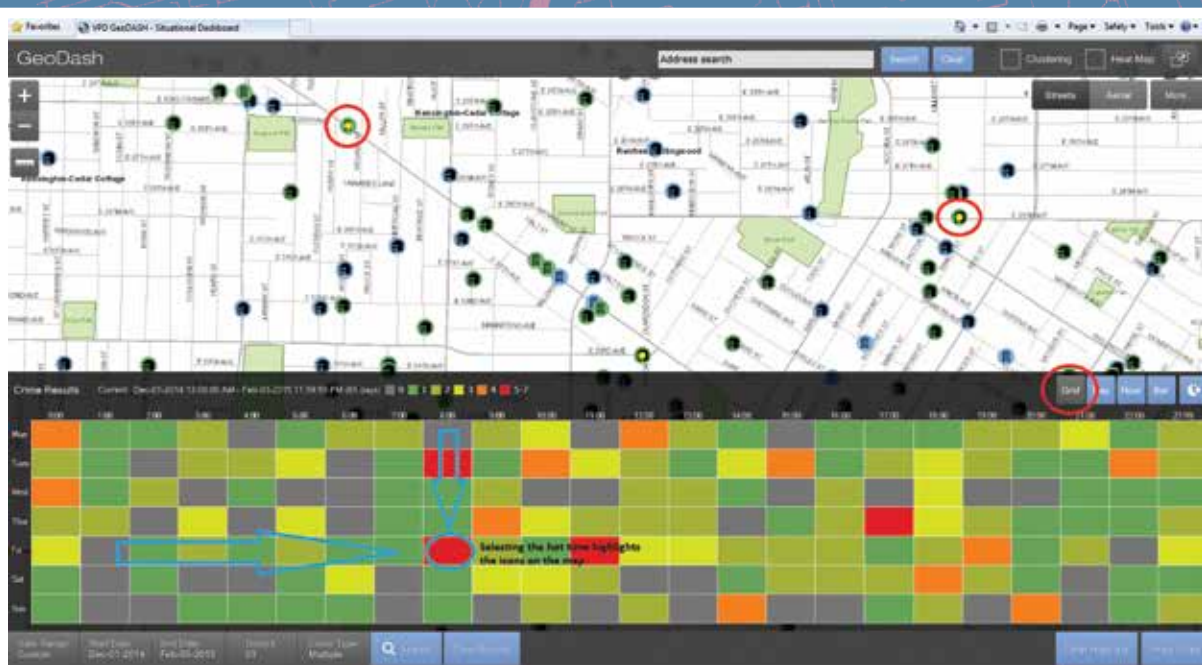
The second approach tended to focus on metrics and efficiency. These OCC structures examined response times to priority calls, call load comparisons (number of calls for service per unit), the distribution of incidents by policing boundaries, and how calls were being tasked (resource allocation).

While these two OCC approaches were modeled differently—influencing how technology was implemented and applied—neither included technology and resources accessible by frontline patrol officers nor empowered them to be self-sufficient. This information did allow the OCC to task additional resources when needed, redistribute patrol units according to demand, and triage calls to ensure a consistent level of service across policing boundaries. In addition, while many of the command centers provided real-time support to frontline officers, they employed a top-down approach where a more modern, officer-led approach was needed—one that communicated with patrol officers, heard what they needed, and addressed those barriers. The focus was on the front lines, but not *for* the front lines.

## A HYBRID SOLUTION

Based on this environmental scan, including an examination of best practices and evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of past initiatives, the VPD project team decided to embark on a hybrid model that incorporated features required by both stakeholder groups: frontline officers and command staff. At its core, the project objective was grounded in achieving improvements in both officer situational awareness and organizational resource efficiency. To begin, this approach required a technology solution that addressed the needs of both groups and that did not result in siloed systems that operated in a segregated environment.

It became clear that an integrated approach with interoperability hardcoded into system architecture was required. The solution could not predominantly cater to command staff; instead, it needed to empower frontline officers with the information and knowledge to assist in their



**FIGURE 1.** VPD GeoDASH Grid Display

day-to-day decision-making and proactive engagements. To this end, the project team explored ways to leverage its existing infrastructure, GeoDASH, and capitalize on officer familiarity with an already established user interface. This approach helped to reduce the overall cost of the project and assisted with the adoption of technology by minimizing the training required. The VPD's existing GeoDASH system was identified as meeting those requirements, as it had already been deployed to patrol officers several years ago and was widely accepted as a valuable patrol resource. As an established tool within patrol, there was already an existing training program in place and high user acceptance.

## User Interface

The existing GeoDASH system provided a visual representation of crime incidents (RMS data) that could be displayed on a map. The system included built-in analytic tools, such as the ability to display clusters of incidents by time of day and day of week within temporally linked crime patterns. In the past, the ability to generate geo-temporal analysis was limited to highly trained analysts who needed advanced GIS to perform the analysis. This ability had now trickled down to frontline police officers, who now possess the ability to conduct these same analyses with a few simple taps on the screen.

The same system served multiple purposes, forecasting crime locations from the predictive policing system could be displayed. The predictive policing system was also well established within patrol—officers could access crime forecasts on their mobile data terminals (MDTs) and display residential and commercial burglaries), as well as thefts from autos and thefts of autos at two-hour intervals throughout the day. The value of the GeoDASH system was well established, with an array of customizations and enhancements that were frequently driven by patrol officer feedback and suggestions. This responsiveness and ease of access helped to maintain the relevance of the system where important information such as building floor plans, gang activity, and critical infrastructure were easily accessible.

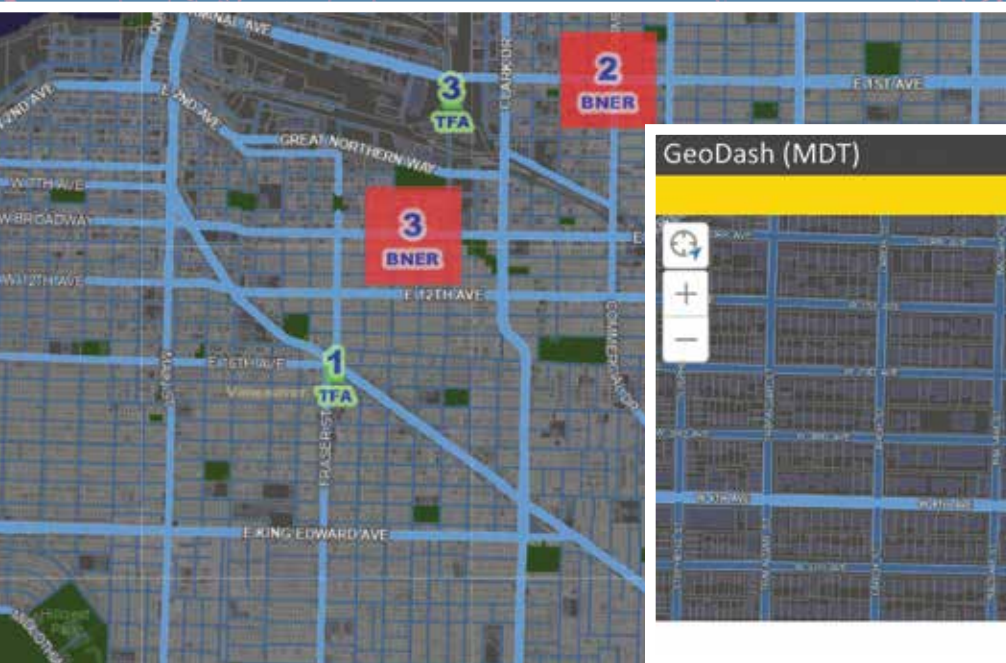
## Challenges

When examining capacity gaps and opportunities for improvement, management realized early on that significant efficiency and resource saving could be gained if existing technology and infrastructure could be adapted to serve an additional role of enabling real-time situational awareness. It also became apparent that bridging the gap between patrol officers and command staff could not be completely addressed with a single integrated solution. While many features could be retooled for disparate

clients and purposes, the oversight and performance metrics requirements of the OCC precluded a single solution. A completely new system was needed that would interact with the GeoDASH but be exclusively focused on tracking performance metrics and improving efficiency to separately address the needs of management. While interoperability was an overriding consideration, there was also the need to maintain a straightforward user experience to ensure the earlier identified challenges of information overload and complexity did not derail the goal of empowering patrol officers.

## THE IMPLEMENTATION

The VPD project team first embarked on the project by looking for ways to adapt the existing GeoDASH system to ingest real-time data. Specifically, the data required CAD data, primarily 911 calls for service details and information on police units, such as their current status and location. These data needed to be provided in a manner where the primary "client"—frontline patrol officers—could glean mission-critical information in a format that met their operational needs. The OCC, the secondary client, needed the same real-time information. However, the data they needed included unit availability, tactical resources, and specialty units such as emergency response teams (ERTs) or negotiators, which are all needed to manage serious incidents in a coordinated approach.



**FIGURE 2.** GeoDASH Predictive Policing/Forecasting View

### Operations Awareness Mode

As previously noted, there are few systems on the market that account for the needs of patrol officers, and officers are often saturated with information overload from multiple sources. The challenge was to distill mission-critical information into manageable segments that had relevance to the moment at hand and that could be displayed on the cellular-connected laptops mounted in the police vehicles, commonly referred to as MDTs.

To this end, the concept of an Operations Awareness (Ops Awareness) mode was explored, whereby only the most pertinent information associated to the

immediate vicinity of the patrol vehicle would be displayed. Specifically, Ops Awareness mode used the GPS/mobile network to determine the officer's current location to help frame the data to be displayed and to continually update as the officer's location changed.

To further minimize distractions, the system was designed to provide proximity alerts for crime incidents that occurred within the past five days. This approach also eliminated the risk of information overload by displaying only the most relevant and mission-critical incidents as the officer patrolled their area of responsibility. When a user activated this mode, it would determine the officer's location

via the MDT and display crime incidents (using the integrated RMS data) that occurred within a 300-meter proximity of their location.

When the Ops Awareness mode is activated on an MDT running GeoDASH, the map automatically centers on the officer's vehicle, which is indicated as a blue dot. A yellow header bar at the top of the screen then appears whenever new crime incidents are detected within 300 meters of the traveling vehicle. The yellow bar indicates the number of crime incidents on the screen, which are highlighted in bright fuchsia, with a label clearly identifying the type of incident.

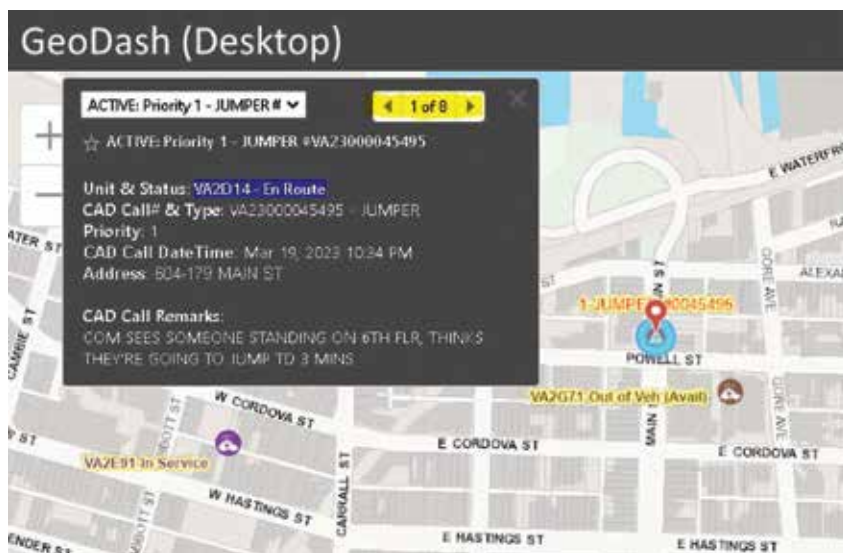
Further, by simply tapping any of the displayed icons, an officer can read the police incident synopsis text without having to switch to another system for details. In addition, nearby patrol units and active calls are displayed in real time. The unit ID and CAD call number are visible on the display, and a police officer can select each icon for further details, such as an overview of the 911 call or the location of a responding cover unit.

### Detailed Subject Information

During the officer engagement and interview process, patrol officers reiterated the need for detailed information on a range of subjects. One of these details included instantly accessible floor plans for bars, restaurants, shopping centers, transit stations, sports



**FIGURE 3.** GeoDASH Operations Awareness Mode



**FIGURE 4.** Real-Time Active Calls



FIGURE 5. Location of Cover Units (backup)



FIGURE 7. Priority Patrol Zones

arenas, and public places. This list also included schools, hospitals, and other locations where there existed a potential for a critical incident.

Further, interviewees identified Bar and Restaurant Watch locations and gang incidents as a high need, from an officer safety perspective, but also in terms of ensuring public safety through consistent enforcement. Bar and Restaurant Watch initiatives were both launched in 2008 after a string of violent crimes in restaurants and bars. They provide a safer environment for patrons by removing inadmissible gang members and persons who pose a risk to public safety. Officers can check a customer's background and remove them from the premises if they have a record of violent gang activity. The system was further enhanced with real-time gang activity and enforcement actions, such as recent curfew checks or compliance checks, to

better inform patrol officers of areas of concern requiring additional attention. The VPD Trespass Prevention Program was also incorporated into the system, which operates in a similar fashion, and authorizes police to take action when presented with persons causing a disturbance on private property.

### Priority Patrol Zones

Other highlights of the solution include the location of stolen and recovered vehicles across the metro Vancouver area, forensic video locations, and patrol zones. Patrol zones were designed specifically with the OCC in mind, as this function provides the capability to monitor zones across the City of Vancouver and provide alerts to the OCC when any area was omitted from a police patrol beyond specific thresholds.

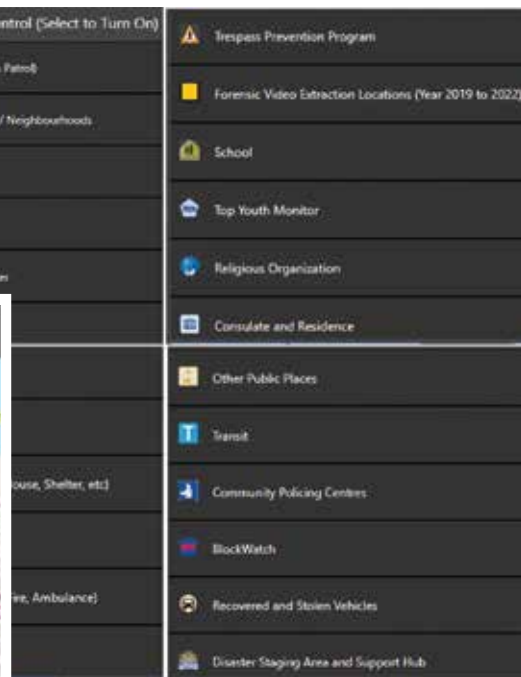
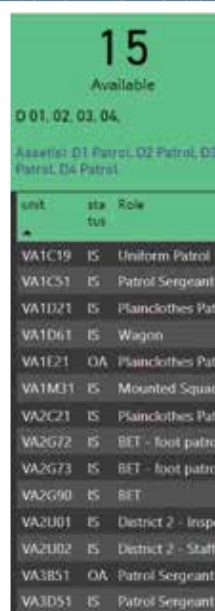


FIGURE 6. Tactical Layers



A unique feature that was introduced to the solution allowed for the creation of priority patrol zones (PPZ), whereby district commanders can designate a specific area for high-intensity patrols in response to an emerging issue. For example, if a developing crime problem was identified through crime analysis, such as a clustering of a series of distraction thefts taking place, the area being targeted could be designated as a PPZ, with a requirement for the area to be intensely patrolled at a minimum of every 30 minutes.

The OCC could then monitor the zone and if there was a lapse in patrols, the designated zone would change to a bright yellow color indicating the PPZ needed attention. This new method of designating and monitoring PPZ provides a real-time assessment tool, whereby the OCC can ensure that at-risk areas of the community are receiving adequate police attention.



FIGURE 8. OCC OpsDASH

## OCC OPSDASH

In tandem with the development of the GeoDASH CAD System, an OCC OpsDASH was also being designed and implemented. This system was created exclusively to support the OCC by providing real-time metrics on call load, response times, and resource availability. OpsDASH is a fully interactive system, whereby the user can select which district (policing area) or specialty unit to display and which priority level to render. The OCC and district commanders can monitor response times in real time for priority 1 and 2 calls, as well as the forecasted call load for the day, based on an average of the previous six weeks for the same day of the week. OCC staff have the ability to monitor the number of priority calls, the availability of specialty resources, and historical call load by hour and day compared to the previous month and the same period the previous year. Unit detail includes those teams with less lethal options such as beanbag guns or trained negotiators. In addition, specialty resources such as ERTs and Dog Squad (K9 teams) could be easily identified and coordinated during critical incidents.

While OpsDASH functions primarily as a performance metrics system, the system was designed to interact with GeoDASH, whereby specialty units or active calls could be pushed to GeoDASH to display the physical location of the unit or calls, in addition to the operations details such as the residences of known gangsters or persons released on bail conditions.

## BRIDGING INFORMATION GAPS IN REAL TIME

To summarize, the VPD's development of a real-time module within GeoDASH was premised on supporting frontline officers with cutting-edge technology that would truly enable proactive policing using a uniquely combined bottom-up and top-down approach. The long-term impact of empowering patrol officers with the tools and resources to manage complex daily challenges also serves to satisfy administrative strategic goals to deliver effective police services and establish safe and engaged community service by strategically deploying appropriate resources. Through the research and fact-finding process, it was discovered that most police services focus almost exclusively on equipping and building capacity in their OCC. In many instances, patrol officers become the "clients" of an OCC, whereby support is managed through a hierarchical process. In the past, it has been uncommon practice for frontline officers to be the focus of patrol modernization and optimization initiatives.

In contrast to what is typical, the VPD prioritized patrol officers as the primary users requiring enhanced capacity development through the introduction of mobile accessible technology. The drive toward empowering patrol officers with the ability to be proactive and self-reliant became the focus of the technology innovation. Simplified interfaces, such

as the Ops Awareness module, were premised on reducing information overload by providing only situationally relevant details, in tandem with the ability to access a multitude of resources and details that were typically reserved for analytics staff. This shift in thinking, derived from interviewing patrol officers and understanding their needs, helped shape and operationalize these ideas into an actionable plan. The next logical step involved the development of key metrics and resource allocation tools that enabled the OCC to ensure patrol operations were functioning at peak efficiency. In the end, the needs of both patrol officers and OCC staff were addressed by approaching the challenge using existing systems with a newly constructed paradigm. ♡

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# Finding a **SHARED PURPOSE**

## Connecting Policing and Community Partners for Mass Violence Incidents

**AS POLICE PROFESSIONALS KNOW, ONE PHONE CALL CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING. AT 9:25 P.M. ON JUNE 17, 2015, CHIEF MULLEN RECEIVED THE CALL NO POLICE CHIEF EVER WANTS TO GET—A CALL THAT WOULD CHANGE HIS LIFE. HIS DEPUTY CHIEF INFORMED CHIEF MULLEN THAT THERE HAD BEEN A SHOOTING AT A LOCAL AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCH, A PLACE KNOWN FOR ITS SIGNIFICANT SYMBOLISM AND HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE ACROSS THE U.S. EAST COAST.** There were multiple victims. This moment would set the stage for what would become a lesson in the power of connections, partnerships, and the true essence of public safety leadership in times of crisis.

When that call came, Chief Mullen had been a police officer for 30 years, including 25 years in formal leadership positions and 9 as the chief of police in Charleston, South Carolina. During those three decades, he had faced many crises, including mass fatality homicides, vehicle crashes, protests and riots, hurricanes, ice storms, and a catastrophic fire.

When he left his home that night, Chief Mullen knew this would be a defining moment for him, the Charleston Police Department, their partners, and the community. It would change everyone involved. In the moments after the call, Chief Mullen also realized that he was joining a group of chiefs of police who had led or would lead their

organizations and communities through a hate-inspired mass violence incident (MVI) and its far-reaching impact. At that moment, he could not have imagined just how deeply this singular event would affect him personally and all those involved in the response.

When Chief Mullen first arrived in Charleston as the police chief, he quickly immersed the organization in developing its knowledge and skills in incident command peer support; joint operations with local, state, and federal partners; and community outreach.

The police department forged partnerships and alliances with nontraditional public safety agencies, allowing the partners to address community issues that extended beyond the traditional scope of policing. They committed time, energy, and resources to service organizations and community initiatives, building deep, trusting relationships anchored in a shared purpose: creating an environment where collaboration and understanding foster safe, healthy communities and hope for everyone. It was a bold purpose that connected the police, their partners, and the community.

Over the years, the Charleston Police Department continued to work hard to strengthen and expand a culture of collaboration, unity of purpose, and trust, both internally and externally. However, Chief Mullen often wondered if their



**BY**

Gregory Mullen, Chief (Ret.), Charleston Police Department, South Carolina, Consultant, National Mass Violence Center, and Elizabeth Cronin, Esq., Associate Academic Program Director, National Mass Violence Center

## THE COMMUNITY TRAUMA OF HATE CRIMES

As the former director of the New York State Office of Victim Services (OVS), I experienced the jarring notification of mass violence incidents several times. Most recently, on a bright May Saturday afternoon in 2022, while on a weekend trip, I learned that there had been a shooting in Buffalo, New York, at the Tops Friendly Markets (a supermarket). Reports were sketchy, but it was clear that there were multiple fatalities and injuries, and the shooter was arrested. It appeared to be a hate-motivated crime. OVS had planned for and responded to a number of MVIs, but every response feels like the first in some ways. You never feel fully prepared. I called the governor's office, my senior staff, our press officer, and advocates in Buffalo to assess the situation. It was clear that OVS needed to deploy to Buffalo as soon as possible and set up at the Family Assistance Center to provide support and resources such as victim compensation. I left my trip to head

home to get ready to travel to Buffalo. I ended up making seven trips to Buffalo over the next year.

As a former special victims' prosecutor, I was very aware of the trauma that the victims and community were experiencing. It was likely that the hate crime would exacerbate fear and trauma and would require a different kind of response, including working with unique partners trusted in the community. Fortunately, we had established many of those relationships. But we were asking ourselves what else we were going to need, who was going to lead the response effort, what were the specific and overall needs going to be and how could we meet them? As victim advocates, we knew that any response must be victim-centered, trauma-informed and culturally sensitive, particularly because this was a hate crime directed at the entire community.

—Elizabeth Cronin, Esq.

efforts were resonating broadly—frequently asking himself questions that likely echo in the minds of public safety leaders everywhere:

- Is the information the agency is communicating resonating with internal and external stakeholders?
- Is the agency's work making a difference in the community?
- Is the agency's focus on cultural change achieving the desired results?

This foundation proved crucial for handling the unthinkable: an MVI that tested all preparation, resources, and resolve.

As the night unfolded, it was discovered that the incident was carried out by a white supremacist intent on inciting a race war. He had killed nine parishioners during their Wednesday night Bible study after spending an hour with them. During their closing prayer, he drew a Glock pistol and opened fire. He left one survivor intentionally to spread the shooter's message, and four others survived through remarkable strength and courage.

That call initiated a comprehensive public safety and community response that would continue for months. It tested Chief Mullen's leadership and character and the connections the police department had built over the previous eight years. It would also provide answers to the three questions previously cited.

This story, regrettably, is just one among many around the world. MVIs have become all too familiar, occurring anywhere, at any time. As communities face the harsh reality that no person or place is immune to such tragedies, the need for effective response strategies becomes paramount. First responders, who are at the forefront of these crises, understand the stakes involved. While disaster planning is an essential government function, effective response to mass violence requires unique tools: deep, trusting connections and cross-sector collaboration.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTIONS AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Joe Riley, the former mayor of Charleston, often reminded his staff, "Disasters find you where you are at a specific moment." This insight is especially relevant as communities across the globe face what can feel like daily MVIs that challenge them to their cores. In times of crisis, the bonds forged before disaster strikes can significantly influence outcomes. This reality underscores the importance of proactive partnerships to ensure that, when tragedy strikes, communities can rely on the trust built over time.

Having both led responses to mass violence incidents—including some that were hate-based—the authors understand that building the right connections before a crisis is essential.



These relationships minimize chaos and ensure that victims, survivors, families, and responders receive the support they need. As one emergency manager aptly noted, “Don’t wait until after the event to get everyone’s business cards.”

General Stanley McChrystal, in his book *Team of Teams*, highlights how rigid military structures struggled against agile terrorist tactics in Iraq, emphasizing the importance of a collaborative environment to overcome such challenges. He writes, “When teams are fused by a common purpose, they become quick and adaptable.” This lesson resonates deeply for public safety leaders, where effective crisis response depends on diverse organizations uniting to tackle complex issues.

Building multidisciplinary teams *before* a crisis enhances response capabilities by bringing together various entities—public safety, government services, the faith community, medical services, and nonprofits. Such collaborations foster resource sharing and build trust, enabling seamless linkages between organizations and allowing them to adapt and respond effectively to changing circumstances.

## THE CHALLENGE OF CONNECTIVITY

How can leaders create and sustain vital connections among organizations with diverse resources and expertise during crises? Public safety leaders have long recognized that ensuring a safe environment requires collective engagement. By shifting from reactive to proactive strategies, public safety can be viewed as a complex system that involves multiple players addressing root issues and minimizing harm.

Understanding public safety as a complex system promotes the sharing of a common purpose embraced by the entire community. To achieve this, public safety leaders must adopt a “Both/And” mindset that values both authority and influence.

While formal positions grant leaders the legitimate right to exercise power—enforcing laws, implementing directives, and controlling resources—authority has its limits. The multifaceted challenges communities face today require leaders to recognize that authoritarian leadership alone will not produce the best outcomes. Influence—the ability to shape opinions and behaviors—does not come automatically with authority; it must be earned through collaboration, mutual support, respect, and a willingness to share ideas and resources.

Building influence expands leaders’ abilities to adapt and respond to complex issues. It empowers diverse disciplines to act quickly and effectively, united by a compelling purpose that benefits the community. Influence inspires voluntary followership, creating trust-based relationships built over time, where members share their humanity, passion, and care for the community.

These relationships are particularly crucial when preparing for potential MVIs. Complex incidents require public safety leaders to involve organizations that may not typically fall under traditional safety planning but play a vital role in the community. Understanding the broader implications of mass violence on victims, families, and the community leads to a more holistic response.

By prioritizing collaboration over competition, public safety leaders can cultivate trust-based relationships that break down silos and foster a unified approach. This transformation shifts reactive measures into proactive strategies that effectively address community challenges, building teams capable of quick response, open communication, and informed decision-making. In crises, pre-established, trusting relationships often determine whether responses are chaotic or well-organized.

Therefore, police leaders must continually ask: How can police agencies nurture genuine connections that enhance daily operations, strengthen communities, and ultimately save lives during crises and promote long-term healing?

## AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is a foundational component of a true connection and is essential for building trust and respect. This trust fosters the support and commitment needed to pursue a common purpose, encouraging others to invest their energy and resources into a shared mission. Authenticity goes beyond simply asking for commitment; it cultivates a collective conviction that inspires individuals to contribute freely, achieving results far beyond what any one person could accomplish alone.

Earning trust requires others to know one’s genuine thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Authenticity involves vulnerability, allowing others to see one’s values, struggles, and hopes. By revealing their true selves, police leaders demonstrate shared humanity, acknowledging the same desires and fears as those they serve in their communities. However, building this genuine connection takes time and consistent interaction. Regular engagement with staff and partners, along with open discussions and community transparency during calm times, helps foster connections that move beyond transactional relationships.

Leaders can cultivate collaboration by revealing their authentic selves and acknowledging their limitations. Sharing personal stories and challenges humanizes leadership and encourages open dialogue. When others witness their passion for the work and their commitment to the community, authentic leaders create mutual understanding that shifts traditional rivalries into unified support for a greater purpose. This authenticity becomes the foundation for effective public safety initiatives, ensuring all partners can better serve their communities when they most need support.

Building trust may require reliance on local groups and organizations that have already established credibility in the community. For example, in Buffalo, New York, following the Tops supermarket shooting in 2022, the New York State Office of Victim Services funded case managers and social workers in the SNUG (“Guns” spelled backward) program, an evidence-based street outreach model that works in communities experiencing gun and gang violence. Many of the SNUG team members are those with lived experience in the community and who have strong connections there, acting as credible messengers. They were critical partners in assisting the largely African American community that was targeted by the hate crime.



## PREPAREDNESS

After-action reviews of MVIs consistently highlight that, while complete preparedness is unattainable, certain components are crucial for effective crisis management. These include establishing incident command, activating family assistance, providing mental and behavioral health support, and coordinating volunteer and donation efforts. The successful implementation of these elements heavily depends on strong relationships built on trust and collaboration.

Effective crisis preparedness starts with understanding an organization's capabilities and the strengths of its existing partners. This assessment helps identify unmet needs and evaluate the reliability of organizations ready to respond. Leaders must ensure that the tactics, culture, and response protocols of partner organizations align with community expectations; misalignment can lead to confusion and undermine public confidence.

For example, during MVIs, well-meaning helpers and volunteers, including mental health providers with varied backgrounds, often arrive to assist. However, unless these providers are vetted and integrated into response planning beforehand, their qualifications and capabilities may be unknown. Are they trained in evidence-based trauma response? Good intentions alone do not guarantee effectiveness as mental health providers.

Once assessments are complete, leaders should forge strategic partnerships with those possessing the necessary skills to address identified gaps. During the response to the Mother Emanuel AME Church shooting, long-standing relationships among local, state, and federal law enforcement facilitated seamless coordination. Trust, shared training, and established response protocols enabled effective collaboration during this critical time.

Additionally, partnerships with government and nonprofit organizations enhanced the police department's ability to support the mental and behavioral health needs of victims, survivors, responders, and the community. Engaging with victim support services and integrating mental health professionals into police operations were essential to mobilizing resources effectively for those affected by violence.

Notably, these connections were not based on authority or position but on a shared commitment to serve the community. During the crisis response, egos were set aside as everyone worked toward common goals: protecting the community, providing immediate victim support, and conducting a thorough investigation that led to the successful prosecution of the offender.

These deep relationships and trust within and among organizations were vital for effective preparedness and response, enabling Charleston to navigate the crisis with resilience.



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**FIGURE 1.** National Mass Violence Center, “How to Create a Coordinated, Survivor-Centric Community Response Plan for Mass Violence Incidents.”

The importance of these relationships was also evident during the Buffalo Tops shooting on May 14, 2022. The New York State Office of Victim Services quickly activated its resources. While the office had prepared internally and coordinated with other state agencies, each community and incident is unique. As Police Executive Research Forum Executive Director Chuck Wexler noted, “It comes out of the blue.... there is no ready playbook. [R]esponsibilities in these situations are vast and complex.”

Buffalo Police Department Chief Joe Gramaglia, who led the response, reinforced the importance of prior relationships: “The time to meet your partners is not after something happens but beforehand. We’re all friends. We meet quite frequently.” Preparedness, developed through collaborative training and exercises, proved invaluable when local authorities needed to activate resources and adapt rapidly to the unique challenges of an MVI.

## TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Developing connections and building relationships is essential for an effective community response to both daily emergencies and mass violence incidents. While rallying around a common purpose to keep the community safe is crucial, embracing this idea alone is not enough. Integrating connected parts into a robust response system requires training and education. Any leader knows that verbalizing a desired outcome is easy; however, without the right knowledge, skills, competencies, and practice, implementation when it matters most will fail.

Once connections are established, opportunities to work together during actual events are vital for solidifying confidence and trust. In Charleston, the response to the Mother Emanuel Church shooting was grounded in years of training, education, and practical application. The police department utilized every event—festivals, road races, and concerts—to train and exercise its incident

command structure. These experiences taught the agency about its response capabilities, those of its mutual aid partners, and the contributions of non-public safety partners. These planned responses revealed strengths, identified areas for improvement, and highlighted specific gaps.

This approach of deepening connections and enhancing response capabilities extended to professional services as well. Before the Mother Emanuel Church shooting, regional victim advocates had formed alliances to build capacity and enhance support services. They refined their skills in trauma-informed interventions, which proved pivotal during the initial response. This coordinated

effort allowed for the quick mobilization of victim services professionals at the Family and Relative Center. Additionally, the police department’s partnership with the South Carolina Department of Mental Health, which embedded a mental health clinician within the Family Violence Unit, provided an immediate liaison who coordinated additional short- and long-term resources.

Moreover, a collaboration with the National Crime Victim Research and Treatment Center to support homicide survivors and develop innovative programs for sexual assault awareness and prevention created opportunities to build trust, share expertise, and gain a mutual understanding of the partners’ distinct roles. With a common passion for serving the community, there were no doubts about motives or agendas during the crisis—everyone was focused on enhancing safety, reducing risk, and preventing harm.

These examples illustrate the importance of training, education, and practice in maximizing connections and ensuring the best outcomes when it matters most. Leaders must seize every opportunity to develop and engage both public safety and external partners to strengthen response capabilities and service delivery for those in need.

## CONCLUSION

In June 2024, the FBI released the *Active Shooter Incidents in the United States Report, 2023*, which documented 229 active shooter incidents from 2019 to 2023—an 89 percent increase from the previous period (2014–2018). These incidents occurred in schools, churches, hospitals, businesses, and government buildings, underscoring that mass violence can happen anywhere, at any time. Communities can no longer afford to operate under the philosophy of “It won’t happen here.”

The National Mass Violence Center offers a template of 16 best practices to guide communities in planning and preparation and can assist communities in developing a

plan or augmenting an existing plan (see Figure 1). One of the most critical aspects of this preparation is understanding community resources and establishing relationships in advance. Assessing who has existing relationships with those impacted most by the incident and determining how they can be utilized in the response are critical.

Communities must know who is responsible for what and what resources partners can contribute during a crisis to provide support but not duplicate services. Preparation should include managing volunteers, handling public communications, and coordinating financial donations, as well as other critical components of a comprehensive mass violence response. Do not wait for a crisis to engage the right partners and address these issues. Identify who will manage the Incident Command System and the Family Assistance Center, maintain an up-to-date contact list, identify mental and behavioral health resources, and establish a timeline for training and practice.

While these steps will not eliminate the chaos that accompanies an MVI, they will significantly enhance the effectiveness of the response and outcomes for the community.

These lessons make clear that fostering connections is not just an abstract idea—it is a necessity for effective public safety. By prioritizing collaboration, authenticity, and continuous training, public safety leaders and community

partners can strengthen their collective ability to respond to crises and serve their communities effectively.

Now, more than ever, public safety leaders must seize every opportunity to deepen relationships, break down silos, and build a collaborative network. Together, they can enhance safety, reduce risk, and prevent harm, ensuring that when MVIs occur, all the players respond with unity and purpose. ♡

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BY  
Kelli Crigler, Operations  
Lieutenant, Signal Hill  
Police Department,  
California



# BETTER TOGETHER



## Helping Female Officers Get Over the “Wall”



*It was early morning, on a Saturday. I was in foot pursuit. I ran left, then jerked right. I side-saddled over a short wall. At a full sprint, I scaled a chain-link fence. Whew. I didn't rip my pants. I kept running. Up ahead, a 6-foot retaining wall stood in my way. I jumped. I hooked my right arm and right ankle. Then I swung my left leg over. I landed on both feet. The suspect was nowhere in sight. But there on the ground, my partner lay lifeless in the roadway. Despite the 35 pounds he had on me, I dragged him 10 feet to the safety of the sidewalk. Paramedics were on their way.*

---

*It was early morning, on a Sunday. My partner and I were dispatched to a residential burglary alarm inside a gated condominium complex. Of all the community gate codes we had, we didn't have that one. He looked at me. He looked over at the 8-foot iron gate. He looked back at me. He had seniority. I knew that meant it was me who had to climb over and let us in. I handed him my flashlight to hold. I climbed over. As I dropped to the other side, I heard loud cheering coming from across the street. There, on the front lawn, I saw two elderly women in lawn chairs, enjoying their morning coffee. They yelled, "Yeah! You go girl! You show him how it's done!" I looked at my partner and I laughed. He looked annoyed, shook his head, and hurriedly ushered us inside the complex to find the unit where we had been dispatched.*

---

*Of these two stories, which one is real? The second story is a real on-the-job experience, and it is the only "wall" story in my career that stands out. The first story describes the physical agility test I had to complete to continue moving through the hiring process to become a police recruit, before starting the academy. What do these stories have in common? They were both tests. The first was scored, and if I failed to scale the 6-foot wall, it was an automatic failure of the test. The second was a "test" by my male partner to see if I, a woman, was strong enough to get over the gate. In my 17 years as a police officer, I can count the number of times I have had to climb a wall or a fence on one hand. And yet, I've spent my career overcoming symbolic walls, proving time and time again that I, a woman, belong in policing.*

## **BENEFITS OF FEMALE OFFICERS**

The discussion of gender in policing is not a question of whether men or women are "better" at being police officers. The simple answer is, they are better together. But the reality is, in the United States, the representation of male officers is still significantly higher than female officers, 86.2 percent compared to 13.8 percent, respectively. In spite of this disparity, evidence-based research shows there are substantial benefits of having more female officers. These benefits relate to (1) differences in use of force,

(2) different and potentially more effective communication styles, and (3) gender diversity creating better community policing.

## **USE OF FORCE**

First, some argue female officers use less force and use less excessive force than male officers. Based on 7,365 surveys of arresting officers from six U.S. cities, female officers were less likely to use force than male officers when effecting an arrest. The same study found that female-female officer pairs used less force than male-male officer pairs, as well as

female-male officer pairs. In another study, researchers reviewed use-of-force reports, within a one-year period, submitted by 558 officers, consisting of 476 male and 82 female line-level officers assigned to patrol. A weighted force factor value was assigned to each officer based on the type of force (including lethal) and the type of resistance. The research team found the most significant difference in force between male officers and female officers was the firing of a firearm; male officers accounted for 21 incidents compared to none by the female officers. In 2008, a research team reviewed shooting files over a

“Gender diversity has been found to be a strong predictor of community policing activities, which help build trust in communities ... police agencies with gender diversity had increased community engagement.”

15-year period from a sheriff's office in California. They compared 314 officers who used deadly force during that timeframe to a control group of 334 officers who had not used deadly force. They found the male officers were nearly three times more likely to be involved in shootings than the female officers. Furthermore, in a 2021 study in Chicago, it was found female officers used force 28 percent less frequently than male officers. One study found male officers are nine times more likely than female officers to have an excessive force allegation sustained against them and are almost three times more likely than female officers to be named in a citizen complaint for excessive force.

In Canada, women compose almost 23 percent of the police force. Researchers collected data over a nine-year period between 2010 and 2018 from a large Canadian police agency. The data included officers within constable and corporal ranks, of which 22.7 percent were women and 77.3 percent were men. During that period, 24,605,000 police occurrences were reported, of which 17,155 (0.07 percent) involved use of force. The research team found the odds of female officers being involved in an incident where force was used was two-thirds lower than those of male officers. Additionally, female officers had 70 percent lower odds of using lethal force compared to male officers.

Despite these findings, it is difficult to determine why female officers used less force. In fact, a 2005 study found no significant difference between male and female officers regarding use of force. Yet another team of researchers examined data from three large police departments in the United States to explore associations between the presence of female officers in multiple-officer use-of-force incidents and female

officer involvement in single-officer incidents. They found that some differences exist in use-of-force incidents when a female officer was present during multiple-officer/suspect incidents or directly involved in single-officer/suspect use-of-force incidents. In other words, there were more similarities in use-of-force incidents when female officers were present compared to when only male officers were present, suggesting a balance of male and female officers in force situations would be optimal. Some researchers also suggest that suspects may not use violence against female officers because of the officers' smaller physical stature (less threatening) or due to societal norms where violence against women is unacceptable. Data regarding the occurrence of use-of-force incidents by all female and male officers in the United States, however, are unavailable. Due to mixed findings, additional research in these areas would be beneficial to have a better understanding of the underlying differences between male and female officers respective to use of force, which could improve training, ensure a more balanced response by both male and female officers, and reduce disparities in role allocation involving use-of-force incidents.

## COMMUNICATION STYLES

Second, as a potential explanation to some findings that female officers use less force, some researchers

suggest women use differing communication styles than men, which may give them a greater ability to de-escalate potentially violent situations and gain cooperation. The results of a survey of 897 officers that aimed to measure emotional labor skills and masculine police culture suggested male officers tended to use cognitive behavioral communication strategies (e.g., analysis and decision-making), whereas female officers tended to use more caring strategies, including those focused on empathy, nurturance, and compassion, which could be more likely to reduce violence.

Perhaps the difference in communication style and use of empathy can account for research that shows police departments with more female officers responded more effectively to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. After reviewing U.S. Department of Justice data between the late 1970s and early 1990s, researchers suggested that, as police agencies increased the number of female officers on their forces, there were higher rates of reporting of, arrests for, and clearances of sexual assault and domestic violence cases. Two additional studies also found similar results.

Another study found that, from 2004 to 2010, the percentage of female officers in England and Wales rose from 20 percent to 26 percent. During the same period, harassment and stalking crimes reported to the police increased by 41 percent, sexual assault by 24 percent, and child sex abuse by 178 percent. The researchers speculated sexual assault victims may feel more comfortable reporting their crimes to a female officer as opposed to a male officer. Additionally, the research team proposed that female officers might show more support, take these crimes more seriously, and provide unique insights into investigating these types of cases.

## GENDER DIVERSITY

Third, gender diversity has been found to be a strong predictor of community policing activities, which help build trust in communities. For

example, a 2017 study by Dr. Amie Schuck, a leading expert on child abuse and community-police interaction, found police agencies with gender diversity had increased community engagement, including hosting a citizen's police academy, partnering with various community stakeholders to solve problems, and assigning officers to specific areas to focus on building strong community relationships.

An internet survey of more than 1,000 respondents at the end of 2014 about gender stereotypes revealed the majority believed that hiring more female officers in traffic enforcement would be effective at reducing corruption. The researchers also reviewed government data from other countries, including Colombia and Uganda, and found women were more often appointed to lead corruption investigations and appointed to cabinet positions to help increase

transparency. Additionally, some research suggests, as minorities, female officers might be perceived more favorably by minority suspects, which could also build trust and help de-escalate situations. Based on the multitude of studies mentioned herein, it is evident that research strongly indicates that having more female officers in policing offers several advantages related to use of force, communication, and community policing.

### WAYS TO REMOVE BARRIERS

If female police officers are so beneficial, why aren't there more of them? Historically, women have made slow progress in achieving parity in policing, with their sworn representation still hovering around 13 percent, and only a small fraction, roughly 3 percent, in leadership roles. The 30x30 Initiative was created with the goal of increasing female officer

representation in police academy classes to 30 percent by 2030 to effect cultural change. This initiative was developed in 2018 after more than 100 police leaders, researchers, and professionals gathered at the National Institute of Justice to discuss the limited research on women in policing. The 30x30 Initiative leads with the belief that 30 percent is the threshold in which change begins to happen in an organization. Although it is still too soon to determine the initiative's impact over the last few years, lessons learned about promising practices have begun to emerge. That does not mean, however, that efforts to increase female representation should be delayed until more precise data emerge.

The most critical actions police leaders can take today are (1) altering recruiting strategies, (2) reassessing physical standards for applicants, (3) establishing formal mentorship

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programs, (4) reinforcing efforts to address workplace respect and discrimination to create better work-life balance for staff, and (5) creating or strengthening a culture of inclusion for every member of staff.

First, to address recruitment, agencies should consider updating their recruitment literature by highlighting the unique strengths and positive impacts of female officers, like showcasing service-based activities. For example, in New Zealand where female officers comprise nearly 20 percent of the police force, New Zealand Police have intentionally used recruitment videos that feature women and portray police interacting with the community and using humor to promote a more positive image of police. In the United States, a police department in North Carolina did a video blog (vlog) that showcased officers mediating disputes to demonstrate preferred communication skills and realistic community service requirements for the job.

Second, let's talk about that wall. To remove potential barriers during the hiring process, agencies should also reassess their physical testing practices. Physical fitness and agility tests still vary from agency to agency. Many include the wall, a fence, a 1.5-mile run, a dummy drag, an obstacle course, sit-ups, push-ups, and pull-ups. In contrast, consider having minimum standards based on empirical data to determine the average for each gender. Also consider removing elements that are scored strictly as pass or fail and, instead, apply them to the overall score. It would be beneficial for agencies to adjust both testing elements and passing scores to account for gender differences. This in no way suggests that female applicants should be given preferential treatment. The goal is to make agility tests fair and equitable. Most importantly, studies show that when female applicants receive help before the tests, they are better prepared to succeed.

Third, consider creating a formal mentor program for female officers. Early in the author's career, her

female captain warned her about a male sergeant who believed women belonged in the kitchen. In hindsight, this interaction was a missed mentorship opportunity. A formal program can provide guidance, support, and career development, helping women navigate challenges like discrimination and harassment. Mentors can offer advice on career advancement, work-life balance, and leadership, empowering female officers to pursue leadership roles.

Some experts recommend mentoring women as early as the police academy. Research also highlights the need for female officers to support each other, creating a positive police culture that can serve as a recruiting tool, with some experts suggesting the development of support networks specifically for women. Organizations like the National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives provide mentorship resources through seminars and conferences. Since taking the 30x30 pledge, the San Diego, California, Police Department has increased female representation to 17 percent through the Women in Blue Initiative, which offers workshops, conferences, training, and mentoring opportunities.

Fourth, agencies should strengthen equal opportunity employment practices. Female officers often face challenges balancing household and work responsibilities. It is common for female officers not to return to work after having a child, and if they do return, they may avoid seeking special assignments or promotions that could disrupt their family commitments.

Additionally, despite existing policies to address sexual harassment and discrimination, there is some evidence that this behavior persists. Research finds that female officers endure inappropriate sexual comments, jokes, and gestures on a regular basis and at greater frequency than their male counterparts. Strong equal employment practices should include regular training on gender sensitivity, strict enforcement of

anti-discrimination policies, and the establishment of clear reporting mechanisms for harassment and discrimination complaints.

Last, police agencies should also foster a culture of inclusion where female officers feel supported and valued. Offering part-time and flexible work schedules, providing private spaces for breastfeeding, and offering childcare services can contribute to this culture. A 2020 report found that although police organizations in Australia had good Equal Employment Opportunity policies, they were often ineffective due to perceptions around flexible work schedules. The authors suggested that providing 24-hour childcare or au pairs could improve work flexibility, benefiting both male and female officers. Agencies in Virginia have implemented schedules where officers work five 10.5-hour shifts followed by four days off, and then five more shifts followed by five days off, allowing officers to work just 16 days a month and get two full weekends off each month. This kind of flexibility can support work-life balance for all officers, regardless of seniority.

## CONCLUSION

Women are not inherently better or worse than men at being police officers, but increasing the number of female officers can serve as a force multiplier in policing. The 30x30 Initiative offers a pivotal opportunity to transform the culture of police agencies by increasing the representation of women. Research indicates that achieving this goal can foster more effective, empathetic, and community-oriented policing. However, for this transformation to occur, agencies must commit to dismantling systemic barriers that women still face, from recruiting and hiring practices to workplace practices and promotional opportunities. Much as the author had to physically scale a wall early in her career, female officers continue to face symbolic walls in the profession—obstacles that limit their potential and growth. By removing these barriers, police



agencies will create an environment where female officers not only contribute to public safety but also flourish as leaders in the field. ♡

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# Navigating Video Privacy Challenges in Policing

BY  
Simon Randall, CEO,  
Pimloc

**POLICE AGENCIES ARE INCREASINGLY CAPTURING AND PROCESSING AUDIO, VIDEO, AND MOBILE DATA RELATED TO CRIMES WITH BODY-WORN CAMERAS DOCUMENTING OFFICERS' DAILY OPERATIONS. THIS RESULTS IN A GROWING VOLUME OF FOOTAGE THAT MUST BE CAREFULLY REVIEWED AND PROTECTED TO SUPPORT CIVIL AND CRIMINAL CASES.**

It also creates greater opportunities to build trust within local communities by sharing more video footage of officers' daily activities.

While officers' primary concern is keeping people safe and apprehending criminals, the rising volume of digital evidence presents significant challenges. Officers are spending more time processing large volumes of data, with strict laws and guidelines dictating how video evidence must be handled, including requirements for the anonymization of sensitive information. This has led to a growing manual workload, highlighting the urgent need for productivity tools. Citizens expect the police to protect their safety while also safeguarding their personal data. With the right solutions in place, officers can save considerable time, enabling them to share more information and efficiently process a greater number of requests and pieces of evidence.

## THE CRITICAL NEED FOR VIDEO PRIVACY

Footage from body-worn cameras, dash cams, drones, and CCTV provides valuable evidence in criminal investigations, civil cases, and public inquiries. It also helps protect police from reputational damage by offering the ability to share the full context of events, countering the potential for the media to use short clips that may portray situations unfairly.

The recording of sensitive footage comes with a dual responsibility: while video provides valuable evidence, it must also undergo detailed review and anonymization to protect the privacy of individuals and sensitive data. This is essential whether footage is shared through a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request or as part of the

discovery process in a criminal case, with varying requirements across the United States depending on what data have been captured and the context of the evidence.

Now, there are more data to review than ever before, and this volume continues to grow. All crimes have a large digital footprint, with nearly all containing video evidence from body-worn cameras and other sources, often filled with personal and sensitive information. At the same time, surveillance technologies are evolving at a rapid pace. Advances in artificial intelligence and facial recognition, for example, have enhanced law enforcement's ability to identify suspects and provide stronger accountability.

With the proliferation of video footage from various sources, including public and private security cameras, smartphones, and social media platforms, police must be equipped to manage an overwhelming amount of data. This includes not only protecting the privacy of individuals captured in the footage but also ensuring that the integrity of the evidence remains intact.

Legally, law enforcement agencies are required to protect specific types of personal and case sensitive data, including information about children and some personally identifiable information (PII). This obligation is crucial when processing civil and criminal evidence, so the data are usable in court, and failure to protect these data in the right way can result in damage to public trust.

For example, FOIA requests for body-worn camera footage are increasingly being used to review police conduct, from stop-and-search procedures to arrests and the treatment

of individuals in custody. While sharing this footage can enhance transparency, it is essential for agencies to anonymize sensitive information and PII to protect the privacy of those involved. By doing so, police ensure that the public can access and review these files without compromising individuals' privacy. Although officers and units are eager to share this footage, they've been limited by the significant time required to manually redact video frame by frame. However, with the latest productivity tools, officers can now quickly prepare video for sharing, enabling them to redact clips efficiently ahead of community meetings.

In addition to legal obligations, there are significant reputational advantages to sharing footage of police conduct. Transparency in police operations can build trust with local communities and promote accountability. Tools that anonymize sensitive information allow agencies to share more data without infringing on individuals' privacy, thereby fostering greater public confidence. These tools also allow officers to quickly redact and share footage of high-profile events, ensuring they can present the full story rather than allowing the media to clip the video in a way that may portray events in a misleading light.

The continuing rise of mass surveillance, coupled with early use of facial recognition technology, has heightened concerns about the impact of these technologies on privacy and individual freedoms. The initial use of facial recognition technology raised significant concerns, but it is now being considered seriously as a tool to assist policing—provided there are appropriate safeguards in place. Law enforcement is grappling with how to deploy these new technologies safely and responsibly.

#### **BEST PRACTICES FOR ANONYMIZING SENSITIVE DATA**

As the volume of video data grows, manual redaction of sensitive content becomes increasingly impractical. Agencies need automation and flexible user tools for reviewing and redacting footage. While there are always personal data that need to be redacted, there are also

contextual and sensitive details specific to each FOIA request or case.

The first step is to anonymize faces and license plates by using artificial intelligence tools that automatically detect and obscure all faces and number plates in every frame of the video, except for those of the suspect. Solutions like Pimloc's Secure Redact uses advanced machine learning and computer vision techniques to recognize and redact PII in various image and video contexts for officers. Next, agencies should implement audio redaction to remove PII, such as names, addresses, and social security numbers, from the audio track. Following this, a careful review of the footage is necessary to identify any additional sensitive data, such as house numbers or vehicle branding, that may have been captured inadvertently. Agencies should also ensure that any sensitive content, including nudity or profanity, is appropriately redacted from the footage.

After these steps, a thorough final review should be conducted, possibly involving legal counsel, to confirm that all sensitive information has been effectively addressed. A final version of the video, with the redacted content removed, should then be created and saved back into the agency's specific digital evidence management system for sharing as needed.

By adopting these practices, agencies can share video evidence with greater confidence, knowing that privacy concerns have been appropriately addressed.

#### **PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE**

The future of video management in law enforcement will continue to be shaped by ongoing technological advancements and legislative changes. Agencies that embrace privacy-enhancing technologies will now be better positioned to meet the challenges of tomorrow. By augmenting the redaction process with automation, agencies can process and share video evidence more efficiently and enhance public trust through greater transparency and accountability.

The complex tapestry of laws across jurisdictions can make it challenging for citizens to understand their rights. However, it's become clear that there is a growing demand for more transparency. While U.S. federal law is likely to be enacted within the next five years, privacy protections for citizens' data still vary by location.

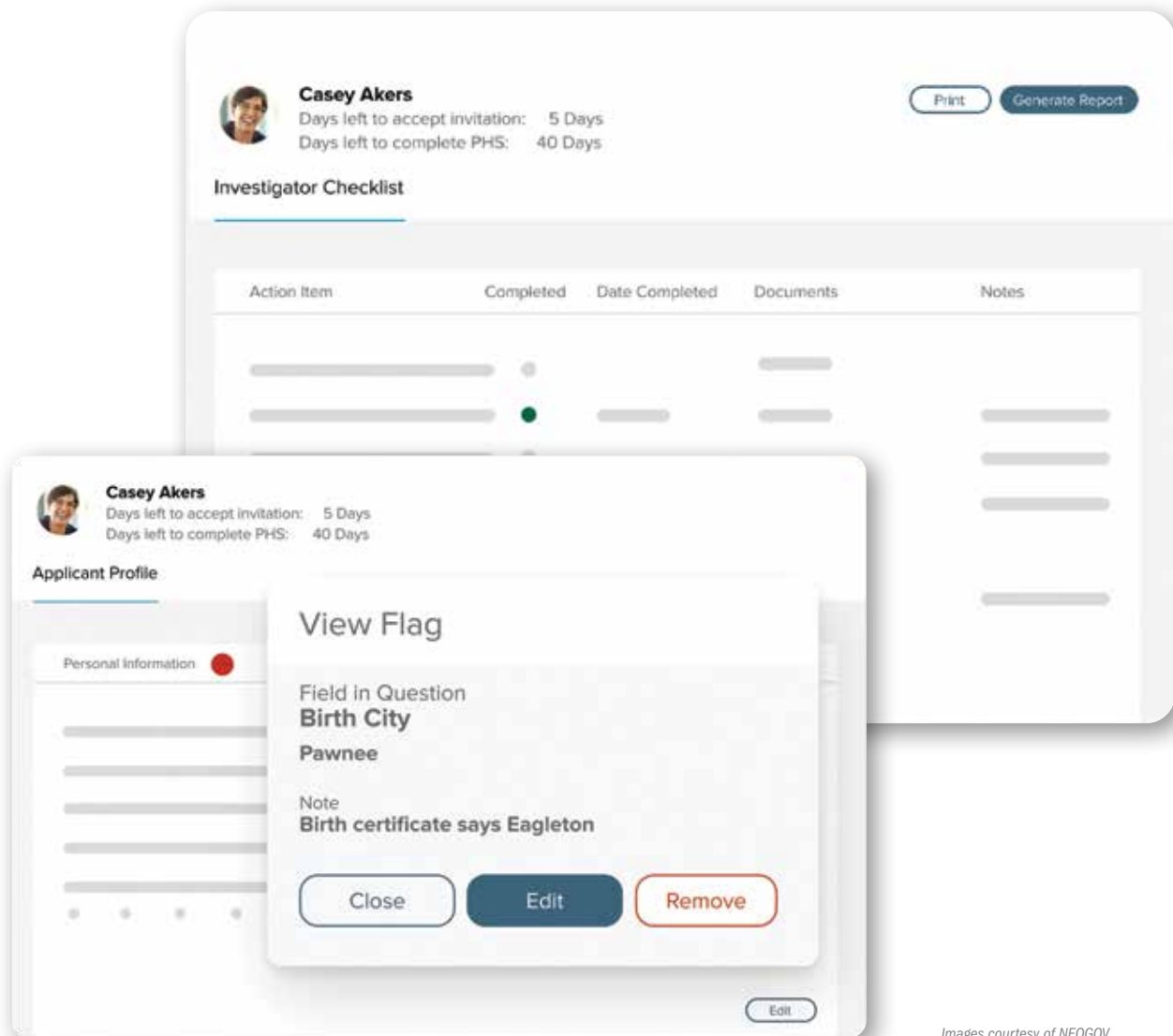
Law enforcement agencies now have the opportunity to take proactive steps by adopting new privacy technologies that streamline the redaction process, freeing up time and resources previously spent on manual redaction. This shift will improve the processing and sharing of video footage, resulting in better outcomes for victims, more effective use of advanced crime prevention technologies, and more responsible management of the growing volume of digital evidence.

Navigating video privacy remains a challenge for police officers. However, by balancing legal obligations with public trust, anonymizing sensitive data, and staying ahead of privacy law changes, agencies can protect personal data while ensuring public safety. As privacy regulations evolve, it's crucial to remain proactive and adaptable, embracing new technologies and practices to meet both present and future needs. ♻



# Attracting and Maintaining a Resilient Workforce

How Personnel Management Tools Can Affect Recruitment and Retention



Images courtesy of NEOGOV

**SINCE THE DAWN OF THE NEW DECADE, THE POLICING PROFESSION HAS FACED A DUAL CRISIS: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION. A REFLECTION OF SOCIETAL SHIFTS AND INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES, THE TRADITIONAL ALLURE OF THE PROFESSION HAS STARTED TO FADE.**

As of the summer of 2024, on average, U.S. agencies are operating at 91 percent of their authorized staffing levels.

Only by confronting and addressing the underlying issues of the crisis can the profession begin to

rebuild a resilient workforce. Adopting innovative tools that make the hiring process more effective and bring unique benefits to the agency could be the turning point.

## FINDING THE RIGHT STAFF

In a survey of member agencies, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) found that “more than 70 percent of respondents reported that recruitment is more difficult now than it was five years ago.” According to data from NEOGOV, between

2019 and 2023, there was a 40 percent increase in the number of job openings for police officers. At the same time, the number of applications per job decreased by 39 percent.

By using PowerDMS, the public safety platform by NEOGOV, police agencies have access to the Attract function. As its name suggests, the solution attracts the right candidates to hard-to-fill positions faster. The candidate relationship manager brings qualified applicants by integrating with GovernmentJobs.com to open up agency positions to more than 2.4 million job seekers, saving agencies time on sourcing these qualified candidates. Agency staff can then connect with candidates throughout the hiring process with custom online forms and email campaigns. Attract gives every agency the opportunity to market themselves more effectively by providing tools that help convert prospective candidates into applicants.

The PowerDMS platform also grants agencies access to Vetted—a solution that digitally manages, tracks, and optimizes the background investigation and hiring process. A single, secure platform enables applicants and investigators to share protected information while maintaining the integrity and compliance of each background investigation. A candidate can quickly upload documents and submit them for review, giving agencies the ability to view inconsistencies and identify potential issues early. The system is also configurable to an agency's needs.

While these tools help to obtain the right individuals for the agency, it is another feat altogether to maintain the talent.

### SUSTAINING THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

To address the changing demands of the profession, agencies have made several adjustments to make a more sustainable workplace for their staff. About 75 percent of respondents to an IACP survey reported changes made within their agency during the last five years to enhance recruitment and retention. Respondents also indicated that resignations are most likely to occur within the first five years of hire. This shows that agencies must provide unique, effective benefits to retain talented employees, or at the very least, express a willingness to adapt to the changing times.

Versaterm offers a wellness platform that ensures agencies can address unique stressors and foster a healthier, more sustainable workplace. The concept of Versaterm Mindbase draws inspiration from the Checkpoints Model, which was developed by Chief Reuben Ramirez during his time with the Dallas, Texas, Police Department. The model emphasizes proactive measures such as education, counseling, structured wellness touchpoints, and peer support networks. Mindbase integrates each of these principles with advanced technology, enabling agencies to scale and customize their wellness initiatives.



Image courtesy of Versaterm

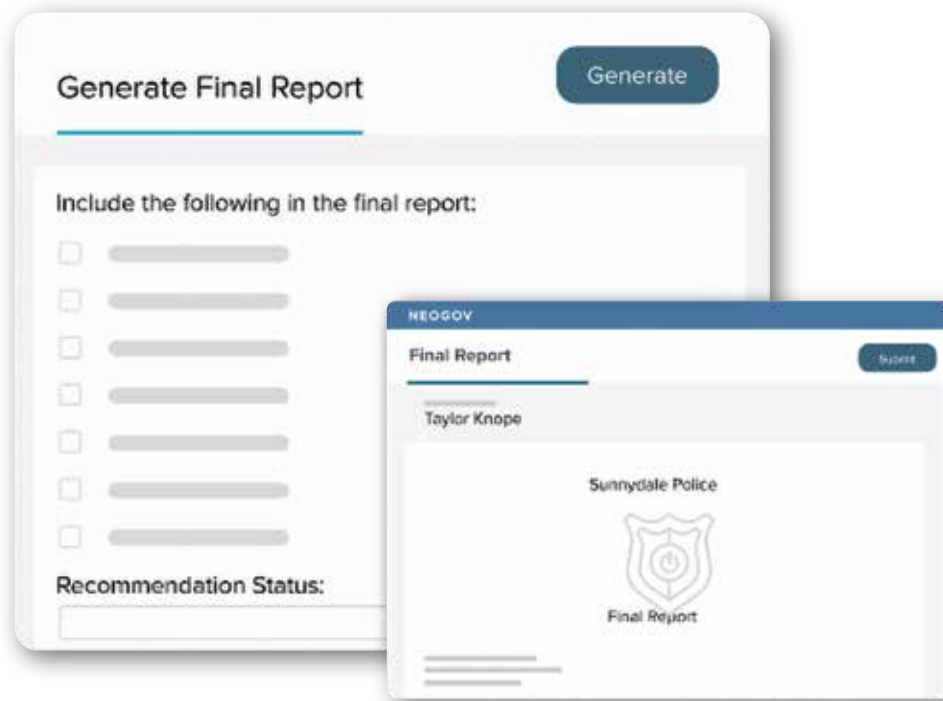
To learn more about the Checkpoints Model, check out “From Idea to Implementation: Dallas Police Department Wellness Unit” in *Police Chief’s* May 2023 issue.

The confidential and secure platform seamlessly integrates into the public safety agency workflow. It features early identification systems, peer support networks, wellness resources, and personalized learning modules tailored for career development.

Agencies that have adopted Mindbase reported a cultural shift toward prioritizing well-being and building a culture where personnel feel valued, resilient, and equipped to handle the demands of the profession. “A Versaterm Public Trends Survey revealed that 81 percent of law enforcement personnel favor expanding wellness resources, reflecting this cultural evolution,” said Chief Product Officer Rohan Galloway-Dawkins.

Another shift within the profession is the idea of being proactive rather than reactive, and Vector Solutions’ Guardian Tracking is a prime example of bringing that aspect to personnel management. At the time of the solution’s conception, early warning systems were focused on catching adverse conduct after the fact, which did not help to prevent the action from occurring in the first place. “We wanted to provide a tool that would allow agencies to provide consistent, transparent feedback and identify potential issues before an incident takes place,” said Skylar Pickard, director of Demand Generation for Law Enforcement and Federal at Vector Solutions.

As an early intervention solution, Guardian Tracking allows agencies to track identified behaviors, document noteworthy conduct, provide consistent feedback, recognize high performers, and maintain



Images courtesy of NEOGOV

personnel files securely. Interventions are driven by customizable thresholds that identify supervisors of positive and negative conduct. Once notified, any appropriate action can be taken to intervene and address the adverse behaviors or provide positive recognition.

Having a system that manages off-duty detail assignments could also be an attractive benefit to potential applicants and current employees because it would streamline the process and allow for supplemental income—an important factor in the retention of employees. Off-duty detail assignments are traditionally managed through manual processes, which are time-consuming, prone to errors, and lack transparency. “These inefficiencies can impact officer morale, administrative workloads, and even relationships with community partners,” said Bill Kicklighter, chief executive officer at Kommander Software.

Detail Kommander is an advanced software solution that is tailored to modernize off-duty detail management. The cloud-based software platform offers a range of capabilities, including an automated assignment distribution, officer self-service portal, integrated scheduling tools, and comprehensive reporting. “By leveraging technology like Detail Kommander, the policing profession has demonstrated its ability to modernize operations and embrace innovative solutions that support both officers and the public,” said Kicklighter.

One of the most significant advancements that Detail Kommander has brought to personnel management has been the adoption of electronic payments through the solution’s integrated financial platform, KommanderPay. While most agencies relied on manual payment processes for off-duty assignments, KommanderPay revolutionized the process by enabling businesses to pay officers electronically for services rendered.

Prioritizing these unique benefits within a job posting may help an agency be more enticing and competitive to qualified applicants.

#### CONCLUSION

Human resources and personnel management are the foundation of any effective law enforcement agency. “In today’s environment, where resources are often stretched thin, having reliable personnel management tools is essential,” said Kicklighter. “These tools not only improve internal efficiency but also enhance the agency’s ability to effectively meet the needs of the community.”

With the help of personnel management tools, the future of recruitment and retention in policing does not look so bleak. The profession, however, must adapt to innovative tools and experiment with new workplace benefits to attract the employees needed and maintain the talent wanted. ♡

## SOURCE LIST

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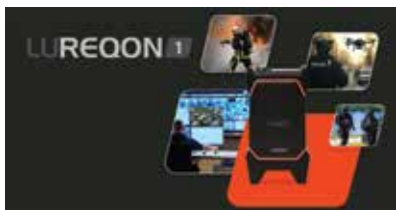
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[www.liveu.tv/public-safety](http://www.liveu.tv/public-safety)



### AI Software Drone Integration

Nokia and Motorola Solutions launch an AI-enhanced turnkey, automated drone-in-a-box solution, offering enhanced situational awareness, streamlined remote operations, and faster decision-making. Nokia Drone Networks integrated with Motorola Solutions' CAPE drone software will help transform public safety. This new solution enables police to remotely dispatch drones from one or multiple operation centers at a moment's notice to assess emergencies and hazards while also receiving AI-powered intelligence that can inform and accelerate decisions. The software's flight-safe features adjust the drone's path to avoid obstacles, stay within a geofenced area, and adapt to changing terrain altitude, with assistive AI helping operators analyze real-time data.

[www.motorolasolutions.com](http://www.motorolasolutions.com) | [www.dac.nokia.com](http://www.dac.nokia.com)



### Shotgun Forend

Mesa Tactical, designer and manufacturer of high-quality tactical accessories and equipment for law enforcement, military, and civilian shooters, is excited to introduce the new Truckee forend for the Benelli M2 shotguns. The forend is machined from 6061-T6 aluminum and is equipped with M-LOK slots on the sides and bottom, providing versatile options for accessory attachment. The M-LOK compatible aluminum forend has a hard anodized finish for added durability and protection. It can be easily installed without requiring modification of the firearm or special gunsmithing skills.

[www.mesatactical.com](http://www.mesatactical.com)



### Rifle

Hydra Weaponry introduces the Hydra MARCK-15 H21 rifle built to use GLOCK-style 10mm magazines. This rifle has a Hydra modular lower receiver with a 10mm H21 magazine well, Hydra Quick Change Barrel Upper Receiver (along with a Hydra 16-inch 10mm blowback barrel), a 10mm blowback bolt, and a durable B5 Systems stock and pistol grip. Easy to change out, even in the field, the rifle requires no tools to convert to another caliber. It weighs 10 lbs. and measures 21" x 3" x 7" with a black finish. Inserts for the handguard include MLOK, KeyMOD, and Picatinny.

[www.hydraweaponry.com](http://www.hydraweaponry.com)





## Underwater ROV Console

Deep Trekker's BRIDGE Console enhances users' control experience with a sleek, weatherproof design and simplifies remotely operated underwater vehicle operations with fewer loose cables, providing rapid response for drowning and evidence recovery. It is built to perform in tough conditions, offering reliable field operations. Operators can see through the murk during search missions with BRIDGE-enabled turbidity filters and experience a wide field of view. It is fully integrated with a large 18.5" display, keyboard, and multiple ports (Ethernet, USB, HDMI) within a durable, weatherproof casing. It consolidates mission-critical data and camera feeds in one place, while offering a variety of customizable controls.



[www.deeptrekker.com/products/technology/bridge](http://www.deeptrekker.com/products/technology/bridge)

## LPR Platform

SoundThinking Inc. has expanded into license plate recognition (LPR) space with PlateRanger, powered by Rekor Systems, Inc. This end-to-end public safety solution is designed to provide immediate leads in critical situations like car theft, DUI enforcement, drug trafficking, armed robberies, and missing persons cases, providing law enforcement with a powerful tool to track vehicles tied to these (and other) serious crimes. It comes in a comprehensive package that includes solar power options, seamless integration with other SoundThinking solutions, and enhanced customer service. When paired with ShotSpotter, PlateRanger streamlines investigations for gun crimes, generating real-time, actionable intelligence without the need for additional resources.



[www.soundthinking.com/law-enforcement/license-plate-recognition-plateranger](http://www.soundthinking.com/law-enforcement/license-plate-recognition-plateranger)

## Touchscreen

Discover unparalleled durability and performance with TRU-Vu Monitors' SRMHTP-15.6G-36A 15.6" rugged touchscreen monitor, engineered for extreme environments and bright conditions. With maximum resistance to shock and vibration, this monitor is designed to meet the demands of the most challenging environments and built to withstand harsh conditions. It's engineered to operate in temperatures from -4°F (-20°C) to 158°F (+70°C). Boasting a stunning 1,500 units of brightness, this display ensures crystal-clear visibility even in direct sunlight. Its touchscreen provides smooth, responsive interaction, and it's powered by a versatile 9-36VDC input. It offers flexible integration for a wide range of applications with enhanced rugged computing and high-performance.



[tru-vumonitors.com/products/srmt-15-6-series](http://tru-vumonitors.com/products/srmt-15-6-series)

## Scope

Hawke Optics unveils the Frontier 30 FD LRX scope. For accuracy and visibility in every lighting condition, the Frontier 30 FD scopes feature a red-illuminated dot-reticle with auto illumination mode to help extend battery life. The ½ minute of angle fingertip turrets make dialing in easy. The LRX - Tactical FD (8x) reticle adds distance hash marks. These scopes are built on a one-piece, machined, high-grade aluminum 30mm main tube and H7 optics that use index-matched lenses with 21 layers of advanced coatings. It is fully water, shock, and fog proof and nitrogen purged, making it durable, clear, and maintenance free.



[www.hawkeoptics.com](http://www.hawkeoptics.com)

## Cases

Gemstar Manufacturing's RoboRack military-grade half rack mount cases are now available in new 3U and 9U sizes. These half rack cases are designed to protect electronics from shock, vibration, moisture, dust, and other contaminants.



Designed, tested, and manufactured in the United States, these hard cases can be used off-the-shelf or configured as needed for specific equipment. They offer stacking compatibility, fully removable lids that hang on the sides, and have a payload of 20 to 150 lbs. They're built with heavy-duty latches, spring-loaded handles, and recessed hardware and come with edge wheels and an extendable handle for additional flexibility in moving electronics.

[gemstarmfg.com](http://gemstarmfg.com)

## Video Series

Team Wendy offers the Headstrong Knowledge Vault. This video series offers expert tips on helmet care, accessory installation, product performance, and more. But it is more than just a collection of how-to videos—it's one of the company's ways of giving back to those who trust Team Wendy helmets with their lives and livelihoods. From how to properly size headgear for optimal protection and comfort to installing accessories, Headstrong makes it easy for police to get the right fit; accessorize seamlessly, adding covers, cables, and more for maximum utility; and explore lesser-known features that make Team Wendy helmets even more versatile.



[www.teamwendy.com/about/headstrong-knowledge-vault](http://www.teamwendy.com/about/headstrong-knowledge-vault)



# Public Safety Needs ... A Connector!

BY  
IACP CJIS Committee

**TECHNOLOGY IS ADVANCING IN THE WORLD AND IN POLICING LIKE NEVER BEFORE. INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES SHOW POWERFUL POTENTIAL TO AID PUBLIC SAFETY EFFORTS, BUT THERE IS LITTLE TIME TO STUDY ACTUAL EFFECTS OR VET THE VALUE AND IMPACT THESE TOOLS MIGHT HAVE UPON PUBLIC TRUST.**

The variety of technology solutions available to law enforcement (and the risks if such tools are brought to market without proper vetting) are almost overwhelming—without the IACP Connector that is.

Agency leaders must regularly consider new technology in these times of low recruiting and high pressure, but due diligence in researching technology solutions, let alone developing policy and procedures to use such solutions, takes time and resources beyond what many agencies are willing to expend. Still, the need and pressure are to deliver better public safety services regardless of agency resources to study them, which is something delivered by the new IACP Connector.

Agency leaders need a research tool that will connect them with other agencies that have successfully discovered, reviewed, considered, and implemented new technologies—and have created policies to govern their use. The internet is of little help; public safety agencies are too aware of the online scrutiny of the criminal element, so their discoveries are kept close to the vest. They need a robust resource protected from the prying eyes of would-be offenders and undesirable others that has applicable, current, meaningful content and source references on a need-it-now basis. A resource protected by the IACP firewall on the IACP website and curated by IACP members.

The success of the IACP Connector relies on agencies contributing data. These contributions will help in fulfilling the premise and promise of the IACP Connector.

Yesterday's public safety researchers did their primary jobs by making phone calls, searching the internet, and spending countless hours reviewing marketing materials for company after company, which may or may not yield a solution for their specific need. Having been in that position many times before, members of the IACP CJIS Committee dreamed of finding a better way.

What was created allows for easy, intuitive access to a searchable database containing a wide array of

- technology solutions for police—and the agencies that are using selected solutions;
- policies and procedures for using those solutions created by police agencies; and
- credible law enforcement and law enforcement–related contacts responsible for technology selection and deployment, including leaders, project managers, and selected industry providers.

The IACP Connector is not an academically imagined answer to the need. It is a concept borne out of the minds and experiences

of people who have been there—in need of rapid access to good answers about urgent technology needs. The IACP Connector is a member-built and driven practical answer to the public safety research needs of today and into the future *if* members and agencies around the world will support it.

Easy, intuitive access means people from all positions in an agency can use the IACP Connector with confidence. They will find what they search for in one place and in a time frame that reduces days, weeks, and months of research to mere hours.

It is a searchable database that contains references to the deployment of technological solutions involving hardware and the software that drives hardware function.

Each technology entry, depending on the willingness and creativity of the submitters, can include information on the following:

- **Real agencies** deploying the technology to better serve their citizens.
- **Real procurement documents** so researchers won't need to duplicate effort.
- **Real policies and procedures** in use and available for consideration and adaptation.
- **Real people** who will serve as credible professional sources and can discuss their research process, communicate best practices, identify challenges encountered along the way, relate surprise functionalities and limitations of the selected solutions, and identify the companies that offered to provide the needed technology.

Initial communication between public safety personnel is essential to fulfill the promise of the IACP Connector. Agency personnel confidentially discuss the most challenging issues with other agency personnel before ever visiting with a provider. That way the research agency can comfortably prepare to visit technologically savvy industry providers and be knowledgeable, competent, and up-to-speed on what the provider might be able to offer. Several different people need to “connect” to establish a comfort zone with the technology and potential vendors:

- Agency leaders can speak with the chief, director, or sheriff about issues important to them, such as privacy and data security, community engagement and trust, and agency morale before, during, and after solution deployment. It is also important they identify the effectiveness of the technology.
- The researcher should talk directly with the project manager, who is accountable for accomplishing the deployment and can share the boots-on-the-ground picture of the project from beginning to end, including lessons learned, best practices, and suggestions.
- Researchers will want to know from other references which industry provider responded to the need and which were selected to fill it.

There are some unique vendor-related IACP Connector benefits as well. The IACP Connector delivers access to a wide variety of vendors who self-report the technologies they offer and their contact information in a separate but still accessible database. This incentivizes industry providers to urge agencies that deploy their technologies to contribute to the IACP Connector database; it provides a no-cost, positive reference, which could be hard to come by in today's busy business world. This also improves the potential of any conversation with an agency researcher. The call comes from the researcher to an aware and prepared representative, and both are able to be more open and candid when discussing the technology—a positive start to a potentially long and productive relationship.

The IACP technology committee chairs are beginning to realize the great value this tool can deliver to IACP members. New potential use cases arise in conversations among participants of every IACP-sanctioned event.

The IACP Connector is a new tool imagined by public safety people *for* public safety people to save time, give more return on investment for research time, and deliver capable trusted solutions to the benefit of the people who depend upon public safety to support their desire for an outstanding quality of life. ♡

Contributors to this article comprise the hardworking and dedicated volunteer membership of the IACP CJIS Committee:

Michael C. Miller (Chair), Chief of Police, Colleyville Police Department, Texas

Patrick Doyle (Vice Chair), Lieutenant (Ret.), New Jersey State Police, Principal, Justice and Public Safety Consulting

Glenn Archer, Vice President, Equifax, Inc.

Ben Bawden, Principal, Brooks, Bawden and Moore LLC

Jason Bussert, Captain, Oklahoma City Police Department, Oklahoma

Greg Park, Law Enforcement Liaison, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

David Shipley, Executive Director, Colorado Information Sharing Consortium (CISC)

Jed Stone, Director, Chief Revenue Officer, Issured Ltd.

Rachael VanDeusen, CJIS Security Analyst, Diverse Computing, Inc.

George Vit, Sergeant, South Brunswick Township Police Department, New Jersey

Rick Zak, Director of Data Governance & Compliance for Microsoft's Worldwide Public Sector



IACPnet is the top resource for effective practices, case studies, and other information to support police leaders as they navigate the ever-changing public safety landscape. Learn more and request a demo by visiting [theIACP.org/IACPnet](http://theIACP.org/IACPnet).

Reflects November 2024 data

PAGE VIEWS

12,758



MEMBER AGENCIES

Police professionals from agencies of all sizes utilize IACPnet to enhance programs and operations, to develop data-driven solutions, and for professional development.

1,241



NEW DISCUSSION POSTS

13

The IACPnet Discussion Board provides a **forum for users** to network, ask questions, and provide valuable expertise and guidance.

RESOURCES ADDED AND UPDATED

208

The Resource Library contains **policies, forms, and other publications**. Search results can be refined by criteria such as type, country, population, date, and more.

TOP RESOURCES

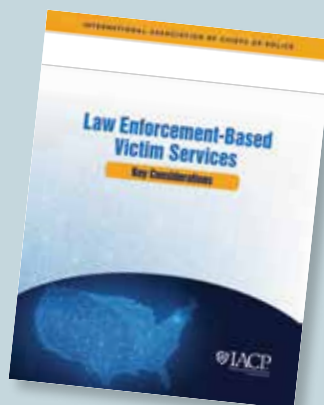
- > **Building Relationships with Communities of Color**  
—Podcast with Chief Chris Magnus of the Richmond, California, Police Department discussing building relationships with communities of color
- > **Federal and State Forfeitures**  
—Policy from the Cincinnati, Ohio, Police Department
- > **Behavioral Health Crisis Dispatch**  
—Policy from the Baltimore, Maryland, Police Department



FEATURED RESOURCE

**Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services: Key Considerations**

This guide provides law enforcement agencies with key considerations for establishing or enhancing law enforcement-based victim services.



Access these resources and more at [theIACP.org/IACPnet](http://theIACP.org/IACPnet). For more information, call the IACPnet team at 800.227.9640.



### TOP IACP BLOG POST

## Crowd Management and Civil Demonstrations Resources

During these challenging times, the ability of police leaders, elected officials, and communities to prepare for, respond to, and successfully manage demonstrations and protests is more critical than ever. As always, the IACP stands ready to ensure its members have the tools and resources needed to address the challenges they are facing. To that end, the IACP has a wide array of resources available to members that address crowd management and civil demonstrations.



Read this and other posts at [theIACP.org/blog](https://theIACP.org/blog).

### POPULAR IACP RESOURCES



- » POLICING CODE OF ETHICS
- » CRITICAL ISSUES: ENCRYPTION & GOING DARK
- » RESPONDING TO HATE CRIMES: A POLICE OFFICER'S GUIDE TO INVESTIGATION AND PREVENTION



Find these and other important resources at [theIACP.org](https://theIACP.org).

### FEATURED ITEM IN IACP MONTHLY DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

## Register Now for the 2025 Technology Conference

Housing and registration are now open for the IACP's 2025 Technology Conference, the premier professional event dedicated to discussing technology in policing. Attendees should expect quality presentations, professional development, and networking opportunities covering a broad array of new and emerging technologies. The conference will take place on May 21–23 in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA.



View this guidance and other policy resources at [theIACP.org/OSWConference](https://theIACP.org/OSWConference).

POST

# of the month



IACP applauds the United States Senate for the passage of the Social Security Fairness Act. This is a historic day for police officers and their families.

### TOP POLICE CHIEF NOVEMBER BONUS ONLINE ARTICLE

## "A Brighter Future in the Fight Against Child Sexual Abuse Material: The REPORT Act"

By Senior Director Heather Barnhart



Read this and other articles at [policechiefmagazine.org](https://policechiefmagazine.org).

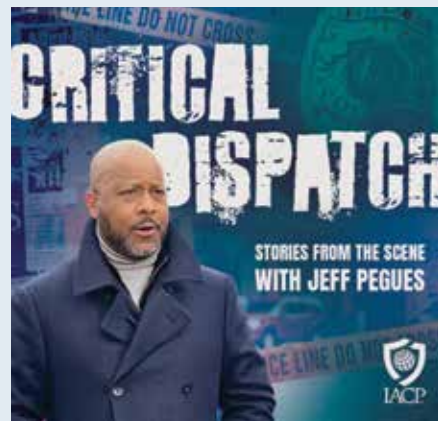
### CRITICAL DISPATCH PODCAST

## Lessons Learned from the Parkland and Pulse Mass Shootings

December 27, 2024

Host Jeff Pegues speaks with Orange County Sheriff John Mina, who was the Orlando Police Chief when the Pulse shooting happened in 2016, where 49 people were murdered and more than 50 others injured.

Then, you will hear from Max Schacter, whose son Alex was murdered in the Parkland School shooting in 2018. Both Mina and Schacter share lessons learned from these terrible tragedies and offer their perspectives on the best practices needed to minimize and mitigate mass shootings.



Access the podcast at [theIACP.org/resources/critical-dispatch-podcast](https://theIACP.org/resources/critical-dispatch-podcast) or via your favorite podcast player.

# The IACP's Latest Recruitment Efforts to Mitigate Retention Challenges

**BY**

Angela Sivak,  
Marketing and  
Communications  
Coordinator, IACP

**IT IS NO SECRET THAT THE POLICING PROFESSION CURRENTLY FACES A RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PROBLEM. FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW, AGENCIES OF ALL TYPES, SIZES, AND LOCATIONS HAVE BEEN STRUGGLING TO FIND AND RETAIN QUALIFIED CANDIDATES. TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THIS CHALLENGE, THE IACP CONDUCTED A SURVEY OF ITS MEMBER AGENCIES IN 2024.**

The responses, which came from more than 1,100 member agencies in the United States, revealed a significant challenge in retaining new hires, indicating that many officers may try policing and realize it is not for them. In response to this information, the IACP developed a resource to help agencies portray an honest picture of policing and recruit the right people from the very beginning.

This resource was presented at the 2024 IACP Annual Conference and Exhibition when the IACP shared a customizable video designed to help police agencies recruit the best candidates into the profession.

The video, which aims to represent the true nature of policing and underline the value that policing provides, splices together scenes of police in action interspersed with officer interviews and a voiceover explaining what policing can entail and offer to those with a passion for service. Since being played at the conference's opening general assembly on October 19, the video has been made available to more than just the in-person attendees. Any agency struggling with recruitment and retention now has access to the video via the IACP's website and can customize it to their agency's need.

The IACP has developed several additional resources to help agencies strengthen recruitment and retention efforts. Through the Discover Policing website, the IACP offers a full-service career center, with online self-assessments, tips for building community policing, virtual ride-alongs, and more. Customizable no-cost technical assistance on recruitment and retention can be requested through CRI-TAC. And, in 2025, the IACP will begin offering free virtual training on recruitment and retention through Elevate Blue: Essential Training for Law Enforcement. Additional resources and toolkits are available, including the *Law Enforcement Recruitment Toolkit*, *CRI-TAC Spotlight: Recruitment and Retention for Workforce Diversity*, and *CRI-TAC Spotlight: Report Out from the Rhode*

*Island Regional Roundtable on Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention.*

These efforts for improving policing's recruitment and retention come at a critical time. The 2024 IACP survey results, which were published in the report *The State of Recruitment and Retention: A Continuing Crisis for Policing*, show that more than 70 percent of respondents find recruiting more difficult today than it was five years ago. Respondents also indicated that resignations are more common within the first five years of hire and that retaining officers during the recruitment and training phase may be more challenging than retaining officers long-term, suggesting that officers may not fully comprehend the role when initially applying. Because of these challenges with recruiting and retaining staff, responding agencies reported being staffed at approximately 91 percent of their authorized staffing levels, thus operating with a deficit of nearly 10 percent.

Targeting, recruiting, hiring, and maintaining adept police officers is one of the most important functions for the future of any agency. For the past 131 years, the IACP has worked to guide the policing profession through crossroads. Today, the IACP encourages agencies that are seeking to improve their recruitment and retention strategies to utilize available resources. ♡



Scan the QR code to access the IACP's recruitment video template. Once downloaded, tailor it to meet the needs of your agency.

## 2025

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### Officer Safety and Wellness (OSW) Conference

Anaheim, California

The OSW Conference is for police professionals to learn from experts in the field about resources and best practices when developing comprehensive officer safety and wellness strategies.

[theIACP.org/OSWconference](https://theIACP.org/OSWconference)

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### 2025 Division Midyear

Orlando, Florida

The Division of State and Provincial Police, Division of State Associations of Chiefs of Police, and Midsize Agencies Division will hold their joint midyear meeting in Orlando, Florida. This meeting provides an opportunity to discuss critical issues facing the law enforcement community, identify best practices, and enhance relationships with colleagues.

[theIACP.org/events/2025-division-midyear](https://theIACP.org/events/2025-division-midyear)

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### 2025 Policy Council Midyear

Grapevine, Texas

The Policy Council Midyear is designed to increase engagement, activity, and collaboration between committees and sections and to ensure the work of the groups aligns with the direction of each Policy Council. All committees will meet in addition to individual section leadership.

[theIACP.org/events/2025-policy-council-midyear](https://theIACP.org/events/2025-policy-council-midyear)

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### IACP Technology Conference

Indianapolis, Indiana

The IACP Technology Conference provides training, professional development, and a forum for law enforcement executives, operational managers, and technology and research staff to share best practices and lessons learned on new and emerging technologies.

[theIACP.org/tech-conference](https://theIACP.org/tech-conference)

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### IACP Impaired Driving & Traffic Safety Conference

Chicago, Illinois

The IDTS Conference is the largest training conference for drug recognition experts and traffic safety professionals, bringing them together from around the world to share knowledge and approaches for improving road and traffic safety.

[theIACP.org/IDTSconference](https://theIACP.org/IDTSconference)

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### 2025 IACP Annual Conference and Exposition

Denver, Colorado

The IACP Annual Conference and Exposition is the pre-eminent law enforcement event of the year. Public safety professionals from across the globe come together to network with their colleagues, learn new techniques, advance their careers, and equip their departments for ongoing success.

[theIACPconference.org](https://theIACPconference.org)



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# Meet an IACP Member



## Mary Eileen Paradis Chief of Police/Executive Director of Public Safety

*The University of Mississippi  
Medical Center*

*Agency size: 100*

*Total years of service: 37*

*IACP MEMBER SINCE 2013*

*Contact me:*

*mparadis@umc.edu*

 [linkedin.com/in/mary-eileen-paradis-70711b31](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mary-eileen-paradis-70711b31)

 [@chiefmparadis](https://twitter.com/chiefmparadis)

### WHY DID YOU JOIN THE IACP?

I joined the IACP because of its reputation in our industry. In hindsight, I wish I had joined sooner, before becoming a senior leader in a law enforcement agency. Now knowing how important the IACP culture is to career development, I engage my entire agency in the services, training, and guidance the IACP has to offer.

### WHEN DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT THE IACP?

[In] 1986 when I became a police officer in Chicago, Illinois.

### HOW HAS YOUR CAREER BENEFITED FROM YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

The IACP has served as an instrumental resource for me throughout my 37-year police and public safety career. I have tapped into the IACP for guidance spanning topics such as recruitment, training, mentoring, and best practices for reimagining our department.

### IS THERE AN IACP RESOURCE OR EVENT THAT HAS AIDED YOUR AGENCY OR COMMUNITY OR YOU IN YOUR CAREER?

Yes—The how-to guide [*Police Facilities Planning Guidelines*] for designing a state-of-the-art police facility with standards recommended by CALEA and IACLEA for best practices.

### DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS OR ADVICE FOR NEW IACP MEMBERS?

Embrace everything about the organization. Leverage all of the opportunities from peer support within the U.S.-based agencies to global agencies assisting with international issues that your police department is presented with. Use the IACP website as a tool for your agency, as well as a source to cite when you are completing research work.

### WHY DID YOU CHOOSE A CAREER IN POLICING?

I began my law enforcement career in 1986 as a Chicago [Illinois] police officer. My father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all Chicago police officers. As a fourth-generation police officer, I believe it was in my DNA to pursue the law enforcement career path.

### WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT THE PROFESSION?

I love that there are very few “routine days” at the office. Each shift you report to is filled with differing calls for service. Generally speaking, we are called to help folks solve problems. Often, we are successful in helping someone who may be experiencing the worst day of their life.

### WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF POLICING?

Setting a proper work-life balance and not bringing home the tolls of the job.

### WHAT CAREER ADVICE DO YOU LIVE BY?

Never stop listening and learning from each other.

### WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO ENTER THE POLICING PROFESSION?

Think seriously about it. Often, it seems like it is a thankless job. You must be prepared to have thick skin and even “turn the other cheek.” However, the rewards far outweigh any possible negative aspects of the job.

### HOW DO YOU DEFINE SUCCESS?

Knowing I gave 100 percent every day and have few regrets.



### WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING POLICING TODAY?

The manner by which society has “evolved” over the past 10 years or so. Police have become the punching bag of society. The “defund the police” movement was an unfortunate experiment and had serious negative outcomes. It has been an uphill battle returning from the “defund the police” period. The profession, like that of teachers, can be a thankless job. I sometimes find it hard to keep my chin up when my colleagues and I have been demoralized by society.

### WHAT KEEPS YOU UP AT NIGHT?

Concern that something tragic may happen to one of my troops. When I swear in officers or promote them, I tell their loved ones my goal is to send them home safely after every shift. I often find myself praying to the Lord to keep my folks safe.

What is a program, policy, or technology you have implemented in your agency that you are proud of?

I worked in Virginia during the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007. The Commonwealth of Virginia recognized fatal security and mental health reporting gaps had occurred leading up to that April mass shooting. In response to a need to close the gaps, the state required K-12 and higher education to develop behavioral threat assessment teams. The teams’ mission was to focus on individuals who may have made a threat, or posed a threat and to develop a plan to manage successfully such a situation. Since 2007, behavioral threat assessment is a best practice I have implemented in all of the agencies I have served.

In 2021, when I arrived at the UMMC Police Department they did not have a behavioral threat assessment team, nor was the agency well-versed in conducting threat assessments. I learned shortly thereafter that none of the agencies in Mississippi were

“

*Generally speaking, we are called to help folks solve problems. Often, we are successful in helping someone who may be experiencing the worst day of their life.*

”

using a threat assessment model to determine if a subject was on the pathway to violence with a plan to hurt themselves or someone else.

I determined quickly that my new agency and my law enforcement partners needed the tools to manage effectively active and ongoing threats within the communities we serve. I engaged Dr. Marisa Randazzo, a subject matter expert (SME) on threat assessment training and management, to come to Mississippi and train the senior leadership of my institution as well as the members of my police department. Additionally, I worked with a software company in Austin, Texas, to develop a software program to manage our threat assessment investigations. By combining the in-person training by an international SME and utilizing modern security software purpose-built to manage threats and mitigate risk, we have been very successful at leveraging connected law enforcement intelligence to keep our community safe. ♡

### CALLING ALL IACP MEMBERS

Interested in being featured in a future Roll Call? Contact [editor@theIACP.org](mailto:editor@theIACP.org) to express your interest. Your fellow members are waiting to meet you!

## Personal Profile

### WHAT INDUSTRY PUBLICATIONS DO YOU LISTEN TO, WATCH, OR READ?

Police 1, the IACP, IACLEA Headquarters, CLERY Center

### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE LEADERSHIP BOOK?

*Extreme Ownership* by Jocko Willink and Leif Babin

### WHO INSPIRES YOU?

Effective and efficient workers who rose from meager beginnings and built beautiful lives for their families

### DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE QUOTE?

“Everything happens for a reason.”

### WHAT IS A FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?

I took Irish step dancing for many years when I was young, and I love to sing Broadway show tunes!

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**IACPnet**

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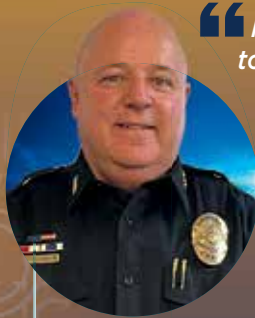


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