

HEARING SEVEN

Law Enforcement Recruitment, Retention, and Training

May 12–14, 2020

The following summary is intended to provide an overview and highlights of the testimony and discussion during the hearings. For a full and detailed account of the hearings, please refer to the [Commission website](#) and the audio recordings and transcripts located there.

Recruitment Panel, May 12, 2020

First Panelist: *Dr. Charlie Scheer, Assistant Professor, University of Southern Mississippi*

Highlights:

- His team, in partnership with Mike Rossler from Illinois State, conducted a 100-item survey of students at five universities about what applicants to law enforcement jobs want from the career and expect from a hiring agency, with the sub-question of what draws them toward or away from policing. This project began through conversations with Gulfport, Mississippi Police Chief Leonard Papania, whose department was heavily affected by Hurricane Katrina.
- About 40% of respondents showed some degree of interest in law enforcement job and are particularly interested in the helping profession aspects of the job.
- They structured the survey to look for, but failed to find, evidence that any of the following were deal-breakers for students interested in police work: rigorous hiring processes, scrutiny (including social media scrutiny) of the selection process, academy length and intensity, potential for hard physical training, change in lifestyle, pressure from friends and family, or personal history issues. They do influence students' concepts of police work but were not found to be significant barriers to applying.
- Respondents did see a disconnect between law enforcement recruitment and the recruiting practices they are used to in other professions. They desire mentoring and more information not just about the selection criteria but about the career itself.
- They don't feel that they are getting proper information about promotional opportunities, about which they are very curious—as many respondents said they were interested in becoming a sergeant as said they don't know what a sergeant does. The lack of information about promotion ladders and metrics for career success means that applicants don't understand what "paying their dues" entails, or what it gets them
- These trends were stronger among non-Black men than among the sample as a whole.
- Applicants will pass up higher salaries to work with specific people who they perceive as charismatic and committed to the same things they want out of life. It's important to make the public face of the department someone who's enthusiastic about the career.

Recommendations:

- There is interest in a law enforcement career among young people, but work needs to be done to reach them.

- There are opportunities for sincere, transparent relationship-building—of the type a sports recruiter would use. This relationship-building is particularly necessary to address concerns of African-American respondents about peer, friend, and family support and of female respondents about barriers to promotion and police culture.
- Show interested potential applicants more information about the realities of the career, including about physical confrontation. Meaningful internships or other opportunities to see departments do not exist universally.
- Many interested respondents were attracted to the helping mission within a blue-collar context. They were interested in job security, benefits, overtime. There is an opportunity for mentors to teach adult life skills while branding their agencies in the process.
- A lot of respondents were on the margins of interest, and could be nudged from curiosity to interest through a concerted recruitment strategy that targets influencing family and peer groups.

Second Panelist: *Chief Will Johnson, Arlington (Texas) Police Department*

Highlights:

- In a recent IACP membership survey, 65% of agencies reported having too few candidates apply for positions, and 78% reported difficulty recruiting qualified candidates: both volume and quality of applicants are low. 75% of agencies report that recruiting is much more difficult today than five years ago. 50% of agencies have had to modify or adapt departmental policies to meet staffing shortages and 25% have had to reduce or eliminate services
- Three main factors are driving the recruitment challenges:
 - Generational differences. Policing is a hyper-traditionalist organization and had not done well in meeting the changes in priorities and needs among people entering the workforce.
 - The hiring process is daunting and too long—many agencies take 6-12 months to navigate a candidate through the process, in which time the candidate may be lost to other organizations or other sectors.
 - And there's a public image challenge.

Recommendations:

- Create opportunities for youth to gain experience and credit towards police employment. Specifically, expand the COPS Hiring Grant process to include paid police cadets.
- Work with the Department of Education to promote college and university partnerships with law enforcement to allow police recruits to trade their training hours for college credits.
- Expand and simplify loan forgiveness programs offered to police under the Department of Education Temporary Expanded Public Service Loan Forgiveness Act. Many rank-and-file officers don't even know the program exists and those that do have extreme difficulty navigating the bureaucracy to qualify for reimbursement.
- Develop federal programs to incentivize colleges and universities that receive federal funds to develop programs to reduce barriers for students entering public service fields. The same with the Department of Defense, to expand and formalize military partnerships where universal service credits can be received, so servicemen and women can get a competitive advantage from their training and experiences in entering civilian public service.
- Consider a national recruitment campaign—marketing to address the public stigma of policing and help share the mission and day-to-day activities of a police officer. Marketing is often one of the first items to be eliminated in budget reductions.

- As we enter into the economic consequences of COVID-19, municipalities and states will try to balance their budgets by reducing funding for training, recruiting, and advertising. Consider three principled approaches to remain important in the post-COVID conversation:
 - Maximize grant funding available for law enforcement specifically—direct funding, not block funding.
 - This funding needs to remain as flexible as possible because each community has its own unique challenges.
 - Advocate for the elimination of the artificial population count and the CARES funding act.

Third Panelist: Deputy Chief Valerie Cunningham, Indianapolis (Indiana) Metropolitan Police Department

Highlights:

- The Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD)'s sworn workforce is approximately 13% female—typical for a major city police department over the last two decades—but has had success since 2016 in increasing the number of women applying to and entering the agency. The recruit class of December 2019 was 31% female.
- The IMPD changed its overall recruitment strategy to look for highly qualified, motivated, and committed individuals. Its tactics were not specifically focused on recruiting women or minorities.
- If you use tactics like ride-alongs or internship programs, ensure there is oversight and quality engagement at all levels. Officers doing ride-alongs should be open to discussion and should be able to give applicants a preview of what the career would look like for them.
- The IMPD hosts community forums for candidates, where they can listen to agency executives, academics, and community stakeholders discuss recent incidents and issues in law enforcement.
- The IMPD's Pre-Academy Readiness (PAR) program tries to remove perceived obstacles to applicants entering the agency. For women, physical testing is a barrier because of Indiana's archaic physical standards—they are highly focused on upper body strength and require the same number of pushups (22) from male and female candidates. The PAR program provides encouragement and practice with the physical skills—one hour of training a week, in which the trainer talks with applicants, assesses their suitability, and answers questions. Formal mentors, field training officers, academy staff, and wellness unit members are also invited to join in.
- The Women Behind the Badge program is a workshop to give female applicants a preview of what it is like to be a police officer. It addresses concerns like shift work, child care, family dynamics, community support, and the male-dominated institutional culture.
- None of these programs are expensive to institute, but they require a commitment of officer time.

Recommendations:

- Focus on marketing campaigns that are inclusive of women. In the past two years, all of the IMPD's marketing (billboards, bus and bench boards) have focused on its Women Behind the Badge program and used only photographs of women.
- Tailor the agency's contact with applicants so that it's mutually beneficial. Applicants want to understand what they will be asked to do, what they're committing to, and what that will look like for them.
- Focus on what the career means for the individual. Talk transparently about organizational culture and resources available within the profession.
- Develop a meaningful professional relationship with applicants through recurring contact.

Fourth Panelist: *Mike Yankowski, Lansing, Michigan Chief of Police (retired) and Assistant Director of Institutional Ethics and Compliance, Michigan State University*

Highlights:

- Lansing, MI downsized its staff by almost 40% during the recession (from about 2006 to 2012). It did not hire any officers for five years. When hiring resumed, the flow of applicants had dried up. Conditions had changed during the hiring freeze, both in working conditions and in candidates' viewpoints. With hiring freezes likely in the wake of the pandemic, it is important to take on the lessons learned.
- In 2013, Lansing tried to develop a 21st-century police hiring playbook. The foundation of the model was building one-on-one relationships with potential applicants—like a farm system in sports, or like recruiting a high school applicant to a university.
- To create pipelines, the department built up youth programs, including Explorers, Cadets, a youth academy, middle school programs, high school career centers, and Police Athletic Leagues.
 - The Explorer program focuses on youth ages 14-21. They are unpaid volunteers, but get an introduction to the profession, mentoring, and exposure to the community.
 - The Cadet program is the next level; cadets are paid a salary and continue to be mentored.
- These strategies improved Lansing's minority hiring, from 5% of the first few recruit classes after the freeze to over 60%.

Recommendations:

- Hire candidates to reflect the value and vision of your department—not just warm bodies.
- Create pipelines within the local area—Lansing tried to focus on a 90-mile radius.
- Establish one-on-one relationships with applicants—starting from the top. In Lansing, the chief contacted individuals and sat in on interviews. Establish a relationship with the candidate's family and significant other, visit their house, build a rapport.
- To build capital and trust with the community, include them in your recruiting process. Have them sit in on interviews. Community champions will bring in new candidates.
- Have a branding strategy.
- Streamline the hiring process. Lansing cut its down from 9-12 months to 90 days. Ensure communication continues throughout the process.

Question-and-Answer Session, May 12, 2020

Q: [For Deputy Chief Cunningham]: Federal law enforcement also struggles with recruiting women; the DOJ averages about 11-12% female agents. The ATF has been focusing on recruiting women. Can you talk more about the role of your wellness program in recruitment, and is there any one particular thing you would say is a must-do?

A: Cunningham and the sergeant assigned to the PAR program both have degrees in exercise physiology. They introduce the program through talking about physical wellness. This fosters an informal relationship with the applicants and breaks down barriers, and then they go on into talking about mental wellness components of the job and agency resources. The mentoring program is also run through the wellness office; the IMPD assigns formal mentors right out of the academy. The atmosphere lets applicants ask specific, pointed questions about family dynamics, support, challenges at home. Because of the age of typical applicants they have a lot of new mothers applying, and many questions about pumping on duty.

Q: [For Dr. Scheer]: When advertising, agencies typically focus on highlights of what they do—SWAT, K9, aircraft, and other niche activities that require a high level of specialization not achieved until after several years of employment. Is there data on the impact of this sort of marketing on retention, for officers who might not achieve these things they saw marketed?

A: We don't have that data, but the team behind the recruitment study is working on a retention study and expects primary results soon. The new study talks to people who have left and who have stayed, as well as to leadership and to roundtables of people from selected agencies. There hasn't been a lot of research into organizational commitment—the phenomenon of believing a workplace or other organization cares about you—in policing. There's a lot of research that could be done/

Q: [For Chief Johnson]: What are some ways we might be able to address overcoming the narrative about law enforcement?

A: The answers to that really lie outside policing—it would be beneficial for the Commissioners to get marketing experts to share their perspective. But the decentralized, locally-controlled police departments of the U.S. are not able to address corporate communications on a profession level. Everybody is doing all they can with the resources they have to project the best nobility of their department. What we really need is a greater degree of penetration that can only come from a structured, nationalized initiative directed toward public education and informing the American society about the true nature of policing. Because there's so many competing voices out there. Today's recruits want a more in-depth explanation of the day-in and day-out work.

Training Panel, May13, 2020

First Panelist: Erik Bourgerie, Director, Colorado Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Commission

Highlights:

- Done properly, training in the academies can help peace officers serve their communities better and possibly save agency resources by decreasing the amount of time needed in field training programs.

Recommendations:

- Create national guidance on the use of evidence-based modern adult learning concepts to increase the core competencies required for law enforcement, with realistic scenarios and in-depth discussions.
- Create a national training grant available for law enforcement training academies to implement and deliver these training concepts, as well as to improve and/or create training facilities.
- Assess the effectiveness of these instructional methodologies and their impact on crime rates, uses of force, complaints leveled against peace officers, internal affairs investigations, retention, and termination rates.
- Complete a national job task analysis in order to ascertain topics of common interest for law enforcement training academies across the nation.
- Change verbiage of 28 CFR 20.3B to include the certification of peace officers as part of the definition of administration of criminal justice.

Second Panelist: Sheriff Ric Bradshaw, Palm Beach County, Florida

Highlights:

- There is a tendency to not pay attention to the human investment that needs to be made, getting caught up in day-to-day operations instead.
- Education should be emphasized throughout the organization. That emphasis should be backed up with financial considerations.

Recommendations:

- Individual agencies should conduct self-assessments, invest in future leaders, and invest in technology.

Third Panelist: Sheriff Bill Brueggemann, Cass County, Nebraska

Highlights:

- Remember there is no one-size-fits-all approach to policing. Small and rural agencies have economic realities and needs that are different.
- Recruiting and retention are more difficult because there are fewer economic incentives and fewer people to represent the agency at recruiting fairs.
- In some very small departments, there is no one to cover a shift if someone goes on training.

Recommendations:

- Establish a funding source for tuition reimbursement for college credits taken while they are actually employed with the agency
- Establish a retirement investment system for law enforcement officers to ensure stability in retirement.
- Establish a funding source to allow small and rural agencies to pay overtime for an officer to cover shifts while another officer is in training. Consider cross-deputation arrangements as needed.
- Establish a funding source for hiring bonuses for those agencies who fall under the rural and small category.
- Require federal training academies to make more seats available for small or rural agencies.
- Establish regional training centers to offer onsite training and take training to remote multiagency training locations.

Question-and-Answer Session, May 13, 2020

Q: [For Director Bourgerie]: What is the barrier to experiential learning? If funding, are there efficiencies that could make up for the additional upfront cost?

A: [Sheriff Brueggemann]: States would have to recognize that kind of training and give credit for it. Quality material would need to be acquired. IACP and NSA have some materials but it would be good to have more standardization.

A: [Director Bourgerie]: Lecture-based methodology has been the standard and there is not a lot of awareness around new adult learning methodologies. We need education and, perhaps, a tool or

resource for agencies to do their own experiential training. Location can also be challenging. And, of course, funding is always difficult as courses need to be set up and actors need to be paid.

Q: [For Director Bourgerie]: Please address Colorado's in-service training challenges on delivery and substance.

A: [Director Bourgerie]: Colorado mandates 24-hours of in-service training per year. Funding has come from car registrations fees to offset those costs. Barriers have been around facilities – where can training occur – and staffing – how can a small/rural agency of three people send someone to an in-person class? Colorado has a small agency backfill program that covers the costs of an officer from a larger jurisdiction cover shifts in a smaller one while someone is out on training.

Q: [For Sheriff Bradshaw]: Same question, please address Palm Beach County's in-service training challenges on delivery and substance.

A: [Sheriff Bradshaw]: Florida has a 40-hour training requirement. We have found successes with distance learning and proxy computer courses. We also have a mobile firearms facility that can be taken all around the county. We also send substitutes while officers in smaller agencies are in training. But training is essential; officer-involved shootings can be reduced significantly – almost 60% – with enhanced training.

Q: [For Director Bourgerie]: Are there studies that indicate that lecture-based training is less effective than adult learning? Also, could some parts of academy training be moved online? How would that affect those studies?

A: [Director Bourgerie]: Colorado uses blended learning. Academies are in-person and lecture-based. In-service training allows for remote learning. As far as studies are concerned, it's not that lecture-based training is ineffective but rather that scenario-based training is more immersive. There have been no studies on law enforcement specifically that I am aware of but there have been studies that show that experiential training helps cement learning better with adults. Blended learning can work for academies, perhaps by doing foundational learning online and reinforcing those lessons experientially.

Retention Panel, May14, 2020

First Panelist: *Bill Johnson, Executive Director, National Association of Police Organizations*

Highlights:

- Law enforcement is a challenging profession by definition. There seems to be an increase in aggressive/violent behavior directed at officers. This impacts retention.
- Despite policing historically being a familial profession with multiple generations serving, some current officers are discouraging their children from going into law enforcement.
- Policing is difficult both physically and mentally and takes its toll on officer health and wellness.

Recommendations:

- Every officer should have access to confidential peer mentoring programs to support officer mental health and wellness.
- Amend the federal rules of evidence, to Rule 501 which deals with the privileges in federal courts to exclude from introduction into evidence in federal proceeding statements made by officers in the context of the critical incident debrief.

- Recognize the value of using the bully pulpit to support and defend officers and the institution of policing. Publicize TOP COPS and similar programs to highlight good things that law enforcement around the country does.
- Encourage “Comply then Complain” programs to improve cooperation between suspects and arresting officers.
- Implement minimal national standards and procedures to guide those state and local law enforcement agencies and officers during investigations, administrative hearings, and reviews. Having and adhering to these procedures will keep discipline from being overturned.
- Grant all law enforcement officers the right to discuss workplace issues with their employers.
- Repeal government pension offset in the Windfall Elimination Provision. Retirement plans and pensions for law enforcement should stand along with Social Security.

Second Panelist: *Sheriff Mark Napier, Pima County, Arizona*

Highlights:

- The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and the Law Enforcement Education Program, both have a clear and compelling nexus to retentions of law enforcement officers.
- Currently we have a fragmented approach. IACP and PERF and universities come out with very fragmented research efforts and we have little to no engagement of practitioners.

Recommendations:

- Reestablish the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration with focused research on policy and practice. The LEAA had previously enhanced the professional standards of law enforcement, spurred the development of victimology and significant technological advancements.
- Reestablish the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) with reimbursement for college degree-seeking law enforcement personnel employed by local, state, and federal law enforcement with a three-year commitment after payment.

Third Panelist: *Commissioner Michael Harrison, Baltimore Police Department, Maryland*

Highlights:

- Baltimore examined its attrition rates and found five main reasons, in descending order of importance:
 1. Working conditions – poor or outdated facilities, equipment, and technology
 2. Upward mobility – professionals leave in search of career track positions
 3. Fairness, equity, and transparency in hiring, selection, promotion, and discipline
 4. Administration support – officer wellness and how to give officers the tools they need, physical and mental support
 5. Pay – fair pay structures, and pay equity across jurisdictions
- Generational differences may also be a factor. Boomers, Gen X, and Millennials have different professional goals, needs, and ambitions.

- Seven scenarios need to be addressed to create high-performing agencies that can overcome generational differences, inequity, disparity, overly harsh grouping, and ever-evolving practices: crime reduction, capacity, culture, community, compliance, connectivity, and communication.

Recommendations:

- Advocate for more resources to implement the kinds of working conditions that offer support, both human and technological and financial support, to improve working conditions, to improve capacity building, to improve our community engagement where we can do three things: build relationships that were never built, improve on good relationships, and repair broken relationships.
- Improve technological advancements and officer wellness programs that police departments critically need in order to change the environment and the culture that fosters increased performance that ultimately leads to crime reduction.
- Improve morale with an effective internal and external communication strategy.

Fourth Panelist: Chief Sylvia Moir, Tempe Police Department, Arizona

Highlights:

- Despite salary and benefit improvements, retaining police officers remains a challenge. A 2018 PERF survey found five findings in the law enforcement retention problem:
 - Rethink and realign incentives – incentives should appeal to changing needs and motivations of today's police officers.
 - Broaden officers' experience and skill-building options – expose officers to different areas of the department
 - Focus on career planning and development early on – career planning opportunities and development plans help officers envision a long-term career with their agency and in policing
 - Promote work-life balance – creative shift-scheduling can help officers have a sense of control
 - Focus on officer health and wellness – should encompass both mental and physical health.
- Tempe efforts have started with acknowledging the uniqueness of law enforcement and the high-stakes rigors of the profession. This approach is born out of the appreciative inquiry construct and individualization:
 - Created individualized development plans to allow for open discussions with supervisors about work and goals
 - Tempe Police Advisory Program, connecting a new hire with a tenured officer for support and guidance
 - Human Performance Team, specialty support to address all aspects of what a police officer might encounter, financial, spiritual, physical, psychological, and medical. Apps on agency-issued iPhones link officers with resources.

- Police equity and testing, adjusting the application and testing process to increase fairness and diminish perception of cronyism

Recommendations:

- Implement ideas nationwide:
 - Explore the organizational climate and make people-centered alternations, with employee voice and dignity at the core.
 - Acknowledge high-stakes and complex environment of policing requires different efforts to fortify officer wellness.
 - Identify and eliminate conditions that focus on identifying and solving deficiencies in employees but rather create documents and plans to empower officers in their own success.
 - Evaluate options for officers to serve in temporary duty assignments for broader exposure.
 - Consider and advisor program pairing tenured officers with new hires
 - Explore and evaluate flexible scheduling
 - Examine testing processes to create equity in action.

Question-and-Answer Session, May 14, 2020

Q: [for all]: How do we recruit minorities and overcome fear and stigma? Also, a lot of solutions are easier for large agencies but more challenging for small ones. How can you have small agencies learn from these perspectives?

A: [Commissioner Harrison]: Baltimore hired a consulting firm to rebrand their image so that the marketing was more in line with the mission and vision of the department. Moved from militaristic to humanistic recruiting materials.

A: [Executive Director Johnson]: Faith-based initiatives can piggyback on existing communities to build bridges to law enforcement. Spreading the word about "Comply, then Complain".

A: [Sheriff Napier]: LEEA can help by doing research into smaller communities, minority communities. How to attract communities of color and the socioeconomically disadvantaged? How can small agencies adopt flexible schedules? Having a strong research arm can help answer those questions and distribute the answers. Education also makes officers better-rounded and LEEP can help with that.

A: [Chief Moir]: Procedural justice should be normalized across every department in the country, linking legitimacy with public judgment.

Q: [Sheriff Napier]: Texas passed a tuition reimbursement bill with a five-year commitment that promises to be helpful on the retention issue.

A: [Sheriff Napier]: Mini-GI bill would be great for law enforcement.