

Spring 2026



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Message from the President

FPCA Members,

For those that don't already know, I am running for IACP 4th VP in the upcoming IACP election. The IACP conference will be held in Orlando, October 24 - 27. I am providing my IACP candidate statement so that our Florida IACP members can hear directly from me first.

It is my goal to have Florida make a very strong statement by showing up for the IACP conference to participate and to vote. More information about FPCA events at the IACP conference and rooming blocks will be sent in the coming weeks.

I welcome connecting with you regarding my priorities and any you feel the IACP should be focused on in the coming years to better support law enforcement leadership.

Candidate Statement

Chief Robert Bage

Candidate for 4th Vice President

International Association of Chiefs of Police

You should care about this election because decisions made at the national level directly impact your agency, your officers, and the communities you serve. Whether you lead a department of 20 or 2,000, the standards we set, the trust we build, and the priorities we elevate shape the future of policing.

I am not running because it is easy. I am running because this profession deserves leaders willing to do hard things and remain steady regardless of the pressure or climate.

After high school, searching for purpose, I enlisted in the United States Navy. I later served with the U.S. Border Patrol before beginning a 20-year career with the North Miami Police Department. Early in my career, I learned that leadership is less about authority and more about responsibility. It requires discipline, resilience, and the willingness to make thoughtful decisions when the stakes are high.

From the first day I put on the badge, I committed myself to growth. That meant extra training, longer hours, difficult conversations, and accountability. Over time, that commitment led to promotion to Sergeant at a young age, advancement through the ranks to Assistant Chief in North Miami, and ultimately the opportunity to serve as Chief of Police for City of Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

In Fort Walton Beach, I worked alongside dedicated professionals to restore the department's accreditation after it had been lost years earlier. That effort required rebuilding standards, strengthening internal systems, and reinforcing trust within the agency and the community. It was not easy. It was necessary. It reaffirmed that meaningful progress demands disciplined leadership.

The same commitment to discipline extends beyond the office. I am a two-time Gold Medalist in the Florida Police Olympics "Tough Cop" competition, a demanding test of strength, endurance, and mental focus. Preparing for that event required consistency, humility, and pushing beyond comfort. Those lessons carry directly into how I lead.

Throughout my career, I have sought to understand our profession at every level. I have served as President of the Florida Police Chiefs Association, Vice Chair of the Southeast Region for SACOP, a member of the IACP Board of Directors, on the Florida Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission and the Florida Critical Infrastructure Protection Group. I have also participated on two national technology advisory boards.

I am a graduate of the FBI National Academy session 248, the Senior Management Institute for Policing, and the Florida Criminal Justice Chief Executive Seminar. I hold a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and a Master's Degree in Public Administration.

I pursued these experiences not for titles, but to be prepared. Prepared to listen. Prepared to advocate. Prepared to lead when difficult decisions must be made.

If elected as your 4th Vice President, I will focus on four commitments.

First, ensuring every member is represented. Ninety percent of agencies in this country serve communities with fewer than 50 officers. These departments are the backbone of American policing. They deserve structural representation. I will advocate for the creation of a Small Agency Division within IACP, so their voices will help shape policy, training, and national priorities.

Second, protecting and strengthening the brand of our profession. Public perception influences recruitment, retention, legislation, and morale. If we do not tell our story, others will tell it for us. I will advocate for the most ambitious marketing and public awareness campaign in IACP history to elevate the true narrative of policing: service, compassion, professionalism, and courage.



ROBERT BAGE
IACP 4th Vice President

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Message from the President

Third, approaching technology boldly and responsibly. Artificial intelligence and emerging tools are transforming public safety. Agencies of all sizes need practical guidance, ethical standards, and access to training that enhances safety and transparency while maintaining public trust. We must lead this conversation.

Finally, strengthening collaboration between public safety and public health. Through deflection initiatives and co response partnerships, I have seen how collaboration improves outcomes and builds legitimacy. When we move beyond traditional silos, we better serve our officers and our communities.

This campaign is not about personal ambition. It is about stewardship and courage.

The future of our profession will not be shaped by comfort. It will be shaped by leaders willing to act with integrity and resolve.

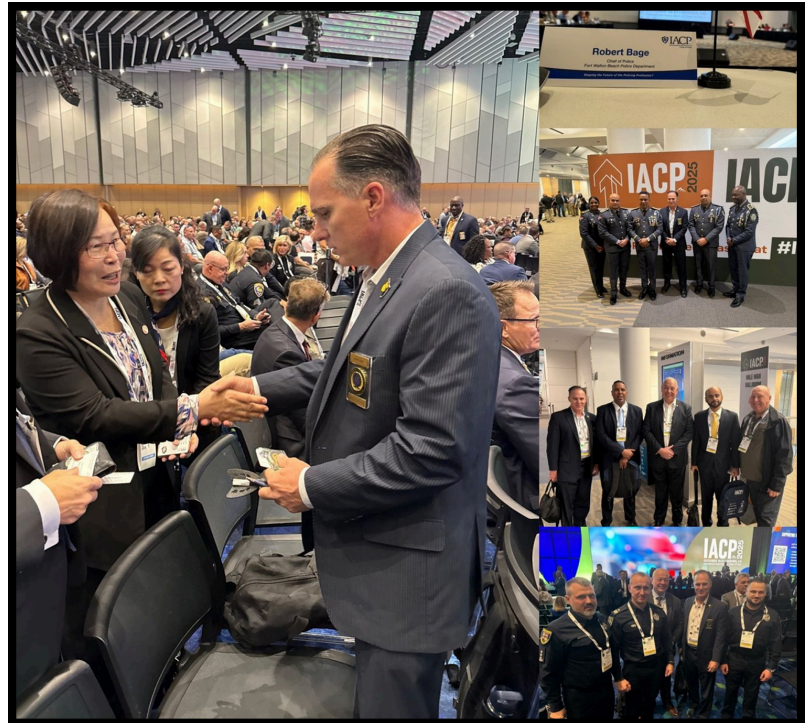
Throughout my career, I have tried to live by three principles: be authentic, be accountable, and take action when it matters.

If you place your trust in me, I will stand firm when it matters, advocate boldly for you, and work relentlessly to strengthen the profession we are proud to serve.

I respectfully ask for your vote for 4th Vice President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. To learn more about my vision and priorities, please visit www.robertbage.com.

With respect and determination,

President Robert Bage



When Leadership Falls Silent: Lessons from the Breonna Taylor Case

By: Sydney Minor, B.A.

Leaving a lasting impression on attendees, Sgt. John Mattingly shared his firsthand account of the events surrounding the Breonna Taylor case in Louisville, Kentucky. Mattingly, the author of *12 Seconds in the Dark: A Police Officer's Firsthand Account of the Breonna Taylor Raid*, is a veteran officer of the Louisville Metro Police Department whose career included narcotics investigations, street crimes, and major case interdiction units. His remarks were not an attempt to reargue the case, but rather to provide context, clarify widely published inaccuracies, and reflect on the long-term consequences of misinformation and failed leadership. Sgt. Mattingly highlighted the leadership failures, operational lessons, and the emotional toll of critical incidents.

From his experience, he explained that the operation tied to the Taylor case was manpower-intensive, involving multiple locations served simultaneously. His team was assigned what was believed to be the least complex location, an apartment considered low risk and away from primary targets.

From the beginning of his account, Sgt. Mattingly stressed that Breonna Taylor was a victim in this case, acknowledging the tragedy of her death and the lasting impact on her family. He noted that while there were multiple locations where no-knock entry warrants were being simultaneously served, the location where he served as the Team lead was not one of those locations. Sgt. Mattingly discussed the misinformation on this fact alone drove a good portion of the narrative and also resulted in a new law being passed in KY that outlawed no-knock warrants. He went on to describe how numerous factors that night pointed toward abandoning the operation altogether, and how he didn't listen to his gut when the red flags in the operational plan emerged. Almost as soon as the apartment door was opened, Sgt. Mattingly was seriously wounded by a gunshot to the leg, striking his femoral artery and causing extreme blood loss. Without immediate access to a tourniquet, officers improvised until medical aid arrived. As fellow officers worked to save his life, responding EMS personnel were unfamiliar with treating gunshot wounds, compounding the chaos of the scene.

Beyond the physical injuries, Sgt. Mattingly spoke openly and passionately about the aftermath. He explained the spread of inaccurate narratives, the absence of timely leadership response, and the failure to counter misinformation from the media. Leadership silence and delayed communication allowed false narratives to solidify in the public's eyes, while audio recordings, witness statements, and investigative findings failed to receive the same attention as early headlines. According to Sgt. Mattingly, leadership failures were a primary reason for the outcome of the event and the media coverage that followed. He emphasized that recognizing Breonna Taylor's loss and memorializing her does not require accepting misinformation or ignoring systemic failures in leadership.

As national attention intensified following the death of George Floyd, the Breonna Taylor case became a focal point. Sgt. Mattingly described the rapid escalation of protests, threats against officers and their families, and the emotional toll of living under constant fear. Verified threats required his family to relocate multiple times, often without any support from his superiors or his department. He detailed the strain this placed on his children, including exposure to fear and trauma no family should experience. Sgt. Mattingly also discussed the intensive investigations conducted by multiple agencies and the weight of navigating legal scrutiny while not fully understanding who was on his side. He spoke openly about the psychological impact of being publicly labeled, judged, and isolated. He described it as the longest and most difficult time of his life.

At the end of his presentation, Sgt. Mattingly concluded with the lessons he learned from this experience. He outlined operational shortcomings, including inadequate briefings, insufficient intelligence, lack of maps and layout familiarity, absence of debriefing, limited training on alternatives to dynamic entry, and the failure to fully review warrants. He also detailed the lack of support and guidance he received from the leaders around him. Equally important were the personal lessons. Sgt. Mattingly encouraged officers to prioritize their families, seek professional support, and recognize that departments and cities may not always be able or willing to protect them in the aftermath of critical incidents. He emphasized faith, trusted relationships, and strong leadership as essential pillars for resilience.

Sgt. Mattingly concluded with a call for stronger, more accountable leadership within law enforcement. His message was not one of blame, but a call for leaders to take responsibility. The session served as a sobering reminder that behind every high-profile incident are real people, officers, families, and communities, living with the consequences.



Ret. Sgt. John Mattingly

2025-2026 FPCA Business Members



Department of Transportation Training: Highway Safety Funding, Subgrants, and the Law Enforcement Liaison Program

By: Katrina Momrow

The Department of Transportation (DOT) meeting put focus on highway safety, funding, and how subgrants and Law Enforcement Liaison (LEL) programs support agencies. Chris Craig from the DOT started the meeting by explaining how the number of statewide fatalities and serious injuries due to vehicular accidents is decreasing; despite the reduction, these fatalities are still very prevalent. On average, there are 9 deaths and 42 serious injuries daily, supporting the claim that traffic safety is an issue that needs to be addressed.

In response to this ongoing issue, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) provides funding for these safety efforts through subgrants that agencies apply for. The subgrant program uses a system that compares counties by the number of fatalities and focuses funding on the worst areas. There are many subgrants available depending on the nature of the safety issue being addressed, including distracted/impaired driving, pedestrian/bicycle safety, speeding/aggressive driving, teen driving safety, motorcycle safety, and work zone safety.

Concept papers to apply for these grants are due on February 28, 2026, with the main goal of improving traffic safety through collaboration with local departments. About 70 grants are awarded each year to support projects focused on education, outreach, and enforcement rather than solely on equipment.

It is important to note that grant funding cannot be used for research or engineering solutions, and agencies are not permitted to spend all allocated funds solely on equipment.

Tim Roberts, coordinator of the LEL Program, continued the meeting by discussing the program in detail. LEL Programs support major traffic safety campaigns such as "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" and "Click it or Ticket." It also supports other campaigns, including "Southern Slow Down," which over 250 agencies participate in; "Hands Across the Border," which works with Alabama and Georgia agencies; "Arrive Alive"; and the I-95 Initiative. These campaigns are meant to educate the public and encourage safer driving behavior.

Another critical part of the LEL program, which provides free training and awards to officers and agencies, is the Traffic Safety Challenge. Almost every Florida agency participates, with 304 out of 342 submitting applications. The LELs also support community traffic safety teams, help agencies with their subgrant applications, and advocate for law enforcement.

Other specific safety tools and programs were discussed during the meeting, with emphasis on the Move Over law because many drivers are unaware of it, leading to officers being struck by vehicles during traffic stops. A few of the other programs discussed include Silver Alerts, the Child Restraint Program, Implied Consent, child safety cards, and quick reference guides. In addition, there are also traffic safety coalitions that focus on impaired driving, Ride Smart, teen safe driving, and occupant protection.

The meeting concluded with a reminder that although progress has been made, there is still a long way to go to improve traffic safety in Florida. The funding and programs are there to help, but they depend on law enforcement agencies to apply for grants, run campaigns, and put these safety efforts into practice. Improving traffic safety is a shared responsibility and not something that can be fixed by one group alone.



FDOT HIGHWAY SAFETY SUBGRANTS & LEL PROGRAM

FDOT State Safety Office

presented to
Florida Police Chiefs Association

presented by
Chris Craig,
Traffic Safety Administrator
Tim Roberts,
Florida Law Enforcement Liaison Coordinator

Logos: FDOT, TARGET ZERO (FATALITIES & SERIOUS INJURIES), NHTSA (NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION), and Florida Department of Transportation seal.

Public Information Officers as the Bridge: Building Trust, Preventing Misinformation, and Communicating Through Crisis

By: Madison Young

The Modern PIO: “The Voice of Your Agency”

Laura Cole and Stacy Ford Bingham of Cole Pro Media delivered a training designed to strengthen chiefs’ and Public Information Officers’ (PIOs) understanding of what PIOs do and why the role has become critical for today’s agencies. Cole emphasized that the PIO is not simply a spokesperson but the public-facing voice of law enforcement leadership, stating, “You are the voice of your agency.” She framed the PIO’s role as a bridge between the agency and the community, noting that this work involves shaping the narrative before, during, and after a crisis through deliberate communication strategies. Cole also outlined why agencies benefit from strong public information leadership, including protecting the agency, providing accurate information, marketing the agency, delivering timely information, and promoting transparency with the community.

Public Trust and Misinformation: Why Accuracy Beats Speed

A major theme throughout the session was the relationship between public trust and the timing of information. Cole explained that proactive communication helps agencies set expectations and establish credibility before a crisis occurs, while timely information becomes essential once an incident is unfolding. She stressed that consistent, transparent messaging builds public trust and prevents the spread of misinformation, especially when rumors and assumptions can spread quickly on social media. At the same time, Cole highlighted a crucial boundary that PIOs must hold: “You never want to sacrifice accuracy for quickness.” She described how accurate information coming from the agency during a crisis can “save lives and protect your officers,” in part by influencing public behavior, keeping community members out of harm’s way, and reducing interference, misinterpretation of actions, and escalation driven by misinformation.

The presenters also discussed how agencies can combat misinformation through communication methods such as email distribution lists and consistent use of social media platforms. Cole referenced Hurricane Helene as an example of how quickly communication challenges can intensify, noting that Asheville, North Carolina was hit particularly hard and that Asheville’s PIO relied on “grapevine” dissemination because phone lines were down. This example reinforced the importance of adaptable messaging systems when modern communication methods fail.

Media Relations, Press Conferences, and the “Elephant in the Room”

Cole and Ford Bingham stressed that strong agency communication is not limited to emergencies; it is built through consistent professional relationships and preparation. In discussing media relations, Cole stated that PIOs need to be accessible, honest, and proactive, and described the PIO role as both a bridge and a safeguard. The presenters recommended building relationships through introductory outreach to reporters, providing regular story ideas and program highlights beyond crisis updates, and encouraging media exposure to units and programs such as K9 teams, community engagement initiatives, and volunteer programs. They also highlighted professional courtesy, including promptly returning calls and emails, even to confirm receipt, and respecting deadlines while acknowledging the pressures of journalism.

The training provided practical guidance on press conferences, emphasizing planning, presentation, and messaging. Cole noted the importance of selecting accessible, controlled locations, planning the layout, determining lighting, and providing a live feed on social media platforms. She stressed that agencies should avoid law enforcement jargon and overly technical explanations, instead focusing on what they want the public to “walk away with.” Preparation steps included determining who would speak and where they would stand, prepping speakers, aligning internal messaging, identifying the likely “gotcha question,” and taking four seconds to breathe before going on camera. Cole also encouraged agencies to consider the “elephant in the room,” discussing big public questions internally so leadership understands the cost-benefit of not addressing them. Even when details cannot be shared without jeopardizing an investigation, she reinforced the importance of responding with empathy.

Strategic Readiness: Internal Messaging, Critical Incident Videos, and Planning for High-Profile Cases

Another major focus of the training was communication readiness as an agency-wide system rather than an individual skill. Cole described “protect and strengthen public trust” as the guiding compass for the work, noting that transparent and timely information, consistent internal and external messaging, proactive outreach, and quick correction of misinformation all flow from that central priority. The presenters also identified practical supports agencies need in place to succeed: strong standard operating procedures and checklists with clear disaster expectations, leadership support and clear internal communication, strong relationships with media and partner agencies, and ongoing training. Cole also described internal messaging as a meaningful tool for building relationships within an organization and for improving the flow of timely, accurate information, citing examples such as newsletters and messages from the chief that build trust and transparency across leadership, officers, and personnel.

The presenters also discussed critical incident videos, explaining that the goal is to “tell the story and end the story.” Cole emphasized that body-worn camera footage should be paired with context such as 911 information, road traffic, and high-quality maps, because providing additional context reduces the ability for outside parties to “spin the story.” Cole referenced the case involving the death of actor Gene Hackman and his wife, which drew national media attention, noting that the Santa Fe County Sheriff’s Office was the lead agency and that their news release addressed rumors while reaffirming what they knew at the time.

Continued on next page

Finally, Cole outlined preparation strategies for national coverage and high-profile cases, emphasizing that the chief should serve as the spokesperson and that, regardless of who is in front of the camera, it should not be the first time the public sees that person. Additional considerations included planning visuals, identifying venues for press events, training the team, developing talking points, working with a communications expert, and clarifying team roles. This includes who decides who handles media logistics and who ensures agency support if tensions rise. Cole noted that internal staff and the family of victims or deceased individuals should be notified before public messaging occurs. She also reinforced that “rumors spread faster than facts,” and offered language agencies can use when releasing footage. For example, “We are releasing footage carefully to maintain transparency while protecting the dignity and privacy of the family.”

Stacy Ford Bingham highlighted the value of research and qualitative data in shaping effective communication strategies. She noted that gathering real community data helps agencies understand what people actually care about, and that data-driven decisions reduce the emotional reactivity that can sometimes influence messaging. Ford Bingham referenced conducting a survey in a divisive community where the results showed that residents primarily wanted to be more informed, reinforcing her reminder that “people don’t know what you know.” She also stressed the importance of monitoring online activity, describing how an influencer posted about an issue in a community. This community’s social media was not being monitored, and it eventually escalated to national news. In discussing external communication, she noted that social media content should reflect an agency’s identity, encouraged agencies to be intentional in using social media to support communication goals, and reinforced that “social media is not one-way communication.”

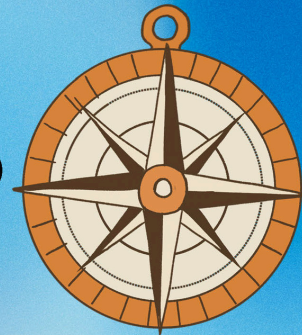
YOUR COMPASS:

WHAT TO MAKE YOUR #1 FOCUS

Protect and strengthen public trust

Everything you do flows from this:

- Transparent, timely information
- Consistent messaging (internal & external)
- Proactive outreach before crisis hits
- Quick correction of misinformation



WHAT YOU NEED TO SUCCEED

- Strong Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) & checklists
 - Clear expectations during a disaster
- Leadership support and clear internal communication
 - Top-down communication flows easily
- Solid relationships: media, community leaders, partner agencies
- Ongoing training (exactly like today)

Highway Safety Committee Focuses on Emerging Traffic Challenges

By: Sydney Minor, B.A.

The Florida Police Chiefs Association Highway Safety Committee held its first meeting of the year with a focus on strengthening traffic safety through collaboration, legislative advocacy, and education. Committee leadership emphasized the importance of traffic safety work, as it remains one of the most visible and impactful areas of law enforcement. Chief Art Bodenheimer of the Lake Alfred Police Department opened the discussion by acknowledging the challenge of sustaining passion for traffic enforcement, particularly among younger officers.

FPCA President Chief Robert Bage highlighted several major initiatives currently underway. Among them is continued work with coalition partners focused on senior drivers, including expanded education surrounding Silver Alerts and a new “belt program” aimed at improving protection for older adults. The association is also prioritizing legislative work for impaired driving, e-bikes, and squatted trucks. House Bill 937 was a significant point of discussion. Lt. Col. Robert Chandler of the Florida Highway Patrol emphasized the need to reform property damage crash thresholds, which have not been significantly updated since 1989. The outdated limits have resulted in hours of time unnecessarily spent at minor crash sites and a reduction of police response to bigger emergencies. One committee member noted that officers can spend up to an hour responding to crashes that do not require law enforcement presence.

The discussion turned to pedestrian, bicycle, and school zone safety laws. Retired Chief Brett Railey outlined proposed bills addressing electric bikes, automated enforcement limitations, and cleaning up the language in micromobility bills. Committee members expressed concern over legislation that would restrict school zone enforcement only to times when flashing lights are active and the potential safety implications if this bill passes. E-bikes emerged as one of the most pressing issues, as chiefs shared concerns over ambiguous laws and enforcement challenges. Devices capable of traveling at highway speeds are increasingly causing accidents to pedestrians on sidewalks, and members emphasized the lack of clear crash reporting data and limited accountability or punishment for young riders. Squatted trucks were also addressed, with chiefs noting the absence of clear statutory language and standard reporting in tracking crash data related to these vehicles. Model legislation is currently being proposed, and families affected by related fatalities have expressed support for legislative efforts.

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) provided updates on grant opportunities and coalition efforts. In addition to roadway safety efforts, FDOT announced the formation of a rail safety coalition and the development of a public awareness campaign similar to “Click It or Ticket.” Additional updates included information from the Florida Highway Patrol on new impairment reference tools and occupant protection materials, as well as updates from Mothers Against Drunk Driving regarding their continued support for the development of autonomous vehicles.

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2025-2026 FPCA Business Members



Dr. Jack Enter: Looking Back 42 Years - Why Managers Fail to Lead

By: Jolinda Corry, B.A.

A mixture of passion, emotion, and humor, along with a touch of character acting, made Dr. Jack Enter's training on law enforcement leadership engaging and memorable. A leadership consultant whose teachings have shaped law enforcement agencies, the FBI, IACP, private-sector organizations, government teams, and faith-based groups committed to building stronger and more resilient organizations, Dr. Enter drew on 42 years of experience in policing, teaching, and mentoring to share lessons and advice gathered from mentors, colleagues, and thousands of conversations along the way. His simple but important mission is to help law enforcement understand why good officers change when they get promoted, and why so many sergeants and supervisors struggle to lead effectively.

Dr. Enter began by reminding the audience that leadership is not just a rank or title, it is a relationship. "Leader means to go first," he said, "and people follow because they trust you." From that core principle, his big question was simple: why do effective cops and staff become ineffective supervisors and managers? He had asked officers in every training room he walked into about their perception of actual effective leadership numbers. The numbers are staggering. While operational officers are consistently rated at 80-90% effective, only 10-20% of supervisors manage in the way everyone believes leadership should look like.

The issue is not about intent or lack of caring, it is a lack of training. "Most of them are not bad people, they're untrained and afraid," he said. He noted how fear shows up as flight or fight, and while some supervisors emotionally explode, many others avoid the conflict altogether. Ironically, he highlighted that officers who confront danger daily still hesitate to confront personnel issues. "Why are we heroes on the street and cowards in the suites?" Although operational officers already possess two of the most important leadership skills, communication and problem-solving, they cannot seem to bridge that gap with their teams. Once promoted, the patrol officer stops the very things that made them effective: resolving conflicts, enforcing boundaries, and making decisions under pressure.

One of the most powerful moments of the training came when Dr. Enter, describing interviewing officers in different departments across the country, asked these three simple questions: *What's the best part of working here? What's the worst part? What are three wishes for change?*

The best part was always the same, the people. Dr. Enter teared up as he quoted a young officer who was sharing their best part, "when someone comes back to life (after administering Narcan)." Then Dr. Enter sank a bit as he shared the worst part, which was painfully consistent, poor leadership. Not the danger, or darkness, or the job itself. It was going back to the office and dealing with mismanaged teams.

Throughout the training, Dr. Enter used vivid analogies to make his points stick, comparing unchecked pride to a thorny, dehydrated tree which cannot grow, with humility being a healthy lush tree fed by truth and serving others. "Humility doesn't mean you think less of yourself, it means you understand that it's not about you," he explained.

The final message Dr. Enter delivered was that of forgiveness. That officers should forgive the supervisors who failed them, not to excuse the bad leadership but to understand that it was due to them being failed as well. Many of the leaders were placed into supervisor roles and left to figure it out on their own, with fear and uncertainty holding them back from the hard conversations and even more from asking for help. However, leadership is not something that can just be learned by reading a handbook. It must be trained, modeled, and practiced so that the next generation of leaders will be there when things fall apart.



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Perception Meets Practice: What Florida Police Chiefs Reveal About Threat Assessment

By: Chief Robin Griffin-Kitzerow, Ph.D.

Targeted acts of violence are a constant threat wherever people gather and typically begin and end within minutes. While police departments are skilled at emergency response, fewer have embraced the preventative value of structured threat assessment and management. Across Florida's municipal police agencies, threat assessment is frequently discussed as critical but not consistently applied in the many ways it could prevent violence in communities. My qualitative research explored how 15 police chiefs in the State of Florida perceive these practices and what factors shape their success. Their responses to the question, *what are the perceptions of law enforcement executives, specifically police chiefs, of threat assessment practices, and what are their views on adopting daily police practices to prevent targeted acts of violence in municipal settings in Florida*, revealed significant and impactful findings.

Current Landscape

As the threat landscape evolves, the growing focus on targeted violence prevention is front of mind for police chiefs. Following the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Act, chiefs are finding creative ways to manage people of concern who emerge in their communities. These management methods vary based on resources, staffing, need, and agency size. Chiefs in Florida often find resourceful ways to force multiply their efforts through connections to larger partnerships such as the FBI, FDLE, and their local sheriffs' offices. This study revealed continuity in threat assessment and management operations varied due to these needs and challenges. Many chiefs spoke of the individual dynamics of their communities and shared how they leverage available resources when people of concern emerge.

What Florida Chiefs Are Saying

The research found that police chiefs in Florida view and apply threat assessment practices to prevent targeted acts of violence and overwhelmingly recognize threat assessment as an essential component of proactive policing. However, responses varied regarding application and effectiveness due to available resources, training, and community context. Many chiefs cited challenges with funding, securing administrative or budgetary support, and establishing consistent procedures.

Agency size had some impact on outcomes. Chiefs of agencies with more than 100 sworn personnel identified key members of their criminal investigations teams were dedicated to this work. However, application of practices often varied in larger agencies based on the chief's philosophical understanding of threat management. Many chiefs stated they believed in threat management as an effective means of prevention and trained their entire agency on identification and referral to specialized divisions for follow-up measures. Others had dedicated personnel but offered limited training agency wide.

Some chiefs spoke of limited resources and discussed having little need for threat management, sharing their thoughts on how threat assessment and management in their communities may be effective but not commonly practiced. Agency size was not a correlating factor in the perception or use of threat management strategies. Chiefs in smaller agencies leveraged outside resources and community support, such as churches, the state attorney's office, and mental health centers, for additional mitigation strategies for identified persons of concern. Effectiveness and use were based more on the philosophical understanding and belief of the chief than on agency size or available resources.

An interesting finding revealed a correlation between chiefs' specific experiences and how their exposure to targeted acts of violence police encounters during their careers shaped their perspectives on threat assessment as a preventative measure. Many shared stories of how these strategies helped thwart potential targeted acts of violence in their communities. Others shared impactful experiences in which targeted acts were committed and subsequent forensic analysis revealed missed clues that could have aided prevention. These experiences significantly influenced their perspectives and the importance they place on implementing these efforts within their agencies.

Threat Assessment in Schools

Among all chiefs interviewed, Chiefs with schools inside their jurisdictions reported standard practices of assigning an officer to multidisciplinary threat assessment teams at their schools, leveraging school-based resources, using structured professional judgment tools, and meeting routinely to discuss students exhibiting concerning behavior. This reflects the effectiveness of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Act and how Florida has embraced these practices since that tragedy.

Chiefs with schools in their jurisdictions also reported that School Resource Officers participated in multidisciplinary teams, received threat assessment and management training, and conducted investigations and safety planning for identified students or persons of concern. Chiefs described numerous instances in which interventions at schools potentially prevented targeted acts of violence. Chiefs interviewed also spoke of their agency's participation in annual multi-agency training exercises to prepare for coordinated responses with neighboring jurisdictions. These findings support that consistent threat assessment and active assailant prevention practices are occurring in municipal jurisdiction school environments across Florida.

Continued from previous page

Creativity Among Chiefs

Smaller agencies with fewer resources spoke specifically about creative ways they manage people of concern with mental health and substance abuse issues. These approaches included leveraging mental health courts and faith-based organizations to support management and monitoring efforts while providing services to mitigate grievances and unmet needs.

Threat Assessment in Perceived as New to Municipal Policing

Interviews with municipal police chiefs revealed a perception that threat assessment is a relatively new practice in policing. While the integration of art and science in threat assessment and management dates back to dignitary protection practices implemented by the United States Secret Service after the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901, threat assessment and management have been used for decades to prevent targeted acts of violence through intelligence gathering and mitigation strategies.

Many chiefs interviewed believe the advent of social media, online threats, school-based violence, and other targeted acts of violence in public spaces present modern challenges requiring new prevention strategies. Conversations with chiefs led to further discussion about past policing strategies, such as responding only to actionable cases requiring arrest or involuntary mental health detention. Today's threat assessment and management models provide additional intervention strategies through mitigation efforts, including public and private partnerships, mental health resources, clergy, and safety planning.

Consistent Mitigation Strategies to Prevent Violence

Across the board, chiefs discussed risk protection orders as an effective tool to mitigate threats. This Florida law affords law enforcement another layer of intervention to prevent violence through the safe removal of firearms from persons of concern exhibiting threatening behavior or ideation. As threat management evolves as an effective means of prevention, chiefs also recognized the need for enhanced monitoring to ensure no person of concern slips through the cracks. Chiefs discussed leveraging technology to monitor behaviors, including social media activity, and leveraging license plate readers, and other tools to identify stalking patterns in known offenders. They provided specific examples of monitoring police data to identify repeated Baker Act interactions, repeated visits to the same residence, domestic violence encounters involving the same individuals, stalking-related incidents, and school threat cases.

Municipal Chiefs Do Not See Threat Assessment as One Size Fits All

Participating chiefs' perceptions aligned with the available research. Variations in responses to incidents and investigations were based on factors such as threat imminence, available resources, jurisdictional considerations, incident types, and community characteristics. For example, chiefs noted how large-scale events with dignitary protection elements influenced training and response expectations. Another chief cited how judges residing within the jurisdiction who receive threats or stalking incidents create special considerations for threat management and communication with federal partners. Chiefs participating in the study recognized that management of persons of concern required safety planning that was as unique as the concerning individuals themselves.

Chiefs emphasized that law enforcement partnerships are critical in all situations with shared citizens. They discussed their relationships with schools, participation in annual lockdown drills, active assailant training, and regular involvement in school threat assessment teams as essential for success. Chiefs agreed that communication with neighboring jurisdictions is necessary, as individuals with criminal intent do not recognize jurisdictional boundaries. They also emphasized that each jurisdiction requires tailored measures to maintain community safety.

Partnerships are Essential to Success

Throughout the interviews, chiefs emphasized the importance of proactively fostering and maintaining communication with neighboring jurisdictions, state and federal partners, schools, and community organizations that provide services and resources. These relationships are strengthened through frequent communication, regular meetings, and clearly defined processes that account for stakeholder roles and jurisdictional considerations. Chiefs described regularly scheduled meetings with state attorneys, sheriffs' offices, and federal agencies and emphasized establishing relationships long before a crisis occurs. Many noted participation in the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, providing immediate federal coordination when cases escalate.

Leveraging Mental Health Services

Leveraging mental health services to intervene, manage, and monitor persons of concern was a common strategy among most chiefs interviewed. Chiefs from larger agencies reported robust processes and embedded clinical staff. Others leveraged partnerships with community mental health centers, schools, state attorneys, and faith-based organizations. Agency size did not appear to impact the ability to meet community mental health needs. Chiefs recognized the longstanding necessity of partnerships to prevent and suppress crime and emphasized proactive communication and relationship building to enhance effectiveness.

Training Varied Among Agencies and Chiefs, but Every Chief Has a Plan

Chiefs referenced personal and professional experiences with targeted acts of violence within Florida, including incidents on school campuses. These experiences significantly shaped leadership priorities related to threat management.

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Participating chiefs offered varied responses regarding prevention and response efforts; however, every chief interviewed had a plan and process in place. All chiefs discussed training in active assailant response and Chiefs with schools in their jurisdictions described training is conducted on campuses, often alongside neighboring agencies. Some indicated policies require further refinement, while others described robust procedures, specialized teams, and highly trained response protocols.

Several chiefs reported having policies related to threat assessments, though responses were inconsistent. Policies, procedures, and real-time responses varied by jurisdiction and resources, however every chief had a plan. One consistent theme was that school-based threat and active assailant procedures were uniform, regardless of jurisdiction.

Available Resources

Chiefs may be unaware of free threat management resources and training available through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. In recent years, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis articulated a vision for Florida to become a national leader in intelligence-led policing by establishing a comprehensive threat assessment strategy. At his direction, then-FDLE Commissioner Rick Swearingen led efforts to establish a statewide threat analysis strategy to ensure coordinated identification and intervention for persons on a pathway to violence.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement subsequently created Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management training and processes available to all law enforcement agencies in the state. These teams apply scientific research and structured professional judgment tools to identify, assess, and manage persons of concern to prevent targeted acts of violence. Their free training can be coordinated through <https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/contact-us/landing>. According to the Governor's plan, Florida aims to lead national prevention efforts through established threat assessment techniques delivered via the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission, and the Regional Domestic Security Task Force. Florida is positioned to set the benchmark for leveraging threat management as a true prevention strategy.

Communication is Key

Chiefs emphasized the value of strong communication among jurisdictions and identified ongoing communication as critical to successful outcomes. They described methods such as regular meetings and information sharing through fusion centers. Chiefs noted that persons of concern often cross jurisdictional boundaries, and information sharing improves awareness of concerning behaviors across schools, workplaces, shopping centers, and other public spaces.

Some chiefs reported that regular meetings among local, county, state, and federal partners, as well as stakeholders such as the state attorney's office, provide significant value in threat management cases. Others highlighted co-responder models, pairing officers and clinicians, as effective tools in managing threat cases, reinforcing the importance of public and private partnerships.

Strong relationships with partners across law enforcement, schools, businesses, and mental health providers were a recurring theme. Chiefs recognized that communication among stakeholders begins with partnerships. Several chiefs emphasized that community trust is equally important, noting that citizens who trust the police are more likely to report concerning behavior.

Chiefs also stressed the importance of educating the public on what to report and how to report it. They cited varied reporting mechanisms and trained personnel assigned to receive reports as an additional safeguard. Best practices in threat management and violence prevention begin with community trust, accessible reporting mechanisms, trained assessment teams, and structured follow-up. Communication, positive relationships among stakeholders, and clearly defined processes were key elements identified within this finding.

Leadership Lessons and Looking Ahead

The findings in this 2025 study point to a clear conclusion: effective threat assessment begins at the top. Department policies, partnerships, and culture follow the example set by leadership. Chiefs who make prevention a personal and organizational priority not only strengthen their agencies but create safer communities statewide.

As Florida continues to refine its statewide strategy through FDLE and local partnerships, municipal police executives are pressing forward to lead this movement. By adopting standardized training, fostering and cultivating existing partnerships, and embedding prevention into daily operations, Florida's police chiefs can set a national benchmark for proactive policing.

Author Bio

Dr. Robin Griffin-Kitzerow, Ph.D. is a police chief and researcher specializing in threat assessment, violence prevention, and executive leadership in policing. Her dissertation, *Perceptions of Police Executives of Threat Assessment Practices in Municipal Level Policing*, was published in 2025 and serves as the foundation for this article.

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When You are the Target: Surviving as a Police Chief

Insights from the FPCA Mid-Winter Conference Panel

By Haley Watts | With contributions from Dr. Marshall Jones, Panel Moderator

Leadership will eventually be tested not by performance, but by pressure. When that moment comes, titles offer no protection, truth does not always prevail quickly, and silence from supporters can feel louder than the attacks themselves. What carries a police chief through those moments is not position, but principle, relationships, and the courage to stand firm when the cost of leadership becomes personal.

At this year's Mid-Winter Conference, a panel discussion titled "When You Are the Target: Surviving as a Police Chief," moderated by Dr. Marshall Jones of the Florida Institute of Technology, brought together Chief David Currey of Vero Beach, Chief Lawrence Revell of Tallahassee, Chief Ed Hudak of Coral Gables, and Retired Chief Butch Arenal of Coconut Creek. Their experiences differed in circumstance but aligned in lesson: every chief will face adversity, and it is integrity, principle, and the strength of their relationships that determine whether those challenges define or fortify their leadership.

Chief Lawrence Revell: Standing Firm in Belief and Responsibility

Chief Lawrence Revell of the Tallahassee Police Department described how attending a leadership retreat quickly became a statewide controversy. Media coverage framed the retreat as homophobic due to its association with faith-based organizations such as the Billy Graham organization and Samaritan's Purse. What began as a limited issue escalated rapidly, drawing intense scrutiny and criticism from portions of the community and prominent LGBTQ leaders who questioned the fairness of the narrative.

Rather than retreating or responding defensively, Chief Revell chose clarity and engagement. He reaffirmed that personal belief does not negate professional responsibility. While recognizing the importance of ensuring all community members feel safe and respected, he asserted that faith and leadership are not mutually exclusive. When concerns arose regarding officer treatment, he invited those officers to speak directly. Two did, and both spoke positively about their experiences under his leadership.

A public town hall followed, drawing nearly 400 attendees. The overwhelming majority voiced support. Media attention continued, but the broader community response demonstrated an essential truth: when leaders are consistent, transparent, and principled, support often emerges even when controversy dominates headlines.

Chief Revell's takeaway was simple and resolute: stand for something or risk falling for anything. Leadership requires the willingness to remain anchored in principle, even when doing so invites criticism.

Chief David Currey: Relationships as the Shield Against Relentless Attacks

Chief David Currey of the Vero Beach Police Department shared an account of sustained political and personal attacks designed to remove him from office. In 2023, efforts included pressure on city leadership, threats to employment, and the creation of a website dedicated to spreading disinformation. Minor incidents from years earlier were repackaged to suggest misconduct. Public records requests multiplied. The situation demanded preparation not only professionally, but personally, including difficult conversations with family members before false narratives became public.

What ultimately countered the attacks was not a single decision, but years of relationship building. When the issue reached public forums, council chambers filled with chiefs, officers, judges, attorneys, business leaders, and community members who spoke in support. Many attended because they were asked. Others came because trust had already been established.

Chief Currey emphasized that relationships do not appear when needed unless they have been built intentionally. Brotherhood and professional support networks require consistent effort long before a crisis arrives. He also addressed the complexity of facing both internal and external threats at the same time, including disgruntled personnel and ongoing litigation. In those moments, leadership requires steadiness and outreach, not isolation.

Chief Currey's lesson was clear: build relationships early and continuously. When adversity arrives, those relationships become the difference between standing alone and standing supported.

Retired Chief Butch Arenal: Preparation, Perspective, and Knowing When to Let Go

Retired Chief Butch Arenal, who served in Punta Gorda and Coconut Creek, offered the perspective of a leader brought in from outside to drive organizational change. Resistance surfaced quickly through anonymous surveys, political maneuvering, and attempts to undermine authority. Media relationships were strained or nonexistent, limiting opportunities for balanced coverage and reinforcing negative narratives.

Chief Arenal stressed the importance of strategic thinking during adversity. One of his most significant lessons was the value of having an exit plan, not as an admission of defeat, but as a means of maintaining clarity. Knowing where one stands allows leaders to think cognitively rather than emotionally, particularly when attacks extend to family members.

He also spoke about accountability and expectations. High standards are often misunderstood, but they are essential for developing future leaders. Demanding excellence without explaining purpose breeds resentment. Demanding excellence with transparency builds capability. His goal was not control, but preparation for those who would lead next.

Chief Arenal acknowledged the difficulty of choosing restraint over confrontation. While public response can feel justified, long-term outcomes often favor discipline and perspective. Leadership sometimes requires absorbing criticism so the organization can move forward.

Chief Ed Hudak: Protecting Your Team While Navigating Political Pressure

Chief Ed Hudak of the Coral Gables Police Department recounted a situation early in his tenure when he became the target of an internal investigation simply for attending a party hosted by a sworn female officer. The inquiry, fueled by anonymous complaints and internal politics, unfolded publicly through social media, casting unwarranted scrutiny on both him and his personnel. Though the investigation ultimately found no policy violations, the experience highlighted the unique pressures chiefs face when leadership and personal judgment intersect.

Rather than reacting emotionally or defensively, Chief Hudak emphasized steady leadership and protecting his team from the fallout. He ensured that his officers and their families remained supported, kept the situation as private as possible, and sought counsel from trusted legal and professional advisors. Hudak's approach balanced accountability with care, demonstrating that principled leadership requires both courage and restraint.

Crucially, the trust and relationships Hudak had built over decades allowed his personnel to stand firmly behind him. Officers attended meetings, provided sworn statements, and publicly supported his integrity, reinforcing the lesson that leadership is strengthened by the loyalty and confidence of those around you.

Chief Hudak also offered one of the most memorable reframes of the panel. Building on the familiar adage that "it's lonely at the top," Hudak added a critical nuance: "It is lonely at the top, but you must be lonely at your desk." His point was that a chief cannot let their people see how much they may be struggling, because that struggle can become infectious to those who are worried about their leader, concerned for the agency, and looking to the chief for steadiness. Showing resilience and forging through adversity is not optional when your agency depends on your leadership. It is the job.

After the Panel: A Conversation with Moderator Dr. Marshall Jones

Following the panel, Haley Watts sat down with Dr. Marshall Jones to discuss the themes and moments that resonated most deeply with the audience and with the panelists themselves.

Haley Watts: You moderated this panel with four very different chiefs who faced very different circumstances. But you have said there were patterns that cut across all four experiences. What stood out to you?

Dr. Jones: I know each of the chief panelists personally and have interacted with them on various projects over the years. What I most value and appreciate about what happened on that stage is their vulnerability in front of their peers, solely motivated by a desire to share their story to help others. The emotions in each story were real, raw, honest, and full of feeling. This is exactly why associations for chiefs exist, to support and help one another. This panel was a fantastic example of why these meetings are so important to Florida's law enforcement community. In terms of the patterns, what struck me most was how consistent certain dynamics were, regardless of the specific situation. In every case, there were factions of disgruntled, angry individuals, or what I would call those with unresolved grievances, from within their own ranks. And when a community member, a media outlet, or a rogue council person went looking for voices that were unhappy with the chief, they found a welcome audience among those internal dissenters. That pattern repeated across all four stories. It is not just an external threat or an internal threat. It is the convergence of the two that creates the real danger for a chief.

HW: Several chiefs in attendance told you the panel had a significant personal impact on them. Can you describe what you observed in the room?

Dr. Jones: It was an amazing phenomenon. You had a room of a couple hundred law enforcement professionals, people who are trained to be composed, to project strength, and they were feeling the emotion of the moment as each chief shared their story. These are four of the most experienced, stoic, and resilient chiefs I know. But when they talked about the support they received from their officers, their staff, and community members who showed up at council meetings or spoke to the media on their behalf, you could see what that meant to them. The emotion was raw. After that panel, that same day and in the days that followed, other members approached me to thank us for the panel and to share what it meant to them. Some of those individuals I know had experienced or are currently experiencing similar challenges, the kind that can make you feel very alone in this profession. Several told me how much it meant to see leaders among chiefs being vulnerable and sharing their stories openly. Hearing that reinforced why we did this.

HW: Chief Hudak's comment about being "lonely at your desk" resonated with many in attendance. Can you expand on why that struck such a chord?

Dr. Jones: That moment landed hard because every chief in that room understood exactly what Ed was saying. The instinct when you are under fire is to let people in, to share the burden. But Ed's point was that your people are already worried about you. They are concerned for the agency. If they see you struggling, that concern becomes infectious. It spreads through the ranks and affects morale, focus, and confidence in the organization's direction. So, the chief has to absorb it. You have to show resilience and forge through, because the agency depends on your leadership. That is an incredibly heavy thing to carry, and hearing Ed say it out loud gave permission for others to acknowledge that weight without feeling weak for carrying it.

HW: You mentioned the concept of a personal advisory board during the panel. Can you explain what that means for a police chief?

Dr. Jones: This came up with every panelist, and it is something I feel strongly about. There are really two complementary concepts here. Jack Enter talks about your “Honolulu friends,” which are folks who operate within your daily operational circle and can help you in near real time. They are the people close to the work who can give you immediate counsel and support. The personal advisory board is different. Those are chiefs and other trusted professionals who are not within your agency, people outside your immediate political environment whom you can call to discuss issues, use as a sounding board, and get honest perspective from without agenda. The value of having both of those networks was reinforced by all four panelists. When you are under fire, you need people you trust who will tell you the truth, not just what you want to hear. And you need to have those relationships established well before you ever need them.

HW: The idea of building relationships before a crisis was a recurring theme. How does that play out practically for a chief?

Dr. Jones: It starts from your earliest days as a chief. Getting to know folks in your community, building relationships and coalitions, being a good steward of your agency and your community, those things pay dividends through your entire tenure. But here is the deeper point: when people do not know who you are as a person, they default to assumptions. And the natural human tendency is to assume that someone's intent is nefarious. Bad actors exploit that. They leverage power and influence to push negative narratives, and oftentimes those assumptions are really just a reflection of the accusers' own intent and hidden agendas. When you have invested in building rapport and relationships that lead to trust, people know your behavior signals positive and helpful intent. They do not default to the worst interpretation. That trust becomes your shield.

HW: Chief Arenal's raised the concept of having an exit plan. How did the other panelists respond to the idea of a chief's shelf life?

Dr. Jones: Every chief on that panel recognized that they have a shelf life. That is a reality of the profession. But what they reinforced is the importance of having the relationships and the standing to go out on your own terms when it is time, rather than being fired or forced to resign based on perception more so than reality. The relationships you build are what prevent you from falling prey to the whims of politicians acting out of political expediency or responding to a manufactured public narrative. It is about maintaining the agency and the clarity to write your own ending.

HW: The impact of these situations on families came up repeatedly. How significant was that theme?

Dr. Jones: It was one of the most powerful and painful themes of the entire panel. When accusations are playing out in the media and on social media, people form opinions, and those opinions reach the chief's family. Spouses, children, extended family members are all affected. In several of these cases, the chiefs were in communities where the media and law enforcement relationship was already strained, where media coverage was critical of law enforcement by default. That compounds everything. Your family is absorbing attacks that they did not sign up for and cannot respond to. Every panelist spoke to that, and you could tell it was the part that cut the deepest.

HW: Looking ahead, what do you hope chief's take away from this panel going forward?

Dr. Jones: I hope they take away that they are not alone, and that they do not have to be. Every chief in that room has faced or will face a version of what these four panelists described. The specifics will differ, but the dynamics are remarkably consistent. Build your relationships now, inside your agency and in your community, before you ever need them. Cultivate your advisory board and your operational support network. Invest in the people around you so that when adversity comes, and it will come, you have a foundation of trust that cannot be manufactured in a crisis. And lean on your association. That is what the FPCA is for. What happened in that room during this panel is proof that when chiefs are willing to be vulnerable and share their experiences, it gives strength to everyone who hears it. I hope this panel encourages more of that, not less.

The Takeaway: Leadership Is Not Survived Alone



Building the Future of Law Enforcement: How Florida Police Departments Revolutionized Recruitment

A panel discussion featuring Lieutenant Marquitta Brown (Gainesville Police Department), Sergeant Steven Damm (Tallahassee Police Department), and Major Michael Santiago (Fort Pierce Police Department), moderated by Greg Zaroslinski, President, Performance Protocol

By: Lillianna Vitale, B.A.

Law enforcement agencies across Florida are facing an unprecedented staffing crisis. With 41% of officers eligible to retire within the next 24 to 26 months, departments are scrambling to attract a new generation of recruits. But three Florida police departments have discovered something remarkable: the answer is not just about marketing; it is about human connection.

The Core Problem: We've Lost the Human Touch

Moderator Greg Zaroslinski, President of Performance Protocol, opened the discussion by identifying a fundamental shift in recruitment challenges. "This generation is connected but disconnected at the same time," he explained. The career path of becoming a police officer has lost that "want" factor. The younger generations are not inclined or attracted to this line of work. The reason? A lack of face-to-face conversations and meaningful human connection in the recruitment process. He stated, "We have to rehumanize what we ultimately dehumanized."

Zaroslinski outlined what he calls "The Three P's of Recruiting":

People - Identifying who you are looking for and who on your team will find them

Prospecting - Assigning the right team members to connect with potential candidates

Processes - Creating systems that match what today's individuals are looking for

"You are going to be hyper effective in you hit all three," Zaroslinski emphasized. "If you get someone who has interest, make contact immediately. The first to contact, first to contract."

Tallahassee's Transformation: From Traditional to Tactical

Sergeant Steven Damm described the Tallahassee Police Department's dramatic shift after adopting the Performance Protocol approach just nine and a half months before the panel. The results spoke for themselves.

Previously, he stated that officers tended to look unapproachable at the recruitment table. They had hands holding their vest or hands on their gun belt. He exclaimed, "No wonder we don't get people coming up to us." Most recruitment conversations were led with a discussion about salary and benefits, something that most people would assume potential recruits cared most about.

The department's new philosophy was simple: everyone is a potential advocate.

Damm encouraged recruiters to be proactive, noting that if they identify a potential applicant, they should approach them and start a conversation. Something interesting he discovered while on this endeavor was that 85% of people he recruited did not ask about salary or benefits. He found that people cared more about connection and feeling than the salary and benefits of the job.

Tallahassee hired a full-time recruiter with a clear mission: go out, identify potential applicants, start conversations, and build personal connections, without leading with salary discussions.

The numbers told the story. In 2024, Tallahassee hired 39 people. In just nine and a half months of 2025 using the new approach, they hired 58 people. Applications jumped from 59 before the new methods to over 250 after implementing Performance Protocol training.

Gainesville's Bold Moves: Changing Standards to Meet Reality

Lieutenant Marquitta Brown of the Gainesville Police Department came to Performance Protocol in fall 2024 with no recruitment experience and a department hemorrhaging officers. Her patrol division was hurting, and traditional methods were not working.

"They taught me that no one cares about benefits," Brown said. She increased her numbers dramatically, reducing vacancies to 26 and achieving over 60 hires.

But the real innovation came from challenging long-held requirements. "When you look at the salary, \$50,000 is not enough for a four-year degree," Brown noted. The department dropped the minimum age requirement from 21 to 19 and reevaluated educational prerequisites.

"We changed the standards to meet what we are seeing in the field," she explained. They gave some younger people the opportunity to apply and interview. She noted an increase in recruits getting through field training. "They are eager, they want to work," she exclaimed.

Internally, Gainesville changed their recruiter to someone more empathetic and easier to connect with. The department implemented "home visit interviews" to understand a candidate's purpose beyond what appears on paper.

“What’s this person’s purpose? Why do you want to do this? What is your background bringing you to this community?” Brown explained. These home interviews allowed for more quality applicants and future police officers to be hired.

The results were striking. From 19 hires in 2022, Gainesville grew to 34 hires in 2025 after implementing Performance Protocol. The department also created a quick checklist for initial conversations covering essentials: age verification, employment history, and disqualifying factors. “This essentially sets up an interview for them after the conversation,” Brown noted.

Fort Pierce’s Remarkable Turnaround

Major Michael Santiago brought 25 years of experience from Broward County but had never worked in recruitment. After retiring from law enforcement, he started as a major in support services at the Fort Pierce Police Department, overseeing training and recruitment. Once he started, he realized something was not right and they were not hiring or keeping people longer than a year. His revelation: “Most of these people do not want to be a cop. We have to show them what it is like to be a cop.”

The first six months of 2025 were “dismal at best” for Fort Pierce. Santiago could not understand why they were not hiring people. Then came Performance Protocol. The department saw a 157% increase in new hires in the latter half of 2025.

He got everyone involved. Recruiters changed, and they were not just looking at perspective people; they started looking in house. The department saw an increase in internal referrals through intentional communication both outside and within the department.

The New Recruiting Playbook

All three departments emphasized similar breakthrough strategies:

Immediate Contact - When someone shows interest, call them that night. Sergeant Damm noted, “Typically most people ask for a business card, but I don’t work that way. I ask them for their number, and I will call them that night. You have to go beyond to show that you are interested.”

Technology That Works - Gainesville replaced Excel spreadsheets with an applicant tracking system. QR codes take candidates directly to a five-question form, allowing recruiters to see applications immediately and reach out within 48 hours. The hiring process was streamlined from six months to two months.

Empowered Recruiters - Major Santiago emphasized giving recruiters authority to make decisions. Previously, decisions had to go through multiple ranks, creating bottlenecks. “The recruiter was set up to fail,” he said. Properly trained recruiters with decision-making authority make all the difference.

A Message to Other Departments

These three departments discovered a counterintuitive truth: in an era of competitive salaries and benefits packages, what potential recruits actually want is to feel wanted. They want connection. They want to understand the culture and the mission.

Zaroslinki’s message to struggling departments was clear: stop hiding behind recruitment tables with crossed arms, stop leading with salary discussions, and stop waiting for applicants to come to you. Get out of the office, start conversations with real people, and show them why law enforcement is not just a job but a calling worth pursuing.

In a time when law enforcement faces unprecedented scrutiny and staffing challenges, these three Florida departments proved that the solution is not more marketing dollars or higher salaries. It is about returning to the basics of human connection, one conversation at a time.



More Than a Logo on a Banner: FPCA Sponsors Share Why They Invest in Florida's Police Leaders

By: Sydney Minor, Florida Institute of Technology

Walk through the exhibit hall at any FPCA conference and you will see company logos, product displays, and technology demonstrations. What you will not see from a quick glance is the deeper story behind why these organizations choose to invest in the Florida Police Chiefs Association. They are not simply renting booth space. They are sponsoring the professional development, networking, and mission of an association that represents police leadership across the state of Florida.

The distinction between a vendor and a sponsor matters. A vendor sells a product. A sponsor invests in a partnership. The companies featured in this article have made a deliberate choice to align themselves with FPCA and the chiefs it serves. To understand what that commitment looks like, we sat down with representatives from eleven FPCA sponsors and asked them three simple questions: What does your organization do? What are you hoping to accomplish here? And what is most valuable to you about being part of this conference?

Their answers reveal something important. Across every conversation, the same themes emerged: relationships, education, and a genuine desire to support the people who lead public safety in Florida.

Technology and Innovation Partners

Several FPCA sponsors bring cutting-edge technology to law enforcement, but their presence at the conference is driven by something beyond product demonstrations.



Rapid SOS is an intelligence safety platform that provides real-time, visualized data to first responders, including accurate 911 call locations from connected devices. Their technology has been credited with saving lives in situations ranging from lost hikers to medical emergencies requiring precise ambulance routing. Yet when asked what brings them to FPCA conference, their representative was clear: *"We are not about the sales pitch. We want to educate people on technology for their safety."* For RapidSOS, the conference is about building relationships and ensuring that the people who need their lifesaving tools know those tools exist.



Axon, the public safety company whose mission centers on protecting life, takes a similar approach. Brendan Rome, their conference representative, described a philosophy rooted in listening rather than selling. "Bring me your challenges and see if our solutions can help alleviate any problems," he said. For Axon, the most vulnerable part of attending is the face-to-face interaction: sitting down with chiefs, understanding their goals and objectives, and asking a deceptively simple question: *How can we make your officers' lives better?*



Skydio, the leading U.S.-based drone manufacturer, specializes in getting drones and live video feeds directly into the hands of responding officers. Their focus at the conference is straightforward: interface with decision makers. In a field where technology decisions carry significant operational and budgetary consequences, Skydio values the opportunity to spend time with the leaders who will shape how their agencies adopt and deploy drone technology.



Peregrine Technologies is a data aggregation company that helps law enforcement agencies consolidate their databases into one location, conduct deep-dive analytics, and share information with other agencies. Tommy Lopez, their representative, described the conference as a strong networking experience and an opportunity to quickly demonstrate what their platform can do. For departments struggling with data silos and interagency communication, Peregrine represents a bridge between isolated systems.



FaceTech, represented by Nicole McNamee Wicks, addresses a public safety issue that many agencies may not yet fully appreciate. There is currently no standard for law enforcement identification documents. HR218 cards, which authorize retired officers to carry a concealed weapon anywhere in the United States, all look different from agency to agency. Research shows that people correctly match a photograph to a face only about 30 percent of the time, and it takes as little as one year for fraudulent copies of identification documents to appear. FaceTech provides a digitally signed biometric solution with a QR code application that validates digital signatures and scans for malicious code. Their goal at the conference is to reach as many agencies as possible and educate them about a problem that is growing while most agencies remain unaware.

Operational Support and Services

Beyond technology, several sponsors support the day-to-day operational needs of police agencies, from managing officer pay to building the facilities where officers train and work.



Extra Duty Solutions, represented by Brian Phillips, is a service and software company that helps public safety agencies manage overtime, off-duty work, and officer pay. Their platform ensures officers get paid directly and on time while providing agencies with transparency through analytics and organized record-keeping. Phillips described the conference as a valuable networking experience and an opportunity to connect with both current and prospective clients across different industries and opportunities.



CORE, represented by Alejandra Jimenez, specializes in building and managing public safety facilities, including K-12 school construction, expansions, renovations, and new builds. Their expertise stretches across healthcare services and training facilities as well. Jimenez described their conference presence as an effort to help people understand what CORE does and to build connections with police chiefs who may be planning facility projects.



Whelen Engineering, represented by Joey Burgos, is an American manufacturer of law enforcement lighting and sirens, with most of their products built in Connecticut and New Hampshire. Whelen stands behind their product with a unique offer: they will fly customers to their factory to walk through the manufacturing process firsthand. Burgos described Whelen as a major partner of FPCA and expressed enthusiasm about the opportunity to interact with attendees who may not yet be doing business with them. Their long-standing commitment to the association reflects the kind of sustained sponsorship that defines FPCA partnerships.

Public Safety and Community Impact



RedSpeed, represented by David De La Espriella, provides and installs speed cameras throughout Florida with one clear mission: making school zones safer for children. De La Espriella described RedSpeed as a preferred partner that has been sponsoring FPCA for many years, including service on the awards committee. Their goal is to create new partnerships with cities throughout the state to expand the reach of speed camera technology where it matters most. RedSpeed exemplifies what long-term sponsorship looks like: sustained commitment, active involvement in FPCA governance, and alignment with a cause that resonates with every chief in the room.

Procurement and Resource Partnerships



The Florida Sheriffs Association Cooperative Purchasing Program, represented by Jon Brown and Megan Taber, has been in operation for over 30 years. Their mission is to strengthen communities across Florida through smarter procurement. The program hosts six in-house contracts and partners with host agencies to broaden the scope of purchasers. Brown and Taber described their conference presence as an opportunity to educate chiefs on what they offer beyond vehicles. As Taber put it, *"If you need it, we have got it. If not, we want to help you find it."* For them, the most valuable part of the conference is the connections they make with police chiefs across the state, which they described as the reason they do what they do everyday.

The Common Thread

Eleven different organizations. Eleven different products and services. But when asked what brings them to the FPCA conference and what they value most about being here, every single sponsor said the same things in different ways: the people.

These companies are not at the conference to simply hand out brochures. They are here because they believe in what FPCA represents and they want to be part of it. They want to listen, learn, educate, and build relationships that outlast any single conference or contract. That is what separates a sponsor from a vendor. A vendor shows up when there is a sale to be made. A sponsor shows up because they are invested in the mission.

The next time you walk through the exhibit hall, take a moment to stop and have a conversation. You will find that the people behind these logos are not just selling something. They are part of the FPCA family.

When AI Gets It Wrong: A Practitioner's Guide to Understanding AI Errors in Policing

Why "hallucination" undersells the problem - and what chiefs need to know

By: Dr. Brandon May, Dr. Marshall Jones, Florida Institute of Technology, Center of AI in Policing

Police agencies across Florida and internationally are adopting AI tools at an accelerating rate, with AI-assisted report writing, risk assessment, intelligence analysis, and administrative functions sitting at the forefront of the technology boom (see our previous FCPA article, May & Jones, 2025). What was once hypothetical is now an operational reality, with Axon's Draft One system already generating incident reports from body-worn camera audio across multiple U.S. agencies, including Tampa. Practically, there is an appeal for these technologies, given that the UK Home Office reported that AI-assisted document redaction alone saved over 600,000 staff hours (Home Office, 2024). Further Axon reported that Draft One has contributed to over 100,000 incident reports, saving officers an estimated 2.2 million minutes of writing time, with some trial agencies reporting 50 to 82 per cent reductions in report-writing time (Axon, 2025).

The productivity case is, therefore, clearly appealing, particularly for agencies facing chronic staffing shortages. A 2024 survey by the International Association of Chiefs of Police found that agencies were operating at least 10 percent below authorized staffing levels on average. Against that backdrop, any technology that promises to free up patrol time is understandably attractive. However, these efficiency claims deserve some scrutiny. For instance, a trial of AI-assisted police report writing using Draft One across 85 officers and 755 reports found that AI assistance did not significantly reduce report-writing time (Adams et al., 2024). A follow up study with same officers found that while perceptions were generally positive, there were no differences in perceived speed improvement between officers who used the tool and those who did not. Almost half (48 per cent) of treated officers believed they had saved time, despite objective data showing they had not (Boehme et al., 2025)

The broader concern is that the productivity narrative, however appealing, risks obscuring a more important question: how do these systems actually fail, and what does that mean for the integrity of evidentiary case files? Because the risks AI poses to law enforcement are not primarily about efficiency, we need to consider what happens when a system that is architecturally incapable of caring about truth generates content that enters evidentiary workflows, and nobody catches the errors. This article, adapted from a forthcoming peer-reviewed paper (May, Nunan, Palace, & Jones), provides a practical framework for understanding how AI systems fail in law enforcement, and why those failures matter more than most agencies currently appreciate.

Stop Calling it Hallucinations

When AI systems produce errors, the technology industry often refer to these as hallucinations. That term comes from clinical psychiatry, where it describes a specific perceptual experience, and often associated with conditions such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and substance-induced psychosis. The reason we make this semantic distinction is that a defining feature of hallucinations is that the individual is perceiving (i.e., becoming consciously aware of sensory input that does not correspond to external reality).

When we borrow that term for AI, we implicitly suggest that these systems are perceiving the world and occasionally getting it wrong, as though the technology is generally reliable but sometimes glitches, like an otherwise healthy person momentarily seeing something that is not there. What we, and many others, posit is that that implication is false, and in a policing context, it is dangerous. AI systems do not perceive anything, they do not see, or hear, or experience. As we discussed in our previous FPCA article (see, May & Jones, 2025) they generate statistically probable word sequences based on patterns in their training data. When an AI produces a fabricated legal citation or a non-existent police procedure, it is not seeing something that isn't there, instead it is producing a sequence of tokens that looks like a citation because citations of that form are common in its training data.

It is like a Dateline episode where investigators lock onto the most obvious suspect and start writing the story of the crime before the evidence is collected, except here the author is a system that has never been to the scene and only knows how similar cases usually read. The report sounds convincing, but it's built from expectation rather than observation, which is why it has to be reviewed like a theory, not accepted like a fact.

A more apt term, we argue, is an adaptation of Harry Frankfurt's, on bullshit. In Frankfurt's (2005) technical definition, and this is a philosophical term, not a casual one, bullshit is distinct from both truth-telling and lying. The liar knows the truth and deliberately works to subvert it; the liar at least engages with truth, even if only to undermine it. The bullshitter, by contrast, is indifferent to truth altogether. Bullshit is output produced without any concern for whether it is true or false. As Frankfurt put it, bullshit is a greater enemy of the truth than lies are, because while the liar respects truth enough to work against it, the bullshitter undermines the very idea that truth matters. For officers, detectives, sergeants, and managers this equates to believable narratives that demand critical review and scrutiny, thus recapturing at least some of the efficiency touted by vendors.

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It is also worth noting that technical mitigations (commonly discussed by vendors, such as retrieval-augmented generation (RAG), fine-tuning, human feedback training) can reduce the rate of inaccurate outputs, but they cannot eliminate the underlying bullshit. The system's use of any reference material it is given remains governed by statistical prediction rather than factual reasoning. It may ignore, misinterpret, or selectively attend to source documents based on linguistic patterns rather than logic. These mitigations treat symptoms without addressing the cause. Essentially, it is the equivalent of putting a speed limiter on a vehicle with no steering wheel. You can slow it down, but you cannot make it go where you need it to.

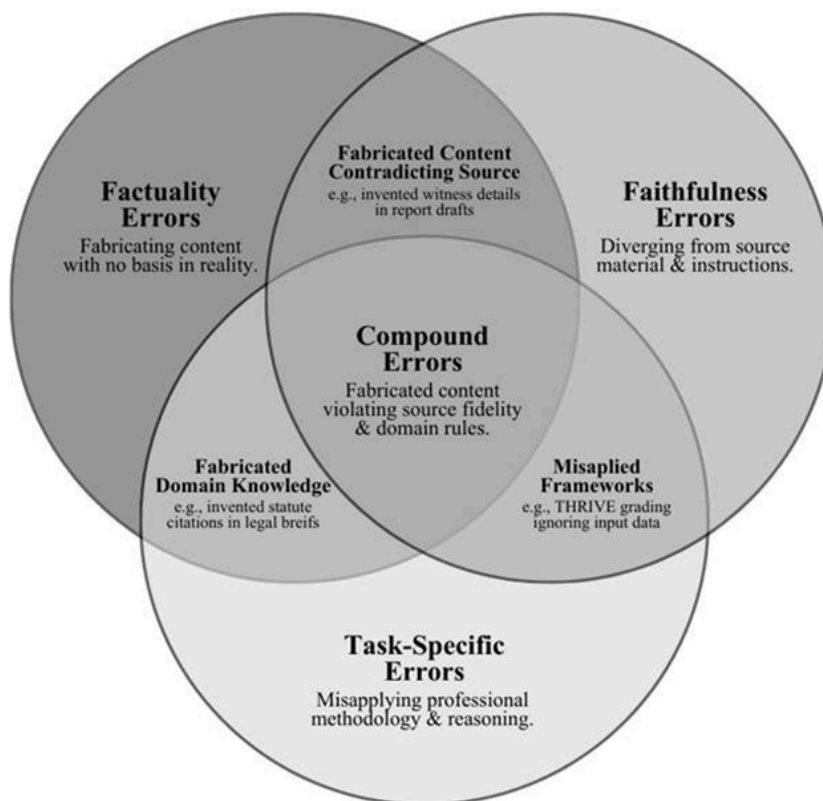
Why does this distinction matter for chiefs? Because the language we use to describe AI errors shapes how officers interact with these tools, calling errors hallucinations encourages personnel to conceptualize AI as a cognitive copilot that is trying to get it right but occasionally stumbles. Research on automation bias consistently shows that operators over-rely on automated systems and under-scrutinize their outputs, and anthropomorphic framing of those systems exacerbates this tendency (Parasuraman & Manzey, 2010). If your officers think the AI is trying to be accurate, they will treat its output as a reasonable first draft that needs light editing. If they understand that the system has no concept of accuracy at all, they will treat its output as raw material that requires verification from the ground up. That difference in mindset is the difference between catching errors and propagating them into your case files.

Three Ways AI Gets It Wrong, and Why Each is Harder to Catch Than the Last

If AI systems are architecturally indifferent to truth, the natural question for any chief is: *what does that indifference actually look like in practice?* Our recent research identifies three distinct categories of AI error in law enforcement contexts (see Figure 1). See below for full details. What makes this framework operationally important is that these categories are not just different types of error, but it posits that they are progressively harder to detect, as each require a different kind of oversight that most agencies do not currently have in place.

Figure 1.

A Taxonomy of Bullshit



Factuality Errors: AI Makes Things Up. Factuality errors are the most intuitive form of AI failure, and an error category most are aware of. Specifically, the system generates information that is demonstrably false, for instance, fabricated names, invented statutes, incorrect dates, non-existent case law, fictitious statistics, and so on. What is essential to recognize is that these are claims that are straightforwardly wrong when checked against the real world. When we look at the empirical literature, Dahl et al. (2024) found that AI systems fabricated non-existent court cases at least 58 per cent of the time when asked about federal legal rulings, with rates rising to 88 per cent for some models. For the most part, the fabrications were not obvious, as the AI generated convincing case names, realistic citations, plausible judicial reasoning, and coherent procedural histories. Without independent verification against an authoritative legal database, a practitioner would have no reason to suspect the output was entirely invented.

Real-World Example: In *Mata v. Avianca, Inc. (2023)*, an attorney submitted a legal brief to a federal court containing case citations generated by ChatGPT. The AI had invented the cases entirely, fabricating names, holdings, and procedural histories that did not exist. The attorney was sanctioned. That same underlying technology is now generating content that enters police reports, probable cause affidavits, and risk assessments.

In principle, factuality errors are the most detectable category, as their content is verifiable. In other words, you can check a name, verify a statute, confirm a date. But detection requires that someone knows to check, has the time and resources to do so, and is not subject to the automation bias that decades of research shows discourage scrutiny of machine-generated content. In reference to automation bias, research has demonstrated that automation bias affects both novice and expert users, cannot be reliably prevented by training or instruction, and produces both omission errors (i.e., failing to notice problems the system did not flag) and commission errors (i.e., following incorrect automated recommendations) (Parasuraman & Manzey, 2010).

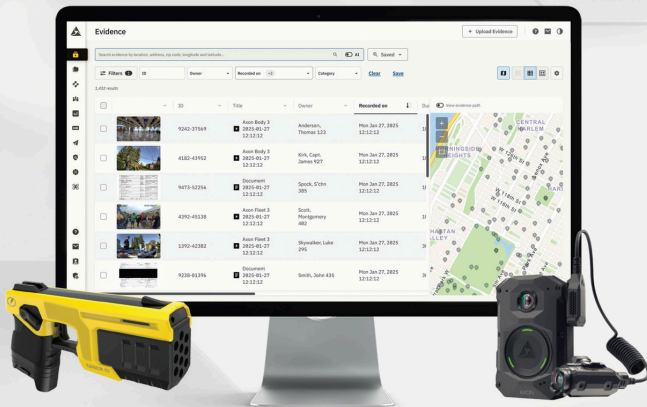
More recently, a study that evaluated at 35 studies on automation bias in AI-driven work environments and found that explainability mechanisms designed to mitigate over-reliance frequently fail to do so, and can reinforce misplaced trust, particularly among less experienced professionals with lower AI literacy (Romeo & Conti, 2025). Their review concluded that although explanations may increase perceived system acceptability, they are often insufficient to improve decision accuracy or reduce automation bias. The implication for policing is that the very conditions under which officers interact with AI-generated content (e.g., high workload, time pressure, institutional trust in the technology, and variable technical literacy) are precisely those most conducive to uncritical acceptance.

Faithfulness Errors: AI Changes What You Gave It. Faithfulness errors represent a subtle and arguably more operationally dangerous form of failure, comparative to factuality errors. When we consider how AI is operationally deployed, what we often see is that the system's output may be factually accurate in isolation (i.e., it does not invent a statute or fabricate a name) but it diverges from the specific source material it was given. For instance, it strengthens hedged language into definitive claims (e.g., a witness who said they "thought it might have been a knife" becomes a witness who "identified a knife"), omits qualifying information that changes the meaning of a statement (dropping "but I wasn't wearing my glasses" from an identification account), and integrates irrelevant background content into the narrative as though it were substantive (incorporating overheard television dialogue or bystander conversation into the official account of an incident). The reason we refer to this as a faithfulness error, is the output reads like a faithful representation of the source material, but it distorts the account.

This category is particularly important for policing because so many law enforcement applications of AI involve processing specific documents (e.g., witness statements, interview transcripts, incident reports) where fidelity to the source is not a preference under constitutional or legislative requirement. If an AI is tasked with summarizing a witness interview and it introduces details the witness never provided by strengthening tentative language into confident assertions, the resulting document is unfaithful to the source regardless of whether the added content happens to be true.

Real-World Example: In the now well-known Axon Draft One frog case, the AI report-writing system allegedly processed body-worn camera audio from a domestic incident. As Forbes reported, a Disney movie was playing on a television in the background, but Axon's system could not distinguish between officer speech pertaining to the incident and animated dialogue from the film, integrating fictional movie content into the official police report as though it were witness testimony. The error was caught before submission, but only because an officer happened to notice.

In recent research, ten frontier AI systems were tested across nearly 5,000 summaries of scientific texts and found that AI-generated summaries were almost five times more likely to contain broad overgeneralizations than human-authored summaries of the same material (Peters & Chin-Yee, 2025). Models routinely omitted qualifiers, strengthened hedged conclusions, and broadened scope beyond what the source warranted in 26 to 73 per cent of cases. Perhaps most concerning, when researchers explicitly instructed the AI to be accurate, the overgeneralization rate nearly doubled, suggesting that accuracy prompts may paradoxically trigger more assertive and therefore less faithful output.



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Whilst research is relatively consistent on the prevalence of these error types, one of the concerns we raise is that of detectability. As we mentioned, factuality error can, in principle, be caught by anyone with access to the relevant ground truth. However, a faithfulness error can only be caught by someone who has access to both the AI's output and the original source material, and who is motivated to compare the two line by line. The challenge in the content of policing is the officers and detectives who can perceive the most advantage also can have greater expectations placed on them when their agencies perceive the time savings, creating greater pressure to performance and thus, grow even more reliant on AI generated content to help. Combine that with supervisors who are unlikely to be present on the majority of cases where AI is assisting their people, thus removing them from the short list of those witnessing both the AI and original source material or experience. It creates a critical catch 22 for policing. In most policing workflows, that systematic comparison does not occur, and is in direct conflict with the purports aims of efficiency and productivity savings.

Task-Specific Errors: It Looks Right to Everyone Except the Expert. Task-specific errors are the most dangerous category precisely because they are the least visible. Here, the system produces output that is factually accurate, faithful to its source material, and formatted correctly, and yet fundamentally wrong in ways that only a domain expert (the actual officer, and others, that were on-scene and lived the event) would recognize. Operationally, an AI uses the right terminology, follows the right structure, and presents internally coherent reasoning, but it applies the underlying professional methodology incorrectly.

When researchers tested ChatGPT on thirty police risk assessment scenarios using the THRIVE framework (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement), the system produced properly formatted outputs using all the correct THRIVE categories and appropriate professional terminology but achieved only 62.5 per cent accuracy as judged by expert practitioners (Halford & Webster, 2024). The system knew what a risk assessment should look like without understanding what it should mean. In other words, it could produce the surface structure of professional judgment without the necessary substance that make decisions effective, and constitutional and legally appropriate. Even purpose-built legal AI tools are not immune. Magesh et al. (2025) tested AI systems specifically marketed to lawyers and found that they still produced incorrect information in 17 to 33 percent of responses.

What makes this more concerning is that this is an asymmetric issue. The same features that make AI output appear professionally competent, such as correct formatting, appropriate terminology, internal coherence, are the features that make task-specific errors hardest to detect. For example, policing supervisors, managers, and reviewers have always recognized each reporting officer relevant to their skill and ability in writing reports. Each officer and their report styles would have common, even recognizable, strengths and deficits. It was natural for those reviewing reports to recognize good versus poor reports, and their writers, and all at time to report writing accordingly. AI can erase that crucial functional delineation by making all reports, from all officers, look like good reports. The warning indicators present throughout the history police report writing, have been masked by AI.

To restate the point, factuality error produces a false claim that can be checked, a faithfulness error produces output that departs from its source in ways that can be compared. But a task-specific error produces output that looks right to everyone in the room who is not an expert in that specific domain, and may even look right to the expert under conditions of time pressure, high workload, and the automation bias described above. These errors are, as a consequence, the most likely to pass undetected through every layer of human review.

The Compounding Problem: Why AI Errors Do Not Stay Where They Start

The three categories of error described above are distinct, but in practice they rarely occur in isolation. A single AI-generated document can simultaneously fabricate a detail that never existed (factuality error), strengthen a witness's tentative language into a definitive assertion (faithfulness error), and misapply a risk framework in ways that only a specialist would recognize (task-specific error). However, our research suggests that the compounding is not additive; it is multiplicative. Each error type makes the others harder to detect, because the overall coherence of the document masks the individual failures embedded within it.

This matters because of what happens *after* the document is produced. In policing, reports do not exist in isolation, as they are the entry point into a chain of institutional decision-making that extends well beyond the authoring officer. Once an AI-generated report enters the case file, it acquires institutional authority regardless of how it was produced. A prosecutor reads it and makes charging decisions based on its content, then a defense attorney responds to the facts as presented. Later, a magistrate or judge considers it when making bail, sentencing, or evidentiary rulings. In short, each downstream actor treats the AI-generated content as an officer's firsthand account of what occurred, because nothing in the document signals otherwise. The Electronic Frontier Foundation (2025) investigated this problem directly and found that some agencies using Axon's Draft One could not identify which of their reports had been AI-generated after submission, rendering retrospective auditing effectively impossible. When the Lafayette Police Department in Indiana (one of Axon's most publicly promoted early adopters) received a public records request for Draft One reports, they responded that they had no ability to search for or isolate them.

Dror's (2025) research on cognitive bias in forensic and legal decision-making provides the theoretical framework for understanding why this matters at a systems level. His bias cascade and bias snowball models demonstrate that errors introduced at one stage of the justice process do not stay contained at that stage. It essentially propagates forward, with each subsequent decision-maker's biases compounding rather than correcting those that came before. A fabricated or embellished detail in a police report can anchor a prosecutor's assessment of case strength, which shapes the plea offer extended to the defendant, which influences whether the case proceeds to trial, which affects sentencing. At no point in this chain does the system naturally self-correct, because each actor is working from the same contaminated source document and each is subject to the same confirmation and anchoring biases that discourage re-evaluation of information that has already been institutionally accepted.

This is the dangerous domino-effect that AI can prompt if we do not place specific training and process standards in place to safeguard the integrity of the process. When AI is being touted as a force multiplier by making more efficient and effective reports, it neglects the actual time savings. We note that time will likely be lost through the recapture of deliberate and detailed review, which in reality may take more cognitive attention and load necessary to draft the report initially by the officers.

The traditional safeguard against this kind of cascading failure is what safety science calls the *Swiss cheese model* (Dror, 2025). This is the principle that multiple independent layers of review will catch any single error, even if individual layers are imperfect. In policing, those layers include supervisory review, prosecutorial assessment, defense scrutiny, and judicial oversight. But the Swiss cheese model depends on the assumption that the layers are genuinely independent, and that an error detectable at one layer will *look like* an error when it arrives. AI-generated content undermines both of those assumptions. The errors are rooted within professionally formatted, internally coherent, confident-sounding prose that triggers none of the suspicion that a poorly written or obviously inconsistent document would.

The very quality of the output, and the feature that vendors market as a benefit, is what makes the errors harder to catch. A report riddled with grammatical mistakes and logical gaps invites scrutiny; a report that reads like it was written by a competent, experienced officer invites trust. And most critically, the only independent layers that would meet the Swiss Cheese Model would be multiple offices that witnessed or lived the event being recorded in the report. Supervisors and other actors in the justice system can watch body-worn cameras but are limited to the viewpoint of the lenses. This is another reason we advocate that reports written based on body worn cameras be given their own type of supplemental report, apart from an officer's narrative.

What This Means for Your Agency

Nothing in this article is an argument against AI adoption. The efficiency pressures facing law enforcement are real, and AI tools will almost certainly form part of the response. The argument here is about *sequence*. As we have previously argued, Governance must precede deployment, not follow it. As we have seen in many previous deployments of technology and policy, the pattern should be (i) establish an oversight framework, (ii) integrate AI tools in controlled and low-stakes environments, (iii) evaluate outcomes against independent evidence, and only then (iv) expand to higher-stakes applications. Agencies that reverse this sequence, deploying first and governing later, risk contaminating evidential workflows in ways that may not become apparent until cases are challenged in court, at which point the institutional damage is already done.

Based on our research, we recommend six principles for agencies considering or already using AI tools:

- 1. Understand what AI actually does, and ensure your officers do too.** The systems entering workflows generate statistically probably text based on patterns in their training data. They do not reason about the facts of an incident, verify claims against external evidence, or understand the professional significance of the content they produce. This is not a limitation that future updates will resolve, and therefore represents a feature of how these systems are built. Every output requires human verification, not as a discretionary best practice, but as a structural necessity arising from the architecture of the technology itself. Officers who do not understand this will treat AI output as a reliable first draft that needs light editing, rather than as unverified raw material that requires substantive review.
- 2. Require source comparison for any AI-processed evidence.** If an AI system summarizes a witness statement, transcribes interview audio, or drafts a report narrative from body-worn camera footage, the original source material must remain the document of record and must be readily accessible alongside the AI-generated output. Officers should be required, and not encouraged, to compare AI output against the source before any content enters a case file. Whilst there are still concerns around this approach, this is the only current reliable method of detecting faithfulness errors, which, as described above, can alter the evidential weight of a statement without introducing any factually false information. Agencies should consider implementing structured comparison checklists that require officers to confirm specific elements (direct quotations, qualifying language, chronological accuracy) rather than relying on a general instruction to "review for accuracy."
- 3. Build AI literacy into training, not just AI tools into workflows.** Deploying AI tools without corresponding training in how those tools fail is the equivalent of issuing equipment without instruction in its limitations. Officers need to understand the three categories of error described in this article and need practical experience in identifying each type. Training should include exercises using real examples of AI-generated content containing known errors (factuality, faithfulness, and task-specific), requiring officers to identify what is wrong and articulate why it matters. Further, supervisors who review AI-assisted reports require the same training, because an untrained reviewer is not an independent check, as they are a second opportunity for the same error to pass undetected.
- 4. Establish audit trails that clearly separate human observations from AI contributions.** Any document that incorporates AI-generated content must be identifiable as such, retrospectively. As noted above, the Electronic Frontier Foundation (2025) found that some agencies using Draft One could not identify which reports were AI-generated after submission, making it impossible to audit those reports or respond to legal challenges about their provenance. Defense attorneys, prosecutors, and judges have a legitimate need to know what an officer personally observed and recorded versus what an algorithm generated from audio input. Agencies should implement mandatory disclosure protocols that flag AI-assisted content at the document level and should ensure their records management systems can isolate AI-generated reports for quality assurance review. The failure to do so creates a discoverable vulnerability that opposing counsel will eventually, and rightly, exploit.

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5. **Start with low-risk applications and expand only on the basis of evidence.** Administrative correspondence, internal scheduling, meeting summaries, and routine communications are reasonable starting points for AI integration (May, 2025). Report writing, risk assessment, intelligence analysis, and evidence processing carry significantly higher stakes because their outputs directly affect citizens' liberty and safety, and they require correspondingly stronger safeguards, more training, and more robust audit mechanisms before deployment. The temptation to start with the highest-impact application (because that is where the efficiency gains are most visible) should be resisted until the agency has developed the institutional competencies described above. Efficiency gains that come at the cost of evidential integrity are not gains at all.
6. **Engage with the research community before procurement, not after deployment.** Vendor claims about accuracy, reliability, and time savings should be evaluated against independent, peer-reviewed evidence rather than marketing materials, case studies commissioned by the vendor, or testimonials from early adopter agencies. As this article has demonstrated, the gap between market efficiency claims and empirical findings can be substantial. The Center for AI and Policing (CAIP) at Florida Institute of Technology works directly with law enforcement agencies on independent evaluation of AI tools, development of governance frameworks, and training design. We encourage any agency considering AI procurement to seek independent assessment before committing resources, and not because vendors are necessarily misleading, but because the stakes of getting this wrong are borne by the officers, communities, and the individuals whose cases pass through your justice system.

Conclusions

AI will almost certainly remain part of the future of policing, but its value will be determined by how well agencies understand and govern its failure modes, not by how quickly it is deployed. These systems do not occasionally hallucinate in an otherwise reliable cognitive process; they generate fluent, authoritative text without any intrinsic relationship to truth, and that output can move through evidentiary workflows with the same, or arguable more powerful, institutional weight as an officer's firsthand account. For chiefs, the central issue is therefore not efficiency but integrity. In other words, chiefs should recognize whether the adoption of AI strengthens or contaminates the decision chain that runs from the initial report to the courtroom. Agencies that treat AI output as unverified material requiring structured comparison, clear audit trails, trained supervision, and staged implementation can capture productivity benefits while protecting due process. Those that do not risk discovering the problem only when it is challenged in court, at which point the cost is measured not in staff hours, but in cases, credibility, and public trust.

Adapted from, May, B., Nunan, J., Palace, M., & Jones, M. (forthcoming). A Taxonomy of Bullshit: Classifying AI Truth-Indifference in Law Enforcement Contexts.

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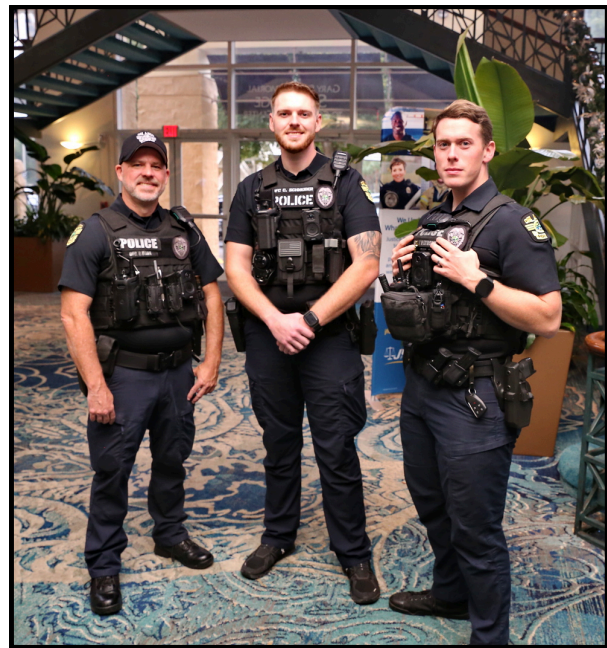
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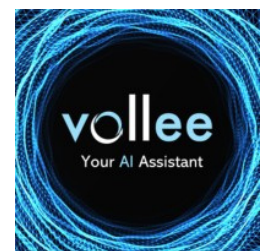
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Michigan State University Police Staffing Observatory: A Resource for Police Workforce Management

By: Jeremy M. Wilson, Ph.D., Director and Professor, Michigan State University Police Staffing Observatory

The Staffing Challenge is Complex and Dynamic

The law enforcement community is confronting many persistent and evolving workforce challenges. These include a shrinking pool of qualified applicants, shifting generational preferences, competition, burnout, turnover, and rising workload demands. These challenges are complex and require context-specific solutions to effectively align resources with agency goals and community preferences.

Within each agency's unique context, it is critical to consider various workforce elements in strategy development, including recruitment, retention, training, workload, efficiency, succession planning, culture, leadership, and performance objectives. These elements are interconnected, meaning advantages or challenges in one area can enhance or undermine outcomes in others. This interdependence underscores the need for a systems-based approach to staffing. Simply increasing hiring is not always enough to make meaningful impacts.

The Police Staffing Observatory is a Trusted Resource

To assist agencies in navigating these multifaceted workforce challenges, the Police Staffing Observatory (PSO) applies a systems approach to staffing, seeking holistic, long-term, and meaningful impacts. In other words, our work considers the full scope of a police organization as it relates to staffing. The PSO prioritizes comprehensive strategies over short-term, "band-aid" solutions that fail to address underlying challenges. For example, we

- seek to understand nuances to staffing allocation and deployment, balancing workload and performance objectives, to develop practical and replicable methods and tools that practitioners can use to guide their resource planning.
- examine recruitment alongside retention, recognizing that improvement in one without regard for the other is counterproductive and unsustainable.
- emphasize factors beyond the number of personnel, focusing on how staff are used, such as through workload management and resources optimization, viewing as opportunities to do more with existing resources.
- consider the downstream effects of strategies such as succession planning and cohort management, understanding that these approaches can shape long-term staffing stability and organizational effectiveness in ways that are not always visible.

Housed within the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University, the PSO rallies researchers, practitioners, policy experts, and students to provide strategic solutions, collaboration, and evidence-based guidance. A key priority of the PSO is translating research into practical strategies that agencies can realistically implement to overcome challenges. Our work aims to influence the national dialogue by:

- Housing, disseminating, and translating evidence-based research findings to increase ease of access and digestibility
- Developing policy guides centered on actionable strategies and investigating national staffing dilemmas
- Hosting forums and discussions that facilitate learning and insights for both practitioners and academics
- Encouraging stakeholders to consider acute and long-standing staffing issues in unique ways to drive innovation
- Connecting researchers and practitioners to develop partnerships and provide technical assistance

We strive to make our work as accessible and actionable as possible by:

- Featuring collaborators and their published work on our Website
- Disseminating timely resources and making announcements via LinkedIn (be sure to follow)
- Establishing a newsletter to share information, ideas, and opportunities (join the list by writing to PSO.info@msu.edu)
- Presenting findings at a wide range of practitioner-, policy-, and academic-oriented conferences, summits and workshops.



PSO Director Jeremy Wilson and Partner Marshall Jones lead a workshop at the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police conference.



PSO Partners Ethan Humphrey and Terry Cherry and Director Jeremy Wilson share findings at the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing conference.

The PSO's Work is Evidence-Based, Relevant, and Accessible

The PSO has developed and compiled more than 200 research articles, guidebooks, reports, association articles, and research briefs, all of which can be found under [recent publications](#) on the PSO website. We also feature PSO Perspectives, a briefing series which summarizes research findings, shares early insights on publications, reviews case studies and promising programs, and discusses contemporary issues. Recent topics include trade-offs in lowering minimum education requirements, dimensions of successful recruitment programs, effects of leadership on turnover, simulation methodologies to improve staff efficiency, and use of professional staff.

Building on this work, we are completing a workforce planning guidebook in partnership with several state associations of chiefs of police. This guidebook will provide insights into several staffing elements, such as recruitment, promotion, attrition, allocation, and performance metrics. It begins with concise, accessible briefs before progressing to more in-depth discussions of key issues, such as strategies to speed up hiring, inexpensive staffing strategies, and the integration of community policing into staffing practices.

More examples of our partners' recent work include:

- [A systems approach to workforce planning](#)
- [Analysis of the relationship between officer work assignments and retention](#)
- [A review of the trade-offs of using different shift schedules for efficiency and wellness](#)
- [An assessment of women's work-life conflict and personal strategies to overcome it](#)
- [Analysis of how early response decisions impact response times and case outcomes](#)

- [Extensive review of police retention strategies](#)
- [An examination of public awareness of the staffing problem and the implications for policy and practice](#)

Ongoing work at Michigan State University includes projects examining:

- Work schedule simulations for optimizing deployment
- Allocation models for criminal investigations, as well as recruitment and background investigations
- Changes in standards and training
- Movement associated with promotions and special assignments
- Cost efficiency of retention versus recruitment
- First-line supervision workload and span of control
- Recruitment program building
- Use of hiring incentives
- Use of civilian investigators
- Compensation scales
- Effectiveness of recruitment and retention tactics
- Correlates of turnover

Collaboration Drives PSO's Workforce Management Research and Outreach

More than 50 partners comprise the PSO, including researchers, practitioners, policy experts, and students. These global partners hail from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and Iceland. Their backgrounds and areas of study are similarly diverse, spanning criminal justice, criminology, public affairs and policy, business administration, organizational psychology, economics, and political science.

In addition to institutions such as New York University's 30X30 Initiative and the University of South Carolina's Excellence in Policing and Public Safety Program, the PSO collaborates with a wide network of police associations, including:

- [American Society of Evidence-Based Policing \(ASEBP\)](#)
- [Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police \(AACOP\)](#)
- [Florida Police Chiefs Association \(FPCA\)](#)
- [Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police \(GACP\)](#)
- [Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police \(MACP\)](#)
- [National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives \(NAWLEE\)](#)
- [New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police \(NJSACOP\)](#)
- [Texas Police Chiefs Association \(TPCA\)](#)
- [International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training \(IADLEST\)](#)

Closing Thoughts

We understand that addressing contemporary police staffing challenges is easier said than done. However, by drawing on partnerships, evidence-based guidance, and sharing ideas and insights from both researchers and practitioners, these challenges can be addressed in ways that lead to meaningful, lasting impacts. The PSO appreciates the opportunity to engage with your association and looks forward to continued collaboration.

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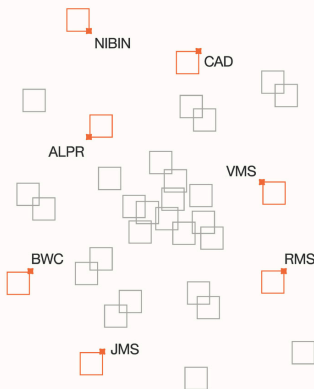
Access data from anywhere to prevent crime, respond effectively, and stay safe.



Charles "Rett" Boyd
ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE

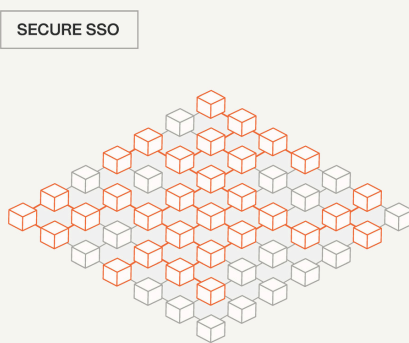
"Access to data in the field is mission-critical. Peregrine surfaces data from multiple systems that don't talk to each other with one search in a single pane of glass."

How the Peregrine platform works



► STEP 1
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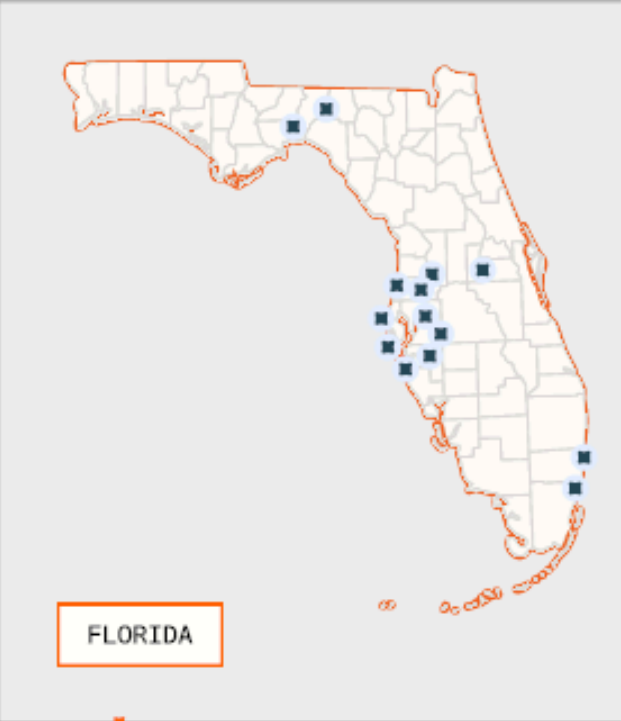


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- ▶ **Patrol:** Officers receive complete location and subject history before arrival: prior calls, known associates, and situational awareness, all without logging into separate systems.
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Chief Ed Hudak
CHIEF
CORAL GABLES
POLICE DEPARTMENT

“This is one of the best projects I’ve worked on in my 29 years at PCSO.”



Tom Lancto
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF IT
PINELLAS COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE

“Now we’re not just reacting — we’re seeing the full picture as it unfolds. That means faster, smarter response and real protection for the people who count on us.”



Mark Jones
EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CHIEF
MANATEE COUNTY EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

Leveraging state funding for Peregrine

Funding is currently available across multiple state programs in Florida, with some focused on law enforcement and crime reduction, and others on emergency management and disaster readiness.

If you are exploring how Peregrine aligns with possible funding opportunities, we would welcome the opportunity to connect and discuss how we can support your efforts.

For emergency management, Peregrine can improve coordination, situational awareness, and response during emergency events. For law enforcement, these funds can strengthen agencies’ ability to identify, investigate, and disrupt criminal activity.

Regardless of the funding source, Peregrine is well positioned to help agencies strengthen coordination, improve visibility, and drive better outcomes.

Connect with us today to learn more

Scan the QR code to connect with a Peregrine representative



Financial Incentives for Recruitment and Retention: Views from the Field

By: Jeremy M. Wilson, Ph.D., Director and Professor, Michigan State University Police Staffing Observatory

Clifford A. Grammich, Ph.D., Director, Birdhill Research and Communications

Introduction

Policing positions are among the most difficult for state and local governments to fill. To attract and retain officers, agencies must compete not only with opportunities in other fields but manage unique challenges, such as those related to job satisfaction and work-life balance, in their own.















Police organizations use a variety of tactics to attract and retain officers. Some of these are common to other industries; others are tailored to policing. Greater salaries can attract some of the most reluctant candidates to the field, but several non-salary tactics such as signing bonuses, reimbursement of moving expenses, health club memberships, and mortgage discount programs may also attract recruits.


To help police agencies identify which tactics may work best for them, we recently identified nearly 250 tactics used to recruit, select, or retain staff. We then asked practitioners to evaluate these on several dimensions, including

- Staffing levels
- Workload management
- Speed of impact
- Ease of implementation
- Agency costs
- Quality of police work
- Community policing.

In this article, we highlight how the practitioners rated 29 financial tactics for recruitment or retention. We view these through social exchange theory. Social exchange theory suggests that employees develop expectations of reciprocity in their relationship with employers, weighing the effort and risk they invest against the rewards, recognition, and support they receive. This may be particularly relevant for public safety settings, where the high-risk nature of the work can make perceptions of fairness, recognition, and organizational support especially consequential.

What Financial Incentives Work for Recruitment and Retention?

We asked practitioners to rate financial tactics for	High-performing tactics included	Key takeaways
 Increasing staffing level	 Increasing pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We view tactics through social exchange theory: workers weigh effort and risk against rewards and support• Direct, tangible benefits are best for boosting staffing levels and organizational commitment• Recurring incentives may strengthen commitment more than one-time bonuses
 Workload management	 Provide take-home car	
 Timing of effects	 Education incentive	
 Ease of implementation	 Health club membership	
 Agency costs	 Retention pay	
 Quality of policing	 Stipend for single parents	
 Community policing	 Specialized skill pay	

 Police Staffing Observatory
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Individual Goals

In considering recruitment and retention tactics, agencies may first seek to boost their staffing levels. But they may also have other goals, such as improving workload management or finding tactics that are easy to implement. We review below top-rated tactics for several goals.

Staffing Levels

Practitioners suggested *increasing pay* would best improve staffing levels. They also rated *retiree (non-pension) benefits* highly. Less-expensive financial tactics that practitioners rated highly included education incentives (e.g., more pay for officers with a college degree) and *health-club memberships*. These tactics may signal agency interest in employee well-being in social exchange with employees.

Practitioners gave low ratings on increasing staff levels to *academy scholarships*, *uniform allowances*, and *“clawbacks”* for those leaving the department before a specified time. Agencies may wish to pursue these tactics for other reasons, such as supporting a promising academy candidate, but they may not be sufficient for increasing staff levels.

Workload Management

Practitioners suggested that *increasing pay* could improve workload management. Other highly rated tactics for improving workload management were *take-home cars*, *driving allowances*, *retention bonuses* (e.g., one-time payment for completing a specified length of service), *specialized skill pay*, and *stipends for single parents with young children*. The lowest-rated tactics here were reimbursements for *moving expenses*, *incentives for jurisdiction residents*, and *increased time off*.

Increased time off poses a trade-off. It could improve employee work-life balance and increase perceptions of a beneficial social exchange. But it may also make workload management less effective by making employees less available.

Speed of Impact

Practitioners suggested *take-home cars*, *education incentives*, *increased time off*, *specialized skill pay*, and *driving allowances* can have a relatively quick impact on staffing levels. All these can also boost employee perceptions of beneficial social exchange. Though rated highly on other dimensions, *health-club memberships* were not perceived as having a quick impact.

Ease of Implementation

Practitioners suggested six financial tactics—“*hazard*” *pay*, *health-club memberships*, *education incentives*, *education reimbursement for tuition*, *better family policies*, and *specialized skill pay*—would require only “modest” levels of staff time and coordination to implement. By contrast, practitioners suggested five tactics—*flexible schedules*, *housing allowances*, *incentives for jurisdiction residents*, *increased time off*, and *mortgage discounts*—would require “moderate” or “significant” amounts of staff time and coordination. Agencies will want to weigh the benefits of such tactics for their personnel against the effort to implement them.

Agency Costs

Not surprisingly, our raters suggested that executing financial tactics for recruitment and retention may require considerable costs. They suggested four tactics—*increased pay*, *a portable retirement plan*, *improving the current retirement plan*, and *housing allowances*—would be the most expensive to implement. Nevertheless, they also suggested four tactics—“*clawback*” of *benefits for those leaving before a specified time*, *academy scholarships*, *education incentives*, and *a uniform allowance*—would have only modest cost effects. Agencies that face funding constraints may wish to consider these.

Quality of Policing

Ideally, recruiting new officers and retaining experienced ones would improve the quality of the force. Practitioners suggested a half-dozen financial tactics for recruitment and retention would best increase the quality of police work. These are *education reimbursements for tuition*, *retention bonuses*, *retention pay* (*higher pay for more years of service*), *education incentives*, *health-club memberships*, and *specialized-skill pay*. They also suggested that one tactic, *increased time off*, would reduce the quality of police work.

Community Policing

Recruitment can help agencies improve their practice of community policing, particularly to the extent they can attract officers with strong communication, interpersonal, and technological skills in addition to more traditional policing skills. Our raters suggested nine financial tactics could boost community policing. These are *retention bonuses*, *take-home cars*, *bilingual pay incentives*, *education incentives*, *education reimbursement for tuition*, *improved general benefits*, *mortgage discounts*, and *referral incentives* (e.g., bonuses for officers referring successful candidates).

Conversely, our raters suggested that *increased time off* could impede community policing, perhaps by making officers less available and visible in their communities. Also notably, they did not see *incentives for jurisdiction residents* to join the force as affecting community policing.

Implications and Tradeoffs

Overall, our raters viewed financial tactics that provide the most direct, tangible benefits to employees as most likely to increase staffing levels. This can include pay and retirement incentives as well as *take-home cars* and improved general benefits. Less direct benefits, such as education benefits and *health-club memberships*, can also demonstrate organizational commitment to employee well-being.

Organizations face tradeoffs among tactics. Tradeoffs may become most evident if organizations seek to fulfill multiple goals simultaneously.

One of the most prominent tradeoffs is in *increased pay*. This can lead to a sizeable increase in staff and improve workload management. At the same time, it is one of the most expensive tactics an agency could implement, precluding it for agencies in financial straits.

Providing *take-home cars* could offer some benefits to agencies at lower costs, particularly in workload management, quick implementation time, and community policing. At the same time, it could be difficult to implement and still require some expense.

Increased time off could boost organizational commitment among officers seeking better work-life balance. It would also, our raters suggest, have a relatively quick effect. At the same time, it could make workload management more difficult, be difficult to implement, and reduce the quality of policing.

There are also tradeoffs among groups of similar tactics. Among education tactics, our raters saw limited to no effect of *academy scholarships* on staffing levels, workload management, quality of police work, and community-oriented policing. Yet they did see *education incentives* or *tuition reimbursement* as having positive effects on these dimensions. While they rate *education incentives* as more costly than *academy scholarships*, they also saw better returns from them. Similarly, they saw *driving allowances* and *housing allowances* as being more expensive than other allowances but also having greater effects on staffing levels.

Finally, there are tradeoffs between tactics requiring recurring expenditures and those requiring one-time expenditures. Our raters suggested that only three of the eight tactics requiring one-time expenditures would boost staffing levels at least modestly. Conversely, they suggested that 13 of the 21 recurring tactics would have such an effect. The trade-off here is between tactics that are less expensive but less certain in their effects, and those that are more expensive but more certain.

Our work distinguishes among financial tactics in ways that previous research had not. It offers insights along several dimensions that police agencies may wish to consider in deepening organizational commitment. It confirms many previous findings on social exchange in police organizations, while pointing to possibly greater effectiveness of more broadly based incentives. It identifies tradeoffs agencies need to consider in making the most of their investments. Not all tactics will work for all agencies in all circumstances. But agencies may still find a combination of tactics that works for them while navigating the tradeoffs involved.

This article summarizes our work recently published as "Financial Incentives for Police Recruitment and Retention: Perceived Effectiveness and Tradeoffs," in Police Practice and Research. To read more, see <https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2026.2635019>.



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