

Critical Issues in Policing



# Strengthening Justice

Strategies for  
Effective  
Prosecutor-Police  
Partnerships

2025



POLICE EXECUTIVE  
RESEARCH FORUM



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December 2025



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# A Message from Executive Director Chuck Wexler



When people think about the relationship between police and prosecutors, they often recall the iconic opening line from the TV show *Law & Order*:

"In the criminal justice system, the people are represented by two separate yet equally important groups: the police, who investigate crime, and the district attorneys, who prosecute the offenders."

And of course, this line accurately reflects a part of the relationship between police and district attorneys (DA). Police do enforce laws and solve crimes, and district attorneys do ultimately take some of those cases to trial, although not nearly as many as *Law & Order* would have us believe.

The actual relationship between police and prosecutors is far more nuanced. At its best, it functions as a symbiotic partnership, with each side reinforcing the other in the pursuit of justice. But when goals diverge or communication falters, collaboration suffers. At its worst, the relationship becomes antagonistic—hindering the work of both parties and eroding the trust and safety of the communities they serve.

**When police and prosecutors align around shared goals and view themselves as partners, they produce their best work.** Their collaboration enhances investigations, strengthens prosecutions, and builds public trust. Ultimately, the entire jurisdiction benefits from a unified approach to justice.

## A Shift in the Prosecutor/Law Enforcement Relationship

Some reform-minded prosecutors began to alter the traditional police-prosecutor dynamic in the mid- to late 2010s by implementing progressive policies that law enforcement leaders navigated with varying degrees of success.<sup>1</sup> PERF outlined this dynamic in a prior report, *Police*

1. David Alan Sklansky, "Foreword: The Future of the Progressive Prosecutor Movement," 16 Stan. J. C.R.&C.L. (2021), <https://law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Sklansky-The-Future-of-the-Progressive-Prosecutor-Movement-16-Stan.-J.-C.R.-C.L.-i-2021.pdf>.

*Chiefs and Prosecutors Work Through Challenges to Find Common Ground.*<sup>2</sup> Some of the prosecutors and police chiefs we highlighted in that report are still in office, while others have moved on. History will reveal whether and to what extent their policies were effective.

What has become increasingly evident is that the strength of the police–prosecutor relationship lies in effective collaborations. When both sides commit to open communication and shared objectives, they are better equipped to address complex public safety challenges. This spirit of partnership not only improves operational outcomes—it also fosters greater trust within the communities they serve.

As the demands on law enforcement continue to grow, the role of the modern prosecutor has expanded, offering new opportunities for collaboration. Prosecutors are increasingly engaging with police departments to support investigations, shape strategy, and address broader public safety challenges. Especially as police departments face challenges in doing more with fewer resources, “doing justice . . . requires partnerships and innovation in addition to the traditional work of prosecuting criminal offenses.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition to prosecuting cases, DAs can

- proactively engage with police to help solve cases;
- work with police to strategize interviews;
- assist in identifying and pursuing funding opportunities;
- assemble stakeholders to address specific community problems;
- collect and analyze data;
- lead transparency efforts;
- operate across municipal jurisdictions;
- access media and publicity;
- leverage their independent political clout.

This list is not exhaustive. How do we know this? According to Kristine Hamann, the founder and Executive Director of the Prosecutors’ Center for Excellence (PCE)—an organization dedicated to promoting best practices in prosecution—DAs nationwide are actively leading partnership initiatives. PCE has been highlighting these efforts and encouraging other prosecutors to get involved.<sup>4</sup>

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2. PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *Police Chiefs and Prosecutors Work Through Challenges To Find Common Ground* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2020), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/PoliceProsecutors.pdf>.
3. PCENBC (Prosecutors’ Center for Excellence National Best Practices Committee), *The New Roles of the Modern Prosecutor* (New York: Prosecutors’ Center for Excellence, 2023), <https://pceinc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/20240604-The-New-Roles-of-the-Modern-Prosecutor-NBP-FINAL.pdf>.
4. PCENBP, *The New Roles of the Modern Prosecutor* (see note 3).



Kristine Hamann



Jennifer Sommers

Hamann, a long-time prosecutor in the Manhattan District Attorney's Office with an impressive career, is also a long-time member of PERF. She attends our meetings, learns about innovations in policing, and, as importantly, provides valuable insights about innovations in prosecution. This dynamic—a prosecutor engaging in discussions about best practices in policing—serves as the foundation of this report.

This project was conceived by PERF Deputy Director Jennifer Sommers, a former longtime state and county prosecutor in New York. She has long believed that “effective collaboration between police and prosecutors is the key to moving from good to great,” and partnered with Kristine Hamann to showcase how jurisdictions across the country are putting that principle into practice. Together, they identified examples of innovative, prosecution-led partnerships from around the country that are strengthening public safety and advancing justice.



## A Gathering of Innovative Collaborators

This report explores DA-driven initiatives that have the support of law enforcement members in their jurisdictions—programs that go beyond DAs merely reviewing cases presented by police and then offering plea bargains or prosecuting those cases in court. To evaluate these initiatives, PERF hosted a meeting on April 10, 2025, in Washington, D.C., where prosecutors and their law enforcement partners from selected jurisdictions presented their programs, and attendees had the opportunity to ask questions. It was an inspiring day for all involved.

The 11 programs highlighted in this report demonstrate how prosecutors are actively collaborating with their law enforcement partners to enhance justice for all. We hope that by sharing these examples, police chiefs and sheriffs will be encouraged to engage with their prosecutors and will consider sharing this report with them to initiate deeper, more innovative collaborations. Ideally, the insights contained in this report will spark a conversation with your DA about starting a new initiative or enhancing an existing practice. While *Law & Order* may be entertaining, the reality of the criminal justice system is constantly evolving, and so must the relationship between the police chief, sheriff, and district attorney.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chuck Wexler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Chuck" on the top line and "Wexler" on the bottom line.

Chuck Wexler  
Executive Director  
Police Executive Research Forum  
Washington, D.C.

# Acknowledgments



Every PERF publication is the culmination of a tremendous amount of work by many people, and this was no exception. Kristine Hamann, Executive Director of the Prosecutors' Center for Excellence, played a crucial role in the project's success and was involved from its inception. We are also indebted to the prosecutors, law enforcement officials, and other participants who attended our meeting. We appreciate the district attorneys, police departments, and sheriffs' offices that allowed these dedicated public servants to attend. The meeting participants were as follows:

## **CALIFORNIA**

- **Long Beach City**
  - Doug Haubert, City Prosecutor, Long Beach City Prosecutor's Office
  - Byron Bolton, Chief Technology Officer, Long Beach City Prosecutor's Office
  - Ty Burford, Deputy Chief, Long Beach Police Department
- **San Diego County**
  - Andrija Lopez, Deputy District Attorney, San Diego County District Attorney's Office
  - Eric Seiter, Detective Sergeant, San Diego Police Department
- **Yolo County**
  - Jeff Reisig, District Attorney, Yolo County District Attorney's Office (virtual)
  - Rob Strange, Chief, West Sacramento Police Department (virtual)

## **GEORGIA**

- **DeKalb County**

- Edward Chase, Chief Assistant District Attorney, DeKalb County District Attorney's Office
- Casey Benton, Investigator, DeKalb County District Attorney's Office (formerly DeKalb Police Department)

- **Douglas County**

- Kaci Stovall, C.A., G.C.A., Child Advocate, Douglas County District Attorney's Office
- Christina Clark, Sergeant, Douglas County Sheriff's Office

## **LOUISIANA**

- **East Baton Rouge Parish**

- Hillar Moore, District Attorney, East Baton Rouge District Attorney's Office
- Don Dartez, Captain, East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office

## **MINNESOTA**

- **Ramsey County**

- John Choi, District Attorney, Ramsey County District Attorney's Office
- Richard Alteri, Commander, Ramsey County Sheriff's Office

## **NEW YORK**

- **Bronx County**

- Jordan Jackson, Crime Strategies Bureau Chief, Bronx County District Attorney's Office

- **New York County**

- Charles Whitt, Trial Bureau 60 Bureau Chief, New York District Attorney's Office
- Chauncey Parker, Director, New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA)

## **OHIO**

- **Ohio (State)/City of Akron**

- Micah Ault, Assistant Section Chief, Ohio Office of the Attorney General
- Mark Kollar, Assistant Superintendent, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation
- Christopher Brewer, Captain, Akron Police Department

## PENNSYLVANIA

- **Delaware County**
  - Matthew Krouse, Deputy District Attorney, Delaware County District Attorney's Office
  - Brian Pot, Detective, Criminal Investigations Division, Delaware County District Attorney's Office (formerly Chester Police Department)
- **Montgomery County**
  - Tanner Beck, Assistant District Attorney, Montgomery County District Attorney's Office
  - Gwendolyn Kull, Assistant District Attorney, Montgomery County District Attorney's Office
  - William Kane, School Resource Officer, Norristown Police Department

## OBSERVERS

- Tammy Brown, Violent Crime Specialist, U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance
- Jennifer Long, Executive Director, AEquitas
- Kristen Mahoney, Deputy Director, University of Chicago Crime Lab
- Beth McGarry, Consultant (formerly U.S. Department of Justice Special Counsel's Office)
- Lashinda Stair, Director, North America Industry Team, Motorola Solutions
- Kimberly Williams, Supervisory Senior Policy Advisor, U.S. DOJ Bureau of Justice Assistance

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Many staff members contributed to this report. Center for Management and Technical Assistance Deputy Director Jennifer Sommers managed the project and wrote the report, while Director Tom Wilson provided project leadership and guidance. Senior Research Associate Rachel Apfelbaum and Research Assistant Rachael Thompson provided indispensable assistance by conducting background research, assisting with interviews, and drafting many of the program summaries. Communications Associate Dustin Waters assisted with the layout, photography, and design of the report. PERF's editor Melissa Fox edited the report.



# Executive Summary



Across the country, prosecutors are leading collaborative initiatives that directly support and enhance the work of law enforcement. These efforts go far beyond traditional case review, trial preparation, and courtroom prosecution. In an era of constrained resources and evolving public safety challenges, prosecutor-driven programs are genuine force multipliers—bringing strategic focus, funding, and cross-sector collaboration to the table.

This report highlights 11 such initiatives, each demonstrating how prosecutors can be proactive partners with law enforcement to solve problems, improve investigations, and build trust in the criminal justice system.

## Key Themes and Takeaways

The following themes emerged consistently across the programs featured in this report, offering valuable insights for law enforcement and prosecutors in other jurisdictions seeking to strengthen their own partnerships and improve public safety outcomes.

### **1. Prosecutors as Strategic Partners**

Modern prosecutors are increasingly stepping into leadership roles that not only complement police work but actively enhance it—**offering strategic advantages that law enforcement agencies can and should leverage**. By convening stakeholders, securing funding, and driving policy innovation, prosecutors are reshaping the traditional police–prosecutor dynamic into a more collaborative and impactful partnership.

## **2. Tangible Benefits to Law Enforcement**

Each program featured in this report was selected because it provides clear and measurable support to police departments and sheriffs' offices. These benefits include the following:

- Improved clearance rates for violent crimes
- Enhanced investigative tools and training
- Reduced burdens on officers
- Increased community trust and engagement

## **3. Replicable Models**

The highlighted programs span jurisdictions of varying sizes and demographics, offering adaptable models that can be applied to other communities. From prosecutor-led focused deterrence in Chester, Pennsylvania, to a mobile app for homeless outreach in Long Beach, California, these initiatives demonstrate that innovation is possible anywhere.



The April 10, 2025, meeting hosted by PERF in Washington, D.C.

## Highlighted Programs

The following examples illustrate how prosecutors nationwide are spearheading innovative, needs-specific initiatives that directly support law enforcement and enhance public safety. Each program embodies a distinct approach to collaboration, problem-solving, and achieving results.

- **Focused Deterrence – Delaware County, PA**  
Prosecutor-driven focused deterrence to address violent crime
- **School Threats Protocol – San Diego, CA**  
Assessing and responding to threats of school violence
- **Human Trafficking Coordinator – DeKalb County, GA**  
Coordinating trafficking cases throughout the county
- **Model OICI Policies – Ohio Attorney General<sup>5</sup>**  
Memorializing policies and protocols so that officers and the community know what to expect
- **FastPass to Prosecution for Retail Theft – Yolo County, CA**  
Reducing the burden on law enforcement after incidents of retail theft
- **Juvenile Auto Theft Reduction Program – Ramsey County, MN**  
Prosecutor-driven juvenile deterrence of auto theft
- **Goodwill Guardian Crime Victim Compensation – Douglas County, GA**  
Filling a necessary void in crime victim compensation
- **Community Justice Units – Montgomery County, PA**  
Embedding prosecutors in police departments
- **GUIDES Mobile Phone App – Long Beach, CA**  
A phone app enabling police on the street to access real-time information about the homeless population with which they interact
- **Crime Strategies Unit – Bronx, NY**  
Reducing gun violence by targeted enforcement
- **Science-Based Interviewing – East Baton Rouge, LA and Manhattan, NY**  
Implementing training in evidence-based best practices for interviewing victims, witnesses, and suspects

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5. This is the only non-local prosecutor model we highlight.

## Principles for Effective Collaboration

The report identifies seven guiding principles for successful prosecutor–police partnerships:

1. Focus on public safety above personal differences or pride.
2. Clearly define the specific problem for which collaboration is sought.
3. Use shared access to stakeholders.
4. Recognize the prosecutor’s access to additional funding sources.
5. Find ways to ensure long-term commitment.
6. Measure outcomes.
7. Leverage the media to showcase successes.

## Conclusion

Prosecutor-led collaborative initiatives are far more than helpful to police—they are essential. As law enforcement agencies contend with increasing demands, these partnerships deliver strategic, scalable solutions that strengthen public safety and advance justice. **Chiefs and sheriffs are encouraged to share this report with their district attorneys and explore meaningful opportunities for collaboration.** Whether adapting a featured program or launching a new initiative, the path forward begins with a shared commitment to innovation and justice.

# Innovation in Action

## District Attorneys Leading Efforts that Benefit Police



Across the country, a growing number of prosecutors are stepping beyond the traditional boundaries of their role to lead innovative, community-focused initiatives in close partnership with law enforcement. These efforts reflect a shift in how prosecutors view their responsibilities: not just as courtroom advocates but as proactive problem-solvers working to prevent crime, support victims, and improve public safety.

The following examples illustrate how forward-thinking district attorneys are identifying pressing challenges in their jurisdictions and driving meaningful change—while, in the process, working alongside and strengthening their relationships with law enforcement.

- As a prosecutor preparing for the trial of a man accused of a horrific school shooting, San Diego Deputy District Attorney Summer Stephens recognized there had been numerous missed opportunities for intervention leading up to that tragedy. She also noted that whenever potential threats arose at San Diego schools, the disorganized and inconsistent responses from school and law enforcement officials often unnecessarily traumatized students and parents. When she became the elected District Attorney of San Diego, Stephens took action to address the issue. She brought together all relevant stakeholders and developed a comprehensive school threat protocol that has since become a national model, available for any jurisdiction to adapt and implement.
- After a study determined that Douglas County, Georgia, was failing its crime victims in terms of compensation as they navigated the criminal justice system, District Attorney Dalia Racine developed a community-involved program that mitigates financial burdens on victims. The Goodwill Guardian Program helps victims manage in the aftermath of crime and keeps them engaged, which benefits law enforcement and the community at large.

- Saint Paul, Minnesota, faced a significant issue with auto theft by young people. As more and more vehicles were stolen, District Attorney John Choi brought together law enforcement officials and other stakeholders from across the jurisdiction to develop strategies to tackle the problem. This prosecutor-driven initiative was more successful in reducing auto theft in Saint Paul than in any other location in the country.

What do these three prosecutors, each from a different part of the country, all serving different jurisdictions with different demographics, have in common? Each had an issue in their jurisdiction—the need for a structured school threat assessment and response, the need for improved crime victim compensation, and the need to combat violent crime—and the DA led the effort to address these issues. They did so in meaningful ways that benefited and supported their law enforcement partners and the communities they serve. In fact, at an April 10, 2025, meeting in Washington, D.C., where we highlighted many of these types of prosecutor-driven programs, a member of law enforcement from each jurisdiction was present to support the prosecutors as they discussed their programs and recounted their benefits.

## Benefits of Prosecutor-Driven Initiatives

The overarching theme of every program presented at the D.C. meeting was this: **Prosecution-driven initiatives can dramatically lighten the burden on law enforcement.**

For example:

- When Delaware County District Attorney Jack Stollsteimer implemented prosecution-led violence reduction strategies in Chester, Pennsylvania—the poorest, most violence-plagued city in the county—the decrease in violent crime was stunning, and greatly benefited the Chester Police Department. Former Chester PD Detective Brian Pot, who now works for the Delaware County DA's Office, observed, "When he and his team came into office, there was an immediate change in thought process; we all got better."
- When Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark created the Crime Strategies Bureau (enhancing what had previously been the Crime Strategies Unit) in her office, it provided tremendous benefits not only to the Bronx prosecutors but also to the NYPD and other law enforcement in New York City. Says Chauncey Parker (former New York Deputy Police Commissioner and current director of New York / New Jersey HIDTA),<sup>6</sup> "We know that bringing together the stakeholders to focus on the most significant drivers of gun violence is what works. Having the Crime Strategies Bureau at the table is important."
- When Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost established best practice policies for investigating officer-involved critical incidents, he aimed to provide clarity for officers and community members about what to expect during these potentially significant events; by outlining a transparent investigation process, Yost helped reduce the burdens and stress on officers while simultaneously increasing trust in the community. As noted by Akron Police Department Captain Christopher Brewer, "Even though we are capable of conducting quality investigations of our officers, we prefer their independent investigations now."

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6. "High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas," Office of National Drug Control Policy, accessed July 21, 2025, [https://www.hidtaprogram.org/ny\\_nj.php](https://www.hidtaprogram.org/ny_nj.php).

The programs referenced in this publication are valuable to share and replicate for several reasons, the primary one being that they enhance the effectiveness of police agencies. **Meaningful engagement with prosecutors can significantly assist police in preventing or responding to criminal activities.** This is undoubtedly the case in East Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where District Attorney Hillar Moore helped subsidize the cost of joint training in science-based interviewing for law enforcement and prosecutors. Members of the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office (EBRSO) are happy with the results. "The interviews we conduct now are well planned and lead to a wealth of information that we can either verify or disprove, and our cases are stronger as a result," says EBRSO Captain Don Dartez.

## Meeting in Washington, D.C.

Kristine Hamann of the Prosecutors' Center for Excellence<sup>7</sup> emphasizes the importance of strong police-prosecutor collaborations; with her assistance, PERF selected 11 programs to highlight in this publication. The programs were vetted during the meeting, allowing prosecutors and law enforcement from around the country to ask questions and determine if and how their colleagues' programs could be adapted to their own jurisdictions.

The DA-driven programs included in this publication, along with the jurisdiction that presented them at the D.C. meeting, are as follows:

### 1. Delaware County, PA – Focused Deterrence

DA-led violence reduction strategy that tripled homicide clearance rates and dramatically reduced nonfatal shootings, despite police staffing shortages

### 2. San Diego, CA – School Threat Protocol

A nationally recognized model for assessing and responding to school threats, developed and led by the DA's office in partnership with law enforcement

### 3. DeKalb County, GA – Human Trafficking Coordinator

A county-wide investigator, housed in the DA's office, supporting police across many jurisdictions, improving case outcomes, and enhancing victim recovery

### 4. Ohio Attorney General – Officer-Involved Critical Incident Protocols

State-level best practices for investigating critical incidents, offering transparency and consistency that benefit officers and the communities they serve

### 5. Yolo County, CA – FastPass for Retail Theft

Retailers submitting theft reports directly to the DA's office, reducing the burden on police and increasing prosecution rates

### 6. Ramsey County, MN – Juvenile Auto Theft Reduction

A prosecutor-led collaboration with law enforcement that reduced auto theft by 55 percent while providing services to youth and families

### 7. Douglas County, GA – Goodwill Guardian Victim Compensation

A DA-led program that uses private donations to meet victims' immediate needs, relieving pressure on law enforcement and improving victim engagement

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7. "Prosecutors' Center for Excellence," accessed July 21, 2025, <https://pceinc.org/>.

## **8. Montgomery County, PA – Community Justice Units**

Embedded prosecutors working alongside police in high-crime boroughs, strengthening cases and building community trust

## **9. Long Beach, CA – GUIDES Mobile App**

A DOJ-funded app that provides officers with real-time access to service information for individuals experiencing homelessness, enhancing outcomes and saving valuable officer time

## **10. Bronx, NY – Crime Strategies Bureau**

A data-driven unit in the DA's office that identifies priority offenders and collaborates with the NYPD to reduce gun violence and improve case quality

## **11. East Baton Rouge, LA – Science-Based Interviewing**

Joint training for prosecutors and police in modern, science-based interviewing techniques that yield more reliable information and build community trust

**Each of these programs shares a key similarity: The police in the jurisdictions benefit from the fact that the DA implemented the program.** Recognizing that effective prosecutor collaborations can dramatically lighten the load on law enforcement is key. Regardless of the police chief or sheriff's current relationship with the DA, enhancing the partnership benefits everyone. Law enforcement does not need to do it alone.

During the D.C. meeting, as each police-prosecutor team described their program, common threads began to emerge and reappear as key principles. These principles can serve as strong motivators for collaboration with prosecutors on specific issues in your jurisdiction.

## **Principles for Effective Prosecutor-Police Collaborations**

### ***Public safety must always rise above egos and personal differences.***

The primary mission of any police-prosecutor collaboration is to serve the public interest and ensure justice is delivered safely, fairly, and effectively. This requires humility, mutual respect, and a willingness to listen—even when opinions differ or tensions rise. When disagreements arise, keep the focus on facts, legal standards, and community safety—rather than personal recognition or authority.

### ***Clearly define the problem.***

Rather than simply collaborating on “how to deal with crime,” it is best to identify a specific issue to strategize the most effective solution. From how multiple entities can effectively coordinate their response to the unhoused population in Long Beach, California, to reducing the disproportionately high level of gun violence in Chester, Pennsylvania, to how to better respond to threats of school violence in San Diego, California, the prosecutors and police began by focusing on a clearly defined issue in their jurisdiction to bring about real change.

### ***Leverage shared stakeholder access.***

Prosecutors are often able to convene stakeholders in a manner that complements—and often exceeds—that of a single law enforcement entity. This was certainly the case in Ramsey County, Minnesota, where the DA brought all relevant stakeholders in the county together to address the rise in youth-driven auto theft. It was also the case in Douglas County, Georgia,

where the elected prosecutor collaborated with the Chamber of Commerce and various local businesses to make the Goodwill Guardian Program a reality. Similarly, in Yolo County, California, the district attorney convened a meeting with major retailers and others to address the issue of retail theft.

### ***Recognize the prosecutor's access to funding sources.***

Many of the programs discussed in this publication succeeded because the prosecutor was able to secure funding to get them off the ground. Some larger law enforcement agencies may have dedicated grant-writing departments, but most do not. Prosecutors may be better equipped to identify solicitations and write grant applications. In addition, some funding opportunities are specifically available only to prosecutors.

For example, the DeKalb County, Georgia, Human Trafficking Coordinator position was established through a federal grant for innovative prosecution, while the East Baton Rouge, Louisiana, DA secured funding from a private entity to train prosecutors and law enforcement in science-based interviewing techniques. The Delaware County and Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, DAs were able to reallocate internal resources to focus prosecutorial efforts in the most crime-ridden areas of their jurisdictions.

### ***Ensure long-term commitment to collaborations.***

Whether it's faithful attendance at meetings (a member of the Bronx DA's Office has attended the New York City Gun Violence Strategies Partnership (GVSP) meeting every day for more than 1,000 days) or putting commitments in writing (such as the Ohio Attorney General's Office's policies and protocols regarding how it will handle all officer-involved critical incidents or San Diego's School Threats Protocol, both of which are available online), finding ways to ensure and maintain consistent commitment is a key to success.

### ***Measure outcomes of collaborative efforts.***

Measuring the impact of collaborative programs with DAs is crucial for securing new or continuing existing funding, establishing the programs' viability, making necessary adjustments, and sustaining programs. In Yolo County, California, the FastPass program yielded positive and measurable results, making it easier to obtain additional funding and continue the program. In Douglas County, Georgia, the Goodwill Guardian Program operates at a surplus, indicating that the private sector is willing to assist victims of crime when a reputable entity such as the DA supports an initiative.

### ***Use press releases, press conferences, and other media-friendly platforms to showcase successful collaborations between prosecutors and police.***

Public support for collaborations between prosecutors and police helps sustain these programs and builds trust in the community. Promoting successful initiatives—through press releases or by inviting the press to cover them—further drives success and encourages others to consider implementing similar efforts. For example, Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig ensured that residents were aware that the FastPass initiative led directly to the criminal conviction of a persistent retail theft offender.<sup>8</sup> The unparalleled success of Ramsey County's

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8. "FastPass Program Secures Conviction Under New Law," *West Sacramento News Ledger*, April 1, 2025, <https://www.westsacramentonewsledger.com/2025/04/01/528105/fastpass-program-secures-conviction-under-new-law>.

efforts to curb youth auto theft has drawn national attention;<sup>9</sup> and the GUIDES app, developed by Long Beach prosecutor Doug Haubert to assist police with people experiencing homelessness, was awarded the 2023 American City and County Crown Communities Award for its innovative approach to public safety and social services.

Each of these principles is clearly illustrated in the following pages. The highlighted programs exemplify effective collaboration between prosecutors and police and should be shared and adapted widely. They are innovative and prosecutor-driven, serving the interests of both law enforcement in the jurisdiction and the broader community. **Most importantly, reading about these programs and sharing them with prosecutors in your jurisdiction may inspire ideas for new collaborations or strengthen existing ones.**

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9. Meg Anderson, "How One City Took On Rising Car Thefts—and Brought the Numbers Down," NPR, last modified February 4, 2004, <https://www.npr.org/2024/02/04/1227928003/rising-car-thefts-st-paul-minnesota-fallen-hyundai-kia>.

# Program 1. Delaware County, PA Prosecutor-Directed Focused Deterrence



Delaware County Deputy District Attorney Matthew Krouse and Delaware County District Attorney's Office Criminal Investigation Division Detective Brian Pot, who previously worked for the Chester Police Department (CPD), discuss how crime reduction strategies implemented by the District Attorney's Office have successfully reduced violent crime in Chester—the most violent city per capita in Pennsylvania.<sup>10</sup>

## The Issue

Chester City,<sup>11</sup> the only city in Delaware County and the oldest in Pennsylvania, was plagued by crime and fiscally strained when Jack Stollsteimer took office as DA in 2020.<sup>12</sup> It had long been financially stressed by the time a state court placed Chester under a receivership in 2020; the city declared bankruptcy in 2022.<sup>13</sup> The CPD was chronically understaffed and underfunded, despite Chester being by far the most violent municipality in the county.

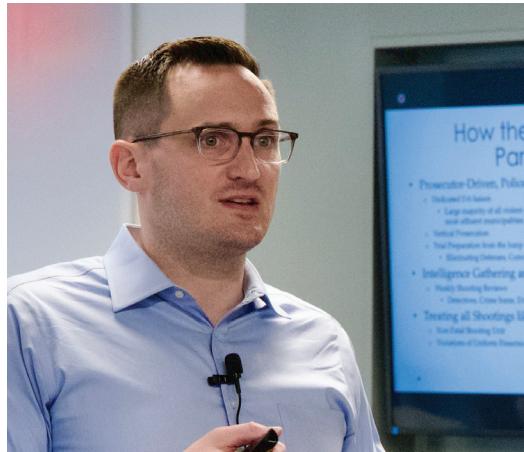
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10. Pennsylvania State Police, "Crime Against Person," accessed July 28, 2025, <https://reports.py.pa.gov/psp/powerbiui>; United States Census Bureau, "Population for Chester City, PA," U.S. Department of Commerce, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/chestercitypennsylvania/VET605223>; Yucy, "Top 10 Most Dangerous Cities in Pennsylvania," Reolink, May 20, 2025, [https://reolink.com/blog/most-dangerous-cities-in-pennsylvania/?srsltid=AfmBOoq4AU4Gfr1a4drPlQ3NAD\\_uwucaSeLvy7ex8TIV6oui-6eoAZpQ](https://reolink.com/blog/most-dangerous-cities-in-pennsylvania/?srsltid=AfmBOoq4AU4Gfr1a4drPlQ3NAD_uwucaSeLvy7ex8TIV6oui-6eoAZpQ).
11. "Chester City" colloquially distinguishes the city of Chester, PA, located in Delaware County, both from Chester Township, also in Delaware County, and from Chester County, PA. This publication does not discuss Chester Township or Chester County, so we will refer to the city of Chester simply by its one-word name.
12. In addition to the April 10, 2025, meeting, information for this program was taken from Kristine Hamann and Alyssa Mendlein, *Prosecutor Initiatives to Reduce Gun Violence* (New York: Prosecutors' Center for Excellence, 2024), <https://crimejusticelab.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/20241017-Prosecutor-Initiatives-to-Reduce-Gun-Violence-CJPL-and-PCE.pdf>.
13. Liz Farmer, "A Small City's Descent Into Bankruptcy," Route Fifty Public Finance Update, last modified January 10, 2023, <https://www.route-fifty.com/finance/2023/01/chester-pennsylvania-bankruptcy-pensions-city-budget-finance/381645/>.

## The Solution

Immediately upon taking office, DA Stollsteimer implemented a focused deterrence model for Chester, which he managed from his office.<sup>14</sup> As Deputy District Attorney (DDA) Matthew Krouse, who runs the DA's Office's Chester programs, noted:

"The premise of focused deterrence is that between 50 and 75 percent of all violent crime is committed by less than one-half of one percent of the population, and if you focus on that small fraction, you'll drive down that violent crime. That's what we do. We focus on the small percentage of people in Chester City who commit most of the violent crimes."



DDA Matthew Krouse

The actions taken in Chester, whose population is approximately 35,000, resemble those implemented in larger cities but have been tailored to address the specific challenges of a smaller city facing significant issues with violent crime. Chester can serve as a model for small to mid-sized cities that are grappling with disproportionately high levels of violent crime.

## Chester Partnership for Safe Neighborhoods

The focused deterrence model implemented by DA Stollsteimer (Chester Partnership for Safe Neighborhoods, or CPSN) is a comprehensive approach designed to reduce crime in Chester. This strategy emphasizes not only addressing criminal activity but also building positive relationships with the community. The program includes several key initiatives, such as increasing police presence in high-risk areas, hiring violence interrupters, and creating programs for young people who want to change their life paths.

### ***Identification of high-risk individuals***

The CPD already had a robust intelligence unit, and one of the first steps the DA's Office took was leveraging that intelligence to identify Chester's high-risk individuals—described by DDA Krouse as "those who will either shoot others or be shot at themselves." The DA's office and the CPD consulted with an expert and then conducted a preliminary violence review.<sup>15</sup> The review resulted in the identification of between 250 and 300 violent individuals involved in at least 75 percent of Chester's 2020 shootings.<sup>16</sup>

From there, the DA's Office made its intentions very public. The message disseminated throughout Chester was, according to Krouse, "We know who you are, we know who you associate with, and we are aware of the violence you and your groups are responsible for committing. **If you let us, we will help you; if you make us, we will stop you.**"

14. The efforts were based upon the work of Dr. David Kennedy, who co-developed the focused deterrence model. "David Kennedy," National Network for Safe Communities, accessed July 21, 2025, <https://nnscommunities.org/staff/david-kennedy/>.

15. Although Dr. Kennedy, upon whom the DA's Office relied, is an expert in the field of focused deterrence (see note 14), any DA's office can benefit from partnering with a local college or university with a criminal justice, statistics, public policy, or similar department for help with this type of analysis.

16. Hamann and Mendlein, *Prosecutor Initiatives to Reduce Gun Violence*, 9 (see note 12).

## **Establishment of a robust police-prosecutor partnership**

The DA's Office began working aggressively with its law enforcement partners, including the following:

- Chester Police Department
- Delaware County Criminal Investigation Division
- Pennsylvania Department of Corrections
- Delaware County Adult Probation and Parole
- Delaware County Juvenile Probation and Parole
- Delaware County Sheriff's Office
- U.S. Marshals
- U. S. Attorney's Office
- George W. Hill Correctional Facility (the local prison)

Unlike in most jurisdictions, this partnership is coordinated by the DA's Office and is described as "prosecutor-driven and police-supported." Some of the notable aspects are noted in the following sections.

### **Zones/DA liaisons**

The DA's Office dedicated DDA liaisons to various zones in the county, including Chester, to promote consistency. The dedicated DDA is responsible for answering all questions about major crimes from law enforcement in that zone. Further, the DDA liaisons are "vertical," meaning, with very few exceptions, they handle everything in their zone—from search warrant applications and charging documents to discovery, hearings, and trials.

### **Weekly shooting reviews**

Every week, law enforcement and their partners meet with the DDA at a shooting review to discuss intelligence gathering and strategize about how to assemble a prosecutable case. These shooting reviews have proven valuable not only in strengthening cases but also in establishing expectations and accountability. Each week, the team reviews the status of all new and ongoing investigations, identifying any potential connections between incidents. The theme of each case reviewed is determining what is necessary to prove the case and, if needed, to take it to trial.

### **Treating all cases as homicides**

One of the most beneficial aspects of the new police-prosecutor partnership has been its **prioritization of nonfatal shootings**. With the recognition that every nonfatal shooting could have been a homicide if the shooter had had slightly better aim or the medical care had been somewhat less prompt, DA Stollsteimer went before the Delaware County Council and secured funding for four DA detectives to partner with CPD on nonfatal shootings.<sup>17</sup> As a result, **each nonfatal shooting is now investigated and processed with the same rigor as a homicide**.

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17. The initial appropriation was from COVID-19 funding and is set to expire in 2026. However, the initiative has been so successful in reducing violent crime that it is now included in the annual county budget.

Handling nonfatal shootings in this manner has many advantages. It not only improves clearance rates but also allows evidence collected in one case—such as ballistics information submitted to the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN)—to assist in solving other cases. As a result, Delaware County has experienced a significant increase in both its fatal and nonfatal clearance rates.

## Building Evidence-Based Cases Involving Uncooperative Victims

Matt Krouse was a prosecutor in Philadelphia before joining the Delaware County DA's Office. He was surprised to learn that in Chester, when the victim of an assault or other violent crime did not wish to cooperate, law enforcement would generally close the case with a written pre-populated form that the victim did not want to proceed. "In Philadelphia, we rarely had willing victims, but we prosecuted cases based on other evidence. So we immediately began educating law enforcement in Chester City [and throughout Delaware County] about how to build cases even if a victim won't cooperate."

Now, law enforcement builds strong circumstantial cases that DAs are willing to prosecute, regardless of victim cooperation, using a combination of the following:

- Camera footage
- Social media
- Grand jury subpoenas
- License plate reader images
- Technological tools (to assist with mapping and analysis, camera integration, video compilation software, and global positioning)
- Forensic evidence (including analysis of cell phones, DNA, gunshot residue, and fingerprints)

As Det. Pot noted, "You don't know what you don't know. After DA Stollsteimer came into office, there was an immediate change in the thought process and how to investigate. The results of those changes were evident very quickly. We dramatically increased our solve rate while reducing nonfatal shootings."



Det. Brian Pot

## **DA's Office funding of law enforcement initiatives**

The DA's Office also worked closely with Chester officials to strategize how to effectively address "hot spots," with a focus on enhancing community relationships. This attention involved very close monitoring of locations where issues might be percolating because of a recent incident or where violence had been gradually escalating over time. As noted in the Funding section, the DA's Office often used its asset forfeiture money to pay for law enforcement overtime details in those areas where violence might be expected.

Moreover, the DA's Office initiated a collaboration with the PA State Police (PSP) for what is essentially community policing in a small city. Members of PSP would partner with CPD to be present, *but not push to make arrests*, in high-crime neighborhoods of Chester. Krouse described this as "Walk the street. Walk the beat."

## **Trusted messengers/violence interventionists**

In 2021, the DA's Office initially used asset forfeiture funds to hire a single "trusted messenger." Also known as a group interventionist, a trusted messenger is someone from an affected area who often has a criminal background but has managed to turn their life around. In Chester, the trusted messenger played a vital role in de-escalating neighborhood rivalries, especially after incidents of gun violence. In addition, he played a crucial role in providing essential services—including food and children's clothing—to those in need. The original trusted messenger was so successful that in 2022, the DA's Office secured a grant to hire two additional part-time messengers.

## **Community trust-building initiatives**

DA Stollsteimer also began youth-driven diversion programs. The Young Offender Program is for nonviolent first-time offenders arrested for drug-related offenses; Delaware County's Gun-violence Reduction – Accountability, Change, Elevation (GRACE) Program is a program for qualifying first-time gun offenders. Both programs offer offenders the opportunity to avoid a felony conviction by entering and completing an intensive, supervised program.<sup>18</sup>

Other miscellaneous steps the DA's Office has taken since 2020 include using its funding to support the CPD in ways that align with community desires. In addition to paying for overtime details, DA-led CPSN purchased the CPD's first video interview room, a dozen license plate readers, and an audio recorder for supervisors to conduct street interviews after incidents. As a result, the CPD was able to reallocate its own funding to purchase body-worn cameras, something the community had wanted and the police department welcomed. The DA's Office also offered free home surveillance cameras and installation to Chester residents, provided they agreed to grant law enforcement access to the footage when needed. The cameras have aided clearance rates and helped the people of Chester to feel safer in their homes and their community.

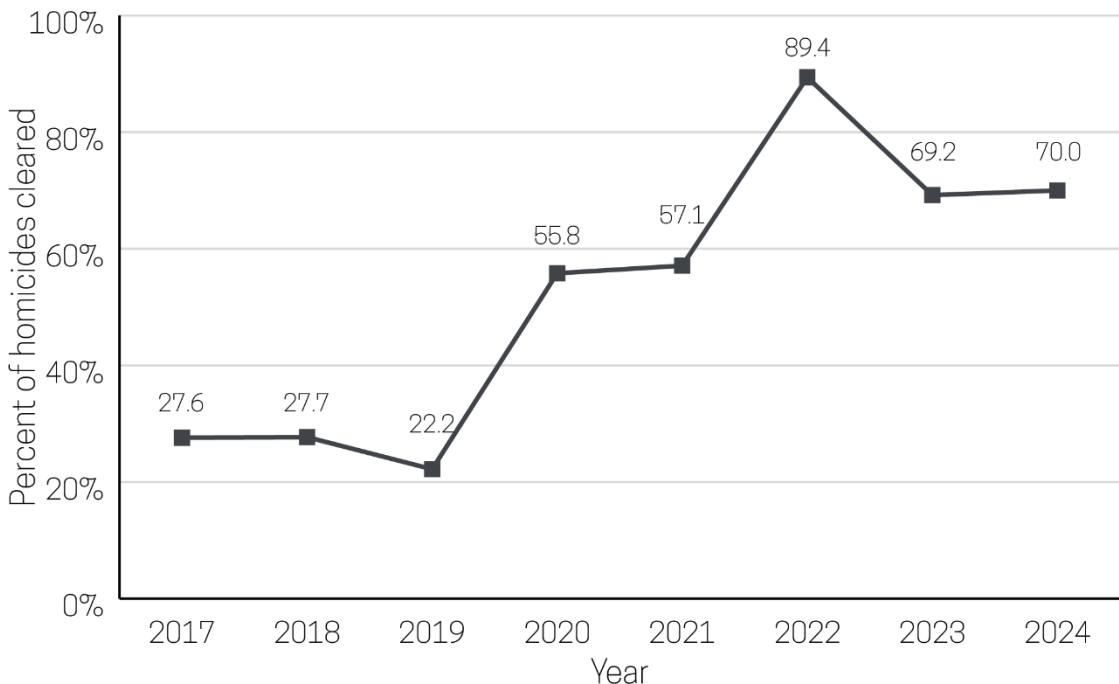
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18. "Young Offender Program," Delaware County Office of the District Attorney, accessed July 22, 2025, <https://delcoda.wpengine.com/young-offender-program/>.

## Measurable Achievements

The DA's Office reports that the homicide clearance rate in Chester has more than tripled since 2019, as reflected in figure 1.

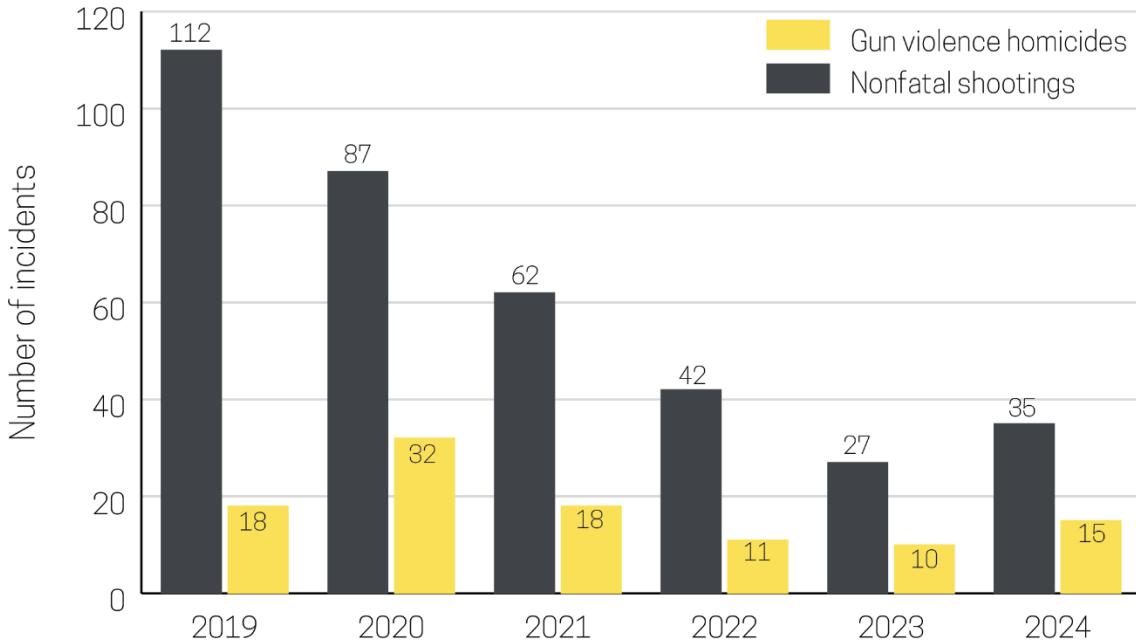
Figure 1. Chester homicide clearance rates, 2017–2024



Source: Delaware County District Attorney's Office internal data

Between 2019 and 2024, again according to numbers maintained by the DA's Office, there has been a decline in homicides and a precipitous decrease in nonfatal shootings, as illustrated in figure 2.

Figure 2. Gun homicides and nonfatal shootings in Chester, 2019–2024



Source: Delaware County District Attorney's Office internal data

This improvement occurred while Chester was undergoing bankruptcy, and the CPD, like many police departments across the country, faced a staffing shortage. Although the department is approved for 80 officers, it has been operating with approximately 60 officers since 2020.

## Benefits to Law Enforcement

The focused deterrence program implemented by DA Stollsteimer has significantly benefited the CPD. By using asset forfeiture funds to support police overtime and the purchase of license plate readers, interview equipment, and various other initiatives, the program has contributed to a significant reduction in Chester's violent crime. Despite operating with only three-quarters of its authorized personnel, the CPD is collaborating with the DA's Office to build strong, prosecutable cases, even in situations where victims do not cooperate. As a result of these efforts, violent crime in Chester continues to fall.

## Funding

Delaware County is home to some of the most affluent areas in Pennsylvania, while Chester stands out as one of the poorest and most violent. When DA Stollsteimer took office, he recognized that areas in Delaware County not facing the same challenges as Chester were nevertheless receiving equal resources—so he immediately implemented shifts in the internal resources and staffing of the DA's Office commensurate with the needs of each area.

Many of these programs were initially funded from the DA's Office's asset forfeiture funds, which included police overtime details, PSP/CPD pairing to walk the neighborhoods in Chester City, and the first violence interrupter. These programs were an innovative way for a DA's office to use these funds, and the decision proved effective. Importantly, however, once the programs began to show promise, the DA's Office was able to transition to grant funding. The office has also been able to work with private funders such as the Green Foundation, the Community's Foundation, and the Foundation for Delaware County for some of its initiatives.<sup>19</sup>

## Takeaways and Implementing in Other Jurisdictions

The reduction of violent crime in Chester demonstrates that with determination and creativity, significant achievements can be made even with limited resources and regardless of the jurisdiction's size. DDA Krouse emphasized that those looking to implement similar programs should understand that these initiatives are based on partnerships, hence the name—Chester Partnership for Safe Neighborhoods. It is essential to collaborate with nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, stakeholders in the criminal justice system, and law enforcement to identify needs, leverage resources, and ensure community engagement.

Offices should think creatively about funding sources. For instance, the DA's Office used asset forfeiture funds to cover essential police overtime costs and hire a violence interrupter. In addition, the office sought COVID-19 relief funds from the Chester City Council to hire four DDA detectives for investigating nonfatal shootings. While these were unconventional uses of those funding sources, they were effective and beneficial.

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19. "The Green Foundation," accessed July 22, 2025, <https://www.ligf.org/>; "The Community's Foundation," accessed July 22, 2025, <https://tcfhelps.org/>; "The Foundation for Delaware County," accessed July 22, 2025, <https://delcofoundation.org/>.

Measuring success is crucial for establishing effective initiatives and facilitating their expansion. The DA's Office has so far demonstrated that its efforts have led to significant reductions in violent crime. Organizations that award grant funding are more likely to support initiatives that have demonstrated success; showing grant-makers that a program works can often help secure both state and private funding.

# Program 2. San Diego, CA School Threats Protocol



San Diego County Deputy District Attorney Andrija Lopez and San Diego Police Department Sergeant Eric Seiter describe the evolution of San Diego County's School Threats Protocol, which has become an adaptable national model.

## The Issue

San Diego County, California, has experienced five reported school shootings.<sup>20</sup> The first of these occurred in 1979; the most recent case, prosecuted by Summer Stephan, then the division chief of the North County branch and now the elected San Diego District Attorney, took place in 2010. Throughout her work on the 2010 case, DA Stephan observed certain system failures that she believed negatively impacted students. Various involved entities missed, overlooked, or misprocessed many warning signs and opportunities for intervention. Inconsistent communications and siloing among different disciplines in San Diego County created vulnerabilities related to school safety.

Furthermore, even in the absence of active shooters, students faced trauma from the growing number of threats of school violence, which often increased following incidents elsewhere in the nation. For instance, according to Deputy DA Lopez, following the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, the Juvenile Division of the San Diego District Attorney's Office received two or three reports of school violence threats by juveniles every day for nearly three months. Disjointed responses from authorities worsened the trauma students experienced during such threats; at the same time, automatic school lockdowns triggered by every reported threat led to panic and drew media attention as well as concerned parents to the scene, which interfered with law enforcement investigations.

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20. Kristina Davis, "Timeline: San Diego School Shootings," *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, December 14, 2012, <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2012/12/14/timeline-san-diegos-school-shootings/>.

## The Solution

Recognizing the need for a more effective approach to this ongoing, disruptive, and potentially deadly issue, DA Stephan and her dedicated staff set out to find a solution. The initiative, housed in her Juvenile Division, was led by Deputy DA Andrija Lopez, identified key stakeholders, including law enforcement and mental health professionals as well as educators. It took the team six weeks to develop a protocol. After drafting the document, they shared it with county partners to gather feedback. They also held a summit that included representatives from all 42 school districts, each of the 12 local law enforcement agencies in the county, and the sheriff's office. Following this summit, they distributed the protocol to stakeholders and provided a day-long training session.

The San Diego County School Threat Protocol<sup>21</sup> is the culmination of these efforts and serves as a comprehensive guide. Completed in 2018 and updated in 2021, this document is available for download and can be adapted by any jurisdiction aiming to reduce the likelihood of such tragic shootings in their area.

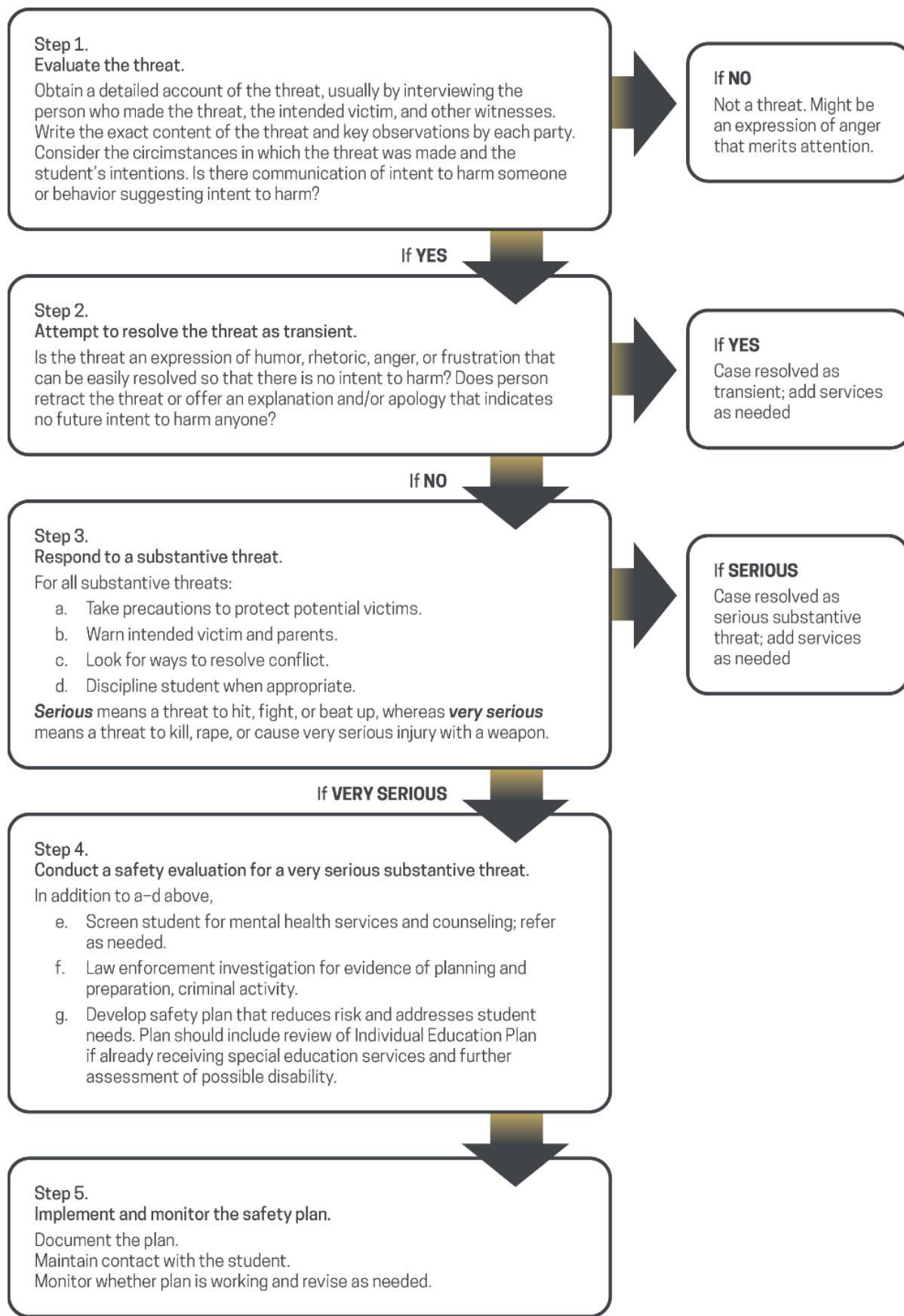
The decision-making process is depicted in figure 3 on page 17, followed by the operational protocol.



Sgt. Eric Seiter

21. San Diego County District Attorney's Office, *San Diego County School Threat Protocol* (San Diego, CA: San Diego County District Attorney's Office, 2021), <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/dam/sdc/hhsa/programs/bhs/CYF/FINAL-%20Master%20School%20Threat%20Protocol%20revised%20November-2-2021.pdf>.

Figure 3. San Diego County school threat assessment decision tree



# The Protocol

## **Step 1. School onsite team**

The first response level under the protocol typically occurs at the school after an initiating incident, such as an online comment or a rumor. This responsibility falls to an on-site school threat assessment team, which best practice models note that every school should have.<sup>22</sup> These school-level teams typically consist of an assistant principal or other administrator, a school counselor or school psychiatrist, a teacher, and a school resource officer or juvenile services officer. The team evaluates issues that can be appropriately addressed at the school level and elevates those that pose a greater danger and require closer examination by law enforcement.

## **Step 2. Law enforcement**

Elevated threats are reported to the Law Enforcement Communication Center (LECC) as a school threat “suspicious activity report” (SAR). The LECC is a local fusion center serving San Diego and Imperial Counties, comprising local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. Importantly, every state has a fusion center, and some have multiple centers.<sup>23</sup> The investigation begins when the SAR arrives at the fusion center. While ownership of and responsibility for the criminal investigation remains with the jurisdictionally appropriate or responding law enforcement agency, the LECC, and San Diego Police Department Sergeant Sieter in particular, are available for support throughout the investigation.

Per the protocol, after the law enforcement agency investigates the incident at the school, it must conduct a home check. Officers are responsible for notifying parents about the situation and providing a transparent explanation of what their child said or did. The officers will then seek consent to search the home. Initially, these searches focused on ensuring that firearms were stored safely; however, the practice has since evolved. In addition to a basic weapons check, officers now conduct a more thorough investigation, noting any relevant aspects of the subject’s living arrangement.

## **Step 3. Multiagency School Threat Assessment Team (STAT)**

The School Threat Assessment Team (STAT) reviews cases in which the LECC finds red flags or an elevated risk. The STAT is housed at the District Attorney’s Office and comprises representatives from several agencies in the county:

- District Attorney’s Office
- Law Enforcement Communication Center
- Psychiatric Emergency Response Team
- Behavioral Health Services Department

22. NTAC (National Threat Assessment Center), *Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2021), <https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2021-03/USSS%20Averting%20Targeted%20School%20Violence.2021.03.pdf>; NTAC, *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model: An Operational Guide for Preventing Targeted School Violence* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2018), [https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/18\\_0711\\_USSS\\_NTAC-Enhancing-School-Safety-Guide.pdf](https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/18_0711_USSS_NTAC-Enhancing-School-Safety-Guide.pdf).

23. “Fusion Center Locations and Contact Information,” U.S. Department of Homeland Security, last modified July 1, 2025, <https://www.dhs.gov/fusion-center-locations-and-contact-information>.

- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- County Office of Education
- U.S. Attorney's Office
- Two volunteer Clinical Forensic Psychologists

STAT meets monthly to assess any threats of targeted school violence; however, many representatives are in touch daily or as needed, depending on the individual incidents. In cases presenting a high level of risk or concern, the STAT team will invite representatives from the responding law enforcement agency to attend its meeting and review the case. They discuss any gaps in the investigation or communication, appropriate treatment options for the individual at issue, and next steps to assist the individual and their family best while protecting the public.

## Overcoming Challenges

Effective communication and information sharing across agencies are essential for the protocol to function correctly. However, because most school threats involve young people—who enjoy greater privacy rights than adults—restrictions on information sharing can potentially hinder successful collaboration. To help overcome this perceived obstacle, the STAT team created documents summarizing confidentiality and mental health laws that permit the sharing of information that would otherwise be illegal in cases where there is a risk to public safety.<sup>24</sup> Officers and other responders began bringing that document to schools and using it to educate employees or others reluctant to share information about juveniles. This helped remind school officials that they *could legally* assist with efforts to help youth while also mitigating the risk of a shooting at their school.

## Measurable Achievements

It is always difficult to assess a prevention-oriented program, because there is generally no way to prove a negative—to unequivocally demonstrate why an event did not occur. But authorities in San Diego, who are leading subject matter experts in school threat responses, are confident that on several occasions their interventions have prevented violent school attacks and saved lives.

However, there are other ways to measure success than this most important measure, the prevention of tragic shootings. For instance, San Diego officials believe that the protocol has prevented students from being needlessly traumatized by haphazard and, at times, unnecessary threat responses. When a response is made, it is done in a measured and consistent manner, following a protocol. And whenever possible, authorities try to keep school-threat situations quiet so that students feel safe at school.

The protocol also prioritizes shifting the focus away from the potential assailant. When a school threat emerges, much of the attention understandably lands on the person making the threat, which can overshadow the voices of the victims. Many people do not realize how traumatizing the threat alone can be for students, regardless of whether a shooting ever takes place. The protocol emphasizes elevating the victims' voices, which also represents a success.

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24. San Diego County District Attorney's Office, "Attachment 7: Confidentiality, Safety, & Mental Health Laws," *San Diego County School Threat Protocol* (see note 21).

## Benefits to Law Enforcement

Fundamentally, a school threat protocol and law enforcement serve the same purpose: protecting the public. San Diego has structured its protocol to support law enforcement at every step of the school threat response. As soon as a threat emerges, law enforcement can find guidance in the document to effectively assess it. Agencies that adapt their policies from San Diego's will also benefit from that guidance.

The thought of implementing an extensive school threat protocol may seem daunting, especially for an agency or entity that is already stretched thin. In San Diego, law enforcement officers, like others across the country, often have too much to do with too few resources. In addition to all their other responsibilities, asking them to dedicate resources to investigating and reporting situations—especially without any chargeable crime—may present challenges. Despite this difficulty, law enforcement buy-in for this program was achieved, in part, through a shift in perspective.



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“I understand that there isn’t a crime yet. I know we may not have a criminal threat that we can charge. But what we’re trying to prevent here is a school shooting. So, I need you to go and investigate that threat, even if you think it falls short of a chargeable time. I want you to send me your miscellaneous report, and we’re going to look into that kid as much as possible and even when we can’t charge them, we’re going to try to give them services to redirect them. So, we’re no longer just walking away saying we don’t have a crime, because that flies in the face of best practices.”

— **Andrija Lopez, San Diego County Deputy District Attorney**

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Further, as noted earlier, the protocol is based on published best practice models issued by the U.S. Secret Service’s National Threat Assessment Center. Jurisdictions that have not implemented a school threat protocol should consider that they may one day be asked by a constituent why they have not done so, especially given that San Diego has conducted the necessary research and made its protocol widely available for other jurisdictions to download and adapt.

## Takeaways and Implementing in Other Jurisdictions

Any jurisdiction seeking to implement a school threat protocol will benefit from many available resources. The San Diego County School Threat Protocol is publicly accessible, and officials encourage its adaptation and use by other jurisdictions. In addition, the Safe Schools Initiative<sup>25</sup> and the National Threat Assessment Center,<sup>26</sup> on whose work the protocol is based, have also published reports and best practices addressing school threats. These resources provide a solid foundation that counties can use to adapt a policy to fit their community's specific needs, resources, and requirements. There's no need to start from scratch.

Several key considerations should remain at the forefront when creating, adapting, or implementing a school threat protocol such as San Diego's. All efforts should be victim-centered, which means the primary focus should prioritize not only preventing attacks but also minimizing the trauma that uninvolved students may experience as a result of threats. Officials involved in these efforts must understand the importance of redirecting juveniles who issue threats or otherwise cause concern.

The goal should not only be to prevent a specific attack that a juvenile has threatened at any given time; there must also be a long-term focus on guiding that person toward a safer and more positive path. According to San Diego authorities, if you are not redirecting the person making a threat, you may only be postponing an attack. Finally, the mindset regarding school threat response and prevention efforts should be to take every threat seriously until you can reasonably articulate why it is not necessary to do so.

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25. Robert A. Fein et al., *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates* (Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, 2002), [https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/ssi\\_guide.pdf](https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/ssi_guide.pdf); Bryan Vossekuil et al., *The Final Report and Findings of The Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States* (Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, 2002), [https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/ssi\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/ssi_final_report.pdf); William S. Pollack et al., *Prior Knowledge of Potential School-Based Violence: Information Students Learn may Prevent a Targeted Attack* (Washington, DC: U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education, 2008), [https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/bystander\\_study.pdf](https://www.secretservice.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/bystander_study.pdf).
26. NTAC, *Averting Targeted School Violence* (see note 22); NTAC, *Enhancing School Safety Using a Threat Assessment Model* (see note 22); for the most recent research from the National Threat Assessment Center, see United States Secret Service, "National Threat Assessment Center," accessed August 21, 2025, <https://www.secretservice.gov/protection/ntac>.



# Program 3.

## DeKalb County, GA

### Human Trafficking Coordinator



DeKalb County District Attorney Sherry Boston secured funding to bring a Human Trafficking and Internet Crimes Investigator to the DeKalb County District Attorney's Office. Detective Casey Benton, formerly with the DeKalb County Police Department, filled this role in the District Attorney's Office, bringing years of experience investigating human trafficking and related crimes. The victims, police, and prosecutors in the county all benefit.

### The Issue

Atlanta, Georgia, consistently ranks among the cities with the highest rates of human trafficking<sup>27</sup> in the United States.<sup>28</sup> Within the greater Atlanta metropolitan area, DeKalb County stands out—not for its size, as it is the third-largest by population—but for its disproportionately high crime rate.<sup>29</sup> Like many agencies nationwide, the DeKalb County Police Department experienced a significant reduction in staff during and after 2020. This personnel shortage forced the agency to reallocate its limited resources to focus on the most urgent public safety needs, which hindered many proactive policing efforts, including those aimed at preventing human trafficking.

In addition, the large number of jurisdictions in the Atlanta metro area has contributed to the persistence of human trafficking. DeKalb County alone has more than 30 different law enforcement agencies, and traffickers often operate across jurisdictional boundary lines. This fragmentation complicates investigations because of the involvement of multiple agencies.

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27. The FBI defines human trafficking as “the illegal exploitation of a person,” including sex trafficking, labor trafficking, and domestic servitude. “What We Investigate. Human Trafficking,” Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed May 13, 2025, <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/violent-crime/human-trafficking>.
28. Chris Swecker, *Testimony before the Helsinki Commission*, Federal Bureau of Investigation, June 7, 2005, <https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/news/testimony/exploiting-americans-on-american-soil-domestic-trafficking-exposed>.
29. *2023 Summary Report: Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program* (Decatur: Georgia Bureau of Criminal Investigation, 2023), <https://gbi.georgia.gov/services/crime-statistics>.

These dynamics greatly impaired the DeKalb County District Attorney's (DA) Office and its law enforcement partners' ability to protect trafficking victims and hold traffickers accountable.

## The Solution

DeKalb County District Attorney Sherry Boston recognized the need for a county-wide, proactive approach to combating human trafficking. Her office proposed hiring an investigator focused solely on human trafficking and Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) cases. Housing this investigator in the DA's Office would not only lessen the burden on their resource-strained law enforcement partners but also leverage the office's ability to observe human trafficking trends across the entire county. Chief Assistant Edward Chase described this advantage during PERF's meeting:

"Our county-wide jurisdiction puts us in a unique position to observe trends throughout the county. So, while there might be issues in the northern parts of the county, other parts of the county and other police departments don't necessarily know about them. We have the ability to have that birds-eye view. We're able to assist with the communication and coordination with those partner agencies."

In January 2024, Investigator Casey Benton, a former detective with the DeKalb County Police Department, began serving as a full-time Human Trafficking/ICAC Investigator for the District Attorney's Office. Benton's responsibilities include the following:

- Supporting law enforcement investigations to combat human trafficking
- Developing leads and assisting law enforcement agencies as requested
- Identifying county-wide trends and connections to other criminal activities
- Proactively searching for Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) missing from DeKalb County
- Providing training for law enforcement and partner organizations
- Mediating jurisdictional issues
- Assisting in both the investigation and charging stages of ICAC cases
- Serving on local, state, and federal task forces



Chief ADA Edward Chase

## Funding

To fund this position, District Attorney Boston applied for an Innovative Prosecution Solutions grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance<sup>30</sup> and received enough funding to support the position for two years. The temporary funding enables the DA's Office to demonstrate the effectiveness of the position to DeKalb County, with the long-term goal of securing permanent county funding.

Investigator Benton has also used grant funding for various licenses and technologies frequently used in human trafficking investigations, such as phone extraction software and digital forensic software, which many individual agencies cannot afford. In the past, agencies that lacked access to these technologies had to rely on the Georgia Bureau of Investigation for tasks such as cell phone extractions, often waiting weeks or even months for results. Now, Benton can help them and return results almost immediately.

## Lessons Learned

One of the challenges in creating this position was managing the transition of a role that had historically been part of a law enforcement agency to the DA's Office. Some law enforcement stakeholders were concerned that an investigator would be less effective when operating out of a DA's Office.

To address these concerns, Inv. Benton conducted extensive outreach with law enforcement to discuss how this position would operate and how it would enhance their efforts. He emphasized that the goal was to assist, not to take over, their investigations. In addition, Benton highlighted the advantage of situating this position in the DA's Office. The DA's Office not only is more fully staffed than any law enforcement agency but also has county-wide jurisdiction, enabling it to monitor human trafficking trends that smaller departments might never have the opportunity to spot. This outreach, along with support and buy-in from law enforcement leaders, helped mitigate most of the initial resistance.

## Measurable Achievements

Within 16 months, Inv. Benton and his law enforcement partners have successfully recovered 11 juvenile trafficking victims, recovered two international adult human trafficking victims, generated two ICAC leads that resulted in arrests, and trained more than 200 law enforcement officers on how to identify indicators of human trafficking.

Yet one of the most significant benefits of this initiative is the strengthened partnerships between entities throughout DeKalb County, the Atlanta metropolitan area, and the state of Georgia. Local law enforcement agencies are contacting the DA's Office more frequently and at earlier stages of their trafficking investigations than they did before the implementation of this program. Inv. Benton's early involvement and his expertise in a niche area that may not be familiar to some in law enforcement who are not immersed in this area of work reduce the resource strain on law enforcement and enable faster evidence gathering than is possible when people in different agencies are working separately, which reduces the knowledge loss that previously took place.

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30. "Smart Prosecution: Innovative Prosecution Solutions Program," Bureau of Justice Assistance, last modified March 14, 2023, <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/smart-prosecution-innovative-prosecution-solutions-program/overview>.

Inv. Benton has also assisted in several cases beyond the DeKalb County line, resulting in indictments in other counties. He described one of these cases during PERF's April 10 meeting:<sup>31</sup>

"We had a human trafficking case come in from Atlanta PD. We recovered the victim in Fulton County but learned she was being harbored in DeKalb County. We were ultimately able to identify four suspects who have all been arrested and are facing charges in DeKalb County and Fulton County. And of course, we were able to connect the victim with services."

The position has also strengthened DeKalb County's relationships with state-level agencies like the Georgia Bureau of Criminal Investigation and the Human Trafficking Unit at the Georgia Attorney General's Office. Both agencies now reach out to Inv. Benton about high-priority tips or cases in DeKalb County, which has streamlined a process previously marred by understaffing and delayed responses.



Inv. Casey Benton

## Benefits to Law Enforcement

This program was created to support law enforcement and has excelled in its goal. Locating a human trafficking investigator in the DA's Office provided entities across DeKalb County with valuable resources that strengthen the county's overall response to human trafficking. Inv. Benton provides expert assistance to police as requested; he also develops leads and builds cases, which he then turns over to the appropriate agency for arrests. In addition, Benton has forged partnerships with non-law enforcement agencies, such as the Georgia Center for Child Advocacy, which often reaches out with concerns about potential trafficking cases. This collaboration helps address some proactive policing gaps exacerbated by the staffing crisis.

## Takeaways and Implementing in Other Jurisdictions

Given decreased staffing levels and increasing demands on law enforcement throughout the country, jurisdictions must find innovative ways to use their limited resources as effectively as possible. DeKalb County has done that with the county-wide human trafficking investigator. Beyond mitigating the impact of staffing challenges, this innovation expanded and greatly enhanced proactive efforts by improving cross-jurisdictional collaboration and creating a role for a county-wide expert. In creating the position, the DeKalb County DA's Office considered the needs of its community and its enforcement partners, successfully addressing a critical public safety issue despite a police staffing crisis. Jurisdictions looking to do the same should look to DeKalb County as a model.

31. Hope Dean and Amanda Alvarado, "Four Men Arrested after Teen Says She was Trafficked for Months," WIFR, last modified May 5, 2024, <https://www.wifr.com/2024/05/05/four-men-arrested-after-teen-says-she-was-trafficked-months/>.

Police agencies should start by discussing with their DA the feasibility of creating this type of position in their prosecutor's office and exploring any available grant funding to support it. Inv. Benton's role saves many outside agencies considerable time and money; he uses technology many agencies cannot afford on their own and quickly produces data they would otherwise wait weeks or months to receive. This information is valuable for grant applications and can serve as a compelling argument to convince municipal legislatures why a DA-located human trafficking investigator would be valuable in a jurisdiction. And if a jurisdiction does secure a position, it's important to track data and publicize successful dispositions (such as figure 4) to justify the continuation of funding.

Figure 4. DeKalb County District Attorney's Office press release

**Office of the DeKalb County District Attorney**  
*DeKalb Judicial Circuit*  
*Sherry Boston, District Attorney*

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**DECATUR MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO TRAFFICKING, ASSAULTING FORMER GIRLFRIEND**  
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**Wednesday, April 3, 2024**

**State v. Mykal Jett**

**Decatur, Ga.** - DeKalb County District Attorney Sherry Boston announces a conviction by guilty plea in the case against a Decatur man accused of trafficking his girlfriend.

On Monday, Mykal Jett, 27, pleaded guilty to two counts of Trafficking of Persons for Sexual Servitude, False Imprisonment and two counts of Aggravated Assault.

According to the investigation, on December 18, 2019, officers with the DeKalb County Police Department responded to a domestic violence call at a home on McGlynn Drive in unincorporated Decatur. When they arrived, they spoke to a 22-year-old woman who identified Defendant Jett as her boyfriend and pimp.

The victim told investigators that throughout their four-year relationship Defendant Jett forced her to make \$1,000 per night or he would beat her. He collected the money and controlled the woman's access to drugs, to which she was addicted. She also explained that Defendant Jett repeatedly refused to let her leave him.

The woman said that she had tried to leave the house that day in a rideshare vehicle, but Defendant Jett forced her into his car and drove her to a different location. The victim said Defendant Jett made her take off all her clothes and then beat her with a rake until it broke. Defendant Jett continued to abuse the victim over a period of six hours, stuffing socks into her mouth, putting a hot iron to her face, and ordering her to stand outside in below freezing temperatures while she was wearing wet clothing. The victim had videos of the assault on her phone and responding officers observed severe bruises all over the woman's body.

Immediately following the guilty plea, Senior Judge David B. Irwin, who was sitting for the DeKalb County Superior Court, sentenced Defendant Jett to 25 years to serve 14 in confinement and the remaining 11 on probation.

The case, assigned to the Sexual Exploitation and Crimes Against Children Unit, was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Charles Ciba and Senior Assistant District Attorney Elizabeth Tarver, District Attorney Investigator Camella Mungroo-Patterson, and Victim Advocate Peggy Remy. District Attorney Investigator Casey Benton, who previously worked for the DeKalb County Police Department, led the initial investigation.



# Program 4.

## Ohio Attorney General

### Officer-Involved Critical Incident Policies and Practices



This program is an outlier in this report because it is led by a state attorney general rather than a local district attorney. Nonetheless, it serves as an excellent example of a prosecutor-driven initiative worth sharing. Assistant Section Chief Micah Ault from the Ohio Attorney General's Office (OH-AGO)'s Special Prosecutions Unit and Assistant Superintendent Mark Kollar from the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation discuss the policies and practices that the OH-AGO has developed for investigating officer-involved critical incidents. Captain Chris Brewer from the Akron Police Department also shares insights into the benefits of these initiatives.

### **The Issue**

Officer-involved critical incidents (OICI) are among the most challenging situations that police agencies and their communities face. Both law enforcement agencies and the public want assurance that the investigation will be conducted fairly and thoroughly. Community members—and often law enforcement agencies themselves—increasingly prefer that an outside agency investigate to facilitate independence and impartiality.

Achieving consistency, fairness, and transparency—essential elements for gaining the trust and acceptance of the officer, the agency, and the community—can be difficult, regardless of the case's outcome. Challenges include keeping the community and the involved agency informed about the investigation, the process involved, and the procedures for reaching a fair result.

### **The Solution**

The Ohio Attorney General's Office (OH-AGO) has prioritized establishing best practices for the independent investigation of OICIs.<sup>32</sup> In addition to developing best practices, the office has published them in a comprehensive guide, available at no cost to members of the media,

32. "Officer-Involved Critical Incident Response Team," accessed July 22, 2025, <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Law-Enforcement/Bureau-of-Criminal-Investigation/Investigative-Services/Officer-Involved-Critical-Incident-Response-Team>.

law enforcement, and the public nationwide.<sup>33</sup> That publication serves as a definitive resource on conducting fair, unbiased, and thorough OICI investigations.<sup>34</sup> The OH-AGO is also a model for conducting these sensitive and challenging investigations with the transparency that the public demands and deserves. The office emphasizes its commitment to these principles on its website, as shown in figure 5.

Figure 5. Transparent practices from the Ohio Attorney General's Office

## Best Practices for Investigating an Officer-Involved Critical Incident

The Ohio Attorney General's Bureau of Criminal Investigation has set the bar high nationally with its protocol for investigating officer-involved shootings. In fact, longtime BCI Special Agent Supervisor Mark Kollar recently wrote the book on the topic.

*Best Practices for Investigating an Officer-Involved Critical Incident* explains the investigatory process from start to finish, reinforcing the meticulous nature of these types of investigations and underscoring the importance of – and the need for – uniform standards.

Special Agent Supervisor Kollar is Ohio's statewide coordinator for officer-involved critical incident investigations. A law enforcement officer for nearly three decades, he has investigated more than 200 of the incidents.



"It is my hope that these pages will help all of us in law enforcement get better; strengthen trust between citizens and police; and result in more just outcomes, both in reality and in perception."

— Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost, *Best Practices for Investigating an Officer-Involved Critical Incident*

Source: "Best Practices for Investigating an Officer-Involved Critical Incident," Ohio Attorney General, accessed November 25, 2025, <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/bestpractices>.

33. Mark Kollar, *Best Practices for Investigating an Officer-Involved Critical Incident* (Columbus: Attorney General of the State of Ohio, 2021), <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/BestPractices>.

34. Kollar, *Best Practices* (see note 33).

## Protocols and Practices

In most states, there are no obligations for a separate entity, such as an attorney general or another law enforcement agency, to conduct investigations into OICIs. In California<sup>35</sup> and New York,<sup>36</sup> OICIs must be investigated by the state attorney general. In Ohio, the OH-AGO *may* conduct OICI investigations for local law enforcement agencies, but its involvement is not mandatory; individual agencies must specifically request these investigations.

Having an outside agency investigate OICIs provides a valuable level of impartiality; however, impartiality is not effective unless paired with genuine expertise. The OH-AGO takes the responsibility of conducting these independent investigations seriously and has developed top-tier policies and practices to ensure quality. This approach is significant; as PERF noted in 2025 in *Managing Officer-Involved Critical Incidents*, “[Community] trust is fragile and can be eroded instantly; mishandling a critical incident is one way to erode that trust.”<sup>37</sup> It is vital to have modern investigative policies and procedures for OICIs and to adhere to them consistently.

### Achieving Results That the Community and Officers Can Accept



“People need to know that these incidents are not going to be swept under the rug.”

Rev. Dr. Jimmie Hicks, Jr.  
Start Right Church,  
Cleveland Heights, Ohio

Source: Ohio Attorney General,  
“BCI insights: Investigating Law Enforcement Lethal Use of Force,” YouTube, September 14, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0qhSneeW0k>.

35. “AB 1506: Officer-Involved Shooting Investigations and Reviews,” State of California Department of Justice, accessed July 22, 2025, <https://oag.ca.gov/ois-incidents>.
36. “Office of Special Investigation,” Office of the New York State Attorney General, accessed July 22, 2025, <https://ag.ny.gov/office-special-investigation>.
37. PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *Managing Officer-Involved Critical Incidents: Guidelines to Achieve Consistency, Transparency, and Fairness, Critical Issues in Policing* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2025), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/ManagingOICIs.pdf>.

The policies, procedures, and model templates the OH-AGO uses to conduct its work are outlined in a video<sup>38</sup> (see sidebar “Achieving Results that the Community and Officers can Accept”) that any investigating agency can use as a model and meticulously detailed in a book, *Best Practices for Investigating an Officer-Involved Critical Incident*<sup>39</sup> (see figure 5 on page 30). Both of these resources are available on the OH-AGO’s website. The video explains the process of investigating OICIs in layperson’s terms, while the book encompasses nearly every policy, practice, model, and checklist related to OICI investigations:

- Recommended minimum training requirements before conducting OICI investigations
- Keys to effective leadership at OICI scenes
- Protocols for notifying next of kin
- Sample public safety questions
- Overviews, guidelines, and checklists for OICI investigators, supervisors, and crime scene technicians
- Model conflict assessment between the investigating agency and the investigated officer(s)
- Neighborhood canvass forms

Consistency in conducting these investigations, in accordance with the protocols posted on the OH-AGO’s website, is crucial; there should be no process-related surprises during an OH-AGO investigation. Importantly, **these resources are available for use by any investigatory agency—not just those in Ohio—to enhance their investigations of OICIs.**

## Transparency

Beyond educating the community about how it conducts OICI investigations, the OH-AGO also models transparency practices when the investigation is over. After every fatal OICI, the OH-AGO posts all documents related to the investigation on its website, with redactions and modifications to comply with the state’s public disclosure laws.<sup>40</sup> Nobody ever needs to request these documents; they are made available for public review in every closed case. Nonfatal cases remain available upon request through the public records process.



Asst. Section Chief Micah Ault

38. Ohio Attorney General, “BCI Insights: Investigating Law Enforcement Lethal Use of Force,” YouTube, September 14, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0qhSneeWOk>.

39. Kollar, *Best Practices* (see note 33).

40. “Investigative Documents Related to Fatal Officer-Involved Shooting Cases,” Ohio Attorney General, accessed July 22, 2025, <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/SpecialPages/Investigative-Documents>.

“At the conclusion of our investigations, we are also very transparent. We put the results of our investigations up on the Attorney General’s website. You can go view the crime scene photographs. You can watch the body-worn camera videos. You can read the investigative reports. We are extremely transparent.”

***Mark Kollar – Assistant Superintendent,  
Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigations***



This practice is much more user-friendly than lengthy reports replete with legalese, which are often difficult for the public to understand.

## **Measurable Achievements**

Many benefits of implementing these best practices, such as the police and the public’s acceptance of results whether they agree with them or not, are difficult to measure empirically. Trust in a process is challenging to quantify. However, more and more law enforcement agencies have chosen to have the OH-AGO conduct the investigations into their officers; in addition, local prosecutors have increasingly chosen to turn cases over to the AGO for prosecution determinations. Special Prosecutions Assistant Section Chief Micah Ault presented post-2019 charging statistics after OAG investigations, as shown in figure 6.

Figure 6. OICI cases since 2019

Total cases presented to the grand jury	42
No-true-bill (i.e., non-charge) decisions	37
Felony indictments	4
Misdemeanor indictments	1

Source: *Officer-Involved Critical Incidents: Bolstering Public Trust* (Columbus: Ohio Attorney General, 2024), <https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/2024-OICI-Report>.

Notably, the percentage of grand jury presentations that result in charges is approximately 12 percent. This is significantly higher than the national rate, estimated at roughly 3 percent.<sup>41</sup>

41. “Mapping Police Violence,” accessed July 22, 2025, <https://policeviolencereport.org/>.

## The Benefits to Law Enforcement of Implementing these Practices

Having an uninvolved agency investigate OICIs brings a level of credibility to the findings that will always be missing whenever a law enforcement agency investigates one of its own employees. Akron Police Department Captain Chris Brewer commented on this reality:

"We had always done our investigations internally, and we have many great detectives. But we came to see that whether we could do it well or not wasn't the point. We need everything to be as transparent and neutral as possible. And having a third party conduct the investigation helps with that immeasurably."

In addition to the benefits for affected law enforcement agencies in Ohio, whose investigations are conducted by the OH-AGO, **every law enforcement agency and prosecutor's office in the nation can benefit** from the policies and processes curated by that office, which are publicly available and models for all to learn from.



Capt. Chris Brewer

# Program 5. Yolo County, CA

## FastPass to Prosecution for Retail Theft



Yolo County DA Jeff Reisig and West Sacramento Police Chief Robert Strange present an innovative program that allows retail asset professionals to report retail theft directly to the Yolo County DA's Office, thereby reducing the burden on their law enforcement partners.

### The Issue

Yolo County, adjacent to Sacramento County in California, experienced a significant increase in retail theft during the early 2020s, with DA Reisig describing the situation as "off the charts."<sup>42</sup> Several factors contributed to this problem, including what many prosecutors and police considered weak state laws and a lack of accountability.<sup>43</sup> These issues led to increased repeat offenders and organized retail theft rings, even as many retailers told their workers to avoid interfering with retail theft to protect themselves from violence. At the same time, police agencies were understaffed, and officers were overworked; they needed to triage calls for service, and retail theft often fell to the bottom of the priority list. As a result of soaring retail theft, many once-vibrant retail areas experienced a decline, with many stores folding or struggling to survive.

For the retailers that remained open, the police staffing deficit meant that police often could not respond promptly to retail theft incidents, and sometimes these incidents were deprioritized altogether. Consequently, retailers began to forgo reporting thefts to law enforcement because of slow or nonexistent responses to previous reports.

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42. In addition to the April 10, 2025, meeting at PERF, information about this program has been taken from Prosecutors' Center for Excellence, "Organized Retail Theft: Challenges and Solutions—Fast Pass Program," YouTube, May 6, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAkujfxljY>.
43. In November 2024, California voters passed Proposition 36, which, among other things, enhanced penalties for repeat theft offenses. Official Voter Information Guide, "Proposition 36," California Secretary of State, last modified November 5, 2024, <https://voterguide.sos.ca.gov/propositions/36/>.

DA Reisig recognized that a system that allowed retail theft perpetrators to avoid prosecution because law enforcement was overwhelmed and unable to address their crimes required reform. He collaborated with law enforcement and major retailers in his jurisdiction to identify and provide a solution.

## The Solution

Borrowing the term “FastPass” from amusement parks that allow people with passes to proceed to the head of the line, DA Reisig explained that **the FastPass program he designed with the retail stakeholders and law enforcement allows certain retail asset protection professionals to investigate and submit retail theft reports directly to the DA's Office through a secure portal**; a copy of the report is simultaneously sent to the police department with jurisdiction over the matter. From there, a member of the DA's office reviews the report within a matter of days. Many cases are warrant-ready, in that every element of the crime has been established; however, if additional police work is required, the DA's Office contacts the law enforcement agency for assistance or uses its own internal investigators. This process is depicted in figure 7.

Figure 7. FastPass model



Even in instances requiring coordination with the law enforcement agency and the retailer, the burden on law enforcement is significantly reduced compared to the conventional method of reporting theft.

During the PERF meeting, many in attendance raised questions about identification issues, but according to DA Reisig and Chief Strange, identification is often not a problem—particularly in larger chain stores. Those retailers have become adept at identifying individuals based on transactions made in any of their stores, not just the one they happen to be stealing from that day. If a customer has previously used any form of ID or a credit card, the store will have a record of it and can build identification through those means. In other cases, loss prevention personnel can often identify repeat offenders because they have witnessed them stealing multiple times. However, even if the element of identification isn't established in the initial report, DA Reisig and Chief Strange have found that loss prevention staff tend to take detailed notes about vehicles and descriptions of associates, which can significantly assist law enforcement to establish it after the fact.

## Suggested Model—FastPass Operation in Yolo County

DA Reisig first established the threshold criteria for program inclusion: jurisdiction, retailer, and incident inclusion.

### **Jurisdiction**

The FastPass program was initially piloted with the West Sacramento Police Department and has now been implemented throughout Yolo County.

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“I came up with this idea because of the great frustration we all had about what was happening with retail theft in California. We chose West Sacramento PD to test the program because that jurisdiction sits in the Sacramento retail market, which is one of the ten worst [for retail theft] in the nation. And [West Sacramento PD] Chief Strange is innovative and leans in on partnerships.”

### **Yolo County DA Jeff Reisig**

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Having determined that West Sacramento would be the test jurisdiction, Chief Strange and DA Reisig decided to start small with a few retailers, assess the results, and then scale up.

#### ***Retailers***

Retailers large enough to have on-site asset protection are the only ones for whom this program will work effectively. In addition, as DA Reisig notes, larger retailers often have the advantage of employing well-trained asset protection personnel who have frequently retired from law enforcement, bringing valuable knowledge and experience to their roles. Larger retailers also have the technology, such as video and portal capabilities, to help supplement and upload reports.

This process involves training. Chief Strange noted that some local police detectives provided retailers quick, intensive training with the county’s loss prevention professionals to ensure consistency in the reports they would be submitting to the DA’s office.

Although the program started small, the list of retailers using it has grown and now includes the following:

- Bel Air
- Best Buy
- CVS
- Food 4 Less
- The Home Depot
- Home Goods
- Lowe’s
- Marshalls
- Nugget Markets
- Raley’s
- RiteAid
- Safeway
- Target
- TJ Maxx
- Ulta Beauty
- Walmart

## ***Qualifying incidents***

DA Reisig stressed that determining which types of incidents qualify for inclusion should be a partnership discussion that will change from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and that he, the retailers, and law enforcement had all contributed input. In Yolo County, they settled on the following criteria to trigger FastPass:

- Theft over \$500
- Recidivism
- Conspiracy
- Organized retail theft
- Cases involving violence or threats against staff
- Felony-level theft

Significantly, even if an incident meets the threshold for FastPass, it can still be reported to law enforcement through traditional means (i.e., a call to 911 requesting police).

## **Lessons Learned**

Yolo County is fortunate to have law enforcement that is open to new ideas. The FastPass program not only saves police time but also provides valuable information about shared theft suspects across different retailers and jurisdictions. It offers leads on related vehicles and fencing operations, along with other actionable insights. This information empowers organized retail crime investigative teams to make a significant impact.

The key to Yolo County's success has been its openness to experimenting with changes and the strong support from numerous retailers throughout the county. Effective partnerships among law enforcement leaders are a critical factor in the program's success and have facilitated connections with retailers. For any jurisdiction considering similar innovations, these elements are essential.

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“Walmart and Target have been the two biggest supporters of this program. They appreciate the program and welcome prosecutors to give it a shot, because they've seen the results on their end.”

***Yolo County DA Jeff Reisig***

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## Measurable Achievements

Yolo County, with a population of 230,000, measured the impact of FastPass for 2024, its first year of implementation, and the results were impressive.

- Prosecutors filed charges in 111 cases.
- Of the cases filed, 75 percent were felonies.
- The cases covered 138 defendants.
- The total value of stolen merchandise was \$233,122.18.
- Average theft amount per defendant per incident was \$1,701.62.
- More than 80 percent of the defendants targeted through FastPass had prior felony convictions.

Noting that 80 percent of FastPass defendants had prior felonies, DA Reisig said, "This program hit the group that tends to be the problem."

## Benefits to Law Enforcement

The benefits to police of the FastPass program are manifold. It enables them to focus on serious crimes while ensuring that significant retail theft continues to receive the attention it deserves. Police continue to work with the DA's Office and retailers for follow-up, but the follow-up required is less extensive than many might think.



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"The relationships are continuing to really pay off, and the discovery, really, of just how robust some of the major retail systems are where they track theft. They track the folks committing the theft. They're able to take sort of their network, both regionally and across the nation, even at times, they can track some of these thieves better than we can."

***West Sacramento Police Chief Robert Strange***

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## Funding

DA Reisig used existing resources in his office to staff the program during its initial launch. Since then, his office has secured grant funding from California retail theft initiatives to expand the program.

## Takeaways and Implementing in Other Jurisdictions

Sheriffs and police chiefs facing challenges related to retail theft should consider collaborating with their district attorneys to launch a similar initiative in their own counties. As demonstrated in Yolo County, success depends on thoughtfully defining key criteria—such as jurisdictional boundaries, participating retailers, and theft thresholds—and starting with a manageable scope before expanding.

Local law enforcement may need to provide basic training for loss-prevention personnel to ensure smooth coordination, effective communication, and consistency in report writing. While some cases may require follow-up, the goal of FastPass is to *minimize* police involvement, conserving valuable time and resources for more pressing public safety needs.

The FastPass program has proven highly effective in Yolo County, with no notable drawbacks. Major retailers have responded positively and are enthusiastic about supporting law enforcement and prosecutors in replicating the model in other communities.

# Program 6. Ramsey County, MN Youth Offender Auto-Related Crime Reduction



John Choi, the elected county attorney of Ramsey County, Minnesota, and Commander Richard Alteri of the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office explain how collaborative efforts initiated by the prosecutor's office and supported by law enforcement throughout the county, including the Saint Paul Police Department, successfully reduced juvenile auto theft rates in Ramsey County and its largest city (Saint Paul) below any other large metropolitan area in the country.

## The Issue

In 2019, Ramsey County began to experience unprecedented rates of carjacking and motor vehicle theft. For instance, in Saint Paul, Ramsey County's most populated city, there were 55 reported carjackings in 2019, 73 in 2020, and 101 in 2021.<sup>44</sup> In prior years, carjackings had been so infrequent that police didn't track them separately from robbery or nonviolent theft.<sup>45</sup> County Attorney John Choi described the rising auto-related crime as one of the most significant challenges the county has ever faced, causing concern and fear among residents.

Juvenile offenders—some, according to Choi, as young as 10 or 11 years old—were committing many of these crimes.<sup>46</sup> Collaborating with and using intelligence from the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, officials were able to identify about 65 juveniles who were responsible for the majority of the county's carjackings.

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44. Upward Mobility Initiative, "Ramsey County, Minnesota," Urban Institute, accessed August 4, 2025, <https://upward-mobility.urban.org/counties/ramsey-county-minnesota>; Mara H. Gottfried, "Can Young Auto Thieves Get Help before Becoming Carjackers? Ramsey County Tries New Approach," Pioneer Press, February 6, 2022, <https://www.twincities.com/2022/02/05/carjackings-st-paul-ramsey-county-solutions/>.
45. Gottfried, "Can Young Auto Thieves Get Help" (see note 44).
46. Crime Data Explorer, "Carjacking," Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, accessed August 21, 2025, <https://cde.state.mn.us/Carjacking/Carjacking>.

Complicating the issue, Ramsey County suspended operations at a residential treatment facility for adolescent boys, including those who were accused or convicted of felony-level offenses, in 2019;<sup>47</sup> the COVID-19 pandemic subsequently delayed plans to develop alternative options.<sup>48</sup> Because many privately run facilities were reluctant to house juvenile offenders involved in violent crime, judges were left with limited options other than releasing youthful offenders back to their families, with little monitoring or support, and this was taking a toll on public safety.

## The Solution

County Attorney Choi, recognizing that pandemic-related crime would not simply resolve on its own, organized the Violence Reduction Leadership Group (VRLG), which brought together law enforcement leaders (including the sheriff and chief of the Saint Paul Police Department), various elected officials, and representatives from other youth-related agencies in the county to address the issue collaboratively. The group began meeting regularly to understand the factors driving the surge in youth-involved carjacking and auto theft, and to strategize a coordinated response.<sup>49</sup>



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“We stopped blaming each other, had a lot of important conversations, listened better, and built relationships. It worked.”

***Ramsey County  
Attorney John Choi***

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The VRLG decided that Ramsey County would seek funding and adopt a focused deterrence model to identify and apprehend repeat offenders of auto theft and carjacking. This approach included offering comprehensive services to young offenders and their families. Furthermore, the County Attorney agreed to take decisive action to prosecute individuals who were resistant to receiving assistance and hold them accountable for their actions by assigning a dedicated prosecutor to work closely with police investigators. The model—**Ramsey County Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project**—represented a collaborative effort between the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Office (RCSO), other law enforcement agencies in the county including the Saint Paul Police Department, the Ramsey County Attorney’s Office (RCAO), the African American Leadership Council, and the Minnesota Department of Commerce.

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47. Jennifer Austin, “Boys Totem Town to Close,” KARE11, last modified May 22, 2019, <https://www.kare11.com/article/news/local/boys-totem-town-to-close/89-29c60e77-d1dd-4f88-8275-210f607fa4d3>.

48. “Boys Totem Town Site Redevelopment,” Ramsey County, accessed August 21, 2025, <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/projects-initiatives/economic-development-initiatives/boys-totem-town-site-redevelopment>.

49. “Priorities,” John Choi, Ramsey County Attorney, accessed August 21, 2025, <https://johnchoi.org/priorities/>.

## ***The Ramsey County Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project***

Those deeply involved in the initiative believe its success stems from the collaboration of various entities addressing different aspects of the same issue: youth carjacking and auto theft.

### ***Ramsey County Sheriff's Office Carjacking and Auto Theft Unit***

The RCSO's Carjacking and Auto Theft (CAT) Unit plays a crucial role in identifying and apprehending the youth involved in these crimes, which is critical to mitigating violence and initiating support. CAT is co-housed with the RCSO's intelligence unit, which helps members to identify habitual offenders quickly. The CAT Unit assesses incidents to determine the safest means of apprehending suspects, employing various tactics and technology including the following:

- Unmarked squad cars
- Air support from helicopter pilots and drone operators
- Global positioning system (GPS) technology from onboard systems, devices left in vehicles, and manually deployed tracking devices
- Stolen vehicle alerts from automated license plate recognition technology
- Mobile and stationary vehicle intervention techniques

CAT members quickly contact families, guardians, social workers, probation officers, and members of the Youth Auto Theft Intervention Team after a young offender is apprehended for an auto-related incident. The VRLG supported CAT's strong emphasis on catching suspects and improving clearance rates for carjacking and auto theft. The effects were twofold: The number of cases charged by the prosecutor increased, and more individuals were identified for support and services.

### ***Youth Auto Theft Intervention Team***

Central to the success of the initiative is the Youth Auto Theft Intervention Team, which provides services to youth involved in carjacking and auto theft crimes. The team consists of a supervisor, a family therapist, and several navigators, who are community members assigned to mentor juvenile offenders and assist them and their families throughout their involvement in the program.

The team offers a variety of support services for young offenders and their families. These services include weekly meetings with team members, including the family therapist, as well as mentorship sessions between juvenile offenders and navigators. In addition, the team provides referrals to social services, community organizations, and other positive activities. Team members also meet weekly with the RCSO to discuss new case referrals and provide updates on existing cases.

## Ramsey County Attorney's Office's Auto Theft Unit

The RCAO maintains dedicated staff specializing in auto theft cases, which helps ensure that offenders are held accountable and prosecuted when appropriate. This team consists of a dedicated prosecutor, investigators, and one paralegal who collect and analyze all auto theft data in Ramsey County to help identify repeat offenders, common methods of committing auto theft, and other patterns.<sup>50</sup>

The DA's team regularly communicates with law enforcement about ways to improve investigations, ensure they meet charging deadlines, and ultimately increase their chances of successful prosecutions.



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“Saint Paul’s auto theft problem has seen consecutive years of success, driven by several factors. Enforcement has been a key component, to be sure, but **prevention has been the most under-recognized aspect of our strategy**. People are happy when we hold someone accountable and recover their vehicle. But they are even happier if their car is never taken in the first place.

“Through education efforts focused on, for example, specific vehicle models that are easier to steal and the dangers of leaving the ignition on during cold weather, we have worked with community members to prevent car thefts or reduce the likelihood that their vehicles will be stolen.

“In 2022, Saint Paul recorded 3,236 auto thefts. By 2023, that number dropped to 2,132—and in 2024, it fell even further to 1,482. This year, we are on track for another 13 percent reduction. These results don’t happen through enforcement alone—they happen when an entire community works together to solve a problem. Every one of those 2,000 fewer thefts represents a crime that never occurred, a victim who was never created. To us, that is the true gold standard of success.”

***Saint Paul Police Chief Axel Henry***

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50. “Auto Theft Unit,” Ramsey County Attorney’s Office, accessed August 21, 2025, <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/leadership/county-attorneys-office/divisions-units/criminal-division/auto-theft-unit>.

## Funding

The Ramsey County Youth Auto Theft Prevention Project is funded by a grant from the Minnesota Department of Commerce's Automobile Theft Prevention Program.<sup>51</sup> This program provides financial support to local law enforcement, county prosecutors, and community organizations to develop collaborative projects aimed at preventing auto theft.

This funding has enabled the RCAO, RCSO, and the African American Leadership Council to hire dedicated staff to focus on auto theft cases. The grant also covers overtime costs associated with auto theft cases and allows for the purchase of automatic license plate readers and GPS devices for tracking stolen vehicles.<sup>52</sup>

## Lessons Learned

The Ramsey County Attorney's Office and the county's 12 law enforcement agencies currently maintain a strong partnership, but this was not always the case. During the COVID-19 pandemic and the surge in crime rates, some relationships became strained. The VRLG successfully achieved lasting change by fostering collaboration among all parties and sharing the common goal of reducing violence. This type of teamwork required setting aside personal egos and was essential for Ramsey County's success in reducing incidents of auto theft and carjacking.

## Measurable Achievements

Nationwide auto thefts increased by 29 percent between 2022 and 2023.<sup>53</sup> However, during that same time in Ramsey County, auto thefts decreased by 39 percent.<sup>54</sup> **And from 2022 to 2024, motor vehicle thefts in Ramsey County decreased by 55 percent.**<sup>55</sup> As with any crime statistic, attributing this decrease to a single factor is challenging. However, Ramsey County's Youth Auto Theft Prevention Project has been credited with much of this dramatic decline, even as auto thefts nationwide continued to rise.<sup>56</sup>

The project has also had effects that are harder to measure and quantify. As noted by County Attorney Choi,

"We would hear from families that they were exasperated and wanted help. We have been able to provide those families with essential services that ultimately help their young members to make better decisions and better choices."

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51. "Auto Theft Prevention Program (Minnesota)," Grants Office, accessed August 21, 2025, <https://www.publicsafetygrants.info/Grant-Details/gid/61486>.
52. Automobile Theft Prevention Program 2021 (Saint Paul: Minnesota Department of Commerce, 2021), <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/bca/data-and-reports/bca-reports>.
53. Ernesto Lopez and Bobby Boxerman, "Crime Trends in U.S. Cities: Year-End 2023 Update," Council on Criminal Justice, January 2024, <https://counciloncj.org/crime-trends-in-u-s-cities-year-end-2023-update/#offense-dashboards>.
54. Lopez and Boxerman, "Crime Trends" (see note 53).
55. Crime Data Explorer, "Crimes against Property," Minnesota Crime Data Explorer, accessed August 4, 2025, <https://cde.state.mn.us/CrimesAgainstProperty/CrimesAgainstProperty>.
56. Meg Anderson, "How One City Took on Rising Car Thefts — and Brought the Numbers Down," NPR, February 4, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/02/04/1227928003/rising-car-thefts-st-paul-minnesota-fallen-hyundai-kia>.

## Benefits to Law Enforcement

The Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project has successfully reduced auto thefts in Ramsey County, significantly reducing the burdens on local law enforcement.

Redirecting juvenile offenders onto a better path also helps prevent future violent crimes, as those involved in auto theft often escalate to more serious offenses. Data presented by the RCSO at the D.C. meeting indicates that 58 percent of offenders referred to the Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project have also been involved in a violent crime incident, and 23 percent have been involved in a nonfatal shooting incident. Law enforcement officers have recovered guns and switches<sup>57</sup> from juvenile auto thieves, indicating that the auto theft might have escalated without intervention.

This program has also strengthened the relationship between law enforcement and prosecutors in Ramsey County. The Auto Theft Unit at the RCAO works closely with law enforcement to enhance their investigations and build stronger cases. Stronger cases help increase the chances of conviction, which is an integral part of accountability for those who are ineligible for or unable to be redirected through this program.



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“The County Attorney’s Office has been so generous in helping the Sheriff’s Office learn how to build these better cases. The attorneys assigned have been a godsend to us in our auto theft unit and our newly formed gun and non-fatal shooting unit. That relationship is really important.”

***Richard Alteri, Ramsey County Sheriff’s Office Commander***

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## Takeaways and Implementing in Other Jurisdictions

Many jurisdictions still struggle with how to address increases in carjacking and juvenile crime. They should consider adopting a version of the Youth Auto Theft Intervention Project, as it has produced excellent results in Ramsey County.

As a starting point, district attorneys and law enforcement agencies should investigate whether their state has a funding program comparable to the Minnesota Department of Commerce’s Automobile Theft Prevention Program. For instance, some states have auto theft prevention authorities that specifically allocate resources for investigating and prosecuting auto theft crimes.<sup>58</sup>

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57. A switch is a device installed on a semi-automatic handgun that allows it to fire as an automatic weapon.

58. “What Is an ATPA,” International Association of Auto Theft Investigators, accessed July 30, 2025, <https://iaati.org/atpa>.

RCSO Commander Richard Alteri highlights the importance of collaboration with community organizations, such as the African American Leadership Council, that have established relationships and trust with local youth. County Attorney John Choi emphasizes the value of engaging with juveniles involved in criminal activities, even when prosecution is not feasible.

While bringing offenders to justice is crucial, the key to success in Ramsey County has been identifying the individuals committing crimes, connecting with their families, and providing support and assistance. In addition, the intense focus on apprehending suspects and solving auto theft cases, endorsed and supported by community leaders, gave this approach the clarity and momentum needed for police and prosecutors to perform their duties effectively.



# Program 7. Douglas County, GA Goodwill Guardian Victim Compensation Program



Kaci Stovall, child advocate in the Douglas County, Georgia, DA's Office (DCDA), describes how that Office developed an innovative program to assist crime victims financially and keep them engaged in the criminal justice system. Sgt. Christina Clark of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office (DCSO) explains how the program helps law enforcement meet the needs of victims.

## The Issue

In addition to the physical and emotional harms that people struggle to overcome when they have been victims of crime, many also face challenges dealing with direct and indirect financial burdens resulting from those crimes. Even when a court orders restitution, it often goes unpaid, is not disbursed quickly enough to address the victims' immediate expenses, or does not fully compensate victims for their losses. These circumstances place an undue burden on crime victims, further exacerbating and extending their hardships.

## The Solution

The DCDA developed the Goodwill Guardian Program (GGP) to address deficiencies in the criminal justice system regarding the financial expenses of crime victims. The GGP, which uses donations from private businesses to offset victim expenses, alleviates financial burdens on those impacted by crime and makes the criminal justice system more manageable.

## Background

In 2022, researchers analyzed the crime victim restitution system in three locations: Douglas County, Georgia; San Francisco, California; and Arlington, Virginia.<sup>59</sup> They learned that none of the jurisdictions was processing restitution in a manner that adequately compensated crime victims. The research indicated that the median restitution amount ordered in Douglas County

59. James Austin, Mai Fernandez, and Roger Ocker, *Expediting Criminal Restitution Payments to Crime Victims: A Feasibility Study in Three Jurisdictions* (unpublished, 2022).

in 2021 was \$1,056.<sup>60</sup> But nationally, about 40 percent of adults have less than \$500 in their bank accounts, with crime victims disproportionately represented in lower socioeconomic demographics.<sup>61</sup> Given this context, the researchers concluded that the financial burdens associated with crime in Douglas County have a significant impact on victims.<sup>62</sup>

In Georgia's criminal justice system, there are two traditional options for financial restoration: the Crime Victim Compensation Program and court-ordered restitution. Each state has restrictions on its crime victim compensation funding, and in Georgia, neither property nor financial crimes are covered. In addition, according to 2021 data, only 7.4 percent of crime victims in Douglas County received a court-ordered restitution order. Furthermore, the average time between an offender's arrest and the issuance of the order was well over one year (401 days). And far too often, a restitution order serves little purpose; in fact, **90.7 percent of victims in Douglas County did not receive any compensation payments, despite having a restitution order in place.**<sup>63</sup>

The 2022 study proposed an alternate model to address crime victims' financial needs more quickly. **This model involves collaboration between the DAs' Offices and local businesses to provide financial assistance, no-cost services, and essential products to victims.**<sup>64</sup> This support aims to help victims meet their immediate needs while they await any court-ordered restitution or victim compensation. It also offers law enforcement a practical way to help ease some of the overwhelming stress and uncertainty victims face in the aftermath of a crime.

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60. Austin, Fernandez, and Ocker, *Expediting Criminal Restitution Payments* (see note 59).
61. Michael Popke, "More than Half of American Adults Have Less than \$500 in Savings," Benefits PRO, last modified January 29, 2025, <https://www.benefitspro.com/2025/01/29/more-than-half-of-american-adults-have-less-than-500-in-savings/>; BJS (Bureau of Justice Statistics), "Table 82. Personal and Property Crimes, 2008: Total Economic Loss to Victims of Crime, by Type of Crime," *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2008 — Statistical Tables* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2011), <https://bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/cv0882.pdf>; Jason Vargas, "The Impact of Socioeconomic Factors on Crime Rates," *Addiction & Criminology* Volume 6, no. 4 (2023), 161, <https://www.alliedacademies.org/articles/the-impact-of-socioeconomic-factors-on-crime-rates-26135.html>.
62. Austin, Fernandez, and Ocker, *Expediting Criminal Restitution Payments* (see note 59).
63. Austin, Fernandez, and Ocker, *Expediting Criminal Restitution Payments* (see note 59).
64. Austin, Fernandez, and Ocker, *Expediting Criminal Restitution Payments* (see note 59).

## Goodwill Guardian Program

Figure 8. Goodwill Guardian press release excerpt



**Douglas County  
District Attorney**  
TRUTH. JUSTICE. COMMUNITY.



### PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 22, 2023

Contact: Douglas County District  
Attorney's Office  
(770) 920-7292

#### Douglas County District Attorney's Office and Douglas County Chamber Foundation Join Forces to Launch Goodwill Guardian Program

The Douglas County District Attorney's Office is proud to announce a groundbreaking partnership with the Douglas County Chamber Foundation to launch "Goodwill Guardian", a new innovative program. This collaborative effort will raise funds that will be used to replace or repair victims' damaged items resulting from criminal acts. The program was officially unveiled during the Douglas County Chamber of Commerce luncheon on June 21st, 2023. The event served as an opportunity for business leaders and community leaders to learn more about the program's objectives and how they can participate.

Goodwill Guardian is an initiative that allows local businesses and individuals to support victims of crime in Douglas County. It acknowledges the significant impact that criminal acts can have on individuals and seeks to alleviate their financial burden by facilitating compensation through the generosity of our community. Victims may incur damage to their homes, vehicle, or other property as the result of a crime. These funds can make a difference in the victims' lives and may allow them to continue to remain in their home, have transportation to work, and various other ways to stabilize their lives despite the chaos surrounding them after having been the victim of a crime.

Source: "Douglas County District Attorney's Office and Douglas County Chamber Foundation Join Forces to Launch Goodwill Guardian Program," Douglas County District Attorney, press release, June 22, 2023.

In 2023, the Douglas County DA's Office implemented the GGP; the press release is shown in figure 8. The GGP provides gift cards or vouchers for replacement items and donated services to crime victims, helping to alleviate their financial burdens. The donations come from private entities in Douglas County, enabling a more effective response to the diverse needs of local victims. This program can help mitigate the financial impact and thus alleviate some of the psychological harms associated with crime.

# Protocol

The process for matching crime victims in Douglas County with GGP compensation funds is as follows:

Figure 9. Victim referral form



**Goodwill Guardian**  
Victim Referral Form

<b>Below Portion to be completed by Victim Advocate</b>	
Defendant:	Case Number:
Victim:	Victim Advocate:
Description of Need/Loss:	
Specific Request from Goodwill Guardian and Estimated Cost (money, gift card, replacement item, etc. and how much):	
Advocate Comment(s)/Information to Consider at Review:	
<b>Below Portion to be completed by Supervisors</b>	
Review Date:	
Approved: <input type="checkbox"/>	Denied: <input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	
Reason(s) Supporting Decision:	
Reviewed By:	
Lindsey Knight, Director of VWAP	Cristin Olivo, Asst. Director of VWAP

Source: Douglas County District Attorney's Office

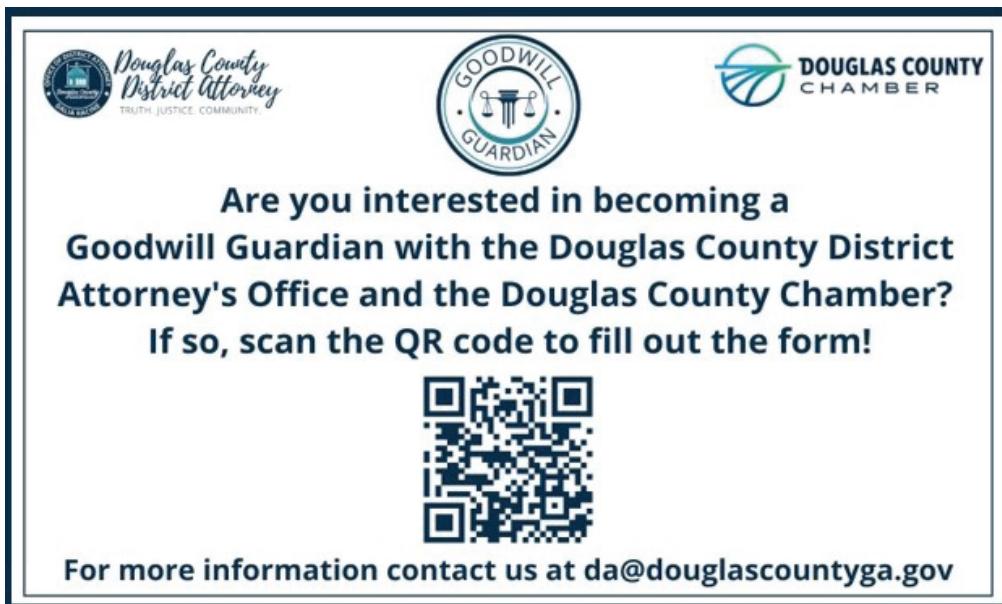
1. A law enforcement officer (or victim advocate from the DA's Office) assesses the needs of a victim. The officer or advocate then completes a brief **victim referral form** (see figure 9), which includes the following:
  - Verification of damages or need (photos, doctor referral, etc.)
  - Exact need and total cost to Goodwill Guardian (verified quote, purchase price of item, etc.)
2. A DA's Office representative (the Director or Assistant Director of the Victim Witness Assistance Program) reviews the referral and determines whether to approve.
3. If approved, the Chamber of Commerce issues a check from the monetary donations account, unless the services are entirely donated or covered by gift cards.

## Funding

Local businesses make financial contributions to the DA's Office account with the Chamber of Commerce. Many businesses also choose to donate gift cards or provide services and products on an as-needed basis, up to a certain amount. Because the program focuses on addressing the immediate and short-term needs of victims, the costs associated with these needs have been relatively low, and DA child advocate Kaci Stovall noted that the DA's Office has been so successful soliciting donations from businesses eager to help those in their community that there is a surplus in the GGP account.

Having the DA's Office attached to the program helps with community commitment, because many in the private sector want to help but are appropriately cautious of scams. The campaign to solicit donations encouraged businesses to view the program as an opportunity for them to give back to the community. Outreach to businesses was conducted through letters, push cards (see figure 10), press releases, and, most effectively, social media.

Figure 10. Douglas County District Attorney's Office's push card



Source: Douglas County District Attorney's Office

As reflected in figure 11, the DA's Office publicly recognized participating businesses.

**Figure 11. Examples of photos posted on the Douglas County District Attorney's Office's social media pages**



Source: "Douglas County District Attorney," Facebook, accessed August 7, 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/DouglasCountyDA/>.

## Lessons Learned

Initially, the DA's Office sought physical items from local businesses, but that approach proved unsuccessful. Although businesses donated items that might *foreseeably* be useful to crime victims—tires, luggage—they were not *immediately* useful and required storage space until they could be provided to someone with that specific need. Therefore, the DA's Office rethought its donation structure and now requests financial contributions (in the form of gift cards or money to purchase them) or donations of services up to a specific value. The donated gift cards or services are then provided to the victims. This strategy has been far more successful.

The DA's Office has come to recognize that it cannot anticipate every situation involving victims' needs, which has led it to adopt a more flexible approach to qualifying standards than it had initially implemented. In most cases, advocates and officers have the necessary information to complete GGP applications, which can be submitted without the victim's knowledge. Those involved in the process have found it helpful to use discretion when deciding whether to inform victims about a GGP application. In some instances, telling victims that an application will be submitted can create expectations that may not be fully met, potentially leading to increased stress if the application is not approved. Conversely, in cases where approval is almost inevitable, informing the victim about the program can provide immediate psychological relief.

## Measurable Achievements

The GGP maintains a surplus, demonstrating the private sector's desire to help crime victims. However, the program is still in its early stages, and the DA's Office, along with law enforcement, continues to fine-tune it. As success stories (like the one described in the sidebar "DA's Office Child Advocate Kaci Stovall Relates a GGP Success Story") emerge, they will continue to support the program's growth.



Child Advocate Kaci Stovall

### DA's Office Child Advocate Kaci Stovall Relates a GGP Success Story

"A victim had several bullet holes in her home from a mass shooting where two children were killed, and there were multiple victims of aggravated assault," Stovall said. "Seeing the bullet holes was retraumatizing for the victim every time she entered her house." (See figure A.) "However, traditional restitution and victim compensation weren't good fits in this case—and she was unable to pay to fix them. Goodwill Guardian was able to have a contractor donate workers' time and fund the repairs to get her house fixed."

Figure A. Bullet holes repaired through the Goodwill Guardian Program

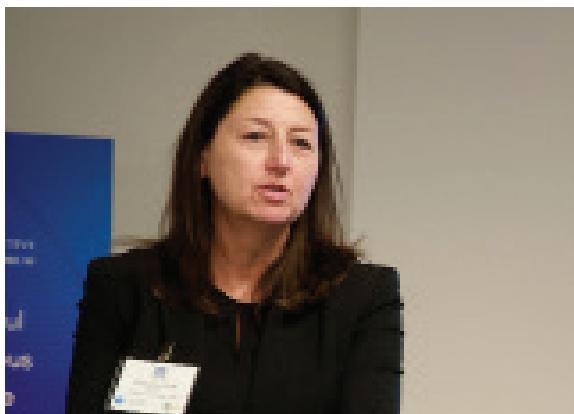


The GGP provides financial assistance to victims, but its impact extends beyond monetary support. The program also has a positive effect on the psychological well-being of victims through the services provided, which is difficult to measure and quantify.

The program's flexibility enables it to address victims' overall needs, including those not directly related to the crime. DA's Office child advocate Stovall shared another story involving a pre-teen victim who received a donated eye exam from a local doctor, along with glasses funded by the program. This assistance had a profound effect on the victim, who had been struggling in school because she couldn't read the board.

## Benefits to Law Enforcement

Sergeant Christina Clark of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office had previously established a supply closet in the Criminal Investigations Division to help children affected by crime. She and her fellow officers contributed their own money to provide goods and supplies. This generous effort is not unique to Sergeant Clark and the Douglas County Sheriff's Office; many officers nationwide have used their personal funds to purchase items such as groceries, baby formula, bottles, and winter hats and gloves to help the community members they serve.<sup>65</sup> The GGP can also offset those needs.



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"I don't know how many times I've had a baby in my office, because their parents are in jail, and I have no diapers, no formula, no clothing. Having resources and supplies available can change the lives of these kids who have been displaced from their homes."

***Sergeant Christina Clark,  
Douglas County Sheriff's Office***

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The GGP enables officers to address the immediate needs of victims at no cost to them or their respective agencies. It also helps connect victims with more extensive financial support and services. Consequently, this program not only offers significant benefits to victims but also fosters increased trust among officers, victims, and the community.

## Takeaways and Implementing in Your Jurisdiction

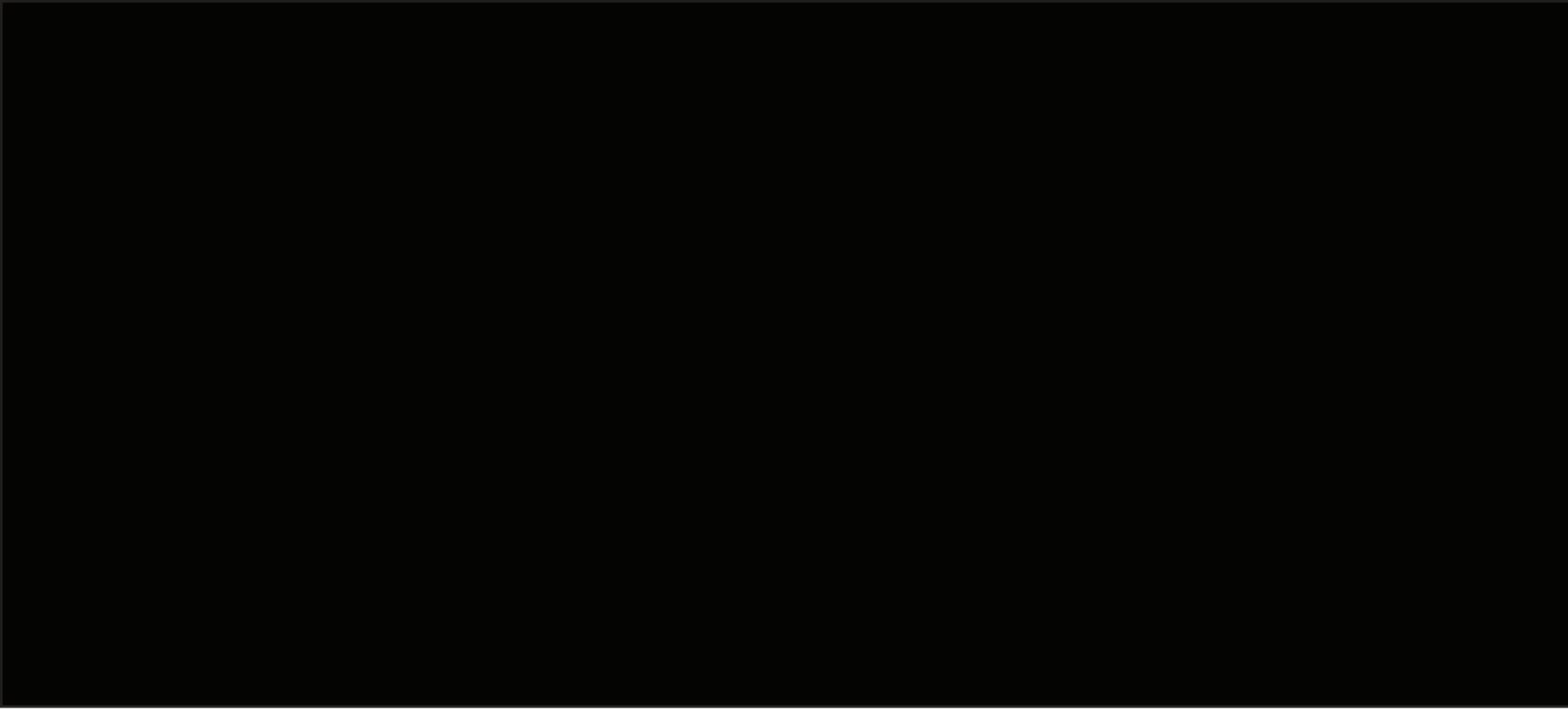
The GGP often enables law enforcement officers and DA's Office advocates to address the needs of the community members they serve quickly and effectively. This promptness can have life-changing effects for victims and enhance their trust in these agencies. The GGP offers local businesses the opportunity to actively support victims and partner with the District Attorney's Office and law enforcement agencies. Many businesses are willing to contribute, as it provides positive publicity and is a tax-deductible donation to a trustworthy source that benefits the community.

As the program is funded through donations, no costs are incurred by the law enforcement agency. Staff time is already accounted for because most of the work is done by victim advocates at the DA's Office, who are already responsible for helping victims access services.

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65. Megan Camponovo, "'They're My Guardian Angels:' Police Officers Save Woman from Falling, Buy Her Groceries," WBAL TV, last modified April 21, 2024, <https://www.wbaltv.com/article/police-officers-save-woman-from-falling-buy-her-groceries/60559184>; Saleen Martin, "Ohio Mom's Desperate Call to 911 at 3 a.m. Leads an Officer to Buy, Deliver Baby Formula," USA Today, July 9, 2024, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/humankind/2024/07/09/officer-buys-formula-for-nursing-mom/74340754007/>; "La Crosse, Wis. Police Officer Praised for Buying Hat, Gloves for Woman in Need," FOX9 KMSP, last modified January 5, 2021, <https://www.fox9.com/news/la-crosse-wis-police-officer-praised-for-buying-hat-gloves-for-woman-in-need>.

Communities wishing to implement a similar program should meet with business leaders through their local chamber of commerce or another business-related organization. After obtaining a commitment, a robust solicitation campaign can begin. Although law enforcement can and should submit applications on behalf of victims with whom they interact in the field, approval should fall to the DA's Office to ensure that only appropriate applications are approved. Finally, all stakeholders should be patient and flexible as they work toward determining their parameters for assistance and protocols for application submissions.



# Program 8. Montgomery County, PA Community Justice Units



Montgomery County (Pennsylvania) Assistant DAs Gwendolyn Kull and Tanner Beck, with Norristown Police Department Officer William Kane, explain how embedding prosecutors in the most violence-plagued boroughs of Montgomery County makes a difference.

## **The Issue**

The boroughs of Norristown and Pottstown in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, have historically experienced higher levels of gun and gang violence than the rest of the county. These boroughs also face challenges similar to those seen in larger cities across the nation, including rival gangs and a small number of individuals responsible for a disproportionate amount of violent crime. Norristown, in addition to violence, struggled with mistrust among residents, community leaders, and criminal justice professionals, including law enforcement and prosecutors; also, the relationship between prosecutors and police needed strengthening.

## **The Solution**

DA Kevin Steele prioritized crime reduction in Pottstown and Norristown upon his election as Montgomery County DA in 2016, and within the first year, he implemented Community Justice Units (CJU) to help achieve that mission. CJUs are based on the philosophy that prosecutor involvement in cases should extend beyond prosecution and into the broader community. He believes that when district attorneys engage with the community, it acts as an additional crime prevention strategy.

## **Montgomery County Law Enforcement Leaders on the Creation of Community Justice Units**

“Hopefully, there will be a deterrent effect. Ultimately, through law enforcement efforts and through partnerships with the community, these ongoing efforts will result in economic growth and vibrancy. That’s our vision of the community prosecution unit.”

— District Attorney Kevin Steele, Montgomery County District Attorney’s Office

“...we made some adjustments to what was going on around here, and we came out with this community prosecution unit, and I can assure you this will be a game-changer for Pottstown. I look forward to the relationships that they forge with our community.”

— Chief F. Richard Drumheller (retired), Pottstown Police Department

Source: Carl Hessler, “Montgomery County DA Unveils Community Prosecution Unit for 1 Town,” *The Times Herald*, September 23, 2021, <https://www.timesherald.com/2016/07/19/montgomery-county-da-unveils-community-prosecution-unit-for-1-town/>.

## **Montgomery County Criminal Justice Units**

Pottstown’s CJU was implemented in 2016, followed by Norristown’s CJU in 2018. Both units have embedded prosecutors working office hours at the respective police departments, where they are involved in cases from the initial investigation through to their conclusion. The prosecutors serve as a valuable and readily available resource for police officers by answering questions, providing additional investigative support, conducting in-house and roll-call training, assisting with search warrants, and providing any other assistance the police may need.

Being in-house and collaborating closely with police allows CJU prosecutors to build stronger cases against the small number of people responsible for most violent crime in the jurisdiction. Furthermore, the CJUs have improved the relationship between the police officers and prosecutors, especially in Norristown. Perhaps most importantly, embedding prosecutors in the police departments has led to enhanced community engagement, benefiting everyone involved.

An example of effective community engagement initiated by the CJUs is the Get Out & Grind (GO&G) program, developed by ADA Gwendolyn Kull as a CJU prosecutor in Norristown.<sup>66</sup> This initiative aims to engage young people and enhance the involvement of prosecutors and police in the community. Then–Norristown Police Department Chief Mark Talbot quickly embraced the program, recognizing it as a valuable opportunity to build relationships with community members and foster trust.

In GO&G classes, prosecutors, police officers, educators, and coaches mentor youth while training them in boxing. Some coaches share their personal experiences with the criminal justice system to educate the kids about the consequences of violence and inspire them to make better choices. The program not only teaches essential skills and discipline but also provides

66. Holly Herman, “Norristown ‘Get Out & Grind’ Workouts Ready To Go,” Patch, last modified June 27, 2022, <https://patch.com/pennsylvania/norristown/norristown-get-out-grind-workouts-ready-go>.

additional educational opportunities. The program has had a positive influence on students' behavior in school and has improved the relationships between prosecutors, police, youth, and their caregivers.



"We had a weeklong summer camp of Get Out & Grind in 2022, and when school started again, the kids asked Officer Kane, 'When are you bringing the boxing coach back?' So we ended up doing this program throughout the school year for the next two years. Originally, parents were not interested in the school environment, the police department, or the prosecutors. But we were there every other week. It started building these foundational relationships with people with a stake in the community. At least one parent group formed a nonprofit to do backpack drives and stuff for the kids."

***Assistant District Attorney Gwendolyn Kull***

## Funding

Implementing the CJUs did not require additional funding sources; the DA's Office transferred funds in the existing budget (previously allocated to units organized by crime type, such as economic crimes or violent crimes) to create the CJUs in alignment with its new crime prevention strategy.

The DA's Office approached the Families Behind the Badge Children's Foundation to fund the GO&G program, which included covering the costs of the coaches. The nonprofit's mission includes "bridging the gap between police and the communities they serve."<sup>67</sup> Community members and a local state senator recognized the benefits of the program and contributed food, as some participating families struggle to get regular meals.

## Lessons Learned

When the Pottstown CJU was established in 2016, the DA's Office already had a close working relationship with officers from the Pottstown Police Department; before the creation of CJUs, they had collaborated—albeit less formally—during the early stages of investigations. So it was easy to build upon that existing relationship once the CJU was in place. Indeed, the Pottstown CJU was so successful that the DA's Office then decided to establish a CJU in Norristown in 2018.

67. "#WhyWeRide," Families Behind the Badge Children's Foundation, accessed August 11, 2025, <https://www.fbbcf.org/>.

The relationship between the officers and prosecutors in Norristown, having a different history of cooperation, was not nearly as strong and required development over time. The Norristown CJU was established to rebuild trust among the community, law enforcement, and prosecutors. The DA's Office began to advocate for the Norristown Police Department in the township, which went a long way toward building the relationship. The CJU team also focused on being present for the police, establishing office hours, maintaining a presence at magisterial district courts, and attending roll calls to understand the community's needs and offer training on issues raised by officers. ADA Kull emphasized that the prosecutors' consistent availability in the police department as a resource for officers has been essential to building and maintaining that connection. Officers understand that failing to use this resource can result in increased workloads later, when prosecutors request additional investigative information.

## Measurable Achievements

Through the CJUs, prosecutors and police are building stronger cases than before against gang members and individuals committing the most violence. It is not possible to attribute decreases or increases in violent crime to one factor; however, in Norristown, violent crime fell significantly after the CJU was established in 2018. Between 2019 and 2025, violent crime, measured from January 1 to June 30 each year, decreased by 35 percent compared to the preceding seven years (2012–2018).<sup>68</sup>



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“For the communities, the CJUs deterring violence is not the only important issue; lowering quality-of-life and nuisance crimes is too. When we go to Chamber of Commerce meetings, especially in Norristown, residents are more concerned about those crimes. So the CJUs have been working to address those, too.”

***ADA Tanner Beck,  
Montgomery County District Attorney’s Office***

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Measured anecdotally, addressing violence and quality-of-life issues has increased community trust. Prosecutors and police are now frequently invited to present at community events, and stakeholders actively seek partnerships with them (as shown in figure 12 on page 63)—a trend that was not previously observed.

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68. “Crime Data,” Norristown Public Safety, accessed July 17, 2025, <https://www.norristown.org/246/Crime-Data>.

Figure 12. Post on “Heels of Justice” event from Montgomery County DA’s Office Facebook page

 Montgomery County District Attorney's Office · Follow May 31 · 

The DA's team, “Heels of Justice,” swapped their sneakers for heels and walked a mile in support of Laurel House and its programs that support the victims of domestic violence. This was the biggest year since the start of “Walk a Mile” with more than 450 participants and \$78,000 raised.

The DA's Office is committed to supporting Laurel House and its mission. #lhwm



Source: Carl Hessler, “Montgomery County DA Unveils Community Prosecution Unit for 1 Town,” *The Times Herald*, September 23, 2021, <https://www.timesherald.com/2016/07/19/montgomery-county-da-unveils-community-prosecution-unit-for-1-town/>.

Figure 13. Norristown Police Department’s Get Out & Grind



Source: Norristown Police Department Community Relations Team’s, “Some shots from @stewartnasd Get Out and Grind event,” Facebook, November 17, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1JNigcNVhJ/>.

In Norristown, officials increased the number of GO&G classes because they led to positive behavioral changes during the school day. Teachers observed fewer fights and other behavioral issues because kids did not want to miss GO&G classes, which are held biweekly during the school year. An average of 20 to 30 kids participate in each lesson, with many returning and bringing friends.

## Benefits To Law Enforcement

CJUs have benefited law enforcement beyond the immediate benefit of having an on-site legal resource. Get Out & Grind, shown in figure 13, is open to all officers and has fostered a closer relationship between community members and the police.



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“Through Get Out & Grind, the kids and their caregivers get to know me outside of the school. As a result, community members’ perceptions of me have profoundly changed. As a school resource officer, I used to be viewed as just a cop with a gun in the middle school, but now they understand that I’m there for the kids. Being there has also helped me establish relationships with non-English speaking youth and their families.”

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***Officer William Kane,  
Norristown Police Department***

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## Takeaways and Implementing in Other Jurisdictions

CJUs are an important resource that DAs’ offices should consider implementing in areas with disproportionately high crime rates; law enforcement officials serving high-violence areas should discuss the feasibility of implementing a CJU with their prosecutor.

Those contemplating implementation should consider how offices can restructure their budget and organizational structure to direct existing resources and staff to CJUs. As was the case when Delaware County, Pennsylvania, began its focused deterrence program (see Program 1. Delaware County, PA—Prosecutor-Directed Focused Deterrence), CJUs may involve analyzing whether the DA’s Office is allocating resources according to the needs of various locations in the broader jurisdiction.

These units can serve as valuable support for police, helping them build cases from the early stages of investigation through to prosecution. However, more importantly, Montgomery County’s experience demonstrates that embedding prosecutors in police departments and having them engage with the community alongside the police can foster trust and serve as an effective crime prevention strategy.

# Program 9. Long Beach, CA GUIDES Mobile App



Long Beach City Prosecutor Doug Haubert, City Prosecutor Chief Technology Officer Byron Bolton, and Long Beach Police Department Deputy Chief Ty Burford describe a mobile app that enables officers to make real-time, informed, service-related decisions when interacting with individuals experiencing homelessness. The app is a tool to support officers and the broader criminal justice system in delivering more effective, compassionate services—and appropriate enforcement when necessary.

## **The Issue**

The City of Long Beach, California, and Los Angeles County more generally—like many cities and counties across the United States—face significant challenges serving their large populations of chronically homeless and unsheltered individuals. One significant challenge has been that officers frequently lack access to or even awareness of individuals' existing case histories and available support services, making it easier to rely on a traditional enforcement model than to connect people to the services they need.

## **The Solution**

Through a collaboration between City Prosecutor Doug Haubert and the Long Beach Police Department (LBPD), a strategy was developed to create the Government User Integrated Diversion Enhancement System (GUIDES) mobile application<sup>69</sup> to be used on LBPD department-issued phones. The LBPD's idea was simple: Police officers need a way to refer individuals to services or to know if someone is already connected. The process should be simple, portable, and easy to use in the field.

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69. "Guides Explained," Long Beach City Prosecutor Doug Haubert, accessed August 5, 2025, <https://cityprosecutordoughaubert.com/guides-explained/>.

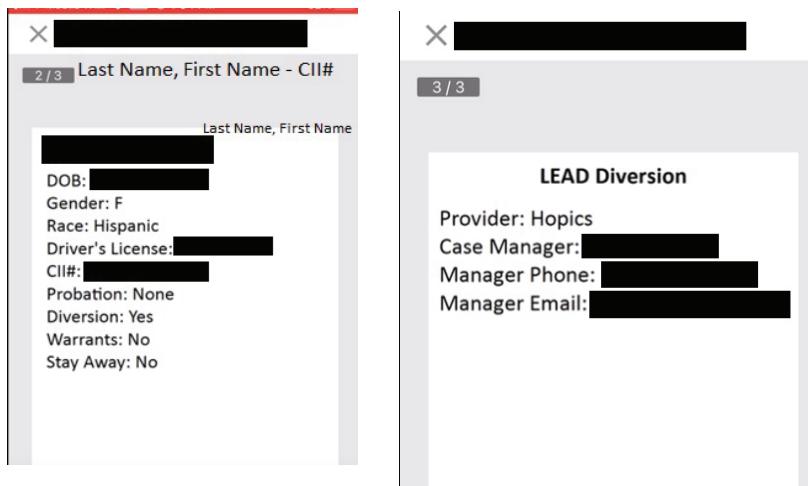
## The GUIDES App

The City Prosecutor's Office launched the GUIDES app in 2023. The app gives officers in the field quick access to essential information and valuable tools, including a profile directory of individuals and a map displaying the locations of stay-away orders, as well as support and network connections to streamline their work and facilitate community members' access to services. In addition, the GUIDES app enables prosecutors to receive updates from officers regarding individuals participating in the Prosecutor's diversion program.

The GUIDES app features a directory of profiles for individuals enrolled in Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) programs, those subject to "stay away" orders, and participants in Priority Access Diversion programs that offer live-in drug and mental health treatment through court-based referrals. Each profile includes key information, such as the following (see figure 14):

- The individual's most recent booking photo
- The individual's date of birth, age, gender, race, and driver's license number
- Any warrants, probation status, and any misdemeanor probation conditions including "stay away" orders
- Services currently being provided to the individual, including the type of program, provider, and case manager's name and contact information

Figure 14. Sample GUIDES app profile



Source: Long Beach City Prosecutor's Office

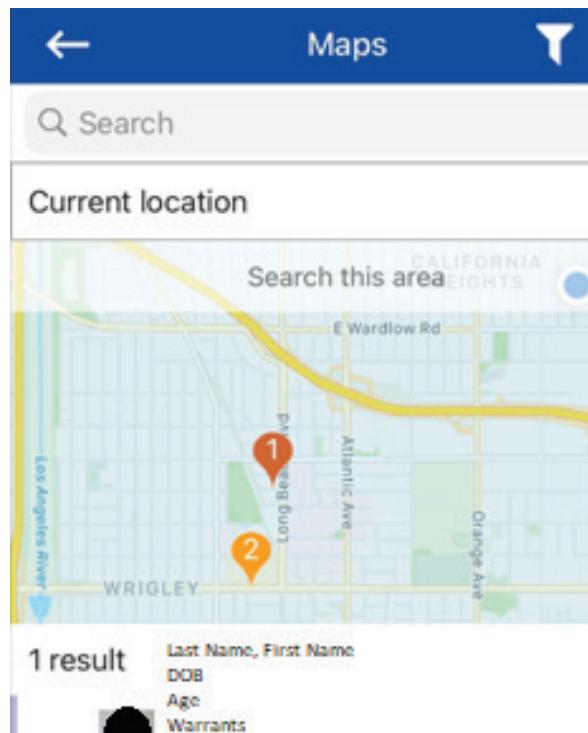
The last profile item serves one of the GUIDES app's primary goals and most significant benefits to police: allowing officers to connect or reconnect individuals with support services rather than taking them to jail or otherwise connecting them to the criminal justice system. For instance, if an officer finds "Jane Doe" sleeping in a public space, they can look up her information in the GUIDES app and choose to contact her case manager instead of issuing a citation or taking other enforcement action. This approach also helps case managers, who often lose contact with their clients while they are (for instance) waiting for affordable housing

applications to be processed and approved. If Jane Doe needs other services, the GUIDES app includes a section where officers can find vetted providers for services related to homelessness, mental health, and substance use issues.

Officers are prompted to complete a brief form in the GUIDES app database documenting their contacts with individuals, including observations of offenses, notes, and updated photos. If the person is willing, the officer can quickly facilitate the provision of services by submitting a referral to a social worker trained to collaborate with the police department and local nonprofits. However, even if the person declines services, the information the officer provides is valuable, as it gives the prosecutor additional context regarding the individual's history, should it become relevant. This documentation can ultimately support accountability by demonstrating to a judge that law enforcement and prosecutors are making every effort to assist someone who may not wish or be able to help themselves.

The GUIDES app also includes a map that allows officers in the field to quickly check, as noted, whether any "stay away" orders are in effect for a given location and identify the individuals subject to those orders. See figure 15.

Figure 15. GUIDES app "stay away" map



Source: Long Beach City Prosecutor's Office

The app automatically uploads data from the Long Beach City Prosecutor's Office database twice daily, and at the end of each day, it also syncs with the Los Angeles Superior Court Database and the Los Angeles County Consolidated Criminal History Reporting System. These data may contain sensitive medical information; however, because the sources are legal and criminal justice entities, rather than hospitals or service providers, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations governing the disclosure of protected health information without patient consent do not apply. Nevertheless, because of the sensitive nature of the information, access to the GUIDES app is restricted to prosecutors and law enforcement.

## The Funding

The GUIDES app serves as an example of how prosecutors can secure funding to create tools and programs that directly benefit law enforcement. In this case, the City Prosecutor's Office successfully secured a U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Smart Prosecution: Innovative Prosecution Solutions (IPS) Program grant.<sup>70</sup> The IPS program provides financial support to prosecutors for developing effective strategies and plans to address and prosecute individuals who commit violent crimes. It also supports the creation of technologies "that enable prosecutors to focus resources on the people and places associated with high concentrations of criminal activity."<sup>71</sup> The GUIDES app falls into the latter category: By connecting the homeless population to essential services, police can more effectively allocate their resources and attention toward addressing the root causes and perpetrators of violent crime within the community, while simultaneously ensuring that vulnerable individuals receive the support they need to regain stability and safety.

## Lessons Learned

The City Prosecutor's Office developed and launched the GUIDES app in response to officer input. Recognizing that successful implementation depends on trust and officer engagement, they emphasized that the police department should lead the rollout of the app. At the LBPD, Quality-of-Life officers are among the app's most frequent users; however, adoption has also spread across other units, demonstrating the importance of department-led engagement and widespread use.

## Measurable Achievements

Nearly one-fourth (at least 180 of approximately 800) of LBPD officers have downloaded and installed the GUIDES app. While the app is used most frequently by officers assigned to the Quality-of-Life team, it has also gained traction across the department, with downloads from a range of divisions—including homicide detectives, reflecting its broader value and versatility.

On average, more than 5,000 contacts are recorded in the GUIDES app each year, primarily generated by Quality-of-Life officers. In the first six months after the GUIDES app was launched, LBPD officers referred more than 80 individuals to services. Currently, there are more than 400 people in the app directory, all of whom are residents of Long Beach and either participate in police and prosecutor-driven diversion programs or are subject to "stay away" orders.

The GUIDES app was awarded the 2023 American City and County Crown Communities Award for its innovative approach to public safety and social services.

## Benefits to Law Enforcement

Haubert and LBPD Deputy Chief Ty Burford said that providing services can make a big difference in getting someone off the street and preventing them from committing further offenses.

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70. "Smart Prosecution: Innovative Prosecution Solutions Program," Bureau of Justice Assistance, last modified March 14, 2023, <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/smart-prosecution-innovative-prosecution-solutions-program/overview>.

71. "Smart Prosecution" (see note 70).



“We shouldn’t expect police to know everything. So if we’re going to ask them to respond to every single call and want them to refer folks to services, we need to have something like this app to make it as easy as possible.”

**Doug Haubert,  
Long Beach City Prosecutor**

The goal of the GUIDES app is to support police in responding to situations involving people experiencing homelessness, substance use, and other quality-of-life issues that extend beyond traditional law enforcement responsibilities. By giving officers in the field immediate access to up-to-date information about available services, the app streamlines the referral process, fosters collaboration with community-based and city partners, and presents multiple pathways for connecting individuals to the support they need—ultimately saving time and improving outcomes for both officers and the people they serve.

Deputy Chief Burford says the app has been well-received as a valuable tool for officers, particularly those focused on quality-of-life issues.

“For patrol officers in the field, the app makes it easy to access service information, especially when someone may be hesitant to communicate with officers or other city services. This resource enables officers to quickly view whether someone is currently receiving service support and contact a provider or make a referral on the spot. It saves time and increases the likelihood of people receiving the support they need.”

**Ty Burford, Long Beach  
Police Department Deputy Chief**



Service providers often have a variety of specialties and may not be able to effectively meet the needs of every person an officer encounters. The app streamlines the process for officers to refer individuals to services that cater to their specific needs, including language support; public transportation accessibility; and issues related to physical health, mental health, and substance use. This approach not only increases the likelihood that individuals will accept

services but also enhances police legitimacy by demonstrating a commitment to effective, compassionate intervention. For example, an evaluation of Long Beach's LEAD program found that individuals who received support through that initiative held more favorable views of law enforcement than those who did not participate—highlighting service-based strategies' potential to build trust within the community.

The GUIDES app also assists officers in managing individuals who have "stay away" orders. When officers encounter a person subject to such an order, they can quickly access a copy of the order through the app to confirm whether the individual is allowed to be in a particular location. This tool streamlines the process of taking the individual into custody, if necessary, and facilitates submission of the required paperwork to the City Prosecutor's Office for further enforcement.

## **Takeaways and Implementing in Other Jurisdictions**

The GUIDES app is available for free download and use by any jurisdiction, as it was developed with a U.S. DOJ grant. Jurisdictions can therefore obtain the app and then work with a software company to have it tailored to their local prosecutors' and police departments' specific needs. In addition to sharing information between prosecutors and police, the platform enables users to communicate with other law enforcement agencies. This flexibility creates a wide range of potential uses.

Long Beach is currently working to expand its GUIDES app by integrating local businesses with police-enforced "no trespassing" orders, so that police will be aware of these businesses when they enter a specific geographic area. This app expansion will allow officers to easily hold individuals accountable for violating these restrictions.

**The design of the GUIDES app in other jurisdictions will depend on their specific needs; its adaptability is key.** At PERF's meeting, participants discussed the potential use of the app to support gang enforcement activities by enabling officers in the field to identify individuals subject to injunctions in any location and the terms of those injunctions, such as probation-directed curfews and "stay away" orders. However, the foundational design work has already been completed thanks to the Long Beach City Prosecutor's Office. The GUIDES app provides officers with easy access to information, tools, and partners, helping to save them time and making their jobs more manageable.

# Program 10. Bronx, NY

## Crime Strategies Bureau



Jordan Jackson, chief of the Bronx (NY) DA's Office's Crime Strategies Bureau (CSB), discusses how the bureau elevates the entire office and helps combat violent crime. Chauncey Parker, Director of the New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), echoes the value of this bureau in the city's overall efforts to reduce violence.

### The Issue

The Bronx, whose residents make up only 17 percent of New York City's population, consistently maintains a disproportionately high percentage of the city's violent crime. The rates of murder, rape, robbery, shooting incidents, and shooting victims in the borough are consistently reported in the range of 30 to 40 percent of the citywide totals.<sup>72</sup>

Crime and a range of longstanding challenges in the Bronx took on a heightened urgency during and after 2020. Overall crime rates, particularly violent crime rates, have surged since 2019 and have remained elevated for several years. Between 2019 and 2024, the Bronx experienced a 55 percent overall increase in index crimes<sup>73</sup> and a 41 percent increase in violent index crimes,<sup>74</sup> significantly higher than the citywide increases.<sup>75</sup>

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72. "Historical New York City Crime Data," New York City Police Department, accessed August 21, 2025, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/stats/crime-statistics/historical.page>.

73. Index crimes are those reported to the FBI. "National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed August 21, 2025, <https://www.fbi.gov/how-we-can-help-you/more-fbi-services-and-information/ucr/nibrs>.

74. "Historical New York City Crime Data" (see note 72).

75. "Historical New York City Crime Data" (see note 72).

In 2019 and 2020, criminal justice practitioners in New York were also adjusting to three significant pieces of legislation:

1. **Raise the Age.** Effective October 2019, a new law mandated that all defendants under 18 be prosecuted in Family Court instead of adult Criminal Court (where the penalties are more severe), except for the most serious offenses.<sup>76</sup>
2. **Bail Reform.** In January 2020, new legislation eliminated cash bail for most misdemeanor and nonviolent felony offenses.<sup>77</sup>
3. **Discovery Reform.** Also effective January 1, 2020, discovery mandates required prosecutors to gather and disclose vast amounts of evidence very early in cases, with the penalty of dismissal for failure to comply.<sup>78</sup>

These three legislative changes, collectively referred to as “Criminal Justice Reform,” were resource-intensive and significantly increased the demands on law enforcement and prosecutors alike. This all contributed to mass resignations of prosecutors across the state, which were especially dire in New York City.<sup>79</sup>

## The Solution

As these issues escalated, the mission and work of the Bronx DA’s Office CSB expanded to meet the challenge. The CSB is a dedicated team that collaborates with stakeholders to develop and implement strategies to reduce violent crime. The bureau “harnesses innovative technologies, data science, and other information sharing techniques that promote the gathering and dissemination of actionable intelligence across the DA’s Office and the larger criminal justice system.”<sup>80</sup>

## Operation of the Bronx Crime Strategies Bureau

The Bronx CSB comprises six prosecutors with no active caseloads; 19 intelligence analysts; and one “boots on the ground” crime prevention coordinator, who builds relationships within the community and works with initiatives like the Crisis Management System<sup>81</sup> and various alternatives to incarceration programs. The CSB also makes use of several interns.

CSB members are assigned to teams responsible for designated areas in the Bronx; each designated area contains two or three precincts. These prosecutors and analysts specialize in gathering and analyzing crime data, as well as identifying priority offenders in the area they cover. They also serve as the primary liaison between the DA’s Office and the NYPD precincts,

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76. “Raise the Age (RTA), New York State Unified Court System, last modified December 23, 2019, <https://nycourts.gov/CourtHelp/Criminal/RTA.shtml>.
77. “Bail Elimination Act,” The New York State Senate, accessed August 21, 2025, <https://www.nysenate.gov/issues/bail-elimination-act>.
78. “Fighting Recidivism: Governor Hochul Announces Reforms in FY26 State Budget to Improve the Discovery Process and Crack Down on Crime,” New York State Government, last modified May 7, 2025, <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/fighting-recidivism-governor-hochul-announces-reforms-fy26-state-budget-improve-discovery>.
79. “Fighting Recidivism” (see note 78).
80. Strategic Innovations Division, “Crime Strategies Bureau,” Office of the Bronx District Attorney, accessed August 21, 2025, <https://www.bronxda.nyc.gov/html/bureaus/strategic-enforcement-division.shtml>.
81. “Interventions,” Mayor’s Office to Prevent Gun Violence, accessed August 21, 2025, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/peacencyc/interventions/crisis-management.page>.

acting as a resource for the officers and a repository for their issues and questions. Intelligence analysts are also assigned to or “embedded” within the various bureaus across the DA’s Office, serving as the “go-to” person for any CSB-related questions.

CSB members attend meetings held by the NYPD where they discuss every homicide and non-fatal shooting that occurs in the Bronx. Their objective is to determine the most effective prosecution strategies, focusing on individuals responsible for the majority of crimes, as discussed in the “Priority Offenders” section beginning on page 74. CSB team members also gather intelligence and meet biweekly with their executive leadership to review violent crime trends in the Bronx, assign case responsibilities, and identify any additional pre-arrest investigative steps. This type of intense collaboration ensures the best possible prosecution outcomes.

### ***Influencing prosecution strategies***

As shown in figure 16, prosecution strategies in the Bronx are primarily influenced by three criteria: crime data, crime trends, and the identification of priority offenders. The CSB plays a crucial role in monitoring these factors.

Figure 16. Factors influencing prosecution strategies in the Bronx



#### **Crime data**

The CSB focuses on understanding where crimes occur and identifying the individuals committing them. This knowledge helps inform prosecution decisions and the development of effective crime-fighting strategies. To achieve this understanding, the CSB collects and analyzes all crime incident data for the DA’s Office, including information on homicides, nonfatal shootings, and shots-fired incidents. The CSB then produces statistics and maps that it frequently uses in discussions with prosecutors, law enforcement partners, and the community.

## Crime trends

Within broader Bronx communities, the CSB identifies “hot spots” and scrutinizes them to identify trends and develop strategies for those communities. The bureau also tracks nonviolent crime trends as they impact overall prosecution strategies and the community; examples include increases in retail theft and auto crimes such as grand larceny.

## Priority offenders

The CSB recognizes that most violent crime is committed by approximately one percent of the population,<sup>82</sup> those commonly referred to as “priority offenders” or “crime drivers.” CSB identifies priority offenders through intelligence gathering and referrals—including social media, firearm history, ballistics leads, and referrals from precinct-level ADAs—and then ensures they are prioritized for prosecution.

## Non-Priority Offenders

CSB recognizes that incarceration is not always the best solution when it comes to non-priority offenders.

“We used to just look at a prosecution as: ‘What are the facts of this case, and what does the rap sheet say?’ But now, there’s been a real shift to ‘Who is this person? Why did this happen? Let’s figure out a way to make sure that it doesn’t happen again.’ And doing that requires an understanding of someone’s background because you don’t commit crime in a vacuum.”

—Crime Strategies Bureau Chief Jordan Jackson



## Partnership with NYPD

In collaboration with the NYPD, CSB implemented an arrest alert system for priority offenders, each of whom is assigned a unique identifying number linked to their fingerprints. If a priority offender is arrested and fingerprinted for a crime anywhere in New York City, the system immediately notifies the CSB prosecutor covering that precinct. That way, the prosecutor can begin working on the case and gathering up-to-date information on the arrested individual well before the case arrives in the DA’s Office intake bureau for drafting.

82. Orjan Falk et al., “The 1% of the Population Accountable for 63% of All Violent Crime Convictions,” *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 49, no. 4 (2014), 559–571, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3969807/>.

The CSB also meets weekly with members of the Bronx Patrol and Detective Bureaus, in addition to maintaining continuous contact and sharing information with the NYPD's Intelligence Bureau. CSB team members do not attend these meetings to observe; they actively participate, and the bureaus consistently value their input.

### ***Participation in the Gun Violence Strategies Partnership***

The Gun Violence Strategies Partnership (GVSP), established in August 2021 amid the citywide spike in violent crime, is a coalition of more than 35 state, local, and federal agencies dedicated to improving investigations and prosecutions related to the most severe gun violence in New York City.<sup>83</sup> The Bronx CSB is an active and essential participant in the GVSP, which has convened every morning for more than 1,000 consecutive business days to discuss and share real-time information about priority defendants. This collaborative effort between policing and prosecution ensures that prosecutors are making proper charging decisions and appropriate bail requests in the Bronx and throughout the city.

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“Our goal, our north star, is nobody gets shot in New York City. That’s the north star. When we started, [priority offenders] were being held at arraignment on bail or remand between 50 and 60 percent of the time. Last month, it was 96 percent. Since we began the GVSP four years ago, gun violence in New York City, in particular, shootings, has been reduced by 50 percent. That achievement is for many reasons—one of which is this remarkable multi-agency partnership.”

***New York/New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Executive Director Chauncey Parker (co-creator and participant in the GVSP)***

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As of September 2025, the GVSP has reviewed more than 2,000 cases, resulting in bail or remand set on an average of 85 percent of individuals at arraignment.<sup>84</sup>

### **Overcoming Challenges**

All parties to the GVSP needed some time to adjust before they started truly working as a team, as the many criminal justice stakeholder members naturally have differing roles and tended to collect and store information in silos. A key factor in overcoming this challenge has

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83. Jennifer Bishram, “Multi-Agency Strategic Partnership in New York City Aims to Reduce Gun Violence,” CBS New York, last modified March 21, 2024, <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/new-york-city-gun-violence-strategic-partnership/>.
84. Office of the Mayor, “Mayor Adams Announces Pilot Program to Improve Quality of Life in Persistently High-Crime Areas, Root Out Causes of Systemic Violence and Disorder,” press release, December 9, 2024, <https://www.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/905-24/mayor-adams-pilot-program-improve-quality-life-persistently-high-crime-areas-#/0>.

been selecting the right individuals or bureau from each agency to participate: those who are committed and will contribute to the shared mission of preventing gun violence in New York City. That shared mission is what the GVSP is about—not who leads it or which agency receives credit for its various achievements. Crucially, everyone involved must set aside their egos.

## Measurable Achievements

As referenced in “Participation in the Gun Violence Strategies Partnership,” the CSB’s focus on priority offenders has significantly impacted the likelihood that such offenders will be released after arraignment on new charges, because the arrest alert system gives prosecutors more time to prepare and makes them better positioned to argue against release.

Other achievements are best measured at the precinct level, primarily through collaboration with police to build stronger, more prosecutable cases. For example, the Bronx’s 40th Precinct, an early supporter of the CSB, consistently reports high rates of homicide and nonfatal shootings. However, prosecutors had historically declined to move forward on cases in that precinct, feeling they were not solid enough to secure convictions. In 2020, the CSB started collaborating with the 40th Precinct to address nonfatal shootings and shots fired incidents before the arrests were made. This partnership led to stronger cases and a significant decrease in the number of cases declined for prosecution. By the end of 2023, only one nonfatal shooting and one shots fired incident from the 40th Precinct were declined or deferred by prosecutors—a significant improvement from previous years. Other precincts took notice of the success the CSB achieved in the 40th Precinct and began to recognize its value for their own operations.

## Benefits to Law Enforcement

The Crime Strategies Bureau collaborates with the NYPD toward a common goal: reducing violence and enhancing community safety. CSB’s efforts help alleviate some of the pressures law enforcement faces, allowing officers to focus their limited resources on the individuals responsible for the majority of crimes. By working closely with CSB members, law enforcement personnel also gain access to prosecutors’ expertise and insights about various issues and processes. This collaboration reduces frustration associated with cases that are not charged and helps law enforcement prepare future cases for successful prosecution, ultimately decreasing the number of violent offenders at liberty.

## Funding

Dedicated resources are crucial to the Bronx CSB’s success. After Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark assumed office in 2016, the unit underwent a significant overhaul, which included a notable increase in staffing and the 2020 transformation of the Crime Strategies Unit into the Crime Strategies Bureau. While resources are limited nationwide, DA Clark recognized that directing the resources she had toward addressing the drivers of crime and enhancing data sharing could improve efficiency and ultimately save money. The Bronx DA’s Office initially funded its crime prevention coordinator position and crime mapping software through grants, including funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance.<sup>85</sup> The office also received grant funding from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services and some state legislative ini-

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85. “Smart Prosecution” (see note 70).

tiatives, as well as discretionary funding from the New York City Council. These funding sources allowed the program to demonstrate its effectiveness, which helped secure permanent funding.

## **Takeaways and Implementing in Other Jurisdictions**

Any DA's Office, regardless of size, can implement a similar unit or concept in its jurisdiction without reinventing the wheel.

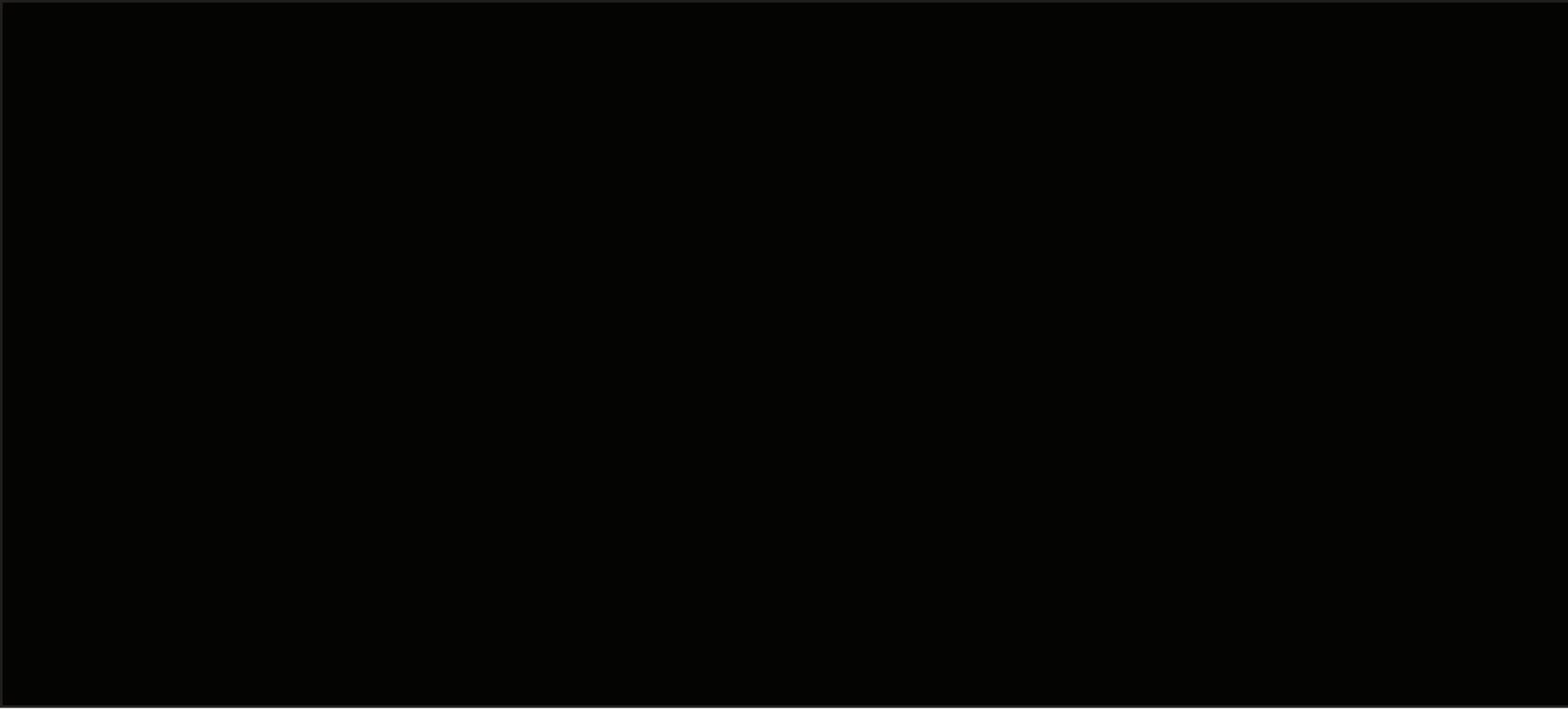
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“Even in a smaller city or town, you’re still going to have those few locations where you know the shootings or robberies happen. You’re still going to have your priority offenders, and law enforcement will know the ten people who continuously offend. It’s really not that different, it just requires having a dedicated person to do this every day—seeing what happened overnight and checking in with law enforcement. Having practiced elsewhere as well, I think it’s even more crucial in some smaller areas, because you may be dealing with 30 or 40 law enforcement agencies. It’s crucial to have one point person in the DA’s Office for law enforcement to call—whether it’s the sheriff’s office or city police or state police—who will understand the agency’s role and can ensure things run smoothly.”

***Crime Strategies Bureau Chief Jordan Jackson***

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The Bronx CSB was initially modeled after a similar bureau at the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office. However, just as the DAs’ offices and their jurisdictions differ, so do their CSBs. While the Bronx offers valuable guidance for success, each community has unique needs and can adapt the Bronx’s model to suit its particular circumstances in developing its own CSB. As NY/NJ HIDTA Executive Director Chauncey Parker notes, collaboration among stakeholders is the key.



# Program 11.

## East Baton Rouge, LA

### Science-Based Interviewing



East Baton Rouge DA Hillar Moore—joined by Charles Whitt, a trial division bureau chief at the Manhattan District Attorney's Office (District Attorney New York County / DANY)—discusses the importance of science-based interviewing (SBI) techniques and how his office uses SBI to enhance interviews and improve information collection. Captain Don Dartez of the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office (EBRSO) shares how SBI techniques have greatly improved the quality of law enforcement investigations.

#### **The Issue**

Many prosecutors and law enforcement officers conduct interviews using outdated approaches. These methods often involve confrontational tactics, misleading suspects about evidence, denying people the opportunity to deny knowledge or involvement, and minimizing the potential consequences of a confession.<sup>86</sup> These tactics have a single objective: to elicit a confession.

These outdated interrogation techniques were developed at a time when confessions were considered more crucial for securing convictions than they are today. Modern prosecutions increasingly rely on technology, such as widespread video evidence and forensic analysis, to prove their cases. Furthermore, these dated interview methods lack a scientific basis and are likely to provoke resistance from suspects. Consequently, these techniques can hinder the flow

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86. Christian A. Meissner et al., "Developing an Evidence-Based Perspective on Interrogation: A Review of the U.S. Government's High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group Research Program," *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* 23, no. 4 (2017), 438–457, <https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000136>.

of information, lead to unreliable statements, and even result in false confessions.<sup>87</sup> In fact, according to the National Registry of Exonerations, of the 3,706 wrongful convictions recorded from 1989 to the present, nearly 13 percent (n=467) were attributed to false confessions.<sup>88</sup>

## The Solution

Obtaining a confession is no longer the primary measure of a successful interview, although it may be a secondary benefit. In today's investigative landscape, a confession is not essential; instead, investigators can rely on compelling circumstantial evidence and trustworthy statements that can be corroborated in many ways. Interviewers should be trained to use SBI techniques, which may still lead to a confession but will also yield significantly more information than traditional methods. This information can then be verified or discredited using external evidence.

## Background

In 2009, President Barack Obama issued Executive Order 13491, establishing a task force to evaluate conventional interview approaches and provide recommendations for improvement.<sup>89</sup> The task force reviewed existing research and funded new studies to develop an understanding of evidence-based investigative methods. This process led to the development of model training in science-based interviewing.<sup>90</sup> The goal of conducting SBI is not to obtain a confession but to gather information with evidentiary or intelligence value that can be corroborated or disproven; confessions may still be obtained, but they are ancillary benefits, not primary objectives.

When Linda Ford, Counsel to the Legal Training Unit at DANY, assumed that role in 2022, she prioritized SBI training. Later that year, DANY piloted an SBI Foundations course. And after hearing a DANY presentation on the benefits of using SBI interview techniques, East Baton Rouge DA Hillar Moore resolved to implement the method in his jurisdiction.

## Science-Based Interviewing

SBI preparation involves the interviewer understanding both their perception of the subject and the subject's perception of themselves and the interviewer, because these factors will impact the course of the interview. Interviewers may develop an interview "preparation board" that includes known facts, reported information, inferences, and the objectives of the interview, as well as information about how the subject perceives the interviewer, how the interviewer perceives the subject, and how the interviewer needs to be perceived. Figure 17 on page 81 is an example of a preparation board regarding an assault case in East Baton Rouge.

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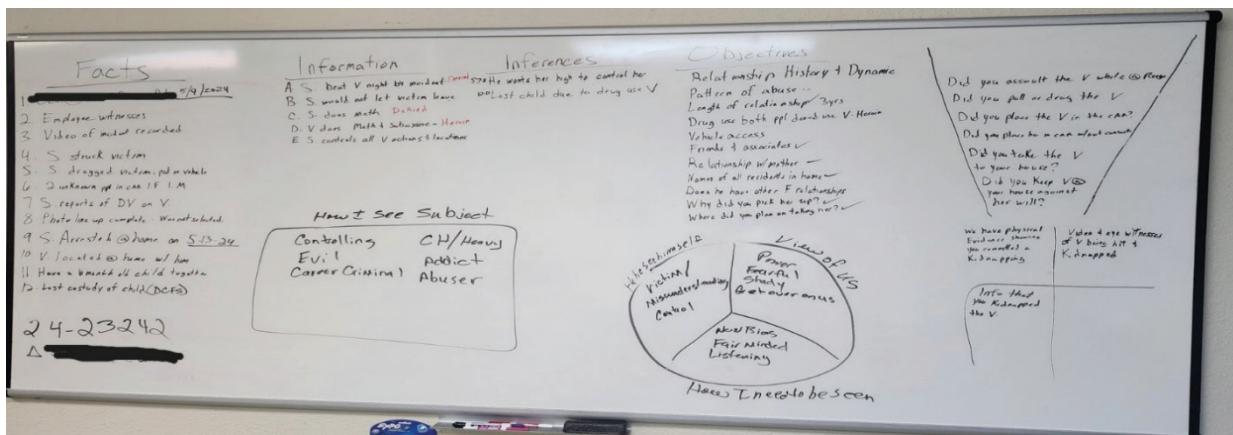
87. Melissa B. Russano et al., "Evaluating the Effectiveness of a 5-Day Training on Science-Based Methods of Interrogation with U.S. Federal, State, and Local Law Enforcement Investigators," *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* 30, no. 2 (2024), 105–120, <https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000422>; Meissner et al., "Developing an Evidence-Based Perspective" (see note 86).

88. "Explore Exonerations," The National Registry of Exonerations, accessed July 9, 2025, [https://exonerationregistry.org/cases?%5B0%5D=false\\_confession%3A1&f%5B1%5D=n\\_pre\\_1989%3A0](https://exonerationregistry.org/cases?%5B0%5D=false_confession%3A1&f%5B1%5D=n_pre_1989%3A0).

89. Russano et al., "Evaluating the Effectiveness of a 5-Day Training" (see note 87).

90. Russano et al., "Evaluating the Effectiveness of a 5-Day Training" (see note 87).

Figure 17. Example of an ERBSO preparation board



During the interview, interviewers build rapport with the subject, ask questions that will generate conversation, listen actively, remain ready to adapt, and implement strategies to improve the subject's recollection—all of which is taught in SBI classes.

## Prosecutor and Police Perspectives on Science-Based Interviewing Methods

Two prosecutors and a law enforcement officer offer some of the benefits they've observed after implementing SBI.

“Science-based interviewing methods have not changed the fundamental, human interaction part of our job – talking to witnesses, cooperators, and suspects. However, the focus of the interview has changed – to gather information that can later be verified [or disproven], rather than obtaining a confession. The interview focuses on engaging the person you are talking to and giving them the opportunity and the freedom to talk to you in a way that allows them to share information.”

— Charles Whitt, Bureau Chief of Trial Bureau 60, Manhattan District Attorney's Office

“In many cases, the information you get in an interview won't be a confession but will be details that are contradicted by other evidence. But the person is locked in, and you can use those statements at trial. This type of evidence can be just as effective as a confession.”

— District Attorney Hillar Moore, East Baton Rouge District Attorney's Office



DA Hillar Moore

“I am going into the interview room to have a conversation, not to get a confession. In law enforcement, we want to ask another question before the person stops answering the previous question. But some key takeaways from the science-based interviewing course are that you need to work with the person in front of you and know when to stop talking. Silence is golden. When you let people keep talking, they will often tell you what you need to know.”

— Captain Don Dartez, East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office

## Implementation of Science-Based Interview Training in East Baton Rouge

DA Moore's experience introducing and obtaining acceptance for SBI in East Baton Rouge can serve as a model for other jurisdictions. Gaining top-down support from law enforcement partners was essential; however, Moore initially lacked support for SBI. To gain law enforcement acceptance, in May 2023, the DA's Office invited high-ranking members of the EBRSO and the Baton Rouge Police Department (BRPD) to join them at an SBI symposium. The response was overwhelmingly positive.

The team quickly recognized that they not only wanted a course in SBI methods but also needed an SBI partner to help implement organizational change. They carefully evaluated various companies and ultimately chose one that specializes in organizational change and has extensive experience in deploying SBI programs for state and local law enforcement and criminal justice professionals.<sup>91</sup>

In September 2023, the East Baton Rouge DA's Office hosted its first course on SBI Foundations. Since then, the offices have collaborated to sponsor a comprehensive SBI Program that includes not only additional courses but also reinforcement sessions, advanced classes, and specialized training to develop internal capabilities for analyzing and coaching live interviews. Each agency has invested in training personnel to become in-house SBI instructors. In addition, EBRSO has sponsored a one-day SBI Basics course to train all its patrol officers in these techniques.

Both EBRSO and the BRPD fully support and have made significant investments in SBI. They have collaborated with the DA's Office by sharing training costs, ensuring that officers attend training sessions, and designating personnel to become SBI instructors. This commitment confirms DA Moore's initial belief that implementing SBI is crucial and a valuable investment.

SBI training facilitators also helped secure law enforcement buy-in by changing the perception that SBI is merely a "big city" concept that DA Moore had heard about and was now promoting in his jurisdiction. Using videos of actual interviews and applying the science behind why specific methods worked or did not, the trainers achieved quick acceptance from law enforcement.

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"I will be in these trainings with other cops, and they will say Hillar [DA Moore] went to New York, and they told him that you all have to do this, so here we are. Then the SBI instructor will start talking, and at the end, those same cops will say it is the best training they have ever been to. And later, they will call me and say, 'you're not going to believe what I got in the interview I just did."

**Captain Don Dartez,  
East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office**

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<sup>91</sup>. The East Baton Rouge team chose Tailored Training Programs as its SBI facilitator; agencies need to do thorough research to vet candidates before selecting an appropriate training facilitator.

## Funding

DA Moore initially sought and obtained a private donation to defray some of the costs of SBI training, which his office continues to hold jointly with their staff and law enforcement. Seeing the positive impact that SBI has on their interviews (and ultimately their cases), BRPD and EBRSO also contribute to the cost of SBI courses. Moore also plans to allow additional agencies to attend SBI training in the future, which will further defray the costs.<sup>92</sup>

## Measurable Achievements

As of March 2025, 108 members of the DA's Office and law enforcement have attended the SBI course, and 15 have become course coaches. To a person, those who attend the training sing its praises. The unequivocal support from law enforcement for an interviewing technique that prioritizes truth-seeking over securing confessions marks a significant and commendable shift in investigative practice; in itself, that is a tremendous achievement. In addition, studies show that SBI methods improve interview outcomes directly by increasing suspect cooperation and information disclosure, and indirectly, by slightly increasing confession rates.<sup>93</sup> However, the East Baton Rouge DA's Office cannot yet quantify the effect of SBI on convictions, as it has only recently been introduced.

Other measures of success exist but are unquantifiable, as ADA Charles Whitt recognizes:

"If you interview someone and are being deceptive and trying to trick them into confessing, they will share that with the community, and that will result in lost trust. Science-based interviewing is about human interaction and talking to people in an honest, empathetic, and deliberate way. It builds rapport with the suspects and witnesses, **so they want to give you information**. Plus, it can build trust over time with the community that the prosecutors and police will treat them justly."



ADA Charles Whitt

## Benefits to Law Enforcement and Takeaways

SBI works. It is a powerful technique that significantly boosts suspect cooperation and yields a greater volume of verifiable information. This cooperation, in turn, enhances the quality of investigations and leads to more successful case outcomes.

Captain Dartez emphasized that the SBI is both ethical and honest. It avoids misleading individuals into making false confessions or attempting to catch them in lies. In his view, this method of interviewing not only yields more information but also is ethically sound and presents a more favorable impression of law enforcement to a jury.

92. At DANY, during budget negotiations, the office highlighted the long-term savings resulting from the implementation of the SBI program, including costs related to wrongful convictions, such as expenses for reinvestigation, litigation, and settlements, as well as the immeasurable human costs suffered by individuals who are wrongfully convicted.

93. Russano et al., "Evaluating the Effectiveness of a 5-Day Training" (see note 87).

Proactively implementing SBI also places agencies ahead of legislative reforms regarding the use of deception in interviews, which some states are considering.<sup>94</sup> SBI can also prevent costs stemming from wrongful convictions.

East Baton Rouge, following in DANY's footsteps, is an excellent example of how a DA's office and law enforcement agencies can collaborate to implement a worthwhile, evidence-based training initiative.

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"We had a case where a lawyer was bringing contraband into the prison. After he was read his Miranda rights, we did a science-based interview. We just let him talk for two and a half hours. I told the detective on a break, "Don't talk, just go back in and say, 'Tell me more,' and the lawyer did; he confessed to two different things."

***Captain Don Dartez, East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office***

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94. Meg Anderson, "It's Legal for Police to Use Deception in Interrogations. Advocates Want That to End," Houston Public Media, last modified November 8, 2024, <https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/npr/2024/11/08/nx-s1-4974964/its-legal-for-police-to-use-deception-in-interrogations-advocates-want-that-to-end/>.

# Conclusion



**This report focuses on prosecution-led collaborations—but its primary audience is police.** Why? Because every collaborative initiative highlighted here was designed not only to advance justice but also to actively support law enforcement. These programs reduce burdens, improve investigations, leverage funding sources, and build trust with the communities police serve. They ease operational burdens, enhance investigative capacity, and unlock new funding opportunities. Prosecutors are not just courtroom advocates—they can be strategic partners in a mutually beneficial relationship that strengthens the entire justice system. When prosecutors and police align around shared goals, they amplify one another's impact—producing better investigations, stronger prosecutions, and greater public trust.

The case studies in this report illustrate how innovative prosecutor-led collaborations translate into tangible benefits for law enforcement. Whether it's embedding prosecutors in high-crime areas, developing mobile apps to streamline service referrals, or implementing science-based interviewing techniques, these initiatives reinforce police work, improve case outcomes, and build trust across the justice system.

The deeper message of the report is this: **Police do not have to do it alone.** Prosecutors can convene stakeholders, secure funding, and drive innovation in ways that complement and amplify their law enforcement partners' efforts. At its best, this relationship moves beyond a simple handoff—where police deliver completed investigations and prosecutors then pursue convictions—and becomes a true partnership, with both sides working in tandem to strengthen cases, share insights, and advance justice. Collaboration thrives when police and prosecutors engage with purpose, share clear objectives, and respect one another's roles. When those elements are present, partnerships move beyond routine coordination and become catalysts for meaningful change.

This report can serve as a roadmap for police leaders seeking to build or strengthen partnerships with their district attorneys. It offers practical guidance, real-world examples, and replicable models that demonstrate how prosecutor-led initiatives can be force multipliers for law enforcement. To help agencies move from concept to collaboration, the report outlines seven guiding principles that emerged consistently across successful programs:

**1. Focus on public safety above personal differences or pride.**

The ultimate goal of any police–prosecutor collaboration is to protect and serve the community. That goal requires prioritizing facts, legal standards, and shared objectives over individual credit, recognition, or authority. When both sides keep public safety at the forefront, even difficult conversations become productive, and partnerships remain strong.

**2. Clearly define the problem.**

Effective collaboration begins with clarity. Rather than tackling broad issues like “crime,” the most successful partnerships focus on specific challenges—such as retail theft, youth auto crime, or school threats. This precision allows for targeted strategies, measurable outcomes, and meaningful change.

**3. Leverage shared stakeholder access.**

Prosecutors often have broader jurisdiction and independent political reach than individual police departments. They can convene stakeholders across sectors—government, nonprofit, education, business—in ways that police alone may not be able to. When both sides bring their networks to the table, the result is a more comprehensive and coordinated response.

**4. Recognize the prosecutor’s access to additional funding sources.**

District attorneys can often tap into grants and funding streams that may be unavailable to police departments. Many of the programs featured in this report were launched or sustained through prosecutor-led funding efforts. Whether through federal grants, private foundations, or reallocated internal resources, prosecutors can help secure the financial support needed to innovate.

**5. Ensure long-term commitment to collaborations.**

Successful partnerships are not one-off projects—they require sustained engagement. Whether through regular meetings, embedded staff, or formalized protocols, long-term commitment builds trust, accountability, and institutional memory. It also ensures that progress continues even as personnel may change.

**6. Measure outcomes of collaborative efforts.**

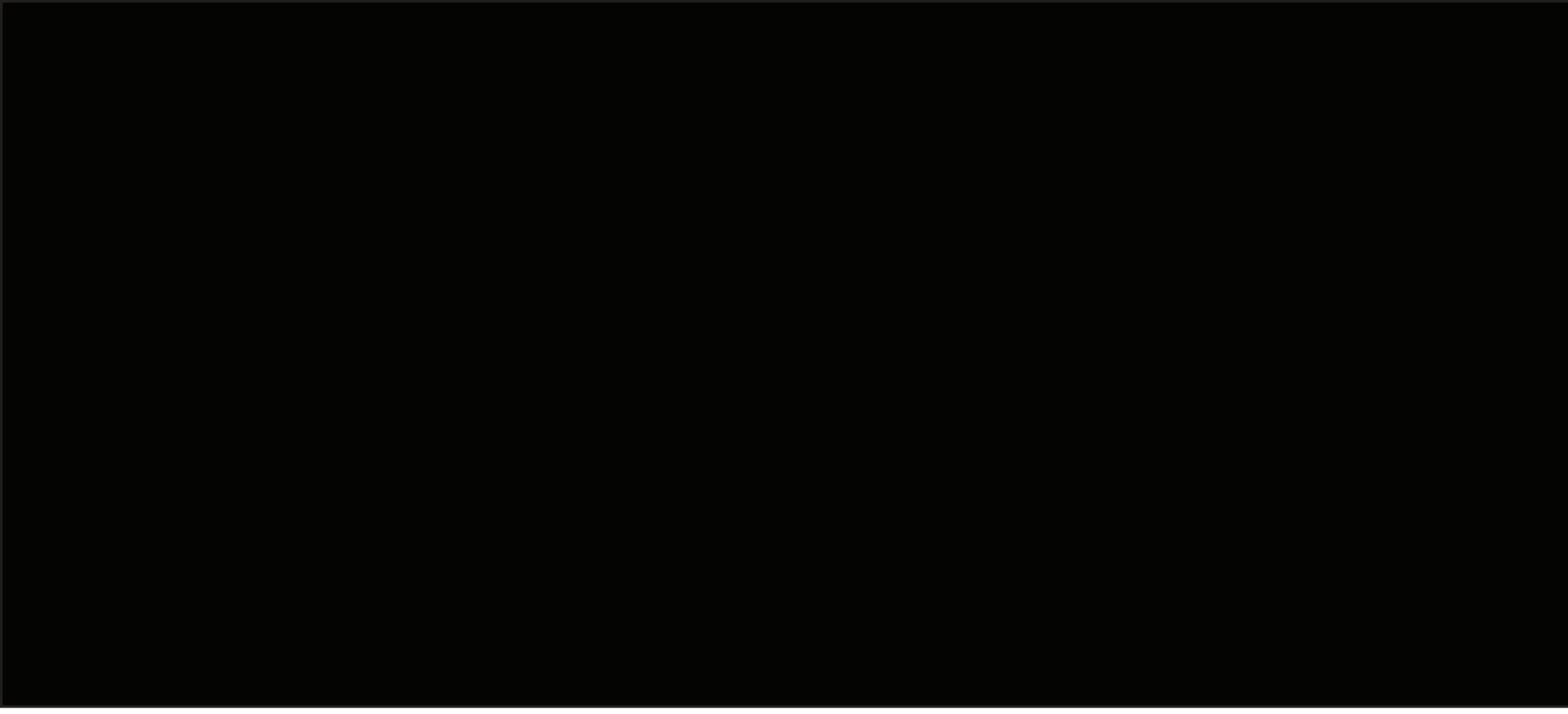
Data drives credibility. Tracking results—such as clearance rates, victim engagement, or reductions in specific crimes—helps secure continued support and funding. It also allows agencies to refine their strategies and demonstrate impact to stakeholders and the public.

**7. Actively use press releases, press conferences, and other media-friendly avenues to showcase successful collaborations.**

Publicizing collaborative wins builds trust and encourages replication. Press releases, community events, and social media can amplify impact, attract new partners, and reinforce the message that police and prosecutors are working together to serve the public.

We hope this report inspires police chiefs, sheriffs, and prosecutors to explore new ways to work together. Whether adapting a program mentioned in this report or initiating a conversation about a specific need or idea, the first step is recognizing that collaboration is not just beneficial—it's essential.

When police and prosecutors coordinate their efforts with intention and clarity, the results extend far beyond operational improvements. These partnerships strengthen agencies, reduce crime, and build trust—delivering the ultimate benefit to the communities they serve. Collaboration is not simply about efficiency; it is about creating a foundation where justice and public safety thrive together.



# The Police Executive Research Forum



The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) is an independent think tank and research organization that focuses on critical issues in policing. Since its founding in 1976, PERF has identified best practices on fundamental issues such as reducing police use of force; developing community policing and problem-oriented policing; using technologies to deliver police services to the community; and developing and assessing crime reduction strategies. Over the past decade, PERF has led efforts to reduce police use of force through its *Guiding Principles on Use of Force*<sup>95</sup> and Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) training program.<sup>96</sup>

PERF strives to advance professionalism in policing and to improve the delivery of police services through the exercise of strong national leadership; public debate of police and criminal justice issues; and research and policy development. The nature of PERF's work can be seen in the reports PERF has published over the years. Most of these reports are available without charge online.<sup>97</sup> All the titles in the *Critical Issues in Policing* series can be found on the PERF website.<sup>98</sup> Recent reports include *Managing Officer-Involved Critical Incidents: Guidelines*

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95. PERF, *Guiding Principles on Use of Force*, Critical Issues in Policing (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2016), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/guidingprinciples1.pdf>.
96. PERF, "ICAT: Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics," accessed February 13, 2025, <https://www.policeforum.org/icat>.
97. PERF, "PERF Reports," accessed February 13, 2025, <http://www.policeforum.org/free-online-documents>.
98. PERF, "Critical Issues in Policing Series," accessed February 13, 2025, <https://www.policeforum.org/critical-issues-series>.

to Achieve Consistency, Transparency, and Fairness,<sup>99</sup> *The First Six Months: A Police Chief’s Guide to Starting Off on the Right Foot*,<sup>100</sup> and *Embracing Civilianization: Integrating Professional Staff to Advance Modern Policing*.<sup>101</sup>

In addition to conducting research and publishing reports on our findings, PERF conducts management studies of individual law enforcement agencies; educates hundreds of police officials each year at the Senior Management Institute for Police,<sup>102</sup> a three-week executive development program; and provides executive search services to governments looking to conduct national searches for their next police chief.

All PERF’s work benefits from its status as a membership organization of police officials and its access to police executives, who share information and open their agencies to research and study. PERF members also include academics, federal government leaders, and others with an interest in policing and criminal justice.

All PERF members must have a four-year college degree and subscribe to a set of founding principles, emphasizing the importance of research and public debate in policing, adherence to the Constitution and the highest standards of ethics and integrity, and accountability to the communities that police agencies serve.

PERF is governed by a member-elected President and Board of Directors and a Board-appointed Executive Director.



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99. PERF, *Managing Officer-Involved Critical Incidents*, Critical Issues in Policing (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2025), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/ManagingOICIs.pdf>.
100. PERF, *The First Six Months*, Critical Issues in Policing (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2025), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/FirstSixMonths.pdf>.
101. PERF, *Embracing Civilianization*, Critical Issues in Policing (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2024), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/Civilianization.pdf>.
102. PERF, “Preparing Police Executives for the Challenges of Today and Tomorrow,” accessed November 25, 2025, <https://www.policeforum.org/smip>.

# The Motorola Solutions Foundation



As the charitable and philanthropic arm of Motorola Solutions, the Motorola Solutions Foundation partners with organizations around the world to create safer cities and thriving communities. We focus on giving back through strategic grants, employee volunteerism, and other community investment initiatives. Our strategic grants program supports organizations that offer first responder programming and technology and engineering education, and align to our values of accountability, innovation, impact, and inclusion.

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The Current State of Traffic Enforcement

Opioid Deaths Fall as Law Enforcement and Public Health Find Common Ground

The First Six Months: A Police Chief's Guide to Starting Off on the Right Foot

Call for Help: Treatment Centers for Police Officers

Managing Officer-Involved Critical Incidents: Guidelines to Achieve Consistency, Transparency, and Fairness

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