

JOINT STATE GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Recruitment and Retention Challenges for Pennsylvania Police, Corrections, and Prosecutors

Report of the Task Force

June 2026



*Serving the General Assembly of the
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REPORT

*2025 Senate Resolution 94
Recruitment and Retention Challenges
for Pennsylvania Police, Corrections, and Prosecutors*

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¹ Act of July 1, 1937 (P.L.2460, No.459); 46 P.S. §§ 65–69.

² Consensus does not necessarily reflect unanimity among the advisory committee members on each individual policy or legislative recommendation. At a minimum, it reflects the views of a substantial majority of the advisory committee, gained after lengthy review and discussion.

Over the years, nearly one thousand individuals from across the Commonwealth have served as members of the Commission's numerous advisory committees or have assisted the Commission with its studies. Members of advisory committees bring a wide range of knowledge and experience to deliberations involving a particular study. Individuals from countless backgrounds have contributed to the work of the Commission, such as attorneys, judges, professors and other educators, state and local officials, physicians and other health care professionals, business and community leaders, service providers, administrators and other professionals, law enforcement personnel, and concerned citizens. In addition, members of advisory committees donate their time to serve the public good; they are not compensated for their service as members. Consequently, the Commonwealth receives the financial benefit of such volunteerism, along with their shared expertise in developing statutory language and public policy recommendations to improve the law in Pennsylvania.

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³ 1 Pa.C.S. § 1939.

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To the Members of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania:

We are pleased to release *Recruitment and Retention Challenges for Pennsylvania Police, Corrections, and Prosecutors* as authorized by Senate Resolution 94 of 2025 to inform the General Assembly about current and recommended efforts to improve the recruitment and retention of law enforcement officers. This document is a comprehensive report of information and analyses compiled by Commission staff and informed by a task force composed of members from around the commonwealth, including law enforcement officers, corrections officers, state government staff, district attorneys, and professional associations, and chaired by the Pennsylvania Attorney General.

The Task Force put forth 24 recommendations for the legislature's consideration that cover public safety personnel, direct law enforcement personnel, state and local corrections officers, and district attorneys.

We extend our thanks to the members of the Task Force for lending their expertise to this project. Moreover, we thank them and their comrades across the commonwealth for dedicating their lives to ensure a safe and secure society for all.

The full report is available at <http://jsg.legis.state.pa.us>.

Respectfully submitted,

Glenn J. Pasewicz
Executive Director

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INTRODUCTION

Public safety in Pennsylvania requires fully staffed law enforcement departments, corrections facilities, and district attorney offices. Recruitment and retention problems for all three professions are at unprecedented levels, presenting challenges for these public servants to do their jobs effectively, and vacancies in these professions result in delays of justice and fears of decreased public safety.

With these concerns in mind, the Senate of Pennsylvania adopted Senate Resolution 94 (Printer's No. 702) on May 12, 2025, recognizing that vacancies in these professions must be filled in a timely manner to ensure safe communities. The resolution directed the Joint State Government Commission to establish a Task Force consisting of the Attorney General, who served as chairman, and representatives of the State Police, the State Department of Corrections, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the Fraternal Order of Police, State Troopers Association, the Chiefs of Police Association, the Sheriffs' Association, the Fraternal Order of Transit Police, the State Corrections Officers Association, state and county corrections officers and labor representatives, the Pennsylvania Bar Association, the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association, and district attorneys from various areas of the Commonwealth.

The task force was directed to:

- Examine the current state of recruitment and retention of law enforcement officers, corrections officers, and prosecutors and make recommendations to assist local governments and the Commonwealth in staffing
- Identify necessary changes to state statutes and practices, policies, and procedures that would assist in improving recruitment and retention
- Consult local government entities
- Accept and review written comments from individuals and organizations

The Task Force met in person or online four times, on August 22, 2025, September 25, 2025, November 13, 2025, and March 19, 2026. Additionally, staff met in person and corresponded via email with various stakeholders during the course of the study.

It should be noted that the recommendations contained in this report represent the general consensus of the Task Force. However, they are not unanimously endorsed and should not be considered the official position of all the organizations represented on the committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for All Levels of Public Safety Personnel

Recommendation #1: All law enforcement agencies should maintain current eligibility standards for training and graduation. Lowering standards may result in more applicants but has the potential to increase expenses and liability for the agency, especially if candidates previously denied are allowed to enter the service. Additionally, more support should be allocated for training.

Recommendation #2: Establish a centralized clearinghouse for job postings as it may expand the likelihood that jobseekers will become aware of positions beyond their immediate vicinity or limited to a particular type of law enforcement agency. The Fraternal Order of Police Pennsylvania State Lodge received funding from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) that supported the creation of <https://www.partnersinpublicsafety.com>. While the grant funding ended in December 2025, the website actively continues to provide recruitment information and social media outreach efforts.⁴ Currently, four law enforcement entities participate in this program: the Pennsylvania State Troopers Association, Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police, Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association, and the Attorney General’s Office. The Task Force suggests that this program could readily serve as a law enforcement recruitment clearinghouse and encourage additional groups to join the coalition. Recurring funding to maintain this clearinghouse is also recommended.

Recommendation #3: Expand efforts by all levels of law enforcement to partner with educational institutions to establish school-to-service pipelines in vocational-technical schools and both community and four-year colleges.

Recommendation #4: Pennsylvania’s institutions of higher education should offer educational benefits, such as tuition discounts, reimbursement programs, loan forgiveness or course credits to assist all levels of existing law enforcement. Benefits for the children of law enforcement personnel could include reduced tuition benefits based on parents’ years of service. Pennsylvania currently provides financial assistance for children of police officers, National Guard members, firefighters and correction employees who are killed in the line of duty who wish to attend community colleges, or State-owned or State-related institutions of higher education. This benefit could be expanded to include all children of law enforcement, corrections, National Guard or firefighting personnel based on a minimum number of years of service.

⁴ Website verified as live and active as of May 1, 2026, by the Fraternal Order of Police.

Recommendation #5: Permit personnel to transfer years of service for retirement and other benefits between different types of law enforcement positions, including between the Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System and individual municipal systems. This would provide more flexibility for law enforcement employees to advance their careers. Allowing for portability of these years of service ensures that employees receive benefits for all years of service in law enforcement.

Recommendation #6: Increase the number of PTO days eligible for payout at retirement. This ability is subject to labor agreements.

Recommendation #7: Establish grant programs that assist all levels of law enforcement to purchase advertising and recruitment materials. PCCD administers the Local Law Enforcement Support Grant Program, but it is currently unfunded.

Recommendation #8: Create a referral bonus program for service members who refer a new applicant who successfully completes training or provides a specified number of years of service. New hire signing bonuses can also incentivize new recruits.

Recommendation #9: Permit counties to participate in the Pennsylvania Employees Benefit Trust Fund so their employees can receive health insurance benefits. This could help counties save on health benefit costs by joining a larger purchasing pool. Currently, active membership in the fund is limited to permanent full-time employees of the Commonwealth or permanent part-time employees who work at least 50 percent full-time hours for the Commonwealth. Also, extend health insurance benefits to retirees.

Recommendation #10: Offer part-time employees proportionally the same benefits as full-time employees. 2025 House Bill 1765 (Printer's No. 2174) is an example of legislation intended to provide part-time police officers with health, disability, and survivor benefits. The bill uses the definition of police officer found in the Municipal Police Education and Training Commission (MPOETC) statute, and includes law enforcement officers of municipalities, railroad police, campus security, Capitol Police, Harrisburg International Airport police, airport authority police, deputy sheriffs in second class counties, police and security officers of first or second class city housing authorities, and county park police. Consistent with recommendations 18 and 19, the bill should be expanded to include all sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, and county corrections officers as well. This bill was introduced and referred to the House Local Government Committee on August 4, 2025.

Recommendation #11: Current law allows for partial waivers of Act 120 training requirements for law enforcement officers transferring from out-of-state, from federal law enforcement or military law enforcement. These candidates take an assessment test to determine what areas of training may be waived. Sheriffs and deputy sheriffs are subject to Act 2 training requirements. While a partial waiver may be granted to a municipal police officer or state trooper wishing to be certified as a sheriff or deputy, a similar waiver does not exist for sheriffs and deputies to receive partial waivers under Act 120. It has been suggested that partial waivers under Act 120 be extended to sheriffs and deputies wishing to be employed as municipal police.

Recommendation #12: Employers should provide reasonable restrictions on overtime, both in the overall amount per day, week, month, and year, as well as in the number of consecutive hours an employee can work. When excess overtime is required, provide higher hourly wages and hour-for-hour compensatory time. This recommendation acknowledges that minimum staffing needs must take priority for some jobs.

Recommendation #13: The Task Force expresses support for Congressional bill 2026 HR 7210, which excludes from federal income taxes the first \$100,000 of gross annual income from all categories of law enforcement personnel who worked full-time as law enforcement officers, and have done so for an aggregate of five years as a law enforcement officer. This act would be known as the Fuel the Force Act of 2026.

Recommendations for Direct Law Enforcement Personnel

Statewide Law Enforcement

Recommendation #14: Repeal the cap on the number of state police troopers in the Commonwealth. Currently set at 4,310, this cap can delay the Pennsylvania State Police's ability to be proactive in recruiting and training new officers, as these delays require the PSP to wait for a vacancy to occur to hire additional officers. With municipal police departments closing, the PSP is responsible for patrolling larger geographic areas and staff can frequently be spread thin or have longer response times due to the availability of officers. New specialized positions in computer crimes can reassign officers from patrol units, further placing greater demand on a limited resource.

Local Government Law Enforcement

Recommendation #15: Currently, there are disparities in reimbursement rates between those available to counties for sheriffs and deputy sheriffs training and those offered for training of municipal police officers. The law should be amended to require that municipal police officer training be reimbursed at 100 percent, and the amount of funding available to MPOETC for this purpose should be increased.

Recommendation #16: Provide incentives to encourage community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities to cooperate in incorporating Act 120 police training into their criminal justice curricula.

***Recommendations for
State and Local Corrections Officers***

Recommendation #17: Adjust the age of pension eligibility for corrections officers to 50 with at least 20 years of service or 25 years of service at any age. This eligibility would be consistent with provisions of the Internal Revenue Code that exempt retirement benefits of “public safety employees,” including state and local corrections officers from early withdrawal penalties.

The next two recommendations are intended to provide corrections officers with the same workers compensation treatment of traumatic events, and temporary disability as other law enforcement officers currently receive.

Recommendation #18: The Workers’ Compensation Act should be amended to clarify the eligibility of corrections officers for post-traumatic stress injuries benefits. Act 121 of October 29, 2024, amended the Workers’ Compensation Act to add post-traumatic stress injuries as eligible for workers compensation benefits for “first responders” under certain circumstances. First responders are identified as:

- An emergency medical services provider (EMS) provider, who is an active volunteer, employe or member of an EMS company.
- An active volunteer, employe or member of a fire company (relating to definitions) who responds to emergency calls.
- A Pennsylvania State Police officer.
- A peace officer as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 501 (relating to definitions) who responds to emergency calls.

A peace officer is defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 501 as any person who by virtue of his office or public employment is vested by law with a duty to maintain public order or to make arrests for offenses, whether that duty extends to all offenses or is limited to specific offenses, or any person on active State duty pursuant to 51 Pa.C.S. § 508 (relating to active duty for emergency). The term "peace officer" shall also include any member of any park police department of any county of the third class.

While state and county corrections officers are considered peace officers for limited purposes under the Prisons and Parole Code and would likely fall under the general definition of “peace officer,” they may encounter qualifying traumatic events in their work that are not the result of a response to an emergency call.

Recommendation #19: Pennsylvania’s Heart and Lung Act, first established in 1935, is a temporary disability benefit program for law enforcement officers. It also provides disability benefits for persons who acquired tuberculosis during four years of continuous service in law enforcement. In 2023, the law was amended to add probation officers, campus police, transit police, housing authority police, and county corrections officers and jail guards to the Heart and Lung Act. The agencies and counties operating these types of entities were given the option to participate in the program. Participation is not mandatory, but once established, is irrevocable. Some Task Force members have recommended that at a minimum, counties be required to participate for the benefit of their municipal corrections officers.

***Recommendations for
District Attorneys***

Recommendation #20: Provide a temporary licensure process for attorneys recruited from outside of Pennsylvania to serve as prosecutors until they are formally admitted to the bar of Pennsylvania.

Recommendation #21: Establish a paid district attorney clerkship and internship programs in conjunction with Pennsylvania’s law schools to provide opportunities for law students to work in district attorney offices.

Recommendation #22: The Task Force expresses support for Congressional bill S 3438, which provides federal grants to assist state and local governments in hiring prosecutors. This statute would be known as the Helping Improve Recruitment and Retention Efforts for Prosecutors Act of 2025, or HIRRE Prosecutors Act of 2025.

Recommendation #23: Provide funding for a comprehensive workload study of prosecutor offices to examine workloads, caseloads, and the underlying causes for high turnover.

Recommendation #24: Expand the scope of practice of certified legal interns to include appearing independently at magisterial district justice proceedings. Under current law, students who have completed their second year of law school may be certified by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to serve as interns under the supervision of a practicing attorney. This proposal would continue the practice of attorney supervision, but remove the requirement that a licensed attorney be present to oversee the intern’s activities at the MDJ level.⁵

⁵ 204 Pa. Code Rule 322.

Other Discussions

The following potential recommendations were briefly discussed but not decided upon by the Task Force.

- Establish an employee assistance program to provide virtual financial assistance advice and wellness consultations for all public safety related occupations. Currently, state-employed police and corrections officers have access to the State Employee Assistance Program (SEAP) and attorneys have access to Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers. A similar wellness program should be available to municipal police and county corrections officers, as well as peer-to-peer support for prosecutors.
- Provide team building opportunities, like recreational sports teams, or public service activities to encourage public interactions in non-law enforcement related activities (e.g. Marine Corps Toys for Tots or Police Athletic Leagues).
- Establish minimum numbers of correction officers per county based on county classification (which is determined by population).
- Establish minimum salary ranges for local police and corrections officers based on national averages.
- Permit non-residents of Pennsylvania to be employed as corrections officers, while retaining a preference for Pennsylvania residents. This proposal can be found in 2025 Senate Bill 111, Printer's No. 1279. The bill passed the Senate on October 28, 2025 (50-0) and referred to the House Judiciary Committee on April 9, 2026.
- When making budget decisions for law enforcement agencies, consider the salaries and benefits of other law enforcement agencies to try to equalize salaries of similarly situated employees as much as possible across all law enforcement agencies. Otherwise, agencies that pay well may lure away individuals from lower-paying agencies, creating greater staffing shortages.

BARRIERS TO RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

*“When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news,
my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers.
You will always find people who are helping.’”*

— Fred Rogers

Senate Resolution 94 (2025) directs the JSGC Task Force on Recruitment and Retention of Law Enforcement to “examine the current state of recruitment and retention of law enforcement officers, corrections officers and prosecutors.” Over the past 10 years, JSGC has researched and reported on recruitment and retention of people in “helper” fields, including direct care providers for persons needing disability services (2024); long-term care facility staff (2023); school bus drivers shortages and children and youth services coordination (2022); primary care physician shortages and veterans services (2021); overdose services, behavioral health system capacity and mental health workforce shortages (2020); addiction treatment (2018); protection from abuse orders, school discipline policies, and homelessness (2016), as well as nurse staffing ratios, services to dependent and delinquent juveniles, and numerous health care and mental health related studies. The conclusion that can be drawn from that research is that the helper fields are hurting and have been for a while. Workers are overworked, stressed out, and burning out.

While spending more money to expand services seems like a relatively simple solution, efforts need to go beyond salaries to look at working conditions and societal attitudes toward the role of the helpers. This report is focused on law enforcement, but it should be noted that, to the extent that there are not enough treatment providers, counselors, children and youth workers, and other helper professionals to assist people in managing their problems outside of law enforcement, the greater the chances are that people have will negative interactions and add stressors to law enforcement. Law enforcement-adjacent agencies providing services such as children and youth, juvenile dependency and delinquency, behavioral health, and substance use disorder treatment face many of the same stressors, and efforts to assist law enforcement to improve recruitment and retention should also bear in mind the needs of these other agencies. As is discussed in more detail further into this report, all areas related to law enforcement find recruitment and retention of qualified personnel are finding it increasingly difficult to do so, and the ability to keep communities safe, prevent crime, reduce recidivism, and help individuals navigate their criminogenic needs is diminishing considerably. The first step toward resolving the problem, then, is to look at potential causes of these difficulties. With respect to police at state and local levels, some of the issues are related to perceptions of law enforcement by both potential officers and by the public at large. If the reputation of the police is suffering, then it becomes harder to find people willing to apply for positions and stay in those positions.

This chapter will explore some of the barriers to recruitment and retention beginning with the objective barriers that frequently relate to funding, and moving on toward the subjective, including the societal attitudes toward policing and the socio/psychological issues that impact law enforcement providers.

State Funding Implications

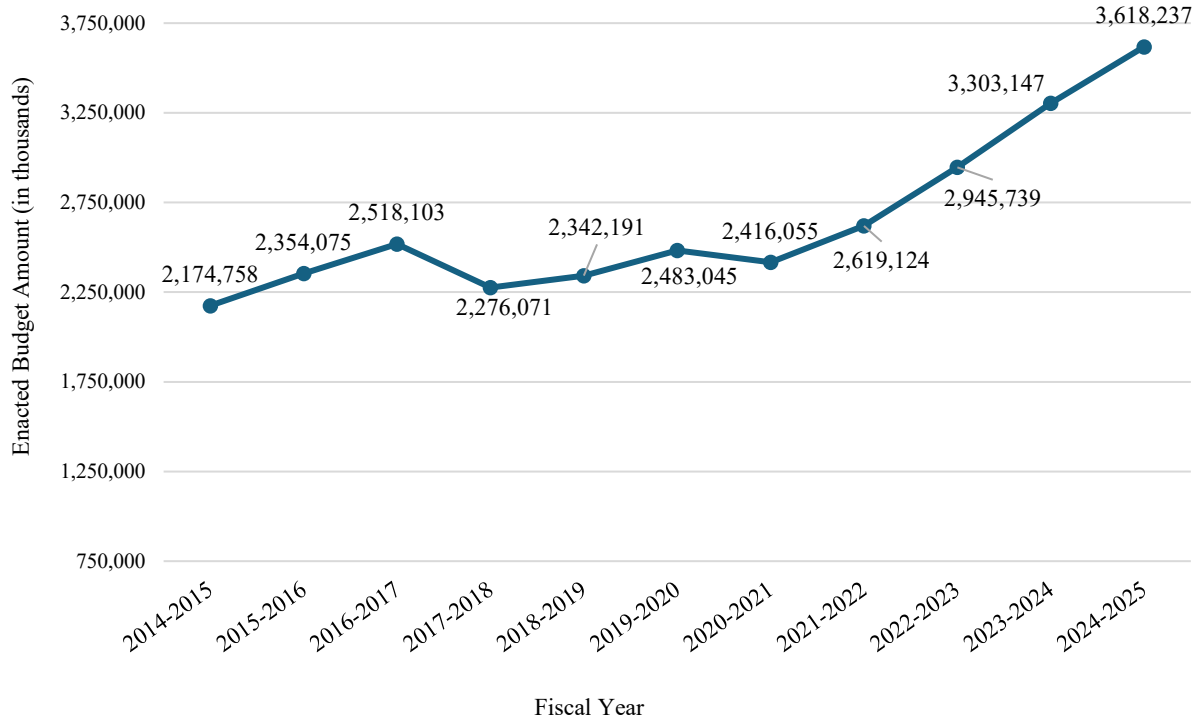
Frequently, when challenges arise in virtually every field that includes state government participation, inadequate funding is identified as the primary culprit, and the common solution is to assume increased funding will solve the problem. And although inadequate funding can play a role in exacerbating a challenge, additional funds are not a panacea.

Pennsylvania's state budget documents the funding allocated to each state agency. Each agency is required to provide an appropriation detail of how its funding will be used. JSGC staff identified over 30 general budget appropriations that were categorized as having a relation to public safety and law enforcement. Seven of these categories were selected as being most closely aligned with this report's main objectives and were evaluated over a ten-year period.⁶

Chart 1 represents combined spending for the seven categories. The data show an overall trend upward, with a slight decline in fiscal years 2017-2018 and 2020-2021 that was followed by increasing appropriations through 2024-2025. In the past five years, lawmakers have shown that they value the field of public safety and law enforcement by continuing to increase the Commonwealth's budgetary contributions year after year. And while it helps, it only addresses a singular issue among the many barriers faced in law enforcement recruitment and retention. As the remaining sections of this chapter reveal, the challenges are not always financial but are multiple and nuanced.

⁶ The seven categories are: Law Enforcement & Emergency Response Death Benefit; Corrections General Government Operations; State Correctional Institutions; State Police General Government Operations; Municipal Police Training; Probation and Parole General Government Operations; and Office of the Attorney General. Compiled by JSGC by extracting enacted Pennsylvania Budget Appropriations for fiscal years 2014-15 through fiscal years 2024-2025.

Chart 1
Pennsylvania Public Safety and Law Enforcement
Enacted Budget
Fiscal Years 2014-2015 to 2024-2025



Source: Compiled by JSGC by extracting enacted Pennsylvania Budget Appropriations for fiscal years 2014-15 through fiscal years 2024-2025.

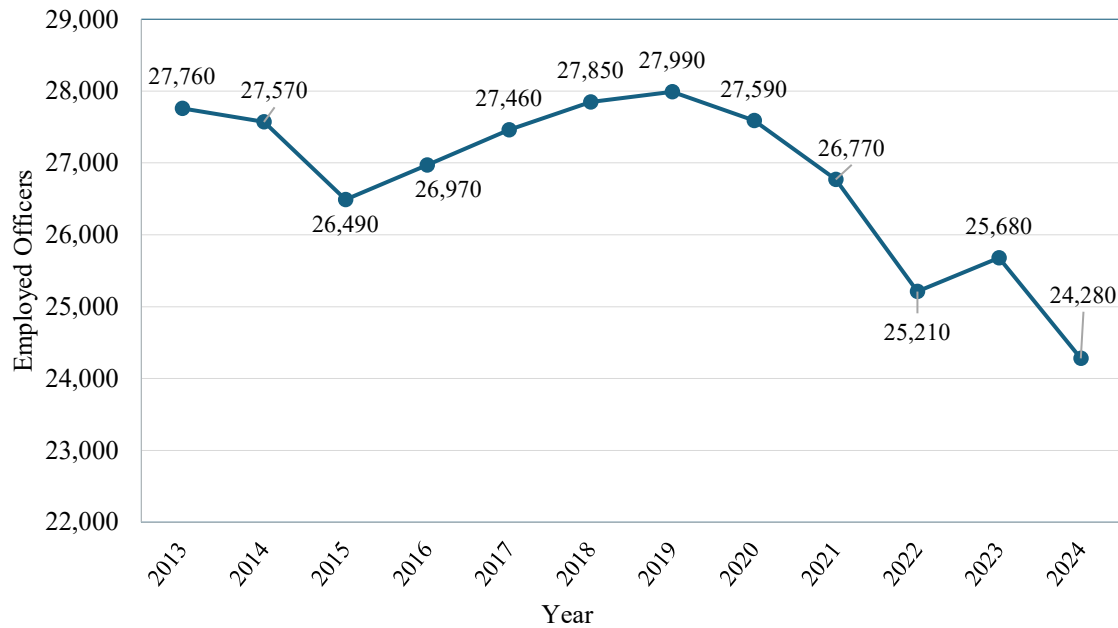
Understaffing and Overtime Hours

A 2025 survey by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) of 217 police departments found that nationally, police staffing numbers are up slightly year over year from January 2024 to January 2025. When compared to staffing numbers from 2020, however, police departments are still working to overcome a five percent deficit in staffing levels. When separated by size of department, smaller agencies reported less of a dramatic drop in staffing, with agencies of 49 or fewer sworn officers recording no loss of staffing levels. Agencies with 50 to 249 sworn officers experienced a drop in 2022 but had outpaced small agencies in recruitment by January 2025. It was large agencies, those with 250 sworn officers or more, that experienced a significant decline of around 6 percent from 2020 to 2024.⁷

⁷ “PERF Survey Shows Police Staffing Increased Slightly in 2024 But Still Lower than 2019,” *Police Executive Research Forum*, accessed November 18, 2025, <https://www.policeforum.org/trending5jul25>.

In Pennsylvania, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics employment data for police officers and sheriffs' deputy sheriffs for the years 2013 to 2024 show that employment declined from 27,760 in 2013 to 26,940 in 2015. Employment then steadily grew until reaching a peak of nearly 28,000 in 2019. Figures then fell to just over the 2015 low in 2021 to 26,770, then fell substantially from 2021 to 2022. After a small rebound in 2023, hiring numbers fell to an 11-year low in 2024 with 24,280 officers employed for a net decrease of 14.3 percent for the period. See Chart 2.

Chart 2
Employed Police Officers and Sheriff's Deputy Sheriffs in Pennsylvania
2013-2024



Source: “Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS) Tables,” *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*, accessed November 20, 2025, <https://www.bls.gov/oes/tables.htm>.

Though certainly the “defund the police” movement of 2020 led to a change in public sentiment among some Americans toward police officers, research shows that nationally the decrease of recruitment and retention dates much further back and began following many years of growth from 1997 to 2013. A report by the PERF in 2019 identified some possible causes and solutions for the employment downturn predating the “defund the police” movement. In 2019, 63 percent of agencies surveyed received fewer applications than they had during the previous five years. Additionally, as has been confirmed by the SR 94 Task Force, the pipelines used to recruit police officers in years past have eroded over time. Former members of the military are a common source of recruits, but as enlistment numbers have declined, so too have recruits from this avenue. Another avenue of recruitment was police families: children of police officers would become police officers themselves. This stream of recruits has also decreased over time.⁸

⁸ *The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies are Doing About It* (Police Executive Research Forum, September 2019), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>.

With lower numbers of applications comes more competition for applicants between departments within the same region. Across the country and in Pennsylvania, some regions use a universal application process, regionalized training, and then hire candidates to different departments in the region. When there are fewer applicants, departments sometimes enter bidding wars with each other to attract the highest quality applicants, increasing salaries as much as they can and sometimes offering sign-on bonuses.⁹

Along with the downturn in recruitment came a downturn in retention. In 2019, the average length of service of officers was already declining. The officers that were leaving before retirement usually only had five or fewer years with their agencies. The most common reason they gave for leaving was finding a job at a different law enforcement agency. The second most common reason was leaving the law enforcement field for something different, and third was leaving for a federal or state law enforcement agency. Competition between departments for experienced officers arises because hiring an experienced LEO is less resource-intensive than hiring a new recruit who needs to graduate from the academy.¹⁰

Since 2019, total retirements across the country rose in 2020 from 4,390 to 5,862, then dropped slightly in 2021 to 5,436, then rose to their peak at 5,870 in 2022, then fell to levels similar to 2019 in 2023 and 2024. Though all sizes of agencies experienced these fluctuations to some degree, larger agencies were better able to weather the uncertainty and have seen retirements return to 2019 levels. Medium-sized agencies experienced a more dramatic peak in 2021 but have similarly lowered retirement rates to 2019 levels. Small agencies, however, experienced the sharpest rise and highest peak in retirements in 2021, a significant decrease until 2023, and once again a sharp increase from 2023 to 2024.¹¹ Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development reports 2,558 separate police jurisdictions in the Commonwealth, with almost 60 percent of these having fewer than 10 officers on staff, meaning Pennsylvania's police departments were more heavily affected by these fluctuations.¹²

The Pennsylvania State Police (PSP) operate under a statutory cap that limits the number of troopers that can be employed.¹³ Since their inception, the PSP fills gaps in coverage for local and municipal law enforcement jurisdictions if necessary. Despite the officer cap not increasing since 2001, new divisions of PSP need to be created to combat cyber-related crimes. This has forced PSP to redistribute officers to cyber units, but, as increasing numbers of officers are placed within specialized divisions, they leave gaps for staffing traditional patrol officers.

⁹ *The Workforce Crisis*.

¹⁰ *The Workforce Crisis*.

¹¹ "PERF Survey."

¹² *Regional Police Guide* (PA Department of Community and Economic Development, 2025), 2, <https://dced.pa.gov/regional-police-guide-strengthening-police-services/?wpdmdl=116741>.

¹³ The act of December 13, 2001 (P.L.903, No.43), an amendment § 205 to the Administrative Code of 1929.

Effect of Understaffing on Corrections Officers

Declining recruitment and retention has also led to chronic and severe understaffing among some mid-state correctional facilities, leading employees to express concerns of a safety crisis, with increased violence among inmates, and increased costs in the form of transporting and boarding inmates in other counties.¹⁴ Staffing shortages are persistent in corrections across the country. Some theorize that the impact of public sentiment toward corrections officers (COs) is one of the causes of the downturn in recruitment. A portion of the critiques of the criminal justice system in the United States center on the administration of prisons and jails, some even on COs themselves.¹⁵ Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic hit correctional institutions disproportionately because inmates were living in close quarters and correctional institutions were locked down to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In 2020, 219 officers and 41 correctional staff members throughout the United States died of COVID-19, increasing deaths of corrections workers by almost twenty-fold.¹⁶ The tragic passing of fellow corrections workers led to increase in voluntary resignations by other COs as working conditions grew more dangerous and stressful.¹⁷ This in turn had an effect on recruitment; prospective employees learning about overcrowding, understaffing, and increased COVID-19 risk may look elsewhere for employment.

Understaffing, a clearly documented problem in correctional institutions in Pennsylvania, not only places stress on the institutions to fill roles but also increases negative outcomes for COs. COs can experience higher rates of burnout, emotional and physical trauma, and decreased safety due to overcrowding. A vicious cycle ensues when these conditions make the job openings unappealing to prospective applicants, contributing further to the understaffing crisis. The safety of guards and inmates alike is threatened by understaffing. When inmates are unable to exercise or be active because there are not enough officers to supervise recreational or educational activities, they become more tense and restless, increasing the chances that they become involved in conflict with fellow inmates or COs.¹⁸

¹⁴ “‘Safety Crisis’ at Franklin County Jail: Understaffing Leads to Violence, Higher Costs, Union Says,” *PennLive*, last modified January 8, 2026, <https://www.pennlive.com/news/2026/01/safety-crisis-at-franklin-county-jail-understaffing-causes-violence-cost-taxpayers-union-says.html>.

¹⁵ Brian Dawe, Andy Potter, Simon Greer, et al., *I Am Not Okay* (One Voice United Corrections, 2021), 23.

¹⁶ Luke Barr, “More Than 250 Correctional Officers Died from COVID-19,” *ABC News*, last modified May 14, 2021, <https://abcnews.com/US/250-correctional-officers-died-covid-19/story?id=77689370>.

¹⁷ Keri Blakinger, Jamiles Lartey, Beth Schwartzapfel, et al., “US Prisons Face Staff Shortages as Officers Quit Amid COVID,” *ABC 4 News*, last modified November 1, 2021, <https://abcnews4.com/news/nation-world/us-prisons-face-staff-shortages-as-officers-quit-amid-covid>.

¹⁸ Gary Cornelius, “Fallout: The Stress of ‘Working Short’ in Corrections,” *Lexipol*, last modified April 20, 2022, <https://www.lexipol.com/resources/blog/fallout-the-stress-of-working-short-in-corrections/>.

Prison Overcrowding

Prison overcrowding can lead to understaffing of correctional institutions, which compromises the safety of both employees and those incarcerated. Short-staffed facilities cause employees to work overtime hours or oversee the care of a larger number of individuals. This can endanger both the employees and those under their care and supervision.¹⁹

Correctional officers work within the confines of prison with people who tend to be highly distressed. Not only do they maintain security, but they also act as proxy counselors, health care workers, and first responders to appropriately care for the people under their supervision.²⁰

Table 1 shows a gradual improvement in overcrowding over the ten-year period 2014-2024, and as of December 31, 2025, capacity at the State Correctional Institutions (SCIs) ranged from primarily mid-80 percent in most, to lows of 14.5 and 20.0 at Muncy and Rockview respectively.²¹ Muncy is an all-adult female institution, and Rockview was permanently closed in February 2026. Reduction in institution capacity is due to several factors. First, the crime rate in Pennsylvania has steadily declined in recent decades, leading to reductions in the number of individuals who are arrested. In addition, recent policy reforms have also reduced state corrections spending. The Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI), first enacted by the General Assembly in 2012, aims to use saving generated by reduced corrections spending to support public safety efforts.²² Subsequently enacted JRI laws have significantly reshaped Pennsylvania's public safety landscape, including significant reforms to count adult probation and parole,²³ as well as increasing rights and services for victims of crime.²⁴

¹⁹ "Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Annual Statistical Report 2024", 14, <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/cor/documents/about-us/statistics/reports-and-dashboards/2024-annual-statistical-report.pdf>.

²⁰ Olivia Miller, Jane Shakespeare-Finch, and Dagmar Bruenig, "Predicting Burnout, Well-Being, and Posttraumatic Growth in Correctional Officers," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 51, No. 5 (May 2024): 724-742, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00938548241233932>.

²¹ Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Monthly Population Report as of December 31, 2025, <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/cor/documents/about-us/statistics/monthly-population-reports/mtpop2512.pdf>.

²² "Pennsylvania - CSG Justice Center," *Justice Center Council of State Governments*, <https://csgjusticecenter.org/projects/justice-reinvestment/past-states/pennsylvania/>.

²³ Amendments to the act of November 22, 1978 (P.L.1166, No. 274), referred to as the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency Law by the act of December 18, 2019 (P.L.771, No. 114) (Act 114) and amendments to the Judicial Code (42 Pa.C.S.) and Prisons and Parole (61 Pa.C.S.) by the act of December 18, 2019 (P.L.776, No.115) (Act 115).

²⁴ Amendments to the act of November 24, 1998 (P.L.882, No.11), known as the Crime Victims Act, by the act of July 11, 2022 (P.L.775, No.77).

Table 1
Pennsylvania State Correction Institution (SCI)
Inmate Population Versus State Institutional Capacity
2014 – 2024

Year	Number of Inmates	Multiple Occupancy Capacity	Percent of Capacity
2014	50,756	47,051	107.9%
2015	49,914	47,041	106.1
2016	49,301	47,098	104.7
2017	48,438	48,262	100.4
2018	47,370	47,520	99.7
2019	45,875	47,267	97.1
2020	39,493	46,526	84.9
2021	37,303	44,759	83.3
2022	37,989	44,644	85.1
2023	38,942	43,773	89.0
2024	39,396	47,675	82.6

Source: Table 15, page 16, <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/cor/documents/about-us/statistics/reports-and-dashboards/2024-annual-statistical-report.pdf>

Note: As of December 31, 2017, the Department of Corrections began using the official operational capacity published by the Department’s Office of Population Management. The operational capacity is ninety percent of the overall emergency capacity. As of Dec 31, 2024, the capacity definition changed to include the original architectural design, plus or minus capacity changes resulting from building additions, reductions, or revisions.

Employee Volume and Overtime Hours

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Office of Administration (OA) releases an annual report on state employment trends across agencies, including distributions of employees per area, financial data, employment demographics, and summaries of employment within specific geographic regions.²⁵ The report looks at the number of individuals employed full-time under each job title and ranks the top 25 jobs with the highest number of employees. Of 2,715 active job titles, “Corrections Officer 1” was the title held by the highest number of employees, with 5,957 individuals possessing this title.²⁶ State Police Trooper was ranked fourth in this list, with 3,229 employees.²⁷

²⁵ “Workforce Statistics, Human Resources, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,” *Official Website of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, accessed June 15, 2026, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/hrmoa/resources/workforce-statistics>.

²⁶ Josh Shapiro, Neil Weaver, *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania 2026 Workforce Statistics Report* (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, n.d.), accessed February 24, 2026, 7, http://www.oabis.state.pa.us/SGWS/2026/2026_SGWS_Dashboard_Charts.pdf#pagemode=bookmarks.

²⁷ Shapiro and Weaver, 7.

Those employed by the Department of Corrections and State Police have had the highest overtime expenditures per employee since the 2021-2022 fiscal year.²⁸ Additionally, these agencies have some of the highest total overtime expenditures annually, meaning that employees in these areas are working more overtime when compared to other state agencies.²⁹ When compared to other state agencies, corrections had over 126 times higher annual expenditure than the average of the top 17 state agencies in the Commonwealth for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.³⁰ State Police had almost 44 percent higher expenditures than the average. Corrections employees have continued to work a disproportionately higher number of overtime hours compared to other state agencies, 111 times more overtime hours worked than the overall state agency average.³¹

Competitive Recruiting Between Different Law Enforcement Groups

There are many reasons that an individual interested in a career in law enforcement will choose one type of agency over the other. Staying close to and participating in one's home community is certainly a factor. Interest in a variety of daily activities can be a draw. Working on a college campus, or the relative freedom of patrolling as a natural resource conservation officer may have its appeal. But financial incentives can be a very important factor. Disproportionate financial incentives relative to what the state or a local municipality can offer can contribute to a recruitment and/or transfer drain.

Impact of Federal Policing Efforts

In August 2025, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) began to send recruitment letters and emails to active local deputies with invitations to join federal law enforcement.³² Despite the continuing need for individuals with local law enforcement, the federal government's recruitment efforts for immigration officers have begun to encroach upon these efforts. Some county sheriff's offices are meeting with their state legislators about the possibility of offering financial incentives to retain staff after many of their deputies began receiving recruitment correspondences.³³ Adding incentives such as waiving education costs or providing bonuses are feared to be the only solution for combatting transfers to the federal level. ICE's emails offered a \$50,000 signing bonus and up to \$60,000 in student loan forgiveness, both of

²⁸ Shapiro and Weaver, 19.

²⁹ Shapiro and Weaver, 19.

³⁰ Shapiro and Weaver, 19.

³¹ Shapiro and Weaver, 21.

³² Meredith Moran, "ICE Hiring Surge Challenges County Law Enforcement | National Association of Counties," *National Association of Counties*, January 7, 2026, <https://www.naco.org/news/ice-hiring-surge-challenges-county-law-enforcement>.

³³ Moran.

which are beyond the means of local law enforcement budgets.³⁴ The email included a link to ICE’s website, ultimately streamlining the process of joining the federal government.³⁵

As local law enforcement officers approach retirement age, the gap created by federal government employee transfers will further strain local police forces. ICE’s goal for its recruitment boost was prompted by funding acquired from the “One Big Beautiful Bill” and the need to hire 10,000 new agents.³⁶ The repercussions of this not only impact retention of the existing force but also decrease the number of local law enforcement applicants. While the federal government’s recruitment efforts may have only been active for a short period of time, this has created a long-term issue at the local and state levels.

Local law enforcement previously involved with the 287(g) program were especially targets of these recruitment efforts. “The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 added Section 287(g) to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), authorizing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to delegate state and local law enforcement officers the authority to perform specified immigration officer functions under ICE’s direction and oversight.”³⁷ The goal of the program is a collaboration “to protect the homeland through arrest and removal of aliens who undermine the safety of our nation’s communities and the integrity of U.S. immigration laws.”³⁸ As of February 2026, 55 law enforcement agencies in Pennsylvania, including constables, sheriff’s offices, and municipal police departments participate in the 287(g) program.³⁹ Those employed in a department within the program’s jurisdiction received the following email:

“Your experience in state or local law enforcement brings invaluable insight and skills to this mission—qualities we need now more than ever. ICE is actively recruiting officers like you who are committed to serving with integrity, professionalism and a deep sense of duty. This is more than a job; it’s a continuation of your service to our country and an opportunity to work alongside dedicated professionals on the frontlines of national security.”⁴⁰

³⁴ Joanna Putman, “‘We’re All in the Same Boat’: Agencies Push Back as ICE Tries to Recruit from Its 287(g) Partners,” *Police1*, August 1, 2025, <https://www.police1.com/federal-law-enforcement/were-all-in-the-same-boat-agencies-push-back-as-ice-tries-to-recruit-from-its-278g-partners>.

³⁵ “America Needs You | ICE,” *U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement*, August 21, 2025, <https://www.ice.gov/join>.

³⁶ Jesse Kirsch et al., “ICE Efforts to Poach Local Officers Anger Some Local Law Enforcement Leaders,” *NBC News*, July 31, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/ice-efforts-poach-local-officers-are-angering-local-law-enforcement-le-rcna222335>.

³⁷ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, “Delegation of Immigration Authority Section 287(g) Immigration and Nationality Act” accessed April 17, 2026, <https://www.ice.gov/identify-and-arrest/287g#:~:text=Breadcrumb,carry%20out%20its%20critical%20mission>.

³⁸ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, “Delegation of Immigration Authority Section 287(g) Immigration and Nationality Act | ICE,” U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, March 24, 2020, <https://www.ice.gov/identify-and-arrest/287g>.

³⁹ DanniRae Renno, “See which Pa. law enforcement agencies are working with ICE,” *PennLive*, updated February 10, 2026. <https://www.pennlive.com/news/2026/02/see-which-pa-law-enforcement-agencies-are-working-with-ice.html>

⁴⁰ FOX 13 Tampa Bay, *ICE Recruitment Letters to Local Deputies*, 2025, 03:15, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x5c9aS81Aqk>.

National Sheriffs' Association CEO, Jonathan Thompson, stated, "federal partners need to recognize that you can't rob Peter to pay Paul here. And that's unfortunately what happened."⁴¹ When local law enforcement loses an officer to the federal government, the sheriffs' offices, which have spent money hiring and training these deputies, lose this investment and must pay to hire and train new staff.⁴²

Public versus Private Sector Attorneys

The annual salary for a full-time district attorney is tied to the salary received by a judge of the court of common pleas in their county.⁴³ Full-time DAs are compensated at a rate of \$1,000 less than the salary of a judge of the court of the common pleas.⁴⁴ For elected district attorneys in 2026, that salary averages around \$235,000 annually.⁴⁵ While this may seem more than adequate, it should be noted that a survey in 2023 found that the median annual salary of first-year associates (typically new law school graduates) is \$200,000.⁴⁶ Further, assistant district attorneys, who are salaried employees of the district attorney's office, can anticipate starting salary offers ranging from \$50,000 to \$77,000 per year.⁴⁷ Attorneys who may begin their careers dedicated to public service and community protection may, after years of stressful working conditions, be lured to the private sector by the prospect of doubling or tripling their salaries.

Disparate Employee Benefits Across Law Enforcement Categories

Under existing state law, employee access to benefits and programs can hinge on full-versus part-time status, or the category of law enforcement for which the individual is trained or certified. These benefits include health insurance, pension participation, line-of-duty injury benefits, educational benefits, line-of-duty death benefits, and training.

Benefits for Part-time Employment

2025 House Bill 1765 (Printer's No. 2174) is an example of legislation intended to provide part-time police officers with health, disability, and survivor benefits. The bill uses the definition of police officer found in the Municipal Police Education and Training Commission (MPOETC) statute, and includes law enforcement officers of municipalities, railroad police, campus security, the Capitol Police, the Harrisburg International Airport police, airport authority police, deputy sheriffs in second class counties, police and security officers of first or second class city housing authorities, and county park police. It does not include all other sheriffs, deputy sheriffs or county corrections officers.

⁴¹ Moran.

⁴² Moran.

⁴³ 42 Pa. Code § 1741.

⁴⁴ 16 Pa.C.S. § 14301(f).

⁴⁵ 204 Pa. Code 211.2(d).

⁴⁶ Profile of the Legal Profession 2024, "Wages," *American Bar Association*, November 18, 2024, <https://www.americanbar.org/news/profile-legal-profession/wages/>.

⁴⁷ "Job Openings," *Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association*, accessed June 15, 2026, <https://www.pdaa.org/job-openings/>.

Pension Benefits

Current state employee retirement law allows police officers to purchase up to five credit years for pension purposes for military service,⁴⁸ and police pension plans may authorize the purchase of up to five pension service credit years for municipal police department service.⁴⁹

In 1974, the Commonwealth established the Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System (PMRS) to provide pension coverage to municipal officers, employees, firemen, policemen, and some municipal government association employees. Membership is optional for the municipality, and special provision is made for individuals covered under the municipal police pension law.⁵⁰

Under the Municipal Police Pension Law, each borough, town, and township of the Commonwealth with a police force of three or more full-time members and each regional police department is required by ordinance or resolution to establish a police pension fund or annuity. Smaller municipalities have the option of doing so.⁵¹ Eligibility is set at age 55 and 25 years of service. Survivor benefits are set at 50 percent of the officer's pension.⁵²

Additionally, the Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement Law allows municipal employees (including officials, employees, firefighters, and policemen) to purchase prior municipal service.⁵³ The municipal buyback provision uses the definition of police officer found in the MPOETC statute, and includes law enforcement officers of municipalities, railroad police, campus security, the Capitol Police, the Harrisburg International Airport police, airport authority police, deputy sheriffs in 2nd class counties, police and security officers of first or second class city housing authorities, and county park police. It does not, however, include all other sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, and county corrections officers.

PMRS represents 1,060 local government municipalities, authorities, and institutions, which is less than half of the approximately 2,600 municipalities in the Commonwealth, which only includes counties, cities, boroughs, and townships.⁵⁴

2025 Senate Bill 782 (Printer's No. 844) would amend the PSERS pension law to provide that a retiree returning to school service as a part-time police instructor would be able to continue receiving his or her pension and not be required to make contributions for service. This amends 24 Pa.C.S. § 8346. Additionally, the Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association submitted information to the SR 94 Task Force and urged that all mandatory overtime compensation continue to be fully pensionable.

⁴⁸ 71 Pa.C.S. § 5304 (State Employees Retirement System) and 24 Pa.C.S. § 8304 (Public School Employees Retirement System).

⁴⁹ 53 Pa.C.S. § 9122.

⁵⁰ Act of February 1, 1974 (P.L.34, No.15), known as the Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement Law.

⁵¹ Section 1 of the act of May 28, (1956) 1955 P.L.1804, No.600), referred to as the Municipal Police Pension Law.

⁵² Sections 1 and 3 of the Municipal Police Pension Law.

⁵³ Sections 204 and 305 of the Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement Law.

⁵⁴ "About the Pennsylvania Municipal Retirement System," *PMRS*, accessed April 12, 2026, <https://pmrs.pa.gov/about-pmrs/>.

Under the federal Internal Revenue Code, retirement benefits of “public safety employees,” which include state and local police and corrections officers, are exempt from early withdrawal penalties, beginning at the earlier of age 50 or 25 years of service.⁵⁵

Line-of-Duty Injury Benefits

Worker’s Compensation for PTSD

In 2024, the Workers’ Compensation Act was amended to add post-traumatic stress injuries as eligible for workers compensation benefits for “first responders” under certain circumstances. First responders are identified as:

- An emergency medical services provider or EMS provider, who is an active volunteer, employe or member of an EMS company.
- An active volunteer, employe or member of a fire company (relating to definitions) who responds to emergency calls.
- A Pennsylvania State Police officer.
- A peace officer as defined in 18 Pa.C.S. § 501 (relating to definitions) who responds to emergency calls.⁵⁶

In order to receive benefits under Act 121, the claimant must have experienced a qualifying traumatic event, which means:

An incident or exposure:

- resulting in serious bodily injury or death to an individual;
- involving a minor who has been injured, killed, abused or exploited;
- involving an immediate threat to the life of the claimant or another individual;
- involving mass casualties; or
- responding to crime scenes for investigations.⁵⁷

"Peace officer." Any person who by virtue of his office or public employment is vested by law with a duty to maintain public order or to make arrests for offenses, whether that duty extends to all offenses or is limited to specific offenses, or any person on active State duty pursuant to 51 Pa.C.S. § 508 (relating to active duty for emergency). The term "peace officer" shall also include any member of any park police department of any county of the third class.

⁵⁵ 26 U.S.C. §72(t)(10).

⁵⁶ § 109 of the act of June 2, 1915 (P.L.736, No.338), referred to as the Workers’ Compensation Act, as amended by the act of October. 29, 2024 (P.L. 1079, No. 121). 77 P.S. § 29.

⁵⁷ § 301(g) of the Workers’ Compensation Act, 77 P.S. § 415.

State corrections officers are considered peace officers in a somewhat limited capacity. They have powers in:

- guarding, protecting and delivering inmates;
- protecting the property of the department; and
- capturing and returning inmates that may have escaped within the immediate area of a State correctional facility or mode of transport. For the purposes of this section, the immediate area of a State correctional facility or mode of transport shall encompass the curtilage up to and including one-half of one mile.⁵⁸

Similarly, county corrections officers have the powers of peace officers in:

- guarding, protecting and delivering inmates;
- protecting the property and interests of the county; and
- capturing and returning inmates that may have escaped.⁵⁹

It is unclear if corrections officers experiencing a qualifying event would be eligible for the program if the event did not happen while the officer was responding to an emergency call.

Heart and Lung Coverage

Pennsylvania's Heart and Lung Act is a temporary disability benefit program for law enforcement officers and was first established in 1935.⁶⁰ It also provides disability benefits for persons who acquired tuberculosis during four years of continuous service. In 2023, the law was amended to add probation officers, campus police, transit police, housing authority police, and county corrections officers and jail guards to the Heart and Lung Act. The agencies and counties operating these types of entities were given the option to participate in the program for their employees. Participation, once completed, is irrevocable, but is not mandatory.⁶¹

Educational Benefits

In December 2025, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) entered into an agreement with Commonwealth University (formerly Bloomsburg University, Lock Haven University, and Mansfield University) to provide college credits to eligible law enforcement officers. PDE's Institute for Law Enforcement Education (ILEE) is funded by federal grants and provides free instruction. Under the agreement, law enforcement officers who are enrolled at Commonwealth University and have received professional development offerings of ILEE can be

⁵⁸ 61 Pa.C.S. § 1106.

⁵⁹ 61 Pa.C.S. § 1734.

⁶⁰ Act of June 28, 1935 (P.L.477, No.193), referred to as the Heart and Lung Act.

⁶¹ Act of December 14, 2023 (P.L.440, No.60).

awarded up to 16 college credits toward a degree in any subject area. ILEE courses previously completed are also eligible for the credits.⁶²

Since 1998, children of police officers, firefighters, corrections employees, sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, and National Guard members who have died in the line of duty are eligible for supplemental grants to allow them to complete an associate or baccalaureate degree at a community college, state-owned, or state-related institution. After applying for all available scholarships and federal and state grants, the child of the deceased individual is eligible to have the remainder of their total institutional charge waived under the Postsecondary Educational Gratuities Program administered by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA).⁶³

Line-of-Duty Death Benefits

The surviving spouse, or if there is no surviving spouse, the minor children of a “firefighter, ambulance service or rescue squad member or law enforcement officer” is entitled to a one-time line-of-duty death benefit of \$165,992.50.⁶⁴ Additionally, a supplementary income benefit equal to the officer’s monthly salary is available to the spouse or minor children until they attain the age of 18 (23 if attending college).⁶⁵ The increase in funding during the 2015-2016 fiscal year was a result of an amendment that extended the benefit to members of the Pennsylvania Civil Air Patrol.⁶⁶ See Chart 3, which indicates that annual appropriations for this benefit have been level funded at \$3.3 million since fiscal year 2021-2022.

The statute defines a law enforcement officer to include peace officers, officers or employees of state correctional institutions, guards or employees of county jails and prisons, or any other law enforcement officer employed by the Commonwealth or a political subdivision.⁶⁷

⁶² “Pennsylvania Now Offering Free College Credits to Law Enforcement Officers,” Pennsylvania Department of Education, Press Release, December 16, 2025, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/newsroom/pennsylvania-now-offering-free-college-credits-to-law-enforcement-officers>.

⁶³ Act of December 16, 1998 (P.L. 980, No.129), known as the Police Officer, Firefighter, Correction Employee and National Guard Member Child Beneficiary Education Act. 24 P.S. § 7201 et seq.

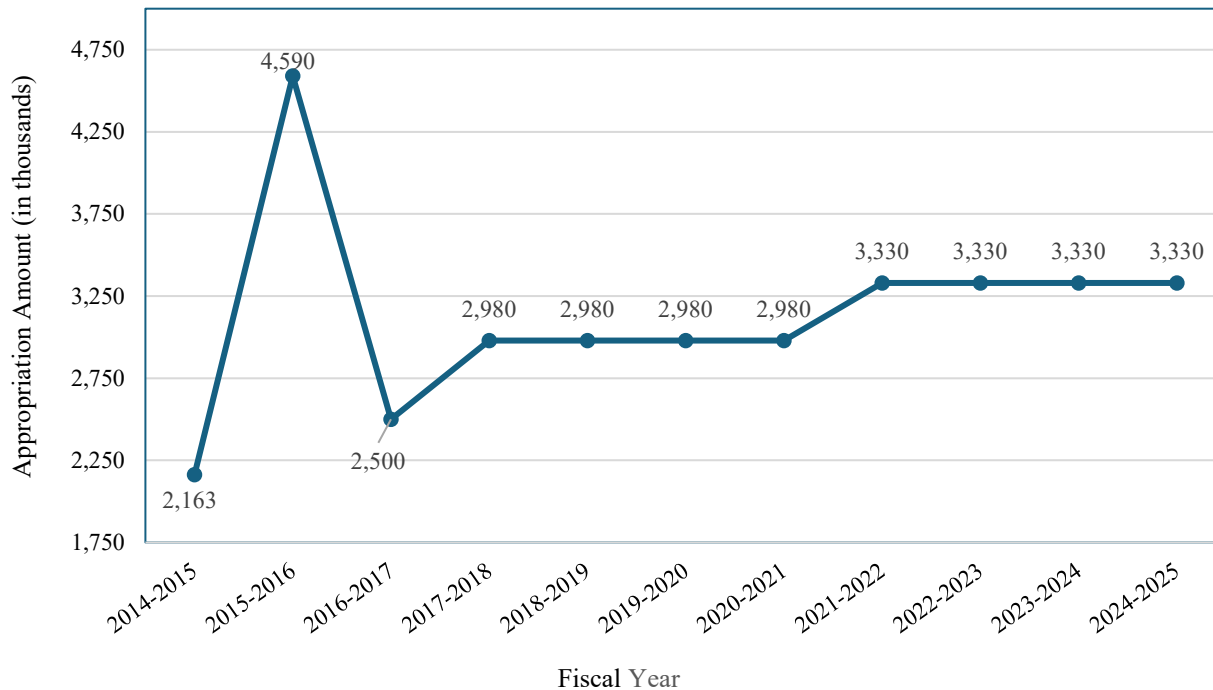
⁶⁴ “Line-of-Duty Death Benefits,” *Pennsylvania Department of General Services*, accessed April 18, 2026, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dgs/file-an-insurance-claim/line-of-duty-death-benefits>.

⁶⁵ Section 1 of the act of June 24, 1976 (P.L. 424, No. 101), referred to as the Emergency and Law Enforcement Personnel Death Benefits Act. The monthly income benefit was added to the act by the act of October 9, 2009 (P.L. 588, No. 51).

⁶⁶ Pa. H.B. 49 of 2016 P.N. 2546.

⁶⁷ Section 2 of the Emergency and Law Enforcement Personnel Death Benefits Act.

Chart 3
Pennsylvania Law Enforcement & Emergency Response
Personnel Death Benefit Budget
Fiscal Years 2014-2015 to 2024-2025



Source: In the 2017-2018 fiscal year, the enacted budget line appropriations consolidated the "Probation and Parole" category into the "Department of Corrections" which on some iterations of the budget is listed as the "Department of Criminal Justice," <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/budget/documents/publications-and-reports/commonwealthbudget/past-budgets-2020-21-to-2011-12/2017-18-budget-documents/2017-18%20line%20item%20appropriation.pdf>.

2025 House Bill 237, Printer's No. 1126, would amend the act to clarify that suicide of an emergency or law enforcement provider will be considered death in the line of duty when the persons acts while influenced by a diagnosed psychiatric disorder due to on-duty exposure to one or more traumatic events, or while influenced by an undiagnosed psychiatric disorder within 45 days of exposure to a traumatic event while in the line of duty. The bill was reported from committee, received first consideration, and was laid on the table on April 27, 2026.

Training

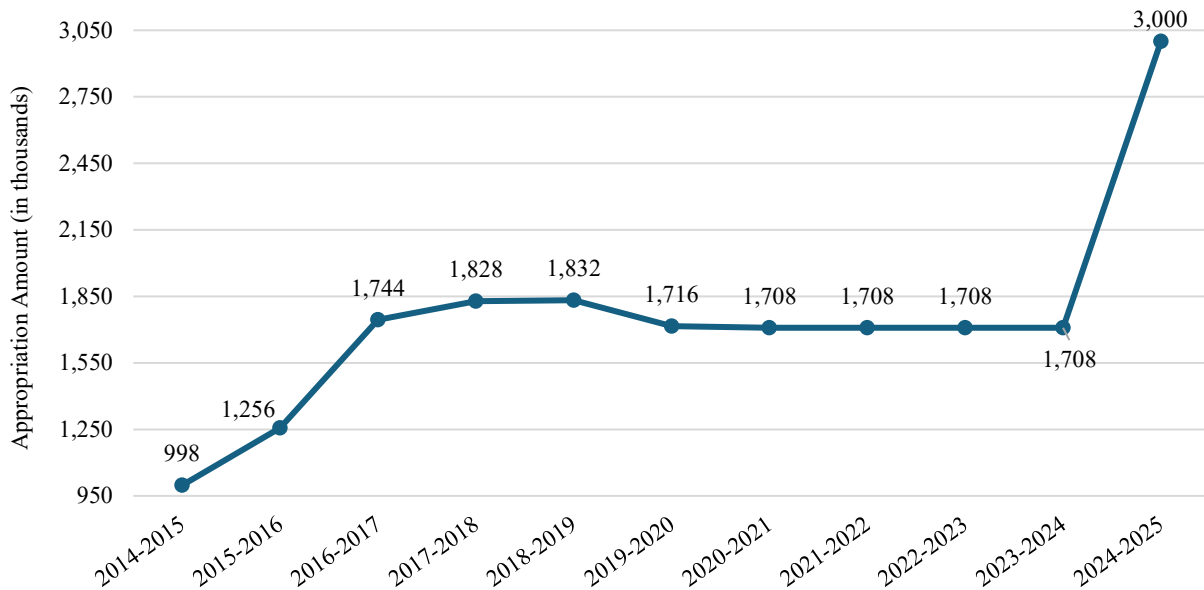
Currently, PCCD's Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Education and Training Program covers 100 percent for tuition costs and reimburses living and travel expenses as well as salary of sheriffs and deputy sheriffs while attending training and continuing education.⁶⁸ This is funded by a surcharge on all legal papers served by a sheriff or deputy sheriff.⁶⁹ Under existing law, the

⁶⁸ 44 Pa.C.S. § 7431.

⁶⁹ 44 Pa.C.S. § 7430.

Municipal Police Officers Education and Training Commissions (MPOETC) is directed to reimburse counties 100 percent for the cost of tuition and living and travel expenses of municipal police officers attending training and continuing education training schools, and 60 percent of the salary of those municipal police officers receiving training and education. Second class counties are liable for costs of certification of deputy sheriffs, and all counties are liable for certification of county park police.⁷⁰ This is funded by a \$5 million recurring allocation from the Motor License Fund of the Department of Transportation. If sufficient funding is not available, then MPOETC must make payments on a pro rata basis.⁷¹ For 2026, proration is occurring, and tuition is currently reimbursed at 75 percent and salary reimbursements are capped at 45 percent.⁷² Chart 4 indicates that funding for MPOETC reimbursements was virtually flat-lined from 2016 to 2024, with a substantial increase included in the 2024-2025 budget. Concerns about the ability of smaller municipalities to receive adequate funding under these MPOETC grants led to the introduction of 2026 House Bill 2251, Printer’s No. 2944, introduced and referred to the House Judiciary Committee on February 26, 2026. The bill would allocate 25 percent of the state funding under this program to townships and boroughs with populations of less than 20,000.

Chart 4
Pennsylvania Municipal Police Training Budget
Fiscal Years 2014-2015 to 2024-2025



Source: Compiled by JSGC by extracting enacted Pennsylvania Budget Appropriations for fiscal year 2014-15 through fiscal year 2024-2025.

⁷⁰ 53 Pa.C.S. §§ 2170 and 2171.

⁷¹ 75 Pa.C.S. § 6118.

⁷² “Grant Reimbursement,” MPOETC, Press Release, accessed April 20, 2026, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/mpoetc/programs/grant-reimbursement>.

Other Areas

Under current state law, corrections officers involved in a collective bargaining dispute that is not reconciled must submit to binding arbitration, while prohibiting peace officers from striking at any time.⁷³ 2026 House Bill 2190, Printer's No. 2852, would add units of peace officers to the binding arbitration requirement. The bill was introduced and referred to the House Judiciary Committee on February 3, 2026. It was reported as amended by the House Judiciary Committee, received first consideration, and was laid on the table on April 27, 2026.

2025 House Bill 1722, Printer's No. 3277, would increase the annual salary of the Commissioner of the State Police from \$95,000 to \$100,000, commensurate with the salary of the Secretary of Corrections at \$100,000. The bill is also designed to align the Commissioner's salary with those of comparable officials in neighboring states. The bill was introduced and referred to the House Judiciary Committee on July 14, 2025. It was reported as amended by the House Judiciary Committee, received first consideration, and was laid on the table on September 23, 2025.

The Fuel the Force Act of 2026 was introduced in the U.S. Congress as HR7210 and referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means on January 22, 2026. The proposed federal legislation excludes the first \$100,000 of gross annual income from all categories of law enforcement personnel who worked full-time time as LEOs and have done so for an aggregate of five years as a LEO.

Stress, Fatigue, and Mental Health

Public safety occupations require many individuals to be in high stress situations daily. Frequent exposure to high levels of occupational stress is linked to an increase in the prevalence of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol and other substance use disorders, and burnout.⁷⁴ Not only do these stresses have a negative impact on the worker but can also indirectly compromise the safety and wellbeing of the communities being served. When an individual is exposed to a stressor, the brain releases cortisol, a stress hormone, that activates the fight, flight, or freeze response. This reaction causes an increase in heart rate and blood pressure, contributing to heightened mental awareness and preparing the body for physical activity.⁷⁵ Short-term stress is helpful for protecting the body during critical situations and sharpening mental awareness. When this state of heightened psychosomatic arousal is sustained for longer periods, individuals can begin to experience damaging physical and psychological effects.⁷⁶ Decision-making, a

⁷³ Section 805 of the act of July 23, 1970 (P.L.563, No.195), known as the Public Employee Relations Act,

⁷⁴ Lucas D. Baker et al., "Indirect Associations Between Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms and Other Psychiatric Symptoms, Alcohol Use, and Well-being via Psychological Flexibility Among Police Officers," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 35, no. 1 (2022): 55–65, doi: 10.1002/jts.22677, 2.

⁷⁵ Irwin M. Cohen et al., "Creating a Culture of Police Officer Wellness," *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 13, no. 2 (2019): 213–29, doi: 10.1093/police/paz001, 214.

⁷⁶ Cohen, 215.

foundational part of any public safety profession, can be impaired by chronic stress.⁷⁷ Researchers have shown that when the body is chronically flooded with stress hormones, can start to create negative physical effects.⁷⁸

Mental and behavioral health have become more recognized topics within the past two decades. From an increase in the number of service providers, to the evolution of diagnostic criteria, people are more than ever aware of the difficulties that come with mental health challenges. Despite a shift in awareness, the barriers that blocked previous generations from coming to terms with such issues have continued to hinder people's willingness to accept the help that has become more readily available.

The perpetuation of needing to appear "strong" or "put together," especially in public safety fields, has created an even more complex issue for those who struggle.

ABLE (Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement)

Law enforcement officers are often seen as a first line of response for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. Law Enforcement officers are not often provided with the necessary resources required to aid their own struggles. Zach Lilly, an FBI police officer, wrote an article focused on reducing the stigma surrounding law enforcement mental health, stated that, "They are reluctant to seek mental health care because they fear being viewed as weak or incapable of performing their duties."⁷⁹ Inconsistent data have been collected on the prevalence of mental health challenges within public safety related professions.⁸⁰ Recent research efforts have sought to mend the gap in data by conducting meta-analyses on the rate of officer suicidal ideation. Law enforcement officers are more likely to commit suicide using a deadly weapon, such as a gun, than any other method. Men are also more likely to die from a suicide attempt, as they are more likely than women to attempt suicide using a gun.

The fear of weakness is one of the driving factors in the high volume of first responder suicides.⁸¹ Law enforcement positions expose individuals to higher levels of psychological and physiological stress, creating a vulnerability that is often not present in nonpublic safety-related occupations. Corrections-related law enforcement positions have an even higher rate of risk associated with stress.

Culture of Silence

Being a law enforcement officer requires individuals to maintain a specific level of physical and psychological fitness. Maintaining this fitness is challenging, as officers need to be able to fulfill the demanding requirements of their position. Mental health is a topic that has slowly

⁷⁷ Meret S. Hofer and Shannon M. Savell, "There Was No Plan in Place to Get Us Help': Strategies for Improving Mental Health Service Utilization Among Law Enforcement," *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology* 36, no. 3 (2021): 543–57, doi: 10.1007/s11896-021-09451-0, p. 544.

⁷⁸ Irwin M. Cohen et al., "Creating a Culture of Police Officer Wellness," p. 215.

⁷⁹ Zach Lilly, "Reducing the Stigma Surrounding Mental Health," *FBI: Law Enforcement Bulletin*, May 9, 2023, <https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/featured-articles/reducing-the-stigma-surrounding-mental-health>.

⁸⁰ Daniel S. Lawrence and Jessica Dockstader, *Law Enforcement Deaths by Suicide*, (Arlington, VA), 2024, p. 2.

⁸¹ Daniel S. Lawrence and Jessica Dockstader, *Law Enforcement Deaths by Suicide*, (Arlington, VA), 2024.

become less stigmatized within modern culture; there is, however, an existing generational divide over the acceptance for mental health trouble. Older generations are perceived as believing younger generations are too “soft” or “emotional,” whereas younger generations view themselves as rewriting previous generations’ being told that mental and behavioral health concerns should be kept to themselves. Proper education surrounding mental health is crucial to deconstruct stigma, but efforts need to be made by individuals “at the top” for this to be effective.”⁸²

Vicarious Trauma

While PTSD is most recognized amongst combat veterans, law enforcement officials can also be subject to PTSD from traumatic experiences while on the job. Some officers may be significantly impacted by the violence that can occur in law enforcement operations. Some may also suffer from PTSD’s cousins: vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout. These mental well-being stressors can affect police, corrections officers, prosecutors, judges, and attorneys in high-conflict practices in general.

Vicarious trauma is “an occupational challenge for people working and volunteering in the fields of victim services, law enforcement, emergency medical services, fire services, and other allied professions, due to their continuous exposure to victims of trauma and violence.”⁸³ The U.S. DOJ’s Office for Victims of Crimes has produced a Vicarious Trauma Toolkit that is designed to assist organizations in becoming vicarious trauma aware, with resources and suggestions for how to support those groups likely to encounter trauma on a regular basis, including specific tools and resources for law enforcement agencies.

Burnout

Burnout, generally identified as exhaustion and disengagement, may or may not be trauma-related. Excessive workloads and perceived organizational injustice are also important factors contributing to burnout. A multi-national literature review from 2023 found that organizational and operational factors were the most predominant risk factors for burnout among police officers. These include work shifts, overtime work, lack of recognition, effort-reward imbalances, absence of leadership, and a feeling of lack of control over one’s work.⁸⁴

A 2023 study in Portugal looked at multiple theories regarding risk and protective factors for police officer burnout and examined them in light of a specialized police force. In police officers, burnout has been shown to negatively affect physical health, mental health, and a high

⁸² Linde Hoffman, Abigail Tucker, Joel Dvoskin, Lisa A. Kurtz, *Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) Employee Wellness Guidance* (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2025), p. 3.

⁸³ U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime, *The Vicarious Trauma Toolkit*,
<https://ovc.ojp.gov/program/vtt/what-is-vicarious-trauma>.

⁸⁴ Lucas Alves, Lee Abreo, Eleni Petkari, and Mariana Pinto da Costa, “Psychosocial risk and protective factors associated with burnout in police officers: A systemic review.” *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 283-298, 2023.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2023.03.081>.

risk of suicide. Burnout also negatively impacts the quality of the services police officers provide, the police organization for which they work, sickness absence, and increased turnover intent.⁸⁵

Moreover, burnout may also negatively affect the legitimacy of the social system itself, because police officers are representatives of the social system and they are armed. It has been shown that burnout in police officers is correlated with more positive attitudes towards the use of force and frequent use of violence during officers' duty and aggressivity.

...

Some of these factors have been found to have a significant impact on police officer burnout, namely high quantitative demands, high emotional demands, and high work family conflict, low social support and low sense of community, lack of job control, low job rewards, low work importance and significance, and shift work.⁸⁶ *(internal citations removed)*

The authors strongly recommend that police command hierarchy employ fair and respectful leadership, that gives a voice to their members, treats members with consideration and respect, and rewards them fairly. Furthermore, the authors recommend implementing transparent processes for adjudicating complaints and discipline.⁸⁷

Special Concerns Relating to Corrections Officers

A 2021 white paper by the national organization One Voice United Corrections articulated the challenges COs face across the country. According to the study, COs are experiencing mental health crises that outweigh even those of military veterans. Around 34 percent of correctional custody staff struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In comparison, 12 to 20 percent of Iraqi War veterans, 15 percent of male police officers, and 14 percent of emergency responders from 9/11 have PTSD. The general population experiences PTSD at rates of around 3.5 percent. Similarly, around 31 percent of COs experience depression, compared to 9.1 percent of the general population and 12 percent of police officers. As PTSD and depression are risk factors for heart disease, this means COs are also significantly more likely to experience these negative health effects from their role as well. Correctional officer mortality is well below the average life span of adults, at 59 years of age compared to 75 years for males and 80 years for females.⁸⁸

Though it can be difficult to quantify the true number of assaults on COs, some studies have estimated that between 83 to 321 offenders out of 1,000 will assault a CO. These assaults and the looming fear of an assault contribute to the psychological harm that COs experience.⁸⁹ Pennsylvania data collection from 2021-2022 shows lower rates, with 11.4 out of 1,000 offenders

⁸⁵ Isabel Correia, Angela Romao, Andreia e. Almeida, and Sara Ramos, "Protecting Police Officers Against Burnout: Overcoming a Fragmented Research Field," *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology* (2023): 1-17, <https://doi.org.10.1007/s11896-023-09584-4>

⁸⁶ Correia.

⁸⁷ Correia.

⁸⁸ Brian Dawe, Andy Potter, Simon Greer, et al., *I Am Not Okay* (One Voice United Corrections, 2021), 14-15.

⁸⁹ *I Am Not Okay*, 16-17.

being involved in inmate-on-staff violence. This amounted to 416 inmate-on-staff assaults in 2021-2022, resulting in 493 victims of assault and 51 major assault victims.⁹⁰

Interestingly, research has found that the highest contributor to stress in the workplace for COs is not the inmates; it is the policies, procedures, and administrators of the prisons that lead to 60 percent of CO stress. Abuse of authority and bullying by fellow COs accounts for another 15-20 percent of CO stress, leaving around 15-20 percent of that stress to be caused by inmates.⁹¹

The white paper identifies a few ways the current administrative structure harms COs. Correctional institutions typically operate through a command structure governed by administration with little to no room for a CO to object to a policy or decision. Though this approach in itself is not wrong, it opens the system up to weaknesses as administrations have more frequent turnovers due to political changes. Each time this leadership changes, the policies may change, giving COs whiplash but little avenue to voice their concerns about changes in policy. COs may disagree strongly with a certain policy but have no power to disregard orders that come from administration, causing internal turmoil for the CO.⁹²

The white paper also addresses the staffing shortages, claiming that disparities could be even larger than what is reported today. Older studies report inmate-to-staff ratios at around 5:1, but anecdotally the authors of the white paper believe that more updated numbers would be more like 60:1. This is because a simple ratio of officers employed by a correctional institution to inmates housed there does not account for the need for 24/7 coverage of the prison and vacation and sick time taken by COs. If COs are working 12-hour shifts, then essentially double the number of COs are needed to meet an appropriate ratio. The white paper suggests correctional institutions conduct “post audits,” where they examine the number of prisoners accounted for at each guard post throughout a 24-hour period to determine what the true ratios might look like. Higher ratios may bring more attention from lawmakers to improve conditions for COs.⁹³

COs often struggle to confront and process their experiences in their work. As the white paper notes, trust of other officers is paramount for a successful correctional institution. Officers must always believe that their fellow COs will have their back in a dangerous situation. If an officer shows sympathy or compassion to inmates, this can make other COs nervous that they will not act decisively in a dangerous situation. Therefore, COs will not share points of weakness with other COs or their families, internalizing these feelings instead. They will develop into psychological stressors for COs over time.⁹⁴

PTSI stands for Post-Traumatic Stress Injury, another term for PTSD. The three common types of stressors that COs face are operational stressors, organizational stressors, and traumatic stressors. Operational stressors include the fallout from understaffing and other working conditions like “mandatory overtime; equipment issues; noise; unclean space; temperature extremes; high

⁹⁰ *Department of Corrections Safety-Related Staffing Plans* (Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, October 2023), S-8, S-9.

⁹¹ *I Am Not Okay*, 21-22.

⁹² *I Am Not Okay*, 25.

⁹³ *I Am Not Okay*, 26.

⁹⁴ *I Am Not Okay*, 30.

workload; low job autonomy; and low job variety.”⁹⁵ Organizational stressors include interpersonal dynamics with members of administration or fellow COs. Traumatic stressors are the specific incidents that cause psychological harm to COs, and these can be either direct, where a CO was immediately involved in an incident, or indirect, where a CO hears about or watches footage of a traumatic incident after the fact.⁹⁶

As solutions, the white paper proposes a number of individual therapy and treatment options be available to COs to combat PTSD and high stress. Organizationally, the paper suggests that correctional institutions offer training on stress management, trauma, and nutrition and exercise for COs. These trainings should be led by outside organizations with no ties to institution administration. Administrations can also practice “transformational leadership,” which encourages collaboration across different levels of employees and allows COs to express concerns with policy or policy changes, working toward a more efficient system for all involved.⁹⁷

Federal Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Program

Established in 2018, the federal Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Program grant program supports implementation of law enforcement mental health and wellness initiatives nationwide. The program recommends crisis lines, mental health checks, and peer and family support programs for law enforcement personnel.⁹⁸ In 2025, over \$9 million in funding was awarded nationally, including \$51,867 to Lower Providence Township in Montgomery County and \$200,000 to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) in Philadelphia.⁹⁹

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing, a non-profit organization representing groups that deliver mental health and substance use recovery services. The organization sponsors the Mental Health First Aid program that offers in-person, partial in-person, or fully virtual training and courses which can be found through a search tool on the organization’s website.¹⁰⁰

The U.S. National Institute of Corrections offers Mental Health First Aid for Corrections Professionals training. Three 8-hour in-person sessions are scheduled around the country at various times. The next training offered near Pennsylvania is scheduled to start September 22, 2026, in Trenton, New Jersey. There is also a mailing list for individuals to sign up for notifications of future training opportunities.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ *I Am Not Okay*, 34.

⁹⁶ *I Am Not Okay*, 34.

⁹⁷ *I Am Not Okay*, 41-46.

⁹⁸ Deborah L. Spence, Melissa Fox, Gilbert C. Moore, Sarah Estill, and Nazmia E.A. Comrie. *Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act, Report to Congress March 2019* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice), https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/2019AwardDocs/lemhwa/Report_to_Congress.pdf.

⁹⁹ “Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2025 Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) Program Awards,” *U.S. Department of Justice*, https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/2025AwardDocs/lemhwa/award_list.pdf

¹⁰⁰ “About,” *National Council for Mental Wellbeing and Mental Health First Aid*, accessed April 17, 2026, <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/about-us/> and <https://mentalhealthfirstaid.org/about/>.

¹⁰¹ “Mental Health First Aid for Corrections Professionals 9/22,” *U.S. National Institute of Corrections*, <https://nicic.gov/training/schedule/in-person-ilt/mental-health-first-aid-corrections-professionals-922>.

Social and Psychological Impact on Current Police Officers and Potential Recruits

Highly publicized events such as the death of Michael Brown and the subsequent unrest in Ferguson, Missouri following his death in 2014, and the death of George Floyd and the unrest associated with it in Minneapolis in 2020 created a nationwide negative perception of police. Numerous studies found that recruitment and retention of law enforcement officers was impacted by these events. These studies noted a short-term effect, and some members of the Task Force believe that there are nuanced, lingering traces of those negative attitudes still contributing in small ways to present obstacles being encountered. This section reviews some of the research into these impacts but is not representative of the entirety of the field. Additionally, because of the increased visibility of police officers in a social media dominated world, broader use of body-worn cameras would provide another point of view to mitigate the magnified effect of specific incidents being shared on social media.

A 2021 survey sent to police chiefs across the country found that over 83 percent of respondents believed recruiting well-qualified candidates had become harder since the death of George Floyd. Over 45 percent strongly agreed with this statement. A majority of respondents did not see increased rates of retirement because of George Floyd's death, but 35 percent of respondents did. Over 80 percent of respondents felt that these events that were out of their control were affecting the public's attitudes toward police. Forty percent of chiefs noted a perceived decline in morale after the events of 2020, 32 percent noted no change, and 28 percent reported a positive effect on morale.¹⁰²

Interestingly, fewer than ten percent of chiefs believed that community sentiment toward the police had decreased since 2020. Just under 28 percent believed the community sentiment was unchanged and almost 63 percent believed it had strongly increased. Northeastern departments were more likely to report struggles with morale, recruitment, and suspects disobeying lawful orders than were southern departments, which is of particular relevance to Pennsylvania, which sits squarely in the middle of the Northeast. In this study, rural police departments struggled with recruitment more than metropolitan and micropolitan departments did.¹⁰³ The study's authors came to an interesting conclusion:

Despite widely portrayed vitriol toward police in the form of slogans such as “All Cops Are Bastards,” we found that 90% of chiefs felt that community support for their police either stayed the same or increased since the murder of George Floyd. It is possible that police chiefs in our sample consider such critics as more extreme or otherwise different from the typical constituent in their jurisdiction, or perceived that the occupational effects of Floyd's murder were acutely felt in their departments, but their own communities were not the source of them. The fact that a great majority of our respondents did not report changes in community support suggests recruitment challenges are caused by other factors. Significantly more

¹⁰² Brandon del Pozo, Saba Rouhani, M H Clark, et al., “Understaffed and Beleaguered: A National Survey of chiefs of Police about the Post-George Floyd Era,” *Policing* 47, no.5 (2024): 846-860, doi:10.1108/PIJPSM-12-2023-0171.

¹⁰³ Brandon del Pozo, “Understaffed and Beleaguered.”

research, especially including qualitative work, is needed to understand the causes of recruitment challenges in policing.¹⁰⁴

Previous catalysts for criminal justice reform, like the 2014 Ferguson protests, prompted claims by commentators that they would lead to an outsized recruitment and retention crisis. However, this conclusion was not borne out by studies completed after these events, aside from a study that showed a short-lived increase in violence toward police officers in the months following the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, and another that demonstrated that some college students were less likely to pursue a career in policing after these events.¹⁰⁵

The events of 2020, then, appear to be unique in their impact on recruitment and retention, with a handful of studies documenting decreased recruitment and increased separations in the years following 2020. Researchers theorize that the pervasiveness and democratization of social media may have led to these events reaching a broader audience than they may have previously.¹⁰⁶ One agency was analyzed through a synthetic control study which projected an expected trend in resignations and compared it to the actual resignations. The study found a 279 percent increase in resignations relative to the expected synthetic control resignations.¹⁰⁷

Though some studies and news coverage have highlighted the increase in recruitment and retention in the years following 2020, one study set out to determine the root causes for the increase, as the protesting of police was coupled with unrest due to COVID-19, vaccine mandates, and economic disruption. The surveys were distributed to eight police departments across the country over the course of 2021. In these survey responses, over 50 percent of respondents agreed that they had reconsidered their law enforcement career as a result of the reaction of the public to the George Floyd incident, with almost 25 percent of those strongly agreeing. Female officers were the most likely to reconsider their careers after this incident. Officers who perceived the public's perception as unsupportive toward police were more likely to reconsider their careers. Officers who were more concerned about their personal liability if qualified immunity was limited or eliminated also were more likely to reconsider their careers. This study demonstrates that George Floyd's death did have a more significant effect on police retention than previous studies of previous movements suggest. This study also found no significant difference between races and ethnicities on these issues. The authors of the study noted:

Officers who had meaningful concerns about public support, fallout in their community, media attention, and personal financial culpability were all more likely to say they reconsidered their careers. Contrary to our expectations, no significant findings were found for race or ethnicity, indicating that the effects were similar for any coded ancestry when compared to white or Caucasian officers. These two findings taken together provide support for the hypothesis that the reconsideration of a police career is not because of divergent personal principles regarding oneself

¹⁰⁴ Brandon del Pozo, "Understaffed and Beleaguered."

¹⁰⁵ Scott Mourtgos, Ian Adams, and Justin Nix, "Elevated Police Turnover Following the Summer of George Floyd Protests: A Synthetic Control Study," *Criminology and Public Policy* 21, no. 1 (February 2022): 9-33, doi: 10.1111/1745-9133.12556.

¹⁰⁶ Mourtgos, "Elevated Police Turnover."

¹⁰⁷ Mourtgos, "Elevated Police Turnover."

versus the institution, but rather over instrumental concerns in the working environment.¹⁰⁸

The authors of the study believed one of the most significant findings of the survey was the “litigaphobia” of officers, meaning their fear of being sued over an incident.¹⁰⁹ Litigaphobia can cause officers to hesitate in tense moments on duty, which could be a fatal mistake.

Other research amplifies the importance of “organizational, financial, and socio-political factors,” in officer leavism.¹¹⁰ The movement following George Floyd’s death appears to have created a broader socio-political effect than other police incidents, leading to an outsized effect on retention recorded by some studies. A study of several police agencies across the country found that most recorded a significant increase in resignations and retirements in the two years after George Floyd’s death. There was around a five percent surplus of resignations and retirements than would be normally expected. In this study, large metropolitan agencies seemed to struggle the most with turnover.¹¹¹

A few studies in the early 2020s, one focusing on adolescents and one focusing on college students, were able to demonstrate relationships between increased consumption of negative police content with lower interest in a career in policing. One of these studies emphasizes the power of social media; a short video of officer misconduct, perhaps lacking context, can be shared to an ever-widening social web that transcends cultural, language, and social barriers. It is easy to see how the sheer increase in level of exposure will increase any person on social media’s exposure to content casting police officers in a negative light. This study analyzed what kind of effect media exposure could have on college students’ occupational commitment to work in law enforcement. After surveying 259 criminal justice students at a midwestern university, the authors determined that students with a greater reported use of social media were less likely to want to be police officers. The analysis did not find a statistically significant relationship between time spent on specific apps or watching specific police-related content and occupational commitment to policing. Social media users were not using social media to find content about police misconduct.¹¹²

Findings of this study also affirmed previous research that individuals with positive attitudes toward police officers were more likely to become police officers themselves. Students who perceived the police profession to be stressful were actually more committed to the profession than those who did not perceive it to be as stressful. This study also found that interactions with police officers did not positively impact their desire to be police officers, which is contradictory to research from years prior. Younger male survey respondents were more likely to be committed to the profession.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Michael T. Rossler and Charles Scheer, “Causes of Police Officer Career Apprehension.”

¹⁰⁹ Michael T. Rossler and Charles Scheer, “Causes of Police Officer Career Apprehension.”

¹¹⁰ Ian Adams, Scott Mourtgos, and Justin Nix, “Turnover in Large US Policing Agencies Following the George Floyd Protests,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 88 (2023): 4, doi: 10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2023.102105.

¹¹¹ Adams, “Turnover in Large US Policing Agencies.”

¹¹² Xinting Wang, “The Influence of Social Media Consumption on College Students’ Perceived Commitment to the Police Occupation,” *Police Practice and Research* 24, no. 6(2023): 712, doi: 10.1080/15614263.2023.2168665.

¹¹³ Wang, “The Influence of Social Media Consumption on College Students,” 712-719.

Other studies have demonstrated a broader issue with recruiting young people to law enforcement careers, in conjunction with negative media and social media coverage, and offered some alternate avenues to begin targeted recruitment:

Studies on motivations to join and stay in the police force found that young generations are less interested in policing as a career (Carrier et al., 2021; Linos, 2018; Schuck, 2021). For example, in a summary of the potential reasons for the police staff shortage in Canada, Carrier et al. (2021) noted that young generations are more interested in other professions than policing, such as professional, paraprofessional, technical, industry, administrative, or customer service occupations (p.1586). Factors associated with the low applicant numbers in policing include the dangerous nature of police work, the potential psychological stresses, the inflexible work shifts, the lack of work-life balance, and the negative perceptions of police work they gained either from negative contact or media coverage (p. 1586–1587... For example, Linos’s (2018) field experiment on police advertisements reported that public service motivation was not attractive to young police applicants, whereas the career benefits and the challenge of the job were more interesting to them. Yet, some research found that women officers gave more preference to public service (e.g., helping people) than men, and Black officers emphasized the importance of altruistic motives and the improvement of minority communities.¹¹⁴

Societal Attitudes Towards Law Enforcement Personnel

Gallup Polls have been asking survey respondents about their confidence level in the police since 1993. In 1993, around 52 percent of respondents had a “great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence. This number peaked in 2004 with 64 percent having a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in police. Since 2004 this number hovered in the mid-to-low 50s, then dropping in 2020 to 48 percent. There was a slight upward tick in 2021 to 51 percent, then another drop throughout 2022 and 2023 to its low of 43 percent. In 2024, the number rose again to 51 percent. From 2023 to 2024, people between the ages of 18 and 34, people of color, and registered Independent voters recorded the greatest positive changes in confidence, mostly because their 2023 numbers were much lower than the average. Their 2024 numbers moved back into a better range. Only one category lost confidence, moving from 44 percent to 41 percent: those aged 35-54.¹¹⁵

When asked specifically about local police, Black adults’ confidence rose from 58 to 64 percent from 2023 to 2024, but remained significantly lower than White adults’ confidence of 77 percent in 2024. Sixty-four percent of Black adults were satisfied with their local police’s relationship with the community, as opposed to 81 percent of White adults’. When asked if they believed local police treated them fairly, 67 percent of Blacks believed they were treated fairly compared to 90 percent of White adults. Similarly, when asked if they believed local police would

¹¹⁴ Wang, “The Influence of Social Media Consumption on College Students,” 712.

¹¹⁵ Megan Brennan, “U.S. Confidence in Institutions Mostly Flat, But Police Up,” *Gallup*, last modified July 15, 2024, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/647303/confidence-institutions-mostly-flat-police.aspx>.

treat them respectfully, 75 percent of Black adults said yes compared to 91 percent of White adults. Black adults aged 18-39 had lower levels of confidence than those of other ages.¹¹⁶

In 2025, a group of researchers conducted surveys of criminal justice students at two liberal arts colleges on the East Coast, one in Pennsylvania and one in New York. Previous studies had examined the possible effect of social media in the 2020s and provided inconclusive results on its impact in the recruitment and retention crisis in law enforcement.¹¹⁷

With the instability of COVID-19 and conversations around defunding the police in the rearview mirror, this study similarly set out to assess those effects and determine if more conclusive evidence could be collected. Though this study asked students to rate their change of opinion on a positive to negative scale, the study focused simply on the power of social media to change opinions, not what those changes were. Therefore, responses were aggregated into “change” or “no change.”

When asked if viewing videos of police incidents changed their perceptions of police, around 57 percent of students said it did not while around 43 said that it did. When asked if viewing those videos changed their desire to have a career in law enforcement, around 86 percent said it did not and around 14 percent said that it did. When asked how often they watched videos of police misconduct, just over 70 percent said they seldom or never did, while 25 percent said they often did, and almost 4 percent said they watch these videos daily. When asked if social media coverage of police incidents was accurate, a small portion of around 17 percent said it was mostly or very accurate. The most popular answer was moderately accurate with 37 percent and slightly accurate with around 26 percent, then not accurate at around 20 percent.

The researcher’s analysis of the survey results found that those with the highest amount of consumption of negative police media and those who perceived media coverage of police as accurate were more likely to change their career plans. The researchers strongly encouraged media literacy training for young people so that they can interact critically with negative social media content about policing and evaluate its accuracy.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Megan Brenan, “Racial Divide on Policing Narrows 5 Years After Floyd Death,” *Gallup*, last modified May 23, 2025, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/690959/racial-divide-policing-narrows-years-floyd-death.aspx>.

¹¹⁷ Ko-Hsin Hsu, Jaeyong Choi, and Melanie C. Mogavero, “The Role of Social Media in Undergraduate Students’ Perceptions of Police and Career Interest in Law Enforcement,” *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* (2025): 1-18, DOI: 10.1080/10511253.2025.2485977.

¹¹⁸ Hsu, “The Role of Social Media.”

ONGOING RECRUITMENT EFFORTS BY STATE AND NATIONAL AGENCIES

In 2019, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) issued a report that highlighted some strategies that agencies were employing to find more recruits.¹¹⁹ While a few years old, this report was very comprehensive and included efforts that predated the “defund the police” movement. The four major takeaways from PERF’s 2019 report for increasing retention were recommendations to provide:

- Professional development opportunities,
- Flexible schedules that allow employees to maintain the work-life balance they desire,
- Wellness programs such as physical fitness facilities, and
- A healthy “culture” in the workplace, in which employees feel that their work is valued, and they are treated fairly and with respect by their bosses and their colleagues.¹²⁰

Many agencies offer salary for recruits going through the academy, pay for the training costs, or offer college tuition reimbursement. A few agencies offered a childcare benefit, student loan forgiveness programs, and assistance for relocation. Some agencies have tried other methods to expand their recruitment pool, like relaxing standards on tattoos and previous drug use, or recruiting what would be considered “untraditional applicants.”¹²¹ Recruiting untraditional applicants means increasing recruiting efforts at colleges outside of standard career fairs by fostering relationships with those colleges, appearing and recruiting at community events, and showing special attention to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Some agencies even offer internship opportunities for college students at local agencies to expose them to the field and increase interest. A few departments also offer boot camps or other forms of support for applicants who are struggling to meet the physical requirements.¹²²

A smaller number of agencies have reduced the minimum education requirement for applicants, which might be considered controversial. Proponents of easing academic standards argue that the cost of a college education has increased, influencing many young people’s decisions on whether they should acquire an associate or bachelor’s degree. In 2016, the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD) lowered its educational requirements to a high school diploma or equivalent but simultaneously raised the minimum age to 22. These modifications meant the department was

¹¹⁹ *The Workforce Crisis, and What Police Agencies are Doing About It* (Police Executive Research Forum, September 2019), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>. PERF is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. and is a membership organization of police officials, academics, federal government leaders, and others with an interest in policing and criminal justice.

¹²⁰ *The Workforce Crisis*, 51.

¹²¹ *The Workforce Crisis*.

¹²² *The Workforce Crisis*.

able to attract applicants with life experience while reducing the educational requirements. The change led to a 20 percent increase in applications.¹²³ As of 2025, the educational requirement for the PPD is still a high school diploma or equivalent, but the minimum age has been lowered to 20.¹²⁴

Others in the criminal justice field do not believe that lowering the educational standards will benefit agencies. In the words of the PERF report, “the benefits of a college experience, including exposure to diversity and development of critical thinking skills, are critical to the job of police officers today, but are not always taught in the police academy.”¹²⁵ Researchers in 2010 found a significant relationship between officers’ education levels and their use of force in two large cities. Officers with higher levels of education were less likely to use force than were those who stopped with a high school degree.¹²⁶ In order to protect against this scenario, agencies might provide incentives upon the hiring of a recruit to encourage participation in higher education, like tuition reimbursement.¹²⁷

Officers appreciated the opportunity to explore areas of the agency outside of their assignment and opportunities to increase their knowledge and abilities. Some departments allow officers hours within the year to shadow someone in a different area of the department. Others evaluate each officer’s individual interests and strengths and plan to meet certain personal development goals. In 2019, officers in Washington, D.C. could register for the Police for Tomorrow Fellowship, which allowed officers to attend monthly sessions held by the Georgetown University Law Center Program on topics pertinent to law enforcement and community development.

To promote work-life balance among officers, some departments have moved their scheduling systems away from a seniority-based system that would give weekends off to those with more experience and service time to a system that allows all officers to have one or two weekends off a month. This emphasis on flexibility and time off is important as overtime pay is not seen as a powerful incentive for the new generation of recruits.¹²⁸

In March 2026, the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics released a report reviewing hiring and retention efforts of state and local law enforcement officers during 2020. The survey shows a nationally representative sample of general law enforcement agencies, including municipal, county, and regional police departments, sheriffs’ offices, primary state and highway patrol agencies. While informative, the report has some limitations in that it does not break down information by state or even geographic region. The report found that in terms of recruiting, the most valued financial incentive was “salary paid during academic training” (68.6 percent of respondents). This was followed by free or reimbursed academic training (49.2 percent). Employee signing bonuses and relocation assistance were not preferred inducements, and were

¹²³ *The Workforce Crisis*.

¹²⁴ “Qualifications and Requirements,” *Join Philly PD*, accessed November 18, 2025, <https://joinphillypd.com/index.php/qualifications/overview>.

¹²⁵ *The Workforce Crisis*, 37.

¹²⁶ Jason Rydberg and William Terrill, “The Effect of Higher Education Police Behavior,” *Policy Quarterly* 13, No. 1(2010):110, doi: 10.1177/1098611109357325.

¹²⁷ *The Workforce Crisis*.

¹²⁸ *The Workforce Crisis*.

chosen by as 5.1 percent and 1.3 percent of respondents, respectively.¹²⁹ The report found that special pay was offered almost twice as often in large agencies (500 or more sworn officers) compared to smaller ones (24 or fewer sworn officers).¹³⁰ An average of 91.4 percent of agencies offered any kind of retention benefit. Overall, free uniforms or a financial allowance for uniforms, extra overtime opportunities, employee assistance programs, and take-home vehicles were among positive retention inducements.¹³¹

In early June 2026, the U.S. Department of Justice announced its Model Cities Initiative to assist cities in reducing violence, crime, and disorder. The initiative will distribute \$300 million to two to four cities over 36 months. Allowable costs include hiring and retaining personnel. Eligible cities must have populations over 100,000. The application deadline is September 1, 2026.¹³² In Pennsylvania, the cities of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Allentown would be eligible to apply.¹³³

Role of Community Policing and Outreach

Though there are many changes that could improve recruitment and retention, one option suggested by the PERF was to emphasize policing as a public service career rather than an action-packed SWAT or military-adjacent career. This is a marketing perspective, as the actual policing career has historically prioritized service to the community. However, at times, news media and popular entertainment emphasize more action-packed police work than the community service and criminal justice administrative duties officers also perform. When recruitment campaigns showcase the more dramatic features of the job over the mundane aspects, it may attract a limited pool of applicants. PERF recommended that departments become creative in their marketing of the career opportunities available to attract a broader range of applicants who may be a good fit for the actual day-to-day work of law enforcement. Realistic “day-in-the-life” video blogs may give prospective applicants a better sense of what police work looks like on a daily basis. This perspective can emphasize the amount of time spent in the community building relationships and providing public services as a core component of the profession.¹³⁴

A 2019 field experiment studied the effects of community policing on attitudes toward police officers. Residents were randomly selected to participate in a survey on their attitudes toward local government, including police. Half of these received visits from officers in

¹²⁹ Rachel Arietti, and Sean E. Goodison, “Hiring and Retention of State and Local Law Enforcement Officers, 2020 – Statistical Tables,” Table 8, pg. 11, *U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs*, NCJ 310652, March 2026, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/hiring-and-retention-state-and-local-law-enforcement-officers-2020-statistical-tables>.

¹³⁰ Arietti, Table 9, pg. 12.

¹³¹ Arietti, Table 10, pg. 13.

¹³² U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs, “Making America Safe Again: DOJ to Award \$300 Million to Model Cities Dedicated to Restoring Law and Order,” June 3, 2026. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/making-america-safe-again-doj-award-300-million-model-cities-dedicated-restoring-law-and>

¹³³ “Pennsylvania Cities by Population 2026,” *World Population Review*, accessed June 4, 2026. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/pennsylvania>

¹³⁴ *The Workforce Crisis*.

community policing and half were the control group that did not receive any visits. On visits, officers knocked on people's doors, assured them that everything was fine, then spoke to them for ten minutes using strategies to encourage positive interactions. At the end, officers provided the residents with a business card with their personal work number written on it.¹³⁵

In surveys provided to all residents before the officer visits (“baseline”), immediately following, and three weeks after, questions targeted four key metrics: legitimacy, perceived effectiveness, cooperation, and compliance. In all four categories, survey findings showed that officer visits had a significant positive effect on the residents' perceptions. Overall, positive feelings overall toward officers increased by 9.5 points on a 100-point scale. The perceptions of police performance and legitimacy rose the most, and residents' willingness to cooperate and comply with law enforcement also increased. Black residents experienced an effect almost twice as high as White residents, and those who had a negative baseline attitude toward police experienced more significant changes as well. The survey respondents were also asked for their opinions on various policy actions, such as increasing the police force by 10 percent. After officer visits, community support for increasing the police force grew. This experiment illustrates the power of a single positive interaction with an officer and its ability to shape both policy and public opinion.¹³⁶

Interactions with Individuals with Mental or Behavioral Health Issues

One area where policing and vulnerable citizens can clash is when persons with mental or behavioral health problems are involved in an incident where police are called. If individuals with mental health needs do not receive the help they need, the likelihood of interactions with the police unfortunately increases as does the likelihood of them becoming victims. The individual may be threatening harm to themselves and others or acting erratically. The first officer on the scene has two duties – to eliminate threats and minimize harm.¹³⁷ Responding to mental health crises can put those two goals in opposition. In addition to achieving these goals, finding ways to improve the ability of police to interact with persons displaying aggressive behaviors due to a crisis can also help the public understand the reasons for some police behaviors and how deadly outcomes can occur.

A Congressional Resource Service (CRS) report in 2022 discussed various ways for law enforcement to respond to mental health crises. The report discussed three models in use across the United States, including co-responder teams, mobile crisis teams, and crisis intervention teams. The co-responder and mobile crisis team models include civilian mental health professionals as part of the response team. Crisis intervention teams (CITs) include specially trained law enforcement officers.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Kyle Peytona, Michael Sierra-Arévaloc, and David G. Rand, “A Field Experiment on Community Policing and Police Legitimacy,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116, No. 40 (October 1, 2019): 19894-19898, DOI: 10.1073/pnas.1910157116.

¹³⁶ Peytona.

¹³⁷ “Policing Code of Ethics,” *IACP*, 2024, <https://www.theiacp.org/resources/policing-code-of-ethics>.

¹³⁸ Johnathan H. Duff, Jill C. Gallagher, Nathan James, and Isobel Sorenson, “Issues in Law Enforcement Reform: Responding to Mental Health Crises,” *Congressional Research Service*, October 17, 2022, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R47285>.

Pennsylvania has focused primarily on crisis intervention teams, although the other models have also been implemented. Crisis intervention is a short-term emergency response designed to assist individuals experiencing acute emotional, mental or behavioral problems.¹³⁹ These services are intended to provide relief from an instance where the individual in question may be a danger to themselves or others. The goal is to deescalate the individual in crisis and refer them to other resources if appropriate. Individuals who work in crisis intervention have specialized training regarding behavioral health.

The CRS report also suggested specialized training for dispatchers. 911 operators receive a high volume of calls each day that often require the dispatchers to transfer the caller to the department that can best handle the issue at hand. With law enforcement positions having vacancies for extended periods of time, it is necessary to distribute the existing force to matters of the highest priority. Adding behavioral health and mental health related specialists to the force to respond to mental and behavioral health emergencies could not only reduce case volume per officer but also ensure that these cases are handled by properly trained individuals. In situations that may be out of the traditional scope for street police, specialists would ensure that street officers could focus on maintaining justice and order in their communities.¹⁴⁰

These dispatchers are trained in deescalation techniques, and work to calm the individual in crisis and prevent them from harming themselves or others. When a person is experiencing a mental health crisis, it can be difficult to understand what that person is seeing through their eyes. If the person had previous contact with law enforcement, seeing uniformed officers may increase their stress levels and continue to escalate the situation. It may be triggering to see officers, reminding them of a time when law enforcement was deployed during a mental health crisis.¹⁴¹

From a law enforcement officer's perspective, the individual having a mental health crisis could be a threat to the officer's safety and has escalated past the point that deescalation tactics would be employed. This can lead to an increase in the use of force and potentially worsen the severity of a mental health crisis.¹⁴²

The importance of community-based policing is also at work with CIT programs. Officers who are familiar faces in their communities and able to recognize when an individual is only a danger to themselves and not others, will be less likely to use deadly force when responding to a mental health crisis.

Pennsylvania's Crisis Intervention Training and Technical Assistance Center (CIT TAC)

In response to an increasing volume of public health related emergencies and incidents of gun violence in Pennsylvania, PCCD leveraged its formula-base federal Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP) grant award to strengthen community-based responses to behavioral

¹³⁹ "Crisis Intervention," *Department of Human Services, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, accessed January 14, 2026, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dhs/resources/mental-health-substance-use-disorder/crisis-intervention>.

¹⁴⁰ Duff et al.

¹⁴¹ Duff et al.

¹⁴² Duff et al.

health crises.¹⁴³ In 2025, PCCD used federal Byrne SCIP funding to launch the Pennsylvania CIT Training and Technical Assistance Center (CIT TAC), A first-of-its-kind statewide initiative that serves as a “one-stop” shop for training, tools, data support, and hands-on assistance to help jurisdictions build, expand, and sustain effective CIT programs.

Developed in partnership with the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Grants, the Department of Human Services, and CIT International, the CIT TAC supports collaboration among law enforcement, behavioral health providers and community partners to improve crisis response outcomes. The CIT TAC is a significant step forward for Pennsylvania’s CIT investments, building on more than a decade of efforts to advance CIT adoption across the Commonwealth by PCCD’s Mental Health and Justice Advisory Committee and other key partners.

Stepping Up Initiative

Seeing an influx of incarcerated individuals with comorbidities such as substance use disorders and serious mental illness (SMI), PCCD sought to aid local systems such as jails and emergency dispatchers by integrating the Stepping Up Initiative, a collaboration between CSG’s Justice Center, the National Association of Counties, and the American Psychiatric Association.¹⁴⁴ PCCD utilized federal Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) funding to launch one of the first statewide Stepping Up Initiatives to better serve those with behavioral health needs who come in contact with the criminal justice system.¹⁴⁵ This initiative led to PCCD’s involvement with the “Stepping Up Initiative,” a framework with an overarching goal of reducing the number of individuals with mental health related issues being incarcerated.¹⁴⁶ Some actions taken by police departments in relation to the CIT and Stepping Up Initiatives around the state are detailed below.

Individual County Responses

In addition to these statewide initiatives, the Commonwealth has also support local behavioral health and justice initiatives. As an example, funded through the PCCD’s Justice Assistance Grant, the Dauphin County CIT’s goal is to improve the county’s criminal justice response to individuals with severe mental health diagnoses.

Current Departments in Dauphin County with trained CIT officers:

- Capitol Police
- Dauphin County Sheriff’s Office
- Derry Township
- Harrisburg Bureau of Police

¹⁴³ Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, *Pennsylvania FY 2022-23 Byrne SCIP Funds Program Narrative* (n.d.), <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/pccd/documents/criminaljustice/gunviolence/documents/pennsylvania%20scip%20program%20narrative.pdf>, 4.

¹⁴⁴ “The Solution,” *Step Up Together*, <https://stepuptogether.org/about/the-solution/#/>.

¹⁴⁵ Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, *Pennsylvania FY 2022-23 Byrne SCIP Funds Program Narrative* (n.d.), 4.

¹⁴⁶ *Pennsylvania FY 2022-23 Byrne SCIP Funds Program Narrative* (n.d.), 3-4.

- Highspire Borough
- Hummelstown Borough
- Lower Paxton Township
- Lower Swatara Township
- Middletown Borough
- Penbrook Borough
- Penn State Harrisburg
- PSP Troop H
- Steelton Borough
- Susquehanna Township
- Swatara Township

Chester County was involved in a case study conducted by CSG the Stepping Up Initiative which sought to reduce the number of individuals with mental illness that are in jails by evaluating how county operations affect public safety and guide individuals with mental illness on paths towards treatment rather than incarceration.¹⁴⁷ The first step in achieving this goal is to better equip law enforcement and other community-based service providers with the tools to respond to individuals with mental illness.¹⁴⁸

Emergency mental health resources, intervention from behavioral health specialists, and direct care initiatives have also been adopted by many counties in recent years. As an example, these initiatives have been established in the counties of Lancaster, Franklin, York, Adams, and Lebanon. York, Adams, and Lebanon counties also provide Mobile Crisis Intervention services through WellSpan Health system. As another example, there is a Mobile CIT in Montgomery County, among other counties. The programs are imbedded within the police departments and are contracted out by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services' Office of Mental Health and Intellectual and Development Disabilities.¹⁴⁹

Police Training Activities

Act 120 Training Curriculum

Act 120 of 1974 was established for Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission (MOPETC) to create a curriculum for basic training of municipal police officers. This curriculum has been revised over time but establishes minimum program standards of training and performance for those becoming entry-level police officers in the Commonwealth.¹⁵⁰ For an officer

¹⁴⁷ National Association of Counties, The Council of State Governments Justice Center, American Psychiatric Association, *The Stepping Up Initiative Six Questions Case Studies* (The Stepping Up Initiative, n.d.), https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/documents/Six%20Questions%20Case%20Studies%20Report_FINAL.pdf, 1.

¹⁴⁸ National Association of Counties, *The Stepping Up Initiative*, 1.

¹⁴⁹ “‘A Better Approach’: WellSpan Crisis Counselors Aid Police on Mental Health Calls,” *WellSpan*, May 2, 2023, <https://www.wellspan.org/articles/2023/05/11735>.

¹⁵⁰ Michael Corricelli, *Municipal Police Officer Basic Training Program* (2024),

to become MPOETC certified, they are required to meet the basic training requirements, complete a certification examination, meet certification qualifications for law enforcement employment, and gain employment by a police department.¹⁵¹

MPOETC’s training program was established through the expertise of existing and former law enforcement officers and instructors. Cadets take examinations throughout the program based on the “instructional objectives” contained in each of the five modules that identify general training topics broken into sections. Cadets must achieve a combined score of at least 80 percent across the instructional objectives of each module.¹⁵² These sections have an outline that provides instruction on the topic as well as “instructional objectives.”¹⁵³ The following are the topics covered in the program:¹⁵⁴

Module 1

- Volume 1: Introduction to the Academy
- Volume 2: Introduction to Law Enforcement in Pennsylvania
- Volume 3: Laws & Criminal Procedures

Module 2

- Volume 4: Juveniles
- Volume 5: Human Relations
- Volume 6: Responding to Special Needs
- Volume 7: Homeland Security
- Volume 8: Vehicle Code Enforcement
- Volume 9: Crash Investigation

Module 3

- Volume 10: Patrol Procedures and Operations
- Volume 11: Criminal Investigation
- Volume 12: Drug Law Enforcement
- Volume 13: Case Presentation

https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/mpoetc/documents/training/basic-police-officer-training/curriculum_overview_2024.pdf, 2.

¹⁵¹ “Municipal Police Officer Certification,” *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*,

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/mpoetc/programs/certification/municipal-police-officer-certification>.

¹⁵² Michael Corricelli, *Municipal Police Officer Basic Training Program*, 4.

¹⁵³ Michael Corricelli, *Municipal Police Officer Basic Training Program*, 3.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Corricelli, *Municipal Police Officer Basic Training Program*, 3.

Module 4

Volume 14: Operation of Patrol Vehicles
Volume 15: Physical & Emotional Readiness
Volume 16: Control Tactics
Volume 17: Firearms
Volume 18: Emergency Response Training

Module 5

Volume 19: Scenarios & Practical Exercises

After all modules in the program are complete, cadets will be eligible to take the state Certification Exam administered by MPOETC but are not certified until they are then hired by a police department and the department applies for their certification.¹⁵⁵

Pennsylvania Certified Act 120 Basic Training Programs

As of 2026, there are 24 schools that offer certified Act 120 Basic Training Programs.¹⁵⁶ Some of these institutions only offer Police Academy training under the Act 120 program, but others such as the Commonwealth University-Mansfield, offers students who are pursuing a Criminal Justice degree, a pathway program that can be integrated with the Municipal Police Academy Curriculum.¹⁵⁷ Some of the 24, such as training centers run by the Pennsylvania State Police, accept only students hired by municipal police departments.¹⁵⁸ At least six of Act 120 training institutions also offer Act 235 lethal weapons training, which is a separate certification administered by the Pennsylvania State Police. There is a total of 20 institutions that offer Act 235 training.¹⁵⁹

Secondary and Post Secondary Educational Institutions

While a college degree is typically not required for many traditional law enforcement positions, the ability to leverage individuals pursuing degrees related to the field may be beneficial

¹⁵⁵ Michael Corricelli, *Municipal Police Officer Basic Training Program*, 4.

¹⁵⁶ “Certified Schools, Municipal Police Officers’ Education and Training Commission| Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,” *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Municipal Police Officers’ Education and Training Commission*, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/mpoetc/programs/training/basic-police-officer-training/certified-schools>.

¹⁵⁷ “Act 120 Municipal Police Academy | Commonwealth University,” *Commonwealth University of Pennsylvania*, <https://www.commonwealthu.edu/academics/workforce-development/act-120-municipal-police-academy>.

¹⁵⁸ “Certified Schools, Municipal Police Officers’ Education and Training Commission| Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,” *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Municipal Police Officers’ Education and Training Commission*, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/mpoetc/programs/training/basic-police-officer-training/certified-schools>.

¹⁵⁹ “Certified Schools,” *Pennsylvania State Police, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/psp/programs/law-enforcement-training/lethal-weapons-training-program/certified-schools>.

for recruitment. College programs sponsored by law enforcement departments allow students the opportunity to immerse themselves within the existing law enforcement culture and get firsthand experience in day-to-day operations. These programs not only allow students to continue their academic area of study but also give receive crucial law enforcement training. The dual pathway learning approach provides law enforcement with a more diverse pool of applicants that can combine interest in the law enforcement profession with their studies in areas such as psychology, criminology and political science. Having recruits with diverse academic backgrounds is beneficial not only to traditional officer positions but also for those who go into more specialized areas such as crisis intervention and community policing initiatives.

Having students interact with existing law enforcement can strengthen younger generations' trust in law enforcement. Getting youth immersed in the law enforcement profession early and seeing that they can make a difference in the creation of a new generation of law enforcement. Many of those currently in the profession have stated that their early career aspirations were much different from the positions they currently hold. If recruitment efforts begin early enough and continue while individuals are completing their education, law enforcement departments may have an easier recruitment process overall.

Secondary Education Programs

The Pennsylvania Department of Education supports 84 career and technical centers and 145 high schools offering career and technical education. Approximately 10 percent (22) of these schools offer a criminal justice/police science program. These schools include:

- Adams County Technical Institute
- Forbes Road Career and Technical Center (Allegheny County)
- Lenape Tech (Armstrong County)
- Berks Career and Technical Center East Campus
- Upper Bucks County Technical School
- Chester County Technical High School – Brandywine
- Chester County Technical High School – Pennocks
- Chester County Technical High School – Pickering
- Clarion County Career Center
- Cumberland Perry Area Career and Technical Center
- Lebanon County Career and Technical Center
- Lehigh County Career and Technical Institute
- Hazleton Area Career Center (Luzern County)
- West Side Career and Technical Center (Luzerne County)
- Wilkes-Barre Area Career and Technical Center (Luzerne County)
- Lycoming Career and Technical Center
- Monroe Career and Technical Institute
- Central Montco Technical High School
- Schuylkill Technical Centers – South Campus

- Susquehanna County Career and Technical Center
- SUN Area Technical Institute (Union County)
- York County School of Technology

Post-Secondary Institutions

Numerous nonprofit colleges and universities in Pennsylvania offer degrees in criminal justice. These include 33 institutions offering associate’s degrees, including 24 community colleges and trade schools, 83 institutions offering bachelor’s degrees, and 29 offering master’s or doctoral degrees.¹⁶⁰

In 2024, MPOETC approved a new police academy in association with Elizabethtown College. Additionally, four other colleges are considering collaborative efforts to establish new academies at Bucks County Community College, Luzerne County Community College, Penn State Dubois, and Penn West University.¹⁶¹ Luzerne County Community College is already certified for Act 235 lethal weapons training.¹⁶²

Other States’ Law Enforcement Education Programs

Table 2 shows law enforcement training and pathway education programs offered by other states that may be helpful for future curriculum development and recruitment efforts:

Table 2
Other States’
Law Enforcement Education Programs
2026

State	Programs	Webpage
Illinois	City Colleges of Chicago “Future Ready” Program	https://pages.ccc.edu/futuready/

¹⁶⁰ “Pennsylvania Criminal Justice Schools,” updated October 31, 2023. Criminal Justice Degree Schools is an independent educational resource website. <https://www.criminaljusticedegreeschools.com/degree-by-state/pennsylvania>. See also, “2026 Associate Degrees in Criminal Justice at Community Colleges & Trade Schools in Pennsylvania,” accessed April 17, 2026, Niche is an internet college search engine. <https://www.niche.com/colleges/search/top-associates-degrees-in-criminal-justice/s/pennsylvania/>.

¹⁶¹ “Municipal Police Officers’ Commission Approves New Police Academy,” *Pennsylvania State Police, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, December 18, 2024, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/psp/newsroom/municipal-police-officers--commission-approves-new-police-academ>.

¹⁶² Certified Schools, *PSP*.

Table 2
Other States’
Law Enforcement Education Programs
2026

State	Programs	Webpage
Massachusetts	Merrimack College Master of Science in Criminology and Criminal Justice with Police Academy Certification	https://www.merrimack.edu/academics/education-and-social-policy/graduate/criminology-and-criminal-justice/
	Bristol, MA Community College Certificate of Achievement in Law Enforcement with courses towards the Associate in Science in Criminal Justice degree program	http://catalog.bristolcc.edu/criminal-justice/law-enforcement-certificate
New Jersey	The state of New Jersey has several counties offering “Alternate Route” programs for individuals with 60 college credits or 2 years of active-duty military service	https://www.ccstest.com/new-jersey-police-academy-alternate-route-programs-ccs-test-prep/
Missouri	Metropolitan Community College River Public Safety Institute Police Academy program: offers students the ability to receive State of Missouri Law Enforcement License and 37 credit (State of Missouri Law Enforcement License and 37 credits towards degree in police science	http://mccckc.edu/programs/police-science/index.aspx
Minnesota	Minnesota’s Professional Peace Officer (includes municipal police, sheriffs, and sheriff deputies) Education Program for those with postsecondary degrees	https://mn.gov/post/applicants/generalinformation/
Hawaii	Police Services Officer Positions offer transitional employment for individuals not yet qualified for a regular Police Recruit Position	https://www.joinhonolulu.org/about.html
	Honolulu Police Department Defense SkillBridge program: trains active-duty military members in their last 90 days of service for entering law enforcement upon discharge	https://www.joinhonolulu.org/about.html
Oklahoma	Tulsa Community College: earning an associate degree in Criminal Justice or Psychology to then work towards completing a Bachelor of Professional Studies in Public Safety. Students complete the final 15 credits of their degree in the Police Academy while doing paid police work	https://www.tulsacc.edu/academics/paths/university-transfer/partners/osu/police-career-program
California	Los Angeles Valley College Police Orientation and Preparation Program: Associate degree program recruiting current 12th graders interested in law enforcement to join the LAPD	https://www.lavc.edu/academics/popp
	Law Enforcement Candidate Scholar’s Program at Sacramento State College: students become involved in various law enforcement positions while completing their college degree to create a pathway into a future full time officer position	https://www.csus.edu/college/health-human-services/criminal-justice/law-enforcement-candidate-scholars.html

Source: Compiled by JSGC staff from individual state and local websites, January 2026.

*Police Apprenticeships and Youth Law Enforcement,
Public Safety, and Legal Experience Programs*

Police apprenticeships can function as a way for future hires to see what it means to be involved in law enforcement and to attract younger, more qualified candidates to open positions. Not only does this allow for ease of transition but gives apprentices first-hand experience of life as a police officer. In response to the growing number of vacancies in law enforcement and public safety occupations the U.S. Department of Education created a “Career Cluster” entitled “Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security.”¹⁶³ The Law and Public Safety Education Network (LASPEN) was established to serve schools that have law enforcement and public safety related career programs by enhancing curriculum development and supporting youth interested in these careers.¹⁶⁴ A comprehensive list of programs by state can be found in the LASPEN Directory of Youth Law Enforcement, Public Safety, and Legal Experience Programs.¹⁶⁵

Future Careers for Youth

In addition to short-term adjustments to standards or salaries or recruitment strategies, there are long-term programs that can interest young people in a career in public service. Law Enforcement Exploring is run by a Boy Scouts of America affiliate called Learning for Life. Young people between the ages of 10 and 20 are able to ride along with officers, volunteer at community events, and learn leadership skills.¹⁶⁶ The Northern York County Regional Police Department offers a Law Enforcement Exploring Program. According to its website, applicants can expect to learn about several categories:

- Criminal law
- Traffic law
- Criminal investigation
- Crime prevention
- Traffic control and direction
- Accident investigation
- Juvenile delinquency
- Other related topics which are integral parts of law enforcement.¹⁶⁷

Participants must be 14 years of age or older, be U.S. citizens, maintain a “C” average in school, be upstanding citizens, have approval from their parents, and not have health or safety concerns that would affect the safety of themselves or others if they participated.¹⁶⁸ This program offers young people a unique opportunity to understand the struggles and benefits of a life in public

¹⁶³ “Who Is LAPSEN, United States, Law and Public Safety Network, LAPSEN,” *LAPSEN*, 2020, <https://lapsen.org/who-we-are/>.

¹⁶⁴ “Who Is LAPSEN.”

¹⁶⁵ “Searchable Program Directory, LAPSEN,” *Law and Public Safety Education Network*, July 6, 2022, <https://lapsen.org/searchable-program-directory/>.

¹⁶⁶ *The Workforce Crisis*.

¹⁶⁷ “Explorer’s Program,” *Northern York County Regional Police Department*, accessed January 15, 2026, https://nycrpd.org/?page_id=15068.

¹⁶⁸ “Explorer’s Program,” *Northern York County Regional Police Department*.

service. They may become interested in police careers, or they may simply carry that perspective to their community and social circles, increasing positive perceptions of police officers in their community. Though this program is national, departments could run similar programs locally that are specific to their department or region. One way to incentivize participation in such a program is college credits or a tuition grant for participants.¹⁶⁹

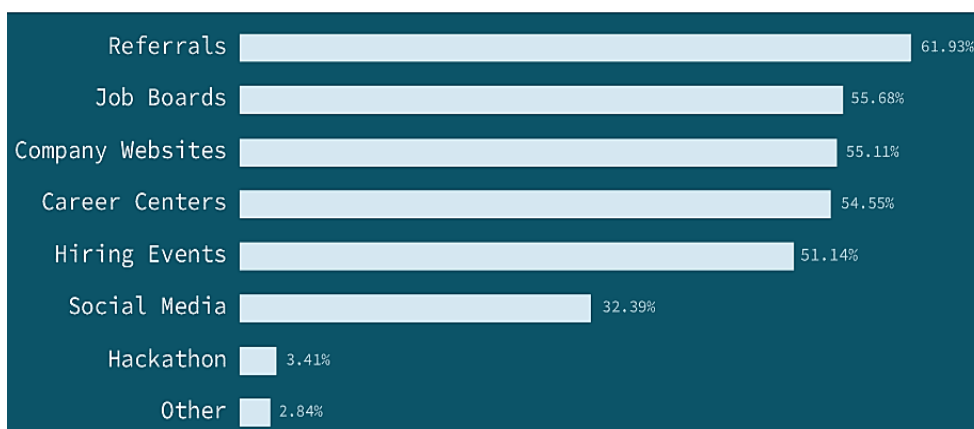
Law Schools and Prosecutor Recruitment

Federal and state efforts are underway to assist in the recruitment of prosecutors, and these will be discussed in more detail in the chapter dedicated to district attorneys.

Online and Social Media Engagement

Yello is a Chicago-based talent acquisition software company that specializes in assisting companies in early-career and campus recruitment through recruitment programs. The company is primarily focused on college campuses and represents 100 Fortune 500 companies, is active in over 70 countries and produces materials in 15 different languages. The company conducted research on recruitment efforts that are most favored by Generation Z candidates in 2019, the first year the cohort began to graduate from college. Generation Z is commonly defined as people born between 1997 and 2012.¹⁷⁰

Generation Z's Most Valuable Job Search Sources



Source: Jennifer Kiesewetter, “Research: Gen Z’s Favorite Places to Look for Jobs,” Blog Post, August 6, 2025. <https://yello.co/blog/research-gen-zs-favorite-places-to-look-for-jobs/>. Data drawn from “Meet Generation Z: The New High-Tech and High-Touch Generation of Talent,” the 2019 Yello Recruiting Study, <https://yello.co/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2019-Recruiting-Study-FINAL.pdf>.

¹⁶⁹ Timothy Karch, “Playing the Long Game: Law Enforcement Recruitment,” *Law Enforcement Bulletin*, last modified March 7, 2024, <https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/featured-articles/playing-the-long-game-law-enforcement-recruitment>.

¹⁷⁰ Michael Dimock, “Defining Generations: When Millennials end and Generation Z Begins,” *Pew Research Center*, January 17, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/>.

Using these preferred search methods as a guide, it is clear that Pennsylvania’s law enforcement, corrections, and prosecutors have made some inroads into Gen Z.

Referrals were cited as the most valuable job search source among Gen Z jobseekers. Recommendation #8 detailed at the beginning of this report would further encourage the development of personal referrals by creating a bonus program to reward service members for referrals.

The second most cited resource in the 2019 study was job boards. While there are several job boards in existence, they are all limited to a particular level of law enforcement, e.g., state level police versus local level police jobs. The official Commonwealth of Pennsylvania website lists position by job category, including corrections, law enforcement, and safety.¹⁷¹ The County Commissioner Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) lists career opportunities by county, including deputy sheriffs and local corrections officers.¹⁷² The Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association also maintains a job board that lists municipal police job openings.¹⁷³ The Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association (PDAA) maintains a job board as well, organized by county.¹⁷⁴ This patchwork approach may hinder the ability of agencies to reach new and emerging professionals who may lack awareness of where to search for specific job opportunities in their field of interest.

Social media, another method of job searching, tends to be focused on specific platforms. The Society for Human Resource Management reviewed research released in 2025 and concluded that Gen Z social media job searches are most likely to occur on TikTok and Instagram, although a third of survey respondents indicated that they also used LinkedIn for career related content and networking.¹⁷⁵

In 2023, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) obtained a grant through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), which it used to fund an initiative to improve law enforcement recruitment. The Pennsylvania State Troopers Association, the PA Chiefs of Police, the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association and the Attorney General’s office joined in creating a website <https://www.partnersinpublicsafety.com> that provided law enforcement testimonials for media outlets as a recruitment proposal. The grant has expired, but the FOP continues to maintain the website, which could serve as a central clearinghouse for all law enforcement entities, and assist in promoting social media content, but additional funding would be needed, and participation from all law enforcement representative groups would strengthen the effort to centralize information for job seekers.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ “Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Opportunities for All Job Seekers,” *Governmentjobs.com*, accessed April 20, 2026, <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/pabureau>.

¹⁷² “Welcome to Career Opportunities,” *County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania*, accessed April 20, 2026, <https://www.pacounties.org/about/job-postings>

¹⁷³ “Jobs,” *Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association*, accessed April 20, 2026, <https://www.pachiefs.org/jobs>.

¹⁷⁴ “Job Openings,” *Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association*, accessed April 20, 2026, <https://www.pdaa.org/job-openings/>.

¹⁷⁵ Nick Ferrera, “How Social Media is Redefining Job Hunting for Gen Z Professionals,” *SHRM*, February 26, 2025, <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/how-social-media-is-redefining-job-hunting-gen-z>.

¹⁷⁶ “Home,” *Partners in Public Safety*, accessed June 2, 2026, <https://www.partnersinpublicsafety.com/>.

Veterans Transitioning to Civilian Law Enforcement

U.S. military veterans are typically a reliable source of recruits for law enforcement agencies and other public safety organizations. However, a decrease in military enlistments has led to a corresponding decline in veterans to be recruited, but Pennsylvania law enforcement agencies continue to target this demographic to find physically and mentally fit, hard-working, disciplined applicants. In Pennsylvania, by way of 51 Pa.C.S. § 7103, veterans receive Veterans' Preference for Commonwealth jobs, meaning they receive an additional ten points to their civil service exam scores. Spouses of deceased veterans and spouses of permanently totally disabled veterans are also eligible for this same preferential treatment.¹⁷⁷ Veterans may also qualify for additional benefits as part of the recruitment or training process offered through local hiring initiatives. As an example, the Philadelphia Police Academy is a non-college degree program and recruits are eligible for a housing allowance through the Post-9/11 GI Bill of \$2,184 per month and a book stipend of \$1,000 a year while attending the Academy. After graduation, veterans can continue to receive the same housing allowance for their first six months and \$1,747 per month for the following six months.¹⁷⁸

Police agencies have targeted military veterans for recruitment for many years. Agencies believe that veterans' experience with tactical skills, leadership, and working well in high-pressure situations makes them valuable law enforcement officers. Both careers have similar cultures, emphasizing "masculinity, toughness, and danger."¹⁷⁹ Veterans have experience with a command structure "characterized by strict rules, harsh discipline, and authoritarian leadership styles," which can be more of a culture shock to those not familiar with this command structure.¹⁸⁰ Research has shown that veterans who stay in policing longer have less stress related to their career than younger, less experienced civilians. Prominent use of SWAT operations and similar activities within law enforcement recruitment videos may also resonate more with candidates with military experience given their prior training and familiarity with these scenarios.¹⁸¹

While there are a number of documented benefits to recruiting and hiring veterans and other military-connected individuals, there may also be potential risk law enforcement agencies should keep in mind. A 2024 study of the Charleston Police Department (CPD) found that some veterans includes the veterans may have unrealistic expectations of police work; even though it is important for officers to have tactical training and experience, much of their day-to-day duties involve public assistance and calls for service, not tense tactical scenarios. Veterans may leave law enforcement if the duties of the job do not match these expectations. This study found that veterans were 67 percent more likely than civilians to leave CPD. The median length of service for a veteran at CPD was 55 months, shorter than the 74-month median of officers recruited from civilian life.

¹⁷⁷ "Veterans' Preference," *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, accessed February 3, 2026, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/scsc/veterans>.

¹⁷⁸ "Careers, Veterans," *Philadelphia Police Department*, accessed February 3, 2026, <https://joinphillypd.com/careers/veterans/>.

¹⁷⁹ Bradley O'Guinn, Elias Nader, Dannelle Goldberg, and Anthony Gibson, "Does Prior Military and/or Law Enforcement Experience Influence Officer Retention? A Case Study of the Charleston Police Department," *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, 18 (2024): 2, doi: 10.1093/police/paad087.

¹⁸⁰ O'Guinn, "Does Prior Military and/or Law Enforcement Experience Influence Officer Retention?" 3.

¹⁸¹ O'Guinn, "Does Prior Military and/or Law Enforcement Experience Influence Officer Retention?" 3.

In other words, at CPD, veterans were more likely to leave the agency and stayed for shorter periods of time than civilians. Additionally, veterans are offered hiring preferences and pay incentives in federal positions, meaning local law enforcement agencies are potentially competing with stronger offers from the federal government.¹⁸²

That same study examined prior law enforcement service as a potential factor in resignation rates for CPD officers, ultimately finding that officers with prior law enforcement experience stayed at the agency around 30 months longer than those with no prior experience. The authors note that the results of this study should not discourage the recruitment of veterans; researchers should simply focus on what the possible reasons may be for their resignations and address these issues at their root.¹⁸³

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) released a brief on strategies for recruiting veterans as law enforcement in 2011. One strategy was to include more obvious mentions of veteran law enforcement members on agency websites where potential recruits would look for job opportunities. LEAs will be able to recruit military veterans more easily if the agency is able to clearly communicate its desire and ability to support them. An agency can do this by adding a separate page for veterans, providing an email to contact a police officer who has military experience to answer possible questions the veteran may have, and a page with FAQs that veterans may have. Agencies should also become a presence at local military or veteran events so that they can nurture relationships with potential recruits. If there is a nearby military base, agencies can prepare a small flyer with important information about their agency that can be easily distributed across bases to potential recruits.¹⁸⁴

Agency recruiter teams should be well-educated on the specific employment protections afforded to military personnel under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)¹⁸⁵ and any other resources that are available to veterans upon return to civilian life. Agencies may want to require training covering these topics for any officer that is recruiting and working with veterans. The IACP also published guidebooks, discussed below, which agency leadership can consult for best practices and important information on employing veterans as law enforcement officers. Agencies can also offer incentives to recruit veterans, which Pennsylvania does, as discussed above.¹⁸⁶

Agencies should have a strong presence at job fairs both on and off military bases. Recruiters will connect with potential recruits best if they have previous military experience and can relate with potential recruits. Marketing literature used at job fairs or distributed to military bases should clearly emphasize the connection between the skills learned in the military and a career in law enforcement. Similar advertisements can be distributed through military base newspapers, localized military or police newsletters, and several national online military publications. Agencies can also use previously existing online job search platforms that have been

¹⁸² O’Guinn, “Does Prior Military and/or Law Enforcement Experience Influence Officer Retention?” 3.

¹⁸³ O’Guinn, “Does Prior Military and/or Law Enforcement Experience Influence Officer Retention?” 7.

¹⁸⁴ *Employing Returning Combat Veterans as Law Enforcement Officers: Recruitment Strategies* (International Association of Chiefs of Police, Bureau of Justice Assistance, April 2011), <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/Recruitment%20Strategies.pdf>.

¹⁸⁵ 38 U.S.C. Chapter 43.

¹⁸⁶ *Employing Returning Combat Veterans as Law Enforcement Officers*.

deemed successful in their region to attract more veteran candidates. Agencies can post their marketing materials, upcoming job fairs, and job postings on social media. They should be aware that these posts will be seen and distributed broadly and make sure their message is specific and brief. The IACP's full 2011 report, which can be found at the hyperlink in footnote 134, includes more details on these recommendations.¹⁸⁷

The IACP released *Employing Returning Combat Veterans as Law Enforcement Officers: Supporting the Integration or Re-Integration of Military Personnel into Federal, State, Local, and Tribal Law Enforcement* in 2009. This project studied issues relevant to veterans in law enforcement careers. The report covers the value veterans bring to law enforcement agencies, some of the issues they may face in transition, the system's existing response, and recommendations for additional responses.

The report showed that PTSD was the most common challenge for veterans entering or returning to law enforcement. Beyond the barriers PTSD can create for veterans in their personal lives, it can also have negative effects on their professional lives, including attendance problems/frequent use of sick leave, difficulty passing fitness-for-duty tests, inappropriate use of force, and domestic disturbances/violence.¹⁸⁸

PTSD can sometimes be missed in the established demobilization process, which offers mental health support, because symptoms might first appear years after a traumatic incident.¹⁸⁹ Some veterans who are offered services in their health examination during demobilization never seek out mental health services beyond this examination. This is especially true for veterans in rural areas where mental health services are not readily accessible.¹⁹⁰

The positive experiences that veterans bring to law enforcement were also listed by the report:

- Physical abilities/conditioning
- Firearms training
- Leadership experience
- Combat experience
- Respect for discipline and authority
- Experience working with/in culturally/ethnically diverse groups¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ *Employing Returning Combat Veterans as Law Enforcement Officers*.

¹⁸⁸ *Employing Returning Combat Veterans as Law Enforcement Officers: Supporting the Integration or Re-Integration of Military Personnel into Federal, State, Local, and Tribal Law Enforcement* (International Association of Chiefs of Police, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Klein Associates, September 2009), <https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/Publications/IACPEmployingReturningVets.pdf>, 16.

¹⁸⁹ "PTSD: National Center for PTSD," *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*, updated March 26, 2025, https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/what/ptsd_basics.asp.

¹⁹⁰ *Employing Returning Combat Veterans as Law Enforcement Officers*, 16.

¹⁹¹ *Employing Returning Combat Veterans as Law Enforcement Officers*, 17.

The report states that these positive qualities are important to consider when recruiting veterans, but agencies must also be invested in creating the necessary training and support for transitioning from active military service to a law enforcement career.¹⁹²

The report notes that the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department uses a *Unit Commander Military Leave Resource Handbook* that similar handbooks could be modeled after. Additionally, as a result of the 2011 report, IACP committed to producing a guidebook for law enforcement leaders, a separate guidebook for combat veterans, and recommended training curricula for agencies and veterans.¹⁹³

The guidebook outlines the current—as of 2010—organization of military forces, provides information on common barriers that veterans entering law enforcement face, details the positive attribute veterans have as law enforcement officers, and lays out some strategies leaders can employ. It also includes training curriculum for how to integrate this content into the existing training framework. The content of this guidebook mirrors the previously addressed findings of *Employing Returning Combat Veterans as Law Enforcement Officers: Supporting the Integration or Re-Integration of Military Personnel into Federal, State, Local, and Tribal Law Enforcement*.

One new recommendation was the role of Military Liaison Officer (MLO). These officers should be veterans themselves, or at the very least have an understanding of military command structure and the unique challenge of transitioning to a nonmilitary career. They would handle any service-related concerns that a returning veteran has and respect proper confidentiality requirements. This officer should be comfortable with addressing the needs of both male and female veterans. MLOs should initiate relationships with their state's VA Transition Assistance Officers, who can connect them to additional resources available to veterans if necessary.¹⁹⁴ This program is now called the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).¹⁹⁵

When a veteran returns from a deployment during employment at a law enforcement agency, the guidebook recommends meeting with the veteran to debrief their experience. The veteran can share the personal development and experience they gained during their deployment, but they can also share barriers they are facing upon returning to the department. Most veterans that contributed to this body of research agreed that returning veterans need three to six months before returning to work. If departments can be proactive in their planning, they can ensure that veterans are able to take the time to adjust before returning to work without negatively affecting agency workflow.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² *Employing Returning Combat Veterans as Law Enforcement Officers*, 18.

¹⁹³ *Employing Returning Combat Veterans as Law Enforcement Officers*, 20.

¹⁹⁴ *Law Enforcement Leader's Guide on Combat Veterans: A Transition Guide for Veterans Beginning or Continuing Careers in Law Enforcement* (IACP, BJA, 2010), 1-9, https://rimpa.ri.gov/sites/g/files/xkgbur786/files/documents/publications/IACP_Combat_Vets_Leaders_Guide.pdf.

¹⁹⁵ "Your Transition Assistance Program," *VA.gov*, accessed February 25, 2026, <https://discover.va.gov/transition-programs/transition-assistance-program/>.

¹⁹⁶ *Law Enforcement Leader's Guide on Combat Veterans*, 9-12.

Though military service can lead to mental and physical health detriments for veterans, the USERRA does not allow agencies to mandate medical evaluations or fitness for duty evaluations for returning veterans. Instead, agencies should prepare a policy for transitioning veterans, understanding the elevated risk for officers to engage in counterproductive behavior. If an officer does engage in counterproductive behavior, further steps can be taken for fitness for duty or medical evaluations for individual officers. If the behavior is determined to not be related to a medical concern, the officer will be disciplined according to the department's policy. It will be helpful to veterans if agencies assign them projects or tasks upon their return that allow them to exercise the new skills they have learned from their deployment.¹⁹⁷

Some law enforcement duties that veterans must undertake upon returning may be a difficult adjustment from their previous "muscle memory." One such duty is driving; when deployed, veterans are trained in tactical driving and how to swerve to avoid potential threats, skills that are better suited to a combat zone than civilian streets. Additionally, veterans report more hesitancy when interacting with civilians than they did before deployment because even people who appeared to be civilians could be a threat in combat zones. Large crowds and loud sounds can also trigger similar hesitancy or trauma responses from their experiences in combat.¹⁹⁸

The guidebook provides a list of suggested training topics to include in a curriculum:

- Transitioning language from an environment where everyone is the enemy to an environment of community policing
- Reprogramming muscle memory to correspond to the equipment and tactics used in domestic environments
- Developing a comprehensive driver training program where the veteran can transition from tactical driving to domestic driving
- Demonstrating and teaching newly acquired department information technology
- Scenario-based training
- Reemphasizing warrant (constitutional) vs. warrantless (unconstitutional) searches
- Communication skills which emphasize civilian vs. military shorthand¹⁹⁹

The full action agenda for returning veterans and veteran recruits, metered out by time frame, and the IACP suggested training curriculum can be found in the source noted in the footnotes.

¹⁹⁷ *Law Enforcement Leader's Guide on Combat Veterans*, 13.

¹⁹⁸ *Law Enforcement Leader's Guide on Combat Veterans*, 17.

¹⁹⁹ *Law Enforcement Leader's Guide on Combat Veterans*, 18-19.

STATEWIDE LAW ENFORCEMENT

Pennsylvania State Police

The Pennsylvania State Police was the first uniformed police organization of its kind in the United States when it was created in 1905. The State Police force consisted of four companies, each of which included a captain, a lieutenant, five sergeants, and fifty men, for a total force of 228 men. Salaries were established in the enabling act, and recruits were required to pass a physical and medical evaluation under the standards of the police force of Philadelphia, be a United States citizen, of sound constitution, able to ride [horses], of good moral character, and between 21 and 40 years of age. The department would provide suitable uniforms, arms, equipment and, when deemed necessary, horses.²⁰⁰ The companies were based in Greensburg, Wilkes-Barre, Reading, and Punxsutawney. In 1907 enlistment was restricted to single men, which was the rule until 1963.²⁰¹

The Department of Highways, now PennDOT, was established in 1903 to maintain state roads, and in 1923 the State Highway Patrol was established to carry out and enforce the provisions of the highway law.²⁰² In 1937, the two entities were merged into the Pennsylvania Motor Police Force.²⁰³ By 1943, the name had been changed to its current “Pennsylvania State Police (PSP).”²⁰⁴

By 1973, the size of the state police complement had been increased statutorily several times, to a total of 3,940 members.²⁰⁵ It reached 4,310 members by 2001, at which time the General Assembly amended the law to remove the cap on the force size.²⁰⁶ The cap was restored in 2013 to 4,310, where it currently remains.²⁰⁷ This cap impacts the ability of the PSP to recruit and train new officers, as PSP must wait for vacancies to occur in order to hire additional officers. With the growing dependence of municipalities on state police coverage, the PSP must cover larger geographic areas with the same number of patrols.²⁰⁸ Additionally, new positions created in response to technological advances, such as those in computer crimes, cause patrol officers to be moved into more specialized positions, again straining the resources of the PSP against the cap.

²⁰⁰ The act of May 2, 1905 (P.L.362, No.227).

²⁰¹ Pennsylvania State Police, “PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE HISTORICAL FACTS AND HIGHLIGHTS,” <https://patrooper.com/history.html>.

²⁰² Section 12 of the act of June 14, 1923 (P.L.718, No.296).

²⁰³ The act of June 29, 1937 (P.L.2436, No.455), an amendment to § 205 of the Administrative Code of 1929.

²⁰⁴ The act of April 28, 1943 (P.L.94, No.52), an amendment to § 205 of the Administrative Code of 1929.

²⁰⁵ The act of July 11, 1991 (P.L.73, No.12), an amendment to § 205 of the Administrative Code of 1929.

²⁰⁶ The act of December 13, 2001 (P.L.903, No.43), an amendment § 205 to the Administrative Code of 1929.

²⁰⁷ The act of July 2, 2013 (P.L. 249, No. 43), an amendment § 205 to the Administrative Code of 1929.

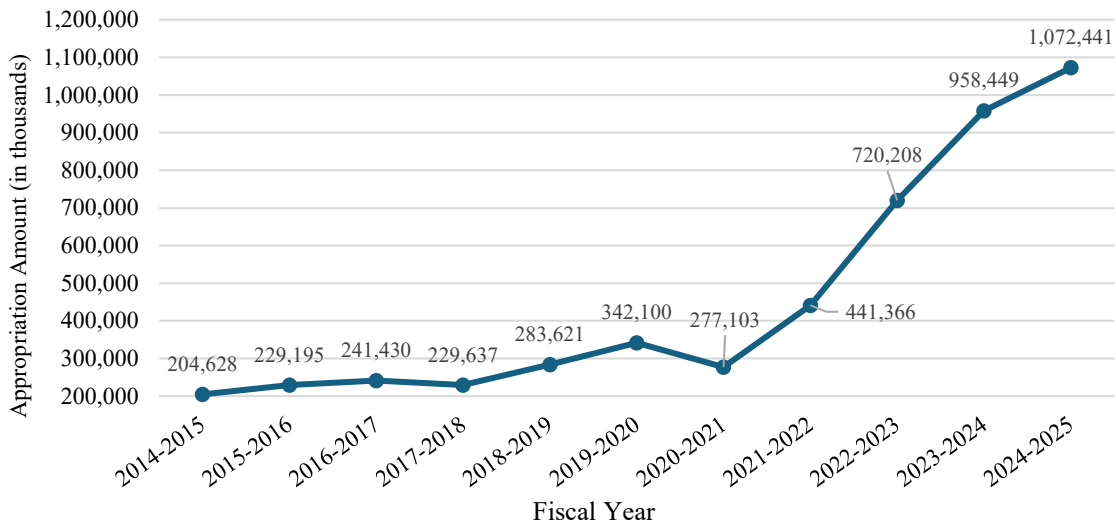
²⁰⁸ See discuss under the Municipal Police section, *infra*.

Pennsylvania State Police Troops – Assigned Counties²⁰⁹

Troop A	Cambria and Somerset Counties, and parts of Indiana and Westmoreland Counties
Troop B	Fayette, Greene and Washington Counties, parts of Allegheny County, and Interstate 70 in Westmoreland County
Troop C	McKean, Forest, Elk Clarion, Jefferson and Clearfield Counties, and parts Indiana and Warren Counties, and Interstate 80 in Butler County
Troop D	Beaver, Lawrence, Mercer, and Armstrong Counties, and parts of Butler and Allegheny Counties and Interstate 80 in Venango County
Troop E	Crawford and Erie Counties, and parts of Venango and Warren Counties
Troop F	Cameron, Clinton, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Tioga, and Union Counties
Troop G	Centre, Blair, Huntingdon, Mifflin, Juanita, Bedford and Fulton Counties.
Troop H	Perry, Cumberland, Dauphin, Adams, and Franklin Counties
Troop J	Lancaster, Chester, and York Counties
Troop K	Philadelphia, Montgomery, and Delaware Counties
Troop L	Berks, Lebanon, Schuylkill Counties
Troop M	Bucks, Lehigh, and Northampton Counties
Troop N	Columbia, Carbon, and Monroe Counties, and parts of Luzerne County
Troop P	Wyoming, Bradford, and Sullivan Counties, and parts of Luzerne County
Troop R	Susquehanna, Wayne, Pike, and Lackawanna Counties
Troop T	Pennsylvania Turnpike

State Police General Government Operations Appropriations

Chart 5
Pennsylvania State Police General Government Operations Budget
Fiscal Years 2014-2015 to 2024-2025



Source: Compiled by JSGC by extracting enacted Pennsylvania Budget Appropriations for fiscal years 2014-15 through fiscal years 2024-2025.

²⁰⁹ “Troop Directory,” *Pennsylvania State Police*, accessed December 19, 2025, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/psp/contact-psp/psp-troop-directory>.

Between 2023 and 2025, the Shapiro Administration budgeted funding to finance 800 new cadets, a new training academy in Hershey that is scheduled to open in 2028 and removed the college credit requirement for new applicants. Applications to the Police Academy were reportedly up 258 percent from August 2023 to August 2025, attributed at least in part to the removal of the college credit requirement.²¹⁰

Qualifications

An individual cannot suddenly decide to become a state trooper, fill out a job application, and start on the job with full authority and responsibility quickly. An individual must first apply to become a cadet trainee and must attend the PSP training academy. Cadet eligibility requirements include that a person must be between 21 and 40 years of age prior to the date of appointment as a cadet. Additionally, cadets and troopers must:

- Have a valid driver's license from any state upon appointment as a cadet;
- Be a resident of Pennsylvania and possess a valid driver's license from Pennsylvania at the time of academy graduation; and
- Be a United States citizen at the time of initial application.

Generally, police officers from other states will have to become a cadet, attend the academy and comply with the regular qualifications although a partial waiver of some training requirements may be waived based on prior experience.

Salary and Benefits

Cadets are paid a biweekly gross salary of \$1,664 during the 28-week training period. They are required to join the State Employees' Retirement System. Benefits include:

- Life insurance, after 90 days of employment, equal to their annual salary
- Medical/hospital coverage, with a 2.75 percent copay. Family plans can be paid for via payroll deduction as well
- Ineligible for overtime compensation or shift differential

Upon graduation from the police academy and appointment as a trooper, base salaries begin at \$71,647 and will rise during the first five years of service to reach a base salary of \$96,225 in the fifth year.²¹¹

²¹⁰ "Governor Shapiro Congratulates 173rd Cadet Class of the Pennsylvania State Police Academy, Highlights Historic Investments in Law Enforcement and Public Safety Initiatives Across the Commonwealth," Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Press Release, August 22, 2025, <https://www.pa.gov/governor/newsroom/2025-press-releases/gov-shapiro-congratulates-173rd-cadet-class-of-the-pa-state-poli0>.

²¹¹ "Cadet Information," *PaTrooper.com*, <https://patrooper.com/cadet-salary.html>.

Employee benefits for troopers include a uniform allowance, vacation, sick, and personal days as well as paid holidays. After graduation, troopers and their dependents become eligible for PSP's health care program, dental care program, vision care plan, prescription drug program, and a health reimbursement account, fully paid for by the Commonwealth.²¹²

Recruitment Programs

Youth recruitment programs are also a way to interest teenagers and young adults in a future career in law enforcement. Some PSP programs are offered around the Commonwealth, while others are only offered in specific geographic areas. The PSP has divided the Commonwealth into 15 regions served by Troops A-H, J-N, P, and R. An additional troop, Troop T, is responsible for the Pennsylvania Turnpike.

Camp Cadet

Camp Cadet is a summer camp for boys and girls from Pennsylvania between the ages of 12 and 15 and is offered by each troop, with the exception of Troop T. The camp is staffed by Troopers, local police officers, and other volunteers. The goal of Camp Cadet is to introduce participants to the diverse criminal justice system and establish a positive relationship with law enforcement personnel.²¹³

Camp Cadet is open to all youth and is structured similarly to training at the police academy. All participants who attend Camp Cadet are addressed as "Cadet" during the week. Cadets are required to participate in all scheduled events. The camp focuses on discipline, self-esteem, teamwork, drug and alcohol education, violence prevention, and many other issues facing today's youth. There is no cost associated with attending Camp Cadet.

PSP Youth Camp

The Pennsylvania State Police's annual youth camp's formal name is Elmer Hafer–American Legion–State Police–National Guard Youth Camp in Central Pennsylvania, scheduled to be held at Messiah College in 2026. The camp is six days long and takes participants through "police scenarios, physical fitness training, drill and ceremony, forensics, traffic and criminal law, water survival, marksmanship, and teambuilding. Cadets will also visit the State Police Academy in Hershey and Fort Indiantown Gap National Guard Training Center in Lebanon County."²¹⁴ Participants must be 15 to 17 years old and will compete to win one of three available \$1,000 scholarships at the close of the camp. Admission to the camp is covered by the American Legion, therefore free to the participants.²¹⁵

²¹² "State Trooper Position Information," *Pennsylvania State Police*, accessed April 20, 2026, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/psp/about-psp/employment/state-trooper-position-information>.

²¹³ "Troop Directory," *PSP*.

²¹⁴ "Pennsylvania State Police Accepting Applications for Youth Camp," Pennsylvania State Police, Press Release, January 12, 2026, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/psp/newsroom/pennsylvania-state-police-accepting-applications-for-youth-camp>.

²¹⁵ "Pennsylvania State Police Accepting Applications for Youth Camp," Pennsylvania State Police.

Hill Impact Program

The Hill Impact Program prepares youth aged 15 to 18 years old for the experience of becoming a cadet at a law enforcement academy. The program consists of weekly 2.5-hour instructional sessions on traffic, criminal investigations, plus other police procedures and resources. Cadets participate in marching and physical training and learn time management, self-discipline, and teamwork skills. This is a free program, and is offered by Troops A and N.²¹⁶ Cadets can apply for and attend Hill Impact multiple times until they reach age 19.

Law and Leadership Academy

Applicants 18 years or older who have graduated from high school or earned a GED may enroll in one of six regional Law and Leadership Academy programs across the Commonwealth. The program is 15 weeks long, begins in early May and continues through early August. Cadets meet twice a week, with occasional Saturday sessions throughout the program.

The program includes physical fitness, paramilitary discipline, law enforcement education, time and stress management skills, and hands-on practicums. Academies are located in Erie, Wilkes-Barre, State College, Hershey, Philadelphia, and Greensburg.²¹⁷

College Internship Program

Under a newly created internship program, students in their senior year at participating colleges and universities can earn their remaining credits toward an associate or bachelor's degree by successfully completing cadet basic training at the PSP Academy. The program is not limited to criminal justice majors.²¹⁸

Sunny Day Camp

Sunny Day Camp is a free one-day program designed to promote good relations between police and children and adults with special needs. The program is a one-day event, funded by donations from individuals and businesses, and troopers and other law enforcement personnel serve as off-duty volunteer camp counselors.²¹⁹ Every troop except Troop T offers Sunny Day Camp.

²¹⁶ "Youth Camp," *PSP*.

²¹⁷ "Law and Leadership Academy," *Pennsylvania State Police*, accessed April 20, 2026, [a.gov/agencies/psp/programs/law-and-leadership-program#accordion-bba5d7e6c3-item-6618127949](https://www.psp.pa.gov/agencies/psp/programs/law-and-leadership-program#accordion-bba5d7e6c3-item-6618127949).

²¹⁸ "New PSP Program Allows College Students to Finish Earning Degree by Completing State Trooper Training Academy," Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Press Release, December 20, 2025, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/psp/newsroom/new-program-allows-students-to-finish-earning-degree-by-completi>.

²¹⁹ "Who We Are," *Pennsylvania State Police Sunny Day Camp*, accessed April 20, 2026, <https://www.sunnydaycamp.org/who-we-are.html>.

PSP Joint Operations

Liquor Enforcement Officers

The Pennsylvania State Police, through the Bureau of Liquor Control Enforcement, recruits persons interested in a law enforcement career to become liquor enforcement officers. Like PSP troopers, they begin their career as a trainee, and must attend the Training Academy. Trainees earn \$1,770.40 to \$1,997.60 biweekly. After approximately 16 weeks of training, starting salary is \$55,436.²²⁰ They receive vacation and sick leave, as well as paid holidays. Pension, health and life insurance, and a work vehicle are provided.²²¹

The state is divided into nine liquor control enforcement districts:

District 1: Philadelphia	District 6: Williamsport
District 2: Wilkes-Barre	District 7: Punxsutawney
District 3: Harrisburg	District 8: Erie
District 4: Pittsburgh	District 9: Allentown ²²²
District 5: Altoona	

Liquor enforcement officers conduct investigations through undercover operations and uniformed inspections of licensed or unlicensed liquor establishments. They enforce the state's liquor laws, the clean air act, gambling regulations, and illegal sales of liquor to minors, as well as investigate nuisance bars, speakeasies, and routine liquor law compliance.²²³

Motor Carrier Safety Inspectors

Under the federal Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program, the Pennsylvania State Police is the designated state agency to receive federal grants to assist in reducing the number and severity of accidents and hazardous material incidents involving commercial motor vehicles.²²⁴ The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, through its Motor Carrier Enforcement Division employs Public Utility Enforcement Officers who have the authority to stop and inspect all commercial motor vehicles to ensure they are in safe working condition. In addition to those duties, these uniformed officers work with state and local police in accident response. Salaries range from \$50,836 to \$77,321. Applicants must meet residency requirements and have four years of any combination of law enforcement, regulatory enforcement, course work in police sciences or law enforcement experience and training. These officers work in all 67 counties.²²⁵

²²⁰ Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Opportunities for all Job Seekers, accessed April 21, 2026, <https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/pabureau/jobs/5283838/liquor-enforcement-officer-trainee-4020-selection-cycle?pagetype=jobOpportunitiesJobs>.

²²¹ "Liquor Enforcement Officer," *Pennsylvania State Police*, accessed April 21, 2026, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/psp/about-psp/employment/liquor-enforcement-officer-position-information>.

²²² "LCE Districts and Offices," *PSP*, accessed April 21, 2026, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/psp/contact-psp/bureau-and-office-directory/liquor-control-enforcement/lce-offices>.

²²³ "Types of Enforcement," *PSP*, accessed April 21, 2026, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/psp/contact-psp/bureau-and-office-directory/liquor-control-enforcement/types-of-enforcement>.

²²⁴ "Safety Assistance Program," *Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission*, accessed April 18, 2026, <https://www.puc.pa.gov/motor-carrier/safety-assistance-program/>.

²²⁵ "Public Utility Enforcement Officer – Allegheny and Butler Counties," *PAPUC*, accessed April 18, 2026,

Natural Resource Officers

Pennsylvania has several police forces working in the natural resources arena. They include:

- Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Park Rangers
- Wildlife Conservation Officers and Deputies (Game Commission Wardens)
- Waterways Conservation Officers and Deputies (Fish and Boat Commission)
- Forest Fire Wardens

Salary levels in the natural resource field are much lower than other statewide officers. DCNR Ranger Trainees are paid \$22.53 per hour, which annualizes to around \$46,862 at 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. Full-time DCNR Rangers earn \$45,859 to \$72,189 per year.²²⁶

The Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 114 supplied a position paper to the SR 94 Task Force that detailed the recruitment and retention struggles of the Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission. The lodge represents the officers of the two Commissions. Historically, the commissions were a popular “niche” law enforcement draw, and officers frequently stayed for 30 years or more. Applications have dropped dramatically, as attrition rates have grown to 40 percent of the waterways officers and 20 percent of game wardens. The Game Commission dropped its college requirement and saw minimal applicant increases. People are retiring earlier, and of the officers who left the agencies in the past 10 years, 90 percent left for better paying jobs in other law enforcement positions. According to the FOP Lodge 114 paper, the only issue for these natural resource agencies is pay. The paper states that these officers are the lowest paid law enforcement personnel in Commonwealth service, with starting salaries for cadets at \$47,987.²²⁷

Capitol Police

Capitol Police officers are charged with patrolling and protecting the Capitol Complex and surrounding state-owned buildings.²²⁸ Capitol Police starting salary is \$48,843. Applicants must be 21 years old. Equipment and uniforms are provided, as are pension and health benefits.²²⁹

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/pabureau/jobs/newprint/4827944>.

²²⁶ “DCNR Ranger (Salary) – Sproul Forest District,” accessed April 18, 2026,

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/pabureau/jobs/newprint/4854304>.

²²⁷ Paper from Jonathan Wyant, President, Frater Order of Police Lodge 114, April 3, 2026, on file in the JSGC offices.

²²⁸ Section 2416 of the Administrative Code of 1929 (P.L. 177, No.175), known as the Administrative Code of 1929. 71 P.S. § 646.

²²⁹ “Join the Pennsylvania Capitol Police,” *Commonwealth of PA*,

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/employment/capitolpolice>.

Transit Police

Pennsylvania has 52 transit systems across the state providing public transportation. The Commonwealth's two fixed rail systems, the Pittsburgh Regional Transit (PRT) and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority (SEPTA) have struggled financially in recent years. The Governor's budget proposal for the last two fiscal years has included increases and changes to transit funding, but they have not survived the budget negotiation process. A permanent funding stream is proposed in the 2026-2027 budget. Some relief was provided to SEPTA in the form of Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency Law Enforcement Recruitment Grant approved in December 2023 that allowed the agency to pay \$5,000 signing bonuses to 39 new police officers.²³⁰

Other Statewide Law Enforcement Officers

Specific agencies within the Commonwealth have their own law enforcement personnel, which were not covered specifically by SR 94 and are not included in this report. They include:

- Pa. Office of Attorney General's Criminal Law Agents
- Pa. Office of Inspector General Special Investigators
- State Institutional Police (Department of Human Services)
- Campus Police (Department of Education: state-related and state-aided universities and Pa. State System of Higher Education institutions; and private college and universities)
- Commonwealth Property Police (state office buildings outside the Capitol Complex)
- Railroad and Street Railway Police
- Revenue Enforcement Agents
- Dog Law Wardens and Human Society agents (Department of Agriculture)
- Fort Indiantown Gap Police (Department of Military and Veterans Affairs)

²³⁰ "Lt. Governor Austin Davis Highlights State Investments to Make Transit Safer," Lt. Governor, Press Release, June 23, 2025, <https://www.pa.gov/ltgovernor/newsroom/lt--gov--austin-davis-highlights-state-investments-to-make-trans>.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAW ENFORCEMENT

Local Autonomy

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s law enforcement population consists of officers at the state, county, and municipal levels. Within its 67 counties, Pennsylvania makes a class distinction within the municipalities, based on each county’s total population.²³¹ As of April 2026, Pennsylvania’s Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) reported 2,558 different law enforcement jurisdictions, more than that of any state.²³² Municipal police officers, county detective agencies, and regional police forces serve 1,245 law enforcement jurisdictions.²³³ Local municipalities have given charge of 1,313 jurisdictions to the state police, meaning that over 50 percent of law enforcement jurisdictions currently require the service of state police. This may occur when a jurisdiction is understaffed or does not have the resources necessary to properly serve their community.

Regional police forces have been formed by 150 of the 2,558 jurisdictions, spanning 30 counties.²³⁴ In order to ensure every individual within the municipality’s needs are met, local governments have some flexibility to operate under “home rule” charter²³⁵ to make decisions that are not outlined in the state constitution. Municipalities may also adopt optional forms of government.²³⁶

²³¹ “Municipalities in PA,” *PA Department of Community & Economic Development*, <https://dced.pa.gov/local-government/municipal-statistics/municipalities/>.

²³² Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, *Regional Police Guide* (PA Department of Community and Economic Development, 2025), <https://dced.pa.gov/regional-police-guide-strengthening-police-services/?wpdmdl=116741>, 2.

²³³ Information compiled by JSGC staff from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, “Municipal Police Service Statistics” as of April 7, 2026, https://apps.dced.pa.gov/munstats-public/ReportInformation2.aspx?report=MuniPolice_Excel.

²³⁴ “Municipal Police Service Statistics,” *Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development*, https://apps.dced.pa.gov/munstats-public/ReportInformation2.aspx?report=MuniPolice_Excel.

²³⁵ Pa. Const. art. IX, § 2.

²³⁶ Pa. Const. art. IX, § 3.

Below is a list of the 67 counties in the Commonwealth and the number of law enforcement jurisdictions per county:

Table 3
Pennsylvania Law Enforcement Jurisdictions
per County, 2026

County	Law Enforcement Jurisdictions	County	Law Enforcement Jurisdictions
Adams	34	Lancaster	60
Allegheny	128	Lawrence	27
Armstrong	45	Lebanon	26
Beaver	53	Lehigh	24
Bedford	38	Luzerne	76
Berks	72	Lycoming	52
Blair	24	Mckean	22
Bradford	51	Mercer	47
Bucks	53	Mifflin	16
Butler	57	Monroe	20
Cambria	63	Montgomery	62
Cameron	7	Montour	11
Carbon	23	Northampton	38
Centre	35	Northumberland	36
Chester	73	Perry	30
Clarion	34	Philadelphia	1
Clearfield	49	Pike	13
Clinton	29	Potter	30
Columbia	33	Schuylkill	67
Crawford	51	Snyder	21
Cumberland	33	Somerset	50
Dauphin	40	Sullivan	13
Delaware	49	Susquehanna	40
Elk	12	Tioga	39
Erie	38	Union	14
Fayette	42	Venango	31
Forest	9	Warren	27
Franklin	21	Washington	66
Fulton	13	Wayne	28
Greene	26	Westmoreland	65
Huntingdon	48	Wyoming	23
Indiana	38	York	72
Jefferson	34		
Juniata	17		
Lackawanna	40		
		Grand Total	2559

Source: "Municipal Police Service Statistics," *Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development*, n.d., https://apps.dced.pa.gov/munstats-public/ReportInformation2.aspx?report=MuniPolice_Excel.

Pennsylvania’s Department of Community and Economic Development reports 2,558 separate police jurisdictions in the Commonwealth, with almost 60 percent of these having fewer than 10 officers on staff.²³⁷ To account for gaps in coverage where these jurisdictions may not have the resources or bandwidth to cover, departments can call on state police to take over. Some areas contain multiple police jurisdictions to account for staffing shortages and mitigate gaps in police coverage.

DCED keeps up-to-date records on county law enforcement data. The department separates each county’s municipalities and law enforcement service type: the municipality’s own police force, police service contracted from another municipality, regional police force, or state police coverage.²³⁸ Table 4 is a snapshot of how police coverage is provided in all of Pennsylvania’s jurisdictions as of April 7, 2026.

Table 4
Pennsylvania Municipal Police Statistics
2026

Police Service Type	Number of Jurisdictions
Own municipal police force	870
Police service contracted from another municipality	225
Regional police service	150
State police coverage only	1,313

Source: “Municipalities in PA - PA Department of Community & Economic Development,” <https://dced.pa.gov/local-government/municipal-statistics/municipalities/>, accessed April 7, 2026.

Having many different sectors that require law enforcement can become a larger challenge when there are not an adequate number of individuals in the profession. As vacant positions remain open for long periods of time, many counties that cannot fill their vacancies must resort to handing their jurisdiction to the state police. While this is a solution for the county or municipality that requires assistance, it subsequently puts strain on those within the state police force. Especially as recruitment and retention of law enforcement from the local through the state levels continues to be a challenge, local police coverage may bridge one gap while creating another at the state level.

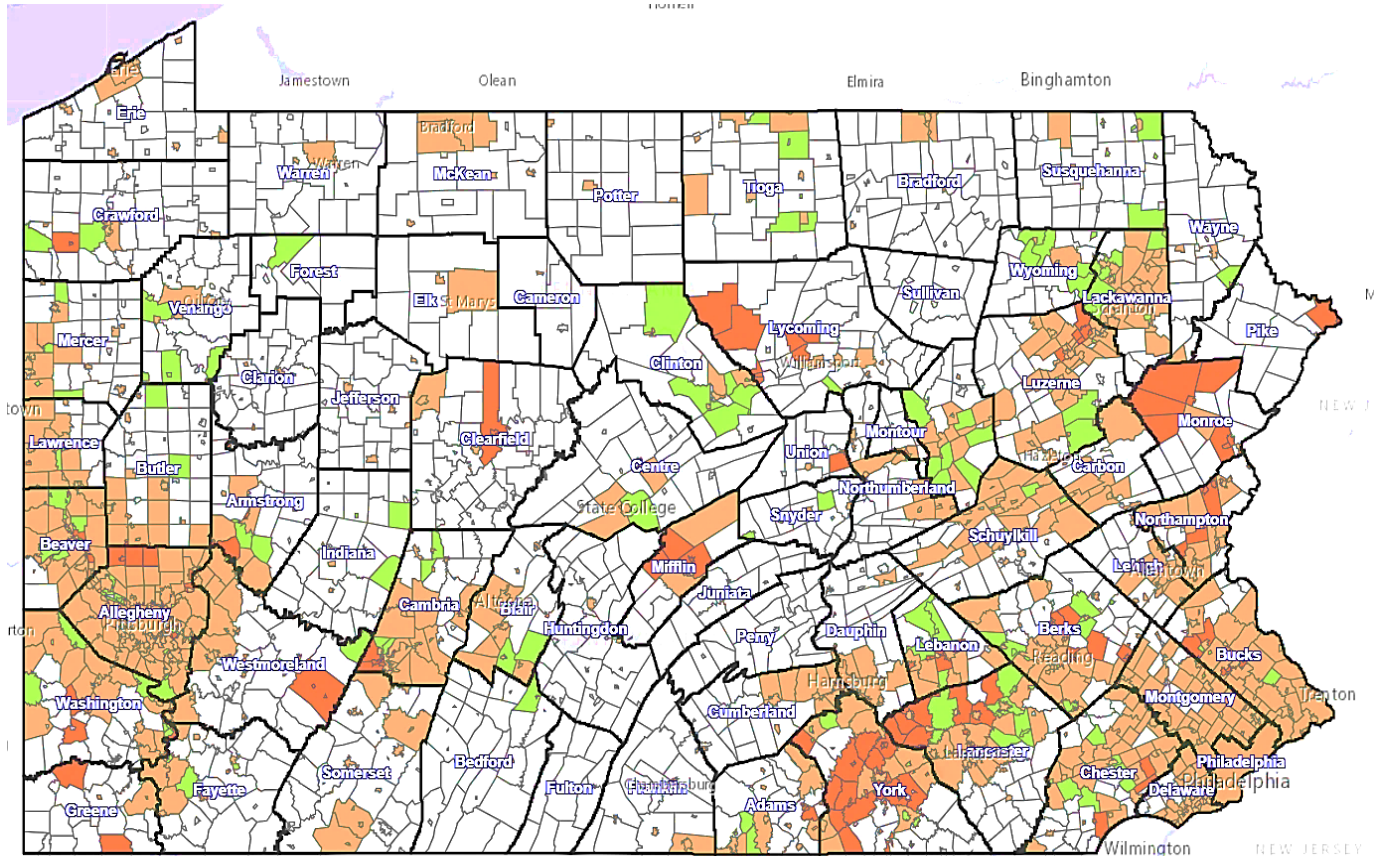
At various times, proposals have been made to assess municipalities a fee for using the State Police for local coverage. Most recently, House Bill 2284, Printer’s No. 2990 was introduced and referred to the House Local Government Committee on March 12, 2026.

²³⁷ *Regional Police Guide*, 2.

²³⁸ “Municipal Police Service Statistics.”

The United States DOJ provided funding to PCCD to support the creation of a comprehensive police jurisdiction map. The amount of law enforcement personnel in each of these departments varies relative to an area's population and concentration of crime in each area.

Map 1 Police Jurisdictions 2026



Source: Pennsylvania Commission of Crime and Delinquency funded through the Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. Updated February 6, 2026, <https://papccd.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=615347f18dbf47699f4660148dd6a636#:~:text=gov/munstats%2Dpublic-,%C2%A0%C2%A0%C2%A0,-Updated%202/3>.

Police Jurisdictions

- Municipal Police Force
- Regional Police Service
- Police Service contracted from another municipality
- State Police coverage only

As is clear on the map, the distribution of the various types of police jurisdictions is not uniform. Municipal size and geographic location are important factors. All but one of the Commonwealth's 56 cities supports its own local police department, and the one-outlier contracts with another municipality for police coverage. No cities rely on State Police coverage only. Conversely, all municipalities in two of the Commonwealth's six eighth class counties (Forest and Fulton) are exclusively protected by the State Police. A third county with 100 percent State Police coverage is Susquehanna, which is a sixth class township. In general, the lower populations counties, ranging from sixth through eighth class, with populations under 90,000 have the largest portion of municipalities using State Police coverage only. Generally, the larger the county population, the greater percentage of municipalities that support their own police forces. This is particularly true in Philadelphia (one county, one city, one police force), Allegheny, and suburban Philadelphia counties such as Bucks, Delaware, Montgomery, and Northampton.²³⁹ The largest regional police forces are found in Lancaster, Monroe, and York Counties. While it may not be realistic to significantly reduce the number of departments and separations within the Commonwealth, smaller areas of compromise may yield success for recruitment and retention efforts.

In early 2025, it was announced that PCCD had awarded over \$3 million to 42 counties to assist in hiring 692 new municipal police officers through the Local Law Enforcement Support Grant program, funded with one-time federal ARPA funding. The smallest grant was to Tioga County for \$2,400 to support two officers. Counties receiving \$10,000 or less also include Adams, Crawford, Fayette, Lycoming and Susquehanna. Recipients receiving over \$100,000 included Allegheny, Berks, Delaware, Lancaster, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, and Philadelphia.²⁴⁰

2025 House Bill 973, Printer's No. 3315 was reported from the House Local Government Committee, received first consideration, and was laid on the table on April 29, 2026. The bill would create the Municipal Police Enhancement and Consolidation Grant Program to benefit municipal police departments, including those receiving services under contract from another municipality or part of a regional police force. Grant funding is to improve and enhance the capabilities of police departments, support accreditation, incentivize voluntary consolidation, and provide training and other appropriate resources to municipal police officers.

Regional Police

“Studies have found that regional policing can improve uniformity and consistency of enforcement, coordination of law-enforcement services, recruitment and training, personnel efficiency, management and supervision, career enhancement opportunities and, perhaps most importantly, the bottom line.”²⁴¹ By both saving money and improving quality of service and

²³⁹ “Municipal Police Statistics.”

²⁴⁰ “Shapiro-Davis Administration Delivers Over \$3 Million to Hire, Recruit, and Train Nearly 700 Police Officers,” Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Press Release, January 15, 2025, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/pccd/newsroom/shapiro-davis-admin-invests--3m-to-support-nearly-700-pa-police->.

²⁴¹ Harrison Cann, “As PA Police Departments Regionalize, Questions Arise About Gains, Losses,” *City and State*, March 31, 2025, <https://www.cityandstatepa.com/policy/2025/03/pa-police-departments-regionalize-questions-arise-about-gains-losses/404167/>.

response times, regionalization can be an effective tool for municipalities to maintain community safety while improving budgets. Concerns have included a loss of direct municipal control and the ability to direct officers to municipality-specific duties.

Existing law enforcement officers are divided on regionalization. Regionalization may help with collective bargaining towards health insurance benefits, pension plans, and educational loan forgiveness. These benefits becoming standard across larger areas also could assist in reducing the number of individuals who transfer to different departments within proximity.

The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development has produced both a guide and a manual for local government officials seeking to explore regional police services.²⁴²

Sheriffs

Sheriffs are elected county officials, serving four-year terms.²⁴³ They are permitted under the County Code to engage (unless otherwise prohibited by the county) in outside employment, including employment in security, during a period when the individual is not scheduled to perform and is not performing a duty as a county employee.²⁴⁴ Sheriff salaries vary from county to county, and are not readily located online, but according to data from ZipRecruiter, they range from \$83,400 to \$154,000 with the majority ranging between \$96,700 to \$119,400.²⁴⁵ As county officials, they are eligible for the same benefits available to other county employees.

Deputy Sheriffs

Each county sheriff shall appoint a chief deputy.²⁴⁶ Sheriffs may also appoint deputies and clerks who meet the following qualifications:

- The individual, chief deputy or other deputy sheriff is a citizen of the United States and 18 years of age or older.
- The individual, chief deputy or other deputy sheriff has never been convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude under Federal or State law or the laws of another state.

²⁴² “Regional Police Guide: Strengthening Police Services,” *Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development*, <https://dced.pa.gov/regional-police-guide-strengthening-police-services/?wpdmdl=116741> and “Regional Police Services in Pennsylvania: A Manual of Local Government Officials,” *DCED*, October 2023, <https://dced.pa.gov/download/regional-police-services-in-pennsylvania/?wpdmdl=59692&refresh=69e8f0286eff51776873512>.

²⁴³ Pennsylvania Constitution, Article IX, Section 4.

²⁴⁴ 16 Pa.C.S. § 13710(d).

²⁴⁵ “Sheriff Salaries in Harrisburg, PA,” *ZipRecruiter*, accessed April 22, 2026, <https://www.ziprecruiter.com/Salaries/Sheriff-Salary-in-Harrisburg,PA>.

²⁴⁶ 16 Pa.C.S. § 13703.

- The individual, chief deputy or other deputy sheriff has not, engaged in an enumerated list of labor dispute activities for a period of two years immediately preceding the appointment.²⁴⁷

In counties of the third through eighth classes, the sheriff may also appoint as necessary special deputies to assist the sheriff in executing a civil or criminal process or court order or in preserving the peace when an emergency arises. A special deputy serves only for as long as necessary to conduct the special deputy's duties under his appointment.²⁴⁸

Salaries of deputies vary widely from county to county and averages are not easily found if special or part-time deputies are included in the calculation. However, looking at 88 postings on Indeed over the past 36 months (ending April 16, 2026), the website found that the average starting salary for deputy sheriffs was \$47,443.

Deputy sheriffs must also complete training.²⁴⁹ As with sheriffs, outside employment is permitted.

Constables

Constables are an elected city office in second class, second class A, and third class cities, as well as an elected office in boroughs, incorporated towns and townships. They serve a six-year term. Constables may appoint a deputy constable.²⁵⁰ Constables are prohibited from serving as a magisterial district judge or alderman, but may be an officer of a political body or party, hold office of a national, state or county committee of a political party, run for or hold elective office, and participate in election-day activities.²⁵¹ Constables may also be employed as municipal police officers, but their compensation may be affected.²⁵² Additionally, constables are required to receive training under the Constables' Education and Training Program in order to perform judicial duties for the courts.²⁵³

County Detectives

With the exceptions of Philadelphia and Allegheny Counties, which have their own staffing rules, every district attorney can appoint one chief county detective and other detectives as needed. Salaries are set by the individual county, and county detectives are considered general police officers and have the powers of constables relating to criminal law and procedures.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁷ 16 Pa.C.S. §§ 13705 and 13706.

²⁴⁸ 16 Pa.C.S. § 13705(b).

²⁴⁹ 44 Pa.C.S. Chapter 74, Subchapter C.

²⁵⁰ 44 Pa.C.S. §§ 7111-7114 and 7122.

²⁵¹ 44 Pa.C.S. § 7131.

²⁵² 44 Pa.C.S. § 7132.

²⁵³ 44 Pa.C.S. § 7143 and 7144.

²⁵⁴ 16 Pa.C.S. § 14340.

Other Local Law Enforcement Officers

Other local municipal and public authorities may employ law enforcement personnel, who have arrest rights and in some instances, carry firearms, but this report does not examine these groups' recruitment and retention activities:

- Agricultural or horticultural exhibit police
- Airport police
- Auxiliary police
- Bridge authorities
- Cemetery watchmen
- Housing authority police
- Night watchmen
- Park police
- Port authorities
- Private police
- School police
- Special fire police

State Corrections Officers

The Department of Corrections (DOC) oversees 22 state correctional institutions (SCIs), seven community corrections centers, and oversees 23 community corrections facilities. Community corrections centers are operated directly by the DOC Bureau of Community Corrections, while community corrections facilities are run by private contractors. Both types are transitional, reentry residential housing, often called “halfway houses.”²⁵⁵

To become a state corrections officer, applicants first attend the DOC training academy in Elizabethtown as corrections officer trainees, at a beginning salary of \$47,925.²⁵⁶ The rank of corrections officer is currently listed as having a salary range of \$56,020 to \$113,083.²⁵⁷ In 2022, the DOC vacancy rate was 10.5 percent, which had the potential to affect staff, inmate, and community safety, and increase reliance on overtime. In late 2022, DOC created a dedicated Recruitment and Retention Division, which engaged in a number of efforts to improve recruitment, including participating in over 750 community events, including job fairs, college and university visits, and military and veteran programs.²⁵⁸

In 2024, the DOC lowered the minimum age for trainees from 21 to 18 years of age and received a waiver to allow out-of-state applicants to apply. In January 2025 the DOC announced that the vacancy rate had dropped to 4.8 percent, with approximately 400 positions remaining open.²⁵⁹ According to data supplied to JSGC staff, the overall trainee failure rate was 35 percent, while the under 21 cohort failed at a 23 percent rate. Legislation to eliminate the residency requirement but retain a preference for Commonwealth residents was introduced as 2025 Senate Bill 111, Printer’s No. 1279, and passed 50-0 on October 28, 2025. The bill was referred to the House Judiciary Committee on April 9, 2026.

²⁵⁵ 61 Pa.C.S. Chapter 50.

²⁵⁶ Commonwealth of PA, Opportunities for all Job Seekers, Corrections Officer Trainee – SCI Mercer,” accessed April 21, 2026, [https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/pabureau/jobs/5294099/corrections-officer-trainee-sci-mercer?department\[0\]=Department%20of%20Corrections&sort=PositionTitle%7CAscending&page=4&pagetype=jobOpportunitiesJobs](https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/pabureau/jobs/5294099/corrections-officer-trainee-sci-mercer?department[0]=Department%20of%20Corrections&sort=PositionTitle%7CAscending&page=4&pagetype=jobOpportunitiesJobs).

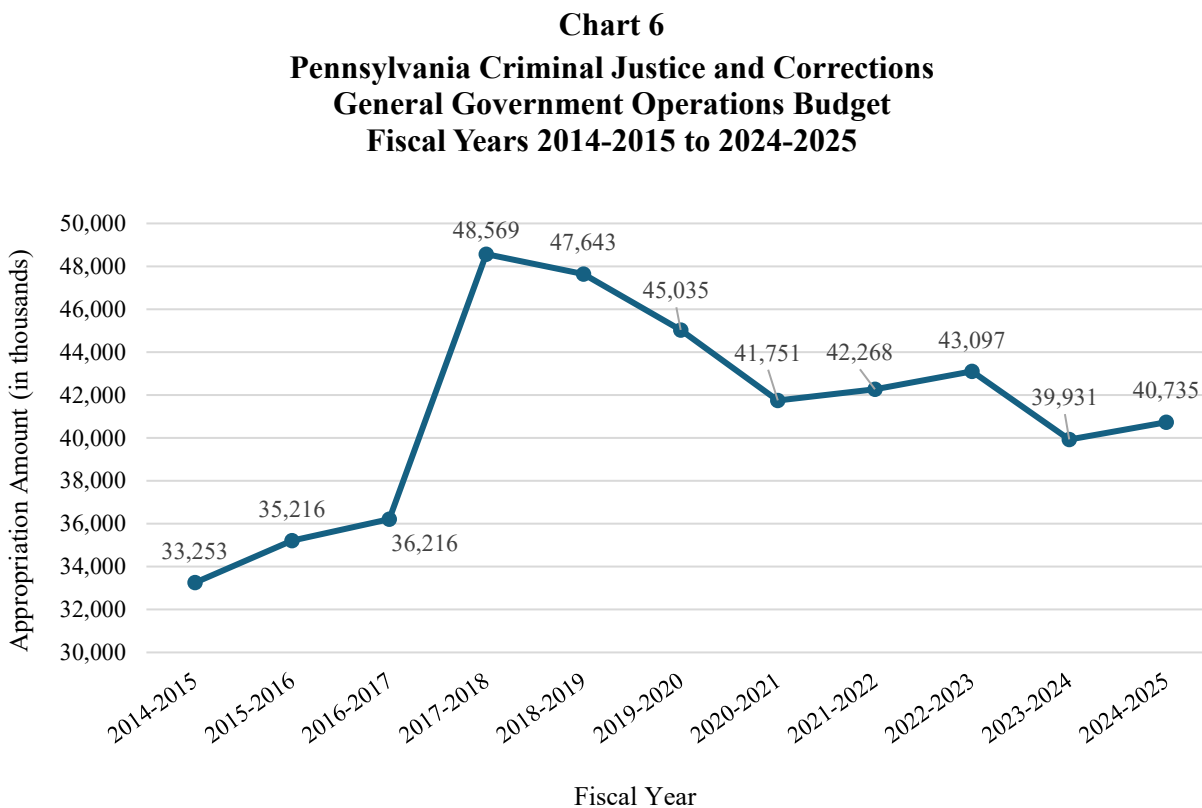
²⁵⁷ “Corrections Officer 3 – SCI Fayette,” *Commonwealth of PA, Opportunities for all Job Seekers*, accessed April 21, 2026, [https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/pabureau/jobs/5304362/corrections-officer-3-sci-fayette?department\[0\]=Department%20of%20Corrections&sort=PositionTitle%7CAscending&page=3&pagetype=jobOpportunitiesJobs](https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/pabureau/jobs/5304362/corrections-officer-3-sci-fayette?department[0]=Department%20of%20Corrections&sort=PositionTitle%7CAscending&page=3&pagetype=jobOpportunitiesJobs).

²⁵⁸ “Corrections Officer Vacancy Rate Falls by Over Five Percent Thanks to Shapiro Administration’s Targeted Recruitment Efforts,” DOC, Press Release, February 3, 2025.

²⁵⁹ “Corrections Officer Vacancy Rate Falls,” DOC, Press Release.

Corrections General Government Operations

DOC's "General Government Operations" appropriation funds administrative offices and the training academy.²⁶⁰ Chart 6 below shows a steady increase in this appropriation from fiscal years 2014-2025 through 2017-2019, however, the DOC merged with the offices of parole field supervision and inmate reentry services in fiscal year 2022-2023, in order to cut down on redundancies in administrative costs.²⁶¹



Source: Compiled by JSGC by extracting enacted Pennsylvania Budget Appropriations for fiscal years 2014-15 through fiscal years 2024-2025.

Note: During the 2017-2018 fiscal year, the enacted budget line appropriations consolidated the "Probation and Parole" category into the "Department of Corrections" which on some iterations of the budget is listed as the "Department of Criminal Justice."

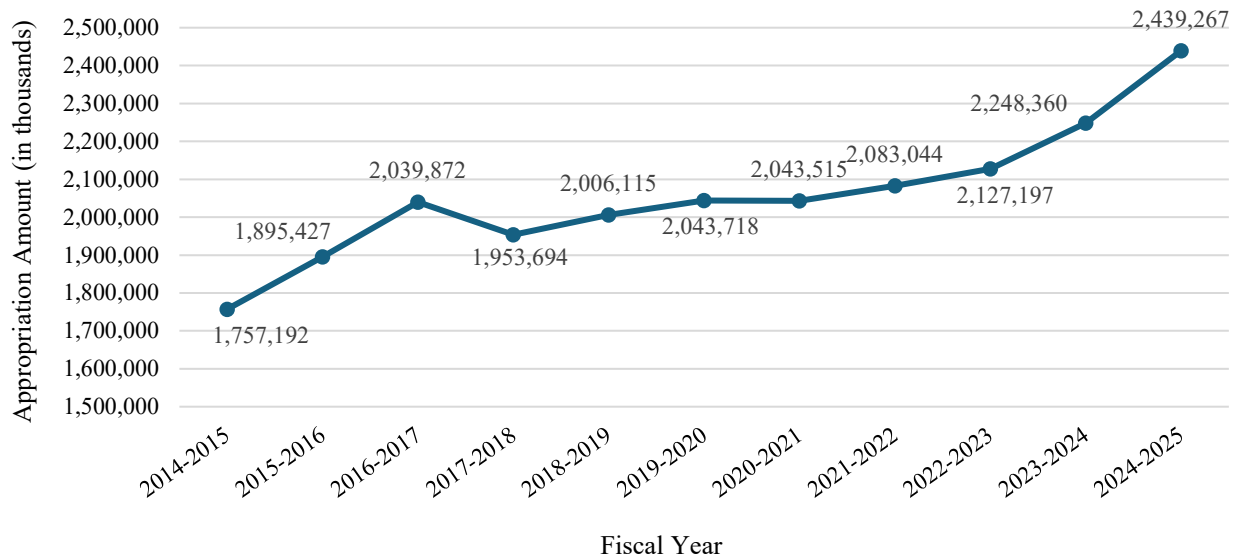
²⁶⁰ PA Department of Corrections, *Department of Corrections Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2024-2025*, https://www.palegis.us/house/committees/committee-archives/archive-file?file=2024_0522h.pdf, 24.

²⁶¹ George Little, *PA Department of Criminal Justice Budget Testimony 2022-23* (PA Department of Criminal Justice, 2022), <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/cor/documents/about-us/statistics/budget-documents/Budget%20Testimony%202022-23.pdf>, 2.

State Correctional Institutions

State correctional institutions house individuals who were sentenced to longer term incarceration than those in county jails.²⁶² Persons sentenced to maximum terms of five years or more serve their terms at an SCI. This includes all felony convictions and all first-degree misdemeanor convictions. Generally, maximum terms of two years or less are served at local jails. Persons sentenced to terms of two years or more, but less than five years may be served in an SCI or county jail, under certain circumstances.²⁶³ According to DOC appropriations testimony for fiscal year 2026-2027, Pennsylvania has 22 state correctional institutions and 30 community corrections centers.²⁶⁴ The SCIs’ appropriation is made up of personnel and operating costs, as well as fixed assets and grants. Personnel costs include salary and benefit increases, and initiatives to reduce inmate solitary confinement. Operating costs account for annual increases in the cost of operating SCIs and any costs incurred through SCI advancement. Any loss of grants or subsidies is covered within this appropriation.²⁶⁵ Appropriations for the DOC have grown steadily over the past ten budget cycles for an aggregate 39 percent.

Chart 7
Pennsylvania State Correctional Institutions Budget
Fiscal Years 2014-2015 to 2024-2025



Source: Compiled by JSGC by extracting enacted Pennsylvania Budget Appropriations for fiscal years 2014-15 through fiscal years 2024-2025.

²⁶² Bradley Keen, “Criminal Justice - Correctional Institutions,” *PA House Appropriations Committee*, 2022, <https://www.houseappropriations.com/Topic/PublicSafety/694>.

²⁶³ 42 Pa.C.S. §9762.

²⁶⁴ PA Department of Corrections, *Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Budget Testimony 2026-27* (2026), <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/cor/documents/about-us/statistics/budget-documents/budget-testimony-2026-27.pdf>, 2.

²⁶⁵ PA Department of Corrections, *Department of Corrections Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2024-2025*, https://www.palegis.us/house/committees/committee-archives/archive-file?file=2024_0522h.pdf, 23.

Local Corrections Officers

Every county has at least one local corrections institution, either known as the county jail or prison. Three counties have maximum bed capacity of fewer than 50 inmates – Huntingdon, Montour, and Union. Three counties have capacity between 50 and 100 inmates – Elk, Potter, and Wyoming. At the other extreme, 11 counties have capacity in excess of 1,000 inmates. They are Allegheny, Berks, Bucks, Chester, Dauphin, Delaware, Lackawanna, Lancaster, Lehigh, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties.²⁶⁶

Each county has a County Jail Oversight Board, which consists of the county chief executive, two judges of the court of common pleas, the county sheriff, the county controller, the president of the county council and three citizen members. The board is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the prison and all alternative housing facilities, and confirms the chief executives selection of wardens.²⁶⁷ The warden must be a resident of the county for six months after the appointment. The warden can hire deputies, corrections officers, and other staff with the approval of the chief executive.²⁶⁸

In counties of the second class A, third, fourth, and fifth class, a board of inspectors is created, consisting of the president judge of the court of common pleas, the district attorney, the sheriff, the controller, and the county commissioners.²⁶⁹ The board appoints a warden, who can hire deputies, corrections officers, and other staff with the approval of board²⁷⁰ In sixth, seventh and eighth class counties, the sheriff serves as the prison warden and may appoint corrections officers and other employees as the local salary board approves.²⁷¹

According to some reports, there is no law that states that local corrections officers must be 21 years of age, but some county jails do not accept younger applicants because of maturity concerns. Some counties maintain a minimum age of 21 for corrections employees, but some will consider 18–20-year-olds on a case-by-case basis.²⁷²

²⁶⁶ “Pennsylvania County Jails Directory,” *SCRIBD*, accessed April 5, 2026, <https://www.scribd.com/document/518857722/Pennsylvania-County-Correctional-Facility-Address-and-Contact-Listing>.

²⁶⁷ 61 Pa.C.S. § 1723.

²⁶⁸ 61 Pa.C.S. § 1726.

²⁶⁹ 61 Pa.C.S. 1731.

²⁷⁰ 61 Pa.C.S. §1734.

²⁷¹ 61 Pa.C.S. § 1741.

²⁷² Marcia Moore,” PA. County Jail Hires 18-Year-Old COs,” *Daily Item* (Sunbury), January 4, 2023, <https://www.corrections1.com/recruitment/articles/pa-county-jail-hires-18-year-old-cos-YzchnYidGOokGYPL/>.

State and County Corrections Competition for Employees

According to nationwide job posting website ZipRecruiter, the average county corrections officer annual salary is \$54,137, ranging from \$29,070 to \$74,678, with the majority of jobs ranging between \$46,100 to \$60,100. The site claims that Pennsylvania is ranked 50th out of 50 in county corrections salaries nationally. There can be large disparities between county to county, and employees in lower-paying counties can easily be induced into applying for a position in an adjacent county with a higher salary and no need to change residence.²⁷³ In addition to the competition between counties with different financial profiles, there is also competition between county and state corrections facilities.

As was noted above at page 73, the Commonwealth's jobs board shows the rank of corrections officer currently listed as having an annual salary range of \$56,020 to \$113,083.²⁷⁴ According to the Department of Corrections July 1, 2025 "Corrections Officers/Forensic Security Employees Pay Schedule," pay scales for state corrections officers can range from \$39,871 for persons at the lowest level with less than five years of service to \$104,716 for persons at the highest level with more than 31 years of service.²⁷⁵ These higher salaries, coupled with usually more generous employee benefit packages than are offered by most counties, can also be attractive to county corrections officers.

²⁷³ ZipRecruiter, County Correctional Officer Salary in Pennsylvania, accessed June 12, 2026.

<https://www.ziprecruiter.com/Salaries/County-Correctional-Officer-Salary--in-Pennsylvania>

²⁷⁴ "Corrections Officer 3 – SCI Fayette," *Commonwealth of PA, Opportunities for all Job Seekers*, accessed April 21, 2026, [https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/pabureau/jobs/5304362/corrections-officer-3-sci-fayette?department\[0\]=Department%20of%20Corrections&sort=PositionTitle%7CAscending&page=3&pagetype=jobOpportunitiesJobs](https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/pabureau/jobs/5304362/corrections-officer-3-sci-fayette?department[0]=Department%20of%20Corrections&sort=PositionTitle%7CAscending&page=3&pagetype=jobOpportunitiesJobs).

²⁷⁵ Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Corrections, Corrections Officers/Forensic Security Employees Pay Schedule, effective July 1, 2025, PA Scale Type CO, <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/hrmoa/documents/org-mgmt/compensation/paysched-corrections-officers-co.pdf>.

DISTRICT ATTORNEYS AND PROSECUTORS

District Attorneys

The position of district attorney (DA) in Pennsylvania is an elected, countywide office. All 67 counties have a DA. Elections occur in odd-numbered years for four-year terms.²⁷⁶ Not all DAs statewide are up for election at the same time; elections are staggered but are frequently held concurrently with other counties, as happened in the November 2025 municipal election in which 17 counties had district attorney elections.²⁷⁷

District attorneys must meet the following qualifications:

- Be a resident of the county for at least one year prior to election or appointment;
- Be at least 25 years of age;
- Be a United States citizen;
- Have been admitted to the practice of law before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court for at least one year before taking the oath of office; and
- Continually hold an active law license during the period when in office.²⁷⁸

By law, a district attorney is a full-time position, except in eighth class counties.²⁷⁹ This classification includes the six counties of Cameron, Forest, Fulton, Montour, Potter, and Sullivan. While the County Code permits part-time district attorneys in eighth class counties, a county may opt to make the position full-time, which is a permanent change that cannot be reversed. Part-time district attorneys are permitted to have private practices outside of their county office.²⁸⁰ Currently, only Cameron, Forest, and Sullivan County have part-time district attorneys.

In counties of the third through eighth class, the court of common pleas may appoint a temporary district attorney, if the DA and the assistants are absent from the court.²⁸¹ Additionally, a DA may refer prosecutions to the Criminal Law Division of the Office of the Attorney General based on lack of resources or a conflict of interest.²⁸² Under current law, vacancies in the office of district attorney can be filled by the court of common pleas by appointing the first assistant district attorney to fill the office, and if he/she is not qualified or unwilling or unable to serve, a

²⁷⁶ 16 Pa.C.S. §12301(a)(11) and (b).

²⁷⁷ Min Xian, “Municipal Elections 101: PA. Voters Will Choose District Attorneys in 17 Counties This November,” *90.5 WESA*, November 1, 2025, <https://www.wesa.fm/courts-justice/2025-11-01/pennsylvania-district-attorney-municipal-elections-guide>.

²⁷⁸ 16 Pa.C.S. § 14301(a).

²⁷⁹ 16 Pa.C.S. §14301(g) and (i).

²⁸⁰ 16 Pa.C.S. §14301(d), (e), and (h).

²⁸¹ 16 Pa.C.S. § 14324.

²⁸² “Criminal Law Division,” *Pennsylvania Attorney General*, accessed April 17, 2026, <https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/criminal-law-division/>.

qualified competent individual can be appointed. These appointees serve until the next municipal election.²⁸³ There are bills in the House and Senate of Pennsylvania that would amend this rule to allow the appointee to complete the unexpired term of the vacating district attorney. Senate Bill 418, Printer's No. 352 was introduced and referred to the Senate Local Government Committee on March 10, 2025. The bill passed the Senate (50-0) on October 20, 2025, and was referred to the House Judiciary Committee. The bill received first consideration on November 12, 2025, and was laid on the table on November 17, 2025. House Bill 1423, Printer's No. 1655 was introduced and referred to the House Judiciary Committee on May 7, 2025, received first consideration and ultimately laid on the table on September 10, 2025.

The annual salary for a full-time district attorney is tied to the salary received by a judge of the court of common pleas in their county.²⁸⁴ Full-time DAs are compensated at a rate of \$1,000 less than the salary of a judge of the court of the common pleas. Part-time DAs receive 40 percent of the annual salary of the judge of the court of the common pleas.²⁸⁵ Judicial salaries are adjusted each January by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, which is funded by the state's judiciary budget. This information is then posted by the Court Administrator in the Pennsylvania Bulletin and updated within the PA Code.²⁸⁶ This adjustment was made effective by Act 30 of 2007 in which judges receive an annual increase in their salary each calendar year reflecting any change in Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) for the Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and Maryland areas.²⁸⁷

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics calculates the CPI-U from the price of goods and services, in addition to landlord or tenant rent reporting, for urban areas. These figures are then weighed by the reported expenditures of each item. Additionally, the 2024-25 fiscal year budget of the Unified Judicial System included a three percent increase in judicial salaries made effective January 1, 2025.²⁸⁸

Assistant District Attorneys

Full-time DAs can appoint assistant district attorneys to lighten the caseload of a single attorney. Alternatively, the district attorney in a third through eighth class county may appoint temporary assistant attorneys.²⁸⁹ These temporary assistants can include deputy attorney generals or an attorney employed by the Commonwealth. The salary of any assistant district attorney is mandated by the county budget and can vary for entry level positions. The Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association posted several assistant district attorney positions opening for 2026 across counties.

²⁸³ 16 Pa.C.S. § 14304.

²⁸⁴ 42 Pa. Code § 1741.

²⁸⁵ 16 Pa.C.S. § 14301(f) and (h).

²⁸⁶ "204 Pa. Code § 211.2. Judicial Salaries Effective January 1, 2025,

<https://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?file=/secure/pacode/data/204/chapter211/s211.2.html>.

²⁸⁷ 204 Pa. Code § 211.2.

²⁸⁸ Chief Justice Debra Todd, et al., "Proposed Budget of the Unified Judicial System 2024-25,

<https://www.pacourts.us/Storage/media/pdfs/20240216/223326-proposedbudgetoftheunifiedjudicialsystem2024-25.pdf>, 4.

²⁸⁹ 16 Pa.C.S. §14320(a) and (b).

Table 5
Pennsylvania County Class
and Starting Salary Relationship
by Ascending Salary for
Assistant District Attorney
2026

County	Starting Salary	Class
Blair	\$50,000	Fifth
McKean	55,000	Sixth
Monroe	55,000	Fourth
Tioga	60,000	Sixth
Luzerne	62,000	Third
Lycoming	62,315	Fifth
Warren	62,500	Sixth
Franklin	65,450	Fourth
Adams	68,834	Fifth
Allegheny	71,027	Second
Lancaster	72,235	Second
Montgomery	74,198	Second
Beaver	74,335	Fourth
Bucks	75,000	Second
Washington	77,554	Fourth

Source: "Job Openings - Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association – PDAA Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association," <https://www.pdaa.org/job-openings/>.

Higher numbered county classes have a lower overall population and lower population density. These are generally more rural areas that require more transportation time for the average person to commute to their place of employment. Rural areas have access to less funding and resources due to the lower population. While these are issues that are directly tied to location, hiring attorneys within these communities becomes an additional challenge.

A Pearson-r correlation was run to determine whether there exists any relationship between county class and starting salary for an assistant district attorney. When conducting a statistical significance test, the goal is to determine whether the two variables relate to each other more than just would occur by chance.²⁹⁰ It was determined that there is a significant negative relationship between entry level salary and county class, $p = 0.014$, $r = -0.620$. This means that the class of county an attorney is employed within is likely related to the starting salary they will be offered. Higher numbered counties, meaning lower in population, will offer on average a lower starting salary.

Higher-number class counties report having more difficulty hiring assistant district attorneys which places a higher caseload and additional stressors on the district attorney. Some areas within higher-number class counties may not have a district attorney's office accessible to their residence. The American Bar Association classifies a "legal desert" as a rural community that lacks access to an attorney.²⁹¹ Each county in the Commonwealth has its own district attorney but may not have any assistant district attorneys available to support the heavy caseload. The funding for allowing more positions in a single office may not be available in a county where the budget is already stretched. States such as Nebraska and North and South Dakota have established programs that sponsor early career attorneys to move into lesser populated areas where they may start at a lower salary.²⁹² It allows individuals the opportunity to earn a living wage while also filling a gap in legal coverage. This is a potential strategy for higher (third to eighth) class counties who are unable to offer higher starting salaries for their attorneys.

Office of Attorney General

The Attorney General is Pennsylvania's top law enforcement official, with a wide range of responsibilities to protect and serve the citizens and agencies of the Commonwealth. These include drug law enforcement, witness relocation, child predator interception, tobacco law enforcement, human trafficking law enforcement and protection, school safety, and organized retail theft prevention, among others. The Attorney General is served by a staff of several hundred prosecutors, attorneys, investigators, agents and support staff in offices across the state, divided into four sections: the Criminal Law Division, the Public Protection Division, the Civil Division and the Operations Division.²⁹³ When requested, the Attorney General's office can provide a substitute prosecutor for any county that requests one.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ "Pearson Correlation Coefficient Calculator," *Social Science Statistics*, <https://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/pearson/>.

²⁹¹ Michelle Paxton, "Preventing Legal Deserts in Our Rural Communities," *American Bar Association*, November 14, 2023, <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/resources/newsletters/childrens-rights/fall2023-preventing-legal-deserts-in-our-rural-communities/>.

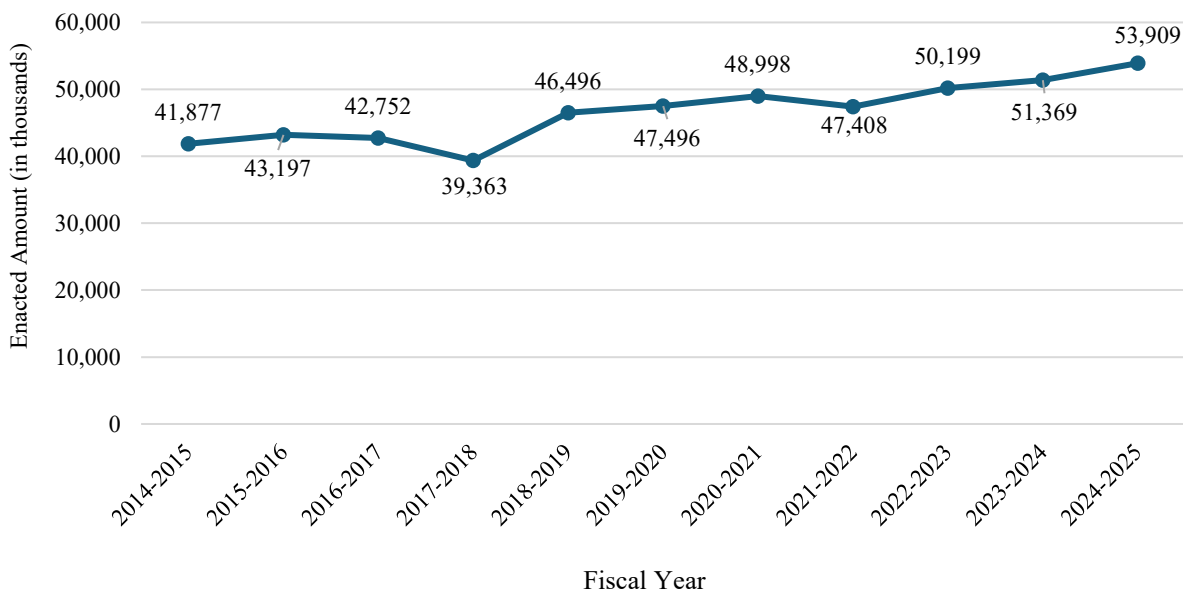
²⁹² Michelle Paxton, "Preventing Legal Deserts in Our Rural Communities."

²⁹³ "The Office," *Pennsylvania Attorney General*, accessed May 18, 2024, <https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/the-office/>.

²⁹⁴ "Criminal Law Division," *Pennsylvania Attorney General*.

Over the 10-year fiscal period of 2014-2025, the General Government Operations budget for the Office of Attorney General increased 28.73 percent, as demonstrated on Chart 8.

Chart 8
Attorney General Office "General Government Operations"
Enacted Budget
Fiscal Years 2014-2015 to 2024-2025



Source: Compiled by JSGC by extracting enacted Pennsylvania Budget Appropriations for fiscal years 2014-15 through fiscal years 2024-2025.

Public Defenders

While not covered by the directives of SR 94, it is notable that public defender offices are also experiencing staffing shortages. In a report from the University of Pennsylvania, the author found that there is an approximately 30 percent shortfall of public defenders statewide. The report stated that 91 percent of Pennsylvania counties have criminal defense attorney staffing levels below current standards.²⁹⁵ These shortfalls in criminal defense can have a spillover effect on district attorneys' caseloads and case flows, exacerbating district attorney staffing shortages, overtime, and burnout. Funding for public defenders received a boost in 2023 with the creation of the Indigent Defense Advisory Committee and grant program within PCCD.²⁹⁶ Since fiscal year 2023-2024, \$7.5 million per fiscal year has been allocated to the grant program.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁵ Paul Heaton, "Gideon's Promise Versus Gideon's Reality: Resource Shortfalls in Pennsylvania's Public Defense," Quattrone Center for the Fair Administration of Justice, University of Pennsylvania, May 2024, <https://www.law.upenn.edu/live/files/13057-gideon-promise-vs-reality>.

²⁹⁶ §201-f et seq. of the act of April 9, 1929 (P.L.343, No.176), known as the Fiscal Code, as amended by the act of December 13, 2023 (P.L.251, No.34).

²⁹⁷ Act of August 3, 1A of 2023; Act of July 11, 2024, 1A of 2024; Act of November 12, 2025, 1A of 2025.

Prosecutor Workload Impacts

A shortage of prosecutors leads to increasing workloads for those in the profession, and as the role of a prosecutor shifts over time to include more proactive crime-detering measures like diversion programs and community engagement, the workload grows only larger. Additionally, criminal cases tend to include much higher volumes of evidence than they did in the past with body-worn camera footage, cell phone footage, cell phone or internet data, and other traditional means of collecting evidence. Some states have also increased unfunded mandates that require more of prosecutor's offices without providing any resources for them to maintain these policies.²⁹⁸ Some states, like New York, have also shortened the amount of time prosecutors have to disclose evidence as the average amount of evidence that needs to be reviewed grows.²⁹⁹

The American Bar Association's (ABA's) Criminal Justice Standards for Prosecution Function state that prosecutors should not have workloads that preclude their ability to provide quality representation to every case, make timely disposition of charges, and fulfill all of their professional obligations. When prosecutors are stretched too thin, it can lead to miscarriages of justice like the failure to convict a guilty defendant or improper plea-bargain cases.³⁰⁰ Attorneys may be forced to perform "triage" and determine which cases will require more of their attention. Offices may also not have administrative or investigative support staff that could remove some of the burden from the attorneys. This staff is often better equipped to make a connection with witnesses and clients because they are able to devote time to the case. For prosecutors, the increase of body-worn camera footage makes discovery a much more challenging process. Some offices also do not have the proper technology to process the amount of discovery they need to produce. Additionally, a decrease of prosecutors makes an office less able to hire specialized attorneys for specific types of cases. When some prosecutors find alternative careers because of the workload and lower pay, this increases the workload on the remaining prosecutors and decreases the institutional knowledge of the office.³⁰¹ Though there has been some concern that imposing workload standards for prosecutors would lead to higher incarceration rates, a prosecutor with a manageable workload will be better suited to fully evaluate all evidence in cases and make decisions that are most desirable for victims and defendants.³⁰²

A survey administered by Dr. Adam Biener at Lafayette College in early 2020 received responses from 31 large county prosecutors' offices nationwide. Counties were chosen based on those encompassing the most populous cities in the U.S., including Philadelphia. Though there was significant variation in the results, around 162 attorneys on average in each office processed criminal cases. When compared to the population size of the jurisdiction, this came down to about 10.4 attorneys for every 100,000 people in the jurisdiction. Offices employed on average around

²⁹⁸ Elaine Borakove, Kristine Hamann, and Antonia Merzon, "Prosecutorial Workload: The Hidden Crisis in Criminal Justice," *Criminal Justice* (Spring 2025): 14-15.

²⁹⁹ Adam Biener, *Prosecutor Workplace and Compensation Study: Report of Findings* (Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, 2020), 4. <https://growthzonecmsprodeastus.azureedge.net/sites/2257/2025/02/Case-Backlogs-Staffing-SurveyLafayette-APA-Prosecutor-Workplace-Study-1.pdf>

³⁰⁰ Borakove, "Prosecutorial Workload," 15.

³⁰¹ 2026 Quattrone Center Spring Symposium, *The Caseload Crisis in State Criminal Courts: Causes, Consequences, and Cures*, May 12, 2026.

³⁰² Borakove, "Prosecutorial Workload," 15.

198 members of support staff. Most offices received funding from their state, with this funding comprising about 38 percent of the funding needed for attorneys. Around 77 percent of offices received county funding, and for these offices, county funding covered around 63 percent of their funding needed for attorneys. Sixty-two percent of offices received federal funding, but this funding made up very little of the needed funding for attorneys.³⁰³

Most offices determined staffing needs by evaluating caseloads. Some offices used programmatic needs that were overseen by some kind of supervisory board. Some offices also used annual performance reviews by supervisory board to track and report prosecutor performance. In 2020, the average starting salary for a non-supervisory attorney was \$68,056. The average salary for existing attorneys in offices was \$91,474. Though there was not a correlation between average salaries and the size of an office, there was a positive correlation between offices that received mostly county funding and those with higher average salaries. There was a slight negative correlation between offices that received more state funding and average salaries.³⁰⁴

For offices that offered specialty courts, offices estimated that staff spent on average eight percent of their time on these courts, though most offices were below this average and one, which reported 20 percent of time spent, brought up the average significantly. For offices with diversion efforts, they similarly estimated that around eight percent of staff's time went toward these programs. Felony and misdemeanor cases took up the majority of staff's time, with 69 percent and 19 percent respectively.³⁰⁵ Before COVID-19 disrupted typical court proceedings, the average number of cases awaiting trial between the respondents was around 9,000, though two offices with over 30,000 cases awaiting trial inflated this average. The pandemic exacerbated the backlogs to an average of 14,056 cases.³⁰⁶ In Philadelphia, an especially large office, the backlog moved from 29,000 cases before COVID-19 to 34,000 in March 2022.³⁰⁷

Paul Heaton from Penn Carey Law School analyzed data from PA Bar records of county prosecutors from May 2021, September 2024, and September 2025. A large portion of those members of the PA Bar are early in their legal careers, having started within the last three years. When evaluating all attorneys in Pennsylvania, the gender division is around 37 percent female and 63 percent male, but among prosecutors, it is around 43 percent female and 57 percent male attorneys. Public defenders are the most balanced with around 48 percent female and around 52 percent male attorneys. Prosecutors leave Pennsylvania to practice elsewhere at a slightly lower rate, of around five percent, than public defenders and attorneys at large and experience less unemployment than public defenders or attorneys at large. New prosecutors hired are most commonly within their first two years of experience. The most common places they worked before becoming prosecutors were small firms and court systems.³⁰⁸

³⁰³ Biener, *Prosecutor Workplace*, 6-7.

³⁰⁴ Biener, *Prosecutor Workplace*, 7-8.

³⁰⁵ Biener, *Prosecutor Workplace*, 9-11.

³⁰⁶ Biener, *Prosecutor Workplace*, 9-10.

³⁰⁷ Tom MacDonald, "Jury Trials Increase in Philadelphia to Help Eliminate 34,000 Case Backlog," *WHYY*, last modified March 14, 2022, <https://whyy.org/articles/jury-trials-increase-in-philadelphia-to-help-eliminate-34000-case-backlog/>.

³⁰⁸ Paul Heaton, "Career Paths of Pennsylvania Prosecutors," PowerPoint Presentation, SR 94 Task Force Meeting, March 19, 2026, https://share.articulate.com/NGha52PJRiOOJsrRsSRvd#.

In Pennsylvania, prosecutors have higher rates of attrition than public defenders. After five years, less than a third of those who start as prosecutors will still be prosecutors. After ten years, this number decreases to 13 percent. Those who have been prosecutors for only three years have around a 50 percent chance that they will leave their positions. Similar chances exist for those between four to seven years and eight to 11 years. Mid-size offices have slightly lower retention rates than small or large offices, but all offices struggle with retention. Female prosecutors are slightly more likely to continue practicing law, but they are around seven percent less likely to continue being prosecutors and are slightly less likely to remain in the same office if they are still a prosecutor. The full presentation is available at the link in the footnotes, complete with interactive charts and graphs. Mr. Heaton is exploring how caseload tools for public defenders could be adapted to help prosecutors' offices create a caseload standards for their offices.³⁰⁹

Public defenders are currently exploring caseload standards, prompting similar conversations for prosecutors. Previous attempts at defining standard caseloads for prosecutors had difficulty with the amount of variation across the country in different parts of the criminal justice field. For instance, the classification of charges can vary from state to state, making it difficult to use charge categories as a metric for a standard. Law enforcement policies also vary from state to state and even department to department, and different prosecutors' offices have different amounts of resources available for investigations and case processing. Prosecutors' offices can have differing organizational models and different numbers of courts that they serve. All of this variation makes establishing a reliable and fair standard very difficult.³¹⁰

Prosecutors' offices also do not use population counts within their jurisdictions to determine how much staff they can employ. The variety of programmatic expectations in different offices makes it difficult to determine a standard amount of prosecutors that is suitable for a certain caseload.³¹¹ Some prosecutors' offices, usually in larger cities, use a horizontal model of assigning cases, where assistant prosecuting attorneys are assigned to specific steps of a case. Offices in smaller cities more commonly utilize a vertical model, where each prosecutor receives a complete case and follows it through all steps of the process. Because of the variation in these workflow models, a study on a possible national workload standard determined that it was impossible to establish such a standard for the entire country.³¹²

One solution to this issue is encouraging prosecutors' offices to develop workload standards at an office level. Offices should analyze the volume of cases as well as the work that is done outside of individual cases that is no less important. A simple way to evaluate workload is to divide the number of cases by the number of available attorneys or attorney hours, or a weighted calculation that takes into account the differing workload between different kinds of cases. However, to fully grasp the workload, an office should perform a combination of a time study and sufficiency study.³¹³

³⁰⁹ Heaton, "Career Paths."

³¹⁰ Borakove, "Prosecutorial Workload," 16.

³¹¹ Biener, *Prosecutor Workplace*, 2.

³¹² Biener, *Prosecutor Workplace*, 4.

³¹³ Borakove, "Prosecutorial Workload," 16.

The Prosecutors' Center for Excellence's National Best Practices Committee (NBP) makes a distinction between the terms "caseload" and "workload." Caseload refers specifically to time spent by prosecutors working on individual cases, whereas workload refers to time spent on cases and any additional administrative or other responsibilities prosecutors might have.³¹⁴

In a time study, either an entire office or a representative portion of employees log their hours by categories determined by the office for around a month or more. After the study, the hours can be analyzed to determine the average amount of time it takes to process a case, what kinds of cases take longer than others, which cases are typically more complex, time spent on other office duties that are not technically caseload, and total hours worked by staff over the course of that time study.³¹⁵ Cases that may be weighted more highly because of their complexity include homicides, sex crimes, vehicular crimes, narcotics trafficking investigations, domestic violence, and identify theft and financial crimes.³¹⁶

A sufficiency study asks staff if they have sufficient time to complete all of their duties in their workload. If they do not currently, it asks how much time would be sufficient for the tasks they are expected to complete. It also provides an opportunity for staff to share why more or less time is needed on certain tasks to help the office develop a full picture of its needs. Analyzing these results can bring more context to the hard data found in the time study so that offices can determine where there are friction points in the current expected workload and what adjustments could be made to address them.³¹⁷

Case management systems can often be used to facilitate measurement of caseload and workload for prosecutors' offices, but staff must be using the technology accurately and consistently for the collected data to be useful. Case management systems can allow administrators to see at a glance how many cases an attorney or unit is actively on, what level of cases an attorney is qualified to handle, and what cases or kind of cases are often taking longer for attorneys to complete. Administrators can build in automatic flags for cases they have found to be more complex and set parameters for how many and what kinds of cases prosecutors can be assigned. Some case management software also allows staff to track how much time is being spent on non-case tasks.³¹⁸

Different prosecutors' offices will have differing levels of non-case tasks. While some are able to hire additional staff to complete these tasks, others cannot afford to do so and expect their attorneys to complete them. The NBP has created a document with a lengthy list of tasks that could be assigned to prosecutors that fall outside of their workload. The categories of these tasks range from review of cases, supervisory roles, development and implementation of alternative dispositions and support initiatives, human resource tasks, training, policy, law enforcement or laboratory collaboration, community partner collaboration, public presentations and meetings, data analysis, safety and wellness, and legislative tasks.³¹⁹

³¹⁴ *Studying Caseloads and Workloads: Benefits for Prosecutor Management and Funding* (PCE National Best Practices Committee, January 2024), 1.

³¹⁵ Borakove, "Prosecutorial Workload," 17.

³¹⁶ *Studying Caseloads*, 2.

³¹⁷ Borakove, "Prosecutorial Workload," 17.

³¹⁸ *Studying Caseloads*, 4-5.

³¹⁹ *Prosecutorial Work Not Included in Case Counts* (PCE National Best Practices Committee, November 2023), 2-5.

Once an analysis of an office’s workload has been completed, offices can request more funding or resources with a more reliable justification. Their caseload needs that were certainly already common knowledge within the office can be shared with decision-makers to show that an identified funding or resource gap has been verified by their research. Offices can also draw on research on national trends that mirror the results within the office. The NBP recommends that prosecutors’ offices build relationships with state legislators, county commissioners, and other funding stakeholders who could provide the much-needed support to bring prosecutor workloads under control. Prosecutors should develop a clear pitch on the needs they would like to see fulfilled, allow legislators and other stakeholders to see their work up close, and clearly explain the negative impacts of high workloads on prosecutors.³²⁰

As the profession grows and shifts over time, new career paths within prosecutors’ offices will become available. Soon, most offices will likely be in search of an AI professional who can navigate the ethical and safe use of the technology within the office. Additionally, offices may hire employees focused on community engagement that can help foster more positive relationships between prosecutors’ offices and local communities, which may lead to more diversity in recruits. Offices may also consider hiring staff to oversee other diversion and treatment options that can help lower rates of overcrowding in local jails or prisons.³²¹

Potential Solutions to Recruitment and Retention for Prosecutors

A 2024 National District Attorneys Association (NDAA) survey asked Pennsylvania prosecutors if they enjoyed being prosecutors, regardless of their current employment. Sixty-eight percent of respondents said they strongly agreed, 29 percent agreed, and 3 percent were neutral. No respondents disagreed. When taking into account the context of their current employment, 45 percent strongly agreed and 39 percent agreed. Nine percent were neutral, 5 percent disagreed, and 2 percent strongly disagreed. Respondents were asked to choose the top three factors that caused them to work at their current place of employment. The most popular responses were “doing justice in my community,” “belief in the mission of the agency,” “opportunity for trial work,” and “flexibility in hours/location worked.”³²²

Even though most prosecutors enjoyed being prosecutors, 68 percent of them stated that they have given serious consideration to leaving their current employer. Around 38 percent of these had done so within the last month, and 18 percent within the last six months. Twelve percent of respondents had done so within the last six to 12 months, and 32 percent had considered it more than a year ago. The two most popular categories for those considering leaving were over year in the past or in the current moment. Those who thought about leaving were able to select up to three motivating factors for leaving. The most common responses were “better pay,” “my own well-being (e.g., exhaustion, stress, anxiety, coping in unhealthy ways, impacts to my health from the work),” “heavy caseloads,” and “better work/life balance.”³²³ For those who did choose to stay,

³²⁰ *Studying Caseloads*, 5-7.

³²¹ *Navigating the Challenges*, 6-7.

³²² *National Prosecutor Retention Survey* (National District Attorneys Association, June 2024), 119-120.

³²³ *National Prosecutor Retention Survey*, 120-121.

they were able to choose the three motivating factors for this. The most common responses were “doing justice for my community,” “I am passionate about prosecution,” “student loan forgiveness,” and “belief in the mission of the agency.”³²⁴

The Institute for Innovation in Prosecution at John Jay College released *Revamping Recruitment and Retention: A Personnel Playbook for Prosecutors in Small Jurisdictions* in November 2022. Though there is no national data available on the severity of the prosecutor workforce crisis, local news outlets are spotlighting the issue and its consequences in many jurisdictions across the country. Rural areas in particular are struggling to fill job postings for prosecutors, partially because of the “brain drain” phenomena that affects many small towns across the country. Young people are gravitating towards cities that offer more resources and community support than small towns are able to provide, meaning that fewer people are willing to move to a rural location for a job. The report out of the Institute for Innovation focuses on some strategies that have met with success in recruiting prosecutors in these small towns.³²⁵

The top recommendation of experts on this issue was that prosecutors offices should “Reaffirm [their] mission—and share it.”³²⁶ Young people entering the job market are more concerned with social justice than past generations may have been. This is an opportunity for prosecutors’ offices to emphasize that their work is ultimately one of the most direct paths toward seeking justice—and enforcing it. If an office wants to be seen as defenders of justice, they should make an effort to display those values prominently on their website and any additional recruiting materials. Offices can engage in dialogue with their local community and prospective applicants to determine what aspects of their work resonate most with young people today.³²⁷

One way to reaffirm mission and values of an office is to advertise trainings and policies that emphasize the mission of social justice. These can include anti-bias and management trainings, policies that emphasize diversity, equity, and inclusion, outreach and transition programs, and collaborative courts like drug treatment court, mental health court, veterans’ court, and human trafficking court.³²⁸ Other ways offices can be involved in community outreach could include advisory boards, DA open houses, expungement clinics, educational school or citizen programming, and different types of anti-violence multidisciplinary response teams.³²⁹ The fact that the role of the prosecutor is developing to include more than case work is a challenge for offices as they expand their capabilities, but also presents an opportunity to recruit applicants who are interested in a more wholistic representation of the criminal justice system.

Prosecutors’ offices should also develop and maintain relationships with local law schools. This is a very helpful way to have direct contact with a host of qualified applicants. Relationships with law school professors can help offices be more aware of what is most important to students at that time. Prosecutors could also volunteer as guest speakers in classes to generate interest in

³²⁴ *National Prosecutor Retention Survey*, 121.

³²⁵ Harry Breault, Deborah Gonzales, and William Ring, *Revamping Recruitment and Retention: A Personnel Playbook for Prosecutors in Small Jurisdictions* (Institute for Innovation in Prosecution at John Jay College, November 2022), 2-4.

³²⁶ Breault, *Revamping Recruitment and Retention*, 4.

³²⁷ Breault, *Revamping Recruitment and Retention*, 5.

³²⁸ *Recruiting the Gen Z Prosecutor* (Prosecutor’s Center for Excellence, November 2022), 2.

³²⁹ *Recruiting the Gen Z Prosecutor*, 2.

their career path. Relationships with the career offices at law schools help offices to be plugged in to any career fairs or other events happening at a school.³³⁰

Internships are another great way to generate interest in a career in prosecution. Internships can be challenging because of the limited window of time that students are with an office, but it is ideal to allow them to experience as many elements of a case as possible. For offices that are near a law school, this may mean allowing interns to stay on throughout part of the school year to see a case from beginning to end. For others, it may mean offering internship opportunities over multiple summers so that students can engage with different parts of the process in different summers. During the internship, offices can invite guest speakers to expose students to perspectives on various sides of the justice system, and can even integrate experiential learning, where students can tour jails or participate in restorative justice circles. Internship programs should be well-organized with clearly published expectations and outcomes. However, internships can exacerbate inequities as they are often unpaid, making them only accessible to students who can afford to work for a summer with no pay. Those who have internship experience are often treated preferentially because the experience they have gained is valuable. This disadvantages those who are not in a financial position to gain such experience. Hiring managers should pay attention to other qualifications that students who were unable to participate in an internship may have.³³¹

Internships and similar programs can also be pursued at the high school level, giving young people an opportunity to experience work in a prosecutors' office and determine if it is a career path of interest to them. Offices can reach out to local clubs to bring in prospective students.³³² One example of a way to engage high schoolers is mini-citizen academies where students learn about the work in a prosecutors' office in an age-appropriate way. This can be done as early as elementary or middle school.³³³

Internships should be well-organized to ensure that interns have engaging and meaningful work to do with the office. They should be paired with mentors who are willing to engage and teach the new generation of lawyers. Since some students will not be able to afford an unpaid internship, offices should investigate manners of funding that would support a paid internship to make the opportunity more accessible.³³⁴

The proper marketing of these available opportunities is important. Websites should highlight an office's mission, policies, and initiatives that it is involved in. Social media should showcase the community work an office partakes in and the kinds of opportunities that will be available to staff attorneys. Offices can also use popular job posting sites and sites hosted by national, state, and local bar associations to advertise available positions. Offices can also join affinity and state bar association hiring fairs to find prospective applicants.³³⁵

³³⁰ Breault, *Revamping Recruitment and Retention*, 5.

³³¹ Breault, *Revamping Recruitment and Retention*, 6-7.

³³² *Navigating the Challenges*, 5.

³³³ *Recruiting the Gen Z Prosecutor*, 16.

³³⁴ *Recruiting the Gen Z Prosecutor*, 13.

³³⁵ *Recruiting the Gen Z Prosecutor*, 16-17.

The report also recommends that hiring managers “revamp their hiring process with openness and transparency.” This highlights the fact that interviewees do not always answer questions honestly because it is known that responses that could favor defense work, like discussing the possibility of mistakes made by law enforcement, will disqualify a candidate. With this precedent, candidates either neglect to mention their opinions if they cover these issues and then offices are unfamiliar with the thought process of their new hire, or possibly qualified candidates are overlooked because of their opinions. The suggested priority moving forward in hiring interviews is asking who the candidate will be as a decision maker.³³⁶

When hiring and when marketing to prospective applicants, prosecutors’ offices should emphasize diversity. To attract marginalized applicants, offices may need to recruit outside of the traditional circles, as these applicants may be predisposed against a career in prosecution. Recruiters may need to respond to law students who believe that reform in prosecutorial spaces cannot be enacted by participants in these spaces. Prosecutors can attract members of marginalized communities by being clear that they stand against systemic racism. Additionally, hiring panels that include more diversity can also increase the diversity in hiring.³³⁷ Offices should be mindful of the perceived professionalism of their interview process. They should give equal respect to all candidates, as a bad experience with one candidate can sour a relationship with a local law college if word about unprofessional behavior spreads to other students.³³⁸

Offices should emphasize the financial advantages to working in a prosecutors’ office. Though salaries may be lower than in other sectors of the legal industry, the benefits that come with employment at a public entity can be attractive to young applicants seeking financial security. Offices should emphasize if their employees have access to healthcare and retirement benefits, as well as free educational opportunities or tuition reimbursement or loan forgiveness. Offices can also offer education on various aspects of financial literacy for employees. Offices should be educated on what a loan payment would be for a prospective applicant utilizing the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program if they are on an income-driven repayment plan.³³⁹

Work-life balance is also becoming increasingly important to incoming applicants. Though prosecutors’ offices often cannot compete financially with other law graduate careers, they do offer something unique: experience of a lot of different aspects of law with more regular hours and more job security. Though these offices cannot compensate financially, they can be more creative in offering other benefits like additional paid time off (PTO). One office even offered four hours of PTO a week for staff to use for volunteering in their communities.³⁴⁰

Prosecutors’ offices could also offer more opportunities for remote work, as the younger generation is seeking hybrid employment options at a higher rate. Offices are experimenting with different variations of this, from working from home for 16 hours a month, to two days a week, to an office that has no official policy as long as the employee’s work is being completed in a satisfactory manner. These strategies come with risks: staff can feel disconnected from the rest of

³³⁶ Breault, *Revamping Recruitment and Retention*, 9.

³³⁷ Breault, *Revamping Recruitment and Retention*, 11.

³³⁸ *Recruiting the Gen Z Prosecutor*, 12.

³³⁹ *Recruiting the Gen Z Prosecutor*, 7-8.

³⁴⁰ Breault, *Revamping Recruitment and Retention*, 12.

their team or even disconnected from their work with less accountability when working from home. Hybrid systems work best when expectations are clearly communicated and simple to follow. If there are discrepancies in work quality that seem to be related to the hybrid strategy, they should be immediately addressed so as not to breed resentment. Each individual prosecutors' office will have to weigh whether they are willing to sacrifice a certain amount of "office culture" to make their positions more attractive to new applicants.³⁴¹

Another way to attract new applicants may be to provide more childcare options. Young parents or those who are planning to become parents will be intrigued by an office culture that supports and encourages this facet of their life. Paid parental leave is one attractive option, but if offices cannot afford this, they could also offer what are called "Infant in the Workplace" programs. These programs give flexibility for parents of infants to bring them into the office occasionally if they do not have another childcare option. Prosecutors' offices can also look into local childcare options that may be co-located with and available to those working in the criminal justice systems.³⁴² Prosecutors' offices can also offer sabbatical programs to attract and retain staff. One office offers 40-day sabbaticals after the first four years of service and 30-day sabbaticals every subsequent three years.³⁴³

Staff in the criminal justice arena are also dealing with the effects of burnout and potential vicarious trauma. Extreme instances of this can cause prosecutors to resign after years of suffering in silence. To avoid this outcome, offices can offer trainings on burnout and trauma, allow peers to mentor each other in these areas, make counseling available for employees who need it, and allow therapy dogs to come on the premises.³⁴⁴

Improper management can affect the work experience of new prosecutors. Management should try to staff offices with non-attorneys who can handle the administrative aspects of the office so that prosecutors can focus on their caseload. Managers should also make themselves available to employees to voice concerns with office culture or management styles. They can also perform "stay interviews," where they ask employees who have not left the office why they have chosen to stay and what they believe could be improved.³⁴⁵ Especially for younger recruits, proper office culture will be important. A mentorship program will ensure that they learn from someone with valuable experience and are supported in their early days of employment. Young recruits also appreciate their input being valued by their management.³⁴⁶

The challenges in many of these areas boil down to a lack of available funding in criminal justice fields. In one county in Indiana, the income tax was raised to provide more funding for criminal justice in the county. One of the leading advocates for this change was the chief deputy at the prosecutors' office, who testified to lawmakers in favor of this change. With this additional funding, the prosecutor's office was able to hire six new deputy prosecutors, two full-time

³⁴¹ Breault, *Revamping Recruitment and Retention*, 13-15.

³⁴² Breault, *Revamping Recruitment and Retention*, 15-16.

³⁴³ *Strategies for Prosecutor and Non-Lawyer Staff Retention* (PCE National Best Practices Committee, January 2026), 2-3.

³⁴⁴ *Strategies*, 3-4.

³⁴⁵ *Strategies*, 5-6.

³⁴⁶ *Recruiting the Gen Z Prosecutor*, 9.

prosecutors, and some additional support staff.³⁴⁷ Some states have invested in loan repayment assistance for law school debt if attorneys worked in rural areas for a specified amount of time. Other states offer fellowships at rural prosecuting offices, subsidizing the cost of hiring for the smaller prosecuting offices and allowing the applicants to get valuable experience in their career.³⁴⁸ Increased funding will allow prosecutors' offices to offer higher salaries for prosecutors and support staff alike, an important improvement since low salaries are often cited as a reason for pursuing employment elsewhere.³⁴⁹ This report includes a short "playbook" that summarizes the information relayed above in a more concise way and categorizes changes into first steps, programmatic changes, and long term projects.³⁵⁰

Pennsylvania Prosecutor Recruitment and Retention Efforts

Pennsylvania is home to nine accredited law schools. Four are in the Philadelphia area, two in the Pittsburgh area, two in the Harrisburg area, and one at University Park in the north central part of the state and include some of the most highly respected in the country. Liaison programs should be feasible between the law schools and the district attorney offices, especially summer programs for the more distant counties and year-round opportunities for students attending urban schools.

The Pennsylvania District Attorneys' Association (PDAA) has actively pursuing outreach to Pennsylvania law students and undergraduates. The following is a description was provided by PDAA's about its "Prosecutor's Panels," a statewide recruitment and outreach program.

. . . beginning in 2021, PDAA has coordinated panels of prosecutors visiting all the law schools in Pennsylvania. These panels, entitled "Modern Day Prosecution: The Rewards You Can Expect as a New Prosecutor," aim to educate undergraduate and law students about the important and impactful work of a modern-day prosecutor. To date, PDAA has conducted 16 panels across Pennsylvania. Each panel concludes with a question-and-answer session, followed by a networking reception at which students can ask questions of prosecutors in a more informal atmosphere.

The panels highlight that the work of the prosecutor resides squarely within the ambit of "public interest" law. Among the many opportunities for students who wish to enter public service, being a prosecutor is indeed among the most fulfilling public interest careers one can have. The Office of the District Attorney in each of the Commonwealth's 67 counties seeks to serve their citizens by solving community problems in a substantive way where possible, rather than by merely accepting the success of statistical convictions. The PDAA recognizes that criminal justice is never a finished construct. Prosecutors are committed to identifying best

³⁴⁷ Breault, *Revamping Recruitment and Retention*, 18.

³⁴⁸ Breault, *Revamping Recruitment and Retention*, 19-20,
<https://www.westmorelandcountypa.gov/1833/Employment-and-Internships>.

³⁴⁹ *Strategies*, 2.

³⁵⁰ Breault, *Revamping Recruitment and Retention*, 24.

practices and policies in order to meet the ever-changing demands of our criminal justice system. These demands require the prosecutor's constant vigilance over the legitimate needs of law enforcement, victims, as well as the rights of the accused. As Ministers of Justice, prosecutors maintain this commitment with the highest level of integrity while performing their duties as responsible public servants for the communities they serve.³⁵¹

At least seven counties in Pennsylvania offer some form of recruitment effort/learning experience for law students through paid and unpaid internships, externships or training academies, which could serve as examples for other counties. Not surprisingly, many of them are located relatively close to where Pennsylvania's law schools are sited. A number of counties, including Berks,³⁵² Butler,³⁵³ Chester,³⁵⁴ Dauphin,³⁵⁵ Lancaster,³⁵⁶ and Westmoreland³⁵⁷ offer internship programs in adult probation offices for college students in a variety of social service fields, including criminal justice and criminology, as does the federal Middle District Court of Pennsylvania.³⁵⁸ Franklin County hosts a criminal justice ride along internship that includes the sheriff's office, adult probation, juvenile probation, the Franklin County Jail and other departments.³⁵⁹

Allegheny County

Allegheny County offers multiple types of summer internship positions. These include:

- Paid Intern: for rising third- and fourth-year law students who are certified legal interns
- Extern: unpaid, for-credit position
- Undergraduate: unpaid, for credit position
- Allegheny County Bar Association Summer Clerkship Program
- Allegheny County Bar Foundation Law Student Summer Fellowship for second-year law students

³⁵¹ Email from Kevin Steele, Montgomery County District Attorney, May 8, 2026. On file in JSGC offices.

³⁵² "Internships," *Berks County Probation and Parole*, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://www.berkspa.gov/departments/apo/internships>.

³⁵³ "Butler County Student Internship," *Butler County*, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://www.butlercountypa.gov/473/Student-Internship>.

³⁵⁴ "Chester County Student Internship," *Chester County*, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://www.chesco.org/2556/Student-Internship>.

³⁵⁵ "Internship," *Dauphin County Adult Probation Office*, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://www.dauphincounty.gov/government/court-departments/adult-division/internship>.

³⁵⁶ "Internship Information," *Lancaster County, Adult Probation*, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://www.court.co.lancaster.pa.us/128/Internship-Information>.

³⁵⁷ "Employment and Internships," *Westmoreland County*, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://www.westmorelandcountypa.gov/1833/Employment-and-Internships>.

³⁵⁸ "Probation/Pretrial Student Intern," *United States Probation and Pretrial Services, Middle District of Pennsylvania*, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://www.pamp.uscourts.gov/event/98/internship-posting-probationpretrial-student-intern>.

³⁵⁹ "Internships and Job Shadowing," *Franklin County*, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://www.franklincountypa.gov/internships-job-shadowing/>.

The DA's office also provides district attorneys as instructors for the Duquesne Law Criminal Prosecution Program.

Bucks County

Bucks County's Summer Internship Program runs for 10 weeks. First year law students may serve as interns, and second-year law students may be hired for the summer to work as Certified Legal Interns. Former internship participants receive special consideration when applying for full-time assistant district attorney positions. The county has recruited law students from over 10 universities in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia.³⁶⁰

Delaware County

Delaware County offers an internship program for college and law students, with shadowing opportunities for high school students during fall and spring. The program operates as a full-time position during the summer. Law students who are certified legal interns qualify for the most in-depth experience.³⁶¹

Lehigh County

The Lehigh County district attorney's office offers internships to undergraduates and law students during the school year and over the summer.³⁶²

Montgomery County

Montgomery County provides three opportunities for students to explore a career as a prosecutor. Law students and college students may apply for the summer internship program. Second- and third-year law school students may apply for the DA's Law School Externship Program, which requires the student to be a certified legal intern.³⁶³ Additionally, the county offers a trial advocacy academy. Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin Steele provided the following description of the DA's offerings to students.

In 2024, the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office met its recruitment challenges by uniting three strengths: proximity to law schools, exceptional trial attorneys, and the competitive drive of law students.

The Montgomery County District Attorney's Office has long found excellent candidates for new ADAs through its robust summer internship program. To train and assess the skills of those interns, for the last 19 years the office hosted an end-

³⁶⁰ "Internships/Careers," *Bucks County District Attorney*, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://www.buckscounty.gov/557/InternshipsCareers>.

³⁶¹ "Internship and Hiring Opportunities," *The Delaware County Office of the District Attorney*, accessed May 11, 2026, https://www.delcopa.gov/sites/default/files/media/DA_Pamphlet_Rouse.pdf.

³⁶² "DA Internship Application," *Lehigh County*, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://www.lehighcounty.org/Departments/District-Attorney/DA-Internship-Application>.

³⁶³ "Internships & Externships," *Montgomery County PA*, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://www.montgomerycountypa.gov/4627/Internships-Externships>.

of-summer trial advocacy competition for the law students who had finished their second year of law school. Winners often accepted offers and built successful careers in advocacy and leadership in the office.

From 2019 to 2024, office leadership noticed a decline in summer internship and employment applicants. Students increasingly seemed to gravitate toward private-sector pay and its promise of flexibility. To compound the problem, changing public perception of law enforcement drew away students who wanted to pursue public service. As always, students who engage with the work see that prosecution is among the most direct, demanding, and honorable paths to public service. But because fewer students were coming through the door, the office took steps to proactively draw them in.

In late 2024, the office launched its first—and now annual—law student trial advocacy competition. The program:

- is delivered over five Saturdays to accommodate academic schedules;
- includes a full day of classroom instruction, a full day of courtroom practice sessions and feedback, and mock trial competitions where students compete against prosecutors who “play” defense attorneys;
- includes a case problem built from the facts and evidence of real, completed homicide trials. These are modified to appropriately protect the privacy of those involved, while still giving the feeling of a real case with real problems and high stakes;
- is taught by senior prosecutors who bring decades of experience, with instruction on opening statements, direct and cross examinations, and closing arguments; and
- mock trials are staffed by supervisors, line ADAs, and professional staff serving as judges, jurors, witnesses, and defense counsel.

Even amid tightening budgets, the office found meaningful ways to invest in participants. A partnership with BARBRI allowed the office to provide top competitors with bar exam preparation course credits, along with the distinction their performance deserved.

The program was embraced by local law schools and students. In its first year, 16 students participated from six law schools. In its second year, participation nearly doubled, attracting 30 students. Surveys also showed a measurable shift: of those students who were not already highly interested in prosecution at the start of the program, 53% reported interest in a prosecutorial career after attending.

The success of the program, driven entirely by attorneys who volunteer scarce personal time, underscores both the power of experiential legal education and the extraordinary commitment of this office to its mission.³⁶⁴

Monroe County

Monroe County's office of the district attorney offers multiple opportunities for students. Both programs are paid positions. The Criminal Prosecutions internships generally last for twelve weeks. A college or law student intern is assigned to a specific prosecutor and serves as an assistant through the criminal investigation process. Students in the Criminal Investigations internships are assigned to a specific county detective and follow through a criminal investigation, including any resulting trial.³⁶⁵

York County

There are four unpaid internship programs available for future prosecutors in York County. The High School Internship Program is an active year-round program for high school students. The Paralegal Internship Program is a year-round program available to students enrolled in a two-year paralegal studies program. The College Student Internship Program is unpaid, but students may earn course credits through their university. The Law Student Internship Program allows law students to assist in research projects and case preparation, and if certified legal interns, conduct court hearings under supervision. This internship is available during the school year and over the summer.³⁶⁶

Nationwide Prosecutor Recruitment and Retention Strategies

The National District Attorneys Association (NDAA) has devoted a considerable amount of time and energy to examining prosecutor retention and recruitment issues. The NDAA conducted a National Prosecutor Retention Survey in 2024 that revealed that 68 percent of Pennsylvania prosecutors have given serious consideration to leaving their current employer within the past year. Better pay with the overall primary motivating factor at 73 percent, followed by heavy caseloads (43 percent) and negative health impact (45 percent). The most common reason for staying despite thinking about leaving was "doing justice for my community" (45 percent) and "I am passionate about prosecution" (37 percent).³⁶⁷

JSGC staff attended the NDAA National Recruitment and Retention Symposium in September 2025. Topics such as recruitment of law students, onboarding for new prosecutors, team building, mental health and wellbeing were explored. As noted in the "Barriers" chapter

³⁶⁴ Email from Kevin Steele, Montgomery County District Attorney, May 1, 2026. On file in JSGC offices.

³⁶⁵ "Paid Internship Program," *Monroe County of the District Attorney*, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://monroecountyda.com/internship/>.

³⁶⁶ "Internships," *York County District Attorney's Office*, accessed May 11, 2026, <https://yorkda.com/internships/>.

³⁶⁷ NDAA, *National Prosecutor Retention Survey* (June 2024), 119-121, <https://www.ndaa.org/news/ndaa-national-prosecutor-retention-survey>.

above, expanded responsibilities amid technological advances in criminal behavior and well as funding limitations that can prohibit acquisition of new law enforcement technologies also add to workload frustrations.

Multiple district attorneys served on the SR 94 Task Force, and the Pennsylvania District Attorney's Association (PDAA) made several suggestions in addition to the formal recommendations to this report. The recommendations include conducting a comprehensive workload study to look at some of the underlying causes of turnover. Additionally, they recommend pursuing grant funding for statewide recruitment media. Another proposal is to expand certified legal intern authority in magisterial district courts. Currently, the Pennsylvania Board of Law Examiners regulates the authorized activities of certified legal interns under Rule 322 of the Pennsylvania Bar Admission Rules.³⁶⁸

In the same vein as the expanded role of certified legal interns, several states have established law student recruitment programs that provide internships and clerkships. The National District Attorneys Association has a webpage highlighting recruitment resources. One resource offered is a toolkit for recruitment at career fairs. The resource advises recruiters to target law schools that have a commitment to public service, are near to the DAs office, have good relationships with the DAs offices, and have a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion. As far as recruiting specific students, the Association recommends looking for students that are first-generation law students, members of minority populations, students studying law besides criminal law, and students from different socioeconomic backgrounds and non-traditional students.³⁶⁹

Current students are motivated and informed by different market trends than those in the past. Students want to know that their career can have a social impact. They value a work-life balance that allows them to enjoy hobbies and relationships outside of work, and an inclusive and diverse workplace. Students may also be interested in how technology can be used in law and what kind of professional development will be available to them in their career.³⁷⁰

Knowing these things, recruiters can tailor their pitch to students by emphasizing traits of their office that speak to these priorities. Possible examples of these qualities listed by the toolkit include: meaningful work and public service, variety and complexity of work, early responsibility, professional development, community involvement, work-life balance, and student loan forgiveness.³⁷¹

The toolkit recommends targeting career fairs in the fall and spring that are in the middle of the week. A successful booth at a career fair can have promotional materials like pens or other free gifts, large banners that advertise the office, computers or other screens playing information about the career, and materials about the application process like eligibility information, and applications forms.³⁷²

³⁶⁸ Pa.B.R. 322. Authorized Activities of Certified Legal Interns.

https://www.pabarexam.org/bar_admission_rules/322.htm

³⁶⁹ "Career Fair Toolkit," *National District Attorneys Association*, accessed September 15, 2025,

<https://www.ndaa.org/news/job-fair-toolkit>.

³⁷⁰ "Career Fair Toolkit."

³⁷¹ "Career Fair Toolkit."

³⁷² "Career Fair Toolkit."

Offices can also be marketed through promotional materials like brochures or flyers, emails, and social media posts. Recruiters should utilize relationships with law schools to spread the word about their offices and can also utilize alumni networks similarly. Sometimes a panel discussion with alumni or prosecutors that are currently employed at an office can engender interest.³⁷³

Tennessee Summer Clerkship Program

The Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference runs a summer clerkship program designed to lead young attorneys into public service. The program's purpose is to convince attorneys not to be tempted by higher salaries in the private industry, train the program participants up to be capable prosecutors, and to supplement the DA offices with fresh legal talent.³⁷⁴

The program recruits lawyers through outreach to law schools in the fall and spring and public service job fairs by circulating descriptions of the program. In the winter, the DA offices nominate students who will be starting their second year of law school (rising 2L). The program attempts to pair offices with candidates that would best suit their needs, intending to make the matching process painless for all involved. As of September 2025, students receive \$26 an hour for their services and have the opportunity to earn law school credits as well.³⁷⁵

At the beginning of the program, students will take a "centralized orientation week," which takes four days and will "ground students in the ethics, skills, and expectations of prosecution."³⁷⁶ The students will take courses on "prosecutorial ethics, working with law enforcement, victim-centered advocacy, charging decisions and discretion, and courtroom advocacy and observance."³⁷⁷

The clerkship program is 10 weeks long. Students who have not yet begun their first year of law school experience a rotation in four different offices, one in suburban, urban, and rural jurisdictions. Those who have completed one year of law school (1Ls) complete a two-office rotation. A DA can nominate a candidate to complete their entire program in one office. While in the clerkship, students can expect to contribute meaningful legal work and enter court and observe DAs in action. Rising 2Ls will have the option to get a limited practice license, with which they can "negotiate cases, argue motions, enter pleas, and participate in trials."³⁷⁸ They will each have a mentor in their office who will supervise their work and provide feedback as necessary. For law school credits, students may have to produce reflections for their professors. Halfway through the program, students will have the opportunity to network at the June DA's Business Meeting, where they can make connections with the hiring offices.³⁷⁹

³⁷³ "Career Fair Toolkit."

³⁷⁴ Stephen Crump, "Tennessee's Clerkship Program," lecture presented at the National District Attorney's Association 2025 National Recruitment & Retention Symposium, Chicago, IL, September 5, 2025.

³⁷⁵ Stephen Crump, "Tennessee's Clerkship Program."

³⁷⁶ Stephen Crump, "Tennessee's Clerkship Program."

³⁷⁷ Stephen Crump, "Tennessee's Clerkship Program."

³⁷⁸ Stephen Crump, "Tennessee's Clerkship Program."

³⁷⁹ Stephen Crump, "Tennessee's Clerkship Program."

Program administrators tout their program as successful because it provides an opportunity to dispel the myths about DA offices, give students connections, and allow them to bring their experiences back to other students at their law schools.³⁸⁰

San Diego District Attorney Recruitment

In San Diego, a recruiter identified the problem points in recruiting prosecutors. The recruiter noted that even though some offices have been recording declines in recruitment for up to ten years, the decline seems to have been exacerbated by the unrest in 2020 which shifted public opinion on law enforcement to become more negative. As she stated, “We’re not the good guys anymore.”³⁸¹ Additionally, she noted that salary offerings are unable to keep up with living expenses and law school expenses.

The recruiter recommended that DAs offices study their potential recruits, looking into why students would join a recruitment program and what kind of program they would join. Offices should investigate what preconceived notions students have about DAs offices and what kinds of experiences they are interested in having.³⁸²

The recruiter’s profile of Gen Z recruits was as follows:

- First generation to grow up fully in the digital age;
- Experienced 2008 recession, COVID-19, and racial justice movement;
- Career and partnership/family focused;
- Value diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- Prioritize self-care, mental health, and work life balance;
- Value financial stability, explore side hustles; and
- Seek authenticity.³⁸³

Factors that could come into play for potential recruits include layoffs and instability in Big Law, the value of the connections and experience that come from the program, mental health programs and peer support being offered to participants and available salaries. The recruiter stated that to attract students, programs should be of high value and include experiential learning, should seek exposure at schools and job fairs and try to network with prospective candidates through the local bar associations.³⁸⁴

San Diego’s 1L Legal Scholars program is a paid summer internship where students can expect to work on motion writing, transcripts, photo discovery, and observing court. Participants will engage in a 995 motion competition, which is a motion to dismiss charges because evidence was obtained in an illegal manner or the evidence was insufficient. Participants will also have a

³⁸⁰ Stephen Crump, “Tennessee’s Clerkship Program.”

³⁸¹ Shawnalyse Ochoa, “We Want You: Effective Recruitment Strategies,” lecture presented at the National District Attorney’s Association 2025 National Recruitment & Retention Symposium, Chicago, IL, September 4, 2025.

³⁸² Shawnalyse Ochoa, “We Want You: Effective Recruitment Strategies.”

³⁸³ Shawnalyse Ochoa, “We Want You: Effective Recruitment Strategies.”

³⁸⁴ Shawnalyse Ochoa, “We Want You: Effective Recruitment Strategies.”

cold case review. San Deigo's DA Academy is a four-and-a-half-day program with experiential learning activities. The Jr. DA Academy is similar except it is only two and a half days long. San Deigo's DA Career Exploration Program is four and a half hours long and includes "student workers, prelaw college students, clubs and associations."³⁸⁵ The program provides experiential learning and allows students to network with the chosen speakers, who are mostly judges and DAs.

Fairbanks, Alaska Junior DA Program

In Fairbanks, Alaska, the DAs office has established a Junior DA program (JDAP) which is designed to "engage with area youth in a proactive and meaningful way, where they see the operation of the criminal justice system firsthand, from the inside-out, interacting with community leaders and criminal justice practitioners along the way."³⁸⁶ The Fairbanks DAs office prepared a handbook to enable other DAs offices across the state to establish their own JDAPs.

The Fairbanks DAs office advises DAs offices looking to start a JDAP to clarify their vision, mission and purpose before beginning. DA offices can do this by asking a few essential questions:

What are your demographics? What are the needs and values of your community? What resources are at your disposal? What do you want the end goals of your program to be? Recruitment? Outreach? Education? Service?... What matters to [youth]? Where are they struggling? What areas of the criminal justice system would they find most engaging?³⁸⁷

Each JDAP should have a core team that can handle the logistical challenges of developing such a program. Second, JDAPs should have instructional teams that focus on educating students and transport them to and from educational activities. JDAPs should develop strong partnerships with school districts to facilitate good strong relationships with students. Educators who are closer to the students will be the most helpful partners in working through any challenges that arise. Some educators may even be recruited as volunteers to help the program run smoothly.³⁸⁸

The JDAP schedule that the Fairbanks DA office followed was a six-to-eight-week class with a once-weekly session in either the morning or afternoon, not exceeding four hours. Sessions should include education on a legal issue by a prosecutor and then a presentation from a participating agency. With cooperation with judges in local courthouses, JDAPs should take students into the courtroom to experience what they are learning in action.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁵ Shawanalyse Ochoa, "We Want You: Effective Recruitment Strategies."

³⁸⁶ Joe Dallaire, "It Starts With You -- Leading to Build the Next Generation of Prosecutors," lecture presented at the National District Attorney's Association 2025 National Recruitment & Retention Symposium, Chicago, IL, September 5, 2025.

³⁸⁷ Joe Dallaire, "It Starts With You -- Leading to Build the Next Generation of Prosecutors."

³⁸⁸ Joe Dallaire, "It Starts With You -- Leading to Build the Next Generation of Prosecutors."

³⁸⁹ Joe Dallaire, "It Starts With You -- Leading to Build the Next Generation of Prosecutors."

Groups that JDAPs should utilize for guest speakers or field trips should include:

- Judges in the court system
- The defense bar
- Law enforcement
- Forensic labs
- Homicide prosecutors
- Probation officers³⁹⁰

This experience can connect students who do not end up being interested in a legal career find other points of interest in the criminal justice system.³⁹¹

To promote their program, the Fairbanks JDAP used recruitment flyers with QR codes that linked to their website, stocked with more information and forms necessary to apply for the program. They also used social media accounts to advertise the program and asked community partners to do the same. In some cases, press releases or tv or radio advertisements could be a helpful tool. By far though, the most effective recruitment tool was visits to schools to present the program to students.³⁹²

Lastly, the Fairbanks DAs office emphasized the importance of a graduation procedure that acknowledges the effort that students who completed the program undertook. They recommended that the DA present awards to the students and recognize their accomplishment.³⁹³

Funding for the Education of Future Prosecutors

The Public Student Loan Forgiveness Program offers partial forgiveness of direct federal student loans in exchange for public service. To be eligible, a person must make 120 qualifying monthly payments while employed by a federal, state, local or tribal government organization or a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Repayment plans are based on income and household size.³⁹⁴

The John R. Justice Program of the U.S. Department of Justice provides loan repayment assistance in exchange for three years of service as a full-time prosecutor handling criminal or juvenile cases at the state or local level. Funds are allocated at the state level. PCCD is state administrator for this program. The closing date for PCCD to file with DOJ is April 17, 2026, and

³⁹⁰ Joe Dallaire, “It Starts With You -- Leading to Build the Next Generation of Prosecutors.”

³⁹¹ Joe Dallaire, “It Starts With You -- Leading to Build the Next Generation of Prosecutors.”

³⁹² Joe Dallaire, “It Starts With You -- Leading to Build the Next Generation of Prosecutors.”

³⁹³ Joe Dallaire, “It Starts With You -- Leading to Build the Next Generation of Prosecutors.”

³⁹⁴ “Public Service Loan Forgiveness,” *U.S. Department of Education, Federal Study Act*, accessed April 17, 2026, <https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service#qualifying-repayment-plans>.

the award ceiling is \$120,000 for fiscal year 2025.³⁹⁵ PCCD received \$81,475 in 2024 and announced that it anticipated making 14 awards of approximately \$5,820 each.³⁹⁶

In December 2025, H.R. 6666 was introduced in the U.S. Congress. Titled the Helping Improve Recruitment and Retention Efforts for Prosecutors Act of 2025, the statute would create a competitive grant program under the U.S. Office of Attorney General. The program would support hiring and training of new prosecutors and the rehiring of prosecutors who had been laid off due to state or local budget reductions. The statute authorized an appropriation of \$10 million for each of the fiscal years 2026 through 2030.

In early 2026, PCCD announced a grant for Prosecutor Training Initiatives. This funding is through the federal Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program. A total of \$971,460 is available to fund one grant over a 24-month period running from July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2028.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁵ “BJA FY25 John R. Justice (JRJ) Formula Grant Program,” *Grants.gov*, accessed June 15, 2026, <https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/361538>.

³⁹⁶ *FY 2024 John R. Justice Grant Program Fact Sheet* (Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency), accessed April 17, 2026, <https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/pccd/documents/funding/documents/funding-announcements/2024andolder/fy%202024%20john%20r%20justice%20fact%20sheet.pdf>.

³⁹⁷ “Active Funding Announcements,” *PCCD*, accessed April 21, 2026, <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/pccd/resources/active-funding-announcements>.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE RESOLUTION

No. 94 Session of 2025

INTRODUCED BY LANGERHOLC, PICOZZI, FARRY, PENNYCUICK, ROBINSON,
BAKER, CULVER, COSTA, VOGEL, STEFANO, FONTANA, TARTAGLIONE,
ARGALL, MILLER, FLYNN AND COLLETT, APRIL 28, 2025

REFERRED TO LAW AND JUSTICE, APRIL 28, 2025

A RESOLUTION

1 Directing the Joint State Government Commission to establish the
2 Task Force on Recruitment and Retention of Law Enforcement.

3 WHEREAS, Public safety in this Commonwealth requires properly
4 staffed:

5 (1) law enforcement departments in all counties and
6 departments;

7 (2) State and county correctional institutions; and

8 (3) district attorneys' offices with qualified and
9 experienced prosecutors;

10 and

11 WHEREAS, Recruitment and retention challenges for all three
12 professions are at unprecedented levels, presenting challenges
13 for these public servants to do their jobs effectively; and

14 WHEREAS, Vacancies in these professions result in delays of
15 justice and fears of decreased public safety; and

16 WHEREAS, It is vital for vacancies in these noble professions
17 to be filled in a timely manner to ensure safe communities

1 across this Commonwealth; therefore be it

2 RESOLVED, That the Senate direct the Joint State Government
3 Commission to establish the Task Force on Recruitment and
4 Retention of Law Enforcement; and be it further

5 RESOLVED, That the Task Force on Recruitment and Retention of
6 Law Enforcement consist of the following members:

7 (1) the Attorney General of Pennsylvania, or a designee,
8 who shall serve as chairperson;

9 (2) the Commissioner of Pennsylvania State Police or a
10 designee;

11 (3) the Secretary of Corrections of the Commonwealth or
12 a designee;

13 (4) the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania
14 Commission on Crime and Delinquency or a designee;

15 (5) a designee of the Pennsylvania State Troopers
16 Association;

17 (6) a designee of the Pennsylvania Fraternal Order of
18 Police;

19 (7) a designee of the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police
20 Association;

21 (8) a designee of the Pennsylvania Sheriffs'
22 Association;

23 (9) a designee of the Fraternal Order of Transit Police;

24 (10) a designee of the Pennsylvania State Corrections
25 Officers Association;

26 (11) a designee of an employee labor organization
27 representing county corrections officers in this
28 Commonwealth;

29 (12) two State corrections officers in this
30 Commonwealth, as selected by the Pennsylvania State

1 Corrections Officers Association;

2 (13) two county corrections officers in this
3 Commonwealth, as selected by an employee labor organization
4 representing county corrections officers in this
5 Commonwealth;

6 (14) a designee of the Pennsylvania Bar Association;

7 (15) a designee of the Pennsylvania District Attorneys
8 Association; and

9 (16) six district attorneys in this Commonwealth, as
10 selected by the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association;
11 and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That the Task Force on Recruitment and Retention of
13 Law Enforcement examine the current state of recruitment and
14 retention of law enforcement officers, corrections officers and
15 prosecutors to provide recommendations to assist local
16 governments and the Commonwealth in staffing these important
17 positions; and be it further

18 RESOLVED, That the Task Force on Recruitment and Retention of
19 Law Enforcement identify necessary changes to State statutes and
20 practices, policies and procedures that would assist in
21 improving the recruitment and retention of law enforcement
22 officers, corrections officers and prosecutors; and be it
23 further

24 RESOLVED, That the Task Force on Recruitment and Retention of
25 Law Enforcement, with the assistance of the Joint State
26 Government Commission, consult with State and local entities,
27 including, but not limited to:

28 (1) the County Commissioners Association of
29 Pennsylvania;

30 (2) the Pennsylvania Municipal League;

1 (3) the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs;

2 (4) the Pennsylvania State Association of Township
3 Commissioners;

4 (5) the Pennsylvania State Association of Township
5 Supervisors; and

6 (6) the Pennsylvania Association of Councils of
7 Governments;

8 and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That the Joint State Government Commission shall:

10 (1) accept and review written comments from individuals
11 and organizations;

12 (2) report findings and recommendations no later than
13 April 30, 2026; and

14 (3) include recommendations for the following in the
15 report required under paragraph (2):

16 (i) improvements in the recruitment and retention of
17 law enforcement officers, corrections officers and
18 prosecutors; and

19 (ii) necessary changes in State statutes and
20 practices, policies and procedures that would assist in
21 improving the recruitment and retention of law
22 enforcement officers, corrections officers and
23 prosecutors;

24 and be it further

25 RESOLVED, That a copy of the report be transmitted to the
26 following:

27 (1) The Governor.

28 (2) The President pro tempore of the Senate.

29 (3) The Speaker of the House of Representatives.

APPENDIX B

A list of Pennsylvania’s 45 regional police departments serving 151 municipalities across 30 counties.

Regional Police Departments, Pennsylvania April 30, 2026

Regional Police Department Name	Counties	Number of Municipalities	
Allegheny Valley	Allegheny	1 – Borough	2 – 1 st Class Townships
Beaver Valley Regional	Beaver	3 – Boroughs	1 – 1 st Class Township
Buffalo Valley	Union	1 – Borough	1 – 2 nd Class Township
Central Berks	Berks	2 – Boroughs	
Central Bucks	Bucks	3 – Boroughs	
Charleroi	Washington	2 – Boroughs	
Clearfield	Clearfield	1 – Borough	1 – 2 nd Class Township
Colonial	Northampton	2 – 2 nd Class Township	
Conneaut Lake	Crawford	1 – Borough	1 – 2 nd Class Township
Eastern Adams	Adams	1 – Borough	1 – 2 nd Class Township
Eastern Berks	Berks	2 – Boroughs	1 – First Class Township
Eastern Pike	Pike	1 – Borough	1 – 2 nd Class Township
Eastern Regional Mon Valley	Allegheny	4 – Boroughs	
Greene Washington	Greene, Washington	4 – 2 nd Class Townships	
Hatfield	Montgomery County	1 – 1 st Class Township	
Lebanon County	Lebanon	2 – 1 st Class Townships 2 – 2 nd Class Townships	
Ligonier Valley	Westmoreland	2 – Boroughs	1 – 2 nd Class Township
Mercersburg	Franklin	1 – Borough	
Northern Berks	Berks	1 – Borough	2 – 2 nd Class Townships
Northern Lancaster County	Lancaster	1 – Borough	3 – 2 nd Class Townships
Northern Regional	Allegheny, Butler	2 – Boroughs	3 – 2 nd Class Townships
Northern Regional York County	York	3 – Boroughs	9 – 2 nd Class Townships
Northwest Lawrence	Lawrence	1 – Borough	
Northwest Regional Lancaster County	Lancaster	2 – 2 nd Class Townships	
Lycoming	Lycoming	1 – Borough	5 – 2 nd Class Townships
Mifflin County	Mifflin	1 – Borough	3 – 2 nd Class Townships
Pennridge	Bucks	2 – 2 nd Class Townships	
Pocono Mountain	Monroe	1 – Borough	4 – 2 nd Class Townships

**Regional Police Departments, Pennsylvania
April 30, 2026**

Regional Police Department Name	Counties	Number of Municipalities	
RESA	Washington	5 – Boroughs	
Slate Belt	Northampton	2 – Boroughs	1 – 2 nd Class Township
Southern Armstrong	Armstrong	2 – Boroughs	1- 2 nd Class Township
Southern Chester County	Chester	2 – Boroughs	1 – 2 nd Class Townships
Southern Clarion County	Clarion	3 – Boroughs	
Southern Regional	York	5 – Boroughs	
Southwest	Fayette	2 – Boroughs	
Stroud Area	Monroe	2 – Boroughs	1 – 2 nd Class Township
Susquehanna	Lancaster	1 – Borough	2 – 2 nd Class Townships
Swissdale-Braddock Hills	Allegheny	2 – Boroughs	
West Shore	Cumberland	2 – Boroughs	
West Hills	Cambria	3 – Boroughs	2 – 2 nd Class Townships
West Side	Luzerne	2 – Boroughs	
Western Lebanon County	Lebanon	1 – Borough	1 – 2 nd Class Township
Westtown – East Goshen Township	Chester	2 – 2 nd Class Townships	
Wyoming Area	Luzerne	4 – Boroughs	1 – 2 nd Class Township
York County	York	6 – Boroughs	2 – 1 st Class Townships 4 – 2 nd Class Townships

Source: DCED, “Municipal Police Services,” https://apps.dced.pa.gov/munstats/public/ReportInformation2.aspx?report=MuniPolice_Excel.