MAINTAINING SAFE STREETS:
Addressing Retention Problems in Florida’s
Local Law Enforcement Agencies

AN ACTION REPORT SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

REUBIN O’D. ASKEW SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY

BY

EVAN BOYD JENNE

Tallahassee, Florida
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Major Michael Goldstein
Director of Human Resources, Broward Sheriff’s Office
2601 West Broward Blvd.
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33312

Dear Major Goldstein:

I have the honor to submit to you *Maintaining Safe Streets: Addressing Retention Problems in Florida’s Local Law Enforcement Agencies*. The report is the product of extensive research and analysis over the summer and fall months of 2002. Retention is an important issue to local law enforcement agencies due to the exorbitant costs of a losing a deputy or officer to another agency. Wasting monies limited by budgetary constraints is an activity that can only harm the quality of service a local law enforcement agency provides to its community.

After analyzing several policy alternatives, my recommendation is that local law enforcement agencies should invest in tuition reimbursement plans in order to retain officers and deputies in their employ. This policy alternative was recommended based on the use of three evaluative criteria: personal benefit to officers, agency wide benefit and economic feasibility. In summary, tuition reimbursement plans scored highest of the reviewed retention policy options in terms of personal benefit and agency-wide benefit. The only criterion that did not rate tuition reimbursement plans as the most appropriate was economic feasibility. The only option that rated higher in this category had no monetary costs attached to it.

Allowing officers and deputies to further their education should be the foundation of any local law enforcement agency’s retention efforts. Several of the scores were quite close, but the overwhelming support from both officers and administrative officials became apparent during the collection of data for the survey administered for this report. The other three policy options did not have the same return on investment made by the agency and the individual.

This recommendation has the potential to improve the overall retention efforts of local law enforcement agencies. Communities depend on high quality service from their law enforcement agencies so that they and their families can lead healthy and productive
lives without the fear of crime. A retention plan that includes a tuition reimbursement plan will help local law enforcement agencies effectively cope with a constantly evolving mission.

Respectfully,

Evan B. Jenne
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Retention within local law enforcement agencies is a vital component of maintaining peace and order within individual communities. Currently, retention is a critical aspect of organizational development that is all too often overlooked. Many local agencies neglect the advancement of their officers’ career and life goals. While sharpening their tactical and safety skills is a necessary form of retention, other options are consistently left unconsidered that would improve the individual in other ways. These other options may hold a key to retaining law enforcement officers for the entirety of their professional career.

While levels of crime have been experiencing a decline for some time on a nationwide basis, localities will always see sharp spikes in criminal activity from time to time. A probable reason for this occurrence is a lack of competent officers in the street. An agency can pour as much money as is available into training individual officers, but that will not guarantee any of them will stay with the organization in question. This fact alone makes an examination of new policy options needed in order to consider how to best meet the needs of each individual law enforcement officer.

Information for this report was collected using three separate methods. First, popular media, professional surveys and academic literature were reviewed in order to gain background information and insight from retention experts. Second, an anonymous survey was administered to several hundred law enforcement officers within the Broward County Sheriff’s Office. Third, administrative members of several local law enforcement agencies and their counterparts within human resource departments were interviewed via
telephone and face to face in order to ascertain how well the policy options would fit within the structure of a local agency.

This report presents four policy options for retention in local law enforcement agencies: 50/50 meetings where officers and administrative representatives have equal time to lead the meeting discussion, tuition reimbursement for job related education, on-site childcare and financial planning. Each option is evaluated using three criteria: personal benefits, agency-wide benefits and economic feasibility.

Assessment of the alternatives using the three evaluative criteria indicates that tuition reimbursement would be the most viable management policy option to retain local law enforcement officers. Allowing officers and deputies to further their education should be the foundation of any local law enforcement agency’s retention efforts. Several of the scores were quite close, but the overwhelming support from both officers and administrative officials became apparent during the collection of data. The other three policy options did not have the same return on investment made by the agency and the individual. The only evaluative criterion that tuition reimbursement did not ranked highest in, economic feasibility, was based on cost. It placed second because one of the possible options presented literally could have no cost based on the manner in which it was implemented.
I. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Within local governments a virus runs rampant. This virus is not of the biological order. Instead it is organizational and eats away from the inside in the same manner of its natural cousin. This virus is a lack of retention in employees. As of 2001, quitting rates in the United States had reached a ten-year high, 1.1% a month (Griffeth, 2001).

This paper will briefly examine retention efforts in local governments and agencies, and emphasize possible remedies to combat the problem. This subject is of the highest importance to the way in which public services are dispensed. Maintaining a capable, knowledgeable employee base is not an easy task for any administrator. This holds especially true when one thinks of the concreteness of results found in law enforcement. Crime rates are published at quick rate with little time in between reports and accountability following closely behind. But law enforcement is not the only aspect of local government. Each public office has its own set of issues to manage. All of this makes for pressure filled decisions in upper levels of management.

An organization with a poor retention plan should be looked upon as an empty bucket. The bucket is filled to the brim with water but a hole near the bottom leaks out drop after drop. Administrators pour more water in only to see it drip out of the whole. Clearly the hole needs to be repaired in order for the bucket to function properly.

In the real world version of the metaphor millions upon millions of dollars are wasted pouring more money and new employees into the organization’s recruiting processes (Grensing-Popal, 2000). In all reality, the organization should find appropriate programs to plug the hole. Strictly from a monetary point of view, it makes no sense to
throw away dollar after dollar on new employees each year when retention of current workers would save untold amounts of money. Retention is the bucket’s stopper.

There is a second and more ethical problem associated with the lack of retention in local governments and agencies. This issues deals with the quality of service that the agencies is providing or good it is producing. With high quality employees being siphoned to state and federal organizations and private business offering salaries that dwarf a locality’s monetary means, the opposition is savage. But, the fight is just. With more and more states choosing to relinquish powers to local agencies to better serve communities, the need for high quality employees in city and county governments has never been greater. This is exemplified in the Department of Children and Family Services of Florida’s dispersal of the child protective service to local law enforcement agencies throughout the state (Rudavsky, 1999).

This paper will compare prevailing ideas and theories of retention to examine them in contrast to their real world performance. Most of these theories have holes that require critical discourse and close examination. Recommendations will be made in order to further thinking in this complicated field of public policy and administration. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the paper will seek realistic applications that might help to alleviate the drain of lost employees. In the words of Ken Jenne, Broward County’s Sheriff, “Poor retention is the biggest drain our budget faces. And that drain is constant”(personal communication, September 5, 2002). With this in mind, the purpose of this Action Report is to examine alternative solutions to retention efforts in Florida’s local law enforcement community.
II. BACKGROUND & LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

In order to have a firm grasp on what the major issues in retention truly are to local law enforcement interviews were conducted with six administrative officers via telephone, including Kathleen Cipot. Cipot is the Director of Recruitment for the Broward County Sheriff’s Office (BSO). Miss Cipot deals with a wide variety of departments whose total number of employees numbers four thousand-six hundred and thirty as of November 27, 2001. These numbers place BSO at the forefront of local law enforcement agencies. Respectively, BSO is the largest fully accredited sheriff’s office in the nation and runs the thirteenth largest fully accredited local jail system in the country. Her job description is given here to show the enormity and complexity that some agencies face.

It should be evident that human resource directors deal with an array of jobs and how to keep able individuals from leaving the organization. After conducting the interviews, it became necessary to distill the information into a concise review of the most detrimental factors to retaining law enforcement officers. These factors are as follows:

1. A lack of qualified recruits.
2. Pay competition.
3. The job description.
4. Job related pressures.
5. The best employees are coveted by state and federal entities.

These five issues will now receive the proper attention they deserve in light of their importance to retention.
First of all there is a serious shortage in the amount of qualified potential employees. In part, this comes from the other four issues being discussed in this section. People are not very likely to gravitate toward a job where death and violence are commonplace. But, an administrative issue that makes qualification difficult is mandatory pre-employment requirements. Just examine the list of qualifications for becoming a deputy with BSO. Applicants must be a high school graduate, a “dependable and responsible” U.S. citizen, nineteen or older, possessor of a valid Florida driver’s license and be in good physical condition. Also, applicants must not have ever been convicted, as an adult, of a felony or misdemeanor involving false statements or received a dishonorable or undesirable discharge from any wing of the U.S. Armed Forces (BSO, 1999).

So, if a potential employee meets all of the above qualifications he or she then moves on to the actual hiring process. Just the simple description of this process BSO lists is enough to scare off high quality employees. It starts off simply enough with a written and basic motor skills test followed by the initial application process. It is at this point that the list takes a turn. At this point an applicant is subjected to a drug and criminal history survey. Next up for possible employees is a structured oral board test followed by a polygraph exam. This polygraph testing includes probing into an individual’s criminal and drug history that may not be evident in police files. Psychological screenings, a thorough background investigation, medical examinations and a drug screening make up the rest of BSO’s hiring process (BSO, 1999). BSO is currently reviewing the strictness of their review.
The second issue in local law enforcement retention is a lack of competitive pay. According to Jenne, the average initial pay for a new local law officer is right around thirty thousand dollars (personal communication, September 5, 2002). This is a problem for all levels of law enforcement. As everyone knows, private sector jobs almost always pay more than their public counterparts. This problem is consistent in that the private sector will always be enticing to public workers.

The third issue Cipot identified is the job description of being a police officer. The dangers of law enforcement are well documented. All too often communities lose officers to violent, on the job deaths. Many individuals just don’t want the responsibility of strapping on a loaded weapon day after day. Another reason is the lack of respect given to police. Many communities live with the tension of believing the police are out to get them and not to protect.

Fourth, are job pressures. Just imagine having the knowledge that in many instances you may be the last hope for someone in a life-threatening situation. Or that during your next traffic stop the driver may pull out a gun and fire from less than a foot away. Visions like these make the pressures of an office environment seem quite mundane in comparison.

The final issue facing local law enforcement agencies in terms of employee retention is theft. Not theft in the traditional sense, mind you, but theft in the sense that state and federal law enforcement constantly hire away the best local officers. This draw is similar to that of the public sector in the sense that generally speaking the pay is slightly higher at the state and federal level. Another draw to these other levels of law enforcement is prestige. Cipot suggests that in the eyes of the general public a federal
agent is, in most cases, superior to a local beat cop (personal communication, November 14, 2001).

**Literature Review**

The pertinent literature can be grouped into four large categories or themes: retention tactics prior to hiring (recruiting and hiring the right person), retention tactics after hiring, costs of retention, and agency-produced recruitment literature. These four groupings each contain multifaceted dimensions which will be discussed at length below.

The first theme is the discussion of retaining employees before they have even been hired. In order to facilitate the discussion at hand it will be referred to as recruitment. Many of the reviewed works consider recruitment the foundation for the retention process. (Bittel, 1987; Branham, 2001; Dibble, 1999; Hargreaves & Jarvis, 2000). At this point the literature concerning recruitment splits in two concerning the aspects reviewed. The first of the two new groupings under recruitment are descriptions and reviews of manners in which to draw in qualified recruits. The second is interested in and reviews how to determine the best applicant for the job offered.

Martinez (2001) is interested in the first group, getting good candidates in the door. She reviews an award-winning recruitment campaign by the Seattle Police Department (SPD). According to Jim Ritter, an SPD recruiter, even $50,000 prime time television commercials generated little interest. A revamped advertising campaign helped turn things around. The change in direction was precipitated by a massive shortfall in officers that had to be filled to maintain safety in Seattle.

Many of the reviewed works delve into applicable theories of good recruiting tactics (Dibble, 1999; Handler, 2001; Hargreaves & Jarvis, 2000). The review generated
five main components for recruitment. First, the organization must search out possible candidates. If the group in question were to sit back and wait for qualified employees to fall into their laps, the quality of their section pool will be below average at best. Second, the organization must seek out ways of communicating with the aforementioned selected groups of individuals. Much like the SPD advertising campaign, an organization can achieve many of its recruitment needs by simple finding the proper voice in which to speak to the targeted talent pool (Martinez, 2001). The third step in recruiting is disseminating information on the actual jobs available and the organization itself to those responding to notification of employment opportunities. The potential employee needs to know whether the organization is a place where they would want to work.

The final components to proper recruitment are interested in what to do when a potential employee has expressed interest in working. At this point the applicants should be narrowed down to only individuals who want to work for the organization. At this point Dibble explains the time has come to determine if the applicant is the type of person the organization desires. The fourth step in recruitment is just that. The organization must decide if the applicant is qualified for the position. This can be done in a number of ways including, but not limited to, surveys, psychological tests and even lie detectors. Once a potential employee has gone through these four processes, the final step can be commenced. This step is to show the employee how the organization can help them meet their career goals and interests. With these five steps the individual has gone from being a potential applicant to a paid employee of the organization.

While this may be the end of the recruitment process, retention will carry on for the duration of the individual’s employment. Here, the reviewed literature shifts its focus.
Like the previous theme, post-hire retention can be divided into two main notions that encompass the ideas presented in the literature. Thompson (2001) defines them as program retention and environmental retention. Program retention includes any and all programs offered to employees to better themselves and their careers. Environmental retention deals specifically with the shared attitudes and ideas that help determine the working environment of any organization.

Program retention encompasses many aspects of an organization that are commonplace in many industries. From the most basic programs, like salaries, to complex benefit packages for an employee’s entire family program retention plays a major part in keeping workers in their jobs (Fyock, 1998; Glube, 1998; Thompson, 2001). But there are other program-based retention solutions that employers may use to keep employees happy and content. Training programs that allow the individual to further his or her learning and competencies in their chosen field can go a long way to bettering the person. In turn, this increases the potential of the organization to accomplish its goals in a more effective manner. Branham (2001) states this mutual improvement is a cornerstone in retention. Programs such as these also have a rippling effect on the mind state of the organization as a whole. It shows that the executive arm is in fact concerned with the well being of each and every employee.

This sense of creating a positive work environment between management and employee is something that can take years to develop and one single event to destroy (Kazanska, 1998). This precarious balancing act can often consume HRD director’s time and their unit’s budget. The implementation of programs can only go so far in promoting good will. Therefore, management level workers must do their best to keep the lines of
communication open and honest between themselves and subordinates. This can even be institutionalized in the form of set times for employees to air concerns or ideas to better the organization. One such example Fyock (1998) describes are “50/50” meetings where management and employees each have exactly half of a set amount of time to control the direction of the conversation.

Small gestures such as this can be extremely helpful in generating the type of work environment that anyone would want to work in and continue to do so. By combining program and environmental retention tactics an organization can hold qualified workers in place within its structure.

The third theme that appears in a review of the pertinent literature is cost. The above-mentioned programs are not cheap to maintain and can drain a budget quickly. But, when that fact is looked at in comparison to losing an employee to another organization, it pales. In a study undertaken by the Harvard Business School (HBS) the actual costs are examined (Cornick, 2000). According to HBS the cost of losing a recently hired employee is three times the total value of their compensation package. The facts are plain, a lack of retention can devastate an organization when it becomes even the slightest norm.

The fourth and final category of literature is organizational literature. This can be defined as informative pieces or pamphlets concerned with what the job being advertised entails and what benefits are standard (BSO, 2000; BRPD, 2000). They also target current employees to notify them of career advancement opportunities. Many times an employee will be unaware of training offered in a field they are interested in. This material helps to reach out to workers and bring them further into the fold, thereby
defeating poor retention. Organizational literature is also low in cost to employers, adding additional value.

This form of literature tends to be a bland representation of facts. None of the reviewed literature seeks to divulge information that is not readily available. These texts act simply as an informative guide to possible employees. For this reason organizational literature does the task that it was designed to do, but little else. Outside of giving an overview of what are normal retention tactics in local law enforcement agencies, this form of literature does little to improve the understanding of the topic at hand.

In summary, the literature provides many multifaceted aspects of retention. But, it tends to shy away from specific types of organizations and no one retention tool stands out above the rest. The present study builds upon this literature by using specific criteria to evaluate leading alternatives. The study will also provide data specific to local law enforcement agencies, a sector untouched by the pertinent literature. Specific recommendations will be made to help policy makers decide the most prudent course of action.
III. METHODOLOGY & EVALUATION CRITERIA

Methodology

Information for this report was collected using the following methods:

- Analysis of popular media, professional journals, surveys, academic literature garnered from the Florida University System’s WEB LUIS database and the Society of Human Resource Management’s database;

- Six structured question-and-answer interviews conducted via telephone with administrative and human resource officials at the Broward Sheriff’s Office and the Broward County Department of Corrections; and

- A survey administered to deputies (n = 649) in the Broward County Sheriff’s Office.

Popular media, professional journals, surveys and academic literature allowed a clear view into the background of retention, the problems it faces and policy options to effectively combat the problems. The pertinent literature also gave real world examples of effective and ineffective policies to deal with retaining employees.

Expert interpretation of the information surrounding the topic was garnered from six interviews with different members of local law enforcement. Each interview was conducted with an individual administrative or human resource director. All of the interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted between five and twenty minutes. Each was conducted in a traditional question and answer format. These interviews were supplemented with five informal conversations between the author and individuals involved in law enforcement.

Finally, a survey was administered to active deputies (n = 649) in BSO (Appendix I). It was given to the deputies on October 31, 2002 by their immediate superior at a roll call prior to going on duty. The deputies were given a five-day window in which to
complete the survey and return it to their Human Resource Office. All participants remained anonymous. The survey was used in order to attain unbiased information from the very people that local law enforcement agencies are attempting to retain. The survey used a five-point scale in order to evaluate policy options.

**Evaluative Criteria**

Three criteria are used to evaluate the proposed policy options: economic feasibility, individual benefit, and agency-wide benefit. Each criterion is measured on a decision-making matrix. The matrix has a ranking scale of one to five, with one being extremely negative and five being extremely positive. Scores for each policy alternative will be summed based upon the expert opinions garnered through interviews and the survey generated for this report. Scores are based upon the extent to which the individual option meets the each evaluative criterion (Patton & Sawicki, 1986).

- **Personal benefit** rates how well the policy option meets the individual law enforcement officer’s needs. The object of having an effective retention program is to keep employees happy and content with their workplace. The data source for individual benefit is the summation of the aforementioned survey of law enforcement officers.

- **Agency-wide benefit** gauges how well the implementation of a policy option will benefit the agency as a whole, independent of benefit to particular individuals. This criterion evaluates the positive nature of the options in relation to this overall environment. The data source for agency-wide benefit is the survey of law enforcement officers.

- **Economic feasibility** rates the ability of a local law enforcement agency to implement a policy option within budgetary constraints. The data source for economic feasibility is interviews with an individual administrative or human resource director in three agencies.
These criteria were selected as representative of the considerations made in the evaluation of retention policy alternatives. Other criteria such as flexibility, community impact and crime-rate impact could not be evaluated in the same manner due to technical difficulties. In each case appropriate data is not available and would take an actual implementation to generate some relevant information. These alternative criteria, while important, are secondary to this study.

One limitation of this study is the lack of local law enforcement agencies that have actually implemented the proposed policy options. Real world data would make conclusions more concrete. Due to budgetary constraints, most local law enforcement agencies are leery of implementing untested policies. However, the information gained from interviews and surveys provided the needed information. One other related subject, effects on crime rates, was considered to outside the scope of this report because prior policy implementation is needed to generate such data. The scale of the survey could be expanded to include more local law enforcement agencies but the cooperation given from BSO would not necessarily be indicative of all agencies. Despite this constraint, the most important evaluative criteria were used and it is believed that similar recommendations would be given by any study using the methodology outlined in this section of the report.
IV. MANAGEMENT POLICY OPTIONS

Section IV explains four of the most promising options in the realm of law enforcement retention: 50/50 meetings, tuition reimbursement, on-site childcare and financial planning services. Each option is evaluated utilizing the three criteria detailed in the previous section: personal benefit level, agency-wide benefit level and economic feasibility. This report is not a case study and as such, specific local agencies will not be discussed. These management policy options are built to assist local law enforcement agencies in retaining officers to serve the public at large.

Option One: 50/50 Meetings

In any paramilitary organization there is a natural dividing line between the lower and upper levels of personnel. This first alternative would seek to blur this line for a brief period of time in order to generate improved communication. A 50/50 meeting would allow for a set meeting period between representatives of the administration and patrol officers. During this set amount of time, each side would share equal time to air any concerns, ideas or formal proposals.

**Personal Benefit:** Hyler Bracey (1990) suggests that the keys to heartfelt leadership are that employees want to be heard and understood while being told the truth. Management can give this to their officers in the form of 50/50 meetings.

The survey asked if such meetings would help foster feelings of trust for officers on a personal level. The results were somewhat surprising. The average score was 3.31433, the closest of all the options to an average score. It received many perfect scores of five, but it also garnered quite a few zeros. The reason behind so many poor scores
may be found in a written response found on Survey #437: “Talk is cheap and the administration always has the last word.” This statement is ultimately true, but it gives insight to the mentality of many law enforcement agencies. There is clear delineation between those that patrol the streets of a given community and those that sit in the seats of power.

Even with the amount of negative response this option generated, there are still enough positive scores to raise the average above the midpoint. This shows that the majority of officers would welcome 50/50 meetings as a way to air out their true feelings on the agency’s goals, vision and mission. If the process is engrained into the organization, even naysayers may eventually come to see it as a personal benefit they can use to their advantage. If both sides of the table demonstrate their willingness to take the meetings seriously and use the discussions as part of a compass to chart the organization’s future, there can be a great benefit to individual officers belief in the whole.

**Agency-wide Benefit:** The 649 respondents felt that the benefits from 50/50 meetings for an agency as a whole would be slightly higher than those for the individual. This indicates that even if they would not utilize the meetings, they knew others would. The actual average score for 50/50 meetings’ agency-wide benefit was 3.56086, a full quarter of a point higher than personal benefit for the same option.

Given the independent nature of most law enforcement agencies, it is not surprising that many of them would not see a personal benefit, while understanding the benefit for the agency. This is imperative for the success of a gathering such as this.
50/50 meetings are geared to generating honest communication for the betterment of the agency as a whole. With this in mind, the disparity between the two scores makes sense.

During interviews with Cipot, Curry, Goldstein, Hartsell, Jenne and MacDonald opinions were uniform when discussing these meetings (personal communications, 2002). Almost all felt that this would be a perfect way to produce honest communication. Many added that one of their main concerns when dealing with subordinates was that they were not given full disclosure when honesty was needed to bring about positive change to benefit the agency. Any local law enforcement agency could benefit from 50/50 meetings. The main obstacle to this option is getting both upper and lower level officers to buy into the belief that their comments will be taken seriously and effect change in the agency. This is overcome by the suggestions on the way things are accomplished raised in the meetings becoming a part of the agency’s overall policy.

**Economic Feasibility:** Of all the policy options the economic feasibility of a 50/50 meeting came the closest to receiving a perfect score: a 4.75 out of a possible five. The main reason for this may deal with the need for open and honest communications between all levels of the organization. Organizations are made up of individuals whose work is related to the agency as a whole. The process of getting all the different work routines to move together calls for, and depends crucially on, the highest level of communication (Redfield, 1969). The rank and file system in place in local law enforcement improves direction and accountability, but at the cost of slower communication. Improving this in any increment is worth the costs holding such meetings would incur.
The reason for such high scores for 50/50 meetings is that the costs are next to nonexistent. A meeting scheduled during normal office hours would cost only the hourly fraction of each participant’s annual salary. Fyock (2001) writes that some relatively cheap extras can further the forging of bonds between the upper and lower level of an organization. She suggests holding such meetings over breakfast or lunch to help relax attendees and encourage an even playing field. Even with extra costs attached to a 50/50 meeting the concrete price is still quite low. Sheriff Jenne stated that two full service breakfasts for twenty people twice a month would cost no more than $1000 (personal communication, September 5, 2002).

No statistic or monetary amount can be used to show the importance of open and honest communication. This is doubly true in the hands-on world of law enforcement where the decision makers are not among the citizens they are serving for the majority of a given workday. The lowest ranking members of local law enforcement are the people truly in the thick of things. It is their view of the organization that is on display every day. When administrative officials show an honest concern for the ideas and concerns of patrol officers, the 50/50 meeting becomes a tool for imparting a sense of importance to each individual, their ideas, and the organization they belong to. This all helps to insure the happiness and ultimately the retention of local law enforcement officers.

**Option Two: Tuition Reimbursement**

Many local law enforcement agencies already have some form of a tuition reimbursement plan in place. Unfortunately, they are too often marred by slim parameters in course selection, partial reimbursement, and waiting lists. A comprehensive tuition
reimbursement plan, built to meet the needs of the employee can be a valuable tool in retaining law enforcement agencies.

**Personal Benefit:** Ken Jenne (personal communication, September 5, 2002) stated that the majority of his deputies held only a high school diploma and this was true for most local law enforcement agencies. Given this, fact tuition reimbursement for job related education should be a priority for fostering a retainable employee.

This option generated the most positive response from law enforcement officers. Its average score was 4.09, the only option to rate over four in terms of personal benefit. A similar survey of a wide variety of private sector workers conducted by The Washington Post found that tuition reimbursement was the second most popular benefit among the 3400 web-based respondents (Grensing-Pophal, 2000). Only telecommuting, an option not possible in the world of policing, rated higher.

Many survey respondents wrote that they regretted not furthering their education when they were younger and now personal funding was not possible. While total funding may not be an option for some local law enforcement agencies, many may welcome some plan of tuition payment. Some officers who wrote that they were too old to go back to school rated tuition reimbursement in a negative manner. In the clichéd words of respondent #108, “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks, (its) not happening!”

Overall, a reimbursement plan for job related education was the most popular of all the policy options in terms of personal benefit. Plans of this nature can generate a bond between the organization and the individual in a way that many policy options cannot. It allows the agency to give reassurance, in the form of funds, to employees. It
also shows concern for the individual by helping them better themselves, allowing organizations to retain more officers and deputies.

**Agency-wide Benefit:** Outside of simply making employees happy to stay in an organization, tuition reimbursement can serve the agency itself. No argument can be made for having less educated employees in a particular workforce. By investing in individuals, the agency will better itself by providing better service for taxpayers. This fact alone is enough to generate interest for administrations in this option.

Reimbursement was also the only policy option to score over four in terms of agency-wide benefit (4.14638). This score was also the highest of any question posed to the officers. One reason for this option’s score eclipsing all others is mandatory requirements for advancements. According to John Curry, Executive Director of Administration at BSO, in order to move beyond the rank of sergeant, a college degree is needed in most local law enforcement agencies (personal communication, October 30, 2002). With this in mind, any ambitious officer with plans on moving up the rank and file would find a four-year degree paramount in achieving their long-term goals.

Tuition reimbursement policies can vary greatly in range and scope depending of the economic stability of the particular agency. According to Major Michael Goldstein, some agencies offer total reimbursement, others offer partial reimbursement, and some offer their own versions of student loans with little to no interest (personal communication, November 5, 2002). But whatever the particulars of the policy are, one thing is clear. The agency as a whole will benefit greatly for this policy option by fostering smarter, better educated public servants to serve individual communities.
Economic Feasibility: This policy option’s economic feasibility is somewhat of a double-edged sword. In the words of Broward County Sheriff Ken Jenne (personal communication, September 26, 2002), “Tuition reimbursement is one of the costliest retention techniques, but it also has one of the highest returns on investment.” For that reason, many of those polled on economic feasibility were reluctant to give it a perfect score. Currently, BSO spends slightly over $300,000 per year on their tuition reimbursement program. Even with the huge costs, it received no less than a four from all polled and had an overall average of 4.5 out of five possible points.

Candice Hartsell, Director of Community Relations for the Broward County Department of Corrections, often finds herself encouraging subordinates to look into tuition reimbursement plans due to her belief in education’s power to improve the individual and in turn the organization they work for (personal communication, November 5, 2002). While education does have the ability to do what Ms. Hartsell suggests it can, some concern must be raised about investing in an individual only to have them leave soon after getting a free education.

Agencies can help to guarantee their investment in an individual with creative agreements. John Curry stated that BSO currently has a plan in place that does just that (personal communication, October 30, 2002). This organization has a contract that requires the individual receiving tuition payments to stay with BSO for the duration of their drawing tuition payment and continue to do so for a set period of time once their education is complete. The length of time is determined by the level and cost of each individual’s educational requirements. Major Mike Goldstein, Director of Human Resources at BSO, states that the impact of this policy is lessened by the organization’s
policy of giving cash supplements to those attending an institute of higher education. This is done in order to make up for lost wages while attending classes during work hours (personal communication, November 5, 2002). Goldstein knows from first hand experience. He is a twenty-year veteran at BSO who received his masters degree utilizing the organization’s reimbursement program.

With reasonable requirements for those accepting tuition reimbursement, an agency can avoid the problem of losing an employee and the money invested in them. If such safeguards are in place, the high monetary costs of retaining through tuition reimbursement pale in comparison to the benefits generated by this policy option. An example of this can be found in an investigation of turnover in the Arizona mental health industry. The combined costs of turnover totaled $3,757,141 in just one year (Griffeth, 2001). A highly educated and, more importantly, satisfied law enforcement officer is much easier to retain than one who is disgruntled because of a lack of advancement.

**Option Three: On-site Childcare**

The option of on-site childcare is designed to ease the dual responsibilities of parents who are law enforcement officers. In times of economic instability more families are dependent on both mother and father to bring home a paycheck. This necessitates some form of childcare. Organizations can offer this service by maintaining licensed facilities on premises.

**Personal Benefit:** The surveys show a dramatic difference of opinion. This is best summed up in the words of Survey #454. This individual scored on-site childcare as a zero, but wrote, “It would not benefit me personally, as I have no children. For persons
with children, it would probably be a great help.” This sentiment was most evident in Survey #19, in which the survey taker wrote the number ten next to the scoring section. In total, 32% of BSO employees have children while 71% are of child rearing age (19-46 years of age).

But in an organization that has a minimum age limit of 19 and a large portion of its employees reaching retirement in the next few years, childcare is not a top personal priority for the majority of the officers. In fact, of all the options evaluated under any of the three criteria, on-site childcare when evaluated in terms of personal benefit rated the absolute lowest (2.41).

This opposition of views was apparent in the interviews conducted with administrative members of local law enforcement agencies. Bill MacDonald, Director of Finance at BSO, felt that it “just wasn’t a big deal” for himself. MacDonald is a gentleman in his mid-forties with both of his children attending schools of higher learning. He also stated that many individuals in his organization were in a similar situation that did not require any childcare services (personal communication, November 10, 2002).

The exact opposite viewpoint was heard from Candice Hartsell. Ms. Hartsell completed a large-scale survey in 2002 solely concerned with on-site childcare in her organization. The results of her research found the same difference of opinion between those with young children and those without (personal communication, November 1, 2002).

As a management policy option used to retain officers in an organization this option has pitfalls. The majority of officers will not utilize this benefit due to a lack of
young children in the home. If an organization has a high percentage of officers in need of quality childcare, this option could be needed in the struggle to retain employees.

**Agency-wide Benefit:** The quote from Survey #454 was used in the last section to show that the individual benefit for on-site childcare was based solely on the beholder. But this individual also gave a perfect score to this option in terms of agency benefit. While this response was not common, most surveys that gave on-site childcare a score of zero gave some points to its benefits for the agency as a whole. This shows that while they may not have children at this point, they know they may in the future and they surely know someone in the agency that could use this retention tool immediately.

The average score for on-site childcare in terms of agency-wide benefit was 3.54391, well over one point higher than its individual benefit. This was by far the most drastic difference in score for one policy option in the survey. What this statistic shows is that respondents were able to discern what is good for them and what is good for the whole. In these terms an on-site childcare program may be a viable option for local law enforcement organizations. This retention policy option can be effective in keeping officers with young children satisfied. It can also give those without any kids the peace of mind and comfort to know that if they were to have children the ability to procure low-cost, high-quality childcare at their fingertips. These facts show that on-site childcare is a viable policy option for local law enforcement agencies.

**Economic Feasibility:** On-site childcare does come with its fair share of economic problems. Kathy Cipot felt that the most significant cost comes in the form of liability issues (personal communication, November 5, 2002). While law enforcement agencies always provide liability insurance for officers while on duty, having an on-site childcare
center would incur extra costs for the necessary liability insurance. One way to attempt circumventing some of these costs would be to bring in an outside provider who could promise low costs based upon a large volume of clients (Kenneth Jenne, personal communication, September 5, 2002). Candice Hartsell estimated that in order to implement the policy without non-agency support it would cost the agency $2.6 million in start up costs. She estimates another $350,000 in yearly costs to maintain such a facility.

Of all the policy options in this action report, on-site childcare placed last in terms of economic feasibility. It scored a 3.58334 out of a possible five. This rating was nearly three quarters of a point behind the third highest policy option in terms of economic feasibility.

The main concern of each of the six individuals interviewed was that there would not be enough interest in such a program to warrant implementation. Another concern raised by two of the interviewed individuals (both asked for anonymity on this particular aspect) was the horrific, yet distinct, possibility that if a case of abuse were to occur under the roof of a local law enforcement agency it would leave an indelible black eye on the whole of the organization in the form of civil law suits. This would also generate a great deal of negativity from within the organization’s ranks directed at administration officials for allowing such a thing to occur. Even with all the good that may come from utilizing on-site childcare as a retention tool, this policy option rates quite low in terms of economic feasibility due to the plethora of problems that may arise.
Option Four: Financial Planning

This option provoked the most interest from administrative officials. Financial planning entails giving officers the option to sit down regularly with a planner to discuss proper investments for the individuals’ monetary goals. This includes saving money for their children’s education and positioning themselves to retire at an early age from the stressful world of law enforcement.

Personal Benefit: There are two distinct camps that emerged from the survey, the first of which is strongly opposed to having financial planning sessions. Sheriff Jenne suggested that these respondents were comprised of the younger population of the workforce (personal communication, November 7, 2002). He has found they came into this organization with the lofty aspiration of making a change for the better in the community they serve and have little concern for personal monetary issues, especially saving for a post-career life. Also, his or her needs are not as diverse as someone nearing retirement age.

The second group is individuals whose retirement is not far off. This camp was eager to accept free professional help in planning their financial future. Major Goldstein stated that these individuals are concerned that they may have not fully prepared for their future and want to be sure that this will be their last full-time occupation (personal communication, November 5, 2002).

When reviewing the statistics generated from the survey, financial planning scores very well. It garnered a 3.90, the second highest in terms of personal benefit. This score is indicative of the overall feeling towards financial planning generated from the survey.
Overall, financial planning is wise retention policy option, especially for the older members of a local law enforcement agency. Even the members of an organization that resist others planning their personal finances may come to the realization that monetary issues are extremely complex. Armed with this information, an individual officer may accept a helping hand. For these reasons, financial planning is a good idea for an organization attempting to retain more individual employees.

**Agency-wide Benefit:** Financial planning is specifically geared to the individual, rather than the whole. For this reason, this option was the only alternative to score lower on agency-wide benefit than its score for personal benefit (3.73). It should be noted, however, that even this score was high enough to earn it the second highest score in terms of agency benefit.

The interviews conducted with administrative officials generated a slightly different reaction. All six interviewees felt that financial planning was a productive way to provide comfort to the individual officer’s private life. After finishing the last round of interviews an important fact became apparent: most of the six administrators were approaching retirement age [in fact, Major Goldstein commented on the fact that he had recently entered BSO’s five-year retirement program, Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP)] (personal communication, November 5, 2002). This fact may have skewed responses. More likely, their comments on this retention tool are indicative of the feelings of any local law enforcement officer nearing retirement.

On the whole, financial planning is a viable retention tool that can benefit the entire organization. Making sure that each individual has an opportunity to solidify his or her personal finances is a way to show that the organization is concerned for the
employees for the whole of their life, not just when they are in uniform. This will create feelings of solidarity that anyone would want to be a part of.

**Economic Feasibility:** Financial planning is a costly retention tool, but the rewards that it can elicit outweigh the costs by a considerable margin. All of the officials interviewed agreed that when employees are financially satisfied, the quality of work produced would almost always be at a higher level.

This shared belief comes across when looking at the scores given for this option. None of the survey respondents gave financial planning less than a score of four. It did, however, only receive one score of five. John Curry stated that while he believed that the benefits would be higher than the costs, the sheer expense of maintaining a financial management service could not allow him to give it a perfect score (personal communication, October 30, 2002). Dan Revis, a professional financial planner in Fort Lauderdale, stated that the price of having a financial planning service would ultimately cost between $2,000 and $3,000 per individual.

The policy option of giving financial planning to officers scored well receiving an average score of 4.25. This emphasizes the fact that in order to garner higher retention quite often higher budgetary spending is needed. For agencies with large, flexible budgets financial planning can be a key to keeping officers content with their economic situation and, in turn, their employment situation.
V. CONCLUSIONS

The action report presented four retention alternatives for keeping law enforcement officers in the agencies they are currently employed by. Each policy option was evaluated based on personal benefit, agency-wide benefit and economic feasibility. Table 1 summarizes the results.

Table 1 – Summary of Alternatives and Evaluative Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Personal Benefit</th>
<th>Agency-wide Benefit</th>
<th>Economic Feasibility</th>
<th>TOTAL SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50/50 Meetings</td>
<td>3.31433</td>
<td>3.56086</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>11.62519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition Reimbursement</td>
<td>4.08937</td>
<td>4.14638</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>12.73575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site Childcare</td>
<td>2.41448</td>
<td>3.54391</td>
<td>3.583</td>
<td>9.54139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Planning</td>
<td>3.89522</td>
<td>3.73035</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>11.87557</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ranking Scale: 0 to 5 with 0 being very negative and 5 being very positive

All four of the options would provide needed alternatives for local law enforcement policy makers seeking to retain their employees. The options discussed here would be beneficial to the task of retaining officers and implementation of the entire set could drastically improve retention rates. Implementation of creative retention tools should be a major long-term goal of any local law enforcement agency. Making the alternative that rates the highest based on the evaluative criteria a part of the organization should be a short-term goal of any local law enforcement agency.

50/50 meetings garnered an average score when evaluated in terms of personal benefit. This may be due to small amounts of distrust harbored by patrol officers towards administrative officials. This option scores fairly well in terms of agency-wide benefit as well. This is do to the blurring of rank and file communication that permeates any paramilitary organization. These meetings allow for direct communication between the
lowest ranking officers and the highest-ranking heads of administration. 50/50 meetings rate the highest when evaluated using the criterion of economic feasibility. This option rates so high because of the lack of cost in holding a meeting. Even providing a meal for all attendees is miniscule at the very most, especially when the return on the investment is so high.

Tuition reimbursement is strongest of all the proposed options when using the evaluate criterion of personal benefit. Those surveyed seemed to be drawn to the idea of furthering their education, regardless of their age and station in the organization. Many officers hold only a high school diploma and harbor some form of regret for not continuing their education into an institute of higher education. This is coupled with the fact that there is a glass ceiling for those without a four-year degree in many local agencies that will not allow them to pass specific ranks into the upper echelons of an organization. Reimbursement also ranks the highest in terms of agency-wide benefit. This option does so well under this criterion because of the commonly held belief that a more intelligent and articulate workforce is a happier, more efficient workforce. Even the high cost of providing tuition reimbursement is not enough to drag down the value of such a program. The high return on the invested monies is ample reason for this option to occupy the second highest rating of the proposed options in terms of economic feasibility.

On-site childcare scores very poorly under the criterion of personal benefit. This is explained by the fact that the majority of officers either have no children or have children too old for childcare. Once again, on-site childcare rates the lowest of all policy options in terms of agency-wide benefit. The aversion to this alternative is again due to the majority of those polled not having children. Finally, on-site childcare rated last
amongst the four options for the very same reasons it finished last under the previous two evaluative criteria.

Financial Planning scores well in terms of personal benefits. In an industry that consistently uses mandatory retirement ages, it is not surprising that individuals want long-term financial stability. Financial planning rates second when using the agency-wide benefit criterion. This option does well because of the set pay rates that are indicative of law enforcement agencies. Officers want a way to earn more money in a safe and professionally recommended manner. While financial planning rates third in economic feasibility, it still received a very high score. The reason behind its placement among the four options can be explained by the fact that the organization does not see the direct improvement of the agency as a whole, making the return on investment slightly lower than the two options rated higher.

Assessment of the alternatives using the three evaluative criteria indicates that tuition reimbursement would be the most viable management policy option to retain local law enforcement officers. Therefore, tuition reimbursement plans are recommended. Allowing officers and deputies to further their education should be the foundation of any local law enforcement agency’s retention efforts. Several of the scores were quite close, but the overwhelming support from both officers and administrative officials became apparent during the collection of data for the survey administered for this report. The other three policy options did not have the same return on investment made by the agency and the individual. The only evaluative criterion that tuition reimbursement did not ranked highest in, economic feasibility, was based on cost. It placed second because one
of the possible options presented literally could have no cost based on the manner in which it was implemented.
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This survey is designed to identify possible benefits and programs to retain you as an employee within this organization. In other words, would these possible options make your employment more satisfactory to your long-term goals?

This survey is totally anonymous. Responses will be complied by a graduate student at Florida State University for a graduate thesis paper in the field of public administration. The paper will be given to your law enforcement agency for use in selecting possible employment benefits.

Please evaluate each option on a five-point scale in terms of its potential benefits to (a) you personally and (b) for work conditions agency-wide. A score of five signifies that an option has very high benefits.

Personal Benefits = measures how well the proposed option would improve your job satisfaction personally.

Agency-wide Benefits = measures how well the proposed option would improve work conditions agency-wide.

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey.
1. 50/50 meetings where officers and administration have equal time to lead the meeting discussion

   Personal Benefits = 0 1 2 3 4 5
   Agency-wide Benefits = 0 1 2 3 4 5

2. Tuition reimbursements for job related education

   Personal Benefits = 0 1 2 3 4 5
   Agency-wide Benefits = 0 1 2 3 4 5

3. On-site childcare

   Personal Benefits = 0 1 2 3 4 5
   Agency-wide Benefits = 0 1 2 3 4 5

4. Financial Planning

   Personal Benefits = 0 1 2 3 4 5
   Agency-wide Benefits = 0 1 2 3 4 5
About the Author

Evan Boyd Jenne (B.S., political science and literature, Florida State University; M.P.A., Florida State University) has worked for the Florida Office of the Attorney General. Mr. Jenne is interested in human resource management, political campaigning, lobbying governments, and obscure literary classics. He is currently a Graduate Assistant for Dr. Lance De Haven-Smith at the Askew School for Public Administration at Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida.