

Description of the issue

Joliet Police Department

Similar to most police departments across the country, the Joliet Police Department has recently struggled to adequately recruit and retain officers. The department has been approved for a budgeted strength of 272 officers; we have yet to reach that number in the past few years, despite consistently hiring new officers. As of the posting of this application, our department has a total of 252 officers, 19 of whom were hired this year. At the same time, a total of 19 officers retired, and 6 officers resigned their positions. Given the significant amount of time necessary for adequate training, the current understaffing is unsustainable in the long term.

Our department has relied on outdated efforts that fail to consider the societal shifts which have made recruitment exponentially challenging. The recent pandemic, along with limited financial and personnel resources, have reduced recruitment efforts to website and word of mouth advertising. The most recent application process in July of this year failed to only generate a total of 95 complete applications; once the testing process is finished, our final list will likely not have a sufficient number of candidates to meet demand.

At the same time, our department faces a legitimacy crisis in the face of the public in terms of the retention of a diverse workforce. Research indicates that increased female representation within departments can lead to a reduction in use of force and increased community legitimacy.¹ While some agencies across the country have been successful in attracting candidates from underrepresented groups, particularly female candidates, our department reached only the national average of 13% female representation in 2022. The resignation of a few officers this year has now reduced that number slightly. Coupled with an overall recruitment decline, our

¹ 30x30 Initiative. (n.d.). *Advancing women in policing*. <http://30x30initiative.org>

department has a strong need to re-evaluate its recruitment plan and develop innovative methods that are responsive to local needs.

Will County

Will County has elected to focus on opioid deaths countywide. The Covid-19 pandemic negatively impacted the entire county, as evident by the 32% increase in Opioid deaths in 2021 after a 20% decline in 2020. This trend is continuing in 2022. The overdose deaths are not only opioids but include other substances mixed with fentanyl. According to the Center for Disease Control, the isolation caused by social restrictions, the inability to access treatment, and community recovery supports, placed people with a substance use disorder (SUDs) at significantly higher risk for relapse and subsequent fatal overdose. Drug overdoses have quickly become the largest number of unnatural deaths in Will County.

While progress has been indicated each year, the fentanyl in our area is proving deadly. There are high risk windows for individuals with an opioid use disorder – the two weeks following release from incarceration, release from residential treatment and immediately following an emergency room visit for an overdose. Forty-four percent of the fatal overdoses occurred in Joliet, as well as the majority of nonfatal overdoses, significantly higher than other Will County communities. The Will County Jail and Statesville Correctional Center are located in Joliet. Special attention needs to be paid to this area. There are specific locations (motels) where people live and are using resulting in most of the overdoses. Rapid deployment of naloxone and recovery assistance are needed to address these high-risk time periods and locations. With the Covid-19 pandemic, our treatment agencies are not taking admissions and more individuals with a substance use disorder are at risk of overdose and death

Recovery housing is an intervention that is specifically designed to address the recovering person's need for a safe and healthy living environment while supplying the requisite recovery and peer supports. Recovery housing can support recovery and prevent relapse, recidivism, and overdose, including improving access to medication assisted treatment. Recovery houses are safe, healthy, family-like substance-free living environments that support individuals in recovery from addiction. While recovery residences vary widely in structure, all are centered on peer support and a connection to services that promote long-term recovery. Recovery housing benefits individuals in recovery by reinforcing a substance-free lifestyle and providing direct connections to other peers in recovery, mutual support groups and recovery support services

<https://www.samhsa.gov/resource/ebp/recovery-housing-best-practices-suggested-guidelines>)

The transition from active addiction into lasting recovery is often a difficult and emotionally trying journey for many people with a substance-use disorder. The first 12 months of this transitional period is a crucial period. Moos & Moos (2005) determined that individuals with more 'social capital' are more likely to show improved outcomes.² Therefore, recovery houses are uniquely qualified to assist individuals in all phases of recovery, especially those in early recovery, by furnishing social capital and recovery supports. A support network comprising friends and family who are not abusing substances, peers with lived experience, trained recovery housing staff, clinical support, and access to community resources is essential to helping people maintain recovery.

Project design and implementation

Recruitment

² Moos, R. H., & Moos, B. S. (2005). Sixteen-year changes and stable remission among treated and untreated individuals with alcohol use disorders. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 80(3), 337-347. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2005.05.001>

Given the underwhelming response to our last employment solicitation, our department recognizes the need to undertake a full redesign of its recruitment strategy and examine both internal and external factors. This will begin with the creation of an in-house recruitment team to spearhead efforts to evaluate the feasibility of the following potential activities.

- Mentoring/personal coach programs for potential applicants
- Development of community partnerships
- Data collection from recent hires
- Revision of the application process
- Availability of referral programs for current employees
- Development of a farm system in the local high schools and universities
- Special scheduling of ride-along sessions for potential applicants
- Examination of generational differences

To assist with this assessment, a marketing consultant will be hired to assist in these efforts.

Their role will be to advise the recruitment team on the strengths and weaknesses of the current recruitment strategy, and to provide expertise in developing a recruitment strategic plan.

According to the Police Executive Research Forum, best practices for recruitment include reorienting marketing materials away from the hegemonic masculinity that pervades law enforcement messaging towards issues that matter more. This includes an emphasis on work-life balance, representation, and towards a service approach.³ A big part of the planned communication with the public involves the development of a video that highlights the actual work that our officers do on a regular basis and giving a full and accurate picture of how our

³ Police Executive Research Forum (2019, September). *The workforce crisis, and what police agencies are doing about it*. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>

department embraces workforce diversity. This video can be used not only at recruitment events, community meetings, and also on our website and social media accounts, increasing the potential for reaching individuals. It is estimated that the cost of production of this video will be approximately 25% of the total award allocated to the Joliet Police Department.

The remainder of funds will be dedicated towards updated recruitment materials such as brochures and posters, audio-visual equipment that can be easily transported to career fairs and community events, and reimbursement for officers attending these events.

Recovery Housing Rental Support

Recovery Housing is a critical component to the success of long-term recovery for individuals with a substance use disorder. Inpatient treatment may be anywhere from 21 days to 90 days. Individuals are then discharged into an intensive outpatient program (IOP). IOP requires attendance 5 days per week for at least half a day. When a client transitions to IOP they need to find housing. Returning to their previous residence or to a family member's home is often not possible. The previous situation may be harmful to continued recovery, the family may not want the person back or the person was homeless prior to treatment. Additionally, to obtain housing the person must have a job and money saved for a down payment on rent.

Will County launched a program to help individuals enter and remain in recovery homes immediately following inpatient treatment. This program provides rental support directly to recovery homes for individuals who need help with the first month rent after being discharged from an inpatient treatment program and/or have fallen behind in rent due to a job loss or illness. In most instances the support needed is for one month \$600 - \$800 per person. Solid Ground Recovery Homes in Joliet have been a solid partner in this program.

Capabilities and competencies

The Joliet Police Department has been awarded many large grant awards over the past twenty-four years. During that time, the Special Projects Coordinator (SPC) has successfully overseen implementation as well as completed all financial and programmatic reports of 89 grants totaling over \$8 million. These programs have ranged from small projects (Tobacco Compliance Checks from the State of Illinois) to large, complicated projects with outside partners (Smart Policing, Bureau of Justice Assistance). In addition, the SPC has completed DOJ Grants Financial Management training in December of 2020. She will complete all programmatic and financial reports.

Plan for Collecting the Data required for this Solicitation's Performance Measures

Data for each project will be collected separately. For the Joliet Police Department, we expect that this will involve the tracking of both the development of a recruitment video as well as the individual hours spent by recruitment officers at events. In addition, data will be collected for each of the activities that the recruitment team elects to implement. Data on the number of persons contacted can be compared with the number of applications received, the number of persons on the final eligibility list, and the number of persons eventually hired. Changing demographics of the department will be monitored to determine the final impact that recruitment has on the overall diversity levels.

Data on the number of individuals provided temporary housing within inpatient treatment programs will be collected. No personal information will be reported during this process. In addition, to measure county-wide impact, the overall number of overdoses as well as overdose deaths, stemming from opioid usage will be collected and tracked.