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The Adaptation And Implementation Of A Comprehensive Retirement Transition Program For Members Of Law Enforcement

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THE ADAPTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A

COMPREHENSIVE RETIREMENT TRANSITION PROGRAM

FOR MEMBERS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Submitted to the Faculty of
Yale University School of Nursing

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Nursing Practice

Renee T. White, Esq., FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC, FN-CSA

May 22nd, 2023

This DNP Project is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of

Nursing Practice.

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Joan A. Kearney, PhD, APRN, FAAN

Date here   _____

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May _____, 2023

Abstract

The Adaptation and Implementation of a Comprehensive Retirement Transition Program

for Members of Law Enforcement

Due to job related PTSD and identification with their intense careers, police officers are at risk for substance use disorder and mental illness when they transition into retirement. This DNP project implemented a retirement transition program modeled from a successful federal program for military personnel that was structured as a five day, in-person experience designed to be efficient and cost effective. The aims of the project were to: 1) modify an existing comprehensive retirement transition program used by the US military for police officers in an unnamed state within 5 years of their projected retirement date; 2) implement and evaluate this comprehensive retirement transition program for law enforcement officer; and 3) make recommendations for scaling and sustainability of the project throughout the local/ county law enforcement system. Methods to accomplish these aims utilized an intensive retirement transition program based on a program for former military personnel hosted by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. A retirement readiness survey was developed to assess officers' retirement preparedness and paired t testing was used to compare pre and post readiness survey results. Retirement preparedness increased significantly post program. The program evaluation showed overall program satisfaction across all participants. Implications include scaling to a statewide system; with demonstrated direct benefits to officers, and indirect benefits of reduction in sick time utilization and associated costs along with increased agency morale

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Part 1

The adaptation and implementation of a comprehensive retirement transition program

for members of law enforcement

Retirement is a milestone and a major life stressor (Laura, 2018). It is often one of the most important decisions one must make in their lifetime. Retirement in the general population has been associated with a risk of decreased life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Wang & Shi, 2014). Retirees entering retirement may have a more difficult time with the transition if they have heavily identified themselves with their life's work role (Wang & Shi, 2014). Individuals in high stress professions may identify with their occupation and have difficulties when that identification is disturbed. Police officers, in particular, strongly identify with their occupation and may therefore experience difficulty when separating from employment in retirement. Even before official retirement, police officers often have difficulty with the concept of having to one day separate themselves from police work. This contributes to mid-career stress and decision anxiety occurring in the years before officers are eligible to retire, thereby exacerbating the problem (Violanti J. E., 2011). This increased stress then impacts officers 'ability to navigate the period before, during and after retirement with little support for this already vulnerable group.

The association between retirement and decreased psychological well-being is especially concerning in the law enforcement population given that post-traumatic stress and depression rates in officers outweigh those found in the general population. In a 2019 survey study done at a large urban police department in Texas, 12% of officers reported a lifelong mental illness and 26% screened positive for current symptoms of mental illness (Jetelina et al., 2020). In a larger UK study involving over 40,000 officers, exposure to traumatic events resulted in the doubling of anxiety or depression in affected officers (Stevelink SAM, 2020). Whereas one in five adults in the general population experienced a common mental disorder according to a 2014 systematic review and meta-analysis pooling 174 surveys across a multitude of high-, low- and middle-

income countries (Steel et al., 2014). The opportunity to assist police officers in the navigation of retirement transition may prove to be financially, physically and mentally beneficial.

Problem Statement

Currently there is no formal retirement transition program tailored to the needs of law enforcement. Analogous to the findings in the 2019 Cross-Sectional Survey Report on the US Department of Veterans Affairs Transition Assistance Program and related to the conclusions of the studies analyzed here, the members of law enforcement in any state would benefit from a formalized educational program to help them navigate this transition (US Department of Veterans Affairs., Office of Transition and Economic Development, 2020). A retirement transition program aims to decrease the morbidity and mortality associated with a law enforcement career in which officers are exposed to various stressors and vicarious trauma (Jetelina et al., 2020). The introduction of formal comprehensive retirement and/or career transition programs for law enforcement officers approaching the end of their careers may improve their quality of life by increasing the level of preparedness and comfort with regard to retirement. The military already has an active transition assistance program for military personnel officers post-deployment who are returning to civilian life. This program has proven to be effective and is analogous to the needs of our public servants in law enforcement (US Department of Veterans Affairs., Office of Transition and Economic Development, 2020). It can be modified to meet the needs of other similar groups and forms the basis of the project proposed here. This DNP Project modified and implemented a comprehensive voluntary retirement transition program for law enforcement officers in an unnamed state within five years of their projected retirement date.

Significance of Addressing the Problem

Categories of potential improvement as the result of a retirement transition program include overall financial preparedness, opportunity for re-employment, and improvement in physical health (Henning et al., 2020). Other areas are more difficult to financially quantify and include the cost savings of avoiding officer financial distress and family dysfunction, as a result of marital

dissolution (Kapelle & Baxter, 2020). Financial stress is known to be a contributing factor to psychological distress in the form of depression and anxiety (Guan et al., 2022). Additionally, the financial impact related to court costs, expenditures on attorney's fees, and loss of pension is significant for law enforcement officers who face lawsuits for behavior related to increased levels of stress or untreated trauma during the wind down of their career. For example, officers under increased stress or suffering from PTSD are at risk for behavioral dysfunction, including substance abuse and inappropriate uses of force (Covey et al., 2013). However, officers who are able to manage their stress and/or PTSD symptoms may not suffer from behavioral dysfunction and its ill effects (Soomro & Yanos, 2018). If help for these problems is included in a formal retirement program, the potential reduction in use of force complaints could mean a gross reduction in expenditures associated with use of force related lawsuits. According to a news article last year regarding the New York City Police Department, in fiscal year 2019, "the city paid out $175.9 million in civil judgments and claims for police-related lawsuits" (Carrega, 2020). A decrease in use of force complaints would not only be beneficial to the officers in myriad ways, but financially for taxpayers, and to society as a whole.

Background

Search Strategy

A search was conducted using the following databases: BIOSIS, Scopus, PsychINFO, CINAHL and Science Direct. Since there were very few scholarly articles specific to law enforcement, the military, which has a similar hierarchical structure, was included as a search term. Using the search terms "retirement AND stress", "military AND transition" and "retirement AND assistance AND civilian" as well as "law enforcement AND police AND retirement" a search was commenced using specific inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria included any studies having to do with police, military or first responder retirement and any studies regarding retirement stress and retirement planning, regardless of their affiliation with law enforcement. Articles were organized by chronology. Exclusion criteria included articles published before 2010 and non-

English language articles. A total of 2465 articles were found. Duplicate removal yielded 1978 articles. Title and abstract screening yielded a total of 154 articles. Full text review yielded a final 27 articles for inclusion in the Review of Literature and 13 articles were entered in the Evidence Table (see Appendix A for PRISMA).

Synthesis of Literature

Study designs included one scoping and one systematic review, two retrospective, four cross-sectional and one longitudinal study. The levels of evidence ranged from Level 2b to Level 4b (Joanna Briggs Institute, 2017). Strengths of the literature included use of various designs. For example, a comprehensive cross-sectional design evaluated the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) utilizing over 160,000 service member surveys. Another international cross-sectional survey utilized a large sample of 792 participants. In addition, a longitudinal study utilized over 5,000 surveys of Marine participants of the TAP program. Limitations included lack of well controlled quantitative studies.

A synthesis of the literature reveals that there are numerous scholarly articles to suggest that retirement is a life stressor. While there is a substantial gap in the literature specific to retirement transition in law enforcement, there are scholarly articles that support the concept that law enforcement is analogous to the military. After careful review, four articles were chosen due to their specific address of the TAP program for members of the service transitioning to civilian life. Two articles were chosen due to the authors' expertise in the area of lifestyle and law enforcement culture and risk. The remaining 7 articles were selected due to their general address of stressors in retirement and issues with transitioning into civilian life. Both the military and law enforcement are organizations with a similar structure and hierarchy as well as similar training and culture. This is an important comparison when contemplating the creation and implementation of a comprehensive retirement transition program for law enforcement officers to improve their quality of life. The US military currently has a retirement program; literature pertaining to this is included in this review and used as a model for the project proposed here. The articles addressed the

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military specific transition assistance program, stressors facing law enforcement as well as common retirement themes of concern

Literature Findings

Evidence Supporting Retirement as a Stressor.

Retirement is considered a developmental milestone (Laura, 2018). Retirement is often defined in many ways including, but not limited to, the complete cessation of full time employment. It may also mean the opportunity to leave one occupation after a lifetime of service to start another career (Maestas, 2010). Whatever the acceptable definition, retirement is often associated with stress related to finances, family dynamics, health care and general concerns of aging. The Stanford Center for Longevity published a Research in Brief in September 2016 which highlighted the biggest implications for those facing retirement: alterations in health, finances and psychological well-being (Jaworski et al., 2016). Their brief outlined a framework for considering the numerous factors involved in retirement decision making and put forth a formal five step process which required serious contemplation with regard to retirement planning. It stressed the importance of careful planning when it comes to retirement, citing two different studies' findings that only 28 percent of workers gave their retirement significant consideration for more than two years prior, highlighting the point that the longer you have to survive after retirement the longer your planning should take place (Jaworski et al., 2016).

Despite planning, the emotional and psychological aspects of retirement may negatively impact those who may be financially stable and/or prepared. "The complex effects of retirement on health" outlines the pros and cons of retirement, illustrating that retirement as a concept is not easily understood (Kuhn, 2018). Kuhn illuminates the negatives of retirement in those who may have loved their careers but had to retire because of years of service mandates or injury. The loss of being cognitively active, being subject to a regular routine, having a sense of purpose, and having a stable social network and a positive self-identity are all items that stand to be lost in the

retirement process (Kuhn, 2018). After a multi-study review Kuhn concluded that the health effects of retirement differ across different subpopulations and different contexts (Kuhn, 2018).

Evidence Supporting Interventions for Adults of Retirement Age.

According to Rodriguez-Monforte et al. (2020), the work to retirement transition involves the separation of oneself behaviorally and psychologically from the workforce. In a scoping review of 15 studies on retirement transition, Rodriguez-Monforte et al., (2020) concluded that most interventions to improve wellbeing with regard to retirement focus on one issue and that interventions should take into consideration social determinants of health. They suggest that programs involving modules on psychological adjustment, physical health and social roles may promote wellbeing in this population, but that additional research needs to be done regarding the transition to retirement process specific to "vulnerable groups". (Rodriguez-Monforte et al., 2020). Arguably, the military as well as law enforcement are vulnerable groups in the sense that years of cumulative trauma and various on the job stressors may place them at higher risk after separation from the workforce (Rodriguez-Monforte et al., 2020).

Baxter et al., (2016) conducted a systematic review of interventions specific to retirement and exercise. Intervention approaches included in-home support initiatives as well as group sessions, individual counseling, and training sessions. Interventions impacted a large age range and failed to identify a specific targeted age group. The systematic review concluded that most of the studies claimed some type of positive effect for the range of interventions.

A longitudinal study by Steffens, et al., 2015, evaluated 424 participants who had transitioned into retirement compared to a control group that had not with regard to social group memberships (Steffens et al., 2016). Mortality and quality of life for participants were evaluated over a period of six years. The results of the study confirmed that individuals in the retirement group who had a 2% risk of death while a member of two social groups increased their risk to 12% if they lost membership in both groups. These effects were confirmed in relation to a control group that differed only in work status but otherwise was similar demographically. This finding

was thought to illustrate that social group membership had a protective quality similar to physical exercise. This suggests that formal retirement planning programs should include connection with social group membership as part of their curricula.

Evidence on Impact of Retirement/ Career Transition on Police Officers.

Carney et al., 2016, conducted semi structured in depth interviews with 20 officer retirees to determine the impact of their retirement on their wellbeing (Carney et al., 2019). Issues specific to law enforcement retirement included identity and coping strategies. Interviews lasted up to two hours in length. The four factors that emerged as impactful on the subjects were family wellbeing, financial wellbeing, emotional well-being, and social networks (Carney et al., 2019). Findings indicate that information and education regarding the four impactful factors may be beneficial to officers approaching retirement and that policies supporting formal training initiatives could benefit additional police officers.

An epidemiological investigation into retirement and officer suicide in the UK drew upon qualitative interviews to determine if the issues of social identity and structured routines suffered as a result of retirement (Bullock et al., 2019). Interviews with officers were related specifically to their transitioning into retirement and the experiences they had regarding access to support and perceptions of fairness. Findings revealed that retirement can be disruptive based on the circumstances and context involved. The disruption caused by retirement may impact self-esteem, especially when officers are not prepared for this transition. Therefore, content on social identity and social support may be important in formal officer education for retirement to help ease this transition.

Additionally, an empirical examination of retired police officer's' length of retirement and age at death suggest that attention should be given to health concerns among officers close to their retirement eligibility. Data from 7,325 public employees of Detroit was obtained, including data on police officers (Brandl & Smith, 2012). The results revealed that law enforcement officers died much younger and had shorter retirements than their public employee counterparts. The

authors' reasoning for this difference is speculative due to the limitations on data. However, data indicating Detroit officers have shorter retirements prior to death suggest that training specific to officer physical health in the years prior to retirement could be beneficial.

Similarities between Law Enforcement and the Military.

Discussion of the Department of Defense's 1033 program by Delehanty, et al. (2017) addressed the militarization of policing by referencing the unregulated regular transfer of excess military equipment, including vehicles and weapons, into the hands of civilian law enforcement. The author posited that possession of such equipment leads to a culture of militarization in policing touching on four different areas: operational, organizational, material, and cultural (Delehanty et al., 2017). The operational aspect is marked by law enforcement's willingness to engage in high-risk situations due to the possession of advanced weaponry and high-powered vehicles. Organizational areas include the use of a structured hierarchy/ chain of command structure and the formation of elite units such as SWAT as well as other martial arrangements. Military grade vehicles and weapons also require specific training for said equipment which also lends to a military culture. Moreover, shared martial language and tactical references also contribute to this shared atmosphere.

In "War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing", the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) received 3, 884 records in response to its request of 260 law enforcement agencies across 25 states seeking reports related to their SWAT team activations from 2011 to 2012 (ACLU, 2017). A subsequent analysis of over 800 SWAT raids in 20 states led the ACLU to conclude that militarization of law enforcement was illustrated in the training they are given and the equipment that they use (ACLU, 2017). The article references national law enforcement training materials that use terms like battle mind, warrior and combat to show that martial language is a common thread between the two worlds. The ACLU exhibited its discontent for the militarization of policing and made recommendations for change due to its interpretation that increased militarization leads to increased violence.

An article by Flores-Macias and Zarkin (2019) illustrates that the inverse interpretation is also recognized. Their article on the militarization of law enforcement also addresses the concept of constabularization of the military, who, especially in times of natural disaster, have provided domestic public safety functions. During the COVID-19 global pandemic members of the military were tasked with guarding vaccination sites and delivering critical supplies to areas in need. Often our National Guard troops are deployed in their home states during emergencies or disasters to help evacuate and perform search and rescue operations many times right alongside local members of law enforcement. This snapshot of shared responsibility also highlights an additional similarity between the military and law enforcement: the exposure to trauma.

Members of the military as well as police are frequently exposed to similar types of traumas. They may be subjected to viewing or handling of dead bodies, they may be responding to natural disasters or man-made disasters, and they may be in repeated or constant fear for their own lives or the lives of their partners/service members. Both populations are often subjected to shift work, sleep disturbance and long periods of time away from their family members (Violanti et al., 2008). These shared experiences and resulting hypervigilance are often an indicator of PTSD. Individuals suffering from same because of trauma have an increased risk of a mélange of chronic conditions, making these fields analogous.

Evidence on Impact of Retirement/Career Transition on Military Members.

Research suggests that transition from military to civilian life can be a significant life stressor. Derefinko et al., (2018), examined a small group of veterans transitioning to civilian life. Eighty individuals were contacted post-separation so that answers would be honest and not impacted by the fear of dishonorable discharge. The results of this study revealed increased drug use from active duty to post separation (Derefinko et al., 2018). Given that the military and law enforcement populations share similar experiences, professional culture, and lifestyle, the law enforcement population may well have a similar susceptibility to post retirement increased drug use compared with their military counterparts. Accordingly, it may be necessary to include

education about self-medication and the use of illegal drugs to any retirement transition curriculum.

Evidence on Efficacy of Transition Assistance Programs for Military Members.

On June 3, 2020, The Post-Separation Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Assessment (PSTAP) 2019 Cross-Sectional Survey Report was released by the US Department of Veterans Affairs., Office of Transition and Economic Development. It provided a history of the TAP Program as well as formal recommendations for improvement. The original TAP Program was the result of federal legislation in 1991. One of its original aims was to help ease the transition of military members into civilian life by assisting them in obtaining civilian employment. The TAP program since then has evolved to now include a 5-day transition course addressing not only employment but education, health and relationships, finances and wellbeing.   A cross sectional and longitudinal survey was done to collect data from veterans with the goal of improving TAP programming. Three different cohorts with three different terms of service were administered surveys in June 2019.   The surveys asked the veterans about their experience with TAP programming and approximately 67% of TAP participants surveyed felt they transitioned well to civilian life (US Department of Veterans Affairs., Office of Transition and Economic Development, 2020).

Future recommendations to improve programming included starting TAP earlier in out-processing. Veterans who were surveyed noted the importance of engaging programming earlier in the process. They also requested better messaging to promote this programming. These recommendations would likely transfer to career transition programs for law enforcement officers, given the similarities between the two groups. Due to the analogous nature of the two fields, the success of the military TAP programming is a positive indicator that a police officer TAP program may well be beneficial to those working in law enforcement.

Project Model

The Project Model that was selected for this DNP Project is Lewin's 3 Stage Model of Change (see Appendix B). This model involves the three steps of Unfreezing, Changing, and Refreezing to aid individuals in understanding the process of change. The first step of Unfreezing involves creating the notion that change is needed. For this project the Unfreezing portion involved creating awareness of the issue of retirement transition. Communication with law enforcement leadership was critical during this phase and buy in was created so that they were motivated to embrace and accept it.

The Changing aspect of this model involved the implementation of the change which is a retirement transition program for police officers. This involved planning, introducing the curriculum, and implementing it. Officers were given information on the evidence and the reasoning behind this change and advised how this change would benefit them to lessen concerns or fear of change.

The third and final step to this model involves Refreezing. This is the act of reinforcing what has been implemented so that advancements are not lost or forgotten. This is the opportunity to sustain the Change as the new normal or status quo. This is the time when incentives and rewards were issued to participants who completed the retirement transition program. Participants received key chains and certificates of completion for framing at the conclusion of programming on the fifth training day. Chiefs or administrations that sent officers to this training or who supported the training with resources or instructors were sent thank you letters by program staff.

Supporting Theoretical Framework

The supporting framework for DNP Project was the HPCDP Policy Change Process Model. This model is specific to projects that are seeking to make changes to policy. This model utilizes a methodical approach including the following steps: (1) Identify and Frame the Problem; (2) Engage Key Stakeholders and Community Groups; (3) Assess Readiness for Policy Change;

(4) Community Outreach, Engagement and Education; (5) Decision-maker Engagement and Education; (6) Draft Policy and Plan Implementation; (7) Adopt Policy; (8) Implementation Policy and Support Compliance; and (10) Evaluate Impact. This is an appropriate Model because it is geared for policy change and specifically policy change with regard to implementation and evaluation. For the purposes of this DNP Project this specific model applied to steps 1-5 only, with recommendations made for drafting of future policy.

First, to identify and frame the problem one must acknowledge that there is currently no formal retirement transition program for law enforcement in New Jersey and therefore, no policy related to retirement transition. This must be confirmed to illustrate a need for policy change. A broad search was conducted with regard to municipal police departments within an unnamed county, to see if there was an official policy, or if any retirement planning program or curriculum was dedicated to retiring officers. Of 30 agencies polled, none offered any type of program specific to officer retirement. The lead law enforcement agency in the unnamed county, is filled with retired members of law enforcement who returned to work post retirement in a law enforcement atmosphere. Some of the officers who returned to work after retirement did so part time while others opted for full time employment. This poses the question of whether these officers may be unable or unwilling to leave the law enforcement atmosphere and if a formal retirement program may assist them in doing so if they wish. Next, the identification and engagement of key stakeholders and community groups ensured that the program was meeting the needs of the targeted population.

Identified key stakeholders were asked what issues they thought were important to be addressed by officers facing retirement and should be formally included in a training curriculum. This was done by attending one monthly "chiefs meeting" where 32 local chiefs of police were scheduled to be in attendance. One local police chief was selected as a liaison to ensure the interests of law enforcement leadership was represented. A representative from a community based mental health agency with experience working with law enforcement was also be consulted

to discuss pertinent issues of importance. For this project, a telephone call was made or an email was sent out to the county commissioner assigned to law and public safety to discuss their opinion about programming and to attempt to gain their support. Estimates of health and fiscal implications were also be discussed at this time. Communication with selected stakeholders resulted in a formal assessment of the culture's willingness to change and made it possible to gauge any opposition to any proposed policy change. Selected stakeholders were tasked to survey their officers by polling their interest in programming related to their retirement needs.

After assessing the readiness for change a cohesive educational plan was developed to include multiple aspects impacting the retirement transition process. Information gathered from any informal polls or surveys done by law enforcement leadership was used to craft effective messaging to the target population of officers. A program mailer or brochure and one online outreach session was conducted with law enforcement officers to educate them on programming and/or answer any questions regarding same. Engagement was also conducted with key decision makers about the proposed policy solution of instituting a retirement transition program for law enforcement officers. Decision makers were provided with information on program specifics and options for changing policy to improve officer quality of life with regard to their transition into retirement. Opportunity was given for them to request additional information or assurances before they made a formal determination.

Organizational Assessment

Law enforcement in the project implementation state exists in a hierarchical structure. The chief law enforcement officer is appointed by the Governor and serves as the chief law enforcement officer for the entire state. The chief law enforcement agency in the state has its own personnel including but not limited to, prosecuting attorneys, detectives and ancillary staff. The chief law enforcement officer for the unnamed state frequently issues directives that are binding on all law enforcement officers throughout the state. There are over two dozen counties in this

state and each county has its own chief law enforcement officer who all report to the chief law enforcement officer for the state.

Law enforcement in this county also exists in a hierarchical structure. The chief law enforcement officer for the entire county is "Prosecutor". Prosecutors in this state are appointed by the Governor to serve a term of five years and Prosecutors are able to serve more than one term. The unnamed Prosecutor's Office is the lead law enforcement agency in this county. With approximately 180 employees, this Prosecutor's Office has assistant prosecutors, detectives, agents and clerical personnel as full time staff.

With an annual operational budget of 15 million dollars, the office is responsible for the salaries of its employees, various internal and external operational costs as well as annual staff training. The annual training budget for the office is $52,000 which does not include the annual County Prosecutor's Association three day overnight "college" for assistant prosecutors, in an urban city, which is paid for using forfeiture funds. This "college" provides assistant prosecutors with all of the continuing education credits that they need to satisfy state requirements and typically costs approximately $30,000 for the three-day two-night event. The $52,000 allocated for training includes limited reoccurring costs like annual training requirements for specialty areas such as sex crimes, high tech crimes and fatal accident reconstruction courses. All expenditures from the training budget are subject to authorization by the County Prosecutor. While there is no limitation on who can use these training funds the aforesaid education is typically utilized by Prosecutor's Office staff or by municipal officers involved in county training projects including but not limited to crisis intervention team training and drug and alcohol counseling classes.

Municipalities in this county are covered by their own police department. Each municipal police department has its own Chief or Administrator and dedicated patrolmen, detectives and ancillary staff. Municipal departments all answer to the chief law enforcement officer for the county, who answers to the chief law enforcement officer for the state. Although county and municipal sworn officers in this county are all part of the same retirement system for pension

purposes, some individual departments have chosen to bargain away their healthcare upon retirement as part of their department employment contracts with regard to collective bargaining. Based upon the disparity between municipal law enforcement agencies the literature does support the creation, development and implementation of this project at the county level. The creation of this project at the county level will allow more meaningful exchange of information and ideas between stakeholders. It was easier to adjust or reconfigure programming at the county level so that the program could be fine-tuned and the roll-out of the program could be controlled by one agency who could make changes quickly and effectively if necessary. Once the program is perfected and working smoothly at the county level it can be reproduced for a statewide roll –out.

There was a perceived and a real need for a retirement transition program in the project county as well as the rest of the state. No one program existed that encompassed more than one area of concern. Moreover, retirement related workshops often cost money and take place after work hours. The organizational culture of law enforcement is now compatible with this type of change. Years ago, this state created a statewide resiliency program for law enforcement, and it also established a statewide Chief Resilience Officer. This initiative suggests that the law enforcement command staff for the state has embraced and acknowledged the issues facing law enforcement and the incredible stresses placed on officers today. The Resiliency Directive also reflects that command staff is willing to assign value to the area of officer safety and wellness and that they are also willing to provide resources in order to do so.

SWOT analysis

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis was conducted for this project.

Strengths. Organizational culture is compatible with the development of a retirement transition program. One internal strength includes local police chiefs that are willing to embrace innovation and to send their officers during work hours to a full week training. Another is that county leadership is supportive of innovation in law enforcement and are willing to leverage

resources within the county to support a retirement transition program. Moreover, multiple county departments and agencies often collaborate to engage in new community programming. Additional strengths include officers that have overcome adversity during their careers who were able to successfully navigate retirement. Retired officers that were willing and able to donate their time and expertise were a great benefit to this project.

Weaknesses. Weaknesses included the possibility of inability to secure trainers to cover every segment of every training class. Funding was a potential issue with regard to providing a venue, refreshments and resources to the officers attending the training. Fortunately, none of these issues posed a problem.

Opportunities. Currently, a state resiliency program for law enforcement exists placing Resiliency Program Officers in each county in the state. Resiliency officers are trained to connect officers in crisis or needing assistance with appropriate resources in the community. The state's Resiliency Program serves as an opportunity to use a pre-existing statewide program that has been implemented and endorsed by state law enforcement leadership to form part of the infrastructure for an ongoing retirement transition program for law enforcement officers.

Another opportunity was a potential partnership with a large school of medicine by the utilization of their post graduate year two psychiatry residents. These residents had the requisite psychiatric foundational knowledge necessary to serve as instructors for some of the modules in the retirement transition program. This was an opportunity for the residents to engage in community outreach and to interact with members of law enforcement and it would come at no additional cost to either agency

Threats. The threat of a global pandemic still looms in the states all over the nation. Social restrictions put in place by the state Governor were a threat to programming if they were to prevent officers from attending in-person training. Weather, natural disasters or other large-scale emergencies were also possible threats to programming. Another external threat was the possibility of budget cuts which could impact county programming. State budgetary cuts could

impact the ability of officers to attend training as well as participate as instructors. Fortunately, none of these possible threats occurred.

Project Goals and Aims

Goal statement

      This DNP project modified and implemented a voluntary comprehensive retirement transition program for law enforcement officers in a large state within five years of their projected retirement date. It was offered to law enforcement officers throughout a well populated county in a large state.

Aims

The aims of the project were:

1) To modify an existing comprehensive retirement transition program used in the US military for police officers in a well populated county in a large state within 5 years of their projected retirement date.

2) To implement and evaluate this comprehensive retirement transition program for law enforcement officers.

3) To make recommendations for scaling and sustainability of the project throughout the local/ county law enforcement system.

Part 2:
Methods

Overview of Methods

This early phase program development project modified and implemented a voluntary comprehensive retirement transition program for members of law enforcement in a well populated county in a large state within five years of their projected retirement date. It was based on the US Department of Veterans Affairs Transition Assistance Program designed to ease the transition of military personal into civilian life. This proposed transition program specific to law enforcement was a 5 day in-person training that was tested with an initial pilot cohort of approximately 40 participants.

Project Goal and Aims

This DNP project modified and implemented a voluntary comprehensive retirement transition program for law enforcement officers in a large state within five years of their projected retirement date*.*

Aims of the project were:

1.   To modify an existing comprehensive retirement transition program used in the US military for police officers in a well populated county in a large state within 5 years of their projected retirement date.

2.   To implement and evaluate this comprehensive retirement transition program for law enforcement officers.

3.   To make recommendations for scaling and sustainability of the project throughout the local/ county law enforcement system.

Aims and Associated Methods

Aim 1. To modify an existing comprehensive retirement transition program used in the US military for police officers in a well populated county in a large state within 5 years of their projected retirement date.

This modified program included the following five modules: psychological and developmental aspects of retirement, retirement and relationships, health considerations, financial considerations, and re-invention/ re-employment, with retirement resiliency woven throughout the program content.

Development of the Resource/ Steering Committee

- The project commenced with the creation of a "resource" committee. This committee included one local police chief, one retired police officer, one mental health clinician as well as two members of the Prosecutor's Office. The inclusion of such a diverse group of individuals supplied an appropriate cross-section of interests to ensure all concerns and subject matters were addressed.

- Once selected the committee met weekly at the Prosecutor's Office to formally track the progress of the project and to discuss any challenges that arose.

- The Project manager informed the committee during the first meeting about the content of the original curriculum and elicited feedback regarding modifications within that original framework in order to draft the curriculum for the project.

- The resource committee along with the project manager, helped to develop officer participant criteria, including but not limited to, the officer's time left to retire, presence of any internal disciplinary actions, and any other factors that impacted an applicant's ability to fully participate in the course.

Development of the Curriculum:

The curriculum was modified from the military Post-Separation Transition Assistance Program to include resilience training which was already in place as a training mandate for Officers in an unnamed county. Resiliency training, designed by the military in consultation with the University of Pennsylvania (McBride, S., Reivich, K., & Seligman, M.E.P., 2011), helped trainees navigate adversity, and complemented the retirement specific modules to provide officers with the tools necessary to deal with the stressors that may be encountered and/or explored during the training and during the retirement process. The project manager presented the curriculum draft to the resource committee for feedback at the second meeting. The curriculum included the following modules which corresponded and expanded upon what was referenced in the original curriculum:

1) PSYCHOLOGY OF POLICING AND RETIREMENT

2) RELATIONSHIPS AND RETIREMENT

3) HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS IN RETIREMENT

4) FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS IN RETIREMENT

5) RE-EMPLOYMENT, RE-INVENTION AND RE-ENGAGEMENT

- Once the curriculum was developed, the project manager created a topical outline and lesson plan for each day based on the modules. Learning objectives stemming from daily course goals were set for the week.

- The project manager, in collaboration with the resource committee, arranged for speakers with the appropriate background, training and experience to deliver the proposed content. Instructors were Master Resilience Trainers, subject matter experts, and were Crisis Intervention Team (hereinafter referred to as CIT) trained or licensed clinicians. They had been given permission by their administration to instruct during their regular work hours. This had been arranged with administration from the Prosecutor's Office, a Township Police Department, another county Prosecutor's Office and the CEO of a community based mental health agency.

- The project manager and resource committee authored written training requests to provide to administration when required.

- Classes were held in person for 5 full days. They were held from 9 AM to 4 PM with each day devoted to the one of Retirement Modules combined with Resiliency training that's been linked to the module subject matter. Module content was modified from the core curriculum used by the Veterans Affairs Transition Assistance Program (see Appendix C).

    o Morning sessions, except for Friday, from 9-12 included targeted resiliency skills lessons linked to one of the retirement modules. The curriculum comprised 12 resiliency lessons in total, all of which had been adopted in their entirety from the FBINAA Comprehensive Officer Retirement Program.

    o (fbinaa.org/FBINAA/FBINAA/OSW/Curriculum.aspx)

    - Lesson#1: Resiliency Overview

    - Lesson#2: Counting Blessings

    - Lesson#3: Accomplishing Goals

    - Lesson #4: ABCs

    - Lesson#5: Check Your Playbook

    - Lesson#6: Balance Your Thinking

    - Lesson#7: Capitalizing on Strengths

    - Lesson#8: Mindfulness and Meaning Making

    - Lesson#9: Spiritual Resiliency

    - Lesson#10: Physical Resiliency

    - Lesson#11: Interpersonal Problem Solving

    - Lesson#12: Good Listening and Active Constructive Responding

    o Afternoons from 1 to 4 consisted of informational lectures and discussion around each of the modules outlined in the curriculum.

Resource arrangements

- The project manager was responsible for reserving and scheduling the venue for the selected training days. The project manager notified speakers/instructors of the correct address and contact information for the venue. The training was at a County Prosecutor's Office. It has three large 80-inch flat screen monitors to facilitate PowerPoint instruction.

- The project manager with the help of resource committee, secured a vendor for food and small promotion items such as cups, keychains, stress balls, blankets and hats for the training. They ensured all vending requirements were met, including but not limited to, proper bidding, purchase order and payment issues.

Preparation of Assessments:

Pre and post retirement readiness assessments as well as a program evaluation survey were developed for this project.

o The project manager developed pre and post readiness surveys to assess participants' level of readiness with regard to retirement. Surveys consisted of nine items each, scored on a 5-point Likert scale for a total high score of 50. They were provided to participants before and after the training took place.

o A program evaluation was also developed. This seven statement Likert scale program evaluation had a section following each rated statement for participant comments (See Appendix I).

Aim #2. To implement and evaluate a comprehensive retirement transition program for law enforcement officers within 5 years of their projected retirement date.

Implementation

Recruitment

- The project manager coordinated notification of eligible program participants and any project correspondence that was distributed. This included the application/registration form for distribution to potential participants. Participation was voluntary.

- A registration form approved by the Prosecutor was released though a county wide cloud-based network that distributes content online. This ensured that local police chiefs, department training coordinators and sworn officers all over the county were aware of this programming. This registration form contained program information as well as contact information so that officers could fax their registration to a specific unit at the Prosecutor's Office where a resource committee member indexed applications until the submission deadline had been reached.

- Registration was conducted on a first come first serve basis, until the class was at capacity with a maximum of 40 officers.

- Participants enrolled in the project were sent a 5-day project agenda by the project manager with facility directions and contact information for the project manager. Participants were asked to arrive at the training facility at 8:30 AM for registration and breakfast with class to begin at 9 AM daily. Lunch was provided every day from 12 noon to 1 PM to ensure networking and team building among participants.

Classes

- Class ran daily from 9 AM until 12 Noon and 1 PM until 4 PM with ten-minute breaks between training blocks.

- Class Days 1-5 ran as follows (see Appendix I):

o Day 1:

▪ Retirement Resiliency 9-12

▪ Lunch 12-1

▪ Psychology of LEO Retirement 1-4

o Day 2:

▪ Retirement Resiliency 9-12

▪ Lunch 12-1

- Relationships and Retirement 1-4

  o Day 3:

- Retirement Resiliency 9-12

- Lunch 12-1

- Health Considerations 1- 2:30

- Estate Planning Documents from 2:30-4

  o Day 4:

- Retirement Resiliency 9-11

- Pension Review 11-12

- Lunch 12-1

- Financial Considerations 1-4

  o Day 5:

- Resumes, Cover Letters & Social Media 9-12

- Lunch 12-1

- Avengers Panel 1- 4

o On the first class day – pre-surveys were administered at the beginning of class by the project manager. Similarly, on the last day of class, both the post -surveys and program evaluation surveys were administered at the end of class by the project manager. Surveys and program evaluation had to be returned in order for officer participants to obtain their completion certificate.

o Program surveys and evaluations were issued using a random number generated by a random number generator app, assigned to each officer, known only to the project manager. These numeric identifiers were used for confidentiality. Only the project manager had access to the master linking file along with program surveys and evaluations.

Evaluation

Descriptive and bivariate statistics were used to evaluate outcomes assessed on pre and post retirement readiness surveys and program evaluations (see Appendix D).

- Paired t –testing was used to compare changes in officers' retirement readiness on pre and post retirement readiness surveys. Responses to open ended questions were analyzed descriptively.

- Program evaluations were evaluated descriptively.

Aim #3. To recommend methods for the scaling and sustainability of the project throughout the county or statewide system.

Sustainability

Findings of the project were presented to county law enforcement leadership and based on the results, recommendations were made to continue the program. Communication with local police chiefs was maintained to ensure that municipal officers eligible for programming have the opportunity to attend. Efforts to secure funding through professional associations or other county/state agencies were sought to ensure continuation of programming.

Scaling

Based on the findings of this project, the PM met and will continue to meet with the resource committee as well as the Prosecutor and Chief law enforcement officer in the state to make recommendations for continued scaling of this project to a regional or statewide level. A singular regional training approach would include four different counties as a central training region using the current PM as the training coordinator. The central region would have its project training take place at one county and would include officers from all counties. A multi-regional approach i.e., statewide training, would include the creation of additional regions, each with their own project managers. These project managers would work together to ensure statewide training coverage by hosting trainings at regional hub locations and sharing resources if necessary.

Dissemination

The results of successful implementation were distributed by the project manager to various stakeholders at regularly scheduled meetings such as the Justice Involved Services Quarterly meeting and the Resiliency Program Officers Quarterly Meeting. The project manager also presented at a statewide law enforcement resiliency conference sponsored by the chief law enforcement state agency. Findings may also be submitted to a mélange of law enforcement journals in the future including but not limited to Policing: a Journal of Policy and Practice, the Journal of Law Enforcement Leadership and Ethics, and the Journal of Police Studies. The project manager was also invited to present at a monthly Chiefs Meeting (all local police chiefs or their designees for over three dozen municipalities are typically in attendance). An abstract will be submitted to the International Conference on Psychiatric-Mental Health Nursing (ICPMHN).

Statement Related to Human Subjects

This DNP project has been determined to be a Quality Improvement project by Yale University IRB and not subject to IRB approval.

Part 3

Systems, Policy and Business Implications

Systems Overview: Leadership, Business, Policy

Years ago, the chief law enforcement state agency mandated Resiliency training for every sworn officer in the state which had to be completed by the end of 2022. A similar mandate was issued regarding de-escalation training for every sworn officer in the county. These two new training mandates were on top of the already exhaustive list of mandated training and continuing education that officers were subjected to throughout the year. In the county at any given time there are approximately 1,500 sworn officers including members of the Sheriff's department as well as the Department of Corrections. These mandates presented a potential barrier to the proposed project due to the time officers were taken off of the street. Because there were existing training mandates that had to be satisfied by the end of 2022 and the spring of 2023 there was a concern that local police chiefs may hesitate to allow their officers to participate in a voluntary retirement transition program that they may have viewed as not providing a benefit to them or the department/agency but only the individual officer. This leadership and business consideration could have become a barrier but was remedied with the advance preparation of talking points and strategies to address their anticipated concerns. Local chiefs were educated on the importance of officer safety and wellness and that the concept of officer wellness should extend up until the time of retirement.

Another consideration, this time with regard to sustainability, was that during the life of the program the state's Governor won his re-election bid and gained another term in office. The Prosecutor had been appointed years before for a multi-year term which is set to expire. All of the Prosecutors in this state are appointed by the Governor and therefore soon this state's Governor will be appointing the next Prosecutor. It would be beneficial for continuity of project purposes if the pre-existing Prosecutor was re-appointed. If that fails to occur it could present a barrier to sustainability. This could be remedied by illustrating project completion data, officer

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satisfaction values and any other complementary data including but not limited to decrease use of force of complaints, decrease in positive values on random urine screens and a decrease in utilization of sick time. Moreover, ensuring the warm handoff of the project from one prosecutor to another could prove beneficial in ensuring project sustainability.

If county law enforcement leadership chooses to proceed with including the retirement transition program in their annual training schedule, a formal policy will be drafted by the PM. This program would be a first step in policy change on a state level. This draft policy would be presented to the County Prosecutor for approval and would include a detailed description and rationale for the project as well as the eligibility requirements and the procedure for registration. This policy would be distributed by Power DMS to all sworn officers in the county. While participation in the project itself is voluntary, it should be mandated that the local police chiefs and/or the Prosecutors' Office notify all sworn members of law enforcement in the County of the date, time and location of the training project. A larger discussion on implications for national policy will be addressed pending results of the project.

The Executive Summary pertaining to this project will be distributed to the County Prosecutor's Office executive leadership team, including the Prosecutor, the First Assistant Prosecutor, the Deputy First Assistant Prosecutor, and the Executive Assistant Prosecutor. The Executive Summary will also be given to key members of the chief law enforcement agency in the state, the original project resource committee members as well as local PBA executives. This will contribute to project success by creating a neutral environment appropriate for troubleshooting, program enrichment and buy-in, to assist in project scalability and sustainability.

The Business Case and Leadership Engagement

Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement

The retirement transition project was sponsored by a Prosecutor's Office in a large state. The student was the project manager for the implementation of the retirement transition program. The student is a full-time supervising prosecuting attorney for the Prosecutor's Office and already

serves as the training liaison to the County Police Academy serving all sworn officers in the jurisdiction. The County Prosecutor served as the site preceptor with Chief Deputy Attorney General assuming a scholarly mentor position. A Chief was responsible for reviewing any internal or external policies and/or legal issues affecting said project. Additional stakeholders included a fulltime sergeant, a full-time detective who liaised between local police chiefs and the project manager. The PM was also was the point of contact for project presenters. Also, the Interim Chief Resilience Officer for the project state, a retired state trooper, assumed the multi-faceted role of liaison to chief law enforcement agency in the state, the State Policemen's Benevolent Association (PBA) and the State Police.

Business/ Financial Considerations

The financial considerations for the implementation of the retirement transition project and the corresponding Return on Investment (ROI) had been reviewed. Resources needed to implement this project include the costs, materials and presenters to cover two separate in-person classes. With approximately twenty participants in one class the goal was to be able to fund a county-based pilot project that would improve officer comfort level with retirement. The values outlined reflected an overall project cost of $6,130 (a breakdown of about $153 investment per officer). This overall project cost included estimated values for the cost of educational/ promotional items, an outcomes analyst, participant gift cards, supplies and a full week of food.

Educational/ promotional items were factored into the budget. These items had the county logo and/ or hotline information for officers in distress. Other expenses included supplies and meals for attendees   Gift cards were used to encourage class member participation and to reward class members for positive responses or interactions during programming.

Certain costs were projected to be absorbed by the operational budget of the Prosecutor's Office and were, including but not limited to speakers/ presenters, printing materials and the use of software and computer equipment. Additionally, the creation of the curriculum was the responsibility of the program director at no cost, the use of administrative assistants was absorbed

by the operational budget of the Prosecutor's Office as they were already an existing full time employee. Retention of presenters was from a pool of government employees who were experts in their respective fields and accessible at no cost. Printing materials were created and provided by the county printing and graphics department and absorbed by the Prosecutor's Office operational budget. PowerPoint modules and their content were created by full time staff and were also provided at no cost.

With a project designed to help ease the transition into retirement, direct and indirect benefits may be hard to quantify. Some indirect benefits may include but are not limited to an increase in officer satisfaction, improvement in agency morale, decreased spillover, and reduction of sick time utilization and an increase in officer motivation which could result in an increase in productivity. Furthermore, potential benefits to the officers, their families and the communities they serve may also be considered to be indirect benefits. This project and its corresponding modules may improve the personal relationship between the officer and their significant other as well as their children and other loved ones. A decrease in stress due to programming may also result in positive outcomes in the community as result in spillover reduction. Taking an exponential outlook on successful programming the most optimal indirect benefit would be a life saved.

Some direct benefits may include lower overtime expenditure and clinical improvement in the form of officer injury prevention. One direct benefit that may be able to be quantified is in the form of grant funding. For the past four years the Prosecutor's Office has received grant funding from the chief law enforcement agency in the state. Every year said funding is earmarked for programming that aims to reduce the impact of substance use disorder on our community. As officers are members of our community who are particularly at risk for substance use disorder after a career of trauma exposure and the stressors of shift work, those officers should be entitled to the same substance use disorder programming benefits as the general population. Funding has been approved this year for first responder specific programming in the amount of $20,000 resulting in an ROI direct benefit of 553% with a payback period of 3.7 months. Moreover, the

Prosecutor's Office has been awarded a Community Funding Project Grant effective 2023, for $300,000 to create a Comprehensive Officer Assistance Program (COAP), the application for which was drafted and submitted by the project manager. Of said funding $100,000 has been designated to support the retirement transition program efforts.

Literature reviewed highlighted an association between separation from active duty military and a significant increase in drug use in soldiers (Derefinko, 2018). Moreover, a direct correlation was made in a dissertation by Griffin with a population of approximately 7,000 police officers, between police officers over the age of 45 and the use of prescription opiates (Griffin 2017). This suggests there is a need and a potential benefit to our officers and the rest of the community in ensuring that available funding be spent on projects that mitigate the dangers of self-medication.

Risk Assessment and Risk Mitigation Plan

The risk assessment for the retirement transition program illustrated three ongoing areas of concern. The three categories included police officers, local police chiefs and county law enforcement leadership. The highest level of risk was attributed to local police chiefs with a high probability rating and the highest potential impact on project implementation. If local chiefs did not clearly see the value in the training the project couldn't be implemented or sustained. This risk was mitigated by ensuring the cooperation of at least three local chiefs. The medium level of risk was attributed to county law enforcement leadership. While there was a risk that county leadership wouldn't make the transition program a priority, the worst outcome would have been that they disallowed use of the Prosecutor's Office as a training site. While inconvenient, the impact of this potential response would have been time sensitive, not fatal, and therefore would have had medium impact on project implementation. Mitigation for this scenario involved having a no-cost back up venue that was available during the selected training dates. The law enforcement class participants were the lowest level of risk but another potential high impact if the worst outcome had presented itself. If officers did not "buy-in" to the training because they were unsure what it

was or what it was for, they would have refused to register or attend the training. One way to mitigate this worst case scenario was to offer the training to officers in a different jurisdiction in order to fill training spots. Then successful outcomes data would have been used to create the buy in with local officers for future training classes. Fortunately, recruitment was not an issue that needed to be remedied.

Part 4

Results

Pre and Post Implementation Retirement Readiness Survey evaluation

Pre and Post Implementation surveys were issued for each participant to assess for changes in "retirement readiness" after their attendance and completion of a 40 hour comprehensive retirement transition program. Each Pre and Post Survey contained nine items rated on a five point Likert scale. The Likert scale ran from one to five with "Strongly Agree" scored at a one, "Disagree" at two, ""Neutral" at a three, "Agree" at four and "Strongly Agree" at a five. Change was determined by calculating the difference between paired values after establishing a Pre and Post Survey "mean" for each of the nine survey items. Post survey means increased for all nine items. See Appendix D.

Post Implementation Overall Program Evaluations:

Post Implementation Program evaluations were issued for each participant to gather critical data to troubleshoot or guide future decision making regarding the comprehensive retirement transition program. Each Post evaluation contained seven items rated on a five point Likert scale. The Likert scale ran from one to five with "Strongly Agree" scored at a one, "Disagree" at two, ""Neutral" at a three, "Agree" at four and "Strongly Agree" at a five. Evaluations were customized to collect specific information including but not limited to, instructor satisfaction, the acquisition of knowledge, the value of materials, and general likes and dislikes of programming due to the insertion of three blank lines under each survey item. Program satisfaction was determined by calculating the Post Program Evaluation "mean" for each of the seven survey items. Post Program Evaluation means increased for all seven items and the rate of return was 100%. The Post Program Evaluation results reflect overall participant program satisfaction with the comprehensive retirement transition program. Comments included but were not limited to positive feedback in the form of, "Best class I've ever taken", "this training should be mandated",

"wish my family could hear" and "has to be in-person". Negative feedback was isolated to the temperature of the training room.

Part 5

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion of Findings:

Review or Modifications for Sustainability:

The evaluation and analysis of programming suggested several modifications for the sustainability and preservation of this training. Regular quarterly meetings with stakeholders via a County Justice Involved Service's meetings will ensure that all data is continuously reviewed by interested parties who are vested in the success of ongoing programming. Four participants were dropped from registration due to infection with COVID-19 at the commencement of training. The compilation of a waitlist would have been helpful in maximizing the venue space and in preserving/ increasing the number of participants in the training due to call outs from unforeseen illness/ injury. Pre and Post Retirement Readiness Surveys will continue to be distributed to participants in future training so that the new retirement process/ training system can be continuously evaluated and any necessary changes made in a timely fashion. Additionally, program evaluations suggested that the training venue should be moved or that the AC/ heating system should be reviewed for operational capabilities assessed.

Recommendations for Scalability:

Based upon the evaluation and analysis of the comprehensive retirement transition program the project may be expanded to include significant others/ spouses of law enforcement members. Additional expansion may also include the delivery of the training to a larger audience via regional hosting in the north, central and southern regions of the state. Furthermore, the training could be advanced by having a lawyer(s) present to draft some advanced directives/ wills for class participants for execution in the near future at a discounted rate. Next steps would be to utilize police professional organizations to gauge the level of interest of law enforcement family members in participating in said training. Also, the local bar association could be contacted to gauge any interest in voluntary wills, trusts, estate work for this participant population. Moreover,

coordinator designees in the north, central and southern regions of the state should be appointed by the chief law enforcement agency in the state so they can start organizing their own training based upon this project.

Policy and Broader Healthcare Systems Implications:

The community and national impact of the retirement transition program is potentially far reaching. One policy consideration is making retirement transition training mandatory as opposed to voluntary. This type of policy carries significant cost considerations. A mandatory training would require the regular implementation of numerous classes to accommodate the constant influx of retiring officers throughout the state. Next steps for this policy consideration would be to include a mandate inquiry survey to various law enforcement agencies and professional organizations throughout the state. Another step would be an attempt to calculate a training mandate increase in cost. Moreover, consideration must be given to whether a mandate would impact officer interest and/or attitude regarding training. This could be addressed in the survey.

This training has already had a positive impact on the local law enforcement community. This same positive impact could be duplicated if the training was expanded to fire personnel, EMS and/or other high stress professions throughout the county. The national impact of such training is undoubtedly a culture change that could potentially increase law enforcement quality of life and decrease officer morbidity and mortality throughout the county, state and nation.

Conclusion

Voluntary participants in a forty hour retirement training pilot for members of law enforcement felt significantly more ready for retirement after taking this comprehensive program. The program was highly successful, and all indicators suggest it should become a sanctioned statewide training. Future plans may include the expansion of the training to larger audiences/ geographic areas as well as an expansion in audience in some form to spouses/ partners of members of law enforcement. Survey and evaluation results could also be utilized as evidence to show funding agencies that they should grant funding to this retirement transition programming.

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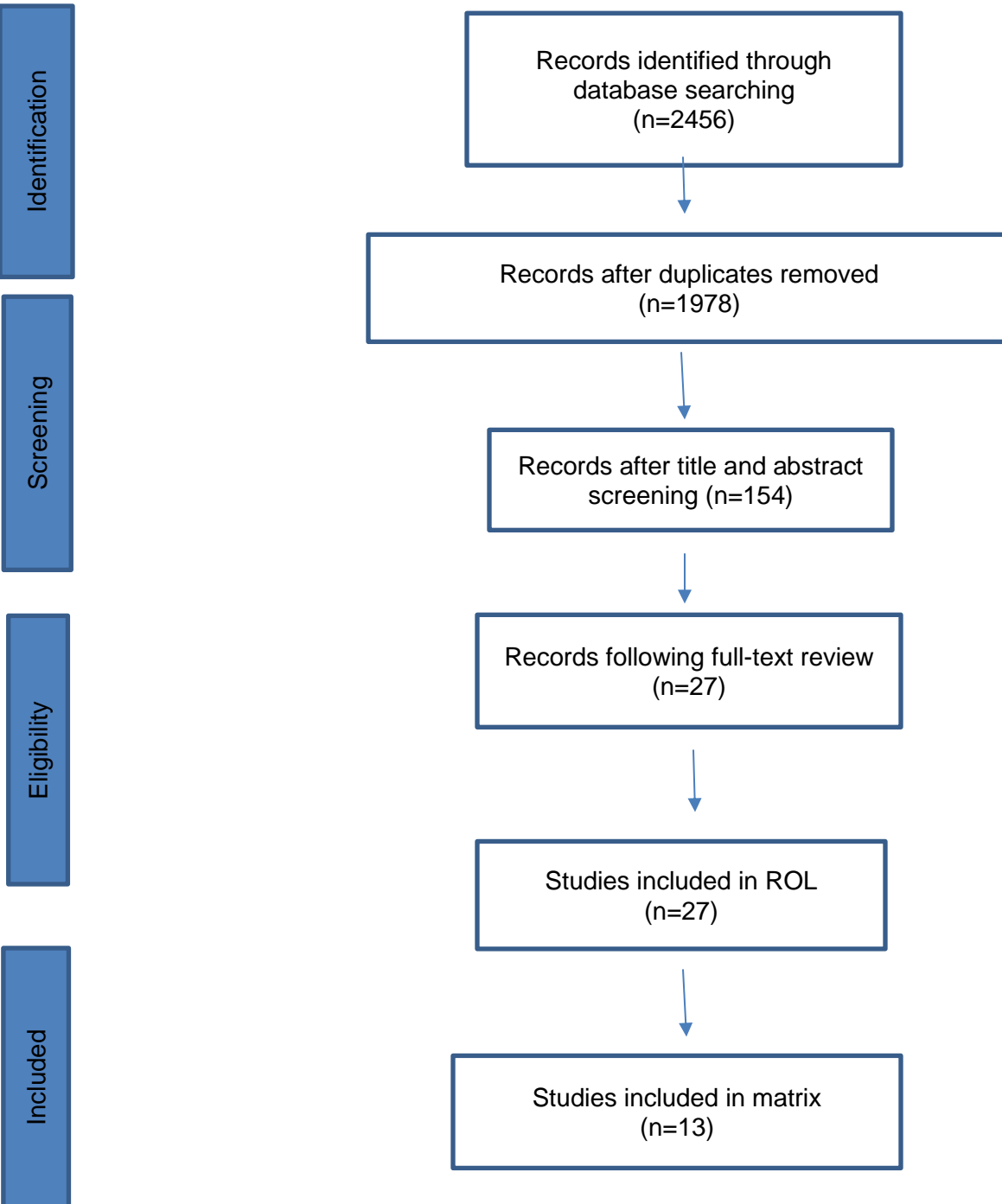
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Appendix A

Adapted PRISMA Study Flowchart

Identification	Records identified through database searching (n=2456)
Screening	Records after duplicates removed (n=1978)
	Records after title and abstract screening (n=154)
Eligibility	Records following full-text review (n=27)
	Studies included in ROL (n=27)
Included	Studies included in matrix (n=13)

Adapted from: Moher et al.: Preferred reporting items for systematic review and meta-analysis protocols (PRISMA-P) 2015 statement. Systematic Reviews 2015 4:1.

Lewins Model of Change

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DOD/ VA/ DOL TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM CURRICULUM

CORE REQUIREMENTS

EMPLOYMENT FUNDAMENTALS OF CAREER TRANSITION   330 MIN

This course lays the foundation for transition from military to civilian careers by introducing

essential tools and resources needed to evaluate career options, gain information for civilian

employment, and understand the fundamentals of the employment process.

FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR TRANSITION   180 MIN

This course provides transitioning Service members with an understanding of how transition

may impact their finances and provides the tools and resources for a successful financial

transition.

MANAGING YOUR (MY) TRANSITION   45 MIN

This course emphasizes the importance of preparing for transition from military service into the

civilian sector and provides an overview of the Transition Assistance Program.

MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL CODE (MOC) CROSSWALK   45 MIN

This course assists with identifying skills and demonstrates how to translate skills, training, and

experience into civilian credentialing appropriate for civilian jobs.

VA BENEFITS AND SERVICES   240 MIN

This course explains how to navigate your transition journey with Department of Veterans

Affairs (VA) benefits and services, including: supporting yourself and your family, getting career

ready, finding a place to live, maintaining your health, and connecting with your community.

WOUNDED WARRIOR AND CAREGIVER EFCT   330 MIN

This course is a blended learning delivery of the online Employment Fundamentals of Career

Transitions (EFCT) followed by instructor-led virtual sessions designed to meet the needs of

transitioning service members who may be wounded, ill and/or injured. Caregivers can also benefit from this course.

FAMILY MEMBERS

MENTALHEALTH FOR FAMILIES   **45 MIN**

This course explains how to identify local services and community organizations that can provide assistance and aid to service members and their loved ones.

SURVIVOR AND CASULATY ASSISTANCE RESOURCES   **45 MIN**

This course provides an overview on VA and DoD survivor benefits and eligibility, and what to do in the event of a loss.

TRANSITIONING TO FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT   **60 MIN**

This course is for US Service members interested in continuing their service through Federal Employment. It provides information, tools, and links that will help you complete your journey from your military career to a civilian position in the Federal Government. You'll learn through the eyes of Teresa, a recently separated veteran who is looking for a job in the Federal Government.

The course has 5 steps, plus an introduction to Federal Employment. Step 1: Gather Your Intel. Step 2: Identify Employment Opportunities. Step 3: Focus Your Search. Step 4: Continue the Mission. Step 5: Complete the Mission.

VA EDUCATION BENEFITS: SPOUSES &DEPENDENT CHILDREN   **45 MIN**

This course communicates relevant information about education benefits, including Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, that can help families, and caregivers pay for tuition, housing, books, and supplies costs through the VA education and training benefits available to them.

VA HOME LOAN GUARANTEE PROGRAM   **60 MIN**

This course offers a general overview of the VA Home Loan Guaranty Program including eligibility, processes, costs, and other available resources.

VET CENTERS   **45 MIN**

This course describes how to connect with local Vet Centers and how Service members, Veterans and their loved ones can use Vet Centers as a free resource.

TRANSITION TRACKS

EDUCATION TRACK: MANAGING YOUR (MY) EDUCATION   **240 MIN**

This course, designed for anyone pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree, includes information on choosing a field of study, selecting an institution, gaining admission, and funding your education.

EMPLOYMENT TRACK: EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOP   **630 MIN**

This course presents a comprehensive view covering best practices in career employment, including learning interview skills, building effective resumes, and using emerging technology to network and search for employment.

ENTREPENEUR TRACK: BOOTS TO BUSINESS   **480 MIN**

This course is for those interested in exploring business ownership or other self-employment opportunities. Participants learn about evaluating business concepts, developing a business plan, the resources available to access technical assistance, start-up capital, contracting opportunities, and more.

VOCATIONAL TRACK: CAREER AND CREDENTIAL EXPLORATION   **420 MIN**

This course offers an opportunity to complete personalized career development assessments of occupational interests and aptitudes. Participants will then be guided through a variety of career considerations, including labor market projections, education, apprenticeships, certifications, and licensure requirements

WOMENS HEALTH TRANSITION TRAINING   **240 MIN**

This course helps transitioning Service women and recently separated women Veterans understand the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care benefits and services available to them, including: available women's health services, how to enroll in VA health care and other transition assistance tools and resources.

MILITARY LIFE CYCLE

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION RESOURCES   60 MIN

This course explores state, local and federal resources that help Service members connect with their community during the transition from active duty to civilian life. Participants will also gain experience with the tools needed to locate and vet online resources.

DISABILITY COMPENSATION   60 MIN

This course introduces the VA disability compensation (pay) benefit that may be available to eligible transitioning Service members and Veterans and shows where they can find key resources.

MENTAL HEALTH FOR FAMILIES   45 MIN

This course explains how to identify local services and community organizations that can provide assistance and aid to service members and their loved ones.

RESERVE COMPONENT DUAL PAYMENTS   45 MIN

This course provides an overview on drill pay, compensation eligibility, and dual payment.

SURVIVAL AND CASULATY ASSISTANCE RESOURCES   45 MIN

This course provides an overview on VA and DoD survivor benefits and eligibility, and what to do in the event of a loss.

TRANSITIONING TO FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT   60 MIN

This course is for US Service members interested in continuing their service through Federal Employment. It provides information, tools, and links that will help you complete your journey from your military career to a civilian position in the Federal Government. You'll learn through the eyes of Teresa, a recently separated veteran who is looking for a job in the Federal Government.

The course has 5 steps, plus an introduction to Federal Employment. Step 1: Gather Your Intel. Step 2: Identify Employment Opportunities. Step 3: Focus Your Search. Step 4: Continue the Mission. Step 5: Complete the Mission.

VA BENEFITS 101   **45 MIN**

This course highlights VA benefits and services to include education, home loan guaranty,

health care, and insurance and memorial benefits.

VA EDUCATION BENEFITS   **45 MIN**

This course provides information about Defense Department (DOD) and VA education benefits

to include Post-9/11 benefits that may help service members pay for or offset the cost of tuition,

housing, books, and supplies.

VA EDUCATION BENEFITS: SPOUSES & DEPENDANT CHILDREN   45 MIN

This course communicates relevant information about education benefits, including Post-9/11 GI

Bill benefits, that can help families, and caregivers pay for tuition, housing, books, and supplies

costs through the VA education and training benefits available to them.

VA HOME LOAN GUARANTY PROGRAM   **60 MIN**

This course offers a general overview of the VA Home Loan Guaranty Program including

eligibility, processes, costs, and other available resources.

VA LIFE INSURANCE BENEFITS   **60 MIN**

This course discusses the different types of VA life insurance benefits to help determine the

best choice for Service members and their loved ones based upon interests and needs.

VET CENTERS   **45 MIN**

This course describes how to connect with local Vet Centers and how Service members,

Veterans and their loved ones can use Vet Centers as a free resource.

Information retrieved directly from https://www.tapevents.mil/courses

Appendix D

Readiness Surveys, Paired T-Testing

PRE– AND POST-READINESS SURVEY ANALYSIS

Survey Item	n	Pretest mean	Posttest mean	t-test
Ret. as milestone	36	3.50	4.89	-8.64***
Financial readiness	34	3.06	4.56	-8.81***
Resource access	36	3.08	4.78	-9.55***
Health screening	36	2.92	4.83	-12.69***
Career options	35	2.94	4.86	-15.25***
Resume	36	2.47	4.31	-9.92***
Relationship impact	36	3.36	4.92	-11.54***
Updated will	35	2.14	2.80	-2.75**
Advanced directive	36	3.36	4.72	-6.81***

*** $P < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$