



Washington Association of
**SHERIFFS &
POLICE CHIEFS**

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Greetings from your Executive Director:

As our WASPC team and I get around the state and communicate with our Sheriffs and Chiefs, and members of your agencies, I continue to see critical and concerning trends resulting from a number of factors, but most specifically the reform laws of the past two years:

- Fewer staffing resources, leading to officers and deputies running call-to-call by themselves, working too many hours. This is the exact opposite of what de-escalation, decompression for wellness, community policing, and non-reactive policing require.
- We are seeing significant reductions in persons in Dept. of Corrections custody. The numbers from the [DOC website](#) show that from August 2019 to August 2022, DOC prison population has gone down over 26%, from 16,711 average daily population in 2019 to 12,287 last month. So, while there are fewer officers and deputies, operating under restrictive laws, there are far fewer consequences for criminals. Remember also, according to [DOC data](#) that 84.4% of DOC inmates are there for murder, manslaughter, robbery, sex crimes, or assault. The narrative that prison is full of people convicted of low-level drug and property crimes is simply false, and significantly more of these convicted offenders are no longer incarcerated over the past three years.
- Fewer officers, more offenders, less chance of consequences with reform law changes equal predictable results. More crime, less public safety.

It is election season and I do not bring these up to “politicize”, I bring it up to point out that public safety is a core function of government, no matter the party. Make sure your community and your elected representatives have solutions to these trends and how we will address them.

Moving forward, we need to:

- Focus on providing justice for victims and create accountability for criminals by changing the current environment that has limited/no consequence for crime, including the perception that no one can be pursued in a vehicle (fix the pursuit law).

- Provide for incentives to people get off the street, into treatment, and healthy. We must make an investment in the infrastructure to provide facilities and personnel to provide treatment (fix the Blake decision).
- Commit to de-escalation through adequate staffing, training, and supervision. With this, we will achieve the shared goals of accountability (increase staffing for law enforcement and the criminal justice system).
- Provide for balanced solutions that support good policing instead of blanket demonization of police (recognize positive intervention by fixing the juvenile access law).

Communications around our State

Snohomish County Sheriff Adam Fortney, Police Chiefs, and elected leaders teamed up to provide effective communication about changes needed for community safety in [this video](#) which was sent out this morning.

Spokane Chief Craig Meidl did a [podcast](#) for his community that provides specific data and information and it is a great example of ensuring people understand the issues.

Gig Harbor Chief Kelly Busey posted this incident of the agency Facebook page:



Gig Harbor Police Department
Published by Kelly Busey · 14m · 🌐

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The relaxed drug laws in our state have resulted in our officers encountering this scene more often. These two individuals (faces blurred) were passed out in their vehicle after smoking fentanyl. The pictures were taken after the officer determined that both subject were breathing and medical aid was en route.

Note that the closest subject is still holding his small torch used for burning fentanyl pills for ingestion.

After confiscating the narcotics, the officer was left with no option but to offer the men a card with voluntary drug referral information.

We support incentivized drug treatment with incarceration as only a last resort.




A few days later, the Chief sent along this comment the posting received:

As an ex-user/convict: Meth/cocaine/crack/heroin/fentanyl/opioid users will NOT (and typically CANNOT) stop using as long as the option to use exists. Secondly, it is not a victimless act. It costs money. The money comes from burglaries, robberies, theft, prostitution, etc. on a daily basis. Multiple times per day. In my experienced opinion, the only real opportunity these addicts have for change, rehabilitation, recovery, is when they are locked up for the crimes they commit to get money. Volunteer rehab where the addict is allowed to leave when they choose has an extremely low success rate. 90-day forced rehabilitation. It allows the addicts to have a moment of clarity despite their initial anger over their loss of freedom. Most of the time, when they walk out the door, they will thank you.

Note - this is a compassionate solution. Compassionate to the community for providing a level of protection against the crimes, compassionate to the families and friends of the addicts who have been through hell, and compassionate to the addict who by the very nature of addiction cannot stop on their own. It is not 100%. Some will never stop until they die or end up incarcerated for life. I LOVE addicts as much as I love all my friends and families. My heart breaks for them. I used to be one. Folks - this is not a police problem. It is a society problem and any viable remedy will cost money. But the worst thing we can do is stand by and reduce the consequences. The result of that is, well, take another look at the picture above.

Also...

As we prepare for the Wellness App to be rolled out after the end of the year, we sent a [letter of thanks](#) to Rep. Leavitt for her support and being a champion of this important initiative. It is important for all of us to notice and appreciate when legislators step up and provide meaningful support for our officers and deputies.

A few Sheriffs and Chiefs have mentioned there has been some confusion about the Youth Access line (YAC) that is part of the law change requiring Juvenile Access to an attorney. Some officers have said that only the YAC line may be used to satisfy the statutory requirement for accessing the counsel- as always, check with your legal advisor, but the law does not specifically say the YAC line is required, but another source can be used, as long as the requirement for the access can be documented and shown. If your prosecutor feels differently, follow their guidance.

Here is a quick update on WASPC's Institute for Credible Leadership Development (ICLD) program- we currently have 1,525 participants (!) four months into our launch, and the training is

being provided free to members and their agency members. Our Training and Development Coordinator, David Doll, points out that had these participants purchased the program individually through the National Command College, they would be paying \$1,700.00 each to participate, and if they want college credit the cost would be \$2,400.00 to participate. So, for our current 1,525 participants, that would be a cost of over \$2.8 million or \$3.6 million if they want college credit, if they paid the bill themselves. There are also three people who have already completed the program and are applying for college credit. We are grateful for the leadership of our Board and the Training Committee for getting this important executive development initiative going!

Attorney General's Use of Force Model Policy and Link to Submit Policy

The Attorney General's Office now has the link to submit the mandated Use of Force Policy information, which is due by Dec. 1, 2022. We have sent out information over the past few newsletters for you to consider, and many of our Sheriffs and Chiefs provided feedback through the process to the Attorney General's Office

The web form for agencies to submit their use-of-force policies and other required information is: <https://fortress.wa.gov/atg/formhandler/ago/LawEnforcementUseOfForcePolicy.aspx>.

You may have already seen this portion from the AGO at the bottom of the [model policy page](#), and it is worth noting: *For the information that is published on the AGO website by December 31, 2022, the AGO will rely on the agency's good-faith attestation as to whether its policy is consistent with the AGO model policy, and trust this analysis will be conducted by the head of the agency in consultation with its legal counsel. The law does not define "consistent" in this context. Agencies should rely on the commonly understood definition. In terms of guidance, the AGO offers the following: a policy need not be identical to the AGO model policy to be consistent with it; however, it should be substantially similar and free from significant deviations.*

Stay Safe- Steve