



Kentucky Judicial Commission on **MENTAL HEALTH**

White Paper

Promoting Police Deflection
Programs Utilizing the Use of
Embedded Police Social Workers/
Social Service Professionals
Prearrest/ Diversion Workgroup

Executive Summary

This white paper explores the integration of law enforcement-based deflection programs with embedded police social workers/social service professionals in Kentucky, detailing their role in enhancing community safety, improving behavioral health outcomes, and increasing the efficiency of the criminal justice system. This paper outlines the different types, functions, and benefits while proposing strategies to develop buy-in and viable funding strategies for these positions.

Introduction

Popular media often portray law enforcement as a high-intensity profession focused on crime-fighting, including pursuits, arrests, and investigations. However, research presents a different reality. According to Rhodes, Geyton, and Ost (2023), approximately 80% of police work involves social welfare services, while crime control and prevention account for only 20% of officers' duties. This "80/20 rule" underscores that law enforcement is primarily service-oriented rather than crime-focused (Patterson, *Police Social Work: A Unique Area of Practice Arising from Police Function*). Despite this, national police training continues to emphasize crime control and prevention (Cordner, 2019; Hsieh et al., 2012).

Recognizing the necessity for innovative approaches to address the diverse social challenges faced by law enforcement officers—challenges that extend beyond traditional crime-fighting roles, such as mental health crises, substance use, homelessness, victimization, and other social welfare needs—many communities have begun integrating social workers/social service professionals into law enforcement. These collaborative efforts foster the development of police deflection programs, which are proactive strategies aimed at enhancing public safety and community well-being by addressing the underlying causes of social service needs.

Police deflection programs are strategic initiatives where law enforcement officers refer individuals facing behavioral health challenges—such as substance use or mental health issues—to community-based treatment services, instead of processing them through the criminal justice system. This prearrest diversion approach aims to provide critical care before individuals reach a crisis point, thereby reducing substance abuse, preventing unnecessary criminal justice involvement, and improving community relations. As noted in *Police Chief Magazine* (2025), "Deflection is designed for those individuals whose behavioral health challenges have placed them at repeated risk of chronic exposure to the behavioral health or criminal justice system."

Social workers and other social service professionals embedded within law enforcement play a crucial role in deflection programs, particularly during crises that could otherwise lead individuals into the criminal justice system. These initiatives align with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) guidelines and the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM), which identifies critical points for intervention to divert individuals with mental health and substance use disorders from punitive measures and into appropriate care. By prioritizing treatment over arrest and incarceration, such programs advocate for a more rehabilitative and preventative approach to public safety. According to the study *A Multi-Site Evaluation of Law Enforcement Deflection in the United States* (RAND Corporation, 2023), deflection programs have been linked to reductions in drug-related deaths and overdoses.

Social workers/social service professionals embedded in police departments address behavioral health crises, mental health disorders, victim services, substance use, and other social services calls for service, ensuring individuals receive necessary treatment, resources, support, and services. Research indicates that police social work increases social service utilization, reduces recurring crises, and alleviates pressure on both the justice and healthcare systems (Droubie, *Police Social Work: Potential Collaborative Responses to Crisis Situations*). Furthermore, partnerships between

police and social workers have been shown to lower arrest rates and reduce time spent on the scene (Shapiro et al., 2015, *Co-Responding Police-Mental Health Programs: A Review*).

Beyond benefiting the community, integrating social workers/social service professionals into law enforcement provides significant internal advantages for officers. By handling calls related to mental health crises, the unsheltered, aging population, victims of crime, and substance use, social workers reduce officers' call volume, allowing them to focus on core crime-fighting responsibilities. This shift not only enhances operational efficiency but also helps mitigate the emotional and psychological toll officers face from repeated exposure to traumatic incidents. By alleviating this burden, social workers contribute to reduced secondary trauma, improved job satisfaction, and overall well-being among officers.

Ultimately, embedding social workers/social service professionals in law enforcement represents a broader vision—one that not only responds to crises but also addresses their root causes. By prioritizing mental health, substance use, the unsheltered, victimization, and other social services, this approach fosters a more compassionate and effective public safety system. Strengthening collaboration between law enforcement, social services, and behavioral health professionals creates a sustainable and impactful model that enhances both public safety and individual well-being while supporting officers on the front lines.

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Kentucky’s Law Enforcement Deflection Programs: The Role of Embedded Social Workers and Social Service Professionals

Law enforcement deflection programs in Kentucky led by embedded police social workers/social service professionals are rapidly emerging as effective strategies to enhance public safety and community well-being. These initiatives integrate social workers/social service professionals within law enforcement agencies to provide immediate support to individuals facing mental health crises, substance use disorders, or other social challenges. By diverting individuals away from the criminal justice system and toward appropriate treatment and resources, deflection programs have demonstrated promising outcomes, including reduced arrests, lower recidivism rates, and improved access to social services. As communities seek alternatives to traditional policing, these programs are proving to be valuable tools in fostering public trust and addressing the root causes of crime and crises.

Kentucky law enforcement agencies are increasingly incorporating social workers/social service professionals into their operations to address issues such as substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, and victimization. These programs vary in structure, funding, and scope, with many initially supported by grants before transitioning to local government funding for long-term sustainability.

While some embedded professionals meet the formal qualifications to be considered "Police Social Workers," others hold different titles and credentials. The title "social worker" is legally protected in Kentucky. According to the Association of Social Work Boards (2022), individuals can only identify as social workers if they hold a bachelor’s or master’s degree in social work from a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)-accredited program and possess the appropriate state licensure, which is referred to as title protection. Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) 335.030 prohibits unlicensed social work practice and using social work titles, unless they are licensed in the state as certification as a Certified Social Worker (CSW), Licensed Social Worker (LSW), or Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) (201 KAR 23:060, n.d.).

Professionals working in Kentucky’s law enforcement deflection programs hold a variety of titles, including Victim Service Specialist, Victim Advocate, Community Resource Coordinator, Social Service Coordinator, Community Policing Advocate, and Community Resource Supervisor. These individuals play a crucial role in bridging the gap between law enforcement and community services, helping individuals access resources while reducing unnecessary involvement in the criminal justice system.

Funding and Program Scope

The structure and scope of social worker/social service professional led deflection programs in Kentucky law enforcement agencies are largely shaped by their funding sources, each of which comes with specific requirements that limit services to particular populations. For example:

- [Victims of Crime Act \(VOCA\)](#) and [OVC-Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services \(LEV\) grants](#) restrict services to crime victims.
- [Kentucky Community Crisis Co-Response \(CCCR\) Grant Program](#) focuses exclusively on individuals experiencing mental health crises and supports only mental health co-response models.
- [Kentucky Opioid Abatement funds](#) and the [BJA-Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program \(COSSAP\)](#) limit assistance to individuals struggling with substance use and substance use disorders.

Despite these restrictions, grant funding plays a crucial role in establishing and sustaining these programs by generating outcomes and data that support their long-term viability. A key trend has emerged: once launched with grant funding, many of these programs gain strong support from law enforcement agencies and local communities. This often leads to a transition from short-term grant funding to sustained financial backing from local governments.

When funded through local governments, these programs increasingly expand their services to address a broader range of social service needs. This evolution enhances their impact on public safety and community well-being, reinforcing the value of integrating social services into law enforcement responses.

Landscape of Kentucky Law Enforcement Deflection Programs with Embedded Police Social Workers/Social Service Professionals

Kentucky has a growing landscape of law enforcement deflection programs that integrate embedded police social workers/social service professionals to address a wide range of social service needs. As of 2025, at least 18 police departments operate programs serving all social service populations, including individuals affected by substance use, homelessness, mental health crises, and crime victimization. These programs employ social workers/social service professionals with various credentials, including MSW, BSW, LCSW, and CSW. Additionally, 2 police departments have specialized programs focused on specific populations, such as domestic violence victims, individuals in mental health crises, and post-overdose response efforts. Several other departments are preparing to launch similar initiatives. This expansion reflects Kentucky's commitment to integrating social work into policing to provide comprehensive support for vulnerable populations.

- A. Programs that provide services to all social service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services:

1. Alexandria Police Department

- a. Launch Date: July 2016
- b. Personnel:
 - i. Kelly Pompilio, MSSW, Police Social Worker
 Office: 859-635-4126
 kpompilio@alexandriaky.gov
- c. Focus: all service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services.

2. Erlanger Police Department

- a. Launch Date: January 2018
- b. Personnel:
 - i. Maryann Moore, Social Service Coordinator
 Office: 859-727-7968
 Maryann.moore@erlangerpd.com
- c. Focus: all service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services.

3. Berea Police Department

- a. Launch Date: September 2019
- b. Personnel:
 - i. Zinnia Hensley, MSW, Social Service/Community Resource Coordinator
 Office: 859-986-8456
 zhensley@bereaky.gov

- c. Focus: all service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services.

4. Jeffersontown Police Department

- a. Launch Date: February 2020
- b. Personnel:
 - i. Amanda Chapman, MSSW, LCSW, Community Resource Supervisor
 Office: 502-267-0503 ext. 399
 achapman@jtownkypd.org
 - ii. Vacant Community Resource Coordinator
 Office: 502-267-0503 ext. 398
 reach@jtownkypd.org
 - iii. Stacie Jones, BSW, Victim Service Specialist
 Office: 502-267-0503 ext. 397
 sjones@jtownkypd.org
 - iv. Luke, Therapy Comfort K9
- c. Focus: REACH provides comprehensive support to all service populations, including individuals affected by substance use, homelessness, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services. The program serves as the chair of the Louisville Situation Table—a hub-based model that facilitates coordinated, collaborative responses for individuals at elevated risk.

In addition, REACH leads a post-overdose response initiative, conducts hotspot analysis, outreach, and engages in prevention activities. The program also offers both internal and external training and has developed a robust internal wellness program to support the well-being of departmental staff.

5. Frankfort Police Department

- a. Launch Date: December 2021
- b. Personnel:
 - i. Shelley Hearn, Community Policing Advocate
 Office: 502-352-2045
 Shearn@frankfort.ky.gov
 - ii. Tricia Hamilton, Community Policing Advocate
 Office: 502-352-2045
 thamilton@frankfort.ky.gov
- c. Focus: all service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services.

6. Campbell County Police Department

- a. Launch Date: June 2021
- b. Personnel:
 - i. Laurie Wilson, Police Social Work Supervisor
 Office: 859-547-3146
 lwilson@campbellcountky.gov
 - ii. Rebecca “Becca” Williams, Police Social Worker
 Office: 859-547-3141
 rwilliams@campbellcountky.gov

- iii. Felicia Ford, Police Social Worker
 -  Office: 859-547-3162
 -  fford@campbellcountyky.gov
 - iv. Ashley “Nikki” Best, Police Social Worker (CCPD: serving Dayton & Bellevue PD)
 -  Office: 859-547-3103
 -  abest@campbellcountyky.gov
 - c. Focus: all service populations, including those affected by substance use, homelessness, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services.
- 7. Highland Heights Police Department**
 - a. Launch Date: June 2021
 - b. Personnel:
 - i. Angie Weinel, MSSW, Police Social Worker
 -  Office: 859-441-8956
 -  aweinel@hhky.com
 - c. Focus: all service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services.
- 8. St. Matthews Police Department**
 - a. Launch Date: December 2021
 - b. Personnel:
 - i. Carolyn Estep-Book, CADIC, ABA, Victim Services Specialist
 -  Office: 502-791-9965
 -  Carolyn.estep@stmatthewsky.gov
 - c. Focus: All service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, crime victimizations, and others in need of social services. The embedded social service professional serves as a member of the agency's hostage negotiation team
- 9. Versailles Police Department**
 - a. Launch Date: January 2023
 - b. Personnel:
 - i. Ellie Castle, Victim Advocate
 -  Mobile: 859-537-8960
 -  ecastle@versaillesky.com
 - c. Focus: all service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services.
- 10. Richmond Police Department**
 - a. Launch Date: April 2023
 - b. Personnel:
 - i. 1. Suzanne Howell, BA Victim Services/Community Outreach Coordinator
 -  Office: 859-358-4546
 -  thowell@richmond.ky.us
 - c. Focus: all service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services.

11. Bardstown Police Department

- a. Launch Date: September 2023
- b. Personnel:
 - i. Olivia Raley, MSSW, Social Service Specialist
 Mobile: 502-291-5766
 Olivia.rale@bardstownky.gov
 - ii. Maverick, Therapy K9
- c. Focus: all service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services.

12. Elizabethtown Police Department

- a. Launch Date: November 2023
- b. Personnel:
 - i. Anesha Knott, BSN, RN, SANE, Victim Services Specialist
 Office: 270-765-4125 ext. 149
 Anesha.knott@elizabethtownky.gov
 - ii. Sofie, Therapy K9
- c. Focus: All service populations, including those affected by crime victimization, substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, people impacted by suicide, people impacted by death investigations, and others in need of social services.

13. Nicholasville Police Department

- a. Launch Date: March 2024
- b. Personnel:
 - i. Jackie Hisel, MSSW, CSW, Police Social Worker
 Office: 859-885-9467 ext. 0607
 Jackie.hisel@nicholasville.org
 - ii. Samantha Potter, BS PSY, Victim's Advocate
 Office: 859-885-9467 ext. 0609
 Samantha.potter@nicholasville.org
 - iii. Jessie, Comfort K9
- c. Focus: All service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services.

14. Maysville Police Department

- a. Launch Date: July 2024
- b. Personnel:
 - i. Ashley Messer, BSW, LSW, Police Social Worker
 Mobile: 606-375-5975
 Ashleymesser@cityofmaysvilleky.gov
- c. Focus: all service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services. MPD also operates a Crisis Response Unit by utilizing the PSW and a CIT-trained officer or supervisor; this unit responds to a variety of calls, as determined by policy created through the PSAP.

15. Boone County Sheriff's Office

- a. Launch Date: July 2024
- b. Personnel:

- i. Chelsea Chorley, Police Social Worker
 Office: 859-334-3215
 cchorley@boonecountyky.org
- ii. Jared Owens, Police Social Worker
 Office: 859-334-3643
 jowens@boonecountyky.org
- iii. Megan Green, CSW, LSW, M.S., Police Social Worker
 Office: 859-334-3214
 mgreen@boonecountyky.org
- c. Focus: all service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services.

16. Cynthiana Police Department

- a. Launch Date: July 2024
- b. Personnel:
 - i. Caity Coffey, Police Social Worker
 Office: 859-234-7157
 caity.coffey@cynthianaky.gov
- c. Focus: The Cynthiana Police Department operates a Co-Response Unit dedicated to serving a wide range of community needs. In addition to responding to mental health crises, the unit provides support to victims of crime and domestic violence, offers post-overdose outreach, and assists individuals experiencing homelessness. They work with vulnerable populations, including children and families, to address barriers to well-being such as employment and access to essential services. Through close collaboration with community partners and stakeholders, they strive to ensure that all residents have access to necessary resources.

17. Independence Police Department

- a. Launch Date: January 2025
- b. Personnel:
 - i. Taylor Graham, MSW, Police Social Worker
 Office: 859-363-2943
 TGraham@cityofindependence.org
- c. Focus: all service populations, including those affected by substance use, unsheltered, mental health crises, crime victimization, and others in need of social services.

18. Newport Police Department

- a. Launch Date: May 2025
- b. Personnel:
 - i. Skylar Fox, MSW, Police Social Worker
 Office: 859-292-3681
 Sfox@police.newportky.gov
- c. Focus: all service populations, including those affected by substance use, victims of crime, unsheltered, mental health crises, suicide, aging, and others in need of social services.

B. Police Departments Serving Specific Populations

These programs provide social services to specific populations, such as crime victimization, mental health crises, or other targeted groups, but not all social service types:

1. Wilmore Police Department
2. Launch Date: July 2024
3. Personnel:
 - a. Bethany Parsons, Administrative Assistant/Victim's Advocate
 -  Office: 859-858-8955
 -  bparsons@wilmore.org
 - b. Focus: Mental health crisis, victims of crime
4. Shelbyville Police Department
 - a. Launch Date: November 2024
 - b. Personnel:
 - i. Brittany Quire, Victim's Advocate
 -  Office: 502-633-2326 ext. 1204
 -  bquire@shelbyvillekypd.com
 - c. Focus: Victims of crime, post-overdose response

C. Upcoming Launches

Several police departments plan to launch their social service programs in the coming months. Details regarding the structure and services provided remain unclear at this time:

- Dayton Police Department
- Bellevue Police Department

Law Enforcement Based Victim Services

Law enforcement-based victim services and police social worker/social service professional-led deflection programs share some common ground but fulfill distinct roles within the criminal justice system.

Victim services units are designed specifically to support and assist victims and witnesses of crime. These programs prioritize helping individuals navigate the aftermath of a crime with compassion and care. In contrast, deflection programs, typically led by police social workers or social service professionals, aim to divert individuals away from the criminal justice system—especially those experiencing mental health challenges, substance use disorders, homelessness, or other social service-related issues.

In Kentucky, it's common for social workers/social service professionals who lead police deflection efforts to also oversee or collaborate with victim services programs. This overlap allows for a more integrated, community-centered approach to care and support.

Law enforcement-based victim services professionals play a vital role in the community by providing compassionate, trauma-informed support. Their involvement ensures that victims have immediate access to critical resources, such as safety planning and emotional care, which can ease the psychological toll of their experiences. By being embedded within law enforcement, these services foster a seamless connection between victims and the justice system, helping build trust and cooperation. This holistic, integrated approach strengthens communities by ensuring that victims are heard, supported, and empowered to rebuild their lives with dignity and hope. Furthermore, law enforcement-based victim services professionals ensure that victims are treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity throughout their involvement with the criminal justice system. These services are offered at no cost and address the emotional, physical, and financial needs of victims. Support services include crisis intervention, information on victims' rights, safety planning, explanation of the protective order process and the criminal court process, court accompaniment, emergency resources and referrals, transportation assistance, advance notification of release, coordination of interpreter and translation services, assistance with filing victim compensation claims, intervention with employers, academic institutions, creditors, service providers, and landlords, and therapy dog services. Victim services professionals support individuals affected by a wide range of crimes, including arson, assault, burglary, child physical and sexual abuse, cold cases, criminal traffic incidents, domestic violence, elder abuse, homicide, human trafficking, non-fatal shootings, robbery, and sexual assault.

Victims are also informed of their rights under Kentucky's Crime Victim Bill of Rights, including protections, financial assistance, and updates about the accused. Services like Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) provide real-time updates on matters such as an incarcerated person's release or parole eligibility, helping victims stay informed and empowered.

Key Differences

Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services

- Focus: Supporting victims of crime.
- Primary Role: Victim advocates assist individuals who have experienced trauma due to a crime by offering emotional support, crisis intervention, safety planning, and guidance through the legal system.
- Who Provides Services? Specially trained victim advocates, who may be civilians embedded within a police department or independently funded through grants.
- Goals: Ensure victims understand their rights, connect them to resources (such as counseling, shelter, or compensation programs), and help them navigate the aftermath of a crime.
- Example Services: Domestic violence support, help filing protective orders, assisting with victim compensation applications, and court accompaniment.

Police Social Work Deflection Programs

- Focus: Diverting individuals from the criminal justice system, particularly those struggling with mental health issues, substance use, homelessness, or other social service-related needs.
- Primary Role: Instead of arresting individuals for low-level offenses, officers connect them with social services, treatment programs, or crisis intervention teams.
- Who Provides Services? Social workers who are embedded within police departments or community-based crisis response teams.
- Goals: Reduce unnecessary arrests and incarceration, address root causes of crime and crisis, and connect individuals with long-term services.
- Example Programs: Mental health crisis intervention, substance use diversion (e.g., LEAD—Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion), and co-responder models where social workers accompany officers on calls.

Both programs enhance community safety and well-being, but victim services focus on supporting those harmed by crime, while deflection programs work to prevent further harm by addressing the needs of at-risk individuals before they become involved in the justice system. Many social work/social service-led deflection programs in Kentucky also operate a law enforcement-based victim service program.

Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services in Kentucky

1. Bowling Green Police Department – Victim Advocacy Unit, the Bowling Green Police Department's Victim Advocacy Unit provides direct services to all victims of crime and their non-offending family members, with a specific emphasis on child abuse victims.
 - a. Launch Date: 1993
 - b. Personnel: 1 full-time social service provider, and 1 part-time social service provider made possible through a cooperative agreement with a local domestic violence program/shelter (BRASS) to place a domestic violence advocate at the department two days a week.
 - c. Point of Contact:
 - i. April Fulcher, Victim's Advocate
 Office: 270-393-4595
 april.fulcher@bgky.org
 - d. Focus: Victims of Crime
2. Lexington Metro Police Department – The Lexington Metro Police Department's Victim Advocacy Program provides services to victims of various crimes, with an emphasis on supporting those impacted by domestic violence, sexual assault, and interpersonal violence. Services include support for victims of dating violence, sexual assault, interpersonal violence, firearm-related crimes, child abuse, and any felony-related crime. The program also addresses overdose deaths by offering counseling, connecting individuals to city support services, and hosting a support group for families impacted by gun violence.
 - a. Launch Date: 2007
 - b. Personnel: 4 victim advocates within the program, all employed by the Lexington/Fayette Government.
 - c. 11 rape crisis counselors from the Sexual Violence Resource Center (formerly Bluegrass Rape Crisis Center)
 - i. Cornetta Harris, Victim's Advocate (case worker from Bluegrass New Vista, specializing in mental health)
 Office: 859-258-3835
 charris2@lexingtonpolice.ky.gov
 - ii. Leticia Hagerman, Victim's Advocate (Bluegrass rape crisis center)
 Office: 859-258-3768
 lhagerman@lexingtonpolice.ky.gov
 - iii. Robin Anderson, Victim's Advocate (Commonwealth Attorney's office)
 Office: 859-258-3783
 randerson@lexingtonpolice.ky.gov
 - iv. Marisol Contreras. Victim's Advocate/Bilingual Advocate
 Office: 859-258-3469
 mcontreas@lexingtonpolice.ky.gov
 - d. Qualifications: Experience-based; bachelor's degree in a related field required.
 - e. Focus: Victims of crime
3. Fayette County Sheriff – Victim Advocacy Program provides a wide range of supportive services for crime victims, focusing on ensuring victims have access to the

- resources they need. Advocates connect victims to resources, provide accompaniment to court, monitor respondents when ordered to treatment, provide transportation through a ride share program for doctors, job interviews, work, etc. for victims when transportation was lost due to victimization, Ring cameras, locks on doors windows and work with local locksmiths to change locks, Safety planning – deputy on staff that works solely with petitioners.
- a. Launch Date: October 2012
 - b. Personnel: 6 advocates in total, and advocates hold at least a bachelor's degree in social work or a related field. 1 Lieutenant, 1 Sergeant, and several other deputies are assigned to work with the victim advocacy team.
 - c. Point of Contact:
 - i. Crystal Happy-Clay, MSW, Director of Amanda's Center & Victim Services, Domestic Violence Intake Center
 Phone: 859-252-1771
 chappy@FayetteSheriff.com
4. Louisville Metro Police Department – Victim Services Unit provides critical services to victims of crime, as well as to people impacted by suicide and death. The Unit employs people with varying backgrounds in education and social services experience. The Victim Services Unit is the largest in the state of Kentucky, with 19 victim services professionals, and 8 additional positions were requested in the FY26 budget to enhance the unit's capacity to serve the community and to build a Spanish-speaking section of the unit.
- a. Launch Date: 2016
 - b. Personnel: (19 Victim Services Professionals to include 5 Victim Services Specialists Is, 8 Victim Services Specialists IIs, 3 Victim Services Supervisors, 1 Paid Intern, 1 Therapy dog, and 1 Director).
 - c. Point of Contact:
 - i. Nicole Carroll, M.S., Director, Victim Services Unit
 Office: 502-574-1264
 Nicole.Carroll@louisvilleky.gov
 - d. Focus: Victims of crime and people impacted by suicide and death
5. Georgetown Police Department – The Georgetown Police Department has an embedded social worker focused on providing services to victims of crime, their family members, and survivors of suicide loss.
- a. Launch Date: 2017
 - b. Personnel:
 - i. Lyndsay Deaver, MSW, CSW, Victims Advocate
 Office: 502-863-7826
 Lyndsay.deaver@georgetownpolice.org
 - c. Focus: Victims of crime and suicide prevention
6. Kentucky State Police – Victim Advocacy and Support Services (VASS)
The program offers victim advocacy and support services to individuals involved in Kentucky State Police (KSP) investigations who have been impacted by crime or related circumstances across the 16 KSP posts. It also provides placement services for the Angel Initiative and facilitates updates for the Handle with Care program.

- a. Launch Date: 2019
 - b. Personnel: 10 victim service providers. They require a bachelor's degree in human services or a related field, or 5 years of experience in victim services.
 - c. Point of Contact:
 - i. Danielle Perkins, M.A., Justice Program Administrator, Victim Advocacy & Support Services, Angel Initiative, and Handle with Care
 Phone: 502-782-1846
 Danielle.perkins@ky.gov
(Can also contact [KSP Posts](#) for services)
 - d. Focus: Victims of Crime and other related circumstances, Angel Initiative, Handle with Care
7. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has a Victim Services Division with staff spread across the USA.
Kentucky has two Victim Specialist serving victims of federal crime throughout Kentucky primarily based in Louisville and Lexington.
- a. Launch Date: 2001
 - b. Requirements: Bachelor's degree from a U.S. accredited college/university in a social or behavioral science discipline. Possess specialized experience in victim assistance to include the following: provide direct assistance to victims of crime within a law enforcement, prosecution, psychology, social work, and/or victim services environment for a minimum of 3 years. Worked within a law enforcement or victim services agency to assess, triage, and provide crisis intervention and assistance to victims at the time they suffered harm as a result to violent crime. Performed direct client services and/or program development functions. Please see www.FBIJobs.gov for more information on hiring and employment disqualifiers.
 - c. Personnel:
 - i. Stacey Sanders, Victim Specialist: Victim Services Division, FBI-Louisville HQ / Owensboro, Bowling Green, Hopkinsville, and Paducah RA's
 Office: (771) 226-7492
 Sasanders@fbi.gov
 - ii. Cassie Wilde, CSW Victim Specialist, FBI-Louisville, KY/Lexington, London, Covington & Pikeville RA's
 Office: 771-226-7650
 CNWILDE@FBI.GOV
 - d. Focus: Victim Specialist work directly with FBI Special Agents and serve as the critical link to ensure that victims of crimes investigated by the FBI are provided their rights and are connected to necessary/critical support, services, and resources.
8. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) – Victim Assistance Program (VAP). The Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Victim Assistance Program (VAP) supports criminal investigations by ensuring victims of federal crimes—such as human trafficking, child exploitation, financial scams, and human rights abuses—receive the rights and services they are entitled to by law. The VAP provides forensic interview support, case consultation, training, and technical assistance to HSI special agents. It also helps victims engage with the justice system and connects them with local resources throughout the investigation and prosecution process. Additionally, the

program ensures compliance with federal victim assistance laws and develops policies related to victim support.

- a. Coverage: Kentucky (and Tennessee, if needed)
- b. Personnel: 2 Victim Assistance Specialists (VAPS) in ASAC Louisville
 - i. Alicia Parham, HSI Victim Assistance Program Specialist
 - ☎ Office: 502-520-9282
 - ✉ Alicia.Parham@hsi.dhs.gov
 - ii. Annisha Dunaway, LCSW, HSI Victim Assistance Program Specialist
 - ☎ Mobile: 808-865-1394
 - ✉ Annisha.Dunaway@hsi.dhs.gov
- c. Focus: Victims of human trafficking, child exploitation, financial scams, white-collar crime, and human rights abuses

In summary

Kentucky law enforcement agencies continue to expand their embedded social service deflection programs, addressing critical needs such as victim advocacy, mental health crisis response, substance use intervention, and unsheltered individuals by offering support and other social service needs, typically on a 24/7 on-call response. These programs, often initiated through grants, have gained strong community and law enforcement support, paving the way for long-term sustainability and service expansion.

Why Social Workers/Social Service Professionals?

Social work professionals have long been integral to society, providing essential support across a wide range of settings, including schools, hospitals, mental health clinics, senior centers, courts, and military environments. In recent years, their expertise has become increasingly vital within local law enforcement agencies.

Social workers are guided by evidence-based practices, employing scientifically validated strategies to assist individuals in crisis and foster sustainable, positive outcomes. Their specialized knowledge, acquired through advanced degrees from accredited universities, equips them to address a broad spectrum of complex social issues. Much like law enforcement professionals, social workers adhere to a Code of Ethics, which ensures the highest standards of professionalism, accountability, and respect for human dignity—values that align closely with the ethical principles upheld in law enforcement. Furthermore, social workers adopt a systemic approach to problem-solving, identifying and addressing broader societal challenges within communities, organizations, and policies. In collaboration with law enforcement and other community partners, they contribute to meaningful changes in public safety, mental health, and community well-being.

By working alongside law enforcement, social workers bring a unique perspective to crisis management, providing valuable insights into the behavioral health issues that often underpin interactions with the justice system. Their expertise is crucial in improving crisis response, addressing the root causes of behavioral health challenges, and offering viable alternatives to traditional criminal justice measures.

Social workers/social service professionals with experience in social work play a pivotal role within law enforcement agencies. Their contributions are essential in advancing the goals of public safety, behavioral health, and social justice, strengthening Kentucky's law enforcement systems, and ensuring more effective, compassionate responses to community needs.

Embedded Police Social Worker/Social Services Professionals' Role in Law Enforcement

Responsibilities

- **Crisis Intervention:** Police social workers/social service professionals respond to emergency calls involving victims of crime, individuals with behavioral health issues, substance use, and vulnerable populations, working alongside officers to de-escalate situations and provide immediate support.
- **Assessment and Referral:** They conduct on-scene assessments and refer individuals to community resources such as mental health services, housing, and substance use treatment. Police social workers/social service professionals advocate for clients' rights, their right to self-determination and assist them in accessing necessary services.
- **Follow-Up Services:** Police social workers/social service professionals provide follow-up support to ensure individuals connect with recommended services, reducing repeated incidents.
- **Support for Victims and Families:** Police Social Workers/social service professionals assist victims by providing referrals, court accompaniment, help with filing for crime victim compensation, safety planning, and understanding the criminal justice process. Police Social workers also support victims in remaining engaged in legal proceedings, improving case outcomes.
- **Service Navigation:** Police social workers/social service professionals connect individuals with appropriate services and collaborate with community organizations to eliminate barriers, resulting in improved outcomes and fewer repeated calls for service.
- **Professional Identity:** Police social workers/social service professionals play a critical role in supporting individuals, families, and communities, both internally within the department and externally in the broader community. They focus on prevention efforts and assist individuals in navigating the daily challenges they face, with the ultimate goal of improving lives. Police social workers operate in the ethical framework provided by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics, which emphasizes six core values: service, social justice, the dignity and worth of every person, the importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (National Association of Social Workers, 2021). Police social workers aim to amplify the voices of marginalized individuals, provide essential support, empower underserved populations, and offer tools and resources that help both individuals and communities achieve better outcomes.

Prevention

- **Early Intervention:** Social workers/social service professionals identify at-risk individuals and connect them with resources to address underlying issues like substance use or mental health, helping to prevent criminal behavior before it escalates.
- **Recidivism Prevention:** By providing case management and rehabilitation support, they help individuals reintegrate into society and reduce repeat offenses.
- **Mental Health Crisis Intervention:** Trained to address mental health crises with de-escalation techniques, social workers prevent situations from escalating into criminal behavior.

- **Community Education:** They lead workshops on domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse, and conflict resolution, helping prevent these issues through public education.
- **Collaboration with Service Providers:** By connecting individuals to mental health, housing, and addiction services, social workers help reduce crime driven by unmet needs.
- **Support for Families and Communities:** Through family counseling and community-based initiatives, they prevent issues like domestic violence, mental health crisis, homelessness, and substance use, strengthening community resilience.
- **Deflection Programs:** Embedded police social workers/social service professionals develop alternatives to incarceration, such as counseling and treatment, addressing underlying issues rather than resorting to punitive measures, which reduces recidivism.

Community Engagement

- **Event Participation:** Embedded police social workers/social service professionals host informational tables at community events, educating the public on available services and topics such as mental health and the criminal justice process.
- **Training and Presentations:** They facilitate training for both law enforcement and the community on mental health, trauma-informed care, and domestic violence prevention, enhancing community understanding and collaboration.
- **Service Provider Engagement:** Embedded police social workers/social service professionals serve as liaisons between law enforcement and community providers, ensuring individuals receive appropriate care
- **Support for National Campaigns:** They participate in campaigns like National Drug Take-Back Day, National Police Night Out, and National Victims' Rights Week, promoting awareness and facilitating open dialogue on public health and safety issues.
- **Building Trust:** Through community engagement and transparent efforts, social workers help demystify law enforcement, fostering trust and cooperation between police and the public.

In summary, a police deflection program with embedded police social workers/social service professionals enhances law enforcement by providing crisis intervention, connecting individuals to resources, preventing crime through early intervention, and strengthening community ties through education and support. Their work promotes a holistic, proactive approach to public safety, reducing crime and improving outcomes for individuals and communities.

Kentucky Law Enforcement Embedded social work/social service Deflection Programs - Pathway Components

The majority of Kentucky law enforcement social work/social services embedded deflection programs adopt a multi-pathway approach to service delivery, ensuring that individuals have multiple access points to support, thereby establishing a "no wrong door" model. Many of these programs operate on a 24/7 on-scene response model, providing immediate and continuous access to services. This approach is designed to reduce crises and divert individuals from the criminal justice system, promoting more effective and supportive interventions.

1. Deflection Models/Pathways to Services

- a. *Self-Referral/First Responder Referral (Angel Program)*: In this pathway an individual and/or family walks into the station and requests assistance.
- b. *Incident-Based/Active Outreach*: In this pathway, an incident has occurred and there is a police report. The embedded police social workers/social service professionals review the reports, identify cases they can assist with, and then attempt to contact that client within 72 hours.
- c. *Post Overdose Outreach*: This pathway is based on the Quick Response Team (QRT) model. In this pathway, when a person experiences accidental drug poisoning, a team attempts to make contact within 72hrs. This team may include a plain-clothed officer, embedded police social workers/social service professionals, peer support, treatment service provider, and/or a combination of these members. The team helps in accessing services and harm reduction tools.
- d. *Officer Intervention (Pre-Arrest Diversion)*: is a proactive approach in law enforcement where officers refer individuals to a diversion program before making an arrest. This pathway involves officers using their discretion to intervene early in the process, directing individuals toward community-based resources, treatment programs, or support services. By diverting cases away from arrest and prosecution, the goal is to reduce the number of people incarcerated, improve outcomes for individuals, and promote rehabilitation over punishment. These programs often involve collaboration with mental health professionals, embedded police social workers/social service professionals internal and/or external, and other community organizations to offer a comprehensive, rehabilitative response.
- e. *Hub Situation Tables*: This model was created by the Global Network for Community Safety, based in Canada. It focuses on enhancing community safety and well-being through collaboration. This approach facilitates multi-agency collaboration and intervention for individuals and families facing a wide range of risk factors, ensuring timely support and connection to services. This approach incorporates a rapid intervention strategy, providing support within 24-48 hours to mitigate acute risks and focuses on connecting individuals and families with essential services. The table brings human services professionals together to discuss and provide solutions and helps prevent people from falling through the cracks in the system. Currently, 10 hub situation tables are located throughout the state.
- f. *Co-Response Model* is a collaborative approach in law enforcement wherein departments partner with mental health professionals, including psychologists, police social workers/social service professionals, and counselors, to address incidents involving individuals experiencing mental health crises or behavioral

health emergencies. This model combines the expertise of both fields to deliver more comprehensive support to those in need, while also prioritizing public safety. Typically, police agencies implement this model through formal contracts or Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to establish a structured framework for collaboration and service delivery.

- g. *Hot Spot Analysis Outreach* refers to a strategic approach where law enforcement and police social workers/social service professionals use data analysis to identify high-risk or high-incident areas, known as "hot spots," in a community. The goal is to allocate resources and conduct targeted interventions in these areas to address the identified areas of need and reduce calls for service to improve public safety. The outreach component typically involves collaborating with local community members, organizations, and businesses to address the root causes, build trust, and create preventative measures. This can include community meetings, prevention activities, the distribution of harm reduction tools, and information-sharing to foster a partnership between the police and the community for lasting safety improvements.

General Case Service Outline

1. Referral from a pathway is received
2. Collaborate/consult with lead Detective/Investigator/Patrol
3. Identify the type(s) of social concerns
4. Contact the client within 72 hours
5. Conduct initial assessment
6. Engage in direct services to stabilize
7. Document services
8. Transition client (warm handoff)
9. Case Reporting (data collection)
10. Case Closure
11. Review/Audit/Storage

Benefits of Embedded Police Social Workers/Social Service Professionals to Communities and Law Enforcement Agencies

Improved Public Safety

- **Reduction in Use of Force:** The integration of embedded police social workers or social service professionals into law enforcement teams has proven effective in reducing the need for physical force during crises. These professionals bring valuable expertise in de-escalation and mental health interventions, which foster safer interactions and more positive outcomes for individuals in distress, officers, and the community. Co-responder models, where social workers collaborate directly with police officers, have been particularly successful in decreasing the use of force. For example, the Mobile Crisis Intervention Team (MCIT) in Sherbrooke, Quebec, not only reduced police use of force but also connected individuals in crisis with community services, thus preventing unnecessary emergency department visits. This model highlights the critical role embedded social workers/social service professionals play in promoting safer, more effective responses to crises (Ghelani, 2022).
- **Deflection from the Criminal Justice System:** Embedded social workers/social service professionals play a crucial role in diverting individuals experiencing crises, such as mental health issues, substance use, or homelessness, from the criminal justice system to appropriate services. This approach addresses the underlying causes of these behaviors, ultimately reducing recidivism. For instance, a case study demonstrated that the embedded police social worker (PSW) model effectively improves resource delivery and diverts individuals in crisis away from the criminal justice system (Ban & Riordan, 2023). By connecting individuals to the necessary treatment and support services, embedded professionals not only reduce the frequency of service calls but also lessen the burden on the justice system. This approach enhances public safety by prioritizing rehabilitation over incarceration and promoting long-term positive outcomes for individuals in crisis.

Internal Benefits

- **Officer Wellness and Reduced Secondary Trauma:** The presence of social workers in law enforcement can significantly alleviate the emotional and psychological strain on officers. By managing behavioral health crises, social workers reduce officers' exposure to traumatic incidents, thereby mitigating secondary trauma and promoting overall officer wellness. Embedded social workers/social service professionals play a crucial role in responding to crises by addressing the root causes of behaviors such as mental health issues or substance use. This intervention not only lowers the frequency of traumatic incidents officers may face but also helps mitigate secondary or vicarious trauma, enhancing the overall well-being of law enforcement personnel (Perry, 2022).
- **Systemic Improvements:** The integration of social workers into law enforcement agencies enhances case management and resource allocation, contributing to greater departmental efficiency. By addressing non-criminal matters, embedded police social workers/social service professionals reduce the workload on officers, allowing them to concentrate on crime prevention and community policing. This integration not only streamlines operations but also improves the overall effectiveness of the department (Perry, 2022).

Enhanced Mental Health Outcomes

- **Timely Intervention:** Embedded social workers/social service professionals play a critical role in providing early intervention during mental health crises, preventing escalation, and fostering better long-term outcomes. Their expertise ensures individuals receive timely, appropriate care, reducing the need for emergency interventions or hospitalizations (Ghelani, 2022).
- **Access to Resources:** Embedded social workers/social service professionals connect individuals with essential mental health services and community-based resources, reducing reliance on emergency services and hospitals. This proactive approach not only enhances individual well-being but also optimizes the allocation of public resources, ensuring that critical services are available for those in need (Ban & Riordan, 2023).

Cost Savings

- **Reduced Incarceration Costs:** Diverting individuals from incarceration to appropriate treatment or social services results in substantial cost savings. Embedded social workers/social service professionals play a key role in facilitating these diversions, promoting cost-effective, rehabilitative alternatives to incarceration (Ban & Riordan, 2023).
- **Efficient Use of Law Enforcement Resources:** By addressing mental health crises and other social issues, embedded police social workers/social service professionals enable law enforcement officers to focus on their core duties, such as crime prevention and ensuring public safety. This strategic use of resources not only enhances departmental productivity but also improves outcomes in community policing (Ban & Riordan, 2023).
- **Reduction in Emergency Room Utilization:** Embedded police social workers/social service Professionals help reduce the overuse of emergency rooms for non-medical issues by connecting individuals to appropriate mental health care and social services. This not only leads to significant cost savings for healthcare systems but also alleviates the strain on emergency services (Perry, 2022).

Strengthened Community Relations

- **Building Trust:** The integration of embedded police social workers/social service professionals fosters a compassionate and supportive approach to policing. By addressing underlying social and mental health issues that contribute to crises, these professionals help build trust between law enforcement and the community, fostering positive relationships and encouraging collaboration (Eastern Connecticut State University, 2021).
- **Holistic Approach to Community Well-being:** Embedded police social workers/social service professionals take a comprehensive approach to enhancing community well-being by addressing social determinants such as housing instability, unemployment, and mental health. By tackling these root causes, they help create sustainable solutions to community challenges, ultimately improving the overall quality of life for residents and strengthening the relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve (Eastern Connecticut State University, 2021).

Kentucky outcomes/program spotlights

1. Alexandria Police Social Work Program

Established in 2016, the Alexandria Police Social Work Program was created to provide comprehensive support to individuals and families experiencing crisis. Recognizing the importance of addressing underlying social issues, the program integrates social workers within law enforcement to connect the community to essential services.

Social workers collaborate with officers to assist those affected by mental health challenges, substance use disorders, domestic conflicts, homelessness, and other social concerns. By offering intervention, referrals, and long-term support, the program enhances public safety while reducing repeat interactions with law enforcement.

Key Achievements

- Over 7,000 individuals and families have been assisted since inception.
- Leads the Northern Kentucky Situation Table, a hub model addressing the needs of over 40 individuals and families.
- Implemented a drug take-back program, collecting over 400 lbs. of unwanted medication.
- Provided dozens of public education initiatives, including Hidden in Plain Sight, social media safety, and senior scam awareness programs.
- Assisted in developing an officer wellness program to support law enforcement personnel.
- Supervised 15+ social work students at the bachelor's and master's levels.

Community & Law Enforcement Impact

The Alexandria Police Social Work Program plays a critical role in bridging the gap between law enforcement and social services. By proactively addressing complex social needs, the program reduces strain on officers, improves community outcomes, and fosters long-term resilience. Through education, intervention, and collaboration, Alexandria continues to set a standard for integrating social work into policing.

2. Jeffersontown Police Department REACH Program

Since its launch in 2020, the Jeffersontown Police Department's REACH Program has provided essential support to over 4,000 individuals and families. Staffed by three social workers/social service professionals, the program has offered critical assistance to more than 2,646 crime victims and 1,478 individuals facing substance use and mental health crises—often compounded by homelessness and other barriers. To date, REACH has delivered more than 14,676 services and made numerous contacts with those in need.

Key Achievements

- Domestic Violence Support: Achieved a 75% success rate in helping victims obtain protection orders.

- Substance Use Intervention: Over 60% of engaged clients accepted recovery support services.

Funding Secured

- Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA): \$193,525 from the COPS Office for a comprehensive wellness program.
- Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program (COSSUP): \$330,715 extension secured in August 2022.
- Kentucky Opioid Abatement Settlement: \$26,811 received in October 2024.
- Walmart SPARK Good Grants: Multiple grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000.
- City Funding & Local Foundation Donations: Ongoing support for program enhancement.

Community Initiatives

- Louisville Situation Table: Leading a collaborative model serving over 50 individuals and families.
- Drug Take-Back Program: Collected over 600 lbs. of unwanted medication, reducing substance abuse risks.
- Narcan Emergency Boxes: Installed 12 permanent boxes and distributed over 300 Narcan kits to prevent opioid overdose deaths.
- REACH Kits: Providing naloxone nasal sprays and recovery resources through officers, fire/EMS personnel, and the REACH unit.

Additional REACH Program Components

- Public Transportation Passes: Limited-use transit passes to access essential services, shelters, resources, and treatment.
- Hotel Assistance: Emergency shelter for crime victims when local shelters are full, funded through donations.
- Victim Relocation Assistance: Financial support for safe relocation, including transportation, moving supplies, and housing costs.
- Crime Scene Cleanup Assistance: Referrals for professional cleanup services, including insurance claim support.
- REACH Care Closet: Providing clothing, hygiene items, baby care essentials, and emergency kits for individuals in crisis.
- 911 Cell Phone Bank Partnership: First in the state to distribute free emergency cell phones with prepaid service, expanding access across Kentucky.

Case Study: Post-Overdose Intervention

A 19-year-old male experienced 12 accidental drug poisonings and required emergency services 18 times within three months. After the 18th call, REACH intervened with four outreach visits in one week, providing emotional support, Narcan, education, and accompaniment to inpatient detox, Vivitrol treatment, and vocational rehabilitation. Since this intervention, over three years ago, there have been no further emergency calls for this individual.

- Estimated emergency response costs: \$12,000
- Cost of REACH intervention: \$700

- Savings: \$11,000+, plus long-term community benefits
- Through early intervention, REACH has significantly reduced high-frequency emergency calls, improving public safety and efficiency.

3. Frankfort Police Department

In December 2021, the Frankfort Police Department hired its first Community Policing Advocate (CPA) to provide a holistic approach to individuals in crisis. This initiative assists individuals and families who frequently interact with law enforcement due to domestic conflicts, homelessness, mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and victimization. The success of the program led to the addition of a second CPA in November 2023, expanding its reach.

Key Achievements

- Over 1,150 individuals and families have been served since inception.
- 432 responses in 2024, averaging 36 responses per month.
- Frankfort Connects (July 2022): Partnered with the 911 Cellphone Bank to provide cell phones to crime victims and vulnerable individuals.
- Quick Response Team – Wings of Hope (August 2023): Assisted 55 individuals with resources and support.
- Situation Table (November 2023): Addressed the needs of 46 individuals and families.

Notable Success Stories

- Domestic Violence & Substance Use Recovery: A female client, once struggling with abuse, addiction, and homelessness, completed treatment, returned to college, secured housing, and is now supporting others in recovery.
- Homelessness & Mental Health Support: A homeless individual with schizophrenia, frequently involved in law enforcement incidents, received housing, mental health services, and benefits, leading to stability.

Financial & Community Impact

By providing early intervention, the CPA program reduces reliance on emergency responders, contributes to a safer community, and strengthens resilience.

4. Berea Police Department

“Zinnia, our police social worker, has made a significant and positive impact on the community by bridging the gap between law enforcement and residents. By offering support, guidance, and resources, she has helped individuals navigate challenging situations such as mental health crises, domestic issues, being unhoused, and even within our department. Her empathetic approach fosters trust, reduces tensions, and promotes a sense of safety and well-being within the community.”

— Chief Hays, personal communication, March 12, 2025

Support for Implementing Programs in Your Area

- [Police Assisted Addiction & Recovery Initiative \(PAARI\)](#) – A nonprofit organization that provides support, training, and networking opportunities to help law enforcement create non-arrest deflection pathways for individuals seeking treatment and recovery from substance use disorders.
- [Kentucky Police Social Work Group](#) – A professional network of Kentucky police social workers/social service professionals that meets to promote collaboration, exchange best practices, share policies and expertise, and offer mutual support for the development and enhancement of police social work programs across the state.
- [International Association of Chiefs of Police \(IACP\) – Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services \(LEV\) Network](#) – Offers guidance in the development of embedded police social workers/social service professionals' victim services programs, providing access to training, sample policies, templates, and expert advice to support program creation.
- [Operations 2 Save Lives \(O2SL\) and Quick Response Team \(QRT\) National](#) – Assist in the training, development, and implementation of Quick Response Teams and/or Hub Situation Tables, aimed at delivering rapid, coordinated intervention for individuals in crisis.

Gaining Departmental and Jurisdictional Buy-In for Police Social Work Programs

- **Present Evidence and Success Stories:** To secure buy-in for a police social work or social service deflection program, begin by sharing compelling evidence from existing programs, both from Kentucky and national case studies. Highlight data showing positive outcomes like improved crisis intervention, reduced recidivism, and enhanced community trust. Use success stories to demonstrate the tangible benefits of integrating social workers into law enforcement, focusing on how they have improved outcomes for individuals in crisis and fostered better relationships between police and the communities they serve.
- **Leverage Grant Funding and Cohort Support:** Securing grant funding is often the first step in implementing a police social work program. Many grant opportunities come with not only financial support but also expert guidance and resources, including technical assistance and access to a cohort of experts who can help with the program's start-up and early phases. This makes it easier for departments to initiate the program, leveraging outside expertise and building momentum without needing to be experts from day one.
- **Engage Stakeholders Early:** Involving key stakeholders—law enforcement leadership, community organizations, elected officials, and other local groups—early in the planning process is critical for securing broad support. A coalition of supporters can advocate for the program, help shape its structure and ensure alignment with community needs. This approach emphasizes collaboration, showing that the program is not a top-down mandate but a joint effort to address shared community goals.
- **Consult with Other Programs and Leaders:** To build confidence and secure buy-in, reach out to law enforcement leaders from jurisdictions that have successfully implemented similar programs. These chiefs and officials can provide valuable insights, share best practices, and highlight lessons learned. Hosting presentations from these leaders or organizing visits to their programs can further demonstrate the success and feasibility of social work integration into policing, showing both the practical benefits and positive impacts.
- **Start with Pilot Programs:** Pilot programs are an effective way to test the waters before a full-scale implementation. Begin with small-scale initiatives to gather local data, measure success, and fine-tune the program. Pilot programs allow departments to refine implementation strategies and avoid overwhelming resources. They also provide an opportunity to gather real-world data that can be used to convince stakeholders of the program's efficacy, with the potential to scale up once proven successful.
- **Focus on Victim Services as a Starting Point:** If the broader concept of incorporating social work into policing feels daunting, begin with victim services. Helping victims of crime is universally supported across political and social divides, which can help build initial buy-in. This approach serves as a gateway for expanding social work services into other areas, such as crisis intervention or deflection for individuals with mental health or substance abuse issues, all of which can improve the overall system.

- **Organize Tours of Existing Programs:** If buy-in remains a challenge, organizing tours to other successful programs within the state can be a powerful tool. Stakeholders can see firsthand how these programs operate, observe their direct impact, and gain a deeper understanding of the program's benefits. Seeing a model in action often helps alleviate concerns and fosters enthusiasm for adopting similar initiatives locally.
- **Training and Education for Law Enforcement:** Invest in targeted training sessions for officers and administrators to help them understand the role and value of law enforcement-based social workers. These sessions should cover key benefits like improving crisis response, enhancing officer safety, reducing use-of-force incidents, and building positive community relationships. Workshops should be collaborative and engage subject-matter experts to equip officers with the tools to work effectively alongside social service professionals, improving outcomes across the board.
- **Continuous Evaluation and Feedback:** Establish a robust evaluation framework once the program is operational. Continuous assessment of program outcomes—such as reductions in arrests, improvements in crisis management, and increases in community satisfaction—provides critical feedback to refine strategies. This data-driven approach is essential for ensuring that the program remains aligned with its goals and can be adjusted as needed. Moreover, ongoing evaluation is key for demonstrating the program's effectiveness to funders and departmental leaders, ensuring sustained support and resources.
- **Sustainability through Ongoing Support:** Building a sustainable program requires ongoing efforts to secure funding, maintain stakeholder engagement, and adjust the program to meet evolving needs. By demonstrating consistent success through data, feedback, and continual improvement, the program will be well-positioned for long-term viability, offering an enduring impact on both law enforcement and community outcomes.

Funding Ideas for Police Embedded Police Social Workers/Social Service Professionals Positions

1. **Government Grants:**
 - a. **Federal Grants:** Apply for federal grants that support the hiring of law enforcement Professionals, including embedded police social workers/social service professionals, and victim service professionals.
 - i. (BJA)-Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program (COSSUP)
 - ii. (OVC)- Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services (LEV) Program
 - iii. (COPS)-Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA)
 - iv. The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) currently administers grant programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)
 - v. Victims of Crime Act Formula Program (VOCA) grants (allocated to states and must follow state submission guidelines).
 - vi. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Grants
 - vii. The U.S. Health and Human Services Grants
 - viii. BJA Law Enforcement Behavioral Health Response Program
 - ix. BJA Collaborative Crisis Response and Intervention Training Programs
 - x. Department of Justice Grants - COPS Office
 - b. **State Grants:** Seek funding from state programs dedicated to mental health services and criminal justice reforms.
 - i. Kentucky Opioid Abatement Settlement Funds
 - ii. Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)
 - iii. Kentucky Community Crisis Co-Response (CCCR) Grant Program
 - iv. BJA Justice Assistance Grants (JAG) - State or Local grants
 - v. Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)-Investments supporting partnerships in recovery Ecosystems Initiative (INSPIRE)
2. **Local Government Funding:**
 - a. **City and County Budgets:** Allocate funds from local government budgets specifically for the hiring of embedded police social workers/social service professionals and/or victim services Professionals.
 - b. **Special Tax Levies:** Consider proposing special tax levies to fund mental health and public safety initiatives.
3. **Partnerships with Nonprofits:**
 - a. **Collaborations with Mental Health Organizations:** Partner with local mental health organizations that may provide funding or share costs for embedded police social workers/social service professionals.
4. **Foundation Grants:** Apply for grants from foundations that focus on mental health, criminal justice reform, and community safety.

5. Private Sector Funding:
 - a. Corporate Sponsorships: Seek sponsorships from local businesses and corporations interested in supporting community safety and mental health initiatives. [Walmart-SPARK good](#), [Verizon](#), [Target](#), Google, etc.
 - b. Public-Private Partnerships: Develop public-private partnerships where businesses contribute to funding in exchange for community service recognition.
6. Academic Collaborations:
 - a. Universities and Colleges: Partner with academic institutions to create internship programs where social work students gain field experience while assisting law enforcement.
7. Fundraising Campaigns:
 - a. Community Fundraisers: Organize community fundraising events to raise awareness and funds for embedded police social workers/social service professionals.
 - b. Crowdfunding: Utilize crowdfunding platforms to gather small donations from many community members.

Additional Resources for Stakeholder Building

- Community Toolkit, Coalition & Partnership Building: <https://ctb.ku.edu>
- Community Catalyst: Building Support for Pre-Arrest Diversion Through Coalitions: <https://www.communitycatalyst.org>
- National Council for Mental Wellbeing: <https://thenationalcouncil.org>
- Rural Community Action Guide: <https://www.ruralcommunitytoolbox.org>
- BJA COSSAP Guidance: <https://www.cossapresources.org>

Conclusion

The integration of embedded police social workers/social service professionals and/or victim services into law enforcement agencies in Kentucky represents a crucial step toward addressing the complex challenges of community safety and behavioral health. By blending social work and social service professionals' expertise with policing, these professionals can significantly improve interactions with vulnerable populations, reduce the strain on traditional law enforcement resources, and contribute to positive outcomes in mental health crises and other non-violent situations. The benefits of this integration are clear, offering not only enhanced public safety but also long-term cost savings for the criminal justice system. By implementing sustainable funding strategies, such as leveraging federal grants, state allocations, or public-private partnerships, Kentucky can successfully integrate these essential roles into law enforcement agencies. The time to act is now, and with thoughtful planning and commitment, Kentucky can serve as a model for other states seeking to improve public safety and social well-being through collaborative law enforcement efforts.

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