

# **APPLIED POLICY PROJECT**

Prepared for the Charlottesville Police Department

## **A STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION FOR THE CHARLOTTESVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT**

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**사랑하는 할머니의 추억으로.**  
이 여정은 당신의 사랑 덕분에 가능했습니다.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have never believed in the idea of being self-made—no one accomplishes anything alone. Over the past two years, I have been fortunate to have the guidance and generosity of a village that made this possible.

To my family—my true anchors, 엄마, 아빠, Chris, and Hoku. Thank you for your unwavering support and love. In the moments when I felt I had nothing left to give, you lifted me up, reminded me of my strength, and constantly guided me back to God when I needed it the most. I love you all beyond words.

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Finally, to two of my most cherished friends at Batten, Jenny and Sanny, who have been with me since day one. You are both extraordinary women and serve as true inspirations to be better and strive for more. Walking alongside you these past two years has been a blessing.

## **CLIENT PROFILE**

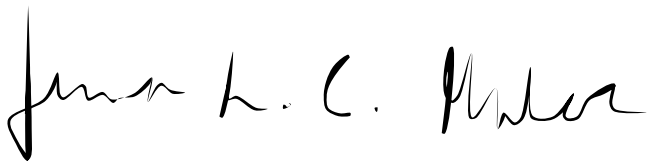
The Charlottesville Police Department (CPD) is a fully-accredited law enforcement agency located in Charlottesville, Virginia. The department is driven by its commitment to community partnership and safety with its core mission to improve the quality of life for those who live, work, and visit the city of Charlottesville. With community policing as its foundation, CPD works to maintain trust and legitimacy through respectful, transparent, and impartial public safety efforts. The department's core values—leadership, integrity, justice, empathy, and commitment—guide its efforts in fostering strong relationships with the community (Charlottesville Police Department, n.d.).

## **DISCLAIMER**

The author conducted this study as part of the program of professional education at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia. This paper is submitted in partial fulfillment of the course requirements for the Master of Public Policy degree. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Batten School, by the University of Virginia, or by any other agency.

## **HONOR PLEDGE**

On my honor as a University of Virginia student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "James H. C. Miller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'J'.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Charlottesville Police Department faces a critical challenge in retaining patrol officers, the backbone of its operational capabilities. This retention crisis threatens CPD's effectiveness and undermines its goal of building strong community relations. Recent Department of Justice reviews have emphasized the importance of consistent community engagement, which requires a stable and experienced workforce. Without addressing these retention issues, CPD risks continued operational strain and erosion of public trust.

Patrol officers are departing CPD at rates that are creating staffing shortages which in turn increase workloads for remaining personnel. This situation contributes to a cycle of burnout, low morale, and reduced capacity for proactive community policing. Local factors compound these challenges, including Charlottesville's high cost of living and limited career advancement opportunities within the department. The resulting institutional knowledge loss and diminished operational capacity directly impact CPD's ability to serve the community effectively.

Based on comprehensive analysis, this report recommends implementing a Fatigue Risk Management System as the most effective intervention for CPD's retention challenges. This approach directly addresses the structural issues contributing to burnout and turnover, making it the most promising long-term solution. Research indicates that structured fatigue management leads to measurable improvements in both job satisfaction and performance in law enforcement settings. Implementation should follow a five-phase approach over twelve months, beginning with assessment and planning to establish baseline fatigue levels and develop a customized framework. This would be followed by stakeholder engagement to secure buy-in through education and feedback sessions. The third phase would focus on policy development and initial leadership training, followed by phased implementation of scheduling changes starting with pilot units. The final phase would involve thorough evaluation and refinement based on collected data and officer feedback.

The Charlottesville Police Department's ability to fulfill its mission depends on resolving its officer retention crisis. The recommended Fatigue Risk Management System directly targets a primary driver of officer dissatisfaction while supporting broader organizational goals. By implementing this system, CPD can create a more supportive work environment where officers feel valued and can build the strong community relationships essential to effective policing. This investment in officer wellbeing will yield significant returns in operational capacity, institutional knowledge retention, and public trust—all critical components of a successful police department.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

**The Charlottesville Police Department is experiencing significant challenges with officer retention, particularly among patrol officers. This retention challenge leads to critical staffing shortages that jeopardize the department's ability to operate effectively and maintain its organizational goal of establishing strong community relations.** Patrol officers, who are responsible for the day-to-day, on-the-ground work of responding to calls and patrolling neighborhoods, represent the backbone of CPD's operations (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). The shortage of patrol officers has increased workloads for remaining staff and contributes to burnout, low morale, and reduced capacity for proactive community policing. Local factors, such as Charlottesville's high cost of living and limited career advancement opportunities, exacerbate this issue. Combined with the national trend of rising attrition in law enforcement, CPD struggles to maintain a stable and experienced workforce. Without intervention, the department risks further operational strain and erosion of trust within the community it serves.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **CLIENT OVERVIEW**

The Charlottesville Police Department is committed to maintaining public safety, fostering trust within the community, and upholding the professional standards of policing. Addressing officer retention directly supports these goals by ensuring a stable and experienced workforce capable of providing consistent, high-quality service and proactively addressing public safety challenges. Retaining skilled officers enables CPD to maintain institutional knowledge, build stronger relationships with community members, and strengthen its capacity to adapt to evolving needs. Conversely, high turnover disrupts these efforts, leading to operational inefficiencies, strained morale among remaining officers, and diminished public confidence in the department's ability to serve. Addressing this issue is essential to achieving CPD's broader mission of protecting and serving Charlottesville effectively.

Addressing retention is particularly pressing in light of the recent Department of Justice review of CPD's community policing practices which underscored the importance of consistent engagement with the community (U.S. Department of Justice, 2024). A stable and well-supported team is critical to implementing the recommendations from this review and building trust with residents. Additionally, as the primary law enforcement agency in Charlottesville, CPD has a unique responsibility to address retention through strategic initiatives such as competitive compensation, career development programs, and workplace support measures. By acting now, CPD can strengthen its workforce, improve internal morale, enhance its public reputation, and lay the foundation for sustainable partnerships with the Charlottesville community. These efforts will ensure the department is better equipped to fulfill its role as a trusted and effective public safety institution.

### **NATIONAL CONTEXT**

Retention issues in law enforcement have become a nationwide crisis, with over 60% of police departments reporting staffing shortages that threaten their ability to operate effectively (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2023). These challenges are driven by a combination of factors, including heightened public scrutiny of policing practices, increased demands for accountability, and the psychological toll of law enforcement work. This intense public scrutiny is reflected in polling data, with Washington Post-ABC News findings showing that public confidence in police training to avoid excessive force has declined from 54% in 2014 to 44% in recent years (Clement and Guskin, 2021). Additionally, 60% of Americans believe more accountability measures are needed in law enforcement, illustrating the challenging public environment in which officers now operate (Clement and Guskin, 2021).

Policing is an inherently high-stress profession, exposing officers to trauma, irregular schedules, and long shifts that contribute to physical fatigue and emotional burnout (Vila & Kenney, 2002).



These factors not only affect officer well-being but also diminish job satisfaction, making it difficult for departments to retain personnel. Nationally, departments are struggling to recruit and retain officers, as fewer individuals are willing to enter a field perceived as increasingly challenging and scrutinized. These trends form the backdrop for CPD's retention struggles, complicating its efforts to maintain a stable and effective workforce.

## **LOCALIZED CHALLENGES**

While CPD's retention challenges align with national trends, local factors significantly amplify the problem. One key challenge is CPD's inability to offer competitive compensation compared to neighboring jurisdictions like the University of Virginia Police Department (UVAPD). These agencies often attract officers with higher salaries and better benefits, leaving CPD struggling to compete for talent. The starting salary at CPD stands at \$55,016.00 (Charlottesville Police Department Recruitment), while UVAPD offers a substantially higher starting salary of \$62,000 (The Rectors & Visitors of University of Virginia). This disparity creates additional financial strain for officers and makes recruitment and retention more difficult, particularly given Charlottesville's high cost of living (Mitchell and O'Hare, 2023). Various stakeholders within CPD have shared specific instances that highlighted the pay and benefit gap. One officer recounted how colleagues employed at Albemarle County and UVA Police Department received holiday bonuses, while Charlottesville officers did not.

Operational challenges within CPD further compound the issue. Officers report long hours, additional training beyond the mandatory 40-hour work week, and unpredictable schedules, all of which contribute to fatigue and burnout. Additionally, the absence of clear career advancement pathways exacerbates the problem, as officers feel limited in their ability to grow within the department. These factors create a work environment where officers feel overburdened, undervalued, and increasingly likely to leave the profession.

Charlottesville's unique social and political climate plays a critical role in CPD's retention challenges. The city's diverse population—comprising college students, young professionals, and long-time residents—creates a complex public safety environment with varied expectations from different community groups. However in other nearby departments, such as Shenandoah County, officers often work with a more homogenous, primarily older local population, which presents a simpler dynamic. Stark differences such as these, make CPD's role in managing community relations and expectations more demanding.

In the last decade, Charlottesville has been under intense scrutiny following several high-profile events, notably the Palestine Encampment, where CPD played a significant role in managing protests and ensuring public safety. This event, along with the infamous 2017 Unite the Right rally—an event for which CPD was predominantly responsible for handling—has led to heightened public scrutiny of the department's practices (Wamsley 2017).

Officers are often caught in the difficult position of balancing their operational responsibilities with the public's expectation for transparency, fairness, and accountability. The challenge of navigating these high-profile incidents, combined with the pressure to maintain community trust, has added significant stress on CPD officers and contributed to dissatisfaction within the department.

These local factors—alongside the broader operational and compensation issues—create an environment where officers feel caught between the demands of their job and the realities of the political and social landscape. This makes it increasingly difficult for CPD to retain experienced officers and ensure the department's ability to effectively serve the community.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF HIGH TURNOVER**

The consequences of CPD's retention challenges are far-reaching. Operationally, staffing shortages reduce the department's ability to respond promptly to emergencies, engage in proactive policing, and maintain visibility within the community. These limitations weaken CPD's capacity to fulfill its mission of protecting and serving Charlottesville residents. Remaining officers must take on additional responsibilities, further exacerbating stress and burnout and creating a cycle of attrition.

The loss of experienced officers also undermines institutional knowledge within CPD. New recruits, while eager, often lack the mentorship and support necessary to handle the complexities of modern policing. Without seasoned officers to guide them, these recruits are more likely to struggle, contributing to higher turnover rates. This cycle erodes the department's effectiveness and strains its resources as more time and funding are directed toward training rather than community engagement.

Community trust, a cornerstone of effective policing, is another casualty of high turnover. Policing relies heavily on strong relationships between officers and the communities they serve, but frequent personnel changes disrupt these relationships and hinder trust-building efforts. In Charlottesville, where public expectations for community-focused policing are particularly high, these disruptions can have lasting negative impacts. Residents may perceive CPD as unstable or unresponsive, further straining the relationship between the department and the community.

### **THE URGENCY OF ADDRESSING RETENTION**

Addressing officer retention is crucial to CPD's ability to achieve its operational and strategic goals. Without targeted interventions, the department risks a cycle of attrition that erodes morale, operational capacity, and community trust. A stable, engaged workforce is key to implementing meaningful reforms and ensuring public safety (International Association of Chiefs of Police).

Retention challenges also impact the broader Charlottesville community. A well-staffed and effective police force is essential for maintaining safety and supporting the city's social and economic objectives (Charlottesville Police Foundation). By addressing the root causes of retention issues, CPD can create a supportive work environment where officers feel valued and motivated. These efforts will stabilize the department and improve its capacity to build long-term partnerships with the community.

## SYNTHESIS OF LITERATURE AND PRACTICAL EVIDENCE

The issue of police officer retention has been addressed by various law enforcement agencies and adjacent industries through evidence-based strategies designed to reduce burnout, improve job satisfaction, and ultimately enhance retention. Multiple interventions have been studied and implemented, providing valuable insights into effective solutions for addressing officer attrition. This section synthesizes the available evidence, evaluating the impact of these solutions and their applicability to the Charlottesville Police Department. While some studies offer strong evidence of causality, others are more suggestive, indicating potential directions for CPD to consider as it develops a comprehensive strategy to combat attrition.

### REDUCING FATIGUE FROM OPERATIONAL STRAIN IN THE WORKPLACE

Fatigue in the workplace is recognized as a critical factor that can compromise both productivity and safety across various professions, with significant research underscoring its detrimental impacts. Research has shown that fatigue can reduce cognitive function, leading to slower response times and increased error rates, particularly in high-stakes fields such as healthcare and law enforcement (Lees et al., 2012). Fatigue risk management systems (FRMS) are commonly recommended to address these challenges, providing evidence-based frameworks to regulate work hours, structure rest periods, and offer health support services to mitigate operational strain.

Studies on FRMS indicate that implementing structured recovery time and clear workload policies can alleviate fatigue and enhance worker safety in roles that demand sustained attention and precision (Lerman et al., 2019). Figure 2 illustrates the key steps involved in an effective Fatigue Risk Management Program, including assessment, planning, monitoring, and adjustment of work schedules, all of which can help reduce fatigue in high-pressure environments. To explicitly link this section to retention, it's important to note that research underscores that fatigue not only impedes performance but also leads to burnout, a leading cause of turnover in law enforcement (Vila & Kenney, 2002). By effectively managing fatigue, agencies can potentially improve retention rates by reducing one of the primary contributors to officer burnout.

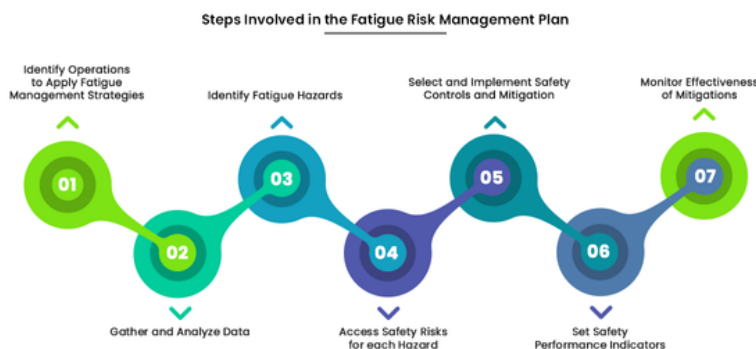


Figure 2. Borrowed from Oodles Technologies

In law enforcement specifically, research highlights unique stressors that exacerbate fatigue beyond what is typically seen in other fields. Police officers often work extended shifts, navigate unpredictable schedules, and face frequent high-stress encounters, all of which contribute to cumulative physical and mental strain (James et al., 2024). This operational strain not only increases fatigue but also undermines officers' decision-making abilities, posing potential risks to both their safety and public safety (International Association of Chiefs of Police). The implementation of fatigue management strategies, such as structured recovery times, can mitigate these risks and help improve retention by alleviating the chronic stress that leads to burnout and turnover.

### **MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES**

Interventions targeted toward mental health are crucial in high-stress roles like law enforcement. While fatigue is linked to physical exhaustion, mental health challenges like depression, anxiety, and trauma can affect an officer's ability to function on the job. Research highlights that structured mental health interventions, including mindfulness-based programs, can effectively mitigate psychological stress and improve resilience among employees in high-stress roles (McDonald et al., 2020). These programs have shown promise in reducing symptoms associated with emotional exhaustion, a major contributor to burnout and turnover.

Mindfulness-based practices, such as meditation and breathing exercises, can significantly improve psychological well-being, reducing anxiety and enhancing emotional regulation. In law enforcement settings, where officers frequently deal with trauma, regular mental health interventions are critical for promoting both emotional recovery and long-term retention (Santre, 2024). Peer support programs have also been found to be particularly effective in law enforcement, fostering a culture of openness and reducing stigmatization of seeking mental health assistance (Smith et al., 2021; Karaffa & Tochkov, 2015). These peer-based initiatives not only address stress but also build a supportive community, making it easier for officers to seek help before burnout occurs. By addressing both emotional and psychological needs, mental health interventions can play a key role in improving retention by ensuring officers remain healthy, supported, and able to manage the challenges of their roles.

### **COMPENSATION AND PAY INTERVENTIONS**

While increasing pay is a common intervention to improve retention, literature suggests mixed results on its effectiveness, especially in public-sector professions. Studies indicate that pay raises can motivate employees to stay by improving job satisfaction and financial stability. For example, research on government roles highlights that wage increases have led to modest retention improvements, particularly when pay aligns with similar private-sector positions (Morrissey & Sherer, 2022).

However, findings are context-dependent and may vary based on market competitiveness and local economic conditions, raising questions about the generalizability of these results across professions with different demands and challenges (Propper, 2006). In high-stress professions such as policing, literature on the effects of pay adjustments is relatively sparse. While there is evidence that competitive salaries can enhance retention, particularly when combined with benefits packages, studies focusing on police forces are limited, making it difficult to establish strong causal links between pay and retention outcomes (Emanuel & Harrington, 2020). For example, some studies on public safety roles indicate that higher wages alone may be insufficient for long-term retention unless coupled with supportive work environments that address both the physical and mental health needs of employees (Jolly et al., 2021). These findings underscore that while compensation is a factor, other aspects such as organizational culture and job support play a significant role in influencing retention.

Moreover, there is evidence suggesting that public servants, including law enforcement officers, may not always be primarily motivated by financial rewards. A growing body of research indicates that intrinsic motivators, such as job satisfaction, community service, and job fulfillment, play a more significant role than compensation in motivating long-term retention (Morrissey & Sherer, 2022). Therefore, while increasing compensation may yield short-term benefits, ensuring a supportive, engaging work environment is equally essential for sustainable retention.

## **DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS**

In assessing interventions to address fatigue, mental health, and compensation within the police force, the evidence on these interventions presents some critical insights but also reveals important limitations. The literature on fatigue-related interventions, for example, offers credible support for the effectiveness of scheduling adjustments and stress management training in mitigating burnout (Horan et al., 2021). However, while these interventions are backed by quantitative data, the causal impact is less certain due to challenges in isolating the effects of such interventions from other workplace changes, such as support from colleagues or organizational policies. Additionally, the generalizability of these findings may be limited when applied to the specific stressors faced by police officers, as much of this research groups together first responders without fully differentiating the unique demands of policing.

Compensation and pay as retention strategies for police officers are also under-explored, particularly in terms of understanding how officers perceive compensation relative to their job demands. While studies indicate that increased pay can slightly improve retention in public-sector roles, evidence suggests that pay alone is often insufficient to address high-stress and high-risk roles (Morrissey & Sherer, 2022). The studies examined largely focus on general public-sector roles and may not capture the unique factors affecting retention in police departments.

Notably, officers at the Charlottesville Police Department have resoundingly reported feeling undercompensated relative to the physical and emotional demands of their jobs. This discrepancy between officer sentiment and existing literature reflects a broader limitation—prioritizing what the people with boots on the ground are saying versus trusting what the literature says.

## **ANALYSIS OF TAKEAWAYS AND CONCLUSIONS**

The evidence gathered throughout the exploration of officer retention at the Charlottesville Police Department has revealed several crucial takeaways that should shape the future direction of the department's approach to this challenge. First and foremost, it is clear that officer retention is not merely a matter of financial compensation or job satisfaction in isolation; rather, it is the product of a complex interplay of organizational, social, and personal factors that influence officers' decisions to stay or leave. These factors include the high cost of living in Charlottesville, the lack of career development opportunities, the emotional and physical toll of policing, and the broader national climate surrounding law enforcement. Addressing these root causes requires a multifaceted, long-term strategy that includes not only improving compensation and benefits but also enhancing the overall work environment, providing clear pathways for career advancement, and offering robust support systems to mitigate the effects of stress and burnout.

A critical takeaway is the importance of mental health and well-being in officer retention. Research and interviews have consistently highlighted the toll that policing takes on officers' mental health. The nature of the work exposes officers to traumatic events and high-stress situations, which can contribute to burnout and emotional exhaustion. Initiatives like peer support programs, counseling services, and stress reduction techniques such as mindfulness can play a pivotal role in addressing these concerns. Mental health is often a taboo subject in law enforcement, and the stigma surrounding it can discourage officers from seeking help. For CPD, integrating mental health support more deeply into its culture and providing officers with the resources they need to cope with stress could significantly reduce attrition rates. Furthermore, as the data suggests, creating a culture where seeking help is normalized will not only reduce burnout but also improve the overall resilience and effectiveness of officers, making them better equipped to handle the demands of the job.

Another important takeaway is the critical role that career development plays in officer retention. Many officers, particularly those early in their careers, express frustration with a lack of clear advancement opportunities within CPD. Without a clear pathway for professional growth, officers are more likely to leave for better opportunities elsewhere. CPD can address this challenge by developing formal mentorship programs, offering leadership training, and creating well-defined career advancement structures.

Providing officers with opportunities to grow within the department will increase their engagement, motivation, and loyalty, ultimately reducing turnover and fostering a more experienced, knowledgeable workforce. This, in turn, strengthens the department's ability to respond to community needs and improve public safety.

The third key takeaway is the need for better work-life balance and manageable workloads. Officers in CPD report facing long shifts, mandatory overtime, and irregular hours, all of which contribute to fatigue and dissatisfaction. Addressing this issue could involve implementing more flexible scheduling options, reducing mandatory overtime, and ensuring that officers have sufficient recovery time between shifts. Fatigue is a well-documented factor that leads to reduced job performance, increased mistakes, and heightened stress levels. Reducing the physical and mental toll on officers by implementing fatigue management programs could not only improve job satisfaction but also enhance performance, making officers more effective in their policing duties. Studies from other departments have shown the benefits of fatigue management programs in improving retention and job satisfaction, and such programs could be particularly beneficial for CPD, where officers report feeling overburdened.



## **EVALUATIVE CRITERIA**

The following criteria will be used to evaluate each policy alternative for addressing officer retention at CPD. Each criterion will be measured on a three-point scale (low, medium, or high) to provide a consistent framework for comparison. A rating of "high" indicates the alternative strongly satisfies the criterion, "medium" indicates moderate alignment, and "low" indicates minimal satisfaction of the criterion. This standardized approach allows for systematic assessment across all proposed alternatives and facilitates clear comparison of their relative strengths and weaknesses.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE FEASIBILITY**

This criterion is important because it will assess how realistic and manageable each alternative is for CPD to implement within its existing structure and resources. This will be measured by evaluating the extent to which each alternative requires additional training, administrative workload, or coordination with external partners. Administrative feasibility will also be assessed based on the complexity of policy changes, the need for new reporting requirements, and the degree of internal restructuring required. Each alternative will be assigned a rating of low, medium, or high feasibility, based on how easily CPD can integrate the proposed strategy without causing operational disruptions. Information will be gathered from internal CPD leadership, existing policies, and insights from departments that have implemented similar initiatives.

### **COST-EFFECTIVENESS**

This criterion will measure the efficiency of each alternative in terms of the financial investment required relative to its anticipated impact on officer retention. It is important to consider cost-effectiveness because CPD operates within a constrained budget and resources must be allocated strategically to maximize results. This will be measured by comparing the estimated costs of implementation—including training, incentives, and program administration—with the projected retention rate improvement.

### **EQUITY**

This criterion will evaluate whether the proposed alternatives promote fair and equitable outcomes for all CPD officers, particularly in addressing disparities in career advancement, workload distribution, and retention incentives. Equity is an essential factor because retention efforts should not disproportionately benefit certain groups of officers while neglecting others. This will be measured by analyzing how each alternative affects officers of different ranks, years of service, and demographic backgrounds. Evaluation will involve reviewing CPD workforce data, exit surveys, and any available information on the distribution of retention-related benefits.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

This criterion is important because it will assess whether an alternative is viable in the long term or if it is likely to require continuous adjustments, funding increases, or structural changes to remain effective. A sustainable alternative should be financially and administratively manageable over multiple years, avoiding short-term solutions that may lose impact once initial funding or enthusiasm diminishes. Sustainability will be measured by examining the projected longevity of funding sources, the need for ongoing program adjustments, and the stability of the policies supporting each alternative. This evaluation will be based on past retention initiatives, CPD's budgetary trends, and insights from current officers.

## **FIT WITH CPD CULTURE AND NORMS**

This criterion will evaluate whether each alternative aligns with CPD's organizational culture, values, and existing norms. Fit with CPD culture is crucial because even well-intended retention strategies may fail if they do not resonate with officers or conflict with established practices. This will be assessed by determining how well each alternative aligns with CPD's leadership structure, officer expectations, and historical approaches to retention. Evaluation will be based on interviews with current officers, a review of CPD's internal policies, and comparisons with retention strategies that have succeeded or failed in similar departments.

## **POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

The following strategic approaches represent evidence-based interventions to address the officer retention crisis currently facing the Charlottesville Police Department. Each alternative targets a distinct dimension of the retention challenge while drawing upon established research in law enforcement workforce management and adjacent fields.

**Alternative 1: Implementing a Structured Officer Retention Incentive Program**

**Alternative 2: Fatigue Risk Management Systems**

**Alternative 3: Strengthening Mental Health Support**

These alternatives emerge directly from an examination of retention factors in law enforcement contexts. As demonstrated in the review of existing evidence, officer retention is influenced by multiple interconnected factors. Each proposed alternative represents a distinct pathway to improving CPD's retention crisis, though they share certain operational requirements. All alternatives recognize the particular vulnerability of patrol officers to burnout and turnover, while acknowledging that retention strategies must balance immediate needs with long-term sustainability. The alternatives are presented individually to facilitate clear evaluation against the established criteria. Throughout the following analysis, consideration is given not only to the theoretical effectiveness of each approach but also to the practical challenges of implementation within CPD's specific organizational context.

## **ALTERNATIVE 1**

### **IMPLEMENTING A STRUCTURED OFFICER RETENTION INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

This alternative seeks to address the high attrition rate among CPD's patrol officers by introducing a structured retention incentive program. The program will incorporate financial incentives and career development opportunities to encourage officers to remain with the department for longer tenures. Drawing from research on similar programs in urban and mid-sized police departments, this initiative aims to enhance CPD's competitiveness with neighboring agencies and improve overall officer job satisfaction.

The program will include retention bonuses, where officers who commit to staying with CPD for at least three years will receive structured financial incentives. Bonuses will be tiered based on tenure, such as \$3,000 after three years of service and \$5,000 after five years, with additional incentives for those reaching ten years. Furthermore, tuition assistance and professional development will be offered through partnerships with UVA or other institutions, enabling officers to pursue higher education.

While increasing pay is a common approach to improving retention, research presents mixed results regarding its effectiveness, particularly in public-sector professions. Studies suggest that pay raises can enhance job satisfaction and financial stability, leading to modest retention improvements when wages align with comparable private-sector roles (Morrissey & Sherer, 2022). However, findings vary based on market competitiveness and local economic conditions, making generalization across different professions challenging (Propper, 2006). In high-stress professions such as policing, evidence on the direct effects of pay adjustments remains limited. Although competitive salaries, particularly when paired with strong benefits packages, have been linked to improved retention, studies focusing specifically on police forces are scarce, making it difficult to establish strong causal relationships between pay and retention outcomes (Emanuel & Harrington, 2020). Research on public safety roles suggests that higher wages alone may not be sufficient for long-term retention unless complemented by supportive work environments that address officers' physical and mental health needs (Jolly et al., 2021).

However, based on interviews with CPD officers and personnel from surrounding agencies, it is evident that pay is a significant factor for many officers at CPD. Several officers noted that they could earn higher salaries at nearby departments, making CPD's compensation structure a clear disadvantage in retention efforts. Many officers also expressed frustration that their workload and responsibilities were comparable to those of better-paid officers in neighboring jurisdictions, further exacerbating concerns about financial stability. While intrinsic motivators such as job satisfaction and community service are important, financial concerns remain a key reason why officers consider leaving the department.

**Administrative Feasibility:** This alternative has a **high** feasibility rating. Managing tiered bonus structures and tuition assistance programs would involve collaboration between CPD’s human resources department, the City of Charlottesville’s Budget Office, and external educational institutions such as the University of Virginia. Establishing clear eligibility criteria for bonuses is essential to maintaining fairness, which will require tracking tenure milestones and enforcing consistent policy application. While similar programs have been successfully implemented in mid-sized police departments, CPD would likely need additional personnel or software updates to streamline the administration of incentives. Internal CPD leadership and existing compensation policies will provide insights into feasibility.

**Cost-Effectiveness:** This alternative has a **medium** cost-effectiveness rating. While the financial investment required includes salary adjustments, tuition reimbursements, and tenure-based bonus allocations, evidence from organizations facing similar frontline worker retention challenges demonstrates significant return on investment. Sysco's implementation of tenure-based bonuses and enhanced benefits for their delivery drivers—frontline workers who, like police officers, represent the organization to the public—achieved an 80% retention rate, saving approximately \$500,000 per operation and \$25 million company-wide (Future Solve). Applied to policing, a Structured Officer Retention Incentive Program that rewards tenure could substantially reduce CPD's recruitment and training costs while preserving institutional knowledge and community relationships. These savings typically offset the initial investment within 1-2 years, as each retained experienced officer eliminates the need for costly recruitment, academy training, and field training that can exceed \$100,000 per officer (National Policing Institute).

**Equity:** This alternative has a **medium** equity rating. While structured retention bonuses would apply across all officer ranks, concerns may arise regarding fairness if the incentives disproportionately benefit senior officers who are already more financially secure. Additionally, newer recruits may perceive the program as favoring officers who have already committed to long-term service, potentially discouraging early-career officers who feel less financially stable. Reviewing CPD workforce demographics and exit survey data will help ensure that retention incentives do not inadvertently widen existing disparities.

**Sustainability:** This alternative has a **low** sustainability rating. Long-term funding is uncertain, as city budget allocations and state grants are subject to political and economic fluctuations. Unless CPD secures ongoing financial support, retention bonuses may become difficult to maintain over time. Tuition assistance partnerships with UVA or similar institutions could enhance sustainability by shifting some financial burdens to external partners. Historical CPD budget trends and funding models from comparable departments will provide insight into long-term viability.

**Fit with CPD Culture and Norms:** This alternative has a **high** culture and norms rating. Interviews with CPD officers indicate that financial concerns are prevalent, suggesting that an incentive program could align well with officers' priorities. However, the success of this initiative will depend on officers' perceptions of fairness in bonus distribution. If structured appropriately, this alternative could reinforce a culture of long-term service while addressing CPD's compensation competitiveness relative to neighboring agencies.

## ALTERNATIVE 2

### FATIGUE RISK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Operational fatigue is a critical challenge in law enforcement, affecting officer performance, safety, and long-term retention. Research has shown that fatigue impairs cognitive function, slows response times, and increases error rates, particularly in high-stakes professions such as policing (Lees et al., 2012). This not only puts officers at risk but also impacts public safety, as fatigued decision-making can lead to critical errors in the field. To address this, many industries have adopted Fatigue Risk Management Systems, which use evidence-based strategies to regulate work hours, structure rest periods, and provide health support services (Lerman et al., 2019). Implementing an FRMS within CPD could help alleviate operational strain, improve officer well-being, and ultimately enhance retention by reducing burnout—a leading cause of turnover in law enforcement (Vila & Kenney, 2002). Beyond retention, such a system would signal to officers that their health and performance are valued, fostering a culture that prioritizes both effectiveness and well-being.

A CPD-specific fatigue management strategy would include structured recovery times, predictable scheduling, and designated rest areas within department facilities. Additionally, CPD could implement wellness programs focusing on sleep hygiene and stress reduction techniques to support officers' long-term health. Research indicates that agencies that integrate fatigue management into broader wellness initiatives see improved officer job satisfaction and reduced burnout rates (James et al., 2024).

**Administrative Feasibility:** This alternative has a **medium** feasibility rating. Implementing structured rest periods and scheduling adjustments will require modifications to CPD's existing shift structures. While many industries have successfully integrated fatigue management strategies (Lerman et al., 2019), policing presents unique challenges due to the unpredictable nature of emergency response. Coordination between CPD leadership, shift supervisors, and potentially an external fatigue management consultant will be necessary. Compliance enforcement may also require additional oversight, potentially increasing administrative workload.

**Cost-Effectiveness:** This alternative has a **high** cost effectiveness rating. While initial implementation costs may include scheduling software upgrades and wellness program investments, reducing officer burnout could significantly lower long-term retention-related expenses. Research suggests that structured fatigue management leads to improved job satisfaction and performance (James et al., 2024), potentially reducing the financial burden associated with high turnover rates. CPD can reference budget allocations from departments that have adopted similar programs to estimate costs.

**Equity:** This alternative has a high equity rating. Fatigue management benefits all officers, regardless of rank or tenure. Ensuring that all officers have access to predictable rest periods and wellness support creates a more balanced workload distribution. Data from CPD workforce reports and exit surveys will help assess whether scheduling adjustments equitably impact officers across different shifts.

**Sustainability:** This alternative has a high sustainability rating. Once initial policies are established, structured fatigue management requires minimal ongoing financial investments beyond standard operational costs. Adjustments to CPD's scheduling system can be institutionalized without reliance on fluctuating external funding sources. Past fatigue management initiatives in law enforcement and other high-stress professions will provide insight into long-term effectiveness.

**Fit with CPD Culture and Norms:** This alternative has a low culture and norms rating. Law enforcement traditionally prioritizes operational readiness over structured recovery periods, and some officers may resist changes to their work schedules. However, increasing awareness of burnout's impact on performance could facilitate cultural adaptation. Successful implementation in similar departments will inform best practices for overcoming resistance.



## ALTERNATIVE 3

### STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Interventions targeted toward mental health are crucial in high-stress roles like law enforcement. While fatigue is often associated with physical exhaustion, mental health challenges—such as depression, anxiety, and trauma—can significantly impact an officer’s ability to function on the job. Research highlights that structured mental health interventions, including mindfulness-based programs, can effectively mitigate psychological stress and improve resilience among employees in demanding professions (McDonald et al., 2020). These programs have shown promise in reducing symptoms of emotional exhaustion, a major contributor to burnout and turnover. Given the nature of police work, officers frequently encounter traumatic situations that can have lasting psychological effects. In law enforcement settings, where officers frequently deal with trauma, regular mental health interventions are critical for promoting both emotional recovery and long-term retention (Santre, 2024).

A comprehensive mental health initiative would include several key components. First, CPD could implement mandatory mental health check-ins, requiring all officers to meet with a licensed mental health professional at least once per quarter. By normalizing mental health care as a standard part of officer wellness, this policy would help reduce stigma and encourage proactive engagement with mental health resources.

To ensure officers have access to support at any time, CPD could contract with an independent third-party provider to offer a 24/7 confidential crisis hotline. This service would allow officers to seek immediate guidance without fear of professional repercussions. Similarly, a trauma recovery and PTSD support providing structured counseling and wellness check-ins following exposure to traumatic incidents, such as officer-involved shootings or child fatalities.

**Administrative Feasibility:** This alternative has a **low** feasibility rating. Establishing mandatory mental health check-ins and a 24/7 crisis hotline requires coordination with licensed mental health professionals, either as full-time staff or external contractors. Partnerships with UVA’s psychology department could provide cost-effective solutions, but integrating mental health initiatives into CPD’s culture will require significant administrative effort. Ensuring officer participation while maintaining confidentiality presents an additional logistical challenge.

**Cost-Effectiveness:** This alternative has a **medium** cost-effectiveness rating. While research suggests that structured mental health interventions improve retention and reduce burnout (McDonald et al., 2020), program implementation costs could be significant. For example, Washington State University received grant funding of \$668,663 for a three-year FRMS feasibility study in 2020 focused on the Seattle Police Department (James et al., 2024). This example demonstrates the potential for academic partnerships to secure funding.

**Equity:** This alternative has a **medium** equity rating. Mental health challenges affect officers across all ranks and demographic backgrounds. Ensuring universal access to mental health resources promotes an inclusive and supportive work environment. However, disparities persist in mental health service utilization, with white individuals accessing outpatient services at significantly higher rates than Black, Hispanic, and Asian individuals (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2015). For example, white individuals are nearly twice as likely as Asian individuals to seek outpatient mental health care, highlighting the need for targeted efforts to address these gaps (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2015).

**Sustainability:** This alternative has a **low** sustainability rating. Maintaining a robust mental health support system requires ongoing funding, and grant-based initiatives may not provide stable long-term financing. Institutional partnerships with UVA or nonprofit organizations could enhance sustainability, but long-term success will depend on securing consistent funding sources.

**Fit with CPD Culture and Norms:** This alternative has a **low** culture and norms rating. While increasing awareness of mental health in law enforcement has reduced stigma, some officers may still hesitate to engage in mental health initiatives due to concerns about confidentiality and career impact. Leadership endorsement and policy protections ensuring that participation does not affect promotions or job security will be essential for cultural integration.

## OUTCOMES MATRIX

	ALTERNATIVE 1: RETENTION INCENTIVES	ALTERNATIVE 2: FRMS	ALTERNATIVE 3: MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT
ADMINISTRATIVE FEASIBILITY	<b>High</b> Requires coordination, tracking, and potential upgrades.	<b>Medium</b> Requires shift modifications and oversight.	<b>Low</b> High admin effort, confidentiality challenges.
COST-EFFECTIVENESS	<b>Medium</b> High upfront costs, potential long-term savings.	<b>High</b> Reduces burnout, lowers long-term retention costs.	<b>Medium</b> High implementation costs, potential partnerships to offset expenses.
EQUITY	<b>Medium</b> Risk of disproportionately benefiting senior officers.	<b>High</b> Supports all ranks with balanced workloads.	<b>Medium</b> Universal access, but usage may vary by demographic.
SUSTAINABILITY	<b>Low</b> Funding relies on unstable budget allocations.	<b>High</b> Minimal ongoing costs after initial setup.	<b>Low</b> Requires ongoing funding.
FIT WITH CULTURE AND NORMS	<b>High</b> Addresses financial concerns and retention culture.	<b>Low</b> Resistance due to traditional operational priorities.	<b>Low</b> Stigma and confidentiality concerns among officers.

## RECOMMENDATION

This analysis recommends that the Charlottesville Police Department (CPD) move forward with **Alternative 2: Implementing a Fatigue Risk Management System**. Each policy alternative aims to improve officer retention by addressing key workplace challenges, and all alternatives demonstrate potential benefits in the outcomes matrix. After careful consideration of the criteria and trade-offs, an FRMS offers the most comprehensive approach to mitigating officer fatigue, improving job satisfaction, and enhancing overall retention. This system directly addresses the structural issues contributing to burnout and turnover, making it the most effective long-term solution for CPD.

While implementing an FRMS requires an initial investment in training and administrative oversight, CPD can reduce these costs by adopting best practices from law enforcement agencies that have successfully integrated similar programs. Moreover, establishing a structured approach to fatigue management will reinforce CPD's commitment to officer well-being and professional development, strengthening its ability to attract and retain high-quality personnel.

For the FRMS to be successful, CPD must ensure that officers and leadership are engaged in its development and implementation. While the system provides a framework for managing fatigue, it does not inherently change workplace culture. To maximize its effectiveness, this analysis recommends that CPD pair the FRMS with ongoing education and leadership training on fatigue mitigation strategies, reinforcing the department's investment in officer health and retention.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The following implementation plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for introducing a Fatigue Risk Management System at the Charlottesville Police Department. This approach has been selected as the recommended alternative following careful evaluation against established criteria. Research indicates that structured fatigue management leads to improved job satisfaction and performance in law enforcement (James et al., 2024), making it a promising solution to CPD's officer retention challenges. The implementation strategy is designed as a five-phase process spanning twelve months, with specific attention to stakeholder engagement, potential obstacles, and risk mitigation. This plan recognizes that successful implementation requires more than just technical changes to scheduling; it demands cultural shifts, leadership commitment, and continuous adaptation based on officer feedback. By addressing both operational and organizational aspects of implementation, this plan provides a practical roadmap for transforming CPD's approach to officer fatigue management and, ultimately, improving retention rates among patrol officers.

The Assistant Chief of Police will serve as the primary project leader, responsible for overseeing the entire FRMS rollout. Their position within CPD's command structure provides the authority needed to coordinate across divisions while maintaining operational continuity. The Assistant Chief will develop implementation timelines, allocate resources, report progress to the Chief and city leadership, and serve as the final decision-maker on implementation issues. Shift Lieutenants and HR Personnel will function as the core execution team handling the day-to-day implementation tasks. Shift Lieutenants will redesign schedules to incorporate fatigue management principles, while HR Personnel will develop new policies, update handbooks, and create training materials. Both groups will also collect data on officer fatigue levels and scheduling patterns.

The Officer Wellness Committee, a group of officers from various ranks with a Sergeant as the chair, will serve as the troubleshooting team responsible for identifying implementation obstacles, suggesting practical solutions, serving as champions for the FRMS among their peers, and creating feedback channels for ongoing system improvement. This committee will follow a governance structure including bi-weekly meetings to address implementation challenges, a direct reporting line to the Shift Lieutenant for urgent issues through the designated committee chair, and monthly progress reviews with the Assistant Chief and Shift Lieutenant. External partners in the form of fatigue management consultants will also be critical to success. Based on the experiences of agencies like the Seattle Police Department (James et al., 2024), CPD should contract with consultants experienced in law enforcement fatigue management, utilize their expertise for training and system customization, and leverage their credibility to overcome internal resistance.

The implementation will proceed through five phases beginning with Assessment and Planning (Months 1-2), which includes conducting a department-wide fatigue assessment using validated tools like the Karolinska Sleepiness Scale, analyzing current shift patterns to identify high-risk fatigue periods, forming the Officer Wellness Committee, selecting and onboarding fatigue management consultants, and developing detailed implementation plans with measurable benchmarks. Phase 2 focuses on Policy Development and Training (Months 3-4), involving drafting new scheduling policies incorporating fatigue management principles, developing training materials on fatigue recognition and mitigation, creating systems for monitoring compliance and effectiveness, training supervisors and command staff on FRMS principles, and updating departmental handbooks and protocols.

Phase 3 initiates a Pilot Implementation (Months 5-6) in one selected patrol division, implementing new scheduling practices with consultant oversight, collecting data on fatigue levels, officer satisfaction, and operational impacts, making necessary adjustments based on pilot findings, and preparing for department-wide rollout. Phase 4 expands to Full Implementation (Months 7-10) across all divisions in a staggered approach, conducting comprehensive training for all officers, implementing monitoring systems, establishing regular review processes, and developing long-term sustainability plans. The final Phase 5 addresses Evaluation and Refinement (Months 11-12), conducting formal evaluation of the initial implementation, comparing pre and post-implementation retention metrics, making necessary adjustments based on evaluation findings, developing plans for ongoing system maintenance, and sharing results with stakeholders and city leadership.

Several stakeholder perspectives must be considered during implementation. Command staff may express concern about operational readiness and scheduling complexity, which can be mitigated by providing evidence from departments like Seattle PD showing improved performance and reduced errors following FRMS implementation, and involving command staff in planning to address operational concerns proactively (James et al., 2024). Patrol officers will likely have mixed reactions—appreciation for wellness focus but potential resistance to schedule changes—requiring inclusion of officer representatives in planning, emphasis on personal benefits of reduced fatigue, and gradual implementation with continuous feedback opportunities. The police union will likely be supportive of officer wellness but vigilant about contract implications, necessitating early engagement with union leadership, framing FRMS as enhancing officer safety and well-being while respecting contractual obligations, and development of contingency plans including identifying specific contract clauses that might conflict with FRMS implementation, developing memorandum of understanding with union leadership before full implementation, and establishing clear protocols for addressing schedule-related grievances.

Community members may express concern about potential reductions in police presence, requiring communication about how improved officer wellness and retention will enhance community policing capabilities and emphasis that well-rested officers provide better service.

Several potential risks could undermine successful FRMS implementation and must be mitigated. Staffing shortages present a high likelihood, high impact risk that could prevent schedule flexibility, requiring implementation of interim measures while developing long-term solutions. Budget constraints pose a medium likelihood, medium impact risk, necessitating prioritization of low-cost components initially while seeking grant opportunities such as those offered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance for officer wellness initiatives. Cultural resistance represents a high likelihood, medium impact risk that can be addressed by framing FRMS in terms of tactical advantage, engaging respected veteran officers as champions, and using research on cognitive performance and decision-making to emphasize operational benefits. Leadership transitions create a medium likelihood, high impact risk requiring formalization of FRMS implementation as departmental policy early in the process, detailed documentation of the implementation plan and progress, and establishment of broad ownership through the Officer Wellness Committee. Union resistance or contract conflicts pose a medium likelihood, high impact risk requiring formal review of the collective bargaining agreement before implementation, inclusion of union representatives in all planning phases, and development of a formal dispute resolution process specific to FRMS implementation.

The implementation of a Fatigue Risk Management System represents a significant but necessary organizational change for the Charlottesville Police Department. By carefully managing stakeholder relationships, following a phased implementation approach, actively addressing potential resistance, and mitigating identified risks, CPD can successfully implement this recommendation and achieve meaningful improvements in officer retention and wellbeing. Regular evaluation and adaptation will be essential to ensure that the FRMS remains effective and sustainable over time.

## CONCLUSION

The challenge of officer retention at the Charlottesville Police Department represents more than a staffing issue—it is fundamentally about the department's capacity to fulfill its promise to the community. While addressing fatigue through structured management systems tackles an immediate operational need, the broader implications extend to the very essence of effective community policing in Charlottesville. The recommendation of the Fatigue Risk Management System offers CPD an opportunity to pioneer a progressive approach to workforce sustainability in law enforcement. By treating officer wellbeing as a strategic priority rather than an administrative concern, the department can position itself at the forefront of evidence-based policing practices. This shift in perspective—from viewing officers primarily as resources to recognizing them as the department's greatest assets—creates a foundation for cultural transformation that extends far beyond scheduling adjustments.

The recent history of policing in Charlottesville underscores the critical importance of this moment. Following the Department of Justice review, CPD stands at a crossroads where meaningful internal reforms can directly translate to improved external relationships. A well-implemented fatigue management program sends a dual message: to officers, that their wellbeing matters; to the community, that their safety and trust are priorities worth investing in through sustainable workforce practices. Importantly, addressing officer fatigue through systematic management provides a tangible entry point for tackling the more complex dimensions of police work—the psychological demands, community expectations, and organizational pressures that collectively shape the experience of serving as a patrol officer in Charlottesville.

The investment in fatigue management today builds capacity for the more challenging work of community policing tomorrow, creating a virtuous cycle where rested, engaged officers can more effectively build the relationships essential to public safety. As CPD implements these changes, the true measure of success will extend beyond retention statistics to encompass the quality of police service, the depth of community connections, and the professional satisfaction of officers who choose to build their careers in Charlottesville. By addressing fatigue as a first step toward comprehensive workforce sustainability, CPD has the opportunity to transform a pressing challenge into a defining strength.



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