

Review of Akron Police Department's Use-of-Force Policies and Practices



POLICE EXECUTIVE
RESEARCH FORUM

April 2026

Review of Akron Police Department's Use-of-Force Policies and Practices

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Acronyms and Initialisms

Throughout this report, acronyms are spelled out at first mention and then referred to by their abbreviated form. However, for ease of reading, the most commonly used acronyms are also defined here.

Core Organizations and Entities

APD Akron Police Department

PERF Police Executive
Research Forum

UA University of Akron

Equipment, Tactics, and Tools

BWC body-worn camera

ECW electronic-control weapon
(e.g., Taser)

OC oleoresin capsicum
(pepper spray)

Labor, Unions, and Personnel

FOP Fraternal Order of Police

FTO field training officer

PIO public information officer

PSD public safety director

Oversight, Accountability, and Review

CIRB Critical Incident Review Board

EIS Early Intervention System

IPA Independent Police Auditor

CPOB Citizens' Police Oversight Board

OIPA Officer of the Independent
Police Auditor

OPSA Office of Professional
Standards and Accountability

Use of Force-Related

CDM Critical Decision-Making Model

ICAT Integrating Communications,
Assessment, and Tactics

MBE medical-behavioral emergency

OICI officer-involved critical incident

UOF use of force

Overview

Since 2019, Akron Police Department (APD) officers have been involved in seven fatal¹ and seven nonfatal² shootings. In response to these incidents, the City of Akron issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking an independent review of APD's use of force (UOF) policies and procedures. After a competitive selection process, the City awarded the contract to the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF).

1. 1. Mohammed Isaifan, December 15, 2019: Doug Brown, "Federal Judge Sides with Akron Police Officers Who Killed Mohammad Isaifan in 2019," Signal Akron, last modified June 25, 2025, <https://signalakron.org/federal-judge-sides-with-akron-police-officers-who-killed-mohammad-isaifan-in-2019/>.
2. James Gross, December 23, 2021: Avery Williams and Tiarra Braddock, "Man Holding Wife at Knifepoint Shot Dead by Officer, Akron Police Say," 19 News, last modified December 23, 2021, <https://www.cleveland19.com/2021/12/23/ohio-bci-investigates-akron-police-officer-involved-shooting/>.
3. Lawrence Rodgers, February 22, 2022: Brian Koster, "Police Release Bodycam Video after 2 People Found Dead in Home Following SWAT Situation in Summit County," 19 News, last modified March 1, 2022, <https://www.cleveland19.com/2022/03/01/police-release-bodycam-video-after-2-people-found-dead-home-following-swat-situation-summit-county/>.
4. Jayland Walker, June 27, 2022: Polo Sandoval and Zoe Sottile, "Family of Jayland Walker, 25-Year-Old Shot Dead by Police, Reaches \$4.85 Million Settlement with Akron," CNN, last modified October 21, 2024, <https://www.cnn.com/2024/10/21/us/jayland-walker-akron-police-shooting-settlement>.
5. Michael Jones, August 17, 2024: Abigail Bottar, "Grand Jury Chooses Not to Indict Akron Police Officers in Fatal Shooting of Michael Jones," WKSU, last modified August 14, 2025, <https://www.ideastream.org/law-justice/2025-08-13/grand-jury-chooses-not-to-indict-akron-police-officers-in-fatal-shooting-of-michael-jones>.
6. Jazmir Tucker, November 28, 2024: Anna Huntsman and Abigail Bottar, "Akron Police Release Bodycam Footage from Fatal Shooting of 15-Year-Old," WKSU, last modified December 5, 2024, <https://www.ideastream.org/law-justice/2024-12-05/akron-police-release-bodycam-footage-from-fatal-shooting-of-15-year-old>.
7. Marcus Smith, February 17, 2025: Andrew Meyer, "Akron releases bodycam video of fatal police shooting," Ideastream Public Media, last modified February 23, 2025, <https://www.ideastream.org/law-justice/2025-02-23/akron-releases-bodycam-video-of-fatal-police-shooting>.
2. 1. Charles Coleman, November 9, 2019: Michael Dakota, Sia Nyorkor, Rachel Vadaj and Simon Hannig, "Akron man firing shots into car, injuring man and 15-year-old boy, leads to officer-involved shooting," Cleveland19, November 09, 2019, <https://www.cleveland19.com/2019/11/09/officer-involved-shooting-started-when-two-cars-exchanged-gunfire-market-street/>.
2. Elijah Cade, January 7, 2020: Sean McDonnell, "Akron Officers Won't Be Charged in Shooting of Man after Jan. 7 Case," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 22, 2020, <https://www.beaconjournal.com/story/news/2020/10/22/akron-officers-wont-charged-shooting-man-after-chase/3725779001/>.
3. Unnamed Juvenile, September 03, 2022: Peggy Gallek, Ed Gallek, and Laura Morrison, "16-year-old injured in officer-involved shooting in Akron," Fox 8, last modified September 4, 2022, <https://fox8.com/news/multiple-arrested-after-police-involved-shooting-in-akron-i-team/>.
4. Unnamed Juvenile, April 1, 2024, "City of Akron Releases Personnel File of Officer Involved in Recent Shooting," City of Akron, April 8, 2024, https://www.akronohio.gov/news_detail_T17_R132.php.
5. Tavion Williams, April 1, 2024: Doug Brown, "Akron Police Fire Officer Who Shot 15-Year-Old, Charges Dropped against Teen," Signal Akron, last modified May 6, 2024, <https://signalakron.org/akron-police-fire-officer-who-shot-15-year-old-charges-dropped-against-tavion-koonce-williams-ryan-westlake/>.
6. Calvin Hunt, May 25, 2025, Anna Hunstman, "Akron police investigating after suspect, officers exchange gunfire over Memorial Day weekend." Ideastream Public Media, May 27, 2025, <https://www.ideastream.org/law-justice/2025-05-27/akron-police-investigating-after-suspect-officers-exchange-gunfire-over-memorial-day-weekend>.
7. Corey Phillips, November 11, 2025: Doug Brown, "Akron Police Shoot Man Who Was Kicked Out of an Ellen Bar on Tuesday Night," Signal Akron, last modified November 13, 2025, <https://signalakron.org/akron-police-shoot-man-who-was-kicked-out-of-an-ellet-bar-on-tuesday-night-karams/>.

In its proposal, PERF committed to do the following:

- Develop a stakeholder engagement strategy.
- Engage stakeholders through interviews and focus groups.
- Review APD's UOF policies and procedures.
- Generate a written report.
- Develop an implementation strategy for the recommendations contained in the report.

This report is the culmination of that work. It reflects extensive engagement with stakeholders; a careful examination of APD's existing policies and practices; and PERF's analysis informed by national standards, emerging best practices, and its experience working with police departments across the country. The findings and recommendations contained herein are intended to support APD and the City of Akron in strengthening accountability, enhancing officer and community safety, and building public trust.

PERF recognizes, however, that the successful implementation of these recommendations will require sustained effort beyond the issuance of this report. While ongoing implementation support was not explicitly identified in the RFP, PERF will remain engaged at the City's discretion. Such support can include participating in working group meetings, facilitating discussions among key stakeholders, and continuing to foster peer-to-peer learning opportunities to help APD and the City translate these recommendations into lasting organizational change.

Engagement / Meetings with Stakeholders

Before evaluating APD's UOF policies and procedures, PERF implemented a comprehensive engagement strategy designed to solicit broad-based input. This strategy included gathering opinions and perspectives from APD personnel across all ranks and divisions and engaging a wide range of non-law enforcement stakeholders—representatives from City government, civic and advocacy organizations, and community groups—to ensure the assessment reflected diverse perspectives.

From APD, PERF met with and interviewed the following:

- The chief
- The deputy chiefs
- A cross-section of captains, lieutenants, sergeants, and officers (across platoons)
- Members of the Training Division
- Members of the Office of Professional Standards and Accountability (OPSA)
- Members of the Street Narcotics Uniform Detail (SNUD)
- Members of the Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team

In addition, PERF met with a high-ranking member of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) Lodge #7, the collective bargaining unit representing all sworn APD personnel. PERF also observed portions of the Akron Civilian Police Academy, and a member of the PERF team participated in ride-alongs to gain first-hand insight into APD operations.³

PERF also engaged with a broad array of non-APD stakeholders and community members, including the following:

- The mayor
- The mayor's chief of staff
- The City Public Safety Strategist
- The City Public Engagement Strategist
- The City Public Information Officer
- The Community Engagement Working Group⁴
- The Independent Police Auditor (IPA), Deputy IPA, and former Police Auditor
- Members of the NAACP
- Members of Akron City Council
- Members of the Greater Akron Fellowship of Clergy
- Members of the Akron Citizens' Police Oversight Board (CPOB)
- Members of Freedom Bloc
- Representatives from Summit County Black Elected Officials
- Members of the Akron Interfaith Council
- Representatives from Moms Demand Action
- Representatives from Akron's business community
- Representatives from Summit County Public Safety
- Representatives from Community Support Services
- Representatives from the Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services (ADM) Board
- Representatives from the Urban League
- Faculty and staff from the University of Akron (UA) Department of Criminal Justice Studies and School of Law⁵

-
3. During one ride-along, the APD officer managed a mental health-related call, ultimately transporting the individual to a hospital for treatment. During transport, the individual urinated in the APD vehicle, which the officer dealt with calmly, adeptly, and compassionately. According to APD members, challenging incidents like this occur daily and are always handled professionally, reflecting the difficult realities officers navigate—realities the public is generally unaware of.
 4. This group, comprising various government, police, community, education, and faith leaders in Akron, was instrumental in suggesting meaningful methods of engagement.
 5. PERF intended and expected to collaborate closely with participants from UA, and representatives were invited to participate in weekly calls with the core stakeholder group throughout the project. However, most likely because of scheduling constraints, UA contributors could not participate as fully as PERF—and they themselves—had hoped.

In addition, PERF observed several meetings of Akron’s CPOB and the Akron City Council—both virtually and in person. PERF also met with a cohort of young men participating in the Beyond Expectations Barber College program.

To encourage further community input, the City and PERF created a confidential email address, which Akron publicized through social media and weekly newsletters. This email address allowed anyone—community members and law enforcement personnel alike—to confidentially share perspectives or request a virtual meeting with PERF. Despite these efforts, only one individual used the email address to contact PERF.

As PERF engaged with APD and non-law enforcement stakeholders, themes began to emerge and, with few exceptions, were consistent across groups.

APD Members/FOP Lodge #7

Since 2020, APD has experienced a substantial number of retirements and resignations, leaving the agency both understaffed and disproportionately young. As of this writing, APD is budgeted for between 455 and 470 sworn officers but is operating with 432. Of those, 31 percent have less than five years of experience, and 40 percent have less than six years. As a result, APD remains a notably young and understaffed department—a dynamic that would challenge any law enforcement agency.⁶

Officers—some of whom grew up in Akron, live there now, or both—told us that they genuinely enjoy their work but often feel misunderstood and underappreciated by some (not all) residents of a community struggling with persistent violence.⁷ Many also expressed the view that the vocal minority of critics does not reflect a broader, quieter majority supporting APD’s efforts to keep city residents safe. Personnel expressed understandable frustration that the community often does not see or appreciate the full scope of officers’ daily efforts to assist residents (see [note 3](#), for example) and support the community. In addition, nearly all felt that the public holds inaccurate beliefs about APD’s UOF rates and practices; they also voiced irritation that local media not only fails to correct these misconceptions but, in their view, often promotes and reinforces them.

6. An academy class of 31 recruits is in progress as of this writing. While their graduation will help address the numerical staffing shortfall at the APD, it will not remedy the ongoing lack of experience in the ranks. Newly sworn officers will require time, field training, and supervisory support before they can meaningfully offset current operational experience gaps.

7. Although Akron’s violent crime rate has declined from a high of 924 per 100,000 population in 2020 to 820 per 100,000 people in 2024, it is still higher than the national average (which has declined from 396 to 359 violent crimes per 100,000 people in the same period). “Akron Police Department, Ohio,” Crime Data Tool, accessed January 9, 2026, <https://crimedatatool.com/#state=Ohio&agency=Akron%20Police%20Department>; Tools for States to Address Crime, “50-State Crime Data,” Council of State Governments, accessed January 9, 2026, <https://projects.csqjusticecenter.org/tools-for-states-to-address-crime/50-state-crime-data/>.

For example, according to APD’s data dashboard, officers responded to 127,524 calls for service in 2025, of which 280 ultimately involved some type of UOF.⁸ While there is no current national benchmark for UOF per calls for service, this figure means that approximately 0.22 percent of all calls for service in Akron ended in some type of force, a very small percentage (especially considering that APD overcounts its UOF numbers, as discussed in “Reportable Force” beginning on [page 23](#)). Yet officers expressed concern that some members of the public seem to believe that nearly every call for service ends in a UOF—a perception that some city residents may hold for reasons of their own, but which is clearly misaligned with the data and seldom contextualized in local media reporting.

PERF agrees with APD that information about the department, its UOFs, and other matters that would cast the department in a better light is not effectively communicated to the public. We address this in detail later in this report in “Civilianization,” beginning on [page 72](#).

One highly unusual theme emerged consistently throughout our interviews with APD members. Knowing that PERF had been engaged to evaluate APD’s policies and protocols, at least one member of each cohort we spoke with raised *Graham v. Connor*, the seminal U.S. Supreme Court case dealing with police UOF.⁹ Officers at every rank told us, in one form or another, that they wanted their actions evaluated under *Graham*’s “objective reasonableness” standard and hoped PERF would offer no recommendations that deviated from that framework.¹⁰

This repeated reference to the *Graham* standard was striking because it surfaced in every conversation we had with APD members. In PERF’s extensive experience conducting hundreds of management studies, it is rare for personnel to spontaneously reference *Graham* at all, much less for it to arise unprompted in every interview. One unavoidable explanation for at least some of this departmental uniformity is that every member of APD—from the newest recruits to captains approaching retirement—is represented by the same collective bargaining unit, FOP Lodge #7.

This structure (one collective bargaining unit *and* one collective bargaining agreement), singular among other large Ohio police departments (see sidebar on [page 7](#)), is also unusual nationally and helps explain the remarkably cohesive perspective and messaging across all APD ranks. But having a single bargaining unit representing an entire police department throughout the rank structure is not best

8. Akron Police Department. *Community Engagement Dashboard*. January 7, 2025. Accessed January 12, 2026. https://cms2.revize.com/revize/akronoh/Documents/Departments/Police/Community%20Engagement/WebsiteDashboard_202512.pdf?t=202601071254460&t=202601071254460.

9. *Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989), <https://www.loc.gov/resource/usrep.usrep490386/>.

10. There was one notable exception: During one APD interview, a member said the *Graham* standard is often used to justify conduct, when in that member’s view, APD should focus on avoidance and continuous improvement.

practice—either from an employee rights or a management rights perspective.¹¹ Officers and supervisors have fundamentally different workplace interests, particularly in areas such as evaluation, discipline, and managerial authority.

When supervisors—who are responsible for evaluating, managing, and (when necessary) disciplining officers—belong to the same bargaining unit as the officers whose conduct they are reviewing, the result is not only the appearance of divided loyalty but also an inherent structural conflict of interest. This concern is illustrated by 2024 data, in which APD supervisors (including sergeants, OPSA members, and high-ranking APD staff) reviewed 301 UOF incidents involving 773 officers and concluded that only one was out of policy; this is an out-of-policy finding rate of one-third of 1 percent.¹² Additional long-term information from the police auditor who held the position for 16 years before the creation of the CPOB reflects a similar pattern: In that entire period, APD found its members' UOFs out of policy barely a handful of times.¹³

While it is theoretically possible that APD members seldom (or, to a first approximation, never) use excessive force, it is extremely unlikely in any agency of APD's size and operational tempo. Direct comparisons with other departments are difficult because most agencies publicize UOF policy compliance data in ways that discourage meaningful engagement; the Hillsboro (Oregon) Police Department (HPD) is one exception. HPD is smaller than APD, with slightly more than 200 sworn and unsworn members combined.¹⁴ According to its public-facing website, HPD had 117 UOFs in 2024, of which 5 were found out of policy, resulting in an out-of-policy rate of 4.1 percent¹⁵—nearly 12.5 times the APD's rate that year.

11. For a comprehensive list of case summaries about this and other labor management issues, see Americans for Effective Law Enforcement, "Bargaining Unit Determinations," AELE Law Library of Case Summaries: Employment & Labor Law for Public Safety Agencies, accessed January 12, 2026, <https://aele.org/law/Digests/empl20.html>.

12. This information is based on APD's internal UOF data.

13. After this report was drafted, PERF was advised that APD's 2025 use-of-force data had been finalized and that four UOF incidents had been deemed out of policy that year. As noted in recommendation 53, APD would benefit from making final out-of-policy UOF determinations publicly available on its website or transparency portal.

14. Hillsboro Police Department, *Hillsboro Police Department 2023–2024 Annual Report* (Hillsboro, OR: Hillsboro Police Department, 2024), <https://www.hillsboro-oregon.gov/our-city/departments/police/reports-and-policies/annual-report>.

15. "Hillsboro Police Use of Force Reporting," Hillsboro Oregon, last modified August 11, 2025, <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrljoiZGJmNW11YjQtN2RmYy00OWEwLWI3NjgtOWMwZGJhN2UyMzQxliwidCI6ImMxYzBkYWVmLWU0OWEtNDYxZC1iNDkyLWRhZTM0NjA2NmY5MSJ9&pageName=ReportSection>.

Other Large Ohio Police Departments and Their Contract or Bargaining Unit Information

- **Cleveland.** The Cleveland Police Patrolmen’s Association represents patrol officers and trainees, and the FOP-Supervisors Unit represents sworn ranks above patrol officer. *Collective Bargaining Agreement between the City of Cleveland and the Cleveland Police Patrolmen’s Association (C.P.P.A.) Patrol Officer Bargaining Unit* (Cleveland, OH: City of Cleveland, 2025), <https://www.clevelandohio.gov/city-hall/departments/human-resources/collective-bargaining-agreements>; *Collective Bargaining Agreement between the City of Cleveland and Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge No. 8* (Cleveland, OH: City of Cleveland, 2025), <https://www.clevelandohio.gov/city-hall/departments/human-resources/collective-bargaining-agreements>.
- **Cincinnati.** While sworn members are represented by FOP (Queen City Lodge No. 69), there are two separate collective bargaining agreements—one for officers and police specialists (i.e., nonsupervisory ranks) and another for supervisory ranks. *Labor Agreement by and between Queen City Lodge No. 69 Fraternal Order of Police and the City of Cincinnati: Non-Supervisors* (Cincinnati, OH: City of Cincinnati, 2024), <https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/hr/labor-relations/police-contract-non-supervisors-2024-2027/>; *Labor Agreement by and between Queen City Lodge No. 69 Fraternal Order of Police and the City of Cincinnati: Supervisors* (Cincinnati, OH: City of Cincinnati, 2024), <https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/hr/labor-relations/police-contract-supervisors-2024-2027/>.
- **Columbus.** FOP Capital City Lodge No. 9 represents all members of the department, but there are two distinct bargaining units – one for full-time sworn police officers below the rank of sergeant and another for sergeants and above. *Agreement between the City of Columbus and the Fraternal Order of Police Capital City Lodge No. 9* (Columbus, OH: City of Columbus, 2024), <https://www.columbus.gov/Government/Departments/Human-Resources/Labor-Relations>.
- **Dayton.** The FOP Officers Unit covers patrol officers and corporals, and the FOP Supervisors Unit covers sergeants and above. *Agreement: Fraternal Order of Police John C. Post Lodge No. 44 Officers’ Unit and City of Dayton, Ohio* (Dayton, OH: City of Dayton, 2025), <https://www.daytonohio.gov/893/Labor-Contracts>; *Agreement: Fraternal Order of Police John C. Post Lodge No. 44 Supervisors’ Unit and City of Dayton, Ohio* (Dayton, OH: City of Dayton, 2025), <https://www.daytonohio.gov/893/Labor-Contracts>.
- **Toledo.** The Toledo Police Patrolman’s Association represents patrol officers, while the Police Command Officers’ Association represents sergeants, lieutenants, captains, and police secretaries. Toledo Municipal Code § 2129 Toledo Police Patrolman’s Association (2012), https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/toledo/latest/toledo_oh/0-0-0-122475; Toledo Municipal Code § 2109 Toledo Police Command Officers’ Association (2012), https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/toledo/latest/toledo_oh/0-0-0-117009.

The exceedingly low rate of out-of-policy findings in APD's UOF reviews raises serious questions about whether shared union affiliation between reviewers and the officers under review compromises the objectivity of internal assessments. Even if every one of these findings were entirely legitimate, the appearance of near-unanimous "in-policy" findings creates its own credibility problem—it *looks* as if the outcomes were preordained and therefore undermines public trust. Separating the bargaining units for supervisory personnel and line officers would meaningfully reduce both actual and perceived conflicts of interest, thereby strengthening the independence and credibility of APD's internal oversight process and public confidence in it.

Equally important, and distinct from the patent conflict-of-interest issue, separate bargaining units allow for more focused, role-appropriate negotiations. Front-line officers typically prioritize issues such as safety protections, shift assignments, and disciplinary safeguards—particularly early in their careers. Supervisors, by contrast, tend to focus on management authority, leadership responsibilities, and pay structures tied to their oversight roles. Differentiated bargaining units enable each group to negotiate based on its distinct needs and workplace realities, ensuring that agreements reflect the unique responsibilities of each position.

In our interviews with APD personnel, we asked why members have never sought to establish separate bargaining units—one for officers and one for supervisors. The response was uniform: "There's strength in numbers." While understandable, this platitude reflects a simplified view of what, in practice, is a more complex structural and labor-relations issue.

As APD continues to evolve, its sworn members should consider whether a different bargaining unit structure would better serve their interests and the department's broader needs. Officers and supervisors have distinct roles, responsibilities, and workplace priorities; separating their bargaining units could allow each group to receive more focused and appropriate representation aligned with those differing interests. Thoughtfully evaluating whether a two-unit structure would improve organizational accountability, support supervisors in fulfilling their oversight duties, better address officers' specific labor-relations needs, and enhance public trust in APD's internal review systems may offer meaningful long-term benefits for employees and the community alike.

Graham v. Connor

Graham v. Connor is a Supreme Court civil case, and variations of its “reasonable officer” standard are cited in criminal statutes and case law across the country, including in Ohio.* But that standard is a baseline—a floor, not a ceiling. PERF consistently recommends that departments adopt policies that *exceed* constitutional minimums.

A useful analogy comes from sports: *Graham* represents the minimum qualifying time needed to enter a race. Meeting that threshold may keep an officer within constitutional bounds, but high-performing athletes do not aim merely to qualify—they strive to excel. The same principle applies to modern policing. Stopping at “reasonable” conduct, without examining whether an outcome could have been avoided or improved, misses an opportunity to learn, take accountability, and grow.

However, recommending that policies exceed constitutional floors does not rewrite Ohio’s criminal code or alter judicial precedent. Ultimately, policies coexist with—but do not invalidate—statutory mandates in determining criminal liability for law enforcement officers.

Failing to look beyond the minimum legal threshold can erode community trust—and in Akron, according to many of the people we interviewed, it already has. Former Camden County (New Jersey) Police Department Chief Scott Thompson captured this sentiment well: **“We lose a lot of credibility with the public when the standard of whether we did something right or not is whether we committed a crime.”**[†]

* *State v. White*, 142 Ohio St.3d 277, 2015-Ohio-492,

<https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/rod/docs/pdf/o/2015/2015-Ohio-492.pdf>.

† PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *Managing Officer Involved Critical Incidents* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2025),

<https://www.policeforum.org/assets/ManagingOICIs.pdf>.

Non-Law Enforcement

We interviewed numerous stakeholders in a variety of roles outside APD, and—understandably—their views were less uniform than those expressed by APD members. **Most agreed that the majority of APD officers perform their duties well and genuinely care about the community.** At the same time, many raised concerns about a smaller group of officers they perceived as having poor attitudes or an unusually high number of UOF incidents. As one participant put it, “Most are good. But they are silent when the few who aren’t good are bad.” Several also expressed disappointment in what they saw as a broader culture that appears reluctant to address recurring issues.

Some of these perceptions stem from APD’s UOF documentation and categorization practices, which count many events that do not involve actual physical force, thereby inflating the department’s reported UOF numbers. We address this issue more fully in “Reportable Force” beginning on [page 23](#). Community perceptions are also shaped

by the absence of a professional, nonsworn public information officer—an important gap, given the many commendable yet often unpublicized actions APD officers perform daily. We discuss this further in “Civilianization” beginning on [page 72](#).

One theme did emerge: Many community members believe APD focuses primarily on whether its UOFs are “reasonable” under *Graham v. Connor* rather than on whether they are avoidable. As noted in “APD Members/FOP Lodge #7” on [page 5](#), this project was unusual in that at least one member of every APD cohort we interviewed raised the *Graham* standard. The fact that non-law enforcement community members have heard this reference often enough to cite the case themselves underscores how deeply this perspective has permeated discussions around UOF in Akron.

Office of the Independent Police Auditor (OIPA)/Akron Citizens’ Police Oversight Board (CPOB)

Many non-APD stakeholders also expressed significant frustration with the current IPA/CPOB process. Several perceive APD as dismissive—even condescending—toward the OIPA and, by extension, toward Akron voters who approved the city charter amendment establishing the OIPA’s and CPOB’s authority. Others noted that, regardless of APD’s posture, CPOB’s effectiveness is inherently constrained because the charter amendment did not grant it meaningful enforcement authority over its recommendations.

PERF reviewed numerous IPA reports; attended multiple IPA meetings; and interviewed the IPA, Deputy IPA, and several board members. Based on those reviews and interviews, we offer the following observations.

Background

In 2022, 62 percent of Akron voters¹⁶ cast their ballots in favor of creating a police oversight board and an IPA by amendment to the Akron City Charter.¹⁷ While it appears to have taken some time and effort to implement the charter amendment’s mandates, OIPA and CPOB are, as of this writing, fully functioning—reviewing all UOFs and complaints and posting those reviews on their website.¹⁸

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16. Emblematic of the recurring “us vs. them” dynamic in Akron, when we raised this topic, we heard from some in the APD that total Akron voter turnout was low that year. The voter turnout in Summit County in the November 8, 2022, general election was 54.6 percent, which is not unusually low for an even-numbered off-year general election: Turnout in 2018 was 58 percent, in 2019 was 30 percent, in 2020 was 75 percent, in 2021 was 20 percent, in 2023 was 52 percent, in 2024 was 72 percent, and in 2025 was 28 percent. “Archives: Elections,” Summit County Board of Elections, accessed March 5, 2026, <https://www.boe.ohio.gov/summit/elections/>.
 17. Danielle Langenfeld, “What’s Next for Akron’s Police Oversight Board,” WJW Fox8, last modified November 9, 2022, <https://fox8.com/news/whats-next-for-akrons-police-oversight-board/>.
 18. “Citizens’ Police Oversight Board,” City of Akron, accessed January 27, 2026, https://www.akronohio.gov/government/boards_and_commissions/citizens_police_oversight_board.php.

Procedurally, APD first conducts its own investigation into all civilian complaints against its officers and all UOFs. The complete case file is then forwarded to OIPA, which independently reviews the investigation and APD’s policy determinations.

The OIPA then reviews body-worn camera (BWC) footage, reports, and any other relevant materials to assess not only whether the incident complied with policy but also whether it indicates a need to improve policy, training, equipment, or tactics. The CPOB votes on whether to accept or adopt the IPA’s findings and recommendations, and the resulting reports are ultimately published on the CPOB website.

CPOB’s mission to look beyond strict policy compliance and assess whether incidents reveal opportunities for growth and change has drawn the ire of some in the policing community, prompting a fairly public back-and-forth.¹⁹ PERF will not comment on that debate, other than to note the straightforward fact that CPOB and the OIPA are carrying out the mission endorsed by 62 percent of Akron voters in 2022. Finding a way to move forward that honors the will of those voters—the same people APD serves—would be an important step toward building trust and shared purpose.

OIPA – PERF Audit of Cases

OIPA produces numerous reports each year, many of which include recommendations for policy, training, or other operational improvements. To better understand the types of incidents OIPA has reviewed and to assess its findings and recommendations, PERF examined 59 reports issued by OIPA between May 16, 2024, and January 28, 2025. In each of the cases reviewed, APD concluded that the involved officer(s) did not violate departmental policy. OIPA’s findings relative to the 59 cases reviewed by PERF fall into the following categories:

- **14 incidents.** OIPA concurred with APD’s finding of no policy violation and issued no recommendations.

In these cases, OIPA determined that the officer’s actions were consistent with APD policy and OIPA did not identify any opportunities for improvement.

- **8 incidents.** OIPA did not concur with APD’s finding of no policy violation and issued recommendations.

In these cases, OIPA determined that the officer’s actions were inconsistent with APD policy and OIPA identified specific areas requiring corrective action or improvement.

19. Anthony W. Finnell, “Why Civilian Oversight of Police Needs Advocacy as Much as Objectivity,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 2, 2025, <https://www.beaconjournal.com/story/opinion/columns/guest/2025/10/02/anthony-finnell-why-civilian-oversight-of-police-needs-advocacy-as-much-as-objectivity-akron/86461068007/>; Kevin R. Davis, “Akron Police Auditor Prefers Activist Agenda over Law and Department Procedure,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 16, 2025, <https://www.beaconjournal.com/story/opinion/columns/guest/2025/10/16/akron-police-auditor-anthony-finnell-pushes-activist-agenda-says-retired-detective-opinion/86698673007/>.

- **37 incidents.** OIPA concurred with APD’s finding of no policy violation but nevertheless issued recommendations.

In these cases, although OIPA agreed that the officer’s actions complied with APD policy, OIPA identified opportunities for policy refinement, training enhancements, or operational improvements intended to reduce the likelihood of similar incidents in the future.

Of the 59 OIPA reports that PERF examined, 45 contained recommendations. PERF analyzed those recommendations to assess both their volume and type, which is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Types and volume of recommendations in 59 OIPA reports PERF analyzed

Recommendation category	Count
Policy	84
Training	93
Miscellaneous	32
Total	209

The appendices contain the full list of OIPA recommendations:

- [Appendix 2.](#) Policy Recommendations
- [Appendix 3.](#) Training Recommendations
- [Appendix 4.](#) Miscellaneous Recommendations

Duplicate/Repeated Recommendations

Although OIPA issued 209 recommendations, several were repeats—the same or nearly identical recommendations appeared in more than one report. There were, therefore, 184 unique recommendations stemming from 59 reviewed incidents over a seven-month period, still a substantial number for any department to absorb or integrate effectively.

Compounding this problem, the reports do not identify the repeated recommendations with language such as “as previously recommended . . .,” so recurring guidance—sometimes lightly reworded—may not be immediately familiar to a reader at APD handling a deluge of suggestions. Recommendations would be easier to track and sort into columns for new issues and longstanding, unresolved ones if they included cross-references or other guideposts.

Following are the recommendations that appeared in more than one report.

Policy

- **Mandatory BWC use during all secondary employment.** Eliminate the BWC exemption for extra jobs to ensure transparency. (5 occurrences)
- **Implement WRAP time limits and tracking.** Include creation of a WRAP log documenting deployment time, rationale, medical checks, and transport duration. (4)
- **Add clear WRAP [restraint device] deployment criteria.** Require supervisory authorization before WRAP deployment except in exigent circumstances; prohibit WRAP use until breathing/airway/consciousness are confirmed stable after CEW exposure or prolonged struggle; mandate continuous monitoring. (3)
- **Limit head strikes.** Adopt explicit restrictions on closed fist strikes to the head, authorizing them only where deadly force would be otherwise justified. (3)
- **Foot pursuit policy enhancements.** Adopt a dedicated Foot Pursuit Policy requiring risk–benefit analysis before initiating/continuing foot pursuit and discouraging high–risk tactics at the end of a chase (e.g., CEW on hard surfaces). (2)
- **Prohibit misrepresentation of discretionary authority as mandatory policy.** Prohibit officers from stating or implying discretionary actions are “required by policy” when they are not. (2)

Training

- **Reaffirm policy requirement.** Reaffirm that all prisoners must be seat belted—no exceptions. (3)
- **Seatbelt policy.** Pre–position and secure resistant subjects with minimal risk. (3)
- **CEW [conducted energy weapon] cycle management and reassessment protocol.** Reinforce that each CEW activation must be justified with rapid reassessment between cycles. (2)
- **Reinforce noncustodial enforcement training for low–level traffic stops.** Institute mandatory training emphasizing noncustodial enforcement strategies for low–level traffic violations and summons–eligible offenses. (2)
- **Bystander involvement.** Train officers to default to time/distance/additional resources rather than relying on bystanders. (2)

Miscellaneous

- Require supervisors to document every policy deviation with remedial actions taken. (3)
- Prohibit subjective justifications for ignoring or modifying policy in practice. (3)
- **Enhance supervisory review of force arising from summons–only encounters.** (2)

Impact of Recommendation Volume and Redundancy

This manner of issuing recommendations—characterized by high volume, limited prioritization, insufficient cross-referencing, and frequent repetition—has contributed to a concerning trend: **APD appears not to take any of OIPA's recommendations seriously**. This disregard should not be interpreted as complete apathy or institutional resistance to improvement. Rather, the continuous influx of recommendations diminishes their visibility and perceived urgency, making it challenging to distinguish findings that warrant prompt corrective action from those that reflect lower-impact or aspirational observations. Consequently, even well-supported recommendations often fail to receive the focused attention they merit.

This dynamic is further complicated by the extremely high rate at which OIPA concurs with APD's ultimate determinations regarding UOF being within policy. Between March 25, 2024, and January 13, 2026, OIPA reviewed **478** UOF incidents. In **465** of those cases, OIPA agreed with APD that the force used was within policy (i.e., "objectively reasonable"), for a concurrence rate of **97 percent**. Such a high rate of agreement likely reinforces APD's perception that the volume of recommendations from OIPA does not reflect systemic concerns that demand substantive action.

In the summer of 2024, the City administration committed to a process under which the mayor would respond to OIPA's recommendations within 45 days or provide an explanation for declining to do so.²⁰ However, according to OIPA, it has received relatively few responses to date.²¹ PERF reviewed a sample of the mayor's—and, more recently, the Chief of Public Safety's—responses to OIPA recommendations and found that, when issued, the responses were generally well reasoned and informed by APD leadership. Nonetheless, the response process overall has taken longer than anticipated, has not functioned effectively, and appears increasingly strained by the volume of recommendations issued by OIPA.

Some APD personnel suggested that the large number of recommendations issued by OIPA and CPOB may, in practice, place greater emphasis on justifying OIPA's oversight framework than on delivering focused, actionable guidance to the department. PERF does not share that view; however, we do believe that APD and OIPA/CPOB would benefit from a more structured, collaborative communication process. Establishing a clearer mechanism for dialogue and feedback would ensure that recommendations are more focused, actionable, and aligned with operational realities—ultimately improving the value of oversight for all parties involved.

20. Doug Brown, "Malik Commits to 45-Day Response to Akron Police Auditors' Reports on Use-of-Force Cases," Signal Akron, last modified July 11, 2024, <https://signalakron.org/malik-commits-to-45-day-response-to-akron-police-auditors-reports-on-use-of-force-cases-shammas-malik-anthony-finnell-kemp-boyd/>.

21. Abigail Bottar, "Report: Akron Police Oversight Board Has Made 39 Recommendations. City Hasn't Responded to Half," WYSO, last modified February 19, 2026, <https://www.wyso.org/2026-02-19/report-akron-police-oversight-board-has-made-39-recommendations-city-hasnt-responded-to-half>. This article referencing 39 recommendations refers to recommendations made pursuant to the verbal agreement; the actual number of recommendations issued by OIPA is far greater.

Moving Forward

Regardless of whether community members greeted CPOB/OIPA with optimism or skepticism, the entity is not currently fulfilling its intended role of driving community-focused police reform. While it has made a meaningful contribution to transparency by publicly posting its reports, the volume of its recommendations has begun to eclipse their practical value, making it difficult to identify specific changes in APD directly attributable to OIPA. This is not to say all OIPA recommendations lack merit; many are well-reasoned and echoed in this report.

A more effective path forward requires a structured process to prevent OIPA's recommendations from becoming overwhelming and indistinguishable, effectively reducing them all to ambient noise. This system should establish a reliable feedback loop and acknowledge that some incidents will not warrant policy or training modifications—particularly in a young and understaffed department with limited training capacity. **In short, APD and OIPA need a mechanism to distinguish high-value, actionable recommendations from lower-impact observations so they can address meaningful issues without overloading the system.**

As outlined in the “Critical Incident Review Board (CIRB)” section (beginning on [page 51](#)) and the “OIPA Recommendations” section (beginning on [page 78](#)), we recommend that APD establish a CIRB. We further recommend the following:

- Before each CIRB meeting, OIPA should provide the board with a list of recurring or otherwise significant recommendations.
- Part of CIRB's responsibilities should be reviewing these recommendations, discussing them, and determining whether to implement them or respond with a brief explanation of why implementation is not necessary or viable.
- OIPA should publicly report, through a portal, the recommendations it submitted to CIRB, whether APD concurred, and what actions were taken. When APD declines to adopt a recommendation, the same portal can be used to document the rationale for that decision.

OIPA should ensure that this system does not become a repository for discussing minor, one-off issues. As discussed in the “Types and Volume of Recommendations” section on [page 12](#), OIPA issued 93 training-related recommendations alone during the seven-month period PERF reviewed. CIRB consideration should be reserved for major themes and the most critical recommendations.

Several APD personnel expressed frustration that OIPA occasionally recommends actions the department has already implemented or mischaracterizes existing policy. The proposed portal can also be a mechanism for APD to clearly communicate such corrections.

This approach benefits from full transparency. A public portal will allow community members to view OIPA's recommendations and APD's CIRB responses, enabling them to make well-informed assessments of the community oversight system's performance.

Recommendations

PERF recognizes that some officers may be wary of the scope and volume of changes recommended in this report, and that reaction is understandable.

Policing has undergone sustained scrutiny in recent years, and new policies or training initiatives are often perceived as criticism of past performance rather than support for future success. That is not the intent of this work. Throughout this review, PERF found that APD officers demonstrated a strong commitment to their profession and to the Akron community they serve. Accordingly, the recommendations in this report are not intended as criticism of APD or its personnel. Rather, they are intended as practical measures that, once implemented, can better equip officers and supervisors to perform an already demanding and complex job—one made increasingly challenging by evolving expectations, heightened public scrutiny, and the dynamic nature of modern policing.

At their core, the recommendations that follow are **intended to protect** officers, the APD, and the community. Clear policy, consistent training, and structured decision-making frameworks can reduce uncertainty in high-stress encounters, help officers avoid unnecessary force, and provide a defensible foundation for actions taken in rapidly evolving situations. They also reduce the agency's exposure to civil liability and the likelihood that individual officers will face criminal investigation or professional discipline.

Evidence-based policing is not merely a compliance exercise; it is a risk-reduction strategy. For instance, research on PERF's ICAT (Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics) program has shown that agencies implementing ICAT experience reductions in use-of-force incidents and decreases in injuries to both officers and civilians—without corresponding increases in officer harm.²² This finding reinforces a critical point: improving judgment, pacing, communication, and tactical decision-making enhances officer safety while also improving outcomes for the public.

Training that equips officers to slow encounters; reassess threats; use time, distance, and communication; and clearly articulate their decisions strengthens operational effectiveness and legal defensibility. Policies and training grounded in these principles help ensure that when force is necessary, it is applied appropriately—and when it is avoidable, officers have the tools to prevent it. The recommendations that follow are intended to advance that goal—minimizing force—and support APD officers by providing clearer guidance, stronger decision-making frameworks, and practical tools that protect everyone involved.

22. Robin S. Engel et al., "Assessing the Impact of De-escalation Training on Police Behavior: Reducing Police Use of Force in the Louisville, KY Metro Police Department," *Criminology & Public Policy* 21, no. 2 (2022), 199–233, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12574>.

Recommendation Implementation Dashboard

The remainder of this report presents recommendations for policy updates, training enhancements, and other improvements related to APD. However, this is not the first time Akron has commissioned an external review of its policing practices, including PERF's 2011 Organizational Assessment of the APD.²³ Across our conversations with stakeholders, a recurring theme emerged: There is no clear record of whether prior recommendations from earlier reports were implemented, partially implemented, or never acted upon. This report must not become another study that identifies needed reforms without a mechanism for follow-through. To be meaningful, the recommendations that follow require ownership, transparency, and a structured system for tracking progress, ensuring that the City and APD can demonstrate what has been implemented, what remains outstanding, and why.

Several agencies subject to consent decrees have implemented public dashboards to inform the public about their progress.²⁴ However, agencies need not be under a consent decree to create a public-facing dashboard that communicates the status of reform efforts. For example, after receiving a set of recommendations from the Prince George's County Police Reform Work Group, Prince George's County, Maryland, developed a public tracker listing each **Recommendation**, its **Implementation Status**, and **Action Taken**.²⁵

Akron should implement a comparable public-facing dashboard. While the City can look to Prince George's County as a model, it should adapt the format to include the following columns: **Recommendation**, **Implementation Status**, **Action Taken**, and **Reason for Nonimplementation**. This structure would require APD to either adopt each recommendation or to explain clearly why they will not implement it. Such a mechanism would promote transparency and allow the public to assess whether APD and the City are making measurable progress toward the reforms outlined in this report. As noted in the "Implementation" section ([page 81](#)), responsibility for managing and updating this resource should rest with the City's Chief of Public Safety.

Recommendation 1. Akron should create a public-facing implementation dashboard to track all recommendations contained in this report. This dashboard will promote transparency, accountability, and community trust by providing a centralized, regularly updated source of information on the status of the recommendations.

23. Police Executive Research Forum, *Organizational Assessment of the Akron Police Department* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, February 2011).

24. "Consent Decree Progress Dashboard," Baltimore Police Department, last modified December 15, 2025, <https://www.baltimorepolice.org/transparency/cd-dashboard/>; "Consent Decree Compliance Dashboard," Chicago Police Department, accessed February 17, 2026, <https://www.chicagopolice.org/statistics-data/data-dashboards/consent-decree-compliance-dashboard/>; Newark (NJ) Police Consent Decree & Planning Division, accessed March 5, 2026, <https://www.npdconsentdecree.org/>.

25. "Police Reform," Prince George's County Maryland, accessed March 5, 2026, <https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/departments-offices/police-reform>.

Policy Review

Review of APD's UOF policies was the most significant aspect of this project. The PERF team reviewed APD policies related to UOF for thoroughness and compliance with recognized policing practices. PERF also examined whether APD's policies provide officers with a clear understanding of the department's rules, expectations, and guidelines, particularly regarding UOF.

Use of Force

The decision to use force is significant; it requires continuous assessment of the situation, threats, options, and risks, **with the overarching goal of resolving all encounters peacefully**. PERF's work in this area is unparalleled.

Specifically, PERF reviewed the following APD policies:

- Policy P-2021-013 Resisting Arrest/Use of Force Procedure
- Policy P-2023-057 Conducted Energy Weapon (CEW) Procedure
- Policy P-2020-003 Chemical Defense Spray Procedures
- Policy P-2023-068 In-Custody Death or Serious Injury Investigation Procedure

As APD implements PERF's recommendations for modifications to its UOF policies, the agency should present those modifications to its members and then incorporate them into future UOF training modules. (See training recommendations beginning on [page 60](#).)

Comprehensive UOF Policy

As a foundational improvement, APD should consolidate all force-related policies into a single, comprehensive document organized into clearly defined sections. Instead of maintaining multiple standalone directives, this unified structure would streamline policy access, reduce confusion, and enhance usability for personnel at all levels.

PERF's experience shows that officers consistently prefer to have all force-related guidance in a single policy, making it easier to reference expectations and requirements in real time. This model has been successfully implemented in several agencies:

- **Virginia Beach Police Department (VBPD)** maintains a comprehensive Use of Force/Response to Resistance policy that incorporates all related directives, including policies governing less-lethal tools such as electronic control weapons (ECW), OC (oleoresin capsicum) spray (pepper spray), and batons.²⁶

26. VBPD (Virginia Beach Police Department), "515 Response to Resistance," General Order, last modified June 16, 2025, <https://police.virginiabeach.gov/your-vbpd/departments-policies>.

- **Baltimore (MD) Police Department (BPD)**—operating under a federally monitored consent decree—similarly consolidates all force-related policies in a single comprehensive document.²⁷

A major benefit of this approach is the ability to clearly highlight core principles—such as the *sanctity of life* and *proportionality*—in one central location. This helps reinforce that these guiding principles apply universally across all force categories and decision-making contexts.

Recommendation 2. APD should consolidate all force-related policies into a single, comprehensive document organized by clearly defined sections. This restructuring will improve clarity, strengthen consistency, and enhance officers' ability to quickly access critical information.

Policy P-2021-013 Resisting Arrest/Use of Force Procedure

Policy P-2021-013 Resisting Arrest/Use of Force Procedure serves as APD's primary UOF policy. The following sections highlight strengths of the current policy and offer targeted recommendations to better align it with emerging best practices.

Strengths

APD's UOF policy contains several notable strengths that are often absent from comparable agencies' policies. Key positive elements include the following:

- **Commitment to de-escalation.** The policy provides both a definition of de-escalation and concrete examples of appropriate strategies. These examples include the use of nonconfrontational verbal techniques, empathy, and active listening, as well as tactical considerations such as creating time, maintaining distance, and using available cover.
- **Restrictions on shooting at moving vehicles.** The policy clearly limits the circumstances under which officers may discharge their firearms at a moving vehicle. Officers are prohibited from doing so unless an occupant poses an imminent threat of deadly force by means other than the vehicle, or the vehicle itself is being deliberately used as a deadly weapon and all other reasonable defensive options—including simply moving out of its path—have been exhausted or are not feasible.

Despite these strengths, the policy's overall tone does not reinforce a strong organizational commitment to minimizing force whenever possible. Although de-escalation is referenced, the policy's framing does not consistently promote a broader philosophy that prioritizes preserving life and reducing reliance on force as a central guiding principle.

27. "Policy 1115 Use of Force," Baltimore Police Department, last modified March 11, 2024, <https://www.baltimorepolice.org/transparency/bpd-policies/1115-use-force>.

PERF's National Role in Shaping Use of Force Standards

PERF's review of APD's UOF policies, training, and practices comes at a time of heightened national scrutiny. Since 2010, PERF has convened hundreds of police leaders and experts to develop actionable strategies to reduce unnecessary force. This work has produced widely adopted principles and training programs that have helped and continue to help agencies move beyond compliance toward prevention and accountability.

Much of PERF's work focuses on police interactions with people who (a) are unarmed or armed with weapons other than firearms and, (b) are behaving erratically or dangerously because of a mental health crisis, drug addiction, disability, or other conditions. When police encounter a suspect displaying a firearm, their options are limited. However, when there is no firearm, officers generally have more opportunities to slow the situation down and use communication skills and defensive tactics to buy time, build trust, and defuse the situation without resorting to force.

PERF has issued the following reports detailing these principles:

- *15 Principles for Reducing the Risk of Restraint-Related Death* (2024). Guidance on minimizing harm during physical restraint.*
- *Suicide by Cop: Protocol and Training Guide* (2019). Tools for recognizing and responding to suicide-by-cop scenarios.†
- *ICAT: Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics* (2016). Scenario-based training for defusing critical incidents.‡
- ***Guiding Principles on Use of Force*** (2016). 30 foundational recommendations for modern UOF policy.§
- *Re-Engineering Training on Police Use of Force* (2015). A call to overhaul outdated training models.**
- *Defining Moments for Police Chiefs* (2015). Leadership insights for navigating high-stakes decisions††

PERF's *Guiding Principles* report is the core document of this work, providing 30 recommendations, including the following:

- Policy & Ethics
 - The sanctity of human life should be at the heart of everything an agency does.
 - Police use of force must meet the test of proportionality.
 - Prohibit deadly force against individuals who pose a danger only to themselves.
- Training & Response
 - Adopt de-escalation as a formal agency policy.
 - Scenario-based training should be prevalent, challenging, and realistic.
 - Provide a prompt supervisory response to critical incidents.
- Tactics & Tools
 - Use distance, cover, and time to replace outdated concepts like the “21-foot rule.”
 - The Critical Decision-Making Model offers a structured approach to incidents.
 - Duty to intervene: Officers must *prevent* excessive force.
 - Promptly render first aid to respect the sanctity of life.

PERF's training program, ICAT: Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics, provides officers with the tools, skills, and options they need to implement the Guiding Principles and to safely defuse a range of critical incidents. ICAT training has been independently studied and has been associated with decreases in the use of force and in injuries to officers and citizens alike.**

PERF provided an ICAT train-the-trainer class to APD in early 2025 and returned to observe several classes during APD's implementation phase for quality control purposes. PERF's trainers were impressed with the APD instructor. However, unlike most ICAT-trained agencies, it appears that at APD, ICAT was more of a checkbox training than a philosophical shift. We address this issue in more depth in "The Critical Decision-Making Model" beginning on [page 29](#).

* PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *15 Principles to Reduce the Risk of Restraint Related Death* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2024), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/Restraint.pdf>.

† PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *Suicide by Cop: Protocol and Training Guide* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2019), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/SBCTrainingGuide.pdf>.

‡ PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *ICAT: Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics. A Training Guide for Defusing Critical Incidents* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2016), <http://www.policeforum.org/assets/icattrainingguide.pdf>.

§ PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *Guiding Principles on Use of Force* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2016), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/guidingprinciples1.pdf>.

** PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *Re-Engineering Training On Police Use of Force* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2015), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/reengineeringtraining1.pdf>.

†† PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *Defining Moments for Police Chiefs* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2015), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/definingmoments.pdf>.

‡‡ Robin S. Engel et al., "Assessing the Impact of De-escalation Training on Police Behavior: Reducing Police Use of Force in the Louisville, KY Metro Police Department," *Criminology & Public Policy* 21, no. 2 (2022), 199–233, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12574>.

The following sections outline opportunities to improve the policy.

Title

APD should change its force policy title to **“Use of Force”** instead of **“Resisting Arrest/Use of Force Procedure.”** *Resisting arrest* is a criminal charge, not a universal element of force incidents, and including it in the policy title inaccurately suggests that force is used only when a subject resists arrest. This framing emphasizes the subject’s behavior at the outset rather than the officer’s decision-making, and it subtly minimizes APD’s responsibility to document, evaluate, and justify UOFs.

Nearly all modern agencies that are or were operating under federal consent decrees—including Seattle,²⁸ Baltimore,²⁹ and Cleveland³⁰—title their force policies simply **“Use of Force.”** This terminology is neutral; standard; legally consistent; and readily understood by officers, community members, and oversight bodies.

Removing “Resisting Arrest” from the title also improves public perception. Especially in a community where some believe (accurately or not) that APD almost automatically justifies its officers’ UOFs,³¹ language matters. Leading a policy title with a criminal offense can appear to pre-justify a UOF by framing it as a response to the subject’s misconduct. A neutral title demonstrates accountability by centering the policy on officer conduct—not on automatically assigning blame to the subject. It also signals that force incidents will be scrutinized in accordance with professional standards, departmental expectations, and constitutional requirements.

Recommendation 3. APD should change the name of its UOF policy by removing the reference to “Resisting Arrest” and renaming it simply “Use of Force.” This will ensure the policy title accurately reflects the full range of force incidents, reinforces contemporary professional standards, and communicates to both officers and the community that APD evaluates force based on objective decision-making rather than assumptions about a subject’s behavior.

28. “8.400-POL-1 Use of Force Reporting and Investigation,” Seattle Police Department, last modified September 1, 2024, <https://public.powerdms.com/Sea4550/tree/documents/2042947>.

29. “Policy 1115 Use of Force” (see [note 27](#)).

30. “2.01.03 Use of Force – General,” *General Police Orders* (Cleveland, OH: Cleveland Division of Police, 2023), <https://www.clevelandohio.gov/sites/clevelandohio/files/Public%20Safety/Police/2.01.03%20Use%20of%20Force%20-%20General.pdf>.

31. See [page 4](#), noting that in 2024, APD reviewed 301 UOF incidents involving 773 officers and concluded that only one officer’s UOF was out of policy.

Reportable Force

As noted in the “APD Members/FOP Lodge #7” section on [page 4](#), APD members expressed frustration that the public believes officers use force more often than they do. Officers attribute this misunderstanding to a policy change APD adopted in 2021. That change significantly increased the number of reportable UOF incidents in the department.

APD Policy P-2021-013 (Resisting Arrest/Use of Force Procedure), which defines UOF in Akron, is the source of this issue. Three elements of the policy are relevant:

- 1. II(C) Reportable force.** Officers must report and supervisors must investigate specific types of physical force, including striking, kicking, tackling, forcefully taking a person to the ground, using chemical spray, using a Taser, K-9 applications of force, any force that causes physical injury, and any force after which the subject complains of injury.
- 2. II(F) Involved officer.** An “involved officer” is any officer who applies reportable force or directs another officer to use force. The definition also includes *any officer who assists in controlling or goes hands-on with a subject after another officer has used force* (emphasis added).
- 3. III(K)(4)(a).** All officers involved in a UOF or resisting-arrest incident must complete a Use of Force/Resisting Arrest report in BlueTeam.

The addition of the second sentence in the definition of “involved officer” is what led to the current overreporting of UOFs. Under this language, an officer who arrives after force has already been used—and who assists only with handcuffing, controlling an arm, or otherwise going minimally hands-on—is now classified as an *involved officer*. Even if that officer does not apply any reportable force under APD’s own definition, the policy still requires that officer to complete a UOF report in BlueTeam.

Because of this policy, publicly available UOF data make it appear that some officers have far more UOF incidents than they actually do. Anyone—including community members, advocacy groups, and, most commonly, the press—reviewing the data without looking carefully at the underlying incidents will likely interpret these inflated totals as actual force events. In reality, the numbers stem from poorly designed reporting rules rather than an accurate picture of who is using force and how often. Paradoxically, in a city where some residents already believe the police use force excessively, the APD’s own policies are worsening that perception by artificially inflating its reported UOF numbers.

The Seattle Police Department (SPD) provides a useful comparison. SPD requires officers to report all uses of force “**except de minimis force,**” which it defines as physical interaction meant only to separate, guide, or control a subject without using tactics reasonably likely to cause pain or injury.³² Actions such as assisting another

32. “8.400-POL-1 Use of Force Reporting and Investigation” (see [note 28](#)) (emphasis added).

officer in handcuffing, controlling an arm, or escorting a subject would be considered *de minimis* and therefore nonreportable. APD currently treats similar actions as reportable force—dramatically inflating its UOF numbers.

Likewise, the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) uses a tiered classification system. BPD requires that force meet at least the Level 1 UOF threshold to trigger documentation and specifies, **“Escorting, touching, or handcuffing a person with minimal or no resistance does not constitute a Level 1 Use of Force.”**³³ This approach prevents the inflation of UOF numbers and gives the public a more accurate picture of actual force usage.

To correct its local problem, APD should revise its definition of reportable force and its categorization of officers who merely assist. APD can adopt a tiered system similar to SPD’s and BPD’s or modify its current policy as follows:

- **Remove the second sentence in the definition of “involved officer.”** The definition would then read: “Any officer who applies reportable force to a subject or directs an officer to apply force to a subject.”
- **Add a new definition, “assisting officer.”** An assisting officer would be defined as: “Any officer who assists in controlling or going hands-on with a subject to whom force has been used but who does not apply reportable force themselves.”
- **Modify section III(K)(4) on required reporting** by
 - retaining the requirement that *involved officers* complete a full UOF report;
 - requiring assisting officers and witness officers to complete a BlueTeam supplement or supplemental report documenting only what they observed or assisted with, rather than a full UOF report.

These changes will give APD and the public a more accurate view of overall force levels and which officers are actually using reportable force.

Recommendation 4. APD should revise that portion of its UOF policy resulting in artificially inflated UOF numbers. APD should revise Policy P-2021-013 to adopt a tiered force reporting system consistent with best practices used in federally reviewed departments, such as Seattle and Baltimore. Alternatively, APD should modify its current policy to clarify who is considered an “involved officer,” establish a new “assisting officer” designation, and clarify report-writing requirements. These revisions will ensure that APD’s UOF data accurately reflects actual force applied rather than routine assistance or minimal physical contact.

33. “Understanding Use of Force,” Baltimore Police Department, accessed March 14, 2026, <https://www.baltimorepolice.org/resources-and-reports/understanding-use-force>; “Policy 1115 Use of Force” (see note 27).

Pointing of a Firearm

Although APD currently over-captures reportable force (see [recommendation 4](#)), thereby inflating its overall UOF numbers, its policy remains silent on whether pointing a firearm at a person constitutes a reportable force action. This gap should be corrected, as pointing a firearm—regardless of whether it is ultimately discharged—is a serious, coercive action that should always be documented and formally reviewed.

Some agencies that contain policies APD could model include the following:

- **SPD**, which, as noted, employs a tiered system for force reporting, is a model APD could look to for language.³⁴ Seattle treats pointing a firearm at someone as a Type 1 Use of Force—the lowest level, but still reportable.
- **Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD)**, which expressly classifies pointing a firearm at a person as the lowest of its five levels of force, but a UOF nonetheless, specifying: “**Pointed Firearm at Person (Reportable) Incident** involves a Department member intentionally pointing a firearm (pistol, rifle, or shotgun) at a person. Drawing from the holster, a slung rifle or shotgun, or displaying a firearm while pointing it in a low ready or other safe position if not pointed at a person’s body does not constitute a reportable PFP incident.”³⁵

Recommendation 5. APD should revise its UOF policy to explicitly classify pointing a firearm at a person as a reportable use of force.

Section (I) Policy Statement

In practice, [recommendations 6](#), [7](#), and [8](#) could have been consolidated under the broader umbrella of “Improve the Policy Statement.” PERF chose to separate them, however, to ensure the significance and impact of each component was clearly articulated.

The current UOF policy begins as follows:

“This policy provides guidelines on the use of force, reporting the use of force, and investigating a use of force incident. When dealing with an angry, agitated, or non-compliant subject, the objective is to utilize de-escalation techniques to calm the individual and obtain voluntary cooperation. However, when officers must use force to defend themselves or others, to prevent a subject’s escape, or to overcome a subject’s resistance to the officer’s efforts to accomplish an arrest or detention, such force shall meet the ‘objectively reasonable’ standard.”

34. Seattle Use of Force Policy (see [note 28](#)).

35. Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, “3-10/038.00 – Reportable Use of Force and Force Categories,” Manual of Policy and Procedures, accessed February 19, 2026, <https://pars.lasd.org/Viewer/Manuals/10008/Content/21034>.

The policy then defines UOF-related terms in section II before addressing the procedure in section III, where many of APD's force-related principles are located.

While the current policy statement provides a basic framework that mentions de-escalation, its tone and overall orientation are noticeably limited. The language is largely procedural and does little to communicate a clear philosophical commitment to minimizing force, protecting life, or guiding officers toward thoughtful, disciplined decision-making. As written, the statement reads more like a technical introduction than a values-driven directive, leaving officers with an understanding of *what* force is, but not *why* or *how* they are expected to approach encounters with the public. PERF therefore recommends strengthening the statement to underscore the department's commitment to avoiding force whenever possible and to explicitly anchor the policy in two foundational principles: the sanctity of human life and proportionality.

For comparison, the Volusia (Florida) Sheriff's Office (VSO) includes a robust "Discussion" section at the start of its UOF policy, which reads:

"The sanctity of human life is paramount to all else. It is this solemn and primary duty of law enforcement—to preserve and protect the sanctity of human life, dignity, and liberty of all persons—that ensures the ideals and very essence of a civil society. The Volusia Sheriff's Office commitment to this principle and its duty to protect human life is taken very seriously and is reflected in its core mission, 'To protect and serve with courage, honor, and integrity by fighting crime, maintaining trust, and building community partnerships.'"³⁶

VSO's policy goes on to describe proportionality, instructing deputies to begin evaluating what is appropriate and proportional as they approach an incident, to use the Critical Decision-Making Model (CDM) to consider the seriousness of the underlying offense, develop backup plans, bring additional resources when necessary, and apply de-escalation, disengagement, or tactical repositioning—particularly in minor, low-risk encounters.

Anyone reviewing APD's and VSO's policies side by side would not be confused about which agency demands more from its personnel regarding UOF. **Compared with VSO, APD's policy offers only a basic set of expectations rather than a clear, values-driven directive centered on human life, proportionality, and structured decision-making.**

APD should create a strong and unambiguous policy statement at the beginning of its UOF policy that clearly affirms a commitment to the sanctity of life and to treating all individuals with dignity and respect.

36. "GO-001-01 Use of Force Guidelines," *Welcome to the Volusia Sheriff's Office General Orders Manual* (DeLand, FL: Volusia Sheriff's Office, 2026), <https://www.volusiasheriff.gov/transparency.stml>.

Recommendation 6. APD should add a clear and strong “Policy Statement” at the beginning of its UOF policy setting forth the agency’s philosophy regarding UOF. The Policy Statement should emphasize the sanctity of life and a commitment to using proportionate force.

Sanctity of Life

APD’s UOF policy does not currently include language explicitly affirming the *sanctity of human life*. While section III states that “The preservation of human life is of the highest value in the Akron Police Department” and that officers must have an objectively reasonable belief that deadly force is necessary before using it, this language applies **only to deadly force**. Preserving life by limiting deadly force is not the same as affirming the sanctity of life as a guiding principle. A sanctity-of-life commitment establishes the expectation that all uses of force—not just deadly force—must reflect respect for human dignity, emphasize the value of every life, and prioritize tactics and decision-making that seek safe resolutions whenever possible.

APD should add language to its policy statement to reflect this commitment and reinforce the agency’s dedication to ethical policing. In addition to the VSO, referenced on [page 26](#), the following agency policies also contain this type of language in their policy statements:

- **Chicago Police Department** begins its UOF policy with “**Sanctity of Human Life**. The Department’s highest priority is the sanctity of human life. In all aspects of their conduct, Department members will act with the foremost regard for the preservation of human life and the safety of all persons involved.”³⁷
- **Washington D.C. Metropolitan Police Department** begins its UOF policy with “**PURPOSE**. Members . . . shall value and preserve the sanctity of human life at all times, especially when lawfully exercising the use of force. In situations where the use of force is justified, the utmost restraint should be exercised. Members shall minimize the force that is used while protecting the lives of members and other persons, and continuously reassess the perceived threat in order to select the reasonable use of force response that is proportional to the threat faced by [themselves] or others.”³⁸

37. “General Order G03-02 Use of Force,” Chicago Police Department, last modified June 28, 2023, <https://directives.chicagopolice.org/#directive/public/6214>.

38. “General Order 901.07 Use of Force,” District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department, last modified March 28, 2024, <https://mpdc.dc.gov/node/423092>.

Recommendation 7. APD should incorporate clear, prominent language into a newly drafted “Policy Statement” that affirms the sanctity of human life. This statement should set the tone for the entire policy and reflect the agency’s commitment to respectful, accountable, and community-centered policing.

The Principle of Proportionality

During our site visit, several APD members expressed concern that PERF might recommend adding proportionality to the department’s UOF policy. But proportionality has become increasingly common and widely accepted in modern UOF standards across the United States, and its inclusion is now considered a best practice. Numerous agencies explicitly recognize that **force should be proportionate to the threat or resistance encountered**, ensuring that officers apply no more force than is reasonably required to safely resolve an incident.

For example, the Cleveland Division of Police (CPD) embeds proportionality directly into its UOF policy statement, noting, “Any use of force that is not necessary, proportional, and objectively reasonable and does not reflect reasonable de-escalation efforts, when safe and feasible to do so, is prohibited and inconsistent with Divisional policy.”³⁹ CPD’s commitment to proportionality is not merely aspirational; it is operationalized in its supervisory review process. Supervisors evaluating force incidents must specifically assess “attempts to de-escalate, objective reasonableness, and necessity of actions taken by the officers, along with the proportionality of force used in relation to the level of resistance encountered.”⁴⁰ Proportionality therefore serves as an essential safeguard that promotes thoughtful, accountable decision-making, reduces unnecessary harm, and aligns departmental practice with evolving national standards. APD should add this principle to its policy statement.

Examples of proportionality-based policy language, beyond CPD, abound. APD could model the Camden County (New Jersey) Police Department, which begins its policy with a strong “PURPOSE” statement followed by a “POLICY” statement outlining seven Core Principles. Core Principle 3 reads, **“Core Principle 3: Duty to Use Only Objectively Reasonable, Necessary, and Proportional Force.** Officers shall use the least amount of force that is objectively reasonable, necessary, and proportional to safely achieve the legitimate law enforcement objective under the circumstances.”⁴¹

39. “2.01.03 Use of Force – General” (see [note 30](#)).

40. “2.01.06 Use of Force – Supervisory Reviews and Investigations,” *General Police Orders* (Cleveland, OH: Cleveland Division of Police, 2023), <https://www.clevelandohio.gov/sites/clevelandohio/files/policies-procedures/2.01.06%20UOF%20-%20Supervisory%20Reviews%20and%20Investigations.pdf>.

41. “Use of Force,” Standard Operating Procedure (Camden, NJ: Camden County Police Department, 2025), <https://camdencountypd.org/ccpd-policies/>.

Similarly, the Anne Arundel County (Maryland) Police Department incorporates proportionality directly into its policy statement, noting that “the use of force by its officers must be necessary, proportional, and in furtherance of a legitimate, law enforcement objective or to prevent an imminent threat of physical injury to a person.”⁴²

Recommendation 8. APD should explicitly incorporate the principle of proportionality into its UOF policy statement. This addition will align APD with nationally recognized best practices and ensure officers apply only the level of force necessary and appropriate to the threat or resistance encountered.

Section (II) Definitions

PERF reviewed APD’s UOF policy’s “Definitions” section and found two areas where additions could be made: (1) a definition of the CDM and (2) a definition of proportionality.

The Critical Decision-Making Model

As noted on [page 21](#), APD has received ICAT training—PERF’s evidence-based de-escalation program that has been shown to reduce UOF incidents and decrease injuries to both officers and subjects alike.⁴³ A core component of ICAT is the CDM,⁴⁴ which provides officers with a logical, intuitive framework for analyzing and responding to incidents beginning the moment they receive a call. The CDM guides officers through an ongoing cycle of assessment and decision-making, particularly in situations with the potential for force.

The CDM consists of five interdependent steps:

1. Gather information.
2. Assess the situation, threats, and risks.
3. Consider police powers and agency policy.
4. Identify options and determine the best course of action.
5. Act, review, and re-assess.

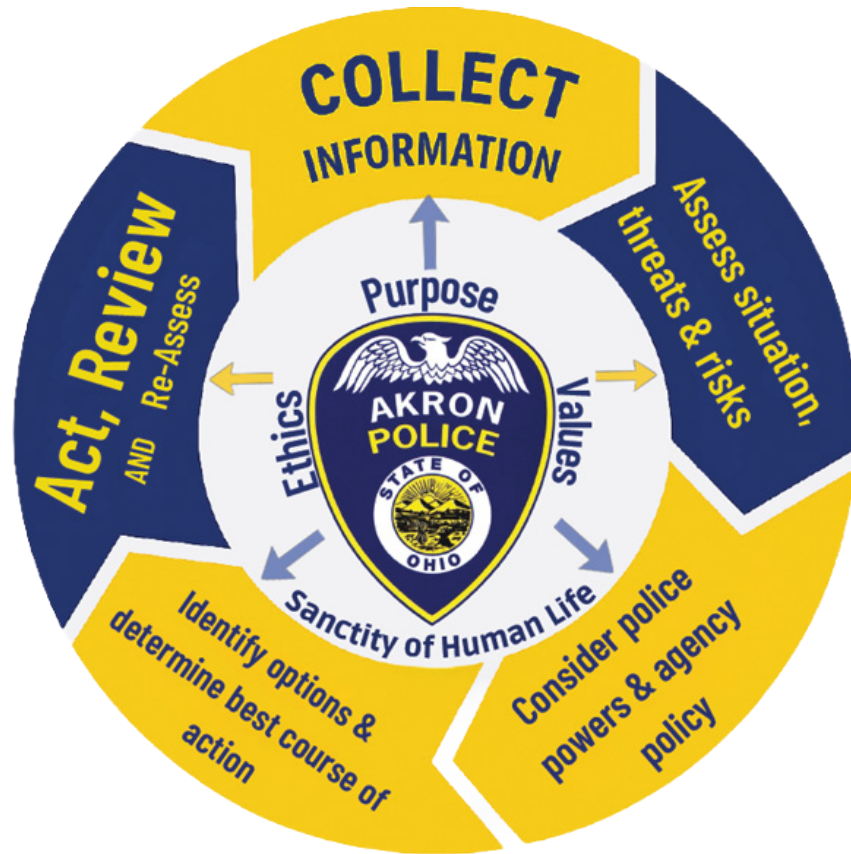
Each step is grounded in the model’s core principles: **police ethics, agency values, proportionality, and the sanctity of human life**. Officers are expected to ensure that their decisions reinforce, rather than undermine, these foundational ideals. The CDM is intentionally circular rather than linear (see figure 1 on [page 30](#)), encouraging officers to revisit previous steps as conditions evolve.

42. “Index Code 401 Use of Force,” Anne Arundel County Police Department Policies, last modified April 28, 2025, <https://www.aacounty.org/police-department/about-us/use-force-stats>.

43. Robin S. Engel et al., “Assessing the Impact of De-escalation.” (see [note 22](#)).

44. PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *ICAT: Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics. A Training Guide for Defusing Critical Incidents* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2016), <http://www.policeforum.org/assets/icattrainingguide.pdf>.

Figure 1. The APD's CDM



Although APD has developed its own version of the CDM and displays it prominently at headquarters, the department does not appear to have fully embraced the CDM as a genuine philosophical or operational shift in how officers should approach force-related decisions. While officers have received ICAT training, little of what we observed during our site visit reflected a decision-making culture oriented toward avoiding or minimizing the use of force whenever possible.

Instead, officers' discussions consistently centered on *Graham v. Connor* as the sole framework for understanding and evaluating UOF. This singular focus stands in sharp contrast to agencies that have truly embedded ICAT into their “organizational DNA,” where the CDM actively shapes expectations, supervisory review, tactical choices, and day-to-day decision-making.⁴⁵ PERF has consistently observed that agencies that meaningfully adopt ICAT and the CDM see reductions in UOF without any corresponding increase in officer injuries.⁴⁶ Several departments—including the Monterey (California) Police Department⁴⁷ and the Burlington (North Carolina) Police

45. PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), “ICAT at 10—A Decade of Saving Lives and Careers and Improving Policing,” February 14, 2026, <https://www.policeforum.org/trending14feb26>.

46. PERF, “ICAT at 10” (see [note 45](#)).

47. “Policy 300 Use of Force,” *Monterey PD Policy Manual* (Monterey, CA: Monterey Police Department, 2025), https://monterey.gov/your_city_hall/departments/police/inside_mpd/policies_procedures_training.php#outer-1240.

Department⁴⁸—have expressly incorporated the CDM into their UOF policies. These agencies show that codifying the CDM helps transform ICAT from a check-the-box training requirement into a sustained cultural and operational change.

Importantly, once the CDM is incorporated into UOF policy, its role can extend well beyond articulating a UOF philosophy (see “Integrate the CDM into aspects of policing beyond force” on [page 64](#)). Officers should use the CDM to thoroughly document their decision-making in UOF reports, demonstrating how they assessed risks, considered alternatives, and attempted to de-escalate when feasible. Likewise, supervisors should apply the CDM when investigating and reviewing UOF incidents to evaluate whether officers followed sound decision-making principles and whether other tactical options or strategies could have led to a safer or more effective outcome. Integrating the CDM into both reporting and supervisory review ensures that it becomes a practical, day-to-day framework—not merely a conceptual model—strengthening accountability and reinforcing a culture of thoughtful, proportional decision-making.

Recommendation 9. APD should incorporate the CDM directly into its UOF policy, either in the “Definitions” section (with an expanded definition) or as a standalone section. Doing so would reinforce and formalize the department’s expectations around ethical decision-making, proportionality, and the sanctity of human life. It would also align APD with agencies that have successfully integrated ICAT as a department-wide philosophy, strengthening both UOF decision-making and overall operational judgment.

Proportionality

As outlined in [recommendation 8](#), PERF recommends that APD strengthen its UOF policy statement by explicitly incorporating the principle of proportionality. To reinforce consistent application throughout the policy, APD should also include a formal definition of proportionality in the “Definitions” section.

Proportionality guides officers in evaluating the severity of an incident and applying only the level of force necessary to control the situation. It requires officers to continually reassess the threat and adjust their response as circumstances change. Importantly, proportionality is not about weighing in the moment how an encounter might appear to the public later; rather, it requires officers to respond reasonably, responsibly, and in direct relation to the immediate threat presented.

48. Attached as appendix 5.

The following definition—adapted from the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General’s statewide policy—offers a clear and practical formulation:

“Proportional Force. The minimum amount of force, in both type (e.g., physical, mechanical, or deadly) and intensity, that is necessary to control a situation and achieve a legitimate law enforcement objective. While officers are permitted to overcome unlawful resistance or force, proportionality does not require the officer’s response to match the subject’s type or level of force exactly.”⁴⁹

Recommendation 10. APD should modify the “Definitions” section of its UOF policy by adding a formal definition of proportionality. Doing so will promote a consistent, shared understanding that proportionality requires reasonable, threat-based decision-making and will help embed this principle throughout officers’ decision-making processes.

Section III (I) – No Duty to Retreat

APD’s current UOF policy contains the following provision:

“No duty to retreat – During certain encounters, an officer may choose to retreat in order to de-escalate the situation or to gain a better tactical advantage. However, there is no obligation for an officer to retreat when faced with a threat that may require the officer to use force upon the threatening person(s), i.e., an officer need not retreat simply to avoid using force.”

This language is highly unusual in modern UOF policies. A review of publicly available policies from major Ohio agencies—including Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Toledo, and Dayton⁵⁰—identified no comparable provisions affirming the absence of a duty to retreat. Likewise, a broader review found no similar language in the policies of comparable agencies nationwide. Instead, contemporary policing frameworks emphasize de-escalation, proportionality, tactical repositioning, and structured decision-making as key strategies for both officer and public safety.

Although APD’s clause mentions retreat as a possible de-escalation tool, the follow-on assertion that officers have “no obligation” to retreat undercuts that message. In practice, the clause risks unintentionally signaling that disengagement; tactical pauses; repositioning; and the use of time, distance, and cover are less desirable than

49. *Use of Force Policy* (Trenton: Office of the New Jersey Attorney General, 2025), <https://www.njoag.gov/force/>.

50. “2.01.03 Use of Force – General” (see [note 30](#)); “12.545 Use of Force,” Cincinnati Police Department Procedure Manual, last modified August 8, 2025, <https://public.powerdms.com/Cin3647/tree/documents/2142651>; “2.01 Use of Force,” Columbus Division of Police Directives, last modified December 30, 2025, <https://www.columbus.gov/Services/Public-Safety/Police/About-the-Columbus-Division-of-Police/Directives>; “Directive 103.2 Response to Resistance,” Standard Operating Guidelines (Toledo, OH: Toledo Police Department, 2025), <https://toledopolice.com/#>; “General Order 3.03-2 Use of Force,” Dayton Police Department, last modified May 2025, <https://public.powerdms.com/DAYTONOH/tree/documents/908462>.

pressing forward toward a force option. This conflicts with modern, evidence-based policing models, in which tactical repositioning is understood as both a core de-escalation technique and a critical officer safety practice.

Importantly, removing this clause would not affect officers' legal rights under Ohio's general no-duty-to-retreat statute, which already applies statewide. That law allows individuals—including officers—to use force in self-defense without retreating if their presence in the location is lawful.⁵¹ However, nothing in the statute requires agencies to embed stand your ground-style language into their UOF policies, and other Ohio agencies do not. Retaining this clause, therefore, provides no added *legal* protection while risking confusion and misalignment with nationally accepted standards of *professional practice*.

In sum, the clause is unnecessary; out of step with peer agencies; and counterproductive to APD's stated aims of promoting de-escalation, tactical safety, and sound decision-making.

Recommendation 11. APD should remove the “No Duty to Retreat” clause from Section III(I) of its UOF policy. The clause is unnecessary and undermines the agency's broader commitment to de-escalation, tactical safety, and modern policing principles.

Section III (J) – Duty to Intercede

PERF recommends that APD modify the “Duty to Intercede” section of its UOF policy.

Expand and clarify

APD's current duty-to-intercede clause limits intervention to situations where other officers are using force that is “clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances.” This framing relies heavily on terminology specific to *Graham v. Connor* and does not reflect a broader, values-based commitment to the sanctity of life or to proactive peer intervention (i.e., stepping in to prevent fellow officers from engaging in conduct that both is seriously wrong and has the potential to result in severe and long-lasting consequences to themselves as well as to the subject).

By contrast, the Newark (New Jersey) Police Department's policy provides a far more comprehensive—and comprehensible—model.⁵² Newark's section IV.C clearly outlines officers' responsibilities to prevent, stop, report, and follow up on any improper use of force, using practical language that emphasizes shared responsibility, multiple modes of intervention (verbal, physical, signaling), mandatory

51. OHIO REV. CODE 2901.09 “No duty to retreat in residence or vehicle” (2021), <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-2901.09>.

52. “General Order 18-20 Use of Force,” Newark Police Division, last modified November 21, 2025, <https://public.powerdms.com/NewarkPD/tree/documents/1257895>.

reporting, and protection for those who step in. APD’s policy would benefit from adopting similarly clear, expansive expectations that reinforce intervention as a core professional obligation rather than a narrow legal threshold.

Recommendation 12. APD should update and expand its duty-to-intervene policy to align with modern practices by requiring officers to intervene—verbally, physically, or in some other way—whenever they observe colleagues using force or committing misconduct that is a violation of law or policy, or would be a violation if the individual carried out their intentions. The revised provision should mirror the clarity and breadth of the Newark Police Department’s approach by specifying officers’ responsibilities to stop improper force, safeguard the individual, notify a supervisor, and document the incident.

Nonretaliation

As APD revises its duty-to-intercede section, it should also adopt a clear nonretaliation clause prohibiting retaliation, interference, intimidation, or coercion against employees who intervene or report inappropriate UOF. The Camden County (New Jersey) Police Department offers a strong model: In its UOF policy, the duty to intervene is one of seven core principles, and section E.1.d expressly states, “Employees are prohibited from retaliating in any form against an employee who intercedes in or reports illegal or inappropriate uses of force.”⁵³ Incorporating similar language would strengthen APD’s accountability framework and reinforce that intervention is both expected and protected.

Recommendation 13. APD should add an explicit nonretaliation clause to its duty-to-intercede policy to ensure that officers who intervene or report inappropriate uses of force are protected from retaliation, intimidation, or coercion. This language would reinforce a culture of accountability by making clear that intervening officers are not only permitted (and in fact encouraged and expected) to act in opposition and report any improper UOF but also protected when doing so.

Section III (L) – Investigating Supervisor’s Responsibilities

Current policy requires supervisors to respond to the scene and complete an investigative package in BlueTeam only *after* an officer has already used reportable force or charged a person with resisting arrest. This reactive approach does not go far enough.

53. “Use of Force” (see [note 41](#)).

As noted in PERF's *Guiding Principles on Use of Force*, supervisors should immediately respond to any scene

- where a weapon (including firearm, edged weapon, rock, or other improvised weapon) is reported;
- where persons experiencing mental health crises are reported;
- where a dispatcher or other member of the department believes there is potential for significant use of force.⁵⁴

As former San Diego Police Chief William Lansdowne noted in that publication, "Getting a sergeant to critical incidents within 15 minutes reduces the chances that deadly force will be used."⁵⁵

Whenever possible, supervisors should also be required to acknowledge and respond promptly to in-progress incidents that present an elevated likelihood of force. Doing so requires training supervisors to recognize situations that frequently escalate into force—such as encounters involving individuals with mental illnesses, developmental disabilities, substance-use disorders, or other conditions that may cause erratic or unsafe behaviors—and encouraging them to proactively respond before being requested. This expectation is particularly important in a young agency like APD, where newer officers would benefit from the presence, experience, and tactical judgment of seasoned sergeants.

PERF recognizes that APD sergeants are currently overextended but is optimistic that several recommendations in this report will help reduce their workload. Redefining reportable force (see [recommendation 4](#)) will reduce the number of reviews sergeants must complete. In addition, assigning sergeants to OPSA (see "Prioritize First Line Supervision" on [page 70](#)) will not only promote greater consistency across UOF reviews but also allow field sergeants to return to the supervisory work they are intended to perform—providing guidance, oversight, and support in the field—rather than spending hours in the office reviewing BWC footage.

Recommendation 14. APD should require supervisors to acknowledge and, when feasible, promptly respond to in-progress incidents with an elevated likelihood of force, rather than waiting until after force has been used. The policy should also require training that equips supervisors to identify high-risk encounters and proactively provide guidance and support to newer officers in the field.

54. PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), "Principle 22," *Guiding Principles on Use of Force* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2016), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/30%20guiding%20principles.pdf>.

55. *Guiding Principles*, (see [note 54](#))(page 63).

Addition of Head Strike Guidance

During PERF’s review of cases provided by OIPA, referenced in “OIPA – PERF Audit of Cases,” beginning on [page 11](#), we identified numerous instances in which APD officers used head strikes against noncompliant subjects. OIPA, seeing the same pattern, repeatedly recommended—with minor variation across cases—that head strikes be prohibited except when responding to deadly force circumstances, a position that implicitly characterizes head strikes themselves as a form of deadly force. In interviews, many APD officers expressed incredulity at OIPA’s stance that head strikes constitute deadly force and firmly disagreed that their use should be restricted in any way.

Under Ohio law, *deadly force* is defined as **“any force that carries a substantial risk that it will proximately result in the death of any person.”**⁵⁶ On its face, this definition clearly encompasses actions such as gunshots or knife attacks; but under normal circumstances, strikes to the head do not result in death, indicating a point of conceptual disagreement between APD and OIPA.

However, two things can be true at once: while head strikes do not ordinarily meet the legal threshold for deadly force, this does not mean they are harmless or should be freely used as a compliance tool. **Head strikes carry a significant risk of injury and, therefore, should be used sparingly, with careful consideration of safer alternatives whenever possible.**

Currently, APD places no restrictions on head strikes and does not include them as a trigger in its early intervention system; we recommend that APD limit their use. Specifically, head strikes should not be permitted as a compliance tool; they should be permitted only as a self-defense measure against physical force. APD can model language from other agencies, including the following:

- **LASD.** “Department members may only strike or punch a subject in the face, head, or neck in response to a physical assault, an imminent physical assault, or a greater threat. A physical assault is imminent when it is about to take place, impending, likely to happen, or at the point of happening. In any application of force, the Department member shall only use that level of force which is proportional, objectively reasonable, and which reasonably appears necessary based on the totality of the circumstances.”⁵⁷

56. OHIO REV. CODE § 2901.01(A)(2) “Deadly force” (2023), <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-2901.01>.

57. Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, Field Operations Directive “24-001 – Strikes/Punches to the Face, Head, or Neck,” Field Operations Directives, accessed February 19, 2026, <https://pars.lasd.org/Viewer/Manuals/13233/Content/21025#>.

- **St. Petersburg (Florida) Police Department.** “Officers will not employ strikes to the face or head as a preemptive measure to control a suspect. Strikes to the face or head will only be used as a defensive measure, with a combative suspect, and not as a technique to gain control of a non-combative suspect.”⁵⁸

These policies clearly affirm that officers may use head strikes only defensively—not as pain compliance tools to subdue unruly subjects. APD should adopt similar language in its UOF policy.

Recommendation 15. APD should revise its UOF policy to explicitly prohibit head strikes as a compliance mechanism and limit their use solely to situations in which an officer must defend themselves from physical assault. Incorporating clear, defensive-only language—consistent with policies adopted by peer agencies—will reduce the risk of unnecessary injury and promote safer, more proportional force practices across the department.

Minimizing the Risk of Restraint--Related Death

APD should add a section to its UOF policy with guidance on how to reduce the risk of restraint-related death. Developed in 2024, with assistance from experts in emergency and cardiac medicine, EMS, and police tactics, PERF’s *15 Principles for Reducing the Risk of Restraint-Related Death*⁵⁹ deals broadly with medical-behavioral emergencies (MBE)—a term used to describe incidents in which police misinterpret a medical issue (often drug-induced or drug-enhanced) as a behavioral problem. Importantly, while the principles were developed with MBEs in mind, much of the guidance applies broadly to any situation in which an officer may need to restrain a person, regardless of the underlying cause of the person’s behavior.

The principles provide steps officers can take to reduce the likelihood that their actions or restraint choices will inadvertently contribute to a person’s medical deterioration or death:

1. **Learn to identify warning signs of MBEs.** Police need to view people who may be experiencing MBEs as patients in need of medical care and respond accordingly.
2. **Plan and develop protocols for a coordinated MBE response.** Stakeholders must meet and develop policies and protocols; they should also train together.
3. **ICAT (Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics) principles apply to MBEs.** Officers should employ the CDM and the principles of time, distance, and cover.

58. St. Petersburg Police Department, “General Order II-42,” Manual of Written Directives, last modified April 2016, <https://police.stpete.org/generalOrders/index.html#gsc.tab=0>.

59. PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *15 Principles to Reduce the Risk of Restraint Related Death* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2024), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/Restraint.pdf>.

4. **De-escalate wherever possible, but at a minimum, don't escalate.** Even if de-escalation is not working, officers should be aware of and refrain from actions that will escalate the situation.
5. **Evaluate the need to restrain immediately.** If a person needs medical help but is not at an *immediate* risk of self-harm or harm to others, police should not restrain until an ambulance is on scene or nearby.
6. **Multiple ECW applications may increase the risks associated with restraint.** This fact is noted in the manufacturers' own warnings.
7. **A supervisor or other leader needs to take charge.** One designated officer needs to manage the many moving parts of MBEs.
8. **Designate a patient safety officer.** One officer needs to focus on nothing other than monitoring the subject's breathing and consciousness during and after restraint.
9. **Prone restraint carries potential risks and should be limited.** As soon as a person is controlled, police must make every effort to move and keep the person in a position that promotes free breathing.
10. **Not following directions does not always mean willful noncompliance.** Police should recognize that people experiencing MBEs may not be capable of following directions, and repeatedly yelling commands will only exacerbate an already stressful situation.
11. **The goal is control, NOT complete immobilization.** A controlled subject does not need to be completely immobile—repeatedly demanding that a restrained person stop moving is counterproductive and dangerous.
12. **The ability to speak does not mean a person can breathe.** A person can talk and still be in physiological distress, so statements about trouble breathing must be taken seriously.
13. **On-scene coordination and collaboration between EMS and law enforcement is crucial during MBEs.** Each entity plays a critical role; deference must give way to safety if EMS observes police engaged in unsafe practices.
14. **Police must keep emotions in check and be ready to step up and step in.** When emotions run high, rational thinking runs low, and these incidents have a high potential for stress.
15. **Commit to learning from every incident.** Agencies must be willing to “Monday-morning quarterback” incidents that ended poorly to determine where improvements can be made.

Not all of these principles require inclusion in the UOF policy. For example, principle 15—reviewing each incident—will ideally be handled through APD's newly created Critical Incident Review Board (see [recommendation 34](#)). Likewise, principle 2—**planning and developing protocols for a coordinated MBE response—is accomplished by** working with EMS, fire, and dispatch to clearly define roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority and then training together (see [recommendation 48](#)).

However, APD should incorporate as many relevant principles as possible into one comprehensive section of its UOF policy so officers have clear, consolidated guidance when responding to a person who may be in a medical crisis or whose behavior places them at elevated risk during restraint.⁶⁰

Recommendation 16. APD should incorporate the relevant PERF principles for avoiding restraint-related deaths into its UOF policy, including early recognition of MBEs, supervisory coordination, limits on prone positioning, and continuous monitoring of restrained individuals.

Doing so will reduce the risk of restraint-related death, enhance officer decision-making, and align APD with contemporary best practices in safe restraint and medical crisis response.

Officer-Created Jeopardy

Our final recommendation regarding the UOF policy is to add a clause acknowledging that an officer's initial decisions and tactics can sometimes contribute to the eventual need to use force—a concept widely known as *officer-created jeopardy*. Including such a provision would help move APD toward a policy framework that emphasizes preventing force whenever possible, rather than simply justifying it after the fact.

Burlington (North Carolina) Police Department's UOF policy (attached as appendix 5) offers a clear example, stating, "Officers should recognize that their conduct before the use of force may be a factor which can influence the level of force necessary in a given situation." This language does not assign blame to officers each time force occurs, but it acknowledges an essential truth: **Early tactical decisions can escalate or reduce the likelihood that force becomes necessary.**

During our site visit, an APD member asked whether we "believed in the concept of officer-created jeopardy." While we understand that one member does not speak for an entire department, it bears noting that the question itself reflects a misunderstanding of the principle and an assumption that officers' actions are infallible by default and categorically beyond improvement. This mindset held by any officer is dangerous in any agency and is inconsistent with a culture that values continual learning, tactical excellence, and the sanctity of human life.

60. APD can look to the Wichita (Kansas) Police Department, for example, for guidance on implementing the principles. PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), "How the Wichita Police Department is Implementing Guidance on Avoiding Restraint-Related Deaths," August 30, 2025, <https://www.policeforum.org/trending30aug25>.

Recommendation 17. APD should incorporate an officer-created jeopardy clause into its UOF policy to reinforce the principle that officers' initial actions and tactical decisions can influence whether force becomes necessary. Adopting language similar to the Burlington Police Department's would promote reflective decision-making, support safer outcomes, and underscore the department's commitment to preventing avoidable UOF.

Policy P-2023-057 Conducted Energy Weapon (CEW) Procedure

PERF next reviewed APD's electronic control weapon (ECW) policy to ensure compliance with modern practices. We found numerous opportunities for improvement as presented in this section. In several key areas, APD's current procedures fall short of contemporary standards adopted by peer agencies nationwide, including limitations on drive-stun applications, restrictions on ECW use against vulnerable or restrained individuals, clear guidance on deployment during flight, and prohibitions on using ECWs on persons operating bicycles or other moving conveyances. Addressing these gaps will help APD align with evidence-based practices, reduce unnecessary risk to both officers and the public, and improve clarity and accountability in ECW decision-making.

"Conducted Energy Weapon" terminology

In APD's current policy, ECWs are referred to as "Conducted Energy Weapons" (CEW). However, the term *Electronic Control Weapon* is the widely accepted standard across the law enforcement profession and is used consistently in national guidance, training materials, and commercial manufacturer terminology.⁶¹ Updating APD's terminology would align the department with industry norms, reduce confusion, and improve clarity in both training and operational contexts.

Recommendation 18. APD should replace all references to "Conducted Energy Weapon" and "CEW" with the widely recognized term "Electronic Control Weapon (ECW)" to ensure consistency with national law enforcement terminology. Updating this language will improve clarity across policy, training, reporting, and interagency communication.

Section (II) – Definitions

Consolidate UOF policies or add broadly applicable force principles to the ECW "Definitions" section

A review of the policy's "Definitions" section highlights why APD would benefit from consolidating its UOF policies (see [recommendation 2](#)). Although this section is intended to establish clear and foundational terminology, it provides only limited guidance and contains notable omissions and inconsistencies.

61. PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *Electronic Control Weapon Guidelines* (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2011), https://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Free_Online_Documents/Use_of_Force/electronic%20control%20weapon%20guidelines%202011.pdf.

For example, APD’s ECW policy does not define *drive–stun mode*, a critical concept for both operational clarity and accountability. Conversely, the ECW policy does include a definition of *less–lethal force*—a term that is absent from APD’s primary UOF policy. Similarly, while APD’s main UOF policy defines and references *de–escalation*, that definition does not appear in the ECW policy, despite its relevance to ECW deployments.

As recommended previously ([recommendation 2](#)), APD should consolidate all force–related policies into a single, comprehensive UOF policy that includes a unified “Definitions” section. This approach will ensure consistency, eliminate contradictions, and provide officers with clear and accessible guidance.

If APD chooses to maintain separate or standalone policies—for example, for ECWs—it must incorporate all relevant definitions found in the primary UOF policy, including those identified in [recommendation 8](#) (proportionality) and [recommendation 9](#) (the CDM). Critical concepts such as de–escalation, proportionality, and less–lethal force must be defined and understood consistently across all force–related documents.

Recommendation 19. If APD does not consolidate all force–related documents into a single comprehensive policy, it should add definitions of foundational force principles, such as the sanctity of life and proportionality, to its ECW policy.

Drive–stun definition

APD references “drive–stun mode” only in its definition of an ECW, stating, “The [CEW] may also be used in a drive–stun mode, whereas [sic] the energy is localized and only affects the sensory nervous system.” This description is insufficient for policy purposes and does not provide an adequate definition of drive–stun mode.

APD should strengthen its policy by providing a clear, standalone definition of *drive–stun mode*. The Fairfax County (Virginia) Sheriff’s Office provides a good and concise example: “**Drive Stun**: An ECW delivery method used by activating the ECW and making physical contact with the subject. It does not cause NMI [(neuromuscular incapacitation)] [but does cause pain].”⁶²

Recommendation 20. APD should place a standalone definition of “drive–stun mode” in the definitions portion of its ECW policy.

Drive–stun mode is widely recognized as a pain compliance technique that does not incapacitate a subject and carries a heightened risk of overuse or misuse when compared with probe deployments. National best–practice guidance emphasizes that drive–stun applications should be limited, given their purpose of inflicting pain to gain compliance rather than controlling a subject through neuromuscular incapacitation.

62. “Standard Operating Procedure 032b Use of ECW (Electronic Control Weapons),” Fairfax County Sheriff’s Office, last modified December 2023, <https://public.powerdms.com/FAIRFAXCSO/tree/documents/172726>.

Section III(B) – Deployment

Warnings

This section of the policy outlines guidance for officers deploying ECWs. To enhance situational awareness, improve officer safety, and reinforce de-escalation efforts, APD should revise this section to require that, whenever feasible, officers issue a clear verbal warning to both the subject and nearby personnel prior to deployment.

Verbal warnings serve several critical purposes, including

- providing the subject with an opportunity to comply voluntarily;
- alerting other officers to the intended action;
- reinforcing principles of de-escalation, communication, and transparency.

The Beachwood (Ohio) Police Department offers a strong model for such a recommendation. Its ECW policy includes a dedicated “Verbal and Visual Warnings” section, which states:

“A verbal warning of the intended use of the TASER device should precede its application, unless it would otherwise endanger the safety of officers or when it is not practicable due to the circumstances.

“The purpose of the warning is to:

- (a) Provide the individual with a reasonable opportunity to voluntarily comply.
- (b) Provide other officers and individuals with a warning that the TASER device may be deployed.
- (c) A preferred minimum warning prior to deployment is ‘TASER, TASER, TASER,’ for officer safety purposes.

“If . . . an individual is unwilling to voluntarily comply . . . , the officer may . . . display the electrical arc . . . or the laser in a further attempt to gain compliance . . .

“The fact that a verbal or other warning was given or the reasons it was not given shall be documented . . .”⁶³

This model provides clear expectations for officers while preserving flexibility for rapidly evolving or high-risk situations.

63. “Policy 304, Conducted Energy Weapon,” Beachwood Police Department, last modified June 24, 2021, <https://www.beachwoodohio.com/622/Police-Manual-Core-Policies>.

Recommendation 21. APD should adopt a clear requirement that officers provide a verbal warning before deploying an ECW whenever it is safe and practical to do so. This revision will enhance opportunities for voluntary compliance, promote de-escalation, and increase safety for both officers and subjects.

Simultaneous deployments

APD's current policy does not address the risks associated with multiple officers simultaneously activating their ECWs. To promote officer and subject safety—and to prevent unnecessary, duplicative, or excessive force—APD should explicitly prohibit the intentional deployment of more than one ECW on a subject at the same time. Establishing clear limits on simultaneous activations supports coordinated team responses, reduces the likelihood of heightened physiological risk to subjects, and aligns APD's practices with widely accepted principles of safe and proportional force.

The Camden County (New Jersey) Police Department offers a concise and effective model for such guidance.⁶⁴ Its policy states, *“Two or more [conducted energy devices] shall not be discharged upon a person at the same time.”* This straightforward prohibition provides officers with clear expectations and reduces the potential for redundant or unsafe ECW applications.

Recommendation 22. APD should revise its ECW policy to expressly prohibit multiple, simultaneous ECW deployments. This update would enhance safety, encourage coordinated tactical communication, and reduce the risk of unnecessary or excessive force.

Number and duration of applications

APD's policy is silent on the duration of ECW exposure and provides no direction regarding how officers should assess the need for additional cycles. This omission stands in contrast to modern best practices, which emphasize limiting exposure, reassessing between cycles, and clearly documenting justification for each activation. Most contemporary ECW policies establish a defined “standard cycle” and require officers to evaluate subject behavior and potential risks before administering another discharge.

The Mesa (Arizona) Police Department offers a clear example of a policy aligned with current national guidance.⁶⁵ Its policy specifies the following:

- **A standard five-second cycle begins after probes establish a connection** following deployment of smart cartridges.
- **Officers must evaluate the need for a second five-second cycle** only after giving the subject a reasonable opportunity to comply.

64. “Conducted Energy Devices,” Standard Operating Procedure (Camden, NJ: Camden County Police Department, 2026), <https://camdencountypd.org/ccpd-policies/> (emphasis added).

65. “Conducted Energy Weapon (CEW) Protocols,” *Department Policy Manual* (Mesa, AZ: Mesa Police Department, 2025), <https://www.mesaaz.gov/Public-Safety/Mesa-Police/About-Mesa-Police/Policy-Accreditation>.

- **Each additional cycle requires an independent justification**, which must address the increased risks associated with multiple or prolonged ECW exposures.
- **Each activation must be documented**, including the justification for the use of a subsequent cycle.
- **After three cycles, the ECW is deemed ineffective**, and officers are expected to transition to another force option unless exigent circumstances exist.

This type of policy language sets clear expectations for officers, reinforces safe deployment practices, and promotes accountability. In contrast, APD’s lack of guidance leaves officers without necessary direction during rapidly evolving encounters and increases the risk of inconsistent or prolonged ECW usage.

Recommendation 23. APD should revise its ECW policy to define a standard five-second cycle, require reassessment between applications, and limit the number and duration of activations absent exigent circumstances. Doing so would align APD with contemporary best practices, reduce risk to subjects, and provide officers with clear, actionable guidance during ECW deployments.

Drive-stun prohibitions

APD’s current policy contains **no explicit limitations** on the use of ECWs in drive-stun mode. This omission is inconsistent with contemporary best practices and diverges from the direction taken by many modern law enforcement agencies. National guidance and current research emphasize that drive-stun applications function primarily as pain-compliance techniques; do not produce neuromuscular incapacitation; and carry a heightened risk of unnecessary pain, overuse, and rapid escalation. To reduce these risks, a growing number of agencies have adopted clear restrictions or outright prohibitions on drive-stun usage.

To remain aligned with evolving ECW standards and enhance officer decision-making, APD should revise its policy to establish explicit limitations on the use of drive-stun applications. These limitations should clearly define when—if ever—drive stun is appropriate; emphasize that it may not be used for pain compliance; and require officers to consider safer, more effective alternatives before resorting to this mode.

The Las Vegas (Nevada) Police Department provides a useful model. Its ECW states: “The use of a touch stun application is discouraged unless used to complete neuromuscular incapacitation by closing a circuit when probes have already been

deployed.”⁶⁶ This type of language sets clear expectations disfavoring drive stun, limits misuse, and strengthens accountability—areas where APD’s current policy provides little to no guidance.

Recommendation 24. APD should revise its ECW policy to explicitly disfavor drive–stun use except in narrowly defined circumstances, such as supplementing an incomplete probe deployment. Drive stun should be expressly prohibited as a pain compliance technique. This update would align APD with modern best practices, promote safer and more effective ECW deployment, and reduce the risk of unnecessary or excessive force.

Special consideration

APD’s policy includes a section titled “*Special Consideration should be used*,” which advises officers to exercise heightened caution when they reasonably believe that ECW deployment could cause serious injury or death because of situational hazards—such as falling, drowning, or igniting flammable substances—except when deadly force is justified. While this language appropriately identifies environmental hazards, it does not address the types of subjects who may face elevated risks from ECW exposure.

To align with contemporary best practices, APD should expand this section to identify categories of individuals for whom ECW deployment presents increased medical or safety concerns. Many agencies and national guidelines instruct officers to consider factors such as a subject’s age, physical fragility, or known medical conditions when determining whether ECW use is objectively reasonable.⁶⁷ This includes pregnant women, older adults, young children, visibly frail individuals, and people exhibiting signs of medical behavioral emergencies⁶⁸—all of whom may be more vulnerable to secondary injuries (e.g., falls, cardiac complications) or adverse physiological effects.

Officers should be required to assess whether ECW deployment is appropriate in light of the subject’s apparent age, physical condition, potential underlying medical issues, and the nature of the threat. In some cases, alternative control techniques—such as verbal de-escalation, physical control, or disengagement—may present a safer and more proportionate response given the subject’s vulnerability. Clear policy language in this area supports better decision-making, reduces the likelihood of unnecessary harm, and ensures that officers apply force in a manner consistent with the principles of necessity and proportionality.

66. Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, “3.110, Use of Force Policy,” Policy and Procedure, last modified August 2025, <https://www.lvmpd.com/about/transparency/internal-oversight-and-constitutional-policing>.

67. PERF, *Electronic Control Weapon Guidelines* (see [note 61](#)).

68. PERF, *15 Principles to Reduce the Risk of Restraint Related Death* (see [note 59](#)).

Recommendation 25. APD should revise its ECW policy to explicitly identify and address vulnerable populations—such as pregnant women, older adults, young children, and visibly frail or medically compromised persons—as subjects requiring heightened caution during ECW deployment. The policy should require officers to evaluate whether ECW use is reasonable considering the subject’s age, physical condition, and potential susceptibility to injury and to consider alternative control strategies when appropriate.

Express prohibition against ECW use on people operating bicycles or other moving conveyances

During PERF’s audit of OIPA cases, we identified incidents in which officers deployed an ECW against a bicyclist. This practice presents a significant risk of serious injury or death, as ECW activation can immediately incapacitate a subject and cause an uncontrolled fall. As a matter of sound policy, ECWs should not be used against individuals who are in physical control of any vehicle in motion, including automobiles, trucks, motorcycles, ATVs, bicycles, scooters, or other similar conveyances. This approach is consistent with national safety guidance.

Axon—the manufacturer of TASER ECW devices—explicitly warns that ECWs carry heightened risks when used on people “operating or riding any mode of transportation,” emphasizing the increased likelihood of secondary injuries from falls or collisions.⁶⁹ APD’s policy should be updated to reflect this clear safety concern. Establishing an explicit prohibition will improve officer decision-making, protect the public from preventable harm, and align APD with widely accepted industry standards and manufacturer-specified limitations.

Recommendation 26. APD should revise its ECW policy to prohibit the use of ECWs on individuals operating or riding any mode of transportation, including bicycles, motorcycles, scooters, and other moving conveyances, unless deadly force is authorized. This update would align APD with Axon’s own safety guidance, which warns against ECW use on persons “operating or riding any mode of transportation,” because of the substantial risk of serious injury or death from secondary falls or collisions.

Flight alone does not justify ECW use

APD policy does not contain language specifying that flight alone is not sufficient cause to use an ECW. This omission leaves officers without clear guidance in situations where a subject is simply attempting to flee and does not pose an imminent threat. Modern ECW policies increasingly recognize that running away, by itself, does not constitute a danger that justifies the use of an ECW.

69. Axon, *TASER Energy Weapon Policy Playbook* (Scottsdale, AZ: Axon Enterprise, Inc., 2023), <https://www.axon.com/resources/taser-energy-weapon-policy-playbook>.

The New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) provides an excellent model. Its ECW/Taser policy states unambiguously:

“Mere flight from an officer is not sufficient cause for the use of an [ECW]. The use of an [ECW] on a fleeing subject when a possible risk to the safety of the officer, the subject, or others has not been established by articulable justification other than flight, is unreasonable.”⁷⁰

NOPD’s language reflects a widely accepted principle: ECWs are an intermediate force option designed to control violent or potentially violent subjects—not to stop someone whose only act is running away. Without an accompanying threat, risk of harm, or active aggression, deploying an ECW creates unnecessary risk of injury, especially because falls resulting from neuromuscular incapacitation can cause serious harm.

APD should adopt similar language to avoid misuse and to ensure consistency with constitutional standards, national guidance, and other agencies that clearly restrict ECW deployment to situations involving articulable danger beyond flight.

Recommendation 27. APD should revise its ECW policy to state explicitly that flight alone does not justify ECW use. The policy should require officers to articulate a specific, imminent risk of harm to themselves or others before deploying an ECW on a fleeing subject, thereby improving clarity, promoting safer and more constitutionally sound decision-making, and aligning APD with contemporary best practices.

ECW use on handcuffed subjects

APD’s policy does not contain clear restrictions on the use of ECWs against handcuffed or otherwise restrained subjects. Modern ECW policies, however, recognize that once a subject is restrained, the justification for intermediate force drops dramatically. Using an ECW on a restrained individual carries a heightened risk of unnecessary pain, positional injury, and escalation. For these reasons, many agencies expressly prohibit ECW use on handcuffed subjects except in rare, narrowly defined circumstances involving imminent harm.

A strong model appears in the Milwaukee (Wisconsin) Police Department’s ECW policy, which states, “The CEW should not be used . . . against handcuffed subjects unless there are compelling reasons to do so which can be clearly articulated.”⁷¹

70. “1.71 Conducted Energy Weapon (CEW),” *Operations Manual* (New Orleans: New Orleans Police Department, 2020), <https://nola.gov/next/nopd/topics/policies/>.

71. “467 – Conducted Energy Weapon,” *Standard Operating Procedures* (Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee Police Department, 2024) https://city.milwaukee.gov/police/About-MPD/Code-of-Conduct?FB_Values=&F81666_ajaxEnabled=0&F81666_DocID=338411&F81666_keywordFilter=&F81666_PageNum=4&.

Recommendation 28. APD should revise its ECW policy to expressly prohibit ECW use on handcuffed or otherwise restrained subjects unless the individual presents an imminent threat of serious bodily harm and officers can clearly articulate compelling reasons why lesser control techniques would be ineffective. Adopting this type of language would minimize unnecessary or excessive force and align APD with contemporary best practices.

Policy P-2020-003 Chemical Defense Spray Procedure

PERF next reviewed APD's Chemical Defense Spray policy to ensure compliance with modern practices. The opportunities for improvement are presented here.

Consistent with our review of the UOF and ECW policies ([recommendation 2](#), [recommendation 19](#)), if APD chooses not to consolidate its UOF policies into a single, unified directive, it should ensure that core principles—sanctity of life, proportionality, and the Critical Decision-Making Model (CDM)—are explicitly integrated into the Chemical Defense Spray policy. These principles are foundational to contemporary UOF standards, and every policy authorizing UOF—regardless of the level—should clearly reflect them. Doing so will promote consistent officer decision-making, reinforce APD's commitment to protecting human life, and ensure alignment with best practices.

Recommendation 29. If APD does not consolidate all force-related documents into a single comprehensive policy, it should add definitions of foundational force principles, such as the sanctity of life and proportionality, to its Chemical Defense Spray policy.

Section (II) Procedure – Threshold Language

APD policy lacks a clear statement of the circumstances under which chemical defense spray may be used and would benefit from explicitly defining the behavioral threshold that permits officers to use it—as well as more clearly outlining the circumstances in which its use is prohibited.

The San Diego (California) Police Department specifies that OC may only be used on a person who is engaged in active, assaultive, or life-threatening behavior.⁷² Department Procedure 1.04, the agency's Use of Force policy, cross-references this while describing various levels of resistance and assaultive behaviors. APD should add similar language to its policy to define permissible thresholds for deployment and to ensure that officers apply the tool only in objectively reasonable, clearly articulated situations.

72. "Procedure 1.06 – Administration: Use of Liquid Chemical Agent," San Diego Police Department, last modified January 2, 2018, <https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/106.pdf>.

Recommendation 30. APD should revise its Chemical Defense Spray policy to include clear, behavior-based thresholds for deployment—such as limiting use to individuals engaged in active resistance, assaultive conduct, or behavior that poses an imminent safety threat. Establishing explicit criteria will reduce ambiguity, support consistent and proportional decision-making, and better align the policy with contemporary UOF standards.

Vulnerable Individuals

APD's policy does not include language prohibiting or restricting the use of chemical defense spray on vulnerable populations. Other agencies provide clear guidance in this area and can serve as models. For example, the Baltimore Police Department explicitly states, "Members shall not use OC Spray against persons who are obviously pregnant, apparently elderly, known to be a preteen or younger (or whose age is objectively apparent to a reasonable officer to be a preteen or younger), or visibly frail, unless exceptional circumstances are present that pose an *imminent threat* of harm to the member or another party, and no reasonable alternative is available."⁷³ Incorporating similar restrictions would align APD's policy with emerging best practices and ensure additional safeguards for individuals who face heightened risks of injury from chemical agents.

Recommendation 31. APD should revise its Chemical Defense Spray policy to explicitly prohibit the use of chemical defense spray on vulnerable individuals—including persons who are pregnant, elderly, preteen or younger, or visibly frail—except in narrowly defined, exceptional circumstances involving an imminent threat and no reasonable alternative.

Crowd Dispersal

At least one of the OIPA cases we reviewed involved the use of chemical defense spray to disperse a group of young people at a school function. Absent extraordinary circumstances, chemical defense spray should not be used to disperse crowds. APD would benefit from the San Diego Police Department's policy language: "Generally, OC should not be used to disperse a crowd without the approval of the on-scene field supervisor or the incident commander."⁷⁴ Adopting this type of language would ensure that chemical defense spray is used sparingly and only in extreme circumstances.

Recommendation 32. APD should revise its Chemical Defense Spray policy to limit its use solely for dispersing crowds.

73. "Policy 1118, Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) Spray," Baltimore Police Department, last modified March 11, 2024, <https://www.baltimorepolice.org/transparency/bpd-policies/1118-oleoresin-capsicum-spray> (emphasis added).

74. "Procedure 1.06 – Administration: Use of Liquid Chemical Agent" (see [note 72](#)).

NOTE: As PERF neared completion of this report, we learned that APD had issued a new policy, which obviated the need for this recommendation.⁷⁵ We commend APD for this decision.

Policy P-2023--068 In-Custody Death or Serious Injury Investigation Procedure

This policy outlines the procedures for responding to, investigating, and documenting any in-custody death or serious injury involving Akron police officers. It addresses scene response, supervisory duties, investigative protocols, and administrative review but does not address how, as an agency, APD can observe incidents and learn from them. We recommend that APD establish two systems to assess officer-involved critical incidents (OICI) with an eye toward short- and long-term improvement.

Tactical Briefing

Within 72 hours (and ideally within 24 hours) of any officer-involved death or serious injury, there should be a briefing to provide the chief an overview of the incident and the status of the investigation. In addition to informing the chief, the briefing should be an opportunity to determine whether the incident raised issues of officer safety, scene management, or other matters **that should be addressed immediately**.

The King County (Washington) Sheriff's Office calls this type of meeting shortly after a critical incident a "Sheriff's Briefing" and notes, under section 6.02.015(2), that its primary purpose is as follows:

- a. Provide a summary of the incident, the status of the investigation, and outstanding investigation steps.
- b. Identify any officer safety, scene management or other issues that need to be addressed immediately.
- c. Identify any significant investigative issues.
- d. Identify any major media issues."⁷⁶

APD would benefit from codifying the requirement for a similar type of briefing within a short time after any critical incident. PERF will work with APD to develop the appropriate personnel to attend, but because the focus is on determining whether glaring issues need to be addressed immediately, the following personnel will suffice:

- The chief
- Representative from OPSA

75 *P-2026-009 Public Order Procedure* (Akron, OH: Police Division, 2026), <https://www.akronohio.gov/departments/police/procedures.php>.

76. King County Sheriff's Office, "6.02.015 Sheriff's Briefing," General Orders Manual, last modified October 2024, <https://kingcounty.gov/en/dept/sheriff/about-king-county/about-sheriff-office/about-kcso/general-orders-manual>.

- Representative from Investigations Unit
- The relevant patrol captain
- Member of the Training Unit
- Member of the Communications Office

Recommendation 33. APD should add a requirement that a tactical briefing take place within 24 to 72 hours of any critical incident. One of the main purposes of the briefing should be to identify issues that require immediate attention.

Critical Incident Review Board (CIRB)

APD should strengthen its In-Custody Death or Serious Injury Investigation Procedure by establishing a permanent Critical Incident Review Board (CIRB) responsible for reviewing all serious uses of force and other critical incidents. Similar bodies—known as Force Review Boards or Performance Review Boards—are used nationwide to evaluate not only what happened but also what the agency can learn from the event.

At APD, the CIRB should review the following:

- Lethal UOF
- Less-lethal UOF involving a device or instrument
- UOF resulting in serious injury
- All in-custody deaths
- Any additional incidents that the chief directs the board to evaluate⁷⁷

A holistic, systems-oriented review process allows the department to identify opportunities for improvement that a narrowly focused administrative inquiry will not.⁷⁸ These reviews can reveal needed updates to officer training, deficiencies in tactics, gaps in equipment, and places where policy may require revision. Importantly, CIRBs also highlight exemplary conduct and reinforce effective practices—ensuring the process is not solely corrective but also developmental.

The CIRB should, at a minimum, include the following:

- Captain of the Patrol Division
- Lieutenant from the Training Unit
- Representative patrol officer
- Representative from OP&A

77. At some agencies, such as the Baltimore Police Department, the Force Review Board also reviews a set number of randomly selected general UOFs each month.

78. PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *Managing Officer Involved Critical Incidents*, Critical Issues in Policing Series (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2025), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/ManagingOICIs.pdf>.

- Other members whose expertise is relevant to the incident under review, designated by the chief
- At least one community member, as is done in some jurisdictions (optional)

The board should convene every other month to review all qualifying incidents that took place since its last session. At the conclusion of each review, the CIRB should submit a written report to the Chief that addresses the following:

- The completeness of criminal and administrative investigations
- Issues identified and recommended improvements
- Any required changes to policy, training, supervision, equipment, or organizational structure
- Any commendable actions or model tactics observed

Many other agencies already employ these types of boards:

- **Baltimore Police Department** uses a Performance Review Board that must provide the Commissioner with “recommended improvements to policies, training, supervision, tactics, and equipment.”⁷⁹
- **Fredericksburg (Virginia) Police Department** uses a Critical Incident Review Board whose outcomes include tactical recommendations, proposed equipment upgrades, and structural or organizational improvements.⁸⁰

Both agencies have formal policies governing their boards, and APD can use these examples as models when drafting its own.

Once APD’s CIRB is established, a dedicated policy should be developed to formalize its membership, responsibilities, workflow, timelines, and reporting requirements. The board should be chaired by a deputy chief and meet bi-monthly.

Recommendation 34. APD should create a Critical Incident Review Board (CIRB) to conduct holistic reviews of critical incidents and identify opportunities to improve policy, training, tactics, equipment, and supervision. This board should serve as a permanent mechanism for organizational learning and improvement, ensuring that APD consistently evaluates serious incidents through a wide lens and applies the lessons it learns from those evaluations agency-wide.

As discussed in “Moving Forward” beginning on [page 15](#), the current relationship between OIPA and APD does not appear to be producing meaningful outcomes. When OIPA provides important recommendations, they often become diluted among

79. “Policy 724 Performance Review Board,” Baltimore Police Department, last modified November 5, 2025, <https://www.baltimorepolice.org/transparency/bpd-policies/724-performance-review-board-0>.

80. “220.00 Critical Incident Review Board,” Fredericksburg Police Department, last modified February 20, 2026, <https://www.fredericksburgva.gov/1187/Department-Directives>.

numerous others, and City administration appears to be struggling to keep up with its initial goal of responding to every OIPA recommendation (see [page 14](#)). The result is a process that lacks clarity, accountability, and actionable follow-through.

To strengthen this system, we recommend creating a structured channel that ensures APD reviews, discusses, and acts upon OIPA's most significant recommendations. Specifically, OIPA should submit all recurring, high-impact, or otherwise substantial recommendations to the CIRB in advance of each meeting. At each CIRB meeting, members should formally review and discuss these submissions. Following its review, the CIRB should provide OIPA with a written response stating whether it agrees with each recommendation and, if so, detailing the steps APD will take to address it. If the CIRB disagrees, the response should explain its rationale for the disagreement—such as redundancy with existing practices or a determination that the issue does not warrant further action.

This type of structured exchange depends on good-faith participation by both APD and OIPA. OIPA should limit its submissions to significant, recurring, or systemically important recommendations and commit to maintaining a clear, organized submission portal. APD, in turn, should commit to establishing a functioning CIRB and requiring that the board formally process and respond to OIPA's recommendations as part of its regular workflow.

Recommendation 35. APD should require the CIRB to formally review and respond to significant OIPA recommendations.

OIPA should submit recurring or high-impact recommendations to the CIRB prior to each meeting, and the CIRB should provide written responses indicating agreement or disagreement and identifying any resulting actions. This structured process will ensure that OIPA recommendations receive meaningful consideration and that APD's responses are transparent, documented, and mutually accountable.

Mobile Recording Device Procedure (Body-Worn Cameras) Policy

In addition to its UOF-related policies, PERF reviewed P-2023-031, APD's Body-Worn Camera (BWC) policy. We found issues related to activation, deactivation, and wearing of BWCs during secondary employment.

BWC Activation

Under Section IV(B)(3) of APD’s Mobile Recording Devices Procedure, every officer is required to place their BWC into Record Mode *prior to taking any police-related action* including the following:

- All calls for service likely to result in citizen contact, whether officer-initiated or dispatched
- Events involving heightened risk, such as armed encounters, acts of physical violence, civil disturbances, criminal or suspicious activity, crime-scene searches, and animal dispatches
- The onset of a vehicle pursuit, when safe and practicable
- Any transport involving a citizen or prisoner
- Any situation in which captured media may be useful

While these expectations are reasonable, the current language is not sufficiently clear or directive, and relies heavily on broad, subjective phrasing (“any police-related action”). Many modern agencies now require BWC activation using explicit, scenario-based triggers that leave little room for interpretation. Anne Arundel County (Maryland) Police Department’s policy is a strong example: Section VI(A) “Mandatory Use of Active Mode Recording” states that BWCs **“must be activated at the first reasonable opportunity,”**⁸¹ whenever any listed circumstance occurs. The policy goes on to identify 13 circumstances, leaving very little to officers’ discretion.

Our review of OIPA case audits revealed several instances in which APD officers failed to activate their BWCs in a timely manner. Clearer, less ambiguous activation requirements would likely reduce these lapses by making expectations unmistakable.

Recommendation 36. APD should strengthen its BWC policy by replacing broad activation language with explicit, mandatory requirements for activation. These requirements should include a clearly enumerated list of circumstances in which activation is compulsory and phrasing such as “must be activated at the first reasonable opportunity.” Doing so will emphasize the importance of consistent BWC use, improve accountability, and reduce preventable failures to record.

BWC Deactivation

Verbal Statement

APD’s policy would also benefit from clearer, more explicit guidance on when and how officers may deactivate their BWC. In particular, the policy should require officers to verbally state the reason they are ending a recording before turning the camera off. This announcement can be brief—e.g., “*Ended citizen contact,*” “*Resident requested*

81. “1904.4 Body-Worn Cameras,” Anne Arundel County Police Department, last modified January 20, 2026, <https://www.aacounty.org/police-department/about-us/rules-and-regulations>.

deactivation,” or *“Medical staff requested deactivation.”* Creating an audio record of the justification provides reviewers with immediate context and eliminates ambiguity during later investigations or supervisory audits.

Anne Arundel County’s BWC policy again offers a useful model. Section VI(A) “Stopping or Not Activating Active Mode” states, “When stopping an Active Mode recording, the officer should memorialize the reason for stopping the recording by making an oral statement prior to stopping the recording.”⁸² This is a simple, transparent requirement that APD can easily adapt and incorporate into its own procedure.

Recommendation 37. APD should revise its BWC policy to require officers to briefly state on camera why they are ending a recording before deactivating the device. This small but important change will improve transparency, strengthen supervisory review, and reduce ambiguity in future investigations.

Clarifying When Recording May End

APD should also update its policy to include more explicit guidance on *when* officers may lawfully deactivate their BWC. As written, the policy permits officers to stop recording once “citizen contact has concluded” or “the call has concluded,” language that leaves room for interpretation and has contributed to ambiguity in several OIPA case reviews. Clearer, more objective standards would help ensure that critical moments are consistently captured and reduce the number of incidents in which recordings end prematurely.

Boston Police Department’s BWC policy provides a strong model in this regard. Under rule 405, officers must continue recording “until the conclusion of the interaction”⁸³ and may not deactivate until all investigative or enforcement activity has fully ended. The Boston Police Department’s directive removes any ambiguity about when the camera may be turned off and specifically incorporates the modern best-practice principle that “when in doubt, officers should continue recording.” These standards ensure that critical interactions—particularly rapidly evolving or unpredictable ones—are captured in full.

Recommendation 38. APD should revise its BWC policy to specify that officers may not deactivate their camera until the incident has fully concluded and no further enforcement or investigative action is anticipated; APD should also include a statement to the effect that “when in doubt, officers should continue recording.” This clearer language will help ensure complete recording of critical events and reduce premature deactivations.

82. “1904.4 Body-Worn Cameras” (see [note 81](#)).

83. “Rule 405, Body Worn Camera Policy – Revised,” Boston Police Department, last modified May 20, 2024, <https://police.boston.gov/rules-procedures/>.

Buffer / Lookback

During our meetings with non-APD stakeholders, several individuals raised concerns about APD's current 30-second lookback period and expressed a desire for a longer buffer.⁸⁴ As APD updates its BWC policy, it should carefully consider whether to expand its buffering or lookback feature. PERF cannot offer an unequivocal recommendation because any such change requires weighing the operational benefits against the fiscal and technical costs that accompany a longer pre-event recording window.

A longer lookback period offers meaningful advantages. The lead-up to any police-civilian encounter is often the most disputed portion of the incident. Capturing more of that pre-activation context can strengthen administrative reviews, enhance transparency, and help ensure that key moments are not missed simply because an encounter unfolded too quickly for an officer to manually activate their camera. This advantage is especially true in UOF incidents, where a longer lookback reduces the likelihood that the substantive portion of the encounter occurs before BWC activation. In addition, a longer lookback can strengthen criminal investigations because initial conduct, movements, or verbal cues often influence probable-cause determinations and help provide a more complete evidentiary record.

However, these benefits must be balanced against the costs. Increasing the lookback period requires storing more data, which in turn raises cloud storage and retention costs, increases upload time, and places a greater demand on battery life. These are not trivial considerations—particularly for municipalities with large camera deployments.

Other police agencies have concluded that the operational benefits justify the added storage and retention costs. Examples include the following:

- **New York Police Department.** 60-second lookback⁸⁵
- **Philadelphia Police Department.** 60-second lookback⁸⁶
- **Chicago Police Department.** 120-second lookback⁸⁷
- **Columbus Police Department.** 120-second lookback⁸⁸

84. Days before completing this report, PERF observed that the mayor and Akron City Council both supported a resolution to study this issue of broadening the BWC lookback time. Derek Kreider, "Akron Proposes Longer Look-Back Periods for Police Bodycams," *Akron Beacon Journal*, March 14, 2026, <https://www.beaconjournal.com/story/news/local/2026/03/14/akron-proposes-longer-look-back-periods-for-police-bodycams/89115666007/>.

85. *Body Worn Cameras: Impact and Use Policy* (New York: New York City Police Department, 2026), <https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/about/about-nypd/policy/post-act.page>.

86. *PPD's Body Worn Camera Policy*, Policy and Practice Explainer (Philadelphia: Citizens Police Oversight Commission, 2022), <https://www.phila.gov/documents/citizens-police-oversight-commission-executive-review-and-explainers/>.

87. "Special Order S03-14 Body Worn Cameras," Chicago Police Department, last modified February 27, 2026, <https://directives.chicagopolice.org/#directive/public/6120>.

88. Tom Bosco, "Next-Generation Body Cameras Deploying on Columbus Officers, Cruisers," Fox28, last modified November 14, 2022, <https://myfox28columbus.com/news/local/columbus-division-of-police-unveil-next-generation-body-camera-technology-cruisers-law-enforcement-technology-body-worn-car-cams-audio-video>.

Each of these jurisdictions determined independently that the value of a longer lookback outweighed the financial impact. Whether that conclusion applies in Akron depends on local budget priorities, data storage capacity, vendor contracts, and the city's overall goals for transparency and investigative completeness.

Recommendation 39. APD should engage in a structured, collaborative decision-making process with the City of Akron to determine whether extending the BWC lookback period is financially and operationally feasible.

This should include an assessment of costs; storage capacity; vendor options; and the potential benefits to accountability, investigations, and community trust.

BWCs for Secondary Employment

Across the United States, when police officers work secondary employment *in which they will foreseeably exercise their police powers*, they are increasingly required to wear BWCs. PERF recommends that APD modify its BWC policy to require the same.

For instance, for nearly a decade—since 2017—Denver Police Department officers have been required to wear BWCs whenever they are in uniform during secondary employment.⁸⁹ Detroit Police Department⁹⁰ and Anne Arundel County Police Department⁹¹ similarly mandate BWC use for any secondary employment assignment in which officers are exercising police authority. The rationale is straightforward: When officers are performing functions that involve a uniformed presence and the potential to take enforcement action, the public reasonably expects the same level of transparency and accountability as during on-duty interactions.

Recommendation 40. APD should modify its policy to require officers working any secondary-employment assignment that involves the exercise—or potential exercise—of police authority to wear and activate BWCs under the same standards that apply during on-duty operations.

This requirement will ensure consistent transparency, strengthen accountability, and align APD with modern best practices used by peer agencies.

Policy P-2023-010 Transport and Prisoner Control Procedure

PERF reviewed this policy and found it generally sound. However, it provides only minimal guidance regarding the WRAP restraint device. As shown in figure 2 on page 58, the WRAP is a commercially manufactured full-body restraint system used by many U.S. law enforcement agencies. The manufacturer states that the WRAP is

89. Brian Maass and Mark Ackerman, "Denver Police Officers Working Off Duty to Wear Body Cameras," CBS News, last modified May 26, 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/colorado/news/denver-police-body-cameras-off-duty/>.

90. "Special Order 22-54 Body-Worn Camera Policy," Detroit Police Department, last modified December 16, 2023, https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2023-12/304.6-22-54-Body-Worn-Cameras-304.6_Special-Order_12-16-2023.pdf.

91. "1904.4 Body-Worn Cameras" (see [note 81](#)).

intended to immobilize individuals who are violent, combative, or otherwise pose a risk of injury to themselves or others, with the goal of “stopping conflicts quickly, achieving fast de-escalation, and providing rapid recovery for both subject and personnel.”⁹²

Figure 2. An individual secured in the WRAP.



Source: Safe Restraints, “The Wrap Safety Restraint” (see [note](#)).

APD, like many agencies nationwide, uses the WRAP because it positions individuals in an upright seated posture, widely regarded as safer than prone restraint.⁹³ However, the WRAP is mentioned only once—in APD’s Transport and Prisoner Control Procedure—where it appears alongside standard restraints such as handcuffs. The policy states, “In order to prevent injuries to officers, subjects, and/or others, it may be necessary to further restrain violent or combative individuals by the use of The Wrap [sic] restraint device or by the use of leg restraints when appropriate.” This brief reference does not provide operational direction on when the WRAP should be deployed, how it should be applied, whether supervisory approval is required, or what type of monitoring is necessary. Given that the WRAP is a full-body immobilization tool with significantly greater intrusiveness and risk considerations than standard handcuffs, the current policy framework is insufficient.

Other agencies that regularly deploy the WRAP—such as the Huntsville (Alabama), Wichita (Kansas), and Henderson (Nevada) Police Departments—treat it as a specialty restraint device requiring enhanced procedural safeguards. Each maintains a dedicated WRAP policy recognizing that its use involves heightened risks, additional responsibilities, and explicit monitoring requirements.

92. Safe Restraints, “The Wrap Safety Restraint,” accessed March 3, 2026, <https://www.saferestraints.com/the-wrap-safety-restraint>.

93. PERF, *15 Principles to Reduce the Risk of Restraint-Related Death* (see [note 59](#)).

For example, the Wichita Police Department requires that subjects placed in the WRAP “should never be left unmonitored” and that officers apply the device only after receiving supervisory approval.⁹⁴ Likewise, the Huntsville Police Department mandates continuous monitoring of breathing, skin color, and consciousness, and requires supervisory assessment before deployment, emphasizing the seriousness of the intervention.⁹⁵ The Henderson Police Department similarly restricts application to situations approved by a sergeant or above, prohibits use of the WRAP as a disciplinary measure, and requires constant supervision until medical staff have evaluated the subject.⁹⁶

Across these agencies, some common policy themes emerge:

- **Supervisory authorization** prior to deployment
- **Specialized officer training and demonstrated proficiency** before application
- **Continuous monitoring** of the subject for medical or behavioral distress
- **Strict prohibitions on punitive use**
- **Clear documentation requirements**, including the justification for restraint and monitoring details
- **Explicit positioning requirements** (upright, never prone) to reduce safety risks
- **Regular reassessment** and removal of the restraint as soon as reasonably feasible

These safeguards acknowledge the WRAP’s unique risks and the level of care required when using a full-body restraint.

APD currently lacks comparable standards. With only minimal guidance, WRAP use is subject to inconsistent application, officer uncertainty, and elevated risk to both individuals and personnel. A dedicated WRAP section in the current policy (or a standalone policy) would establish necessary procedural guardrails and align APD with peer agencies that recognize the need for enhanced structure when using this type of restraint.

94. “Policy 915 WRAP Restraint Systems,” Wichita Police Department, last modified August 17, 2023, <https://www.wichita.gov/549/Policy-Procedure-Manual>.

95. “701.6 The WRAP Restraint,” Huntsville Police Department, accessed March 10, 2026, <https://www.huntsvilleal.gov/residents/public-safety/huntsville-police/police-operations/police-operating-directives/>.

96. “Department Policy 312 The WRAP Restraint System,” Henderson Police Department, last modified December 27, 2023, <https://www.cityofhenderson.com/government/departments/police/department-policies>.

Recommendation 41. APD should develop a standalone section of its policy covering the WRAP (or develop a standalone policy) that provides clear direction on the authorization, application, monitoring, and limitations associated with this specialized restraint device. Although APD authorizes the WRAP’s use, its single reference in the Transportation and Prisoner Control Procedure is insufficient for a tool that imposes full-body immobilization, carries greater risk of injury than other methods of restraint, and requires far more oversight than standard handcuffing.

Training

Policy review and recommendations were the most substantial portion of this project. But policy reform is meaningful only to the extent that it is understood, internalized, and consistently applied by officers in the field. **Training is the primary mechanism through which the recommendations in this report will become operationalized.** Updated policies—however well drafted—will not change outcomes unless they are deliberately translated into training curricula, reinforced through supervision, and reflected in daily decision-making.

APD faces a particular challenge in this regard. The department is young, understaffed, and operating under significant operational strain. Especially in that environment, training must do more than convey technical requirements or ensure compliance; it must build judgment, reinforce shared expectations, and provide officers with a structured framework for applying policy under stress. As PERF’s review of OIPA recommendations revealed, most of OIPA’s training-related concerns are not rooted in a lack of technical skill but in uneven decision-making, risk assessment, and tactical judgment.

Accordingly, APD’s training strategy should focus on **bridging the gap between policy and practice**—ensuring that officers understand not only *what* the policy requires but also *why* it exists and *how* to apply it in real-world encounters. This requires a cohesive training approach that integrates updated policies, the CDM, de-escalation principles, proportionality, and the sanctity of human life across recruit training, in-service instruction, supervisory development, and post-incident review.

Training is the thread that connects nearly every recommendation in this report—from supervisory decision-making to specialized tools like the WRAP, ECWs, and de-escalation tactics. While APD provides required and highly competent training across multiple domains, our review indicates that much of the department’s curriculum is heavily task-focused and compliance-oriented rather than grounded in a broader philosophy that emphasizes proportionality, the sanctity of life, structured decision-making, and the prevention of avoidable force. As a result, training often reinforces technical proficiency without consistently cultivating the judgment, communication skills, and tactical patience necessary in the modern, high-accountability policing environment. Strengthening APD’s training program will therefore require more than

updated lesson plans: It will demand an organizational commitment—from leadership to line officers—to embed the CDM, de-escalation principles, proportionality, and respect for the sanctity of life into their everyday policing.

The following recommendations will help APD to operationalize the policy recommendations made in this report.

Process policy changes through training

Policy changes must be integrated through training rather than simple administrative updates. Each substantive revision to APD policy—such as new limits on head strikes, guidance on ECW cycle management, WRAP deployment criteria, or revised definitions of reportable force—should trigger a structured training response. Relying on written policy dissemination alone risks uneven understanding and inconsistent application, particularly in a young and operationally stressed department. To ensure policy intent is fully understood, leadership must give officers clear instructions on what has changed, why the change matters, and how it should be applied in the field.

Accordingly, every significant policy revision should be accompanied by three core training components: a concise training bulletin explaining the change and its rationale; a scenario-based module that allows officers to practice applying the policy under realistic conditions; and supervisor talking points to guide roll-call discussions and reinforce expectations at the line level. This approach ensures that policy updates are not merely acknowledged but are actively taught, practiced, and reinforced through supervision. By embedding policy changes into training and daily operations, APD can promote consistent application, strengthen decision-making, and reduce the gap between written policy and field practice.

Recommendation 42. Require that significant policy changes be integrated through training, using three core components: (1) a concise training bulletin; (2) a scenario-based module; and (3) supervisor talking points. APD can track progress on the training aspect of policy recommendations in the implementation dashboard (see [recommendation 1](#)).

Apply the CDM to review OIPA-highlighted cases with recurring themes

As PERF analyzed the 93 OIPA training recommendations issued during our seven-month audit period (see [page 12](#)), a clear pattern emerged: Although the recommendations were numerous and varied in wording (with that overabundance creating a “white-noise” effect for all of them), the overwhelming majority reflected a single underlying theme—**according to OIPA, officers need to exercise better judgment**. Most recommendations were essentially generalized guidance repackaged as specific training directives, even when they did not identify an actual skill deficit or concrete curriculum gap, as shown in table 2 on page 62:

Table 2. Many OIPA recommendations boil down to a common underlying theme

OIPA RECOMMENDATION	USE BETTER JUDGMENT IN ...
Reinforce decision-making under stress.	... rapid, high-pressure encounters where slowing down is feasible.
Reinforce officer safety and tactical positioning to reduce the need for high-risk maneuvers inside vehicles.	... choosing safer positioning instead of unnecessarily entering confined spaces.
Reinforce engagement strategies that minimize escalation.	... tone, communication, and pacing to prevent avoidable conflict.
Reinforce training on time, distance, cover, and verbal engagement with noncompliant but nonviolent individuals.	... recognizing when force is not immediately necessary and alternatives exist.
Expand scenario-based training focused on containment and delayed arrest strategies rather than immediate force during flight.	... distinguishing dangerous flight from mere evasion and adjusting tactics accordingly.
Require enhanced juvenile-specific de-escalation training emphasizing communication, time, and distance.	... recognizing developmental differences and adapting tactics in youth encounters.

Viewed collectively, these recommendations highlight a structural issue: They call for outcomes that cannot be achieved through isolated, one-off classes or topic-specific refreshers. **“Use better judgment” is not a curriculum; it is a cultural expectation.** Without a central framework—such as the CDM—woven consistently throughout recruit training, in-service instruction, supervisory development, and after-action reviews, officers are left with generalized directives that do little to strengthen their applied judgment in the field.

APD has already completed PERF’s ICAT training, and PERF instructors were impressed with the APD instructor who delivered the material. However, as noted earlier in this report (see [page 30](#)), neither the CDM nor the broader ICAT philosophy has permeated the agency’s organizational DNA. The training has not yet translated into a shared culture or into consistent, observable changes in how officers assess risk, communicate, or resolve encounters. During our site visit, several officers said they “got a few useful takeaways” from ICAT, but this type of limited, individualized impact falls short of the systemic adoption needed for meaningful change. Agencies that have

realized the full benefits of ICAT are those that have intentionally aligned philosophy, policy, supervision, and practice—creating a reinforcing ecosystem that elevates ICAT from a standalone class into a foundational decision-making framework.⁹⁷

To achieve the full impact of ICAT, agencies must do more than deliver the curriculum—they must internalize it. ICAT becomes meaningful only when its core principles are reflected in daily decision-making, supervisory expectations, after-action reviews, and the broader organizational mindset. Without these reinforcing mechanisms, training remains an isolated event rather than a driver of consistent, department-wide decision-making.

One way to reinforce the CDM is to incorporate selected, anonymized, OIPA-reviewed cases that surface recurring judgment-related issues into scenario-based training and facilitated debriefs; facilitators can use the CDM to analyze the key decision points, alternatives considered, and opportunities to slow or stabilize encounters. Framing actual incidents in this manner and using them as training tools also reinforces that oversight findings are intended to support learning and improvement rather than punishment and helps translate external review into practical guidance that officers can apply in future encounters. Used consistently, this approach would strengthen the feedback loop between oversight, training, and field practice while reinforcing the CDM as the department’s common language for decision-making.

Recommendation 43. APD should use OIPA cases that present recurring judgment-related issues as training opportunities to reinforce the CDM.

Reviewing these cases through a consistent CDM lens will reinforce judgment as a core professional skill and help translate oversight findings into practical guidance for training, supervision, and field practice.

Use BWC footage to reinforce better decision-making

BWC footage is one of the most powerful tools available to reinforce strong decision-making and identify opportunities for improvement. When used intentionally, BWC allows agencies to show officers what “right” looks like, examine where judgment broke down, and connect real-world incidents to the principles of the CDM. Supervisors and training staff should draw not only from APD’s own footage but also from illustrative incidents nationwide to demonstrate how the CDM can be applied across a wide variety of situations.

Importantly, the use of BWC footage need not be limited to formal in-service instruction. Sergeants can incorporate short video clips into roll calls to highlight effective use of time, distance, communication, tactical patience, and proportionality—or to prompt discussion of what alternatives might have produced safer or more effective outcomes. APD could mandate that every sergeant do this

97. PERF, “ICAT at 10” (see [note 45](#)).

once each quarter. Agencies improve when they adopt a culture of examined practice: one in which supervisors and officers have the humility to review incidents honestly, ask hard questions, and learn from both successes and mistakes.

The Volusia (Florida) Sheriff's Office offers an instructive example. Their trainers routinely visit precincts to deliver brief, on-site ICAT "micro-refreshers" using recent BWC footage to reinforce CDM principles. These short, recurring touchpoints keep deputies' skills sharp, promote shared expectations, and normalize ongoing, judgment-based learning. This type of continuous reinforcement is essential for building a department-wide culture of sound decision-making.

Recommendation 44. APD should use recent BWC footage—both their own and other agencies'—to reinforce CDM-based decision-making through regular roll-call discussions and short, precinct-level refresher sessions. Embedding these brief, ongoing BWC-based reviews into supervisory practice will strengthen officers' judgment and support a culture of continual improvement.

Integrate the CDM into aspects of policing beyond force

From the academy onward, recruits should be taught to apply the CDM to a wide range of policing situations—not only to force encounters. Agencies that have successfully embedded ICAT and the CDM into their organizational cultures have done so by introducing it early, reinforcing it often, and applying it consistently across operational contexts.

For example, after the Baltimore Police Department received ICAT training, it restructured its academy curriculum so that recruits were introduced to the CDM in the first week of training. The Baltimore Police Department also reorganized the ICAT sequence, teaching ICAT module 2 (CDM) before the traditional module 1 content. As a result, recruits learned the decision-making framework first and then viewed all subsequent tactics, communication skills, and scenarios through that lens. Field training officers (FTO) later reported that new graduates demonstrated clearer thinking, stronger articulation, and more deliberate decision-making—improvements they directly attributed to early and persistent exposure to the CDM.⁹⁸

Similarly, the Burlington (North Carolina) Police Department teaches recruits to apply the CDM broadly, using it not only in force scenarios but also in everyday judgment calls, such as managing noncompliant subjects, conducting vehicle stops, and navigating citizen interactions. Burlington's training staff also uses the CDM during remedial after-action debriefs, giving recruits a structured tool to reflect on their decisions, identify alternatives, and consider whether different choices might have

98. The Baltimore Police Department's CDM lesson plan, which it provides to its academy class to promote better and more thoughtful decision-making throughout policing, is available to APD upon request.

led to safer or more proportional outcomes. Because recruits know they will be evaluated using the same framework, the CDM becomes a shared decision-making language rather than an isolated training module.⁹⁹

These examples demonstrate that the CDM is most powerful not when reserved for high-risk encounters but when used routinely—during supervision, peer coaching, report writing, tactical planning, and post-incident review. When the CDM becomes the default way officers think about risk, options, time, distance, communication, and proportionality, it begins to shape organizational behavior from the ground up. For APD, integrating the CDM into routine decision-making would also reinforce many of the patterns we observed during the audit: the need for officers to slow encounters; manage distance; avoid officer-created jeopardy; and choose safer, more deliberate tactics.

A department cannot achieve these outcomes through isolated training events alone. The CDM must animate how officers are taught, how supervisors evaluate incidents, how FTOs coach new officers, and how the organization talks about effective policing. When used this way, the CDM becomes not merely a model but a culture.

Recommendation 45. APD should integrate the CDM into all aspects of training, supervision, and operational practice—not just UOF instruction. This integration can include the following:

- Introducing the CDM during the first week of academy training and reinforcing it throughout recruit instruction
- Structuring academy and in-service curricula so that CDM principles precede—and frame—all tactical, communication, and scenario-based training
- Training FTOs and supervisors to use the CDM during coaching, after-action reviews, and performance evaluations
- Incorporating CDM analysis into all UOF reviews, vehicle stop critiques, tactical planning discussions, and report writing expectations
- Ensuring all officers understand that their decisions will be assessed using CDM principles, promoting consistent application and accountability

Review UOF

APD demonstrates meaningful commitment and genuine effort, yet its current UOF review process needs development. As noted in the “APD Members/FOP Lodge #7” section beginning on [page 6](#), in 2024, APD supervisors (including sergeants, OPSA members, and high-ranking APD staff) reviewed 301 UOF incidents involving 773 officers and concluded that only one member used force that was out of policy. Given the volume, complexity, and inherent variability of UOF encounters, that outcome is far more likely to signal shortcomings in the review process than near-perfect officer performance.

99. PERF facilitated a meeting between members of APD and members of the Burlington Police Department to discuss these principles.

Integrating the CDM into UOF reviews provides a consistent, structured framework to help supervisors evaluate whether officers' actions were appropriate at each stage of each encounter. When supervisors use the CDM in their investigations, it reinforces its importance across the organization and clearly signals to officers that the same principles that guide their training will also guide how their decisions are assessed.

For the CDM to serve as an effective review tool, supervisors must be trained to examine incidents holistically—not simply at the moment force was used but also at the “upstream” decisions that shaped the encounter. This comprehensive examination includes assessing whether officers gathered adequate information, communicated effectively, used distance and time appropriately, avoided creating jeopardy, and considered alternative tactical options.

The Chicago Police Department provides a strong model for this approach.¹⁰⁰ It uses the CDM as the backbone of its UOF review system, treating each incident as a structured decision analysis rather than a simple compliance check. Reviewers walk step-by-step through the CDM: evaluating what information officers collected, how they assessed threats and risks, whether they recognized their policy constraints, what options they identified (including de-escalation and tactical repositioning), and why they chose the actions they did. Supervisors focus not only on whether the application of force was “objectively reasonable” but on whether officers made sound choices throughout the entire encounter—slowing the situation, communicating effectively, using available resources, and maintaining proportionality. This approach yields a coaching-oriented, learning-focused review system that helps officers understand how alternative decisions earlier in the encounter could have produced safer and more effective outcomes.¹⁰¹ **This is how agencies meaningfully improve officer decision-making over time.**

Recommendation 46. APD should implement the Critical Decision-Making Model (CDM) as the required framework for all UOF investigations and supervisory reviews. Embedding the CDM into APD's review system would promote more rigorous oversight, strengthen officer judgment, and advance a culture of continuous learning and accountability.

Document policy violations

One recurring issue identified during our OIPA audit was a pattern in which sergeants and other reviewing supervisors observed clear evidence of policy violations but declined to formally document them. In other words, instead of noting that a violation occurred and then weighing the underlying mitigating circumstances to determine

100. PERF can facilitate a meeting between APD and the Chicago Police Department to discuss this approach. PERF can also provide a PowerPoint detailing how supervisors use the CDM to review force.

101. PERF can facilitate a meeting between APD and the Chicago Police Department, provide a PowerPoint presentation that the Chicago Police Department uses to teach these methods to APD, or both.

the appropriate response—as any credible accountability system requires—reviewers frequently avoided finding a violation at all, often by offering justifications that do not exist in the policy.

This issue appeared most consistently in cases involving the failure to properly seatbelt people in police vehicles. PERF repeatedly reviewed incidents in which officers failed to secure individuals in their custody, typically because the person was unruly or resistant. While such behavior may appropriately influence the corrective action taken, it does not negate the underlying requirement to seatbelt detainees—i.e., there is no “unruly passenger” exception to the rule that people must be seatbelted. Yet rather than documenting the violation and then considering the unruly behavior to mitigate the corrective action, supervisors often chose to find no violation whatsoever. This practice undermines transparency, weakens accountability, and deprives the APD of opportunities to learn from mistakes and reduce risk in future encounters.

To correct this habit, APD must ensure that sergeants, lieutenants, OPSA personnel, and all others responsible for incident review receive consistent training in evaluating policy compliance. Reviewers should be explicitly taught to distinguish between (1) determining whether a violation occurred and (2) deciding what response is appropriate after considering intent, context, and mitigating factors. This distinction is fundamental to a credible oversight system. Without structured training—and reinforcement through supervisory expectations and quality-control reviews—reviewers may continue to conflate mitigation with absolution, undermining both accountability and organizational learning.

Recommendation 47. APD should train all supervisors and OPSA staff to accurately and consistently document policy violations, even when mitigating circumstances exist. The review process must distinguish between identifying a violation and determining the appropriate response, ensuring accountability while supporting fair and transparent decision-making.

Formalize and train a coordinated police–EMS response

As detailed earlier (in [recommendation 16](#)), APD should add operational principles of PERF’s *15 Principles for Reducing the Risk of Restraint-Related Death* to its UOF policy. Principle 2 reads as follows: **Plan and develop protocols for a coordinated MBE response.** *Stakeholders must meet and develop policies and protocols; they should also train together.* The report goes on to note, “Police, fire, EMS, and dispatch leaders must plan for on-scene coordination and collaboration,” and after the details of a plan have been agreed upon, stakeholders must engage in scenario-based training together.¹⁰²

102. PERF, *15 Principles to Reduce the Risk of Restraint-Related Death* (see [note 59](#)).

APD should therefore establish regular, structured coordination with EMS and other relevant partners to jointly develop response protocols for MBE- and restraint-related incidents, clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority. This collaboration should be reinforced through recurring joint, scenario-based training that emphasizes early medical involvement, communication during dynamic incidents, and coordinated transitions from law enforcement control to medical care.

Recommendation 48. APD should formalize a coordinated police-EMS response to MBE- and restraint-related incidents by jointly developing protocols with EMS, fire, and dispatch that clearly define roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority. APD should further participate in joint, scenario-based training to reinforce early medical involvement, effective on-scene communication, and coordinated transitions from law enforcement control to medical care.

Run Concurrent Investigations in Critical Incidents

Like all police departments, APD has a strong interest in determining whether an officer acted in accordance with policy and training during any OUF that results in death or serious physical injury. Yet APD continues to delay its administrative investigations into these significant incidents—in their entirety—until after the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) completes its criminal investigation and the case is presented to a grand jury. In practice, this means APD places its administrative review on hold—sometimes for many months or more—until the criminal process has run its course. This approach unnecessarily slows the administrative investigation and stands in contrast to contemporary practice in most large police agencies, many of which have moved away from this sequential model in favor of conducting administrative and criminal inquiries concurrently, with appropriate safeguards to ensure the integrity of both processes.

This hesitation to proceed with an administrative investigation largely stems from concerns about compelling an interview with the subject officer—specifically, the legitimate fear that a compelled statement could complicate or jeopardize a potential criminal case by creating immunity issues if charges are warranted.¹⁰³ However, as PERF has previously noted, “an agency may not need to wait to conduct a compelled interview [of a subject officer] if it has a thorough understanding of *Garrity* and the capacity to completely wall off those taking the compelled statement from all members of the criminal investigative team, (that is, prohibit those taking the compelled statement from sharing that information with [others]).”¹⁰⁴

103. *Garrity v. New Jersey*, 385 U.S. 493 (1967), <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/usrep/usrep385/usrep385493/usrep385493.pdf>.

104. PERF, *Managing Officer-Involved Critical Incidents*, 55 (see [note 78](#)).

In other words, agencies that effectively separate administrative and criminal investigators can move forward with timely administrative interviews without compromising the integrity of the criminal investigation. This separation is even easier to maintain in Akron, where APD's administrative investigations are conducted by OPSA and the criminal investigations are handled entirely by BCI. Given this structural separation—which many agencies must create artificially—APD is well positioned to conduct timely administrative interviews without risking contamination of the criminal case.

Large police agencies are increasingly erecting walls and conducting concurrent investigations. For instance, officers at the Philadelphia Police Department must provide a compelled statement to members of Internal Affairs within 72 hours of an incident; members of the Portland (Oregon) Police Bureau must provide their statement to Internal Affairs within 48 hours.¹⁰⁵ From that point on, administrative investigators do not share any information with criminal investigators.

APD should establish a practice of conducting concurrent administrative investigations into significant UOF incidents, potentially including timely, compelled interviews that are fully protected by appropriate wall-off procedures. Waiting for prosecutors to issue criminal determinations—a process that can take months or even years—delays corrective action where it is needed and, conversely, in cases where an officer acted appropriately, postpones returning a cleared officer to an assignment where they are needed. Conducting parallel administrative investigations is consistent with modern best practices and ensures that APD can address training, policy, and performance issues without being held hostage to the length of the criminal process.

Recommendation 49. APD should implement a policy permitting concurrent administrative investigations into significant UOF incidents, including, potentially, timely compelled statements, which should be fully protected by wall-off procedures. This approach will enable APD to identify training, policy, and performance issues without waiting for lengthy criminal determinations, allowing necessary corrective action—or the timely return of an officer who acted appropriately—while maintaining the integrity of the criminal investigation.

If APD opts not to accept this recommendation in full, it should, at a minimum, commit to completing all components of the administrative investigation—other than the compelled interview—while the criminal investigation is ongoing. There is no operational or legal justification for placing the entire administrative process on hold, only to restart it months (or even years) later. By the time the criminal investigation concludes, the only remaining task should be the compelled interview, along with any

105. PERF, *Managing Officer-Involved Critical Incidents* (see [note 78](#)).

follow-up that stems directly from it. This approach minimizes delay, reduces duplication of effort, and ensures the administrative review progresses as efficiently and responsibly as possible.

Recommendation 50. If APD elects not to compel administrative interviews, it should nonetheless require that all other components of the administrative investigation into significant UOF incidents proceed concurrently with any criminal investigation. This approach will minimize delay and ensure prompt corrective action or officer clearance once criminal proceedings conclude.

Personnel

Prioritize first-line supervision

There is no more important—and no more difficult—position in a police agency than the first-line supervisor. This is especially true in a young department like Akron, where officers rely heavily on sergeants for on-the-job training, coaching, and real-time decision-making support. Effective front-line supervision is the single most powerful lever a department has to shape officer behavior, reinforce expectations, and build a healthy organizational culture.

However, during our site visit, it became clear that APD sergeants are unable to fulfill these critical responsibilities. Despite their strong desire to mentor and develop their junior officers, sergeants reported being overwhelmed by the volume of minor UOF reviews, spending much of their shifts inside headquarters watching BWC footage rather than supervising officers in the field. The result is predictable: diminished oversight, limited coaching, and fewer opportunities to model and reinforce good decision-making—precisely what a young department cannot afford to lose.

Adopting [recommendation 4](#) will help. APD currently over-captures force, resulting in sergeants spending substantial time reviewing incidents that would not be considered reportable in many other agencies; reducing this unnecessary volume will free sergeants from hours of unwarranted BWC review. *But reducing workload alone is not enough.* APD also needs a structural shift that allows sergeants to prioritize what matters most: being out in the field, guiding officers, modeling sound judgment, and reinforcing expectations in real time.

According to a recent press release,¹⁰⁶ the most recent union contract settlement includes adding three exempt sergeant positions to OPISA (see also “Civilianization” beginning on [page 72](#)). This addition is an important step. These positions will help provide greater consistency in UOF reviews—an issue repeatedly raised by both officers and OIPA—and will relieve field sergeants from the near-constant burden of

106. City of Akron, “Mayor Malik Releases Statement on Tentative Agreement with Akron Police Union,” press release, October 20, 2025, https://www.akronohio.gov/news_detail_T17_R365.php.

evaluating force incidents. Just as importantly, this shift will return sergeants to their core function: providing real-time leadership, guidance, and supervision to the officers they oversee.

Placing three sergeants in OPSA is a meaningful beginning, but it should be understood as the foundation—not the endpoint—of a broader, more comprehensive strategy. Ideally, APD should transition to a model in which all UOF reviews are conducted by OPSA rather than by field supervisors. Under this approach, sergeants would still play an essential role by collecting initial information, identifying witnesses, and preparing a brief synopsis. That preliminary package, including the linked BWC footage, should then be turned over to OPSA for the full UOF review. This structure would allow OPSA to develop deeper subject matter expertise, promote consistency and quality in UOF evaluations, and preserve sergeants' capacity to lead operations in the field, where their presence is most critical.

Recommendation 51. APD should transition responsibility for all but the most minor UOFs from field sergeants to OPSA, enabling sergeants to prioritize front-line supervision, coaching, and real-time decision-making support. Centralizing force reviews in OPSA will increase consistency, enhance subject matter expertise, and strengthen accountability while restoring sergeants' capacity to lead effectively in the field.

Increase civilianization

Many sworn officers at APD—individuals who attended police academies and entered the policing profession to perform work that requires a badge and a gun—are instead assigned to positions that do not require police authority. These tasks could be performed just as effectively, and often more efficiently, by civilian personnel with the appropriate technical expertise, at substantially lower cost to Akron taxpayers. While we recognize that shifting to a more civilianized workforce will require thoughtful navigation of labor-management issues, the broader policing field has already moved in this direction. Reassigning non-police functions to qualified civilian staff is a necessary step toward enhancing operational efficiency, ensuring sworn officers are deployed where they are most needed and modernizing APD's organizational structure for long-term sustainability.¹⁰⁷

The benefits of civilianization are manifold, as PERF detailed in *Embracing Civilianization: Integrating Professional Staff to Advance Modern Policing*.¹⁰⁸ Primary among them, and directly relevant to the understaffed and very young APD:

107. We assume that most sworn personnel assigned to these non-policing roles—such as redacting BWC footage—entered the profession because they would prefer to be in the field performing the core duties of a police officer rather than at a desk performing the core duties of a film and video editor.

108. PERF (Police Executive Research Forum), *Embracing Civilianization: Integrating Professional Staff to Advance Modern Policing*, Critical Issues in Policing Series (Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum, 2024), <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/Civilianization.pdf>.

Civilianization frees up police officers for duties that require their training, skills, and law enforcement responsibilities. But it doesn't end there. Assigning civilians to roles better suited to their skills can also achieve the following:

- Improved service
- Greater productivity
- Lower costs
- Needed stability in key positions
- Enhanced professionalism¹⁰⁹

One of the most striking examples of a sworn APD member performing work that a nonsworn professional would accomplish more effectively and efficiently is the public information officer (PIO) role. Currently, APD rotates a higher-level sworn staff member into this position, meaning someone who entered policing to do police work could spend years performing functions—public relations and strategic communications—that do not require police authority.¹¹⁰

PERF heard from numerous APD members—and we agree—that much of the meaningful work officers do every day is simply invisible to the public because the department lacks a professional, sustained communications presence to highlight it. Daily, APD officers build relationships, solve problems, de-escalate tense situations, mentor youth, support crime victims, and engage in countless acts of quiet public service that never reach the residents of Akron. A professionally staffed public information office would ensure that these stories are told consistently, accurately, and strategically, thereby helping the agency build trust, demonstrate transparency, and strengthen community understanding of the real work officers perform. Civilianization of this role would not only free sworn staff to return to the field but also elevate the quality and impact of APD's communications in ways that benefit both the agency and the community it serves.¹¹¹

One reason APD cannot fully realize the benefits that would come from civilianizing certain positions is, presumably, the labor-relations issues involved. *Embracing Civilianization* outlines strategies for working through union concerns and building collaborative support for these transitions. Paradoxically, moving positions such as the PIO and BWC editors to civilian staff would benefit APD in general—and therefore benefit union members—by returning sworn officers to front-line duties, thereby reducing burnout, strengthening staffing, and improving overall operational effectiveness. We therefore encourage APD and the City to examine those positions currently occupied by sworn members that do not

109. "Civilianization," Baltimore Police Department, accessed March 10, 2026,

<https://www.baltimorepolice.org/civilianization>; PERF, *Embracing Civilianization*, 7 (see [note 108](#)).

110. To be clear, this is not a criticism of the current or any former PIOs; it is simply an acknowledgment that the role requires a different skill set than that of a sworn officer, as well as full-time attention to those duties.

111. "Julie Parker," Police1.com, accessed March 10, 2026, <https://www.police1.com/Julie-Parker/>.

require police authority or benefit from law enforcement training and to work with the union to develop a phased, mutually agreed-upon plan for transitioning those roles to qualified civilian professionals.

Recommendation 52. APD and the City of Akron should work with the FOP Lodge #7 to identify all positions currently filled by sworn personnel that do not require police authority and develop a phased plan to civilianize the work. Transitioning these functions to qualified professional staff will improve efficiency, reduce costs, and allow sworn officers to return to core policing duties.

Commit to UOF transparency

PERF has already recommended that APD strengthen its analysis of UOF incidents (see [recommendation 46](#)) and shift as much of the review process as possible to OPSA to improve quality and consistency (see [recommendation 51](#)). We noted previously (on [page 6](#)) that in 2024, out of 301 UOFs involving 773 members, APD found only one out of policy; we also noted that the out-of-policy finding rate of 1/301 was based on internal data (see [note 12](#)).

APD has a Transparency Hub and publicly reports its annual UOF numbers, but it does not disclose how many of those incidents were ultimately determined to be out of policy. This is a significant omission. Embracing the recommendations in this report should not only improve the overall quality of APD's UOF practices but also lead to more accurate reporting, more rigorous reviews, and therefore more meaningful out-of-policy determinations when appropriate. As APD strengthens its analysis and shifts greater review responsibility to OPSA, the department should also commit to publicly reporting its out-of-policy findings. Doing so would enhance transparency, allow the community to better understand how APD evaluates force, and provide a clearer picture of the department's progress over time.

Departments are sometimes hesitant to publish detailed UOF findings because the public often lacks a clear understanding of how police conduct is evaluated. Most people, understandably, view force incidents through a visceral, human lens: They see the video clip, the injury, or the confrontation and react to something that appears wrong or unnecessary. But administrative reviews operate under a very different and comprehensive framework. Officers are assessed based on constitutional standards, departmental policy, what they knew at the time, what a reasonable officer would have perceived (including mistaken but reasonable beliefs), and what training authorizes or requires in rapidly evolving situations. Without someone to explain these principles, the public is left to assume that every troubling video reflects misconduct.

This is precisely where a full-time, professional public information specialist can make a substantial difference (see [recommendation 52](#)). A trained communicator—someone with both the time and the subject matter fluency to unpack complex UOF reviews—can help the community understand *why* certain decisions were made, *how* officers were judged, and *what* the findings actually mean. By engaging

proactively and consistently, such a specialist can help bridge the gap between public perception and the analytical process, fostering greater trust, understanding, and transparency.

Recommendation 53. APD should post the number of UOF incidents that are ultimately determined to be out-of-policy on its transparency, along with the raw UOF numbers. Doing so—supported by a full-time professional public information specialist—will improve transparency, strengthen community understanding of UOF reviews, and reinforce trust in APD’s accountability systems.

Honor officers who de-escalate

It is not uncommon for law enforcement agencies to award life-saving medals or commendations to officers who perform CPR, pull a driver from a burning vehicle, or intervene heroically in a crisis—and rightly so. In those situations, the connection between the officer’s action and the life saved is immediate and unmistakable. De-escalation, by contrast, often prevents harm that never becomes visible: the injury that didn’t occur, the force that wasn’t used, the trauma that was avoided. **Although these outcomes are harder to quantify, the skill, judgment, and restraint required to achieve them are equally worthy of recognition.**

Law enforcement agencies have begun creating ways to recognize officers who show consistent efforts to peacefully resolve incidents. For example, in 2024, the Cape Coral (Florida) Police Department created the Tactical De-escalation Award after the chief, who had “lean[ed] in on de-escalation training” saw officers successfully resolve an incident with a man having a mental issue who was armed with a dangerous instrument.¹¹² Likewise, in 2025, the New Bedford (Connecticut) Police Department created the Award for Excellence in De-Escalation and recognized several officers “for their exceptional ability to de-escalate high-intensity situations through communication, empathy, and professionalism.”¹¹³ These agencies recognize that de-escalation is not merely the absence of harm—it is the product of deliberate choices, disciplined tactics, and a commitment to preserving life and dignity whenever possible.

APD should join these agencies by formally recognizing officers who successfully de-escalate tense or volatile situations. Doing so would reinforce a commitment to the sanctity of life, signal organizational support for the behaviors APD wants to see more often, and help shift department culture toward prevention rather than reaction. Creating a de-escalation commendation or award would not only highlight

112. Asha Patel, “Cape Coral Police Dept. Emphasizing De-escalation Training,” WINK, last modified August 12, 2024, https://www.winknews.com/news/lee/cape-coral-police-dept-emphasizing-de-escalation-training/article_30911735-624b-5ba7-89fa-9108e3837433.html.

113. “New Bedford Police Department Announces First Recipients of New Award for Excellence in De-Escalation,” press release, accessed March 4, 2026, <https://www.newbedfordpd.com/2025/06/new-bedford-police-department-announces-first-recipients-of-new-award-for-excellence-in-de-escalation/>.

exemplary performance but also normalize the expectation that officers use communication, patience, and tactical skill as first-resort tools. This type of recognition would demonstrate to the public and to APD members that APD values not just bravery in crisis but also the judgment and professionalism that keep crises from escalating in the first place.

Once again, if APD had a full-time professional dedicated to communicating with the public (see [recommendation 52](#)), the commendable work APD members perform every day would not feel so unfamiliar or invisible to the community. A skilled communicator could consistently highlight these examples of service, helping the public understand that de-escalation, compassion, and professionalism are core parts of APD's daily work—not rare exceptions.

Recommendation 54. APD should develop a formal award—or establish other meaningful forms of recognition—for members who use de-escalation skills to avoid the need for force. This recognition should honor not only major or high-profile incidents but also the officers who consistently apply these skills in their daily work.

Improve and re-integrate Early Intervention System

The Early Intervention System (EIS) has become a common and widely adopted tool in modern police personnel management.¹¹⁴ The core premise behind an EIS is that serious incidents of police misconduct rarely occur without warning. Instead, these events are often preceded by a series of minor incidents or emerging behavioral patterns. An EIS is designed to help agencies identify these early indicators so they can be addressed proactively—through training, counseling, or other nonpunitive measures—before they escalate into more serious forms of misconduct.¹¹⁵

Though EISs are adaptable to each agency, an effective EIS must include the following:

- **A flagging mechanism.** The agency must identify officers whose patterns of behavior, measured against agency-defined thresholds, may indicate an area of concern and trigger a review.
- **Time parameters.** The agency must determine the time within which the flagging mechanism signals an issue.
- **Evaluation of situational factors.** After the flag or trigger, a supervisor or a team reviews the situational factors to determine whether remediation is necessary and if so, what type.

114. Robert E. Worden et al., *Police Early Intervention Systems: The State of the Art*, Document No. 310787 (Albany, NY: John F. Finn Institute for Public Safety, 2018), <https://www.ojp.gov/library/publications/police-early-intervention-systems-state-art>.

115. Karen L. Amendola and Robert C. Davis, *Best Practices in Early Intervention System Implementation and Use in Law Enforcement Agencies* (Arlington, VA: National Policing Institute, 2019), <https://www.policinginstitute.org/publication/best-practices-in-early-intervention-system-implementation-and-use-in-law-enforcement-agencies/>.

- **Documentation of supervisory or command review.** The EIS should include a mechanism for a supervisor to review a flagged alert and record any remedial action, so the agency can track interventions, monitor progress, and support performance management.¹¹⁶

An effective EIS will track and monitor far more than UOF incidents. Agencies rely on EIS platforms to identify patterns involving officer complaints, head strikes, abuse of sick leave, tardiness, civil actions filed against officers, domestic violence investigations, positive drug tests, insubordination, neglect of duty, and numerous other behaviors that may signal emerging concerns.

APD's EIS is triggered by any of the following within a rolling 12-month period:

- **Five** vehicle pursuits
- **Six** UOFs
- **Three** complaints
- **Two** vehicle accidents
- **Three** supervisory incidents

APD should ensure it is using its EIS to its full potential. For example, the Rock Hill (South Carolina) Police Department uses its EIS to capture officers doing good work, leading leadership to highlight them (see [recommendation 54](#)) and pair them with lower-scoring officers.¹¹⁷ This practice has benefited all officers.

APD should also consider modifying its UOF trigger number after it redefines UOF (see [recommendation 4](#)). Currently, APD uses six UOFs to trigger its EIS. However, threshold-based systems are sensitive to the definition of the qualifying events. As APD's definition of force becomes more stringent, fewer incidents will qualify as UOFs, which means the same threshold will flag fewer officers. APD should lower the trigger number to ensure the EIS continues to identify officers exhibiting meaningful risk indicators.

Finally, APD should consider other meaningful ways to use the EIS. For example, some agencies have used their EIS to identify officers who may be abusing their discretionary authority by tracking the following:

- **Three** arrests in **90 days** in which a *discretionary* charge (e.g., resisting arrest, disorderly conduct) is the sole charge, with no other allegation of criminal wrongdoing
- **Ten** arrests in **90 days** in which a discretionary charge is added to another criminal charge

116. Amendola and Davis, *Best Practices in Early Intervention* (see [note 115](#)).

117. Axon, "Early Intervention Systems for Law Enforcement: A Complete Guide," accessed March 9, 2026, <https://www.axon.com/resources/early-intervention-systems-for-law-enforcement-a-complete-guide>.

- **Two arrests in 180 days** in which charges are dismissed by a magistrate because of a finding of no probable cause¹¹⁸

In short, APD should use its EIS as a true management tool—one that surfaces emerging concerns early, highlights exemplary work, and helps supervisors reinforce the behaviors and decision-making the department wants to see replicated.

Recommendation 55. APD should conduct a full, improvement-oriented re-evaluation of its EIS to ensure it aligns with best practices and incorporates the recommendations in this report. An updated EIS should refine its thresholds—particularly its UOF trigger—to match APD’s revised definition of force, expand the types of behavioral indicators it monitors, and more fully leverage the system to identify both early risk patterns and positive officer performance. These changes will help ensure the EIS remains a proactive, effective, and fair tool for identifying emerging concerns and supporting officer development.

Renovate APD’s Physical Space

PERF has conducted hundreds of management studies across the United States and has observed a wide range of police headquarters, from newly constructed facilities to aging legacy buildings. Across jurisdictions, PERF has consistently found that a professional, functional work environment is essential to effective policing, officer well-being, and public service delivery. During its work with the APD, PERF observed the Harold K. Stubbs Justice Center, which currently houses APD operations. The building is outdated and, in many areas, ill-suited for modern police work, with physical limitations that constrain efficiency, collaboration, and basic functionality.¹¹⁹ A police department the size and complexity of Akron’s should not be operating from a space that no longer meets contemporary standards. Addressing APD’s physical facility needs should be treated as an urgent priority.

At the same time, it is evident that the current Akron administration recognizes the seriousness of this issue and has begun taking meaningful steps to address it.¹²⁰ The mayor’s decision to commit to a full, phased renovation of APD’s headquarters reflects an understanding that the existing facility no longer meets the operational needs of a modern police department and that continued inaction is not an option; PERF commends this approach. However, given the longstanding condition of the building and the scope of work required, ensuring that APD has a professional, functional

118. PERF can facilitate peer-to-peer meetings with agencies that use their EIS in this way.

119. For example, water fixtures in the area where PERF conducted interviews required running for an extended period before the water became clear; one of the facility’s two elevators was out of service; and PERF staff were advised not to drink the water in the building. More broadly, the overall condition of the structure contributed to a run-down and bleak work environment that is inconsistent with the needs and expectations of a modern police department.

120. City of Akron, “Mayor Malik Announces Decision on Future of the Akron Police Station,” press release, December 12, 2025, https://www.akronohio.gov/news_detail_T17_R385.php.

headquarters will require sustained attention, strong oversight, and continued prioritization for multiple years. This effort should remain a central focus of the City's public safety and capital planning moving forward.

In addition, sworn members of the APD are required under Ohio law to complete annual firearms qualification. Because APD does not have a dedicated, department-owned firearms training range, the department must rent range space from external partners to meet this statutory requirement. Currently, APD relies on facilities operated by the Cuyahoga Heights Police Department, the Alliance Police Department, and the Summit County Sheriff's Office—all of which are smaller than APD and must understandably prioritize training access for their own personnel. This arrangement requires APD to absorb recurring rental costs and significant travel time for both individual sworn members and training division staff. Over time, this reliance on external facilities imposes additional financial and operational burdens and complicates the efficient delivery of mandatory training. As with APD's headquarters facility, this is a structural challenge that should be addressed as part of a long-term, highly prioritized plan to modernize the department's infrastructure.

Recommendation 56. The City of Akron should treat the modernization of the APD's physical infrastructure as a high-priority, long-term investment essential to effective, professional policing. This effort should include the timely completion of the planned headquarters renovation and the development or acquisition of a dedicated, department-owned firearms training range. The City should establish clear timelines, strong oversight mechanisms, and sustained funding commitments to ensure that APD's facilities fully support contemporary policing practices, mandatory training requirements, officer safety and well-being, and efficient service to the community. Addressing these infrastructure needs comprehensively will reduce ongoing operational inefficiencies, improve readiness, and position APD to meet current and future demands.

Recommendations for OIPA

The OIPA is an independent body, and PERF was not asked to evaluate or reform its internal practices.¹²¹ However, because APD will be unable to effectively implement several of PERF's recommendations without corresponding cooperation from OIPA, PERF offers the following suggestions with the intent to smooth some of the friction points in the current process and, ideally, help OIPA more fully achieve its oversight goals.

121. Nevertheless, the IPA was generous with his time during our discussion and indicated an openness to hearing suggestions for improving the process.

Align recommendations with examples

Not a single recommendation in this report stands alone; each is anchored in examples from other agencies that have already implemented comparable reforms. Demonstrating that these practices are both feasible and effective elsewhere makes it easier for agencies to visualize the change, understand its value, and adopt it with confidence.

While OIPA produces a substantial volume of reports and clearly devotes significant time to analysis, many of its recommendations are presented as self-evident “best practices” without citing the sources, evidence, or origins that support that designation. In several instances, recommendations explicitly refer to themselves as best practices but, with limited exception, do not identify when, where, or under what conditions those practices were developed or validated. This lack of sourcing makes it difficult for APD—and the public—to assess the basis for OIPA’s guidance or determine whether the recommended practices are appropriate or applicable.

Going forward, OIPA would benefit from grounding its recommendations in concrete, real-world examples. When recommending a policy change, OIPA should identify the agencies or jurisdictions that currently use the proposed language. Similarly, when recommending training, OIPA should indicate whether other comparable agencies provide similar instruction and describe the content or outcomes of those programs. For the immediate future, this report itself will likely serve as the source for many of those examples. Providing clear sourcing will strengthen the credibility, transparency, and practical relevance of OIPA’s recommendations.

Recommendation 57. OIPA should support each recommendation with specific, real-world examples—such as comparable agencies that have adopted similar policy language or implemented comparable training—to clearly demonstrate the basis, feasibility, and applicability of proposed reforms.

Provide recommendations to CIRB

As noted previously (see “Critical Incident Review Board” beginning on [page 51](#)), the current process between APD and OIPA does not appear to be producing meaningful change and instead seems to be generating frustration on both sides. This report proposes a more effective path forward (see [recommendation 34](#)).

For that proposal to succeed, OIPA must commit to forwarding only substantive, actionable, and—ideally—sourced recommendations to the CIRB. The system will quickly break down if OIPA continues to submit large volumes of recommendations driven by one-off or isolated circumstances. Limiting submissions to well-supported, broadly applicable recommendations is essential to ensuring that the CIRB can focus on changes with a realistic likelihood of improving outcomes.

OIPA should also commit to sending its recommendations to the CIRB sufficiently in advance of each meeting to allow the CIRB to thoughtfully review and prepare to discuss them. As noted elsewhere, OIPA should maintain an accessible portal that

documents all recommendations submitted to the CIRB, along with APD's responses and any resulting actions. Doing so will create a transparent, shared record that supports accountability, tracks progress over time, and reduces duplicative or conflicting recommendations. Ultimately, this system will promote clearer communication, reinforce mutual expectations, and help ensure that only the most meaningful recommendations reach the CIRB.

Recommendation 58. OIPA should submit recommendations to the CIRB in advance of meetings and maintain a public portal documenting those recommendations as well as APD's responses to ensure transparency, accountability, and effective follow-through.

Implementation

Throughout this project, PERF benefited from the APD's full cooperation. APD provided all requested information, arranged meetings, made personnel available across all ranks, and spoke candidly with the PERF team. PERF also met with the mayor, chief of staff, and newly appointed chief of public safety to discuss progress and implementation as the work advanced. In addition, PERF held weekly calls and check-ins with members of the City of Akron's team to review progress and discuss emerging findings, consistently receiving full cooperation and openness to recommendations.¹²²

PERF also facilitated peer-to-peer learning opportunities, including enabling City and APD personnel to observe the Baltimore Police Department's Performance Review Board. The PERF team also organized a meeting between the Burlington Police Department and APD representatives to discuss training and the CDM.

Throughout this report, PERF has offered recommendations that law enforcement agencies nationwide have adopted, providing concrete examples to support them. As a result, APD has been provided with a series of mini-roadmaps to guide the implementation of each recommendation. APD may adopt the sample policy language included in this report or develop its own, provided it reflects the intent and substance of the recommendations. The report was intentionally designed to be user-friendly and to support practical, actionable reform.

PERF will also continue to support the APD and Akron. As APD implements policies and training recommendations, PERF remains committed to facilitating the type of peer-to-peer engagement that will help the agency grow.

122. As noted in [note 5](#), PERF and participants from the University of Akron (UA), intended to collaborate closely on this project. However, scheduling constraints prevented UA contributors from participating as fully as PERF—and they themselves—had hoped.

Some recommendations can be adopted quickly—such as revising the definition of reportable force—while others, like civilianizing positions that sworn officers should not occupy, will require negotiation. However, the first recommendation in this report should also be the first implemented: creating a public-facing portal that tracks each PERF recommendation and documents APD’s progress toward implementation.

Responsibility for maintaining and updating this resource (and, as detailed in “Responsibilities” on [page 81](#), for oversight of the implementation of many of the recommendations in this report) should rest with the City’s newly appointed chief of public safety. This position is best suited to serve as the primary liaison between APD and the City, maintain visibility into the status of each recommendation, and communicate progress to the public in a clear, accurate, and accessible manner. There may also be an opportunity for the University of Akron to assist here, and PERF encourages such collaboration to the extent possible.

The dashboard itself will serve as an accountability tool, ensuring that the recommendations contained in this report are not forgotten on a shelf but are actively tracked, reviewed, and advanced over time. The public can and should follow this closely.

Implementation Framework

This section converts the report’s recommendations into a sequenced plan with clear ownership, timelines, deliverables, and feedback loops so that Akron can demonstrate measurable, sustained progress rather than one-time policy edits. It builds on the recommendations described previously.

Responsibilities

Overall Implementation Oversight and Accountability.

The City’s Chief of Public Safety (CPS) should serve as the central implementation coordinator and be responsible for maintaining the public-facing dashboard that tracks each recommendation’s status, actions taken, and—where applicable—the rationale for non-implementation. The CPS is well positioned to serve as the primary liaison between APD and City leadership and to maintain visibility into resource constraints, funding options, and implementation sequencing necessary to support sustained and coordinated progress.

Implementation Working Group

To support coordinated, disciplined implementation of the recommendations in this report, PERF recommends that the City establish a standing Implementation Working Group. The Working Group should be convened by the CPS and include, at a minimum, a Deputy Chief designated by the Chief of Police as well as representatives of OPSA, training, and union leadership. Additional participants—such as legal counsel, City administration, or subject matter experts—should be included as needed based on the recommendations under review.

The purpose of the Working Group is not to revisit the substance of PERF's recommendations but to coordinate sequencing, resolve operational and labor-management considerations, identify resource needs, and ensure consistent communication among stakeholders. The Working Group should meet regularly during the initial phases of implementation and serve as the primary forum for tracking progress; addressing barriers; and aligning policy changes with training, supervision, and accountability systems. Establishing this group will help ensure that implementation is deliberate and collaborative while maintaining momentum and minimizing confusion or fragmentation across the department and the City.

PERF is available to attend the first Working Group meeting and provide additional support as Akron works to implement the recommendations.

APD Implementation Leads.

Implementation in APD should be guided by clearly defined roles across command staff, specialized units, and first-line supervision. The Chief of Police and Deputy Chiefs are ultimately responsible for adopting policy changes, establishing implementation sequencing, and allocating the personnel and fiscal resources necessary to carry out the recommendations in this report.

OPSA plays a central role in implementation by serving as the primary unit responsible for drafting and updating the policies addressed in this report.¹²³ In addition, OPSA should centralize the review of UOF incidents and conduct concurrent administrative investigations, including the use of appropriate wall-off procedures where required. Through these functions, OPSA will help ensure that policy changes are implemented consistently; administrative reviews are timely and credible; and emerging training, policy, or performance issues are identified– and that they are addressed without unnecessary delay.

The Training Division should be responsible for translating each substantive policy revision into operational practice with training bulletins, scenario-based modules, and supervisor talking points and for ensuring that training content remains aligned with updated policies, decision-making frameworks, and departmental expectations.

The CIRB should serve as APD's system-learning and improvement body. It should be responsible for reviewing serious incidents, identifying cross-cutting trends, and formally evaluating and responding to high-impact or recurring recommendations from the OIPA. Through this, the CIRB will provide a structured mechanism for organizational learning and accountability.

123. Alternatively, APD could consider temporarily assigning one person to this large responsibility.

First-line supervisors will be responsible for the day-to-day operationalization of policy and training changes in the field. This responsibility includes reinforcing expectations during roll call, providing real-time guidance during incidents, and coaching officers after UOFs. Sergeants should be equipped and supported to prioritize field supervision and coaching ahead of administrative review tasks.

Phased Implementation Approach

Given APD's current staffing levels, operational demands, and training capacity, implementation of the recommendations in this report should proceed in structured phases. A phased approach allows the department to focus first on foundational policy and accountability reforms and then build toward more complex training, supervisory, and organizational changes. This sequencing is intended to reduce implementation fatigue, promote consistency, and increase the likelihood that reforms are fully institutionalized rather than adopted in name only.

The implementation phases outlined in this section are intended as a structured framework **that APD may adapt based on operational realities and resource availability. Certain recommendations—particularly those affecting staffing, job assignments, or working conditions—may require collective bargaining or other labor-management processes and may therefore proceed on a different timeline.** Where such requirements exist, implementation should be coordinated with labor negotiations while maintaining momentum on reforms that can be advanced independently.

PHASE 1 – FOUNDATIONAL POLICY & ACCOUNTABILITY (0–6 MONTHS)

Objective. Establish ownership, transparency, and high-impact policies while laying the groundwork for training and oversight.

Key actions

- Launch the public-facing implementation dashboard and assign the Chief of Public Safety as the coordinator of record; map owners and due dates for every recommendation.
- Convene the Implementation Working Group to finalize sequencing, identify recommendations requiring collective bargaining or resource adjustments, and align policy issuance with training capacity and OPSA review workflows.
- Use the Working Group to flag Phase 1 items that can be completed administratively versus those requiring negotiation, allowing non-dependent reforms to move forward without delay.

- Issue a PHASE 1 policy package, which could potentially prioritize the following: clarify reportable force (adding “assisting officer”); embed sanctity of life, proportionality, and the CDM; remove “no duty to retreat;” classify pointing a firearm as a reportable UOF; tighten ECW/chemical-spray thresholds (warnings, cycle limits, vulnerable populations, flight-alone limits); publish interim WRAP guidance (upright, monitored, supervisory approval except exigency).
- Establish the CIRB (members, schedule, deliverables) and begin formal processing of high-impact OIPA recommendations.
- Begin training activation for urgent policy changes (training bulletins, scenario modules, supervisor talking points at roll call).
- Authorize concurrent administrative investigations.

PHASE 2 – TRAINING, SUPERVISION & SYSTEMS (6–18 MONTHS)

Objective. Translate policy into practice, strengthen supervisory review, and operationalize organizational learning.

Key actions

- Integrate ICAT/CDM across recruit, FTO, in-service, and supervisory training; begin using recent BWC clips and OIPA themes in scenario-based refreshers.
- Consolidate all force-related policies into a single comprehensive UOF directive; publish a full WRAP policy (authorization, monitoring, documentation, time limits).
- Centralize UOF reviews in OPSA (field sergeants complete scene triage/summary; OPSA conducts the full review) and embed CDM-based checklists in supervisory investigations, reinforcing consistent evaluation of decision-making, proportionality, and officer-created jeopardy.
- Formalize CIRB operations (bi-monthly reviews; written concur/decline responses to OIPA, posted to the portal).
- Finalize initial police-EMS protocols for MBE/restraint incidents and begin joint scenario-based training.
- Use the Implementation Working Group as the primary forum to coordinate policy rollouts with training delivery schedules, supervisory guidance, and OPSA review criteria.
- Work to resolve operational or labor-management issues that emerge during training implementation (e.g., workload impacts, supervisory expectations, or changes to field practice) before they undermine consistency.
- Review dashboard data at regular Working Group meetings to identify lagging recommendations and re-sequence as needed.

PHASE 3 – MODERNIZATION, TRANSPARENCY & CULTURE (12–24 MONTHS)

Objective. Institutionalize reforms, enhance transparency, and reinforce a culture of accountability, learning, and continuous improvement.

Key actions

- Implement a civilianization plan (e.g., PIO, BWC redaction/editing) to return sworn staff to core policing and stabilize key support functions.
- Recalibrate the EIS to align with the revised UOF definition and monitor broader risk and positive–performance indicators.
- Require BWC for secondary employment, continue feasibility work on enhanced lookback/auto–activation, and publish out–of–policy UOF findings alongside raw totals with plain–language explanations.
- Transition the Implementation Working Group from a high–frequency implementation role to a periodic oversight and sustainability role, focused on monitoring outcomes, institutionalizing successful practices, and identifying areas requiring course correction.
- Use Working Group review to assess whether reforms are producing measurable changes in training quality, supervisory practice, UOF review rigor, and public transparency—and to recommend adjustments where needed.

This phased approach is intended to support deliberate, transparent, and sustainable implementation of this report’s recommendations. While the specific sequencing and pace of reform may evolve based on operational demands, staffing levels, and labor–management considerations, sustained progress will depend on clear ownership, consistent training and supervision, and ongoing evaluation of outcomes.

PERF recognizes that implementation is not a one–time event completed upon delivery of this report; rather, it is an iterative process that benefits from reflection, adjustment, and ongoing learning. As APD and the City of Akron move forward, PERF will remain available to provide practical technical assistance, facilitate peer–to–peer exchanges with agencies that have implemented similar reforms, and support the continued refinement of policies, training, and review processes as implementation progresses. As part of this support, PERF will meet with City and APD leadership to review and explain the report’s findings and recommendations and will participate in initial Implementation Working Group meetings to help establish shared understanding, clarify sequencing, and address early questions or challenges.

This engagement is intended to support—not direct—the City’s implementation efforts and to help ensure that the recommendations in this report are not only adopted, but fully integrated into daily practice, supervision, and organizational culture.

Conclusion

The recommendations in this report provide APD with a clear, practical roadmap to strengthen its policies, training, oversight systems, and organizational processes. Many of the steps outlined here can be implemented immediately, while others will require sustained coordination, thoughtful negotiation, and structural change. But taken together, they provide a deliberate and achievable path forward—one designed not only to align APD with contemporary policing standards but also to reduce risk, enhance transparency, support officers in the field, and build deeper trust between APD and the community it serves.

But policy change—no matter how comprehensive—cannot, on its own, transform an organization. Real and lasting progress depends on culture change: the shared expectations, habits, and norms that shape how officers think, communicate, and make decisions. The most effective agencies are those that weave principles such as proportionality, the sanctity of life, de-escalation, and structured decision-making into daily practice—not because policy mandates it but because those principles become the instinctive starting point for how officers approach their work. Culture change cannot be issued as a directive; it must be modeled, reinforced, and lived consistently by supervisors, command staff, training personnel, and officers at every rank. It is incremental work, but it is the foundation on which durable reform and improved outcomes are built.

APD has already demonstrated the most important precondition for that change: a willingness to engage openly, provide access, and participate fully in this process. Sustained progress will require the same level of consistency and commitment—from leadership, rank-and-file officers, and City partners who share responsibility for accountability and public trust. With a clear implementation structure, a public-facing dashboard to promote transparency, and ongoing support from PERF and peer agencies nationwide, APD has the tools it needs to evolve in ways that strengthen officer performance, enhance community confidence, and cultivate a culture that reflects the best of modern policing. The work ahead is significant, but it is unquestionably achievable—and the benefits will be felt across the City of Akron for years to come.

Appendix 1. PERF Recommendations

Recommendation 1. Akron should create a public-facing implementation dashboard to track all recommendations contained in this report. This dashboard will promote transparency, accountability, and community trust by providing a centralized, regularly updated source of information on the status of the recommendations.

Recommendation 2. APD should consolidate all force-related policies into a single, comprehensive document organized by clearly defined sections. This restructuring will improve clarity, strengthen consistency, and enhance officers' ability to quickly access critical information.

Recommendation 3. APD should change the name of its UOF policy by removing the reference to "Resisting Arrest" and renaming it simply "Use of Force." This will ensure the policy title accurately reflects the full range of force incidents, reinforces contemporary professional standards, and communicates to both officers and the community that APD evaluates force based on objective decision-making rather than assumptions about a subject's behavior.

Recommendation 4. APD should revise that portion of its UOF policy resulting in artificially inflated UOF numbers. APD should revise Policy P-2021-013 to adopt a tiered force reporting system consistent with best practices used in federally reviewed departments, such as Seattle and Baltimore. Alternatively, APD should modify its current policy to clarify who is considered an "involved officer," establish a new "assisting officer" designation, and clarify report-writing requirements. These revisions will ensure that APD's UOF data accurately reflects actual force applied rather than routine assistance or minimal physical contact.

Recommendation 5. APD should revise its UOF policy to explicitly classify pointing a firearm at a person as a reportable use of force.

Recommendation 6. APD should add a clear and strong "Policy Statement" at the beginning of its UOF policy setting forth the agency's philosophy regarding UOF. The Policy Statement should emphasize the sanctity of life and a commitment to using proportionate force.

Recommendation 7. APD should incorporate clear, prominent language into a newly drafted "Policy Statement" that affirms the sanctity of human life. This statement should set the tone for the entire policy and reflect the agency's commitment to respectful, accountable, and community-centered policing.

Recommendation 8. APD should explicitly incorporate the principle of proportionality into its UOF policy statement. This addition will align APD with nationally recognized best practices and ensure officers apply only the level of force necessary and appropriate to the threat or resistance encountered.

Recommendation 9. APD should incorporate the CDM directly into its UOF policy, either in the “Definitions” section (with an expanded definition) or as a standalone section. Doing so would reinforce and formalize the department’s expectations around ethical decision-making, proportionality, and the sanctity of human life. It would also align APD with agencies that have successfully integrated ICAT as a department-wide philosophy, strengthening both UOF decision-making and overall operational judgment.

Recommendation 10. APD should modify the “Definitions” section of its UOF policy by adding a formal definition of proportionality. Doing so will promote a consistent, shared understanding that proportionality requires reasonable, threat-based decision-making and will help embed this principle throughout officers’ decision-making processes.

Recommendation 11. APD should remove the “No Duty to Retreat” clause from Section III(I) of its UOF policy. The clause is unnecessary and undermines the agency’s broader commitment to de-escalation, tactical safety, and modern policing principles.

Recommendation 12. APD should update and expand its duty-to-intervene policy to align with modern practices by requiring officers to intervene—verbally, physically, or in some other way—whenever they observe colleagues using force or committing misconduct that is a violation of law or policy, or would be a violation if the individual carried out their intentions. The revised provision should mirror the clarity and breadth of the Newark Police Department’s approach by specifying officers’ responsibilities to stop improper force, safeguard the individual, notify a supervisor, and document the incident.

Recommendation 13. APD should add an explicit nonretaliation clause to its duty-to-intercede policy to ensure that officers who intervene or report inappropriate uses of force are protected from retaliation, intimidation, or coercion. This language would reinforce a culture of accountability by making clear that intervening officers are not only permitted (and in fact encouraged and expected) to act in opposition and report any improper UOF but also protected when doing so.

Recommendation 14. APD should require supervisors to acknowledge and, when feasible, promptly respond to in-progress incidents with an elevated likelihood of force, rather than waiting until after force has been used. The policy should also require training that equips supervisors to identify high-risk encounters and proactively provide guidance and support to newer officers in the field.

Recommendation 15. APD should revise its UOF policy to explicitly prohibit head strikes as a compliance mechanism and limit their use solely to situations in which an officer must defend themselves from physical assault.

Incorporating clear, defensive-only language—consistent with policies adopted by peer agencies—will reduce the risk of unnecessary injury and promote safer, more proportional force practices across the department.

Recommendation 16. APD should incorporate the relevant PERF principles for avoiding restraint-related deaths into its UOF policy, including early recognition of MBEs, supervisory coordination, limits on prone positioning, and continuous monitoring of restrained individuals.

Doing so will reduce the risk of restraint-related death, enhance officer decision-making, and align APD with contemporary best practices in safe restraint and medical crisis response.

Recommendation 17. APD should incorporate an officer-created jeopardy clause into its UOF policy to reinforce the principle that officers' initial actions and tactical decisions can influence whether force becomes necessary.

Adopting language similar to the Burlington Police Department's would promote reflective decision-making, support safer outcomes, and underscore the department's commitment to preventing avoidable UOF.

Recommendation 18. APD should replace all references to "Conducted Energy Weapon" and "CEW" with the widely recognized term "Electronic Control Weapon (ECW)" to ensure consistency with national law enforcement terminology.

Updating this language will improve clarity across policy, training, reporting, and interagency communication.

Recommendation 19. If APD does not consolidate all force-related documents into a single comprehensive policy, it should add definitions of foundational force principles, such as the sanctity of life and proportionality, to its ECW policy.

Recommendation 20. APD should place a standalone definition of "drive-stun mode" in the definitions portion of its ECW policy.

Recommendation 21. APD should adopt a clear requirement that officers provide a verbal warning before deploying an ECW whenever it is safe and practical to do so. This revision will enhance opportunities for voluntary compliance, promote de-escalation, and increase safety for both officers and subjects.

Recommendation 22. APD should revise its ECW policy to expressly prohibit multiple, simultaneous ECW deployments. This update would enhance safety, encourage coordinated tactical communication, and reduce the risk of unnecessary or excessive force.

Recommendation 23. APD should revise its ECW policy to define a standard five-second cycle, require reassessment between applications, and limit the number and duration of activations absent exigent circumstances. Doing so would align APD with contemporary best practices, reduce risk to subjects, and provide officers with clear, actionable guidance during ECW deployments.

Recommendation 24. APD should revise its ECW policy to explicitly disfavor drive-stun use except in narrowly defined circumstances, such as supplementing an incomplete probe deployment. Drive stun should be expressly prohibited as a pain compliance technique. This update would align APD with modern best practices, promote safer and more effective ECW deployment, and reduce the risk of unnecessary or excessive force.

Recommendation 25. APD should revise its ECW policy to explicitly identify and address vulnerable populations—such as pregnant women, older adults, young children, and visibly frail or medically compromised persons—as subjects requiring heightened caution during ECW deployment. The policy should require officers to evaluate whether ECW use is reasonable considering the subject’s age, physical condition, and potential susceptibility to injury and to consider alternative control strategies when appropriate.

Recommendation 26. APD should revise its ECW policy to prohibit the use of ECWs on individuals operating or riding any mode of transportation, including bicycles, motorcycles, scooters, and other moving conveyances, unless deadly force is authorized. This update would align APD with Axon’s own safety guidance, which warns against ECW use on persons “operating or riding any mode of transportation,” because of the substantial risk of serious injury or death from secondary falls or collisions.

Recommendation 27. APD should revise its ECW policy to state explicitly that flight alone does not justify ECW use. The policy should require officers to articulate a specific, imminent risk of harm to themselves or others before deploying an ECW on a fleeing subject, thereby improving clarity, promoting safer and more constitutionally sound decision-making, and aligning APD with contemporary best practices.

Recommendation 28. APD should revise its ECW policy to expressly prohibit ECW use on handcuffed or otherwise restrained subjects unless the individual presents an imminent threat of serious bodily harm and officers can clearly articulate compelling reasons why lesser control techniques would be ineffective. Adopting this type of language would minimize unnecessary or excessive force and align APD with contemporary best practices.

Recommendation 29. If APD does not consolidate all force-related documents into a single comprehensive policy, it should add definitions of foundational force principles, such as the sanctity of life and proportionality, to its Chemical Defense Spray policy.

Recommendation 30. APD should revise its Chemical Defense Spray policy to include clear, behavior-based thresholds for deployment—such as limiting use to individuals engaged in active resistance, assaultive conduct, or behavior that poses an imminent safety threat.

Establishing explicit criteria will reduce ambiguity, support consistent and proportional decision-making, and better align the policy with contemporary UOF standards.

Recommendation 31. APD should revise its Chemical Defense Spray policy to explicitly prohibit the use of chemical defense spray on vulnerable individuals—including persons who are pregnant, elderly, preteen or younger, or visibly frail—except in narrowly defined, exceptional circumstances involving an imminent threat and no reasonable alternative.

Recommendation 32. APD should revise its Chemical Defense Spray policy to limit its use solely for dispersing crowds.

Recommendation 33. APD should add a requirement that a tactical briefing take place within 24 to 72 hours of any critical incident. One of the main purposes of the briefing should be to identify issues that require immediate attention.

Recommendation 34. APD should create a Critical Incident Review Board (CIRB) to conduct holistic reviews of critical incidents and identify opportunities to improve policy, training, tactics, equipment, and supervision.

This board should serve as a permanent mechanism for organizational learning and improvement, ensuring that APD consistently evaluates serious incidents through a wide lens and applies the lessons it learns from those evaluations agency-wide.

Recommendation 35. APD should require the CIRB to formally review and respond to significant OIPA recommendations. OIPA should submit recurring or high-impact recommendations to the CIRB prior to each meeting, and the CIRB should provide written responses indicating agreement or disagreement and identifying any resulting actions. This structured process will ensure that OIPA recommendations receive meaningful consideration and that APD's responses are transparent, documented, and mutually accountable.

Recommendation 36. APD should strengthen its BWC policy by replacing broad activation language with explicit, mandatory requirements for activation. These requirements should include a clearly enumerated list of circumstances in which activation is compulsory and phrasing such as “must be activated at the first reasonable opportunity.” Doing so will emphasize the importance of consistent BWC use, improve accountability, and reduce preventable failures to record.

Recommendation 37. APD should revise its BWC policy to require officers to briefly state on camera why they are ending a recording before deactivating the device. This small but important change will improve transparency, strengthen supervisory review, and reduce ambiguity in future investigations.

Recommendation 38. APD should revise its BWC policy to specify that officers may not deactivate their camera until the incident has fully concluded and no further enforcement or investigative action is anticipated; APD should also include a statement to the effect that “when in doubt, officers should continue recording.” This clearer language will help ensure complete recording of critical events and reduce premature deactivations.

Recommendation 39. APD should engage in a structured, collaborative decision-making process with the City of Akron to determine whether extending the BWC lookback period is financially and operationally feasible.

This should include an assessment of costs; storage capacity; vendor options; and the potential benefits to accountability, investigations, and community trust.

Recommendation 40. APD should modify its policy to require officers working any secondary-employment assignment that involves the exercise—or potential exercise—of police authority to wear and activate BWCs under the same standards that apply during on-duty operations.

This requirement will ensure consistent transparency, strengthen accountability, and align APD with modern best practices used by peer agencies.

Recommendation 41. APD should develop a standalone section of its policy covering the WRAP (or develop a standalone policy) that provides clear direction on the authorization, application, monitoring, and limitations associated with this specialized restraint device.

Although APD authorizes the WRAP’s use, its single reference in the Transportation and Prisoner Control Procedure is insufficient for a tool that imposes full-body immobilization, carries greater risk of injury than other methods of restraint, and requires far more oversight than standard handcuffing.

Recommendation 42. Require that significant policy changes be integrated through training, using three core components: (1) a concise training bulletin; (2) a scenario-based module; and (3) supervisor talking points. APD can track progress on the training aspect of policy recommendations in the implementation dashboard (see [recommendation 1](#)).

Recommendation 43. APD should use OIPA cases that present recurring judgment-related issues as training opportunities to reinforce the CDM.

Reviewing these cases through a consistent CDM lens will reinforce judgment as a core professional skill and help translate oversight findings into practical guidance for training, supervision, and field practice.

Recommendation 44. APD should use recent BWC footage—both their own and other agencies’—to reinforce CDM-based decision-making through regular roll-call discussions and short, precinct-level refresher sessions. Embedding these brief, ongoing BWC-based reviews into supervisory practice will strengthen officers’ judgment and support a culture of continual improvement.

Recommendation 45. APD should integrate the CDM into all aspects of training, supervision, and operational practice—not just UOF instruction. This integration can include the following:

- Introducing the CDM during the first week of academy training and reinforcing it throughout recruit instruction
- Structuring academy and in-service curricula so that CDM principles precede—and frame—all tactical, communication, and scenario-based training
- Training FTOs and supervisors to use the CDM during coaching, after-action reviews, and performance evaluations
- Incorporating CDM analysis into all UOF reviews, vehicle stop critiques, tactical planning discussions, and report writing expectations
- Ensuring all officers understand that their decisions will be assessed using CDM principles, promoting consistent application and accountability

Recommendation 46. APD should implement the Critical Decision-Making Model (CDM) as the required framework for all UOF investigations and supervisory reviews. Embedding the CDM into APD’s review system would promote more rigorous oversight, strengthen officer judgment, and advance a culture of continuous learning and accountability.

Recommendation 47. APD should train all supervisors and OPSA staff to accurately and consistently document policy violations, even when mitigating circumstances exist. The review process must distinguish between identifying a violation and determining the appropriate response, ensuring accountability while supporting fair and transparent decision-making.

Recommendation 48. APD should formalize a coordinated police–EMS response to MBE– and restraint-related incidents by jointly developing protocols with EMS, fire, and dispatch that clearly define roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority. APD should further participate in joint, scenario-based training to reinforce early medical involvement, effective on-scene communication, and coordinated transitions from law enforcement control to medical care.

Recommendation 49. APD should implement a policy permitting concurrent administrative investigations into significant UOF incidents, including, potentially, timely compelled statements, which should be fully protected by wall-off procedures. This approach will enable APD to identify training, policy, and performance issues without waiting for lengthy criminal determinations, allowing necessary corrective action—or the timely return of an officer who acted appropriately—while maintaining the integrity of the criminal investigation.

Recommendation 50. If APD elects not to compel administrative interviews, it should nonetheless require that all other components of the administrative investigation into significant UOF incidents proceed concurrently with any criminal investigation. This approach will minimize delay and ensure prompt corrective action or officer clearance once criminal proceedings conclude.

Recommendation 51. APD should transition responsibility for all but the most minor UOFs from field sergeants to OPSA, enabling sergeants to prioritize front-line supervision, coaching, and real-time decision-making support. Centralizing force reviews in OPSA will increase consistency, enhance subject matter expertise, and strengthen accountability while restoring sergeants' capacity to lead effectively in the field.

Recommendation 52. APD and the City of Akron should work with the FOP Lodge #7 to identify all positions currently filled by sworn personnel that do not require police authority and develop a phased plan to civilianize the work. Transitioning these functions to qualified professional staff will improve efficiency, reduce costs, and allow sworn officers to return to core policing duties.

Recommendation 53. APD should post the number of UOF incidents that are ultimately determined to be out-of-policy on its transparency, along with the raw UOF numbers. Doing so—supported by a full-time professional public information specialist—will improve transparency, strengthen community understanding of UOF reviews, and reinforce trust in APD's accountability systems.

Recommendation 54. APD should develop a formal award—or establish other meaningful forms of recognition—for members who use de-escalation skills to avoid the need for force. This recognition should honor not only major or high-profile incidents but also the officers who consistently apply these skills in their daily work.

Recommendation 55. APD should conduct a full, improvement-oriented re-evaluation of its EIS to ensure it aligns with best practices and incorporates the recommendations in this report. An updated EIS should refine its thresholds—particularly its UOF trigger—to match APD's revised definition of force, expand the types of behavioral indicators it monitors, and more fully leverage the system to identify both early risk patterns and positive officer performance. These changes will help ensure the EIS remains a proactive, effective, and fair tool for identifying emerging concerns and supporting officer development.

Recommendation 56. The City of Akron should treat the modernization of the APD’s physical infrastructure as a high-priority, long-term investment essential to effective, professional policing. This effort should include the timely completion of the planned headquarters renovation and the development or acquisition of a dedicated, department-owned firearms training range. The City should establish clear timelines, strong oversight mechanisms, and sustained funding commitments to ensure that APD’s facilities fully support contemporary policing practices, mandatory training requirements, officer safety and well-being, and efficient service to the community. Addressing these infrastructure needs comprehensively will reduce ongoing operational inefficiencies, improve readiness, and position APD to meet current and future demands.

Recommendation 57. OIPA should support each recommendation with specific, real-world examples—such as comparable agencies that have adopted similar policy language or implemented comparable training—to clearly demonstrate the basis, feasibility, and applicability of proposed reforms.

Recommendation 58. OIPA should submit recommendations to the CIRB in advance of meetings and maintain a public portal documenting those recommendations as well as APD’s responses to ensure transparency, accountability, and effective follow-through.

Appendix 2. OIPA Policy Recommendations May 16, 2024–January 28, 2025

- **Limit Head Strikes.** Adopt explicit restrictions on closed fist strikes to the head, authorizing them only where deadly force would be otherwise justified. (3)
- **Improve EMS Coordination Protocols.** Clarify and document the process of medical refusal and ensure officers do not inadvertently dissuade treatment.
- **Revise Impound Procedures.** Require photographic documentation and dual officer verification of all vehicle contents before tow.
- **Strengthen Dispatch Response to Officer–Recusal Requests.** Develop a policy framework for flagging officer conflicts in follow-up investigations.
- **Ban Head Strikes on Juveniles.** Prohibit strikes to the head of minors unless there is a clear and immediate threat of deadly force.
- **Clarify Reasonable Suspicion Criteria.** Require specific, observable facts to justify stops.
- **Youth Protocols.** Implement trauma-informed procedures for interacting with juveniles and investigate all head strike incidents involving minors.
- **Mandate Early BWC Activation.** Update policy to require officers to activate BWC immediately upon forming reasonable suspicion of a stop, not upon contact.
- **Behavioral Crisis Response.** Clarify procedures when officers encounter individuals potentially in crisis, including mandatory de-escalation efforts and CIT involvement.
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- **Add Clear WRAP Deployment Criteria.** Require supervisory authorization before WRAP deployment except in exigent circumstances; Prohibit WRAP use until a subject's breathing, airway, and consciousness level are visibly confirmed stable after CEW exposure or prolonged struggle; Mandate continuous monitoring, including airway, extremity circulation, and signs of medical distress. (3)
- **Implement WRAP Time Limits and Tracking.** Create a WRAP log documenting deployment time, rationale, medical checks, and transport duration. (4)
- Establish a maximum allowable duration in the WRAP absent medical approval.
- **Report WRAP usage** quarterly to OIPA and CPOB.
- **Strengthen Policy Language Regarding Restraints.** Incorporate explicit prohibitions on using WRAP devices for passive resistance only and require a clear articulation of why less restrictive restraints were insufficient.
- **Clarify Drive Stun Usage Restrictions.** Update CEW policy to prohibit drive stun applications except where the subject poses an imminent physical threat and other force options are not viable.
- **Taser Use on Moving Persons.** Adopt a clear prohibition or strong presumption against deploying CEWs on bicyclists, motorists, or other moving subjects unless they pose an immediate threat of serious harm.
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- Flight from Minor Offenses.** Revise pursuit and force policies to emphasize disengagement when suspects flee from non-violent misdemeanors, unless public safety is at risk; Incorporate supervisory approval for extended pursuits of minor traffic violators.
- **Risk Assessment in Use of Force.** Require officers to articulate in reports not only the justification for force, but also why less risky alternatives were ruled out; Supervisors should explicitly evaluate proportionality in reviews.
 - **Pretextual Stop Oversight.** Require officers to document both the alleged traffic violation and independent corroboration (video, witness statements).
 - **Video Accountability.** Mandate activation of BWC/IVC to capture traffic violations before initiating a stop. If unavailable, prohibit initiating stops absent urgent safety concerns.
 - **De-emphasize Minor Violations for Investigations.** Adopt policies limiting use of minor infractions as pretext for narcotics enforcement unless supported by independent articulable suspicion.
 - **Supervisor Call Policy.** Require supervisors to be called when requested by citizens to strengthen transparency and procedural fairness.
 - **Foot Pursuit and Surrender Protocol.** Adopt a policy mandating de-escalation once a fleeing subject stops or surrenders, limiting immediate takedowns unless a clear threat persists.
 - **Amend P-2021-013.** to explicitly require that officers issue the command "place your hands behind your back" before initiating a takedown when a suspect is stationary and surrendering.
 - **Ban/Restrict Head and Neck Force.** Explicitly prohibit pressure to the skull/neck as a pain compliance method due to medical risk; Update UOF policy to limit such tactics to deadly-force situations.
 - **Bystander Involvement.** Prohibit reliance on civilians to physically restrain suspects. Officers must maintain exclusive control.
 - **Policy Clarification.** Clarify APD policy language distinguishing passive vs. active resistance and the appropriate force options for each.
 - **Clarify Bicycle Pursuit Application.** Amend P-17-2024 to explicitly define pursuits involving non-motorized vehicles and require disengagement for minor traffic violations.
 - **Low-Level Offense Engagement Policy.** Emphasize containment and follow-up rather than pursuit for traffic-only infractions.
 - **Supervisor Accountability.** Require separate Vehicle Pursuit BlueTeam entries for any incident involving lights/sirens activation and failure to yield.
 - **CEW Deployment.** Add a policy requirement discouraging CEW use on actively fleeing subjects on hard surfaces unless the subject presents a clear threat or flight poses a substantial risk to the public; Require verbal warning before CEW deployment whenever feasible.
 - **Post-Restraint Care.** Strengthen P-23-010 to require immediate repositioning within 30 seconds once the subject is handcuffed and safe.
 - **Supervisory Expectations.** Require supervisors to document exact time measurements of prone positioning and delayed repositioning.
 - **Foot Pursuit Policy Enhancements.** Adopt a dedicated Foot Pursuit Policy requiring risk-benefit analysis before initiating or continuing foot pursuit and discouraging high-risk tactics at the end of a chase (e.g., CEW on hard surfaces). (2)
 - **BWC Activation and Review.** Add requirement for officers to verbally state the subject's condition ("subject unconscious," "subject breathing/not breathing") on BWC footage.

- **Firearm Disclosure Protocol Revision.** APD should adopt clear guidance distinguishing Lawful gun possession from threatening behavior.
- **Revised Vehicle-Exit Protocol.** Officers should step back, provide clear direction to exit the vehicle, and avoid commands requiring unnatural postures inside confined spaces.
- **Clarify permissible "verbal intensifiers".** Amend P-2021-013 to explicitly prohibit *threats of unlawful force* as a compliance tool; incorporate examples of acceptable vs. unacceptable verbal cues.
- **Expand WRAP-specific guidance.** Add a WRAP-specific appendix covering monitoring, positional asphyxia, precautions, and communication protocols to ensure consistency and transparency.
- **Enhanced Supervisory Documentation Guidelines.** Recommend clarifying requirements to document officer's articulation of environmental risk factors and explain alternative tactics considered but deemed ineffective.
- **Reinforce BWC Marker Training.** Encourage officers to use BWC Markers proactively to tag key moments (commands, warnings, probe deployment).
- **CEW Deployment Policy on Elevated Surfaces.** Add guidance to avoid Taser use on elevated platforms unless necessary.
- **ADA Documentation Enhancements.** Add required section documenting behavioral-health considerations.
- **Supervisory Review Enhancements.** Require supervisors to document de-escalation attempts explicitly.
- **Mandatory Body-Worn Camera Use During All Secondary Employment.** Eliminate the BWC exemption for extra jobs to ensure transparency. (5)
- **High-risk restraint safeguards (youth, agitation, and EMS sedation).** Codify explicit requirements for (a) minimizing time in prone/body-weight restraint, (b) repositioning as soon as feasible, (c) continuous monitoring and documented observations, and (d) coordination with EMS when chemical sedation is used.
- **CEW Cycle Management and Reassessment Protocol.** Require supervisors to specifically document rationale when any cycle exceeds standard duration or when re-energize occurs.
- **Develop a Crowd-Management and Juvenile-Event Response Protocol.** Adopt guidance, including early detection of crowd tension, deployment of multiple officers to potential hotspots, structured communication among security personnel, Clear public-address and warning protocols, Designated juvenile-deescalation teams.
- **Prohibit Misrepresentation of Discretionary Authority as Mandatory Policy.** APD policy and training should expressly prohibit officers from stating or implying that discretionary enforcement actions are "required by policy" when no such requirement exists. (2)
- **Mandatory Weapons-Securing Protocols at Summit County Jail.** Officers should not bring detainees into pat-down spaces until all weapons are secured.
- **Clear Guidance on "Dropped Weapon" Transitions.** Update policy guidance to clarify threat reassessment once a weapon is dropped, including decision-making criteria for continued pursuit versus containment.

- **Fourth Amendment Entry and Continued Presence Documentation.** APD should require officers to explicitly document the legal basis for warrantless entry into, and continued presence within, a residence during domestic– violence investigations. Reports should clearly identify whether entry and continued presence were justified by consent, exigent circumstances, or emergency–aid considerations, and articulate the specific facts supporting that determination.
- **Reinforce the Purpose of Reportable Force Classification.** Training should emphasize that classifying force as reportable is a transparency and accountability mechanism, not an implication of misconduct.
- **Primary Physical Aggressor Determination and Documentation.** APD should require explicit documentation of the primary physical aggressor analysis mandated by domestic violence policy, including comparative injury severity, self–defense claims, prior history, and the reasonableness of fear. Where a determination cannot yet be made, officers should document why, and supervisors should verify that explanation.
- **Clarify BWC Activation Thresholds.** Update training to emphasize that any post–incident citizen engagement, even brief or verbal, requires BWC activation.
- **Emergency–Scene Communication Training.** Reinforce training on transitioning from command presence to explanatory communication once immediate safety risks are mitigated.
- **Procedural Justice Refresher.** Incorporate scenario–based training emphasizing respectful tone, explanation of police actions, and acknowledgment of citizen stress during emergencies.
- **CEW/TASER Policy Modernization.** Deployment Thresholds – Clarify CEW use during flight–only incidents, prioritize CEW when active resistance presents risk of harm; otherwise emphasize containment and verbal tactics.
- **Behavioral Health Encounters – Non–Emergent "Pink Slip" Protocol Clarification.** Codify a decision tree: incapacity and/or immediate threat allow for emergency transport; otherwise, de–escalate/contain, consult mental–health co–responders, and avoid hands–on absent a crime or safety exigency. Include required articulation of facts satisfying each element before physical compulsion.
- **Issue a Formal APD Policy Clarification on Driving Under Suspension and Summons–Only Enforcement.** APD should issue a written policy clarification or training bulletin explicitly stating that handcuffing and cruiser placement are not required to issue citations or summonses for DUS or other summons–eligible traffic offenses.
- **Evidence handling clarity.** Where the record reflects variations (“in her hand” vs. “on her person”), require officers to reconcile the location in the case narrative/evidence log to prevent impeachment of credibility in later proceedings.
- **Reinforce the Definition of Reportable Force (Policy Clarification).** APD should formally reinforce the definition of *reportable force* contained in Section II.C of APD Policy P–2021–013, which expressly includes situations “*when the suspect complains of physical injury from a use of force.*” Supervisors must be instructed that reportability is triggered by the complaint itself and is not contingent upon the severity of the injury, corroboration by medical

evidence, or the supervisor's assessment of credibility.

- **Treat WRAP Restraints as a High-Risk, Exceptional Control Measure.**

The Akron Police Department should formally classify the WRAP restraint as a high-risk, full-body restraint to be used only in exceptional circumstances, rather than as a routine post-arrest control device. Policy language should explicitly state that WRAP deployment is appropriate only when a handcuffed subject continues to engage in active, safety-threatening behaviors, such as sustained kicking, thrashing, or attempts at self-harm, that cannot be reasonably controlled through lesser restraints or repositioning.

- **Require Explicit, Behavior-Based Articulation for WRAP Deployment.**

APD should require officers to specifically articulate the subject behaviors that necessitated WRAP application, including why handcuffing and standard positional adjustments were insufficient. Reports should clearly distinguish between resistance that justified initial force or arrest, and post-arrest behaviors that independently justified the WRAP restraint.

- **WRAP policy.** Policy should further emphasize heightened caution when WRAP restraints are used on subjects who claim ingestion of narcotics, exhibit signs of excited delirium or medical distress, or have recently engaged in prolonged physical struggle.

- **Prohibit Punitive or Convenience-Based Use of WRAP Restraints.** APD should explicitly prohibit WRAP application for purposes of punishment, officer convenience, behavioral control absent a safety threat, or mere verbal noncompliance.

- **CEW Cycle Documentation.** Require consistent documentation of the number, duration, and purpose of each CEW activation, aligned with CEW data downloads.
- **Off-Duty Identification Requirement.** Requiring clear identification before asserting authority reduces officer-created ambiguity, supports constitutional reasonableness, and aligns with national best practices emphasizing legitimacy as a cornerstone of effective policing.
- **Limits on Off-Duty Firearm Implication.** Restricting firearm implication by off-duty officers absent clear identification or imminent threat reinforces de-escalation principles, mitigates Fourth Amendment risk, and protects both officers and civilians from avoidable harm.
- **Witness-First / Contain-and-Communicate Protocol.** Formalizing a witness-first approach, prioritizing observation, communication with dispatch, and disengagement unless immediate intervention is required, reduces risk, preserves jurisdictional clarity, and supports safer outcomes consistent with constitutional policing standards.
- **Officer-Created Jeopardy Review.** Requiring supervisors to separately assess officer-created jeopardy promotes more accurate, transparent reviews, strengthens organizational learning, and avoids the false equivalence that lawful force equates to flawless tactics.

Appendix 3. OIPA Training Recommendations May 16, 2024–January 28, 2025

- **Enhanced De-escalation Training.** Reinforce decision-making under stress, vehicle extraction tactics, and the risks of positional force inside vehicles.
- **Use-of-Force Proportionality.** Incorporate national best practices from PERF's Guiding Principles on Use of Force to emphasize proportional response.
- **Vehicle Extraction Protocols.** Reinforce officer safety and tactical positioning in training to reduce need for high-risk maneuvers inside vehicles.
- **Reaffirm policy requirement.** All prisoners must be seat belted—no exceptions (3)
- Pre-positioning seatbelts and securing resistant subjects with minimal risk (3)
- **Expand Procedural Justice and Empathy Training.** Train officers to recognize trauma indicators and respond with empathy and transparency.
- **Adolescent Trauma Response.** Train officers in adolescent brain development and behavior under stress.
- **De-escalation Techniques.** Reinforce engagement strategies that minimize escalation.
- **De-escalation.** Reinforce training on time, distance, cover, and verbal engagement with non-compliant but non-violent individuals.
- **Proportional Response.** Train officers on proportionality in force application, emphasizing alternatives before resorting to punches or TASER use.
- **Professional Conduct.** Expand ethics and professionalism training to emphasize the importance of language and demeanor post-apprehension.
- **Enhanced Scenario-Based De-Escalation Training.** Train officers to maximize time, distance, and cover while using tactical disengagement, persuasion, and verbal containment.
- **Tactical Communication Under Stress.** Provide modules that emphasize communication tactics to manage intoxicated or mentally impaired subjects.
- **Force-Decision Review Exercises.** Use after-action video review sessions to evaluate use-of-force choices against constitutional and policy standards.
- **De-escalation Training.** Expand scenario-based training focused on containment and delayed arrest strategies rather than immediate force for flight; Reinforce that not every act of evasion requires physical apprehension at that moment.
- **Expand scenario-based training** on proportionality and alternative tactics for apprehending fleeing juveniles.
- **De-escalation and Procedural Justice.** Require enhanced juvenile-specific de-escalation training, emphasizing communication, time, and distance; Increase training on procedural justice to reduce reliance on profanity and improve officer-suspect interactions.
- **Body-Worn Cameras.** Reinforce policy requiring BWC activation prior to engagement whenever feasible.
- **Legal Accuracy Training.** Correct officer misunderstandings of Ohio firearm disclosure laws.

- **Enhanced De-Escalation and Communication Training.** Require reinforcement scenarios emphasizing verbal direction before physical force, particularly in partial-compliance situations; Incorporate medical disclosure awareness (e.g., insulin pumps, prosthetics) into force decision-making modules.
- **Comprehensive Report Integrity Training.** Train officers to document both aggravating and mitigating factors—including environmental lighting, subject compliance, and medical explanations—to ensure balanced reporting.
- **De-Escalation Protocol.** Train officers on extended verbal engagement, slowing encounters, and calling for additional units before physical force when feasible.
- **Tactical Options.** Expand training on alternative control techniques (team handcuffing, body positioning, leverage-based holds) rather than pain compliance.
- **Enhanced Pursuit Decision-Making Training.** Reinforce balancing tests under §III(A)(1–3) and require officers to articulate justification in reports.
- **Secondary injuries associated with CEWs.** Add mandatory training (head strikes, concrete falls).
- **Post-Restraint Care.** Implement mandatory training on Positional asphyxia; Monitoring unconscious or semi-conscious subjects; Use of the recovery position; Institute scenario-based training assessing officers' ability to recognize sudden unconsciousness and provide care.
- **Trauma-Informed Communication Training.** Officers must be trained to differentiate nervous, fear-based movements from deliberate noncompliance.
- **Strengthened De-Escalation.** APD should reinforce avoiding officer-created jeopardy, avoiding unnecessary physical control, and using time, distance, and cover as default tools.
- **Scenario-based training.** involving lawful gun carriers.
- **Practical exercises** in vehicle-stop tactics emphasizing proportionality
- **Verbal Professionalism & Procedural Justice.** Reinforce respectful communication under stress; Use real-case examples (including this one) for training on maintaining professionalism during high-resistance encounters.
- **WRAP Device Proficiency Refresher.** Annual training ensuring officers are adept at safe application, monitoring, and medical-assessment triggers.
- **Scenario-Based Foot Pursuit Training.** Include modules for risk assessment in real time, voiding officer tunnel vision, communication and coordination between responding units, de-escalation opportunities during dynamic movement.
- **De-Escalation Under Pressure.** Even when subjects flee, officers must continue [a] clear threat assessment, tactical communication, and slowing the encounter when safe to do so.
- **CEW Targeting, Distance, and Secondary Injury Prevention.** Reinforce optimal probe spread, avoidance of “fall zones,” managing post-deployment positioning to reduce impact injuries.
- **Enhanced Crisis Intervention Training.** Greater focus on slowing encounters, maintaining distance, and structured communication.
- **Communication Strategies.** Improve identification and avoidance of subject triggers.

- **Scene Management Improvements.** Avoid confined or cluttered environments for force encounters when possible.
- **Prisoner Transport Compliance.** Reinforce seat belt policy through quarterly roll-call reminders, scenario-based training, and supervisory spot checks.
- **De-Escalation and Tactical Communication Refreshers.** Reinforce that language can escalate physical resistance.
- **Bodyweight / Positional Asphyxia Training Upgrade.** Reinforce PERF's "minimal time in prone restraint" standard.
- **Ground-Control / Grappling Proficiency Training.** Increase APD's defensive-tactics training frequency and introduce scenario-based practice for solo officer control.
- **Communication with Potentially Homeless Individuals.** Add training on contact with vulnerable populations, including behavioral cues, crisis indicators, and non-escalatory approaches.
- **Enhanced De-Escalation Training.** Reinforce communication, slowing down, and rapport-building techniques in low-level offense encounters.
- **Ground restraint and positional asphyxia risk.** Reinforce safe restraint positioning, transition-to-recoverly positioning once controlled, and medical distress recognition, especially when EMS sedation is used.
- **Integrated police-EMS operations.** Joint training with AFD on roles, communication, and safety protocols during psychiatric emergencies, including gurney-area control and transport readiness.
- **CEW Cycle Management and Reassessment Protocol.** Reinforce training and reporting expectations that each CEW activation must be justified with a rapid reassessment between cycles (threat, access to weapon, ability to safely disengage, alternative control options). (2)
- **Reinforce Non-Custodial Enforcement Training for Low-Level Traffic Stops.** APD should implement mandatory training emphasizing non-custodial enforcement strategies for low-level traffic violations and summons-eligible offenses. (2)
- **Enhanced Tactical Decision-Making Training.** Officers should receive refresher training on requesting backup when a subject displays escalating agitation during transport.
- **Expanded WRAP Training.** Incorporate case studies, including AP findings, into annual training to reinforce the device's intended purpose, risks of misuse, the importance of medical monitoring, and documentation of the safety rationale.
- **Procedural Justice Communication Skills.** Enhanced communication training can reduce the likelihood of emotional escalation and reinforce community trust.
- **Crisis communications under stress.** Implement scenario-based training requiring officers to manage a parent/guardian who is actively escalating while maintaining a calm, neutral, non-sarcastic tone and using structured phrases (e.g., "I hear you; I need you behind this line so we can keep everyone safe").

- **Youth crisis response decision points (slow-down and resource request).** Add explicit guidance (and CAD prompting where feasible) for juvenile domestic/behavioral health calls: when safe, prioritize time/distance, request additional units early, and consider specialized response resources (CIT, juvenile officer, co-responder) before initiating custody steps that predictably trigger resistance.
- **"Contain and separate" protocol for family disputes.** Train and reinforce a "contain and separate" approach. Move parties into discrete zones, reduce the audience effect (including separating the patient from the youth), designate one officer to manage family members, and use clear physical staging markers.
- **Restraint adaptations for medical devices.** Create a short training bulletin on handcuffing/transport when a subject has a cast or medical restriction (preferred cuffing options, double locking, avoiding pressure points, documentation expectations, and when to request medical clearance).
- **Foot-Pursuit and Containment Training.** Reinforce tactics emphasizing containment, coordinated roles, and distance management when a firearm has been dropped but the subject continues to walk away.
- **Armed-Subject De-Escalation Scenarios.** Expand scenario-based training addressing intoxicated, armed-but-non-compliant subjects, focusing on communication, time, and distance when feasible.
- **Reinforce the Definition of Reportable Force (Policy Clarification).** APD should formally reinforce the definition of *reportable force* contained in Section II.C of APD Policy P-2021-013, which expressly includes situations "*when the suspect complains of physical injury from a use of force.*" Supervisors must be instructed that reportability is triggered by the complaint itself and is not contingent upon the severity of the injury, corroboration by medical evidence, or the supervisor's assessment of credibility.
- **Clear Distinction Between Obstruction and Protected Speech.** APD should reinforce through training and reporting standards that detention or arrest for obstruction must be grounded in physical interference with lawful investigative duties, not verbal hostility, criticism, or profanity. Officers should be required to document the specific conduct that impeded separation, victim assessment, or other required domestic-violence investigative steps.
- **Trauma-Informed Domestic-Violence Interviewing.** APD should provide refresher training on trauma-informed interviewing in domestic-violence cases, including victim recantation dynamics, postpartum stress, and fear-based minimization. Training should emphasize addressing inconsistencies without prematurely threatening criminal consequences that may chill truthful disclosure.
- **Dignity Safeguards in Sensitive Encounters (Nudity and Privacy).** APD should formalize training and guidance requiring officers to implement dignity safeguards during encounters involving nudity or partial nudity, including reducing unnecessary police presence and

providing coverings or clothing as soon as practicable without compromising safety.

reaction time, and decision-making under stress.

- **Child–Present Domestic–Violence Scene Management Protocols.**

APD should incorporate child–presence considerations into domestic–violence response training, emphasizing controlled pacing, clear role assignments, rapid stabilization strategies, and documentation of child–welfare considerations.

- **Clear Standards for the Transition from Verbal Control to Physical Force.**

APD should reinforce training on the transition from verbal control to hands–on force, including the use of a single primary command voice, behavior–specific instructions, and clear articulation of why physical force became necessary at that moment. Training should address how premature threats or conflicting commands can increase resistance.

- **Ground–Control and Post–Control Positioning Training.**

APD should enhance training on ground–control techniques with a focus on minimizing body–weight pressure, avoiding head and neck contact absent necessity, and transitioning promptly to recovery positioning once control is achieved. Officers should be trained to document these transitions clearly in reports.

- **Procedural–Justice and Perception–Gap Training.**

APD should incorporate procedural justice modules addressing how lawful enforcement actions may nonetheless be perceived as unfair, aggressive, or humiliating. Training should focus on tone, explanation, and communication during enforcement actions.

- **Emergency Vehicle Operations and Risk–Based Decision–Making.**

APD should expand in–service training on emergency driving that integrates vehicle dynamics, stopping distances,

- **De-escalation & Tactics (Scenario-Based Refreshers).** Expand training on time/distance/cover, contact/ cover roles, slowed approaches, and communication with persons in crisis; include scripted options for re-engagement outside the residence and supervisor consults prior to compulsion where feasible.
- **Cessation & Transition Training (From Control to Care).** Reinforce immediate transition from hands-on control to monitoring/medical care once cuffed and controlled; emphasize risks of prolonged prone restraint and "extra seconds" of pressure absent resistance.
- **FTO Program Emphasis for Phase-3 Trainees.** Embed modules on constitutional policing in crisis contexts, lawful bases for seizure in mental-health situations, and real-time coaching on balancing lawful objectives with proportionality, with specific evaluation rubrics for trainers and trainees.
- **Bystander Involvement.** Train officers to default to time, distance, or additional resources when control cannot be achieved safely, rather than relying on bystanders. (2)
- **BWC activation: tightening performance expectations for force-prone contacts.** "Activate early; narrate decisions." If officers delay activation for safety, train them to state on-camera, immediately once recording begins, why activation was delayed and what occurred before recording.
- **De-escalation and tactical patience for warrant arrests involving emotionally dysregulated subjects.** When feasible, use containment and additional units rather than immediate hands-on engagement, particularly in slippery/ unsafe footing where injury risk is elevated. Reinforce persuasion and options-based commands ("Stop where you are. You're under arrest on a warrant. If you keep walking, we will stop you and it may result in force."), consistent with APD's de-escalation definition.
- **Reinforce the Purpose of Reportable Force Classification.** Training should emphasize that classifying force as reportable is a transparency and accountability mechanism, not an implication of misconduct. Accurate reporting protects officers, strengthens investigations, and reinforces public confidence by ensuring that all qualifying uses of force receive appropriate review.
- **De-escalation Training Reinforcement.** Reinforce training emphasizing patience, communication, and graduated responses in low level school-based encounters, particularly involving juveniles and non-criminal conduct.
- **Professional Communication and Language Standards.** Reinforce departmental expectations regarding professional language and demeanor, especially after a subject is restrained and under control. Profanity and confrontational speech toward juveniles should be explicitly discouraged.
- **Post-Custody De-Escalation Emphasis.** Incorporate scenario-based training that focuses on post-custody interactions, ensuring officers understand that de-escalation responsibilities continue after handcuffing.

- **Implement Scenario-Based Training Focused on Post-Arrest Control Decisions.** Training should focus on differentiating post-arrest agitation from active resistance; decision-making between repositioning, time, distance, and WRAP deployment; Medical risk recognition associated with restraint devices; and Clear communication among officers during post-arrest control.
- **Foot-Pursuit Risk Assessment Training.** Develop scenario-based training addressing winter conditions common in Akron, focusing on officer safety, pursuit alternatives, and injury prevention.
- **CEW Training Enhancements.** Reinforce guidance on assessing the effectiveness of initial CEW cycles before additional deployments, except where immediate safety concerns persist, and emphasize that drive-stun use should be limited and clearly articulated as a pain-compliance or transitional control measure.
- **Armed-Subject Foot Pursuit Protocols.** Enhance scenario-based training on containment, coordination, and communication when a fleeing subject is suspected to be armed.
- **Weapon-Discard Recognition.** Reinforce training on immediate threat reassessment once a weapon is discarded, while recognizing the ongoing risk of access or secondary weapons.
- **Prone Restraint Awareness.** Reiterate best practices on minimizing time spent in prone positioning after CEW deployment and handcuffing to reduce medical risk.
- **Scenario-Based Training on Off-Duty Encounters, Identification, and Perception Management.** Scenario-based training allows officers to experience how lack of identification, tone, posture, and timing affects civilian perception and escalation dynamics.
- **Supervisory Training on Temporal Segmentation of Force Analysis.** Effective supervisory review requires analyzing encounters in phases rather than as a single event. Training supervisors to distinguish between pre-force decision-making, the moment force is applied, and post-force actions enhances analytical rigor, improves accountability, and ensures that systemic risks are identified without unfairly second-guessing reasonable defensive actions.

- **Cross-Jurisdiction Coordination Training for Off-Duty Responses.**

Training that emphasizes communication protocols, role clarity, and handoff procedures with neighboring agencies supports safer resolutions, reduces confusion on

scene, and reinforces mutual-aid and jurisdictional respect.

- **Procedural Justice Training.**

Incorporate scenario-based training emphasizing legitimacy, fairness, and respect in interactions, even with resistant individuals.

Appendix 4. OIPA Miscellaneous Recommendations

May 16, 2024–January 28, 2025

- **Require supervisors** to document *every* policy deviation with remedial actions taken (3)
- **Prohibit subjective justifications** for ignoring or modifying policy in practice (3)
- **Implement Real-Time License/ Insurance Validation.** Improve access to DMV/insurance systems to reduce wrongful citations or vehicle impoundments.
- **Amend the Findings to the Allegations.** OIPA believes the findings for each allegation should be changed from Unfounded to Unsubstantiated [...] Investigating supervisors shall reach an objective conclusion based on the evidence and information gathered.
- **Community Trust Considerations.** APD should communicate publicly that it is adopting reforms to limit force against non-violent fleeing suspects.
- Explore [BWC] auto-activation technology tied to weapon draws or vehicle exits.
- **Early intervention.** Establish an early intervention review for any use of head strikes.
- **Supervisory Review Enhancement.** Implement a BWC-to-report comparison checklist for all use-of-force reviews, ensuring factual consistency and identifying narrative inflation.
- **Community Trust Building.** Publicly report and review pretextual stop data (race, geography, outcomes) to monitor equity and reduce selective enforcement.
- **Supervisory Review [of UOF] Enhancements.** Require post-incident analysis of whether proportionality was achieved relative to offense severity; Embed specific questions on *least intrusive alternatives* considered.
- **Community Transparency Reporting.** Publish an annual pursuit summary and analysis (per §M) in OIPA's public dashboard to enhance accountability.
- **Early Intervention.** Incorporate referral when an officer has multiple procedural violations within a short period.
- **BWC-assisted coaching.** to reduce misinterpretation of movements
- **Decision-making models.** emphasizing Graham and Ohio weapon laws
- **APD should develop communication materials explaining.** When officers may operate without lights/sirens; The difference between emergency and non-emergency responses; Why officers sometimes perform rapid maneuvers.
- Expansion of Mental-Health Crisis Resources-Co-responder models and behavioral-health units.
- **Develop supervisory [UOF] checklists.** Requiring review of alternatives considered, duration of force, medical assessment, and communication behaviors.
- **Enhance Supervisory Review of Force Arising from Summons-Only Encounters.** Any use of force occurring during an encounter that ends in citation and release should trigger

heightened supervisory and command-level review. (2)

- **Supervisory practice: strengthen the "tactical lessons learned" loop.** Require the supervisor UOF conclusion to include a brief "preventability" section to present what tactics might have reduced the likelihood of going hands-on. This would be separate from the legal/policy justification.
- **Supervisory Documentation and Narrative Standards.** APD should adopt supervisory documentation standards requiring explicit resolution of civilian allegations, including clear explanations of how evidence was reviewed, weighed, and used to sustain, not sustain, or unfound allegations.
- **Domestic-Violence Documentation Compliance Audits.** APD should conduct periodic audits of domestic-violence cases, particularly those involving force or contested narratives, to ensure completion of injury photographs, evidence documentation, victim resource provision, and supervisory review.
- **Aggregate Risk Awareness, Supervisory Review, and Early-Intervention Practices.** Supervisors should be encouraged to assess policy deviations and risk indicators collectively rather than in isolation. When multiple issues arise within a single incident, such as BWC non-activation, unsafe driving, and rapid escalation, coaching, training, or early-intervention tools should be considered to address potential normalization of risk or stress-related decision-making before patterns develop.

- **Bystander Documentation.** Require a supervisory review flag whenever a civilian makes physical contact during an arrest, with mandatory articulation of why it occurred and why alternatives were not feasible.
- **Supervisory review of BWC late activation.** Treat late activation during a force event as a coaching trigger (not automatically misconduct), with pattern-based intervention if recurring.
- **School-Based Policing Coordination.** Encourage closer coordination between officers and school staff to leverage non-law enforcement voices early in emotionally charged situations, consistent with best practices for school resource policing.
- **Supervisory use-of-force investigations should include a distinct analytical subsection addressing WRAP usage** that evaluates whether the articulated behaviors met the policy threshold, whether medical monitoring was timely and sufficient, whether the duration of WRAP use was justified, and whether less restrictive alternatives were reasonably available.
- **Supervisory Narrative Rigor.** Encourage supervisors to explicitly tie Graham factors to their conclusions to strengthen transparency and public confidence.

Appendix 5. Burlington (North Carolina) Police Department Use of Force Policy

This appendix is a faithful reproduction of the text of the BPD UOF policy.

Chapter 3 Operations – Policy 03–07 Response to Resistance

PURPOSE

The Burlington Police Department is committed to the sanctity of human life, dignity, and liberty of all persons. An officer's commitment to public safety includes the welfare of members of the public, the people the officers are dealing with, and the officers. It is incumbent for the department to accomplish the police mission with the cooperation of the public and as effectively as possible. The Department's value statement, "We respect the rights, liberties, and dignity of all; serving with compassion, respect, and courtesy" shall be the cornerstones of the Burlington Police Department's response to resistance policy.

POLICY

Officers shall take lawful actions in response to resistance only when no reasonably effective alternative appears to exist and will use only the amount of force that is objectively reasonable and necessary given the totality of the circumstances to bring an incident under control. Upon using force, and when safe to do so, officers will render aid to anyone involved and ensure the scene is secure for additional investigation as might be necessary. Officers will comply with all reporting and investigative requirements.

DEFINITIONS

Active Resistance: A subject's physical actions that make it more difficult for officers to make an arrest and represents an immediate threat to the officer or third party for officers to achieve actual physical control.

Compliance: Actions by the suspect or detainee who verbally and/or physically submits to the authority and control of the officer.

De-escalation: Actions or communications (verbal and non-verbal) used by officers in an attempt to stabilize the situation and reduce the immediacy of the threat so that more time, options, and resources can be called upon to safely resolve the situation without the use of force or with a reduction in force used.

Imminent/Immediate threat: A reasonable belief that there is an immediate probability of an act or consequence occurring. The focus rests on a subjective evaluation of whether a suspect's actions if allowed to continue unchecked, are likely to result in death or serious physical injury to a police officer or third person.

Objectively Reasonable: The reasonableness standard of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight. This is based on whether the officer's actions are objectively reasonable in light of the facts and circumstances confronting them,

without regard to their underlying intent or motivation. (*Graham v. Connor*, 490 U.S. 386 (1989)).

Passive Resistance: A subject's refusal to comply with an officer, but they are not presenting an immediate threat to the officer or a third party, and they are not actively resisting.

Serious Physical Injury: Bodily injury which creates a high probability of death, or which causes serious permanent disfigurement, or which causes a permanent or protracted loss or impairment of the function of any bodily member or organ, or other serious bodily harm.

I. CORE PRINCIPLES (RESPONSE TO RESISTANCE)

- A. Officer's actions are to be "objectively reasonable" in light of the facts and circumstances confronting them, without regard to their underlying intent or motivation. Reasonableness is judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight. *Graham vs. Connor*- 490 U.S. 386, (1989). Officers will take into consideration the three prong test when using force:
 - 1. The severity of the crime(s) at issue;
 - 2. Whether the subject poses an immediate threat to the safety of the officer(s) or others;
 - 3. Whether the subject is actively resisting arrest or attempting to evade arrest by flight.
- B. Every member of the Burlington Police Department is committed to upholding the Constitution and Laws of the United States and the State of North Carolina and defending the Civil Rights and Dignity of all individuals while protecting human life and property and maintaining Civil Order. The Burlington Police Department embraces Policing with a Purpose- which includes:
 - 1. Preserving the Sanctity of all Life
 - 2. Nurture and Protect Democracy
 - 3. Ensure Justice and Fundamental Fairness
 - 4. Spirit of Service
 - 5. Protect the Community from harm
 - 6. Treat all individual with dignity and respect, the ethical foundation of policing.
- C. When time and circumstances permit, officers will use de-escalation tactics to reduce the need for force.
- D. An officer will use only the degree of force that is objectively reasonable, necessary, and proportional to the threat or resistance of a subject.
- E. Each officer is responsible for explaining, articulating, and documenting the specific facts which justify the officer's use of force.
- F. The department is committed to upholding lawful, professional, and ethical standards through assertive leadership and supervision before, during, and after every use of force incident.

The department will continue to maintain standards and transparent oversight to ensure compliance and accountability to the community to maintain their trust. Oversight includes de-escalation efforts, effective tactics, policy review, and objective review and analysis of all incidents where force is used.

- G. Having a strong partnership between the department and the community is essential to establish trust and increase public safety.
 - 1. Use of force, even if lawful and proper, can have a damaging effect on the public's perception and the department's relationship with the community. Both the department and the individual officers need to be aware of the adverse effects of use-of-force-incidents and be empowered to take appropriate action to mitigate these effects, such as:
 - a. Explaining actions to subjects or members of the public
 - b. Offering reasonable aid to those affected by a use-of-force incident
 - c. Treating subjects, witnesses, and bystanders with professionalism and courtesy
 - d. Conducting departmental follow-ups with neighbors or family to explain police actions and hear their concerns and feedback

II. CRITICAL DECISION-MAKING MODEL

- A. Officers should recognize that their conduct before the use of force may be a factor which can influence the level of force necessary in a given situation.
- B. Officers should continually assess the situation and changing circumstances. The Critical Decision-Making Model (CDM) is an ethically-based thought process that helps officers manage a broad range of incidents effectively and safely. Four elements guide the CDM, which are:
 - 1. Police ethics
 - 2. The values of the police agency
 - 3. Proportionality
 - 4. The sanctity of human life
- C. The CDM has five steps and is a circular process, not a linear one. Officers may move to any step as needed or as the situation changes. The five steps are:
 - 1. Collect Information and intelligence
 - 2. Assess situation, threats, and risks
 - 3. Consider police powers and agency policy
 - 4. Identify options and determine the best course of action
 - 5. Act, review, and re-assess

III. DE-ESCALATION

- A. When time and circumstances permit, officers will use de-escalation tactics to reduce the need for force. When safe and feasible, officers will attempt to slow down or stabilize the situation so that more time, options and resources are available.

- B. Consider whether a subject's lack of compliance is a deliberate attempt to resist or an inability to comply based on factors including, but not limited to:
 - 1. Medical conditions
 - 2. Mental impairment
 - 3. Developmental disability
 - 4. Physical limitation
 - 5. Language barrier
 - 6. Influence of drugs or alcohol use
 - 7. Behavioral crisis
- C. De-escalation tactics include, but are not restricted to:
 - 1. Placing barriers between an uncooperative subject and an officer
 - 2. Containing a threat
 - 3. Reducing exposure to a potential threat using distance, cover, or concealment.
 - 4. Verbal techniques, such as verbal judo, to calm an agitated subject and promote rational decision making
 - 5. Mitigating the immediacy of threat by calling additional resources to assist, including more officers, supervisors, Crisis Intervention Trained officers, in-house Crisis Specialist, and officers equipped with additional less-lethal tools.
 - 6. Any other tactics and approaches that attempt to achieve law enforcement objectives by gaining voluntary compliance of the subject.

IV. RESPONSE TO RESISTANCE OPTIONS

- D. Officers shall follow the North Carolina General Statutes governing the Use of Force by Police Officers, NCGS 15A-401 (d) Use of Force in Arrest. Officers shall use only the amount of force necessary, objectively reasonable, and proportionate to effectively bring an incident or person under control while protecting the lives of the officer and others. (CALEA 1.3.1)
- E. Officer's actions are to be "objectively reasonable" in light of the facts and circumstances confronting them, without regard to their underlying intent or motivation. Reasonableness is judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight. *Graham vs. Connor- 490 U.S. 386, (1989)*. The following are a response to resistance options, not listed in a particular hierarchy:
 - 1. Presence: Psychological force established through the officer's arrival on the scene and symbols of authority to include uniform and badge.
 - 2. Verbal Direction/Control: Conversation, advice, commands, or instructions used by the officer to control or de-escalate a confrontation. Verbal communication, when applicable, should accompany officer actions, including the officer's identification and the announcement of the arrest.
 - 3. Soft hand control: Techniques which have a low probability of injuries, such as joint locks and pressure points. Soft hand technique should be used on a passive resistant person.

4. Hard hand control: Techniques that have a higher probability of injuries, such as punches and kicks. Hard hand techniques should be used when there is an immediate threat to the officer or third person. In addition to hard hand techniques, intermediate weapons provide methods for controlling a subject when deadly force is not justified, but when punches and kicks may not be effective. The intermediate weapons are the baton, Oleoresin Capsicum, Conducted Electrical Weapon (CEW), Impact Munitions, and Police Canine.
 - a. Whenever an officer uses an intermediate weapon for control, it should be used with the intent to temporarily disable a subject who is threatening an officer or third party with an immediate threat of physical harm and never with the intent of creating a permanent injury.
 - b. A subject's head, neck, throat, spine, groin, and clavicle shall not be used as targets for intermediate weapons unless an officer is justified in the use of deadly force. These areas have high implications of injury resulting in death or serious bodily injury.
 - c. Officers must follow the procedures below for each intermediate weapon:
 - 1) OC Spray: Aerosol spray or foam based with the active natural ingredient oleoresin capsicum, a derivative of various species of cayenne pepper. These agents typically cause moderate discomfort, activate mucous membranes, and reduce resistance.
 - a) Deployment: When feasible, officers will verbally warn the suspect before using OC spray and the subject should be given time to comply with the officer's commands unless doing so would place the officer or any other person at risk.
 - b) Primary Target Areas: Face, eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - c) Application: Short bursts of spray, approximately one second.
 - d) Mandatory Wear: Officers are required to wear OC spray on their duty-belt.
 - e) Persons/Areas to Avoid:
 - i. On the elderly, mentally disturbed, emotionally disturbed, pregnant persons, or a child (unless reasonable and justifiable). Officers will not use OC spray on persons who are passively resisting.
 - ii. Officers should avoid a direct discharge into the eyes at a close distance.
 - iii. Enclosed areas, such as hospital emergency rooms or other areas with closed ventilation systems.
 - f) Rendering Aid:
 - i. Officers will put the suspect in a recovery position and reassure the suspect that the effects of the OC product are temporary and will subside within a short period. Officers will ask the suspect if they are asthmatic, have any other

- respiratory disease or if they are abnormally sensitive to OC; (CALEA 1.3.5)
- ii. Decontaminate at the scene or in the secure area of the police department by applying water and monitoring progress of recovery; (CALEA 1.3.5)
 - iii. The suspect will not be left unattended until after the effects of the OC spray have been completely diminished, or the person indicates they have fully recovered from the effects of the spray. (CALEA 1.3.5)
 - iv. Officers using OC spray should also be aware that in some unusual instances, a subject may be abnormally sensitive to OC spray or be allergic to its active ingredients. This situation shall be treated as a medical emergency.
- 2) Expandable Baton (ASP): A collapsible weapon made by various manufacturers.
- a) Deployment: When feasible officers will verbally warn the suspect before using the baton, and the subject should be given time to comply with the officer's commands unless doing so would place the officer or any other person at risk.
 - b) Primary Target Area: The officer will attempt to target large muscle mass areas likely to stop the suspect from actively resisting.
 - c) Application: Strikes will be applied with the intention to knock the subject down and stop the threat.
 - d) Mandatory Wear: Officers are required to wear the ASP baton on their duty belt.
 - e) Persons and Areas to Avoid:
 - i. On the elderly, mentally disturbed, emotionally disturbed, pregnant persons, or a child (unless reasonable and justifiable). Officers will not strike persons who are passively resisting.
 - ii. An officer should avoid striking another person in the head, in the neck, or groin with a baton unless the officer reasonably believes his life or the life of a third party is threatened.
 - f) Rendering Aid: Examine all areas affected by the baton strike and evaluate the need for medical attention, to include bruising lacerations or penetration.
- 3) Conducted Electrical Weapon (CEW): Also known as TASER®. Devices that deploy electric currents (low watt, high volts) to induce involuntary muscle contractions that cause temporary incapacitation. (can be used on a suspect's body by deploying probes or through the drive stun method). The TASER (probed deployment or drive stun mode) should only be used when an

officer can articulate immediate danger to themselves or others and not used for passive resistance alone.

- a) Deployment: When feasible officers will verbally warn the suspect before discharging the TASER, and the subject should be given time to comply with the officer's commands unless doing so would place the officer or any other person at risk. If possible, the deploying officer should give other officers at the scene a warning when the deployment of the TASER is imminent such as "Taser, Taser, Taser."
- b) Primary Target Areas: The recommended aiming areas are a lower center mass of the front of the subject and below the neck of the back of the subject.
- c) Application: Each application of the TASER is separate. Multiple applications of the TASER cannot be justified solely because a subject fails to comply with a command. Any decision to apply multiple applications of the TASER must take into consideration whether a subject is capable of complying with the officer's commands.
- d) Mandatory Wear: The TASER must be worn in a cross-draw fashion on the opposite side of the firearm.
- e) Persons and Areas to Avoid:
 - i. On the elderly, mentally disturbed, emotionally disturbed, an extremely low body mass person, pregnant persons, or a child (unless reasonable and justifiable). Officers will not use the TASER on persons who are passively resisting.
 - ii. On a subject who is in control of a vehicle, while that vehicle is moving or in gear.
 - iii. On a subject who is complying with an officer's commands.
 - iv. When it is reasonable to believe that incapacitation of the subject may result in serious physical injury or death (e.g., where the subject's fall may result in death or serious physical injury).

- v. On a subject used as pain compliance, while in drive stun mode when circumstances dictate that pain is reasonably foreseeable to be ineffective (usually due to drug, alcohol, or mental illness causes an elevation of pain compliance).
 - vi. In the proximity of flammable liquids, gases, or any other highly combustible materials that may be ignited by the device including any individual that may have been exposed to combustible substances or liquids such as gasoline.
- f) Rendering Aid: Following the deployment of the TASER, officers or medical personnel will remove the probes that have penetrated the skin, using appropriate PPE. The probes will be removed using the following steps: (CALEA 1.3.5)
- i. Secure the skin area by placing the probe between the thumb and index finger with the palm flat against the subject's body. (CALEA 1.3.5)
 - ii. Use counter pressure with the hand against the body and remove the probe with the other hand by pulling it outward from the impact area at a 90-degree angle. (CALEA 1.3.5)
 - iii. Dispose of the probes in an approved sharps container. (CALEA 1.3.5)
 - iv. Contact EMS to evaluate any unusual probe sites or secondary injuries that may have occurred following deployment. Probes that strike the subject in the head, face, neck, spine, breast, or groin should be removed by EMS or a hospital emergency department. (CALEA 1.3.5)
- 4) Impact Munitions: Specifically designed projectiles that are made to strike a subject's body causing non-lethal blunt trauma and incapacitation. Departmentally approved impact munitions are the 40mm foam baton and 12-gauge shotgun bean bag round.
- a) Deployment:
- i. When feasible officers should verbally warn the suspect before using the impact munition and the subject should be given time to comply with the officer's commands unless doing so would place the officer or any other person at risk.
 - ii. Before deployment, an arrest team should be staged near the subject to make the arrest.
- b) Primary Target Areas: The recommended aiming areas are large muscle groups like the thighs, calves, and buttocks area.
- c) Application: Impact munitions can only be deployed using a 40mm weapon and/or 12-gauge shotgun. All casings should be collected as evidence.

- d) Persons and Areas to Avoid:
 - i. On the elderly, mentally disturbed, emotionally disturbed, pregnant persons, or a child (unless reasonable and justifiable). Officers will not strike persons who are passively resisting.
 - ii. Officers should avoid deployment at close distances.
 - iii. Officers should avoid firing at high-risk target areas like the head, neck, chest, spine and groin area unless deadly force is authorized.
- e) Rendering Aid: Suspects who are struck with an impact munition shall be secured and when possible, treated at the scene by EMS and transported to a medical facility for examination. (CALEA 1.3.5)
- 5) The police canine is also considered a form of intermediate force. Canine officers may deploy their canine in accordance with Burlington Police Directive, 03-15 Canine.
- 5. Deadly Force: May only be used in circumstances where the officer reasonably believes that the action is in defense of human life, including the officer's own life, or in defense of any person in imminent danger of serious physical injury. (CALEA 1.3.1) CALEA 1.3.2)

NCGS 15A-401.d2):

To defend themselves or a third person from what they reasonably believe to be the use or imminent use of deadly physical force;

To effect an arrest or to prevent the escape from custody of a person who he reasonably believes is attempting to escape by means of a deadly weapon, or who by his conduct or any other means indicates that he presents an imminent threat of death or serious physical injury to others unless apprehended without delay; or

To prevent the escape of a person from custody imposed upon him as a result of a conviction for a felony. (only applicable to Department of Corrections)

- a) When feasible, officers will verbally warn the suspect before discharging a firearm, unless doing so would place the officer or any other person at additional risk.
- b) Officers should use firearms to stop most deadly threats and should aim center mass to ensure the highest likelihood of stopping the threat. (CALEA 1.3.2)
 - i. Shooting at a moving vehicle is prohibited unless someone in the vehicle is using or threatening deadly force by means other than the vehicle itself.
 - ii. Warning shots are prohibited (CALEA 1.3.3)

- c) If the use of a firearm is not practical under the totality of the circumstances other force may be used such as a moving vehicle, knife, or improvised weapon. In all deadly force applications, the procedures listed in 04-10, Officer Involved Shooting, will be followed.

F. Other Response to Resistance Criteria:

1. Officers are required to complete use of force training which includes both classroom and practical instruction. Proficiency training is monitored by a certified weapons or tactics instructor (See BPD 03-06 Weapons policy).
2. Police Department authorized intermediate weapons will be used in accordance with the current established departmental training standards. Any other non-deadly objects that a police officer uses to assist in subduing an individual will, for this policy, be considered an intermediate weapon.
3. Any officer present and observing another officer using force that is clearly beyond that which is objectively reasonable under the circumstances shall, when in a position to do so, intercede to prevent the use of unreasonable force. An officer who observes another employee use force that exceeds the degree of force permitted by law should promptly report these observations to a supervisor.
4. Officers will immediately notify Communications anytime force is used on a suspect.
5. Officers will advise their shift supervisor when they are involved in a use of force. When possible, officers who are involved in a reportable use of force will remain on-scene until the supervisor arrives.
6. Officers are required to photograph injuries to include the impact point of TASER probes.
7. Before transferring custody of a subject that force was used upon, officers shall verbally notify the receiving agency of any force used, injuries sustained and any medical aid or EMS rendered.

V. ON-DUTY SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The supervisor will respond to the location of the employee when a reportable use of force occurs.
- B. After meeting with the employee, the supervisor will go to the subject's location to complete the investigation. The supervisor's investigation will include:
 1. Debrief the employee(s) who engaged in the use of force.
 2. Document any reported injury (actual or alleged) to any individual involved.
 3. Ensure any on-scene evidence is preserved and collected and ensure photographs are taken to include any alleged injuries, all involved persons, and the physical scene.

4. If the TASER is deployed, the supervisor will download the TASER's information and is responsible for uploading it to the officer's Use of Force/Pursuit Report for the committee review.
5. Locate and review any evidence related to the force incident (digital media devices, private cameras, security video, etc.)
6. Locate and identify witnesses to the use of force incident to include other officers and obtain statements from these individuals.
7. Contact the employee's chain of command if the force used appears to be unreasonable or appears to constitute possible misconduct.
8. Ensure that the incident is accurately and appropriately reported. Barring any unforeseen emergency, preliminary and Use of Force/Pursuit Report will be completed by the end of the officer's shift. (CALEA 1.3.7)
9. Make the initial entry for the use of force during the current shift and then review all reports and supplements related to the use of force incident.

VI. POST-REPORTING AND COMMITTEE REVIEW

- C. All officers who are involved in a reportable use of force shall document only the details of the use of force or pursuit in Blue Team. The officer will document what led up to and actions after the use of force/pursuit in the appropriate preliminary or supplemental report. (CALEA 1.3.6c) (CALEA 1.3.7) Officers will complete the UOF/Pursuit entry by the end of their shift. Supervisors may make an exception in unforeseen emergency, such as an officer's serious injury.
- D. Reported involvements include:
 1. discharging a firearm, for other than training or recreational purposes (CALEA 1.3.6a)
 2. taking an action that results in or is alleged to have resulted in injury or death of another person (1.3.6b)
 3. hard hand techniques (1.3.6d)
 4. the force applied through lethal or less lethal weapons (1.3.6c)
 5. A show of force, to include:
 - pointing of a firearm (pistol, rifle or shotgun)
 - less lethal ammunition and weapons
 - activation when pointing or arcing a Taser
 - canine (A canine handler issues a release of the canine warning or other command prior to the release/deployment of a canine for a building search, track, or bite apprehension. A suspect complies with the handler's canine release warning and/or commands prior to the canine being released/deployed. A canine release/deployment does not occur)
- E. If multiple officers are involved in one incident, each officer shall complete the appropriate preliminary or supplemental and a Use of Force/Pursuit entry.

- F. In cases where officers are assaulted or are the victim of a crime while working in an official capacity the involved employee's supervisor will complete the preliminary report for the officer. The supervisor will collect any evidence related to the alleged offense. The supervisor may assign personnel as needed to assist in the investigation.
- G. The supervisor will upload the Use of Force/Pursuit report, other supporting documents, and digital media to the appropriate folder on the shared drive for the Use of Force/Pursuit Review Board to review the incident.
- H. The committee chair will review the submitted reports on a regular basis and will schedule meetings as needed to review the incidents promptly. (CALEA 1.3.7)
- I. The Committee Chair will provide to the appropriate captain a copy of the committee's written findings, and the captain will review to ensure no additional action is needed.
- J. Cases that are determined to require further investigation will be reviewed by the Chief of Police, who will decide whether or not to assign an Internal Affairs investigator.
- K. If an officer is not in compliance with policy, the committee may recommend some form of remedial training for that officer. The employee's captain will coordinate with the Training Section. After the training is complete, the Training Section will complete a Remedial Training form and upload it to Blue Team.
- L. The Burlington Police Department shall report all use of force incidents that meet the appropriate submission criteria to the Federal Bureau of Investigation National Use of Force Data Collection. Submission to the National Use of Force Data Collection will be made by the Records Supervisor who shall maintain access to the FBI Law Enforcement Enterprise Portal (LEEP). The submission will be requested by the Administrative Lieutenant who will also be responsible for compiling the necessary data. Any incident meeting any of the following submission criteria shall be submitted:
 1. When a fatality to a person occurs connected to a use of force by a law enforcement officer
 2. When there is serious bodily injury to a person connected to a use of force by a law enforcement officer
 3. In the absence of either death or serious bodily injury, when a firearm is discharged by law enforcement at or in the direction of a person

VII. Administrative Leave and Post-Incident Debriefing

- M. In certain circumstances, employees will be placed will be placed on administrative leave and suspend from active duty, pending an administrative review. These circumstances will include: (CALEA 1.3.8)
 1. Officer involved shootings
 2. Fatal motor vehicle collisions
 3. Any other actions in an official capacity that result in the death or serious physical injury of a person
 4. Actions involving excessive force

- N. The department will provide post-incident debriefing or counseling for those employees involved, as needed, as well as the employee's family if assistance is requested. (Refer to BPD 08-07 Benefits policy) (CALEA 1.3.8)

VIII. Use of Force Prohibitions

Officers shall not apply direct pressure to the throat, windpipe, or airway of a person with the intent to reduce or prevent the intake of air (choke hold). Choke holds are prohibited unless deadly force is authorized. (CALEA 4.1.7)

IX. Non-reportable Use of Force

Use of control holds or joint manipulation techniques, often used to control or escort detainees, in a manner that does not cause injury. Moderate pain compliance is expected and authorized under the circumstances.

X. Response to Resistance

The Committee Chair will complete an annual documented analysis of the response to resistance. The analysis will include policy review, data collection, equipment and training needs, or identifying trends/patterns and will be submitted to the Chief of Police. (CALEA 1.3.13)



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