



Recruiting and Retaining Kentucky's Local Police Department Workforce

Interim Joint Committee on Local Government
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WHY RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION MATTER TO CITIES

- Public safety is a core city service
- Police protection is one of the largest services cities provide
- Staffing shortages affect response capacity, overtime costs, and service delivery
- Every vacancy places additional demands on remaining officers and city resources



RECRUITING A POLICE OFFICER: A SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENT

KENTUCKY OFFICERS MUST COMPLETE:



- ✓ Background Investigation
- ✓ Physical and Medical Screening
- ✓ Polygraph
- ✓ 800-hour Basic Training Academy
- ✓ Annual In-Service Training

The estimated cost of salary and benefits while an officer completes basic training is

\$30,025

(excluding travel and equipment)

Source: 2024 KLC Wage and Salary Survey

KENTUCKY'S MUNICIPAL POLICE WORKFORCE



NUMBER OF CITY POLICE DEPARTMENTS:

233



NUMBER OF CITY POLICE OFFICERS:

4,760 certified officers



AVERAGE MUNICIPAL POLICE DEPARTMENT (excluding Lexington):

16 sworn officers



DECLINE IN CITY POLICE OFFICERS:

Since 2021, the average number of sworn municipal officers has decreased **8%**



VACANCIES IN KENTUCKY'S TWO LARGEST DEPARTMENTS:

- ▶ **Louisville:** 200–250 vacancies
- ▶ **Lexington:** 100+ vacancies

Sources: Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training, 2024 Comprehensive Survey, and the Kentucky Law Enforcement Council.

KENTUCKY'S MUNICIPAL POLICE PIPELINE

EXPERIENCE BREAKDOWN

Based on responses from 104 Kentucky city police departments

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE



Source: Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training, 2024 Comprehensive Survey

STAFFING CHALLENGES FACING CITIES



RECRUITMENT



LIMITED APPLICANT POOL

Fewer individuals pursuing law enforcement careers



COMPETITION FOR TALENT

Cities compete with neighboring state and federal agencies



LENGTHY HIRING PROCESS

Extensive screening and training requirements



PUBLIC PERCEPTION CHALLENGES

Recruiting qualified applicants into a demanding profession



RETENTION



COMPETITION FOR EXPERIENCED OFFICERS

Agencies recruiting from the same workforce



STAFFING PRESSURES

Vacancies increase workloads on remaining officers



WORKLOAD DEMANDS

High workloads and the nature of the job



CAREER MOBILITY

Officers move between agencies throughout their careers

HOW ARE CITIES RESPONDING?

Cities continue investing in recruitment and retention through:



Competitive compensation

Offering competitive salaries and benefits to attract and retain quality officers.



Flexible scheduling options

Providing scheduling flexibility to support work-life balance and improve job satisfaction.



Wellness initiatives

Investing in physical and mental wellness programs to support officer health and resilience.



Professional development opportunities

Supporting career growth through training, education, and advancement opportunities.



Community outreach and recruitment efforts

Building relationships and engaging communities to attract the next generation of officers.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS THAT HAVE HELPED

SB 206
(2016)

**RETIRED OFFICER
REHIRE**

Allowed cities to rehire retired police officers.

SB 209
(2022)

**ENHANCED HEALTH
BENEFITS FOR
WORKING RETIREES**

Allowed hazardous and nonhazardous duty retirees who choose to work beyond retirement to earn enhanced health benefits.

HB 380
(2023)

**EXPANDED
RECRUITMENT
PIPELINE**

Allowed individuals to be hired by a law enforcement agency at age 20 and attend the police academy before turning 21.

SB 10
(2025)

**ENHANCED RETIREE
HEALTH BENEFITS**

Strengthened health insurance support for eligible CERS retirees.

SB 237
(2025)

**RECIPROCITY
IMPROVEMENTS**

Expanded pathways for experienced out-of-state officers.

HB 213
(2026)

**HEALTH INSURANCE
FLEXIBILITY**

Allowed cities to provide health insurance in lieu of retirement benefits.



THANK YOU!

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