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# THE POST DISPATCH

THE LATEST NEWS AND UPDATES FROM  
COLORADO POST

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

## Choose Your Hires Wisely

Who we choose to bring into our agencies can be one of the most important decisions an administrator can make. This single decision can have a profound impact on the agency for years into the future. A positive peer leader can help create positive morale and develop a synergy with their coworkers that can drastically improve performance and overall attitude. A negative peer leader, however, can tank morale, create dysfunction, and result in such a miserable work environment that it drives the positive peace officers away. And this impact, from a single hire, can last anywhere from a few months to a few decades. Choose wisely.



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Who we hire also affects our relationship with our community and can either build, or destroy, trust. Therefore it is so important that we properly vet all of our peace officer applicants, but our vetting also needs to make sense. Historically, our profession has looked for reasons to exclude someone from a hiring process.



But is this the best method to find excellent peace officers? Or does finding a reason to opt candidates in make more sense in finding well rounded peace officers with life experience who can relate to the community members they will interact with on a daily basis? Depending on the specifics, or course, does one area of concern or need for improvement override nine areas of strengths? Or should that one area define the entire person?

Some of our vetting processes, though, have been dictated to us by statute. Starting in 2016, each hiring agency has been required by § 24-33.5-115, CRS, to review the personnel files, including any IA files, from every law enforcement agency the applicant has worked for previously. And since January 1, 2022, § 24-31-305(5), CRS, has required hiring agencies to check the public

facing POST Peace Officer Database to see if the candidate has any “actions” reported on the database. And, if there is an “action” on the Peace Officer Database, the hiring agency must file a Form 15 (available on our website) with POST if they decide to move forward with the hiring. Both of these statutory requirements are designed to ensure hiring agencies are making informed decision regarding who they bring into their agencies to serve their communities. Neither statute dictates who can be hired. That is solely at the discretion of the agency executive. Who do you want to impact your agency, your culture, your community for the next few decades? Some of the ways peace officers get in trouble are mistakes that can be corrected and learned from, often resulting in better, more competent, peace officers in the long run. Others are moral or ethical failings that destroy the trust and faith of the community, and which really are not recoverable.

It is absolutely vital for the integrity of our profession that our law enforcement leaders make good, informed decisions on who they bring into their organizations. As we all know, one tragedy resulting from misconduct anywhere in the nation, much less within our state, unfairly paints us all. Lastly, we have received some valuable feedback regarding the Peace Officer Database, which we are evaluating to see if there is a better way for us to manage this statutory requirement. We try to maintain a mindset of continuous improvement at POST and this type of feedback is exceedingly helpful for us. Also, **I'd like to remind those currently on the database that they may present new evidence to POST via the Rule 7 variance process in order to be removed from the database.** This would include those that believe they are on the database for non-misconduct related reasons. Take care and be safe.



***Need to request a variance? Learn more about the process on the POST website.***

## In Response to Tyre Nichols Tragedy

The assault and killing of Tyre Nichols in Memphis has shocked us and outraged us. The video is difficult to watch and heartbreaking. And we know that these actions do not reflect the high standards of policing and justice we set for ourselves in Colorado. In fact, when I talk with cadets and officers about their “why” for serving—it is to protect and defend the vulnerable. This tragedy is the opposite of that call to service.

The killing of Tyre Nichols is not just a tragedy, but beyond the pale and unjustifiable. It also is a call to action. For those of us committed to improving policing, we can do our part by:

- **Working to avoid unnecessary escalations;**
- **Increase greater emotional awareness of officers;**
- **Empower officer bystanders to do something in the face of a potential tragedy.**

In Colorado, we are working hard to advance a culture of continuous improvement and creating better systems and practices to avoid unnecessary escalations of the use of force. That will both improve public safety and help ensure that we are building—rather than undermining—community trust in law enforcement.

There are many elements to this work, including ensuring that incident review teams honestly ask, “how could we have done better?” It also means celebrating and sharing best practices and improvements that represent effective policing at its best. Finally, and my focus of this letter, it also involves committing to critical training that better prepares officers for challenges in the field. At POST, we now have three training offerings designed to complement one another and to do just that.

The first training program is **Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT)**, developed by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF). ICAT is the only scientifically validated de-escalation system in the United States and is designed for peace officer encounters that do not involve an armed community member. ICAT trains officers on proven methods and tactics to help de-escalate encounters with community members, including with those who are experiencing mental health crises.

Over the last year, POST staff has been traveling across the state teaching this day and a half long course to peace officers, receiving very positive reviews. POST also has offered scholarships for an ICAT Train the Trainer course. Since this course was so popular, POST paid for a second Train the Trainer course in Colorado providing it cost free for agencies!

**If your agency would like to host an ICAT training, please contact Training Manager Bob Baker at [robert.baker@coag.gov](mailto:robert.baker@coag.gov)**

The second training is **Ethical Decision Making Under Stress (EDMUS)**. Decades of study has shown numerous physiological impacts of experiencing survival stress. These impacts include distortions in perception and other cognitive abilities which results in poorer decision making and outcomes. We know that these impacts are acute for peace officers who often experience and witness trauma. To develop tools for managing emotions under stress and increasing emotional awareness, POST has worked with a vendor to create EDMUS—a two-day course, with an optional third day for those wanting to become instructors. EDMUS will be free to all students. The design philosophy of EDMUS is to provide our peace officers with the skills and tools necessary to recognize the onset of extreme stress and to prevent entering a state of survival stress. This training will allow peace officers to focus on the actual events that are occurring, avoid perception distortions, and clearly think about how to use other skills (such as ICAT) to gain voluntary compliance from community members.

The third, and final, new training opportunity is **Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE)**. The Attorney General's Office and POST has partnered with the Denver Police Department and Georgetown Law to create ABLE Colorado.



The intent of ABLE is provide a process that serves as a safety net to help peace officers avoid a career-ending mistake. ABLE provides our peace officers with the skills they need to effectively, and in a nonconfrontational manner as possible, intervene with their fellow peace officers, including with their supervisors. These interventions may occur before or during a physical encounter in the field, with a coworker struggling with addiction, or with a shift mate who may be considering self-harm. ABLE fills an essential space in our peace officer training. At POST, we will continue to operate with a mindset of continuous improvement, learning from needs in the field and looking to bring best practices to Colorado. In that spirit, I would encourage all of our law enforcement agencies, and all of our peace officers, to take a close look at and consider adopting all three of these complementary programs. Please reach out to POST Director Bo Bourgerie with any questions on how you can get involved.

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Serving as a peace officer is an honorable calling and a noble form of public service. To best support your work, we at POST recognize that we have an obligation to operate with a culture of continuous improvement. The development and offering of these impactful trainings are a direct result of that culture. As you participate in these trainings and have suggestions or feedback on how we can better support you in your important work, both Bo and I would welcome the opportunity to hear from you.



## Hard at Work

In December, Compliance proctored 17 POST exams across the state, certifying 415 new officers. The team approved 14 provisional and two renewal applications, 22 spring 2023 academies, and processed two academy renewals. They coordinated two appeal hearings, both of which were granted appeals by the POST Board subcommittee. Compliance also helped subject matter experts from the Law Enforcement Driving Committee and the Arrest Control Tactics Committee amend the Skills Proficiency Manual for Test Outs.

## Rule 17 Season

Agencies are **required** by POST Rule 17 to submit forms through Benchmark between November 1st and January 31st, verifying compliance.

*As of February 14, 2023 POST is at approximately*



*compliance.*

Last year POST tried to educate about the purpose of the Rule, and as always, we want to work with our partners to gain voluntary compliance. But please **remember that fines or other administrative sanctions can be issued in cases of noncompliance**. Feel free to contact POST with any questions or concerns.



## Farewell to Compliance Investigator Steve Eckelberry

During his nearly three years at POST, Steve served a variety of roles and provided the team and the unit with great problem-solving skills, amazing knowledge of tech, and true devotion to law enforcement. He is moving onto another state agency in an investigator role, and will truly be missed. Meanwhile, Compliance will be shifting roles and responsibilities, so please be patient as they fill the gaps.



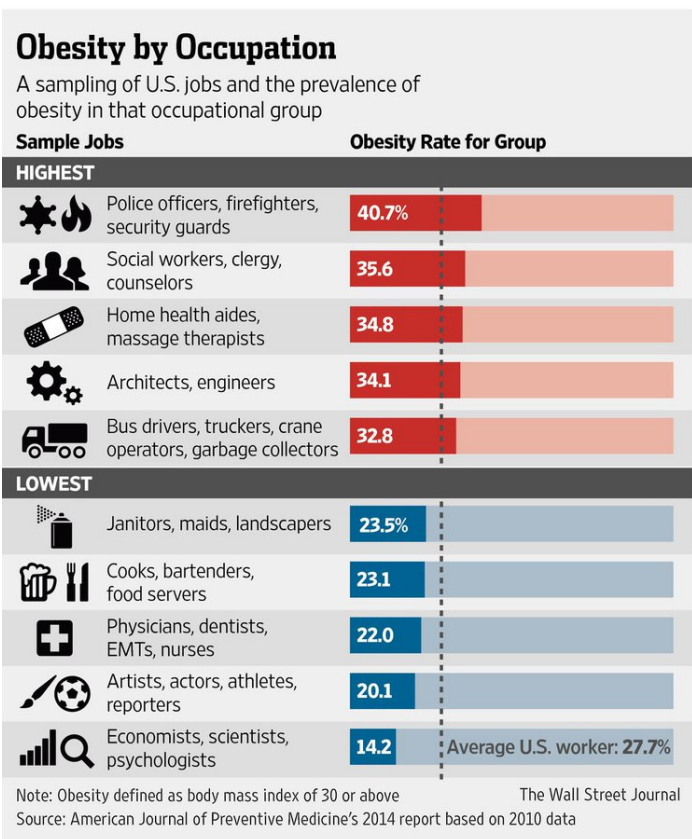
### BECOME AN SME MEMBER

Subject Matter Expert Committees always look for law enforcement professionals who can contribute their expertise. Find out what it takes [here](#).

## Changing Nutrition & Physical Routine Can Improve Officer Wellness

In [November issue of the POST Dispatch](#) we talked about sleep disorders among law enforcement, and what it can do to officers' health. Though it's not a surprise that nutrition and physical routine are equally as important, the data shown in a [2014 Wall Street Journal analysis](#) is shocking:

**40.7% of all police officers, firefighters & security guards are obese.**



"After the academy, like many law enforcement officers I lost my fitness routine and became unhealthy," shares

Jarrett Morris. In his article "[One Cop's Fitness and Nutrition Principles](#)" Jarrett talks in detail about how he took control of his health, despite the challenges of the profession.

Small but subtle changes can have profound impacts on officers' mental and physical health, including cognitive decision making, work ethic, and their life as a whole. Read Jarrett's article linked above to help you get started.

POST NEW HIRES

## Training Specialist Nicola Erb

**Nicola:** For 32 years I proudly served as a law enforcement officer, investigator, trainer, and leader. During my career I had the opportunity to work for many organizational structures, including university policing, large municipal policing, mountain resort policing and a district attorney's office; all of which have a distinct focus on community-based service. In 2012, I completed doctoral studies in Human and Organizational Development on the topic of Drug Endangered Children and the impact to the Criminal Justice System. I was part of numerous drug task forces and provided state and national training on a variety of drug-related issues, most notably the National Jewish Health Methamphetamine Exposure Studies, where I was an epidemiologist on the studies. Serving as an Interim and Assistant Chief, I developed a deep commitment to training and education for law enforcement.

I am passionate about creating the opportunities for Colorado officers and organizations to become knowledgeable, ethical and simply the best at what they do. One of my goals had always been to work for Colorado Peace Officers Standards and Training, and I am very grateful to be on the team.

In my spare time, I enjoy hiking and exploring with my dog, Carlos, at our home in Sayulita, Mexico and going out on the boat in Lake Havasu in Arizona!



## GRANTS

# Grant Applications for FY2024 Open Soon

Senate Bill 03-103 created a POST Board cash fund to support continuous education and training of Colorado peace officers, particularly small and rural agencies. Approximately \$3 million dollars is awarded through this program annually.

FY2024 (July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024)

**application process will be open March 1 through March 31, 2023** for the

following funding opportunities:

**Regional Grant Program** supplements law enforcement agency training budgets. Ten (10) training regions have been established throughout the state that are responsible for applying for funds on behalf of the law enforcement agencies within their geographical location.

**Who is eligible?** A local government, college, university, or not-for-profit entity for the purpose of funding peace officer training programs to law enforcement agencies throughout the state.

**In-Service Grant Program** helps agency budgets due to In-Service training requirements.

**Who is eligible?** Law enforcement agencies.

Both Regional and In-Service Grant funds are available to acquire training, conduct training and attend training for Colorado peace officers, who are currently employed by a law enforcement agency. Examples of allowable costs: tuition, lodging, travel, instructor fees, class supplies, backfill, and overtime. Training equipment is also an allowable expense.





**Capital Improvement Grant Program** is designed to improve law enforcement training facilities in Colorado.

**Who is eligible?** Law enforcement agencies as well as the POST training regions. Projects benefitting region wide training initiatives will be prioritized.

**Rural & Small Agency Academy Scholarship Grant Program** provides scholarships to law enforcement agencies in rural and smaller jurisdictions with limited resources. Funding is to assist with the payment of **tuition costs only** for peace officer candidates to attend an approved basic law enforcement training academy. POST will reimburse the law enforcement agency once the academy attendee has successfully completed the academy. The academy attendee must sign a contract with POST requiring that they work in a small and rural jurisdiction for three years.

**Who is eligible?** Rural and small law enforcement agencies.

## HOW TO APPLY?

If you are interested in any of the grant programs and would like to learn more about the application process, please visit [Available Grants & Due Dates](#) page on the POST website.

Please note that grant awards are not provided to individuals.

### OTHER UPDATES & HELPFUL RESOURCES

## Office of Justice Programs on Stalking

In 2019, about 1.3% of Americans ages 16 and older (3.4 million people) were victims of stalking, according to a report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics. A crime in all 50 states and at the federal level, stalking is dangerous and potentially lethal. Learn how to identify whether you became a victim, and what to do if you are at the [Office of Justice Programs](#) website.

### POST BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

## December 2 Session

The POST Board held its last meeting of 2022 on December 2. Three members: Chief Debra Funston, Sheriff Robert Jackson and Sheriff Tony Spurlock departed the Board, while Monte Vista Chief Dingfelder was elected as Vice Chair. As usual, Chairs of SME Committees presented their reports, the Board had six variance requests, group revocations and rule making.

Training Specialist Jared Torsney introduced a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives course. It was approved by the Board and started to be taught in January 2023.



**FOR NEWSLETTER  
INQUIRIES**

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