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# THE POST DISPATCH

THE LATEST NEWS AND UPDATES FROM  
COLORADO POST

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

## “Dammit, Jim! I’m a cop, not a babysitter” or Why You Should Care About Drug, AKA Problem-Solving, Courts

Not long after I became Detention Division Commander at the Sheriff’s Office I once worked for, my Sheriff asked me to be the law enforcement representative on our county’s newly developing Drug Court. I was not enthused. While I believed in treating everyone I encountered respectfully, I didn’t believe in programs that coddled offenders. Especially addicts.

See, **I had grown up surrounded by addiction.** Alcohol. Drugs. One of the crazier stories growing up was about my dad, a senior noncommissioned officer in the military, trying to avoid the ending of his career by reporting my sister’s overdose at our on-base housing. **Instead of calling for an ambulance, he walked her around the block, forcing her to drink coffee, in order to keep her alive.**

When I was between 8 and 9, I knew how to roll joints and create makeshift marijuana pipes. I was sneaking beer from my sisters’ friends. And since they wouldn’t let me



smoke marijuana, I started huffing gas out of my mini-bike to get high. My dad’s suicide put me on a different path, one that intensely hated drug use in all forms. In high school, I clearly saw that **the victims of addiction are the children and family of the addicts.** Opening the fridge at another sister’s house, who had small children, I saw only ketchup, mustard, and beer. Things routinely disappeared from our house when some of my sisters came over, including an entire ham one Thanksgiving. And we weren’t even that upset over it; at least we knew their kids were going to be able to eat. **To say I was very skeptical of Drug Courts would be an understatement.** I truly thought that the solution was to keep addicts in custody to get them clean and sober. This would give them a chance to get their life back on track, and if they used,

committed offenses or victimized our citizens again, that was on the offender. Keep them in custody longer next time! Then I learned more about these types of problem-solving courts, which can apply to Mental Health Courts, DUI Courts, Veterans Treatment Courts and such. Adult Drug Courts have been studied since the first Drug Court was founded in 1989. A 2022 *Adult Drug Courts Brief* by the National Drug Court Resource Center cites a meta-analysis, which showed **Adult Treatment Courts had a 38% recidivism rate, compared to the control recidivism rate of 50%.** Problem-solving courts make a significant difference in reducing criminogenic thinking by offenders, pairing treatment with intensive supervision and frequent oversight by the Court. Each percentage point reduction in recidivism represents fewer future victims and improved quality of life by the offender and their family, especially their children. **Eventually, these programs started to resonate with me because they were exactly what I wanted for my family: to be treated with respect, be held accountable, and to get the help they needed** to overcome their addiction and live a normal, productive life. And I am ecstatic to say that most of my sisters are now well on their path to recovery! Problem-solving courts differ that **they use a team approach to achieve the best outcomes.** These teams normally consist of a judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, probation, treatment provider and law enforcement. Law enforcement members are an important component of

this collaboration and they help shape the overall decision-making process. According to the [Office of National Drug Control Policy archives](#), Adult Drug Court teams that include a law enforcement professional see higher graduation rates (57% vs 46%), because officers provide a unique perspective, improved referrals and connections to the community.

*If our goal as law enforcement is to increase safety, hold offenders accountable, reduce future victims and improve the quality of life for our communities, then problem-solving courts are worth every second of our time invested.*



Problem-solving courts across Colorado are struggling to find law enforcement members to join their teams. I know the difficulty of dedicating resources to yet another series of meetings, especially in light of staffing shortages. The truth is, dedicating law enforcement resources to problem-solving courts is a wise investment against future crime and victimization. I'd encourage each of you to contact your local problem-solving court to see how you can assist. If you are a law enforcement leader, I would strongly recommend dedicating resources to these very valuable and useful efforts.

*To get involved, please contact me at [erik.bourgerie@coag.gov](mailto:erik.bourgerie@coag.gov) or Statewide Problem-Solving Court Unit Manager [Desiree Hermocillo](mailto:desiree.hermocillo@judicial.state.co.us) at [desiree.hermocillo@judicial.state.co.us](mailto:desiree.hermocillo@judicial.state.co.us).*

## Addressing Domestic Violence Here and Now

October was Domestic Violence Awareness month. At the Department of Law, we house the Colorado Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, which every year is responsible for identifying all of the individuals who died because of an act or acts of domestic violence. We rely heavily on our law enforcement partners to help us identify these senseless events. The [Colorado Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board Annual Report](#) acknowledges these tragic incidents and identifies ways to try to prevent such tragedies in the future.

Across the state, **Coloradans lost mothers, fathers, children, grandparents, and fellow community members.** In the report, the family and friends of victims shared pictures and quotes that celebrate the impact those people had. **It is important that we center on these voices and stories, as we work together to prevent domestic violence.** And we can each do our part to enable their memories to live on as a blessing.

As we consider the realities of the tragic cases we report on, I am proud that our office has worked hard to combat domestic violence. We have given, for example, over **\$3 million in funding to organizations across the state** who provide resources to support anyone impacted by domestic violence. In addition, we **issued a grant to TESSA**, a community-based organization in Colorado Springs, to establish a local

domestic violence fatality review board there, which will **support better learning** about domestic violence fatalities. We are glad that TESSA is partnering closely with both the Colorado Springs Police Department and the El Paso County Sheriff's Office.

We are also working to address domestic violence in other ways. Over the last few years, we have worked to train law enforcement officers to ensure that they use a risk-assessment tool on each domestic violence call. **The Lethality Assessment Program (LAP)** uses a scientifically validated screening tool that predicts the likelihood of serious bodily injury or death. We are contracting with University of Colorado Police Department Lieutenant Mark Deaton to **raise awareness amongst law enforcement agencies of this life-saving tool** and to offer training on its implementation throughout the state. If you have not yet received our free LAP training, reach out to [POST Director Erik Bourgerie](#).

Gun violence prevention is another big effort that ensures perpetrators of domestic violence do not have access to firearms and that organizations across the state are well-trained and prepared to support the survivors. Currently, **POST is finalizing a training on Domestic Violence Strangulation**, one in a series of trainings for peace officers related to domestic violence.





Our Consumer Engagement and Data Services and Constituent Services teams have made great progress in this space, identifying domestic violence resources in all 64 counties in Colorado so that when constituents call, our office can connect them to reliable tools. **There is more work to be done to address and prevent domestic violence, and I appreciate everything your agencies do to respond to domestic violence in the community.**

Finally, I acknowledge the many members of our office who work on the heavy task of preparing the annual report and who contribute meaningfully to many of our domestic violence initiatives, including my counsel Shalyn Kettering and our Deputy Attorney General Janet Drake, who is going to be the next President of Colorado Organization for Victim Assistance (COVA).



**If you or anyone you know is experiencing domestic violence, there is help!** For immediate support and crisis situations, dial 911 or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE (7233). For a comprehensive list of resources available throughout Colorado, please visit [Violence Free Colorado](https://www.violencefreecolorado.org).

## OTHER UPDATES & HELPFUL RESOURCES

### Year-End Reflections

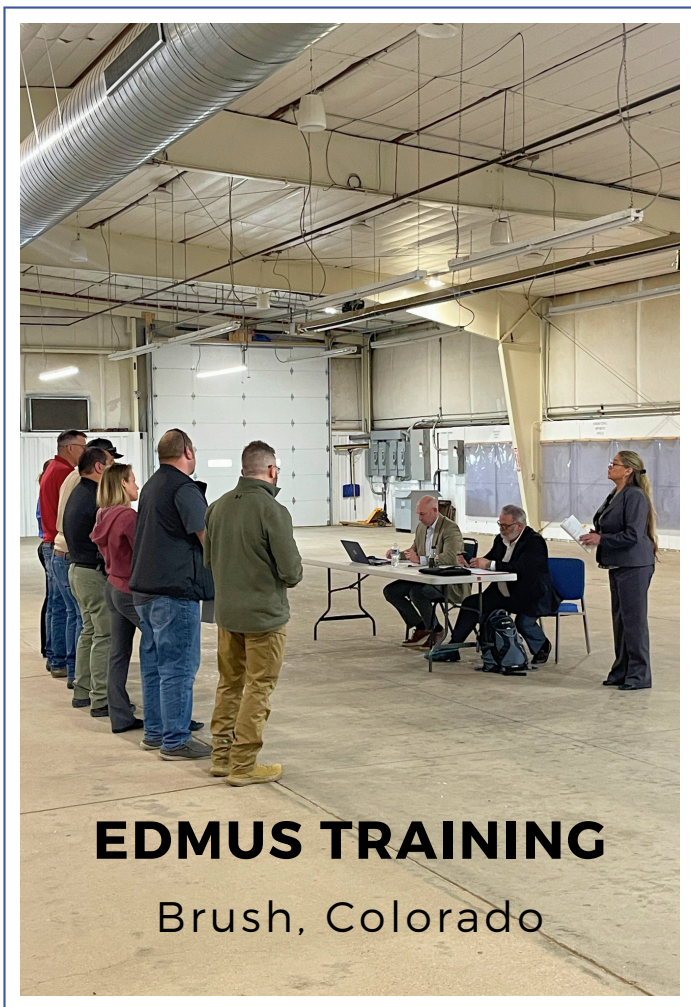
*If you talk to academy cadets or even seasoned officers, many don't realize that certification is only a portion of what POST is about. Sometimes we can't wrap our own heads around everything we do! Here's a recap of main efforts in 2024 from each program area (yes, there are three of them at POST).*



**Compliance:** This year was challenging to say the least! Most notably, 2024 saw the promotion of a new Compliance Manager and the addition of two new Compliance Specialists. Our team welcomed its new members while still keeping up with frequent inspections, new academy classes and POST exam sessions. The Compliance unit worked on **changes to POST Rule, including a new anti-hazing training and policy requirements for all academies, additional training requirement for academy firearms instructors and major changes to the Basic Academy ACT program.** The North Metro Police Academy received final program approval – it was a heavy lift for the staff and volunteer SMEs, but the academy is all set to begin operating! As we are moving into 2025, the team is planning ahead: there is another proposed academy seeking approval, academy redesign project progressing at full speed, and, of course, more POST exams and a lot of new recruits graduating the academies, which is very exciting for us!



**Training:** The Training unit traveled the state quite a bit this year, teaching Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) and Ethical Decision Making Under Stress (EDMUS). These are **fantastic courses that give officers more tools to help with their job demands and keep them safe.** POST continues to fund SFST, ARIDE and SFST Instructor courses throughout Colorado. Be sure to keep an eye on the [POST calendar](#), so you can plan for trainings ahead of time!



Our team was also tasked with creating a **Juvenile Interrogation webinar.** Training Coordinators did a great job developing and presenting it to more than seven hundred officers throughout the state. This training is available as an online course now, and can

be accessed on [Benchmark](#). **Investigating Crimes Against At-Risk Adults is another new online course** that was added to Benchmark. Check them both out!

**Grants:** This year, POST awarded around **\$2.3 million in grant funds to support law enforcement training.** Our team has been busy processing reimbursement requests, closing out FY24 and starting on FY25. Other accomplishments include a **revised quarterly reporting process for the regional grantees, getting three new fiscal agents on board and providing technical support to different training regions across the state.** The Grants unit also participated in community outreach events: helped organize an Open House in Delta County and hosted booths at the Longs Peak Scottish Irish Festival and at the COVA conference in beautiful Keystone (the below photo is taken there). COVA is one of our regional grantees and a valued partner in streamlining victim services across different fields.



There were many great resources at the conference, and POST looks forward to the next event!



## MORE COVA photos

We are thrilled to share that **POST will have a conference of its own in 2025**, and the Grants team is largely involved in planning for it. One of the goals is to educate POST's stakeholders about our mission, procedures and best practices. If you have interest in particular topics or ideas on speakers, please drop us a line at [post@coag.gov](mailto:post@coag.gov). More details to follow!

## Academy Redesign and Collaboration Opportunity

*On different occasions, in the POST Dispatch and meetings, Director Bourgerie and Attorney General Weiser have shared information about the Academy Redesign project and the reasons behind why we are taking on this important task. As the new Academy Curriculum Developer, Gwen Burke goes over what has been done, what we are currently doing and how YOU can partner with POST to improve Academy training throughout the state.*

**Gwen:** Over the years, POST has heard the calls for more consistent and robust training that better prepares recruits for day one on the job and for an increased use of active

or experiential learning to better teach the knowledge, mindsets, motivations and skills necessary to be an effective peace officer. In response, POST is taking on this project to **modernize the Academy curriculum**. The redesigned curriculum will **emphasize not only the traditional hard skills**, such as driving, firearms, and arrest control, but will **also focus on character development, critical decision-making, officer resilience and hardiness, and better responsiveness to the communities we serve**. We are utilizing proven instructional methodologies and evidence-based adult learning theory to ensure the new curriculum will create better and more consistently-prepared academy graduates.

The redesigned curriculum will be offered for **free to all LETAs** and will **standardize what is taught throughout the state**. LETAs are allowed—and welcome—to develop additions to build on top of the base curriculum to address specific needs of their communities. LETAs can also submit requests for variances to replace components of the base curriculum. Once approved, that component can become part of the larger base curriculum, thus providing a mechanism for ongoing improvement in the academy curriculum.

The current academy model uses time-based blocks of instruction that can be taught in any order, and often only requires topic areas to be covered once throughout the curriculum. The redesigned curriculum will be more integrated so that **each concept will build from previous lessons and will thread increasingly**



**advanced aspects of those same concepts throughout the curriculum.**

The redesigned curriculum will also be structured around active learning methodologies including **an emphasis on scenario-based training** in order to better realistically expose students to the types of calls they will receive in the field.

This is an **ambitious project** that will take **several years to complete** and will **require the input and feedback of our law enforcement community** from across the state. We are grateful for the POST Board members, community leaders, agency leadership and others who have offered their time to support the project thus far. We are committed to continue collaborating with those in the field and in our local communities **to ensure that we are meeting the expectations of our citizens and our profession.**

For the next steps, we will be **forming Curriculum Development Teams (CDTs) to help develop the new curriculum components.** We invite LETA staff and instructors, law enforcement practitioners at all levels and community members to **fill out this interest form**, noting their subject matter area expertise. You can also scan the QR code below to reach the interest form page on your phone. We hope each of you will consider joining this effort and sharing your insights and perspectives.

*If you have any questions regarding the Academy Redesign project, please reach out to Director Erik “Bo” Bourgerie at [erik.bourgerie@coag.gov](mailto:erik.bourgerie@coag.gov) or Academy Curriculum Developer Gwen Burke at [gwen.burke@coag.gov](mailto:gwen.burke@coag.gov). We look forward to collaborating with you!*



POST Curriculum Development Team Interest Form







# Baby, It's Cold Outside! Things POSTies Enjoy as the Seasons Change

Summer days are over, but it doesn't mean the fun is! Not feeling it and the blues are getting to you already? See what POSTies have to say about that.

**Ron Ryan:** The fall weather signals the return to sleeping with the window open, comfort food, cool-weather camping and the relabeling of all products to "Pumpkin Spice."



**Chris Cooper:** My "cool days" activities include knitting, walking my dogs Gracie & Olive and playing with my grandson Arthur!



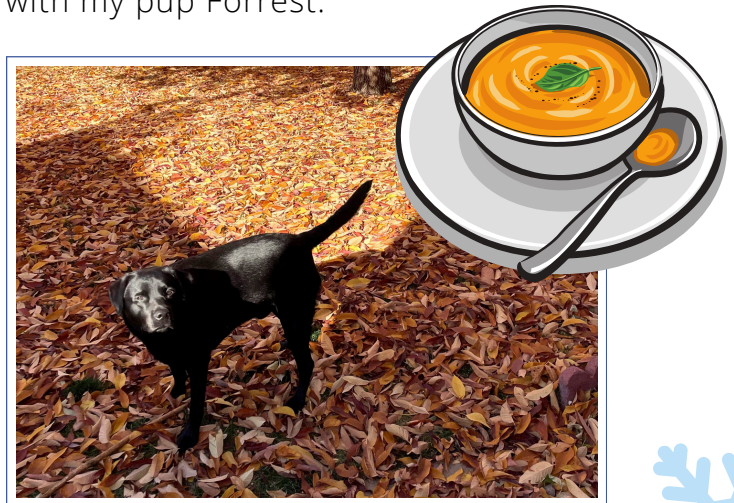
**Lisa McCammon:** I enjoy second summer the best. The change in seasons: warm days and cool nights, the smell of fall and the changing leaves! Going to the mountains, seeing the beauty. Taking it all in: sights, smells and feels!



**Gwen Burke:** I adore the cold and feel more alive and happier when the weather changes. I enjoy sitting on my porch with my dog, drinking something warm, wrapped in blankets and either reading or writing.



**Megan Serena:** I love trying out new soup and chili recipes, and playing in the leaves with my pup Forrest.



**Mary Vekasy:** You'll definitely find me outside once winter arrives. Whether it's hitting the slopes on a snowboard or jumping on a lake for a little pond hockey - winter days are best spent outdoors. Followed up by evenings by a fire, of course!



**Dan Ostrander:** During the cool winter days, by far my favorite thing is anything hockey. I love to skate, I love to go skate with my daughter, I love going to Avs games or watching them on TV!





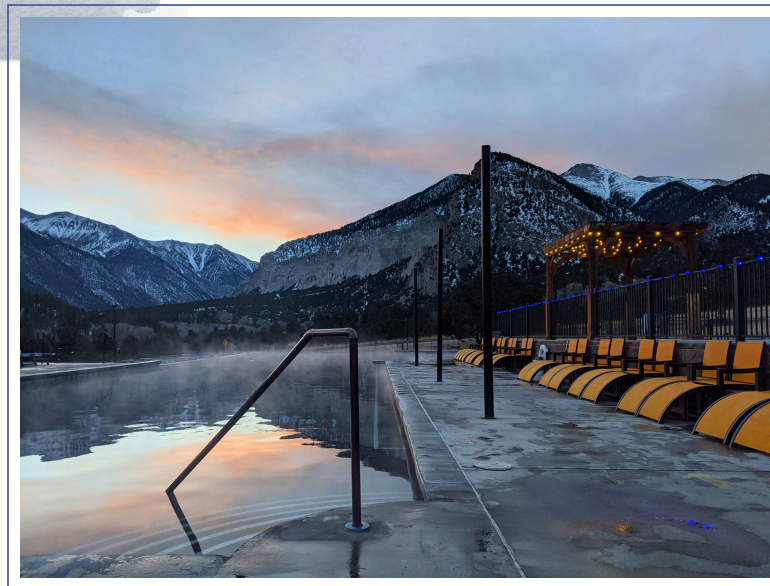
**Kishawn Leuthauser:** Our family tradition is to go tubing at the Adventure Park in Frisco!



**Mario Noriega:** When the snow falls, I love to stay inside with my puppy Eevee, watch studio Ghibli films (*Howl's Moving Castle*, *Ponyo*, *My Neighbor Totoro*) and drink hot cocoa.

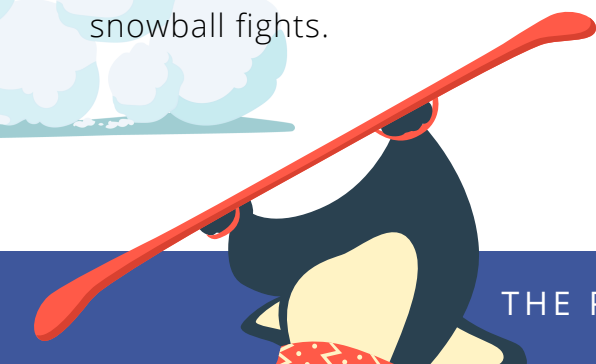


**Victoria Edstedt:** As soon as the first snowflakes are in the air, I am getting ready to hit the hot springs! I like to try new places whenever I can, but Strawberry Park Hot Springs in Steamboat is my favorite so far. The photo on the right is of the infinity pool at the Mount Princeton Hot Springs, which is a wonderful spot for relaxation too!



**Kim Hernandez:** I enjoy going on hikes with the hubby when the weather is nice, cross stitching/crocheting while binge-watching TV and spending time with the family, especially my grandson TJ. He brings me so much joy!

**Janelle Rasmussen:** I love to snowboard and get to the mountain as much as possible! On those really snowy days, our family enjoys making a fire and getting cozy after a lot of snowball fights.





**Eric Sipes:** My favorite part of winter is when it's over. *Editor's Note:* this guy has clearly gotten the blues and needs to reference the above list. We'll be sure to check on him at the next all-staff gathering.

POST BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

## September 12 & 13 Sessions

### A shout-out to the Pueblo County

**Sheriff's Office** for hosting our annual off-site Work Session and Board Meeting!

During the Work Session, Gwen Burke gave an update on the Academy redesign project. Director Bourgerie submitted **a suspension matrix to the Board for adoption.** The purpose of this matrix is to provide guidance to the Director in cases that require suspension of POST certification.

The Board referred the matrix back to staff for improvement. In addition, Director Bourgerie and Sheriff Hume presented five **Sunrise Review recommendations.** Grant Manager Kim Hernandez announced plans for organizing a POST Conference in 2025. Director Bourgerie and Deputy Director Ryan went over the **LETA graduate survey** that will assist in the academy redesign, tracking the tenure of officers and identifying the trends. Deputy Director Ryan also introduced an **Analysis of Decertifications and Relinquishments**

PowerPoint that intern Andre Martinez worked on during his time at POST. Training Manager Bob Baker recapped his unit's current projects and tasks.

The following day Attorney General Weiser opened the Board meeting and wished farewell to departing Board member, Chief Terrence Gordon, and to three SME members. He **welcomed three new members to the Board:** Jessica Shouse, Sheriff Aaron Shiplett and Sheriff Justin Perry. Reports were given by each of the four SME committee chairs for Arrest Control, Curriculum, Driving, and Firearms. The Board heard two requests for appeals and voted on five felony, one misdemeanor and three untruthfulness decertifications.

There was also one voluntary relinquishment and one administrative hearing officer decision resulting in revocation. **Changes to ten rules were approved unanimously,** and all five Sunshine Review applications were approved unanimously as well. There were two appeals hearing findings presented with one approved and one denied. Final comments included an update on the **heroic actions of a CSP officer** who was ambushed in a highway shooting. We were relieved to learn that he is recovering very well from this incident.

Detailed minutes will be available on the [POST website](#). Stay safe & Happy Holidays!



**FOR NEWSLETTER INQUIRIES**

Contact

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