Recruiting & Retaining Public Safety Employees

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Hello everyone!

As I sit here on Thursday, March 12, 2020, writing a message that will appear in the April HR News, I wonder what the status of the COVID-19 outbreak will be when you read this. I hope, as I’m sure everyone did a few weeks ago, that the crisis has passed. At the very least, I want reported cases of infection by the novel coronavirus to be on the downswing. We shall see.

For today, I am proud of IPMA-HR members’ response. I watch the conversations and sharing of information on social media and Engage (engage.ipma-hr.org). I see that the Utah Chapter is offering a webinar. Regular conference calls are being conducted, and the Association created a frequently updated coronavirus resources webpage (see below).

I am proud to be part of a group whose members support each other and reach out in what feels like one of our worst of times. THANK YOU!!

Now, let me update you on some IPMA-HR goings on. I’ll organize information by my goals as 2020 president.

**Continuity of the 3 Ps**

Past-President Christine Major, President-Elect Pam Dollard and I are working together with past-presidents Mary Rowe and Jackie Wehmeyer to ensure a smooth transition when the new executive director takes over from the retiring Neil Reichenberg this spring. We received 48 applications and are in the process of interviewing candidates. While I cannot name an exact date, we plan to make an offer by the beginning of April. Watch Engage and check the May HR News for a hiring announcement and an introduction to the next executive director.

**Updating and Operationalizing the HR20/20 Report**

A fully revised HR20/20 Report: The IPMA-HR Guide to Transformative HR became available for free download in mid-February. As part of the rollout, IPMA-HR past-president Mila Cosgrove and Lucinda Kenning conducted a webinar. You will find links to that session, the updated report and other resources for implementing the guidance at on.ipma-hr.org/hr2020.

**Communication and Connection**

There are so many ways for us to communicate and stay connected. I plan to share regular messages like this one in HR News and to use the Engage platform to stay in touch. Conferences and meetings are also great opportunities to provide updates, as are the weekly HR Bulletin e-newsletter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

In addition to what I’ve already mentioned, there is a new Executive Leadership Program. It was piloted last fall, finalized and offered in full for the first time in March in Houston.

Finally, please join us in Baltimore for our 2020 Annual Conference that starts on September 13! —

Cheryl Cepelak, IPMA-SCP  
ccplk@comcast.net

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**Thanking Public Safety Personnel, Now More Than Ever**

The COVID-19 outbreak is straining public safety in ways not seen since the flu pandemic of 1918. From staff and providers at public hospitals and nursing homes to police officers, firefighters, EMTs and corrections personnel, the demands for service in the face of uncertainty have been immense. IPMA-HR salutes your professionalism and dedication.

While Association staff cannot do much other than heed the evolving advice of experts, we have compiled a list of coronavirus response resources for all who work in the public sector. Visit www.ipma-hr.org/coronavirus to find relevant guidelines and policies. —
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What’s Working to Recruit Police Officers and Sheriff’s Deputies

By Ed Lamb

At the start of 2020, the Detroit Police Department launched a push to hire 400 new officers. To meet that goal, the DPD allocated $500,000 for TV and online advertising. The city also committed to raising starting pay to $42,000 per year when next year’s budget goes into effect on July 1.

Successful law enforcement personnel hiring efforts in Akron, Ohio, and Muscogee County, Ga., suggest that Detroit has made a good start. But only a start.

Take a Team Approach

Stacey Doty, IPMA-SCP, the employment and selection manager for the City of Akron, explained that the city started working on bringing in at least 40 new police offices by 2020 in November 2018. At that time, representatives from the city’s Human Resources Department, police department, fire department and safety communications division held the first of several meetings. Within three months, the group created a comprehensive Safety Forces Strategic Recruitment Plan and formulated 10 hiring goals, as listed in the sidebar.

Implementing the plan resulted in 45 hires for the police department. The recruits must still complete academy training, but Doty noted that Akron feels it is in a good position to meet the challenges raised by a wave of expected retirements.

Rethink Standards for Applicants

Akron may have heard from so many hirable candidates because it modified its screening practices with the intention of increasing the pool of potential applicants. For instance, the city raised the maximum age for police recruits to 40 and changed the fitness requirements for qualifying to enter the police academy to those used by state-sanctioned peace officer training academies.

In Muscogee County, Lt. Kasey Trombley has no doubt that relaxing appearance and grooming standards for deputy applicants boosted recruitment. The county sheriff’s office now accepts applications from individuals with neatly trimmed facial hair, inoffensive arm tattoos and past drug use. Decisions are still made on a case-by-case basis.

As an example of this, Trombley, who works in human resources and pretrial release for the sheriff’s office headquartered in Columbus, Ga., recalled a female applicant who “had taken a bite of a marijuana brownie at a party about 6 months prior to applying.” While “this technically should have disqualified her,” Trombley noted, “she was honest about it on her application and her truth verification test, which made us rethink our automatic disqualifiers.”

Akron’s Goals for Hiring Police and Fire Personnel

1. Attract and hire the best and brightest applicants who can successfully perform the duties and responsibilities of the position while fulfilling our stated goals.
2. Reduce the difference between the percentage of minorities and females in the available workforce and the percentage of minorities and females in the safety forces.
3. Increase the number of qualified minorities and female applicants for police officer and firefighter/medic positions.
4. Expand employee engagement in the safety forces to present a positive image, represent the jobs as positive and rewarding, and recruit by word of mouth.
5. Implement new technologies in recruitment to market our positions to millennials and underrepresented groups.
6. Increase transparency of the hiring and selection process.
7. Educate the citizens, applicants and elected officials about the background screening requirements so that young people can make positive life choices in preparation for a career in the safety forces.
8. Promote the City of Akron as an employer of choice through ongoing marketing, education and recruitment.
9. Create new partnerships with nonprofit organizations, schools and universities to assist in preparing local residents for employment opportunities in the safety forces.
10. Decrease the no-show rate for each portion of the selection process.
Trombley pointed in particular to the recruiting benefits of going along with the rest of society in accepting beards and goatees. “I don’t have statistics for it,” Trombley wrote in an email, “but I currently have 11 openings and a neighboring agency (that pays more) has 100-plus openings. The applicants will almost always cite the facial hair, tattoo policy or our work in the community as the reason they chose to apply with us.”

Get Creative

Akron and Muscogee County greatly expanded the ways in which they advertised open law enforcement positions. Some of the innovations were actually returns to traditional practices. Others brought recruiting well into the 21st century.

Eight static billboards and five digital ones guaranteed that the Akron PD could deliver its call for applicants 24/7 in targeted communities. To further ensure the message literally hit home, city personnel and council members received T-shirts, Pop Sockets, palm cards, brochures, pencils, water bottles, pens, cups, bracelets and flyers emblazoned with Akron PD contact information.

The police department also worked with HR and a media firm to produce and post a series of YouTube videos that touched on topics ranging from how police personnel have helped the community to tips for getting through the selection process and what current officers consider the hardest things about their jobs.

Doty recommended checking out the bloopers reel at on.ipma-hr.org/r8t. “Showing that police are real people” is important, she said.

So is making extensive use of social media. To reach millennials, Doty said, “We focused heavily on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and are working on text messaging and using services like Nixle to communicate with people who are interested in policing.”

Trombley likewise emphasized that using social media is key to recruiting younger deputies. The soft sell appears to be the best approach.

“Have social media pages that demonstrate community involvement,” Trombley advised. “Millennials want to see that they can be a part of something. They want to know that they are needed. They may not research who the chief of police is for that agency, but they will look to see what is being posted on the agency’s Facebook page and if it looks like an enjoyable place to work.”

Trombley suggested that smaller agencies may benefit from pitching themselves as offering steppingstones to greater career opportunities in law enforcement. This could work by having a recruiter discuss former officers or deputies who moved on to the state bureau or FBI.

Focus on Diversity

Akron took several steps to meet its goals for building a police force that reflects and engages with the community.

Doty explained that the city’s HR director took a lead role on this by meeting with “members of the faith community, leadership from the Urban League and the local leaders from the NAACP to discuss ways they could assist us in the recruitment process.” She also noted that recruiters visited local malls, college campuses, libraries, YMCAs, area churches and job fairs.

A very localized innovation was participating in a Nepali-language podcast. Thousands of recent immigrants from Nepal and Bhutan live in and around Akron.

The outreach efforts paid off in record numbers of applications from women and nonwhites.

“Our recruitment numbers over the previous 15 years were not as diverse as we wanted them to be,” said Doty. “We would like to continue to focus on increasing percentages of minority and women candidates in order to ensure the diversity of the Akron Police Division is in line with the demographics of the City of Akron.”

When geographic diversity is a goal—or a necessity due to local workforce limitations—Trombley recommended “streamlining the process so that the applicant only has to come to your area a max of two times (preferably once) during the hiring process.”

Once a candidate arrives for an in-person interview, Trombley suggested giving them a tour of the community.

“Encourage the applicant to bring along their significant other, mom, dad, etc. with them to visit,” Trombley said. “Have an FOP auxiliary member take them to lunch at a local favorite, show them the city. Show them the local schools. Make them feel welcome in your city. If you can get a significant person in their life to feel good about your agency, you will get those that are on the fence.”

—N
The lack of diversity and inclusion in the fire service is not headline news. For as long as fire departments have existed in this country, they have been staffed almost exclusively by white men. This remains true even as communities grow increasingly diverse.

In 2018, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) estimated that 370,000 career firefighters served in the United States. These full-time uniformed firefighters made up one-third of the firefighting workforce, and just 4 percent of them were female. Among the male career firefighters, 82 percent were white.

Why Diversity Matters for the Fire Service

In a December 2018 Harvard Business Review article titled “Making U.S. Fire Departments More Diverse and Inclusive,” UCLA management professor Corrine Bendersky observed, “To succeed as a firefighter, stereotypically masculine traits like brawn and courage are simply not enough. Firefighters also need the intellectual, social, and emotional skills required to deliver medical emergency aid, support each other through traumatic experiences, and engage intimately with the communities they serve.”

Confirming this analysis, NFPA data shows that currently, fewer than 4 percent of calls to fire departments are related to fires.

The overwhelming majority of calls (64 percent) are for medical assistance.

Quite simply, the role of the fire service has changed since Boston established the first publicly funded fire department in the United States in 1679. Leaders recognize this. When asked about diversity, the number-one response of most fire service and community leaders is that emergency service personnel should reflect the communities they serve in terms of race, gender, beliefs and ethnicities. Having people who look like you show up to calls for emergency assistance fosters trust, which brings members of a community closer together.

While participating in a roundtable on improving fire department diversity that was convened by the publication Fire Rescue 1, Duck, N.C., Fire Chief Donna Black confirmed that “the best way to gain the trust of your community is to reflect your community.” Achieving that makes a department more attuned and responsive to the community and its needs.

Spokane Fire Department Chief Brian Schaeff er agreed and pointed to the benefits of diversity for the fire service by building stronger teams. He said, “We also believe that a workforce made up of people with different beliefs, backgrounds, experiences,
genders/non-genders and ethnic heritages all contributes to improving the overall culture of our organization.”

Seeing people who share one’s background and beliefs can also increase interest in a fire service career.

What Needs to Change

According to those striving to do so, creating fire departments that are reflective of their communities starts with having an honest, sometimes difficult, conversation about why diversity is important and what is keeping a department from achieving it. Does an “old-school” mentality and firehouse culture exclude women and minorities? Is there a lack of interest in fire service careers among members of the community? Do announcement of job openings and opportunities to participate in junior cadet programs simply never reach targeted groups? Getting to the heart of the issue is step one.

Bendersky further recommended “reframing the firefighter prototype.”

“In my research on reducing gender bias and my work conducting training on general diversity and inclusion with fire departments,” she wrote, “I find that, when evaluating fit and competence, firefighters tend to default to a reductive set of traits (physical strength evaluated through strict fitness tests, for example) that serve to maintain white men’s dominance in the fire service.”

Bendersky also noted that “when you hold all department members accountable to excellence along the full spectrum of traits associated with being a successful firefighter, you help firefighters that don’t fit the straight, white, male archetype and create more equal opportunities and inclusion.”

How Departments Are Achieving Diversity and Inclusion

Mentoring has been a valuable tool for the Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD) and the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD). In the mid-1990s, the Stentorians of Los Angeles City created a process to mentor black firefighters through the promotion process. This seemed a natural move for the group that was formed by black employees of the LAFD in 1954 “to combat the racism and blatant bigotry that prevented African Americans from joining and advancing in the fire service.”

LAFD assistant chief and former Stentorians president Kwame Cooper has praised the mentoring program as “one reason why there is relatively equal representation of blacks throughout ranks of the LAFD.”

Fire departments in both the city and county have also partnered with the group Los Angeles Women in the Fire Service to host events that educate, prepare and support qualified female firefighter candidates. “Qualified” in this instance means the candidates passed the written and physical tests for entry-level firefighters.

“We have our current women firefighters showing these interested women what the job is really like, and what they need to do to succeed,” LACoFD Captain Brent Burton told Bendersky for her article.

Across the country in Ohio, efforts to increase diversity in the Toledo Fire & Rescue Department raised the number of minorities and women enrolled in the fire academy from single digits to 30 percent. “People need to see a department that reflects the community it serves,” Chief Brian Byrd told the Toledo Blade on March 3, 2020.

Engaging community leaders from area schools, churches, businesses, local organizations and neighborhoods was key. “The onus is on us to make sure we recruit a capable workforce across all demographics,” said Byrd. “If we do that correctly, by default the department should reflect the community.”

Jenny Donovan is a former police officer and current freelance writer living in Maine. Her articles for HR News focus on issues facing public safety professionals. You can reach Donovan by email at jenny@writeondcmv.com.
Finding Solutions to Staffing Challenges at the Connecticut Department of Correction

By Donna Pantin-Worrell

Like many law enforcement and correctional agencies across the United States, the Connecticut Department of Correction (CTDOC) faces many challenges in recruiting and retaining qualified custody, treatment and support staff. We tackle each challenge from multiple angles.

Recruiting at Job Fairs, Via Social Media

Recruiting qualified applicants is just the first barrier that the department has to overcome, as we are forced to compete with other law enforcement agencies, the federal government and other employers throughout the public sector. As a result, we devote limitless time and focus to recruiting the most-qualified candidates. Recruitment strategies that have proven successful in connecting with an ever-changing and diverse workforce include, but are not limited to, distributing flyers in the community and utilizing social media like Facebook and Twitter.

Another example of such efforts is hosting and participating in career fairs throughout the Northeast. Taking part in local career fairs allows CTDOC recruiters and personnel to showcase the myriad exciting opportunities within the department.

All recruitment efforts are thoroughly planned and executed to deliver firsthand knowledge to potential candidates of current openings, growth potential, compensation, benefits and retirement incentives. In preparation for any recruitment activities, dedicated CTDOC staff take proactive steps to ensure that the agency recruits candidates from small towns, larger cities and rural and urban areas across Connecticut and its neighboring states.

Since many potential candidates cite wages as a recruitment incentive when considering employment with the CTDOC, the department works collaboratively with bargaining units to negotiate fair and equitable compensation and benefits. Doing this also helps overcome a barrier to retaining employees.

Removing Roadblocks to Applying and Hiring

The CTDOC takes great pride in ensuring that the application and hiring process is completely transparent and runs as smoothly as possible for every candidate. First and foremost, the department actively ensures that all applicants are thoroughly educated on the specific tasks that each position requires. Our efforts include providing candidates with written and visual instructions for completing the application and physical ability test.

The CTDOC also invites emails and phone calls from potential candidates. This ensures they have direct access to recruitment and custody staff who can answer questions and address their concerns throughout the recruitment, hiring and onboarding process.

The face-to-face interview is strength-based, with applicants being presented with general questions and scenarios aimed at gauging their strengths in specific areas of corrections work. Most candidates successfully complete this segment of the process despite possessing little or no previous corrections experience. Still, they are made to understand that additional training will be provided at our academy.
Each candidate is also required to consent to and pass complete criminal history and employment background checks. Unfortunately, this stage of the process proves to be the most challenging for many applicants.

**Losing Qualified Candidates Is Inevitable**

After the recruitment process is completed and the best candidates are identified, we extend job offers. Each initial offer is contingent upon the candidate passing a medical exam and drug screening. Some candidates are eliminated at this stage. Additionally, the sheer length of the process from application to offer leads a small percentage of candidates to decline employment with the CTDOC because they found opportunities elsewhere.

Another small number of conditional hires resigns before graduating from our training academy. Some people leave after a single visit to the facility, saying that one day was enough to convince them that corrections is not the right line of work for them.

Other aspects of the job that force people to have a change of heart include working off shifts, being mandated to work up to 16 hours due to staff shortages and having to work weekends and holidays so they must miss important milestones and events with their families and friends. The hazardous nature of the job of a corrections officer also causes hesitation, as staff may witness traumatic events such as assaults or be assaulted themselves.

**Ensuring Employee Well-Being Is Essential for Retention**

Retaining hires who decide to make a career in corrections can be daunting. Here, the department must be deliberate and intentional in ensuring staff members’ safety and well-being. It is no secret that those who work in law enforcement, including corrections, have a high suicide rate, low life expectancy and high rates of cardiovascular disease, depression, stress and other conditions. These realities compel us to answer the question of what the department can do to ensure that our workforce is cared for.

We are becoming more vigilant in recognizing the factors that contribute to low staff morale, high absentee rates, increased assaults and inmate-on-inmate fights. We are also committing to maintaining adequate staffing levels to eliminate mandatory overtime. Wellness programs that offer staff opportunities to unwind and decompress are being developed.

Last, after a long career in corrections, employees look forward to an excellent retirement package that benefits all instead of some and not others. From start to end, then, good employee relations begins with letting the workforce know that everyone is valued and appreciated.

Donna Pantin-Worrell is principal HR specialist for the Connecticut Department of Correction. HR generalist Deb Sass and Lt. Ewan Hayles contributed to the article. — N
How do you keep “the only all-volunteer rescue squad system among this nation’s 200 most-populous cities” fully staffed?

The City of Virginia Beach answers this question daily. And, full disclosure, as one of the city’s 450,000-plus residents for two-thirds of my life and a thankful recipient of Department of Emergency Medical Services, um, services, I am glad that VBEMS discovered the formula for attracting, training, developing and retaining highly skilled volunteers.

Who Volunteers

The precursor to VBEMS incorporated in 1952 and became recognized as the city’s advanced life support provider in 1972. As stated on its website, “The mission of the Department of Emergency Medical Services is to deliver valued services to the community that preserve life, improve health, and promote the safety of citizens and visitors, who live, learn, work and play in our community while maintaining a sustainable systems approach that is focused on dynamic resource utilization to enhance the overall quality of life in Virginia Beach.”

Currently, VBEMS is organized into 10 volunteer rescue squads staffed by more than 800 volunteers who are overseen and supported by 56 paid city employees. Anyone who submits an application and meets the criteria listed in the accompanying sidebar can join, and every outreach effort includes the assurance, “No prior training or experience is required.”

VBEMS Outreach Coordinator Derek G. Fuller told HR News, “We do not target a specific specialties or backgrounds, as we have people from all walk of life in our organization. People that want to volunteer or serve their community find a way.”

Minimum Requirements for VBEMS Volunteers

- Older than 18
- High school graduate, G.E.D. recipient or higher education
- Valid driver’s license
- Good driving record
- Pass criminal background check (with fingerprinting)
- Clear medical screening

That does not mean everyone can staff an ambulance, become a member of a specialty team or provide help behind the scenes. Going on calls and treating patients requires meeting National Registry standards for EMT’s or paramedics.

Above that, VBEMS requires completion of more than four months of college-level classes and a mandatory field internship even for people who arrive with EMT certifications. Upon obtaining the proper credentials and demonstrating sufficient skill, volunteers can sign up for specialty teams assigned to do patient care, marine rescue, search and rescue, SWAT support, disaster preparedness and other tasks that go beyond standard EMT or paramedic work.

Across the city, VBEMS averages 125 calls per day. Patients are charged nothing for services. Funding for operations comes from city taxes and outside grants. The value of volunteers’ service is estimated at $8 million annually.
How Volunteers Are Recruited

VBEMS did not formally recruit volunteers until 1988. That year, ads appeared in the Virginia Beach insert to the regional newspaper and donated billboards went up around the city.

Now, Fuller noted, “There are several avenues that are used to get the word out. Commonly, word of mouth is a great tool due to the number of volunteers that we have in our system. But the Virginia Beach Rescue Squad Foundation is also great at sending a consistent message about the Volunteer Rescue Squads. They utilize social media, radio advertisements and different recruiting events.”

The events referenced include sending recruiters and active volunteers to employers and civic meetings. VBEMS also holds special events like EMS Day for high schoolers and “Touch a Truck,” at which attendees can learn about volunteer opportunities while getting up close to ambulances and other rescue vehicles.

Fuller coordinates the high school event for two reasons. “Students must learn CPR in order to graduate,” he said. “Having that program, we are also able to demystify what it is EMS truly is all about. We are able to provide a better breakdown of who we are, the services that we provide and the different programs that you can be involved in as a member of EMS.”

Ride-alongs are available for prospective volunteers, as are grants for training so finances do not need to be a barrier to volunteering or earning a paramedic certification. Participation at all levels is encouraged because, Fuller stressed, “The skills that you learn in EMS are lifelong skills.”

He added, “The rescue squad is successful because it is a community effort.” —

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Communication and strategy are key to holistically improving the wellbeing of any public sector organization. Whether a town, a metropolitan city or a K-12 school, each organization faces unique challenges.

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Numerous recently published audits, reports and news headlines reveal the struggles state and local governments encounter while trying to hire and retain public safety dispatchers. Excessive overtime, low morale and high turnover also came into sharp relief.

In April 2019, the Portland Press Herald reported vacancies ranging from 13 percent to 24 percent at three regional communications centers that handle emergency calls in Maine. That same month, in Newport News, Va., local television station WTKR noted that the city’s dispatch center staff had declined from 57 people to 35.

Then, in California, audits and reports released in 2019 chronicled the lack of sufficient staff to effectively deploy police, fire, and emergency medical personnel in Berkeley, San Jose, Fresno County and Nevada County.

These problems are not new, but they have been accelerating. Finding, hiring, training and keeping call takers and dispatchers are proving particularly tough.

In some municipalities and regions, these jobs are combined; in others, call takers exclusively communicate with people requesting assistance and dispatchers handle radio communications with police, firefighters and emergency medical personnel. However the tasks are assigned, the role of the public safety dispatcher is emotionally draining and mentally demanding. The unpredictable schedule and relatively low pay given the requirements of the job do not help.

“In a strong economy, people have more opportunities to go into different fields that don’t have the difficult hours and the stress,” said April Heinze, the 911 and PSAP operations director for the National Emergency Number Association. At NENA, Heinze closely tracks workforce issues and policy, operations and education challenges at public safety answering points, as dispatch centers are commonly called.

Improving the Recruitment and Screening Process

Staffing the nation’s more than 6,000 emergency communication centers has become more challenging as the increasing diversity of phone systems and complex technologies have made possessing advanced technical skills a basic job qualification.

Attracting applicants is only the beginning of the challenge. Karen Sutherland, the manager of the police dispatch center for Scottsdale, Ariz., noted that a dispatcher must have many skills and jump through several hoops in order to be hired. According to Sutherland, a dispatcher must be able to type, listen to a caller, accurately capture information and read maps. They must pass a written test in order to qualify for selection from eligible candidates, go through a panel interview, undergo a rigorous background check, and take a polygraph test, a preemployment drug test, a physical and a psychological evaluation.

An illustration of how this typical process hamstrings centers comes from Columbus, Ohio, where call taker and dispatcher are separate positions. Late last summer, a call went out to fill three open dispatch positions. The city received 754 applications, but only 23 candidates qualified to take the candidate test. Eight candidates did not show up for the test, and two failed the typing skills portion. Of the 13 applicants who were approved for consideration, fewer than five completed the complex background forms.

Elizabeth Reed, Columbus’s Civil Service Commission executive assistant director, told us that this dispatcher hiring experience was a wakeup call that the minimum qualifications needed to be broadened. Instead of requiring previous emergency dispatch experience, the city opened the job to individuals with other administrative experience in law enforcement or corrections, as well as to individuals with any kind of previous dispatch experience—for example, working in logistics for a trucking company.
The city also developed a plan to conduct in-person information sessions to help candidates learn more about the job and the selection process and to receive instructions on properly filling out an application. A similar approach was taken previously for police and firefighter positions, but it had not been tried for hiring dispatchers.

When Columbus advertised for open dispatcher positions again at the start of 2020, the city ran a more aggressive recruiting campaign. Close to a thousand people attended one of three open sessions, and a total of 1,473 applications were received.

For applicants who met minimum qualifications, the city opened its test center for three days prior to the exam so candidates could become familiar with the test and practice typing. That last consideration could prove especially beneficial since one qualification for the job is the ability to perform 3,500 keystrokes per hour.

Some 500 applicants qualified to take the exam, and 51 took advantage of the opportunities to practice the typing test at the test center or via a web link that allowed candidates to practice at home. Data on how the actual testing went is not yet available, but it is abundantly clear that Columbus’s dispatcher desert has grown somewhat moister.

**Paying More to Compete for Talent**

Human resources professionals are striving to reduce the time it takes to hire and to reduce turnover. Raising salaries is seen as a way to better compete with private sector and other public sector jobs that pay more and are less emotionally draining.

In Utah, six state government-run emergency communication centers currently start new hires at $15 an hour. This makes it tough to compete with the 31 separate PSAPs in the state.

“We’re all in competition for people,” said Utah Highway Patrol Capt. Travis Trotta. “We’re trying to go after that same qualify of person, and we’re in competition with every one of those PSAPs.”

He is hoping that the legislature will approve a hike to $18 an hour when it passes the 2021 budget. That salary hike was also requested for 2020 but not approved. This term, no decision has yet been made.

**Clarifying Job Expectations**

Training a newly hired public safety dispatcher can take nine months to a year and cost $50,000. When a new employee quits during that period, the investment is lost and the hiring and training process starts all over.

Part of the problem stems from the fact that when new employees expect something different from a job than what they get, they do not stick around.

That can create a vicious cycle in which high turnover produces vacancies that necessitate mandatory overtime, burnout, high rates of absenteeism and more turnover.

The national 911.gov program is encouraging PSAPs and emergency communication centers to change their job descriptions for dispatchers and call takers in order to give potential applicants a better understanding of what the job will be like. Model job descriptions were posted on 911.gov in March 2020.

**Preventing Burnout and Curbing Turnover**

Dealing with the stress and emotional impact of the job becomes even more difficult for overworked dispatchers who are too busy to take advantage of wellness or counseling services. According to the audit of the Berkeley, Calif., Police Department Communications Center, resources to deal with stress are available, but “dispatchers often do not have time to access them.”

Still, said NENA’s Heinze, providing employee assistance programs that make short-term counseling, confidential assessments and follow-up services available to emotionally-drained employees must be a focus for HR professionals. Offering low-cost gym memberships, wellness programs and peer support programs are also critical, she said.

Unpleasant physical working environments add to the problem. Consider this description of the Nevada County, Calif., dispatch center, which is quoted from a 2018-2019 grand jury report: The center, housed in the Wayne Brown Correctional Facility, is a “windowless dispatch room [that] is 516 square feet and has stations for four operators. There is only one restroom and no kitchen or break room. The Dispatch Center is crowded and uninviting.”

Elizabeth Linos runs the People Lab at the University of California, Berkeley, where she has been working on ways to improve dispatcher job satisfaction and cut back on turnover. A behavioral economist, Linos recently reported on an experiment conducted across nine cities that was run by the Behavioral Insights Team in collaboration with What Works Cities.

The cities were chosen based on the difficulties they were having with absenteeism and turnover among dispatchers. Over a six-week period, experienced dispatchers received weekly emails featuring stories of challenges met and encouraging recipients to give advice to rookies by sharing stories of their own experiences. A new story was featured in each email.

The “behavioral nudges” was designed to solidify dispatchers’ sense of their own community, reduce feelings of isolation, increase a sense of communal identity and foster mutual respect. Compared to a control group, participants in the email experiment reported less burnout. The participants’ centers also saw half as much turnover four months later.

Linos is quick to acknowledge that these results need further confirmation, and she is continuing similar projects. She does believe, however, that dispatchers fall into a group of government employees who feel undervalued and who have not received the level of respect or support that they need in their jobs.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24
The Purpose of Active Listening

By Andrew Rahaman, Ed.D.

In an age when automation and computers have made work easier and more efficient, we often assume that technology will solve our business problems by enabling us to communicate more effectively and efficiently. That assumption is false.

In the early 1990s, the Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) identified good listening as one of the essential skills for succeeding in the workforce. Executives at leading tech companies like Microsoft, Dell and Oracle agree. Commissioned by the U.S. Department of Labor, SCANS’ landmark report said having the ability to listen carefully allows people at all types of organizations to effectively resolve problems with coworkers and customers. Further, listening well to suggestions and input makes it easier to promptly address needs, improve processes and innovate in the delivery of products and services. This is true even when the interactions occur over Teams, WhatsApp or Skype.

Explaining Active Listening

Active listening differs from critical listening in that the listener concentrates on ensuring that the other person knows they are being heard and understood. Instead of evaluating the message of the other person with the goal of offering one’s own opinion, an active listener evinces desires to comprehend, offer support, express empathy and, perhaps, solve their own problems.

Stephen Covey, the author of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, has argued that while “empathic” listening is essential to communicating effectively, actively listening is one of the hardest skills for individuals and organizations to master. Covey joins others in stating that the only way to establish communication in some professional and personal situations is by becoming, in small part, the person who is speaking or typing. He describes that process as “sensing” the information being communicated.

Covey claims that standing for a moment in another’s shoes and seeing the world through their eyes is something everyone can do, but rarely does. Still, the reward is a whole new level of communication and problem-solving because the listener acquires the ability to see a situation simultaneously from multiple points of view.

One of Covey’s best-known principles is “Seek first to understand. Then to be understood.” He cautions, however, “Most people listen with the intent to reply, not to understand.” And once people think they know what the other person wants to say, they stop listening and are no longer dealing with reality.

As a result, their prescriptions are doomed to be off target.

Relationships Grow One Conversation at a Time

Active listening has many benefits. First, it demonstrates that the listener is paying attention to the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of the other person. This is crucial to building productive relationships. Active listening also allows the listener to understand the point of view of another person and respond with empathy. It earns trust, establishes rapport and facilitates understanding. Making the effort to see the world through the eyes of someone else enables the listener to ask the types of questions needed to ensure understanding.

Last, active listening validates the speaker and makes them want to speak longer. In light of all this, it is not hard to see how practicing active listening benefits relationships.

Engaging in active listening is particularly important while addressing customer complaints. As Don Carl advises, “When dealing with disgruntled people, try to understand their perspective and respect their position, even if you disagree. Simply listen for content and avoid arguing.”

Regularly grade yourself after interactions to gauge how well you actively listened and note ways you could have listened better.

– Kellie Fowler
Active Listening Must Be Learned

Covey said it takes time to listen empathically and, also, that it takes practice to become adept at doing so. Echoing this, Judi Brownell, a former president of the International Listening Association and the author of several books on active listening, observed that “the listener may struggle at first because so many of us have spent years focusing on getting our own messages across rather than on fully understanding someone else.”

Active listening requires concentration and focus. For the most part, it is a learned behavior that does not come naturally. Without focusing intently on what the other person says, some important information may be missed or misunderstood.

The box above contains tips for how to focus. Points to emphasize are:

- Encourage people to continue speaking. Nod, or say things like “Right” or “Is that so?”
- Observe the speaker’s body language. Look and listen for underlying emotions while focusing on the speaker’s main points.
- Restate what the speaker said in your own words.
- Don’t interrupt. Let the speaker finish talking. “The worst thing is to anticipate what you think a customer is going to say. You could wind up giving the ranch away, or making them mad,” Carl said.
- Let the speaker know when you don’t understand something. While you should not interrupt, it is not wrong to ask questions. Sometimes, it’s best to write down your question and get clarification after the speaker is done talking. Avoid frustrating the speaker.
- Ask open-ended questions, which can elicit the kind of information you want to know and need to address the issues.

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Nominate a Candidate for 2022 IPMA-HR President

To stand for election as 2021 president-elect and serve as president in 2022, a person must

- Be a current individual member or covered staff member of an IPMA-HR agency member and have maintained membership for no less than three (3) years,
- Have demonstrated a commitment to the Association through service at any level, and
- Be willing to contribute actively of time and talents to the objectives of the Association.

Nomination will be accepted at on.ipma-hr.org/112 until May 8, 2020. Additional information on how to make a nomination, as well as an email for asking specific questions, is provided on the website. —

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Basic Techniques For Active Listening

Don Carl of the Success Academy and the jewelry industry “bible” Jewelers Circular Keystone offer these tips.

- Eliminate distractions. “Most people do not completely listen, but rather are thinking ahead of time about what to say next or even daydreaming,” said Carl of the Success Academy.
- Pay attention.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Practice good body language. Face the speaker and refrain from doing things like fiddling with paper clips, making hand gestures and looking around.
- Encourage people to continue speaking. Nod, or say things like “Right” or “Is that so?”
- Observe the speaker’s body language. Look and listen for underlying emotions while focusing on the speaker’s main points.
- Restate what the speaker said in your own words.
- Do not interrupt unnecessarily.
- Provide the speaker with feedback by asking pertinent questions once they have fully had their say.
- Let the speaker know when you don’t understand something. While you should not interrupt, it is not wrong to ask questions. Sometimes, it’s best to write down your question and get clarification after the speaker is done talking. Avoid frustrating the speaker.
- Ask open-ended questions, which can elicit the kind of information you want to know and need to address the issues.

Andrew Rahaman, Ed.D., has worked nationally and internationally with leaders and organizations of all sizes in the public and private sectors, including 26 years in federal government. He is an executive in residence at American University, where he teaches graduate courses on organizational learning, leadership, change management and teams for the university’s Key Executive Education Programs. Rahaman is also on the staff of the Center for Creative Leadership and past-chair of the U.S. affiliate of the World Institute for Action Learning. He currently runs his own consulting firm, specializing in executive coaching, onboarding, organizational culture assessment and delivering leadership development programs. He can be reached at rahamanaa@gmail.com or rahaman@american.edu. Follow him on Twitter @ProfA_Rahaman. —

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Former Employee With Migraines Cannot Proceed With Disability Discrimination and Retaliation Claims

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit on Feb. 6, 2020, upheld a district court’s summary judgment for the defendant in Ronald Woolf v. Melissa Strada et al. (19-860-cv). The plaintiff is a former employee of Bloomberg L.P. He claimed he was terminated for requesting an accommodation for migraines, but the courts held that sufficient information showed that he was terminated for performance issues.

In 2011, Bloomberg hired Ronald Woolf into a sales position. Despite having suffered from complex migraines with neurological deficits since 2000, he affirmed to Bloomberg that he had “no disability and no history of impairments that limited his major life activities.”

Around February 2013, Woolf began experiencing more intense migraine headaches, which he attributed to increasing stress at work. This led him to start arriving at work late. He did email his supervisors each morning he expected to be late.

On March 19, 2013, Woolf left a handwritten note on a superior’s desk, stating that he could no longer endure the added stress at work and requesting a transfer to a new group. The intended recipient testified that she never saw the note, and no effort was made to transfer Woolf.

On March 26, 2013, Woolf sought care from Bloomberg’s in-house medical professional due to his deteriorating health and worsening symptoms, which now included significant stomach pain and discomfort, along with more frequent migraines. The in-house doctor wrote a letter stating that Woolf was under his care and that he had advised Woolf to follow-up with a specialist.

A neurologist subsequently wrote a letter to Bloomberg stating that Woolf needed to change work environments and that a medical leave of absence or intermittent medical leave would not significantly mitigate his stress. The neurologist also stated that Woolf’s condition could become life-threatening if it was not properly managed.

Shortly thereafter, Woolf identified several open positions that he wanted to pursue as a reasonable accommodation, but the company did not place him in any of those positions. Instead, Woolf alleged, the company decided he should take intermittent leave. On Jan. 10, 2014, Bloomberg terminated Woolf.

Woolf sued Bloomberg and a number of his former superiors while alleging disability discrimination, retaliation and violations of his rights under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The district and appellate courts both held that Bloomberg did not discriminate against Woolf due to his disability by refusing to transfer him or by terminating him.

In affirming the lower court, the Second Circuit explained that Woolf did not properly show that his stress-induced migraines substantially limited his ability to work, which meant the migraines did not qualify him as disabled under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In addition, according to the courts, Woolf did not identify a suitable open position that he was actually qualified to hold. While Woolf argued that he was terminated in retaliation for requesting an accommodation, the defendant documented Woolf’s numerous performance deficiencies.

As to Woolf’s FMLA impairment and retaliation claims, the appellate court explained that all of his requests for intermittent leave were granted; therefore, there was no evidence that anyone dissuaded him from, or penalized him for, taking FMLA leave.

Female Truck Driver May Proceed With Sexual Harassment Claims Against Employer Based on Co-Driver’s Behavior

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission filed suit on behalf of a woman who claims she was sexually harassed by a co-worker the company knew to have been previously suspended for sexual harassment. On Feb. 4, 2020, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri declined to grant summary judgment to the defendant in EEOC v. New Prime Inc. (6:18-03177-CV-RK).

Melinda Huerta began working for New Prime as a driver in July 2016. She is still employed by the company.

When Huerta finished her driver training, she requested a co-driver to gain additional experience. New Prime told her that she could find her own co-driver, and Eric Weekley, an independent contractor for the company, asked Huerta to drive with him.

Since she did not have any other options, Huerta accepted the offer. Unbeknownst to Huerta, however, New Prime had previously suspended Weekley as a trainer for six months after it determined that he had sexually harassed a trainee. When Huerta informed her supervisor that she would be driving with Weekley, the supervisor, who knew of Weekley’s suspension, did not tell Huerta about it because he believed the information was confidential.

As soon as Huerta started driving with Weekley, he began intimidating her and making sexually provocative comments to her. For example, Weekley asked Huerta for sex daily, showed Huerta pictures of other women on his phone, repeatedly made crude comments about sexual behavior and discussed
his sexual encounters with other women. Huerta repeatedly told Weekley that his sexual comments were not welcome, but he did not stop.

Weekley also made threatening statements, according to Huerta. She alleges that he said he had been arrested for rape and was under investigation for killing his wife. Also, Weekley allegedly refused to allow Huerta to spend time off the truck to take care of personal needs or to shower while on the road.

Every time she got off the truck, he told her that they were running late and that she needed to get back into the truck. When she mentioned leaving the road, Weekley told Huerta that she would be fired or lose her commercial driver’s license if she did.

For six weeks, Huerta was afraid to report Weekley’s sexual harassment because she feared for her safety and believed that he was correct about the consequences for doing so. Finally, in November 2016, while on the road, Huerta reported Weekley.

The company sent a truck to pick her up and return her to headquarters. New Prime management also assured her that they would guarantee her pay for six months.

Upon returning to headquarters, Huerta requested to be placed on another truck, but New Prime did not immediately reassign her. As a result, she lost significant income. When the company did eventually place her on another truck, she was demoted.

A complaint to the EEOC led to this lawsuit against New Prime for creating a hostile work environment. The principal allegation is that New Prime knew or should have known of the harassment and failed to take action.

In requesting dismissal of the case, New Prime argued that Huerta could not show Weekley’s behavior was unwelcome because she engaged in behavior similar to Weekley’s while she was on the truck. The company supported that contention by producing text messages Huerta sent while on the truck in which she used sexually charged language, told Weekley about a

sexual encounter and voluntarily asked Weekley to join her at a bar. New Prime also argued that Huerta sent sexually explicit texts to her boyfriend when she knew that Weekley was monitoring her texts.

The court held that the text messages did not definitively show that Huerta was inviting Weekley’s daily requests for sex. Further, some texts showed that she affirmatively stated that she was not interested in a sexual relationship with him. With the evidence being inconclusive, the court ruled that live testimony would be necessary.

New Prime also argued that Weekley’s behavior was not severe or pervasive because he never touched Huerta. On this point, the court held that the law is clear that an individual does not have to be touched to have a litigable claim of sexual harassment.

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**Coworker’s Comments and Behavior, as Well as a Warning Letter, Sustain African American Employee’s Claims of Hostile Work Environment and Retaliation**

The District of Columbia must defend itself against a longtime employee’s claims of permitting the existence of a hostile work environment and retaliation in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The case involves an African American woman who received a written warning after complaining about racial insults and threatening behaviors by a coworker. The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia issued its ruling in *Bynum v. District of Columbia* (No. 16-cv-1904) on Jan. 30, 2020.

The city’s Department of Behavior Health hired Cemone Antenette Bynum as a data management specialist in 2005. Bynum was diagnosed with anxiety disorder and major depression disorder in 2011, and with post-traumatic stress disorder in 2014.

She filed multiple complaints for age and racial discrimination against the department between 2012 and 2015, and she received some settlements.

According to Bynum, department managers responded by isolating her, denying assignments, excluding her from team projects and refusing her several promotions. The first incident that prompted the current case occurred on March 29, 2016.

On that date, Bynum and several coworkers went to a meeting on improving the generation of statistics. After the meeting concluded, she informed her male colleague, Colin Billet, that he had improperly filled out several expense invoices. Upon hearing this, the court recounted, “Billet suddenly bolted out of his chair, causing his chair to violently hit the wall behind him.” He then allegedly stood over Bynum while shouting, “I’m sick of you” and “You are immature, you are childish, and stupid.” He also reportedly told Bynum that she needed to “go back to the South where you came from.”

Bynum’s supervisor was in the room but did not intervene during the outburst, which lasted about 10 minutes. At some point, the supervisor told Bynum not to call the police, and Billet carried on until another employee entered the room and removed him.

Bynum said she feared for her safety during the incident and that she suffered a panic attack and emotional distress. She immediately reported Bynum, calling the incident an assault, and she sought medical assistance and took leave.

When Bynum returned to work on May 9, 2016, Billet repeatedly approached her workspace despite having no
business reason to do so, and she reported feeling threatened by his presence. She asked to transfer to another area, but that request was denied. A separate request to order Billet to not harass, intimidate or annoy her was also refused.

That same day, Bynum received a written warning stating that she had “failed to comply with professional standards of conduct.” Subsequently, Bynum sued the department, alleging disability discrimination, harassment and retaliation.

Asked by a federal magistrate to review a report and recommendation on the viability of the claims, the district court held that enough evidence existed to show that Bynum suffered retaliation after she complained of Billett’s racially discriminatory conduct because she received the warning letter. The court also held that Bynum could proceed on her hostile work environment claim, as there was adequate evidence to show that Bynum was harassed due to her race.

Worker With Bipolar Disorder Wins Reinstatement of Failure to Accommodate Claim

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit found that a district court erred in dismissing all of a fired employee’s ADA claims against a financial company. With its Feb. 3, 2020, ruling in Kassa v. Synovus Financial Corporation (No. 19-10441), the appeals court allowed the plaintiff to proceed with a claim that the defendant failed to accommodate him by, for instance, authorizing short breaks after customer service calls triggered symptoms of his bipolar and intermittent explosive disorders.

In 2015, Synovus hired Tony Kassa as a lead network support analyst and put him on night and weekend shifts. Following a discussion about his mental health conditions with his then-supervisor, Kassa was allowed to take short breaks when he became frustrated. This accommodation would continue as long as he ensured that he remained reachable and that his work area was covered while he took a break.

In 2016, as part of a corporate restructuring, Kassa was transferred to a new team and asked to answer customer service calls from technical and nontechnical personnel. He told his new supervisor and a human resources manager that his disorders could make him lose his temper during phone calls for service, and he requested several possible accommodations. These proposals included taking customer service calls only from technicians, working nights or from home, and going on short breaks when symptoms flared up. According to Kassa, none of his requests were granted.

Rude and unprofessional statements to team members during an online chat in February 2017 earned Kassa a written reprimand. Rude and unprofessional comments during a customer service call got him fired in July 2017. Kassa subsequently sued Synovus while alleging disability discrimination for not providing a reasonable accommodation and retaliation for exercising his rights under the ADA.

The district court held that Kassa failed to prove disability discrimination or retaliation, and he appealed. The Eleventh Circuit reversed that ruling in part, stating that evidence existed to show that Synovus failed to accommodate Kassa’s disability by not permitting him to take short breaks while working. As a result, the case returns to the district level for further proceedings.

Contact David B. Ritter at david.riter@btlaw.com or (312) 214-4862. Contact Kelsey Schmidt at kelsey.schmidt@btlaw.com or (312) 214-4589. You can learn more about labor law cases by visiting www.btlaw.com and following our blogs at www.btcurrentemployment.com and www.btlaborrelations.com. —N

HR News Anywhere

Members can access the full text of every issue of the magazine back to 2005 at on.ipma-hr.org/hmew3e91e.
What’s the Public Sector Employment Outlook for 2020?

As it has done for more than a decade, IPMA-HR surveyed members in January and generated the following snapshot of expected hiring, layoffs and adoption of technology that changes how workers do their jobs. Visit on.ipma-hr.org/fdm to read a fuller report.

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### Employment Outlook Survey

**Public Sector Hiring Trends 2020**

**Where IPMA-HR Members Work**

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Local/Municipality</td>
<td>74%</td>
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<td>State</td>
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<tr>
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<td>University or College of Public Schools</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
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</tbody>
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**Hiring**

- **Do you plan to hire for new positions in 2020?**
  - Yes: 64%
  - No: 22%
  - Not Sure: 14%

**Layoffs**

- **Do you plan to have layoffs in 2020?**
  - Yes: 10%
  - No: 71%
  - Not Sure: 19%

**Current Trends**

- **Has your organization introduced technology/automation that now handles all or part of the activities done by employees?**
  - Yes: 29%
  - No: 63%
  - Not Sure: 8%

- **How has the organization handled technology/automation replacing part or all of the activities done by employees?**
  - Reassigned staff to other activities: 79%
  - Laid off: 6%
  - No Impact: 3%

**Employment Actions**

- **Are there plans for any of the following actions in 2020?**
  - Furloughs: 1%
  - Pay Freezes: 4%
  - Hiring Freezes: 5%
  - Increased Employee Contributions for Benefits: 22%
  - Pay Increases: 80%

- **With vacant jobs, do you plan to leave some unfilled for budgetary reasons?**
  - Yes: 20%
  - No: 59%
  - Not Sure: 21%
**Member News**

Jacob Smith, IPMA-SCP, a past president of the Oklahoma Chapter and currently a member at large, is now the administrator for the Human Capital Management division of the State of Oklahoma’s Office of Management and Enterprise Services. He previous job title was deputy administrator, Human Capital Management.

Dana Webb accepted the position of chief of staff for the State of Oklahoma’s Office of Management and Enterprise Services. Her previous position was administrator, Human Capital Management.

**IPMA-HR Welcomes Its New Members**

The Association looks forward to serving and connecting these organizations and individuals who joined during February 2020.

**New Agency Members**

City of Round Rock Human Resources
Round Rock, Texas

New Jersey Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency
Trenton, N.J.

**New Individual Members**

Toni Beatty
North Charleston, S.C.

Diera K. Bullard
North Charleston, S.C.

Elounda Faye Burton
Henderson, Tenn.

AmyJo Gilligham
Stoughton, Wisc.

George Steven Panagoulis
Landover, Md.

Khalilah Richardson
North Charleston, S.C.

Sandra Schickel
San Bernardino, Calif.

Yaosca Smith
Hopewell, Va.

Penny A. Watts
Tucson, Ariz.

**Missed a Webinar? Need to Recertify?**

Your IPMA-HR membership earns you free, unlimited access to every webinar archived at learning.ipma-hr.org/webinars.

Bookmark the page to revisit topics, catch up with sessions you could not stream live and earn points toward recertifying as an IPMA-CP or IPMA-SCP. The latest additions to the Webinar Library are:

- Managing the Workforce During COVID-19
- In Harm’s Way: Suicide Prevention in Law Enforcement
- Walk a Mile in Your Candidate’s Shoes: 6 Tips for Improving the Candidate Experience (Sponsored by NEOGOV)
- HR20/20 Report: The IPMA-HR Guide to Transformative HR
- Government Affairs Update for January 2020
- Best Practices in Police Recruitment: How the Metropolitan Police Department Continues to Thrive in a Challenging Environment
- Change Management: Driving Culture Change Through User Adoption

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<td>IPMA-HR Assessment Products</td>
<td>C2, C3, C4</td>
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<td>IPMA-HR Certification</td>
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<td>Workforce Institute at Kronos</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Certification Corner
Congratulations to these newly certified individuals!

Kelly Anderson, IPMA-CP
Senior HR Specialist
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
Woodlawn, Md.

Jennifer Arguijo, IPMA-CP
Human Resource Generalist
City of Liberal
Liberal, Kans.

Crista Binder, IPMA-SCP
Executive Assistant Airports
Los Angeles World Airports
Los Angeles, Calif.

Kimberly Bowers, IPMA-CP
Administrative Support Specialist
Greensboro Fire Department
Greensboro, N.C.

Stacey Brown, IPMA-SCP
HR Officer
Maryland Department of Human Resources
Lusby, Md.

Angela Cline, IPMA-SCP
Classification & Compensation Manager
City of Cape Coral
Cape Coral, Fla.

Karen Crouch, IPMA-CP
HR Coordinator
City of Eustis
Eustis, Fla.

Candace Davis, IPMA-CP
Payroll/Benefits Specialist/HR
City of Manchester
Manchester, Tenn.

Bridgette Eckhoff, IPMA-SCP
Client Relations Manager
City of Houston
Houston, Texas

Robert Freeman, IPMA-SCP
Airport Environmental Manager II
Los Angeles World Airports
Los Angeles, Calif.

Fausto Gonzalez, IPMA-CP
HR Training & Programs Coordinator
City of San Luis
San Luis, Ariz.

India Griffin, IPMA-SCP
Building Construction and Maintenance General Superintendent
City of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, Calif.

Michelle Halsey, IPMA-CP
Human Resources Technician
Milpitas, Calif.

Alexis Haynes-Wafer, IPMA-SCP
Human Resources Specialist
City of Kansas City, Missouri
Kansas City, Mo.

Danielle Holland, IPMA-CP
Contract Administration Coordinator
Pinellas County Government Clearwater, Fla.

Fatimah King, IPMA-CP
Human Resources Training Specialist
City of Roanoke
Roanoke, Va.

Donald Kirtland, IPMA-CP
Deputy Director Continuous Quality Improvement
Department of Human Resources
Virginia Beach, Va.

Kenia Long, IPMA-SCP
HR Generalist II
Baltimore Convention Center
Baltimore, Md.

Katrina Makkouk, IPMA-CP
Personnel Analyst
City of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, Calif.

Shannon McCain, IPMA-SCP
Human Resources Manager
City and Borough of Juneau
Juneau, Alaska

Melvin Merritt, IPMA-SCP
Human Resources Generalist II
City of Baltimore Department of Human Resources
Baltimore, Md.

Alissa Nored, IPMA-CP
Account/HR Technician
Placer County Superior Court
Roseville, Calif.

Christopher Parker, IPMA-CP
HR Systems and Compensation Administrator
City of Roanoke
Roanoke, Va.

Jeanette Persing, IPMA-CP
HR Coordinator
City of O’Fallon
O’Fallon, Ill.

Noel Pfaff, IPMA-CP
Executive Administrative Assistant
Lorain Metropolitan Housing Authority
Lorain, Ohio

Daniel Quach, IPMA-SCP
Financial Management Specialist IV
City of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, Calif.

Patricia Rockwell, IPMA-CP
Human Resources Administrator
City of Ridgecrest
Ridgecrest, Calif.

Gina Routen, IPMA-SCP
Administrative Services General Manager
City of Cleveland
Cleveland, Ohio

Janet Schiavoni, IPMA-SCP
Manager
City of Cleveland
Cleveland, Ohio

Sheena Schmutz, IPMA-SCP
Chief Human Resources Officer
Sedgwick County
Wichita, Kans.

Jamie Tusing, IPMA-CP
HR Technician
City of Eustis
Eustis, Fla.

Nycole West, IPMA-SCP
Director
City of Cleveland
Cleveland, Ohio

Melissa Westerfield, IPMA-CP
HR Analyst
City of Peoria
Peoria, Ariz.
Check www.ipma-hr.org/events for updates on conferences and meetings. Online courses will commence as scheduled.

Mar. 31-Apr. 28 Developing an Ethical Culture in an Organization – Session 1
Online Course
To register, on.ipma-hr.org/pd6

Apr. 6-Aug. 31 Public Sector HR Essentials – Session 2
Online Course
To register, on.ipma-hr.org/kt2

April 14-June 14 Workforce and Succession Planning – Session 1
Online Course
To register, on.ipma-hr.org/i1q

April 23 HR Managers Meeting – City of Rancho Cucamonga
Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.
To register, on.ipma-hr.org/gva

May 3-6 Western Region Conference
Anaheim, Calif.
To register, on.ipma-hr.org/oh9

May 4-July 8 HR Foundations: A Roadmap for Non-HR Managers
Online Course
To register, on.ipma-hr.org/5op

June 7-10 Central Region Training Conference
Kansas City, Mo.
To register, on.ipma-hr.org/p0l

Sept. 13-16, 2020 IPMA-HR Annual Conference
Baltimore, Md.
For more information, on.ipma-hr.org/2020i59edb

Sept. 18-22, 2021 IPMA-HR Annual Conference
Indianapolis, Ind.
For more information, on.ipma-hr.org/b7s

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“Dispatchers, in terms of self-reporting,” Linos said, “often think they’re not understood and there’s a strong correlation between that and burnout.”

Recognizing the Essential, Life-Saving Work of Dispatchers

A national drive to classify dispatchers as first responders for the purposes of pay and benefits is gaining momentum, with bills to do this being introduced in California, Colorado and Tennessee. Federal legislation dubbed the 911 SAVES Act (H.R. 1629) was also proposed by Rep. Norma Torres (D-Calif.) in 2019.

Those moves followed local ordinances, resolutions and policy changes in Colorado’s Pitkin and Arapahoe counties, Knox County, Ky., and all 55 counties in West Virginia that showed promise for attracting more qualified men and women to dispatcher jobs. At the state level, Georgia, Texas and Maryland have already taken various actions to more clearly align dispatchers with first responders.

While some of the state and local measures have been symbolic, Maine’s Gov. Janet Mills in June 2019 signed An Act to Create Fairness for Dispatchers in the Maine Public Employees Retirement System. The new law gives local governments the option of paying the additional costs of enrolling dispatchers in their retirement plan for first responders.

The 911 SAVES Act drew 114 co-sponsors. The bill, which would have shifted dispatchers out of an administrative or clerical worker category and classified “public safety telecommunicators as Protective Service Occupations” was passed by the U.S. House last year. It was then included in the House’s version of the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, but it did not survive into the military budget package signed by the president.

“I think the bill deserves a hearing” by the House Committee on Education and Labor said Torres, who served as a dispatcher for 17 years. Dispatchers, she said, “are hearing people call at the most vulnerable time in their lives. You answer the phone and you hear a gunshot or you need to talk someone through an attempted suicide as I have done in many cases.”

She concluded: “To get them out of an administrative category and put them more in line with first responders acknowledges that this is a critical position.”

Katherine Barrett and Richard Greene have analyzed and written about state and local management and policy for nearly 30 years. You can find more of their reporting and commentary online at www.greenebarrett.com and follow them @greenebarrett. Their email address is greenebarrett@gmail.com.
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