Massachusetts Police Chief

The Voice of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association

In Unity There is Strength

October Edition 2026

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Publication of the
Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association, Inc.
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The MCOPA is an association, comprised of nearly 400 municipal and campus law enforcement executives from all across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Working together, in the interest of continuing to improve the law enforcement profession, the MCOPA has been able to accomplish great things. The MCOPA remains very active in collaboration efforts with other law enforcement associations and agencies, in the Massachusetts Legislature, and in the appellate state and federal courts on issues affecting law enforcement.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This month, we once again came together for our annual Charity Walk benefiting The Jimmy Fund in Boston. As most of you know, the Jimmy Fund has been our primary charity since 1953, and since 1989, chiefs from throughout Massachusetts have gathered for this special annual tradition. Over the years, our Association and its members have proudly raised more than $3 million to support The Jimmy Fund and the children and families facing cancer. For me, and for so many of our members, this truly is the best day of the year.

Add body text

It is a day when active and retired police chiefs put aside the titles, responsibilities, challenges, and demands that come with leading our respective departments. We come together not as individual chiefs, but as one law enforcement family, united by a common purpose and a desire to help others.

This year's Hero Match was for Connor Keefe from Needham, making the walk especially meaningful. We were honored to walk in support of Connor, his family, and every child and family who is facing the unimaginable challenges that come with cancer.
Being a police chief can sometimes feel like a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week responsibility. The decisions are difficult, the challenges are constant, and there are times when the weight of the job can be overwhelming. That is why days like this are so important. They remind us to step back and put things in perspective.



Chief Shane D. Woodson
Southbridge Police Department

For one day, we are reminded that our profession is about much more than policies, budgets, staffing, politics, and the daily challenges that come with leading a police department. At its heart, our profession is about people. It is about serving others, standing together, and making a difference when people need us most.

As I had numerous conversations with chiefs, both active and retired, from all around the state and watched us all walk together, I was reminded of the strength of our profession and our Association. Regardless of the size of our departments or the cities and towns we serve, we share a common bond and a responsibility to support one another and our communities.

Times can be tough for chiefs. There are difficult days and difficult decisions. But days like this help keep things in perspective. They remind us why we became police officers in the first place and why, even after decades in this profession, service still matters to every single member of our Association.

I am proud of our Association, proud of our members, and especially proud of the way we continue to come together to support one another and those who need us. Thank you to everyone who participated, donated, volunteered, and helped make this year's walk another tremendous success.



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Executive Director's Report
Chief Michael J. Bradley, Jr. (Ret.)

A GREAT CONFERENCE AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR FROM YOU

Thank you to everyone who joined us in Norwood September 15–17 for our Annual Training Conference. It was great to see our members come together for three days of training, shared experiences, and conversation about the challenges facing our profession.

Our training program covered a wide range of topics, including artificial intelligence in policing, digital investigations, controlled substances, de-escalation and use of force, operational planning using the Incident Command System, legal updates, and leadership development. The sessions offered practical information and ideas members could bring back to their departments. Thank you to our speakers and instructors for sharing their knowledge and experience.

I want to thank our vendors and sponsors for being part of the conference and supporting MCOPA. Their participation allows members to learn about available resources and build relationships that continue throughout the year.

A special thank you goes to Cheryl Lott, Eric Atstupenas, the staff at MPI, our Conference Committee, and everyone who worked behind the scenes to make the conference run smoothly. I also appreciate President Chief Shane Woodson and our Executive Board for their leadership and commitment to our members.

For me, one of the best part of the conference was the opportunity to catch up with colleagues and hear directly from chiefs. Conversations over coffee, between sessions, and at our evening gatherings are valuable. They give us time to compare experiences, ask for advice, and remind one another that we have colleagues we can turn to when difficult issues arise.

Please Help Us Build on That Momentum

Our **MCOPA Membership Satisfaction Survey** is another opportunity to tell us what you need from your association. If you have not yet completed it, I ask that you take 10–15 minutes to share your feedback.

The survey covers advocacy, communications, training, member resources, and opportunities to become more involved. Whether you regularly attend our events or have had limited involvement, your perspective matters. We want to understand what we are doing well, where we need to improve, and which services and training opportunities should receive greater attention.

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Individual responses will be reviewed only by MCOPA staff, and results will be shared with the Executive Board in aggregate form. Your feedback will help guide our discussions and future priorities.

Complete the MCOPA Membership Satisfaction Survey

You must be logged into the MCOPA website to complete the survey.

Thank you for making the conference a success and for helping us strengthen MCOPA. Your participation, both at our events and through your feedback, helps us better serve chiefs throughout the Commonwealth.

– In Unity There is Strength

Fraternally yours,
Chief Michael J. Bradley, Jr. (Ret)
Executive Director
Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association



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Strengthening Our Voice: Support the MCOPA PAC

How You Can Help:
We are asking members to consider making a voluntary contribution of up to $50 per year. You can donate quickly using the Venmo QR code (Please include your home address in the Venmo note field) **OR** by mailing a check payable to: MCOPA Political Action Committee, 353 Providence Road, South Grafton, MA 01560. Important Compliance Reminder: All contributions must be made from personal funds only. Agency funds or resources may not be used.

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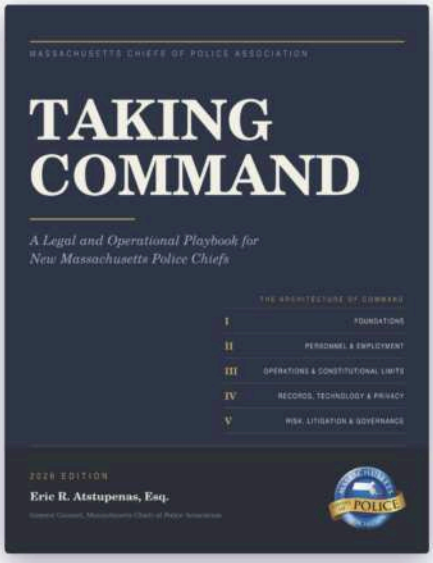


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MASSACHUSETTS CHIEFS OF POLICE ASSOCIATION

New for 2026 · Released at the Annual Leadership Conference

September 15–17, 2026 · Four Points by Sheraton, Norwood



NEW · 2026 EDITION

Taking Command

A Legal and Operational Playbook for New Massachusetts Police Chiefs

By **Eric R. Atstupenas, Esq.**
General Counsel, Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association

Becoming chief is more than a promotion. It is a shift in responsibility most officers are never formally trained to handle.

Capable chiefs get into trouble on what they did not know to look for: a reporting obligation missed, a decision poorly documented, a fast action taken without grasping its legal implications. Those are failures of preparation, not of character or leadership.

This playbook closes that gap. It is the book a chief reads beforehand, so the framework is already in place when the moment comes.

548	5	60+	Annual
PAGES	PARTS	CHAPTERS	LEGAL REVIEW

WHAT IT COVERS

I. **Foundations.** Tenure and removal, the first 48 hours, the first 90 days, documentation doctrine, POST obligations.

II. **Personnel & Employment.** Certification, leave, discipline, Brady and Giglio, Garrity, CBA reading, wages and details.

III. **Operations & Constitutional Limits.** Use of force, officer-involved death, Section 12, firearms licensing, pursuits, immigration.

IV. **Records, Technology & Privacy.** Public records, CORI, AI governance, facial recognition, body cameras, social media.

V. **Risk, Litigation & Governance.** Civil claims, conflict of interest, whistleblower protections, policy review, mutual aid.

Plus a full glossary and index for fast reference under pressure.

BUILT FOR THE WAY CHIEFS ACTUALLY WORK

Quick Command Checklist
Every chapter ends with a condensed operational sequence. Under pressure, start there.

What the Chief Should Do
Specific, sequenced, actionable. Not a survey of the law, an operational playbook.

Massachusetts Legal Framework
Controlling statutes, regulations, and cases in short form, so the authority is there when it is needed.

Pause Points
The triggers that should stop action and prompt a call to counsel. Pausing almost always costs less than proceeding into a problem.

Documentation
What to put in writing, where it lives, and the retention posture that proves the work was done right.

Written for every command seat
The first-year chief, the deputy preparing to promote, the lateral new to Massachusetts, and the municipal or campus agency alike.

> *"Chiefs succeed when they understand where the risks are and act deliberately. The chief will still face hard situations; that comes with the job. But the chief should not have to learn avoidable lessons the hard way."*
>
> From the Preface

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Calendar of Events

IACP Orlando
October 24-27, 2026

MCOPA IACP Hospitality
October 24, 2026

Executive Board Retreat
November 4 & 5, 2026

November General Meeting and Annual Election of 2027 Officers
November 12, 2026 / Pleasant Valley CC

Installation of 2027 Officers
December 10, 2026
Warren Center & Inn





Proposed Memberships

Active

Chief James West, Franklin
Chief Matthew Wright, Cheshire

Law Enforcement Associate

Lieutenant Robert P. Toupin, Hardwick-New Braintree
Deputy Chief Marc Scola, Littleton
Lieutenant John Ouillette, Northbridge

Business Associate

Life

Chief Thomas J. Lynch, Franklin Retired
Chief Robert Pistone, Haverhill Retired

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General Counsel's Corner



Attorney Eric Atstupenas

The Officer the District Attorney Will Not Call

A Somerville detective was terminated in 2018. An arbitrator ordered him reinstated in 2021 but denied three years of back pay. Before he could return, the Middlesex District Attorney's Office issued a second letter stating it would not call him as a witness barring extraordinary circumstances. The mayor directed that he be placed on paid administrative leave. A federal jury later found that decision retaliatory and awarded damages.

DiFronzo v. City of Somerville, No. 25-1210 (1st Cir. Sept. 21, 2026). The First Circuit reversed part of the award on a pleading rule, which is a lesson for municipal counsel. The problem underneath it belongs to the chief, and it is the one worth working through: an officer is coming back, and the district attorney will not put him on the stand.

The Disclosure Side Is Settled, and It Is Not Negotiable

A chief cannot talk a district attorney out of these obligations, so start by understanding that they are fixed.

- In the Matter of a Grand Jury Investigation, 485 Mass. 641 (2020), held that once information about an officer is determined to be exculpatory it must be disclosed to defendants in unrelated cases where the officer is a potential witness or authored a report.
- Graham v. District Attorney for the Hampden District, 493 Mass. 348 (2024), held that adverse judicial credibility findings about officers must be disclosed automatically rather than as a matter of prosecutorial discretion, and that prosecutors must err on the side of caution.
- Mass. R. Crim. P. 14, as amended effective March 1, 2025, now requires disclosure of any information about a prospective witness contained in any database or list of law enforcement misconduct maintained by or available to the prosecuting office.

Ask Which Letter You Actually Received

Chiefs treat every letter from a district attorney as a do-not-call letter. Often it is not, and the difference governs what you can do next.

The Attorney General's published Brady/Giglio procedure states plainly that its Required Disclosure List is not a list of officers who are disqualified from testifying on behalf of the Commonwealth. It is a disclosure designation. The AGO procedure also notifies both the officer and the officer's department, and gives each fourteen days to seek reconsideration with additional materials.

District attorney practice in Massachusetts is a patchwork. Some offices maintain formal lists and publish policies, some do not, and notice to the department is not uniform.

Ask the office, in writing, three questions: Is this a disclosure designation or a determination that you will not call the officer? What is the underlying basis? Is there a process for the officer or the department to submit additional information?

What the Reinstatement Order Actually Restores

This is the part that resolves the operational problem, and it is well settled in Massachusetts.

An arbitrator's reinstatement award restores employment. It does not dictate assignment.

The Appeals Court applied that in Town of Framingham v. Framingham Police Officers Union, 93 Mass. App. Ct. 537 (2018). A chief reassigned an officer from detectives to patrol, and the union sought arbitration. The court held the grievance non-arbitrable, stating that a police chief's authority to assign his officers to particular duties is a matter that concerns the public safety, that the assignment and deployment of police officers is a nondelegable right of management, and that it is not a proper subject of collective bargaining.

The SJC reached the same conclusion in City of Boston v. Boston Police Superior Officers Federation, 466 Mass. 210 (2013), holding that a nondelegable authority may not be delegated to an arbitrator even with the parties' consent.

The practical consequence is straightforward. A chief can comply with a reinstatement order by returning the officer to the payroll and assigning duties that do not generate testimony. Property room, records, fleet, training, accreditation, grant administration, and court liaison are all assignments that exist in most departments.

Operational Takeaways for Chiefs

- On receipt of any letter from a district attorney concerning an officer's credibility, ask in writing whether it is a disclosure designation or a do-not-call determination, and what process exists to respond.
- Identify now, before you need it, which positions in your department do not generate testimony. Build the list while the question is hypothetical.
- Keep any reassignment at the same rank and compensation. Reductions convert an assignment decision into a discipline decision with a different forum and a different standard.
- Do not treat a reinstatement order as a directive about where the officer works. Treat it as a directive that the officer works.

When an Officer Complains in the Middle of a Separation

Two First Circuit decisions this cycle make the same point from different directions, and a chief can act on both this month.

The Case: Russo v. New Hampshire Neurospine Institute

Russo v. New Hampshire Neurospine Institute, P.A., No. 25-1519 (1st Cir. Aug. 25, 2026). After eleven years, an employer's partners voted unanimously to terminate a physician assistant because a partner said he could not remain if she stayed. The First Circuit held that decision lawful and affirmed summary judgment on her discrimination claim.

The employer did not implement the termination immediately. The parties negotiated a transition period of several additional months, a separation agreement, and a possible post-employment contractor arrangement. Then she complained that the termination was sex discrimination, and her attorney sent a demand letter.

Within days the employer accelerated the termination and withdrew the contractor opportunity. The executive director wrote internally that she was done because of the allegations she was making.

The First Circuit reversed on retaliation as to the employer. The termination decision predated the complaint, but the termination was not the only employment action. Accelerating it cost several months of expected wages and benefits and was materially adverse. A jury could find the same of the withdrawn contractor opportunity. The internal email was characterized as direct evidence of retaliatory animus.

The court did not decide whether acceleration alone would be materially adverse if the employee had continued receiving full pay and benefits through the original separation date. The claim against the individual partner had been resolved below and was not before the court.

Why This Is a Police Department Problem

The pattern is not a medical practice pattern. A negotiated transition period, a separation agreement under discussion, an understanding about detail work or special officer status after a resignation, an agreement about how the departure will be characterized. These are how difficult separations are commonly wound down in a department.

Every one of those is a post-decision action. Each can be evaluated on its own once an officer has engaged in protected activity.
The Somerville case above is the same structure. The termination was one decision. The paid leave after the arbitration award was another. A jury treated the motive behind the second one as compensable.

The Massachusetts analysis is harder on a department than Title VII is:

- G.L. c. 151B, § 4(4) makes it unlawful to discharge, expel, or otherwise discriminate against a person because he has opposed practices forbidden under the chapter or filed a complaint.
- Section 4(4A) separately reaches coercion, intimidation, threats, and interference with the exercise of rights granted by the chapter.
- Section 4(5) reaches any person who aids, abets, incites, compels, or coerces a forbidden act. Command staff and members of an appointing authority can be named individually in a way Title VII does not allow.
- Chapter 151B carries no damages caps.

Recognizing the Letter for What It Is

In the Somerville case the officer wrote to the mayor complaining about department practices he said should be brought to the attention of an outside public body, and stating that he was compelled to report violations of law to the Attorney General.

That language tracks the Massachusetts Whistleblower Act, G.L. c. 149, § 185, which covers cities and towns by name and provides reinstatement, treble damages on lost wages, and attorney's fees. He never brought the claim.

Subsection (f) is a likely reason. It preserves an employee's other rights and remedies generally, but it provides that instituting a private action under the statute waives other contractual and statutory rights and remedies arising from the same conduct. An officer who elects § 185 may be giving up the grievance machinery.

For a chief the point is recognition, not strategy. A letter that references an outside public body, the Attorney General, or violations of law is potentially protected under both the First Amendment and § 185, and what the department does next is measured against both.

The Surprise Test

A useful question circulating in employment practice this fall is worth borrowing: will this person be surprised they are being terminated?

If the answer is yes, the contemporaneous record probably does not reflect the concerns that actually drove the decision. That is a problem in any workplace. In a department where discipline runs through G.L. c. 31, §§ 41 through 43 or through just cause arbitration under G.L. c. 150E, the record is not merely useful for defending against a pretext claim. It is the evidentiary basis for the just cause finding itself.

The same discipline applies to workplace investigations. Scoping an investigation before it starts, rather than after, determines whether it produces findings that hold up or a second set of claims.

Actionable Takeaways

- Document the separation decision and its contemplated timing contemporaneously, before any complaint arrives. That record is what makes the timing of later events explainable.

- Treat any change to the timing or terms of a separation after a complaint as a new decision requiring its own independent business reason, recorded before the change is made.
- Keep internal communications focused on the business reason. Frustration with a complaint, put in writing, is what will be read to a jury.
- Read an officer's complaint letter for the statutory markers. References to an outside public body, the Attorney General, or violations of law change the analysis.
- Verify allegations independently when they come from an officer the complainant has complained about, and make the file show that you did.
- Scope an investigation, and decide what level of review it requires, before it begins.

Three Accommodation Requests, Three Different Frameworks

A pregnant officer asks for light duty. An officer asks not to work a particular day for religious reasons. An officer with ADHD asks that supervisory instructions be put in writing.

These three requests arrive through the same door and are handled by the same supervisor, and they are governed by three different statutory frameworks with three different standards. Two of them are more demanding on the employer than the ADA analysis most supervisors have been trained on. One of them contains a public safety provision written for departments like yours.

Pregnancy: G.L. c. 151B, § 4(1E)

The Massachusetts Pregnant Workers Fairness Act took effect April 1, 2018, and predates the federal statute of the same name.

Two prohibitions do most of the work:
- An employer may not require an employee to take a leave if another reasonable accommodation may be provided for the known conditions related to the employee's pregnancy without undue hardship on the employer's program, enterprise, or business.
- An employer may not require an employee to accept an accommodation she chooses not to accept, where that accommodation is unnecessary to enable her to perform the essential functions of the job.

The statute enumerates what a reasonable accommodation may include. Four of the listed items are ordinary department assignments: temporary transfer to a less strenuous or hazardous position, job restructuring, light duty, and a modified work schedule.

Defaulting to leave where a workable assignment exists is not a neutral holding pattern. Under § 4(1E) it is the violation.

The cost of getting this wrong in the private sector was illustrated this spring. An employer twice denied a work-from-home request supported by a physician's order for modified bed rest in a high-risk pregnancy, faulting the level of detail in the note, and offered unpaid leave instead. The employee returned to the office to keep her income and insurance. was hospitalized shortly afterward, and delivered at twenty weeks and six days. The infant did not survive. The estate brought a wrongful death claim rather than a discrimination claim, and on March 18, 2026, a jury in the Hamilton County, Ohio, Court of Common Pleas returned $25 million in compensatory damages and apportioned ninety percent of fault to the employer. A trial court verdict is not precedent anywhere, and the post-trial status of that judgment has not been confirmed. It is included as an illustration of exposure, not as authority.

A judgment of that size could not be entered against a Massachusetts city or town on those facts. G.L. c. 258, § 2 provides that public employers are not liable for any amount in excess of $100,000, nor for punitive damages or prejudgment interest, and § 4 requires written presentment within two years. That limit does not reach a c. 151B claim, which is statutory rather than tort and carries no cap, and under § 4(5) individual liability remains available.

Religion: G.L. c. 151B, § 4(1A) and the Groff Standard

Groff v. DeJoy, 600 U.S. 447 (2023), rejected the reading of Title VII under which anything more than a de minimis cost established undue hardship. An employer denying a religious accommodation must now show that granting it would result in substantial increased costs in relation to the conduct of its particular business. Groff also held that a hardship attributable to employee animosity toward a religion, or toward the idea of accommodating religious practice, cannot be considered undue.

The First Circuit applied Groff in Bazinet v. Beth Israel Lahey Health, Inc., 113 F.4th 9 (1st Cir. 2024), vacating a dismissal on the pleadings and holding that undue hardship could not be resolved at that stage. A thin record will not support a denial.

The Massachusetts provision is G.L. c. 151B, § 4(1A), and it is not a copy of Title VII. It contains its own definition of undue hardship, and one clause of that definition was written for public safety:
- The inability to provide services required by and in compliance with federal and state law, including regulations or tariffs of a regulatory agency with jurisdiction.
- Where the health or safety of the public would be unduly compromised by the absence of such employee or employees.
- Where the employee's presence is indispensable to the orderly transaction of business and the work cannot be performed by another employee of substantially similar qualifications during the absence.
- Where the employee's presence is needed to alleviate an emergency situation.

Section 4(1A) also requires an employee intending to be absent for religious reasons to give not less than ten days advance notice of each absence, provides that the absence shall wherever practicable be made up at another mutually convenient time, and states that nothing in the subsection requires the employer to pay for the absence. The employer bears the burden on undue hardship. The employee bears the burden on the required practice of the creed or religion.

One gap is worth knowing. Section 4(1A) contains no seniority system safe harbor. Title VII shelters bona fide seniority systems by

statute. Chapter 151B does not, so a collective bargaining seniority clause is not a statutory answer here.

Disability: G.L. c. 151B, § 4(16) and the Request to Put It in Writing

Requests that supervisory instruction and work communication be provided in writing, usually supported by a diagnosis of ADHD or a related condition, are appearing more often. Supervisors tend to react to them as an attempt to avoid oversight. Some are. The framework does not turn on that.

Section 4(16) requires accommodation of a qualified handicapped person capable of performing the essential functions of the position with reasonable accommodation, unless the employer demonstrates undue hardship. The statute lists the factors:

- The overall size of the employer's business with respect to the number of employees, number and type of facilities, and size of budget or available assets.
- The type of the employer's operation, including the composition and structure of the workforce.
- The nature and cost of the accommodation needed.

The MCAD Guidelines on handicap discrimination place the burden to begin the conversation on the employer once it is on notice, and state that relaxation or elimination of an essential job function is not a required accommodation. Where the need is not obvious, the employer may require reasonable documentation from a health care provider of the handicap and the need for accommodation.

For a sworn officer this is where the analysis has real content. Receiving and acting on radio and verbal direction under time pressure is an essential function of patrol. A blanket requirement that all communication be in writing is difficult to sustain against that. A requirement that non-urgent assignments, expectations, and performance feedback be confirmed in writing is a different request and is often workable.

Two Massachusetts differences are worth carrying. Chapter 151B uses the term handicap, and in Dahill v. Police Department of Boston, 434 Mass. 233 (2001), itself a police hiring case, the SJC held that mitigating or corrective measures are not considered in determining whether a person has a handicap. Massachusetts also never enacted an analogue to the federal ADA Amendments Act, so federal disability jurisprudence is persuasive here rather than controlling.

Practical Takeaways for Chiefs

- Train supervisors that the first question in all three situations is the same: what is the work limitation, and what is being requested? Not whether the condition is a disability.
- Stop defaulting to leave. Under § 4(1E) that default is itself a violation where a workable accommodation exists.
- Know which of your assignments are genuinely available as accommodations, and how the collective bargaining agreement treats them, before a request arrives.
- For a religious accommodation denial, build a record of minimum staffing, coverage qualifications, and operational impact. Section 4(1A)'s public safety and emergency clauses are real, but they require facts, and co-worker objection is not a permissible basis under Groff.
- Document the interactive process as it happens, including what was requested, what was offered, what was declined, and why.
- Do not rely on the $100,000 municipal liability limit here. It does not reach a c. 151B claim, and individual liability is available under § 4(5).

The Phishing Attack That Defeats Multifactor Authentication

The advice your department gives officers about spotting a phishing email is probably out of date. Bad grammar, awkward phrasing, and odd return addresses are no longer reliable tells, because the messages are now generated by tools that do not make those mistakes.

More consequential is a technique that does not rely on the employee making a mistake at all.

How Device-Code Phishing Works

The attacker initiates a sign-in on their own device and sends the employee a short code. The employee goes to the real sign-in page, not a counterfeit, and enters the code. The employee completes multifactor authentication. The identity provider then issues the access token to the attacker's waiting session.

Nothing is spoofed and nothing is intercepted. Multifactor authentication does not stop it because the requirement was satisfied rather than bypassed. The employee authorized the attacker's device.

The resulting tokens can keep an intruder in the mailbox for weeks. A password reset alone does not end the session. Tokens have to be revoked.

One security firm reported a roughly fifteen-fold increase in device-code phishing attempts during the first four months of 2026 compared with the second half of 2025, driven largely by subscription phishing kits that package the infrastructure for attackers with little technical skill.

What a Compromised Account Triggers in Massachusetts

Three separate obligations can attach, and they run on different clocks. A chief should know which ones reach a municipal department, because two do and one does not.

1. Breach notification under G.L. c. 93H. This applies to you.

Chapter 93H defines agency to mean any agency, executive office, department, board, commission, bureau, division or authority of the commonwealth, or any of its branches, or of any political subdivision thereof. A municipal police department is an agency under the statute.

Section 3(b) requires notice as soon as practicable and without unreasonable delay to the Attorney General, the Director of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation, and the affected resident. The regulator notice must include nine specified items, among them the nature of the breach, the number of residents

affected, the type of personal information compromised, and whether the agency maintains a written information security program.

The resident notice is constrained in a way that surprises people. It must describe the right to obtain a police report, how to request a security freeze, that there is no charge for one, and any mitigation services. It must not include the nature of the breach or the number of residents affected.

Notice may not be delayed on the ground that the total number of affected residents is not yet known.

Note the definition of personal information, which is narrow. It is a resident's name in combination with a Social Security number, a driver's license or state identification number, or a financial account or card number. A compromised mailbox full of incident reports, without one of those three elements, does not trigger c. 93H.

2. The written information security program regulation. This does not apply to you.

201 CMR 17.00 defines person to exclude an agency, executive office, department, board, commission, bureau, division or authority of the Commonwealth, or any of its branches, or any political subdivision thereof. A municipal department is carved out.

That is a genuine regulatory gap, and it is not a reason to relax. Chapter 93H, § 3(b) requires the agency to tell the Attorney General in writing whether it maintains a written information security program. A department with no program answers that question in the negative, in writing, to the regulator, at the worst possible moment. 201 CMR 17.03 is the only articulated Massachusetts standard of care, and adopting a program modeled on it voluntarily is the defensible course.

3. CJIS incident reporting. This applies, and it is the fastest clock.

803 CMR 7.02 designates the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services as the CJIS Systems Agency for Massachusetts. The DCJIS incident report form states that agencies shall report criminal justice information system incidents to the DCJIS Information Security Officer within 48 hours in compliance with the FBI CJIS Security Policy. Stated consequences of non-compliance include loss of access to criminal justice information systems.

The FBI CJIS Security Policy also requires internal reporting to the agency's incident response team within one hour of discovery. Confirm that figure against your department's current copy of the policy, and confirm your own executed DCJIS user agreement, which is where your specific terms live.

A compromised account belonging to an employee with access to criminal justice information is reportable even if no such information is confirmed to have been taken. The trigger is unauthorized access, not proven loss.

CORI adds no separate breach duty, but it adds audit exposure. G.L. c. 6, § 172 requires a secondary dissemination log for one year and retention of acknowledgment forms subject to audit, and 803 CMR 2.23 provides that any request for CORI is subject to audit at any time and that DCJIS may immediately deactivate an account on a suspected breach.

Practical Takeaways for Chiefs

- Update awareness training. Teach officers and civilian staff to recognize situations, such as an unexpected code or an urgent payment or credential request, rather than to look for bad grammar.
- Add token revocation to your incident response steps. A password reset does not end an attacker's session.
- Require out-of-band verification for any change to direct deposit, payroll, or banking information, using a number from your own directory and never one supplied in the request. A familiar voice is not verification. Voice cloning is inexpensive.
- Extend the same verification practice beyond email to text and messaging platforms.
- Adopt a written information security program modeled on 201 CMR 17.03 even though the regulation does not bind you, so that the answer to the Attorney General's question is yes.
- Confirm who in your department is responsible for the 48 hour DCJIS notification and that they know it exists.

AI-Generated Images and an Untested Massachusetts Statute

On August 25 the Seventh Circuit held that a federal statute criminalizing possession of obscene virtual child sexual abuse material is unconstitutional as applied to a man who possessed AI-generated images in his home that the government conceded depicted no actual child. United States v. Anderegg, No. 25-1354 (7th Cir. Aug. 25, 2026).

The holding is narrow, it binds no department here, and the coverage it drew has been wider than the ruling. Officers and members of the public will ask about it.

What the Court Held, and What It Did Not

The defendant generated hundreds of photorealistic images and sent at least one to a minor. The referral reached law enforcement through the CyberTipline. 18 U.S.C. § 2258A. He was charged with production, distribution, transfer to a minor under sixteen, and possession. Only the possession count under 18 U.S.C. § 1466A(b)(1) was dismissed, and the government appealed that dismissal.

The Seventh Circuit affirmed, working through authority it described itself as bound by. Stanley v. Georgia, 394 U.S. 557 (1969), bars criminalizing possession of obscene material in the home. New York v. Ferber, 458 U.S. 747 (1982), and Osborne v. Ohio, 495 U.S. 103 (1990), permit prohibiting material depicting actual children because the governing interest is in the children exploited by the production process. Ashcroft v. Free Speech Coalition, 535 U.S. 234 (2002), found that interest absent where no real child is depicted and rejected the grooming, normalization, market-reduction, and prosecutorial-difficulty rationales. The government offered those same rationales again.

The limits are the part to communicate accurately:

- The court did not strike down 18 U.S.C. § 1466A.
- It did not address the production, distribution, or transfer counts, which remain pending.
- It did not reach morphed images, which Free Speech Coalition expressly left aside.
- It did not address any image involving a real child.

A concurrence asked for further guidance from the Supreme Court, noting that research showing child sexual abuse material within AI training datasets might supply the stronger connection Free Speech Coalition left open, but that the record was insufficient. As of this writing the Department of Justice has not said publicly whether it will seek certiorari.

The Open Massachusetts Question

Nothing in Anderegg changes how a department handles material depicting a real child, or production, distribution, or transmission to a minor.

The Massachusetts charging question is open, and chiefs should not assume an answer in either direction. G.L. c. 272, § 31 defines visual material to include depiction by computer, telephone, or any other device capable of electronic data storage or transmission. Neither § 31 nor G.L. c. 272, § 29C states that the depicted child must be an actual, identifiable person. On the text the Massachusetts statutes are broader than a reader coming from the federal cases would expect.

Whether they can constitutionally reach an image involving no real child, possessed in the home, after Free Speech Coalition, is a question no Massachusetts appellate decision appears to have decided.

Practical Takeaways for Chiefs

- Treat Anderegg as out-of-circuit authority on a single possession count, not as a statement about Massachusetts law.
- Where a referral involves imagery that may be entirely synthetic, involve the district attorney's office in the charging decision from the outset.
- Answer the investigative question of whether a real child is depicted before the charging question is asked. The federal result turned entirely on the government's concession on that point.
- Be ready for questions that assume the decision went considerably further than it did.



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Network Management

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COPPER

"Chiefs of Police Pleasantly Enjoying Retirement"

Chief Michael R. Healy, Ret.

As I write this COPPER article I am preparing for my Jimmy Fund walk next week. From mid-April until mid-October Penny and I reside in West Dennis. Four years ago I decided to walk here because I found it more difficult to try and get off the Cape on Sunday morning with the traffic. Then with the drive to Boston and drive back it would turn into an eight hour day. So for the last four years I have completed my walk along the West Dennis Beach. The walk along the beach parking lot from the Lighthouse Inn to the Bass River is about one and a quarter miles long so if I go from one end to the other and back twice I cover close to five miles. I have a cheerleading squad who set up every year with their chairs and a bell who encourage me to keep going. And when I walk I find I am not alone. There is a group, "I'm with Joe", with anywhere from twenty-five to fifty Jimmy Fund walkers who walk for a fellow named Joe McPherson. Joe happened to be a neighbor of ours on the Cape who passed away three years ago from cancer. Joe's battle with cancer lasted many years and he started this walking group several years ago and they still continue. For those of you who choose to sit in your back yard, watch the football game, mow the lawn or just want to take the day off and not have to venture to Boston you can still support your association and the Jimmy Fund. Yes, you do not need to go to Boston to walk in support of the Jimmy Fund. You can do it along the Cape Cod Canal, the Connecticut River, Blackstone Valley, Horseneck Beach, through the haunted streets of Salem or around your local school track. Going to Boston should not be a deal breaker why you don't walk. Grab some friends, neighbors, fellow area chiefs or even members of your own department and walk together for an hour and raise a few dollars. If you only raise $300 its still more if you chose not to participate. Just imagine if we had 350 police chiefs, (municipal, campus, public agencies) raise $500 each we would be able to give $175,000 to the Jimmy Fund.

Congratulations are in order for Westborough Police Chief Todd Minardi who was selected to receive the 2026 MCOPA Community Policing Award for making community engagement part of the department's culture and core mission. Chief Minardi was recognized for strengthening connections between officers and the Westborough community. The MCOPA credited Minardi with supporting its Community Engagement Team and building relationships with local schools, seniors, businesses, nonprofits and faith communities as well as creating opportunities for officers and community members to become partners. MCOPA President Shane Woodson presented Chief Minardi with this award September 16th. Nothing more rewarding than to be recognized by your peers.

The following was sent to me and it did bring a smile to my face and reminded me of a piece I wrote several years ago about the trendy expense of buying bottled water. Buying bottled water started as a joke in a French marketing meeting where someone said, "Let's charge people for water, and if we say it's from France, they'll buy it." Well it worked, look at the popularity of Poland Springs from fresh springs in Maine. It has been challenged in court whether it is true natural spring water after processing. How about bottled Evian water which comes from France. Spell Evian backwards and it's Naïve, which is what consumers are too frequently.

This commentary I received was about the high cost of gas today compared to some other things we think of as important to our lifestyles. Here is what I received.

I keep hearing people complain that gasoline is over $4.00 a gallon. And yes, I'd love to see it at $2.00 again. But before we declare gasoline the most outrageously expensive liquid on Earth, let's put things in perspective. For $4.00, I get a GALLON of gasoline. I pour it into a 4,000-pound machine, turn a key, and that gallon will haul me, my wife, the groceries, the golf clubs and half the junk in my trunk almost 30 miles down the highway. That's actually a pretty impressive day's work for $4.00. Now let's compare. A restaurant sells me a 5-ounce glass of wine for $9. That's about $230 a gallon. And how far does it transport me? Usually from the dinner table to the men's room. A fancy coffee shop can charge $6 for a 16-ounce latte. That's $48 a gallon. It doesn't transport me 30 miles. It transports me from "Leave me alone" to "Okay, now you may speak." Bottled water at a convenience store might be $2.50 for 20 ounces. That's $16 a gallon, for something that occasionally falls out of the sky FOR FREE. A 12-ounce energy drink at $3.50 works out to more than $37 a gallon. Apparently caffeine becomes a precious mineral once you put lightning bolts on the can. Buy one of those little 2-ounce bottles of "energy shot" for $3. That's $192 a gallon. At that price, it shouldn't give me energy.

It should mow my lawn. Maple syrup at $8 for a 12-ounce bottle? About $85 a gallon. And its principal technological achievement is making pancakes sticky. Vanilla extract at $6 for two ounces? That's $384 a gallon. For $384, I expect the vanilla bean to come to my house and bake the cookies. Printer ink can cost thousands of dollars per gallon. And unlike gasoline, it sometimes refuses to come out because the printer has decided cyan is low. Even that $9 glass of wine deserves another look. At roughly $230 a gallon, filling a typical 15-gallon gas tank with restaurant wine would cost about $3,450. Of course, after drinking 15 gallons of wine, transportation would no longer be your biggest concern. So yes, $4.00 gasoline is expensive. But it's also a remarkable bargain when you think about what you're buying. You're purchasing enough concentrated energy to push several thousand pounds of steel, glass, groceries and humanity nearly 30 miles. Meanwhile, we'll cheerfully pay $6 for coffee, $9 for wine and $3 for water, then stand at the gas pump staring at the numbers like we're watching the national debt clock. Maybe gasoline doesn't need better pricing. Maybe it just needs a fancier name. "Handcrafted Premium Petroleum, locally pumped, small-batch refined, with subtle notes of octane and dinosaur." Put it in a 12-ounce artisan bottle and charge $14. We'll line up around the block.

Time to enlighten you with some useless information. I'll bet you didn't know this. Long before anyone laughed out loud on the internet, "LOL" was in use by virtue of a different phrase: "little old lady." The acronym was popularized by San Francisco Chronicle columnist Herb Caen in the 1960s. Caen used the abbreviation "LOL" in many of his works to refer to a "little old lady." In his 1960 book Only in San Francisco, he described an outfit that included a tricorn hat topped with an "evil-looking bird of prey" as the "regalia of the authentic LOL." He also once used "little old lady" as an affectionate nickname for a woman who angrily called the White House and told one of Richard Nixon's aides of her wish that the commander in chief "go completely to hell." After calming down, she made another call, this one to the FBI, to ask, "Is telling the president to go to hell the same thing as threatening his life?" They assured her it was not. Not every LOL was as quiet and demure as that description makes them sound. Remember the title character in the 1964 hit song "The Little Old Lady from Pasadena," which describes this situation: "And everybody's sayin' that there's nobody meaner than the little old lady from Pasadena - She drives real fast and she drives real hard - She's the terror of Colorado Boulevard." It seems this particular LOL was nothing to LOL about.

The first known use of "LOL" in its current form was in the 1980s. If you were on a pre-internet chat room called Viewline in the 1980s, you might have witnessed a historic moment: the first use of "LOL" to mean "laughing out loud." Prior to that people would type hahaha so you would know something was funny. Viewline was reportedly also credited with ROLF (rolling on the floor laughing). The first verified instance of "LOL" came in 1989, when it appeared in the newsletter FidoNet (which still exists) alongside "BRB" ("be right back") and "BTW" ("by the way"). In 2011, "LOL" was added to the Oxford English Dictionary.

How about this for more well spent money. Lists of the world's most intelligent animals don't often feature cows, but our bovine pals have more emotional depth than they tend to get credit for. A 2011 study by scientists at the University of Northampton in England revealed that not only do cows have best friends, but they also get stressed out when separated from their BFFs. The research was conducted by comparing heart rates and cortisol levels during 30-minute sessions in which cows were penned with a "preferred partner" they were known to have a close bond with, then a "familiar but nonpreferred individual." When the besties shared a pen, their heart rates were lower and other signs of stress were also reduced. Just what I wanted to know the next time I'm slicing through my steak or biting my hamburger that there is someone or something missing their BFF.

Thoughts for the day

Just a reminder that the Constitution was not written to restrain citizen's behavior. It was written to restrain Government's behavior. We need to understand that the Constitution doesn't give us our rights. It tells Government what rights they can't take away.

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts."- Winston Churchill

"The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain" – Dolly Parton

Words of Wisdom

Being a Police Officer is essentially dealing with people who are mad at you for decisions they made.

The trust of the innocent is the liar's most useful tool. – Stephen King

A fake friend is worse than an enemy.

Mystery Trivia

September's trivia question asked to identify three blue laws that were enforced during your early career. This was specifically aimed at the retired chief, COPPERS, whose careers expand back to the 1960's and 1970's. As I said Blue Laws are called that because the word "blue" was 18th-century slang for a rigid, over-strict moral code. Over the years many

Blue Laws in Massachusetts have been eliminated. Back in the 70' and 80's Retail stores were closed on Sunday as were most manufacturing businesses. Package stores were not allowed to be open. Hunting was prohibited on Sunday. Restaurants serving alcohol and bars had to close by midnight Saturday and could not open until noon on Sunday. Interstate truck traffic was prohibited from midnight Saturday until midnight Sunday. Massachusetts did not fully eliminate its major retail Blue Laws in the 1970s; instead, year-round Sunday retail shopping was officially permitted starting on March 27, 1983, following legislation signed by Governor Edward J. King in late 1982.

In the 1970s, Massachusetts Sunday Blue Laws strictly regulated commercial motor vehicles by prohibiting the operation of most commercial trucks on state highways on Sundays. Rooted in colonial-era Puritan restrictions designed to protect the Sabbath, these transport restrictions remained heavily enforced throughout the decades before shifting economic realities and federal trucking regulations forced widespread reforms. During the 1970s, commercial truck drivers were broadly prohibited from operating on Massachusetts highways on Sundays to reduce traffic congestion, preserve public peace, and enforce a uniform day of rest. Trucking was not entirely paralyzed, but carriers could only operate on Sundays if their cargo fell into a specific statutory exemption. Some of those exemptions included perishables like meat, fish, cut flowers, dairy, and bakery goods as well as fuel and emergency auto supplies to name a few. It was common back then to see the many roadside truck stops full of tractor trailers with their drivers waiting for mid-night Sunday to resume their trip. In the 1970s, Massachusetts Blue Laws completely banned all package stores and retail businesses from selling alcohol and general goods on Sundays. Massachusetts lifted its total ban on Sunday retail alcohol sales in 2004, allowing package stores and liquor stores to open starting at noon with local approval. Most recent change. One of the last Blue-Law holdouts in Massachusetts was the Sunday hunting prohibition. As of 2026 Governor Maura Healey announced legislation to expand hunting to Sundays, which critics say would end the one day residents can hike or walk dogs without conflict with hunters. There were no winners for the month of September.

This month's trivia question

Massachusetts is known for many firsts in law enforcement. Can you tell me the name of the first female police officer in Massachusetts and the department she served on?

If you are the first to answer the monthly trivia question you will receive a prize. That prize will be a monogramed MCOPA item that's in stock at the office. You win and the prize will be mailed to you. If you think you have the correct answer send it to me at topcopwpd1@gmail.com. Cheryl will make sure you are rewarded.

Just think of life as fun

I got people who love me because I'm me.
I got people who hate me for the same reason.

Driver: It's not about how many times you fall. It's about how many times you get back up.
Cop: That's not how field sobriety tests work.

Getting older means your arm has to be in the right position when you go to bed if you want to use it the next day.

Jimmy Fund

Nothing frustrates me more than to look at the Jimmy Fund Team progress goal and with two weeks to walk day find only 87 signed up and many of those are not police chiefs. Unfortunately I say this same thing every year. Then I take a look at the money raised by the end of September and find of the $31,000 more than fifty percent has been raised by retired chiefs. Is it me or is there something wrong here. You active chiefs have the means and the audience to certainly do better than us old chiefs who are has-beens with no audience or clout. Boy now I see why Jack Creighton use to get frustrated and go off on his rants. How hard is it for you, during one of your public meetings with your Board of Selectmen or City Council, to advise them publicly of your walk intentions and encourage them to support your efforts? Believe it or not your local politicians as well as most members of your community have family or friends who have or are presently being effected by cancer. You would be surprised what support you would get and positive image you would demonstrate. Well, I guess it too late to dwell on those who don't support the MCOPA Jimmy Fund efforts. It's time to praise those who step up for our association and the Jimmy Fund and lace up their sneakers or financially support the Jimmy Fund. You are the best. For all you walking this year I, as a cancer survivor and fellow chief, thank you. I'm hoping for great weather and a safe, healthy and enjoyable walk day.


Our 2025 Team Police Chiefs

Quote of the day

"The difference between humans and animals is that animals never allow a fool to lead the pack." – Winston Churchill



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Chief Rochelle Ryan
Stonehill College
October 1, 2026

Chief Rochelle Ryan, 60, of Brockton, Massachusetts, departed this life on October 1, 2026. She was the devoted and beloved wife of Stanley Ryan, with whom she shared 36 years of marriage.

Rochelle was born on November 1, 1965, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Willie Wilson and the late Odell Wilson Jr. She was raised in Brockton, Massachusetts, where she attended Paine Elementary School before graduating from Southeastern Regional High School in 1984 with a certification in cosmetology.

Rochelle was a woman of strength, determination, faith, and service. After graduating from the Police Academy, she began her distinguished career in law enforcement with the Weymouth Police Department, where she faithfully served from 1989 to 1995.

In 2002, Rochelle began a new chapter in her career when she joined Stonehill College as a campus police officer. While serving and advancing through the ranks, she continued her education and earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Stonehill College. Her dedication, leadership, and unwavering commitment to the safety and well-being of the Stonehill community were recognized throughout her years of service.

On November 1, 2021, Rochelle was proudly promoted to Chief of Police by the administrators of Stonehill College. This remarkable achievement reflected her years of hard work, perseverance, leadership, and dedication to the law enforcement profession. She became not only a respected leader but also a source of inspiration to those who had the privilege of working alongside her.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Rochelle's greatest joys were her faith and her family. She loved God deeply and gave her life to Christ at a young age, becoming a member of Full Gospel Tabernacle. Throughout her years of service to the church, she faithfully accepted numerous leadership responsibilities. She served as vice president of the Women's Committee, chairlady of the Safety and Security Ministry Team, Pastoral Care Ministry Team Leader, and director of safety and security for The Tabernacle of God Fellowship International Conference. She was also a devoted member of the Adult Choir and Women's Choir.

Her faith was the foundation of her life and guided her through every season. It was reflected in the love, strength, compassion, and encouragement she so freely shared with those around her.

Rochelle was the eldest of eleven children and proudly served as the matriarch of her family. She was a source of wisdom, love, strength, and guidance to generations of relatives. Her family meant everything to her, and she treasured every moment spent with them.

Rochelle leaves to cherish her memory her beloved husband, Stanley Ryan of Montreal, Canada; her children, Shanelle (Nelly) Toney, M 'Kenzi Ryan, and Alyssa Ryan; her grandsons, JR Flemon-Wilson and Legend Hendrick; her siblings, Odell Wilson III (Cynthia) of Minnesota, Roosevelt Wilson (Lakisha), Renee Finch (Eric), Rodney Wilson (Kathleen), Ramona Bowman (Vincent), Peter Harris, Rynard Wilson, Rashad Wilson (Bianca), Renaldo Wilson, and Ronique Wilson; 39 nieces and nephews; 13 great-nieces and great-nephews; her godchildren; her god-siblings; and a host of extended family members and friends who loved her dearly.

She was preceded in death by her father, Odell Wilson Jr.; her mother-in-law, Ellen H. Ryan; her father-in-law, William A. Ryan; her brother, Randy Wilson; her grandparents; her great-grandparents; and her great-nephews, Ramzes Wilson, Rodney Finch Jr., and Rodney Finch III.

Rochelle's life was one of faith, service, leadership, perseverance, and unwavering love for her family. From her distinguished career in law enforcement to love, she poured into her husband, children, grandchildren, siblings, and extended family, she leaves behind a legacy that will continue through generations.

Though she will be deeply missed, Rochelle's memory will forever remain in the hearts of those who knew and loved her. Her life was a blessing, her memory a treasure, and her legacy will live on.

"Well done, good and faithful servant." - Matthew 25:21, Holy Bible

To send flowers to the family, please visit our floral store.

To plant trees in memory, please visit the Sympathy Store.

https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/rochelle-ryan-obituary?id=62698859

Chief James Moran (Ret.)
Mattapoisett Police Department
October 5, 2026

James F. Moran, a cherished member of the Mattapoisett community, passed away peacefully on October 5, 2026, with his devoted son and daughter at his side. Born on April 15, 1936, in New Bedford, MA, James lived a life marked by dedication to his family, community and country.

James was the beloved son of the late James Moran and Natalie (Fontaine) Moran. He was predeceased by his beloved wife Annette R. (Paquin) Moran to whom he was married for 59 years, his son Stephen H. Moran and his brother Donald Moran. He leaves behind a legacy of love and strength shared by his son, retiredMassachusetts Environmental Police LTC Patrick J. Moran and his wife Heather H. Moran of Buzzards Bay; his daughter Christine (Moran) Richards of Mattapoisett and her fiancé Eugene Jones of Acushnet; and his granddaughter Molly K. Richards of Mattapoisett.

In 1953 at age 17 James answered the call of duty and served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War and the occupation of Germany. He received an honorable discharge in 1956, having been awarded the Good Conduct Ribbon and the Occupation of Germany Ribbon. James



eventually went on to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree from Northeastern University in Criminal Justice.

James' commitment to public service continued when he joined the Mattapoisett Police Department in 1963 as a reserve officer. He rose through the ranks and became Police Chief in 1981, a position he held until his retirement in 2001. During his tenure, he was instrumental in the construction of a new police station in 1989 and during his 20 years as Police Chief he served as President of the Plymouth County Police Chiefs. He was also a lifetime member of the MA Chiefs of Police Association and Southeastern MA Police Chiefs Association. James was also a plasterer by trade and was a proud member of the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers International Union of America.

His dedication to community extended beyond his professional career. James was an active member of the Mattapoisett Lions Club, the Machacam Club of Mattapoisett, and served faithfully as an usher at St. Anthony's Church for many years. His love for the sea was evident in his passion for boating, fishing and shell fishing in the waters of Mattapoisett- a beloved family tradition.

James was a devoted fan of the New England Patriots, holding season tickets for over 30 years and attending two Super Bowls. He had a special place in his heart for the family's many cats and dogs throughout the years. Above all, James was a mentor and friend, taking great joy in watching his younger police officers grow and rise through the ranks.

The family extends their heartfelt gratitude to the staff at All American Assisted Living in Wareham and the compassionate team at Sunset Hospice for their unwavering support and care during James' final days.

A Mass to celebrate James' life will be celebrated on Thursday October 15, 2026, at 10:00 AM at St. Anthony's Church in Mattapoisett. Burial with military honors will follow in Cushing Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests that donations be made in James' memory to CARE Southcoast, Inc. Arrangements are by the Saunders-Dwyer Mattapoisett Home for Funerals, 50 County Rd., Mattapoisett. For online condolence book, please visit www.saundersdwyer.com.

Flora Ayotte
October 28, 1941 - September 23, 2026
Mother of Chief James Ayotte (Hatfield Retired)

WEST BROOKFIELD/SPENCER- Flora M. (Plumley) Ayotte,84, of West Brookfield, passed away peacefully on Wednesday,September 23,2026 at home surrounded by her loving family.

She leaves her children, Terry & her husband John, Jimmy and his fiancé Tami, Donna & her husband Donald, Christine, & her husband Jeff and Lynn & her husband David, along with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who loved her dearly; her brothers, Rollo and Eddie, and her sisters, Jean and Sheila. Flora was predeceased by her parents, Julia and Cleo; her brother, Carmine; her sisters, Charlotte, Barbara, and Rita Mae; and her beloved daughter, Debbie. She was also predeceased by her fiancé, Edward Floyd, who held a special place in her heart and shared an important part of her life.

Flora was a loving and devoted mother whose family meant everything to her. She gave her heart, her time, and so much of herself to her children, always putting her family first and making sure each of them knew just how deeply they were loved.

Flora was happiest when she was surrounded by family and friends. She loved having people around her—the laughter, the stories, the conversations, and all of the little moments that made life special. Her home was a place where family and friends were always welcome, and her door was always open. As her children grew older, married, and began families of their own, Flora's love never changed. She cherished the time she spent with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, caring for them, spoiling them, and simply enjoying every moment she could share with them. They brought tremendous happiness and pride to her life.

Flora enjoyed the simple pleasures that brought people together. She was an avid bingo player and loved playing cribbage. Most of all, she enjoyed good company and making memories with the people she loved.

A hardworking woman, Flora worked at Brown Shoe Company and Spencer Plastic Company. Throughout her life, she gave so much of herself to her family, creating a lifetime filled with love, memories, and devotion.

There are no words that can truly express what Flora meant to her family. She was not simply their mother—she was the heart of their family. Her love was unconditional, her family was always her greatest priority, and the bonds she created will remain long after her passing. Her family will forever miss her voice, her laughter, her hugs, her stories, and simply knowing that she was there. They will miss gathering around her and all those everyday moments that, with her passing, have become treasured memories.

Flora gave her family a lifetime of love. Although their hearts are broken that she is no longer with them, they are forever grateful and blessed for every moment they shared. Her love will live on through her children , grandchildren, great-grandchildren, family, and friends, and in all of the memories she created throughout her life.

We love you, Mom. You will forever be in our hearts. Until we meet again. We love you more than words can say.

The family wishes to thank the JCC Hospice team for all their love and care for Flora.

A Mass of Christian burial will be celebrated on Thursday, October 1, 2026 at 10:00 AM in Our Lady of the Rosary Church 7 Church St Spencer for Flora and her beloved fiancé, Ed , who passed away in 2021, bringing them together once again in a final tribute to the love they shared. Following the Mass, Flora and Ed will be laid to rest together, side by side in the parish cemetery.

Arrangements are under the care of Pillsbury Funeral Home 163 Main St. Spencer.

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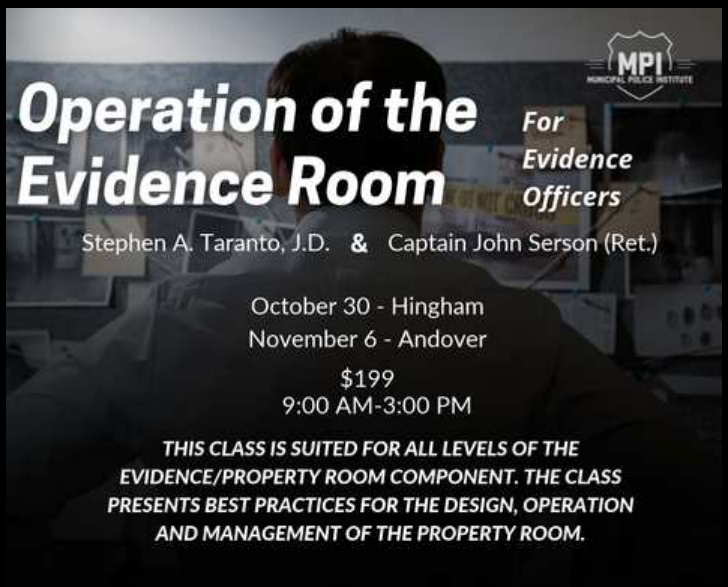
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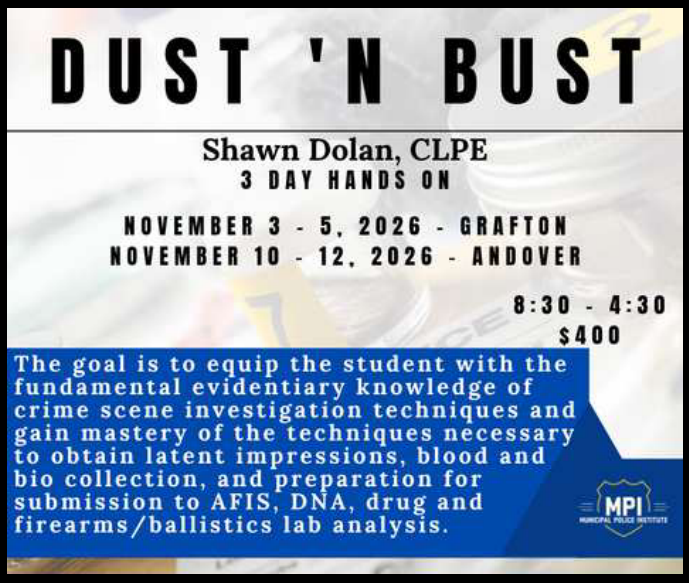
- Give supervisors ready-to-lead training, with new content added weekly
- Bring more consistency to training at the start of every shift
- Reinforce critical guidance through team discussion
- Reduce time spent researching topics and building training materials

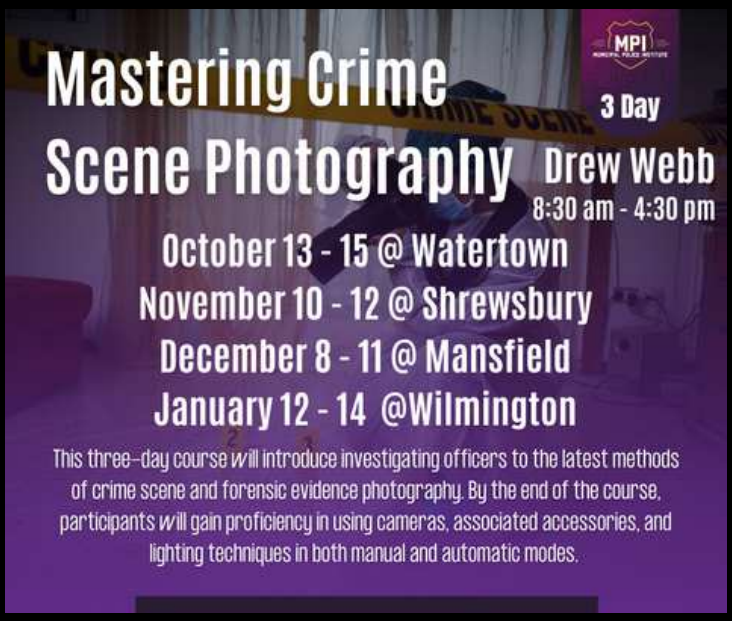
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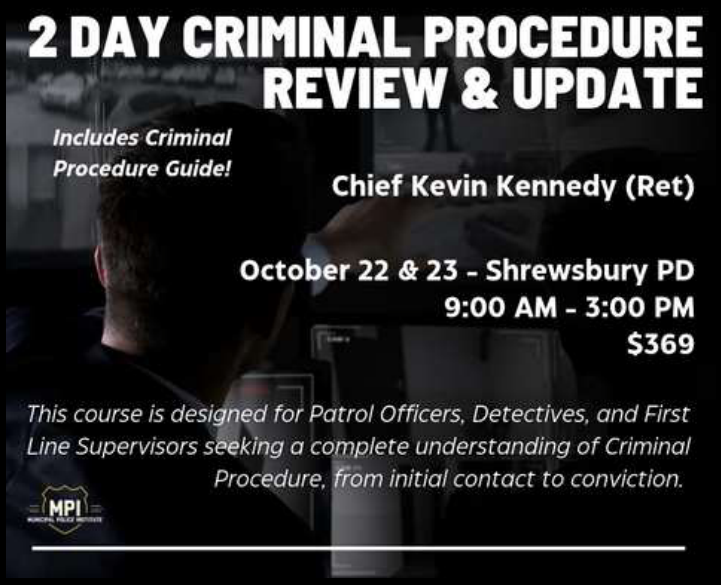
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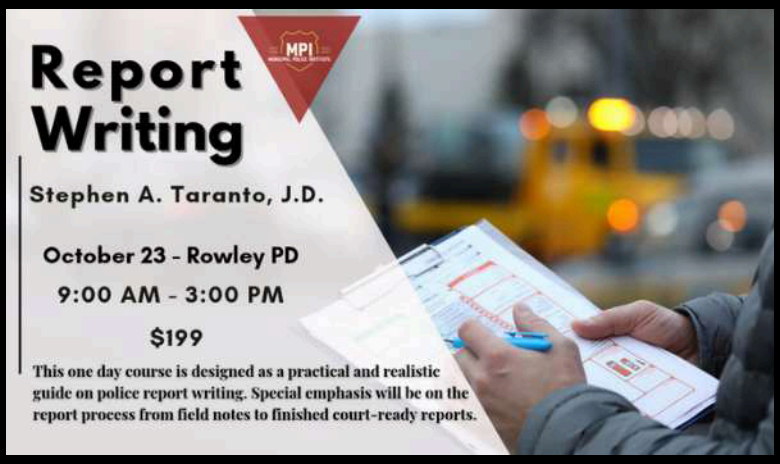
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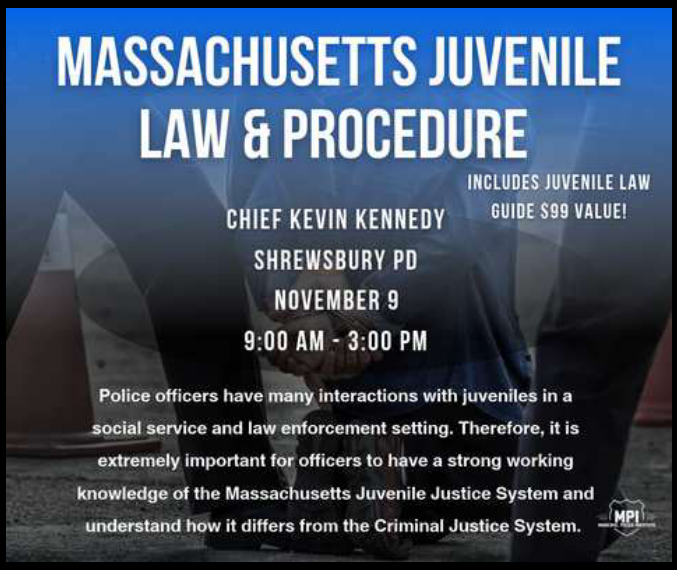












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Psychotropic Medications and Police Officers

Dr. Lewis Schlosser / 646-342-5480 / lew@ifp-testing.com

It has become increasingly common for Americans to use mental health prescription medication (hereafter referred to as psychotropic medication). Recent estimates place psychotropic medication use among Americans between 15% and 20%. Although police officers are often hesitant to take any medication, let alone psychotropics, the reality is that plenty of police officers take psychotropic medication. For Chiefs, this naturally leads to questions about how, if at all, do these medications impact an officer's ability to safely and effectively perform their duties.

A great resource is to answer that question is the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine's Guidance for the Medical Evaluation of Law Enforcement Officers. This includes a section focused on medication – both psychotropics and others – that provides guidance on whether the medication would impact the officer's ability to perform their job duties. The ACOEM guidance is one of the best resources to rely on in determining if a medication would compromise an officer's safety in the field. Accessing the ACOEM guidance requires a paid subscription; if interested, you can find the guidance here: https://www.publicsafetymedicine.org/.

In my experience, a class of medications called Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) are the most common psychotropic medications used by police officers. SSRIs are typically used to treat depression and anxiety disorders. Some examples include Lexapro, Zoloft, and Prozac. Nearly all of the SSRI medications are approved for on duty use by the ACOEM guidance. Other medications (e.g., hypnotics, benzodiazepines) can be more challenging to manage; some are in categories that limit the officer to being on light duty, while others require a short time delay before the officer resumes working. Chiefs should not hesitate to consult with their agency physician and attorney, as well as your MCOPA Chief Psychologist, regarding any questions surrounding officers and psychotropic medications.

As I presented at the MCOPA training last month, it would be helpful for your agency to have a medication use policy that simultaneously protects your officers' privacy while ensuring that any medications being taken by your officers won't compromise their safety in the field. Last month you read how seeking mental health treatment does not meet the legal threshold for ordering an officer for a psychological fitness for duty evaluation. Similarly, learning that an officer is taking a psychotropic medication does not meet that fitness for duty legal threshold either.

Conclusion

Do you have a question regarding psychotropic medications? If so, please send it along to me. As always, I am available to MCOPA members for *free* consultation if you have any questions or concerns that are relevant to police and public safety psychology (e.g., pre-employment psychological evaluations, fitness for duty evaluations).

Stay safe and healthy!







Legislative Updates

Legislative Update: The Session Continues, and So Does Our Advocacy

With the Legislature now meeting primarily in informal sessions, members may wonder what happens to bills that have not yet become law. While the July 31 deadline changed how legislative business is conducted, opportunities remain to advance legislation before the current term ends.

Understanding the Two-Year Cycle

Massachusetts operates on a two-year legislative cycle. The current cycle, the 194th General Court, began in January 2025 and concludes on January 5, 2027. Legislation generally moves through filing, committee review, public hearings, and consideration by the House and Senate. Both branches must approve the same language before a bill reaches the Governor. Most pending bills carry forward from the first year into the second year without starting over. However, unfinished bills do not automatically carry into a new two-year cycle. Proposals that do not advance before the current term ends generally must be refiled and begin the process again in the next session.

What Can Move During Informal Sessions?

Informal sessions allow the House and Senate to continue legislative business, but without formal debate or recorded roll-call votes. Bills generally advance by voice vote when no member objects. A single legislator's objection can prevent a measure from moving forward during that session.

That makes agreement especially important. A bill with broad support and no unresolved opposition may still move through the remaining steps and reach the Governor. Local petitions and other measures that have achieved consensus can advance during this period. For legislation facing disagreement, resolving concerns before it reaches the floor becomes critical.

An Important Change to the Rules

The current legislative rules also provide specific opportunities for formal sessions after July 31. These include consideration of agreements from conference committees formed on or before that date, appropriation bills filed afterward, and action on legislation returned by the Governor with vetoes or proposed amendments. Consequently, some significant unfinished matters can still receive formal consideration this fall.

What This Means for MCOPA

For MCOPA, this period calls for continued engagement and realistic expectations. Having support for a bill is important, but its procedural status, remaining approvals, and any unresolved objections will determine whether it can advance before the term ends.

Our advocacy must focus on identifying opportunities for agreement, explaining how proposed legislation affects police operations, and keeping public safety concerns before legislators. At the same time, we must prepare priorities for the next legislative cycle where additional work or refiling will be necessary.

Members can help by staying in contact with their representatives and senators and sharing practical examples from their communities. Explaining how a proposal would affect staffing, resources, officer safety, or service to residents gives legislators useful information as they weigh these decisions.

The remaining months still matter. Continued communication and collaboration can help move achievable legislation forward while building support for the work ahead.



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Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association

Take Your Leadership to the Next Level with MCOPA's Mentor Program

Are you a police chief looking to strengthen your leadership skills & expand your network?

The Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association (MCOPA) Mentor Program connects emerging leaders like you with experienced police chiefs. Learn from seasoned mentors who provide invaluable insights to help you navigate the complexities of modern law enforcement.

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- **Monthly Check-Ins**
  Engage in regular one-on-one sessions with your mentor to discuss topics like community relations, personnel management, crisis response, and leadership strategies. Build a foundation of trust and get support for your immediate leadership challenges.
- **Professional Development Goals**
  Set personalized goals with your mentor to focus on the areas you want to improve, from operational strategies to team management. Progress evaluations help ensure you're achieving meaningful growth throughout the program.
- **Quarterly Meetings & Networking Events**
  Join MCOPA gatherings to expand your network, share experiences, and gain fresh perspectives from law enforcement leaders across Massachusetts.

Interested?

Visit our website to apply or learn more about how you can benefit from MCOPA's Mentor Program.

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Annual Meeting & Election of 2027 Officers

Thursday, November 12, 2026

Pleasant Valley Country Club, 95 Armsby Road, Sutton, MA 01590

Click here to register

8:30 am / Registration and Morning Coffee with Sponsors
8:30 am / Executive Board meeting
9:00 am / Breakfast Buffet Opens
9:30 am / Life Member Caucus
10:00 am / MCOPA General Business Meeting
12:30 pm / Election of 2026 Officers
1:00 pm / Meeting Adjourn

Attention: Election of Officers for 2027

We kindly request that any nominations or inquiries regarding the process be directed to Executive Director Michael Bradley (mbradley@masschiefs.org) or Cheryl Lott (cheryl@masschiefs.org), who will forward them to the Nominating Committee.

Reminder: Any chiefs running for office AND/OR re-election must submit notification in writing to or via email. You must be an active or life member of the Association to cast a vote. You must register at the Registration Table to receive your ballot.

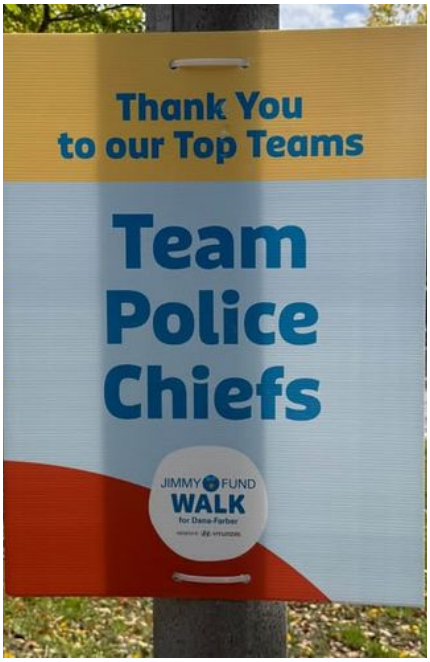
2027 Nominating Committee members are as follows:
Chief Gary Thomann, Pelham – Chairman
Chief Michael Bennett, Templeton
Chief John Paciorek, Deerfield

October 4th Jimmy Fund Walk
Team Police Chiefs

















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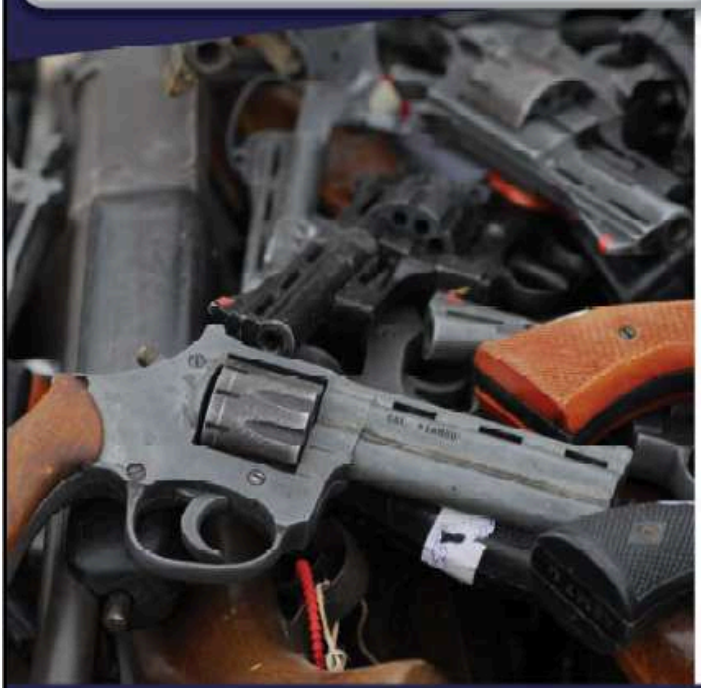
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New England State Police Information Network

Taking Care of Our Own: Officer Wellness Across New England

By Cara-Lin Graham, NESPIN Criminal Intelligence Services Supervisor.

Law enforcement officers prepare for difficult calls. They check their equipment, review plans, and look out for the officers beside them. That same attention should extend to what happens after a call—and to the strain that can build over years of service.

A critical incident affects each person differently. So does repeated exposure to violent cases, traumatic images, and dealing with people in various forms of crisis. Stress does not follow a set timetable. What matters is recognizing when support may be needed and knowing where to find it.

After a Critical Incident

In the hours after a difficult event, practical needs come first: a chance to rest, contact family, and learn what support is available. A supervisor's check-in should not end when the shift does. The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) advises supervisors to follow up and watch for changes such as withdrawal, irritability, sleep problems, or increased alcohol use. PERF identifies peer support and employee assistance programs as important parts of an agency's response.

Here in New England, agencies offer examples of this support in action:

- Maine State Police Member Assistance Team provides wellness tools and training for its members.
- Vermont State Police Members Assistance Team offers support and referrals to employees facing trauma, work-related concerns, or personal difficulties, with services extending to family members and retirees.
- Connecticut State Police State Troopers Offering Peer Support (STOPS) Unit provides peer support and post-incident outreach to sworn and civilian personnel.
- New Hampshire Department of Safety operates a dedicated Peer Support Team that provides confidential, peer-to-peer crisis intervention and stress support for New Hampshire State Police dispatchers, NH911 telecommunicators, and emergency services personnel.
- Rhode Island Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides peer-driven crisis intervention and stress management support for uniformed service personnel, including fire, EMS, law enforcement, dispatchers, and nursing staff.
- Massachusetts State Peer Support Network provides 24/7 free and confidential crisis intervention and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) services for public safety personnel across the commonwealth.

Those programs serve their respective agencies. Officers in other departments can find out what their agency, union, or regional critical incident team offers. It is also helpful to understand a program's confidentiality rules before support is needed. A trained peer can be a comfortable first contact, while a mental health professional can provide care when an officer needs more than a conversation with a colleague.

When the Stress Builds Quietly

Not every difficult period begins with one defining incident. An investigator may spend weeks reviewing evidence from a violent crime. A dispatcher may hear a call that is hard to put aside. An analyst or evidence technician may repeatedly encounter disturbing details without ever going to the scene. Over time, such exposure can contribute to compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress.

The signs can be easy to dismiss: feeling exhausted even after time off, losing patience more quickly, becoming cynical, having trouble concentrating, or withdrawing from people and activities that matter. Noticing a change creates an opportunity to seek support early. It does not mean an officer is unable to do the job.

Sometimes a call from early in an officer's career stays in the background for years before its effects become more noticeable. Reactions may include poor sleep, unwanted memories, feeling constantly on alert, or avoiding reminders of the incident. Another difficult call or stress outside of work may bring those reactions to the surface. The VA's National Center for PTSD notes that stress reactions can arise or return months or years after an incident, and that treatment can help even when the event happened years ago. It is never too late to talk with a peer supporter or mental health professional.

Officers can support a partner with a direct, ordinary question: "How are you doing after that case?" Then they can listen. They do not have to solve the problem themselves; they can help a colleague connect with a peer supporter, an employee assistance program, or a clinician who understands first responder work.

Support That Can Be Put to Use

Resources vary by location and agency, but there are places to start. In Massachusetts, MassCOP members can access its peer support program and a 24-hour critical incident line. McLean Hospital's LEADER MAST Clinic provides specialized outpatient care for first responders. In New Hampshire, the Nashua Police Department Peer Support Team serves officers and members of the first responder community. Brown University Health lists Rhode Island resources, including a local critical incident stress management team and the Code 9 Project first responder helpline at 844-HOPE-247. Officers should contact a program directly to confirm eligibility and

services. RISS hosts an Officer Safety and Wellness site available to member agency Access Officers via the RISSNet platform. (See table below for other resource examples).

For support outside an agency, COPLINE at 1-800-267-5463 is available around the clock to current and former law enforcement personnel and their families. Anyone who needs immediate mental health crisis support can call or text 988.

Everyday habits matter as well. Getting enough sleep, eating regularly, staying physically active, taking time away from work, and connecting with family and friends can be difficult around an officer's schedule, but they deserve attention. Supervisors and agencies can help by making resources easy to find, following up after demanding assignments, and treating help-seeking as a normal part of staying ready.

Officers would not expect a partner to handle every dangerous call alone. The same principle applies to the effects of the work. Looking out for one another means speaking up when a change is noticed—and accepting support when it is needed.

Resources and Further Reading:

Topic	Resource
Post-critical-incident check-ins and agency support	Police Executive Research Forum (PERF): Post-Critical Incident Resources
Compassion fatigue, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): Compassion Fatigue and Self-Care Resources
Peer support, confidentiality, and referrals to clinicians	U.S. Department of Justice, COPS Office: *Best Practices and Professional Standards for Peer Support Counseling Programs for First Responder Agencies*
New England program examples	Maine State Police Member Assistance Team; Vermont State Police Members Assistance Team; Connecticut State Police wellness information, including STOPS; MassCOP Peer Support Program; Nashua Police Peer Support Team; Brown University Health: First Responder Resources in Rhode Island; https://rhodeislandcism.com; https://www.desc.dos.nh.gov/peer-support-team ; https://mastatepeersupportnetwork.org/; https://officersafety.riss.net
Delayed stress reactions and treatment	VA National Center for PTSD: *Strategies: Police Self-Care* and *Why Get PTSD Treatment?*
Immediate and confidential support	COPLINE for current and former law enforcement personnel and their families; 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline for anyone needing crisis support

Success Stories

Organized Crime/Cartels/Extremists – Organized Retail Theft: The NESPIN Criminal Intelligence staff assisted numerous police agencies with identifying and disrupting an organized retail theft ring responsible for a series of beauty product thefts throughout Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Investigators linked the organization to 25 theft incidents targeting a national retail chain, resulting in losses exceeding $20,000.00.

Members of the theft ring were arrested by a Member Agency during the commission of a felony. One of the suspects was known to the surrounding law enforcement community, and his capture assisted with identifying two other suspects. NESPIN intelligence staff coordinated with NESPIN's law enforcement coordinators in multiple areas to connect with impacted agencies and share information regarding the group's identity and their capture.

NESPIN Publication services distributed a special bulletin to aid with agency notifications. In querying multiple law enforcement indices to compose the special bulletin, NESPIN intelligence staff discovered that one of the suspects is a self-admitted associate of violent street gang. The assistance provided by NESPIN enabled investigators to identify and charge key members of the organization. Eight Member Agencies cleared cases involving the same group.

Burglary and Larceny: A Member Agency investigated several burglaries and thefts from multiple storage units in their town. While using RISSProp detectives were able to locate a guitar that had been stolen during one of the storage unit burglaries. The guitar was recovered and a suspect was identified. Further information found that the suspect's girlfriend who resided out of state was the one committing the burglaries. The arrest warrant for multiple burglaries was granted for her arrest.

Larceny: A Member Agency investigated a larceny of jewelry from an elderly victim in their judication. The elderly victim and their family reported that a health care worker was suspected of stealing jewelry from the victim's residence. Officers were able to locate the missing jewelry using RISSProp and identified the suspect as the health care worker. Officers found that the suspect had stolen $77,449 worth of items from the victim and using RISSProp found that $48,000 of jewelry was pawned.

Larceny: A Member Agency received a report of the theft of a catalytic converter from a motor vehicle. The catalytic converter had been maliciously cut off resulting in severe damage to the vehicle. The Detective developed a suspect and seized his cellular phone with a search warrant. The device was submitted to the NESPIN Digital Forensics Unit where the contents were examined. The examination resulted in the identification of other coconspirators and a fence that purchased the stolen catalytic converter. Three suspects plead guilty to the charges.

Larceny: A Member Agency received a call from a citizen reporting that his cellular phone had been stolen while he was visiting a casino in Rhode Island. The citizen reported that using a locating feature they determined that his device was currently located in the lobby of a retailer in their Town. The Detective queried RISSProp and located the device being sold to an electronic recycling company with a kiosk located in the retailer's lobby. The investigators responded to the kiosk and were able to successfully recover the stolen device. A suspect was identified through the RISSProp transaction data, the prosecution is being prepared.

Credit Card Fraud: A Member Agency was investigating a credit card fraud case in which a woman lost her credit card while at a supermarket. The card was later used at the same supermarket by two supermarket employees. The employees were identified by the store using surveillance video. NESPIN's intelligence staff were able to provide contact information, phone numbers, and addresses for the suspects. Arrest warrants for the suspects are currently in NCIC.

Credit Card Fraud: A Member Agency was investigating two individuals who broke into lockers at a gym and fraudulently used the credit cards to purchase approximately $8,000 worth of products. The individuals fled the store prior to police arrival. NESPIN's intelligence staff was able to provide information that assisted with confirming one suspect who used a Canadian license to rent a vehicle. NESPIN intelligence staff provided contact information for a Canadian law enforcement agency, who recognized and helped to identify the other individual. Arrest warrants were issued for the individuals.

OUI-Death Resulting: A Member Agency utilized the NESPIN Criminal Intelligence Services Unit during an investigation involving a OUI-Death Resulting incident. The vehicle operator was in police custody and receiving medical treatment, while investigators worked to positively establish the individual's identity.

Based on information provided by the investigators, a NESPIN Criminal Intelligence Specialist contacted the New York State Intelligence Center (NYCIS) to request an expedited search for a New York driver's license and any associated arrest records, including photographs.

The search resulted in photographs that were provided to the Investigators. Using these photographs and related law enforcement records, investigators were able to positively identify the vehicle operator. The individual was subsequently charged with Operating Under the Influence / Manslaughter.

Fraud by false pretenses: A Member Agency contacted NESPIN after a resident was coerced into sending $5,900 dollars via a cryptocurrency ATM. NESPIN's analytical staff was able to locate the funds in a wallet that contained an additional $33,803 that was then able to be back traced to other victims of the same scam. As a result, the entire $39,703 was able to be seized and returned to several victims across multiple jurisdictions.

Fraud by false pretenses: A Member Agency contacted NESPIN after a resident reported that they sent $1,700,000 over several years as part of a "pig butchering" scam. NESPIN's analytical staff conducted a trace of the victim's funds to an account that resulted in the identification of 100 additional victims across the United States. As a result, $1,800,000 was able to be seized with the assistance of a Federal Member Agency and approximately $600,000 was returned directly to the victim, and the remaining funds to the additional victims identified in this analysis.

A final thought.
NESPIN has been in operation for more than 45 years. We have a myriad of services that support your work and help secure successful resolutions. Information sharing, equipment loans, digital forensics, training, event/target/currency deconfliction, analytical and criminal investigative support are what we do. I'm confident we can help you and remain just a call away.

Please remain healthy and safe.

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NEW ENGLAND STATE POLICE INFORMATION NETWORK
124 Grove Street, Suite 105, Franklin, MA 02038-3159 • 508-528-8200 • www.riss.net

ANNOUNCEMENT OF OPEN POSITION
CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE ANALYST

The New England State Police Information Network (NESPIN) is a regional center dedicated to assist local, state, federal, and tribal criminal justice agencies by providing adaptive solutions and services that facilitate information sharing, support criminal investigations, and promote officer safety.

The schedule for this onsite position is Monday through Friday, 37.5 hours per week, during regular business hours of 8:00am to 4:30pm. The duty location is NESPIN headquarters in Franklin, Massachusetts.

Duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Provide case-specific analytical assistance to member agencies in the areas of communication analysis, device location data analysis, case analysis, link analysis, cryptocurrency analysis, and social media analysis.
- Prepare written and oral reports summarizing the results of analytical work.
- Review relevant literature to stay current on criminal activity trends and identify patterns or similarities useful to member agencies.
- Represent NESPIN analytical unit during information sharing meetings, trainings, and provides any relevant material for sharing with members through NESPIN's publications.
- Attend periodic training on specific criminal topics and analytical tools that will assist them to better serve law enforcement members.
- Testify as needed in court on work product for case-related analysis.
- Perform other related duties or projects assigned by management.

Minimum Requirements:

- Bachelor's degree in criminal justice, or a related field and knowledge of the criminal justice system.
- 3-5 years of experience (within the last 5 years) working in an intelligence gathering or investigative environment.
- Knowledge of criminal intelligence techniques and analytical procedures to effectively conduct analysis of criminal investigations and other intelligence projects involving interrelated subject areas.
- Knowledge of cellular phone technology and record analysis is highly desired.
- Strong attention to detail, time management and organizational skills.
- Excellent verbal and written communication competencies.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office suite, GIS mapping platforms, i2 Analysts Notebook, and intelligence databases.
- Ability to travel for courtroom testimony and training (less than 10% of the time).
- Ability to maintain the confidentiality and integrity of information and investigations coordinated, developed, and/or assisted by the NESPIN.
- The final candidate will be offered conditional employment and must pass a State Police background check before employment commences.
- A combination of education, training, and experience may be considered.

Salary Range: $76,981 annually, plus generous benefit package.

Interested candidates should submit resume and letter of intent before **October 30, 2026** by email to nespinjobs@outlook.com, or sent by regular mail to the address above.

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SCHOOL SECURITY INSIGHTS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Secure School Entrance

Why a Vestibule Is Only One Part of the Security Process.

Michael Gagnon / President & CEO / Smart Security Partners, LLC

Why This Matters

A secure vestibule can be an important layer of school security, but the vestibule itself does not control risk. The real security value comes from the complete process: how a visitor approaches, is observed, identified, admitted, screened, authorized, monitored, and ultimately allowed access beyond the reception area.

The Entrance Is Where Policy Becomes Practice

For many schools, the main entrance has become the most visible symbol of security. New and renovated buildings increasingly include secure vestibules, video intercoms, electronic access control, visitor management systems, cameras, and reception areas designed to separate visitors from the student population.

Those improvements matter. But a secure entrance should not be judged by how impressive the vestibule looks or how much technology has been installed. It should be judged by what actually happens when an unfamiliar person walks toward the building.
The strongest entrance designs combine architecture, technology, staffing, procedures, and good decision-making. If any one of those elements is weak, the overall process can be weakened as well.

This is an area where collaboration between schools, law enforcement, architects, facilities personnel, and security professionals is especially valuable. Each group sees the entrance differently. The school sees daily operations. The architect sees circulation and space. Facilities personnel see doors and hardware. Police see behavior, response, and the consequences when normal controls fail.

Start Before the Visitor Reaches the Door

Entrance security begins outside the building.

A visitor should be able to understand where to go without wandering among multiple doors. Signage, pathways, parking, landscaping, lighting, and the placement of the main office all contribute to that experience. At the same time, school personnel should have reasonable natural or technological surveillance of the approach.

Landscaping should not create concealment near the entrance or obstruct views from offices and cameras. Exterior lighting should support visibility during early morning, evening, and after-hours activities. Vehicle circulation should reduce unnecessary conflict between visitors, buses, students, and staff. Visitor parking should near the front entrance whenever possible to promote natural surveillance.

Good security design should make the expected path obvious to legitimate users while making unauthorized access more difficult.

Identification Before Admission

One of the most important questions is simple: what information does the school have before it unlocks the exterior door?

A video intercom can allow staff to see and communicate with a visitor, but the equipment does not make the decision. Staff still need a clear process for determining why the person is there and whether entry should be granted. That process becomes especially important when the visitor's purpose is unclear, the person refuses to identify themselves, appears agitated, or requests access to a student or staff member unexpectedly.

Schools should establish practical procedures that staff can apply consistently. Employees responsible for controlling the entrance should know when to admit someone, when to seek assistance, and when circumstances warrant contacting law enforcement. Technology should support that judgment, not replace it.

Control What Happens After the First Door Opens

A common misconception is that once a visitor has been admitted into a vestibule, the security problem has been solved. In reality, the next transition may be more important than the first.

A properly configured entrance should prevent an unverified visitor from moving directly from the vestibule into the school. The person should instead be routed to a controlled reception or administrative area where identification and purpose can be confirmed.

That transition is critical and deserves careful review. Can a visitor bypass reception? Can someone follow an employee through an interior door? Does the reception area have direct access to student corridors? Are there doors behind the desk that staff routinely leave unsecured?

The physical design and the operating procedure have to work together. A door that is electronically controlled provides little value if staff routinely defeat the control for convenience.

Visitor Management Is More Than Printing a Badge

Electronic visitor management systems have become common in schools. They can improve consistency, maintain records, screen identification against selected databases, and produce visible visitor credentials.

But the badge is not the objective, it's about accountability. The school should know who has been admitted, why the person is there, where they are authorized to go, whether an escort is required, and when they leave. Staff throughout the building should understand what an authorized visitor credential looks like and what to do if they encounter someone without one.

Visitor management also needs to address contractors, volunteers, substitute staff, vendors, delivery personnel, parents attending events, and others whose access may not fit the typical check in scenario. The system should support a clear policy rather than become the policy itself.

Plan for the Difficult Visitor

Most people arriving at a school are there for legitimate reasons. Security procedures, however, also have to work when the interaction is difficult.

Consider an angry parent, a former employee demanding access, a person involved in a custody dispute that arrives unexpectedly, or even a person who refuses to comply with identification requirements. Front office staff are often the first people required to manage these encounters. They should not be expected to improvise. Schools should establish escalation procedures, duress notification methods, communication protocols, and clear thresholds for involving administrators or law enforcement.

The physical workspace should also be reviewed from the staff perspective: Are employees positioned safely? Do they have a reasonable path of retreat? Can they secure access to the rest of the school? Can they summon assistance discreetly? These are operational questions, not just architectural ones.

Don't Forget Arrival, Dismissal and After-Hours Use

The main entrance may be tightly controlled during the middle of the school day while security conditions change substantially during arrival, dismissal, athletic events, performances, voting, community programs, and evening activities.

Doors that are normally locked may be opened. Staff may be positioned outside. Large groups may enter at once. Community members may be permitted into portions of the building that are otherwise secured. Those conditions should be planned rather than treated as exceptions. Where possible, after-hours use should be compartmentalized so that the public can reach the gymnasium, auditorium, cafeteria, or restrooms without gaining unnecessary access to academic portions of the school.

Access-control schedules, interior separation doors, staffing, and emergency egress all need to support that concept. Police departments familiar with these patterns are better positioned to understand what a 'normal' condition looks like at different times of day.

Test the Entrance as a Complete Process

A useful entrance review is not simply a hardware inspection. It is a walkthrough of the visitor experience.

Start outside and approach the school as a first-time visitor. Follow the signage. Use the intercom. Observe what staff can see. Consider what happens when the exterior door unlocks. Follow the path into reception. Identify every point where a person could potentially move in an unintended direction.

Then test less routine conditions. What happens if the intercom fails? What happens during a power outage? How is the entrance managed when the receptionist is away from the desk? What changes during dismissal? What happens when a delivery arrives? Small operational tests frequently reveal issues that are difficult to see on drawings or equipment lists.

A Practical Entrance Review

Schools and their public-safety partners can use a straightforward set of questions during the next entrance review:

1. Is the main visitor entrance obvious from parking and pedestrian approaches?
2. Can staff adequately observe and communicate with a visitor before unlocking the exterior door?
3. Once admitted, is the visitor physically prevented from entering the school until authorized?
4. Are visitor identification, screening, badging, escort, and checkout procedures consistently applied?
5. Do front-office staff have a clear process for handling an agitated, suspicious, or noncompliant visitor?
6. Are arrival, dismissal, deliveries, and after-hours activities addressed as separate operating conditions?
7. Are entrance doors, locks, intercoms, cameras, access control, and duress systems routinely tested?

The purpose of the review is to confirm that the entrance works as an integrated security process.

Security Without Creating a Fortress

A school entrance has to serve competing needs. It should be welcoming to students, families, and legitimate visitors while still establishing meaningful control over access.

Security that is well designed is often unobtrusive and provides clear circulation, good visibility, appropriate separation, reliable door control, trained staff, and consistent procedures that can create a safer environment without making a school feel institutional.

It's important to note that a secure vestibule is an important tool, but it is only one layer. The real security system is the combination of people, procedures, physical design, and technology working together from the moment someone approaches the building until their visit is complete.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Gagnon is President and CEO of Smart Security Partners, LLC (SSP), an independent, vendor-neutral security consulting firm and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB). SSP provides physical security and CPTED assessments, security design consulting, technology assessments, emergency preparedness support, and security program development for schools and other organizations nationally.

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Date	Course Title	Location	Time	Cost
October 15, 2026	Firearms Legal Update	Shrewsbury Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	$219
October 15 & 16, 2026	2 Day Criminal Procedure Review & Update	Hingham Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	$369
October 15 & 16, 2026	Assessment Center Testing Preparation (2 Day)	Millis Police Department	8:30AM – 2:30PM	$420
October 16, 2026	Operation of the Evidence Room for Evidence Officers	Bellingham Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	$199
October 19 & 20, 2026	2 Day Search Warrant Preparation	Grafton Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	$330
October 20, 2026	Management Rights for Law Enforcement Leadership	Mansfield Police Department	8:30AM - 2:30PM	$199
October 20, 2026	Firearms Legal Update	Middleborough Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	$219
October 20 & 21, 2026	14th Annual Sergeants Conference	DoubleTree by Hilton, Milford MA	9:00AM - 3:00PM	$399
October 21, 2026	Firearms Legal Update	Hudson Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	$219
October 21, 2026	AI Command Responsible AI Governance for Law Enforcement Leaders	On-Demand	9:00AM - 3:00PM	$895/$1,495
October 21 & 22, 2026	2 Day Search Warrant Preparation	Wilmington Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	$330
October 22 & 23, 2026	2 Day Criminal Procedure Review & Update	Shrewsbury Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	$369
October 23, 2026	Report Writing for Law Enforcement	Rowley Police Department	9:00AM - 3:00PM	$199
October 26 – 30, 2026	Internal Affairs Certification Program 5 Day	Millis Police Department	8:30AM - 2:30PM	$699
October 27 & 28, 2026	Breaking and Entering Evidence and Recovery (BEER)	Andover Police Department	8:30AM - 4:30PM	$459
October 28, 2026	Firearms Legal Update	Webinar/Zoom	9:00AM - 3:00PM	$219

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