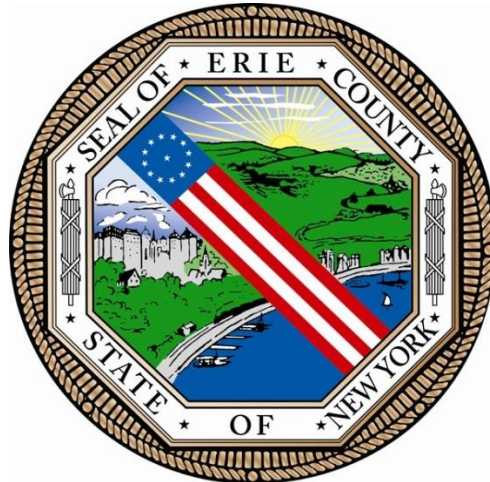


**June 2020**

**A Report on Services Provided by  
the Erie County Sheriff's Office**



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**June 9, 2020**

Erie County Legislature  
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Dear Honorable Members:

Amidst recent protests decrying incidents of police overreach and systemic racism, one potential reform measure mentioned has been to defund police.

Defunding police calls for a reimagining of the role of police in the community. It would remove police from involvement in certain roles which they have traditionally provided and allow that money to be spent for other priorities by elected officials.

The purpose of this report is to provide information to legislators regarding the services that are currently provided by the Erie County Sheriff's department in their discussions as to whether they value these services when making spending decisions.

As a result of this report, we caution against eliminating functions of the Sheriff's department without certainty that those services are not valuable to the community. Further, if it is determined that the services are not valued by the elected officials, we recommend that consideration be given to allowing taxpayers to keep fund used to pay for these programs for themselves, rather than being spent on other priorities of elected officials.

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## Background

Police services are provided by multiple offices and departments at the county level in Erie County. The two main providers of police services at the county level are the Office of the Sheriff and the Department of Central Police Services.

The Office of the Erie County Sheriff operates according to the New York State Constitution, New York State law, and the Erie County Charter. The office is divided into three major divisions, providing services in each division. These divisions include the Division of Police Services, the Division of Jail Management, and the Division of Correctional Health.

The Office of the Erie County Sheriff also serves as a revenue source. This source is relatively small compared to its overall budget. However, these revenue sources must be considered when making changes to the budget.

The Department Central Police Services falls under the supervision of the County Executive. Their primary mission is to provide forensic, technical, and support services on a countywide and regional basis to law enforcement agencies and other public safety and first responders.

The department is broken down into four divisions. Each division has its own set of program and service objectives.

## Office of the Sheriff

### Division of Police Services

The Division of Police Services provides 24-hour patrol services, as well as providing investigative services necessary to solve crimes committed in the community. In addition to public safety and emergency services, the division also offers community service and crime prevention programs. Further, the division provides civil process services and services to the civil courts.

Among the programs and services performed by the Division of Police Services are:

- Provide 24-hour, 7 days/week road patrol services in primarily, but not limited to, each patrol district serving the towns and villages in Erie County that do not have their own police forces.
- Provide appropriate, timely response to all routine and emergency calls received and render services as required.
- Help break the cycle of domestic and family violence by vigorously investigating reports of same, strictly enforcing NYS laws, and responding swiftly and appropriately to calls of domestic and family violence.

- Provide aviation patrol to enforce New York State penal laws throughout Erie County and surrounding areas, conduct search and rescue operations, and provide additional intelligence to Sheriff's deputies and other police officers on the ground.
- Provide effective investigation of all crimes reported to the Sheriffs' Office and assure that persons responsible for criminal acts are identified and arrested.
- Provide specialized investigators, techniques and equipment to assure the effective investigation of narcotics trafficking and the arrest of persons responsible for narcotics offenses.
- Provide specialized investigators and techniques to assure the effective investigation of human trafficking and the arrest of persons responsible for trafficking offenses.
- Provide effective, specialized investigation of all fires occurring within the Sheriffs' patrol districts and other localities, as requested, and assure that persons responsible for arson fires are identified and arrested.
- Provide marine patrol enforcement of boating and navigation laws in the Niagara River, Lake Erie and adjoining waterways, and provide search and rescue services and assistance to boaters as required.
- Provide bomb removal and explosive ordnance services, and Special Weapons and Tactical (SWAT) services to all police agencies in the county as requested.
- Maintain effective & efficient traffic enforcement programs, including crash investigation and DWI enforcement.
- Execute all warrants issued from any court in connection with child support cases that are initiated by the Department of Social Services and Family Court.
- Receive, record and properly serve and/or execute all civil process orders including subpoenas, orders of seizure or attachment, warrants of commitment or eviction and executions involving income or property.
- Process and maintain accurate, up-to-date criminal history information in the state computer system.
- Implement effective programs of public awareness and crime prevention throughout the county, and provide education and information to the public, as requested. The programs include, but are not limited to, the Yellow Dot Program, car seat safety checks, child ID, drug drop and the K-9 program.
- Conduct effective in-service training programs.
- Provide building security at Rath Building and Main Street offices where individuals seeking services from the County arrive to receive same.

In addition to the above-mentioned services, some officers provide volunteer or uncompensated services. These services include chaplain services for inmates and funerals of officers; care of personally owned horses for use at mounted patrol events; the all-volunteer scientific staff who provide highly technical assistance to the office; etc.

In order to execute their programs and services, the division is budgeted \$33,079,326 for 2020. This funds a total of 378 employees, comprised of 191 full-time, 16 part-time, and 171 seasonal. The total budgeted for payroll for these individuals is \$14,074,702. The amount budgeted for fringe benefits for these employees is \$9,440,770 and the amount of overtime budgeted is \$5,203,700. The division also lists as revenue \$2,452,277 from various sources.

## **Division of Jail Management**

The Division of Jail Management operates two facilities, with a total capacity of 1,522 inmates. The Holding Center is located in downtown Buffalo and houses inmates who are considered a hazard to themselves, others or the community, as well as a number of high-risk federal prisoners with cases pending in federal court.

The Erie County Correctional facility holds low and medium risk inmates. Many inmates at this facility participate in job training and community service programs. Some of these inmates provide assistance to the Erie County Parks Department and the Highway Division, performing tasks such as cleaning, maintenance, clearing brush, debris removal, gardening, painting and landscaping improvements on county property.

Among the programs and services performed by the Division of Jail Management are:

- To effectively secure all jail management facilities, to maintain control of all persons committed to the custody of the Sheriff, to firmly and fairly enforce all laws, ordinances, rules and regulations pertaining to incarcerated persons, and to do so in a humane, dignified and respectful manner.
- To comply with all federal guidelines, all New York State Commission of Corrections standards, and to safeguard the health and welfare of all inmates by providing quality and nutritionally balanced meals and by taking a "best practices" approach to medical care, mental health services, counseling, and interpretation services.
- To provide rehabilitative, educational, recreational, religious and job training programs designed to assist inmates in making productive use of the time they are incarcerated.
- To support family relationships through visitation.
- To assist with re-entry into society by providing educational opportunities, literacy programs, GED programming, life skills and parenting workshops, to name a few.
- To provide job readiness programming, resume' writing workshops, and work assignments during incarceration, all with the goal of helping the inmate become gainfully employed upon release.

In order to execute the programs and services, the division is budgeted \$97,294,288 for 2020. This funds a total of 780 employees, comprised of 738 full-time, 41 part-time, and 1 regular part-time. The total budgeted for payroll for these individuals is \$48,239,354. The amount budgeted for fringe benefits for these employees is \$29,988,550 and the amount of overtime budgeted is \$8,008,800. The division also lists as revenue \$967,810 from various sources.

## **Division of Correctional Health**

The Division of Correctional Health provides medical care for inmates in the care of the Erie County Sheriff's Office. The care is provided from the time of incarceration to the moment of release. The division cares for an average of 17,500 inmates yearly, with an average daily population of 1,300.

The Division of Correctional Health provides assessment of community programs in order to assist inmates to continue to receive appropriate medical care in the community upon release.

Among the programs and services performed by the Division of Correctional Health are:

- Provide an initial medical and mental health screen upon admittance.
- Verification of community prescribed medication and treatment.
- Ensure the proper placement of the incarcerated individual: Detoxification Housing, Mental Health Housing, ADA requirement Housing or Medical Housing.
- Provide medical and physical care within the mandated guidelines.
- Provide detoxification screening and monitoring when necessary.
- Provide chronic disease management when necessary.
- Conduct a daily sick call, provide wound care and administer medications.
- Scheduling for specialized clinics off-site.
- Quality Improvement Program.
- Infection Control Program.
- Discharge planning for identified detoxification individuals.

In order to execute the programs and services, the division is budgeted \$14,290,407 for 2020. This funds a total of 100 employees, comprised of 89 full-time, 9 part-time, and 2 regular part-time. The total budgeted for payroll for these individuals is \$6,252,178. The amount budgeted for fringe benefits for these employees is \$3,301,976 and the amount of overtime budgeted is \$738,000.

## **Grant Funded Program – Office of the Sheriff**

### Gun Involved Violence Elimination

The Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative is a comprehensive strategy to reduce crime in targeted areas. Through improved coordination among federal, state, and local law enforcement, this program attacks violent street crime and addresses illegal guns, gangs and drugs. The Sheriffs' Office participates in this program with the Buffalo Police Department, Probation Department, Central Police Services, and the District Attorney's Office.

## **Department of Central Police Services**

### **Division of Law Enforcement Training Academy**

The Division of Law Enforcement Training Academy provides a full range of law enforcement training to all agencies in Erie County.

Among the programs and services performed by the Division of Law Enforcement Training Academy are:

- To work with SUNY/Erie and the Joint Advisory Committee providing direction and oversight of the operations of the Police Training Academy and provide courses and training programs designed to upgrade the technical and professional skills and competence of law enforcement and other public safety professionals from all law enforcement and public safety agencies in Erie County.
- To conduct basic training for newly appointed law enforcement officers, supervisory training and specialized training.
- Continue to offer the pre-employment initiative with SUNY/Erie.

### **Division of the Forensic Laboratory**

The Division of the Forensic Laboratory provides forensic scientific analysis services to 40 different law enforcement agencies in Western New York.

Among the programs and services performed by the Division of Forensic Laboratory are:

- Controlled substance identification.
- Ignitable liquid residue analysis.



- Impression analysis.
- Trace materials analysis.
- Biological fluid identification and DNA analysis.
- Firearm operability testing.
- Firearm identification.
- Identification and classification of fired ammunition components.

In order to execute the programs and services, the division is budgeted \$3,614,555 for 2020. This funds a total of 14 full-time employees, including the administration of Central Police Services. The total budgeted for payroll for these individuals is \$926,761. The amount budgeted for fringe benefits for these employees is \$412,370 and the amount of overtime budgeted is \$23,250.

## **Statewide Automated Biometric Information System**

The Statewide Automated Biometric Information System is responsible for identifying crime scene evidence through the investigation of fingerprints and palm prints.

Among the programs and services performed by the Statewide Automated Biometric Information System are:

- Provide fingerprint and palmprint analysis.
- Provide expert testimony in court regarding analysis and findings.

## **Division of Communications and Information Systems**

The Division of Communications and Information Systems supports an immediate response to emergency calls to the E-911 system. The division also answers and processes calls for the Buffalo Police non-emergency lines.

Among the programs and services performed by the Division of Communications and Information Systems are:

- Develop and maintain computerized information systems, which provides over 70 local, state, and federal law enforcement, public safety, and criminal justice agencies with computerized records, 24-hour on-line information retrieval, and information exchange designed to increase police officer safety and improve police effectiveness.

- Work with the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, striving for coordination between all responders during an emergency.
- Promote interoperability and sharing of information between first responders by continuing to improve countywide Enhanced 911 services and countywide information retrieval and exchange.
- Work with all public safety disciplines on the newly implemented County-wide 911 telephone system for improved and coordinated public safety responses.

In order to execute the programs and services, the division is budgeted \$5,210,246 for 2020. This funds a total of 51 employees, comprised of 47 full-time and 4 part-time. The total budgeted for payroll for these individuals is \$2,544,318. The amount budgeted for fringe benefits for these employees is \$1,524,088 and the amount of overtime budgeted is \$292,740. In addition, 18 full-time Sheriff's Office dispatchers provide services at Central Police Services. Their total salary is budgeted at \$988,651. The amount budgeted for fringe benefits for these employees is \$706,876 and the amount of overtime budgeted is \$205,000.

## **STOP-DWI and Traffic Safety Office**

The STOP-DWI and Traffic Safety Office are funded through fines collected from drunken drivers in Erie County courts. Since the system begins with enforcement, 65% of annual DWI fine collections are paid back to the police agency that made the arrest. This system supplies incentive to police agencies and leverages their resources to DWI enforcement. As such, defunding the program would not provide an incentive to more stringently enforce DWI laws.

The remaining 35% of annual revenue is allocated among other components to create a comprehensive campaign that creates a public perception of high risk for apprehension; supervises chronic offenders through probation; produces expert investigation of DWI crashes; encourages strict prosecution of DWI cases with an emphasis on high fines and immediate collection; supplies DWI victim services; and properly administers the program within state guidelines.

## **Grant Funded Programs – Department of Central Police Services**

The Department of Central Police Services receives a number of grants from various agencies. These include:

### Aid to Crime Labs Program

The general purpose of this state grant program is to provide local assistance funding to crime labs. The Central Police Services Forensic Laboratory is the recipient of grant funds which are used to maintain the laboratory's capacity to analyze physical evidence associated with criminal

investigations being conducted by law enforcement within Erie County. This includes the presentation of laboratory findings in court cases as required.

#### DNA Backlog Reduction

The program goal is to reduce the forensic DNA sample turnaround time, increase throughput of DNA samples and reduce the number of forensic DNA samples awaiting analysis.

#### Gun Involved Violence Elimination

The goal of this program is to provide the Erie County agency partnership with the tools necessary to employ intelligence-led strategies that will reduce gun involved violent crime within Erie County.

#### National Forensic Sciences Improvement Grant

This grant provides funding to reduce the backlog of seized drug cases, retain one part-time chemist, and purchase consumables associated with the analysis of seized drugs with an emphasis on opioid related drugs.

#### Pedestrian Safety Awareness and Harm Reduction

The program goal is to coordinate information efforts to increase public awareness of risks faced by pedestrians. Activities include participation in local meetings, and distribution of accident statistics and incident locations. This grant is administered by the STOP-DWI Program.

## **Conclusion**

Police Services provided to the residents of Erie County are numerous. This report is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of the services provided. Rather, it serves as a starting point for a discussion about what services are and should be provided.

The services provided include patrol, investigation, incarceration, report and response, safety training, victim advocacy, and public awareness. Each office and department provides metrics during the budget process to support the expenditures for these services. These services are costly, yet have been determined to be a priority of the officials who create and approve the annual budget.

It is certainly possible to reduce funding for law enforcement. This may require public safety services which have been provided by law enforcement agencies to be eliminated. It may also detach the service, if continued elsewhere, from years of invaluable experience in providing such services. Any decision regarding the elimination of services from law enforcement should only be made with careful consideration to public safety.

