

ON THE JOB

CRIMINAL JUSTICE UPDATE

COVER STORY

MEETING THE DEMAND

A new unit at BCI that's dedicated to use-of-force cases will further enhance the quality of other investigations, too

To better serve law enforcement agencies and municipalities around the state, the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation has created a stand-alone unit dedicated to investigating shootings and other critical use-of-force incidents involving law enforcement officers.

But the creation of the Force Investigations Unit (FIU) serves another important function, as well.

Because BCI's Special Investigations Unit is no longer tasked with investigating officer-involved shootings, SIU agents will be able to devote even more time to assisting local law enforcement with other types of cases, including homicides, public corruption, financial crimes, and voter fraud.

Use-of-force cases are complex and time-consuming, even more so if they involve a fatality. They typically include a large amount of evidence to process and numerous witnesses to interview. A BCI analysis of 2023 investigations found that each case took an average of 320 work hours to complete. And, because the cases are typically in the media spotlight, the public's demand for quick answers is often intense.

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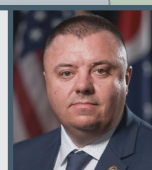


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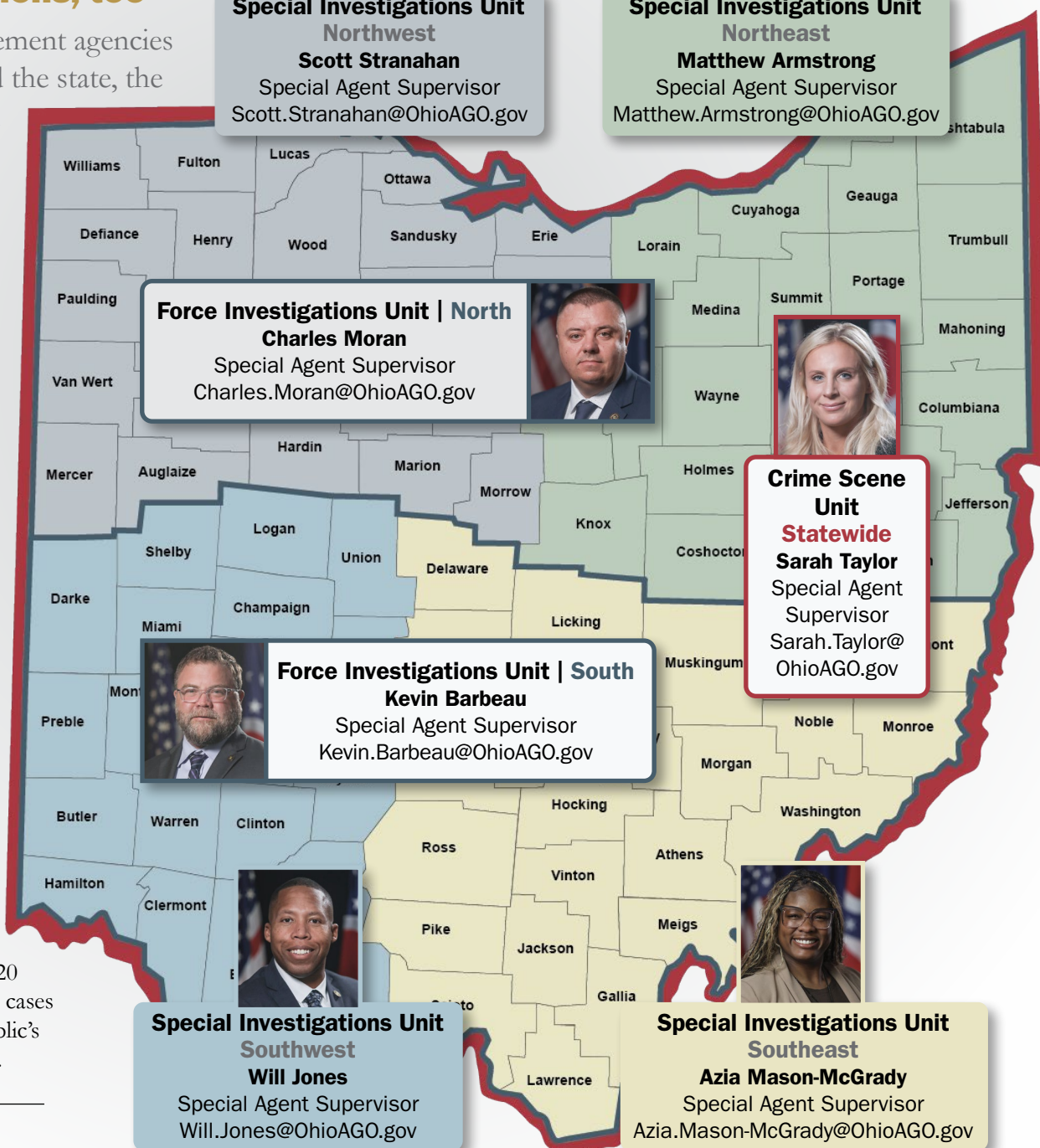
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When I took office in 2019, my message to Ohio's law enforcement community was simple: *I want to know what you're encountering and how I can help.*

I would like to think that anybody who wears a badge knows that I recognize how demanding the job is, and that I've heard your concerns over the years and responded to your needs.

Several stories in this edition of On The Job detail some of my office's most recent efforts — help with investigations, help with training, help with inmate addiction.

Let's start with investigations. We recognize that agencies across Ohio are being asked to do more with less. That's why we reshuffled and moved resources around at the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, an arm of my office, so we can provide even greater assistance to local law enforcement.

Faced with a steady flow of requests from agencies to investigate officer-involved shootings, we recently established a stand-alone unit at BCI — the Force Investigations Unit (FIU) — to handle only those cases.

The benefits of this change are twofold: Use-of-force investigations are complex and time-consuming, and they demand the highest priority. With the creation of the FIU, officer-involved shootings will continue to get the attention they demand and turnaround times are likely to be reduced.

Furthermore, because these cases will no longer be the responsibility of BCI's Special Investigations Unit, SIU agents will have greater availability to help local law enforcement with homicides, public corruption, financial crimes, voter fraud and other important investigations.

We also heard loud and clear about the need for improved and more accessible peace officer training, and hopefully you're familiar with changes that we've already made in that area. For example, thanks to the OPOTA Online platform and our six Close to Home training partners, officers can train online or at a regional site and still sleep in their own bed.

But that's just the start. The Blue Ribbon Task



Force that I commissioned last year proposed major changes in police training, and most of these have now been implemented. The changes incorporate cutting-edge technology and affect what and how officers are taught, beginning with basic training and extending through the arc of their careers. It's a smart, new approach for the 21st century.

Another priority is our county jails. The opioid crisis is still going on, and we're hearing the concerns of sheriffs about inmate addiction and the threat it poses. That's why we've decided to take the opioid settlement money in OneOhio and give it back to you, the ones still fighting the good fight.

So far my office has awarded \$3.5 million in grants to 21 jails this year to help inmates through detox and recovery. But there's much more money available — a total of \$60 million over the next few years — and I urge every sheriff to seize the opportunity.

These initiatives are just the latest examples. Throughout my administration, we have committed to supporting local law enforcement in numerous ways. These include:

- Expanding NIBIN access and DNA firearms testing through BCI.

- Supporting task forces to fight human trafficking, drug trafficking and organized retail theft.
- Creating a Cold Case Unit and an Electronic Financial Investigations Unit in BCI, and enhancing DNA-testing methods in the BCI Laboratory.
- Providing school-threat assessment training.
- Offering grants for body armor, portable drug-analysis devices, and Drug Abuse Response Teams (DARTs).

Here's the takeaway: I'm still listening and always will be.

I want to know the challenges you face and what you need from my office to meet those challenges. No aspect of my job is more important.

Yours,

Dave Yost
Dave Yost
Ohio Attorney General

May turns tragic as Ohio loses 2 deputies in line of duty

The Ohio law enforcement community and the citizens of southwestern and central Ohio suffered tragic losses in May when two deputy sheriffs — Larry Ray Henderson Jr. of Hamilton County and Daniel Weston Sherrer of Morrow County — were killed in the line of duty just three weeks apart.

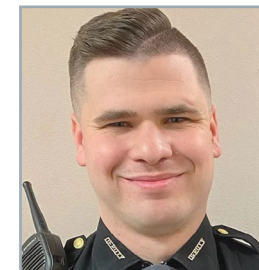
Henderson Jr., 57, died May 2 after being struck by a car driven by a man whose son had been fatally shot the day before by Cincinnati police during an auto-theft investigation. Henderson was directing traffic at the University of Cincinnati graduation at the time.

Henderson's death occurred just days before Ohio's annual Peace Officers Memorial Ceremony, where Attorney General Dave Yost mourned the deputy, adding, "We should never accept that these tragedies have to happen."

Henderson served 33 years with the Hamilton County Sheriff's Office before retiring in



Larry Ray Henderson Jr.



Daniel Weston Sherrer

December 2024, only to return to the agency as a special-duty deputy. During his law enforcement career, the former Marine served on the regional bomb squad, the SWAT team, and the FBI's joint terrorism task force.

He leaves behind a wife and five children.

Prosecutors said they will seek the death penalty. The trial is scheduled to begin in January.

Morrow County Deputy Daniel Weston Sherrer, 31, was shot and killed on Memorial Day, May

26, when he responded to a report of gunshots at a home south of Marengo.

A 53-year-old man was seated on the porch holding a gun when Sherrer arrived. The suspect, who was wounded in an ensuing exchange of gunfire, has been charged with aggravated murder.

Sherrer had worked for the sheriff's office for four years, his first law enforcement job.

"I share in the anguish experienced by so many in this tightknit community," Yost said.

Sherrer graduated from the Delaware Area Career Center's peace officer training academy. He was a field training officer and had completed the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Law Enforcement Active Shooter Threat Training Program.

Said Morrow County Sheriff John Hinton: "He was a godsend for this sheriff's office, this community, this county."

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"In an officer-involved shooting, we want to have everything that's within our control done within the first 90 days," said BCI Assistant Superintendent Mark Kollar.

To ensure that these cases continue to be investigated to the highest standards and in a timely manner, BCI created the FIU. An increasing volume of requests by local law enforcement agencies for independent, third-party investigations ultimately prompted the move.

The numbers tell the tale.

In 2019, Attorney General Dave Yost's first year in the elected office, BCI accepted requests from law enforcement agencies and municipalities to investigate 26 officer-involved shooting incidents. The following year, BCI was asked to investigate 50 cases, nearly double the number of the previous year.

Since then, requests for independent investigations have only increased, with BCI averaging more than 63 OICI cases a year since 2020.

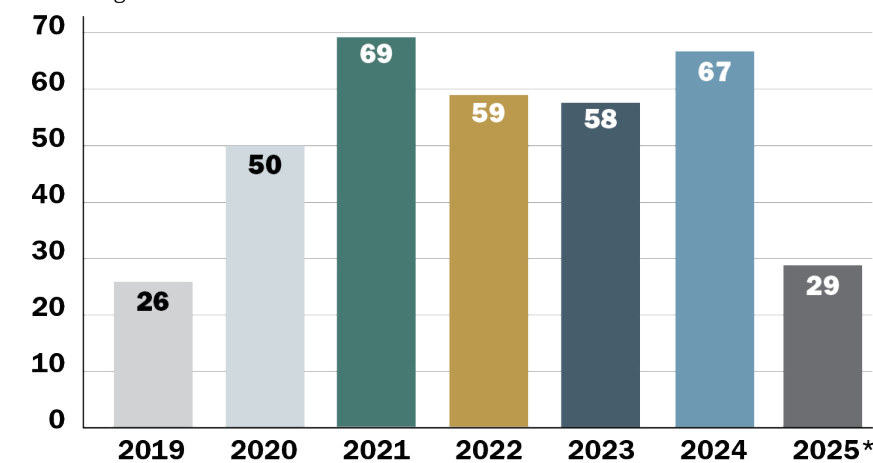
Overall, since 2019 — including 29 cases in 2025 (as of July 16) — BCI has investigated 358 officer-involved critical incidents and established itself as a national leader in such investigations.

According to Kollar, the bureau conducts about 85% to 90% of the officer-involved shooting investigations statewide — what he calls "the new normal" for the agency.

"In recent years, public officials, the general public and law enforcement alike have realized the benefits of third-party independent investigations," Kollar said. "That in turn, has led to many agencies that previously conducted their own use-of-force investigations to begin requesting BCI to carry out those investigations."

OICI investigations by BCI (*as of 7/16/2025)

Since 2020, the Bureau of Criminal Investigation has fielded a high number of requests to investigate officer-involved critical incidents:



The Force Investigations Unit is made up of two teams, each with nine agents and a special agent supervisor. One team covers the northern half of Ohio; the other, the southern half. (See map on cover).

Having a unit that handles only OICI investigations will, most notably, help expedite turnaround time, Kollar said. Additionally, FIU agents will receive even more in-depth training because they'll be specializing in only one type of investigation.

As a whole, Kollar said, the changes should drastically decrease the turnaround time on all types of investigations — including those done by SIU — and allow the bureau to give even greater attention to the needs of Ohio's law enforcement agencies.

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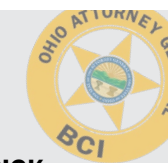


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VR PLAYS BIGGER ROLE IN CPT

OPOTA developing more courses based on video scenarios

The marriage was inevitable: Immersive virtual reality and continuing professional training — VR and CPT — have tied the knot in Ohio.

The beauty of this union? The state’s 33,000 law enforcement officers can use VR training and related courses on OPOTA Online to earn all 16 hours of the general/elective credits needed to fulfill the statewide CPT requirements. (The eight hours of mandatory CPT courses cannot be fulfilled through VR training as of yet.)

It also means that officers have a wider selection of technology-enhanced, scenario-based CPT courses to choose from and — because they’re online — can take the courses whenever and wherever they choose.

“You don’t send officers out to face 21st-century threats with 20th-century training — it puts lives at risk,” Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost said. “Virtual reality gives us the ability to mimic high-stress, lifelike scenarios without real-world consequences, leading to better training and, in turn, smarter policing in Ohio.”

It was just last summer when the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy introduced VR as a pillar of its training regimen, intended for use in both basic and advanced law enforcement education and across many roles, including first-line supervisors, field training officers, patrol officers and tactical officers. The move was one of several sweeping changes recommended by the Attorney General’s Blue Ribbon Task Force on the Future of Police Training.

OPOTA’s initial focus was on building a library of VR video simulations, developing a corps of certified trainers, and distributing VR headsets to police academies and OPOTA’s six regional training partners statewide.

With tremendous progress achieved in all those areas — 12 VR simulations have been created, 270 instructors have been certified, and 160 headsets have been distributed — OPOTA Executive Director Tom Quinlan directed his curriculum team to develop multiple one-hour,

VR library continues to grow

OPOTA recently introduced a second series of six VR training simulations, each between eight and 12 minutes long. The simulations must be led by an OPOTA-certified VR instructor, who conducts a 45-minute debrief as part of the training.

SERIES 1 addresses these topics:

- Teen brain
- Suicide prevention
- Domestic violence
- Mental health check
- Irate families
- School violence

SERIES 2, which builds on material in the first series, addresses these topics:

- Communication
- Community engagement
- De-escalation
- Decision making
- Using time as a tool
- Ethical and legal considerations
- Officer safety and wellness
- Scene assessment
- Suspect interaction
- Tactical considerations

An online resource

OPOTA has created webpages focused solely on virtual reality training. The pages explain how and where agencies and individual officers can get VR training, how to locate OPOTA-certified instructors, how to become an instructor, where to borrow or buy approved VR headsets, and how to use VR to qualify for CPT credit.

Visit <https://OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/OPOTA-Virtual-Reality>



CPT for 2025

24 TOTAL HOURS

8 REQUIRED IN:

- Use of Force (3)
- Ethics Laws (2)
- Legal Updates (2)
- Search & Seizure (1)

16 GENERAL/ELECTIVE:

On the required topics OR any combination of:

- Officer Trauma & Wellness
- Domestic Violence
- Vehicle Dynamics
- Report Writing
- Leadership

All CPT credits earned from VR training count only toward the 16 hours of general/elective credits.

CPT-themed courses for each of the 12 VR simulations.

The courses — free and available only through OPOTA Online — cover report writing, domestic violence, officer wellness, leadership and other topics. Each course yields one hour of CPT credit.

That means that an officer who completes a virtual reality simulation and debrief led by a certified instructor would qualify for an hour of CPT credit. Having done that, he or she could get additional CPT credit — up to 3 more hours — by going to the VR course catalog on OPOTA Online and taking the lessons that correspond to the VR simulation. Each VR simulation has either two or three one-hour courses connected to it.

For example, three one-hour CPT courses on OPOTA Online relate to the VR simulation titled Domestic Violence on Oak Street; one course goes into greater depth about domestic violence, one discusses officer wellness and the third deals with leadership issues. All told, four CPT credit hours can be earned by watching the domestic violence VR simulation and taking the related courses.

OPOTA’s VR simulations, produced in collaboration with Ohio University, emphasize situational decision-making, which, research shows, decreases use of force, discretionary arrests and officer injuries. The training is designed to help officers develop “soft skills” (such as listening and de-escalation techniques)

rather than tactical skills (such as shooting or making arrests).

Once trainees put on the headsets, they are “dropped” into the virtual world of the scenario, which offers a 360-degree perspective that enables them to turn to look in all directions.

VR training activates several senses at once and accommodates various learning styles better than traditional classroom courses. Consequently, it generally improves a person’s ability to process, distill and retain key information, allowing for more thorough and faster learning.

Robert Strausbaugh, OPOTA’s director of advanced training, said the VR rollout is on schedule and evolving as planned. In addition to the six new VR simulations and the steady increase in certified instructors, he points to another measure of success: Police chiefs and sheriffs are buying their own VR equipment and having OPOTA upload the videos to them.

In many cases, he said, the money used to buy the headsets comes from the state reimbursement that agencies receive to cover the time officers spend on CPT.

Sheriffs urged to use AGO grants to fight addiction in Ohio’s jails

Like jails around the country, Ohio’s jails have a drug problem. In some places, as many as 75% of inmates have substance-abuse disorders, often related to opioids, according to various sheriffs.

To help jails fight the scourge, Attorney General Dave Yost is offering \$60 million over the next several years to help monitor and treat inmates, and ultimately to break the debilitating and often-fatal cycle of addiction and incarceration.

As of mid-June, 21 Ohio jails — some that serve multiple counties — have received a total of \$3.5 million in Opioid Remediation Grants. Thirteen of those jails were just recently awarded money in the second round of funding.

“While a jail is no substitute for a rehab center,” Yost said, “these grants will aid recovery and support better outcomes for inmates struggling

with substance abuse.”

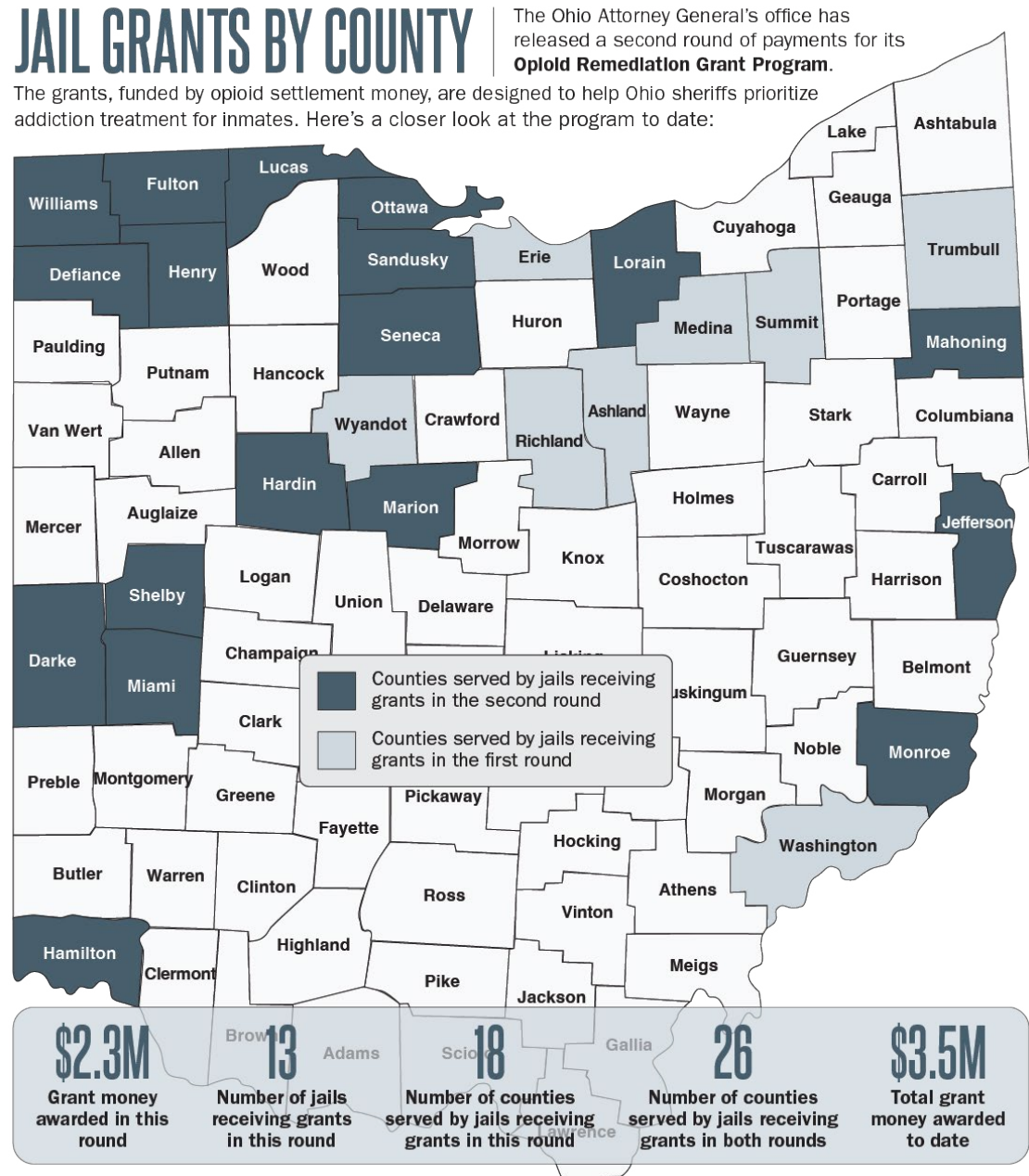
The grants are funded with money from opioid settlements negotiated by Yost’s Office.

County jails can apply for grants of \$150,000 to \$200,000 for calendar year 2025 to hire a full-time addiction-services coordinator or a contractor providing similar services. Grant amounts are based on county population. (These grants cannot be used to replace existing spending on addiction services for inmates.)

In addition, any county that operates a jail can apply for a \$50,000 grant to help pay for medications and supplies for inmates experiencing opioid withdrawal.

This year’s application window runs through Dec. 1. Grant payments will be disbursed quarterly, with the next round in September.

To apply, email JailGrants@OhioAGO.gov or download an application at: <https://tinyurl.com/25ksuevh>



From **VISION** to **REALITY**

New program for training police in Ohio already making an impact

The objective was to reimagine police training in Ohio, from basic training through the arc of an officer’s career.

The goal was to identify outdated methods and material and put into place a more progressive, holistic, technology-based model that would better serve law enforcement officers and their communities.

Attorney General Yost’s Blue Ribbon Task Force returned seven wide-ranging recommendations, which the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission approved and immediately set into motion.

Now, a year later, all the recommendations have either been implemented or are on the verge of being implemented.

The result is a model that enhances communication skills, strengthens decision-making under stress, increases tactical skills for patrol officers, rethinks continuing professional

training (CPT), rewards career-long education, and supplements officers’ knowledge of the laws and policies pertaining to firearms use.

“Training used to be static — you’d sit in a classroom as someone lectured to you,” said Tom Quinlan, executive director of the Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy and chair of the Blue Ribbon Task Force. “We’re far more into scenario-based training now, application training — something that officers actually take out of the classroom and can apply on their next shift.

“We’re doing more with technology. We’re doing more student-led, participative training where people don’t just get talked to — they share experiences and decipher what went well and what didn’t. In short, the program we laid out in the Blue Ribbon recommendations is already having an impact.”

Here is a summary of those recommendations and their status:

1A Amend the Peace Officer Basic Training (POBT) curriculum to reflect contemporary police services.

Seventy-two of the 740 hours of POBT courses were deleted and replaced with courses that center on communications, critical decision-making, cognitive demands and practical applications. The new POBT curriculum, approved in late May, took effect on July 1 for the state’s 59 training academies. However, academies can request a deferral until Jan. 1 to give them time to hire instructors qualified to teach the new material and develop lesson plans.

STATUS: IMPLEMENTED

1B Revise the physical fitness (PT) standard needed to graduate from a basic peace officer academy.

The change allows a cadet to graduate and take the State Certification Exam even if he or she fails to meet the prescribed 100% standard required in one of the three categories of the PT final exam (situps, pushups, 1½-mile run). The exception is permitted in one category, and only if the cadet has achieved at least 75% of the progress expected in that one category. The reduced standard has been in place for a year. “Ninety-one men and women have passed under the revised PT standards and become police officers,” Quinlan said. “That’s almost 100 officers now serving Ohio communities who under the previous standard would have been forced out of the profession.”

STATUS: IMPLEMENTED

2 Establish certification levels to reflect an officer’s training and experience.

Many states offer progressive levels of certification to recognize officers’ continuing education, training and work experience, but until now there was just one level of certification for law enforcement officers in Ohio — basic. Consequently, a police chief with 30 years of experience would have the same certification as a new, part-time officer. OPOTA is developing an online portal so officers can document their achievements in order to apply for several newly created certification levels. The portal is being tested and will go live by the end of the year. “This isn’t mandatory,” Quinlan said, “but if you spent the time and invested in your own development, you’d want to be recognized for going the extra mile.”

STATUS: PORTAL IN TESTING

3 Create a Tactical Patrol Officer Program.

Developed by the Ohio Tactical Officers Association in coordination with OPOTA, the program aims to enhance an officer’s ability to handle unexpected and ongoing violent criminal events. It is tailored toward field training officers and first-line supervisors, who by the nature of their jobs are best situated to impart these skills to new patrol officers. Several courses in the 80-hour Tactical Patrol Officer curriculum are being taught; others are in development and will be completed soon. To date, 51 classes have been conducted with 1,027 officers completing portions of the required 80 hours.

STATUS: IN PROGRESS

4 Add new technologies while incorporating elements of reality-based situational decision-making scenarios into basic and advanced training.

OPOTA has made virtual reality a cornerstone of its training philosophy. So far, 12 scenario-based VR simulations have been developed, 270 VR instructors have been certified, and 160 VR headsets have been distributed to police academies and OPOTA’s six regional training partners across the state. VR training has become so popular, in fact, that many police agencies are buying their headsets and having OPOTA upload the VR simulations to them. The scenarios replicate real life encounters, in varying environments, that officers are called to resolve.

STATUS: IMPLEMENTED AND GROWING

5 Develop integrated lesson plans across training platforms.

Traditionally, OPOTA lesson plans focused on a single topic. Now, coursework incorporates clusters of activities commonly encountered by officers during service calls. For example, a subject-control call in the real world might require an officer to also render aid, write a report, collect and preserve evidence, and testify in court. Newly created lesson plans also include elements of supervisory activities, community perspectives, officer wellness, tactics, and policy considerations.

STATUS: IMPLEMENTED

6 Focus CPT so that it keeps advancing police services.

OPOTA surveyed peace officers about CPT and more than 2,000 responded. Respondents overwhelmingly said they wanted more training on legal issues and case law. To that end, the eight hours of mandatory courses in the 2026 CPT will include three hours on legal updates. Also included are two hours on communication training; two hours on subject and prisoner control, including guard duties and medical transports; and one hour on firearms safety, laws and policy (see below). As in years past, the CPT requirement for 2026 is 24 hours of training. Beyond the eight hours of mandatory courses, 16 hours of additional courses are required. Officers can select from a catalog of more than 1,200 courses, including VR-based courses.

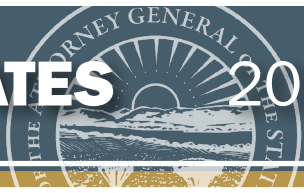
STATUS: IMPLEMENTED

7 Strengthen firearms standards and testing.

The state requires a single annual firearms qualification of 25 shots (minimum score of 20) on a prescribed target — although some agencies set higher standards. In any case, the qualification measures only how accurately officers discharge their weapons. What has been lacking is verification that an officer understands when the use of deadly force is legally permissible. Beginning in 2026, one of the eight hours of mandatory CPT courses will include an exam on laws and policies related to the use of firearms in constitutional policing, with an emphasis on the sanctity of life. The course also will address keeping firearms secure at home, in a private car and in public.

STATUS: IMPLEMENTED





Mark Your Calendar

Looking Ahead



Law Enforcement Training Symposium

Registration for LETS is open

The 2025 Law Enforcement Training Symposium — designed for patrol officers, corrections officers, trainers, supervisors and administrators — will be held Sept. 28-30 at Kalahari Resorts & Conventions in Sandusky, the site of last year's gathering.

Be sure to register at:

<https://ohioattorneygeneral.regfox.com/2025-lets>

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DAVE YOST
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL