

**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

**Staffing Model for Support Positions
in Law Enforcement**

**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
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Leadership Command College**

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ABSTRACT

A staffing model for support positions in law enforcement is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because a unified work load should be desired across all lines of staff, both sworn and civilian representatives, in each law enforcement agency. It is unfair to civilian personnel working in positions that supply support for sworn positions to have a disproportioned amount of duties and workload.

The purpose of this research is to determine whether or not law enforcement agencies are adequately staffing positions that provide support for sworn officers and if consideration is being given to these positions each time an indented number of sworn positions are added to the department. The method of inquiry used by the researcher included: a review of articles, Internet sites, periodicals, journals, and a survey distributed to 24 survey participants.

The researcher discovered that there are several variables that change the average ratio of civilian employees to that of sworn officers. For example, municipalities staff far fewer civilians than sheriff's departments, whose largest personnel make-up is in the detention facility and routinely staffed by non-sworn personnel. University campus and medical facility police departments also utilize non-sworn security officers to accomplish missions in their organizations that municipalities would otherwise employ a sworn officer. These variables were taken into consideration in this research; therefore, this researcher feels that the averages and formulas used to determine the ratios for civilian positions to sworn positions will be beneficial to all law enforcement agencies needing assistance in formulating their staffing models.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem or issue to be examined is whether or not law enforcement agencies that are experiencing substantial internal growth are considering increasing staffing levels for civilian positions when adding additional sworn personnel to the organization in order to maintain the quality of life for its citizenry. Furthermore, it must be considered if police agencies serving built-out communities have appropriately proportioned staffing levels that include positions filled by civilian personnel. Both of these issues could cause a decline in levels of community service if not immediately addressed.

The relevance of a staffing model for civilian personnel to law enforcement is that it is necessary to determine future needs of the organization as sworn personnel are added and as communities continue to grow. It is vital that law enforcement agencies maintain all positions within the organization at a proportioned level, whether that is a ratio for a specific number of sworn officers to the community population or a ratio of civilian personnel to the number of sworn officers currently allocated. A staffing model is not only helpful in planning for the future, but also for ensuring that civilian employees are not being overworked and making sure that their span of control to sworn ratios are at a level that is acceptable for those positions.

The purpose of this research is to examine current state and national staffing models for law enforcement agencies and to determine if those models include formulas for the allocation of civilian personnel as they relate to the number of sworn personnel. If no research exists in this area, the researcher will propose a staffing model that will encompass all positions, sworn and civilian, within a law enforcement organization. The

development of such a staffing model will assist law enforcement leaders in developing an organizational structure for their departments that will create a staffing balance across all levels.

The research question to be examined focuses on whether or not current research exists on this topic and if law enforcement agencies are adequately staffing support positions that are held by civilian personnel. Additional questions on this topic will evaluate a span of control issues for civilians who provide support to sworn personnel, either in a particular division, such as patrol, or in specialized units, such as narcotics. A span of control for civilians will help determine if “x” number of civilian employees are capable of providing an accepted level of support to “y” number of sworn personnel, which will include supervisory personnel as well as the line level.

The intended method of inquiry includes: a literary review of texts, journals, and articles or other internet based publications. In addition, a survey will be administered to various police agencies differing in size, demographics, and relative location to ensure adequate representation relative to the research. It is also anticipated that personal interviews with various respondents to the survey may be necessary to clarify individual agency objectives relative to staffing.

The intended outcome or anticipated findings of the research is that traditional staffing models for law enforcement agencies only focus on sworn personnel and those assigned to specialized units, such as the criminal investigation function, and there is a need for a staffing model that includes other non-sworn positions within a law enforcement organization. These findings will assist in developing future growth needs

of law enforcement agencies as well as analyzing their current staffing needs for civilian personnel.

The field of law enforcement will benefit from the research or be influenced by the conclusions because law enforcement agencies are becoming more affected by the continued addition of sworn personnel, especially in those agencies that are experiencing rapid community and organizational growth. The affects of this growth are causing a negative rippling effect to support positions within the organization that are not being equated into staffing models. Law enforcement agencies will recognize that there is a great need to maintain staffing levels for their civilian staff as well as sworn personnel based on ratio's provided by this researcher.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Upon initial research on this topic, the researcher found several Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas (LEMIT) papers that were written on various staffing models and personnel allocations. The first paper that was reviewed was on patrol allocation needs for the Huntsville Police Department (Fitch, 2007). While this paper concluded that the Huntsville Police Department is understaffed, the methods used to make this determination were based on the officer per thousand residents ratio, the officer per square mile ratio, and an average of comparison size cities to Huntsville. During all of Fitch's (2007) research, there was no consideration given to support level positions when considering drastically increasing the size of the sworn force.

The second paper reviewed staffing models for large municipal cities in the United States (Johnson, 2003). Johnson (2003) stated, in his conclusion, "staffing dilemmas are identified but the solutions are not. Determining which staffing model is

the most appropriate remains obscure” (p. 15). This statement substantiates that there is not only a need for more research to be conducted in the field of staffing models but, even further, the limited research that exists does not cover staffing models for support level positions or even include these positions in the staffing model for sworn personnel. Johnson’s (2003) research, like Fitch’s (2007), only focuses on the analysis of increasing sworn officers and identifies the same methods to determining staffing needs. However, they both agreed that no one staffing model covers all of the variables that different cities must take into consideration when determining their staffing needs and allocations. Johnson (2003) found that the method most used by cities that he surveyed was the workload analysis method; however, many faults were also discovered with this formula. Johnson (2003) concluded that even though a workload analysis formula was most commonly used, a comparative formula must be also considered because it is widely accepted by members of the communities, media, and employers.

Going outside the scope of law enforcement, this researcher found other literature on staffing needs for the private sector. There was an article on staffing ratios for information technology businesses which discussed strategies for improving their support positions. (“IT Spending Ratios”, 2008). Although the researcher has limited knowledge into the world of information technology as spoken of in this article, the main topic was to evaluate and determine adequate staffing needs for support personnel. In reading this article, there were many similarities that law enforcement faces when determining staffing: one being that there are several factors that must be considered, and no one formula creates a magical number that will satisfy all of an agency’s or

company's needs. In this particular literature, the quality of the system and number of users to the system varied and, therefore, created obstacles to determine exact staffing requirements.

In conclusion, the research revealed that there is limited information on staffing models for law enforcement agencies. There are a few methods being used within law enforcement to try and determine these needs; however, all of these models focus on sworn staffing for organizations. Even within these models, there are pros and cons to each method. Many agencies use the comparative study in hopes of finding an average that will adequately staff their organizational structure. However, these methods only identify the needs for patrol and criminal investigation divisions and other specialized units that are staffed with sworn officers. They do not take into consideration any of the positions that are staffed by civilian personnel. This research can conclude that when law enforcement agencies are identifying their staffing needs, civilian positions are not rising to the level of importance as sworn positions are, and the amount of disproportioned work for these positions can clearly be mismanaged.

METHODOLOGY

The research question to be examined considers whether or not law enforcement agencies that are experiencing substantial community growth are adequately staffing support positions in an effort to provide a high level of community service. The researcher hypothesizes that law enforcement agencies are primarily focusing on the addition of sworn personnel in their staffing allocation models, and methods of calculating these needs do not include consideration of support level positions. It is further hypothesized that there are no staffing methods available to assist in this

evaluation, and the staffing models that are readily available focus solely on sworn positions as they relate to population, workload analysis, and calls for service.

The method of inquiry will include: a review of articles, internet sites, periodicals, journals, and a survey distributed to approximately sixty participants. The instrument that will be used to measure the researcher's findings regarding the subject of a staffing model for support positions within law enforcement will include a survey distributed to law enforcement agencies from across Texas, which are diverse in size, demographics, mean income, and type of agency, so as to assure a broad spectrum of comparison. The size of the survey will consist of 42 questions, distributed to approximately 60 survey participants from the described geographic area.

The response rate to the survey instrument resulted in 24 returned surveys. The researcher felt that of the surveys returned from the participating agencies, the diversity of the agencies will be helpful in determining ratios that will benefit all of law enforcement rather than a select group such as municipalities. The information obtained from the survey will be analyzed by the researcher and other personnel of the researcher's agency who participate in the development of staffing allocations and models to determine adequate ratios for various civilian positions within a law enforcement agency such as records, communications, detention, public safety officers, crime scene technicians, and crime analysts.

FINDINGS

The researcher recorded the data of the 24 returned surveys for analysis preparation. The survey participants were diverse in their representation of law enforcement agencies. They ranged from municipalities and sheriff's departments to

university campus police and medical facility departments. The population of citizens in which their departments served and number of sworn and civilian staff were vastly different from one another. This provided the researcher with an adequate sample of participants.

In taking into consideration the 24 agencies and formulating the number of sworn personnel to that of civilians, the overall average needed for each department was two officers to every one civilian employee. However, some of the survey participants employed a higher number of civilian employees to that of sworn officers due to the unique style of policing and needs of their organizations. Potter County Sheriff's Department employs 99 civilians to that of 106 sworn due to their large detention facility which is primarily staffed with non-sworn personnel. University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, Texas actually employs more civilian staff (91) than sworn personnel (41) again due to non-sworn security personnel handling more of the daily operations than sworn staff. Therefore, to gain a better perspective for similar agencies from the participating agencies, the researcher focused on the municipality survey participants.

When averaging the number of civilian personnel to that of sworn personnel for municipal law enforcement agencies, the researcher used 20 of the 24 survey participants. The results were 38 civilians for every 100 police officers for each of the agencies. Of those agencies, eight were above average, one was equal to, and 11 were below average.

To further breakdown this data, the researcher compared the number of civilian employees to each sworn officer as they relate to specific positions within the

organization. Again, to get a better ratio, the researcher used those 20 municipal agencies as the sample group for this data. The first position analyzed was communications; the data reflected that for every 100 officers, an agency should employ 20 dispatchers, on average. Of the agencies, only 17 municipal agencies reported to have communication centers, and of those 17, eight agencies were above average and nine were below. The agencies that did not have communication centers utilized either the county dispatch center or a neighboring larger city.

The second position was records; the data reflected that for every 100 officers, the records unit should employ five civilian employees. Of the participating agencies 18 reported to have a records unit, and of those agencies, five were above average, four were equal to the average, and nine were below the average. The agencies that did not report to have a records unit relied on other civilian positions, such as administrative assistants, to maintain records for their departments.

The third position was the jail; the data reflected that for every 100 officers, the jail should employ eight detention officers. Only 11 agencies reported to have their own detention facility, and of those, five were above average and six were below average. The agencies that did not have a detention facility utilized the local sheriff's department for their needs.

The fourth position was public safety officers; however, only nine agencies reported having this position. The averages of those agencies were three public safety officers for every 100 sworn officers. Four agencies were above average, one agency was equal to the average, and four agencies were below the average.

The fifth position was crime scene technicians, and the survey asked for civilian crime scene or sworn crime scene officers; however, when analyzing the data, there was an incorporation of both civilian and sworn numbers reported on the survey. Of the municipal agencies, 11 reported to have crime scene technicians in their agencies; the average ratio is two crime scene officers to every 100 police officers. Five of the agencies were above average, three were equal to, and three were below average.

The sixth position was crime analysts, and ten of the agencies showed to employ this position within their organization. The average of those ten agencies was one crime analyst for every 100 sworn officers. With this average being so low, eight of the agencies showed to meet the average, and two exceeded the average by one position.

The last position analyzed was administrative assistants; 18 of the municipal agencies showed to have this position, and of those, the overall average was four administrative assistants for every 100 sworn officers. Five agencies were above average, one was equal to, and 12 were below average.

Table I. Ratios of Sworn Officers to Non-Sworn Positions

Category	All Positions	Communications Dispatch	Records	Jail Detention	Public Safety Officer	Crime Scene Technicians*	Crime Analyst	Administrative Assistant
Ratio Of Civilians : Sworn Officers	38:100	20:100	5:100	8:100	3:100	2:100	1:100	4:100
Agencies Above Average	8	8	5	5	4	5	2	5
Agencies equal to the Average	1	0	4	0	1	3	8	1
Agencies Below Average	11	9	9	6	4	3	0	12
Total Agencies with this Position	20	17	18	11	9	11	10	18

* Combines both civilian and sworn positions for this specialized unit.

After careful evaluation of all positions within municipalities defined within this research, and comparing the overall average of civilian employees to that of sworn officers for all survey participants, it appears that most agencies are either right at the average or are falling below it in each category.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The problem or issue examined by the researcher considered whether or not law enforcement agencies that are experiencing substantial community growth were considering increasing staffing levels for civilian positions when increasing sworn ranks to the organizational structure. The purpose of this research was to examine current state and national staffing models for law enforcement agencies and to determine if those models included formulas for the allocation of civilian personnel as they relate to the number of sworn personnel. The research question that was examined focused on whether or not current research existed on this topic and if law enforcement agencies were adequately staffing support positions that are held by civilian personnel. An additional area reviewed on this topic was span of control issues for civilians who provide support to sworn personnel in various areas in the department.

The researcher hypothesized that there would not be current research available on this topic and that once the research was conducted, most law enforcement agencies would fall below a determined average in the civilian staffing. The researcher concluded from the findings that of the 24 survey participants, only eight of those agencies were above the average on civilian staffing as it related to the number of sworn police officers. Once the research was narrowed to municipalities in order to have more defined and comparative data, the ratios did improve slightly on the number of

agencies above the average for each position. However, the ratio was either close or equal to the average or fell below; no agency far exceeded the average in any category.

The findings of the research did support the hypothesis. The reason why the findings did support the hypothesis is probably due to the lack of emphasis that is placed on staffing civilian personnel within law enforcement agencies and the high emphasis that is placed on maintaining certain ratios within the sworn staffing as it relates to the community population and other determining factors. Limitations that might have hindered this study resulted because some of the survey participants came from agencies that had different priorities in their staffing needs or accomplished their missions in a different fashion and, therefore, were able to utilize more civilian staff in positions that most municipality agencies could not. Furthermore, the lack of available research in the area of civilian staffing models did not assist in gaining more insight into how much staffing is recommended to support a given number of sworn staff; therefore, a basic average of law enforcement agencies and their existing staffing numbers were used to find an average in those categories.

The study of staffing models for support positions in law enforcement is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because there is a great need to consider staffing levels for civilian staff as well sworn personnel in order to maintain acceptable workloads and to provide support for personnel within the department as well as the community's needs. In addition, inclusion of civilian personnel in agency staffing models will assist in finding functions currently being provided by sworn officers, which could be filled by civilian personnel, creating opportunities for increased focus on field intervention by sworn personnel and budgetary savings for the organization. The field of

law enforcement, as a whole, will benefit from the results of this study because of the continued need for manpower within law enforcement agencies and to properly distribute workloads among all positions within the organizational structure. This will not only reduce excessive workloads and tasks on support level positions but will also retain existing personnel who would otherwise leave the organization to seek employment where workloads are more considerate to their positions.

REFERENCES

- Fitch, J. (2007). *Patrol allocation needs of the Huntsville Police Department*. Huntsville, TX: The Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas.
- IT Spending Ratios. (2008, April). [Electronic version]. *Computer Economics Report*, 30 (4).
- Johnson, W. (2003). *An analysis of staffing models for large U.S. municipal cities*. Huntsville, TX: The Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas.



The Allen Police Department is in the process of developing a new staffing model / ratio formula. The formula / staffing allocations will set a standard for selected position / assignments throughout the department. An example of this is as follows, for every 100 sworn officers there should be “X” number of dispatchers, “Y” number of jailers, “Z” of detectives, and so on. This will help our agency to set future staffing needs as more sworn personnel are added and as the community continues to increase in population. Once completed, the Allen Police Department will gladly share its findings with agencies that are interested. Your assistance in completing the following survey is greatly appreciated.

Surveys can be returned by email to ksylvester@cityofallen.org or by fax at 214-509-4218.
Postal mailing address:
205 West McDermott Drive
Allen, Texas 75013

Allen Police Department Staffing Survey

Please complete the following survey. If your agency does not have a particular position, please indicate so by putting **N/A** in the appropriate space. If you have questions regarding the survey and information requested, please contact Lieutenant Kim Sylvester at (214) 509-4206 or by email at ksylvester@cityoffallen.org:

Name of Agency _____

Person Completing Form _____ Phone # _____

Total personnel allotted (budgeted): Sworn _____ Non-Sworn _____

Population of Jurisdiction _____

Total Crimes per 1,000 (2007) Part I _____ Part II _____

2007 Dispatched Calls for Service _____ Total Arrests _____

Number of Personnel By Positions Budgeted:

_____ Chief _____ Assistant Chief(s) / Deputy Chief(s) _____ Captain(s)

_____ Lieutenant(s) _____ Sergeant(s) _____ Corporal(s) _____ Officers

_____ Public Safety Officer(s) (non sworn) _____ Crime Analyst(s)

_____ Records Technician(s) _____ Communication / Dispatchers

_____ Detention Officer(s) / Jailer(s) _____ Fleet Maintenance

_____ Administrative Assistant(s) _____ Crime Scene Tech (____ Sworn / ____ Non-Sworn)

_____ Other(s) _____ Other(s) _____

Number of Personnel By Assignment (Full-time Assignments):

_____ School Resource Officers _____ Detectives _____ Gang Unit

_____ Narcotics _____ Task Forces _____ Traffic Unit

_____ K-9 _____ Background Investigator / Recruiter

_____ Street Crimes Unit _____ Victim Advocate(s) _____ Other _____

_____ Internal Affairs / Professional Standards _____ Community Relations/ Crime Prevention