

## Survey to Chief APOs

### Issue: Turnover and Retention

#### Question (from York County)

I have had so much turn over recently that I can't even keep track of it. Just in the last two weeks I have received 5 resignations. Most people seem to be leaving for career changes, other life decisions and for more money. I know in my head that this is probably tied to Covid and the economy and the crappy raises the County gave the probation officers, but it's hard to manage at times and impacts morale in a huge way.

I guess what I am asking is, are any of you also experiencing significant turn over?

What strategies do you have to retain employees....that doesn't involve money, unless you have a creative way of making that happen?

#### Armstrong County

We have the same issues in Armstrong County as everyone else. I had six new employees in 13 months and including Admin we only have 17 Probation Officer positions. Starting salary is \$15.00 and the PO's are going to arbitration in May. Our commissioners are very unsympathetic and adversarial. I just had an officer who was here for three years, completely trained, leave to go to another probation office for almost \$15,000 more per year. I get very few qualified applicants when posted. I have 2 new officers starting Monday. I can't even get one year with full staff.

We also try to keep a few "in the bank" but by the time I call them when I get another resignation they have moved on. It is a real struggle.

Our "on call" pays fairly well and we do what we call "special assignments" (bar sweeps, assist on DUI checkpoints, community service project) that are done after hours that PO's get a minimum of 5 hrs at time and a half of their regular rate of pay. This is funded out of Act 35 monies. I am also in the process of developing a program that officers will get extra pay, stipend, for taking on additional duties such as instructors for firearms, control tactics, ORAS, etc. This, if approved, will be paid out of our DUI fund. We took over the County's DUI program and officers are paid extra for completing CRN's and Safe Driving School. It is a constant battle with our commissioners however, our PJ supports us which helps. Not sure that any of this is or will make a difference but it doesn't hurt.

#### Bedford County

Bedford County has 4 vacant positions.

#### Berks County

We normally do not have a lot of turnover here. We are very blessed to have our staff paid fairly well with a current starting salary of \$47, 027 and after 12 years officers are currently

making \$81,172. That being said, we are in the process of filling 9 vacancies due to retirements and other departures. We do offer some additional incentives for staff to earn extra money. We require officers to see high risk offenders during non-traditional hours (after 5:00 pm/weekends) where they can work up to 7 additional hours per month for OT/comp time. We have numerous instructors certified by NCTI/UCC who deliver cog groups in anger management, dv, dui for additional hours of OT/Comp. We've always attempted to be flexible with staff who need to leave for family issues (kids sporting events/coaching/etc.). We're also very fortunate to have a YMCA across the street where a lot of officers play basketball together over their lunch hour, which seems to help morale as well as a softball team that plays together outside of work hours. Holiday parties, retirement parties and we are hoping for several events during probation and parole week including a cookout/picnic.

### Blair County

Where do I start?!?!? Our turnover rate is crippling. Hard to focus on the future and the direction we want to move when we don't have people around long enough to move anywhere.

New contract was signed by Commissioners yesterday. Hoping that helps retain some of the senior Officers that we do have, which isn't many.

### Cameron County

I hope all this will change when County Probation gets the JRll monies and a substantial increase in GIA. Always compared to CYS. CYS is funded at 85-90% and is a cash cow for the Commissioners. There is funding available because there is millions of dollars for IP grants yet no increase for GIA. The IP initiative offers potentially 5 times more than the GIA. Also, we need to remember that the adult GIA only funded a percentage of officers under GIA. I believe that half or almost half of county POs were never funded under the old GIA because they quit approving officers who provided "improved services" back in the late 80's or 1990's. If we are not funded adequately, we will continue to experience turnover and our officers will be placed in compromising situations due to lack of resources and experience. As Dave suggests continue to, "keep plugging away, adapt and overcome."

### Carbon County

Currently have 4 vacancies and turnover is killing us – also nobody even show for interview

### Clarion County

Commissioners just gave our CYS a \$5.00 increase. The starting salary for CYS is now \$20.00+. This is more than what seven of my officers make (I have a total of ten). One has been here twelve years. I am expecting seven resignations.

### Columbia County

Columbia has not had much turnover but I know some of my younger Officers are looking. I did just lose an 18-year veteran to the Sentencing Commission and have begun the task of going through limited resumes coming in. Starting at \$18/hr and the Law Enforcement field in general is becoming an issue and likely will remain this way for a while unfortunately.

### Elk County

Same for Elk! After a few years I finally have a full staff. It has been so challenging trying to keep up with all the changes, trainings etc. when you have all new people who do not even know the basics. In our county it is definitely linked to the low pay. My most senior officer is two years, the rest are a few months. I feel your pain.

### Erie County

Erie is in the same boat. Applicants are scarce and we are hiring people we previously wouldn't have, especially in clerical. We are recreating our training program in order to try to help the trainers we have left so they don't feel so overwhelmed with all the new trainees. We were experiencing a lot of burnout there. We try to maintain the family atmosphere so people want to be here but the finances make that difficult. We are losing several to police and other higher paying agencies. My understanding is that this is a problem with all county positions. Hang in there.

### Fayette County

We have always had that problem. Starting pay is now \$18.01/hour. There now is a two tier pay scale where the new officers will never make as much as an officer that was hired before 2014. Until they pay more and get rid of the two tier pay scale I will continue to have high turnover. I am very liberal on leave usage and I let them work thru their lunch and leave early as long as they have worked their hours for the day. Impossible to come up with a creative way to pay them more as we operate under a contract and a strict budget. I still try to get quality people but I know that they will likely leave to move on to bigger and better things but while they are here, they do a good job gaining their experience.

### Lebanon County

Lebanon County is also having these issues. We have seen turnover for a multitude of reasons. I made some organizational changes in response to some concerns that were raised by employees leaving. I believe that has made an impact, despite always having that one person that is never happy no matter what you do.

The past two budget seasons I have been fortunate enough to have the support of the PJ to work on increasing salaries for non-union staff. My first year in office we addressed the management team whose raises were not near what the union employees were receiving. This obviously caused issues with finding staff interested in taking on management roles and has now put a bigger gap between management and line staff. The increase was split over two years. I think the Commissioners were hoping we would forget about year two. The Commissioners supported year one of the increase, but the judge is using supervision fee funds to pay for the increases this year. I also had some support positions reclassified because the job descriptions and salaries assigned were not matching actual job duties. Although some are still ridiculously low salaries, it helped and the people affected were quite happy and surprised when I broke the news to them.

We try to utilize supervision funds for things that staff appreciate throughout the year: probation and parole week activities, additional work gear, i.e. sweatshirts or collared shirts for office days, updated gear.

As a smaller department, it's easier for me to do things that I personally want to do to show appreciation to staff, i.e. food is always a big hit. I will buy donuts occasionally or a crockpot of hotdogs and sauerkraut or buffalo chicken dip. I don't know that anyone is staying for the donuts, but it makes them happy for a while. We have not done too many group activities due to COVID, but we had previously done Escape Room challenges and Laser tag after hours for team building.

#### Lehigh County

Lehigh had about 3 or 4 either retire or move on to other jobs, mostly out of the field for more money. However, our officers received a new union contract which provided them about a 7% increase across the board.

#### Northampton County

Northampton is having a little as well. We had retirement and two leave for more money and opportunity.

#### Somerset County

Received another resignation this morning. Currently have 5 PO positions (3 APO, 2 JPO) vacant and (1) PO Aide. All for financial reason. I feel only solution is financial at this point, otherwise Somerset has deal with this issue until the next PO contract. Keep plugging away everyone! Adapt and overcome!

#### Susquehanna County

No.. a union here.. wages good.. average years experience here bout 20. We just hired treatment court officer. we are poster child of stability here

#### Warren County

Historically, Warren hasn't had a lot of turnover, but we have over the last year started to experience it as well. When I took over as Deputy Chief and now Chief, we started doing some team building exercises. Some examples of what we have done include:

- Office Christmas Party - A local organization donated the use of their recreational room for a night. Played trivia, had shuffleboard, darts, cornhole, other games. Everyone brought a dish to pass and I bought the pizza and wings.
- Trivia Night - Played trivia as group at a local establishment.
- Bingo - Went as a group to local Bingo Hall.
- Pot Luck - for birthdays or long Court days we will each bring a dish and set up for lunch in a multi-use room within our office.

- Escape Room - The County paid for our office to go to an Escape Room during work hours. Split into 3 teams and made it a friendly competition.
- Ropes Course - The County paid for our office to go to a local Adventure Course at Peek ' N Peak. Zip lines, ropes, ladders, other obstacles, etc. For those physically unable to participate, they still tagged along and were able to soak in the sun and we all met for lunch afterwards.
- Indoor Golf - Took the office to an indoor golf facility on a Friday afternoon with nothing on the Court calendar. Everyone that came split the cost. It was \$10 / person and great time.
- Burnout Training - Had a local counselor donate their time and speak with office staff over a provided lunch about burnout and ways to deal with it.
- Summer Picnic - The President Judge typically puts on a summer picnic each year on a workday afternoon.

All of these are optional for the staff, but almost everyone attends and has a good time.

I do feel your pain though as my last 20 plus year employee will retire within a years' time. After that its me with 13 years at the County and nobody else with more than 8 years.

The low starting rate is always an issue for us as well. We have a union and they have been without a contract since January 1st. Negotiations with the Commissioners are the worst I have seen. The union's proposed pay scale is a healthy increase for new and veteran officers, but the Commissioners seem likely to push for arbitration this time.

#### Wayne County

Wayne County is fine. Last turn-over was in 2021 due to my deputy chief resigning to run for a magistrate office, which union contract gets renegotiated 2023, which should address all the new concerns raised by inflation, etc. Starting wage for 2022 is \$38,670 and my most senior union officer (18 yrs.) is at 63,940 per union pay structure. However, my salary is capped due to County pay scale structures. We're fortunate right now, but it all can fall apart quickly as you all know.

I believe money is number one factor that effects turnover then office culture/climate and so on. People leaving for better employment due to a different profession (like PSP, Fed probation officer) is always a constant and I commend them for doing so. I have only ten POs, including myself, so moving into a supervisory position is very restricted and that causes some angst once you are on the job for ten years or so. I'm looking to promote stipends (decent amount \$) for POs that perform a specialty that enhances the department, such as instructorships, MI coaches, etc.

#### Westmoreland County

We have had over 20 new hires last year and are expecting at least 10 more this year. It has been a real struggle! I have approached our PJ and requested that our non-union positions receive a pay increase, some upwards of \$15,000 plus for these positions in my office are severely under paid. Our PJ is very supportive and we hope to pass some raises at our next

salary board meeting. As far as the PO's go, their union had a good contract that started this year, so I think we may keep some that we would have otherwise lost.

I have found that keeping on top of the interviews and extending the range of time an interview cycle reaches out helps. For example, I may post a PO position, interview 6 applicants then tell them their interview is good for six months. This has helped with those unexpected vacancies. Most, if not all, have been available when I extended an offer of employment at a later date. I like to keep people "in the bank".