

Empowering Member Excellence: Evidence-Based Practices for Law Enforcement

A Quick Reference Guide for Command Staff & City Leaders

March 2025

Presented by:



In partnership with:



Executive Summary

Changing societal, political, and regulatory factors combined with labor shortages have created immense strain and change upon every law enforcement agency, its people, and stakeholders. When considering the scale and impact of these trends we are arguably in one of the most consequential periods in American law enforcement history.

Concern about these trends and a shared purpose of helping those who protect and serve spurred the Board of the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (the Trust) to partner with Benchmark Analytics, a public safety data science firm based in Chicago. The resulting program, called iMPACT®, identifies key risks facing each Trust member's law enforcement agency and identifies evidence-based recommendations for approaches most likely to address these risks. Since 2022, the Trust has partnered with its members and Benchmark to answer a fundamental question: "What are top performing agencies doing that can be shared with all members?"

iMPACT conducts Minnesota-specific research with chiefs, sheriffs, command staff, and municipal administrators to learn what programs and practices show statistical connection to reduced officer injuries, accidents, and incidents leading to liability claims.

Through hundreds of member engagements since program inception we've heard:

- unvarnished perspectives about challenges facing each municipality and agency.
- how leaders are innovating and finding new ways to thrive amidst change.
- how command staff incorporate evidence-based research into their strategic decision-making and operational excellence programs.

Through this program, we identified agency practices that show strong statistical connection to reduced liability, workers compensation and auto claims costs at agencies of varying sizes, geographic locations, and serving a wide variety of community demographics. ***We call these "evidence-based practices."***

This guide provides iMPACT program's latest research findings and is intended to support Trust member members of all sizes and geographies throughout Minnesota. Therefore, it is important to for each member to consider their unique agency and community factors before choosing which practices are most appropriate for an agency to implement.

Note: for those who have read previous versions of the research, we highlight updated findings as ***New in 2025.**

Evidence-Based Practices

Since 2022, iMPACT interviews have collected information for seventy-three (73) practices of law enforcement operations across ninety-one (91) participating agencies in Minnesota. Statistical analysis revealed nine (9) evidence-based practices that show strong statistical connection to reduce incidents leading to officer injuries, auto accidents, and / or liability claims. Each evidence-based practice represents a proven approach that ***agency and city leaders can improve the health, safety, and overall outcomes for their officers and the community they serve.*** We recommend agency and city leadership consider this research as one factor among others important to their city or agency when considering new practices to deploy.

Table 1: Evidence-Based Practices

Evidence-Based Practices	Practice Area	Liability Claims Reduction	Workers' Comp Claims Reduction	Auto Claims Reduction
1. After-Action Review	Operations	✓	✓	✓
2. Advanced Leadership Training	Training	✓	✓	✓
3. Wellness Programs	Wellness	✓	✓	✓
3a. Check up from the Neck Up	Wellness		✓	
3b. Peer Support	Wellness		✓	✓
4. Evidence-Room Practices (Audit, Technician)	Operations	✓	✓	
5. Mental Illness / Crisis Response Policy and Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Certification	Policies, Training	✓	✓	✓
6. Restrictive Pursuit Policy	Policies	✓		✓
7. Lateral Hire Risk Assessment	Operations		✓	
8. Emergency Vehicle Operations Policy	Policies			✓
9. Tasers	Equipment	✓	✓	

***New in 2025:**

- Removed practice:** Body-Worn Cameras. Expanded iMPACT research has revealed that Body-Worn Camera implementation alone doesn't statistically lead to lower workers compensation or liability claims. To achieve this risk reduction, agencies must also implement an after-action review or body-worn video review program. More on this new finding in the After-Action Review section.
- New Evidence-Based practices:** Check up from the Neck Up, Peer Support, and Lateral Hire Risk Assessment practices are new areas of research. Details are provided in each respective section below.

Taser deployment showed historical benefit of reducing liability severity but are not discussed further in this guide as every agency we surveyed had Tasers in service. Please note that this does not reduce the need for continued training in both the application and legal use of Tasers and use of force.

After Action Review

Question: Does the agency have a documented **after-action review process**?

If Yes, which events do you review? (Check all that apply)

- i. Use of Force
- ii. Vehicle Pursuit
- iii. Citizen Complaint
- iv. Officer Involved Auto Accident
- v. Other. Please specify: _____

Question: If your agency has deployed Body-Worn Cameras for all officers, how often do you **RANDOMLY** review body camera footage?

- i. No – My agency DOES NOT have a formal review process
- ii. YES – Daily
- iii. YES - Weekly
- iv. YES – Monthly
- v. YES - Quarterly

Question: Do you utilize Body-Worn camera videos in any of the following ways?

- vi. Direct Officer Feedback
- vii. Officer Commendations
- viii. Illustrate “Job Well Done” in Training / Roll Call
- ix. Risk / Compliance
- x. Other. Please specify: _____

iMPACT program research shows that at the heart of top performing of agencies is a culture of learning and development and defined After-Action Review (AAR) practice that extends beyond high-risk incidents to everyday operations. These agencies significantly reduce incidents leading to workers compensation, liability and auto claims. *While many agencies utilize this practice following critical incidents, few extend the practice to benefit everyday operational excellence.*

Defining AARs

After-action reviews are a non-punitive, team-based process for analyzing events and spotting lessons that can be applied going forward, and for proactively highlighting positive behaviors and outcomes. The focus is on improving agency performance, not on placing blame with individuals.

AARs can be done informally, like debriefing after a training scenario or a call for service. They can also be scaled up, formalized, and conducted by an outside resource, as might be appropriate after an incident of mass violence, a major protest, or other high-impact event.

AARs can identify opportunities for commendations and service awards. They can also identify near misses and expose gaps in areas such as training, planning, policy, equipment, communications, and readiness; and then translate these findings into initiatives for improvement.

For more information, please consult the LMCIT Evidence-Based Practice Quick Start Guide: After Action Reviews available from your Trust contact.

Agencies meeting our criteria for this practice had numerous examples of how incidents and near-misses inspired learning and response. Training programs were scenario-based on actual events and in some cases, command staff or officers shared incidents, learnings, or commendations as part

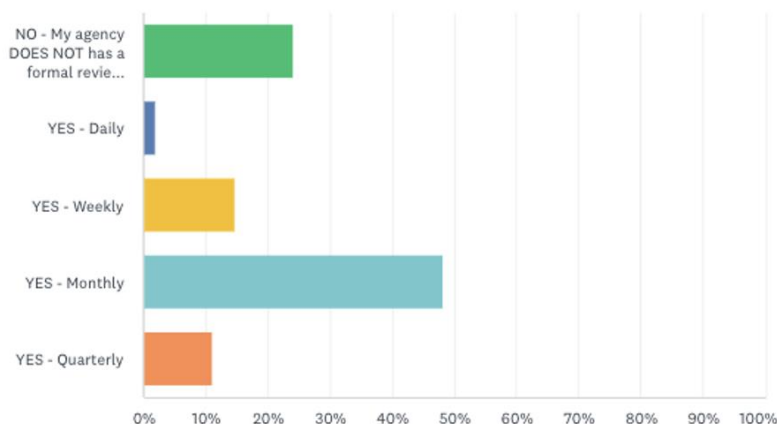
of roll call briefings. When AARs include both positive and constructive elements they become part of an agency's culture and practice. Officers in these agencies know that the chief and command staff invest time to learn from incidents (big or small) and this influences everyday decision making.

***New in 2025-** In prior research we noted that some of these chiefs and their command staff were further utilizing body-worn camera (BWC) footage as a risk management tool. Periodically, someone is responsible for pulling footage and analyzing multiple interactions for each officer over a given timeframe. This review results in constructive feedback and commendations, as appropriate. To further explore the role of BWC video review in the after-action review process we added the two additional questions above to our research survey. The results were compelling and statistically significant:

- **Agencies who implemented BWCs but didn't review the footage saw no statistical reduction in liability claims.** Stated differently, the evidence-based benefit of BWCs to reduce liability risk is centered around how agencies use that footage to learn, train, and develop their officers through after-action review processes.
- **The type of BWC review matters.**
 - **Learning & Commendation:** Agencies whose BWC review process produced officer commendations and "Job Well Done" in training and/or roll call showed the strongest benefit to reduce officer injuries. Top performing agencies also connected commendations to clear mission ("why") and core values ("how"). In other words, commendations were held up as examples of officers serving above and beyond in support of the agency's core principles. This connection is critical.
 - **Rules, Risk, & Compliance:** Agencies whose BWC review program was more focused on direct officer feedback or risk / compliance showed some correlation to reduce officer injuries but a much lesser extent than the learning & commendation approach.

***New in 2025:** iMPACT research also reveals how frequently agencies conduct review of BWC footage. The graph below shows BWC review frequency distribution among the 54 agencies surveyed in 2024 who had implemented BWCs:

Answered: 54 Skipped: 10



Because of the strong connection to risk reduction, research-based roots and low cost, **expanding** after action reviews is the top recommendation for all Trust members to evaluate, enhance, and expand in their agency practice. To support this effort the Trust published an After-Action Review Quick Start Guide which is available to all members upon request and at no cost.

While seemingly simple, defining what great looks like and fostering a culture of learning and development is needed for after action reviews to have full effect. Top performing agencies often pair this practice with the next one – advanced leadership training.

Advanced Leadership Training

Question: Does your agency require supervisors complete a defined curriculum of **advanced leadership education and training**?

***New in 2025-** the iMPACT research team changed the question to look for required, defined curriculum. We found that nearly every agency sends staff to some form of leadership training. However, to validate the research we needed to further qualify the practice to be a defined and required process.

Agencies that implement a required advanced leadership training curriculum for command staff reduced liability and workers compensation claims in the years following the start of this practice. Agencies were included in this group if they had a paid sponsorship of advanced degrees (master's or doctorate) in relevant fields or who sponsor command staff's tuition to advanced programs such as the FBI National Academy, Northwestern School of Police Staff and Command, or equivalent.

Further, agencies with command staff skilled in advanced leadership fostered cultures of excellence, purpose, and pride in service excellence. Not only did we find a statistical reduction in claims for these agencies, but we also saw reduced turnover in these agencies. In fact, several of these agencies have “waiting lists” of officers waiting to join.

Outcome-Based Wellness Program

Question: Does your agency have an incentive based wellness program? (e.g. A Program where an officer received vacation, pay or other financial rewards for meeting goals.)

Question: Does your agency offer a “check up from the neck up” or similar mental health wellness program?

If Yes, is “check up from the neck up” participation required?

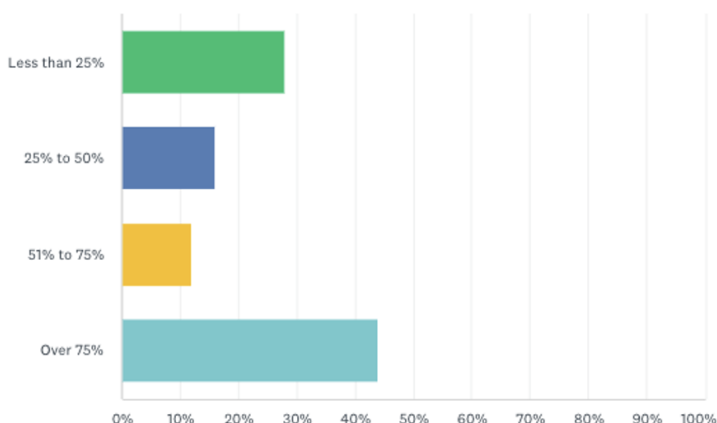
Question: Does your agency offer a Peer Support program?

Top performing agencies and their cities make wellness a conscious and intentional part of their agency culture and everyday life. These agencies significantly reduce officer injuries leading to workers compensation claims and incidents leading to liability claims.

The nature of wellness programs varied greatly in our interviews. Nearly every agency and city had some wellness practice, ranging from discounted gym memberships to an exercise / weight room at the department or nearby facility. The consensus on these programs was that few, if any, officers regularly participate in these passive programs.

Because of the wide variation of wellness programs, the iMPACT research team limited our evaluation of “Wellness Programs” only to agencies with established voluntary wellness programs that consist of objectives or measured outcomes to receive benefits or incentives. Outcomes included physical achievement (such as distance runs, agility, and strength tests), mental health program participation, knowledge and skill assessments, multi-language proficiency, community volunteering, and other factors important to agency mission. Command staff report increasing adoption of wellness programs. The graph below shows employee adoption rates for 25 agencies who reported having an outcome-based wellness program.

Answered: 25 Skipped: 39

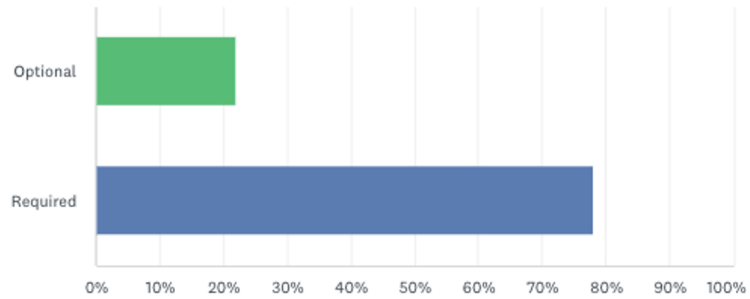


***New in 2025.** Across the Trust’s law enforcement membership, the fastest growing new practice is in the wellness arena. Command staff are strategically prioritizing efforts to “erase the stigma” of utilizing mental health programs to foster resilience or treat acute issues. This was the first year we had enough observations of “Check up from the Neck Up” and Peer Support programs to measure each separate from cities’ overall wellness programs. This is critical because many cities do not have formal programs but have funded these independent law enforcement or public safety initiatives.

- **Check up From the Neck Up** – refers to a program offering no-cost mental health and consultative session(s) with a culturally competent, trauma-informed licensed clinician. These programs were typically contracted with local organizations separate from a city’s EAP. This practice showed statistical connection to reduced workers compensation claims.

An important program decision about this program is whether it is optional or required. Most Trust members require participation. Command staff tell us they do this to help normalize the program and overcome inertia of change. The graph below shows a distribution of 41 agencies implementing the program, and what percent were required vs. optional.

Answered: 41 Skipped: 23



- **Peer Support** - refers to a program offering access to trained “peers” who can facilitate discussions about mental health and wellness and connect officers to resources if needed. This practice showed statistical connection to reduced workers comp claims.

In summary, top performers measure participation and often commission employee groups or surveys to obtain feedback and continually improve the program. This is combined with a top-down support approach with command staff personally engaging in the program and setting an example. The Trust offers extensive resources for agencies who are starting or expanding their wellness programs. Please visit the Trust [Mental Health Toolkit](#) for more resources on this topic.

Evidence Room Practices

Question: Does your agency conduct **periodic evidence room audits**?

Question: Does your agency employ a **certified evidence technician** or have a sworn officer **certified in property and evidence room management**?

Evidence management is a complex matter that encompasses many legal and regulatory requirements, policies, procedures, physical infrastructure, training, and domain level expertise. While we asked three different questions about property and evidence-room practices, periodic audits and hiring / training a certified evidence technician were the practices that showed strong statistical correlation to reduced liability and workers' compensation claims.

Liability reduction related to evidence management is intuitive as annual audits are designed to mitigate risks associated with improper handling of evidence, chain of custody, or missing property. However, the strong correlation to reduced workers' compensation claims was surprising. From our interviews, we feel it is likely that agencies who implement this practice are simultaneously elevating all aspects of agency and officer performance.

Mental Illness / Crisis Response Policy

Question: Does the agency have a specific written policy on responding to calls involving persons with mental illness or in crisis situations? Examples include: IACP, LMCIT, Lexipol

Top performing agencies have clear policy and training about how to identify and engage those in mental crisis or with mental conditions. These agencies reduce liability and workers compensation claims following implementation.

Community mental health crisis is a significant issue we heard affecting every community. Given the increasing percentage of calls for service involving people in mental crisis, and the high risk of these encounters, many agencies are adopting this practice and related training (See Crisis Intervention Team Certification).

Crisis Intervention Team Certification

Question: Does your agency certify all or most of your officers in CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) training?

Top performing agencies utilize CIT training to provide their officers the necessary skills to identify and engage those in mental crisis or with mental conditions. These agencies reduce liability claims following implementation.

We heard many chiefs indicate strong interest in having every officer certified in CIT. However, this training is resource intensive. As chiefs and city leaders contemplate their strategies, the benefit of this practice on community experience metrics and officer wellness cannot be understated.

Restrictive Pursuit Policy

Question: Is your agency's **vehicle pursuit policy more restrictive** than the state mandated policy per MN Rule 6700.2701 and Minn. Stat. §626.8458, Subd. 3?

We heard a variety of different philosophies from chiefs regarding pursuit policy. Some chiefs have implemented very restrictive pursuit policies permitting pursuits in only the highest risk situations. Other chiefs felt that pursuit and the apprehension of criminals is a part of the job for a broader set of situations.

Our research shows that in most cases agencies restricting the number of high-risk, high-speed pursuit operations significantly reduced both their liability and workers' compensation claims. Further research would be required to determine if there are any notable changes to crime rates or other factors in these cities because of this change.

Lateral Hire Risk Assessment

Question: Do you assess risk of lateral hire officers and adjust FTO/supervision accordingly?

***New in 2025** – Lateral Hire Risk Assessment joins the list as a new Evidence-Based Practice. The iMPACT research team added this question to the research after observing this practice at a number of top performing Trust members. With officer shortages common across Minnesota and the country, many agencies have prioritized lateral hires to fill vacancies while reducing the time and expense of hiring new officers. Agencies that assess the risk of lateral hire, screen out high-risk candidates and adjust FTO to onboard lateral transfers showed a reduction in workers compensation claims after implementing the practice.

Two separate studies by Benchmark Analytics and University of Chicago research find that approximately 3% of the American policing workforce are "Wandering Officers". These are officers who were previously fired or quit under investigation, then rehired by another agency. This research finds a Wandering Officer is:

- More likely to migrate to smaller, less resourced agencies that have lesser background investigation practices or more willing to give the officer "another chance" due to staffing shortages or lower pay budgets.
- 2x as likely to be fired again than a rookie.
- Significantly more likely to accrue serious misconduct complaints or disciplinary action. 5% of the American policing workforce generate 66% of the liability claims cost incurred due to police misconduct.

Beyond screening out Wandering Officers, top performing agencies assess each lateral hire and many put them through an adjusted FTO process. The goal of this process is to enculturate the lateral transferring officer into the agency's purpose, core value, and standards of service excellence.

Emergency Vehicle Operations (non-pursuit) Policy

Question: Does the agency have a written policy on emergency vehicle operations (non-pursuit related such as medicals, crimes in progress, and fire calls)?

This practice governs how an agency manages emergency call response. If an agency analyzes their dispatch codes and reserves use of emergency lights and sirens for only the most critical calls, we found connection to reduced liability claims. Some top performing command staffs also monitor squad car telematics (the monitoring of location, movements, status, and behavior of a vehicle or fleet of vehicles) to determine if officers were adhering to this policy or exceeding posted speed limits by a particular amount. We did not include an agency as having implemented this practice if we could not find evidence that the practice was *monitored and reinforced on a periodic basis* by command staff.

Organizational Health and Turnover

Talent acquisition and retention remain a top concern of most Chiefs and City Administrators. The macro issue of fewer qualified candidates entering law enforcement careers than tenured officers retiring has been well documented.

While the issue and its effects are pervasive, top performers are experiencing much lower rates of turnover than the average agency across all sizes and geographies. In economic terms, these agencies have found a way to outperform the labor market by keeping their officers longer and attracting qualified candidates much easier than their peers.

Our research reveals that agencies with **20%+ lower** turnover than their peers have:

- *A Mission that is...*
 - *Clear and concise,*
 - *Incorporated into everyday decision making, recognition & reward,*
 - *And guides strategic direction.*
- *Core Values that are...*
 - *Clear and concise,*
 - *Incorporated into everyday work, recognition & reward.*
- *Focus on normalizing officer mental health & wellness with...*
 - Strategic objective(s) such as “erasing the stigma” of mental health,
 - Multiple programs established with measured participation,
 - Officer-directed input / command staff advocacy,
 - Focus on “Our journey”.

Many of these agencies and their cities routinely deploy employee satisfaction surveys and work to develop responsive programs and practices.

Footnote on compensation. Many agencies we surveyed have adjusted officer pay scales to stay as competitive as possible. We were not able to measure pay scale effects on turnover; however, it was not among the main reasons top performing agencies cited for their low turnover rates. This is consistent with a body of research indicating that pay can be a dissatisfier but is rarely viewed by employees as a driver of job satisfaction.

Conclusions & Implications for Future Work

The evidence-based findings in our research are correlations, not causal. It is also important to note that the magnitude of each risk-mitigating benefit for each practice is a function of the frequency and severity of claim outcomes, for each city. Put another way, a workers' compensation mitigation practice may have less benefit to a city that already has lower injuries and claims for workers' compensation. Therefore, it is important to understand the unique risk factors of each agency and community before choosing which practices are most appropriate for an agency to implement.

We also note that each of these practices were measured for their statistical correlation to change claims outcomes. Few, if any, practices in law enforcement are designed to specifically address claims. Instead, most are intended to preserve life, promote safety, and instill trust, confidence, and security for the community. Therefore, we recommend agency and city leadership consider this research as one factor among others important to their city or agency when considering new practices to deploy.

Evidence-based practices form a toolbox of ways leaders can address risk factors that most affect their city and agency. We will continue to research practices to expand our list of evidence-based practices that improve outcomes for our members.

***New in 2025** – We've added new areas of research including a deeper dive into the causal factors of success for AAR and wellness programs. We're also tracking additional practices such as co-responder programs, police jiu jitsu training, load-bearing vests, TSO programs, telematics, and progressive discipline for at-fault squad damage.

Through this process we will systematize and maintain knowledge in a way that can help agency and city leaders ramp up quickly and make data-driven decisions to successfully navigate today's demanding and transforming law enforcement landscape.

iMPACT's evidence-driven, risk management framework is designed to be an iterative process. The more questions we answer, the more research ideas we generate. As a reader of this report, you play an essential role in shaping the future of our program. We welcome your thoughts and feedback.

- *The Benchmark Analytics Team in partnership with the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust*