



October 15, 2021

Greetings from your Executive Director:

One of the many bills passed last session began the process of creating a “988” system to **redirect crisis response**. Here is the [bill](#) itself, and here is a quick summary of the bill:

- Directs the Department of Health to designate crisis hotline centers that meet standards related to technology and the ability to identify and deploy community crisis resources for persons experiencing a behavioral health crisis.
- Establishes the Crisis Response Improvement Strategy ([CRIS Committee](#)) to develop a comprehensive assessment of the behavioral health crisis services system and a recommended vision for an integrated crisis network throughout Washington. WASPC’s representative to the CRIS committee is Poulsbo Chief Ron Harding.
- Requires that health plans and medical assistance programs provide coverage for next day appointments for enrollees experiencing urgent, symptomatic behavioral health conditions.
- Establishes the Statewide 988 Behavioral Health Crisis Response Line Tax on phone lines to fund the crisis hotline centers and response services.
- Makes several appropriations to increase capacity for the existing crisis call centers and begin implementation of the crisis call center hub system and supporting technology.

We support the additional resources and the redirecting calls that may be better handled by behavioral health providers, but many of the best elements were removed from the bill itself, including rapid response crisis teams, crisis stabilization service beds, peer respite services, behavioral health urgent care, and coverage for care coordinators and next-day appointments. These changes make it harder to achieve a “warm hand off” that is critical to any system to be successful. The legislature funded some parts of a future system in other parts of the budget but as is often the case they have not been fully built out.

Reform Impacts:

The King County Prosecutor released their quarterly “[Shots Fired](#)” report that tracks shootings in King County. As with the first two quarters (Jan-Jun), the big takeaway is the **continued increase in the number of firearm homicides** and nonfatal shootings across the county. The number of shooting victims is up 76% over the four year average from 2017-2020, with fatal shooting victims up 71% and nonfatal shooting victims up 77%. The authors of the report do not typically include year-to-year comparisons, but in this case, and particularly given the national conversation around the increase in firearm violence in 2020, they noted that “firearm violence has **continued to increase beyond 2020 levels with 33% more total shots fired incidents and 39% more total shooting victims this year** as compared to the same time period last year.”

Also directly from the report: “Of the 356 shooting victims in Q1-Q3 2021, 85% were male (302); 32% were between the ages of 18-24 (112); and 81% were people of color (289).” As far as statewide homicide data, here at WASPC we reported an almost a 50% increase from 2019 to 2020 (206 to 302), and very preliminary data through the end of Sept. 2021 indicates that 2021 will again be higher than 2019.

Moses Lake Chief Kevin Fuhr sent along this recent case with two media stories. [Story 1](#) and [Story 2](#) highlighting an alarming incident. Both Chief Fuhr and Grant County Sheriff Tom Jones have confirmed their agencies would have pursued the stolen car identified in the first case. New laws prevented that from occurring, and the driver continued on, later breaking into a home, where the homeowner was placed in a position to defend themselves, and the intruder was shot and injured. WASPC continues to believe that improvements to the public service of law enforcement do not have to be mutually exclusive with public safety. However, when it comes to the law, the details matter, and that’s our biggest concern with many of the recently-enacted laws. Reforms should not result in increased victimization. In this case, the details of the bills resulted in a violent crime, as well as two traumatized families, changed forever.

In **Seattle**, [neighborhood residents meeting](#) with Chief Diaz expressed their frustration with safety and disorder in their community, and recently I received this portion of a company-wide e-mail passed along from an employee who works in an office building in downtown Seattle: “Due to increased criminal activity in and around our office building, the building owner has recommended that we temporarily lock elevator access to open public floors. We apologize for this inconvenience. As a reminder, you can likely complete your business without a trip to our offices. Most services are available online or can be done remotely.” [Weyerhaeuser](#) has delayed employees returning to their offices due to crime concerns. Several [rest areas](#) along I-5 have been closed now due to being “overrun by problems like vandalism, drug use and squatters.”

Escalating violent crime should be a concern for everybody. People cannot go to their offices and are being forced to work remotely, not because of COVID restrictions, but because of crime concerns? Trucks need to park on off-ramps, and your kids cannot use a bathroom on long trips, because rest areas can no longer be accessed due to crime and disorder? Is this the new normal, and is that OK? That is the decision we as a state and as individual communities have to make. WASPC has supported constructive [police reform](#) balanced with public safety all along, and we will continue to work for that balance.

Also:

In the [August 31 newsletter](#), we encouraged you to offer feedback regarding the **proposed rulemaking changes for LETCSA** and prohibitions on briefings for executives in officer involved incidents. Many of you sent written testimony and were intending to speak at the virtual meeting Sept. 8, but it was cancelled and rescheduled due to a lack of a quorum. It has now been set for Nov. 4 at 10 AM and the information is found [here](#).

For several months, the Training and Education Committee, along with the WASPC Board, have worked to enhance training and development for WASPC members, especially for command staff and future leaders. After some delays, we are pleased to let you know we now have a new Training Coordinator, former Bellingham Chief David Doll. David will start Nov. 1 and we are

looking forward to providing stronger support to all of you. David will be at our conference in November to hear from you about next steps and how we can best be responsive to you.

This year's Medal of Honor ceremony was held October 8th; Cowlitz County Sheriff Brad Thurman is our liaison for the Committee, and we appreciate his commitment and service. [Here](#) is the program listing the recipients. Sheriff Thurman and WSP Captain Linn are attending the 2019 and 2020 Line of Duty Deaths Memorial ceremony in Washington D.C.

Finally, here are two great stories highlighting the extraordinary work our teams do- first, Seattle officers [saved a life](#) and in another case, Vancouver PD Officers do extraordinary and heroic work to [save the life of a baby](#). These are yet more reminders of what the 11,000 men and women in law enforcement in our state are there to do every day.

Thank you and stay safe!

- Steve