Austin Police Department's Early Intervention System for Officers
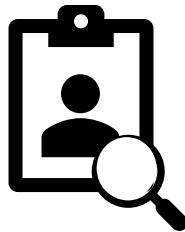
OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR

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What is an Early Intervention System?

➢ Austin's system - **Guidance Advisory Program**

➢ Purpose: To identify officers who may need additional support to do their jobs safely and effectively

➢ Austin tracks 3 indicators:

Response to
Resistance Incidents

Internal Affairs
Complaints

Use of Sick Leave

Early Intervention System benefits

- Monitoring employee performance

- Correcting behavior

- Strengthening public confidence

Department of Justice Best Practices for Early Intervention Systems

- Established Processes
- Good Data Collection
- Appropriate Support Services
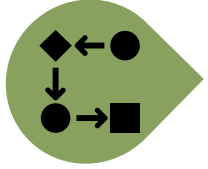- Continuous Monitoring & Improvement
- Generate Buy-In
- Adequate Training
- Foster Transparency

The Austin Police Department's early intervention system is not fulfilling its mission.

Established Processes

GAP processes are not effective or working as intended

Good Data Collection

GAP does not effectively identify officers who may need assistance

- Information queried from indicator databases is not correct

- More than 33% of officers were not identified by the system

- Some officers were only identified once, despite multiple activations

Appropriate Support Services

The GAP does not effectively connect officers to support services

Our sample of supervisor memos found:

- 93% of supervisor reviews found no issues
  - 7% noted informal communications

- 0% of supervisor reviews recommended formal action

- 0% of supervisor reviews referred officers to services

Continuous Monitoring & Improvement

There is minimal reporting on GAP activations and no trend analysis, tracking, or evaluation

- No trend analysis to detect problematic behavior patterns

- Interventions are not tracked or evaluated for effectiveness

- Our 5-year trend analysis of activations found:
  - 7% of officers accounted for 17% of activations
  - No issues found for officers with higher activation numbers

The Austin Police Department has not generated the buy-in, provided the necessary training, or created the transparency needed to support use of the GAP.

Generate Buy-In

Supervisors do not find the GAP helpful and officers view it as punitive

Adequate Training

Training is minimal and not provided regularly

Foster Transparency

The purpose of the GAP and how it works is not clear to all users

The GAP may not track the right amount or type of indicators or have the appropriate threshold levels

- Other cities track more than Austin's **3 indicators**
  - Dallas   6
  - Houston   10
  - San Antonio   5
  - Pittsburgh   18

- Austin may not track the right indicators

- Austin may not use appropriate thresholds

More data-driven early intervention systems claim to have predictive value

- Only a few cities are using these systems

- These systems track 20 or more indicators

- Early tests of these systems show promise

Recommendations

The Chief of Police should:

1. Fix existing data collection issues so the GAP appropriately identifies officers

2. Work to create the necessary culture to generate buy-in

3. Work with stakeholders to review and update indicators and thresholds

4. Ensure the revised program has appropriate resources

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