

State of Nevada  
Governor's Finance Office  
Division of Internal Audits

**Audit Report**

**Department of Public Safety  
Division of Parole and Probation**

\*\*\*\*\*

**Caseload Ratios**

\*\*\*

**Align caseload ratios to improve operational effectiveness.**

DIA Report No. 21-02  
January 28, 2021



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**  
**Dept. of Public Safety/Division of Parole and Probation**  
**Caseload**

**Introduction**..... page 1

---

**Objective: Align actual and budgeted caseload ratios to improve operational effectiveness**

---

**Track caseload ratios based on actual staffing levels** ..... page 2

Understanding where NPP operates relative to caseload ratios established during the budget cycle is essential to understanding where operational imbalances exist at the officer level. Tracking caseload ratios based on actual staffing levels, rather than budgeted positions, informs NPP leadership when adjustments are needed to ensure optimal caseloads derived during the legislative session discussions are achieved. Budgeted caseload ratios are established by the legislature during the budgetary process and are considered optimal for case-handling positions in carrying out the proper level of supervision for various risk levels. NPP continuously operates above the budgeted ratios due to high personnel turnover in case-handling positions. NPP has a continuously high vacancy rate which affects the caseloads of the remaining officers. DIA's analysis shows 48% of officers, 49% of sergeants, 33% of specialist 2s, and 10% of specialist 3s operate above the optimal caseload ratios. Although NPP does track caseload ratios at the unit level, they are not tracked in a manner that identifies where caseload imbalances at the officer level.

**Develop a plan to improve retention and expand recruitment** ..... page 10

Unprecedented recruitment challenges in law enforcement nationally require creative approaches to ensure adequate staffing locally of this critical public safety function. Developing a plan to expand recruitment efforts and improve retention will promote operational stability. A documented retention and recruitment strategy is necessary to address the challenges in retention and recruitment of law enforcement officers. Case-handling positions are responsible for ensuring supervision objectives are met. High turnover in case-handling positions has a direct impact on the effectiveness of offender supervision and results in an estimated \$2.1 million annual loss of investment of trained officers. Documenting a plan to improve retention and expand recruitment, as an integral part of the strategic plan, will ensure adequate resources at hiring and retaining individuals who have high potential for success with the organization.

---

**Appendix A**..... page 18  
Scope and Methodology, Background, Acknowledgments

**Appendix B**..... page 20  
Response and Implementation Plan

**Appendix C**..... page 21  
Timetable for Implementing Audit Recommendations

---

---

---

## INTRODUCTION

---

---

At the direction of the Executive Branch Audit Committee, the Division of Internal Audits conducted an audit of the Nevada Department of Public Safety (DPS), Division of Parole and Probation (NPP). Our audit focused on NPP's caseload ratios. The audit's scope and methodology, background, and acknowledgements are included in Appendix A.

Our audit objective was to develop recommendations to:

- ✓ Align actual and budgeted caseload ratios to improve operational effectiveness.

### **Division of Parole and Probation Response and Implementation Plan**

We provided draft copies of this report to DPS/NPP for review and comment. NPP's comments have been considered in the preparation of this report and are included in Appendix B. In its response, NPP accepted our recommendations. Appendix C includes a timetable to implement the recommendations.

NRS 353A.090 requires within six months after the final report is issued to the Executive Branch Audit Committee, the Administrator of the Division of Internal Audits shall evaluate the steps NPP has taken to implement the recommendations and shall determine whether the steps are achieving the desired results. The administrator shall report the six-month follow-up results to the committee and NPP officials.

The following report (DIA Report No. 21-02) contains our *findings, conclusions, and recommendation*.

Respectfully,



Warren Lowman  
Administrator

---

---

## **Align Actual and Budgeted Caseload Ratios to Improve Operational Effectiveness**

---

---

The Nevada Department of Public Safety (DPS), Division of Parole and Probation (NPP) should align actual and budgeted caseload ratios to improve operational effectiveness by:

- Tracking caseload ratios based on actual staffing levels; and
- Developing a plan to improve retention and expand recruitment.

Aligning actual and budgeted caseload ratios to improve operational effectiveness could benefit the state by improving the effectiveness of supervision efforts and mitigating officer attrition costs of \$2.1 million annually. Improving the effectiveness of supervision efforts has been shown to reduce recidivism in case studies. Reducing recidivism lowers incarceration costs.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Track Caseload Ratios Based on Actual Staffing Levels***

The Division of Parole and Probation (NPP) should track caseload ratios based on actual staffing levels. Tracking actual caseload ratios will help NPP understand where they operate relative to optimal staffing levels established during the budget cycle.

NPP does not track actual caseload ratios and cannot gauge optimal staffing levels based on offender supervision requirements outlined in NPP operational manuals. Determining actual caseload ratios will allow NPP to understand the various operational demands and factors impacting the effectiveness of offender supervision.

### **Actual Caseload Ratios Exceed Budgeted Ratios Significantly**

NPP officers consistently have caseloads above the budgeted ratios. Some of the factors affecting caseload ratios include the growth seen in offender population which often outpaces the growth of the agency. "Community corrections populations' records demonstrate that there are more offenders on probation and parole today than in the past, with more of these offenders having increased and more complex ordered conditions of supervision and many more have high levels of risk and needs to be addressed, which increases the workload per offender"<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> DIA Report No. 20-06

<sup>2</sup> Probation and Parole's Growing Caseloads and Workload Allocation: Strategies for Managerial Decision Making.

### NPP Caseload Tracking is Inadequate

NPP tracks the number of cases assigned to each officer by supervision type. The type of cases tracked include regular supervision, intensive supervision, residential confinement, sex offender caseload, admin caseload, and deported. However, caseload tracking is inadequate because NPP does not track whether a regular supervision case is low, medium, or high-risk which have different caseload ratios.

NPP reported the reason for not tracking the risk level of regular supervision cases is because regular supervision is used in rural areas where it is not possible to assign an officer to one type of offender. However, review of Supervision Caseload Count reports shows regular supervision is also used in urban areas with no distinction between low, medium, and high-risk levels. The reports included supervision caseload counts for case-handling positions, including officers, sergeants, and some nonsworn specialists.<sup>3</sup> The reports did not identify why offenders were assigned to sergeants or specialists as opposed to officers. Case-handling positions do not necessarily supervise offenders.

### It Is Unclear What Actual Caseload Ratios Are for Offender Supervision Positions

It is unclear what actual ratios are for offender supervision positions and if they meet or exceed budgeted ratios based on information in Supervision Caseload Count reports. NPP's budgeted ratios are meant to be applied to caseloads that are comprised of one single type of offender; these reports do not make the distinction for risk level of regular supervision cases.

### NPP Can Determine Whether Caseload Ratios Exceed Budgeted Ratios

NPP can determine whether caseload ratios exceed budgeted ratios with available information. We determined an actual caseload factor for each officer on the June 29, 2020 Supervision Caseload Count report that had 235 officers, sergeants, specialists, and other personnel with caseloads.<sup>4</sup>

For officers with caseload assignments in the regular supervision category, we applied the budgeted 1:80 caseload ratio due to limitations of the Supervision Caseload Count report, which does not provide case assignments for low, medium, and high-risk sub-categories. For officers with caseloads across multiple categories, we applied a weighted average to determine if officer workload was appropriate. An optimal caseload would result in a factor of 1.00, which would indicate the officer is not exceeding the desired workload regardless of whether the

---

<sup>3</sup> Officers perform direct supervision of offenders. Nonsworn case-handling personnel duties include writing pre-sentence investigation reports, post-conviction reports, warrants, and deportation documents.

<sup>4</sup> Provided by NPP.

case is assigned across multiple categories with different budgeted caseload ratios. Conversely, a factor greater than 1.00 indicates excessive caseload. See Exhibit I for a summary of actual NPP caseload factors based on the June 29, 2020 Supervision Caseload Count report.

## Exhibit I

### Actual NPP Caseload Factors<sup>a</sup>

Caseload Factor	Officer 2		Sergeant		Specialist 2		Specialist 3	
	0 - 0.50	27	14%	0	0%	0	0%	0
0.51 - 1.00	73	38%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Total ≤ 1.00</b>	<b>52%</b>		<b>0%</b>		<b>0%</b>		<b>0%</b>	
1.01 - 1.50	54	28%	15	83%	2	25%	6	86%
1.51 - 2.00	21	11%	3	17%	1	13%	0	0%
2.01 - 3.00+	18	9%	0	0%	5	63%	1	14%
<b>Total &gt; 1.00</b>	<b>48%</b>		<b>100%</b>		<b>100%</b>		<b>100%</b>	
<b>Total Offender Supervision Caseload</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: June 29, 2020 Supervision Caseload Count report provided by NPP.

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Excludes two DPS Officer 1; One DPS Sergeant; one Admin Assistant 3; and five individuals whose positions could not be identified.

When applying the weighted values to the supervision caseload count to determine the actual caseload factors, the analysis showed 52% of officers were at or below a factor of 1.00, about a third of which were below half of the optimal caseload size. This analysis excludes officers' non-supervision duties, such as task force assignments, which may account for those with low caseload factors. Of the 48% of officers with caseload factors above 1.00, slightly less than half were significantly above (1.5 or higher), with 9% of Officer 2 positions carrying a caseload between two and three times the optimal size. All sergeants and specialists included in this analysis exceeded a caseload factor of 1.00. This analysis presumed case assignments for sergeants and specialists, which do not typically perform direct supervision of offenders, were in addition to a full workload of their core duties.

### Caseloads May Not Be Balanced

Caseloads may not be balanced. It is unclear why there is such a variation among case-handlers. Our analysis shows cases could be better distributed among case-handlers. Understanding the risk level of cases would also help ensure more balanced caseloads. Modifying the Supervision Caseload Count report to indicate the risk levels of regular supervision would allow more precise caseload factors to be determined.

In addition to officers, there are also sergeants and specialists with supervision caseloads. See Exhibit II for a summary of direct and indirect supervision assignments by personnel category:

## Exhibit II

### Direct and Indirect Supervision Assignment by Personnel Category

Caseload Assignment	Officer 2		Sergeant		Specialist 2		Specialist 3	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Direct Offender Supervision Caseload	193	92%	18	49%	8	33%	7	10%
Indirect Offender Supervision Caseload	16	8%	19	51%	16	67%	62	90%
<b>Total</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: June 29, 2020 Supervision Caseload Count report provided by NPP and HR Data Warehouse data.

As shown in Exhibit II, 49% of sergeants directly supervise offenders in addition to their core responsibilities of overseeing officers. Without sergeants taking on supervision cases, these cases would be assigned to officers and exacerbate already sub-optimal caseload factors. Sergeants held relatively low offender supervision caseloads in addition to overseeing officers at a 1:6 ratio. Sergeants do not traditionally supervise offenders. Their supervision caseloads are most likely a result of NPP officer vacancies. Moreover, diverting sergeants from overseeing officers may impact the effectiveness of offender supervision. Some specialists, 33% of specialist 2s and 10% of specialist 3s, held offender supervision caseloads as well. Although most specialists carried a low offender supervision caseload, some had a caseload factor more than double what we determined was ideal. Specialists are nonsworn case-handlers and, with the exception of outgoing Interstate Compact Unit cases, are not intended to directly supervise offenders.

### Caseload Ratios Developed with Budgetary Oversight

Caseload ratios are developed with budgetary oversight to provide effective offender supervision based on operational guidelines. Caseload ratios are a compromise between operational demands and budgetary constraints. NPP, in general, operates with fewer officers than authorized due to retention and recruitment challenges. Caseload ratios are applied to offender population forecasts to determine personnel needs after internal discussions considering many factors for optimizing supervision outcomes.

### Offender Population Forecasts Inform Staffing Decisions

Offender population forecasts are provided by an independent contractor and are based on historical data and caseload by function. These functions include categories for both sworn and nonsworn duties. Sworn duties include low, medium, and high-risk supervision populations as well as special categories such as: interstate compact; lifetime supervision; intensive supervision; and residential confinement. Nonsworn functions include presentence investigations (PSI), post-



conviction reports, warrants, pardons, and deportation reports. See Exhibit III for functional breakdown of actual and projected caseloads.

**Exhibit III**

**NPP Caseload Information for 2019-21 Biennium Forecasts<sup>a</sup>**

<b>Caseload Estimates</b>	<b>FY 2017 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2018 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2019 Projected</b>	<b>FY 2020 Projected</b>	<b>FY 2021 Projected</b>
<b>Warrants</b>	2,877	3,041	3,056	3,084	3,101
<b>Interstate Compact</b>	1,562	1,523	1,628	1,667	1,705
<b>Pre-Release</b>	2,296	2,236	2,294	2,311	2,328
<b>Pardons Investigations</b>	78	96	76	77	83
<b>Post Convictions</b>	108	684	714	719	725
<b>Presentence Investigations</b>	10,887	10,740	10,618	10,666	10,702
<b>Regular Supervision</b>	10,128	9,612	11,151	11,338	11,513
<b>Intense Supervision Unit/Residential Confinement</b>	1,018	1,065	1,121	1,161	1,192
<b>Sex Offenders</b>	1,889	1,927	1,946	2,056	2,152

Source: February 2019 James Frank Austin offender population forecast.

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Sworn duties are highlighted.

Caseload Ratios are Determined by the Legislature

Caseload ratios are determined by the Legislature based on proposals by NPP for each sworn and nonsworn function. NPP’s proposed caseload ratios and personnel needs are incorporated into the state executive budget the governor recommends to the Legislature each biennium. The Legislature then accepts, modifies, or rejects the proposed ratios, personnel needs, and associated costs.

NPP’s ratios included in its budget submission are based on internal factors, such as: demand issues, efficiency improvement, and changes in the industry for supervision ratios. Factors affecting an officer or specialists’ workload are also a catalyst for ratio proposals. However, because of the extensive process to revise ratios, NPP does not factor in operational demands impacting workload until two legislative sessions after the initial impact.<sup>5</sup> As a result, NPP is unable to quickly adjust budgeted caseloads to reflect changes in operational demands on personnel.

NPP applies ratios to caseload projections to determine budgeted positions necessary to maintain desired supervision levels and nonsworn workload. Caseload decisions assume budgeted positions are fully staffed. Vacancies negatively impact NPP’s ability to achieve organizational objectives. When vacancies occur, NPP must redistribute caseloads to filled positions leading to

<sup>5</sup> Two years of baseline data are collected before changes that impact workload are factored into JFA’s caseload ratios to project personnel needs during legislative sessions.

heavier than optimal caseloads or case-handling position not meant to supervise offenders. Heavier caseloads may impact critical public safety services and lead to higher offender noncompliance. When full staffing is not maintained, operational effectiveness is compromised. The 2019 Budget Closing Action Report shows the legislatively approved NPP caseload ratios for the 2020-2021 biennium. See Exhibit IV.

**Exhibit IV**

**NPP Approved Caseload Ratios for 2020-2021 Biennium**

Sworn Activities	2019 Legislatively Approved Staffing Ratios	Nonsworn Activities	2019 Legislatively Approved Staffing Ratios
Miscellaneous <sup>a</sup>	1:75	Warrants	1:250
Regular (General) Supervision <sup>b</sup>	1:80	Interstate Compact	1:250
ISU/Residential Confinement	1:30	Pre-Release	1:250
Sex Offenders	1:25	Pardon Investigations	48/year
Low-Risk Supervision Unit	1:150	Post-Conviction Investigations	240/year
Medium-Risk Supervision Unit	1:80	Pre-Sentence Investigations	
High-Risk Supervision Unit	1:60	Specialist 3	1:12
Day Reporting Center	1:50	Specialist 4	1:8

Source: 2019 Budget Closing Action Report.

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Miscellaneous includes probable cause investigations.

<sup>b</sup> Regular supervision includes low, medium, and high-risk offenders.

**Caseload Has a Direct Impact on Supervision Effectiveness**

Research shows that caseload has a direct impact on supervision effectiveness. As Exhibit I shows, 48% of supervising officers exceeds a 1.00 workload factor, which indicates excessive caseload. Effective supervision requires manageably sized caseloads combined with evidenced-based practices.<sup>6</sup> Caseload and the accompanying workload must be balanced for supervision objectives to be achieved. Operating at a caseload ratio above the budgeted ratios compromises supervision effectiveness. Likewise, operating at a caseload ratio below budgeted ratios can also have adverse effects associated with over-supervision. As Exhibit I shows, 52% of supervising officers have a workload factor at or below 1.00. Although the analysis in Exhibit I excludes duties not directly related to offender supervision, such as task force assignments, striking the right balance is critically important and requires informed judgment by leadership and decision makers.

<sup>6</sup> Caseload Standards for Probation and Parole (September 2006).

Caseload ratios established during the budget process are designed to optimize operational efficiencies and meet agency objectives of reducing recidivism and reintegrating offenders into society. Research shows that establishing optimal caseload ratios is imperative for the success of offenders under NPP supervision: "Officer caseloads are the equivalent of teacher class size. Those caseloads must be of a size that provides officers with enough time to devote to each offender to achieve supervision objectives."<sup>7</sup>

#### Heavy Caseloads Potentially Lead to Ineffective Supervision

Heavy caseloads potentially lead to ineffective supervision by stretching officer resources. Supervising too many offenders compromises an officer's ability to effectively correct offender behavior. With an overburdened caseload, officers become preoccupied with administrative responsibilities required by statute, leading to inadequate time to meaningfully pursue new innovative techniques; this could potentially counteract efforts to implement individualized supervision techniques.

Research shows that caseload size is important in parole and probation. Manageably sized caseloads are necessary for effective supervision especially when attempting to implement individualized supervision techniques.<sup>8</sup>

#### New Techniques for An Individualized Approach Increase Supervision Demands

New techniques for an individualized approach have increased supervision demands. Consistent with national best practices, NPP has implemented new techniques to provide an individualized approach to offender supervision. These changes include implementing a new, more in-depth risk assessment and Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICs).

EPICs is a supervision model for structured face-to-face contact between an officer (or specialist) and offender. This face-to-face contact is conducted in standardized "sessions" that focus on behavioral change in the offender. These sessions last between 20 and 50 minutes and require other NPP officers trained in EPICs to review the sessions and provide feedback to the officer (or specialist) on how they can improve their interaction with the offender.<sup>9</sup>

EPICs has added new requirements that increased pressure on officers' workload. Officers are now required to spend more time per offender and provide additional

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Parole and Probation Division Directive Manual 1.02.020.

individualized attention to offenders.<sup>10</sup> These new requirements make it difficult for officers to stay within the budgeted ratios that have not been adjusted for EPICs.

### Offender Population Has Grown Significantly in the Last 40 Years

The offender population has grown significantly in the last 40 years. In addition, the type of offender under parole and probation supervision has changed significantly. Change within the justice system as well as prison overcrowding has led to more offenders, including offenders with higher criminogenic characteristics placed under parole and probation supervision. Offenders with higher criminogenic needs potentially pose greater community safety threats. These offenders “require more officer time to provide adequate supervision, treatment, and enforcement of conditions, and hopefully behavior change.”<sup>11</sup>

### NPP Actual Caseload Ratios Exceed Budgeted Ratios

NPP actual caseload ratios exceed budgeted ratios due to high vacancy rates in a perpetuating cycle. Consistently high vacancy rates result in caseloads above optimal ratios which, in turn, contribute to employee turnover. Caseloads above the optimal ratios lead to officers with excessive workloads in an already stressful environment. Officers eventually seek other employment to find a more balanced workload.

## ***Conclusion***

Tracking caseload ratios based on actual staffing levels will allow NPP to determine their operational caseload ratios. Caseloads have a direct impact on the effectiveness of supervision making it imperative that the budget ratios are met. Actual caseload ratios exceed budgeted ratios because turnover in case-handling positions requires a re-distribution to the remaining supervision force. Identifying the degree to which operating caseload ratios agree with budgeted caseload ratios will inform staffing decisions during discussions with legislators.

## ***Recommendation***

1. Track caseload ratios based on actual staffing levels.

---

<sup>10</sup> Offenders must qualify for EPICs based supervision.

<sup>11</sup> Probation and Parole's Growing Caseloads and Workload Allocation: Strategies for Managerial Decision Making.

## Develop a Plan to Improve Retention and Expand Recruitment

The Division of Parole and Probation (NPP) should develop a plan to improve retention and expand recruitment for case-handling positions.<sup>12</sup> Improving retention promotes operational stability and continuity of offender supervision. Failing to address chronic turnover causes perpetual redistribution of cases, increases caseloads for remaining officers, and disrupts rapport established between supervising officers and supervised offenders.

A combination of competitive market forces, stringent qualification standards, and the level of difficulty of job duties creates a challenging recruitment and retention environment. This environment is compounded by the high stress nature of the work and potential dangers officers face in the line of duty. There is also an apparent dissatisfaction with salary and overall compensation. Officers are compensated less than their counterparts in municipalities. NPP states that a current negative climate towards law enforcement presents additional challenges to recruiting efforts. High turnover creates a greater workload for the remaining officers which may result in decreased job satisfaction.

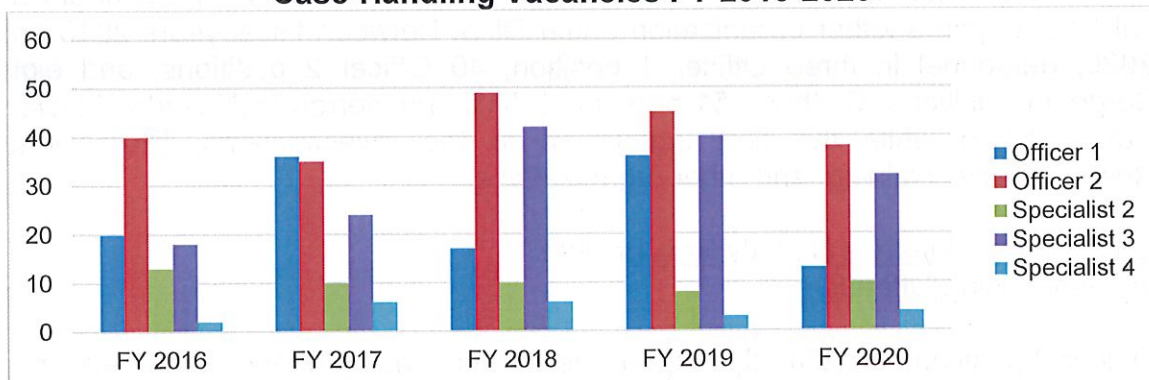
### NPP Has High Turnover in Critical Positions

NPP has high turnover in critical positions which directly impacts operational effectiveness. As of November 2020, NPP had a total of 603 authorized positions and 119 (20%) were vacant. Of the vacant positions, 93 (78%) were case-handling positions including officers, sergeants, and specialists.

High turnover in case-handling positions has been consistent. Between fiscal years 2016 and 2020, there were a total of 619 vacancies, 525 excluding retirements. See Exhibit V for total case-handling vacancies by position.

### Exhibit V

Case-Handling Vacancies FY 2016-2020 <sup>a</sup>



Source: DIA analysis of HR Data Warehouse data.

Note: <sup>a</sup> DPS Officer 1 positions are hired as underfills for the DPS Officer 2 positions. The positions are budgeted at the DPS Officer 2 level.

<sup>12</sup> Case-handling positions include Officers, Sergeants, and Specialists.

As an organization, NPP's five-year turnover exceeds its number of currently authorized staff, and case-handling position turnover is the greatest contributor. There has been significant turnover within the Officer 1, Officer 2, and Specialist 3 positions. See Exhibit VI for the total five-year turnover rates for case-handling positions and NPP overall for fiscal years 2016 through 2020.

**Exhibit VI**

**Five-Year Turnover Rate for Fiscal Years 2016-2020**

Positions	Positions Currently Authorized <sup>a</sup>	Positions Vacated	Gross Vacancy Rate	Positions Vacated (net of lateral transfers and retirements) <sup>b</sup>	Net Vacancy Rate
Officer 1 <sup>c</sup>	NA	80		77	
Officer 2	256	176	100% <sup>d</sup>	104	71%
Sergeant	44	32	73%	11	25%
Specialist 2	30	27	90%	20	67%
Specialist 3	100	125	125%	97	97%
Specialist 4	16	16	100%	7	44%
Total Case Handling Positions	446	456	102%	316	71%
All Positions	603	619	103%	418	69%

Source: HR Data Warehouse

Note: <sup>a</sup> Positions authorized as of November 2020

<sup>b</sup> Lateral transfers include personnel who either transferred to a non-classified position within the same home organization or employees who have transferred between home organizations.

<sup>c</sup> DPS Officer 1 positions are hired as underfills for the DPS Officer 2 positions. The positions are budgeted at the DPS Officer 2 level.

<sup>d</sup> Includes DPS Officer 1 and DPS Officer 2 vacated positions.

Positions vacated net of lateral transfers and retirements excludes personnel who left NPP to join another organization under DPS. Between fiscal years 2016 and 2020, personnel in three Officer 1 position, 40 Officer 2 positions, and eight Sergeant positions. Of these 51 personnel, 51% transferred to Nevada Highway Patrol (NHP) while the rest transferred to the Investigations, Professional Responsibility, Training, and other organizations.

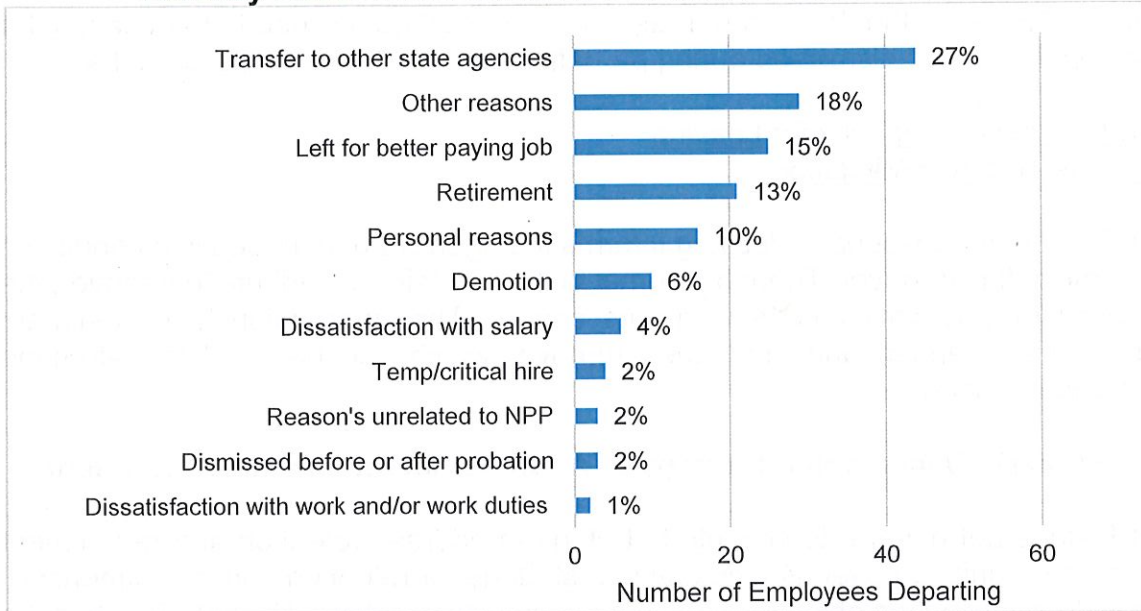
Officer 2 Positions are Directly Responsible for Supervising Offenders

Officer 2 positions are directly responsible for supervising offenders and ensuring supervision tasks required by regulation are completed. High vacancies in these positions have a direct impact on NPP's ability to attain the budgeted caseload ratios and comply with supervision tasks. There are many reasons why officers leave; however, three of the most prominent are: lateral transfers to other state

agencies; a better paying job at another government agency; and retirement. Data shows that over 50% of Officer 2 personnel who left for another state agency went to NHP at the same position and pay grade. NPP reports that many transferees to NHP are attracted by overtime opportunities. These personnel account for 15% of total departures. See Exhibit VII for Officer 2 vacancy reasons for fiscal years 2016 through 2020.

**Exhibit VII**

**Vacancy Reasons for Officer 2 Position FY 2016 – FY 2020 <sup>a</sup>**



Source: DIA analysis of HR Data Warehouse data.

Note: <sup>a</sup> HR Data Warehouse has a total of 33 vacancy reasons. Similar reasons were grouped together.

Officer 1 Personnel Leave Before Becoming Operationally Viable

Many Officer 1 personnel leave service before becoming operationally viable. The high rate of officers dismissed during probation may be related to the stringent standards that must be met to become an officer. Data show the two primary reasons for vacancies in the last five years were “personal reasons” (23%) and “dismissed during probation” (24%).<sup>13</sup> NPP staff noted there are fewer qualified candidates who are able to pass the stringent background check. Of those that are hired, many are screened out during training. Those who meet qualifications in the first year and are automatically promoted to Officer 2 sometimes leave for employment outside of NPP. The high number of departures due to dismissal during probation underscores the need for NPP to develop a strategy to recruit individuals with the highest potential for success.

<sup>13</sup> Termination reasons were obtained through HR Data Warehouse.

### Specialist Positions Fill Critical Role in Supervision Process

Specialist positions fill a critical role in the supervision process. These positions are responsible for investigating offenders' backgrounds prior to being placed under NPP's supervision. These responsibilities include performing presentence investigations and writing reports related to post-conviction, warrants, pardons, and deportations. Over the last five years, 27% of total vacancies within NPP were Specialist positions, and about 75% of those were in Specialist 3 positions. Other than retirement, the top three reasons for departure included: termination for personal reasons; dismissed during probation; and left for better paying jobs.

### Understanding Reasons for Leaving Informs Turnover Mitigation

Understanding reasons for leaving informs the agency about underlying conditions and mitigating turnover. Though external factors certainly contribute to turnover, the agency may identify factors within its control. This information helps estimate anticipated planned and unplanned turnover which can be used to determine recruitment needs.

### **NPP Has No Documented Strategy to Address Retention and Recruitment**

NPP does not have a documented strategy to address retention and recruitment despite chronic turnover. Documenting a strategy for retention and recruitment will provide clarity on the objectives and path for implementation. "Never before has the recruitment and retention of police personnel been as critical or as challenging for police organizations as it is today. To address these challenges successfully, law enforcement leaders must examine the process in an entirely different manner. This process will require a constant review of the labor market, compensation systems, leadership, recruiting techniques, supervision of recruiters, employer brands, leadership and operational management systems, and retention systems. Quite simply – when recruiting and retaining personnel, every detail is important and deserves attention."<sup>14</sup>

### A Significant Number of NPP Positions Turnover Each Year

A significant number of NPP case-handling positions turnover each year. A one-year probationary period must be completed before an officer candidate becomes operationally viable. Case-handling positions are an integral component of the agency's infrastructure. These positions are difficult to recruit, making it imperative that a plan be developed to improve NPP's retention of trained officers. "Successful law enforcement administrators make recruitment and retention a top priority... The

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



best practice is to develop a strategic recruitment and retention plan and monitor it for effectiveness.”<sup>15</sup>

NPP officers play a critical role in the state’s public safety efforts. Ensuring NPP is adequately staffed is a key component of that effort. Consequently, retaining officers should be a high priority. The state has a significant investment in the officers, including the cost of training and the first year’s salary, before they handle cases. The state has a low return on investment when officers remain less than a year after they have completed training. According to Exhibit VI, 77 Officer 1 and 104 Officer 2 positions vacated between fiscal years 2016 through 2020 before becoming operationally viable, resulting in a loss of investment of approximately \$10.5 million over the period, or \$2.1 million annually.<sup>16</sup> This conservative estimate excludes the cost of training, testing, and attrition related to other case-handling positions. Implementing new retention efforts, such as a service requirement for Officer 2 positions, would allow the state a greater return on investment.

Retention of trained personnel is vital to NPP’s success. NPP could make personnel retention and recruitment an essential focus within its strategic plan. By incorporating a plan for recruitment and retention into the organization’s existing strategic plan, NPP can ensure leadership and decision makers are informed about retention objectives. The core components of the retention and recruitment plan can then be reevaluated and synchronized with other strategic objectives.

### Retention is Key to Alleviating Recruitment Needs

Retention is key to alleviating recruitment needs. Law enforcement attrition is a complex and difficult issue to manage. Identifying attrition trends at NPP can help illustrate the severity of the problem and how to coordinate retention efforts at critical times. Before an agency can determine the retention strategies to be initiated, it is critical to know the specific reasons why officers are leaving an agency.<sup>17</sup>

Determining reasons why employees stay is equally important. Conducting ‘stay’ interviews with high performing veteran employees can help identify factors that influence their decisions to remain in the agency. The goal is to determine factors that are pulling individuals into the agency as well as individual traits in persons who are more likely to stay and fit within the agency.<sup>18</sup> These techniques are extraneous to normal recruitment practices in Nevada state government but could

---

<sup>15</sup> Recruitment and Retention for 2019 and Beyond; Police Chief Magazine; International Association of Chiefs of Police.

<sup>16</sup> 77 Officer 1s vacated (excluding lateral transfers) X \$53,599 (grade 36, step 1 salary) = \$4,127,123. \$4,127,123/5 = \$825,425 average per year. 104 Officer 2s vacated (excluding retirements and lateral transfers) X \$61,011 (grade 39, step 1 salary) = \$6,345,144. \$6,345,144/5 = \$1,269,129 average per year. \$1,269,129 + \$825,425 = \$2,094,454 annual loss of investment.

<sup>17</sup> Best Practices Guide for Recruitment, Retention, and Turnover of Law Enforcement Personnel by W. Dwayne Orrick.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

be justified for agencies experiencing especially challenging retention environments. Other techniques to address retention include:

- Planning and analysis;
- Reducing the financial impact of turnover;
- Enhancing compensation and perks;
- Employee engagement strategies; and
- Improving organizational effectiveness.

Whatever organizational initiatives are undertaken to address chronic turnover, it is largely based on the judgement of agency leadership: "Unfortunately, the research on what agencies can do to reduce turnover appears to rely more on anecdotal accounts than on empirical analysis."<sup>19</sup> Using available data is key to informing NPP leadership as it develops a strategy to attain retention objectives.

#### NPP's Strategic Plan Does Not Include Recruitment Objectives

NPP's strategic plan does not include recruitment objectives. "Recruiting sufficient numbers of qualified applicants to meet the staffing needs of an agency is the most fundamental human resource process in a police department. The success of the department's recruitment efforts impacts every other function in the agency."<sup>20</sup>

Recruitment is important to the success of the organization. Effective recruiting has a direct impact on the success of the agency. Recruiting individuals with high potential for success and share NPP's goals increases the chances that the individual will remain with the organization and pursue a long career in law enforcement. It also ensures that the agency is hiring individuals who can develop the extensive skills needed to meet the needs of offenders under NPP's supervision and be successful within the agency.

Without a recruitment strategy, NPP is unable to focus their resources and efforts at a direct and common goal. Because NPP's hiring process is lengthy and entails a great number of state resources, NPP must develop a strategy for recruiting officers and specialists capable of doing the job and will contribute to achieving its goals.

#### Current Recruitment Efforts Are Limited

NPP's current recruitment efforts are limited. Recruitment decisions and efforts are concentrated at the department level. DPS does not create individualized recruitment strategies for the various divisions within the department. NPP has a

---

<sup>19</sup> Police Recruitment and Retention for the New Millennium; Rand Corporation, Center on Quality Policing; page 44.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

low recruitment budget and is not formally budgeted for recruitment in the department's budget. Previous attempts to fund dedicated recruitment personnel have been denied by the Legislature.

DPS reports it submitted a funding request for dedicated recruiting positions for consideration during the 2019 legislative session. The request was retained under 'items for special consideration,' but was not funded. Failing to adequately fund recruitment efforts increases costs associated with understaffing, which perpetuates higher rates of turnover and affects operational effectiveness. The costs associated with underfunding recruitment efforts are hidden in the costs of hiring and retraining to replace trained case-handling positions. The cost of a decline in supervision effectiveness due to the effects of inadequate recruiting is not quantifiable.

DPS reports its recruitment funding for all divisions for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 was \$19,318 for dues, registrations, and travel, which represents approximately .004% of its budget. A law enforcement agency budget of .004% may be inadequate even in an environment where recruiting for law enforcement positions is favorable. However, as NPP has reported and research affirms, law enforcement agencies are facing historically unfavorable recruitment challenges. This amount of funding is inadequate relative to the size of the organization and its demand for qualified candidates.

NPP stated that DPS maintains an active recruitment for all DPS positions and reviews applications as they are received. Last year, DPS developed a career site detailing the different positions available at DPS. Recruitment efforts also include participating in job fairs, hosting recruiting events and presentations, and connecting potential candidates with recruiters.

## ***Conclusion***

Developing a plan to improve retention and expand recruitment within positions that have a direct impact on caseloads will promote operational stability and continuity of offender supervision. NPP has high turnover in critical positions and is experiencing recruitment challenges. Making retention and recruitment an integral part of the strategic plan will allow adequate resources to be directed at hiring and retaining individuals who have high potential for success with the organization. Adequately funding recruitment and retention efforts will mitigate increased costs associated with high turnover estimated at \$2.1 million annually for Officer 1 and Officer 2 positions alone.

## ***Recommendation***

2. Develop a plan to improve retention and expand recruitment.

**Exhibit VII****Summary of Audit Benefits**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Annual Benefit</b>
1. Track caseload ratios based on actual staffing levels.	
2. Develop a plan to improve retention and expand recruitment.	\$ 2.1 million
Total estimated benefit:	\$ 2.1 million

## Appendix A

### Scope and Methodology, Background, Acknowledgements

---

#### Scope and Methodology

We began the audit in September 2020. In the course of our work, we interviewed management and staff and discussed processes related to caseload determination and the applicability of caseload ratios to the supervision of offenders. We also received input from the Governor's Finance Office, Budget Division. We reviewed the Division of Parole and Probation's (NPP) records, policies and procedures, and researched law enforcement association journals, professional publications, Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS), Nevada Administrative Code (NAC), Legislative Committee studies and reports, as well as other state and federal guidelines. Additionally, we reviewed applicable federal and independent reports and audits. We concluded fieldwork in November 2020.

We conducted our audit in conformance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*.

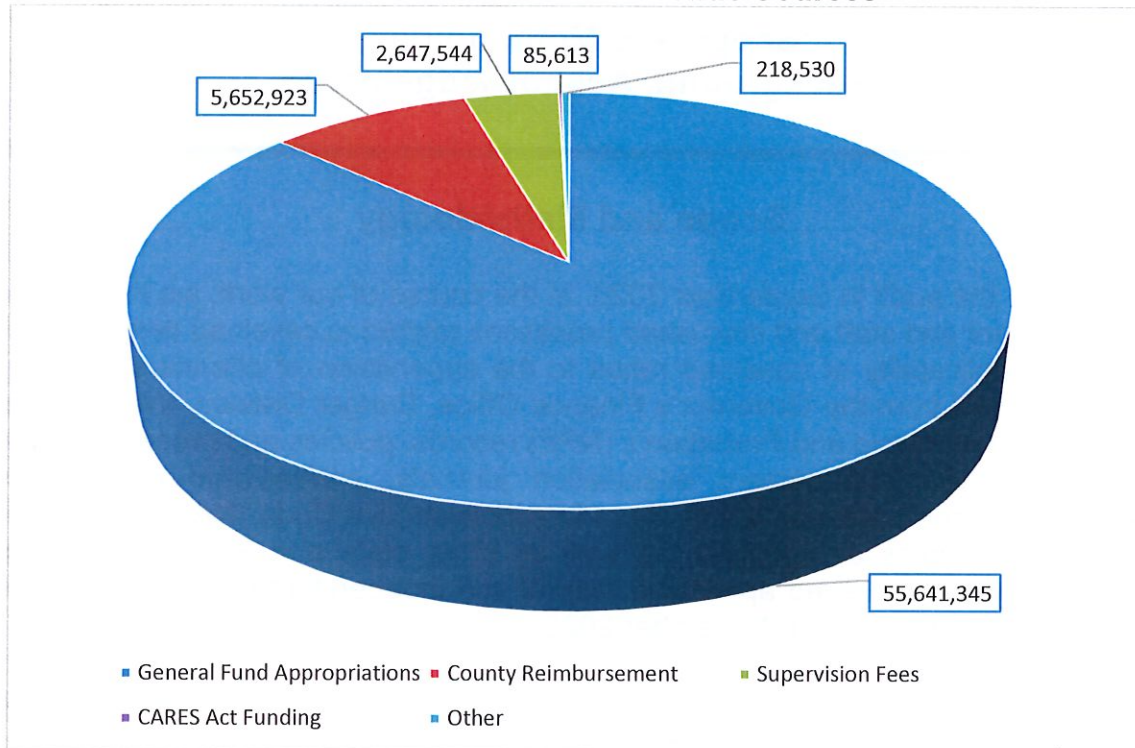
#### Background

NPP is one of nine divisions and four offices under the Department of Public Safety. It is NPP's philosophy and practice that each offender is responsible for his or her behavior and for the choices they make each day. There are units in NPP tasked with the supervision of: sex offenders; house arrest offenders; hardcore gang members; mandatory release parolees; drug court and mental health court; interstate compact offenders; and general supervision offenders. NPP also has a training component dedicated to the training and professional growth of new officers through the use of field training officers.

NPP's revenues for fiscal year 2020 were approximately \$64 million, with 603 authorized positions. See Exhibit VIII for NPP's fiscal year 2020 revenue sources.

**Exhibit VIII**

**Fiscal Year 2020 NPP Revenue Sources**



Source: State Accounting Records

**Acknowledgments**

We express appreciation to the Department of Public Safety, Division of Parole and Probation management and staff, and Governor’s Finance Office, Budget Division staff for their cooperation and assistance throughout the audit.

Contributors to this report included:

Jeff Landerfelt, MBA  
Executive Branch Audit Manager

Beatriz Mena-Ortiz, MBA  
Executive Branch Auditor

## Appendix B

### Division of Parole and Probation Response and Implementation Plan

Steve Sisolak  
*Governor*



Nevada Department of  
**Public Safety**  
Parole and Probation  
**Headquarters**

1445 Old Hot Springs Road, Suite 104  
Carson City, Nevada 89706  
Telephone (775) 684-2605  
Fax (775) 684-8157

George Togliatti  
*Director*

Sheri Brueggemann  
*Deputy Director*

Tom Lawson  
*Chief*

January 8, 2021

Warren Lowman, Administrator  
Governor's Finance Office  
Division of Internal Audits

Re: DIA Report No. 21-02

Mr. Lowman,

The Division of Parole and Probation has received and reviewed the report prepared by the Division of Internal Audits (DIA) following the audit on Division Caseload Ratios. The audit report made two recommendations based upon the investigation findings. The Division has addressed each recommendation under the headings below.

**Recommendation 1:** *"Track caseload ratios based on actual staffing".*

The Division accepts this recommendation. Although the Division currently tracks caseloads relative to actual staffing, the weighted factor example provided by DIA presents the information in a manner easily comparable by both internal and external stakeholders. The Division will work to update internal caseload reports to better delineate specific caseloads for each officer.

**Recommendation 2:** *"Develop a plan to improve retention and expand recruitment."*

The Department accepts this recommendation; but requests DIA acknowledge the extensive recruitment efforts that the Department of Public Safety (DPS) has implemented for the past decade. As DIA graciously noted in their audit report, recruitment and retention is an ongoing concern for the Division, and all of DPS, especially considering the salary disparity between DPS and the County and Municipal agencies, and the overall negative public climate towards law enforcement in general.

As discussed during the audit closeout meeting, recruitment is a function of the DPS Human Resources section; therefore, future progress reports relative to this recommendation will be submitted by DPS Human Resources and not the Division of Parole and Probation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Lawson".

Tom Lawson, Chief  
Nevada Department of Public Safety  
Division of Parole and Probation.

Capitol Police • Office of Criminal Justice Assistance • Emergency Management/Homeland Security  
State Fire Marshal • Records, Communications and Compliance • Highway Patrol • Investigations • Parole and Probation •  
Office of Professional Responsibility • Office of Traffic Safety • Training • Office of Cyber Defense Coordination •  
Emergency Response Commission

## Appendix C

### Timetable for Implementing Audit Recommendations

---

In consultation with the Nevada Division of Parole and Probation (NPP), the Division of Internal Audits categorized the recommendations contained within this report into two separate implementation time frames (i.e., *Category 1* – less than six months; *Category 2* – more than six months). NPP should begin taking steps to implement all recommendations as soon as possible. NPP's target completion dates are incorporated from Appendix B.

---

#### **Category 1: Recommendations with an anticipated implementation period less than six months.**

<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
1. Track caseload ratios based on actual staffing levels. (page 9)	Jul 2021

---

#### **Category 2: Recommendations with an anticipated implementation period exceeding six months.**

<u>Recommendations</u>	<u>Time Frame</u>
2. Develop a plan to improve retention and recruitment. (page 16)	Jan 2022

---

The Division of Internal Audits shall evaluate the action taken by NPP concerning the report recommendations within six months from the issuance of this report. The Division of Internal Audits must report the results of its evaluation to the Executive Branch Audit Committee and NPP.