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Baltimore Police will try to catch red flags in officer behaviors, before misconduct, with \$2.5 million early intervention system



Ulysses Muñoz

The Baltimore Police patch on a graduated trainee's uniform. Police Thumbnail generic art. Baltimore Police Academy Class 18-02 graduated on February 1, 2019 at Baltimore Police Headquarters.



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Baltimore Police will soon track officer behaviors, such as uses of force or arrests, to look for red flags in need of correction or assistance.

The so-called early intervention system will alert supervisors and command staff about potentially problematic performance — allowing the department to then intervene with nondisciplinary steps including training, supervisor actions or connection to the Officer Safety and Wellness section.

It's meant to catch issues before they rise to the level of complaints or wrongdoing, the department says.

“The goal is not to have it be a punitive system,” Deputy Commissioner Eric Melancon, who leads the agency’s Compliance Bureau, told the city’s Board of Estimates on Wednesday. “In fact, it’s designed to make sure we’re getting in front of an officer’s behavior through direct intervention, before something manifests itself as misconduct.”



The spending board voted unanimously to approve the \$2.5 million request from the police department. The allocation will cover five years, though the contract will begin with a three-year time frame and have options for renewal, Melancon said. The spending request was a late addition to the Wednesday meeting agenda.

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This kind of system was called for in the [city's consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice](#), reached in 2017 to address unconstitutional policing practices.

The agreement requires the department to have an upgraded early intervention system that “promotes supervisory awareness and proactive identification of potentially problematic behavior among officers” and that “facilitates the delivery of individualized interventions.”

It mandates, specifically, that the system capture metrics including uses of force; injuries and deaths of people in police custody; vehicle pursuits; traffic collisions; violations of body camera policies; misconduct complaints; disciplinary action; non-disciplinary corrective action; sick leave use; and training records.

It also requires the department to track when prosecutors or judges make a negative determination about an officer's credibility, when an officer faces criminal proceedings or restraining orders and when an officer uses force and charges a person with crimes such as failure to obey, resisting arrest, assault on an officer, disorderly conduct or trespassing.

Melancon on Wednesday called the contract a “critical item” for consent decree compliance and “one of the last lynchpins” of the technology requirements.

Earlier this year, the federal judge overseeing the consent decree, U.S. District Judge James K. Bredar, too, [cited the system as one of the remaining challenges to the department](#) in fully meeting consent decree expectations.

Mayor Brandon Scott, who sits on the Board of Estimates, said he pushed for an early intervention system as a city councilman, prior to the consent decree. He said the system has been a “long, long, long time coming.”

The system will catch infractions or signs there is an issue earlier, so they do not “fester,” Scott said at a [later press availability](#). He pointed specifically to the Gun Trace Task Force, the [corrupt squad that erupted into scandal and federal criminal charges](#).

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Baltimore Police's [early intervention system policy](#), published in 2018, describes the system as a resource to help officers succeed in their careers by offering a “confidential process” to track indicators that could pose a risk to the officer, police force or public.

It goes on to describe that some officers could receive performance improvement plans containing the job performance issue and the corresponding corrective actions.

Baltimore Sun reporter Emily Opilo contributed to this article.

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