

MILWAUKEE COUNTY



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

## SHERIFF DENITA R. BALL

**DATE:** January 21, 2025

**TO:** Committee on Finance

**FROM:** Brian Barkow, Chief Deputy, Office of the Sheriff  
Pat Carravetta, Fiscal Administrator, Office of the Sheriff

**RE:** **2025 Deficit and Overtime Deficit Informational Report**

This report is submitted consistent with the guidance of Section 56.02(1) of the Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances. This ordinance states that, "whenever such person has reason to know or believe that a net deficit of at least one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) or whenever an overtime deficit of at least one million dollars (\$1,000,000) will occur or is projected to occur for the division of county government under the supervision of that person", a written report shall be submitted.

The Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office is projecting an overall deficit of \$6,809,720, which includes a projected overtime deficit of \$8,512,578. Several critical factors have contributed to this financial shortfall as we strive to maintain public safety and fulfill our mandated responsibilities:

### 1. Staffing

The Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) is budgeted for 277 Deputy Sheriffs in 2025 which includes the addition of 10 positions (9 Courts and 1 County Executive Security positions) in the 2025 adopted budget. We currently have 241 positions filled, leaving 36 positions vacant. We are budgeted for 225 Correctional Officers and currently have 178 positions filled, leaving 47 vacant positions. Much of our overtime is coming from these two groups, where there is a total of 83 vacancies.

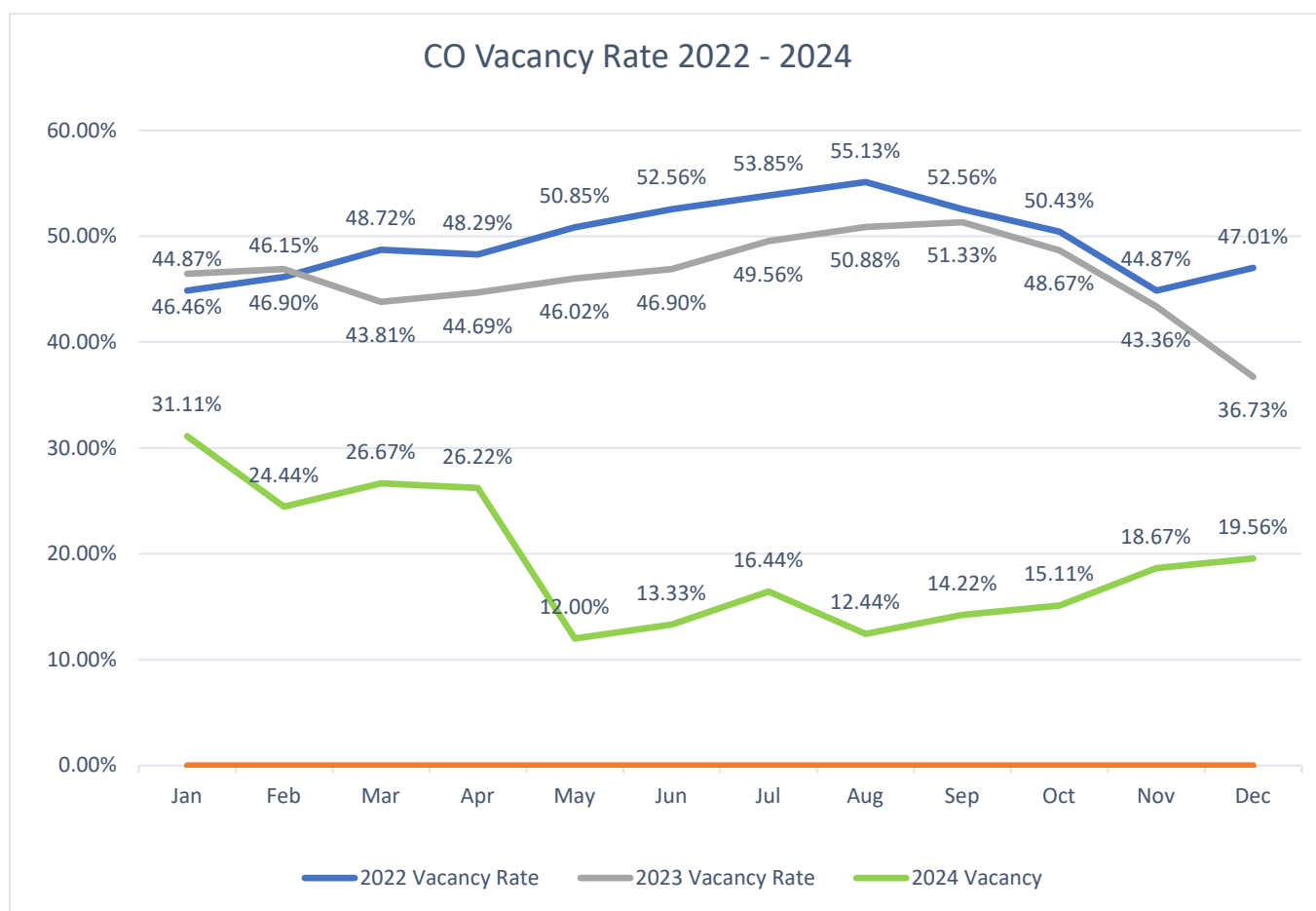
Officers and deputies are using more earned compensatory time than they did the prior years in the following categories: vacation, FMLA, sick, personal, holiday, military leave, etc. Our agency has statutorily mandated duties 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. These duties cannot be delayed, postponed, or rescheduled without creating the potential for negative safety and security outcomes. When an employee is off work, that position must be backfilled on overtime.

In addition to the above stated issues as it relates to overtime, staff turnover and training must be accounted for. The recruitment and hiring process consumes several months. When we do hire a deputy sheriff, the training process is approximately 12 months from start to finish. During this training period, these deputies are not able to fill working

positions, meaning we are paying their salaries, however, are not able to use these recruits in a way that would effectively reduce our overtime usage.

The correctional side of the agency is facing the same problems. When a Correctional Officer is hired to fill a vacancy, they are required to attend 10 weeks of training. During this period of training, these staff members are not working in a position that would negate our need for overtime in the jail to fill the vacant positions. Other training to include specialty unit training and a state mandated 24 hours of in-service annually impacts our necessity to utilize overtime. When these staff members are at training, their positions must be filled on overtime. We simply do not have enough budgeted deputy or correctional officer FTEs to fill vacancies that we know will occur. This has been a consistent problem for many years.

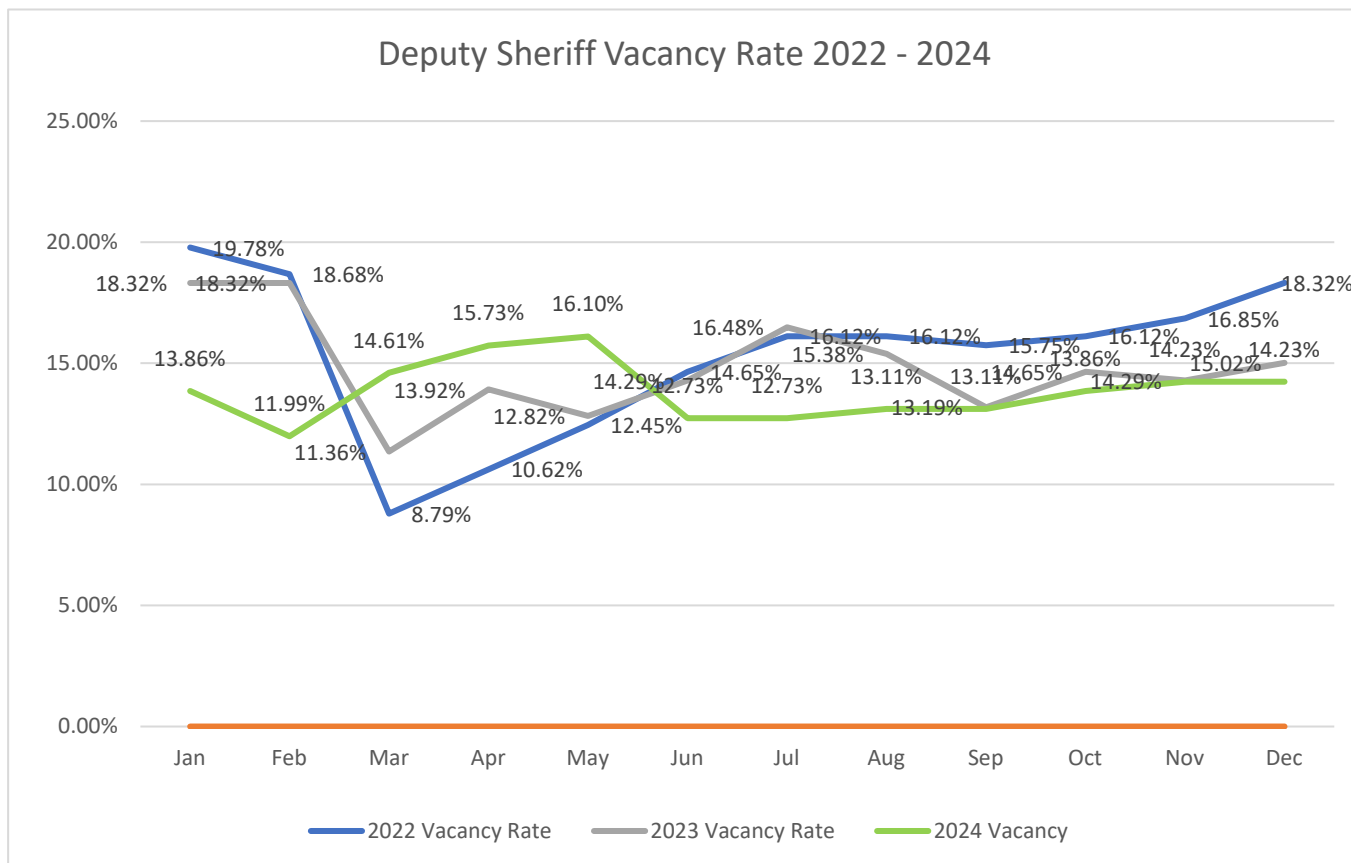
Vacancy rates are significantly decreasing for Corrections Officers. The increase in pay relates to the increase in filled positions.



Vacancy rates are slightly increasing for Deputy Sheriff positions due to retirements and resignations. Deputy recruitment for the MCSO has been just as challenging as it has been for other agencies across the state and the nation. We regularly start out with a pool of about 130-150 applicants. Through the process of state mandated Physical Readiness Testing (PRT), criminal background checks, and the interview process, we frequently end up with a class of 10 or 15 viable recruits. Because of the nature of the position, it is critical that we maintain our high standards to ensure that we are putting the best people into the field that community

deserves. However, the lag time in replacement is not keeping up with hiring.

There was a 13-year hiring freeze with deputies. That means that within the next five to six years, everyone that was hired before the freeze will be retiring; from the deputy ranks all the way up, creating a vast hole of both deputies and supervision that was not accounted for when the freeze was first implemented. With the full replacement of each deputy who either retires or is promoted taking approximately 18 months (six months recruitment process and 12 months training), this is a devastating wave that is coming and complicates the issue that we are currently facing not only from an overtime point of view but also a mandate point of view, whether constitutional, statutory, or contractual.



## 2. Wage Increases

By state law, Milwaukee County must collectively bargain deputy sheriffs and deputy sheriff sergeants' wages with the Milwaukee Deputy Sheriff's Association (MDSA). For example, between 2016 & 2024, through settlement agreements and/or arbitration award, the wage for deputy sheriffs has increased \$10.81 per hour, which is an 47.1% increase. Although the wage increases were necessary to maintain a competent and motivated workforce, they have also contributed to a rise in overtime costs. This rise in overtime costs also includes overtime incurred in the ranks of Sergeant and Lieutenant. Unfortunately, none of these increased costs have been adequately covered in the annual overtime budget. No additional wages increases have been negotiated with the MDSA as of this writing.

**Deputy Sheriff: 17BZ****%**

	<b>2016</b>	<b>2024*</b>	<b>Increase</b>	<b>Increase</b>
<b>Step 1</b>	\$22.97	\$33.78	\$10.81	47.1%

\*2024 Increase as of 5/26/24

Likewise, the corrections officers have received substantial wage increases over the same time-period. For example, the hourly rate for corrections officers has increased \$12.99 between 2016 & 2025, which is a 73.8% increase. Like the deputy hourly wage increases, the correction officer increases have led to a rise in overtime costs. This rise in overtime costs also includes overtime incurred in the ranks of CO Sergeant and CO Lieutenant. The 2025 adopted budget included an overtime increase of only \$807,014 for corrections officers, CO Sergeants, and CO Lieutenants, however this did not cover the full 73.8% increase.

**CO: NRC1****%**

	<b>2016</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Increase</b>	<b>Increase</b>
<b>Step 1</b>	\$17.61	\$30.60	\$12.99	73.8%

Wages increases are a major component to the increase in the actual cost of overtime. The 2025 adopted budget did increase overtime \$1,551,276 but is not enough to match wage increases.

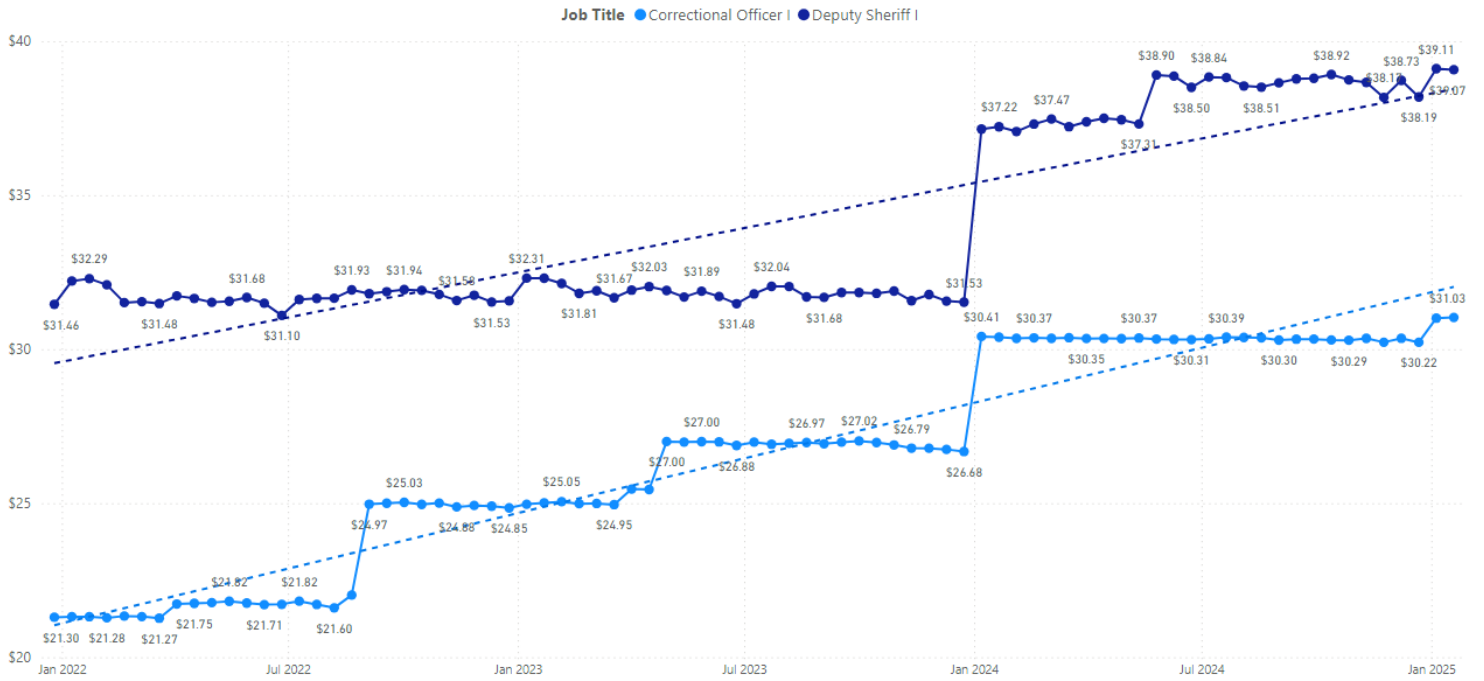
**Adopted Overtime Budget:**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Variance</b>
2016	\$4,721,724	\$9,944,283	(\$5,222,559)
2017	\$2,013,312	\$10,139,047	(\$8,125,735)
2018	\$3,099,204	\$7,767,409	(\$4,668,205)
2019	\$3,577,500	\$9,836,761	(\$6,259,261)
2020	\$3,577,500	\$7,797,954	(\$4,220,454)
2021	\$3,907,140	\$8,016,217	(\$4,109,077)
2022	\$3,862,033	\$10,479,612	(\$6,617,579)
2023	\$4,223,225	\$13,664,436	(\$9,441,211)
2024	\$4,582,544	*\$15,028,913	(\$10,446,369)
2025	\$6,133,820	**\$15,000,000	(\$8,866,180)

\*2024 Actual is a preliminary number

\*\*2025 Actual is an estimate for the year

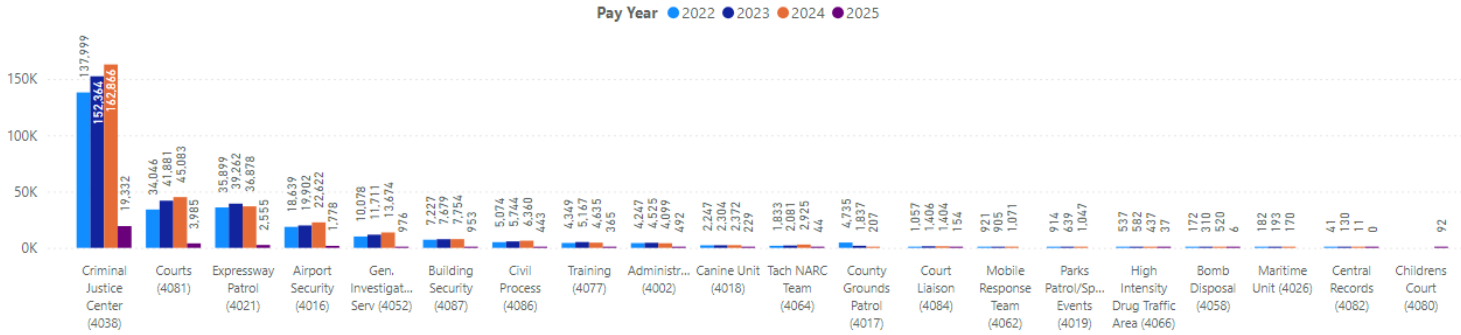
Average Regular Pay Rate  
BY PAY PERIOD (START DATE), JOB TITLE



### 3. Overtime Assessment

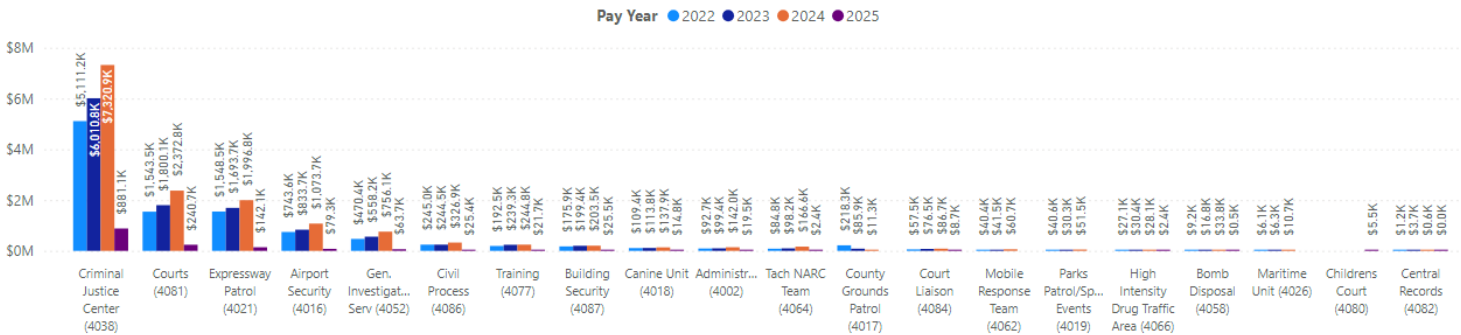
#### Total Overtime Hours

BY DEPARTMENT WORKED, PAY YEAR



#### Total Overtime Pay

BY DEPARTMENT WORKED, PAY YEAR



Most overtime is worked at the Criminal Justice Facility followed by Courts and Patrol divisions.

Total Overtime Pay and Hours Utilized for Hospital Watch Duties		
Pay Year	Total Overtime Pay	Total Overtime Hours
2022	\$194,045.95	4,214.97
2023	\$312,415.46	6,817.75
2024	\$429,136.67	7,772.76
2025*	\$55,311.02	971.08
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$990,909.10</b>	<b>19,776.56</b>

\* 2025 is Year-to-Date including Pay Periods 1-3

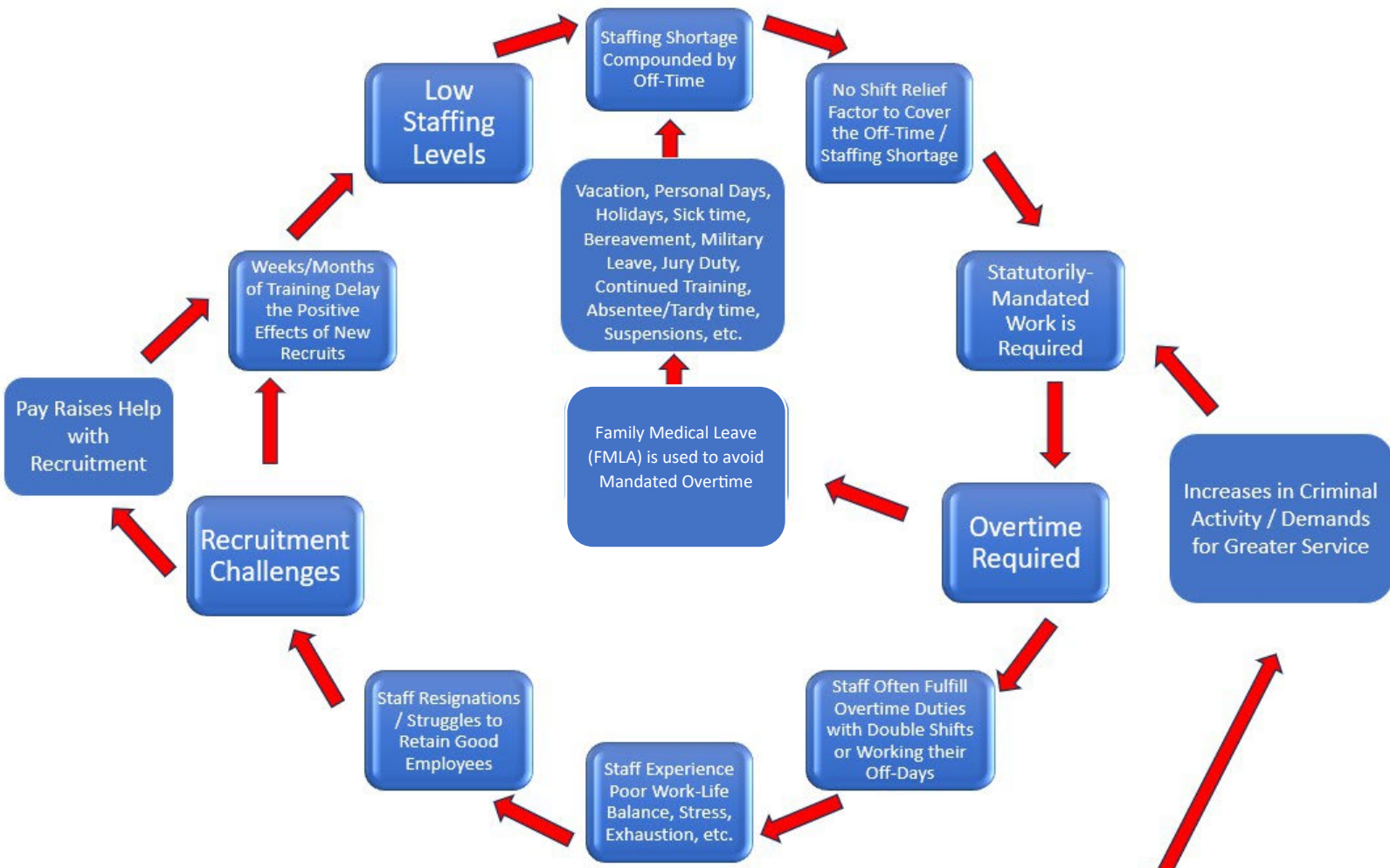
- Hospital watch overtime is an example of a mandated responsibility for the MCSO yet there are no FTE positions allotted for this due to the random and fluctuating

need to staff these required watches. As such, in addition to all previously mentioned staffing shortages, this duty must be carried out primarily on overtime. As you can see in the chart above, the costs of maintaining custody of our occupants while being treated at a medical above the MCJ and Wellpath's capabilities is both frequent and costly.

- The change in the overtime payout policy for all FLSA Exempt and Non-exempt employees will also influence overtime paid. Moving forward, any overtime accrued during a calendar year and not used will be paid out on the last paycheck of the year it was earned. While accruing overtime did defer costs, this new policy will not allow accrual of overtime past the end of the current year it is earned. MDSA members are not included in this policy change.

MCSO continuously works to reach a balance of overtime and off time so staff may maintain a healthy work/life balance. Increases in vacancies and off time cause more overtime and a decrease in job satisfaction and leads to more call-ins and to retention issues. MCSO is committed to working with its county partners to address the vacancy and retention issues to combat this cycle.

MCSO has increased the frequency of job fairs and our media focus on hiring. An enhanced partnership with Human Resources at our job fairs has evolved to include streamlining the following areas: our application and interview process, background checks, and conditional offers of employment are made on the spot if the candidate qualifies to be hired. Attending more community events and leveraging them as hiring opportunities has also increased MCSO's workforce.



The MCSO overtime/staffing issues are multidimensional and cyclical in nature

The courts mandate 1-2 bailiffs per courtroom, and attempts to reduce court case backlogs means that deputies are often pulled from Patrol/Airport/etc. to cover the mandated bailiff positions

Increasing the time occupants spend outside of their cells improves the wellbeing of occupants but also creates a greater need for more staffing

Recent activity (e.g. = crime, reckless driving, park incidents, etc.) is resulting in:

- More demand for freeway patrol
- Demand for Parks unit expansion
- Criminal investigations work
- Greater jail population
- More court cases

The Sheriff's Office have many responsibilities that are often overlooked:

- 24/7 Jail Operations
- 24/7 Freeway Patrol
- 24/7 Airport Security
- Courthouse/Safety Building Security
- Criminal Investigations
- Seasonal Expansion of Parks Patrol
- Civil Service/Serving Court Papers
- Warrant Arrests
- 24/7 Hospital Watches (which are not budgeted)



## Options Currently in Process of being implemented to Reduce OT Deficit

- a. **Courts:** Courts are budgeted for 9.0 additional Bailiff positions in the 2025 budget. The effect of these additional positions will not be seen for 18 months which is the time from hire to end of training and fully certified.
- b. **Courts:** Fund a pilot program for hourly bailiffs. The MCSO 2025 budget includes funding of \$300,000 to start a pilot program for hourly bailiffs. The program funds ten (10) already certified law enforcement officers (hourly positions) to serve as bailiffs in the courthouse complex to reduce the amount of forced overtime in the Courts Division. These hourly deputies would be paid at a straight time rate, reducing the need for overtime in this division.
- c. **Courts:** Implementing online Sheriff Sales. One deputy is required to attend the Sheriff's sale which can last 1-3 hours per week depending on the sales volume. When the sale goes online, that deputy will no longer be required to attend the sale, thus saving staffing and backfill (currently in process of being implemented).

## Conclusion

The Sheriff is working hard to reduce the use of overtime by filling vacant positions and improving retention. She will continue to work with our county partners to improve the attractiveness of working for the county and improve the work/life balance for staff members.