



TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMISSION

Perceptions of the DRE Program in Washington State

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Chapter One: Introduction

The Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) program is a specialized law enforcement initiative designed to train law enforcement professionals to recognize impairment in drivers under the influences of drugs other than, or in addition to, alcohol. There are various tools available for law enforcement to detect and apprehend impaired drivers, such as the standardized field sobriety test (SFST) and portable alcohol screening devices. However, the DRE program attempts to fill a gap in the law enforcement toolkit by training law enforcement professionals to recognize the complex and specific symptoms and behaviors that are caused by substances other than alcohol.

Originating from the Los Angeles Police Department in the 1970s, the DRE program aims to address the complex challenges of recognizing specific symptoms and behaviors that are caused by drugs by training law enforcement professionals to conduct systematic evaluations of suspected impaired drivers. At the time, there was minimal to no training provided to law enforcement professionals for investigating driving under the influence of drugs other than alcohol, making it difficult for law enforcement professionals to evaluate drivers who were suspected of intoxication. In reflection of a need for this training, the program developed a drug impairment recognition protocol and established its ability to train law enforcement professionals to successfully identify drivers under the influence of drug categories outside of alcohol. Today, law enforcement professionals undergo a specialized training, using standards established by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, to become certified as a DRE. As of 2022, there were over 8,300 certified DREs in the United States, with 2,799 law enforcement agencies hosting a DRE within their organization (IACP, 2022).

In recent years, the necessity for such impairment monitoring has been underscored by the volume of impaired or potentially impaired drivers. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), approximately 1.5 million people were arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs in 2021 (NHTSA, 2021). Of course, these figures only capture those who are arrested for these offenses: A study conducted by the NHTSA in 2019 found that about 12.6 million people aged 16 or older had driven under the influence of illicit drugs (NHTSA, 2019). In Washington State, the number of impaired drivers involved in fatal crashes has increased by 43% (WTSC), 2023). Further, driving under the influence of two or more substances, known as poly-drug driving, has been the most common type of driver impairment involved in fatal crashes in Washington State since 2012 (WSTC, 2023). Finally, impaired driving has consistently made up half of fatal crashes for decades (WSTC, 2023). These figures highlight the critical need for the drug recognition and intervention strategies that the DRE program provides.

The DRE program is intended to enhance road safety and ensure that impaired drivers are accurately identified and appropriately handled. With the legalization of marijuana in several states and the ongoing opioid crisis, law enforcement agencies face significant challenges in detecting and managing drug-impaired drivers. While alcohol impairment can be measured relatively easily using devices designed to measure breath alcohol content,

drug impairment is more complex to identify due to the variety of substances and their diverse effects on individuals.

Despite the importance and significance of the DRE program, there is very limited research on various aspects of the DRE program beyond accuracy of drug recognition. Prior research related to DREs has primarily focused on drug categorization accuracy (see Smith et al., 2000; Porath-Waller et al., 2009) and the efficacy of DREs at detecting impairment (Vaillancourt et al., 2021; Beirness, LeCavalier, & Singhal, 2007). In addition, some studies have also concentrated on the technical efficacy of DRE procedures and their contribution to the legal process (Solensten and Willits, 2021; Merrill et al., 2019). However, there is limited exploration into the broader context of the DRE program and what DREs experience, such as how they perceive their effectiveness, the day-to-day realities of their role, and the challenges they encounter.

This study aims to fill this critical gap by documenting the perceptions of DREs across Washington State, the ways in which DREs are utilized, and the difficulties they experience in their role. By focusing on these aspects, this study looks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the DRE program's current state in Washington and the challenges faced by its DREs. Therefore, our overarching research question is:

Research Question 1: What are current and prior DREs' perceptions of the DRE program?

In addition to this broad research questions, we address several sub questions as well, including:

Research Question 2: What are the major challenges that DREs face in their role?

Research Question 3: Why do individuals decide to not recertify as a DRE?

Research Question 4: What do DREs believe is needed to make the DRE program reach its full potential?

This study was reviewed by the Washington State University Institutional Review Board and employed a case study of the DRE program in Washington State. Case studies are designed to produce contextual and in-depth explorations of a given event or phenomenon, which in the present study, is the Washington State DRE program itself. Therefore, this method allows for a detailed examination of the Washington State DRE program's operations, challenges, and impacts.

To gain an understanding of the DRE program from multiple perspectives, we utilized sequential mixed-methods design consisting of two phases: qualitative face-to-face interviews, followed by a state-wide survey. The first stage aimed to capture detailed narratives about law enforcement professionals' personal experiences within their role and their recommendations for how the program can be improved. These interviews provided a nuanced understanding of DREs' viewpoints, which offered insights into their daily responsibilities, perceived effectiveness, and overall satisfaction with the program.

Following the first stage, the second stage involved distributing a survey to all DREs across Washington State. This state-wide survey was designed to quantify the themes and insights that emerged from stage one on a broader scale. By reaching out to a larger number of DREs, the survey aimed to validate and test the findings from the qualitative phase, while also providing a more generalized understanding of the DRE program's effectiveness, DRE perceptions, and areas needing improvement.

In the chapters that follow, we present our research methods for this sequential mixed-method design, which covers our research design and procedures, as well as a summary of the data collection, management, and analytic approach employed by this study. Chapter two provides an in-depth look at stage one of our research, outlining the methodologies employed during face-to-face interviews with current and former DREs. We also present a thorough analysis of interview results, highlighting key themes, patterns, and insights into the DREs' perceptions and experiences within the DRE program. Chapter three provides an overview of stage two of this study, detailing the design and implementation of the state-wide survey and data collection and analysis procedures. We then present survey findings, offering a broader perspective on DREs' perceptions and areas for improvement, as validated by the data in stage one. The final chapter integrates the findings from both qualitative interviews and the survey, providing a summary of the results and synthesizing the insights gained from each phase of the study.

Chapter Two: Interviews

2.1 Methods

2.1(A). Participants

For the qualitative stage of the project, we employed semi-structured interviews with current and former DREs employed in Washington State. The sampling strategy was a combination of purposeful, convenience, and snowball sampling. Participants were contacted via email, which informed them of the study and sought voluntary participation in a Zoom interview regarding the DRE program. Participants interested in meeting sent a follow-up email to researchers, who then responded with an IRB consent form with information about interview procedures and consent for recording the interview for transcription purposes. Names, titles, and positions were redacted, as per our IRB agreement. Given that the DRE program is a specialized position with fewer than approximately 130 DREs in the state, the anonymous identifiers used by research will not be provided to further protect anonymity.

An upper echelon law enforcement supervisor provided the majority of the law enforcement sampling pool by reaching out to the current DREs via email, with other participants coming from snowball sampling. Initially, 12 agreed to participate. Two additional potential participants showed initial interest but ended up not participating in the study due to scheduling conflicts. One interaction with a current DRE snowballed into three further recruitments of 2 current DREs and 1 prior DRE.

Contact information for 44 prior DREs were provided by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) at the request of the research team, all of whom were sent an email seeking their voluntary participation. Of these 44 individuals, 21 had incorrect or out-of-date contact information, so emails were not able to be delivered. Of the 23 emails that

were successfully sent, 6 participants agreed to participate, with no replies from the remaining 18.

Overall, we interviewed 21 DREs or prior DREs between August and September 2023. Fourteen participants were currently certified DREs, while seven participants were prior DREs that had chosen to not recertify. Throughout these interviews, many alluded to the fact that their experiences may differ from others located in separate districts. We addressed this by seeking at least one participant from each of the eight WSP districts throughout Washington, to which we were successful.

All interviews were conducted over Zoom. Before asking questions related to our study, researchers read an IRB addendum informing participants that the interview was anonymous, voluntary, and could be stopped at any point.

Table 2.1 – Stage One Recruitment

	Total Contacted	No Reply	Declined	Accepted	Interviewed
Current DREs	123	108	0	16	14
Prior DREs	21	15	0	7	7
Total	144	123	0	23	21

2.1(B) Interview Data Collection, Management, and Analysis

Interview Procedures.

All our qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews over Zoom. Six interviews were conducted by Dr. Dale Willits, and fifteen interviews were conducted by Mary Dhondt. Interviews took an average of 40 minutes, ranging from 20 to 83 minutes. Before asking questions related to our study, participants were informed again that their participation would be anonymous, voluntary, and that they could terminate participation at any time.

Interview Questions.

The WSU IRB approved two interview guides with questions specific to either current DREs or prior DREs. All participants were asked how many years of experience they had in their respective positions and how many years of DRE experience they had. Questions within the interview guide were aligned around perceptions of DRE training, support, and overall job duties and challenges. The final question for all participants was if they had any important topics that were potentially overlooked during the interview. A full list of questions and general prompts are listed in the Appendix. It is important to note that every prompt was

asked for each interview, but additional prompts were asked depending on the flow and context of a given interview.

Interview Questions for DREs.

We asked DREs what made them interested in joining the DRE program and if they intended to maintain their certification. We further asked their thoughts on the initial certification and training they received, asking if they felt they needed more training. Our second line of questioning asked participants to describe how they spent most of their time in their DRE position, how many evaluations they typically conduct, their travel time, and how many evaluations are self-initiated stops versus calls for support for other law enforcement professionals. In addition, we asked DREs to discuss the value of the DRE program outside of their assigned duties, such as education of fellow law enforcement professionals or phone-call advice. Participants were also asked how the callout system for DREs operates in their personal experience, including their overall opinions on the system, potential suggestions, and how often it is utilized within their district. Our fourth line of questioning asked about their experiences in the adjudication process, and if they had interacted with prosecutors or judges outside of the courtroom setting. If they had participated in the adjudication process; prompts included asking how much they believed their testimony was relied on, and/or if they testified as an “expert” witness. Fifth, we asked DREs if they felt valued by fellow law enforcement professionals and leadership, and if they were viewed as a resource for their department. We also asked DREs about the overall challenges they face in the field, and suggestions that they believed would improve the DRE program. Our last question for DREs was what they would change about the DRE program if they had a magic wand.

Interview Questions for Prior DREs.

Individuals who were previously certified as DREs, but no longer maintained that certification, were asked all the same questions current DREs were asked, including their thoughts on the DRE school and initial training, the callout system, their role and typical duties in the DRE role, their experience in the adjudication process, their feelings of value from fellow law enforcement professionals and leadership, the challenges they faced, and their suggestions for the DRE program. Prior DREs were also asked specifically about why they chose not to maintain their certification.

Interview Transcript Procedures.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim from their corresponding audio file in two stages. First, all interviews were recorded using Zoom, which provides an automated transcript. This transcript was then edited and double checked for accuracy by hand in Microsoft Word, following the seven transcription principles set forth by Mergenthaler and Stinson (1992). These included transcribing verbatim and maintaining commentary structure. Finally, the audio file was listened to a second time to ensure transcription accuracy. All transcripts were edited to remove personal identifiers of either the participants or other individuals named in the interviews.

Interview Analysis.

Interviews were coded in four stages. First, each transcript was coded based on general themes related to our research questions. These preliminary codes served as a helpful guideline in creating a second tier of coding, which added further depth and description to initial codes. Following the recreation of initial coding and sub-themes, researchers collaborated to brainstorm the best way to group sub-codes under major themes and categories of interest. The fourth stage coded for themes and sub-themes that developed the eventual outline of our results, including a coding check of all interviews to ensure all necessary data was coded.

2.2 Interview Results

The twenty-one interviews completed for this project provided a wealth of rich data on the job experiences of DREs and the state of the DRE program from the perspective of individuals who have held or who continue to hold a DRE certification. After completing the initial and line-by-line coding, we organized codes into four general categorical themes: (1) How DREs are Utilized; (2) Perceived Challenges; (3) Indirect Benefits; and (4) Suggestions for the DRE program.

2.2(A). How DREs are Utilized

A prior analysis of the DRE program in Spokane, Washington provided significant background information for this study (Solensten and Willits, 2021), including the marked decline of DRE callouts and evaluations in the state of Washington. Our interviews quickly supported this result, with many DREs discussing how the number of evaluations they've completed has decreased since their certification. In addition, many participants discussed a decline in DREs in general and noted that they had very few instances of involvement in the adjudication process. However, there was substantial evidence that the DRE program provided value outside of adjudication involvement and the completion of DRE evaluations, specifically in providing advice and education to fellow law enforcement professionals and community outreach.

Education of Fellow Law Enforcement Professionals; Phone Call Advice

Throughout all twenty-one interviews, all participants discussed how they believed their certification as a DRE provided general value and benefit to their department, even if they don't conduct many full DRE evaluations. In fact, many noted that their primary role as a DRE wasn't necessarily conducting evaluations but providing support for drug-related traffic cases in their agency. Specifically, participants discuss how much of their focus is on assisting law enforcement professionals who are not DRE certified, for example:

“So, most of it's just kind of like using it [DRE knowledge] in the peripherally - periphery - periphery of like - it's a good foundation, it's a good education. Just kind of where I am, my career, what I'm doing in my career, like, I don't make a bunch of DUI arrests anymore. I don't - I'm not driven to go out and hit every DRE, you know, I'm not trying to make my rolling log number the highest it can be. So... it's a good

knowledge base. I share some of that knowledge base with people as - as like, you know, as those touch points occur.” - Officer

Others concurred and stated that their efforts were less focused on making DUI arrests and were more focused on training and instruction.

“Like I said - most of my focus is on the instruction side.” - Detective

“Yeah, I do a lot of the DUI training for the department...And... I don't just - just go based off of the - the curriculum, I make sure to save time to - to kind of brush over the DRE program, what we're looking for... where they find stuff... So, whether they use the information or not, I'm trying to give them all the tools... to help them out so that you know we can get these people off the road. Not just, you know, let them go. Sometimes... it... it... You know, we've reached some people where they've been more... weren't interested in impaired driving, at other times, they... you feel it's a kind of glossed over them. But I feel that if I can introduce them with any type of DUI training the - the part of the DRE program; they become a DRE or not, that just help us support it. It. It does help a lot. And I - I think, especially the new officers, they're not getting a whole live exposure with that in the Academy, because they're concentrating on a lot of other things. So, I like to really hammer the -the new guys on - on this type of training so that they can, they're really eager and they, wanna get out there they're - they're not just missing these signs, so I think that's really helped a lot.” - Officer

Many DREs noted that they had become unable to complete DRE evaluations due to their higher-ranking position and subsequent duties. However, they continue to provide education and advice to other law enforcement professionals:

“Yeah, so like I said most of the time it's used when just... right now I'm - I'm a supervisor as well. So, a lot of times when I come to a scene or am called to a scene, they you know - you know, they explain to me what they're dealing with, you know, I could run my (sound break) at that point. And we're kind of able to further those investigations.” - Sergeant

“You know my - my primary role now is - is as a detective, and so, being a DRE is a collateral duty. And - and mostly, I respond to calls when - when a page goes out for DRE, or you know, or within the department, if people have questions about impaired driving enforcement things of that nature. So, it's more of a collateral duty right now.” - Detective

“Yeah, lately it's been... I'm also a field training officer so like, that obviously takes precedent. Because I - I'm a police officer first and a DRE second.” - Officer

Some DREs discussed that while they weren't called out as much for DRE evaluations, their presence is needed and valued for when those situations to arise.

"I think it's a valuable resource for all law enforcement agencies. And it's important that we have people that are available to respond to serious injury or fatal collisions in particular, but in order to get justice for - for families and victims of all impaired drivers." - Detective

"So, if someone who is less competent in their skills is investigating an impaired driver, they - they definitely value my input as - as a DRE... I think, in certain circumstances... some of the more subtle signs of impairments are missed by less experienced officers and are picked up with by DREs with advanced training. And - and so again, I think that we should be called a lot - lot more often, or more often than - than we actually are." - Corporal

Others again noted that the DRE program was valuable in that it afforded non-DRE law enforcement professionals a resource to get support for DUI cases, even outside of formal instruction:

"People are like, oh, hey - if you have your DUI or drug questions, go ask [me], they're the DRE person." - Corporal

"So, understanding the effects of drugs on the - on the person has helped me identify characteristics; if it's relevant to our case, or - or even if it's not, you know, some of our victims or suspects may be under the influence of drugs. So, it - it helps to identify that as well, and definitely providing training to other members of the department." - Detective

As discussed previously, there has been a notable decline of DRE callouts and evaluations within Washington State over the past few years. However, callouts and evaluations are still very apparent in the daily operations of many DREs, in addition to providing education and resources to fellow law enforcement professionals.

Evaluations and Callouts

When asked about how often they conduct evaluations and receive callouts, many DREs noted that there has been a decline in the number of evaluations they conduct and a decline in the number of callouts they've received.

"Like, actually full structured evaluations is changing. Because last year I did 20 something, and then this year I've done 4. So, it's very... it really fluctuates." - Detective

"For DRE, honestly, I can't remember... I can't remember the last time I responded. I think... I mean, it would have been... yeah, I mean, functionally, that's not something I'm doing." - Officer

"I really seem to only be getting them every couple of months, and it wasn't like that my first year. I was getting them more often - I don't know why I've not gotten as much." - Detective

When discussing their involvement in the callout system and conducting DRE evaluations, participants had vastly different experiences with the DRE callout system and the number of evaluations they conducted monthly/yearly. While some DREs rely on callouts from allied agencies, other DREs rely on self-initiated evaluations or referrals from inside their region (instead of receiving a callout from WSP). When asked about how many evaluations they typically conduct on a monthly or yearly basis, DREs also had varying answers. While some report having at least one evaluation a month, other DREs report doing less than five evaluations within a year. Many discussed how the number of evaluations they complete also varies throughout the year.

"It varies. So sometimes, I'll go a month or two and not get any, and sometimes I'll get 3 or 4 in a month. And my numbers are going to be significantly lower than [busier cities], those type of areas." - Sergeant

"In the year it ranges from probably 4 to 8; I wish it was more." - Corporal

"Yeah, so in the last two years... I try to do 10 full completed DRE evaluations a year, that's usually what I strive for. And last year... I know I got more than 10 last year; I'm at 9 right now. So on average, I'd say 10." - Trooper

"It really kind of depends on... you know... when I'm when I'm active, I would say, you know one... one or 2 a month, maybe." - Detective

One DRE remarked that the differences in number of evaluations could depend on which region of the state they are located in:

"It depends on where you work and how much you're utilized. When I was over in Eastern Washington, I probably did 20 or so evals a year. And actually, ever since I've come back to Western Washington, where I thought I would be busier - I'm probably doing 10 to 15." - Trooper

Another DRE remarked that due to their promotion status, the number of evaluations they had time to complete has decreased due to the increase in other job duties:

"Well, honestly, since I became a supervisor, they've become a little bit more difficult, just because, you know I - I'm supervisor in that I can't do go and do it like, if somebody's called out on shift. So probably I don't know... depending on the year 2 to 4, maybe more? But it really just depends." - Sergeant

Further, a prior DRE discussed how the number of evaluations they completed decreased throughout their time as a DRE:

“Oh, gosh, the first couple of years was really good, I would say the first couple of years I was anywhere from 6 to 8 a year and then after that it would... it fell quite drastically, to probably about 3 or 4.” – Sergeant

Self-Initiated vs. Callouts

In addition to being asked about the number of evaluations they typically conduct within a month or year; DREs were also asked how many of their evaluations were self-initiated versus calls for support from other law enforcement professionals. This differed among participants, with some saying the majority of their evaluations are self-initiated, while others stated that the majority of their evaluations were from callouts.

“I would say most of them are calls for support. Maybe a year before I became a supervisor, I self-initiated for a little bit more, you know, cause I was out working the road more versus supervising. But now I'd say the majority of them are calls for support.” – Sergeant

“Yeah, they're mostly self-initiated. We try to avoid that, though - like if I find a DUI and I make the arrest, theoretically I should be getting another DRE to do the evaluation with the actual one. Sometimes we don't get that, so I would say I'd probably break it down to like 50/50 for this year.” – Detective

This may be attributed to differences in rank/position; for example, troopers and traffic specialists may be more likely to self-initiate because they are already out on the road, while those in other roles (like a detective position) are more likely to do callouts:

“I haven't done any self-initiated, since my primary role is as a detective now. So, they've all been requests for DREs at this point.” – Detective

“Yeah, and that just varied on varied, based upon my position. So, in... before I started as a school resource officer, we had one traffic officer at that time, and I was that traffic officer. So, during that 2-and-a-half-year period, there was a lot of self-initiation. Then, as a school resource officer, not so much. As a detective, I've not going out and just running traffic. I just don't have time for that. So, when I had opportunity, I was as self-initiated as I could, but again I wasn't always on the patrol emphasis.” – Detective

The difference in self-initiated evaluations versus callouts could also be attributed to location/region. In agencies that have higher rates of substance abuse, one officer noted that self-initiated callouts may be more common:

“So, my old agency, it was probably 80% self-initiation. But we had that major, major, major problem; versus where I'm at right now, drugs is very rare versus alcohol, you know. So that one, I would say 90% is call outs for when they find drugs, and like 10% self-initiation.” – Officer

Some DREs discussed how self-initiated evaluations were less preferred, as having the opinion of a second DRE was both seen as a beneficial tactic for handling of suspects, as well as providing adequate evidence for probable cause and arrest. For example, many DREs noted that while they have confidence in their own skills, having another DRE come to conduct an evaluation on a suspect they initiated contact with provided an 'extra set of eyes' to determine anything they may have misinterpreted or failed to notice.

"I would have - we used to have another DRE in the area, and I would make a point of trying to call him, because I wanted to not have that, I - I don't know if it'd be confirmation bias, but bias... but basically, the bias like, I had already established this is what I believe, and then it's not it. It makes it harder. And it is - it's a lot of work to do. The original evaluation of the driver, making the arrest in Washington we have to do a search warrant which also takes time and then do the drug influence evaluation. And so, it's really not something that I prefer to do, but it's something that I end up doing because I want to hold drug impaired drivers, accountable." - Officer

Other participants agreed:

"And I encourage our DREs, especially ones that are working the same shifts, I would encourage that if they get a drug DUI that they call a DRE partner so that we have independent eyes to come and... look at this driver. So that's what I encourage them to do, is to work with each other so that they both get evals from each other hopefully. And so, then they have an independent person looking at their particular case, because obviously they've made up their mind that this person's under the influence of something. And then it - I think it's always nice to have that independent set of eyes to come and - and take a look at the person." - Detective

"Only a handful were mine my own. I try not to... the reason why is very ethical. So, I think that it's kind of contradictory to if I arrest somebody for DUI, and then I do my own eval. So, if I do something, I prefer to have somebody else do it, because, we're all human, I mean, in the end. I'm - I'm not saying it doesn't occur, and that I could be wrong; if you have that extra person to say that, you know, like, yeah, I'm not seeing impairment, or, yeah, I've had them say, yeah, you know what, I'm not seeing it now. But then, when I did the blood results, it came back as a, you know, as a - as a little result." - Detective

"I find it difficult to do a DRE evaluation on someone I've arrested for DUI, mainly because I've already done the field; I've already made that arrest decision. So, in that suspect mind's, I am the bad officer that arrested them." - Corporal

Overall, the differences in number of callouts and number of evaluations appears to differ based on position, region, and overall experience. For example, DREs located in larger agencies were more likely to report utilizing the callout system, while those in smaller agencies were more likely to self-initiate or receive personal references. Additionally, more populated regions likely have higher levels of substance use, meaning that DREs may

conduct a greater number of evaluations than areas that have lower levels of substance use, though as quoted above, this trend is not universal. Some DREs who reported lower numbers of callouts and evaluations often discussed how even though they weren't spending their time on these tasks, they often utilized their DRE knowledge in other ways.

DRE as an "Auxiliary" Duty

Many participants expressed that while they frequently utilize their DRE training, their role as a DRE is more of an 'auxiliary duty,' in comparison to their other duties. DREs who hold positions of detectives, for example, reported that their duties prevented them from doing evaluations in the field; but that they use their expertise and additional training to assist other law enforcement professionals. Other DREs with leadership roles agreed:

"The majority of the time, I do it as an auxiliary duty... I have to fulfill my other duties as a sergeant and as a patrol officer. And so, I have a lot going on, a lot on my plate, you know, I have other responsibilities, [so] there's a whole bunch of other things going on. But the DRE itself doesn't take a large chunk of my time." - Sergeant

"I do a lot of phone calls and just walking people through the process versus actual full evals." - Detective

One DRE noted that they only kept their DRE certification to be able to provide education and support to other law enforcement professionals, and couldn't remember the last time they were called out to do an evaluation:

'For DRE, honestly... I can't remember the last time I've got called out and responded. I mean, functionally, that's not something I'm doing, the - the only reason for the last couple years I've kept it was to do the instruction side of it, teaching ARIDE and stuff - so yeah, most of it is on the instructional side, I'm not who's on the ground doing the evaluations.'" - Officer

Because individuals who obtain DRE certification gain a wealth of specialized knowledge, they can not only utilize their training within DUI and traffic-related incidents but could provide benefits in multiple facets of law enforcement. Many participants alluded to this within their interviews, with some discussing particular instances of their involvement in non-DUI cases and overall value in the adjudication process.

Non-DUI Cases & Value in the Courtroom/Adjudication Process

While involvement in non-DUI cases and the adjudication process was low, some DREs expressed how when utilized, they believed their DRE training provided valuable resources outside of typical evaluations. For example, many DREs discussed how they believe their knowledge was (or would be) be beneficial in non-traffic related incidents:

"But, yeah, I think, like again it - I think it could... there are a lot of more, there are a lot more functions we could expand the DRE program into that would probably

make it more relevant to criminal cases and consent cases, right? If we have an active rape that just occurred with a victim, was this victim, is this victim impaired? Can this victim knowingly give consent? Well, we have a drug recognition expert saying, in my expert opinion, they were impaired, right. And so now it's not just a well, he says, she said, or well, the tox says this - but what does the tox, you know, what is the level of impairment needed for Rohypnol? Or what is the level of impairment for an antidepressant right? And then you're gonna get into this, the - the toxicologist won't say, 'Well, this this level, this is impairing. This level is not impairing,' So, those kinds of things." - Officer

"I was called to testify about a mother who was fentanyl dependent while she was pregnant, and I was called to testify for a hearing for her newborn child. So that had nothing to do with driving. But it was, you know, as my opinion, as a, as a DRE to how that would have affected the baby, and what signs I saw that led me to believe that the mother was using." - Sergeant

"Oh, well, so I've had child abuse cases where a child's been acting odd, and I have asked like, or encouraged CPS to go and take the child to be drug tested. There are... there was a homicide case; we don't have many homicide cases [here], so but there was a homicide case where the person was acting very off; and so I got to use some of my knowledge and skills as a DRE to try and collect evidence, to see if there were any other drugs involved. With sexual assaults, I find that, again, I am trying to use knowledge that I have from the DRE program to better investigate the sexual assault, and honestly, we have this... there is this rumor that women are being drugged. And so, I had started working on coming up with ways so that we can better evaluate whether or not people are being drugged, because we have such so much talk about it, but yeah, we're not seeing drugs coming back in the system."
- Officer

One officer mentioned that because their community hosted a large college campus, that they had utilized their DRE knowledge in cases regarding sexual assault and drug use:

"So, aside from giving me more tools to be more effective at not just, and I will tell you, DRE is not just great for DUI enforcement - I have used it in realms that are like, felony level. So, I - I was a detective for a period of time, and I would use my DRE skills as a detective, even... I'm finding that we could really apply DRE more in sexual assault, especially in the [college campus] area, because there's so many reports of drug facilitated sexual assault, as well as alcohol facilitated sexual assault. And it - it's really underutilized and kind of under respected." - Officer

Another officer noted:

"Well, and, to be fair, I did have a prosecutor reach out to me on a sexual assault case that to see if I could testify, and what I could testify to. And so like, I feel like that was a step forward." - Officer

Throughout interviewing, it became apparent that while officers utilized the majority of their knowledge in traffic-related incidents involving substance use, they recognized that their training could be applied in multiple other facets of law enforcement. Many DREs relayed that they believed their DRE certification was extremely valuable and needed within their communities and helps give non-DRE law enforcement professionals better knowledge on drug impairment.

"When we're done with policing, a group of officers will be putting this on so that they could teach other officers to make a good decision whether to arrest or not; arrest or let this person drive or not drive, or you know any of the other things." – Captain

"I love the people aspect of it. I love getting to just chat with people more... we're actually going to go to some camps, local homeless camps, and practice SFSTs, and practice identifying people that might be under the influence, and talking to them about 'why'. Because yeah, well... yeah, cause that's a huge part of, I think disconnect, is a lot of officers can't comprehend why someone would want to in the first place, or why they would have those addictions." – Detective

"And I - I think it's really fascinating to get... to be in a field where we're actively working towards progression and efficiency and factual information - is a lot of fun. And it was a role I felt was... meaning to be fulfilled in our agency." – Detective

Due to the specialized training and knowledge that DREs have, they have also been encouraged to employ such educational skills outside of law enforcement, such as in community spaces and educational institutions. Therefore, in addition to education of fellow law enforcement professionals and conducting evaluations, DREs also discuss how they commit time to community outreach.

Community Outreach

Quite a few respondents discussed how community outreach is an important and enjoyable part of their job responsibilities. In addition, many DREs noted that they believed their expertise was a valuable resource for the community at large. For example, many DREs discussed how the DRE program encouraged them to go out into the community and use their training to further knowledge on the effects and harms of substances:

"I've also taught at community meetings, for our citizens, for parents... done a couple, like, you know, here's what to look for - for paraphernalia, here's what look for signs, symptoms, and your teenage kids that they're using drugs." - Corporal

"I was [in a program] in part with our chaplain, a mental health professional, a drug recovery specialist or professional, and myself... we did a community, like, regional led meeting for parents who are interested in drugs, how to block that out, like here's what to look for, here's what symptoms are, here's what paraphernalia looks like, here's what drugs look like, stuff like that." – Detective

Some DREs discussed how in the past they worked as a school resource officer while holding their DRE certification, and communicated with administrators, teachers, and students:

“I was one of our school resource officers, and so as I communicated and talked with administrators or specific teachers... there were a handful of times where [in a health class], I just talked about the effects of drugs, and you know, kinda molded that to, you know, quote unquote, you know why drugs are bad, but to, you know, give a little education... and that was very much encouraged within the DRE program, is to go out into the community, and, you know, present as often as you could. So, I whatever position I was holding at the time I – I tried to do that as much as possible.” – Detective

“I also... was part of our community services unit and was the SRO [school resource officer] supervisor for my department... So I taught a lot of, like, middle school, high school classes on drugs; knowledge, awareness. And then I taught a lot for the teachers, so, what to recognize and all that.” - Corporal

Overall, it was clear throughout interviewing that while some DREs may not conduct a substantial number of evaluations, their skills are still used within law enforcement. When conducting evaluations, there are vast differences – such as in how DREs arrive on a scene, or the number of evaluations they conduct. However, all DREs reported providing advice, education, and general support for fellow law enforcement professionals and their community, specifically in recognizing and targeting the harms of substance use.

2.2(B). Challenges

In addition to understanding how DREs utilize their training, knowledge, and certification, researchers also sought to understand any potential challenges that DREs encounter within their field. Throughout interviews, almost all DREs discussed how they believed that while they are valued in their position, they are underutilized both in the field and within the adjudication process.

Many DREs discussed that they believed many of the challenges they face stem from a lack of certified DREs and a lack of funding for the program. Some believe that the lack of DREs and funding stems from a perception that the DRE program is ‘dying,’ and an overall lack of support for the program from leadership, the court system, and the criminal justice system more broadly.

Throughout interviews, researchers also asked participants about potential challenges relating to the detection of poly-drug use, or evaluations where it may be difficult to determine which drug category an offender falls under. In addition, DRE discussed how training on poly-drug use can pose challenges, especially because research on substances and their effect is constantly evolving. Further, DREs discuss that while they have much satisfaction from their initial training, they wish for more job-specific and “in-the-field”

training in both the DRE school and in conferences and post-trainings. Finally, some DREs discussed challenges relating to the overall culture of the DRE program, such as being more “trooper focused,” and institutional and social issues within policing and society, such as sexism and misogyny.

Notable Absence of Callouts and Participation in Adjudication

One of the most common grievances among DREs was the belief that they are not getting utilized as much as they should be. As one trooper stated:

“That’s where I’m struggling right now, is getting my people to take the time to do the DUI, and to ask me for an evaluation when it’s necessary. That’s a struggle.”

Not Getting Called: Time Constraints of Blood Draws

The most common reasoning for this was related to the process of getting a warrant for blood draws, and how other law enforcement professionals may just go to the warrant process and skip calling a DRE to perform an evaluation:

“It’s easier to just get the warrant and go get blood. I mean, it doesn’t cost the officer or anything, other than they have to sit there a little while longer - because they have to wait for us to show up, and then an hour for the eval. So, it costs them more time. And I think a lot of officers would rather turn and burn and go get another drunk if they can, versus actually waiting for an eval and using it. So, it’s frustrating, because it’s a whole mentality thing.” – Officer

Specifically, one of the most discussed complaints surrounding why DREs may not be called out for an evaluation is related to changes in legislation for blood draws, particularly changes surrounding implied consent. Prior to the *Missouri v. McNeely* (2013) Supreme Court decision, implied consent allowed officers to conduct blood draws without a warrant, assuming that by driving, individuals had automatically given consent for such tests. However, the *McNeely* decision in 2013 ruled that warrantless blood draws were no longer automatically permissible, and implied consent no longer applies in these situations. As a result, many DREs discussed how when non-DRE officers encounter individuals driving under the influence, they go straight for the warrant and bypass calling a DRE, as it is seen as quicker and more efficient. Many DREs discussed how because there is no longer implied consent for blood draws, other law enforcement professionals who encounter individuals under the influence are more likely to go straight for a warrant, rather than contact a DRE for an evaluation, simply because it saves time. When DREs were asked about what they would change about the DRE program overall, multiple cited the implied consent for bloodwork to be their number one grievance.

“...once the requirement for the search warrant came out, [leadership] said, what’s your purpose? Because if we just get a warrant, get the blood anyways, you know, you’re kind of just 2-hour-delaying us. So, they’re like, we’re just gonna get a warrant. Back when I started in 2003, blood draws... everybody was terrified of

search warrants. They didn't know how to do... they didn't know how to do blood search warrants or blood draws, and they were scared to death of doing it. And today, officers you know, they're not scared [of] search warrants, you know, we've got post-Gant and so search warrants for everything. But that's not a way it was back in 2005 or 2006." – Captain

"My...My biggest thing is, we used to have implied consent for blood, with on drug arrest, and then Missouri case kind of eradicated that, even though we had nothing to do with - with that case, drugs didn't... it would be nice to be able to have that back. Because, you, our DRE process is way more I think reliable and accurate, once you can go through the whole process... so if we have an opinion, and - and you know, we have a good track record of having accurate opinions; to be able to say, "Okay, I think you're under the influence of a narcotic" and he wants me to blood test, and if they don't, aren't willing to voluntarily do it, they should be, they should lose their license because it is part of actually the implied consent, warning, or was. So having that back would be great. I don't think the program can change that, but that that's one of my - my pet peeves." – Officer

"Over here - A lot of the troopers will just go get blood and not call a DRE - cause a lot of the counties over here on this side, they don't have voluntary blood, they just want you to get a warrant. So, they'll just go straight to the warrant process and skip the whole DRE process." – Trooper

"And then they just go and get a search warrant for blood, and they get blood without asking for DRE, without calling us to get those evaluations that you know, should be done to help their case." – Deputy

Some DREs discussed how less experienced law enforcement professionals may miss signs of impairment beyond alcohol that a DRE would normally pick up on, and therefore wouldn't realize they needed to call a DRE.

"Impaired driving can be really hard to detect sometimes. You know your... your alcoholics, long term drug users, are - are better at hiding their impairment indicators, so they might seem totally normal. But a... and... and so, a less experienced officer, with less - less training in impaired driving would - would miss some of the subtle signs, like pupil size, or response to light, or their speech pattern, muscle rigidity; things that a DRE would potentially pick up on. So, they - they it just doesn't cross their mind to - to, because they're not... they're not thinking along the lines of impaired driving." – Detective

"Every time I hear an off an officer say: "Oh, I went straight for a blood work," I'm like - I think you should have called a DRE. A lot of that comes down to the fact that, you know, they just don't think about it, not always top of mind. That's something that we always have to remind officers about." – Officer

“Because we've seen, and I know we've talked about this with groups before too within the DRE field, about how people are just like, ‘Oh, yep, they're impaired. We're just going to get the blood warrant, and it's fine.’ And so not like... thinking those few steps ahead.” – Detective

When one detective was asked if training such as ARIDE were reasonings for fewer callouts, they responded:

“Um, sometimes. There are some really efficient officers who are ARIDE trained and who can you know, can call... but they can't call impairment the same way that I can. Like, I always caution officers don't put in your reports ‘Oh, it's a narcotic analgesic, oh, it's a CNS stimulant’ because without going through that training, sometimes they don't understand it completely...There are some real go-getters for DUIs in the area, and I feel like they are comfortable to say ‘Oh yes, that's definitely impairment. And even if [redacted] isn't available because [they're] out of the area, or whatever, I'm comfortable enough to call a judge, get a blood search warrant, and say this is what I saw.’ Um, so the times that I'm not available, and WSP you know they have some great officers who are troopers comfortable with doing DUI arrests on drugs, even if they aren't calling out a DRE. So, I can't go to all of them, obviously, and I feel like there are quite a few proficient officers and deputies who are comfortable with that, and so I don't always get called out for that reason.” – Detective

When asked a question along similar lines, one officer said:

“So, part of it I think is, because they know - they think that they know more than they do, a lot of times. So, you know, especially if they've been ARIDE trained, they're like, ‘Oh, I got this. I don't need any more than that.’ But the reality is - is that you know, even as a DRE, and I don't think a lot of people realize this, I can't go testify at trial and say that I think that they are under the influence of a specific substance without doing a full DRE evaluation with somebody.” – Officer

Callout System Use

A few DREs discussed how they believed one of the reasons they were not called out as much as they should be, or could be, was in relation to the callout system. For example, two current DREs said:

“So, I went through probably a - an 8-month, 9-month period, where my phone wasn't actually getting any of those texts which - which was so clearly... there's a technical problem somewhere, and I actually haven't gotten one, probably in in a few weeks now, which is pretty weird. So, I don't... I don't know how many of these technical glitches come and go.” – Detective

“So, I - I think that there's some technical issues with the system, at least in the last year. So, when - when it's functioning properly, I think it works great. And when it's not working, obviously, then there's a lot of unanswered calls, probably.” – Officer

Some DREs discussed frustration with the setup of the callout system; mainly noting how they would prefer a call-based system rather than a text-based one.

“Our call out system.... it's - it's on a text message system right now, which is good and bad, because I work straight days, so I could get called out at night. And I'm in my last 2 years, so I would love the call out; but they just do text messages, and I sleep through it, right? So, I've told officers... if you really do need it, a DRE, have them call me, because if my phone rings I'll wake up. But if it's just a text message, I sleep right through it. So, I've told them that. But there's still... they're still not calling very often.” – Officer

“So, in theory, it works fine. As long as you have your phone, you're paying attention to your phone.” – Corporal

“I've had... not a lot of success with the text call out system, and a lot of it's because I one, I don't get a lot of texts, and I - and I can't tell if that's just because [the] systems not being used, or in our region is not being used as much. And like I said, because I have friends, say, [redacted] gets a lot of calls, but [they're] a very active DRE in a region with not a lot of DREs. It might be, in fact that [my redacted] has a lot of DREs. A lot of WSP DREs are out here, so there might be a lot of on duty, which results in not a lot of call outs.” – Officer

“So yeah, the system seems nice. Oh, I see my phone, I see a text, I go out and I handle it. But there's a lot of... yeah like a lot of a lot of hands that it's kind of touching. And some other barriers that aren't, as at the forefront, right so.” – Officer

Many DREs admitted that one fault of the callout system was that they occasionally would forget to call in and log in as available within the WSP dispatch:

“So, there's what's supposed to happen, and there's what actually happens. And then there's like, today, I forgot to call in and log in. That's hard to remember - cause I don't work for WSP, so if I want to be shown as available, I have to call into their dispatch, and that's a whole extra step for me and I just forget.” – Detective

“I think on the end of DREs, we just need to make sure we keep our number current with the call out system, and I, personally could call in at the beginning of my shift more frequently.” – Officer

Some DREs discussed how while the DRE callout system works fine in theory, there are complications due to the technical nature of the situations and their job. For example, two participants discussed how there may be confusion around the funding of such callouts:

“I think some of it would be some education for the - for smaller agencies to know that that call out doesn't cost the agency. you know. It's all about money, and to be honest, I think a lot of the agencies would authorize a call out, right, even if it did

cost the money at a command level. But in the middle of the night, you have a corporal or a sergeant running the city, and we don't have any authorization to, you know, authorize, external call outs. Right that there's, you know, I call somebody into work full shift and authorize that overtime just fine. But once you start getting into like, kind of outside that scope of work, you know, scope of responsibility, most agencies will - won't risk it. So, I think it's the knowledge that yeah, a call in - the call can happen, and usually it's a quick response, because we all live in the area. But that's not gonna be a cost to agency." – Corporal

"Now, on the flip side is there issues where a DRE is called out in the same region, and WSP doesn't know? Yes, every day. Where they go through our dispatch center, or they go through the County dispatch center, and then they call them there, and WSP will never know that DRE was called out. So that in itself becomes something, because no offense to supervisors cause I respect them, and I know they have things to do... but some supervisors look at money, and they say, 'No, We don't want to call it out', and then it goes back to like, 'Hey, WSP, the Washington Traffic Safety Commission will reimburse this if you do.' Oh, oh, yeah, okay, cool. Let's call one out, and then you go through their process, with WSP, and going through the call out process. Some agencies like mine, they'll call us straight up to our phone instead and bypass WSP." – Officer

Another detective noted that they believed the callout system could be more interactive, and allow DREs to respond both when they are available and not available, while also alerting them to when a call has been answered by another DRE:

"Consistency from Washington State Patrol is part... and officers, I should say I should. I don't blame one agency. I just that, I've called in and they're like, 'Oh, yeah, we got somebody already' And I said, Oh, okay. It would have been nice to have known through the message kind of thing, because I know sometimes these troopers and officers are looking to drop things to make this work out'. I mean, there's times where we're just not available, and - and we don't.... we won't even respond, but maybe - maybe if that, maybe do the opposite, maybe have them call in to tell them you aren't available. Just have everybody respond, because at least they know you're getting the message as opposed to, we haven't had anybody respond. We don't know if this is the right phone number. We don't know if we're even texting the right person, you know. And I guess it's just been - it happens so seldom that we don't... we don't really think about it until we're talking about it. So it - it kind of comes up where it... the call out system is a tool; it's not perfect, but it's not bad, either from what I've seen." – Officer

"So, I know that there's miscommunications, cause, is it a local one like I... cannot even remember the last time our local 911 center sent out a text call out. They're supposed to send out a page if we request it, and I'm sure they've requested it, but I can't even remember the last time I got one from our local. So, it's more like the implementation issues, I think, are what's really a struggle, not so much the format of the call out, cause, I mean, yeah. My call outs for other stuff works just fine. So,

and I know it works like I get the call outs. I just seem to only get them from certain places, which is really weird, and I'm sure there's more of them I'm missing. They just don't... either don't do it, or like, they don't know that they can do it. I don't know... or maybe people really aren't asking. I - I don't know.” – Detective

Overall, most DREs discussed how they believed the callout system is a tool that could be improved upon by educating local agencies that callouts are at no-cost to them to aid in the challenge of DRE officers not receiving callouts. Further, allowing officers to choose between text and phone-notifications may aid in calls going unanswered, particularly for callouts that occur during night shifts. A more interactive system that would allow officers to respond whether they are available or not, and more communication for officers when calls are answered, would also likely aid in streamlining the process of DRE callouts and aid in the challenge of calls going unanswered. These technical improvements with the callout system could lead to more DRE callouts and evaluations – which could also aid in DRE involvement in adjudication.

Not Being Utilized in Adjudication

As discussed previously, a prior analysis of the DRE program in Spokane, Washington provided evidence that in addition to a decline in callouts and evaluations, there was a notable absence of DREs within the adjudication process (Solensten and Willits, 2021). Of the DREs interviewed in this study, very few interviewees reported participation in the courtroom process as a DRE. Of those who did, most of them had only gone to court for DRE related cases on one to two occasions. When asked why they think they may not be called to testify frequently, many cited institutional level issues and challenges, such as heavy caseloads and plea bargaining, as the central reason for their non-involvement.

“I think that the adjudication process is - is tough, because, you know, I've seen cases from 2018 that are still coming up on our radar because of blood and evidence, and covid and everything that occurred in the last, however, many years, where certain cases got brushed aside, and now they're playing catch up. Or seeing certain cases that have just disappeared, because it just got caught up in the - the filing and - and stuff, and wasn't as important as - as others at that time period. So DREs aren't utilized as much as they probably should be. But again, we only can do so much outside of that system.” – Officer

“I also know that a lot of times people will plead stuff down; and you know, maybe take a reckless instead of a DUI. Okay, it - it still gets the impaired driver off the street. Of course, I prefer to see it go through as a DUI, because that's what it was.” – Detective

Further, some DREs stated that their individual agency had less prosecutors overall, and therefore prosecutors likely didn't have the time to reach out to DREs or fight for cases to go to trial:

“Their caseload. Just they’re... they’re short on prosecutors, and just the workload that they have, honestly.” – Detective

“It's because the turnover rate [for] the prosecutors is so high right now, and they're so far behind. - Trooper

In some agencies, DREs discussed that they believed local prosecutors are steered away from DREs and judges were simply ‘uneducated’ on the program and their DRE role, and therefore didn’t realize that they could use their expertise:

“They're very uneducated about what we actually do and what do: what DUIs actually look like, and what SFSTs actually look like, and what an evaluation actually looks like. They have no idea, so that that probably doesn't help.” [regarding why they aren’t used in adjudication processes] – Detective

“And we - so we know what we're talking about; we tend to be the more articulate ones, because we are so used to having to really carefully talk about what it is that we know, and how we know what we know... we tend to be articulate, and we tend to be very good on stand, and we tend to be very useful. And - and I just don't think that they really know that in general.” – Detective

“Most lawyers have no idea how to deal with DUIs, just in general. And once you get into - once you get into drug DUIs, there some of the more complicated case, and so I think a lot of the prosecutors like... it's just a, you know, it's not a felony misdemeanor, and it's one of the most complicated things you could do, it's not a felony. And so I think they just want to stay away - just stay away from the whole scientific side of it, because we start diving into that. You better know what you're talking about, especially if they're dealing with a defense attorney that has taken some kind of a modified DRE class, like ARIDE, or whatever... a prosecutor is not educated in that, and it can get pretty stupid pretty fast. So yeah, I think probably one of the big reasons is because the complexity of it.” – Corporal

Finally, some DREs discussed that the reason why cases may plead out is because a DRE’s expertise is not beneficial to a defendant’s case, and may not be in the defendant’s best interest if they go to trial:

“The state attorneys are paid to represent the client, represent the client in the best way they can. We are considered expert witness at that point, and they probably prefer to keep any expert witnesses that are against them out, I think, is basically the difference. So they'd look at their guy and say, ‘Hey, this is, you know, you're going against the top thing in the country, and you're going, you know it's going to be more difficult if you want to fight you can, but my recommendation is not.’”

“I don't think the defense attorneys want us on the stand, so if they know there's a DRE they plead out. It's hard, because who are they gonna hire as an expert to testify against us? They'd have to, you know, have a doctor or somebody like that come in

and testify against us, and it's pretty hard to take a doctor against a cop when it's involving a DUI, or, you know, a vehicular homicide or vehicular assault. So, I don't think the defense attorneys want to touch it." – Trooper

"[The involvement of a DRE officer] is... it's very powerful in court [to] persuade people to take plea deals and not to go to court. Because they don't want us to testify. Because a DRE testifying on the stand is very powerful, because we can give our opinion. You can't give your opinion in court unless you're a qualified expert. So being a DRE is very powerful in that manner." – Trooper

"I think some are getting plead down, I think a lot of defense attorneys don't want to go to trial with the DRE. Because they know what they're talking about, and they... like we even, you know, do training on DUI defense stuff. So, we know their little tricks and stuff. And then... yeah, I think it's a combination." – Sergeant

While some DREs discussed working with local prosecutors, others discussed how they had very little contact them. Those that did interact with prosecutors were often looked to as a subject matter expert, and communicated with prosecutors about DRE knowledge, changes in relative legislation, or general questions surrounding substance use:

"So if there's questions on a case, they send us a little thing that's called a law enforcement referral sheet, asking for particular information about whatever case. And I get them on DUIs quite a bit, just because of the complexity of those cases. And they'll ask, you know, for additional information on the case. So, I'm frequently contacting them and talking about that stuff." – Sergeant

"We - I work very well with our municipal prosecutor. We've had the same prosecutor - we've had one prosecutor that's been the same since I started, [they] was here before I started, they'll call me, and they'll ask me things about DUIs in general, drug DUIs, that I was involved in, and this that and the other. So I do get... we... we collaborate well when it comes to that sort of thing. And we also collaborate well when I'm like, briefed on like possible upcoming case law or case laws that might be more relevant to drug or just you DUIs in general, that I learned in the DRE program that might not come up to them right away." – Corporal

"Yeah, the prosecutors would reach out to me as a as a subject matter expert. I had two DRE cases that that went to court, and then, you know, a handful of DUI cases. And I would say that additional training and experiences with DRE just made those slam dunks." – Deputy

However, many DREs discussed having very little communication with local prosecutors and adjudication figures.

"I can't even tell you the last time I talked to a prosecutor." – Officer

“No, I still... since, like the 2 years I've been a DRE I have yet to, you know, work with the prosecutor or the court, in that way, whether you know that's not... if on a case that I'm not involved in or I haven't been, haven't done work in that capacity.” – Officer

The differences in levels of prosecutor interaction and communication could be dependent on region and DRE's level of expertise. Newly certified DREs reported very little interaction with prosecutors, for reasons discussed in a subsequent section. For example, a senior DRE who had frequent interaction with prosecutors mentioned how they had developed this working relationship over several years; this was more common among DREs with more years of experience in the field.

“We have a good working relationship in [my area] with our prosecutors. There's quite a bit of communication. I have more than most... They use me as a resource more than - more often than they would most of the law enforcement, just because I've been known. So they're bouncing ideas off me, and [having me give them a run down] of certain situations.” – Captain

One DRE who had transitioned from one region to another discussed how in their position in a smaller agency, prosecutor interaction was much more frequent versus in their position in a larger agency. One DRE currently situated in a larger agency also discusses how they feel as if there simply isn't enough time to communicate with prosecutors.

“Um, I tend to. This is just me, I talk and reach out to my prosecuting all the time and talk to them about stuff. Hey, this is what I am. If I see something like - someone's going to, you know, like a DUI thing, if they say, Hey, this person wants to have a hearing on this, and I said, do they realize what my, you know, training and that kind of stuff is? You're more welcome to fight it, I mean, I'm happy to go, and you do that and resolve it. But I'll even talk to, you know our local municipal prosecutor for those ones. And I'll know this is what - it's all my... [sound glitches] I work for a smaller town now, so that's a lot better than you know, where I used to be was a lot busier, and we didn't have that kind of time.” – Officer

“We all have a job to do, and I think that we all are looking for the best outcomes. Unfortunately, we also have another side... that we answer to supervisors and - and bosses, and [the] climate of what is the norm for that time. So sometimes we're utilized very, very frequently, and sometimes it's like, Oh, okay, cool. They got this handled.” – Officer

Resource Constraints and Certification Concerns

Throughout interviews, one of the most discussed grievances among DREs was the declining number of certified DREs. Some of the potential reasonings for this decline have been discussed throughout this report, but one reason commonly reported by DREs was issues surrounding the ability to maintain the certification. Further, many DREs discussed

how an overall lack of program funding and support has led to a perception that the DRE program is not as viable as it once was.

The Need for More Certified DREs

Many DREs interviewed believed that the central challenges they faced in their role could be fixed if there were more certified DREs available. Nearly every interview participant alluded to this issue, with many stating that their biggest challenge was staffing:

“Probably the major drain on it with the staffing environment, biggest issue with the DRE, or my ability to respond for DRE, it's just overall staffing.” – Corporal

“I'd say the number one thing is that, it seems like sometimes we're stretched really thin. I know that there's been times where, you know, there's a request for DREs and then they go unanswered, and whether that's a - a lack of people being available when they're - when they're not working, or just a lack of numbers. I know that they... I keep being told that that our area, that we're pretty heavy as far as DREs go, as far as numbers, that we have compared with other areas. But it just seems like there's a lot of requests, and a lot of requests that go unanswered. So, I don't think it's a bad thing to have way more and so you know, the more we have, the - the more use. And then one of the problems that we have sometimes, is that people get discouraged I think, from calling, because every time they call there's never one available. So, they stop asking at that point, too.” – Detective

When asked about how the program could encourage more law enforcement professionals to obtain DRE certification, some DREs discussed that the time commitment and small class size of the initial training were central constraints. While DREs believed that the class size of DRE schools was good and shouldn't necessarily be increased, many of them alluded to how many individuals may not be able to obtain certification due to the selective nature of the DRE school:

“I see that are really into DUIs, especially if they're willing to do drug DUIs - is a lot of times we just don't have the space. Like I keep having more people that are putting in and - and getting rejected from the schools because the schools are fairly small.” – Detective

“I'd love for there to be more DREs. I... I find that trying to keep officers interested, like I have one officer, he's put in three times, and I get it, there's a limited amount of spots, there's limited amount funding. But if we can just make that like 'Oh, hey! We have more availability for as many officers who are interested in being DREs that are qualified.” – Sergeant

“I'm not saying, take everybody right, because obviously people apply who aren't qualified, but most qualified people - to be able to get them trained up as DREs just means that we'll have more available, just means there's more out there. So... just having more officers would be a huge one.” – Officer

“So, we haven't had a lot of schools lately, and - and generally the schools are limited to maybe 10 to 12 students. So, you know, when you're getting a ton of people putting in for it, or even, you know 20 to 30 people putting in for it, there's a lot of people that don't get to go. I also understand that they don't want to oversaturate the - the DRE world as well. So you need to pick the right people to do it.” – Detective

Further, some interview participants discussed how smaller agencies have difficulty sending law enforcement professionals to the school, as their shifts then have to be covered by the department during their absence:

“Just, a lot of times... being short staffed, it's hard to get people committed to that long of a school. Like, I really wanted those two deputies to go this year, but they just couldn't afford to let them go from patrol.” – Sergeant

“Probably class - either the number of classes or class sizes. I know that instructors are kind of stretched thin, and I know that obviously, there's a financial aspect to everything, with the travel and the training, and everything that Traffic Safety pays for - for putting on these classes. But you know, at least for my agency, we, many times have a lot of people who are willing to put in for, who request to get put in to the school, and we end up having to tell them no, and if that happens very often, I think they get discouraged and they move on to something else. So - then they find something else to - to focus on. And then if they can get training into doing that, then they're no longer interested in the DRE program, so sometimes you gotta get them while they're interested, before they lose that interest.” – Detective

Throughout interviews, almost every participant suggested that an increase in the number of certified DRE offices would aid in many of the challenges they face. While not as much of an issue in larger agencies, agencies that are located in smaller communities (particularly, rural areas) are more likely to experience challenges relating to staffing and the availability of DREs; many of the DREs we talked to relayed that they were the only available DRE within their district. While the scarcity of DREs within Washington State is partially related to the selective nature of the DRE school, its seasonal operation, and small class sizes, some DREs believe that a declining perception of the DRE program among leadership could also play a role.

Declining Perceptions of Program among Leadership

While most DREs felt that their position was valuable and that they were a valuable resource for their agency, some cited that they felt undervalued by leadership and other officers. For example, when one detective was asked if they felt valued and supported by leadership to be a DRE they responded:

“No. Most people didn't care. One, they just straight up told us they don't believe in it.” - Detective

DREs who discussed a lack of support from leadership often discussed how while they were supportive of the idea of DREs, many upper echelon and leadership entities promote a belief that the DRE program is 'dying,' and not needed as much as it once was.

"There are... there's one sergeant that I work with, who has... [they haven't] said it to me, but [they have] said it to other people that the DRE program is a dying program and [we] butt heads all the time, and I tell [them] you have to call us out." – Officer

"And he was like, "that program is dead. You don't need to be [a] DRE." and I was like, "well, could you just put my request through to the chief, anyway?" And our chief was like, "yes, [they're] gonna recertify." And I'm like, thank goodness." – Sergeant

"But I will also say that I feel like the program – it's gone past its shelf life a little bit as far as how the program is ran." – Captain

Some DREs indicated that the support for the DRE program likely varies throughout regions. For example, it appears that Eastern districts receive more support from upper leadership, while Western districts provide less support. One DRE who debated moving locations discussed this specifically:

"I did put - put feelers out to other agencies, and every in a major agency near us that was hiring, and I talked to them, and I talked to them extensively like, 'Hey... I wanna do DRE on my certification, I really enjoy doing impaired driving.' And they were like, not interested, saying 'I don't think we've had a DRE in a couple decades.' So while I say, my command is really like, super, and I've never had any issues with any of my DRE stuff, I would not say that that's the case for every agency." – Corporal

Overall, most DREs reported feeling valued by fellow law enforcement professionals and leadership due to their training and specialized knowledge, but some believed that the DRE program as a whole has lost recognition as a program that should be maintained and supported.

One of the challenges that has stemmed from a lack of support is DREs not maintaining their certification, for reasons discussed below. Further, some DREs discussed how while they wanted to continue to remain certified, they experienced difficulties in their recertification process.

Issues Surrounding Recertification; Reasonings for Decertification

Throughout interviews, a common theme brought up by DREs was issues with the recertification process, particularly in finding an instructor for required observed evaluations. Many DREs discussed how the lack of DRE instructors in their area made recertification difficult, and that this could be a primary reason in why individuals decertified.

"I'd say the certification process right now, it's a little hard, mainly because, yeah, you got to recertify every 2 years, and right now to be able to get recertified, you have to do 2 evaluations with an instructor that's observing. The problem is, there's not a lot of instructors right now, at least in my area that I know of. There's just one in [redacted-(semi-local agency)] that just recently became an instructor. So the struggle is, you know, if I'm getting up to those 2 years, then I need to recertify, let's say, for whatever reason it's coming up, you know, I- I don't get my sort of- if I don't get those 2 done, you know it's - it's really...it really comes down to, I better hope I get a call where I can have that instructor, you know, be available." - Trooper

"The - so, the certification process is... to get recertified is... to find an, to find an instructor was... it's - it's just stupid. I mean, there's got to be an easier process to do that." - Detective

One prior DRE noted that the primary reason for their decertification was not being able to find an instructor:

"The reason why I didn't recertify is because I couldn't get somebody to do a mock eval. I needed an instructor, an instructor reserve. I had plenty for the year, I mean, way, way over, what was I think it's 2 or 3 for the year fully evals; I went way over that, I was almost double, I think. I guess I'm just going off top of my head, but I couldn't get a - I couldn't find an instructor. I went down to [redacted], I went everywhere. I couldn't find an instructor to do the eval, and then I ended up getting decertified." - Detective

This same individual also discussed how even though they tried to get recertified after their decertification, they realized that they would have to complete the entirety of the initial school again; they unfortunately were never contacted about how to make this a possibility, and they ended up dropping their certification for good:

"When I tried to recert... I didn't know that if you go beyond the year, you have to take the whole thing again. And I was willing to do it, but nobody... I, the last email I got were like, Hey, we'll, you know, we'll see if we can set it up. And that was it." - Detective

DREs who were currently certified and located in smaller agencies additionally mentioned that coordinating instructor-observed evaluations or mock evaluations can be difficult due to the low number of DRE instructors in their region.

"Another thing, our regional coordinator is in [a distant county], which is hard to get every 2 years... And that's.. that can be hard to coordinate, so to get more instructors in this area, in [my] county, would be a lot - would be very beneficial." - Officer

Many DREs discussed how being promoted to higher ranks was another reason why individuals may choose not to recertify, which was confirmed by interviews with prior DREs.

“Um.. some go to different positions that they don't use it anymore. Some just lose the drive for it some of their departments stop supporting them in it. And then some sometimes don't see the program progressing. So they just say, Hey, you know, it was fun while it lasted, and they go to something else. One of my other friends left because they're promoted so high that their agency doesn't let them do it at that position or that rank. So I like, I said, I don't. I don't think there's a certain answer that's driving people away per se. And I've had friends of all walks in life of who started when I did and still do it, who've been doing it longer than I have, and - and people who did it first in and then left and went to something else.” – Officer

“I'm still looking to promote upwards and the further up you promote, the less road time you have, and the more I'm about developing other officers to take my position. I don't plan on becoming the DRE instructor, and if I plan to become a DRE instructor, I would maintain that certification till the end of time, probably, but because I don't see that in my future I probably will let it lapse once I have a replacement at my department.” – Corporal

“Because of the work. So, a lot of times, people will move onto other specialties. And so it's just extra work, and maybe just not able... who are willing to do the extra work, and you know, it's just maybe not in their career path. That's usually the reasons why people let it expire that it's either too much work or they're not interested in it as much. Or maybe their agency makes some choose between specialty assignments.” – Sergeant

“Some go to different positions that they don't use it anymore. Some just lose the drive for it some of their departments stop supporting them in it. And then some sometimes don't see the program progressing. So they just say, Hey, you know, it was fun while it lasted, and they go to something else.” – Officer

“Once you promote beyond officer, and you, you know, get those opportunities with you... and I love the spirit, the spirit is to keep up and make sure there's ample opportunities for our officers to take the torch. But my understanding, I remember when I was going through the training, and that was one of the challenges that the program was having, is that our kind of your...they're the leaders within the organization, to say, at the most politically correct. And so, they're constantly promoting. And - and that makes it difficult to maintain the DRE numbers.” – Deputy

There are a few reasons why DREs may choose to not maintain their certification; most commonly was the belief that once promoted to upper-level positions, DREs were either encouraged to drop their certification by leadership or felt as if they couldn't maintain certification in addition to their supervisory duties. Further, a lack of available certified

DRE instructors may cause difficulties for those who want to maintain certification, particularly in smaller or more rural agencies.

Updated Information & More 'Job Specific' Post-Training

Almost all DREs expressed that their initial training was incredibly informational and comprehensive; one DRE, for example, stated that it was “the best training they had ever received” as a cop, Despite the comprehensive nature of the initial training, some participants noted that follow-up trainings and in-service trainings/conferences didn't seem to fit their needs as much, and wished that they had more 'job-specific' training:

“So sometimes our in-service training is great... and I don't wanna talk shit about [redacted] but [in this training] we spent like four hours listening to this dude talk about nothing. And we're all... I mean to be a DRE, we have some level of education where we're really into it. What we want to learn is new drug stuff, right? What are we looking for? What can we do better, right? You don't need 4 hours of, rah, rah! Rah! And -and then our - then we also went to the Lifesavers Conference this year, which was partnered with Traffic Safety, but there wasn't really a lot of DRE related training at that Lifesavers Conference. There's much more... there's a couple ones, but the there wasn't anything real tracked. 4 years ago, when we partnered with lifesavers to do it, there was a whole DRE track, and it was awesome. But this year it was... there's nothing related to us, really, or if it was, it was like out- of- state people talking about things that don't relate to Washington state. And it just... training hasn't been, as you know.... So, as you know, forthcoming, and, as well as it could be.”
– Corporal

“And then the conferences that we go to, I feel like a lot of times, are kind of a waste of time, because we often get grouped in with, you know, other agencies and other areas of focus, and so it's like you have all these classes that you can choose from, to go - all these what you can choose to go to. But you know, 99% of them don't apply to your job as a DRE. And so it's kind of like well, let me pick whichever one is closest. And so, I think if the conferences were a little more DRE focused in helping us maintain our knowledge, I think that would be very beneficial too.” – Sergeant

A few DREs believed that while the initial training they received was both technical and skill-based, training surrounding technical and medical procedures could be updated and encouraged more – both in the initial DRE school and in post-trainings and conferences:

“The - the 2-week school is so technical and it's skill-based. And for whatever reason, the annual in-services, they would try to do more conference style - It's really a excellent knowledge, but it needed to be balanced with some of the technical skills. Because I would see a DRE performing in the field, and I would question their competence. And I – I think that you can have somebody who certifies, and even though they - they re-certify, there's - there's a loss of technical expertise, over time. And so maybe out of the 8 hours, they would do... maybe half of it is just technical

skill based. And then the other half of it being more of a cognitive, learning new things and bring it in international speakers.” – Deputy

One DRE who had been involved with the program for a significant amount of time believed that the program had become more lax since they had joined, specifically in the initial DRE school:

“So I feel like, and my understanding is from this last DRE class, talking to another instructor, it's even gone more relaxed from that... like... that... we're kind of going in this downward trajectory of... we've gone from this really, super, having like professionals teaching this, you know, taking a long time, to - we're going to give you a lot of information really quickly and get you out the door. And the testing standards seem to be loosening as well.” – Officer

One DRE noted that due to their agency's smaller status, that opportunities for post-trainings was rare:

“I think, being out here sometimes, agencies feel a little secluded, because the majority of the training opportunity for agencies occur like from [neighboring county]. It can be difficult to get people to train because it requires a time commitment for the training itself and a lot of travel. So, I feel like, if there were more opportunities for higher level trainings out here on the [this part of the state], agencies might be more supportive.” – Sergeant

Poly-Drug Use

In relation to challenges surrounding training, another common issue discussed within interviews was the potential challenges surrounding evaluations of poly-drug use, or instances where individuals appear to be under the influence of multiple substances. For example, while DREs receive extensive education on substances, it can still be difficult to evaluate an individual who is under the influence of multiple substances:

“And - and so, poly drug use is taught in this very simplistic approach of ‘Hey, this - we're gonna give you these easy formulas.’ But the reality is they're very complex in the way the body actually processes any substance.” – Officer

“Right now, within the past few years, no one is on just one drug category anymore. So, all of the evals I've done recently, they're head scratchers. You just look at them and they're all over the board. So, trying to determine a drug category; it's a lot more challenging than when I started, you know, a long time ago, because now everybody's poly drug users.” – Trooper

One detective relayed that they believed poly-drug use was one of the more difficult challenges DREs faced:

"There, so poly drug use is when you combine different categories, that can get tricky because it's, you know, if you have something that increases your heart rate and something that brings your heart rate down, not telling what it's gonna do. So, you might see all kinds of different signs, and that can be difficult to differentiate. So polydrug users, to make a short answer, is probably the most difficult." – Detective

When asked what substances they see most often in poly-drug use scenarios, the majority of DREs stated that combinations of alcohol, cannabis, fentanyl, inhalants, and/or prescribed medications were the most common:

"Usually either marijuana plus something, or fentanyl plus something; those are the 2 big ones right now. They have... people don't think marijuana is a drug anymore, because it's legalized; so they don't look at it any different than alcohol anymore."
– Trooper

"It's frustrating seeing impaired drivers that are impaired by substances of like, both cannabis and pills. You know, the bottle says that - use care or caution when operating a motor vehicle, but they don't necessarily say - don't. And seeing those people go out and take others, lives - all of that is avoidable, through either education or more enforcement. And - and that's frustrating to me." – Corporal

"I always make the joke that cannabis is the bacon of drugs: it goes well with everything, you know. So, we see cannabis with everything, we see alcohol with everything. A lot of our fentanyl users already, the fentanyl, whether they use meth as like a stimulant, just to like kind of negate the possibility of overdose, right?"
– Corporal

"So, you see a lot of combinations between alcohol, cannabis, other prescription medications. So, if you have a little bit of alcohol, and you're taking anti-anxiety medications, that's an additive effect that are gonna cause the symptoms to be even worse. Along with, you know, people that are doing combinations of heroin or fentanyl, and then a stimulant like methamphetamine. And so, some of those are antagonistic effects, and so they kind of balance it out - but the person is still under the influence of drugs and unable to operate a vehicle safely. So, I think the - we're seeing a lot of combinations which - which might make it more difficult. Cannabis is definitely becoming more common, or has become a lot more common." – Detective

However, one DRE noted that poly-drug detection in itself is not a major concern of theirs, as they are more determined on differing drug impairment from a medical issue than determining a specific category of impairment:

"I mean ultimately, what we're looking at is: is the driver impaired or not? And so, you know what they're impaired by, whether it's one drug or more than one drug, is like the third question. So is the driver impaired, are they not impaired? Is it related to drug impairment? Or is it potentially a medical issue? So that's another key aspect of the DRE program - is to be being able to distinguish drug impairment from a

medical issue. And then, if it is a drug impairment, then we go ahead and try to narrow it down to a category. So, I don't have to say that this person is impaired by methamphetamine, I would say, this person is... impaired by - their signs and symptoms are consistent with being impaired by a stimulant. So even though poly drug issue is present, it's not... it's not necessarily an insurmountable challenge. It - it... cause it's, you know, third on the list. You know it, it's are they impaired or are they not impaired, is - is the basic question." – Trooper

Regardless of challenges surrounding determining category of impairment, virtually all DREs recognized that evaluating poly-drug use cases was likely an issue faced by DREs across Washington State. In addition to increased instances of poly-drug use, some believed that trainings needed to be updated accordingly in line with current medical research, as well as encouraging practical, 'hands-on' knowledge within conferences and post trainings. While various challenges and concerns of current and prior DREs were discussed, the majority of interview participants believe that such issues could be alleviated if there were more available certified DREs within their agency; with many stating that a lack of faith in the DRE program overall has caused many of their negative experiences, such as not receiving adequate leadership support. Despite the many difficulties DREs may face in the field, however; many of them feel immense feelings of value within their own position, showing that there are many indirect benefits that stem from the DRE program.

2.3(C). Indirect Benefits

As discussed above, one of the most pertinent findings from our interviews was the value that DREs hold outside of their prescribed duties. Every DRE that we talked with, both current and prior, held a lot of pride and value in their position, and truly believed that they had been able to make a difference in their communities because of their certification. It's clear that while the DRE program may be viewed to be 'less' viable by some than it once was, this belief does not consider the value that DREs report outside of evaluation duties.

Fellow Law Enforcement Professional Support, Education, and Overall Feelings of Value

From providing advice via phone calls to fellow law enforcement professionals, planning educational outreach within the community, to being a 'expert' resource on substances and substance use – DREs provide an immense number of indirect benefits. Many certified DREs also expressed satisfaction with their position, and enjoyed being a part of the DRE program as a whole:

"And to me, part of that responsibility is making sure that the roadways are safe. So, it's, it's an honor to me to be in this position to be able to go out in the middle of the night and help some young officer who's like 'Oh my gosh, I've got this mess of a wreck, and what do I do?' I feel privileged to, be the one that they call like 'I need help.'" – Sergeant

“Oh, I love it! I'm - I'm all about it. I you know. I... I come from a department that's very supportive of the DRE program which helps. One of our lieutenants is a DRE instructor, [redacted]. But I think, my department has always been DUI focused. And then so - it's been supportive, then, of the DRE program, to do drug impaired driving, and to the point where I still try to push some of my more junior officers to apply to become DREs.” – Detective

One DRE noted that due to the intensive nature of the initial DRE school, they had been able to make lifelong connections with other DREs, and believed that this was a common theme among Washington State DREs:

“Because also DREs are a pretty close network, and I can always reach out to [my district] and my coordinator for my region. And he can give me information on training, or the State Coordinator or the State Coordinator's assistant. They're really great about getting us all the information we need, so I never feel... even though I'm out here all alone, I never feel alone.” – Sergeant

Overall, multiple DREs reported that they enjoyed their position as a DRE is because they felt that the specialized training added greatly to their overall skill set, and they simply enjoyed learning and applying the material.

“I work with a lot of different agencies, and it helps improve my skills just seeing different - different... how different agencies do investigations and - and seeing different types of investigations.” – Trooper

“Personally, just find it super fascinating; just the general concept of it. And it was a role I felt was... meaning to be fulfilled in our agency, and it went hand in hand with my current assignment, which is... so I got certified just after I became a traffic homicide detective. So, it worked hand in hand with my assignment. I personally just find it really fascinating.” – Detective

Further, it appears that many DREs felt pride in their successful completion of the DRE certification:

“And it's just all these extra pieces that have indicators of impairment, which, you know, it adds to the SFST [Standard Field Sobriety Test] process, and all of the observations that the officers who are trained in SFSTs are already getting... and it just takes all of that extra information. You can't fake what your eyes are gonna do. You know, you might be able to do well on a walk and turn, or a one leg stand, depending on your tolerance level for whatever you've consumed, but you can't fake what your eyes are going to do. You can't fake your blood pressure. You can't fake your pulse. They're just... there's a lot of extra little puzzle pieces that are put together with the DRE Process. That's why I like it.” – Sergeant

“I know a lot of people think it's too much work, or it's hard, but it's necessary, you know, to reach the level of expertise that we're expected to maintain. It's necessary

to have that kind of training. So, I found it intriguing, and I know it's not for everyone, but I thought it was... I found it fascinating." – Officer

While some did discuss feeling undervalued by leadership, others did not experience this. Instead, they felt extremely supported by leadership within their agency, which added to overall feelings of value:

"They recognized the prestige that that comes with having a DRE, and so they wanted that subject matter expert. They wanted that resource for the community. So, yeah, they've always wanted to have at least one DRE on staff and haven't gawked at the training requirements for the time. They've supported the program."
- Deputy

"Administrative leadership is totally on board. To the point that one of our former chiefs was a DRE himself. My next lieutenant, he was a DRE, and one of my, the bomb sergeant right now, or one of the – the sergeants on the bomb squad, he was a DRE. It definitely has been supported by our chief and – and everybody that seems to come across cause. They see the value and... and have experienced it in – in many ways. I don't ever see an issue with them, not supporting it, even to the trainings that we have to go to." – Officer

"I - only speaking from my agency, they're very supportive of us. They understand the importance of having us and is - is good from my end." – Detective

Throughout the interview process, it was clear that the majority of DREs were very happy that they had become involved with the DRE program because they believe their position had been able to make a clear difference in the impact of substance abuse on their communities:

"There isn't a time that I look back at it where I see that there is anything I would have done differently, except try to get into it sooner. I've gotten to see the evolution of drugs and the unfortunate... unfortunate toll that it takes on families, as a drug itself and then into the driving population is a whole 'nother aspect to that, and I wouldn't have been able to dig and dive into that if I wasn't a DRE. Just because I work in the in the DRE field in the driving capacity." – Officer

"I think it's a valuable resource for all law enforcement agencies. And it's important that we have people that are available to respond to serious injury or fatal collisions in particular, but in order to get justice for - for families and victims of all impaired drivers." – Trooper

"I think it's - I think it's an amazing program. and I'm so grateful that I went through the program, and I am so grateful for that education there. I – I will say that the DRE program did more to make me a good cop than anything else that I went through. Nothing, nothing compares to the DRE program. Especially since I came from, I was not in law enforcement, or I was not around and a little naive. And so coming in the

DRE program, not having any real drug experience as far as what people that are on drugs, are like things... I - I missed a lot of stuff. And then once I became a DRE, I felt like my eyes got opened up to so many things that I was missing. So I think the programs amazing. I've had quite a few deputies that have come and talk to me about hey - I was thinking about signing up for this, what do you think, and I think it's - I've always encouraged them to do it. Because it'll make you a much better officer or deputy. And yeah, best education I've ever gotten, though, and I've done a lot of different things in law enforcement last 20 years." - Captain

Detailed Report Writing

Throughout interviews, it became clear to researchers that DREs may provide more detailed reports than other law enforcement professionals. Several participants reported that DREs often spend a substantial portion of their time completing reports:

"We're trained to write a full-fledged narrative on top of our face sheet, and that in turn creates better report writers. If you have to write a whole narrative, a whole page narrative every time you do a DRE eval, you're gonna write good reports, and they - they look for that. They train that at least through our DRE, the Washington DRE program. They train that a lot. And boy, do I train guys on how to write DUI reports in my department all the time. And that just it's even simple alcohol DUIs. My, on my reports we have another, a sergeant who used to be a DUI traffic card back when I started, he's now sergeant. Now and then, another corporal, when we get new people, we, our reports are always shared with them. Say, Hey - here's how you write a DUI report, because we're well known for writing full detail." - Corporal

"And our biggest thing is, you have to write your reports and describe everything, because you have to. We teach them to write it to a juror level - the juror who has no idea what you're talking about; you have to write your report in order to paint a picture for this person who has no idea any of this stuff. So, I yeah, I think our reports are better. I know they're a lot longer; or at least they'd better be." - Trooper

Many DREs eluded that report writing was one of the more annoying challenges of their role, but that they recognized why so much time was needed to complete them:

"If - if we could eliminate writing the whole narrative of the DRE Report, that'd be awesome. I would love to never have to do that thing ever again. But I understand why it's important and why we need to do it. It just it gets long... So I would say as a DRE, I just I end up writing longer reports, because I watch my body camera to make sure that what it is and what I wrote down is consistent, and that I'm like, okay, this is definitely what I saw, or, you know, like the walk and turn test, you know yours facing from heel to toe has always been one of the things that I have to second guess myself on, because on the camera being this far away from it, and the actual things this close, you don't always see that... the distance you need to see. But you remember in your head you're like, Okay, that was on this step, this, that this step. But to me, in a DRE Evaluation, that's important, right? Because you're again

testifying as an expert in court, you'd need to be better than the lay officer who would come in doing the SFST from the roadside impairment.” – Officer

When asked if they believed DREs produced better reports than other law enforcement professionals, one DRE stated:

“Oh, a hundred percent, because we have to. I mean, my DRE evaluations are like 8 to 10 pages long, right? And that's a typed-out form, and especially our DRE, our DRE program in Washington state very much pushes that.” – Corporal

Providing heavily detailed reports is one of the many indirect benefits that DREs provide outside of their typical job duties. As discussed above, DREs act as an ‘expert’ resource in regard to substance use and detection, and therefore hold a very valuable position within their respective agencies. By providing education to fellow law enforcement professionals, community outreach, and an overall added level of precision to technical aspects of arrest, DREs and the DRE program are an important resource for not only police officers, but for all of Washington State. Many believe that while the DRE program holds much promise, there are changes that could be made to improve the program’s operations and make it even more viable.

2.4(D). Suggestions for Program

Among discussions of perceived challenges and how DREs utilize their certification, interview participants were also asked if they had suggestions to improve the DRE program as a whole. In addition to the primary need of having more available certified DREs, proposed measures included providing more intensive post-training, improvements to technology, and changes to the overall culture of the DRE program and policing.

Need for More Intensive Post-Training

While many DREs discussed high levels of satisfaction in regard to the initial DRE school, some noted that post-trainings could be revamped, specifically in regard to updated medical research and re-trainings on medical evaluations:

“Yeah. So, I, specifically, with the evaluation process.... So, part of the evaluation process is we - is we take the blood pressure people - we learn how to take the blood pressure. So that's, for me, that's something that I feel we definitely should get more training on, because we just get the training at - during the DRE in class. And we learn how to, you know we - they show us a Powerpoint, and what on - on end, and then we practice it in the class, and we take each other's blood pressure and stuff like that, and then that's pretty much it. And then until we go into our practicals, and then do it there. So I feel that I felt that it wasn't enough training in class to take people's blood pressure to, and then to go into the practicals, it's - it's definitely one of those things that I feel we should probably, you know, retrain every, you know, as part -as part of you know every year, try to, you know, try to get some, even, even some, nothing in person. But even like some, some videos from the program or some material from the program just to, you know. Keep that keep that, you know skill,

you know, as sharp as we can. Because that's something that we don't, like I mentioned, we don't really do much within the beginning. We study it, we practice it in class and then say, alright good luck! But I feel like that's something we should definitely keep and add to it more." – Trooper

In relation to the earlier challenges of needing more specialized and specific job training, some DREs mentioned that the training DREs in evaluation of poly-drug use or 'non-typical' DUI cases was lacking in the initial school, and that they believed DREs could benefit from more 'hands-on' practice:

"I think... I wish there was a... okay, police like, having... like being told what to do when it comes to a specific incident. So, a DUI case – let's see, a bland DUI case that's just a DUI. The DRE school teaches you a [step-by-step] to get personal, vehicle, promotion, personal contact, your prearrest, screening, and then administrator stuff. So, you're going through all the things step by step, and if you go and follow the steps, you should come out with a solution, or something that you need to do, whether you choose to arrest or you don't arrest. I think... with some of the trainings that we've had, and the ways that DREs can respond, there isn't a straight answer to what a DRE should be doing on a scene. So, for example, a vehicular homicide occurs. Whether or not is a crime at this point, or it's an issue of some other capacity, of why someone was killed... regardless. The one thing that, or the 2 things that I can say that we know at this point, before a DRE is called, is somebody was driving, and somebody was killed." – Officer

"I guess one of the problems in - in law enforcement in general is that there can be a book answer for everything or a lots of things, I guess, but the reality is that it doesn't always look like the way that you think it's going to look like. So, the reality of is people under the influence of certain drugs, especially when they're combining drugs, you know, you can guess what the book would say, but the reality is that until you see it in person in real life... you know, you need those experiences, but I don't know that the training can give you that experience. Except for obviously we do those - those practicals that you have to get signed off on and do those 12 practicals; but it takes a lot more experience to get used to what real life is gonna throw at you." – Detective

Technology

Another common suggestion from DREs was providing updated technology to use within the field to ease with time constraints and other difficulties. For example, providing advanced technology such as automatic blood pressure cuffs or the introduction of tablets was discussed in a few interviews:

"But yeah, like, so like something like automatic, you know blood pressure cuff like that, that would make everything a lot easier, the process a lot easier, and it would, you know, I think it would help with the whole thing about, you know we don't get much training on it, and we just get told about it once time a few times in the

classroom, but then we never, you know, we never looked into it ever again.” – Trooper

“You know... They... they talked about this whole iPad thing, or tablet doing the evals on that - It's kind of been a couple of years in the in the working, and that seems like it's a cool concept as opposed to doing the paper form. I think that would be neat to have. I've got it pretty good as a DRE here, [but] I think maybe having some updated equipment or the newer - newer stuff that's being utilized [by the] IACP... and what they certify, again, cost money. I get it. But we are kind of in a - in age of cheaper older lights, thermometers, nanometers, I mean the blood pressure cuff, and - and all these different things that we utilize are older when there's better things out there. Again, there's not a lot of us. So, I think some money can be invested into that equipment a little bit better, and having the newer technologies that are coming out.” – Officer

Further, when discussing challenges around the practice of blood draws, some participants discussed the potential of having DREs receive phlebotomy training. Opinions on if this should be fully implemented in Washington State differed, with some believing it would be a viable tool, and others believing it would add too much complication:

“Oh, gosh. If we had those, super expensive roadside drug test kits, or if we had [phlebotomy] cops, or you know the ability to test almost immediately for drugs not going through the hospital. But we're a small agency out here, so we can't afford stuff like that. That would make it easier because it confirms what you saw quicker. And the lab is so backed up that it can be a year before you get blood results back.” - Sergeant

“I think [phlebotomy training] is definitely a skill that'd be great. And you know, if that officer is only doing DRE blood or DRE Blood draw, and they work for an agency that doesn't have a lot, I think... that off- you might not have many officers, unless they have prior medical skills or prior medical training, that are gonna really seek it out. I think it's a cool program. I mean, in the middle of nowhere in Eastern Washington, or where your hospital right might be half an hour... if, who knows what your wait time would be to say? Can this trooper come out to draw the blood? I think that's awesome... But I just don't think there's enough around the program to make sure. I think, to make that [the phlebotomist program] work you need to advertise it, you need to let agency knows it's available, and you need to have it well staffed.” – Corporal

“I think it's super cool, and I would love to see the State pursue it, and the DRE program pursue it. That being said, I do not ever want one of my officers trained is a one. I do not want that increased risk for them. I don't want to worry about them getting stuck, I don't want them to have to worry about another certification, and yet another layer of testimony. And so, having the layers of separation... now, because of television and all of these shows, they expect all these experts to be paraded in front of them. And so now, if my... the way I did it, often now is my DRE is, in fact, the

person who stopped the car. Now they are the subject matter expert, who also is doing an evaluation. Then there's a person that's also doing the blood. Not only is there a lack of experts to parade in front of the jury, but also there's not much diversity in that investigation in general.” – Deputy

“Oh, I think that’s actually an extremely great idea. I know, part of the problem too, is that - there's a lot of anti-police round the nation here. But the problem is, it becomes... it's - it bleeds over into people's employment, so I would take somebody to the hospital, and then there's like have you talked to a lawyer? You know, and I'm like, no, hold on, I got a search warrant signed by a judge. He goes, it doesn't matter. Well, I think you should talk... to learn about them... like that is not your job to give legal advice, I bring them here and in there. Sometimes we've had instances, I mean, throughout my career where nurses just refuse to draw the blood. And I'm like you can't do this. So, we've had.... [redacted] was one of my biggest ones, they'll stick you in a corner and purposely let you sit there for 3 hours. And it's kind of like, oh, how many you know things could I be doing that would benefit things during that period? And you're like, hey, I need this blood drawn, you know, and they're like, Well, we'll get to them - like they only killed somebody in a vehicular homicide. I need what I need right now because the evidence is dissipating. So yeah that’s - I think it’s a great idea to have that.” – Detective

One DRE discussed how they had suggested such technology changes to leadership but had not heard back about if his request was ever looked into.

“Yeah, so all technology has to be like vetted through like a board of officers. There's a term for it and I can't remember it again. You'd have to ask somebody more senior in the DRE program like [redacted] but if we have an idea for a technology pop up, and the DRE program, it has to be submitted to the tech board. And it has to go through this review process, which is pretty opaque. One example of this was pulse oximeters. So you know the whole thing to put on finger, and I tell you the pulse of somebody and their oxen saturation. I carry one in my day bag as a confirmation tool, right? Because I gotta take a physical pulse. But for most people like it's hard to get a pulse up right, you know. Veins are shot out right, their arteries are destroyed. So, trying to find a pulse rate at the radial on the wrist, where we're trained, is difficult. I throw something on some finger that gives me, hey, a pretty accurate pulse, and I found them to be very accurate and small battery ones. So I send it up, and they're like, Wow, right, that's an easy technology... and it's I'm sure it's still somewhere up there. I send it up like 5 years ago, like an idea to one of our tech boards, and I haven't really.... So just there's - there's a big waiting time on newer technology nowadays.” – Corporal

Culture

Lastly, some DREs discussed overall challenges with the culture of policing, whether it be within the DRE program itself, or overall. When discussing the culture within the DRE program, one DRE noted that the DRE program has become increasingly “trooper” focused:

“And so, and I think that just that mentality that troopers bring to the table in general about how the programs run is detrimental to the program, and I think it's narrowly focused. I think it narrowly focuses them, because troopers in Washington State are so narrowly focused. And that's where it kind of becomes... if all you have is this understanding that traffic law is supreme... and the systems in place, and I'm sure you've talked to troopers that rail against WSP, right, WSP is as archaic as any other agency out here, mine included, right, like they're not changing the boat. If you have officers and troopers coming up to run this program, they're not interested in overturning WSP, kind of stuff... I think, moving it completely out of their control, having a DRE coordinator that is, under the actual direction of Washington State Traffic Safety Commission. “If I were to make a recommendation to the DRE program, they need to remove from... If I were to make a recommendation to Traffic Safety Commission, they need to remove the program from WSP. And I think that might give it a different perspective rather than being so, trooper focused - that the only thing, you know, the only thing in the world is a DUI kind of thing.” – Officer

“So, we don't like - they very narrowly focus on, this is a DUI function. And even LAPD, who had started it doesn't even narrow, doesn't focus as narrowly on what the function of a DRE is, partially because of the way the laws are down there. Some of those things... so they have basically in the public code, just walking down the road it's illegal for you to be impaired in California, right? So DREs down there will do those kind of things...” - Deputy

One prior DRE noted that this ‘trooper’ mentality was one of the central issues they experienced while in the field, and that it contributed to their decertification:

“I was gonna say, that's - that's probably problem number one I found dealing with State Patrol's in charge of the program. And WSP... is a pain in the butt to deal with. I did not like dealing with... I was friends with some troopers, but doing the triplicate on all their stupid forms and sending forms everywhere... it just - it was, it's just redundant. And yeah, there's a - there's definitely a lot of like loopholes and kind of hoops just jump through with the way that everything set up in general. So I got pretty annoyed with.... I got pretty annoyed with dealing with State Patrol and their process.” – Officer

Another detective discussed issues they encountered at a conference, noting that the overall culture of sexism is one of the reasons why there are fewer female law enforcement professionals:

“I would actually say, I think. it's unfortunately also just a broader issue with police culture in general. But one of my big fights I'm fighting right now is: it's very difficult to be a lady or in the LGBTQ department, it's ridiculously difficult to be taken seriously. So, I've been to trainings and some of the conferences that we hold for DREs and been very uncomfortable because I am happily married, and have no desire to mess around with anyone... and just the amount of unwanted touching

from what are supposed to be adults; counterparts, that arrest people for unwanted touching. You know what I mean? it's not always the most welcoming in that sense.”

They further continued:

“How am I supposed to want to recruit other women not just into law enforcement, but that more specifically into the DRE program, when I know that that's what they have to put up with? And it's already had hard enough, like, fighting my department about that right now. They're very sexist, and our admin is like openly sexist. So like... how am I supposed to then want women to join law enforcement, and then become specialties like DREs? Like, I'm the first woman to join our traffic unit in the history of the department... that's wild. I think if I had a magic wand, those would be some of the things that I would fix first, because I think some of the other issues, like can't get people that want to apply - well, you're missing out on a whole lot of people because they don't want to have to put up this. And I'm not going to lie to get people to apply and then have them be surprised that this is what it's like. That's not... I knew what it was like getting into it, I knew that that was a possibility. A woman that doesn't work here anymore, she got out of law enforcement because of this; actually, she used to be a DRE, and that was part of why she stopped being a DRE. So I knew what I was getting into, it doesn't make it any easier. But like I at least wasn't surprised when it happened... but it's - it's an issue.”

A few participants noted that they would have liked to see increased communication between leadership and agencies:

“I think the administration does a good job of - of figuring it out, all the way out to the IACP and NHTSA; I mean, they're so high up there. I don't really ever know what they do as opposed to giving guidance to the person, and they kind of just trickle down, and it just keeps going out into the to the smaller groups; and to me, the guidance has been good so far. [I] haven't seen anything else different regional coordinators that's kind of at the state level.” – Officer

“But lower [level officers], we never really know who's who. So... that's kind of one thing that it - it doesn't really matter... but I think our regional coordinator is still [redacted]. I don't know - but we have other regional coordinators in other areas, or... I've been at DRE longer than [redacted] [the regional coordinator now]. So... I don't know what it is that is different, you know, or the only person that's available. Not saying I would ever want that job, because it's again stressful. But we need to at least know our chain of command - and I think that communication helps out, too.” – Corporal

“I guess the only thing I can think of is... cause, I - I mentioned about the varying policies across the state within each individual agency... maybe creating like a white paper on best practices for utilizing a DRE and sending it out to agencies for review, maybe. You know, because I think the utilization of DREs varies greatly from agency to agency. So, if you have somebody in the command structure that is supportive of

the DRE Program, those DREs are - are going to be utilized a lot. But then, if you have an agency that, you know, doesn't really understand the value of the DRE, then they're not going to be used. So maybe just establishing some, you know, best practices and policies that could be disseminated." – Detective

In relation to combating challenges they face in the field; DREs believe that an increased number of available DREs is the most needed change within the DRE program. Further, some believe that while DRE trainings are already intensive, they likely need to be revamped to include updated information on physiological and medical practices, as well as encourage more 'hands-on' learning within conferences and post-trainings. Further, the introduction of more advanced technologies and techniques, such as automatic blood pressure cuffs or phlebotomy training, could produce great benefits for the DRE program while also aiding in practical issues that arise in the evaluation process. Some DREs believe that if the DRE program were to shift away from a 'trooper-based' mentality, that DREs and DRE training could be applied in many situations outside of traffic incidents as well. Finally, a few participants believed that many of the challenges they face on a day-to-day basis could be alleviated by combating institutional-level issues surrounding the culture of policing.

2.3 Summary & Conclusion

The DRE program offers an avenue by which law enforcement professionals receive specialized training on the behavioral and physiological detection of drug impairment. Participants clearly perceive that the DRE program fills a gap in detecting and apprehending drivers under the influence of substances other than alcohol; however, the inner workings and nuances of the program are not as clear. This study used a qualitative case study method to discover the perceptions of the DRE program from current and prior DREs, the major challenges that DREs face in the field, why some choose to not maintain certification, and what DREs believe is needed for the DRE program to achieve its full potential.

Qualitative interviews conducted with both current and prior DREs produced a wealth of data regarding perceptions of the DRE program from officers who were/are involved with the program on a day-to-day basis. Four major themes emerged: 1) how DREs are utilized in Washington State; 2) challenges that DREs face; 3) indirect benefits that DREs provide/experience; and 4) suggestions to improve DRE program operations. A prior analysis of the DRE program in Spokane, Washington provided additional background information, including the concern that there has been a decline in the number of DRE callouts, DRE evaluations, and DRE involvement in the adjudication process. Our interviews supported all these concerns, with almost all interview participants discussing a notable decline in the number of available certified DREs. A few participants who had been involved with the DRE program for an extended period suggested that they have conducted significantly less evaluations in recent years than they did in earlier stages of their certification. Newly certified DREs reported very few evaluations on a yearly/monthly basis; highlighting that the number of DRE callouts across the state has likely decreased

since the program's inception. Very few had been involved with the adjudication process, also highlighting that DREs are not utilized within the courtroom as much as they could be.

Although DREs report a decrease in callouts, evaluations, and involvement and adjudication processes, a significant finding was that DREs provide immense benefit outside of their prescribed job duties; specifically, DREs are also a viable resource for fellow law enforcement professionals and their community due to their specialized training and knowledge. In fact, many participants reported that the education of fellow law enforcement professionals through either trainings or general advice was much of their focus as a certified DRE; in addition to responding to callouts and conducting evaluations. DREs will often answer phone calls from other law enforcement who have questions regarding substance use, or how to proceed with a suspect they believe may be impaired. Some DREs also reported working as school resource officers and provided educational seminars to local schools on the dangers of drugs, and how to recognize impairment in others. DREs will also coordinate with community leaders to give town-hall like discussions on the concerns and dangers of substances within their local area. It's clear that one of the major ways in which DREs are utilized is through their dedication to spreading knowledge and educating others – leading many certified DREs to feel as if they are an important resource that is heavily valued by fellow law enforcement professionals, leadership, and their community. While very few interviewees had participated in the adjudication process, those who had been utilized in trial proceeding believed that they provided incredibly valuable testimonies and evidence. Many DREs with low levels of interaction with adjudication figures expressed that they wished they were more involved in the process. Further, many DREs express that they believe that DRE knowledge goes beyond that of just traffic-related incidents and wish that they were utilized more in non-DUI cases.

Although some referred to their DRE certification as an 'auxiliary' duty due to the decline in callouts and evaluations, these prescribed duties are still very much a large portion of how DREs spend their time. However, there were differences among participants regarding how many evaluations they typically conduct, as well in how they interacted with the DRE callout system. For example, some DREs heavily relied on callouts from allied agencies, while others mainly operated on self-initiated evaluations or referrals from inside their region. Some DREs discussed how conducting self-initiated evaluations is less preferred to avoid bias, and that having another DRE called out to a scene is likely better in obtaining probable cause and conducting a successful evaluation. The differences in number of evaluations conducted and the number/type of callouts DREs receive is likely due to differences in rank and location. Those who are in non-supervisory positions are more likely to have higher numbers of evaluations, especially if they are assigned to traffic-duty positions. Individuals in leadership positions reported lower numbers of evaluations, with many feeling as if they simply don't have as much time to conduct evaluations or answer callouts in relation to their other duties. Further, differences among regional levels of substance abuse may cause differences in the number of evaluations reported among DREs.

Interviews also informed researchers of the perceived challenges that current and prior DREs experience, with the overall lack of available certified DREs being the most discussed grievance among DREs. Overall, many DREs believed that many of the challenges they face

in their position could be alleviated if there were more DREs available for callouts, evaluation, and educational endeavors. Participants believe there are a few reasons why there has been a notable decline of available DREs, some discussing a lack of support from leadership regarding maintaining/receiving a DRE certification due to a belief that the DRE program is 'dying' and not as viable as it once was. Further, difficulties in the recertification process, such as being promoted or not being able to find a DRE instructor for observed observations, was also cited as a potential reason for the declining number of DREs.

Most DREs believed that their initial experience in the DRE school was exceptional and incredibly valuable; however, some DREs discussed how there was a need for more 'job-specific' training and updates in conferences and in post-trainings. For example, both technical and medical procedures, such as updated training on evaluating physiological indicators of impairment, could be encouraged in both the initial DRE school and at in-service trainings. Further, DREs in smaller agencies may not have as much viable opportunity to attend these trainings, highlighting a need to ensure that post-training and conference attendance is encouraged by leadership. In relation to challenges surrounding certification and training, the detection of poly-drug use and subsequent evaluations of those situations can also be a challenge for DREs. Specifically, since the legalization of cannabis in Washington State, participants discussed a notable increase in situations where an individual is impaired by more than one substance.

As discussed, the DRE program and DREs provide immense benefits to policing and the community at large outside of their prescribed duties. Many DREs felt as if they were valued as a resource in their department and were often viewed as the resident 'expert' on substance use and detection. DREs report feeling as if the training they received for their certification provided them with an additional skill set that they frequently utilize both in and outside of their jobs. Most current and prior DREs interviewed very much enjoyed their participation in the DRE program and believe in its viability, noting that they believe because of their certification, they have been able to make a clear difference within their communities. Further, due to the extensive nature of DRE work, certified DREs often provide much more detailed reports, eluding that DREs are likely trained better in writing reports and writing narratives.

Finally, interview participants provided many suggestions for how the DRE program can aid in alleviating perceived challenges and promoting the viability of the program. As stated previously, many DREs believe that both the initial training for DRE certification and post-trainings and conferences could provide more 'job-specific' and 'hands-on' training. In addition, the DRE program could potentially invest in more advanced technology, such as automatic blood pressure cuffs, to aid in practical challenges DREs experience in the field. Finally, some participants alluded to an idea that the DRE program is 'trooper-focused,' and believed that the program focuses too narrowly on DUI functions. Some also discussed intuitional challenges faced throughout policing, such as instances of sexism and a lack of communication between management figures and other law enforcement professionals.

This qualitative case study provided an in-depth exploration of the Washington DRE program from the perceptions of current and prior DREs. In addition, we were also able to

gain an understanding of the challenges that DREs experience and hear how they would like to see the program adapt and continue to grow. Finally, interviews provided detail regarding how DREs are utilized, as well as the immense value that they can provide to Washington State traffic safety.

Chapter Three: Survey

3.1 Methods

3.1(A) Participants

For the second stage of this project, we developed a survey based on themes identified from the qualitative interviews in stage one. The survey was developed using the Qualtrics online data collection platform, which allows users to create and administer surveys via web forms. In addition, the Qualtrics tool also provides quantitative analysis and reporting on data that is collected. The survey included both closed-ended questions (such as Likert scales) and open-ended questions and was sent to DRE program leadership and traffic safety personnel to ensure clarity and relevance of the questions.

Prior to completing the survey, participants were given an informed consent form document with information regarding the purpose of the study and length of participation. In addition, the informed consent document detailed how participation in the study is voluntary, and that participants could choose to not answer specific questions or change their minds about participation without any penalties or loss of benefits. Further, respondents were informed that the survey would collect no personal or identifiable information, and that the findings of the study would solely be used for research purposes and to generate recommendations for the DRE program.

To receive as many responses as possible, the survey was sent out to 123 current DREs via email by the upper echelon law enforcement supervisor that provided most of our sample in stage one. In addition, a follow-up email was sent three weeks following the initial email; and the deadline for the survey was extended to allow DREs further time to respond. Data collection occurred over a five-week period. Overall, we received 52 complete responses and 2 additional incomplete responses, achieving a response rate of 43%, which is average for contemporary online surveys (Wu, Zhao, & Fils-Aime, 2022).

Table 3.1. – Stage Two Recruitment

	Total Contacted	No Reply	Declined	Accepted	Completed
Current DREs	123	69	0	54	52

3.1(B) Survey Data Collection and Management

Survey Procedures

The survey was issued via the Qualtrics online data collection tool. The survey included 33 questions and took an average 20 minutes for each participant to complete. Before completing the survey, participants were given a consent document informing them that their participation was anonymous, voluntary, and that they could terminate participation at any time.

Survey Questions

The IRB approved our initial survey instrument with questions specific to current DREs and their perceptions of the program and experiences while on the job.

The survey consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture a broad range of data. Closed-ended questions included demographic and professional information, as well as assessments of the following: satisfaction with the DRE program and DRE training, how DREs are utilized, DRE interaction and participation with callouts and the callout system, challenges faced by DREs, and perceptions of non-DREs and leadership. Open-ended questions allowed for participants to provide detailed responses based on their individual experiences and their recommendations for program improvement.

Demographics

Participants were asked to report basic demographic information, including gender, race/ethnicity, and their age.

Professional Information

Participants were provided details on what type of agency they were currently employed at, details of their current position and position title, and years of experience as a law enforcement professional.

Satisfaction of Program and Training

We assessed participants' satisfaction with the DRE program and their likelihood of recommending the DRE program to other law enforcement professionals. In addition, participants also reported their satisfaction with the DRE training program, including how well they felt prepared for DRE-involved situations, how often they wished they had more training for certain situations, and their beliefs on what the most needed areas of DRE training were (e.g., drug categories, poly-drug use, updated drug trends). We also inquired about the frequency of utilizing DRE training outside DUI-related cases.

How DREs are Utilized

Further, participants were also asked about how much time they spend conducting evaluations, consulting with other law enforcement professionals, providing training to non-DRE law enforcement professionals, completing professional development tasks, educating of the public, and interacting with prosecutors. Participants also indicated how often they utilize their DRE training and how frequently fellow law enforcement professionals contact them for assistance.

Interactions with the Callout System

We also asked participants to report how many full and partial DRE evaluations they complete in an average month and how often an individual declines to participate in an evaluation. Participants also reported how many callouts they receive in an average month, how many callouts they are able to respond to, and how often they log into the WSP callout system when on shift.

Challenges Faced by DREs

Participants also identified challenges they encounter within their role, and the degree to which said challenges impact their experience. We asked about issues such as not being called out by other law enforcement professionals, lack of job-specific training, and institutional/cultural challenges. Open-ended questions also allowed participants to specify additional challenges not included in the survey.

Perceptions of Non-DRE Law Enforcement Professionals and Leadership

In further exploration of DREs not being utilized, we asked participants on if they believed leadership within their agency supports the DRE program, and if they felt valued by non-DRE law enforcement professionals in their role as DRE. We also inquired on if participants had heard of reasons for why they may not be utilized, or if they have ever had criticisms or concerns about the DRE program expressed to them.

Recommendations for the DRE Program

Finally, we gave participants an open-ended question asking for their recommendations to improve the DRE program within Washington State.

Survey Data Analysis

Quantitative data from closed-ended questions were analyzed using descriptive analysis. Frequency counts, percentages, and basic summary statistics for each closed-ended survey question were collected. Open-ended survey responses were analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify recurring themes and supplement the quantitative findings, and the qualitative interview findings from stage one.

3.2 Results

3.2(A). Demographic Variables

In terms of demographics, the typical respondent was male, White, and between the ages of 31 and 50.

What sex do you identify with?

Male	42	78%
Female	9	17%
Non-Binary/Third Gender	0	0%
Prefer Not to Say	3	6%
Total:	54	

What Race/Ethnicity do you Identify With? (Select all that Apply)

White	45	83%
Black or African American	0	0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	2%
Asian	3	6%
Hispanic	8	15%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	2%
Other	0	0%
Prefer not to Answer	4	7%
Total:	62	

How old are you?

21-30	7	13%
31-40	24	44%
41-50	17	31%
51-60	6	11%
61+	0	0%
Total:	54	

3.2(B). Agency & Position Information

Roughly equal numbers of respondents worked for municipal and state agencies, with fewer representing county agencies. No respondents were from other types of law enforcement organizations. In terms of titles, the most common were “trooper”, “police officer”, and “sergeant.”

At what type of agency do you work?

Municipal/City	22	41%
County/Sheriff	8	15%
State	24	44%
Other (Please Specify)	0	0%
Total:	54	

Respondents defined their current position title via a fill-in question:

What is your current position title? (e.g., police officer, sergeant, etc.)

'Sergeant'	11	20%
'Traffic Officer'	1	2%
'Trooper'	15	28%
'Police Officer'	13	24%
'Detective'	3	6%
'Trooper, DRE, SFST Instructor'	1	2%
'Deputy'	3	6%
'Instructor'	1	2%
'Lieutenant'	1	2%
'Patrol'	1	2%
'DUI Traffic Officer'	1	2%
'Deputy Sheriff'	1	2%
Total:	54	

There was considerable range in years of experience for the survey respondents, with most falling between 3 to 11 years, with another sizable proportion ranging from 12 to 23 years.

How many years of experience do you have as a law enforcement professional?

Less than 3 years	0	0%
3 – 5 years	9	17%
6 – 8 years	7	13%
9 – 11 years	12	22%
12 – 14 years	4	7%
15 – 17 years	6	11%
18 – 20 years	5	9%
21 – 23 years	4	7%
23 – 25 years	2	4%
26 – 28 years	2	4%
29 + years	1	2%
Unanswered	2	4%
Total:	54	

3.2(C). Plans for Re-Certification

Most DREs plan to stay certified as DREs and anticipate doing so for many years. This was in alignment with our findings from stage one, as many participants cited their

commitment to the role and its importance. Those who do not intend to remain certified plan to let their certifications expire within the next year, though this only represents two respondents. Of those undecided, respondents provided a number of reasons, with two citing difficulty meeting recertification requirements and two noting that promotions may pull them away from the DRE program. These findings also aligned with our stage one results; while most DREs plan to recertify, many DREs note that the possibility of promotion and gaining additional duties may make it difficult to maintain DRE certification.

Do you currently plan to stay certified as a DRE?

If yes, for how many more years?	43	81%
If no, when do you plan to let your certification relapse, and why?	3	6%
If unsure/undecided, why?	7	13%
Total:	54	

DREs who intended to remain certified reported how much longer they saw themselves maintaining certification, with most respondents writing that they planned on staying in the program for another 6-15 years.

If yes, for how many more years?

Less than 2 years	1	2%
At least 2 – 5 years	3	7%
6 – 10 years	9	21%
10 – 15 years	11	26%
16 – 20 years	6	14%
21 + years	3	7%
As long as possible/Until Retirement	8	18%
Unknown	2	5%
Total:	43	

If no, when do you plan to let your certification relapse?

Within the next year	2	67%
Unanswered	1	33%
Total:	3	

DREs who were unsure or undecided on if they would maintain certification provided the following reasons:

If unsure/undecided, why? (Fill In Question)

Possibility of promotion, with additional duties making it difficult to maintain certification status	2	29%
Unsure if they can maintain number of evaluations required to maintain status	3	43%
Lack of support from leadership to participate in DRE-related training	1	14%
Unknown retirement date	1	14%
Total:		7

3.2(D). Satisfaction with DRE Program

Overall, respondents were satisfied with their participation in the DRE program. 77% respondents indicated that they were somewhat or extremely satisfied with their participation in the DRE program and 88% noted that they were somewhat or extremely likely to recommend this program to other law enforcement professionals. This reflects satisfaction similar to stage one, as many DREs feel a sense of pride from being a part of the DRE program. Importantly, 13% suggested that they were dissatisfied and 10% suggested that they were unlikely to recommend this program to others – these may be areas that require more investigation in the future.

Overall, how satisfied are you with your participation in the DRE program?

Extremely dissatisfied	6	11%
Somewhat dissatisfied	1	2%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	5	9%
Somewhat satisfied	18	34%
Extremely satisfied	23	43%
Total:		53

How likely are you to recommend the DRE program to other law enforcement professionals?

Extremely unlikely	3	6%
Somewhat unlikely	2	4%
Neither likely nor unlikely	1	2%
Somewhat likely	14	26%
Extremely likely	33	62%
Total:		53

3.2(E). DRE School & DRE Training

Overall, respondents (91%) indicated that they were well to very well prepared for DRE situations by the DRE school. This reflects a strength of the current program, and mirrors insights gained from stage one.

How well did the DRE school prepare you for DRE-involved situations?

Very unprepared	1	2%
Somewhat unprepared	1	2%
Somewhat prepared	3	6%
Well prepared	26	49%
Very well prepared	22	42%
Total:	53	

In terms of specific training opportunities, the number one recommendation was more training dealing with polydrug use. Respondents also want to see more medical oriented training (those on drug categories and their effects or proper use of psychophysical and physiological evaluations).



The DREs that selected the 'other' option provided recommendations for additional areas that should be emphasized, including more training for court testimony procedures and more cannabis-related training. Further, recommendations to provide further training on DRE responses to serious/fatal injury collisions, as well

as how to assess individual's suspected of impairment while they are in a hospital for injury treatment.

Despite their desire to see more trainings in the above areas, over 90% of DREs feel as though they rarely or never encounter situations for which they are unprepared for.

Considering all of your DRE training and experience, how often do you feel unprepared for DRE-related situations?

Very often	1	2%
Often	0	0%
Occasionally	4	8%
Rarely	36	68%
Never	12	23%
Total:	53	

Interestingly, respondents reported using their DRE training a substantial amount outside of DRE related cases. A third of respondents suggested that they did this daily, with an additional nearly 50% suggesting they did this a few times per week to a few times per month.

How often do you use your training outside of DRE related cases?

Daily	17	33%
A Few Times Per Week	10	19%
A Few Times Per Month	15	29%
A Few Times Per Year	6	12%
Less Than A Few Times Per Year/Never	4	8%
Total:	52	

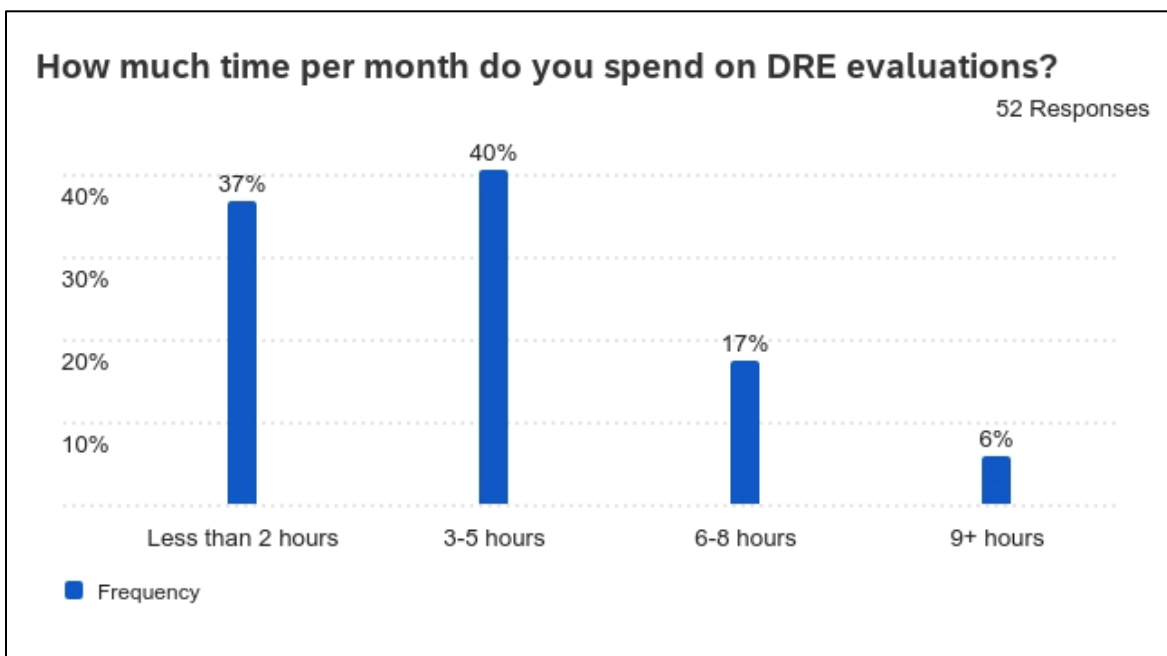
3.2(F). How DREs are Utilized

While the majority (54%) of respondents indicated that they spent most of their DRE-related time on evaluations, another 38% suggested that this was training other law enforcement professionals. Similar to results from stage one, it seems that evaluations (including report writing) and assisting others require the most time commitment.

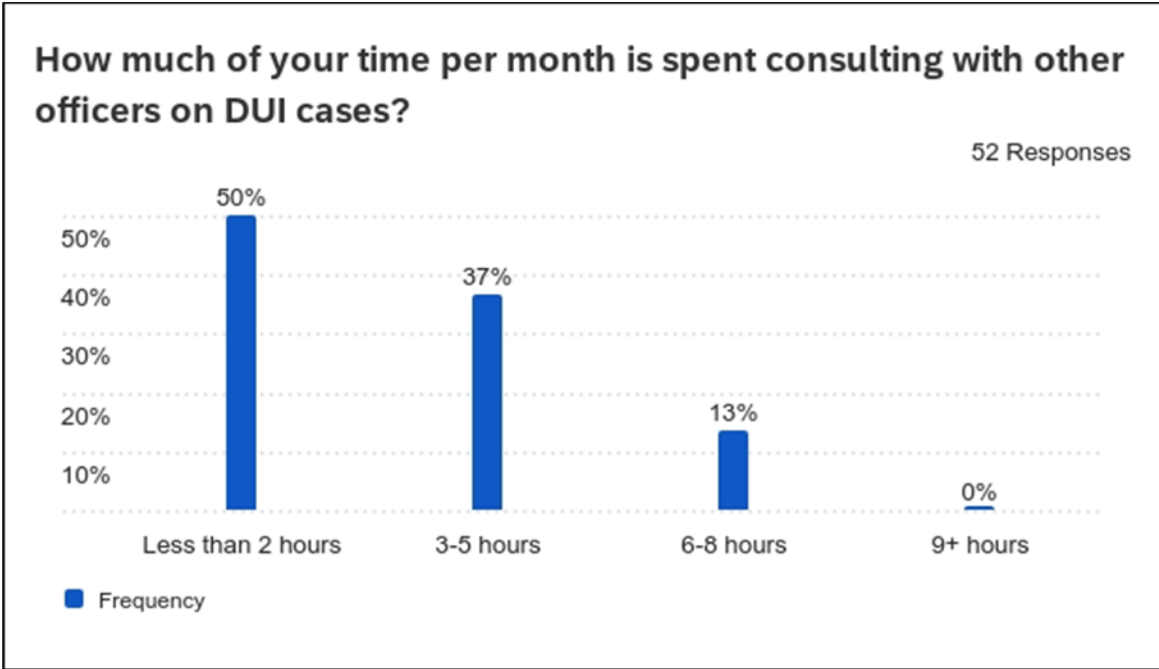
Of all the tasks you do as a DRE, which task do you spend most of your time doing? (Select One)

Evaluations (including report writing)	28	54%
Consultations with other officers	3	6%
Training other officers	20	38%
Educating the public	1	2%
Other (please specify)	0	0%
Total:	52	

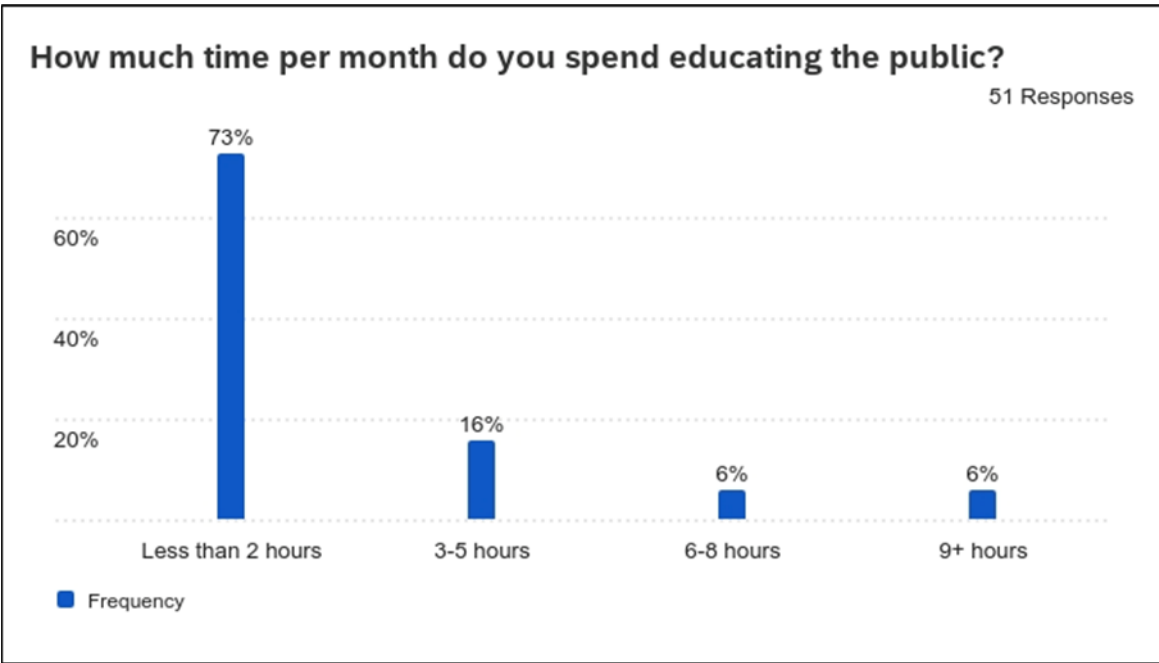
DREs also expressed how much time per month they spend on the above tasks, displayed below.



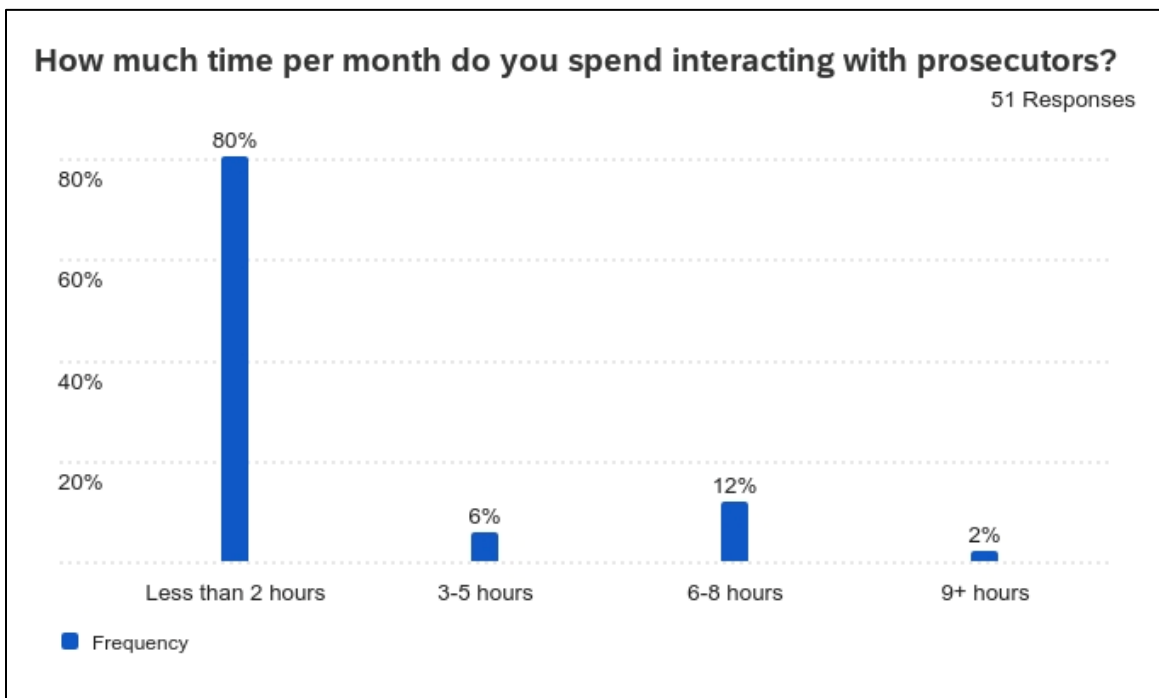
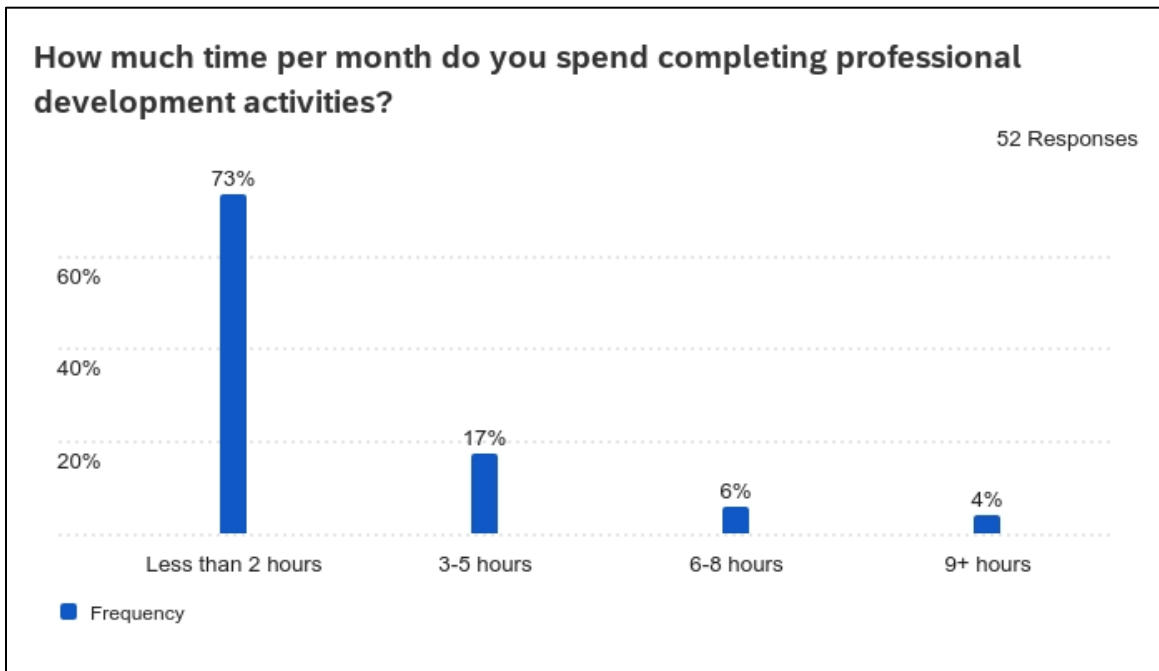
While most DRE respondents indicating that they spent 3-8 hours on evaluations, a sizable proportion (37%) indicated that they spent less than 2 hours on evaluations. This is an interesting result in that it only partially supports the qualitative results. Like the qualitative results, a sizable proportion of DREs do not spend a considerable amount of time on DRE evaluations. Unlike the qualitative result, this group is not the majority – most DREs are spending 3+ hours per week on evaluations.



Similar to the qualitative results, DREs reported spending a significant amount of time consulting with other law enforcement professionals. They reported comparatively less time educating the public, a result that is largely consistent with the qualitative interviews.



In terms of professional development, nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of DREs report spending less than 2 hours week, though some reported significantly more time. DREs also overwhelmingly indicate that they spent very little time interacting with prosecutors.



As per the results above and the qualitative data, a significant amount of DRE's time is allocated to providing assistance to other law enforcement professionals – nearly a quarter said that they did this daily, with another 44% indicating that they did this a few times per week.

How frequently do fellow law enforcement professionals contact you for assistance with DUI related tasks?

Daily	12	23%
A Few Times Per Week	23	44%
A Few Times Per Month	12	23%
A Few Times Per Year	3	6%
Less Than A Few Times Per Year/Never	2	4%
Total:	52	

Most DREs conduct very few full and partial (0-2) evaluations per month. More research needs to be done in this area – there is tension between this result and the result suggesting that most of their DRE-time is spent doing evaluations. This may suggest that being a DRE represents a very small proportion of their work duties. In other words, most complete very few evaluations, but when they do, these take up a considerable amount of time.

In an average month, how many full DRE evaluations do you complete?

0-2	46	88%
3-5	6	12%
6-8	0	0%
9+	0	0%
Total:	52	

In an average month, how many partial DRE evaluations do you complete?

0-2	51	98%
3-5	1	2%
6-8	0	0%
9+	0	0%
Total:	52	

In an average month, how often do individuals decline to participate in a DRE evaluation?

0-2	44	85%
3-5	7	13%
6-8	1	2%
9+	0	0%
Total:	52	

3.2(G). Callout System

A notable weakness of the program is in the usage of the WSP callout system. While some DREs call in everyday, the majority do not, with 58% suggesting that they do this either never or on very few days.

When you are on shift, how often do you call into the WSP callout system?

Every Day	11	21%
Most Days	7	13%
Some Days	4	8%
Very Few Days	15	29%
Never	15	29%
Total:	53	

Perhaps unsurprisingly, most respondents indicated that they responded to very few callouts. This is likely because most DREs are not calling into the callout system.

How many callouts to conduct a DRE evaluation do you receive in an average month?

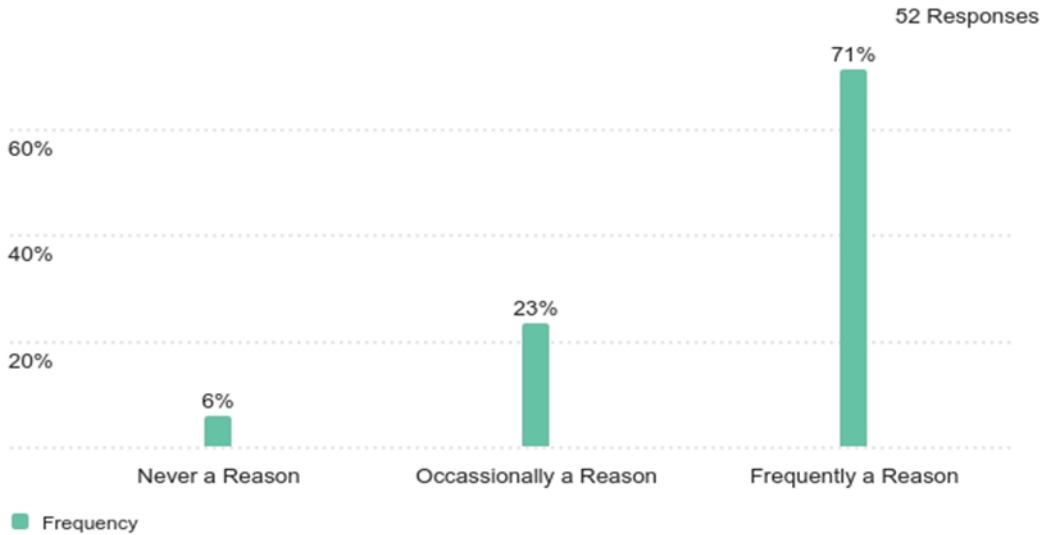
0-2	40	75%
3-5	12	23%
6-8	1	2%
9+	0	0%
Total:	53	

How many callouts are you able to respond to in an average month?

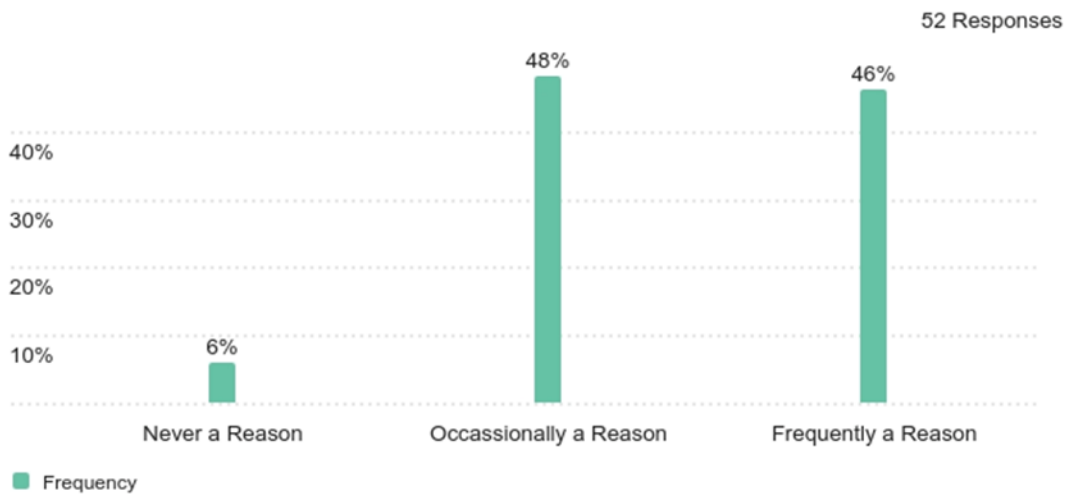
0-2	39	75%
3-5	9	17%
6-8	3	6%
9+	1	2%
Total:	52	

In terms of not getting callouts from other law enforcement officers, DREs largely reported that this was because the others were more likely to just go for a warrant for a blood draw. Respondents also provided numerous other reasons for why they aren't called out more frequently, including several responses that also reference blood warrants.

Not Getting Called Out: Non-DRE officers prefer to get immediate blood draws/blood warrants

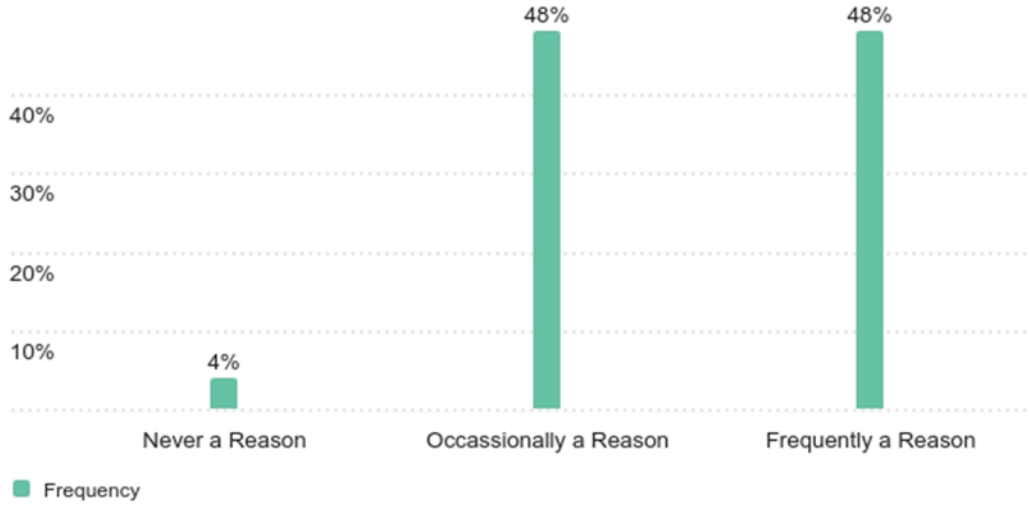


Not Getting Called Out: Non-DRE officers believe they are equipped to handle the situation on their own



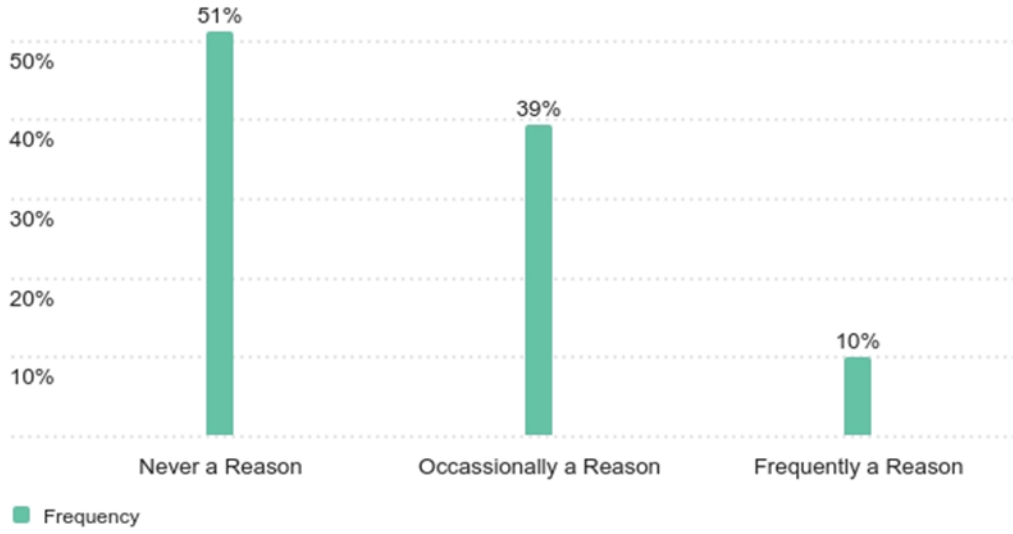
Not Getting Called Out: Uneducated on When to Call

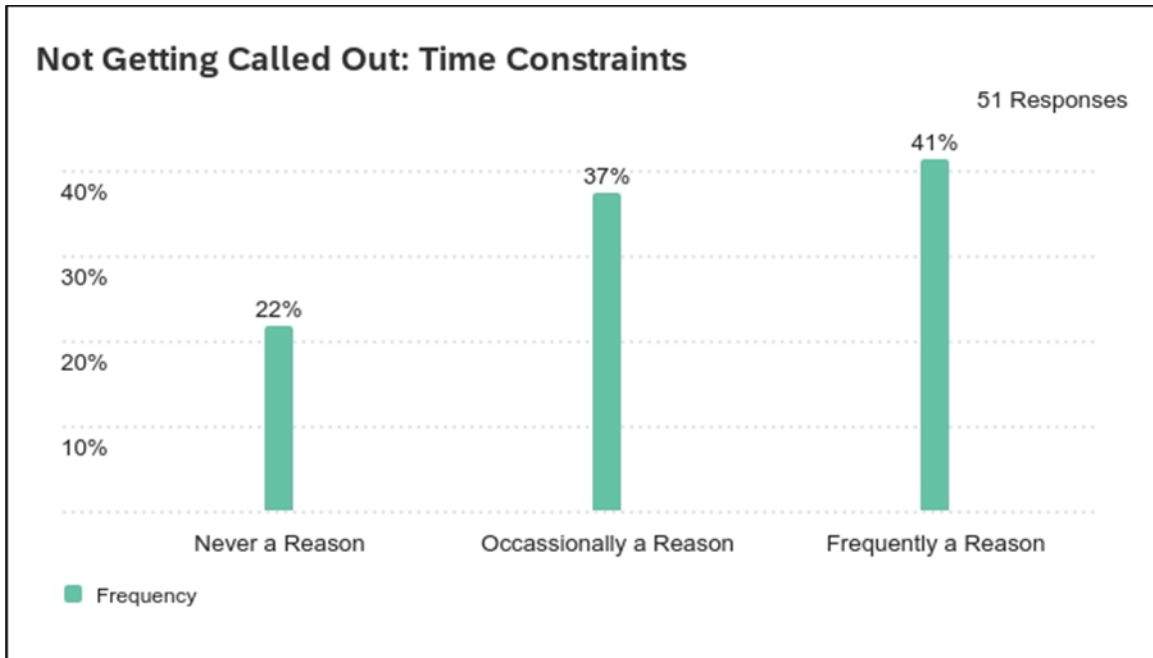
52 Responses



Not Getting Called Out: Technical Issues Within Callout System

51 Responses





Respondents also specified additional reasonings for why a DRE may not be called.

Are there any other reasons you’ve heard of for why a DRE may not be called?

Yes (Please Specify)	31	63%
No	18	37%
Total:	49	

For those that wished to specify additional reasons, the most common cause of why DREs may not be called out is because non-DREs are either unaware that they can call-out a DRE, assume that a DRE won’t answer/isn’t available, or don’t want to wait for the DRE to travel and complete the evaluation. In most cases, it appears non-DREs want to skip ahead and apply for blood warrants, like our results in stage one. Other DREs mentioned that it may be issues within the agency itself; for example, the on-scene supervisor may not require a DRE callout, or dispatch may only check for law enforcement within their agency. Therefore, the callout system is not being utilized to its fullest extent. In addition, one DRE mentioned that agencies are uneducated on who pays for overtime fees, and then assume the completing callouts will be a detriment to the agency budget. The full list of reasons DREs provided is listed in the appendix.

3.2(H) Interactions with the Court System

Interestingly, nearly half of respondents indicated that they have testified in court as a DRE, with several noting that they have done so many times. This is significantly different from the results we found through the qualitative interviews. We struggle to explain this

discrepancy, as the interview and survey questions are quite similar. Most respondents however note that they have very infrequent contact with prosecutors (71% indicated either a few times per year or less than a few times per year).

In your role as a DRE, have you had to testify in court?

Yes	25	48%
No	27	52%
Total:	52	

If you have testified in court, how many times have you testified?

1-2 times	8	32%
3-5 times	6	24%
6-8 times	4	16%
9+ times	7	28%
Total:	25	

How often do you interact with prosecutors in your role as a DRE?

Daily	0	0%
A Few Times Per Week	4	8%
A Few Times Per Month	11	21%
A Few Times Per Year	21	40%
Less than a Few Times Per Year/ Never	16	31%
Total:	52	

3.2(I). Perceptions of Non-DREs and Leadership

In terms of support, the responses vary between “yes” and “somewhat”, with a much smaller proportion indicating no. Responses are more positive in terms of feeling valued by other law enforcement professionals.

Do you believe leadership in your agency supports the DRE program?

Yes	25	48%
Somewhat	21	40%
No	6	12%
Total:	52	

Do you feel valued by other non-DREs in your role as a DRE?

Yes	34	65%
Somewhat	13	25%
No	5	10%
Total:	52	

Interestingly, most respondents have heard people express criticism or concerns about the DRE program, a result which echoes some of our qualitative findings. This needs more research and programmatic attention.

Have you ever had someone express criticisms or concerns about the DRE program, or about your service as a DRE?

Yes	31	60%
No	21	40%
Total:	52	

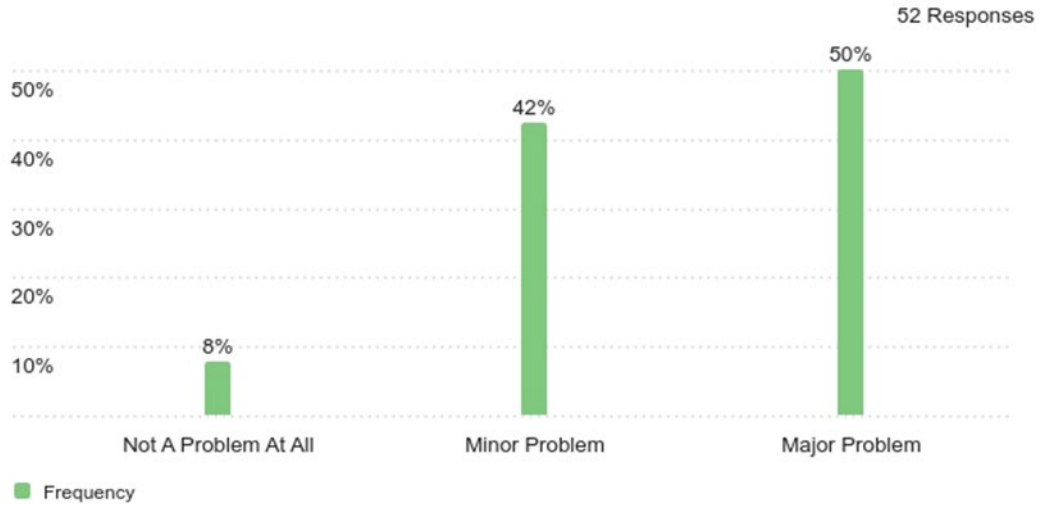
Among DREs who have had criticisms or concerns expressed to them, the most common issue heard is the perceived inefficiency of the DRE evaluation process compared to simply obtaining a blood sample. One respondent wrote, “I have heard other troopers say that it takes too long to wait for the DRE to respond, conduct the evaluation, and obtain the report.” Similarly, non-DREs may feel that they have sufficient experience to establish probable cause on their own without a DRE. Several DREs noted that the time and effort required for DRE evaluations are viewed to be excessive by other law enforcement professionals; comments such as “too much time invested on DREs” and “A DRE is not needed, takes too much time, and doesn’t provide enough pros to outweigh the time commitment” illustrate this sentiment.

Some DREs even reported hearing statements like, “DRE is a dying program,” highlighting a belief amongst non-DREs that the program is losing its perceived value. Overall, many respondents felt that the qualifications and skills of DREs are undervalued, similar to our findings from the stage one qualitative interviews. Similar concerns included lack of support from leadership, and an insufficient number of DREs to meet demand. One DRE commented, “sergeants don’t support me when called by outside agencies, and my agency doesn’t utilize me,” while another pointed out that “the callout system doesn’t deliver DREs, as there are not enough available.”

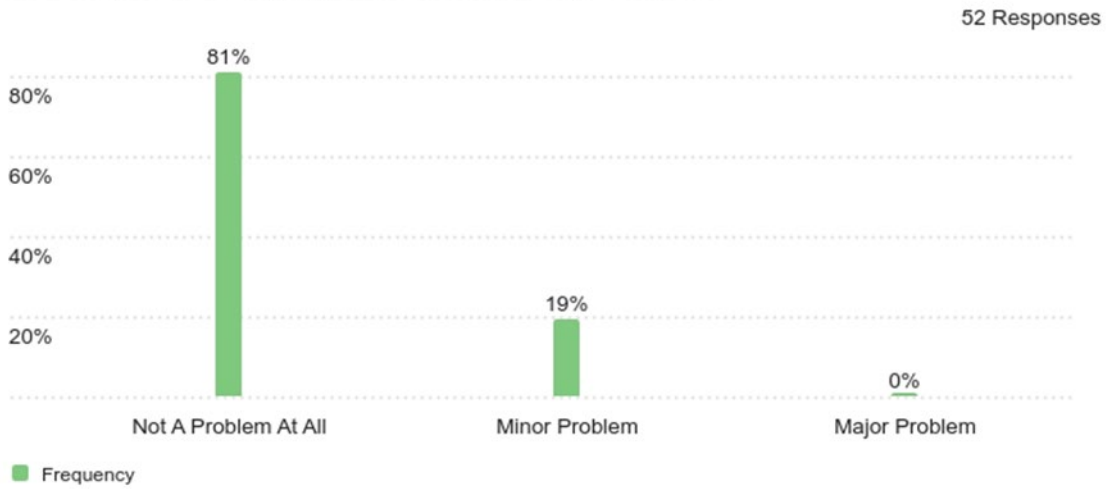
3.2 (J) Challenges in the Field

In terms of challenges that DREs experience in the field, DREs cite not being called by other law enforcement professionals, a lack of DREs, and declining perceptions of the program as the biggest challenges that they face.

Challenges: Not Being Called Out By Other Officers

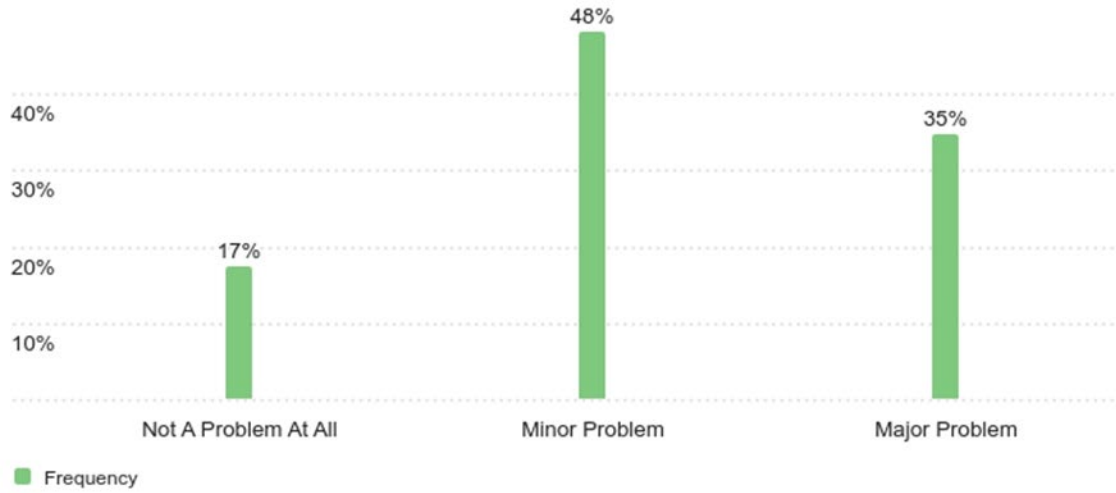


Challenges: Identifying/determining Poly-Drug use



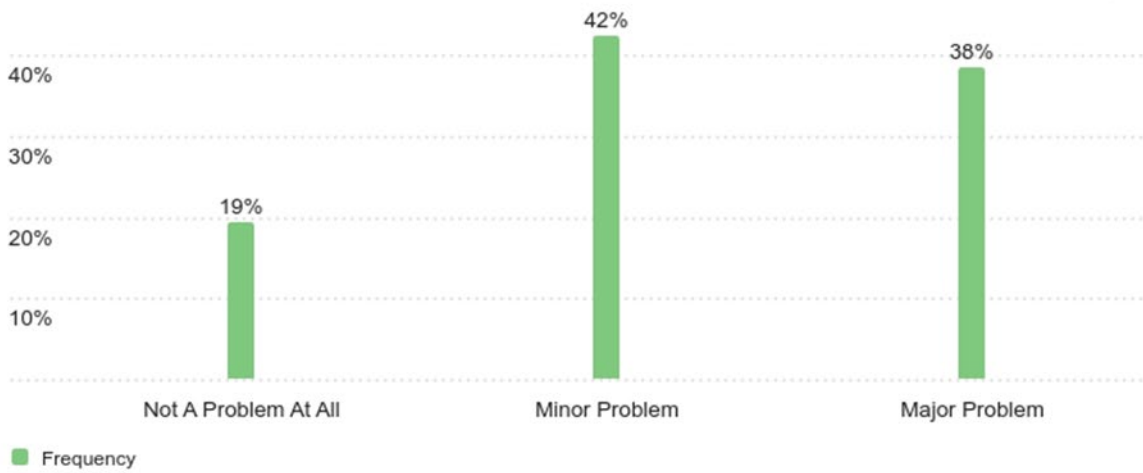
Challenges: Lack of certified DRE officers

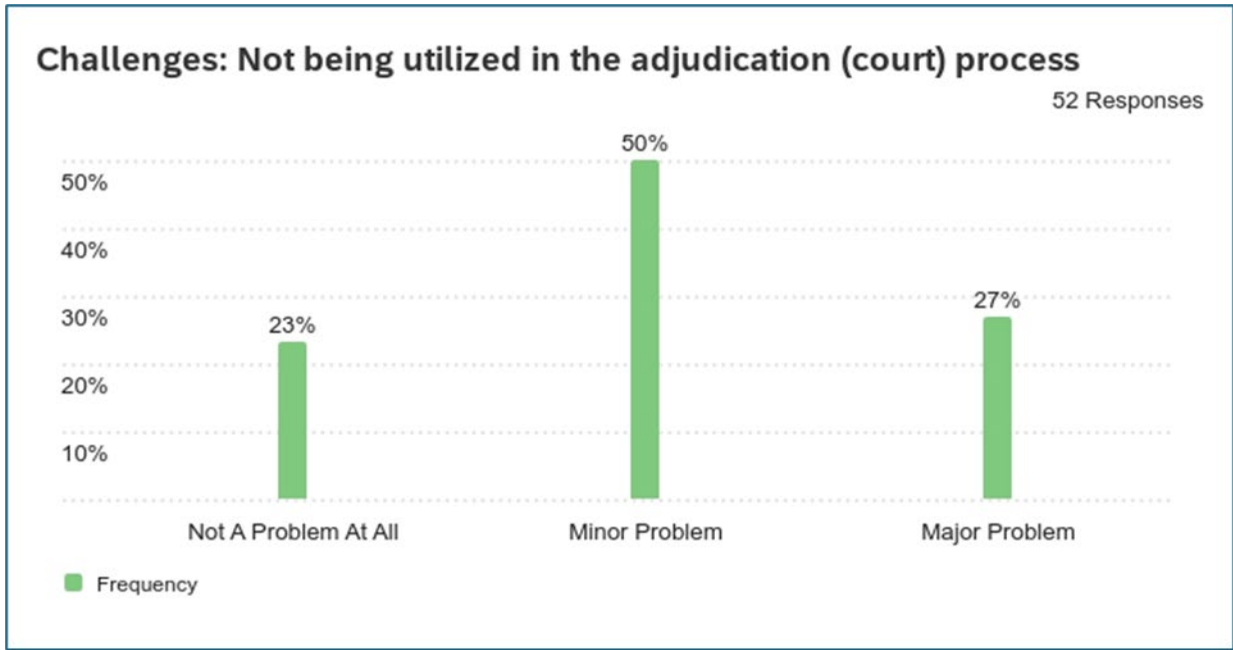
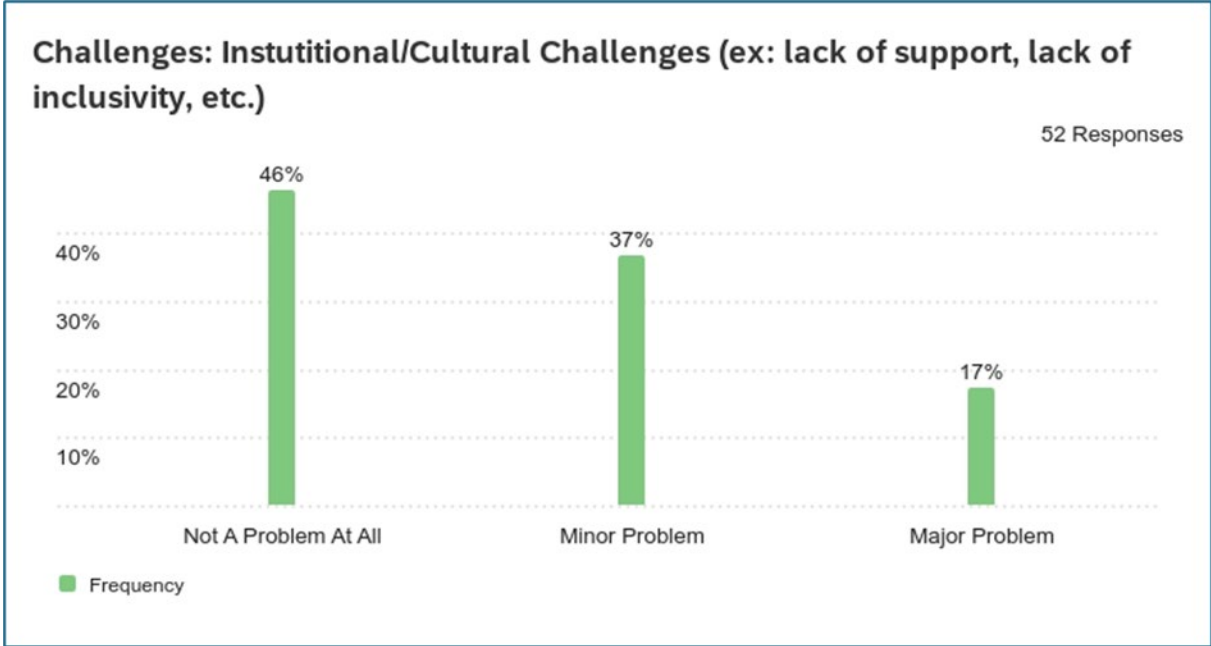
52 Responses



Challenges: Declining Perception of the Program

52 Responses





In terms of other challenges not captured by the survey item, respondents provided a host of challenges that they face. The challenges experienced by DREs are similar to those reported in stage one; however, there was a stronger emphasis on the need for better support and incentives for maintaining DRE certification. A full list of these challenges is provided in the appendix.

One significant issue is that law enforcement in some areas rarely arrest DUI-impaired drivers, partly due to the apprehension that when PBT readings are .000 that the case may not move forward. This leads DREs to avoid conducting evaluations due to a lack of calls for

assistance. Additionally, there is a tendency among law enforcement to not utilize call-out procedures when dealing with drug DUIs, often perceiving it as a “waste of time” when a warrant can be obtained instead.

The difficulty of completing evaluations based on job assignments and work locations poses another challenge. DREs note that balancing their workload and DRE responsibilities to maintain certification can be particularly demanding. Further, some DREs noted that anticipated changes, such as the use of tablets, have yet to be implemented, leading many to feel that they are not receiving the proper support to be successful in their roles. DREs have expressed the need for a better way to log evaluations and track blood results, however efforts to assist in this regard have yet to be introduced. The extensive work required to become a DRE and maintain certification, coupled with a lack of incentives and compensation for the additional work, adds to respondents’ frustrations.

There is also a push to utilize DREs in non-traffic investigations, such as sexual assaults. However, non-DRE law enforcement often lack knowledge and understanding of the DRE program and its potential benefits. Washington state laws and turnaround time for toxicology lab results further complicate the situation, adding a significant burden to law enforcement in terms of paperwork data entry, and tracking cases with long toxicology result times. One DRE noted, “prosecutors seem to believe tox results are more important than evaluations,” particularly in cases involving THC. Further, some DREs also expressed a desire for a DRE-exclusive monthly newsletter to provide updates on the program, and research and information on new drugs trends to keep them informed and engaged.

What other challenges would you like to note that are not included in the list above?

N/A; I have no other challenges I would like to note	29	57%
Please Specify (Fill-In)	22	43%
Total:	51	

3.2(K). Recommendations for Program

Lastly, we asked respondents about their recommendations for the DRE program. All of their recommendations are listed in our appendix. However, in terms of a general summary:

1. Many DREs remarked that completing evaluations is particularly challenging based on job assignments and work locations, compounded by extensive paperwork, data entry, and case tracking. DREs have expressed frustration over the extensive work needed to become and remain certified as a DRE, especially without sufficient incentives or compensation for the additional responsibilities.
2. There is also a highlighted need for more DREs and better education for non-DRE offices on the importance of their role. DREs suggested providing DREs with templates or PowerPoints for training other law enforcement professionals and the public, as well as continuing to promote and improve the program through outreach and education. They emphasize the importance of retaining good leaders who work together and unite DREs for the program’s benefit. Doubling the number of certified

DREs statewide, with incentives to aid retention, was a common suggestion. For example, some respondents recommended increased specialty pay for DREs to provide further incentives and recognition for their work.

3. As stated previously, a primary issue is that law enforcement professionals in certain areas rarely arrest DUI-impaired drivers when PBT readings are .000, leading to fewer evaluations being conducted due to a lack of calls for service. Additionally, many law enforcement professionals and agencies do not utilize call-out procedures when dealing with drug DUIs, viewing it as a “waste of time” compared to obtaining a warrant. Consequently, DREs are underutilized, which contributes to the program’s perceived stagnation within the state. Many DREs suggested that agencies should make a push for supervisors to require DRE callouts, or providing more education/advocacy for the program to non-DRE law enforcement professionals.
4. There is also a notable lack of understanding and support for the DRE program among non-DUI law enforcement professionals and senior leadership. DREs have called for more training for non-DREs, such as roll call training, to increase their knowledge of what the program offers. There is also a need to gain more support from senior leadership, from the Chief down to first-line supervisors, to ensure better utilization and recognition of DREs. Some suggested sending more patrol officers through ARIDE training to boost their confidence in identifying and arresting drug-impaired drivers.
5. Another significant concern is the amount of work involved in completing an evaluation, submitting it to the database, and finishing the narrative report. DREs have suggested technological improvements, such as better systems for logging evaluations and tracking blood results, to further streamline these processes.
6. Furthermore, DREs highlighted the continuing need for more training and education, with a focus on continuing professional development activities and staying updated on new drug trends and their effects. Here, the call for a monthly newsletter detailing news and updates regarding DRE-related subjects were reiterated.
7. In addition to these recommendations, there was a clear call for more leadership and agency support for the program and the role of DREs. DREs believe that more visible and vocal support from leadership, including agency heads, would significantly enhance the program's effectiveness and ensure better utilization of DREs. This support could manifest through policies that recognize and reward the additional work DREs perform and through initiatives that integrate DRE evaluations more seamlessly into everyday police work.
8. Finally, changes in bureaucracy, especially within the Washington State Patrol (WSP) and Washington state policies and procedures, were also recommended. Streamlining procedures, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and updating policies to better support the DRE program would address many of the frustrations expressed by respondents. This could involve simplifying the reporting process, ensuring quicker toxicology results (a factor beyond the control of the program), and improving the call-out system to make it more efficient and user-friendly.

3.3 Summary and Conclusions

The second stage of this study provided a comprehensive survey to gauge the perceptions, challenges, and recommendations of DREs across the state. The survey findings offered insights into the current DRE perceptions of the DRE program, highlighting both its strengths and areas needing improvement. The survey revealed a generally positive view of the DRE program among respondents, with many expressing satisfaction with their roles and a commitment to maintaining their certifications. However, the results from the survey also underscored several issues that may impact the program's effectiveness and sustainability.

Overall, respondents expressed a strong sense of satisfaction with their involvement in the DRE program. A substantial majority indicated that they were either somewhat or extremely satisfied with their participation, and most were likely to recommend the program to other law enforcement professionals. The DRE school was notably praised for adequately preparing DREs for drug-related evaluations, with 91% of DREs feeling either well or very well prepared for situations they encounter in their role. Despite this, there were still recommendations for ongoing training, particularly in dealing with medical evaluations, as well as poly-drug use.

The survey revealed that DREs predominately spend their time conducting evaluations and training other law enforcement professionals. Despite the substantial amount of time dedicated to evaluations, the actual number of evaluations conducted each month is relatively low, suggesting that while DREs are actively involved in the roles, the volume of drug impairment cases may not fully reflect their effort.

A significant issue identified was the underutilization of the callout system. Many respondents reported that they may not call into the system on a daily/weekly basis, which corresponds with their infrequent response to callouts. Consequently, DREs are also not being called upon as often as they could be, which is attributed to a perception that a DRE evaluation and callout is less efficient when compared to obtaining a blood warrant. Not being called out was also seen as one of the more significant challenges that DREs face in their role.

DREs face several additional challenges, including the extensive paperwork and data entry required for evaluations. The administrative burden can be a source of frustration, especially given the lack of additional compensation and incentives for the extra responsibilities. Additionally, the perception that DRE evaluations are time-consuming contributes to the challenges DREs experience, as many feel as if they are under-utilized within their role. Respondents also highlighted issues related to balancing their DRE duties with other job responsibilities and the need for technological improvements to streamline processes.

The survey found mixed perceptions of support from non-DREs and leadership. While many respondents felt valued by their peers, there was a sizable number who reported

hearing criticisms about the DRE program's efficiency and relevance. A lack of understanding and support from non-DREs and senior leadership was noted as a major barrier, with suggestions for increased education and advocacy about the DRE program to non-DREs.

Finally, the survey provided a set of recommendations from DREs' perspectives. The most critical recommendations appear to be that of addressing administrative burdens (simplifying paperwork/data entry process; technological solutions), improvement to callout system utilization, increased leadership support and enhanced training and education. Further, many DREs believed that increased leadership support and the inclusion of compensation for additional DRE duties may aid in the program's standing, as well as encouraging more law enforcement professionals to join the program.

Chapter Four: Conclusions

This study, encompassing both qualitative interviews and a detailed survey, provided an examination of the Drug Recognition Expert (DRE) program from the perspective of the law enforcement professionals who have been directly involved with the program. This mixed-methods approach yielded important insights into the program's current state, including its strengths, challenges, and areas for potential improvement.

Summary of Findings

Stage One: Interviews

The qualitative phase involved in-depth interviews with current and former DREs. These interviews revealed several key themes:

1. How DREs are Utilized
 - a. DREs detailed their roles in drug impairment evaluations and training other law enforcement professionals. While many are actively engaged, the extent of their involvement varies, with some facing inefficiencies and underutilization. Some reported experiencing inefficiencies and underutilization of their skills, indicating that while DREs are engaged in their roles, the full potential of their expertise is not always realized. This discrepancy points to a need for more consistent and strategic deployment of DREs to maximize their impact.
2. Challenges They Experience in their Role
 - a. DREs pointed out several issues, including heavy administrative work, insufficient pay or incentives, and difficulties balancing their DRE duties with other tasks. Additionally, balancing DRE responsibilities with other law enforcement tasks is often difficult, further straining DREs. These challenges may not only affect satisfaction but also the overall effectiveness of the DRE program.
3. Indirect Benefits
 - a. Beyond their direct responsibilities, DREs contribute to broader law enforcement goals. Their expertise enhances the overall capabilities of their departments, particularly in understanding and addressing drug-related issues. DREs also play a role in improving public safety by helping to identify and manage drug-impaired drivers. Their presence and specialized knowledge support a deeper understanding of drug issues within their departments, contributing to more informed and effective law enforcement practices.
4. Suggestions for Program Improvement
 - a. Based on their experiences, DREs provided several recommendations for enhancing the DRE program. They suggested streamlining the paperwork process and reducing administrative burdens to allow DREs to focus more on their core responsibilities. Increasing training opportunities, both for DREs and their colleagues, was also emphasized to ensure ongoing development and effectiveness. Additionally, participants called for greater support from leadership, including better communication and coordination within

departments. By addressing these suggestions, the program could improve both its operational efficiency and its impact on drug-impaired driving prevention.

Stage Two: State-Wide Survey

The state-wide survey provided a broader perspective on the issues identified in the qualitative phase. Key findings include:

1. Satisfaction of DRE program and DRE training
 - a. Most DREs reported a high level of satisfaction with their roles and the initial training they received. They value the specialized knowledge and skills gained through the program. However, they expressed a strong desire for continued education, particularly regarding new drug trends and complex cases. This ongoing training would help them stay current with evolving drug-related issues and maintain high standards in their evaluations and testimonies.
2. How DREs are Utilized
 - a. The survey confirmed that DREs are actively involved in drug impairment evaluations and contribute to training other law enforcement professionals. Despite this, their specialized skills are not always fully utilized. There is significant room for improvement in how often and effectively their expertise is leveraged within their departments. The underuse of their skills means that the full potential of the DRE program is not being realized, suggesting a need for more strategic deployment of DREs.
3. Interactions with the Callout System
 - a. The survey highlighted ongoing issues with the callout system. Many reported that the system is rarely used. This underutilization limits the program's reach and effectiveness, as the callout system is designed to ensure that DREs are available when needed for drug impairment cases. Improving the system's efficiency and encouraging its use could enhance the program's overall impact.
4. Challenges faced by DREs
 - a. The survey reaffirmed several challenges identified in interviews, including heavy administrative workloads, insufficient additional compensation, and the difficulty of balancing DRE responsibilities with other duties. Respondents suggested that advancements in technology could help alleviate some of these burdens. Specifically, better systems for managing evaluations and tracking results could streamline these processes and reduce the administrative load, making the role of a DRE more manageable and effective.
5. Perceptions of Non-DREs and Leadership
 - a. The survey revealed mixed perceptions of the DRE program among non-DRE law enforcement professionals and law enforcement leaders. Many non-DREs lack a comprehensive understanding of the program's benefits and contributions. There is a notable gap in education and advocacy, which affects how the program is supported and integrated within the broader law enforcement community. Increased training and awareness for non-DREs, as

well as more visible support from leadership, are necessary to improve program integration and overall effectiveness.

6. Recommendations for the DRE program

- a. Based on the survey findings, several key recommendations emerged:
 - i. **Reduce Administrative Work:** Streamline paperwork and data entry processes by adopting better technology solutions. This would help DREs focus more on their core responsibilities rather than administrative tasks. For example, an app that allowed DREs to enter information specific to an evaluation that would then generate a template report would streamline the report-writing process.
 - ii. **Enhance Training and Education:** Increase the number of certified DREs and improve ongoing training for existing DREs. Develop better educational materials and outreach programs to raise awareness about the DRE program's role among non-DREs and the public.
 - iii. **Improve Callout System:** Make the callout system more efficient and encourage its use to ensure that DREs are available and utilized effectively for drug impairment cases. Addressing system inefficiencies could help improve its overall effectiveness. It is problematic that such a large proportion of DREs do not call into the system on a regular basis.
 - iv. **Boost Leadership Support:** Enhance backing from agency leaders and ensure that DREs receive recognition for their work. Leadership support is crucial for integrating DRE expertise into everyday law enforcement operations.

Discussion

Taken as a whole, the results of this study suggest that the DRE program plays an important role in public safety in Washington State, but that the scope of this role is likely not captured if policy makers take a narrow perspective of counting evaluations and examining rolling logs. To be sure, the evaluation is the hallmark of the program and as such, should be tracked and reported on. However, the results here suggest that the DRE program has many indirect benefits ranging from being an informal resource to other law enforcement professionals to providing training that can be used in non-traffic incidents. Further, DREs expressed significant satisfaction with their involvement in the program, emphasizing how their specialized training in recognizing impairment is a valuable resource for all officers in all jurisdictions. Many DREs also valued the training they received from the DRE school, noting that this training enhanced their skills for traffic-related incidents and non-traffic related incidents. DREs express personal fulfillment from their roles, specifically the ability to make a direct impact on public safety in their communities. Calculating the true benefit of the DRE program is likely to be daunting, yet this may be an important area for future research.

Still, the program has its limitations. First, a number of DREs stated that there are declining perspectives of the DRE program, with some claiming that they have heard that the program is "dying." This perspective and trend should be alarming for DRE leadership and stakeholders, as the program is not viable if leadership does not continue to invest in it –

and, frankly, why would leadership choose to invest in a program that is perceived to be dying? Indeed, the problem of investment is central to the DRE program. Given the natural cycle of promotion-oriented decertifications, there will be a consistent need to replenish DRE ranks. If police leaders opt to not send their personnel to a “dying program”, then DRE numbers in Washington will continue to be low, which likely feeds into other limitations of the program (the perception that it takes too long for a DRE to respond, hence why other law enforcement professionals are not calling for them).

Second, the callout system is not working and cannot work if DREs do not call into it. The importance of this process needs to be emphasized to DREs throughout the state. This is an important step that DRE leadership can tackle.

Third, while many officers expressed satisfaction with their involvement in the program and their training, many noted a need for ongoing training for poly-drug use and evolving drug trends. Considering the rise of poly-drug use in the state of Washington, efforts to ensure DRE officers are prepared to tackle poly-drug driving is essential.

Fourth, a small number of research participants noted that they were dissatisfied with the yearly training and conferences designed for DREs. The curricula offered to this group should be carefully reviewed and should likely incorporate DRE feedback and suggestions. This is an actionable move that would likely improve DRE satisfaction and make DREs more effective in their roles.

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Third, several research participants stated that there are declining perspectives of the DRE program, with some claiming that they have heard that the program is “dying.” This perspective and trend should be alarming for DRE leadership and stakeholders, as the program is not viable if leadership does not continue to invest in it – and, frankly, why would leadership choose to invest in a program that is perceived to be dying? Indeed, the problem of investment is central to the DRE program. Given the natural cycle of promotion-oriented decertifications, there will be a consistent need to replenish DRE ranks. If police leaders opt to not send their personnel to a “dying program”, then DRE numbers in Washington will continue to be low, which likely feeds into other limitations of the program (the perception that it takes too long for a DRE to respond, hence why other law enforcement professionals are not calling for them).

Regarding decertifications – it is one thing for a DRE to decertify because they are receiving a promotion in which they will have less time or room for DRE activities. Some research participants, however, noted that there was difficulty in finding an instructor to observe their evaluations. This is a shortcoming of the program and one that should be prioritized. No DRE who wants to stay in the program should decertify due to difficulty in finding instructors for field observations.

Still, the training offered to DREs is viewed as strong and important to the research participants in these studies. With some of the programmatic revisions described above, the DRE program in Washington can be further strengthened and further contribute to the broader public safety mission of law enforcement in the state. Given the rising number of impairment-related traffic fatalities within Washington State, it is essential to reinforce and elevate support for the DRE program. Policymakers and stakeholders must recognize the program's ongoing relevance and commit to necessary improvements and resource allocation to further enhance its effectiveness. By doing so, DREs can ensure they are fully equipped to combat impaired driving and continue to play a pivotal role in monitoring road safety. Supporting and strengthening the DRE program will not only address the current challenges it faces, but also will further affirm its crucial role in safeguarding our roadways.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Interview Questions for Current DREs

Instructions: Thank you for agreeing to talk to me about your experiences of being a DRE. Information from this interview will be used as part of a broader study where we explore the DRE program in Washington and highlight program challenges. Your answers will be recorded and transcribed to assist in the processing of data. In any publications about this research, including our report to WSP and Traffic Safety, we will not use your name. Your comments will either be grouped together with others, or you will be referred to more generally as a DRE officer. As we move through the interview, please tell me if you would like to skip a question or if you would like further clarification.

1. How many years of experience do you have as an officer, and how many years of experience do you have as a DRE?
2. What made you decide to join the DRE program and what made you decide to get certified?
 - a. Prompt: Are you happy that you joined the DRE program? Why or why not?
 - b. Prompt: Do you intend to maintain your certification? Why or why not?
3. What are your thoughts on the training you received to be a DRE?
 - a. Prompt: Are there any situations that you encounter that you wish you had more training for?
4. Thinking about your role as a DRE, can you describe how you spend most of your time?
 - a. Prompt: How many evaluations do you do in a typical month or year? How long do they take?
 - b. Prompt: Tell us about travel time – how much time do you spend traveling to conduct evaluations?
 - c. Prompt: How many of the evaluations that you do are self-initiated versus calls for support from other officers?
5. One of the things we want to really highlight is the value of the DRE program beyond just evaluations, can you tell me a little bit about how you use your expertise aside from conducting evaluations? (Trainings, education, phone referrals, etc)
6. Can you explain how the DRE callout system works in your experience? That is – how are you informed that a particular incident needs a DRE?
 - a. Prompt: What do you think about this system?
 - b. Prompt: Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the callout system?
 - c. Prompt: How often do you get called out? How often do you respond?
7. How often has your expertise as a DRE been used in the adjudication process?

- a. Prompt: How often have you testified in court? Why do you think your testimony was used that much/little?
 - b. Prompt: What about collaborations with prosecutors, do you find yourself getting calls for things other than going to trial?
8. Do you feel valued as a DRE by other officers? Explain why or why not.
 - a. Prompt: How does leadership view your participation in the program?
 - b. Prompt: Do other officers tend to view you as an expert and/or resource?
9. Kind of a general question - what are some of the challenges you face as a DRE officer? In other words, are there any things that make your experiences less ideal?
 - a. Prompt: What could be done to improve your experiences?
10. Is there anything that you think we should be talking about when we meet with other DREs? So is there any topics we're missing, or other areas that you feel are important that we haven't discussed yet?
11. If you had a magic wand, and could change something about the DRE program, what would it be?

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Prior DRE Officers

Instructions: Thank you for agreeing to talk to me about your experiences of being a DRE. Information from this interview will be used as part of a broader study where we explore the DRE program in Washington and highlight program challenges. Your answers will be recorded and transcribed to assist in the processing of data. In any publications about this research, we will not use your name. Your comments will either be grouped together with others or you will be referred to more generally as a DRE officer. As we move through the interview, please tell me if you would like to skip a question or if you would like further clarification.

- 1.) How many years of experience do you have as an officer? How long were you a DRE?
- 2.) What made you decide to originally join the DRE program?
 - a. Prompt: Are you happy that you joined the DRE program? Why or why not?
- 3.) What are your thoughts on the training you received to be a DRE?
 - a. Prompt: Are there any situations that you encounter that you wish you had more training for?
- 4.) Thinking about your former role as a DRE, can you describe how you spent most of your time?
 - a. Prompt: How many evaluations did you do in a typical year? When you did an evaluation, how long did they take on average?
 - b. Prompt: Please tell me about travel time – how much time did you spend traveling to conduct evaluations?
 - c. Prompt: How many of the evaluations were self-initiated versus calls for support from other officers?
 - d. Prompt: Aside from evaluations, how else did you use your expertise as a DRE officer? (Prompt: Trainings, education, phone referrals)
- 5.) How often was your expertise as a DRE used in the adjudication process?
 - a. Prompt: How often have you testified in court? Why do you think your testimony was used that much/little?
 - b. Prompt: How often have you collaborated with prosecutors as a DRE?
- 6.) What are some of the challenges you faced as a DRE officer?
 - a. Prompt: What would have been helpful in reducing these challenges?
- 7.) Aside from evaluations, how else were you able to use your expertise as a DRE officer?
 - a. Prompt: Trainings? Phone referrals? Education?
- 8.) Did you feel valued as a DRE by other police? Explain why or why not.

- a. Prompt: How does leadership view your participation in the program?
 - b. Prompt: Do other officers tend to view you as an expert and/or resource?
- 9.) What made you decide to leave the DRE program?
- a. Prompt: If you moved to a new role, was there support for you to maintain your DRE certification?

Appendix C: Survey Questions

1. Which gender do you identify with?
 - a. (Choose One)
 - i. Male
 - ii. Female
 - iii. Non-Binary
 - iv. Prefer Not to Answer

2. Which Race/Ethnicity do you identify with?
 - a. (Select all that apply)
 - i. White
 - ii. Black
 - iii. American Indian/Native American
 - iv. Asian
 - v. Hispanic
 - vi. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
 - vii. Other
 - viii. Prefer not to answer

3. How old are you?
 - a. (Choose One)
 - i. 21-30
 - ii. 31-40
 - iii. 41-50
 - iv. 51-60
 - v. 61+

4. At what type of agency do you currently work?
 - a. (Choose One)
 - i. Municipal/City
 - ii. County/Sheriff
 - iii. State
 - iv. Other

5. What is your current position title? (e.g., police officer, sergeant, etc.)
 - a. (Text Box)

6. How many years of experience do you have as an officer?
 - a. (number entry)

7. How many years of experience do you have as a DRE?
 - a. (number entry)

8. Do you currently plan to stay certified as a DRE?
 - a. If yes, for how long? (text entry)

- b.** If no, when do you plan to let your certification relapse, and why? (text entry)
9. Overall, how satisfied are you with your participation in the DRE program?
- a.** (Choose One)
 - i.** Very Dissatisfied
 - ii.** Dissatisfied
 - iii.** Neutral
 - iv.** Satisfied
 - v.** Very Satisfied
10. How likely are you to recommend the DRE program to other officers?
- a.** (Choose One)
 - i.** Very Unlikely
 - ii.** Unlikely
 - iii.** Neutral
 - iv.** Likely
 - v.** Extremely Likely
11. How well did the DRE school prepare you for DRE-involved situations?
- a.** (Choose One)
 - i.** Very Unprepared
 - ii.** Somewhat Unprepared
 - iii.** Somewhat Prepared
 - iv.** Well Prepared
 - v.** Very Well Prepared
12. How often do you encounter DRE-related situations that you wish you had more training(s) for?
- a.** Choose One)
 - i.** Daily
 - ii.** A Few Times Per Week
 - iii.** A Few Times Per Month
 - iv.** A Few Times Per Year
 - v.** Less Than A Few Times Per Year/Never
13. Consider the following areas of DRE trainings. Select all those that are most needed for DREs to be effective in their roles:
- a.** (Select all that apply)
 - i.** The Seven Drug categories and their individual effects
 - ii.** Proper administration of psychophysical and physiological evaluations used in DRE procedure
 - iii.** Poly-Drug (the use of multiple categories) use, how to evaluate, and their effects
 - iv.** Updated information on drug trends and phenomenon
 - v.** How DRE training can be used in non-traffic circumstances
 - vi.** Other (Please Specify)

14. In an average month, how many full DRE evaluations do you complete?

- a. (Select One)
 - i. 0-2
 - ii. 3-5
 - iii. 6-8
 - iv. 9+

15. In an average month, how many partial DRE evaluations do you complete?

- a. (Select One)
 - i. 0-2
 - ii. 3-5
 - iii. 6-8
 - iv. 9+

16. In an average month, how often do individuals decline to participate in a DRE evaluation?

- a. (Select One)
 - i. 0-2
 - ii. 3-5
 - iii. 6-8
 - iv. 9+

17. How many callouts to conduct a DRE evaluation do you receive in an average month?

- a. (Select One)
 - i. 0-2
 - ii. 3-5
 - iii. 6-8
 - iv. 9+

18. How many callouts do you respond to in an average month?

- a. (Select One)
 - i. 0-2
 - ii. 3-5
 - iii. 6-8
 - iv. 9+

19. When you are on shift, how often do you call into the WSP callout system?

- a. (Select One)
 - i. Every day
 - ii. Most days
 - iii. Some days
 - iv. Very few days
 - v. Never

20. Of all the tasks you do as a DRE officer, which task do you spend most of your time doing? (Multiple choice, select 1)
- a. Evaluations (including report writing)
 - b. Consultations with other officers
 - c. Training other officers
 - d. Educating the public
 - e. Other (please specify)
21. How often do you utilize your DRE training outside of DUI related cases?
- a. Choose One)
 - i. Daily
 - ii. A Few Times Per Week
 - iii. A Few Times Per Month
 - iv. A Few Times Per Year
 - v. Less Than A Few Times Per Year/Never
22. How frequently do fellow officers contact you for assistance with DUI related tasks?
- a. (Choose One)
 - i. Daily
 - ii. A Few Times Per Week
 - iii. A Few Times Per Month
 - iv. A Few Times Per Year
 - v. Less Than A Few Times Per Year/Never
23. In your role as DRE, have you ever had to testify in court?
- a. Yes/No
 - b. If yes, how many times?
 - i. (0-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9+)
24. How often do you interact with prosecutors in your role as a DRE?
- a. Choose One)
 - i. Daily
 - ii. A Few Times Per Week
 - iii. A Few Times Per Month
 - iv. A Few Times Per Year
 - v. Less Than A Few Times Per Year/Never
25. Please consider the following challenges you might experience as a DRE and rank them on their severity (Major problem, Minor problem, Not a problem at all)
- a. Not being called out by other officers
 - b. Not being utilized in the adjudication process
 - c. Identifying/determining Poly-Drug use
 - d. Institutional/Cultural challenges (ex: lack of support, lack of inclusivity, etc.)
 - e. Lack of 'Job-Specific' Training
 - f. Lack of certified DRE officers
 - g. Declining perception of program

26. What other challenges would you like to note that are not included in the list above?
- (Text-Box, Please Specify)
 - N/A
27. What are some of the reasons you've heard for officers not calling out DREs?
(Choose one in each category between - frequent, occasionally, never)
- Time constraints
 - Uneducated on when to call
 - Technical issues within the callout system
 - Other officers prefer blood draws/blood warrants
 - Officers believe they are equipped to handle the situation on their own
28. Are there any other reasons you've heard of for why a DRE officer may not be called?
- (text box)
 - N/A
29. Do you believe leadership in your agency supports the DRE program?
- (Choose One)
 - Yes
 - Somewhat
 - No
30. Do you feel valued by other non-DRE officers in your role as a DRE?
- (Choose One)
 - Yes
 - Somewhat
 - No
31. Have you ever had someone express criticisms or concerns about the DRE program, or about your service as a DRE?
- Yes/No
 - If yes, please briefly explain (text box)
32. In an average month, how much time do you spend on the following activities in your role as a DRE:
- DRE evaluations, including report writing
 - (Less than 2 hours, 3-5 hours, 6-8 hours, 9+)
 - Consultations with other officers on DUI cases
 - (Less than 4 hours, 5-9 hours, 10-14 hours, 15+ hours)
 - Training other officers
 - (Less than 4 hours, 5-9 hours, 10-14 hours, 15+ hours)
 - Completing professional development activities
 - (Less than 4 hours, 5-9 hours, 10-14 hours, 15+ hours)
 - Educating the public
 - (Less than 4 hours, 5-9 hours, 10-14 hours, 15+ hours)

F) Interacting with prosecutors

a. (Less than 4 hours, 5-9 hours, 10-14 hours, 15+ hours)

33. The purpose of this study is to find ways to improve the DRE program within Washington State. What are your recommendations for improving the DRE program in Washington?

a. (text box)

Appendix D: Survey Fill-In Questions

Other reasons why a DRE officer may not be called:

- Non-DRE officers are unaware they can call out for a DRE, or assume no DRE officer is available
- DRE officers don't answer/aren't available/none in service
- Non-DRE officers don't want to wait for a DRE to respond/don't want to wait for the evaluation to be completed, as they would rather skip SFSTs and just apply for a blood warrant (e.g., "Why do a DRE eval if I have a blood draw done already?")
- On-scene supervisor doesn't require it, so communications officer may not be using call-out system to fullest extent
- Dispatch only checks for officers within their agency
- Agencies are uneducated on who pays overtime fees

Recommendations for DRE Program Provided by Officers:

- "The DRE program requires a lot of a DRE, but that is to be expected, that is why we are DRE's. It is expert level work, thus there should be long reports and documentation."
- "More training for non-DREs on what is or is not available, i.e., roll call training."
- "To gain more support from senior leadership, starting with the Chief down to the first line supervisors."
- "Send more officers working patrol through ARIDE, so they feel more confident in identifying and arresting drug impaired drivers."
- "We need to keep a good leader, similar to our current coordinator, that clearly works to unite the various DRE's for the good of the program. We need to double the amount of DRE trained officers, statewide, with incentives. Incentives would help with retention of experienced DRE's. A current trend is DREs leaving after the 4 years - we need to work on retaining them."
- "We frequently host in-service and training sessions where prosecutors and other partners from the legal system are invited. Perhaps sending invites to supervisors/commanders to attend as well to broaden their understanding and support of the program would be helpful."
- "Continue to promote it and get more involved"
- "Outreach and education for officers who have the capability to request DREs. Continuing to improve the DRE program itself (technology and command support)"
- "Larger scope of what DREs can articulate impairment on"
- "Increase the number of DRE certified officers"
- "Have the DRE program be more influential in terms of educating other and doing consults or since blood takes 1-2 years to return. The testimony can replace the results for time constraints."
- "More education to non-DRE officers and admin on the importance of our role"
- "Educating new officers on the benefits of calling out a DRE. Improving the quantity of active/available DREs."
- "More DREs, more education for non-DRE officers"

- “Remove the program from WSP”
- “Hosting workshops for agency leadership to highlight the benefits of the DRE program so individual DREs can be supported.”
- “Better call-out system. Text do not work when people are sleeping. Getting buy-in from prosecutors and agency leaders. Timely tox results.”
- “For WSP, I'd like a DRE identifier in badge number like all other WSP specialties have. Also, I'd like to be able to wear the jumpsuit for easy ID of DREs, DRE morale, quick uniform readiness when called to scenes off-duty, and it has more pockets for DRE equipment. It can easily be washed after shift of conducting evaluations which can lead to soiled uniforms depending on the subject being evaluated.”
- “Providing DREs with templates or PowerPoints to utilize in training other officers/the public.”
- “More money and schools to get a new generation of instructors up and running to take over in the very near future. Also, a long-term sergeant who is not trying to promote to provide stability and consistency to the program. Ryan has been a breath of fresh air and has done some very nice things. Knowing he is actively seeking to leave the programs means another change in the near future and thus relearning anew and adjusting. So I don't have any investment in what is taking place currently because it will all change very soon! The admin of the program has been its biggest hurdle for the last 10 or so years. So much conflict and animosity and it trickles down to the boots on the ground.”
- “The program is a great program. Its value could use a little more educational support to command.”
- “Get rid of ‘per se’ for THC”
- “Possibly educating officers on using this resource more. A lot of them don't know that they can use the callout feature, and a lot just go for warrants without a DRE”
- “Getting DREs into areas and around the state, specifically areas that have none”
- “Educating non-DRE officers of DRE roles and their policy and procedure”
- “The program managers need to quit accepting applicants that do not want to be a DRE, but are being forced to apply to the program by their agency, because they are in a traffic or DUI position.”
- “More agency support for its DREs”
- “More education for officers on when to use a DRE, we need more DRE callouts”
- “Additional education for non DRE about the importance of an evaluation”
- “Increase specialty pay for DREs”
- “Technology improvements for DREs and legislative requirements requiring officers to attempt to include DREs in more investigations”
- “As always, more training. Never stop learning.”
- “WSP and State funding issues, nickel and diming DRE students and instructors during training events”
- “As mentioned before, I believe that a monthly newsletter detailing news and updates regarding DRE related subjects would be appreciated.”
- “Need administrative buy-in from agency heads in order for the program to continue to grow and be successful.”

- “Incentives for DREs within the program, awards for active DREs, and recognition towards people who stay in the program and do a good job”
- “Continued trainings on drugs and effects on the body”
- “Consolidate the narrative, face sheet, database entry”