

Patrol work schedule assessment

Many law enforcement agencies struggle with designing work schedules that efficiently and optimally deploy available patrol resources. The path to developing an efficient work schedule that optimizes the effective deployment of patrol personnel requires thoughtful consideration of several overarching goals:

- Reducing or eliminating predictable overtime
- Eliminating peaks and valleys in staffing due to scheduled leave
- Ensuring appropriate staffing levels in all patrol zones or beats
- Providing sufficient staff to manage multiple and priority calls in patrol zones or beats
- Satisfying both operational and staff needs, including helping to ensure a proper work/life balance and equitable workloads for patrol staff

Designing a schedule that accomplishes these goals requires an intentional approach that is customized to your agency's characteristics (e.g., staffing levels, geographic factors, crime rates, zone/beat design, contract/labor rules), and there are several key components that bear consideration in that process.

This worksheet has been designed to help assess the patrol work schedule in use within your law enforcement agency in relation to these components. When completed, this worksheet will provide you with an overall composite score for your agency. It will also highlight the areas of your patrol schedule that scored low, which may help identify areas that require adjustment.

Instructions

For each statement in Section 1, use the system below to rate the component, placing the designated score in the corresponding box. Your responses should reflect how the schedule actually and regularly functions, from an objective perspective.

- 2 - The schedule satisfies this component completely, or nearly completely.
- 1 - The schedule satisfies this component partially, or to some degree.
- 0 - The schedule satisfies this component minimally, or not at all.

For each statement in Section 2, use the system below to objectively rate the component, placing the designated score in the corresponding box.

- 1 - The schedule satisfies this component.
- 0 - The schedule does not satisfy this component

If you are uncertain of an answer, you are encouraged to discuss and assess the component collaboratively with the person or persons responsible for maintaining the patrol work schedule. After scoring each component, tally the totals and see page 3 for additional information.

Interpreting the scores

The components listed in Section 1 involve efficiencies or standards that many patrol schedules only partially meet. These areas substantively impact the effectiveness of the work schedule, and to the extent possible, they should all be fully met. The components in Section 2 generally involve a yes or no question; either the schedule satisfies the component, or it does not. The areas in Section 2 are important and should also be met whenever possible, as they contribute to the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the schedule. However, the components in Section 1 are more critical, and deserve the highest level of attention. Regardless of the stated importance of these components, compliance with FLSA and/or labor contracts (as described in Section 2) is a requirement.

Scores

25-22: If the patrol schedule scored in this range, it is likely relatively efficient and generally meeting operational objectives. However, if there are any components within Section 1 that were scored as a 1 or 0, adjustments may be required.

21-18: If the patrol schedule scored in this range, it is likely that adjusting the components of the schedule would improve its effectiveness and efficiency. Priority consideration should be given to any component in Section 1 that was scored as a 1 or 0.

17 or below: If the patrol schedule scored in this range, there are several areas of effectiveness or efficiency that are not being met by the current design. It is likely that a full schedule redesign will be necessary to optimize effectiveness.

There are numerous patrol work schedule designs that can be used to satisfy all of the components included in this assessment. This includes a wide range of rotations and shift configurations, which can be customized to meet operational needs.

Schedule Components	Rating
Section 1	
Maximized shift coverage during the periods of greatest need for services (assessed by hour, day, month, and/or season).	
Providing overlaps in coverage across all shift changes.	
Flexibility to accommodate vacations, individual training, holidays, and predictable sick leave.	
Minimized use of overtime to manage predictable leave (e.g., vacation, training).	
Reduction of significant peaks and valleys in daily personnel allocations that occur due to leave patterns.	
Ensuring appropriate staffing levels in all patrol beats/zones.	
Availability of supplemental staff to manage multiple and priority CFS in patrol beats/zones.	
An allocation or allowance of time for in-service training and internal meetings.	
Integration of first-line supervisors into the overall schedule in a manner that includes consistent supervision of personnel groups or teams.	
Sub-Total Section 1 (maximum of 18)	
Section 2	
Using a single shift duration.	
Substantial consistency and continuity of shift rotations.	
Limiting scheduled work hours to no more than 2,080, inclusive of leave time or holiday time (unless budgets or labor practices provide otherwise).	
Reducing available scheduled work time for each patrol officer, based on holiday hours allocated as leave time (reducing work time from 2,080 hours).	
Conformity with labor contracts, or Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) allowances for public safety employees, which prescribe the maximum hours allowed within a work cycle or year.	
A plan for easy and consistent inclusion of additional work shifts as the workforce grows on a temporary or a permanent basis (e.g., school resource officers who are available during summer months).	
A mechanism for adjusting patrol personnel deployments, without significant service disruption, following a temporary or permanent reduction in force.	
Sub-Total Section 2 (maximum of 7)	
Overall Total Score (maximum score – 25)	

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wherever you are based, we look forward to working together.

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