

# E.I.S.

A GUIDE TO AN EFFECTIVE EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

BUILDING TRUST AND HIGHER-PERFORMING  
TEAMS THROUGH EARLY INTERVENTION  
AND POSITIVE LEADERSHIP

# GUARDIAN TRACKING

creating higher-performing teams

One of Guardian Tracking's primary goals is to promote excellence by recognizing positive officer behavior, and effectively reinforcing that behavior. We know that is an essential part of improving policing culture. In this ebook, however, we will focus on another essential aspect of police leadership, Early Intervention (or Early Warning) Systems.

Guardian Tracking has 12 years as a company dedicated to improving policing culture and our goal is to help your

for increased accountability are creating shockwaves throughout the country.

Without trust and legitimacy, both internal and external, police agencies cannot function effectively. While most officers are honorable and embody professionalism, courage, and service, there are some who do not.

Mounting pressure, public mistrust, and constant exposure to human hardship can take a toll on even the most resilient of officers. When that happens, it can result in



## PUBLIC SAFETY ORGANIZATIONS CHOOSE US TO HELP IMPROVE THEIR CULTURE AND PROMOTE LEADERSHIP

organization with adapting to the challenges faced by law enforcement today.

Currently, over 1,100 public safety organizations trust us to help improve their culture, promote leadership, and provide transparency within their organization. This ebook was written to guide you through a successful implementation of an EIS/EWS for any size organization.

Law enforcement agencies around the country are facing an urgent dilemma. Constant scrutiny from the media and cries

a change of behavior, which if left unchecked could destroy lives, communities, agencies, and careers. Your officers and the citizens of the community you serve deserve better. To create positive change transparency will play a vital role in the future of the law enforcement profession.

For the safety and well-being of our officers and our communities, leaders must take proactive measures to ensure they are assuming an active role in the day-to-day workings of their departments.



## Early Intervention Systems (EIS)

are not meant to be a substitute for engaged leadership.

EIS is early in the sense that it helps to identify an officer's unsatisfactory job performance that may not warrant formal disciplinary action yet indicate that an officer is having problems dealing with personal or job related stressors. This could impact interactions with co-workers or citizens.

**A major contribution of an EI system is its ability to identify a wide range of problems and not just a system to focus on problem officers.**

EIS provide the opportunity for leaders to intervene before problems lead to a serious incident such as a lawsuit, a citizen complaint over excessive force, or some other crises involving the department.

An EIS warns an officer to the extent that it sends a pre-disciplinary and informal but clear message that his or her performance needs improvement.

An EIS can proactively help leaders identify and monitor officers' performance in need of course correction and additional support.

At the same time, these tools can also act in defense of an officer's actions by portraying a realistic picture of their character and highlighting their performance history with the department.

No Early Intervention process will be effective without engaged leadership. **Are you engaged? Is the leadership within the organization engaged?**

# IT BEGINS WITH LEADERSHIP

Seizing opportunities to motivate employees helps agencies improve communication and develop stronger teams from the top down.

The most impactful EIS includes pre-disciplinary performance indicators and is part of an ongoing performance management process. The success or failure of any EIS to create a climate of accountability within a law enforcement agency begins with a strong commitment from the agency's leadership to implement and constantly monitor the program.

First-line supervisors play a vital role in Early Intervention. They must be able to monitor and address EIS related data. With the proper insight, first-line supervisors can proactively engage officers about potential personal or professional problems that may be affecting job performance. Furthermore, because every officer is different, supervisors need flexible intervention options to meet a wide range of needs. As Deputy Chief of the Buffalo Grove Police, Roy Bethge (Ret.) explains,

*"First-line supervisors have the essential role of caring for their employees. In today's ever-changing and dynamic law enforcement agencies we have an obligation to make sure officers get home safe and healthy each day, each month, each year, and to the end of their careers. EIS play a key role in ensuring the wellness of our officers as they change shifts, work special details, attend court, and are managed by different supervisors.*

*"At the highest levels in police organizations, we often become aware of problems or challenges that employees face only to learn that there were signs and symptoms where an early intervention could have dramatically improved the outcome for the officer and the agency. We have an obligation to care for our people so that they can serve and protect the public upholding their oath."*

With that in mind, although flags can signify the start of behavioral problems,

## **EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEMS ARE DESIGNED TO EVALUATE DATA NOT PEOPLE.**

In some cases, the system will proactively flag events that warrant no action beyond analysis. Therefore, supervisors must also consider the situational factors leading up to this behavior, while at the same time weighing any other circumstances that may explain the officer's actions. In this sense, every flag presents an opportunity for a leader to engage their officers in conversation and offer strategies for growth.

An **EIS should never replace the human element of leadership** and does not change the critical responsibility of leadership to directly monitor their officers. Engaged leaders do not need a trigger or threshold alert to take action following a critical incident that may or may not be part of preset early intervention triggers. Noticing and documenting critical incidents officers are involved in can serve as a marker-in-time to help identify what might have contributed to an officer struggling.



## ENHANCING A HOLISTIC ENVIRONMENT

- **by cultivating awareness**

Developing a department-wide culture of personal accountability is essential. Detecting, mitigating, and monitoring problematic behavior provides an opportunity for deeper reflection and creates learning opportunities for both officers and supervisors. If an officer is struggling with their role or having difficulties adjusting to a new assignment, early Intervention paves the way for supervisors to tackle the issue from a supportive angle, thereby reducing conflict and eliminating discomfort on both sides.

Sometimes an officer will be aware of the problem but reluctant to ask for help. Other times the officer may not realize that the problem exists. In both instances, early intervention opens the door for healthy conversations and self-reflection. By centering discussions on the need for positive change, Early Intervention sends clear, compelling messages of deterrence, accountability, and empowerment from the beginning.

- **by examining practical use of an early intervention system**

Supervisors dealing with frequently transferred personnel and alternating rosters will find EIS especially beneficial. When used in conjunction with traditional performance management tools, EIS can supply insight into which areas a new employee excels and where they struggle. This is essential in gauging employees who are performing new roles or new assignments. Without a clear understanding of an employee's history, supervisors may not understand which behaviors are inherent to the officer's personality or if behavioral changes are the result of a new task or stressor. Excessive overtime, absences, irritability, or carelessness may signify hidden personal issues, including compassion fatigue. Illness, sleep deprivation, financial stress, and marital problems can alter an officer's performance, signaling the need for added support as opposed to reprimanding.

As DOJ studies have shown, targeted and specialized interventions are most effective in helping an officer achieve needed improvements. Because Early Intervention advocates a hands-on approach, if an officer is involved in an incident, supervisors will be better equipped to take into account outside factors and view situations from the officer's perspective. Not only does this process improve the quality of supervision, but it also cements the importance of comprehensive and consistent performance analysis. The supportive nature of the organization is a key factor in facilitating recovery from stress, adversity, and trauma and provides sustainability throughout a career in public safety.

- **by spotlighting high performers**

While traditionally EISs have been used to highlight pre-disciplinary actions, these programs can also call attention to exemplary behavior. Not only does this practice encourage officers to go beyond their regular duties, but it also fosters constructive interactions between members and supervisors. When a leader affirms good behavior, they are demonstrating an investment in their officer's professional development and well-being. In turn, positive reinforcement can have a powerful impact on the entire agency, creating a rippling effect of value and validation, and a stronger, healthier organizational culture.



# 6 MYTHS

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# 6 FACTS

about an EIS

## 1 EIS WILL REPLACE PROACTIVE SUPERVISION

**Fact:** EIS should never be viewed as a means to replace engaged, effective leaders who cultivate positive relationships with the men and women they lead. Relying solely on data diminishes effectiveness and negatively impacts morale; essentially reducing people to statistics and contradicting the principles of successful leadership. Leaders must examine each incident individually, viewing Early Intervention as a tool to initiate constructive conversations, provide meaningful feedback, and incorporate proactive discussions.

## 2 WILL CREATE CULTURES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

**Fact:** While an EIS can reaffirm accountability standards; it cannot enforce them. Therefore, holding members accountable for their actions will always rely on leadership engagement and commitment. While no one wants to be responsible for pointing out a member's shortcomings, being forced to continually compensate for a poor performer can wear on an entire squad. Regardless of an agency's use of an EIS, all supervisors must play an active part in ensuring all officers remain productive and professional.

## 3 WILL SINGLE OUT ENGAGED OFFICERS

**Fact:** When setting up an Early Intervention program, leaders must take into account the varying degree of posts and positions within their department. It's reasonable to assume certain assignments will generate more complaints or lead to a higher degree of resistance. And while it's true proactive officers may receive more flags, it's important to remember a system alert does not automatically mean there is an issue with the officer. In contrast, EIS flags can point to a more significant problem within the department or division. If multiple officers receive flags within a specific category, this may signify the need for safer practices, increased resources, better training, higher situational awareness, or department policy changes.

## 4 WILL HURT MORALE

**Fact:** Organizational conflict, poor performance, and negative public discourse hurt morale. So do risky behaviors, unfounded allegations, and civil lawsuits. Yes, Early Intervention Systems may call attention to underlying issues; however, they do not cause them. Data alone cannot create problems where they do not exist. On the contrary, Early Intervention Systems provide officers with the ability to address internal concerns and justify their actions before being faced with a formal complaint.

## 5 WILL RUIN REPUTATIONS

**Fact:** EIS protect careers and the integrity of your organization. A major contribution of an EI system is its ability to identify a wide range of problems and not just a system to focus on problem officers. By identifying patterns of performance problems, EWS and EIS provide the opportunity for leaders to intervene before problems lead to a serious incident such as a lawsuit, a citizen complaint over excessive force, or some other crises involving the department. An EI system warns an officer to the extent that it sends a pre-disciplinary and informal but clear message that his or her performance needs improvement.

## 6 EXPENSIVE & NOT SUITED FOR SMALLER AGENCIES

**Fact:** The need for early intervention has nothing to do with an agency's size. While it's true larger organizations may incorporate early intervention as part of a larger performance management system, all agencies can benefit from these programs. In fact, ninety-five percent of the police agencies in the country operate with fewer than 100 officers. However, that doesn't mean these officers are any less effective.

**REGARDLESS OF LOCATION, COMPLAINTS, LITIGATION, AND STAFF; ATTRITION CAN COST AN AGENCY MORE THAN ITS REPUTATION. AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO EXPENSIVE AND EXHAUSTIVE LEGAL RAMIFICATIONS, A VERSATILE EIS IS A COST-EFFECTIVE TOOL THAT HELPS AGENCIES ENSURE ALL MEMBERS ARE PROACTIVELY SUPPORTED.**



# Art and Science of Leadership

EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT ARE CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESS OF ANY ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE.

While EIS alerts forewarn, each flag is fact sensitive, and a learning opportunity for both the employee and department leadership.

It is the responsibility of leadership to act on the

must work to establish an organizational climate of accountability and empowerment while at the same time committing to significant and sustainable change. While a considerable challenge, the cumulative

Positive results come from both the art and science of leadership to inspire engaged leadership throughout the organization.

An early intervention feature can promote transparency,



information appropriately and use it to help and support the employee. Like any element of ongoing performance management, EIS are not “set-it-and-forget-it programs.”

Early Intervention systems require a continuous commitment by the department as a whole to ensure that supervisors follow through with their responsibilities to respond to EWS alerts and conduct meaningful interventions.

In today's environment leaders

effect of changes made in the roles of supervisors and changes in department policy has the potential for changing the organizational culture of a department by establishing new standards of accountability and employee support.

Some may dismiss EIS as a micromanagement tool.

Relying on event counts and algorithms of predetermined problematic behavior CAN negatively impact an individual officer's morale as well as the morale of the entire department.

guidance, and growth, allowing officers to view how their behavior is perceived and reflected.

**WITH AN EFFECTIVE EARLY INTERVENTION SYSTEM, PUBLIC SAFETY PROFESSIONALS CAN PERFORM THEIR DUTIES WITH CONFIDENCE AND CLARITY, KNOWING THAT THEIR SUPERVISORS AND THEIR AGENCY ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE POSITIVE PROGRESSION OF THEIR CAREERS.**

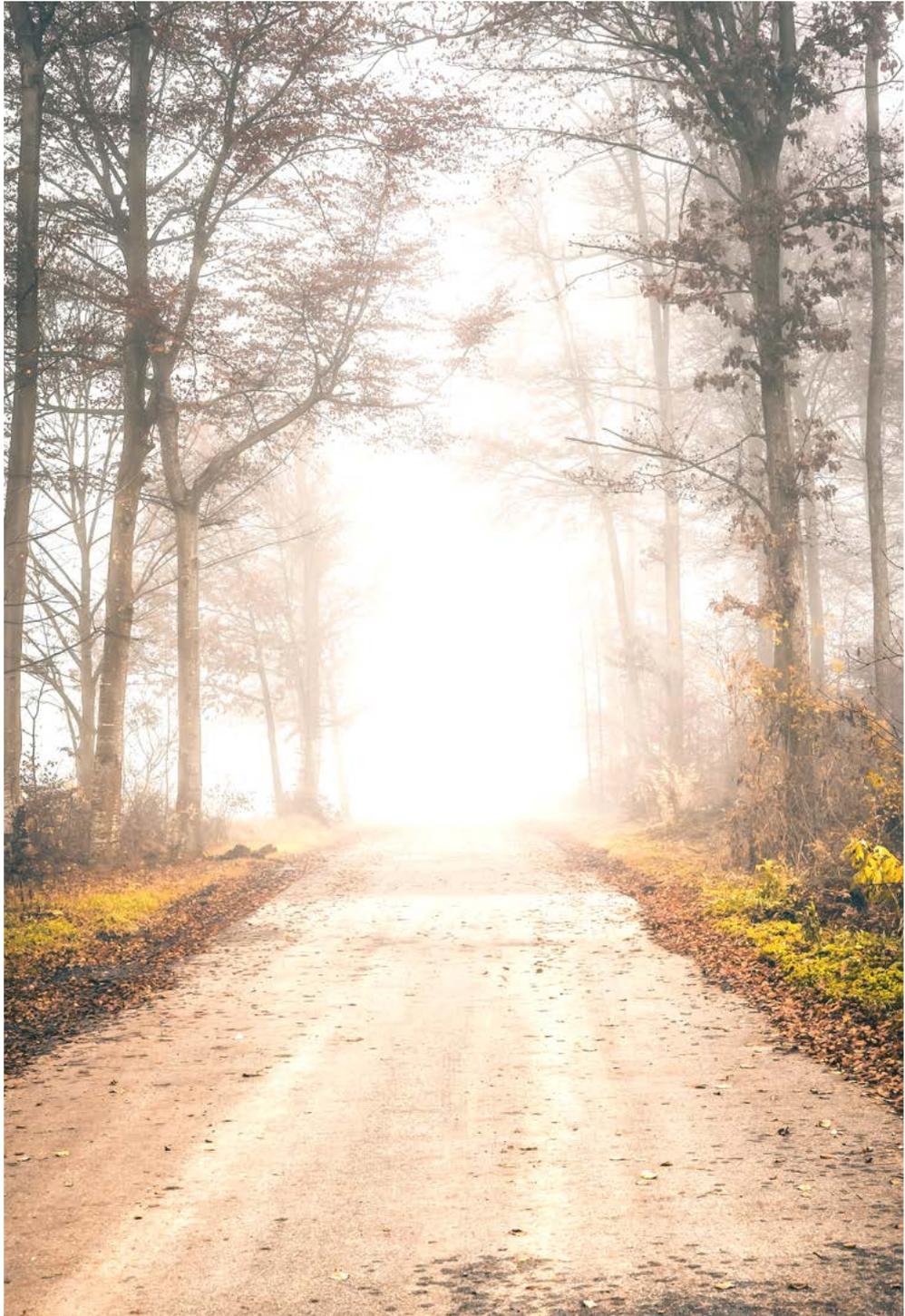
# ENSURING SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

*On staff, GT has a combined 70 years of law enforcement and  
CALEA accreditation experience--we understand*

Before deploying an Early Intervention System, agencies should have written directives outlining which events require data capture, monitoring, analysis, and specific thresholds and time parameters for each qualifying category. In addition to these policies, it's also essential to establish directives clearly defining the agency's reporting practices, documentation, review, and meaningful intervention strategies. Supervisors should also be briefed on the breadth of resources available to officers and the procedure to request and obtain these services.

**For an EIS to be successful,  
the program must apply to ALL  
members of the department.**

Finally, self-reflection is vital for individual growth. As such, officers should have the ability to view their files. When talking to department members about the Early Intervention System, leaders should stress that all information will be handled discreetly and that certain documentation is kept confidential.



# INTEGRATING EARLY INTERVENTION INTO EVERYDAY PRACTICE



Employee participation and leadership commitment are critical to the success of any organizational improvement initiative. Therefore, departments should begin planting the seeds of early intervention well ahead of the program's rollout. Disseminating literature to employee unions and associations is a legitimate first step; however, it's paramount to provide staff members with the chance to learn more about the program and ask questions in an informal environment. Many officers will wonder how this program will affect their day-to-day, as well as future opportunities for advancement. Approaching the subject from a role-neutral perspective will assist leaders in presenting this too as an organization-wide improvement strategy.

In keeping with best practice, leaders should explain what type of information is evaluated by the EWS while always framing the conversation around pre-disciplinary objectives. First and foremost, officers should know that Early Intervention Systems are for their benefit as well as the departments. Explaining the need for a tighter focus on improving officer safety, internal culture, and community relations will steer the conversation away from micromanagement thoughts.



## About Guardian Tracking

The men and women behind Guardian Tracking are committed to bringing positive change to the world of policing. Founded by law enforcement professionals, we have stood in your shoes and we know what it means to walk out the door, not knowing what the day will bring. Throughout our roles as agency leaders, and later as CALEA assessors, we've experienced the challenges and positive effects that come with implementing real change.

In fact, it was these very issues that led us to form Guardian Tracking.

We understand that the work you do day in and day out has tremendous meaning and impact on your communities.

Our system is there to amplify that work and make it easier for you to manage so you can focus on inspiring your team and guiding them to greater success.

Guardian Tracking creates a clear path for empowered and engaged leadership to facilitate both individual and organizational success. To date, the Guardian Tracking system helps over 1100 organizations ensure higher performance, accountability, trust, employee engagement, and morale at every level of their organization.

Contact us at **[guardiantracking.com](https://guardiantracking.com)** for more information.