Norfolk Police Department Internship Portfolio

Ryleigh Holthus

01248154

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Section 1: Agency Overview

Purpose of the Agency

The Norfolk Police Department (NPD) is a law enforcement agency located in Norfolk Virginia. Its primary purpose is to protect and serve the citizens of Norfolk. This is carried out in a multitude of ways, such as prevention and detection of crime, enforcing city, state, and federal laws, preserving public order, and protecting civil rights and liberties. The mission of the NPD is to foster a safe, inclusive and thriving community through building trust. Providing transparency, accountability and community engagement are key aspects in the mission. The department is committed to not only reactive law enforcement but also creating and enacting proactive strategies that address root causes of crime and disorder specific to the city.



Figure 1a. A picture of the Police Operation Center

Image Credit: City of Norfolk (n.d)

Administrative Structure

The Norfolk Police Department is led by the Chief of Police, Mark Talbot. Following him are the Deputy and Assistant Chiefs who oversee daily operations, community outreach and the

three bureaus: Field Operations, Investigative Services, and Administrative and Strategic Services. Field operations are your patrol officers, precincts and community response teams like Traffic and K9 units. The Investigative Services oversee felonies and misdemeanor crime investigations, forensics and pinpointed anti-crime operations; these are your detectives and anti-crime units. Lastly the Administrative and Strategic service bureaus handles internal support operations, infrastructure, training, and public communications. This division spans from Central Records to Financial management for your Admin services and for the Strategic services is your training divisions, 911 call center and Real Time Crime Center.



Figure 1b. Norfolk Chief of Police, Mark Talbot

Image Credit: City of Norfolk (n.d)

Population Served

The NPD serves the City of Norfolk and its citizens. The city has a diverse population of about 242-244 thousand residents and spans roughly 66 to 96 square miles. The city has a large population of military folks due to the city having the largest Naval station in the world. NPD serves many different communities from varying socioeconomic backgrounds, age groups, and racial/ethnic individuals. The city also holds a population of people experiencing homelessness,

people with mental health concerns or substance abuse, juvenile offenders and victims, all whom I encountered during my time with the NPD.



Figure 1c. Shows precinct and sector outlines

Image Credit: Department of Police, Crime Analysis Section (2021)

Funding Sources

The NPD gets funding from the City of Norfolk's general operation budget, which is made up of local taxes (property and sales) as well as various fines and fees that the city collects. There is also revenue coming from services responding to false alarms (business and residences that tally up false calls), processing fees from incident reports, collections from pawn shops, taxicab licensing and funeral escort services. In addition to the funds provided by the city, NPD also gets funds from state and federal grants, which often go towards specialized programs like community policing initiatives, new technology and task force operations.

Interfacing Agencies

The NPD does not work alone; they work with multiple local, regional, state and federal agencies. These corporations span from emergency dispatch, specialized investigations,crisis response and community programs. On a close level, the NPD works with the Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney, the city's jail, the Magistrates office, the Norfolk Circuit and General District Courts, Emergency Medical Services and the Office of Chief Medical Examiner. Officers see these agencies on a daily basis and are familiar with them. During investigations the NPD uses the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) to trace firearm evidence across jurisdictions and states. The department also collaborates with Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC), which also spans multiple agencies with investigations, interviews and evidence. In addition to the city collaborations, NPD also interfaces with neighboring jurisdictions like Portsmouth and Hampton; they also could work with the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) or the Virginia State Police & Department of Criminal Justice Services if the case deems cross city/county/state lines.



Figure 1d. Officer placing markers while investigators converse

Image Credit: The Virginian-Pilot (2026)

Strengths and Weaknesses

A standout strength of the NPD is the integration and collaboration between units. Such as the coordinated training and observation between the Bomb Squad, SWAT, K-9 and drone units. The department's investigative technology is of note as well; the Real Time Crime Center, license plate readers and access to officer body cameras and vehicle cameras give a protective advantage to the responding officers and prevention of crime. The NPD also provides resources and limitations for officers and their mental health.

With strengths there are also weaknesses in every agency. With the new technologies there are also drawbacks, a notable one is the lag and blind spots that the Real Time Crime Center experiences. This could result in missed evidence during criminal incidents or having a criminal act going entirely unnoticed. There are also challenges when prosecuting juveniles which is partially rooted in our current political and legal standpoint surrounding juvenile justice. Additionally some units are understaffed; this can limit operation capacity when short staffed. For example, there need to be two Harbor Patrol officers to operate the patrol boat, it's very common to only have one officer in office at a time. As well as, the ICAC unit is a department that could have major benefits from more resources and improvements. They only have so much manpower to only go after the obtainer and not the producer of Child Sexualized Abuse Material (CSAM).



Figure 1e. Inside the Real Time Crime Center in Norfolk

Image Credit: Jay Greene / WTKR News 3 (2025)

Section 2: Internship Experience

Role and Function Within the Agency

My primary role while interning at the Norfolk Police Department was to observe and learn across the multiple divisions and units during my internship. Rather than being assigned to one precinct or officer, I was given the opportunity to rotate through different departments which provided me with a comprehensive view of the full picture of what the NPD does. I was partnered with officers to do ride-alongs, accompanied detectives and special unit officers to shadow and learn throughout their day-to-day duties.

Throughout the internship, I assisted officers responding to 911 calls of service, observed detectives in the Property and Special Crimes, and the Narcotics Division. I observed operations at the Real Time Crime Center as well as the 911 Call center; I attended court proceedings and reviewed evidence in on-going crimes, as well as overseeing training by the K-9, SWAT, Bomb Squad and Drone Unites. I also had the opportunity to interact with a Magistrate and a

Commonwealth's attorney. They provided insight into the judicial process that follows law enforcement. I had the chance to help officers by entering information into the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system and helped calm a distressed citizen as officers worked to identify her and proceed with next steps.



Figure 2a. CAD interface in patrol car

Image Credit: Ryleigh HOlthus (2026)



Figure 2b. 911 dispatcher and screens

Image Credit: eforceSoftware (n.d)

Knowledge and Skills Gained

The internship gave me substantial knowledge pertaining to a future career in criminal justice. Before the internship, my knowledge surrounding law enforcement was largely shaped by academic coursework and media portrayals, both created an incomplete representation of this field. Through this opportunity, I gained first-hand knowledge of different procedures including: processing evidence, understanding legal forms such as domestic violence lethality screening form, the FR300 accident report, the NIBIN ballistic testing form and the process of obtaining video evidence from a private business. I also developed an understanding of the legal

distinctions like the difference between judicial (permitted) warrants and administrative (non-permitted) warrants, the difference between secured and unsecured bonds, and the legal processes around juvenile detention and custody orders. Additionally I gained insight into the technology that is used in the department such as body and car cameras and the NIBIN's database. To add to my future career goal, my conversation with an ICAC officer created a deeper interest into instigations around sensitive topics.



Figure 2c. NIBIN's interface (Viewed during Property Crimes)

Image Credit: Virginia Department of Forensic Science (2013)



Figure 2d. Sex Offender & Crimes Against Minors Registry (viewed in Central records)

Image Credit: Ryleigh Holthus (2026)

Reflection on the Experience

This experience shaped my academic career. My prior knowledge was based on second hand information from classes and a somewhat romanticized view of the criminal justice system through television and the media. What I oversaw during my time with the NPD gave me a more

complex and a more human idea of what these officers, detectives and citizen workers go through on a day-to-day basis. I know that there's still corruption in law enforcement but from my personal experience (that could also be swayed) there is good in the Norfolk Police Department. The officers were patient and empathetic and used their right judgment in situations that were emotionally demanding and sometimes legally complicated. I experienced and got to converse with officers about some of the hardest days of the job and how they keep pushing. From 911 dispatchers who must maintain composure during hard calls to the detectives who investigate cases involving people that are having the worst day of their lives.

The most impactful day was May 26th 2026, I was doing a ride along this day and we got called to a suicide. While this was a difficult thing to witness first hand, it further reinforced what I want to do in the future in this field. I want to be able to contribute meaningful work to my community and protect vulnerable people. This day will stick with me forever. I remember her name, the road she lived on, how she was found and how her family reacted. She will always be a very important person in my career.



Figure 2e. Medical Examiner Building (Tidewater District)

Image Credit: Virginia Department of Health (n.d)

Overall Learning and Benefits

Overall this internship provided me great insight into the field and left me with a deeper desire to continue pursuing my degree. I learned that law enforcement is not only to be found by people enforcing the law but also by the empathy shown in difficult situations. This opportunity could not have been shown to me in a textbook as I would not have gained as deep of an understanding as the internship provided me. The police department is more than Patrol officers on the street, it is an entire law enforcement Community with specialized units civilian personnel Partnerships working on public safety. The biggest thing I learned is that I am in a degree that I want to build a career with.

Section 3: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Literature Review

Wolak, Finkelhor, Mitchell, and Ybarra (2008) provided the realities of online predators in their studies. They found out that internet sex crimes involving adults and children stem from statutory rape rather than forcible assault. Typically the two individuals meet and then develop a relationship, the adult openly seduces the underage person rather than what people typically think (this happening through chicory or violence). During the past couple of years police have been tasked to investigate online child exploitation and have had to encounter a range of challenging material which they may not have been ready for (Krause, 2009). With this growing

technology ICAC came about as tasking multiple officers with this challenging content was doing more harm than good. This is not to say that the ICAC task force don't have their own struggles. A study by Burruss, Holt and Wall-Parker (2018) found that nearly one in four ICAC investigators show high levels of secondary traumatic stress and or burnout. Bourke and Cram (2014) support these findings by providing an insight of how ICAC personnel can manage secondary trauma formed from this job. All this information goes to show that ICAC is one of the most psychologically demanding units in law enforcement. The departments must invest in meaningful wellness outlets to these investigators to sustain the effectiveness of this operation.



Figure 3a. Map of the USA. Red dots are unique computers that have CSAM

Image Credit: Wyoming Attorney Generals ICAC (2008)

Theoretical Framework: Routine Activities Theory

Routine activity theory provides the framework for understanding both the literature and my internship. The theory says that crime occurs when three elements fall into place: a motivated offender, a suitable target and the absence of a capable guardian. Wolak et al. (2008) discusses how the internet is a great space where predators specifically go online where adolescents look for people to talk to. These kids are vulnerable as they don't have someone monitoring or looking over their shoulder and these predators know that.

During my internship, a lot of my ride-alongs were patrolling high crime areas, creating a police presence and eliminating the absence of a capable guardian. We were there to signify that these possible offenders are being watched and should not commit a crime.

Section 4: Perspectives on the Internship

Overall Perspective

My overall experience at the NPD is highly positive. This experience moved me emotionally and clarified the direction I want to go in my career. I came into the internship with many questions and misunderstandings of the field, I left with a deeper desire to pursue my degree and move on into this career. My experience wouldn't have been the same as reading a textbook as I was able to capture people in this field, help and respond to their community.



Figure 4a. Dog in the back of animal protection van

Image Credit: Ryleigh Holthus (2026)

Benefits of Internship Placement

I believe there are many benefits from this internship opportunity. First I got exposed to so many different career paths in the NPD which many never get to experience. Unlike being placed in just one department I got exposed to every stage of what a case holds. Even though I wasn't carried through a case from start to finish I was able to grasp the idea of what it would be like in every stage. For example, the initial response, investigations, evidence collection, and court, all of that paints a picture of what a carried out case looks like. Most importantly I got an experience that could not be replicated from a textbook or a slideshow. I got first-hand experience and witnessed multiple things that to some are just stories but to me was real life.



Figure 4b. Narcotic testing equipment (saw at narcotics unit)

Image Credit: Julian Dufort (2021)

Potential Employment Prospects

During my stay at the Norfolk Police Department I was given many chances to make connections which I took advantage of. I made a name for myself and had people give me their numbers for recommendations later in my future. These numbers aren't just things that I can put on an application, they represent what I can do, which is make good impressions in a field I'm passionate about. These connections are promising areas of potential employment. I have made connections and made a name in the NPD that post graduation I would happily go back and apply.

Preparation as a Competitive Candidate

This opportunity has strengthened my candidacy for positions in Criminal Justice and serving my community. Having that direct exposure to difficult manners and being able to be present in a professional way makes me stand out. I'm showing employers that I can hold composure, I can show respect to my community and I'm a collaborator. I also show that I have a deeper understanding of evidence procedures, observing interrogations and legal distinctions; all of this can come out on my resume, in a cover letter and job interviews.



Figure 4c. New recruit academy combat training

Image Credit: Suffolk Police Department (2025)

What I liked Best

What I liked most about the job was being able to see different units work. I found what I want to do and what I don't necessarily want to do, but still have respect for those areas. Specifically working in the K-9 training unit I was fascinated by the psychology of animal training and the bond between the handlers and the working dogs. The trainer has extensive understanding of animal behavior and what that looks like while training and working. I also enjoyed shadowing a professional in the Special crimes Unit. They deal with very sensitive topics and the way they make victims comfortable to be able to help them was amazing to

witness. In whatever unit I shadowed, I got to see the human side of these professionals. I got to learn how they can deal with this line of work and go home and be content.



Figure 4d. Attentive K-9 and Trainer
Image Credit: Witt Brooks (n.d)



Figure 4e. K-9 with training toy
Image Credit: Mike Kremer (2024)

What I liked least

What I found least interesting was Central Records. Not saying that we don't need this unit, but I found it to be more paperwork than what I would prefer in a future career. I understand policing and detective work comes with paperwork but there's a split between interactions and paperwork. During my time at Central Records, I interacted with retirees or people having this being a second job. I respect the work that they do. It is important and we need them, just not for me currently.

Suggestions for improvement

One area of improvement is the communication amongst the different precincts, sectors and units of the department. I was under the lieutenant at the first precinct but I went to the second precinct, the POC, and shadowed different detectives. Sometimes the chief of that unit or the person that overlooked that area didn't know that I would be coming that day though, I was told an email was sent out to each unit that I would be shadowing. This improvement is more than on an internship-based view, but from a department collaboration view. At the end of the day, I did get my time in and they were receptive to taking me in whether they knew in advance or not.

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