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**Document Title: Civilian Staff in Policing: An Assessment of the
2009 Byrne Civilian Hiring Program**

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ABSTRACT

Civilians have come to play significant roles in law enforcement over the years. As the number of civilians in policing has increased, their roles have expanded as well. Originally occupying clerical positions, civilians now are often found in technical positions, research and planning positions, and administrative positions. In some departments, they even assist in non-hazardous patrol and investigation duties traditionally in the domain of uniformed officers.

During the recession of 2008, many law enforcement agencies were forced to lay off substantial numbers of employees as municipalities struggled to balance budgets with lower tax revenues. Although many law enforcement administrators appreciate the value that civilians bring to policing, they were often the first to be laid off or furloughed as budgets were tightened. The Bureau of Justice Assistance, through its Byrne grant program, provided competitive funds for agencies to retain civilians or hire new civilian staff.

This report presents the results of an NIJ-funded national examination of the Byrne civilian hiring program and the effects of the program on law enforcement agencies and crime rates. It also provides a picture of the state of civilianization in policing and issues associated with the hiring, retention, uses, and performance of civilians. The study combined a variety of research methods, including a national survey of the use of civilians in policing, interviews with agencies that hired or retained civilians through the Byrne program, an analysis of crime rates among Byrne grantees and matched control agencies, and case studies of innovative uses of Byrne funding.

The results underscored the range of positions that civilians now hold and the positive contributions they make to police agencies. Civilians are now not only in clerical and support roles, but also in key skilled positions in I.T., crime analysis, intelligence, human resources, and media relations. Resentment of civilians that has been observed in earlier reports was not a major issue among respondents in our study.

We found that Byrne grant recipients made good use of the positions made possible by the program, in many cases adding significant new analytic and intelligence capabilities to their departments. Byrne grant recipients believed that civilians hired through the program increased their agencies' effectiveness by freeing sworn staff for patrol and investigation duties, by enhancing crime analysis and intelligence capabilities, and by reducing costs. In most instances, the short-term grants led to permanent positions within the law enforcement agencies. During a period of recession and retrenchment, the Byrne civilian hiring program helped make it possible for some agencies not only to retain key civilian staff, but also to add civilian staff in a way that enhanced the capacity of their departments.

