

DENVER POLICE DEPARTMENT TO BEGIN HIRING CIVILIANS



In the not-so-distant future, civilians in Denver will be joining the ranks of the police department to undertake the jobs of evidence collection to crime scene analysis, according to Fox News. This is nothing new, as it is part of a trend nationally that has been increasing of late. Civilians will also be used to perform jobs such as lab technicians, fingerprint technicians and crime scene analysts. The move has the goal of saving money while also putting more officers back out into the field of patrol. "We've identified approximately 45 positions that sworn police officers are currently doing that civilians can do ... just as effectively," Chief Robert White said. "I'm pretty much of the philosophy if it doesn't require a badge and gun, with rare exceptions we should be looking for opportunities to have civilians to do that." Professor Mary Dodge, the director of the Masters of Criminal Justice Program at CU Denver, said that the main benefit of doing such a thing is cost. "Departments with tight budgets can save a lot of money. If you have a detective, who let's just say theoretically is making \$90,000, you can hire two people to fill that position." White also said that putting civilians in non-dangerous positions helps to free up police officers to better serve the community and "to really get them focusing out in those communities and put them in the best position where they can partner with the citizens in an effort to meet our long-term goal, which is the continuation of the prevention of crime." Dodge noted that civilians being able to perform jobs as well as police officers will depend on the training they receive and how well they respond to that training. "Crime analysis is one of the most important positions that departments have now ... and that's what you get through a university," he said. "For example you have a student who is graduating who has crime-mapping skills and they can go in to a department and offer a great deal that a police officer may have no training in." Dodge noted that a major problem could be resentment amongst officers who might get the feeling that they are being displaced. Dodge said that collaboration needs to be stressed. "For example in a crime lab they're looking at little pieces of evidence and so a civilian can do that," Dodge said. "But they may miss the whole picture. If you still have sworn police officers in your crime lab they can put the puzzle pieces together." White hopes to add anywhere from 40 to 50 civilians to the Denver Police Department over the span of a couple of years. They will be taking phone reports, making cold calls and file field reports where an officer with a badge and gun is not needed. White provided an example: "Police officers spend time taking traffic reports, tens of thousands of hours a year. That doesn't really require a police officer to be on the scene because there's not a crime in progress. Civilianization will actually help us put more sworn officers out on the street which will ultimately increase our response time (to dangerous crimes)," White said.