

MARYLAND CRIME RESEARCH & INNOVATION CENTER

Spring 2026 | NEWSLETTER

➤ A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR: MCRIC INSIGHTS

Greetings Friends, Colleagues, and Partners,

Spring 2026 is well underway with a number of exciting projects taking place. Our ongoing partnerships continue to drive innovative strategies for crime prevention and reduction, emphasizing data-driven approaches to inform decision-making, and understanding local contexts in public safety efforts. We recently wrapped up a project **evaluating several Maryland programs addressing the opioid epidemic**, our **embedded analyst program** is growing, we received funding to expand our partnership with Prince George's County Police Department to **assess patterns and risk factors for the concentration of crime along jurisdictional borders**, and we are finalizing the **Maryland community safety dashboard** to be released later this Spring.

While MCRIC is deeply engaged with our Maryland neighbors, our team is also having an impact on the broader community. MCRIC Director, **Dr. Bianca Bersani**, delivered the keynote address on Emerging Adult Justice to a collective of practitioners and policymakers taking innovative and developmentally-informed steps to respond to youthful offending. We congratulate **Dr. Torri Sperry**, MCRIC Research Director, on receiving recognition from the American Society of Criminology for her work analyzing the relationship between city mayors, department chiefs, and use of force policies on racial disparities in fatal police encounters.

Check out the **More News** section below for research by our UMD colleagues related to these projects and others. As your research partners, with the on-going grant season, feel free to reach out to discuss your ideas and collaboration opportunities. You can reach us at: **mcric@umd.edu**.

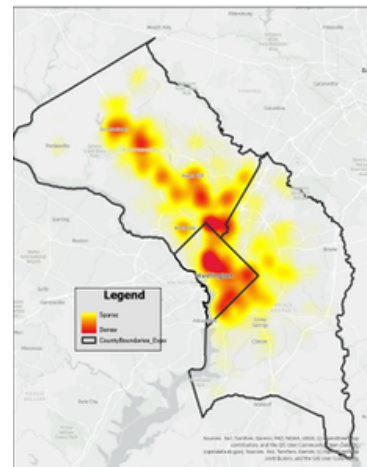
~Your MCRIC Team

➤ PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: PG/DC Jurisdictional Border Crime Grant Awarded

Studying Crime Concentration along the PG/DC Border

MCRIC is expanding its work in the National Capital Region by examining why certain communities experience persistently high rates of crime and violence, with a particular focus on the border areas between Prince George's County and Washington, DC. Funded by the **Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP)**, this project combines geospatial analytics, community interviews, and ride-alongs with law enforcement officers to better understand the factors driving these concentrations of violence and to develop practical, community-informed strategies.

Preliminary research shows that crime is disproportionately concentrated along these jurisdictional borders, where overlapping legal and practical challenges can complicate law enforcement efforts. These patterns suggest that border areas are not just locations of crime, but rather, spaces where multiple social, environmental, and enforcement challenges emerge, creating vulnerabilities that require careful, coordinated attention.



Continued: Studying Crime Concentration along the PG/DC Border

By focusing on both where crime occurs and why it happens, the project is helping to identify key risk factors, guide patrol strategies, and highlight community needs. The insights generated aim to strengthen public safety in the National Capital Region, support coordinated prevention efforts, and improve community well-being in areas that have historically been overlooked.

► **PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Developing Algorithms Using Body-Worn Camera (BWC) Data**

Using Artificial Intelligence & Machine-Learning to Enhance Community Safety

In collaboration with the Baltimore Police Department, researchers from UMD and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln have been developing algorithms to automatically detect and predict use of force, escalation, and de-escalation in police officer-civilian interactions that are captured in Body Worn Camera (BWC) footage data. The team is currently clipping and labeling raw BWC video data to develop and train artificial intelligence (AI) / machine-learning (ML) -based computer vision and signal processing algorithms. The long-term goal of this project is to develop a multi-modal ML tool that can automatically, and ultimately in near real time, detect specific actions and interaction patterns based on speech, video, and transcript from BWC, and other linked structured data elements.

► **EXPANSION OF OUR ANALYSTS PROGRAM**

Our Largest Cohort of MCRIC Analysts!

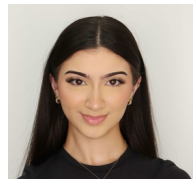
Since 2019, MCRIC has supported data analysts in partnership with the Baltimore PD (BPD). This partnership provides an opportunity for students to engage with practitioners in real-world, real-time translational research. The success of the program has resulted in its continued and expanded presence in BPD and a new collaborative partnership with the Prince George's Police Department (PGPD) this past year.

This year's embedded analysts included: **Erika Feeney**, a Criminology and Criminal Justice System (CCJS) doctoral student with research interests in youth crime prevention, program & policy evaluation, race in the system, and alternatives to incarceration; **Diane Mamish**, a CCJS Master's student with research interests in gender and crime, racial disparities in victimization, corrections, and policing as it relates to public safety; **BreAna Bell-Freeman**, a CCJS Master's student with research interests in youth's experiences in the juvenile justice system, implicit bias and discretion, the pre-carcer lives of individuals with maternal or paternal incarceration, and reintegrative programs for repeat offenders; and **Simran Gawri**, a Computer Science Master's student with research interests in generative AI, computer vision, data analytics, database management, and data visualization.

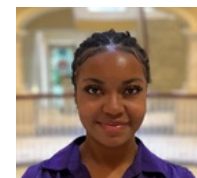
Our Analyst Program with the PGPD also grew with two new analysts this year. Current CCJS doctoral candidates - **Casey Kindall** and **Madisen Placzkowski** - both brought research interests in crime and place, racial inequalities, and policing.



Erika Feeney



Diane Mamish



BreAna Bell-Freeman



Simran Gawri



Casey Kindall



Madisen Placzkowski

Meet the full Maryland Crime Research & Innovation Center (MCRIC) Team



➤ MORE NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Recent Projects & Reports

- MCRIC Director, Dr. Bersani, **publishes research** expanding on our understanding of re-entry from prison, limits of recidivism, and offers a novel way to measure success.
- New report released **assesses the impact of local substance use treatment programs** in Maryland.
- MCRIC evaluates a youth-centered program to **understand the impact of youth-focused life-coaching & interventions**.
- New paper released looking at the **impacts of crime & law enforcement across Baltimore neighborhoods after the killing of Freddie Gray**.



Maryland Day 2026

Contact us at mcric@umd.edu



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