



Erie County Prosecutor Kevin Baxter



11 Erie County officers on 'Brady list'



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Names of 11 law enforcement officers in Erie County – including current and former members of the county sheriff’s office, the Ohio State Highway Patrol and the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation

– appear on a list known for misconduct and dishonesty.

A Brady list contains the names and details of law enforcement officers who have a
11 Erie County officers on 'Brady list'

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Here is the list of Erie County's "Brady cops," with additional information and context provided by local law enforcement:

Erie County Sheriff's Office

- Former deputy Adam Bess



- Former deputy Jeanette Barrett



Bess resigned after [purportedly choking an inmate in the Erie County Jail](#) while the inmate was being secured in a restraint chair in 2021. He was criminally charged in U.S. District Court with depriving the victim of her rights. Barrett, who was present at the time, allegedly failed to report the incident and resigned as well.

- Former detective Justin Smith

Smith was added to the list for disciplinary history. He resigned from the sheriff's office after he [was allegedly intoxicated and used a racial slur when speaking about Sandusky attorney Geoffrey Oglesby](#). Smith was hired as an officer in the Oak Harbor Police Department and was also included on [Ottawa County's Brady list](#).

- Former deputy Brian Stoll

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stop where he had an issue with the driver, according to Erie County Sheriff Paul Sigsworth.

- Former deputy Johann Matute

Matute was terminated after instances of being late for work, according to information provided by the sheriff's office. Matute allegedly falsified information relating to an interaction with a disabled vehicle, Sigsworth said.

- Deputy Trevor Harlow

Eleven years ago, Harlow was involved in a minor crash in his sheriff's office cruiser, Sigsworth said, and inaccurately reported how the crash occurred when reporting it to his superiors. Sigsworth said he wrote up Harlow for the incident, leading to his inclusion on the Brady list, but believed Harlow had learned his lesson.

"He was disciplined for inaccurate reporting. He was never dishonest about reporting, just a discrepancy on how it occurred," Sigsworth said. "Deputy Harlow certainly learned from the situation when he was a young deputy. We've had no other issues with him regarding personal integrity. He's been promoted twice, has been an excellent employee and an excellent person. He learned from the error."

Sandusky Police Department

- Officer Stephen Ritterbach

Ritterbach was originally terminated after a 30-day suspension in 2012 when he violated department standards, according to Sandusky Police Department records. Ritterbach made inappropriate comments, threats and omitted facts in regard to another officer, a subordinate. His actions questioned his ability to function as a supervisor in the department, the records state. In 2013, Ritterbach was reinstated and was added to the Brady list in 2014.

- Officer Jamie DeSalle

DeSalle was terminated in 2011 after an internal investigation ruled he had used tobacco and was dishonest about the matter, violating department policies. DeSalle was reinstated with the department and was added to the Brady List in 2014, Sandusky Police Department records state.

Specific information on three other officers' inclusion on the Brady list could not be secured for this article:

Perkins Police Department

- Tonya Corbin

Corbin was fired from the Perkins Police Department in 2021 after an incident involving the use of a stun gun at school. Corbin was reinstated in November 2022 and is still employed by the agency. But information on why she was added to Baxter's list was not provided by Baxter or interim Perkins police Chief Jeff Musser.

Ohio State Highway Patrol

- Zac Steinbach

Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation

- Sam Fortner

What a Brady designation entails

Past convictions related to dishonesty or misconduct would qualify as Brady material in the event the person is a potential witness, regardless if it occurred at a previous law enforcement department, Baxter said.

“Our concern in a Brady context lies more with potential witnesses and impeachment material,” he said in regards to whether an officer should be qualified to serve in a command position.

The Brady list is an outcome of the Brady doctrine, established in 1963 by the Supreme Court after a man was found guilty and sentenced to death for first-degree murder. The decision in *Brady v. Maryland* required the prosecution to turn over all evidence to the defense, including evidence that would help the defense.

During the original trial, the prosecution failed to provide Brady’s defense a confession that proved Brady did not commit the murder and was ordered a new sentencing.

“There are working officers who have been identified and routinely provided in discovery if they are a potential witness. Usually, we provide a letter addressed to this office from the chief or sheriff,” Baxter said.

While the Brady list serves the prosecution and defense by weeding out compromising witnesses and testimonies, it doesn’t prevent a law enforcement agency from hiring a “Brady cop” in another department.

Baxter said there is a concern for police officers with past disciplinary problems who are able to leave one apartment and join another.

“There should be better background checks on hiring. From a prosecution standpoint, it would hinder our ability to provide potential Brady material if there is not a proper vetting of new hires with previous disciplinary problems from other departments,” he said.

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