



*Kathleen Padilla and her service dog, Phyl.*

Assistant Professor Dr. Kathleen Padilla from the School of Criminal Justice and Criminology is a New Mexico native who brings a passion for researching the current state of law enforcement mental health resources to Texas. Kathleen earned her bachelor's degree from New Mexico State University in 2014, then achieved her master's degree at Arizona State University. After receiving her Ph.D. from ASU in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice in 2021, she completed a year-long postdoctoral fellowship in the same department evaluating an officer wellness program.

Born and raised in Las Cruces, New Mexico, Kathleen moved to Arizona and later to Texas while her husband completed his Ph.D. at Sam Houston State University. They eventually settled in the Austin area and are thoroughly enjoying life's next chapter. In November 2023, they welcomed a baby

girl who recently turned six months old and is thriving.

Kathleen was welcomed by Texas State University in the fall of 2022 and teaches both online and in-person courses. Outside of class, her research is driven by a deep-rooted passion for understanding police environments, influenced by an upbringing in a law enforcement family. Kathleen's focus spans various aspects of policing, particularly the working conditions and mental health resources for officers, including the experiences of female police officers. She also collaborates with a dog training company, looking at the efficacy of therapy dogs for officers and how they can assist in cases involving children to help them feel more at ease.

Her research endeavors have branched into the gendered component of policing, examining discrepancies and issues faced by female police officers. Engaging in qualitative research, she's encountered compelling stories, such as a female investigator facing burnout from being pigeonholed into handling sex crimes cases. This highlights the gender equity issues within the profession and underscores her commitment to this research area.

She has conducted research on organizational resources for mental health, gender dynamics in policing, and the experiences of female police officers. Collaborating with the Dallas Police Department, she developed a project addressing recruitment and retention of female officers, which received funding from TXST's Research Enhancement Program. This collaboration led to her future involvement with DPD as they set up a daycare within the department and partnering with their unique mental health and wellness unit. Kathleen and her research team have been successful in the recent publication of "**The bar is different as a woman**": A thematic analysis of career advice given by female police officers" which was published in *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*. Kathleen was the lead author on the piece and was co-authored with Kellie Renfro (Dallas PD) and Jessica Huff (University of Cincinnati).

One notable article was from Kathleen's postdoctoral work titled, '**Hot, Dumpster Fire, Mess**': Police Personnel Perceptions of the Current State of Mental Health in Law Enforcement. The article was co-authored with her mentor Adam Fine from Arizona State and is published in the International Journal of Police Science and Management. This study explored perceptions of mental health within a progressive police department. Despite the progressive nature of the department studied, negative perceptions of mental health support persisted, highlighting generational divides in attitudes. Kathleen has had success in networking with multiple police agencies, observing similar themes and attitudes across different departments. She has been fortunate to access various police departments to examine these sensitive topics. She expressed interest in expanding her research to include more police departments, particularly larger ones like Austin PD and El Paso PD.

Currently, Kathleen is mentoring a doctoral student and is involving him on a summer grant project with the eventual aim to secure funding for a postdoc in the future. Ultimately, her overarching research theme focuses on the working environments of officers, whether police or correctional, and their interactions with the public. Kathleen strives to approach her work as an advocate, addressing issues and providing support to officers, ensuring healthier and more positive interactions with the community. Overall, her work is a continuous effort to understand and improve the working conditions and well-being of law enforcement officers, driven by a personal and professional commitment to making a positive impact in this field.



*Kathleen and her colleagues at the American Society of Evidence-Based Policing Conference in May 2024 in Spokane, Washington.*

Learn more about Kathleen's research in the following articles:

- **'Hot, Dumpster Fire, Mess':** Police Personnel Perceptions of the Current State of Mental Health in Law Enforcement." The article was co-authored with Adam Fine from Arizona State and is published in the International Journal of Police Science and Management. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/14613557241244959>
- **"The bar is different as a woman':** A thematic analysis of career advice given by female police officers" was just published in *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*. Dr. Kathleen Padilla, Kellie Renfro (Dallas PD), and Jessica Huff (University of Cincinnati).
- Padilla, K. E. L. (2023). **A Descriptive Study of Police Officer Access to Mental Health Services.** *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-023-09582-6>