



# REPORT OF THE METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMUNITY POLICING WORKING GROUP

December 2019

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## **Mayor Muriel Bowser and Members of the Council of the District of Columbia,**

Pursuant to Title II, Subtitle A of the Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results (NEAR) Amendment Act of 2016, effective June 30, 2016 (D.C. Law 21-0125; D.C. Official Code § 5-132.32), the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) convened a working group to examine national best practices in community policing and make recommendations for the District of Columbia.

The working group consisting of individuals from government agencies, non-profit organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and the general public, met several times to discuss what community policing meant, how it has been implemented and is perceived within the District, and what can be done to strengthen the relationship between MPD and the communities we serve. Robust conversations were held at these meetings and meaningful suggestions for future improvements were made.

To that end, I am pleased to present the Community Policing Working Group's report. This report contains the result of feedback collected orally and in writing and the Community Policing Working Group's recommendations for making community policing even stronger within the District.

I am thankful for the time that the Community Policing Working Group's members contributed to this report and to helping MPD better understand what we can do to improve and continue our partnerships with members of our communities. MPD is fully committed to fair, constitutional, and unbiased policing in our city and will work to implement the recommendations contained in this report as we continue our work to make the District of Columbia a safer and stronger city for everyone.

Peter Newsham  
Chief of Police





## Introduction

The Metropolitan Police Department Community Policing Working Group (“Working Group”) was first convened in the summer of 2017, pursuant to Title II, Subtitle A of the Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results (NEAR) Amendment Act of 2016, effective June 30, 2016 (D.C. Law 21-0125; D.C. Official Code § 5-132.32). In the summer of 2019, the second Working Group convened to review progress on the recommendations made by the first Working Group and to propose additional recommendations.

The 2019 Working Group represents District communities, non-profit organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and government agencies in the District of Columbia. Working Group members offered thoughtful suggestions on ways that police-community interactions could be strengthened and deepened.



## Defining Community Policing

The Working Group operated under the same definition of “community policing” as the 2017 Community Policing Working Group Report contained in President Barack Obama’s 21st Century Policing Task Force that was issued in May 2015 by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

The 21st Century Policing Task Force report describes community policing as follows:

*Community policing emphasizes working with neighborhood residents to co-produce public safety. Law enforcement agencies should, therefore, work with community residents to identify problems and collaborate on implementing solutions that produce meaningful results for the community. Specifically, law enforcement agencies should develop and adopt policies and strategies that reinforce the importance of community engagement in managing public safety. Law enforcement agencies should also engage in multidisciplinary, community team approaches.*

## Working Group Process

The Working Group consists of a diverse group of individuals who donated their time to serve on this important team. Together, the members represented a cross-section of constituents from the city, including at least one representative of each of the seven police districts and from each of the five distinct communities served by MPD’s Special Liaison Branch – the African, Asian and Pacific Islander, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Latino, and LGBTQ+ communities.

The Working Group met on three occasions. During the first in-person meeting in June 2019, the Working Group heard presentations from MPD members on current engagement activities. The Working Group heard from MPD’s Victim Services Branch, Youth and Family Services Division, Special Liaison Branch, Public Information Office, and Office of Volunteer Coordination. The Working Group was also updated on progress on the 17 recommendations from the 2017 Working Group. These are outlined in **Appendix B**. Working Group members then solicited feedback from their respective networks and communities, returning for a second in-person meeting in August 2019. Between the first and second meetings, members completed and distributed a questionnaire to solicit feedback regarding community perceptions of police, police-community communication, community involvement, relationships, and interactions.



While there were numerous themes discussed and varying and diverse opinions, this report attempts to capture the core themes and provide tangible and actionable recommendations for implementation. The Working Group met a final time in September 2019 to review and approve this report for transmission to the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia

## Working Group Discussion

Throughout the discussion of the Working Group, several core themes were raised, as highlighted below:

### Transition of Leadership and Community Meetings

*"When we ask for someone to show up for community meetings, it is a white shirt and not a patrol officer. How do we get an officer to show up? We want them to know who the block captains are."*

The Working Group highlighted that, as upper ranking officials are promoted or transferred to new assignments within MPD, the connections built with the community are not necessarily maintained. The Working Group supported officials making

introductions to key community partners when they are moved from their assignment. Additionally, members of the Working Group highlighted the need for more patrol officers to attend community meetings and for newly assigned officers in Field Training to be introduced to community partners and leaders.

### School Resource Officers

The Working Group highlighted the important role of School Resource Officers ("SROs"), but noted that the SROs are not necessarily the officers that would respond when a 911 call for service is placed by a student. The Working Group recommended several items that leverage the relationships

*"The [school resources officers] that the students know at school are not the [officers] when they call the police."*





developed by SROs to deepen the connections between officers assigned to patrol services and students.

## Interactions with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community

Interactions with the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community was a topic of discussion among the Working Group. The Working Group recognized the value of MPD's Special Liaison Branch and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Unit, but put forward recommendations for further strengthening understanding between MPD officers and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. The Working Group recognized that the District, as the home of Gallaudet University and its student body and staff, has a unique need for continued initiatives in this community.



## Training

The Working Group discussed the need for MPD to further train officers in community engagement, communication, and positive body language. Further, the Working Group discussed the need for supervisors to assist their subordinates in engaging with the community and the need for Field Training Officers to introduce new officers to the community in which they are assigned.

*"Officers use their body for protection. How do we train them to be friendly, open, and inviting with their body language?"*

## Role and Understanding of the Community

*"Officers don't realize the community feels they are 'being policed,' as if it is an action against them."*

The Working Group also highlighted the essential requirement for the community to further understand the role of MPD and its policies and procedures. Building on the successes of MPD's outreach programs, the Working Group discussed further initiatives MPD can provide the community to deepen their understanding of the operations of the Department.





## Accessibility of Information

The Working Group discussed the accessibility of information regarding incidents that occur in their communities, as well as reports and data on MPD websites. A theme of the discussion was making follow-up information more accessible to the public.



## Inter-agency Collaboration

The Working Group discussed the need for the Department and other agencies to build upon the collaboration that already exists among District government agencies. The Working Group discussed the need to raise the consciousness among District personnel of the wide array of services different agencies offer and of the need to create touchpoints between agencies to pass on relevant information with the goal of increasing the quality of service delivery.



## Working Group Recommendations

The Working Group's discussion covered many topics and many suggestions were brought by members to the group. The Working Group issued the following 18 items as recommendations to the Department:

*"Police respond to social and economic disadvantages; they don't create them."*

1. The Department should reinforce the positive work of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Unit by hosting a Community Engagement Academy for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community.
2. MPD should provide the community with more insight into the Department through a video series accessible online to all. This video series should highlight training, patrol operations, and new initiatives such as the program at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.
3. MPD media releases, including the Community Policing Working Group report, should be published in a format accessible to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. MPD should explore utilizing a QR code linking printed material to American Sign Language (ASL) media. In addition, MPD, when possible, should utilize ASL interpreters at press briefings.
4. Develop and provide a course to new officers on "Positive Body Language" to increase the positive outcomes of officers' interactions with the public. Officers are trained how to use their body tactically; they should also be provided with tools to use their body to appear engaging and welcoming.
5. The Department should provide supervisors with training on community perceptions of police, to help them better recognize when they need to encourage officers to "ungroup" and interact with community members whether on patrol or at community events.
6. Develop and provide a course on police customer service to new officers to instill a sense of customer-oriented policing.





7. Standardize how Captains or Sector Leadership transfer information and make community introductions before leaving their assignments.
8. Ensure patrol officers are also included in Citizens Advisory Councils and Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) meetings along with officials.
9. Improve the MPD website to be more community- and customer-friendly with a searchable interface. The website can then be better utilized to provide reports and updates to the public.
10. Department personnel, both sworn and civilian, should be sent to other agencies and non-governmental group to gain a deeper understanding of their work and the services they offer and to create a network of public servants who cultivate interagency collaboration.
11. Invite personnel from sister agencies and non-governmental groups to attend MPD's Community Engagement Academy, including staff from the Mayor's Office of Community Relations and Services, to further develop this above-mentioned network.
12. Provide education programs on the police department to K-12 students, hosted by patrol officers in collaboration with SROs. Students should have interactions with the officers assigned to patrol facilitated by relationships SROs have developed in schools.
13. Create a "Bring a Friend" program where SROs bring a patrol officer to their schools to introduce to students.
14. As new officers graduate from the academy, introduce them to their respective ANCs.
15. Develop a portion of officers' field training that focuses on positive community engagement.
16. MPD should explore offering ongoing resiliency training for officers to assist them with coping with trauma.
17. Officers should visit the Domestic Violence Intake Center as part of their training to understand the services offered to victims.
18. MPD should offer an engagement program such as a social media live stream where community members can participate in a question and answer session with officers.



## Appendix A - Working Group Members

First Name	Last Name	Title
Allyson	Abrams	Bishop, Empowerment Liberation Cathedral
Cathy	Alexander	Pastor, Metropolitan Community Church
Zainab	Alkebsi	Policy Counsel, National Association of the Deaf
Robert	Brannum	At-Large Member, Chief of Police's Citizens Advisory Council
Michelle	Chatman	Assistant Professor, Crime, Justice, and Security Studies, University of the District of Columbia
Marc	Dalton	Chief Clinical Officer, Department of Behavioral Health
Jose	Gutierrez	Founder, Latino Pride
Marilyn	Hamilton	Dean, University of the District of Columbia Community College
Kylie	Hogan	DC Survivors and Advocates for Empowerment (SAFE)
Dexter	Humphrey	Vice Chairman, 6th District Citizens Advisory Council
Judi	Jones	Chairperson, 4th District Citizens Advisory Council
Stephanie	Mahdi	Co-Chair, DC Anti-Violence Project
Camille	McKenzie	Chairperson, 3rd District Citizens Advisory Council
Stephanie	Mintz	Student Services Director, Briya Public Charter School
LaQuandra	Nesbitt	Director, Department of Health
Frances	Penn	Chairperson, 5th District Citizens Advisory Council
Robert	Pittman	Chairperson, 1st District Citizens Advisory Council
Brenda	Richardson	PSA 702 Outreach Committee/ Ward 8 Resident
Howard	Rosenblum	Chief Executive Officer, National Association of the Deaf
Naznin	Saifi	Executive Director, Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
Mary Ann	Seremeth	At-Large Member, Chief of Police's Citizen Advisory Council Professor, Gallaudet University



## MPD Staff Members

Salah	Czapary	Director, MPD Office of Volunteer Coordination
Tyria	Fields	Director, MPD Victim Services Branch
Marvin	Haiman	Executive Director, MPD Professional Development Bureau
Ramey	Kyle	Commander, MPD Youth and Family Services Division
Evelyn	Lopez	Supervisor, MPD Community Outreach Coordinators
Kelly	O'Meara	Executive Director, MPD Strategic Change Division
Brett	Parson	Lieutenant, MPD Special Liaison Branch
Dustin	Sternbeck	Director, MPD Office of Communications

## Appendix B - Status of the 2017 Working Group Recommendations

***1. Revisit the Department's communication strategy on community policing activities to ensure information is available and accessible to the public.***

MPD's Office of Communications has been fully engaged and has made substantial progress towards this Community Policing Working Group (CPWG) recommendation. Since the last report, some developments include:

- Press releases, press conferences, media interviews
- Social media posts – developed advertising to increase followership and are currently the largest DC government presence
- List serv postings in each patrol district. We are exploring new list serv products as our current system is outdated.
- Quarterly ANC newsletter
- Community meetings, educational workshops and safety/education pop-ups
- Critical Incident Response Protocol
- Public campaigns
- Internal/External partnerships
- Post event details in Mayor's public calendar

***2. Reinforce daily, positive community interaction between officers and the public.***

This CPWG recommendation has been addressed through multiple forums throughout MPD. From trainings held at the Police Academy for veteran officers, to ongoing roll call, and promotional training, there has been a concerted emphasis and focus within training reinforcing the benefits of daily positive community interactions. Additionally, some specific actions to address the CPWG's recommendations have included:





- Developed creative campaigns to humanize personnel (e.g., Beyond the Badge, 2019 Recruitment Materials, Play It Safe, Pay It Forward)
- Positive media hits
- Built out of a 12 month community outreach calendar “asset mapping” to ensure wide coverage of all districts
- Broader effort to promote all MPD programs which may be less known to member of the community (e.g., Reaching New Heights and Youth Creating Change).

**3. Enhance messaging consistency across community outreach coordinators.**

Since the issuance of the CPWG report, all seven patrol district Community Outreach Coordinators have been realigned to centrally report through the MPD Office of Communication. Two supervisory Community Outreach Coordinators have been added to the team to provide focus and structure and continuity of services across the seven districts. Additionally, some developments in line with this recommendation include:

- Regular trainings with all district outreach coordinators
- Ensure MOCRS are informed of incidents impacting communities
- Developed a robust and comprehensive outreach calendar
- Critical Incident Response Protocol
- Created a Resource Identification document – established a working document off all district contacts for community outreach (residential, business, education, religious)

**4. In consideration of the full agendas of ANC meetings, encourage community members to attend CAC meetings to address safety concerns. The CAC meetings could be rotated within the police districts to ensure residents have ample opportunity to attend based on their location. In order to make best use of time allocated to public safety issues at ANC meetings, a list of community members’ questions should be provided in advance when possible.**

Recommendation #4 was shared with the CACs.

**5. Sector Captains should hold regular meetings for members of their community.**

Sector Captains hold frequent community-based meetings, connecting and interacting with community constituents. Since the Sector concept has become more engrained within the culture of the Department, such structure allows for greater access and continuity of leadership within the Sector.

**6. MPD outreach coordinators should create and distribute a periodic newsletter or report updating ANC commissioners on the latest and upcoming MPD news and activities.**

Since the issuance of the CPWG report, the Office of Communications has taken the lead and developed content and distributed quarterly ANC newsletter. Some of the contents of the newsletter come from ANC Commissioners directly as well.

**7. The return of “Officer Friendly” could be a successful branding opportunity to unify Department-wide efforts to**

The “Officer Friendly” program was relaunched in support of a 2017 CPWG recommendation. The Side-by-Side band plays at weekly appearances, interacting and engaging members of the community. The Youth and Family Services Division and our School Resource Officers play a meaningful role



***engage youth and adults in the community.***

***8. Provide crime prevention tips and training to ensure members of the public can avoid becoming victims of crimes of opportunity.***

engaging with young men and women across DC. MPD is further expanding our Officer Friendly program beyond the elementary school setting and into our Rec Centers, summer camps, and Boys and Girls Clubs.

- MPD has engaged in multiple activities that drive towards this objective. Specifically, the Department:
- Hosts community pop-ups to educate residents and visitors on current crime trends and prevention methods
- Participates in media interviews
- Safety events and demonstrations are held frequently
- Social media posts are published
- Community meeting attendance to promote these matters
- Critical Incident Response Protocol
- Video production and dissemination
- Promotional items and campaigns (Pink ticket, Protect Your Auto, Camera Rebate Program)
- The Community Engagement Car deploys after critical incidents, such as a homicide, to interact with residents and visitors. Recruit Officers from the Academy similarly deploy.

***9. Hire a member of the deaf and hard of hearing community to serve as an outreach specialist and support services to the community.***

While this 2017 CPWG Report recommendation has not yet been implemented, in addition to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Unit (DHHU) core officers, MPD currently has 12 officers who are certified as DHHU affiliates. These officers provide meaningful support to members of the DHHU community. MPD worked with the Citizen Advisory Councils (CAC) to include a member of the DHH community to join the group to ensure that the DHH community can provide continuous feedback.

***10. When releasing official videos for the public, include American Sign Language (ASL) in the video, in addition to closed captioning, to ensure accessibility.***

The Department has broadened its use of ASL interpreters during larger events (e.g., Annual Awards Ceremony and Mayoral events/press conferences).

***11. While there are significant costs associated with an on-call interpreter system, the Working Group encourages MPD to give consideration to such a concept while evaluating the existing contract.***

MPD issued a contract for ASL services to help improve the availability and quality of interpretation services. MPD worked with the assistance of subject matter experts in the community to develop the statement of work. In addition, MPD frequently deploys the Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) system as well as leverages the Language Line. Additional training was conducted for officers during 2018 on Language Access.

***12. Provide ASL classes to officers.***

Elective courses were held on ASL for sworn and civilian members through MPD's Professional Development Institute.

***13. Assign a permanent member to create an African Liaison Unit, rather than a rotation of affiliate members.***

MPD has expanded the reach of the Special Liaison branch without establishing new liaison units. As MPD strives to ensure that it is able to meet needs throughout the city, MPD will provide training for affiliate members and ensure that they are able to respond to victims of crime and participate in outreach activities. MPD has approximately 20 African Affairs affiliate officers. MPD



continues to partner with the Mayor's Office of African Affairs, including through the now annual soccer game to bring the African community and police together and provide a soccer skills event for youth.

***14. Implement a mentoring program where senior Departmental officials share their perspective and positive community interaction with younger officials and officers, helping to further transfer knowledge and experiences to newer members of the Department.***

The Department has implemented the Police for Tomorrow program in partnership with Georgetown University Law Center. Cohort 1 of the program was held in 2018 and Cohort 2 is ongoing. Each officer and/or civilian employee within the program is paired with a knowledgeable ranking command member mentor. These individual mentors serve as guides to the new members as they learn more about the profession. For the senior members, it provides a positive way to connect and share their experience. This program has been well received and the Department has recently applied for grant funding to expand this to mid-level managers.

***15. Develop a training course for officers at crime scenes to improve interactions with community members. This training should be scenario-based and teach officers how to provide community members with information that does not compromise the investigation, but could allow the community to understand what occurred and possibly provide useful information. One option would be to designate an identifiable communications officer at each large crime scene.***

The Department has implemented the 2017 CPWG's recommendation on this matter by developing a robust block of instruction which is delivered to each recruit class as well as all current officers as a part of the 2019 Professional Development Training. This training focuses on teaching officers what they can and should say on crime scenes and encourages them to appropriately communicate within their respective role to members of the community.

***16. Continue training on implicit bias and cultural competency for officers so they are aware of how their actions impact the communities they serve.***

Beginning in January 2018, the MPDC began taking all sworn and civilian members of the Department through the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) on a guided 10-hour program, led by two professors from the University of the District of Columbia. This model program educates officers on the long and complex history of interactions between law enforcement and members of the black community. The program also includes a tour of the NMAAHC and robust discussions.

***17. Provide public speaking training for newer officers and other MPD personnel so they can effectively present information at community meetings.***

As a result of the 2017 CPWG recommendation, this was added to promotional trainings for new officials.





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