

Report of the Metropolitan Police Department Community Policing Working Group

July, 2017



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

Pursuant to the Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results (NEAR) Act of 2015, 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 better 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 results of feedback collected orally and in writing and the Community Policing Working Group's recommendations for how to make 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”) is a diverse group of individuals representing government agencies, non-profit organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and the general public of the District of Columbia. The full membership of the Working Group is listed in Appendix A. The Working Group considered a wide variety of information, including reviewing national best practices in community policing, in preparation for this report. Working Group members offered strong suggestions on ways that police-community interactions could be strengthened and deepened.

Additionally, the Working Group recognizes the concerns regarding police involved shootings resulting in fatalities. This is a heightened concern in communities throughout the country and the Working Group is interested in the use of law enforcement best practices that could reduce these kinds of incidents, increase community trust, and build greater confidence in law enforcement. The recommendations contained in this report are intended to help grow and deepen that trust and confidence.

Defining Community Policing

The Working Group found a wide variety of definitions for the term “Community Policing,” both in theory and practice. The definitions vary based on the organization promulgating the definition; however, the Working Group operated under the definition of Community Policing 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 Orientated 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 for planning, implementing, and responding to crisis situations with complex causal factors.

Working Group Process

The Working Group consists of a diverse group of individuals gracious enough to donate their time to serve on this important team. Each member 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 District communities served by MPD’s Special Liaison Branch (African, Asian, deaf and hard of hearing, Latino, and LGBT).

The Working Group met in whole on three occasions. During the first in-person meeting in January 2017, the Working Group heard presentations from a wide variety of MPD members regarding current engagement activities throughout the community, which are outlined in Appendix B. Working Group members then went back to their respective communities and held discussions and solicited feedback – returning for a second in-person meeting in April 2017. Between the first and second meetings, the Working Group reviewed materials including the Department’s responses to the 21st Century Policing Task Force regarding current operations and activities and also completed an informal questionnaire as to their perceptions of police along the lines of

communication, community involvement, relationships, and interactions. Working Group members were also invited to share the perceptions of the communities they represent.

During the April 2017 meeting, Chief Peter Newsham chaired a robust discussion on community policing in the District. Chief Newsham specifically asked members of the Working Group to provide tough recommendations on how MPD can strengthen community policing efforts in the District of Columbia. While there are numerous suggestions, this report attempts to capture the core themes and provide tangible and actionable recommendations for implementation within the Department. To flesh out the in-person meetings further, a series of written questions and interviews were conducted. The Working Group met a final time in June 2017 to review and approve this report for transmission to the Mayor and the Council of the District of Columbia.

Working Group Discussion

The Working Group commended the Metropolitan Police Department’s substantial and substantive commitment to building positive and long-lasting relationships throughout all communities across the District of Columbia. After robust discussions, the Working Group identified several core areas of focus:

Communication

This was a recurring theme of the Working Group’s discussion. Members expressed concern with the challenges of communicating with multiple levels of employees, including front line officers and Department managers. The Working Group identified communication as a specific area needing improvement.

Crime Scenes

The Working Group expressed concern with some interactions at crime scenes between officers and members of the public. The sense was that officers often do not know how much information they can provide to residents asking about what happened in their community. This results in officers not feeling comfortable talking with community members while a crime scene is still active.

Brand Recognition

While the Working Group noted very positive interactions with some Department managers, it believes the Department can do a better job building a “brand” and ensuring consistent messaging and customer service levels across the entire Department.

General Interactions

The Working Group recognized that most members of the community want to have more frequent positive interactions with officers. While recognizing the significant volume of calls for service, the Working Group emphasized the value of officer interaction in the community and outside of their patrol car. Even a simple hello is recognized and appreciated in the community. The Working Group noted the value in “Caught in the Act of Doing Good” and that officers should be recognized when this occurs.

“Saying we need to work on community relations- we need not ignore the good. In comparison, DC probably has the best model for community policing than most cities in the nation.”

- Working Group member

Specific Interactions

The Working Group noted several underserved communities, including the deaf and hard of hearing community, African community, and others, that have specific needs for enhanced services. The Working Group heard positive feedback about the work done by the Special Liaison Branch, but believes more services can be provided in these areas to help enhance the interaction between MPD and the community.

Perception

The Working Group noted that the community's perception of the Department is generally positive; however, improving communications will help strengthen public perception.

Messaging

The Working Group recognized the value that proactive messaging around sensitive topics such as sanctuary cities has within the District's diverse community. It supports the Department conducting frequent, pervasive, and proactive messaging on important topics.

Programming

Community programming was raised by the Working Group, which recognized the many outstanding youth and adult programs offered by the Department, but also noted the importance of reaching more youth and adults regularly. Again, the need for greater brand recognition was raised in relation to this topic.

Strategy

The Working Group recommends the Department create a strong marketing and branding effort to pull all

“I work in communications - what law enforcement personnel should do is figure out who is good at communicating that way when there is a crime scene citizens can talk to this officer about what is going on. Maybe officers should wear a green bib that says ‘communications officer’. Get those who are great at it and maybe even specifically trained to do so or require training to be qualified.”

- Working Group member

community policing efforts under a single recognizable name. For example, the “Officer Friendly”¹ program was a widely recognized MPD initiative and exemplifies successful branding.

Community Meetings

The Working Group noted the challenges presented by having Police Service Areas (PSA) and Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) boundaries not aligned, but understands why this occurs. Because PSA meetings are generally sparsely attended, the Working Group supports the Department focusing more time and effort on attendance at ANC meetings and other community-organized events. The Working Group encourages community members to attend meetings of the Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) or police sector.

Working Group Recommendations

The Working Group recognized the wide diversity of ideas and perspectives of its members and the broader community in the District. In order to have the greatest impact on the Department, the Working Group developed a series of tangible and actionable recommendations. The hope

¹ “Officer Friendly” serves as a model program in which law enforcement officials participate in community outreach by actively engaging children and young adults.

is that these recommendations lead to the Department seriously considering them and taking action.

The Working Group reached consensus on recommending the following items:

Communication and Outreach

1. Revisit the Department's communication strategy on community policing activities to ensure information is available and accessible to the public.
2. Reinforce daily, positive community interaction between officers and the public.
3. Enhance messaging consistency across community outreach coordinators.
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.
5. Sector Captains should hold regular meetings for members of their community.
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.
7. The return of "Officer Friendly" could be a successful branding opportunity to unify Department-wide efforts to 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.

Community Representation

9. Hire a member of the deaf and hard of hearing community to serve as an outreach specialist and support services to the community.
10. When releasing official videos for the public, include American Sign Language (ASL) in the video, in addition to closed captioning, to ensure accessibility.
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.
12. Provide ASL classes to officers.
13. Assign a permanent member to create an African Liaison Unit, rather than a rotation of affiliate members.

Officer Education

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

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

Appendix A – Membership of the Community Policing Working Group

Community Policing Working Group members:

First Name	Last Name	Title
Zainab	Alkebsi	Policy Counsel, National Association of the Deaf
Ronald	Austin	Chair Person, 4th District Citizens Advisory Council
Robert	Brannum	At-Large Member, Chief of Police's Citizen Advisory Council
Keith	Byrd Sr	Pastor, Zion Baptist Church
Enoch	Chang	Staff Attorney, Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center
Mary	Cuthbert	President, 7th District Citizens Advisory Council
Marc	Dalton	Chief Clinical Officer, Department of Behavioral Health
Andre	Davis	Student, Anacostia Public Safety Academy
Josh	Eisenstat	Co-Chair of the DC Anti-Violence Project
Ayman	Farghal	Management and Program Analyst
Dr. Sinclair	Jeter	Assistant Professor, Crime, Justice and Security Studies Program, University of the District of Columbia
Natalia	Marlow-Otero	Executive Director, DC SAFE
Stanley	Mayes	At-Large Member, Chief of Police's Citizen Advisory Council
Camille	McKenzie	Chair Person, 3rd District Citizens Advisory Council
Stephanie	Mintz	Student Services Director, Community Schools Coordinator
Amelia	Missieledies	Executive Director, The Person Center Inc.
LaQuandra	Nesbitt	Director, Department of Health
Samantha	Nolan	At-Large Member, Chief of Police's Citizen Advisory Council
Frances	Penn	Chair Person, 5th District Citizens Advisory Council
Robert	Pittman	Chair Person, 1st District Citizens Advisory Council
Howard	Rosenblum	Chief Executive Officer, National Association of the Deaf
David	Sheon	Vice Chair, ANC 4D-04 and Executive Director, DC Community Carrot
Robert	Thomas	Director of School Security Services, DCPS
Elizabeth	Travers	6th District Constituent

Appendix B – Current Department Community Policing Activities

The Working Group recognized that MPD supports a wide variety of community policing related activities. During the Working Group meetings, several presentations were provided to give specific examples of MPD's community policing-related activities. This served as foundational knowledge for the Working Group and many of the recommendations provided in this report. However, the Working Group recognizes the Department's outreach efforts extend beyond just the areas presented during the working sessions.

Youth and Family Services Division

The Youth and Family Services Division (YFSD) is led by Commander Chanel Dickerson and serves as one of the best examples of positive police and community interactions. YFSD supports many major and ongoing initiatives that directly speak to the definition of community policing as outlined by the 21st Century Policing Task Force. Members of the Working Group learned about the following initiatives:

Reaching New Heights: The Reaching New Heights Program is designed to address criminal and delinquent behavior among “at risk” youth between the ages of 10 to 14. The program consists of four phases to help identify the root causes of their negative or delinquent behavior and empower them to make positive choices.

Partnership for Success: Partnership for Success Program (PFS) is a collaborative of government and community agencies that recognizes the social and economic problems of the affected youth in our city. The PFS program attempts to mitigate the negative challenges that confront the youth, by providing a variety of services.

Youth Creating Change (YCC): An innovative youth development and public safety program aimed to decrease youth violence while developing positive civic leadership skills. YCC engages 15 to 21-year old at-risk youth, living in neighborhoods with more frequent violent crime. Youth selected to join YCC are viewed as influential leaders in their neighborhoods. Throughout the three-month program, each team member participates in team building activities, service projects, and other positive youth development activities. Youth learn to trust one another and the officers who mentor them.

Youth Intervention and Prevention Unit: This unit of the YFSD visits our local schools and conducts classroom and school assemblies targeting bullying/cyber bullying, curfew/truancy violations, youth and violence presentations, robbery presentations and discussion and activities about stranger danger.

Summer Initiative Program/Youth Academy: Held in conjunction with Summer Crime Prevention Initiative areas, the Academy provides youth with safety and life changing experiences. The Academy helps teach youth leadership skills, team building, self-respect, confidence, self-esteem, all while fostering a positive relationship between the police and our youth.

Patrol Services – Community Outreach Liaisons

Each patrol district has a dedicated civilian or sworn employee focused on engagement activities within their assigned area. Often these coordinators work with their counterparts to create activities and engagements that benefit residents in multiple districts across the city. Additionally, the outreach liaisons monitor, respond to, and post messages on the district listservs. The Working Group heard presentations from the 1st and 4th District's Outreach Coordinators. Some of the initiatives included:

- Career days for youth
- Sporting events between officers and the community
- Outreach to local hospitals
- Reading events
- Events at neighborhood movie theaters
- Participation in the ‘Beat the Streets’ initiative
- Neighborhood cookouts and special events
- Senior citizen dances
- Holiday parties

The Working Group commends the work of Diane Groomes, retired Assistant Chief of Police, who led the Community Outreach Liaisons and greatly expanded the work of the unit to provide meaningful engagement activities throughout each district. Their work has continued under Patrol Chiefs Robert J. Contee III and Lamar Greene.

Special Liaison Branch

The Special Liaison Branch (SLB) consists of the Asian Liaison Unit, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Liaison Unit, Latino Liaison Unit, LGBT Liaison Unit, and the African Affairs Affiliate Program, and works closely with historically underserved communities. The SLB is a model for community policing. The primary role of SLB officers is to strengthen relations between police and underserved communities through outreach and to help the Department support victims of crime, particularly bias-motivated crimes. SLB conducts hundreds of annual engagements for community groups and organizations to provide meaningful opportunities to connect with law enforcement. The efforts of SLB officers are magnified by trained “affiliate officers” working on patrol in each district. The affiliates have volunteered to receive specialized training on diverse communities, their particular issues, and how to best serve them. Affiliate officers also serve as informal liaisons and resources for their fellow patrol officers. Additionally, SLB handles outreach to minority religious communities throughout the city.

Office of Volunteer Coordination

The Office of Volunteer Coordination leads and expands high-quality volunteer service provided to the Department by members of the community. The Office of Volunteer Coordination is responsible for leading the Police Reserve Corps, Citizen Volunteer Corps, Collegiate Internship Program, Community Engagement Academy, and other internal volunteer engagement efforts. While other units within the Department focus on external community engagement efforts, the Office of Volunteer Coordination is responsible for engaging volunteers to actively serve within the Department, directly contributing towards the Department’s public safety mission. Additionally, the Office of Volunteer Coordination manages the relationship with DCPS and the Anacostia Public Safety Academy. The Public Safety Academy is a career pipeline program for the MPD Cadet Program. The Office of Volunteer Coordination is in the planning stages of the creation of the Junior Cadet Explorer and Cadet Explorers program for 6th Grade – 20 year of age students, in partnership with the DC Police Foundation. The services of 250+ MPD volunteers during 2016 provided well over 2.5 million dollars of supplemental manpower contributions to the Department and strengthened countless community partnerships.

DC Police Foundation

Patrick A. Burke, Executive Director, Washington, DC Police Foundation, met with the Working Group to outline how the nonprofit supports MPD’s role in the community. The mission of the Washington, DC Police Foundation is to bring together business, professional, civic and nonprofit organizations and individual citizens

to promote public safety by providing financial and in-kind resources to MPD. Additionally, the Foundation has four primary programmatic efforts, including support for MPD programs, the Junior Cadet Program (5th Grade), Classroom to Careers, and support for capital campaign initiatives. Specifically, the Junior Cade Program and Classroom to Careers, in addition to the new Cadet Explorers program specifically are focused on outreach and engagement.