

MPD Initial Response to Cultural Assessment of the MPD Workplace

In June 2021, Chief Contee contracted with the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) to conduct an organizational assessment of the District of Columbia's Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). The scope of this assessment included analyzing MPD's management practices, internal investigation procedures, opportunities for employee advancement, and efforts to instill diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) throughout the organization. The goal of this analysis was for PERF to recommend options for policies, procedures, and practices that could potentially improve MPD performance in these areas. MPD received the final report at the end of March 2023.



Overall, MPD was encouraged to see how many of PERF's recommendations align with initiatives already underway. There are, of course, also several areas where there is room for improvement. This response outlines the areas that MPD intends to prioritize moving forward.

The full report can be found at <https://mpdc.dc.gov/node/1660406>.

SECTION 1: PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Internal Engagement

MPD will continue to build an internal communications strategy and enhanced capacity to ensure we reach our members with the information that is relevant and important to them. We are also exploring new methods and technologies to make these communications more impactful and effective.

Professional Development

MPD has successfully returned to in-person training for all members, and will explore how we can increase training opportunities for both sworn members and professional staff (as budget and staffing allow). In addition, MPD will update the existing internal website which lists approved trainings and how to apply. This will ensure all members have the information to apply for programs for which they are qualified.

The recommendations that MPD develop career paths within patrol and extend the mobility program to professional staff merit further exploration and discussion. MPD's Engaged Workforce Team has already been developing potential career paths for our professional staff members, so these ideas will be considered as part of that ongoing work. While the sworn officers' mobility program cannot be easily replicated exactly for professional staff, there may be opportunities to allow movement within positions with similar skill sets.

MPD participates in Georgetown University's Policing for Tomorrow program, which includes a mentoring component. However, given the limited size of that program in relation to the total number of MPD members who may be interested, MPD will explore ways to expand this capacity. MPD has several efforts underway to expand available mentorship opportunities.

Rotational Assignments

While MPD understands the appeal of rotational assignments, it is not feasible given current staffing challenges. Furthermore, this system could give the perception that those individuals who participated in the program would be given a preference when a vacancy opens up in that unit, which would be less fair than the current process. MPD understands the spirit in which these recommendations are made and will assess options that can create opportunities for job shadowing or visibility into differing assignments.

Specialized Assignments and Promotions

MPD will consider convening a working group to explore opportunities to provide support to members and make the testing and selection process for specialized units more transparent based on some of PERF's recommendations. For example, the working group may explore making attendance at the preparation sessions already offered by the Testing & Assessment Branch mandatory prior to taking a promotional exam. The working group could also explore using an electronic portal to advertise vacancies in specialized units, along with the application requirements and other relevant information for applicants.

MPD does not agree with PERF's recommendation to change the process for making promotional selections. MPD's current process has been carefully shaped by challenges to past alternative processes. In addition, introducing subjectivity into the rank-ordering will be poorly received and subject to legal challenges. Bearing in mind the risks of subjectivity and possible discrimination, and respecting the rank-ordered system that has been shaped by past challenges, MPD will continue to look for ways to cultivate and reward leaders and help its professionals have careers that offer the level of growth each person seeks.

SECTION 2: WORKPLACE CULTURE

Professional Staff Inclusion and Leadership

MPD continues to take steps to be inclusive when it comes to its professional staff. Professional staff have been included as part of different department trainings and selected as co-leads for three of the Strategic Priorities teams.

MPD also recognizes that we can do more to identify additional ways to recognize, include, and promote development of professional staff. For example, if it is not already happening, divisions that hold community engagement events should include their professional staff. Led by both sworn and

professional staff members, MPD is also working on the creation of a comprehensive community engagement calendar.

MPD does not agree with PERF's recommendation to equalize the titles of sworn and professional staff. Unlike many other police agencies, MPD has several high-ranking officials who are professional staff, including the Chief Operating Officer, Chief of Staff, General Counsel, Executive Director of the Strategic Change Office, Chief People and Equity Officer, and numerous individuals at senior management and mid-management ranks. While these are non-sworn positions, they do have sworn command staff members who report to them. These individuals hold positions at the highest levels of department leadership and serve as examples for professional staff who have aspirations of rising in the ranks. Equalizing ranks would be even more challenging at the lower ranks (e.g., professional supervisors are not equivalent to sergeants).

Reducing Administrative Burdens

MPD agrees with PERF's recommendation to streamline administrative investigations and update forms in order to assist supervisors with their workload. A standardized template for use of force, vehicle pursuit, and misconduct investigations is under development by the Innovative Infrastructure team. Additional efficiencies currently in development include digitizing commonly used forms and leave requests. Sworn members in the field have contributed to these projects.

Wellness and Work-Life Balance

Chief Contee has prioritized employee wellness since becoming chief, and the events of January 6th made this effort all the more urgent. Since that time, MPD has named a Director of Employee Well-being with an accompanying team of wellness staff and made significant investments in support of our members' physical, mental, spiritual, financial, social, and intellectual health. Members can learn about these resources through our monthly wellness newsletter and dedicated internal wellness website.

MPD agrees with the recommendation that training be provided to members on health and wellness services, and some of this training has already been delivered by the Director for Employee Well-being Support. The capacity to deliver this training will be greatly expanded as additional staff join that unit and several positions have already been filled. Another wellness recommendation that MPD has already made some progress on is development of a wellness app. Through DC Police Foundation support along with existing health providers, members have access to a variety of resources for meditation, sleep tips, and other wellness guidance.

MPD agrees and is already assessing childcare options for members. Any solution in this area will likely have to be a regional one given that a majority of MPD employees do not live in the District; however, childcare options in the district may be an incentive for individuals to consider living in the District as well. Moreover, this issue impacts many in the District's workforce, including firefighters, paramedics, 911 call center employees, and other non-public safety staff with 24/7 responsibilities.

With respect to employing department psychologists, MPD does not agree that these staff must be in-house; however, we do have the exact same services mentioned in PERF's recommendation available

through our model employee assistance program (Metropolitan Police Employee Assistance Program (MPEAP)).^[1] Relatedly, the level of mental health evaluations recommended by PERF is unfortunately impractical for our existing MPEAP.

SECTION 3: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Equal Employment Opportunity Investigations

MPD is committed to creating an inclusive workplace, including by improving the quality of EEO investigations. MPD has already worked with the DC Office of Racial Equity (ORE) to understand these issues and begin implementing best practices. MPD is implementing several of the recommendations from ORE's recent report,^[2] including updating our EEO policy, creating high-quality training for our members, and developing additional informational materials and resources.

MPD's new Chief People and Equity Officer will be instituting several new measures to ensure EEO data are captured in a more effective manner, with stronger case management protocols. We appreciate PERF's acknowledgment of MPD's strong percentage of female officers, in particular with recent hires – far exceeding the national average. With enhanced data collection and analytic capacity, MPD will be able to conduct deeper analysis into potential issues of disparate impact of policies, promotional process, and discipline. MPD maintains our commitment to ensuring a diverse workforce that reflects the city we serve.

PERF's recommendations related to organizing case files and format have already been implemented, and once the new EEO policy is complete, every member across MPD will receive updated training.

Disciplinary Process

MPD recently revised its Table of Penalties^[3] which allows for expedited adjudication of some low-level violations, but MPD is open to exploring the policy examples provided by PERF to determine if there are more efficient ways to handle minor offenses. Under MPD's new discipline process, the Discipline Review Division (DRD) plays a greater role, which should enhance the consistency of penalties assessed across the department.

MPD agrees with PERF's recommendation to create an internal discipline newsletter using aggregate data to inform members about what discipline has been issued for which types of conduct. Given the volume of discipline issued, and the capacity to produce such reports, MPD agrees such a newsletter should be produced periodically, but probably not monthly as suggested by PERF. MPD agrees that this presents an excellent teaching opportunity and creates transparency to increase internal legitimacy and dispel the misinformation commonly surrounding disciplinary actions.

Use of Force Investigations

Based on PERF's recommendation regarding the use of neutral language in use of force case narratives, MPD will reexamine current training for internal affairs investigators and issue a reminder, with

hypothetical examples, on this topic. This reminder will also be shared with chain-of-command officials who conduct use of force investigations.

In addition, MPD will examine its current internal affairs investigator training to determine what other improvements could be made. This review will include a survey of specialized training conducted by other agencies across the country to identify best practices in internal affairs investigations.

PERF also found that some use of force narratives lacked sufficiently detailed descriptions of the de-escalation and communication techniques employed by officers (e.g., time, distance, cover, additional resources). This detail is critical so that reviewers have enough information about the incident to make an informed evaluation. To that end, MPD will strengthen its training and emphasis on documenting these tactics in reports, and the Academy, together with Internal Affairs and the General Counsel, will explore ways to expand use of body-worn camera footage for training purposes. We agree that that BWCs offer a valuable learning tool for training and MPD was an early adopter for this technology.

SECTION 4: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Data and Tracking

MPD agrees with the recommendation related to improving the collection, tracking, and analysis of recruitment and hiring data. MPD's eSOPH system gathers a significant amount of relevant information, and MPD will look into other helpful functionalities contained in the system not currently used. Based upon PERF's feedback, MPD has already made some immediate adjustments to data collection to allow better analysis of applicants through the process. For example, MPD is modifying the process for when applicant demographic information is collected to ensure we are able to look holistically at the entire universe of applicants.

Incentives

MPD has implemented several recruitment and retention incentives. In addition to recently increasing the new hire bonus for police officers to \$25,000, MPD negotiated a "base retention differential" (essentially a 5 percent retention bonus) for all sworn members who have been with MPD for at least five years. MPD has also maintained, or even increased, funding for other retention programs, including tuition reimbursement, housing assistance, and the Police Officer Retention Program (PORP). MPD agrees with PERF's position that implementing these incentives to retain veteran members are important and worth pursuing.

SECTION 5: ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLICY REVIEW

Updating MPD Policies

MPD has been working diligently to update outdated policies. This is a time-intensive process, but the Policy and Standards Branch has been strategic in incorporating all relevant older policies into new ones. For example, MPD issued two updated general orders on the use of force and less-lethal weapons in January 2022 that combined 16 separate use of force policy documents spanning almost two decades into two comprehensive, up-to-date documents.

The unit's ability to work through the large backlog of older policies is limited by staffing constraints. While assigning a sworn member to this unit on a full-time basis may not be possible given current staffing levels, MPD is open to using select subject matter experts to assist on a part-time basis.

Addressing Extremism in Law Enforcement

One of the main motivations for this project was exploring the issue of extremism in law enforcement and developing an agency strategy for addressing it. MPD's central role in protecting the Capitol on January 6th, and the reports of several law enforcement officers from across the country who participated in that event, made this issue particularly salient to MPD.

MPD is grateful to PERF and all the agencies that shared their - often times difficult - experiences with PERF to help in the development of this strategy. MPD plans to carefully review the steps identified by PERF's recommendations and consider how to best leverage these recommendations.

SECTION 6: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Racial and Gender Representation

MPD's Chief People and Equity Officer will continue examining different parts of the department to determine where there is a potential to remove barriers and increase opportunity for diverse members. As referenced in PERF's recommendation, part of this effort includes conducting listening sessions across the department. The MPD "Voices Tour" was initiated by MPD's first Chief Equity Officer, and is being continued under the new Chief People and Equity Officer.

Articulating and Institutionalizing MPD's DEI Values

MPD agrees with PERF's recommendation that we update the Department's Mission and Values Statement to reflect our values, which include diversity, equity, and inclusion. This update was proposed by one of the Strategic Priorities teams and the revision process is already underway. Once the new statement is finalized, MPD will ensure it is prominently featured both on the website and in the workplace. MPD will also work to incorporate our DEI values in all relevant policies (e.g., EEO policy, promotional process).

Commitment to DEI and Wellness

MPD has demonstrated its commitment to both DEI and wellness through fully funding the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. In addition to hiring MPD's first Chief Equity Officer, the Mayor's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2024 supports an additional six full time positions to expand MPD's DEI and wellness efforts.

SECTION 7: EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

Organizational Culture Survey

MPD will work with both Unions to use the results of the organizational culture survey as a baseline for periodically measuring how MPD is performing in the key areas of organizational commitment and job satisfaction; work environment; communication; supervision; leadership; training and resources; and hiring, professional development/special assignments, and promotions. As part of MPD's commitment to continuous quality improvement, this will provide an evaluation mechanism to see if the improvements implemented are having the desired effect, as well as identifying other areas of improvement.

CONCLUSION

The Metropolitan Police Department would again like to thank the MPD members and community representatives who contributed to this report, as well as the Police Executive Research Forum for providing numerous recommendations for MPD to consider.

NOTES

[1] The Metropolitan Police Employee Assistance Program (MPEAP) is contracted through the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) for the benefit of MPD members.

[2]

https://mpdc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mpdc/publication/attachments/MPD_ORE%20Analysis_Final.pdf

[3] https://go.mpdconline.com/GO/GO_120_21.pdf