

Report of the Delaware County Criminal Justice Reform Task Force’s Working Group on 21st Century Policing

The Working Group asks each policing agency in Delaware County to embrace the Six Pillars of 21st Century Policing recommended by President Obama’s Task Force report issued in May of 2015. The Presidential Task Force, like our Working Group, comprised leaders from law enforcement, police unions, academia, civil rights organizations and community members. Testimony before the Presidential Task Force included members of the Delaware County Law Enforcement Community.

The Six pillars are:

1. Building Trust and Legitimacy
2. Policy and Oversight
3. Technology and Social Media
4. Community Policing and Crime Reduction
5. Training and Education
6. Officer Wellness and Safety

The Working Group has determined that one of the challenges to implementing these pillars in Delaware County is the wide variance in the size and resources of the forty-four (44) law enforcement agencies that provide municipal policing services in our county. Our Departments range from the 144-person Upper Darby Township Police Department to several boroughs which maintain a full time Chief assisted by part time officers. Ensuring each department, no matter it’s size and the community it serves, implements the best practices contained in the Presidential Task Forces’ Final Report, will require resources from our State and County governments. We ask for the support of our legislators and policymakers in this effort.

This Working Group specifically recommends the following actions be taken or implemented to ensure all Delaware County Policing Agencies are adhering to the Principles of 21st Century Policing:

- The Delaware County District Attorney should provide funding, where required, for an ongoing diversity, sensitivity and implicit bias training program for all police officers in our county, the training provided through the Delaware County Chiefs of Police Association.
- Every police officer in Delaware County should attend and complete Delaware County Crisis Intervention Training to ensure our officers are prepared to deal appropriately with individuals suffering from mental health disorders and become the vital link connecting individuals in need with the mental health resources available in our county.
- Each policing agency should seek Accreditation through the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association’s Law Enforcement Accreditation Program. Accreditation offers policing agencies a tool to ensure they are following best practices in all areas of police work by adopting and adhering to 139 clear statewide standards, including such areas as written “use of force” policies. Since the Accreditation Program was established in 2001, 126 agencies in the Commonwealth have successfully completed the process including

five here in Delaware County: Springfield, Marple, Newtown, the Sheriff's Office, and now Haverford Township, with several more departments in process. But the Accreditation process is resource intensive: many of our departments will need help from their local and state officials to ensure funds are available to successfully complete this process.

- Every department should require body and/or dash cams for the protection of both the community and police officers. This will require significant resources and a commitment from local elected officials to implement and sustain the costs associated with procuring and maintaining the equipment, as well as costs to store and produce video footage as required under Pennsylvania law.
- Police Departments should, to the extent allowed under Pennsylvania law, post department policies (for example, Use of Force) and crime statistics (for example, annual Uniform Crime Reports) on their websites, updated on a regular basis.
- Every police agency acting as a municipal police force in Delaware County should make a real commitment to community policing and engagement. Municipal police officers in Delaware County must see themselves as “Guardians not Warriors”. Our Police Chiefs should take the lead by building community engagement teams of local elected officials, community members and police officers to implement a continuing plan aimed at building community trust through positive police-community interactions. Many Chiefs do this now, but every department should embrace the mission of breaking down barriers between police and some members of our communities and building bridges in their place.
- As a component of community policing, many of our communities require investment in organized recreational activities, such as the Police Athletic League (PAL) sports programs or Citizen and Youth Police Academies, that allow positive interactions between our police officers as role models with at risk children.
- Delaware County Law Enforcement Agencies should utilize our religious community more fully through the Delco Police Chaplain program. Including chaplains as part of the community engagement team while also available to respond with police where appropriate to crime scenes, can be a great resource in defusing community problems.

Through our meetings and individual interactions this Working Group has found that Delaware County police officers and citizen members of the community have the same goal: to ensure public safety by embracing the diversity of our community. We are, after all, in this together; all human beings who love “Delco”, our families and friends. We must remember, as Senator Robert F. Kennedy once said “...that those who live with us are our brothers, that they share with us the same short moment of life; that they seek, as do we, nothing but the chance to live out their lives in purpose and in happiness, winning what satisfaction and fulfillment they can.”

We hope, through our work together, to have made a contribution to making Delaware County a safer and more welcoming community for all.