

**Police Policy and Procedure Review Task Force**  
**Community Feedback on Policing Practices to Reduce Biased Policing Outcomes**  
**Sorted by Themes**  
**June 6, 2018**

**Question 1: What are your expectations and outcomes from a community-policing model?**

**Expectations:** Community members identified a number of key statements speaking to their expectations of the Grand Rapids Police Department (GRPD) and a culture of community policing:

- Be kind, exercise some kind of humanity – does not cost anything to be kind.
- Officers are happy to engage with community, not with intent to intimidate.
- We should be able to trust one another.
- We can live/walk/play safely in our neighborhoods.
- We can function in our community without being discriminated against.
- We can look forward to seeing an officer of the law with confidence despite the climate of the country.

**Accountability:** Community members expressed a basic desire for GRPD to be accountable to the public for its interactions with the community it serves.

- GRPD needs to be accountable to the public through standards, protocols and policies.
- Citizen or civilian review board needs to be considered a part of community policing.
- GRPD needs to meet measurable outcomes or at least outputs.

**Departmentwide community policing:** Community members supported a department-wide approach to community policing.

- Community policing starts with GRPD leadership.
- Begin with a mindset change – community policing is not watered-down policy, rather it is department-wide with every officer engaging with the community.
- Establish a precinct model where community members can speak with officers in their area and where officers are physically located in neighborhoods, making it easier for neighbors to engage rather than a centralized headquarters downtown.
- Do a review of the model GRPD has with its community policing specialist (CPO) officers. Residents want to see more officers during all three shifts – CPOs are available only 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays – and want to see more officers walking the neighborhoods and creating relationships and trust through positive interactions outside of enforcement contacts with the public.

- ALL officers are community officers: Treat all contacts with respect, relationship building, know how the community wants to be treated.
- Best law enforcement is when all people have skin in the game.

**Staffing and Resources:** GRPD must have the resources to respond to calls for service and to build positive relationships outside of enforcement contacts.

- GRPD staffing is an issue for continuing study to ensure the department has sufficient resources to respond to calls for service – having resources to perform positive reinforcement.
- GRPD needs to review calls for service to prioritize these calls and seek to emphasize delivering the best service levels with the resources available.

**Incentives for officers live in their community:** Community members expressed a high degree of interest in having GRPD officers live in the community.

- Offer incentives for officers to live in the community where they work. When officers don't live in the community, they come into a neighborhood on a call already on the defense.

**Diversity of GRPD:** Community members expressed a desire to see GRPD reflect the diversity of the community.

- Focus on ensuring a diverse force in communities that are growing and increasing the number of people of color in the area. We need more officers to look like us in our neighborhoods.

**De-escalation:** Community members wanted to see a stronger focus on de-escalating police interactions as much as is safe.

- GRPD should continue to emphasize de-escalation and develop incentives for it.
- Review body cam videos in which an incident was appropriately de-escalated and use it for training purposes.
- Don't use quotas or anything that can be construed as a quota for stops or arrests.

**Equal treatment:** Community members felt strongly that equal treatment for all citizens was essential to building trust between the community and police.

- Clear policies regarding officer discretion are essential because officer discretion can contribute to disparate outcomes as a result of implicit bias. Implicit bias training needs to be reinforced regularly, and supervision needs to include key performance indicators.

- Internal Affairs needs to look at comparatives and situations in which similarly situated individuals of a different race are treated more favorably by a community officer/patrol officer under similar circumstances and determine the reasoning with a plan of action to decrease these disparities.
- Equitable responses to all calls regardless of area is important to building trust – stigma is in the poorest communities. Bad area equals more cops. Repeated profiling of communities and individuals, especially when there is no actual cause creates anger and frustration.
- Act the way the community wants them to act – treat individuals with respect and don't always expect the worst.

**Community engagement in policing strategies:** Community members expressed a desire to be more involved in partnering with police to improve outcomes.

- There are more ways that citizens can be involved in policing: civilian representatives shadow community police officers and Internal Affairs investigators, expand Citizen Police Academy and who has access to it and increase citizen participation in hiring and training.

**Transparency and communication:** Communication and transparency are essential to building trust and relationships between the community and police.

- GRPD needs to ensure transparent and open communication, especially when things don't go right. The department also needs to do a better job of telling the good stories.

**Engagement between officers and community – it needs to be relational:** Community members spoke extensively about deepening relationships with police as a strategy to reduce disparate outcomes through increased insight, knowledge, respect and collaboration between police officers and the neighborhoods they serve.

- Officers being present in sectors such as schools, churches and companies and establishing relationships so they are connected and engaged outside of calls for service and police enforcement actions is essential.
- GRPD needs to make it possible for officers to be as proactive as possible – able to do positive things in the community that build strong and healthy relationships.
- Officers need to get to know their neighborhoods. If communities are seen as neighbors first, as partners, communication is more open, mutual respect is earned on both sides and problem-solving is more likely.
- Community members want to be seen as an officer's neighbor or family member, to be treated with the same dignity and respect they show their own trusted relationships. Nobody needs to be defensive or fearful. Rather than negative expectations, they want to be seen as constructive partners and co-owners of community well-being and safety.

- Regular neighborhood meetings between GRPD – community officers and “beat cops” – and residents are essential. These meetings create an opportunity to learn from one another. Residents talking and problem-solving with officers, learning about how and why officers do what they do, providing feedback on how policies/protocols/practices are experienced and perceived by the community.

**Role of dispatch:** Dispatch plays a critical role as the first point of contact for the public with calls for service through 911.

- 911 dispatch needs to ask more pertinent questions during non-threatening calls.
- Dispatch training/documentation/information-gathering during calls needs to be included in efforts to reduce disparate outcomes in policing.
- Dispatch can be trained to assess and diffuse calls by asking more pertinent questions during non-threatening calls to determine the full picture – is racism involved, for example – and lower the service call load.

**Problem-solving:** Community policing includes problem-solving as a major component of reducing calls for service and improving public safety and officer safety.

- Proactive problem-solving focuses on issues that can be mitigated through creative solutions jointly developed by the community and police, especially in areas with higher crime rates and social disorder issues. By working together, the community and police can monitor strategies to reduce or manage disparate outcomes in ways more acceptable to the community.
- Partnerships can maximize efforts to problem solve by mobilizing resources and engaging all the key stakeholders. Officers should be trained in available resources and how to develop and work with partnerships.
- Data is a key to problem-solving. GRPD needs to identify additional resources to support data collection for problem-solving.

**Positive engagement with schools, children and youth:** Community members said they wanted to see officers spend more time interacting positively and proactively with children and youth.

- GRPD needs to identify ways to partner with schools and others to spend quality time in positive and proactive ways with children and youth. This can include a school-based curriculum, afterschool activities, lessons on how to protect themselves, reporting abuse, child-centered events and officers as coaches or mentors.
- Recognize that many parents fear police interactions with their children and youth so work with parents and the broader community to help them understand ways to interact with the police and how and why police policies impact the way officers handle enforcement interactions with the public and with youth. As part of that work, make sure officers understand that their enforcement interactions with children and youth

can cause trauma and how to work with and recognize children and youth who have been exposed to trauma.

- Train officers and dispatchers to recognize calls for service that may be the result of the caller's own implicit bias about a particular situation that is an incorrect assumption about the situation. Don't dismiss community and parental concerns about racism/implicit bias, rather train all to recognize it, understand it and develop strategies to mitigate unnecessary further harm as a result of mistaken calls for service.

**Community building:** Community members said they need to be proactive in building community capacity as a partner with police.

- Look at the community's gaps in knowledge and educate ourselves to know our rights and responsibilities as community partners in interactions with the police.
- Create concrete ways that the community can work with the police to strengthen neighborhoods, address public safety issues and reduce social disorder factors, especially tools for neighbors to solve issues without having to call the police.
- Focus on strategies to increase community bonding and attachment, where neighbors know one another and factors that contribute to isolation are tackled and addressed.
- Strengthen partnerships with grassroot organizations to facilitate community strategies to create a city culture that recognizes and values the contributions and participation of all segments of the community. Latinos and African Americans were mentioned specifically as populations experiencing a sense of isolation and disparate treatment.

## **Question 2: What are the characteristics of an ideal police officer recruit?**

**Reflective of the community:** Community members felt strongly that, to the extent possible, GRPD must seek to hire and incentivize officers to live in Grand Rapids.

- GRPD needs to seek to hire "home grown" officers by creating a pipeline for community members to become police officers. Home grown officers are more likely to reflect the community itself and understand the dynamics, history and culture of the community.
- Create programming that can funnel interested applicants into the profession in lieu of advanced degrees.

**Character traits:** Community members identified character traits they believed were important in officer recruits.

- Disciplined, self-driven, decision-maker
- Empathetic, able to legitimize/validate the importance of residents' concerns
- Competent, knowledgeable, cultural and historical understanding
- Ability and willingness to learn, open to correction
- Secure, patient, mature, well-balanced
- Honest, high-quality values, high moral character, integrity

- Not an alpha male; no ego-tripping
- Strong social skills/interpersonal skills, high emotional intelligence
- Open-minded, non-judgmental
- People person, outgoing, welcoming
- Kind, compassionate, caring
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills, tactful, good listener
- Public service-minded, interest in serving others
- Someone who can de-escalate

**Understand the history and culture of community:** Community members want officers to understand the history of racism and the culture of the community.

- Officers need to have the capacity to understand the history of racism and the current challenges being experienced in the community by people of color with law enforcement and in the broader community as a way to address their own implicit bias, empathize with and see all community members with a greater capacity to be equitable and fair.
- Officers need to understand and appreciate the heritage that each segment of the community brings to the diversity and richness of the community.
- Officers need to be able to talk to a lot of different people and articulate/communicate with residents about what they are doing, including people who are different from them.

**Factors to consider in recruitment:** Community members identified a number of factors to consider in the recruitment and hiring of new officers.

- Demonstrated willingness to work with other cultures, i.e. Peace Corps, military
- Emotional intelligence screenings
- Various assessments psychological/personality/leadership capability
- Team sport athletes, team players
- Healthy understanding of power relationships, know how to interact with people and not make fear-based decisions
- People who have undergone de-escalation/implicit bias training
- Older, more experienced officers, experienced, seasoned officers with other agencies
- Some younger officers
- If they don't know the answer, able to ask a question
- Knowledge of criminal justice system, mental health and social services
- Stamina, physical and mental fitness
- Some level of education, educated but does not need a degree
- Understand important issues
- Community connections, association, involvement
- Service focus, volunteer history, community service mindset

- Social work skills, problem solver, emotional intelligence, ability to read others and desire to help
- Able to write a report and analyze a situation
- Balance both the warrior and guardian characteristics because police are dealing with more challenging issues like school shootings
- Bilingual – social worker background
- Instill a level of confidence, need a “presence” about them
- Ability to follow up and follow through, let you know the next steps, take an action – e.g. if this happens then do that

**Recruitment strategies:** Community members identified ideas around recruitment strategies to address how to reach and recruit strong candidates, including persons of color.

- GRPD needs to start in middle school and high school to find ways to identify and mentor kids early and pay for their training to become an officer. Educate them about the things that can keep them from being able to be hired such as tattoos, drug charges.
- GRPD needs to ask why a person of color would want to work for law enforcement to identify the changes it needs to make as an organization and culture to make the organization welcoming and supportive to all officers and nonsworn staff.
- GRPD needs to examine hiring practices to identify the barriers/arbitrary rules that tend to keep women and people of color from being included in recruit applicant pools and identify ways to mitigate underlying policies or address barriers.
- Need to have hiring screeners who are skilled at finding the right people to be an officer.
- Are the requirements too structured? Are we missing people with common sense who may not have the level of education?
- Allow a longer period of time for onboarding for sufficient vetting to find out who officers actually are so new officers can be introduced to the area where they will be assigned.

#### **Miscellaneous comments**

- Changing the culture first equals making the culture attractive
  - The culture is not attractive for people of color
- Not about recruitment – it is training/procedures/systems
- There is no ideal candidate
- Be intentional about recruiting
- Be intentional about looking at implicit bias when hiring
- Black officers struggle with getting respect from residents – they’re called “Uncle Tom” and “sellout,” which impacts their ability to do their job effectively and build relationships
- Diversity training
- Hold officers accountable to what they say during their job interview

