

**Jacksonville Sheriff 's Office Community Engagement
Zone 1 Action Plan**

**Prepared by Bethune-Cookman University
Center for Law and Social Justice
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Introduction

Jacksonville, like many other urban cities, has been forced to recognize and address recent highly publicized events involving law enforcement and some segments of the community. The heightened level of public scrutiny and tensions between law enforcement and some of the communities they serve continues to be a major challenge. With the goal of strengthening community-police relations, enhancing public safety, and police and community competence through professional and personal development, Bethune-Cookman University (B-CU) Center for Law & Social Justice led nine (9) individual training workshops with Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) law enforcement personnel, community residents, and local stakeholders within the zone 1 service district. B-CU faculty and associates conducted community engagement training for more than 150 JSO representatives. The training included elements of procedural justice with an emphasis on individual and collective bias, stereotyping, and cultural awareness. In addition, more than 40 zone 1 community residents, stakeholders, and youth received training on the roles, responsibilities, and perspectives of law enforcement. The community residents and stakeholders actively participated in highly volatile simulated scenarios involving law enforcement encounters (traffic stop, crime in process, etc.) within the community. The participating youth discussed their perceptions of law enforcement and ideas on how to improve the relationship between law enforcement and community residents in general, and more specifically those residing in high-call volume areas.

The initial focus of the training was on JSO service zone 5, which represents one of the highest call volume areas within the city of Jacksonville. The majority of the law enforcement professionals and community residents including youth and stakeholders who received training served or lived in this area. With training in zone 1 completed, plans for zone 4 are currently in process. Future community engagement training for law enforcement professionals, community residents/stakeholders and youth within zones 3, 2, & 6 are planned. According to participant evaluations (150), approximately 90% of the participants rated the training as excellent with respect to usefulness, relevance, and overall rating of the trainers. Although some uncomfortable topics were discussed and there was not always uniform agreement, it is within these uncomfortable spaces and conversations that individual and professional growth occurs. This was clearly reflected in the evaluation responses of law enforcement, community residents, and local stakeholders.



Executive Summary

The President's 21st Century Policing Task Force Report (2015) identified six pillars. These pillars cover the major aspects of policing and range from community policing to technology to officer safety. Due to the limitation of resources, only four pillars were selected for the proposed Action Plan. Within these four pillars, various strategies were reviewed and ranked by the zone 1 action plan team. A summary of these pillars and selected recommendations were identified by JSO and community residents/stakeholders to represent the foundational principles of the JSO Community Engagement Action Plan. Specific details of the Action Plan are presented below.

Pillar 1: Building Trust & Legitimacy

- When serious incidents occur, including those involving alleged police misconduct, agencies should communicate with citizens and the media swiftly, openly, and neutrally, respecting areas where the law requires confidentiality.
- Law enforcement agencies should promote legitimacy internally within the organization by applying the principles of procedural justice.
- Law enforcement agencies should create opportunities in schools and communities for positive non-enforcement interactions with police. Agencies should also publicize the beneficial outcomes and images of positive, trust-building partnerships and initiatives.
- Law enforcement agencies should track the level of trust in police by their communities just as they measure changes in crime. Annual community surveys, ideally standardized across jurisdictions and with accepted sampling protocols, can measure how policing in that community affects public trust.
- Law enforcement agencies should strive to create a workforce that contains a broad range of diversity including race, gender, language, life experience, and cultural background to improve understanding and effectiveness in dealing with all communities.

Pillar 2: Policy & Oversight

- Law enforcement agencies should collaborate with community members to develop policies and strategies in communities and neighborhoods disproportionately affected by crime for deploying resources that aim to

reduce crime by improving relationships, greater community engagement, and cooperation.

- Law enforcement agencies should have comprehensive policies on the use of force that include training, investigations, prosecutions, data collection, and information sharing. These policies must be clear, concise, and openly available for public inspection.
- Law enforcement agency policies for training on use of force should emphasize de-escalation and alternatives to arrest or summons in situations where appropriate.
- Some form of civilian oversight of law enforcement is important in order to strengthen trust with the community. Every community should define the appropriate form and structure of civilian oversight to meet the needs of that community.
- Law enforcement agencies should adopt policies requiring officers to identify themselves by their full name, rank, and command (as applicable) and provide that information in writing to individuals they have stopped. In addition, policies should require officers to state the reason for the stop and the reason for the search if one is conducted.

Pillar 3: Community Policing & Crime Reduction

- Community policing should be infused throughout the culture and organizational structure of law enforcement agencies.
- Law enforcement agencies should develop programs that create opportunities for patrol officers to regularly interact with neighborhood residents, faith leaders, and business leaders.
- Law enforcement agencies should schedule regular forums and meetings where all community members can interact with police and help influence programs and policy.
- Communities should adopt policies and programs that address the needs of children and youth most at risk for crime or violence and reduce aggressive law enforcement tactics that stigmatize youth and marginalize their participation in schools and communities.

- Communities and law enforcement agencies should restore and build trust between youth and police by creating programs and projects for positive, consistent, and persistent interaction between youth and police.

Pillar 4: Training & Education

- Law enforcement agencies should provide leadership training to all personnel throughout their careers.
- POSTs should make Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) a part of both basic recruit and in-service officer training.
- POSTs should ensure that basic officer training includes lessons to improve social interaction as well as tactical skills.
- POSTs should ensure both basic recruit and in-service officer training incorporates content around and recognizing and confronting implicit bias and cultural responsiveness.
- Law enforcement agencies should implement ongoing, top-down training for all officers in cultural diversity and related topics that can build trust and legitimacy in diverse communities. This should be accomplished with the assistance of advocacy groups that represent the viewpoints of communities that have traditionally had adversarial relationships with law enforcement.

JSO Action Plan & Recommendations

The final training workshop included a select group of JSO representatives and community residents/stakeholders that worked collaboratively to develop the framework for a comprehensive Action Plan. The purpose of this plan is to improve the relationship between JSO and the communities they serve with a specific focus on high call volume areas. Many of the strategies and ideas documented during the previous eight (8) training workshops were utilized in the development of the proposed Action Plan. The Action Plan serves as a roadmap, as well as a tool to ensure all parties are accountable for their role in improving law enforcement and community relations and the safety of the community.

Pillar 1.) *Build Trust & Legitimacy between JSO and the Jacksonville community*

Given the current climate, this is the most important pillar and serves as the foundation on which all the other pillars are built upon. Increasing transparency and trust, positive community encounters, internal police legitimacy, and targeted recruitment are key steps in this process.

- Recommendation #1: Critical Incident Communication

The action plan development team overwhelmingly identified a need for improved communication with citizens and the media when serious incidents occur including those involving alleged police misconduct. **It is recommended that JSO continuously review its current policy on communicating incidents of alleged police misconduct to ensure a swift, neutral, and open response.** This review should include a clear understanding and articulation of the information that can be shared, under what circumstances, and any restrictions that may prevent the sharing of information. This review should also include policies and procedures on the release of audio or video footage (police body camera or public recordings).

The establishment and maintenance of meaningful reciprocal relationships between JSO, community residents, stakeholders, and the media is critical to developing the trust necessary for effective communication between these groups. **It is recommended that JSO in collaboration with community stakeholders identify a diverse group of community residents to serve as resources in facilitating open and transparent lines of communication between JSO and various community interests (faith, business, non-profit, community activists, media, etc.). It is recommended that this group meet at minimum twice a year with JSO leadership.** The group will be educated on the types of information that can be released, when, and in what situation it can be shared with the broader community. It is further recommended that these parties be represented during press conferences and other events involving the sharing of information on critical incidents relative to law enforcement actions.

- Recommendation #2: Targeted Recruitment

Like many other law enforcement agencies throughout Florida and the nation, JSO law enforcement personnel are not reflective of the general population of Jacksonville. Notwithstanding a limited pool of minorities interested in a law enforcement career, creative recruitment is needed to address these disparities. Hence, the following recommendations are offered.

It is recommended that JSO continue to actively participate in the annual Florida Historically Black Colleges and Universities Law Enforcement Recruitment Forums.

The events are held on the campuses of Florida’s four (4) Historically Black Colleges & Universities (Bethune-Cookman University-Daytona Beach, Edward Waters College-Jacksonville, Florida A & M University-Tallahassee, and Florida Memorial University-Miami). These events provide law enforcement agencies and professionals the opportunity to mentor and identify potential recruits as well as foster a positive environment for engagement with a diverse and talented pool of students.

Fall 2018 Law Enforcement Career Symposium
Bethune-Cookman University
Daytona Beach, Florida



Spring 2019 Law Enforcement Career Symposium
Florida A & M University
Tallahassee, Florida



It is also recommended that JSO employ a strategy to increase interest in careers in law enforcement among minority youth with a focus on those residing in high-call volume areas. Strategies may include the JSO Explorers Program, as well as the creation of similar programs. For instance, a model like the Students to Troops program which is used as a military recruitment tool can be developed to recruit and increase the interest of local youth in pursuing careers in law enforcement. The program should target schools located in communities with a consistent and concentrated police presence (“hot spots”). It should also include directed, routine outreach to local faith, civic, social, and athletic organizations to identify youth and young adults that may have an interest in law enforcement or related careers.

- Recommendation #3: Promote Internally Legitimacy

While it is expected that law enforcement professionals will engage the public in a manner consistent with a spirit of trust and mutual respect, it is just as important for this spirit to be reflected internally across the agency. One of the core tenants of procedural justice, a nationally recognized law enforcement concept, is the recognition that law enforcement actions should be grounded in both internal and external legitimacy. The foundation of which is based on having a voice, fairness, impartiality, and transparency. **It is therefore recommended that JSO cultivate or maintain a culture of internal legitimacy at the highest level of leadership to patrol officers as outlined by the tenets of procedural justice.**

Pillar 2.) *Policy & Oversight*

Another vital pillar as it relates to police and community relations involves the development of comprehensive, purposeful, and pragmatic law enforcement policy. Equally important is the internal and external review, acceptance, and oversight of such policies.

- Recommendation #1: Continue to Engage Community in the Development of Law Enforcement Policy & Practice
Law enforcement efforts to achieve a safe community requires community buy-in, transparency, and a clear articulation of the purpose and intent of departmental policies. **It is recommended that JSO intentionally and meaningfully engage the community in the development of law enforcement policies and practices that directly impact police-community encounters (i.e.: body cameras, use of force, officer misconduct, officer commendation, training).**
- Recommendation #2: Continue to Maintain Clear, Concise, and Openly Available Use of Force Policies and Related Data & Information
Law enforcement use of force incidents, whether appropriate or inappropriate, are the most critical and highly publicized community encounters. For this reason, **it is recommended that JSO continuously update its use of force policies, data-collection, investigation, training, and information-sharing/availability protocols.** JSO currently utilizes the agency website to communicate this and other information in a clear and user-friendly format.
- Recommendation #3: Increase Emphasis on Alternatives to Arrest and De-escalation
It is recommended that JSO continue to seek data-driven and practical alternatives to arrests when appropriate, similar to the civil citation (juvenile) and pre-arrest diversion (adult) programs currently being used by the department. It is also recommended that JSO examine its current policies relative to the use of juvenile and adult alternatives to arrest practices. It is further recommended that JSO continue to identify and implement innovative policies in the area of de-escalation, which includes use of force, engaging the mentally ill, and other potentially volatile encounters with the public. All JSO use of force policies should clearly state what information can be released, when and in what situations to maintain transparency.

Pillar 3.) *Community Policing and Crime Reduction*

According to the U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Police Services, community policing is defined as a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. However, many law enforcement agencies consider the creation of community policing divisions or units as community policing. True community policing when implemented as the foundation of an agency, permeates every facet of the department's operation from the top down.

A critical component of any community policing effort is the establishment of community trust. Without community trust, all community policing efforts are futile.

- Recommendation #1: Develop a mutual understanding of community policing and its components

Consistent with JSO's current mission statement which emphasizes community partnerships, **it is recommended that JSO work collaboratively with community stakeholders to develop a mutual understanding of the definition and application of community policing specific to the Jacksonville community.** This shared and common understanding will allow both parties to have a vested interest in the safety and well-being in the community. It will also allow for two-way accountability in this process.

- Recommendation#2: Continue to Infuse Community Policing into the Culture and Structure of JSO

Given the current climate of community-police relations as a result of nationally publicized negative encounters, it is critical for JSO and other law enforcement agencies to find effective strategies for positive engagement with the communities they serve. For this reason, **it is recommended that JSO continue to work toward a system that values and encourages positive, non-law enforcement contacts with community members in general and those residing in high-call volume areas in particular.** For instance, positive, non-law enforcement contacts could be considered as part of an officer's annual evaluation and promotional process.

Historically, law enforcement effectiveness has been measured by the number of arrests, the evolution of policing requires innovations in how law enforcement assesses productivity and effectiveness. Hence, **there is a critical need to include positive non-law enforcement interactions as a measure of public safety.** Increasing the number of positive community encounters will lead to greater trust, better problem-solving and open lines of communications thereby resulting in safer communities.

- Recommendation#3: Targeted Community Engagement

JSO currently utilizes the Sheriff's walk to engage residents within each of its six service zones; a more strategic and focused effort is warranted. **It is recommended that JSO embrace the intentional inclusion of all voices including those critical of JSO.** JSO has demonstrated its commitment to the faith community through its current and past use of a full-time Chaplain to provide a platform that engages Jacksonville's faith community. Continued efforts are needed to expand and strengthen relationships with other community-based organizations, non-profits, and the business community.

While it is critical that JSO engage the diverse population of individuals that comprise the Jacksonville community, the most impactful and integral group is the youth population. Although JSO currently has a functioning Police Athletic League that engages hundreds of youth throughout Jacksonville, **it is recommended that JSO strategically increase efforts to engage youth and young adults through various civic, social, and educational venues.** This includes increasing engagement opportunities with youth attending local

schools, in general and schools located in disadvantaged communities in particular. Exposing youth to positive images and experiences with law enforcement professionals at an early age may increase their positive perception of individual law enforcement officers and the profession as a whole. **It is further recommended that JSO continue the use of civil citation and juvenile diversion programs to prevent the inappropriate use of the legal system for minor delinquency infractions.**

Pillar 4.) *Training and Education*

The continuation of zone-specific community engagement training is recommended. JSO's leadership must continue its commitment to ensuring the men and women of JSO are provided the most innovative and up-to-date training in the areas of citizen engagement, procedural justice, implicit bias, cultural awareness, legitimacy, and community trust. It should be noted that JSO's leadership has shown a willingness to acknowledge and address the negative perception of law enforcement by some members of the Jacksonville community.

- Recommendation #1: Continue the Development and Delivery of the Law Enforcement and Community Engagement Training Provided by Bethune-Cookman University's Center for Law and Social Justice

As of July 1, 2019, **approximately 360 JSO representatives, to include leadership, participated in the Community Engagement Training sessions.** The training was designed to strengthen and improve police-community relations, enhance public safety, and increase mutual police and community awareness. More than 360 members and representatives of JSO were trained in service zones 1 and 5.

Although the training of law enforcement personnel is an integral element of community engagement, the community's understanding of its own role in ensuring public safety is as, if not more, important to achieving this end. **For this reason, approximately 100 Jacksonville community residents, stakeholders, and youth in service zones 1 and 5 received training on the roles, responsibilities, and perspectives of law enforcement professionals and community members.** The community residents and stakeholders actively participated in highly volatile simulated scenarios involving law enforcement encounters (traffic stop, crime in process, etc.) within the community. In a separate session, local youth were provided a forum to discuss their views and perspectives of law enforcement, as well as strategies to increase positive interactions between the two groups.

Community engagement training was delivered in three (3) distinct, but integrated phases. The three (3) phases are outlined below.

Phase 1 (Law Enforcement Professionals) This training introduced and provided effective interpersonal communication strategies for law enforcement professionals in the effort to reduce the level of mistrust and fear of members of the community. The training included elements of procedural justice, implicit and explicit bias, stereotyping, cultural awareness, barriers to effective interpersonal communication and de-escalation strategies to resolve or prevent conflicts. The training sought to promote the importance of mutual understanding and respect between law enforcement and the community. The training also provided law enforcement professionals with an awareness of how current and past negative community encounters influence community perceptions of law enforcement, even when such encounters are not local. The impact of social media and the 24-hour news cycle will also be examined.



Phase 2 (Community Members and Stakeholders) This training examined the nature and some of the factors that contribute to community mistrust as it relates to law enforcement. The training explored the perceptions and attitudes of the community towards law enforcement from a historical perspective. Training participants were provided an in-depth overview of the hiring process, training, and role of law enforcement professionals. Participants also participated in role-playing scenarios and simulations depicting situations officers encounter in the performance of their duties. The training provided participants with strategies to overcome negative perceptions and attitudes towards law enforcement professionals and build stronger relationships based on mutual respect.



Phase 3 (Community Members/Stakeholder and Law Enforcement Professionals)

This session included a select group of JSO representatives and community residents/stakeholders working collaboratively to develop an Action Plan aimed at improving the relationship between JSO and the Jacksonville community. The training was designed to provide community members and law enforcement professionals with an understanding and awareness of each other's role in ensuring the safety and security of the community. The training focused on enhancing mutual accountability and responsibility among law enforcement and community residents. The Action Plan included tangible and measurable strategies and outcomes for strengthening the relationship between law enforcement and the community, thereby enhancing public safety.



- Recommendation #2: Provide Continuous Leadership and Professional Development Training for Law Enforcement Professionals Throughout the Ranks

Providing continuous professional development to law enforcement professionals throughout their careers is essential to personal well-being, job satisfaction and performance, positive community interactions, agency morale, as well as many other facets of law enforcement. **It is recommended that all JSO personnel (from street patrol to command staff) be provided the training necessary to perform their responsibilities at the highest standard of the profession.** Given the high levels of stress and exposure to violence experienced by law enforcement and residents residing in high-crime communities, it is necessary to train officers to recognize and address personal symptoms of PTSD as well as the impacts of trauma on the community. Heightened levels of trauma may exacerbate community conflicts during police involved or other community-level encounters. **Therefore, training on conflict resolution and management is recommended.**

- Recommendation #3: Identification and Utilization of Community Resources and Partners

Today, more than ever, law enforcement personnel are called upon for non-enforcement services. Therefore, it is critically important that law enforcement have an understanding and awareness of community resources, services, and stakeholders. This is particularly important in socially disadvantaged, lower income, high call volume areas. **As such, it is recommended that JSO develop strategies to identify and incorporate community-based organizations and services as a resource tool in crime prevention efforts. It is also recommended that JSO incorporate community stakeholders and organizations as presenters during academy and in-service training.**

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