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BUILDING PUBLIC TRUST IN POLICING

A FIVE-POINT PROGRAM FOR RAPID, VISIBLE
PROGRESS TOWARDS STRONG, EFFECTIVE
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS, SAFER
NEIGHBORHOODS, AND POLICING BASED ON
RESPECT FOR THE CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL.

21ST CENTURY POLICING – 21CP SOLUTIONS, LLC



A STEP-BY-STEP ACTION GUIDE FOR POLICE REFORM & BUILDING PUBLIC TRUST

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“(T)he police are the public and the public are the police; the police are only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties that are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.”

-- Sir Robert Peel when he established London's Metropolitan Police two centuries ago

Executive Summary

The authors of this paper have extensive national and international experience in police reform and, more specifically, in the implementation of consent decrees in several jurisdictions throughout the country, including Seattle, Baltimore, Chicago, East Haven (CT), Springfield (MA), Puerto Rico and the State of New Jersey.

Policing in the United States faces a **threefold** crisis – a collapse of **public trust** in many communities, a sharp decrease in police **officer numbers**¹, and **rising crime**² after years of decline. These three elements are linked.

Public Trust. A lack of confidence in our policing is widespread. In a 2023 poll, 89% of respondents called for changes in policing,³ 47% saying that the changes should be major and 42% saying they be minor. In 2022, the annual Gallup survey of confidence in US institutions found that only 45% of respondents had a ‘great deal’ or ‘quite a lot’ of confidence in police – 53% of Whites and 30% of other races. 31% of non-White respondents expressed little confidence or none at all, versus only 10% of White respondents.⁴

Fewer Police. Budget cuts have reduced the numbers of police on patrol. This has disproportionately impacted traditionally underserved neighborhoods, notably communities of color, that are most affected by crime and threats to public safety. (Black Americans, especially those between the ages of 15 and 34, experience the highest rates of homicides and shootings, and Black Americans are more than 10 times as likely as

¹ MacFarquhar, Neil. “Why Police Have Been Quitting in Droves in the Last Year.” *New York Times*, June 24, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/24/us/police-resignations-protests-asheville.html>.

² Kang, Jay Caspian. 2022. “Opinion | Violent Crime Is up as Cities Lose Police Officers. What Now?” *The New York Times*, June 6, 2022, sec. Opinion. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/06/opinion/violent-crime-police.html>.

³ DePinto, Jennifer, Anthony Salvanto, Fred Backus, and Kabir Khanna. 2023. *Review of Most Americans Think Changes to Policing Are Necessary* — CBS News Poll. February 5, 2023. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/policing-opinion-poll-2023-02-05/>. 47% of the 89% called for major changes, and the remaining 42% called for minor changes.

⁴ *Gallup Annual Survey of Confidence in US Institutions*, published June 2022. Confidence in policing is only surpassed by confidence in the military (64%) and small business (68%), and is well above the average (27%) and Congress (7%), but policing is highly dependent on trust, so a finding below 50% is worrying, and the disparity between the races especially so.

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White Americans to die by gun homicide).⁵ Leaders in those communities have consistently called for different policing that is fair and constitutional.

Rising Crime. The erosion of public trust has made the job of policing more difficult, less rewarding, and less attractive as a career. Many officers have resigned or retired early and not enough have been recruited to replace them. The combination of understaffed police departments and ineffective police engagement with communities has hampered crime prevention. In the Baton Rouge, La., parish, for example, the parish's homicides spiked over the same period that the city lost police officers, with 170 homicides in 2021, compared to 97 in 2019.

A Roadmap for Progress

Addressing this crisis is urgent. Reform needs to be **thorough and thoughtful**. But this does not mean it has to be slow. **This paper sets out five areas for achieving timely, visible results and enhancing police legitimacy, public trust, and community safety.**⁶

1. **Authentic and transparent police leadership.** This is by far the most important factor in effective reform.
 - a. **The chief of police must be a dynamic change agent.** Without that, no reform initiative can succeed. Communities, and those serving in the police service, need to see that their chief of police is fully committed to reform.
 - b. **Chiefs and their command teams must be united** in pursuing reform and instilling a **culture of continuous improvement** in the entire police department. Leaders must engage authentically and transparently both within the police department and with the public, regularly spending time with department members of all ranks and those living and working in the community.
 - c. **Strong city leadership** from mayors, city managers and councilors is also important. They must also take responsibility for effective policing and community safety.
2. **Direct community involvement in the process of reform.**
 - a. Police leaders **should consult closely with community leaders and representatives from other disciplines**, including education, health, business, labor, religious and volunteer sectors. They should listen to anyone who wishes to offer views. Engagement should be authentic and transparent. It also needs to be ongoing.

⁵ Edmund, Marissa. 2022. "Gun Violence Disproportionately and Overwhelmingly Hurts Communities of Color." Center for American Progress. June 30, 2022. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/gun-violence-disproportionately-and-overwhelmingly-hurts-communities-of-color/>.

⁶ For a more comprehensive guide to policing reform, see [Seven Ways to Fix Policing Now](#) by Kathleen O'Toole and Robert Peirce, published by Rowman and Littlefield, 2022.

- b. Policing **strategies should be nimble** and respond to changing concerns and priorities.
 - c. Police chiefs should **ensure that their vision-and-reform program is communicated clearly** to communities, and that communities are kept informed of progress and challenges.
3. **The primacy of patrol.**
- a. **Neighborhood policing should be the lifeblood of the police organization** – the core operational strategy and ethos of the department, fully reflected in the allocation of staff and other resources.
 - b. **‘Community policing’** should be understood as **policing with the community**. Neighborhood patrol officers, who know their areas well and can build relationships with residents and earn their trust, are critical to building **police-community partnerships** for crime prevention, violence intervention strategies, and the protection of all.
4. **Police are part of the community, not apart from the community.** Police should see themselves as part of the community, and their recruitment, composition and training should all reflect this, as should the conduct of police in doing their jobs. Police are civilians; **there should be no ‘us versus them’**.
5. **Accountability** is vital and must be clearly defined, not a haphazard accumulation of offices with overlapping responsibilities.
- a. The **three functions of external accountability should be clear and separate**: one body for **oversight** of the performance of the chief and the department, one for **complaints**, and one for **inspections**. Complaints should be investigated by independent bodies, staffed with first-rate investigators.
 - b. Police chiefs should have the final decision on discipline and **termination. They are held accountable for all their decisions** in the running of their departments and must therefore have the responsibility to make those decisions.
 - c. Better **performance management** – internal accountability – is also crucial. Early interventions, retraining, and mentoring of officers who are underperforming or making mistakes can reduce the risk of serious problems in the future. **72% of police do not believe that underperforming officers are held accountable.**⁷

⁷ Morin, Rich, Kim Parker, Renee Stepler, and Andrew Mercer. 2017. "What Police Think about Their Jobs." Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project. January 11, 2017. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2017/01/11/behind-the-badge/>.

- d. Departments need robust **officer wellness** programs for the physical and mental health of their employees.⁸

Consent Decrees Can Be a Valuable Tool: A Guide to Culture Change

Several police departments are under consent decrees, which can have very positive outcomes, providing a comprehensive framework for reform and bringing significant improvement in both policies and practices. However, consent decrees can take a decade or more to work through. The decrees are long, detailed documents with lists of actions to be taken and points of compliance that are difficult for non-experts to follow.

A police department should **use a consent decree or similar plan as a foundation for reform; not as a box-ticking exercise**, but as **a basis for transforming their work**.

A Guide. As Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said when the Los Angeles consent decree was lifted in 2013 after twelve years of federal oversight, the LAPD “took it to heart” and “used it as a **guide to change their culture**.”

Innovative Measures. The Seattle Police Department has leveraged its consent decree, which dates from 2012, as the foundation for innovative measures going beyond the strict requirements of the decree itself, notably its Micro-Community Policing Plans (discussed below) and multi-agency work to address mental health crisis, homelessness, and addiction conditions.

Managing Expectations. Communities tend to have high expectations of imminent change when a consent decree is agreed and can become frustrated if they do not quickly see a change in policing style and conduct, transparency, and accountability. This may happen despite the department steadily progressing through the list of actions set out in the decree. The police may be moving forward on technical requirements but nevertheless be making no headway with public sentiment and support.

Role of Technology. New technology required to capture necessary data to assess compliance has also been utilized to create public facing dashboards and other reports to enhance transparency and better inform the community on important topics such as Use of Force, Stops and Arrests, Overall Crime, Bias Crimes, and Public Disclosure.⁹ Consent decrees should be seen as an opportunity to be leveraged, and to promote a culture of innovation.

Beyond the Consent Decree: Culture of Continuous Improvement

Reform should not depend upon consent decrees alone. Relatively few of the more than 18,000 police agencies in the United States are operating under decrees and such

⁸ <https://cops.usdoj.gov/officersafetyandwellness>

⁹ <https://www.seattle.gov/police/information-and-data>

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processes may take several years to complete.¹⁰ Many departments need urgent reform, and all of them, however well they are performing, should aspire to a culture of constant reform and innovation.

It Begins with a Vision. To achieve police reform, every department needs a **clear vision** for building, or rebuilding, the community trust on which police legitimacy depends; and a **program of action that can show results within a short timeframe**. This is necessary even when a consent decree is in place. As important as it is, a consent decree is not enough to inspire community trust, absent an overarching vision and **early signs of an improved policing service**.

Charting the Way Forward

There is much debate about policing reform but not enough progress, and certainly not enough *visible* progress. An ugly incident anywhere in the country can raise questions about the state of policing everywhere, even in jurisdictions that have a good record of community relations and have not been prone to such incidents. The death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014 was one such event. The murder of George Floyd in 2020 triggered demonstrations around the world. More recently, the fatal beating of Tyre Nichols in Memphis has sparked outrage (and an investigation into the Memphis Police Department now launched by the Department of Justice.)¹¹ And there have been many other high-profile cases.

Police departments should demonstrate a vision for reform, which should inspire communities and police officers alike to work towards a truly collaborative approach to policing and produce visible results within a short space of time. The five areas covered in this paper should inform the development of such a vision.

When developing this paper, the authors drew on their first-hand experience and interviewed current and former police chiefs, command staff members (sworn and non-sworn), and other officials from the projects above, as well as several who have worked in New Orleans, Cleveland, and Los Angeles. They also reviewed extensive literature on topics that emerged in those discussions.

¹⁰ See [Appendix A](#)

¹¹ Statement from United States Attorney Kevin G. Ritz. 2023. [www.justice.gov. January 18, 2023. https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdtn/pr/statement-united-states-attorney-kevin-g-ritz.](https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdtn/pr/statement-united-states-attorney-kevin-g-ritz)

Policing in Crisis

Police are not a garrison imposing order upon a captive population. They are part of the community, and they are public servants whose purpose is to protect the rights of all.

Policing is facing the most serious crisis in a generation:

- **Public trust has been shaken by high-profile incidents involving the use of lethal force.**
- **The profession is being vilified.**
- **Political leaders aren't providing support for effective policing.**
- **Morale is low.**
- **Understaffing is plaguing departments.**

Misuse of Lethal Force. Public trust has been shaken by high-profile incidents involving the use of lethal force, caught on video, and widely viewed around the country and abroad. In many instances, communities have witnessed police conduct that has been egregious, contrary to policy, and in some cases criminal. In communities that have historically had difficult relationships with police, these incidents have taken the level of trust to a new low. They have also had a detrimental impact on attitudes towards the police in communities that have previously been more trusting and supportive.¹²

Vilified. Police everywhere have been affected by negative perceptions, often to the point of overt vilification of their profession. A high-profile incident in any city can trigger hostile demonstrations against police in cities thousands of miles away. There have been instances of physical attacks on officers. There have been targeted assassinations in New York City, Dallas, Los Angeles and Bristol, Connecticut for example and attempts to kill officers during protests,

Little Help from Politicians. The response of political leaders, from the left and the right, has not always supported effective policing, nor has it amounted to coherent reform efforts. The responses to weeks of demonstrations in cities such as Oakland,¹³ Portland¹⁴ and Seattle¹⁵ were deep cuts in police budgets, thereby compounding the policing crisis and making reform more difficult. At the other end of the political spectrum, elected representatives have defended and praised the perpetrators of the January 6th, 2021, attack on the Capitol, which led to police deaths and many officer injuries. Some also

¹² See, e.g., Kochel, T.R. and Skogen, W.G. (2021) Accountability and transparency as levers to promote public trust and police legitimacy: findings from a natural experiment. *Policing: An International Journal*. 44(6): 1046-1059.

¹³ Li, Roland. 2020. "Hundreds Gather in Oakland to Protest Police Brutality." San Francisco Chronicle. August 29, 2020. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Hundreds-protest-police-brutality-in-Oakland-15523702.php>.

¹⁴ Carpenter, Zoë. 2021. "The Past 2 Years Have Left Portland Reeling. What Kind of Recovery Comes Next?" [www.thenation.com](https://www.thenation.com/article/society/portland-black-lives-matter-protests/). October 5, 2021. <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/portland-black-lives-matter-protests/>.

¹⁵ Carter, Mike, Daniel Beekman, Heidi Groover, and Paul Roberts. 2020. "How a Year of Protests Changed Seattle." The Seattle Times. December 29, 2020. <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/how-a-year-of-protests-changed-seattle/>.

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promote old crime-control methods that have proved to undermine trust and legitimacy in communities.

Morale Is Low. The strain of the past few years has taken its toll on police officers and leaders. Many officers have resigned or taken early retirement. Fewer people are applying to join the profession.¹⁶ Many departments are falling far short of their recruiting target.^{17,18}

Understaffing Creates Big Problems. The Seattle Police Department, for example, lost a quarter of its officers in 2020-22. The chief of police in Fairfax County, Virginia, declared a state of personnel emergency in July 2022 and instituted mandatory overtime.

This kind of understaffing is widespread and has resulted in fewer police officers dedicated to patrol, which in turn has led to less day-to-day engagement with communities, and less effective crime prevention.

It has also led to **longer response times** to calls for service (almost twice as long in New York City,¹⁹ compared with 2019, and three times as long in New Orleans, according to a recent study). A recent Chicago Tribune analysis found that 911 response times exceeded one hour for one in every twenty-four high priority calls in Chicago.²⁰ One study found that the odds of an offender being placed under arrest decreased 4.7% for every minute of response time (for footnote: this came from a thesis by Brittney Thorndyke at Boise State University).

The crisis calls for rapid action. These factors present an opportunity to transform the relationship between police and their communities. Seizing that opportunity will require **strong and committed police leadership**, which is both bold and decisive and at the same time communicative, transparent, engaged with, and responsive to, the communities they serve.

Police derive their legitimacy from communities. Policing should be based on the **consent** of those communities. Police are not a garrison imposing order upon a captive population. They are part of the community, and they are public servants whose purpose is to protect the rights of all. They have unique powers to curtail the rights of some

¹⁶ For a good overview of staffing and morale issues in modern police departments, see Stirling, C.A. (2022) "Why are police officers unhappy? A qualitative case study of an American police department." *Northcentral University ProQuest Dissertations Publishing*, 29165966.

¹⁷ A survey by the Police Executive Research Forum covering the years 2019-2021 found that the number of police resignations across the United States increased by 40%, and retirements by 20%. Hirings declined by 4% in the same period, and officer staffing levels dropped by 3.5% against a background of surging violent crime. (policeforum.org/workforcemarch2022).

¹⁸ According to the New York Police Department Police Benevolent Association, NYPD resignations in 2022 ran at four times the rate of 2015.

¹⁹ Asher, Jeff, and Ben Horwitz. 2020. "How Do the Police Actually Spend Their Time?" *The New York Times*, June 19, 2020, sec. The Upshot. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/19/upshot/unrest-police-time-violent-crime.html>.

²⁰ Mahr, Joe, and Annie Sweeney. 2023. "Many 911 Calls Deserve an 'Immediate' Police Response. But in Thousands of Cases, Officers Didn't Arrive for More than an Hour." *Chicago Tribute*, January 1, 2023. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/criminal-justice/ct-chicago-police-dispatch-long-delays-20230101-y3ky5kq6rnfuhd6b3hrbj5lia4-story.html>.

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individuals, by detaining or arresting them, but only when those individuals pose a threat to the rights of others in the community.

Thus, reform must be rooted in the needs, concerns, and priorities of the community – **all communities** – served. It follows that **communities must be involved in the process of reform** and should be able to see the outcomes of that process for themselves.

REFORM - A FIVE POINT PROGRAM

1. Police Leadership²¹

The Police Chief as Change Agent

The police department leader must:

- **Be wholly committed to reform.**
- **Instill a culture of continuous improvement.**
- **Thoroughly assess the entire organization.**
- **Engage members of the community.**
- **Have ongoing dialogue with police unions.**
- **Develop an informal pool of diverse advisors.**

All in on reform. For reform to succeed, the police chief must be **wholly committed** – and be seen to be committed – to implementing reforms, working with communities, communicating transparently and honestly, building trust, and instilling a **culture of continuous improvement**. The culture of a department is shaped from the top,²² and the **sustainability** of any reform program is dependent on focused, dynamic leadership. Progress made under the leadership of one chief can quickly erode under a less capable, less committed successor. The essential requirement is that the chief, whether from within the department or not, has a **proven record as a change agent**.

An Assessment from Outside the Department. An incoming police chief should, upon assuming office, order an urgent assessment of the organization, lasting no more than three months and ideally done by an external party. This will give the chief a baseline from which to make, and measure, an early impact on the department's standing with its communities. The assessment should include:

²¹ For scholarship in this area, see, e.g., Simmons-Beauchamp, B. and Sharpe, H. (2022) "The moral injury of ineffective police leadership: a perspective." *Front. Psychol.* 13:766237; Schafer, J.A. (2010). "The ineffective police leaders: acts of commission and omissions." *J. Crim. Just.* 38, 737-746; Schafer, J.A. (2008) "Effective police leadership: experiences and perspectives of law enforcement leaders." *77 FBI L. Enforcement Bull* 13; Isenberg, J. (2017) *Police leadership in a democracy*. New York: Routledge.

²² <https://civilrightspolicing.org/leadership/>

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- **Key metrics of police performance, including crime patterns.**
- **Calls for service.**
- **Staff and resource allocation.**
- **Community engagement.**
- **Use of force data.**
- **Citizen complaints and dispositions.**
- **Other issues affecting community safety, trust, and support.**

Grassroots Dialogue. A police chief, whether newly appointed or not, should be personally involved in regular dialogue with communities at the grass roots level. In some instances, and with some communities, the new chief will need to acknowledge past mistakes to establish a foundation for trust and future partnership.

Charles Ramsey, a former Chief in Washington DC and Commissioner in Philadelphia, adopted a practice of meeting in his office with groups of residents, five or six at a time, to talk about local concerns. Town halls have their place in police-community relations, but private meetings such as these enable voices to be heard that might otherwise not be, and issues to be discussed in more detail.

Similar small group meetings with (self-selecting) patrol officers can also be immensely useful.²³ Officers who sign up for meetings are likely to be the ones who know their neighborhoods well, care about them, and have ideas for solutions to problems. This kind of input is invaluable to a reforming chief.

Communicate with Union Leaders. Chiefs should also engage with police unions. Some are more progressive in their thinking than others, but all should have an interest in improving the policing profession, its attractiveness to recruits, its support for officer wellness, its training, equipment, and resourcing. **Chiefs should maintain strong lines of communication with sworn and non-sworn labor leaders who represent members of their organization.** They should offer to attend union executive committee meetings, general membership meetings, and other events. While naturally there will be differing opinions and disagreements as labor leaders and managers perform their roles, respectful lines of communication between management and labor enhance internal transparency and trust.

Diverse Voices. Some chiefs benefit from an informal pool of diverse advisors drawn from a variety of sectors, including academia, the private sector, and the non-profit community.²⁴ An open and inquisitive mind is one hallmark of a strong leader.

²³ When serving as Police Commissioner in Boston, Commissioner Kathleen O'Toole established a Commissioner's Advisory Group that consisted of highly respected front-line personnel from the ranks of patrol officer and sergeant.

²⁴ In Seattle, the police department benefitted from strong relationships with the Downtown Seattle Association and partnerships with major corporations headquartered in the region, such as Starbucks, Microsoft, Amazon, Boeing, and Alaska Air. The private sector has partnered with the SPD on community programs as well as executive development programs for police leaders.

The Command Team

Chief as CEO. A chief is not only the top cop but also the 'CEO', and usually comes to the job with little or no training for the latter role. Therefore, a diverse, nonsworn contingent on the command team is so important. It is they who should provide expertise in many of the areas listed below.

Leadership goes beyond the chief. Departments need a deep bench of diverse talent and different perspectives, a mix of people from within the department and from elsewhere, a mix of sworn and nonsworn.

Diverse command team with range of skill sets. Successful reform requires a strong, committed, and diverse command team. Police departments have often suffered from poor business practices, leading to inefficiencies and poor allocation of resources. This is partly because command teams comprise sworn personnel who have proved themselves as police officers but know little about project management, data analytics, human resources, finance, technology, procurement, building management and the many other items that are essential to the effective and efficient operation of large organizations.

Strategic thinking needed. Chiefs of police can easily find themselves **trapped in cycles of crisis management, going from one emergency to the next.** This is an endemic feature of policing. But a chief needs time to think and plan strategically. This is only possible with a strong command team, with whom the chief can share the dual tasks of handling crises and providing strategic direction. It follows that the command team must have the full confidence of the chief.

Chiefs should select their own command teams. This does not always happen. Some cities, some mayors, do not allow it. This is misguided. If you want to hold a chief accountable for the management of a department, you must give them the responsibility to manage it and not impose management decisions on them from above. **Beware of any candidate for chief who does not ask for authority to pick the command team. They are probably not the change-agent you seek.**

Energizing the Department

Emphasize Strategic Objectives. Police leaders should ensure that the entire department – sworn and nonsworn, from the command team to managers at all levels, front-line officers, and all support staff – understand the strategic objectives of the organization and their part in delivering results, which should also be incorporated into recruit training. **All should understand that their performance and conduct will be assessed against the department's objectives.**

Reform should infuse and inform all police work. It should not be seen as a program separate from the conduct of 'normal' police business. There is scope for

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misunderstanding on this point, especially when a department is working under a consent decree. It may be tempting for a chief to assign personnel to take charge of compliance with the decree, as a task apart from the continuation of police operations by everyone else in the department. This would be a mistake. Everyone needs to contribute to the reform process *and* police operations.

Understanding the consent decree. In the case of consent decrees, police leaders should be particularly vigilant about ensuring that **all members of the department are well briefed on the process**, what it means and what their role is in securing compliance with the decree. Leaders should recognize that, for many officers, consent decrees can be traumatic events. They can be seen as indictments of an entire department and all the officers within it. In fact, decrees typically identify a number of specific policies and practices that need to be addressed and reformed. A consent decree is often triggered by an incident involving misconduct by a few police officers. A 'pattern and practice' investigation follows, and may identify systemic failures, such as bad hiring practices, inadequate pre-recruitment screening, poor training, weak performance evaluation, lack of supervision and deficient handling of complaints. In some cases, the problems go beyond the police department, to failings of city leadership and the structures in place to support good, effective policing.

Officers need to be assured that a consent decree is not an indictment of all of them personally. Many of them do an excellent job whether or not their department and city support and guide them properly. The decree is an opportunity to work toward better policing. Consent decrees typically bring about better resourcing for equipment, technology, and training – much needed items that are often squeezed by tight budgets. Officers should view a consent decree with optimism, but they must hear that message from their chief.

Instilling a Culture of Continuous Improvement and Transparency

Listen to the rank and file. Reform should become part of a new organizational culture. Leaders should encourage all members, from the command team to the front line, to speak out when they have concerns about policies and practices that are not working well, and ideas about how to do better. They need to feel part of the reform process and free to put forward their concerns and ideas. The **culture of continuous improvement** depends on them, and on leaders listening to them and empowering them. A department in which 'dissent is not tolerated', to quote Rebecca Boatright, Chief of Legal Affairs at the Seattle Police Department, cannot develop such a culture.²⁵

Make command structure less hierarchical. Police departments have traditionally been hierarchical, sometimes oppressively so. Ranks may be unavoidable in policing, but a

²⁵ See, e.g., Paoline, E.A. and Gau, J.M. (2020) An empirical assessment of the sources of police job satisfaction. *Police Quarterly*, 23(1), 55-81; Kasper, J. (2011) Improving motivation and morale: a police leader's guide. Looseleaf Law Publications.

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hierarchical culture is not, and it should be eliminated by any leader aiming to get the best from an organization. **As far as possible, decision-making authority should be devolved to district commanders, non-sworn leaders, and neighborhood patrol supervisors.**

In hierarchical organizations, headquarters often seems remote from the front line. Officers and nonsworn members complain that the top leaders do not understand what they do, that communication is one-way, and that instructions coming down to them from above fail to take account of the realities on the street.

Communications and transparency inside the department is vital. Successful police leadership depends on it. Leaders should communicate frequently and freely with their front-line members and visit their units regularly so that the workforce has opportunities to talk directly to them.

For example, in Seattle, the chief and all command team members attended all in-service training, including live scenarios, side-by-side with personnel of all ranks. It underscored the command team's collective commitment to new policies and training, emphasized the need for all department members to attend the training, and gave command staff the opportunity to assess the value of the new training modules. It also provided unique opportunities for front-line officers to engage with their leaders informally and promoted great camaraderie. **Countless officers commented, "This is the first time we've seen chiefs at training."**

Visibility/Transparency: Building Trust in the community. The police chief and members of the command staff should be highly visible, meeting community leaders and other partners involved in promoting community safety.

When incidents such as officer-involved shootings occur, the chief should speak out publicly and quickly, even before facts are clear. Facts are *never* clear in the first few hours, but waiting until they become clear can be disastrous. **This is an indispensable part of building trust.** Silence and delay breed suspicion, rumors, and false stories; and they destroy trust. Body-worn camera footage should be released quickly, ideally within twenty-four hours. The chief should share what is known, tell the truth as they understand it, pledge a full and fair investigation, and apologize when appropriate.

In the words of Sir Hugh Orde, who led the Police Service of Northern Ireland through a transformational reform process after three decades of conflict and deep distrust of the police by a substantial minority of the community, **people can forgive an honest mistake, but they will never forgive a cover-up.**²⁶

Accessibility: Tell it like it is. There should be a presumption that all information about policing should be available for public scrutiny unless it is in the public interest – not the

²⁶ [Fix Policing Now podcast](#), Sir Hugh Orde – Part 2, Dec. 5, 2022.

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police interest – to withhold it. Information about the police department, its staffing and services, budget, training, and crime data should all be easily accessible and up to date.

Several chiefs interviewed during preparation of this paper also pointed to the importance and value of meeting privately with small groups in the immediate aftermath of a high-profile incident or tragedy, for example, clergy leaders or community members most impacted, including loved ones of victims.

City Leaders

The **sustainability of policing reform** depends not only on the chief and the command team but also on wider city leadership. Constitutional, fair, and effective policing should always be a top priority for mayors, city managers and city council.

Elected leaders must be involved. Mayors, city managers and city councils are integral parts of policing leadership, in two respects:

- **First, the city authorities empower the police.** They do so by appointing police chiefs, setting policies and objectives, allocating resources to achieve those objectives, and holding chiefs accountable for their performance. All these tasks are vital components. If the wrong person is appointed chief, if policies and objectives are misguided or unclear, if resources are inadequate to the policing task, or if an underperforming chief is not held to account, it is a failure of city leadership.
- **Public safety is more than policing: Coordination of public safety assets.** Second, the police are not the only city agency responsible for public safety. City leaders have a responsibility to develop strategic plans for the coordination of public safety assets. Without a plan, it's hard to drive the other arms of government into the public safety space. In addition to other first responders, health agencies, housing agencies, family and child welfare agencies and others have responsibilities that affect public safety --- mental health and addiction issues, homelessness, domestic abuse, children at risk, and urban decay. Policing in the broadest sense should be seen as a **collective undertaking among city agencies.**

Require Inter-Agency Collaboration. Too often, inter-agency collaboration depends upon informal arrangements, understandings, and working relationships between individuals. One such initiative was the Navigation Team in Seattle, introduced in 2015 as a multi-disciplinary collaboration to address a wide range of challenges associated with homelessness. Police worked together with other government agencies and non-profit entities in joint teams. Violent crimes against the homeless were substantially reduced, as were theft and drug activity.²⁷ Regrettably, the Navigation Team was defunded by the Seattle City Council in 2020 and a good example of multi-agency cooperation was lost. There have been many other examples of discrete initiatives of this kind, but it is not yet

²⁷ Precise statistics are unavailable because crime numbers from those years relate to neighborhoods rather than specifically to homeless encampments within those neighborhoods, but those involved with the Navigation Team program are in no doubt that it had this effect.

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an established norm in the United States that police and non-police agencies are required to work together on matters of community safety.

Balance of prevention, intervention, and enforcement. Non-police agencies whose work impacts public safety should be left in no doubt that their cooperation with police, and vice versa, is city policy, including the **establishment of common goals** and **sharing of information concerning threats to safety**. Regularly scheduled meetings of city agency heads, including the police chief, should be in place to review progress and underscore shared accountability. Whether addressing youth violence, domestic violence, mental health crisis, homelessness or other issues impacting community safety and well-being, multi-disciplinary approaches that provide a balance of prevention, intervention and enforcement have produced positive results in jurisdictions across the country.^{28 29}

2. Achieving Community Confidence in Policing Reform

Policing reform must be **well-considered and comprehensive**. Reform requires investment in better training and up-to-date technology. Good policing does not come cheap, but bad policing costs a fortune in ruined lives, degraded neighborhoods, and lost businesses.

Benefits and Limitations of Consent Decrees

A consent decree sets out detailed measures that need to be addressed. It does not provide an overarching vision.

Several police departments are now under consent decrees, agreed with the US Department of Justice following patterns and practice investigations. Consent decrees typically stipulate many areas of reform that a department must implement. They are important and useful tools, but they can be very complicated – hundreds of paragraphs - and hard to understand.

Not a short-term route. When a consent decree is announced, communities naturally expect to see rapid change follow over the next couple of years. But **a consent decree can take many years, often a decade or more to work through**. Much of its content can be too detailed and arcane to command public attention. The process can seem remote from the community and people may well forget that the decree is in force.

A consent decree, therefore, is not a short-term route toward a **state of public trust in policing**. Indeed, public trust can even suffer further damage if the initially high expectations generated by a consent decree are followed by a period during which

²⁸ <https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-w0874-pub.pdf>

²⁹ Williams, Quintin, and S. Rebecca Neusteter. 2022. "Alternative Public Safety Models Can Keep All Chicagoans Safer." Crain's Chicago Business. October 24, 2022. <https://www.chicagobusiness.com/craains-forum-safer-chicago/911-alternative-response-programs-can-improve-public-safety>.

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change – or at least *visible* change - moves at a frustratingly slow pace. Real progress may indeed be underway within the police department - new policies and training programs for example. But the practical outcomes of such measures may remain invisible to the general public for some time.

Leaders need a vision. Moreover, a lot can happen in a decade. Society's expectations change quickly. Local policing priorities and threats to community safety evolve. Technological advances create new capabilities (and concerns). Consent decrees are not designed to accommodate such changes.

For these reasons, it is important for a police leader, supported by city leaders, to set out a broad, **optimistic**, easily understood **vision for the future** of their department and community safety in their jurisdiction, to reassure communities and police members alike.³⁰

Community Involvement in the Reform Process

Police and communities should think in terms of policing reform, not merely reform of a police department, with communities themselves part of the solution. Crime is a core task for police but occupies less police time.

In a crisis, restoring trust requires that communities see change being implemented with urgency. They also need to be part of the reform process and be assured that the changes underway are based on their mandate to the police. To build trust with the community, the chief and other leaders should:

- **Meet regularly with small groups of residents.**
- **Attend community meetings and events.**
- **Inform residents about changes that the police are making.**
- **Consult with them about local concerns.**
- **Invited groups to observe use-of-force and de-escalation training.**

Meet with the community. An ongoing dialogue should exist, cast as a collective endeavor, not a program of police-community briefings. Everyone who wants a voice in the process should be heard; it should not be dominated by a vocal few.

As Daniel Murphy, a former Deputy Commissioner of Police in Baltimore (and before that in New Orleans), counsels, police officers should be given coaching in the handling of community meetings, and “how to talk about crime and reform in a way that fosters collaboration.”

³⁰See *United States v. Armour & Co.*, 402 U.S. 673, 681-82 (1971) (“Consent decrees are entered into by parties to a case after careful negotiation has produced agreement on their precise terms. ... [T]he decree itself cannot be said to have a purpose; rather the parties have purposes ... and the resultant decree embodies as much of those [generally] opposing purposes as the respective parties have the bargaining power and skill to achieve.”)

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Inform. When implementing a court-supervised consent decree, it is important for city leaders and police to explain clearly for non-experts what the decree means and what changes are underway. Police should keep the community closely informed about the progress it is making and challenges it faces. Reform updates should be provided at all community meetings and links to informative, public facing dashboards that include important data and relevant reports should be readily accessible.

Consult. Whether or not a consent decree is in place, a process of continuing community consultation should be in place. Communities – and by this we mean, neighborhood by neighborhood within each police district or precinct – should be proactively engaged. The police chief meeting with small groups of residents, as mentioned in the previous section of this paper, is one example. Other police leaders and neighborhood patrol commanders should do the same. Police should also look for opportunities to attend community meetings and events, and not rely on residents coming to them. This is likely to result in a much broader range of community input.

Open the doors. Wherever possible, community representatives should be invited to observe certain aspects of police training. The high-profile incidents that have led to the current crisis in community trust have raised issues about the use of force. Police departments are now revising their use-of-force policies and training.³¹ It would be instructive for communities to witness the new **use-of-force and de-escalation training**. This is a tangible response to community concerns and communities need to be assured that it is happening.

For the police, it would also be an opportunity to show the kind of calls that they respond to every day. Most of the average officer's time is spent responding to calls concerning vulnerable people that require service. Crime is a core task for police but occupies less police time.

It takes a village. Communities and the police should all understand that policing is not something that the police can or should do alone. Neighborhood leaders, schools, clergy, social and health workers, volunteer groups and private sector businesspeople should be involved, working with patrol officers in a collective responsibility to solve neighborhood problems and deliver community safety. Police and communities should think in terms of *policing* reform, not merely reform of a police department, with communities themselves part of the solution.

³¹ An example of the de-escalation training now in use by many police departments is ICAT (Integrating Communications, Assessment and Tactics) developed by the Police Executive Research Forum. www.policeforum.org

3. Policing with the Community ³²

Policing with the community should be the core ethos of policing, not specialization, and police departments should be organized to turn that ethos into reality.

'Community policing' is a much-used term with no universally agreed definition. In some police departments community policing is treated as a separate assignment or unit. A small team of officers may be designated as 'community police'. This often amounts to little more than a community relations function.

Community policing, properly understood, means authentic, effective partnerships between police and communities, and other agencies as appropriate, to solve problems that threaten community safety. It is perhaps more useful to use the term 'policing with the community'.

The Primacy of Patrol

How the department is organized is crucial to reform. That means:

- **Prioritize patrol for staffing and resources.**
- **Look for opportunities to reorganize and reallocate resources.**
- **Reassign sworn officers to patrol and replace them with nonsworn employees.**
- **Move away from specialist and "saturation" teams when necessary.**

Patrol is the lifeblood of a police department. Patrol officers are the primary service providers to the public. The core duties of police – ensuring community safety, protecting people from harm and crime prevention – fall in the first instance to them. They are critical to the way that communities perceive their police. The performance of patrol officers determines whether communities have confidence that policing is being carried out fairly, impartially, and competently. It is the patrol officers who need to work with partners in the community to understand the challenges and threats in each locality, address problems and deliver solutions.

Departments should prioritize patrol for staffing and resources. Cuts on the front-line damage the ability of police to deter crime and keep people safe. This in turn damages the standing of police in the eyes of the community and overall confidence in police. Recent budget cuts in departments around the country have led to reductions in the numbers of officers on patrol. In some cases, this was hard to avoid, but that has not always been so. When choices are available, **every effort should be made to give priority to front-line deployment.**

Review, reorganize, reallocate. Immediately upon taking office, a police chief should meet with the heads of every unit in the department and find out how they are resourced

³² See, e.g., Police Executive Research Forum (2016) Advice from police chiefs and community leaders in building trust: "Ask for help, work together, and show respect." <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/policecommunitytrust.pdf>

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and deployed, and what roles they fulfil. It is very likely that the chief will find that there are overlaps and duplications of activity, or examples of working in silos, or misallocations of resources. Particular attention should be given to the balance of staff resources to patrol vis-à-vis specialist functions and city-wide units. The great majority of officers should be allocated to patrol.

Many police departments are currently understaffed, and some have hundreds or even thousands fewer officers than they had a decade ago. Yet the structures of departments have often remained as they were when the officer numbers were much higher. A review of any larger police department is likely to find that the organization of the department is no longer appropriate for its diminished size. In that case, there will be opportunities to reduce, dissolve or merge some units and redeploy officers to the front line.

Coping with short staffing. These measures will, however, only be a partial fix in police departments that have lost a large percentage of their sworn strength. The problem of declining numbers is a national crisis for police. The policing profession is proving less attractive than it once was. Departments once had no problem finding recruits, but now nearly all of them are struggling to attract qualified applicants. They are also losing officers to resignation and early retirement in far larger numbers than in the past. Negative media, declining community trust, lack of political support and budget cuts have all taken a toll.

Until the larger workforce crisis is overcome, it will be difficult to get enough officers assigned to patrol. Nevertheless, this must be the priority of every department. Currently, however, it does not seem to be treated as such. ***In some departments fewer than 50% of the sworn personnel are front-line patrol officers.***

Use nonsworn employees. Many positions occupied by sworn officers do not require police powers. There is no good case for a sworn officer to be allocated to administrative duties, human resources, data analytics or dispatch. Nonsworn members of police departments can and should do all such jobs. Occasionally it may be helpful to have someone with sworn officer experience in some of these roles, but that can be achieved with former officers. Current sworn officers are needed on the front line.

Reassess specialist units and move officers to the front line. The organization of a police department should reflect the primacy of the patrol function. Specialist units – those working homicide, drugs, or gangs, for example – are vital, but they should in no way be seen as ‘elite’ or superior to patrol. They should be seen, and see themselves, as part of a wider community policing service, in support of their colleagues on the front line. There should be no notion that an officer has to serve in the specialized units to move up the ranks. All officers, whether in patrol or other units, should be considered for promotion equally on their merits.

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“Saturation teams” that respond to and focus on high-crime neighborhoods have produced questionable results. The value of such operations should be carefully weighed against risks. The Rampart Scandal during the 1990’s in Los Angeles is one example. The arrest and convictions of members of the Baltimore PD Gun Trace Task Force is another. Most recently, the shocking actions of members of the Scorpion Unit of the Memphis PD led to the tragic death of Tyre Nichols. Also, reassigning officers from neighborhood patrols to such units often puts strain on patrol resources essential to effective community policing.³³

Neighborhood Policing Strategies

The first step towards effective policing in the community is to have dedicated patrol officers working the same beats from day to day at the neighborhood level.

The building blocks of a neighborhood policing system include:

- **Learning from the experience of other cities.**
- **Making sure the same officers patrol the same neighborhood every day.**
- **Using statistics to allocate resources.**

Seattle Neighborhoods design their own policing plan. A few years ago, Seattle introduced the concept of Micro-Community Policing Plans, a grass-roots approach whereby the many distinct neighborhoods in the city each developed their own **customized policing plan**, in collaboration with the local police officers assigned to them. The neighborhoods had different challenges, demographics, and histories, but all were able to work with police to identify priorities and design their plans. Seattle University was a valuable partner in the process, bringing **academic rigor and metrics**ⁱ to the design and assessment of the plans, which generally proved popular and successful.³⁴

Officers in New York maintain ‘sector integrity.’ Beginning in 2015, the New York Police Department rolled out a neighborhood policing concept which it now sees as the cornerstone of policing in the city.³⁵ It divided each precinct into sectors corresponding with established neighborhoods and assigned a dedicated team to each. The teams work only within their neighborhoods; they work with radio dispatchers and supervisors to maintain ‘sector integrity’ – the same officers working the same shifts in the same teams. They are sufficiently staffed so that the officers have ‘off radio’ time, when they do not have to respond to calls for service and can spend time working together with residents on crime prevention and problem-solving.

³³ See generally <https://cops.usdoj.gov/ric/Publications/cops-p247-pub.pdf>

³⁴ Helfgott, J.B., Parkin, W., Danner, J., Goodwin, G. Bray, B., Schuur, K., Chandler, J., Thomas, M., Ro, S., Kachurina, Z., Yap, C. and Singer, J. (2018). Seattle Police Department’s Micro Community Policing Plans: Implementation Evaluation. Seattle, WA: Seattle University.

https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Police/Reports/2018_Seattle_PD_MicroCommunities.pdf

³⁵ <https://www.nyc.gov/site/nypd/bureaus/patrol/neighborhood-coordination-officers.page>

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As trust improves, results get better. The key to successful neighborhood policing is the dedicated staff - the same officers patrolling the same geography every day. The officers get to know their neighborhood well - its problems and the threats to community safety. Officers responding to calls for service across large districts or entire cities simply cannot acquire the same degree of knowledge and understanding about any individual neighborhood. They can only respond to specific incidents, rather than try to solve the underlying problems affecting public safety. By contrast, officers focused on a single neighborhood can both respond to incidents and follow up with community and other partners to address root causes.

Neighborhood patrol officers also get to know the residents and have an opportunity to earn their trust. This too helps with crime prevention and problem-solving. People tend not to talk about their problems, much less their suspicions, with someone they don't know. As trust improves, community members are more likely to share information with police and work more cooperatively with them, leading to better results for all.

Knowing their turf. Only by understanding sentiment at the neighborhood level can police get a true sense of community approval. A citywide survey cannot capture that. Drilling down into neighborhoods, as only dedicated patrol teams can do, enables police to get a day-to-day read of the community mood – how residents are reacting to what the department is doing, or not doing, or how they are reacting to a policing incident in another city.

Deep and detailed local knowledge is a prerequisite for effective crime prevention. In even the most dangerous neighborhoods of a city, the proportion of people who have been arrested or in trouble with the police is typically a very small percentage, perhaps no more than two or three percent. A small number of people degrade the living environment for everyone else. A dedicated neighborhood patrol team would know where threats to public safety are likely to emanate from, and who is most at risk. The team is far more likely to be able to take effective crime prevention measures than officers covering an entire district or precinct.

Make statistics count. The numbers of police officers assigned to neighborhoods and districts should be based on objective need, having regard for the workload and the nature of the threats to public safety. Not all neighborhoods are equal in this respect. Some are far safer than others. Yet their residents may clamor for a greater police presence. Resource allocation should not be a political response to demands from voluble residents or local leaders. It should be data-driven and reviewed continuously to respond quickly and flexibly to changes in threats to safety. 'CompStat' or comparable systems for collating near real-time data should form the basis of such review.

Resource allocation should begin with a baseline study of the workload in each patrol area and the police assets currently deployed there. This study, which ought to take no more than sixty days, should take account of crime statistics (numbers and types of

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crimes), volume of calls for service, overtime hours and any other metrics indicative of workload. The findings of the study should determine where police resources are deployed. The same metrics should be kept under constant review so that resource allocation can be adjusted as necessary. Politics should play no part in this process. **Police numbers are limited and must be deployed for maximum effect where they are needed most.**

The findings of such a study, and periodic reviews, should be made public so that citizens can see that their policing is changing and responding to their needs. Transparency is an important element of accountability.

Relationship between Patrol and Headquarters

Rigid hierarchies can be debilitating to morale.

Continuous improvement. Police departments have traditionally been too hierarchical, which has led to inefficiencies, slow responses to evolving problems, suppression of initiative, and top-down, citywide prescriptions that take insufficient account of facts on the ground.

As noted above in the section on leadership, well-trained, experienced, and knowledgeable officers should be treated as such and allowed an appropriate **degree of autonomy with localized supervision**. Patrol team leaders and district/precinct commanders should be able to make most decisions affecting their own responsibilities, within the constraints of agreed department policy. They should also be allowed to take initiatives and develop and test ideas. Ideas that prove successful should be shared, so that they may be adopted elsewhere within the jurisdiction or beyond. A culture of continuous improvement should be encouraged, and initiative rewarded.

Leaders need to know what is happening on the front line. The police chief and command team should pay regular visits to all teams. Decentralization of control should not mean that districts, patrol teams and patrol supervisors are left to themselves. They should join them on patrols and participate with them in training, they can learn a lot more from direct contact with patrol officers than they get from office briefings.

It is also important that front line officers see their senior commanders visiting their neighborhoods and can raise issues and questions directly with them. Nothing undermines morale more than the sense that headquarters is distant, out of touch and uncommunicative.

4. Police are Part of the Community

A founding principle of policing is that the police are part of the community. The reality that police are part of the community needs to be a thread running through:

- **Recruitment: The police service should be diverse by race, ethnicity, and gender.**
- **Composition and culture: The department should reflect the composition of the community and the culture should emphasize service, teamwork, and courage.**
- **Training: Recruits should get both academic training from educational institutions and operational training from police academies.**

Being part of the community is central to the principles attributed to Sir Robert Peel when he established London's Metropolitan Police two centuries ago – generally regarded as the beginning of modern policing.³⁶ One of these read as follows – “... the police are the public and the public are the police; the police are only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties that are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.”

This principle remains as important today as it was when Peel was differentiating policing from the imposition of public order by the military. Unfortunately, it is not always reflected in practice. Some communities do not see the police as ‘their police’ or part of their community. This is more often the case with communities of color, whether or not the police department itself is racially diverse.

Recruitment ³⁷

Bring more women into policing. It is well understood that a police department should recruit a diverse workforce and much progress has been made in recent years, at least in respect of racially and ethnically diverse recruitment (although by no means everywhere). However, the percentage of women officers in the United States is only 12%. This compares poorly with other countries, where the figure is often 30% or higher. There is an initiative under way now in the United States to raise the proportion of women police officers to 30% by 2030. More than 200 departments have signed the 30x30 pledge,³⁸ and it is to be hoped that many more will do so.

Look for talent, not degrees. As well as recruiting more women, police should widen their reach beyond familiar sources of recruitment, to include diversity of educational background, socio-economic background, professional experience and lived experience. Criminal justice degrees are useful, but any degree that demonstrates a capacity for **critical thinking** should be considered, as should prior professional

³⁶ Hurd, D. Robert Peel: A Biography. Phoenix (2008).

³⁷ Police Executive Research Forum (2019) The workforce crisis, and what police agencies are doing about it. <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/WorkforceCrisis.pdf>

³⁸ <https://30x30initiative.org/>

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experience. Insistence that applicants should have a degree *before* they are recruited could deprive a department of useful talents.

Policing is a social service. Most people do not understand what the policing profession actually entails. Most of the time it is not crime fighting or law enforcement and the profession does itself no favors by using such terms. The great majority of a typical police officer's time is spent **helping people who are at risk or in behavioral crisis**. Policing is a social service requiring a broad range of interpersonal and other skills. If it were marketed as such, it would command a broader appeal among jobseekers and attract people who would otherwise not be likely to consider it as a career option.

The nonsworn positions within policing also call for a wide range of skills and expertise, from data analytics to human resources. These career options should also be marketed more imaginatively.

Outsourcing: Leave recruitment to the experts. At this unprecedented time of acute difficulty recruiting police nationwide, consideration should be given to outsourcing recruitment to experts. A good example of this exists in Northern Ireland, where recruitment is conducted by a private sector company up to the point where applicants are determined to qualify in terms of merit. The police department then runs background checks and completes the final steps towards membership of the service. Outsourcing has worked well in Northern Ireland. The police service there is now far more diverse than it was 25 years ago. It is hard to see why outsourcing would not also work here in the United States. Also, it would help conserve valuable sworn officer resources that are now tied up in recruitment units.

Technology: Get your head in the cloud. Police organizations have been slow to adopt **up-to-date technology**, and some are far behind other professions in the equipment they provide their employees, sworn and nonsworn. This affects not only the efficiency of police organizations but also their appeal to jobseekers, the best of whom have a wide range of options open to them and may be put off by the prospect of having to use antiquated systems. The sooner police departments eliminate stand-alone systems and adopt integrated, cloud-based platforms, the better, not only for efficiency but also for recruitment.

Composition and Culture

Inclusion. A police membership comprising 30% women and 30% nonsworn, as well as an ethnic and racial mix broadly in line with local demographics, and drawn from a various educational and social backgrounds, is less likely to lapse into an 'us versus them' mindset in respect of the community it serves.

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Think like members of the community. A police department that is clearly part of the community should broadly reflect the composition of that community.³⁹ This should apply to both the officer cadre and the nonsworn membership. The proportion of nonsworn members in a department is typically much lower in the United States than in other countries, where percentages more than 30% are common. As with the percentage of women officers, there is no clear reason why this should be the case. It is not simply a matter of looking more like the communities outside the department, but also a question of thinking more like them.

Police culture can be divided into two aspects – occupational culture and organizational culture.⁴⁰

Occupational culture refers to the attributes and attitudes that apply across the profession, including the best qualities we see in police such as dedication to service, teamwork, and courage (for example, running into the World Trade Center on 9/11).

Organizational culture is the culture of an individual police department, and this can vary greatly from one to another. Partly it is driven by leadership.

Police can fall prey to an **'us versus them' mindset**, with regard both to communities where they have been unable to secure cooperation and to non-police who they feel do not understand them. Police often refer to non-police as 'civilians', even when talking about nonsworn members of their own departments. In fact, of course, all police are themselves civilians; they are not military.

An 'us versus them' mentality is antithetical to fair, respectful policing. By contrast, police officers who see themselves as part of the community are likely to treat people with respect, as they would a friend or even a family member. All of us, including all police, have people close to us who have suffered mental illness, addiction or other issues that might involve a crisis of some sort. Police should approach people in behavioral crises with that in mind.

The story of how to change the culture begins with training.

Training

The current problems in policing in the United States will not be solved without high-quality training and retraining.

Police departments have three areas of training that they must attend to:

³⁹ For a comprehensive overview of considerations for advancing diversity in law enforcement, see <https://www.eeoc.gov/advancing-diversity-law-enforcement>.

⁴⁰ Paoline, E.A. III (2003). Taking stock: toward a richer understanding of police culture. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 31: 199-214.

- **Recruit training should prepare new officers for the realities they later must deal with on the streets and not sow the seeds of the 'us versus them' perspective.**
- **In-service training should be developed with the assistance of professionals with knowledge of adult learning principles and curriculum development.**
- **It should include scenario training in use-of-force and de-escalation with professional actors when possible.**
- **Every police department should have a Continuous Professional Development strategy.**
 - **Police chiefs should receive management and leadership training.**
 - **Each employee should have an individual development plan.**
 - **Those interested in promotion should get training in management and leadership.**
 - **Departments should leverage partnerships with academia and the private sector to provide valuable executive education opportunities to future leaders.**

Revamp recruit training. In the United States recruit training is conducted almost exclusively in police academies. Academies typically use a high proportion of sworn police instructors, and few non-police presenters. Some academies are run like military boot camps. This is the first experience that recruits, many of them very young, have of their new profession. It is a far cry from the realities they later must deal with on the streets. It also runs contrary to the principle that police are part of the community and instead sows the seeds of the 'us versus them' perspective. Academies should be used only for training in police operational skills.

Higher ed partnerships for training and evaluation. Robust partnerships with academic institutions can be immensely valuable to police departments, not only when designing recruit and in-service curricula, but also when developing and evaluating policing strategies. Independent validation of such strategies, underpinned by academic rigor, is far more valuable and persuasive than in-house assessments conducted exclusively by police department personnel.

As far as possible, police recruits should study alongside other students. Academic work should be done in colleges and universities or other non-police educational institutions. In 2021, Baltimore Police Department announced a partnership with Baltimore City Community College, under which recruits can earn credits towards an associate degree.⁴¹

Prioritize in-service training and retraining. Generally, in-service training has not been treated as a high enough priority by many departments, and it is often the victim of budget constraints. This is a false economy and dangerously counter-productive.

⁴¹ Anderson, Jessica. 2021. "Baltimore Police Recruits Will Get Credit towards an Associate Degree during Training under New Agreement with BCCC." The Baltimore Sun. November 4, 2021. <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-ci-police-community-college-20211104-owbmups2sjcydnpxcoav3aviu-story.html>.

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The current problems in policing in the United States will not be solved without high-quality training and, in the vital area force, *retraining*. Again, such training should be developed with the assistance of professionals with knowledge in adult learning principles and curriculum development.

Training, and in-service training in particular, should be given an adequate budget, and that budget should be ring-fenced. Departments should have robust and mandatory in-service training programs, aligned with adult learning principles. This is critical to getting the reforms we need now in American policing, and the culture of continuous improvement that we should embed for the future. Reform must be sustained.

Use-of-force and de-escalation training are, rightly, becoming mandatory requirements for many police departments - both initial training and regular refresher courses. Not all departments use scenario training for this purpose. This is a serious mistake. A few hours in a classroom cannot prepare or test an officer for an encounter on the street.

Live scenario training. Live scenario training, with actors, does not come cheap but it is very effective. Virtual reality training is a less expensive option, and technology is improving all the time. Classroom work is not enough.⁴²

Inter-agency scenario training is typically conducted with police officers as the only participants. Some scenario training should be done periodically in conjunction with other agencies, such as mental health clinicians. Some jurisdictions, like Denver, are training all police officers for Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) response. Some states require all police officers to undergo crisis intervention training, but not to the level required for full-time assignment to CITs. This requirement should be adopted nationwide. Any patrol officer may find themselves in a situation where CIT skills prove useful, or even save a life.

Continuous Professional Development has been another neglected – in some departments non-existent – area. Good employers pay attention to the career development of their employees and police departments should aspire to be good employers. Apart from the obvious benefit of having a better educated and informed workforce, the career itself will be more attractive to high-quality recruits if it is seen as one that encourages and nurtures professional development.

Every police department should have a Continuous Professional Development Strategy, and an individual development plan for each employee. Regardless of whether they are interested in promotion, individuals should have the opportunity to broaden their experience and enhance their skills.

Leadership training. As for those who are interested in promotion, at present many officers rise through the ranks without receiving training in **management and leadership** or gaining a perspective of the world beyond policing. It is particularly important that police

⁴² See, e.g., <https://www.policeforum.org/assets/icattrainingguide.pdf>

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chiefs, who are not only the top police officer but also the chief executive officer of the police organization, should receive management and leadership training as part of their professional development.

Departments should leverage partnerships with academia and the private sector to provide valuable executive education opportunities to future leaders. Academic institutions and private companies often welcome the opportunity to engage with and support police in their communities.

5. Police Accountability to the Community

Accountability is crucial in public service and nowhere is it more important than in policing. There are several aspects to police accountability, some external and others internal. All are important to achieving a police service that communities can trust.

External accountability

Crucially, external accountability may be divided into three separate elements.

1. **Democratic accountability.** Police departments answer to mayors or other elected leaders. This can be done with policing boards with responsibility for general oversight of the police chief and the department, in matters of policy, priorities and performance.
2. **A procedure for handling complaints against police.** There should be an independent ombudsman, with full investigative powers and a remit encompassing all complaints against police or some form of independent office responsible for investigating complaints against the police.
3. **External inspection and intervention.** An inspectorate that conducts periodic investigations into individual police services or any issue affecting multiple police services. It must have the powers to investigate department practices and patterns, and issues affecting policing.

Accountability Systems Do's & Don'ts

There is no good example within the United States of a **tripartite system** encompassing these three elements of accountability. There are some good examples overseas.⁴³ But there are bad examples here.

All too often, in the United States, the accountability architecture around a police department has come about in a haphazard fashion, without such clarity about who is responsible for what. In these situations, a department can be subject to multiple layers of 'accountability', without in fact being properly held to account because of confusion

⁴³ Both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are examples of this tripartite division of external accountability, between a policing board, an independent complaints office and an inspectorate. England and Wales have a similar separation of functions.

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and lack of clear lines of responsibility. In effect, the buck stops nowhere. Chicago is an example in the United States where accountability is diffused among several institutions, created over several years, without clear separation of functions.

Policing Board

The remit of a policing board should be threefold.

- **A voice on policy.** Firstly, within the overall policy plans and guidelines set by the democratically elected leadership of the city, the board should work with police to agree on policies, objectives, priorities, and resource requirements.
- **Evaluate performance.** Secondly, a board should hold the police accountable for their performance against those objectives. This includes the performance of the chief of police.
- **Choosing the chief.** Thirdly, boards should be involved in the selection and, if necessary, the removal of a chief – the final decision resting with the mayor or city manager, as appropriate.

But the chief runs the department. A policing board should not be involved in internal police department appointments and management decisions. This is a crucial point. If a police chief is to be held responsible for the running of the department, that chief must be given the responsibility to run it. A board that dictates appointments within the department cannot in good conscience expect the chief to be held responsible for what follows. The chief must be responsible for managing the department, and then held accountable for the outcome.

A policing board should not be involved in handling individual complaints and matters of discipline and dismissal. That should be the job of a separate, independent office.

Who should be on the board? The composition of a policing board should be very carefully considered. The key requirement for candidates should be that they are honest brokers, with no political agenda and with no pro- or anti-police bias. They should be a diverse mix of talents and backgrounds. They should command confidence and trust across the jurisdiction. The board should share with police the objective of building trust with all communities.

Independent Investigations of Complaints

Complaints procedures should be simplified along the following lines:

- **Serious complaints**, including possible criminal actions, should be investigated by independent entities with solid experience of high-stakes investigations.
- **The chief should have the final word on termination.** This is a decision that should never be taken lightly and there should be a review process, but the final decision should always rest with the police chief. The chief is accountable for managing the department and all decisions taken in that regard. To second-guess those

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decisions is to remove the chief's responsibility for management and thereby his or her accountability for it.

- **Less serious complaints**, and infractions should be handled within the police department. Unless there is a pattern of poor judgment and behavior, some may simply be a matter of performance management.

Avoid cover-up allegations. Typically, in the United States, police investigate complaints against themselves. Not surprisingly, this practice commands a low level of trust, even among many people who are well disposed towards the police. It puts the police department and the chief in a difficult position. Exonerating an accused officer, whether or not that is the right outcome of an internal investigation, can expose the department to charges of a cover-up. Also, the officer concerned may remain suspect and compromised in the eyes of the community.

Get skilled investigators. This loss of trust can be avoided by having serious complaints be the responsibility of an independent office or ombudsman with a skilled team of experienced investigators. Communities simply will not have faith in the outcome of police investigating themselves. This is not a criticism of the police but rather of any institution. There will always be skepticism when a university, a hospital, a church, or any other institution investigates serious allegations against itself. Investigating police officers would be a tall order for someone without a solid record of complex investigations, up to and including serious crimes.

Let outside law enforcement do criminal investigations. If an administrative investigation by the independent office does lead to suspicion that a crime may have been committed, the case must be referred to an appropriate law enforcement entity to conduct the criminal investigation. (There are legal constraints against one unit or entity carrying out both administrative and criminal investigations.) But that law enforcement agency should not be the one whose officers are the subject of the complaint. In some jurisdictions in the United States, agreements exist between law enforcement agencies to ensure that such investigations are conducted by an external state or local agency.

Give chiefs the final say on terminations. A serious problem facing many chiefs of police across the United States is that they do not have the final decision on terminating an officer. There are countless examples of officers terminated by police chiefs for cause, such as dishonesty or inappropriate use of force, who have been reinstated by civilian oversight bodies and arbitrators. This undermines the authority of chiefs and their ability to manage their departments. A compromised officer, who the chief believes is a potential liability and not to be trusted, cannot be redeployed to patrol duties, so a front-line position is effectively lost.

Handle minor complaints within the police department. Allegations that a police employee has been impolite, incorrect, or negligent in dealings with an individual or an

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organization – a customer service complaint – should be dealt with by police supervisors as part of their management responsibility.

Inspection

The aim of an inspectorate should be to identify problems before things go wrong, as well as to find ways to improve services and efficiency, and promote best practice.

An external inspectorate would help in sustaining reform. Any reform program runs the risk of backsliding after the departure of a dynamic leader or when an administration is replaced by one that has different priorities and is less attentive to policing. Sometimes, a successful reform program may lead to complacency. Policing, however, can never rest on its laurels; there will always be new threats to community safety. A robust, dedicated inspectorate will help sustain change and ensure continuous improvement and innovation.

Ensure fairness and integrity. In 2018, the city of Seattle appointed its first Inspector General, with a remit to “help ensure the fairness and integrity of the police system as a whole in its delivery of law enforcement services by providing civilian auditing of the management, practices and policies of the Seattle Police Department ...and the Office of Police Accountability”.

This is an unusual and welcome innovation. In the United States, we do not have a national entity comparable to those in some international jurisdictions, which can conduct inquiries into any aspect of policing and periodic inspections of police services nationwide. It would not be practical in the United States to have a single national institution performing these functions, because we have over 18,000 police agencies. No single office could have the capacity to take on the task.

U.S. DOJ only steps in after something goes wrong. The Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice conducts ‘pattern and practice’ investigations into police departments, focusing on matters involving violations of rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution. Also, as discussed above, consent decrees are negotiated by the Department of Justice, or by state authorities, and overseen by federal courts. But these processes are usually activated after something has gone badly wrong.

Several cities have an inspector general, who can investigate or audit all city departments, but **the Seattle initiative is unusual because it is specific to policing**. There is an advantage in cities, particularly larger cities, having a dedicated inspectorate with solid expertise in policing. Alternatively, states or large counties might set up inspectorates with remits covering several agencies; having multiple departments to assess could have some advantages in terms of context and comparison.

Internal Accountability

Temperament, judgment, fairness, courtesy, confidence, professionalism, self-control – these qualities and more should become evident during the one-to-two-year period spanning training and probation.

Internal accountability is as important as external:

- **Performance management is a key element.**
- **Continuous monitoring by supervisors is crucial.**
- **Set clear objectives and encourage open communications.**
- **Require officers to report bad conduct and act to stop it.**
- **Distinguish between performance management and discipline.**
- **Use training and probation periods to assess the ability to do police work.**

Performance management, a process of guidance, advice, and training. It is a key element of internal accountability. The objective is ensuring that an officer who is underperforming or making mistakes can be set on the right track, without incurring a derogatory disciplinary finding on record. This is vital to the delivery of quality service to the community and hence also to communities' confidence that their policing is both fair and effective.

All too often, performance management in an organization becomes a simple, annual or semi-annual box-checking exercise. This is particularly unsatisfactory, and potentially dangerous, in a police department. Without **early intervention** or corrective training, an underperforming officer may develop bad practices leading to serious problems for the department.

Don't tolerate underperformance. Managers should be trained in performance management – when and how to intervene, how to mentor, when to order additional training, and so on – and evaluated on their discharge of that duty. At the very least, toleration of underperformance by an officer impacts the mood and morale of others and their sense of pride in the team. A survey by the Pew Research Center in 2017 of more than 12,000 officers found that 72% did not believe that officers who 'consistently did a poor job' were held accountable. **Continuous monitoring** by supervisors, especially for probationers and younger officers, is the key.

Encourage open communications. Officers should be encouraged to speak freely about problems in their work and be assured that it is all right to ask for help. Performance management should not be complicated or time-consuming. Officers and managers are busy. Clear objectives should be set. Feedback on progress, and discussion, should be ongoing, not bi-annual.

Require officers to report improper conduct and to intervene to stop it. *Many police departments now have these policies in place. All should do so.* Effective performance management has sometimes been hampered by the tendency to put loyalty to fellow

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officers before loyalty to the policing mission. Officers can be reluctant to speak up if they see misconduct by a colleague. It is not hard to see how this can come about when people are working closely together in stressful and dangerous situations, and it is one of the dangers of a closed police culture. However, it is also very clear that good officers despise the bad ones. This has long been so, but the incidents of the last few years that have fueled anti-police sentiment have driven home the realization that an ugly occurrence anywhere can affect police everywhere.

Distinguish between performance management and discipline. Disciplinary proceedings should only come into play when performance management measures have failed and there has been serious misconduct. Action in these instances should be swift and decisive.

Not everyone is suited to be a police officer. It is often difficult to terminate a police officer once they have completed training and probation. Trainers and probation managers need to take very seriously their responsibility to assess whether the recruits in their charge are fit to be police officers. Temperament, judgment, fairness, courtesy, confidence, professionalism, self-control – these qualities and more should become evident during the one-to-two-year period spanning training and probation. Unfortunately, some who are not so suited nevertheless get through the process. Active performance management might identify them before they do harm; a periodic box-checking evaluation will not.

Officer Wellness

All departments should have **wellness programs**,⁴⁴ for physical and mental health, and training for all employees in detecting signs of stress, depression and suicidal thoughts in their colleagues and direct reports. Officer wellness is a major concern for police departments in the current crisis.

Even at the best of times, **police work is stressful and dangerous.** Police are exposed, in the words of the Department of Justice, “to the daily tragedies of life, and regular interaction with people who are in crisis or hostile toward them.” **Staffing shortages, budget cuts, career concerns, hostility from communities, and lack of political support have all added to the pressures on officers and nonsworn police employees, including dispatchers, crime scene operatives and victim counselors.**⁴⁵

This is a form of accountability, both internal and external. Departments are accountable to their employees for the support they provide for people doing a difficult job, and also accountable for ensuring that individuals serving the community are in a fit state to do so.

⁴⁴ For advice on wellness programs, see the 2021 paper by the Department of Justice COPS office and the Police Executive Research Forum ‘Promising Strategies for Strengthening Police Department Wellness Programs.’

⁴⁵ See U.S. Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services. *Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act – Report to Congress* (March 2019) https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/2019AwardDocs/lemhwa/Report_to_Congress.pdf;

Extremism⁴⁶

The discovery of extremists in a police department undermines community trust in the department and the profession. It raises questions about police selection procedures and ongoing monitoring of officers. To guard against this, all police departments should require:

- **All officers and staff to make their affiliations transparent.**
- **Pre-employment psychological evaluations.**
- **All department employees to report inappropriate activity by colleagues.**

High stress can make police susceptible to recruitment by extremists. Research has shown that people under extreme stress find it harder to connect with others or to regulate their emotions. They can experience a narrowing of perceptions, degraded cognitive function, increased anxiety and fearfulness, depression and even paranoia or post-traumatic stress disorder. Police are required to undergo psychological evaluation in most states before they are hired. But stress can eventually overwhelm people who have passed such tests in the past. The conditions listed above, in addition to impacting both mental and physical health, can render a person susceptible to group polarization and radicalization. It is no accident that officers from several police agencies around the country have been recruited by these groups.

Declare affiliations. Police members, sworn and nonsworn, should all be required to sign an annual declaration of all affiliations and memberships of clubs, societies, and other groups, and to confirm that they are not members of proscribed organizations. **Extremist groups, including white supremacists, prey on people who are under high stress and are keen to target police officers.** Departments should also have a social media policy, precluding participation in inappropriate sites or engaging in inappropriate messaging.

Require pre-employment psychological evaluations. These should be conducted by outside experts, based on criteria and metrics that align with the requirements of the work of a police officer. Police leadership should be aware of those criteria and metrics and satisfy themselves that they are fit for purpose.

Some states have legislation requiring pre-employment psychological evaluations for all police department applicants, but not all. Some police departments in states without such laws also require such evaluations, but by no means all of them do so. Moreover, evaluation tests vary, some being far more rigorous than others.

An obligation to report inappropriate activity by colleagues. Officers and staff should be advised of signs and indications of memberships of, or sympathy with extremist groups.

⁴⁶ See 21CP Solutions (2022) "Guarding against extremism in law enforcement: a wellness-based approach." <https://www.21cpsolutions.com/21cp-research>

Police agencies should consult with their attorneys as to whether, and in what circumstances, agencies can conduct periodic background checks of current employees, including social media reviews.

Conclusion

- **Leadership makes all the difference.**
- **Commit to a vision for reform.**
- **Generate authentic engagement with the community.**

Reform must begin with dynamic, transparent, and engaged leadership – a committed police chief fully supported by a strong command team and elected city officials. Authentic engagement of communities at the neighborhood level, and police patrol officers, should be the foundation of reform and the sustainability of that reform. The policing career should be made more attractive to a broader range of recruits and the police workforce should be better trained, equipped, and supported. Data, not politics, should dictate police deployments, and external oversight bodies should comprise honest brokers.

The current crisis in policing may do generational damage to community safety, and to the policing profession itself, unless the situation can be turned around quickly. Whether or not they are working through a consent decree, all departments should demonstrate a vision for reform, which should inspire communities and police officers alike to work towards a truly collaborative approach to policing and produce visible results within a short space of time. **The five areas covered in this paper should inform the development of such a vision.**

There is every reason to be optimistic that rapid improvements can be achieved in community safety and policing, provided these simple principles are followed.

Appendix A

