



**COPS**

Community Oriented Policing Services  
U.S. Department of Justice

**IIR**

Institute for Intergovernmental Research

# Building Relationships of Trust

Recommended Steps  
for Chief Executives





Dear colleagues,

Community policing has been a key and dynamic philosophy in American law enforcement for over 30 years. It has gained a steady increase in adherents across the nation's 18,000 state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies.

The flexibility of the community policing approach is particularly noteworthy. What the COPS Office identifies as community policing's three core pillars—partnerships, problem solving, and organizational transformation—have been applied to a host of problems, ranging from “traditional” property and violent crimes to social disorder problems, such as homelessness, to public welfare issues, such as lost children and senior citizens suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Most recently, the community policing model has become an essential strategy to counter violent extremism, develop resiliency to radicalization, and encourage civilian reporting of suspicious activity.

*Building Relationships of Trust: Recommended Steps for Chief Executives* speaks directly to the adaptability and broad applicability of community policing in building genuine partnerships. Whether we seek to prevent traditional crimes, hate crime, or violence borne of political and religious extremism, the importance of communities and law enforcement working together cannot be overstated.

This list of recommendations complements a growing number of publications supported by federal agencies, including the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the State Department, and the U.S. Department of Justice, that underscore the importance of building trust, enhancing police legitimacy, and encouraging active participation by residents in joint efforts to maintain homeland and hometown security. More specific, it also complements the White House's Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States, which embodies the core concepts of community policing and building communities of trust.

These recommendations, as well as practical examples illustrating successful efforts of leading law enforcement agencies, provide practical and actionable guidance that law enforcement leaders can implement and adapt across our nation's vibrant, diverse, and evolving communities.

Sincerely,

Ronald L. Davis, Director  
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

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Robert Wasserman. 2014. *Building Relationships of Trust: Recommended Steps for Chief Executives*. Tallahassee, FL: Institute for Intergovernmental Research.

The Internet references cited in this publication were valid as of the date of this publication. Given that URLs and Web sites are in constant flux, neither the author(s) nor the COPS Office can vouch for their current validity.

## **Recommended Steps for Chief Executives Who Support Building Relationships of Trust**

A key component of successful policing is building collaborative, trusting relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve, particularly immigrant and minority communities. Developing these relationships allows law enforcement to more successfully address the challenges of crime control and terrorism prevention. The knowledge and insight that come from trust-based relationships between law enforcement and the community are critical because they allow law enforcement to distinguish between innocent cultural behaviors and behaviors indicative of criminal activity.

The checklist on the following pages summarizes the recommended steps executives should consider when working to build relationships of trust with members of their community. As outlined in the document, this process must begin at the executive level but should be implemented department-wide. Implementation of these recommendations will enable agencies to more easily build and sustain those relationships. Each of the steps is outlined in more detail later in this document.





# 16 Recommended

1. Form a citywide citizen advisory council to provide advice and counsel in matters of policy, strategy, and tactics.
2. Form a district or precinct citizen advisory council to provide advice and counsel on neighborhood policing issues.
3. Assign new police recruits to work with a neighborhood organization for an introduction to the area, neighborhood leadership, resident issues, and business concerns.
4. Provide a police liaison officer for each area (e.g., precinct, division, or distinct neighborhood) within the community so that relationships can be developed with neighborhood leadership.
5. Establish true collaboration with each neighborhood to identify community problems that the police can help address, with the community sharing responsibility for action.
6. Survey community perceptions of fear and safety, as well as perceptions of police service and procedural fairness in interactions with the police.
7. Survey police employee perceptions of the organization, the community, procedural fairness within the department, job satisfaction, and other issues.
8. Arrange for an audit of departmental adherence to standards that arise when “pattern or practice” charges are leveled against a police organization.
9. Provide cultural awareness training to officers who come into contact with members of ethnic and immigrant communities.



# Steps

10. Train all members of the department, including those who do not regularly work in ethnic and immigrant communities, on the importance of building relationships of trust.
11. Develop a contact list of all leaders within minority, ethnic, and immigrant communities so they can be reached quickly during a time of crisis or when an action is about to occur that may be of concern to their community or neighborhood.
12. Ensure all patrol officers understand the importance of having a “felt presence” in the neighborhood in which they are working, particularly when on foot patrol or out of the patrol vehicle.
13. Take the issue of transparency seriously, providing the community and media with full access to information about police procedures, policies, and actions.
14. Develop among officers a comprehensive understanding of the potential for bias in policing and how to avoid allowing bias to unintentionally creep into their decision making or actions.
15. Ensure all officers are thoroughly familiar with the behavioral indicators used as the basis for identifying suspicious activities and with how to report information observed or received from the community.
16. Adopt a policy providing that whenever significant police activities are occurring in a neighborhood, additional officers independent from the action team will be assigned to answer questions raised by residents who observe the activity.



# Recommended Steps and Action Items



## Step 1. Form a citywide citizen advisory council to provide advice and counsel in matters of policy, strategy, and tactics.

Every chief executive of a police agency should consider creating a citywide citizen advisory council to advise the executive on matters of policy and strategy. Advisory councils can provide invaluable advice and bring the community into the policy and strategy development process, such as providing input when new policies are being developed. Advisory councils also serve as a vehicle to allow input from residents and business people in solving problems within the community.

In some locations, meetings of advisory councils may be required to be posted and open to the public. Each agency must determine what is possible under its state and local laws and regulations. The [Cincinnati \(Ohio\) Police Department](#) is a good example of an agency that has successfully implemented a citizen advisory council.

### Action Items

- ✓ Identify the key constituencies in the community, including ethnic minorities, immigrants, religious groups, business leadership, academic institutions, and others.
- ✓ Decide on the appropriate size of the advisory council.
- ✓ Create a list of individuals to be asked to serve on the council and invite their participation.
- ✓ Determine requirements for public access to meetings of the advisory council under state and local open meeting regulations. The city attorney may be able to offer guidance in this area.
- ✓ Determine policies for attendance (such as number of absences allowed), media policy, drafting of minutes, and process issues.
- ✓ Develop an agenda for the first meeting, ensuring it covers the purpose of the meeting, identifies substantive discussion areas, and reviews challenges the department faces.



## Step 2. Form a district or precinct citizen advisory council to provide advice and counsel on neighborhood policing issues.

A citizen advisory council composed of community residents and business people can help keep district or precinct commanders informed of local concerns and provide the basis to encourage the community to share responsibility for how the police address local problems. In some instances, these councils might identify a member to serve on the citywide citizen advisory council, described in Step 1.

District or precinct councils can also be used as sounding boards regarding the department's approach to addressing crime and violence in the neighborhood and to offer suggestions for addressing the problems. It is important that a schedule of meetings be prepared and publicized in advance.

The [Raleigh \(North Carolina\) Police Department](#) has successfully implemented the advisory council concept. The department uses the "dot method" to identify the top concerns/issues that the community would like to see addressed. A group of community members identifies topics, and then each community member present at the meeting is given a "dot" to place next to the issue that he or she feels is most important. The department is then able to prioritize topics/issues easily by selecting those with the most dots.

### Action Items

- ✓ Follow the steps delineated in forming the citywide citizen advisory council, except make the focus the neighborhoods being served by the police district or precinct.
- ✓ Focus the meeting agenda on the problems unique to the particular neighborhood and how the precinct/division personnel and community can work together to address the underlying issues.





### **Step 3. Assign new police recruits to work with a neighborhood organization for an introduction to the area, neighborhood leadership, resident issues, and business concerns.**

Police recruits often begin their patrol assignments without a real understanding of the neighborhoods in which they will work. Community organizations are often willing to assume responsibility for orienting the new officers to the neighborhood, usually at the end of their field training, for a week or so. From such an orientation, the new recruits learn about the neighborhood and its leaders, issues of concern to residents, dynamics of the neighborhood culture, and how community support can be generated when problems arise that require police intervention.

Involving the community in officer orientation to the neighborhood also lays a foundation upon which neighborhoods will assume greater responsibility for addressing problems, supporting the officers, and providing the officers with important contacts they can use to better understand situations they face in the area.

The [Cambridge \(Massachusetts\) Police Department](#) is an example of very successful recruit officer orientation.

#### **Action Items**

- ✓ Identify the neighborhood areas to which the recruits will be assigned and community organizations that have the capacity to serve as the orientation coordinators for the recruit.
- ✓ Request the participation of the community organization as a partner with the police department in recruit orientation to the neighborhood; if the organization cannot participate, find another organization.
- ✓ Determine the length of time the recruit will be assigned to the orientation.
- ✓ Assign an officer to work with the community organization in developing a schedule of activities in which the recruit will be engaged.
- ✓ Assign the recruits for orientation.
- ✓ Provide both the recruit and the community organization with an evaluation form to assess what went well and what could be improved in the process.
- ✓ Hold a post-event briefing of the recruits, and have each report their experiences with orientation and what they learned.

## Step 4. Provide a police liaison officer for each area within the community so that relationships can be developed with neighborhood leadership.

While every police officer must adhere to the basic principles of community policing—such as treating every person with respect, collaborating with the community to form action partnerships, and providing for full transparency about policing activities—many departments have found it useful to assign community liaison officers to work in neighborhoods throughout the city to develop ongoing relationships of trust with the community. A neighborhood liaison officer's goal should be to build a strong relationship with members of the neighborhood and to encourage residents to contact the officer directly when issues arise.

The [Raleigh \(North Carolina\) Police Department](#) is an excellent example of successful utilization of neighborhood liaison officers.

### Action Items

- ✓ Identify the neighborhood areas to which a police liaison officer should be assigned (there should be a relationship between these areas and police patrol assignment areas).
- ✓ Develop a list of responsibilities and accountabilities for neighborhood liaison officers.
- ✓ Explain to members of the department the objectives of the new assignments and how they can be of great benefit to other patrol officers.
- ✓ Request volunteers for the assignment, and then select those to be assigned as neighborhood liaison officers.
- ✓ Provide an orientation to the officers selected for this assignment.
- ✓ Have each selected officer develop a plan for how he or she will approach leadership in the neighborhood.
- ✓ Announce the assignments in the local media.





**Step 5. Establish true collaboration with each neighborhood to identify community problems that the police can help address, with the community sharing responsibility for action.**

One of the primary purposes of community relationships is to collaborate with neighborhood residents and business people to solve the specific problems important to that area. Collaboration means that participants (police and community) meet around a table and identify issues and problems impacting the neighborhood. Everyone in the discussion is equal, but good facilitation is often required to keep things moving. From the discussion, a list of issues and problems can be developed and then prioritized. For those at the top of the list, the group can then identify actions the police can take as well as actions the community can undertake. The result of these discussions is true collaboration. Once the participants agree to a course of action, there should be agreement to meet again at a set time to review progress toward the objective.

This type of collaboration results in the formation of meaningful partnerships between police and the community. And since the neighborhood is taking action along with the police, they share responsibility for the results.

These types of sessions are far more complicated than simply responding to calls for service and treating incidents with a one-time solution time after time. Collaboration with the community works toward more meaningful responses, not just to the incident but to the problem that is often ongoing, and results in repeated incidents.

Scanning, analysis, response, and assessment (SARA) is a problem-solving process from which police can develop informed responses that may reduce the number of incidents or the harm resulting from those incidents. For more information about SARA, visit [www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=2559](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=2559).

*(continued)*

## Action Items

- ✓ Identify a facilitator who can assist the department in meetings between police officers and residents and business people in the community.
- ✓ Identify appropriate members for the group from both the department and the community.
- ✓ Develop an agenda for discussion by the group, indicating the desired outcome from the sessions.
- ✓ Have the facilitator brief the members of the department who will be attending the sessions so they understand the objectives and process that will be utilized.
- ✓ Hold the first collaboration session under the guidance of the facilitator.
- ✓ Evaluate the results of the sessions, and discuss ways to improve future sessions.
- ✓ Following the session, have the facilitator train members of the department in the facilitation process and skills so future meetings can be run by the department's personnel, if necessary.



## **Step 6. Survey community perceptions of fear and safety, as well as perceptions of police service and procedural fairness in interactions with the police.**

Regularly surveying the community to gain information on perceptions about policing and the police agency is a valuable and important tool through which the agency can get a picture of community fears, concerns, and perceptions of police performance. The survey must be scientifically done so that the respondents represent a true cross-section of the community and its neighborhoods. Some communities perform city surveys annually or biannually. In such instances, the police should ask that specific questions regarding the police and their performance be included in that survey. Otherwise, the police agency will have to undertake the survey itself.

There is a range of options available for conducting such a survey. Less common today, a mailed survey is one methodology, but often the response rate is lower than for other strategies. Other options include telephone or Internet surveys or a combination. Police agencies should consider involving professors to act in the capacity of advisors to the department and have students conduct the surveys. Academics can provide guidance regarding content and format of the questionnaire; help ensure responses are meaningful, valid, and reliable; and make sure respondents are as representative as possible of the community as a whole. They can help ensure a department gets the best possible results based on the resources the department has available for surveying residents.

Regardless of which strategy is used, there will be costs associated with the surveying that can be met through a department budget allocation, funding from a local police foundation if one has been formed in the jurisdiction, or contributions from business groups or community organizations.

*(continued)*





## Action Items

- ✓ Develop a set of questions to measure the issues and perceptions that will provide the information desired from the survey.
- ✓ Determine what surveying the city is currently conducting and whether additional questions regarding policing, police legitimacy, and community satisfaction can be included in existing surveys.
- ✓ Determine whether a local police foundation or business would fund the costs of a survey, whether done by students or the police department.
- ✓ Determine whether the university can have the survey conducted as a part of a university course under faculty supervision.
- ✓ If no other source of funding is available, determine what funds in the police budget could be utilized for the survey.
- ✓ Conduct the survey, and analyze the results.
- ✓ Match survey results with the perceptions held by department employees (see Step 7) to determine areas in which there appears to be conflict or tension.



## Step 7. Survey police employee perceptions of the organization, the community, procedural fairness within the department, job satisfaction, and other issues.

Police employees should be surveyed on a regular basis regarding their perceptions of their job and their satisfaction with it, as well as their perceptions of the community and its issues. This survey should be similar to a “cultural diagnostic,” a tool widely used in the United Kingdom. The cultural diagnostic describes the police organization’s beliefs, cultural elements, and priorities. The department can then compare these with the beliefs, perceptions, and priorities of the community, determined through surveys, thus allowing the department to assess how well it aligns with the community. When discrepancies between perceptions of the community and those of police personnel are apparent, strategies can be used to narrow the gap between police employees and the community.

### Action Items

- ✓ Identify a local university with a strong social science program focusing on survey research. Arrange a meeting with key faculty.
- ✓ Ask the faculty if they will assist the department in developing a cultural diagnostic of the police department related to the survey of the community.
- ✓ If costs are involved, identify areas in the budget where funds may be available.
- ✓ Advise the management staff and the police union or association of the desire to survey the officers.
- ✓ Form a coordinating committee to oversee the survey effort. The committee should include representation from all ranks and the union or association if possible.
- ✓ Develop and finalize the survey instrument with the university under the guidance of the coordinating committee.
- ✓ Implement the survey, explaining to officers why it is being conducted.
- ✓ Analyze results, and provide a summary to members of the department.
- ✓ Arrange for the university staff to compare the results of the survey with perceptions of the community.



## **Step 8. Arrange for an audit of departmental adherence to standards that arise when “pattern and practice” charges are leveled against a police organization.**

Every chief executive needs to know that his or her police agency is adhering operationally to the law regarding how officers in the field are conducting department business. There are many instances across the country in which chiefs have believed their agency met all required standards of legal and unbiased performance, only to find out after complaints by residents or an investigation by the state or the U.S. Department of Justice that substantial problems exist.

The best mechanism to prevent this from occurring is to have an unbiased, independent organization conduct a survey of department operations. One need only look at the numerous consent decrees that have been put in place in police agencies across the country to understand the issues that raise legal and constitutional concerns. For more information about consent decrees, see Wasserman and Ginsburg's *Building Relationships of Trust: Moving to Implementation* (Tallahassee, FL: Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 2014).

There are many organizations that will perform the review, such as consultants or state agencies. Proactive action by chiefs of police is critical if the agency is to avoid being charged with improper or biased policing.

For the chief of police, having an open attitude that says to the public, “We need to ensure that we are operating with a high level of integrity and within the requirements of the Constitution,” can go a long way toward creating the sense that the department is committed to the highest standards, which greatly benefits building relationships of trust.





"to protect and to serve"

### Action Items

- ✓ Collect information on standards being applied to police agencies regarding pattern or practice issues that would be a violation of federal law.
- ✓ Merge the findings of that review with the standards set forth in Wasserman and Ginsburg's *Building Relationships of Trust: Moving to Implementation* (Tallahassee, FL: Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 2014).
- ✓ Develop a comprehensive list of the issues a review should examine. These issues should include actual field practice.
- ✓ Collect data on complaints received by the department over the last three years for each of these areas, including the nature and the disposition of the complaint.
- ✓ Seek proposals from public and private organizations to conduct the review, and determine which respondent is best positioned for such a review, ensuring independence, objectivity, and credibility.
- ✓ Contract for the review.

## **Step 9. Provide cultural awareness training to officers who come into contact with members of ethnic and immigrant communities.**

Many police officers have had little contact with ethnic minorities until they join the police force. As such, they often have limited understanding of the cultural norms of these residents. To be effective in interacting with minority residents, officers need to be trained in cultural norms of the groups in order to have a better understanding of common customs and behaviors.

Cultural awareness training can be provided by academy instructors knowledgeable in this area and supplemented by individuals from the community. Reaching out to the ethnic minority and immigrant community leadership and inviting them to participate in the training is an excellent strategy for strengthening the agency's relationship with these communities. It also provides the officers being trained with the opportunity to meet and interact with the community leaders.







## Action Items

- ✓ Assign the person in the department responsible for training to meet with representatives of minority, ethnic, and immigrant communities to discuss the type of training the department desires to implement.
- ✓ Obtain suggestions regarding the content of the training.
- ✓ Determine whether such training is available from regional police academies in the area. If so, have representatives from the department attend that training and provide the department with feedback.
- ✓ Develop a curriculum for the training, involving the officers who have attended similar sessions.
- ✓ Review the training materials available from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Combating Violent Extremism (CVE) program staff to use as a guide.
- ✓ Identify a role for community representatives to participate in the training.
- ✓ Implement the training for officers who have substantial contact with these communities, and mandate that officers who transfer into these assignments receive such training.

## Step 10. Train all members of the department—including those who do not regularly work in ethnic and immigrant communities—on the importance of building relationships of trust.

Every police officer needs to understand the importance of building relationships of trust. As part of its CVE initiative, DHS has developed a training module on building communities of trust that provides excellent content for such training. It generally replicates the material included in Wasserman and Ginsburg's *Building Relationships of Trust: Moving to Implementation* (Tallahassee, FL: Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 2014).


Such training should include material on the emerging concepts of police legitimacy and how it impacts the community's relationship with the police and the department's relationship with the community.

Police agencies should work with their state Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) units to recommend incorporation of these materials in the state-mandated curricula for both recruit training and in-service training. These subject areas are an important part of understanding the elements of building collaborative, trusting relationships in community oriented policing.

### Action Items

- ✓ Obtain training materials from DHS's CVE program staff for review.
- ✓ Have department staff review the monograph included in this toolkit for content for the training.
- ✓ Drawing from those materials, develop an in-service training program that best reflects the nature of the police agency.
- ✓ Make the training a required part of the department's in-service training.





**Step 11. Develop a contact list of all leaders within minority, ethnic, and immigrant communities so they can be reached quickly during a time of crisis or proactively when an action is about to occur that may be of concern to their community or neighborhood.**

As the department develops relationships of trust with various segments of the community, it is important that a list of those contacts be kept so the executive can quickly reach them during times of crisis, invite them to meetings and events, and provide them with regular information on activities of the department. A monthly newsletter from the chief of police is one way to keep people informed of department developments.

The department should obtain e-mail addresses for the contacts who would like to receive regular updates from the department on events and other news. Contacts should also be asked whether they want to be linked to the department's Twitter feeds and other social media outreaches from the agency. In the evolving world of social media, a police agency needs to be engaged in the very latest social media methods that can help keep the public informed of events and other information.

### **Action Items**

- ✓ Create a listing and, if possible, a computerized database of contact information for neighborhood leadership throughout the city.
- ✓ Have police officers add contact information for persons with whom they develop meaningful relationships in their assigned area and persons who have influence in the community. Update the listing regularly to keep it current.
- ✓ Make the database available to commanders for use in a crisis or other situation where community leadership needs to be informed of a pending or recent police action that could impact community perceptions of the police. Keeping community leadership informed in a proactive manner can help reduce the spread of inaccurate information.
- ✓ When possible, contact neighborhood leadership regarding significant events in their area before they hear about them from the media.

## Step 12. Ensure all patrol officers understand the importance of having a “felt presence” in the neighborhood in which they are working, particularly when on foot patrol or out of the patrol vehicle.

As a part of community-oriented policing efforts, many police agencies encourage patrol officers to leave their vehicles and walk through the community’s neighborhoods. The objective of this strategy is to have a “felt presence,” a term coined by George Kelling of “Broken Windows” fame. Felt presence means making contact in one way or another with people the officer passes, such as nodding as the officer looks people in the eyes, shaking hands, or engaging in brief, friendly conversations.

Officers often walk through neighborhoods in pairs, and this tactic frequently results in the officers conversing with each other rather than focusing on the neighborhood through which they pass. Training officers in how to undertake foot patrol is needed if they are to understand the dynamics of the felt-presence tactic.

Police agencies should consider providing officers with business cards so they can pass them out to people they meet on these patrols, particularly if the officer is regularly assigned to the neighborhood.

### Action Items

- ✓ Develop a training brief and a policy that address the issue of how officers can establish a “felt presence” when they are on patrol in a neighborhood.
- ✓ Consider using “proximity patrol” tactics (when officers walk near each other but not side by side) when two officers are assigned to walk beats.
- ✓ Announce to the community that officers on neighborhood patrols will be reaching out to community members.
- ✓ Ask the officers to identify neighborhood leadership from the contacts they make during these patrols.





## Step 13. Take the issue of transparency seriously, providing the community and media with full access to information about police procedures, policies, and actions.

If the community perceives that the police agency is not being fully transparent with regard to information about incidents and developments in the department, it can damage the relationship. While withholding information from the media can be justified by a number of factors (including the need to notify next of kin about deaths and personnel regulations), it is important that the agency not appear unwilling to share information that the community wants or needs to know.

Recent situations involving mass shootings provide excellent examples of chiefs who understand the need for full disclosure in a timely manner, with Chief Dan Oates' handling of the 2012 mass shooting in Aurora, Colorado, serving as an excellent example of best practice. Chiefs of police need to think ahead and prepare themselves to handle such an event. There are numerous materials available to help guide chiefs in handling those types of situations.

The police agency should also have a policy in place on media relations, clearly listing those situations where information regarding an event will not be released—either immediately or ever—because of defined circumstances. In such situations, the executive should be prepared to cite the policy rationale for withholding the information.

To make transparency work, the agency should make the commitment to transparency one of the core values of the department.

### Action Items

- ✓ Develop a policy on media relations and transparency in the police organization.
- ✓ Offer the draft policy to key media outlets in the community for their comments and suggestions.
- ✓ Following review, redraft the policy and finalize it.
- ✓ Incorporate the policy into the department's value statement listing.
- ✓ Ensure police employees understand the commitment to full transparency.



## Step 14. Develop among officers a comprehensive understanding of the potential for bias in policing and how to avoid allowing bias to unintentionally creep into their decision making or actions.

Much of the bias on the part of officers in policing activities is unintentional; often they are unaware that they are allowing bias to influence their decision making. It is important that all officers receive training in common ways that bias manifests itself and how to eliminate it. In building relationships of trust, particularly in immigrant and minority communities, there are frequently widely held perceptions that the police are biased. When officers are informed of that perception, they react with disbelief because they perceive that they are acting neutrally and without bias. Only by understanding how others may perceive comments and actions can the officer learn how to avoid those perceptions.

Over time, as relationships of trust are established, many of these biases will disappear, both among officers and the community. Many of the biases held by the community about policing are based on prior experiences or long-standing perceptions passed from generation to generation. In immigrant communities, often their negative experiences with police before relocating to the United States have conditioned their beliefs.

The more familiar police officers become with the community and the better the community gets to know the officers assigned to their area, the more comfortable they will be with each other, and both will likely find that prior perceptions were misinformed and not valid.

The [Cambridge \(Massachusetts\) Police Department](#) has implemented a highly effective bias prevention initiative that has had significant impact on both officers and residents. For more information about consent decrees, see Wasserman and Ginsburg's *Building Relationships of Trust: Moving to Implementation* (Tallahassee, FL: Institute for Intergovernmental Research, 2014).

### Action Items

- ✓ Contact the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the Bureau of Justice Assistance to obtain current materials on policing bias issues.
- ✓ Recognize that most bias is unintended by police employees; it occurs because they do not fully understand how bias can impact their decision making.
- ✓ Seek out qualified trainers on preventing bias policing to educate and develop officers who can, in turn, train other members of the department in bias prevention.

## Step 15. Ensure all officers are thoroughly familiar with the behavioral indicators used as the basis for identifying suspicious activities and with how to report information observed or received from the community.

Through research, the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI) ([nsi.ncirc.gov](http://nsi.ncirc.gov)) has developed the suspicious activity reporting program and a series of complementary components that provide the basis to effectively identify suspicious activity; protect privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties; and recognize the difference between suspicious activity and constitutionally protected activity. The NSI has developed police officer training materials, including a DVD explaining the process, and has an executive checklist for implementing SAR in local police agencies. This checklist can be found at <http://it.ojp.gov/docdownloader.aspx?ddid=1147>.

A critical element in building relationships of trust is ensuring that all police employees understand the NSI process and can differentiate between actual suspicious activity and that which is either constitutionally protected or representative of a group's cultural norms. Many police agencies across the country have successfully implemented the NSI process and trained their officers with the NSI training materials.

### Action Items

- ✓ Obtain the NSI materials, including the line officer training video, by visiting the NSI Web site at <http://nsi.ncirc.gov>.
- ✓ Ensure all members of the department go through the video training program.
- ✓ Ensure all officers are thoroughly familiar with the content of the behavioral indicators of suspicious activity produced by the NSI.
- ✓ When an officer observes suspicious activity or a community member reports it, develop a mechanism for transmitting the information to the area fusion center for review by trained intelligence analysts.



## **Step 16. Adopt a policy providing that whenever significant police activities are occurring in a neighborhood, additional officers outside the action team will be assigned to answer questions raised by residents who observe the activity.**

It is common for police agencies to undertake proactive tactics in urban neighborhoods to address issues such as drug houses, gang headquarters, outstanding warrants, and crime-related situations. Specially trained officers—such as “raid teams,” whose entire focus is to get the action completed safely and quickly, without violence—commonly undertake these police responses. In congested neighborhoods, it is common for residents to come out of their homes to observe the police action.

As the police are deploying these tactics, such as in a drug raid, it is common for observers to ask deployed officers about what is occurring. The officers engaged in the police action are not in a position to respond to these inquiries. Because of the stress involved in the police action, those who ask questions are sometimes simply told by officers to “stand back” or “get out of the way.”

Police agencies need to ensure that additional officers are assigned to the location to engage with community residents who watch the action or ask questions. People have a right to know what is happening in their neighborhood, and if accurate information is not provided, there is the risk of resident observations turning into accusations of police misconduct. This can be avoided if additional liaison officers are on-site to answer questions and talk with residents.

### **Action Items**

- ✓ Determine which officers can be assigned to these events as liaisons to provide a positive interaction with neighborhood residents.
- ✓ Explain to field officers the importance of such contact with the community and how to address questions that observers will raise as an event unfolds.
- ✓ Develop a policy that requires officers to be assigned wherever and whenever a major police action takes place.
- ✓ Brief the neighborhood liaison officers in advance about the purpose of the police action.



Community policing has evolved since the concept was first introduced in the 1980s and after the COPS Office opened its doors in 1995. Indeed, community policing has proven to be an adaptable approach across not just time but also place. It has been tailored to meet local needs in diverse police departments and sheriffs' offices, both large and small, across the nation. While building partnerships and relationships grounded on trust has always been central to this philosophy, law enforcement executives today face rapidly changing challenges. They need to better understand new patterns of population diversity and increased migration of immigrants to suburban and rural jurisdictions and implement successfully varied strategies to build communities of trust across their uniquely diverse communities. *Building Relationships of Trust: Recommended Steps for Chief Executives* responds to this need for flexibility and provides clear, practical guidance for operationalizing the principals of community policing in a new area.

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