

**WHAT A GOOD POLICE DEPARTMENT LOOKS LIKE:
PROFESSIONAL, ACCOUNTABLE,
TRANSPARENT, SELF-MONITORING**

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The Purpose of This Guide

This Guide identifies principles, policies and programs that characterize good policing. In each case, it offers an example, with a live link, of a good program or practice that already exists in a police department, and/or an important report on it.

This Guide is designed as a community education tool, to help people evaluate the quality of their own police department in terms of the best practices that characterize a good police department.

This report does not claim to be the last word on the subject. It aspires to be the first word in a continuing public discussion of what a good police department looks like. Readers and community groups are invited to make suggestions or adapt it to their own purposes.

HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

This report is designed as a community organizing tool.

It seeks to inform people about what they should look for and expect of their own police department. The report can serve as a check list of the important principles, policies, and programs. Particularly important, the report will help community people have a solid basis of information when they initiate discussions with their police chief, sheriff, mayor, city council members, civic leaders, and the media.

Not everyone will agree with this report's definition of what a good police department should look like. People will certainly disagree with the some examples offered on particular points.

Good! One of the main goals of this report is to initiate an informed discussion of what constitutes a good police department. Let that discussion begin.

ADVISORY

As you certainly already know, web sites are very unstable: here today, gone tomorrow. As a result, some of the web sites in this report may not be live by the time you seek to access them. In some cases, they simply have a new address and you can try to find them through an original search.

We will try to continually monitor the web sites and update links when necessary. New versions of this report will be duly noted.

Please notify us when you encounter dead links. We will either substitute a new link or send you the latest version of the report.
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BASIC PRINCIPLES

The Goal: A Professional and Accountable Police Department

No community should settle for anything less than the best, most professional and accountable police department. There is no excuse for not having the best. Many departments have in place some valuable policies and programs, but no department has all of the necessary ones. This guide identifies the best that currently in place across the country.

PATS, for professional, accountable, transparent, and self-monitoring, is a useful acronym for the various elements that constitute a good police department.

A GOOD POLICE DEPARTMENT IS:

Professional

A good police department is professional in the sense that it is effective in serving the public and makes a continuing effort to seek out and adopt the best practices.

Accountable

A good police department holds its officers accountable for their conduct. It achieves this by having state of the art policies on use of force, domestic violence, and other critical incidents. Early intervention systems (EIS) have emerged as the best practice in accountability, and every department should have an EIS system. An independent oversight agency is also an important form of accountability.

Transparent

A good police department is open and transparent. It achieves this by providing information to the public about its operations: by placing its policy manual on its web site, by explaining its various units and what they do, and by facilitating communication with officers who serve in various units.

Self-Monitoring

A good police department has in place procedures for self-monitoring. This involves reviewing and learning from critical incidents, such as shootings or use of force incidents, to determine if there are ways to prevent such incidents from happening in the future. It also involves learning from other police departments and adopting the recognized best practices.

A PROFESSIONAL POLICE DEPARTMENT

A professional police department adopts the current best practices for responding effectively to crime and disorder, protecting the public, and helping to maintain safe communities. The question is how to achieve these goals. We have learned that the old ways – putting more police on the streets—do not work. Recent innovations have resulted in effective strategies that have been evaluated and found to be effective when properly implemented.

It is now recognized in policing that the police cannot do all themselves. Effective responses involve partnerships with community groups, other private organizations, and other criminal justice agencies.

Problem-Oriented Policing

Problem-oriented policing (POP) is widely recognized as the best way to approach for addressing specific crime and disorder problems. The POP Center in Madison, Wisconsin has a wealth of information about strategies for addressing particular problems. POP Guides are available on Sexual Assault of Women by Strangers, Gun Violence Among Young Offenders, Robbery of Convenience Stores, and many other topics.

Go to the PopCenter web site: www.popcenter.org

Suggestions for Navigating the POP Center Web Site

Go to the POP Center web site.

On the left hand side, click on “What is POP? and learn about its basic principles.

Across the top, click of “POP Projects,” and then on the right-hand side, explore the collection of Goldstein Award projects. This will give you many examples of exactly what police departments have done.

The Collaborative Agreement in Cincinnati, settling several racial profiling suits against the police department, required the department to adopt problem-oriented policing. Read the Collaborative Agreement and see the changes it mandated: <http://samuelwalker.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Collaborative.pdf>

Addressing Gun and Gang Violence

Gun violence and gang-related violence is a serious national problem. Recent research has identified a strategy that has proven to be effective when properly implemented. Check out the relevant Pop Guides discussed above. Focused deterrence is a strategy for focusing on a small and carefully selected group of individuals known to be active in gangs and violent crime.

One widely cited successful focused deterrence program is the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV). Go to the Cincinnati Police Department web site and learn more about CIRV:

<http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/police/community-involvement/cincinnati-initiative-to-reduce-violence/>

What to Look For in the CIRV Program

Notice the use of partnerships in the program.
Notice how it focuses on a small group of known high-level offenders, and does not engage in indiscriminate stops, frisks, or arrests.
Notice the cooperation among law enforcement and social service agencies.

Partnerships: A Community –Wide Approach

It is the consensus among police experts that addressing violent crime requires a coordinated community-wide approach. One promising example is the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative. Learn more about it here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/education/youthInitiative/AboutUs.htm>

One of the core principles of both problem-oriented policing and its first cousin community policing is **partnerships**. This includes partnerships with neighborhood groups, social service agencies, and other criminal justice agencies. Experts on policing today recognize that the police cannot do it all by themselves.

A Department Must Reflect the Community it Serves

A professional police department is one that reflects the community it serves, particularly with regard to race, ethnicity, and gender. A professional and transparent department provides information about the demographics of its sworn officers on its web site where people can readily find it and assess how well their department is doing.

See the demographics of the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Police Department (go to p. 32 of its Annual Report):

http://mpdc.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/mpdc/publication/attachments/MPD%20Annual%20Report%202013_lowres.pdf

AN ACCOUNTABLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

An accountable police department holds its officers accountable for their actions. It has state of the art policies on critical actions, provides close supervision, reviews officer conduct, and imposes discipline or takes other remedial actions where necessary. There are a variety of accountability policies and procedures that a good department should have, and a department should inform the public about which ones it has in place.

A State of the Art Policy on Use of Physical Force

A department's use of force policy should embody state of the art principles. The policy should provide clear and detailed guidance for officers on the proper use of force in various situations, in a well-organized policy statement. The policy should be readily available to the public (see our discussion of this point, below).

What to Look for in a Use of Physical Force Policy

The use of force policy should address specific police actions. It should, for example, (1) specifically prohibit strikes to the head, (2) emphasize de-escalation techniques, and (3) include a clear statement that only the minimal amount of force should be used to accomplish a lawful police purpose.

These are just a few of the key points. If you study other departments' policies, you will get a better picture of what a good policy looks like.

A recent report on the new Collaborative Reform Process involving the COPS Office of the Justice Department and the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department sets forth the standards for use of force policies and procedures for continuous monitoring of policies and practices. Read the report here:

COPS/Las Vegas Collaborative Report on Las Vegas:

http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/e10129513-Collaborative-Reform-Process_FINAL.pdf

What to Look for in the Collaborative Reform Report

Notice the weaknesses in the department's force policy

Notice the criticisms of how the department reviewed use of force incidents.

Notice how use of deadly force incidents is often the result of communication and command failures.

Most important notice the value of an independent assessment of use of force incidents and the lessons to be learned.

De-Escalating Police-Resident Encounters

One of the most important recent developments in policing has been a commitment to de-escalating encounters between police officers and community residents. Historically, officers responded to perceived or actual challenges to their authority by escalating their actions, often using force where it was not necessary. De-escalation involves responding through verbal or non-verbal tactics or simply ignoring minor challenges.

A good police department should have a de-escalation policy, along with the appropriate training for all officers. Read the important Police Executive Research Forum report on de-escalation: http://www.calea.org/sites/default/files/PERF%20UOF%20De-Escalation_v5.pdf

As a result of a consent decree with the Justice Department, the Seattle Police Department revised its use of force policy, incorporating de-escalation as a starting point. See the new policy:

http://www.seattle.gov/police/compliance/finished_policy/Use_of_Force_Policy_11_27_2013.pdf

A Commitment to Bias-Free Policing

Issues of biased policing affect police departments across the country. This includes bias related to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. It includes all police actions: stops and

frisks, traffic stops (“driving while black”), arrests, the investigation of sexual assaults and domestic violence incidents. A department should have a formal policy on bias-free policing, make that policy available to the public, and conduct the appropriate training designed to ensure bias-free policing.

One recognized training program is Fair and Impartial Policing project: Learn about it here: <http://www.fairandimpartialpolicing.com/>

An Early Intervention System (EIS)

Early intervention systems (EIS) are recognized as a powerful accountability tool. An EIS consists of a computerized data base of individual officer performance that permits identification of officers who have performance problems (e.g., community member complaints) at rates higher than their peers. For officers so identified, an EIS provides non-disciplinary interventions (e.g., counseling, training) designed to correct an officer’s performance problems.

Read the COPS Report on EIS:

<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/Publications/e07032003.pdf>

What is Important about an EIS

1. A small number of officers are responsible for repeated problems such as use of force and resident complaints.
2. An EIS has the capacity to identify those officers
3. An EIS provides corrective action to improve their performance.

Early intervention systems have been required in all of the Justice Department settlements with police departments. See the details of the EIS, called the Personnel Performance Monitoring System, in the Washington, DC, police department (scroll down to roman numeral VI): <http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/spl/documents/dcmoa.php>

An Open and Accessible Community Member Complaint Process

Community members should find it easy to file a complaint about their experience with the police. This means the department should provide widely available information about the complaint process; provide it in all languages appropriate for the community; provide multiple

ways of filing complaints, including electronically, by mail, by telephone, or in-person at a non-intimidating location.

The complaint process should be prominently indicated on a police department's home page. People should not have to hunt for it.

The department needs to have a formal protocol for the complaint process to ensure that possible witnesses are located, medical evidence is obtained and reviewed, officers are not asked leading questions and complainants not asked intimidating questions, and that the determination is closely related to the available facts. Finally, complainants need to be kept informed of the progress of the complaint investigation.

No police department has a perfect community member complaint process. But some are certainly more open and accessible than others.

Take a look at the San Jose, CA, Police Department's process:

<http://www.sjpd.org/COP/IA.html>

Mediating Community Member Complaints against the Police

Mediation, which is widely used in many other areas of American life, is a small but growing aspect of policing. With a trained mediator conducting the session, mediation is an opportunity for both the complainant and the police officer to both say what they want to say and to listen to what the other side says. The point of mediation is not discipline, but instead for each side to listen to the other side and to achieve a greater level of understanding.

Learn more about police complaint mediation from the Washington, DC, Office of Police Complaints: <http://policecomplaints.dc.gov/service/mediation-service>

What to look for in the mediated cases.

Scroll down to the list of examples of mediated cases. Look for the kind of complaints that were mediated and the reported outcomes of the mediation process.

Learn more from the U.S. Justice Department report on mediating complaints:

<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/e04021486web.pdf>

External Oversight

External oversight is a crucial part of police accountability.

External oversight of the police takes many forms. The traditional approach involves a civilian review board, an independent agency that reviews community member complaints against police officers and makes a recommendation to the department. An alternative, newer approach involves what is often referred to as a police auditor (although the terms monitor or inspector general are also used). Some external oversight are hybrids, investigating individual complaints and auditing the police department.

Whatever form of oversight is adopted, it needs to have sufficient powers to achieve its stated objectives.

This report recommends the police auditor approach, because it has the authority to examine the policies, procedures, and practices of a police department. Auditors have the authority to examine any and all data it believes to be important. Police auditors issue public reports, which represent an important element of openness and transparency to police issues. Particularly important police auditors make recommendations for changes in policies, procedures, and practices. The primary goal is to change the department and to prevent future misconduct. And finally, police auditors conduct updates on progress toward implementing prior recommendations.

(1) The LASD Special Counsel

Since it was created in 1993, the Special Counsel to the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department has established a reputation as one of the best external police oversight agencies in the country. Its work has covered a wide range of issues, including use of force, law suits against the department, the early intervention system, the dangers of foot pursuits, and many more issues. The Special Counsel reports are all readily available from the Police Assessment Resource Center: http://parc.info/los_angeles_county_sheriffs_department.shtml

See, for example, the Special Counsel's report on the dangers of foot pursuits: http://parc.info/client_files/LASD/16th%20Semiannual%20Report.pdf

(2) The Washington, DC, Office of Police Complaints

The Office of Police Complaints in Washington, DC, also has a regular program of using community member complaints to identify problems and to make recommendations for reform.

See their police recommendations here: <http://policecomplaints.dc.gov/page/policy-recommendations>

(3) The Denver Office or Independent Monitor (OIM) Policy Review

The Denver Office of Independent Monitor conducts an annual review of policies and practices in the Denver police department that need attention. Read the 2011 OIM Annual Report (and take a look at earlier annual reports):

http://www.denvergov.org/Portals/374/documents/OIM_2011_Annual_Report-FOR_WEB.pdf

A TRANSPARENT POLICE DEPARTMENT

A transparent police department makes available information about its policies and operations that are matters of concern to the public. The department web site is the obvious place for posting such information, and the web site should be easy to navigate for the average person.

Department Policy Manual on the Web

An increasing number of police departments place their policy and procedure manual on their web sites. This allows community members to study policies on use of force, vehicle pursuits, and other critical incidents that are community concerns. Placing the manual on the web is an important step in the direction of openness and transparency, helping to eliminate the feeling that the department is a closed, secretive bureaucracy.

Police departments that have their policy manuals on their web sites include:

Minneapolis: <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/police/policy/index.htm>

Charlotte-Mecklenberg (North Carolina):

<http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/CMPD/resources/DepartmentDirectives/Documents/CMPDDirectives.pdf>

Search other police departments to see if they put their police manual on the web.

Study the critical policies on use of force, de-escalation, domestic violence, bias-free policing, and others.

Access to the Department

The Minneapolis Police Department represents a model for providing detailed information about how community members can contact officers who serve their neighborhoods. Click on the link here and see that the department provides the names and phone numbers of the crime prevention specialists in each neighborhood.

http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/police/crimeprevention/police_outreach_safe-teams

SELF-MONITORING

Continually Reviewing and Updating Policies

We have already discussed the COPS Office / Las Vegas Collaborative Reform Report. Take another look at the recommendation for an annual review and update of use of force policies. The recommendation states:

“Recommendation 5.1: LVMPD should review and update its Use of Force Policy at least annually and as needed to incorporate recent court decisions, analysis of use of force data, and lessons learned from incidents in Las Vegas and other jurisdictions.”

Learning from Critical Incidents

Departments should have a formal process in place for learning from critical incidents that have occurred. The review should be independent of the investigation for possible discipline and instead should focus on possible ways to improve policies, training and supervision in ways that would help prevent unnecessary uses of force and/or other adverse outcomes

See for example, the response of the Dallas, Texas police chief to an increase in officer-involved shootings represents an excellent example of a police department responding to and learning from a controversial incident. Two weeks after the shooting of an unarmed suspect, the chief issued an 8-Point plan for New Policies and Strategic Directions. In addition to developing a foot pursuit policy and strengthening the policy on consent searches, the plan called for researching the “best practices” that have emerged “from around the nation.”

Read the Dallas 8-Point Plan here:

<http://samuelwalker.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Dallas8pointplan.pdf>

Kansas City Police Department Internal Audits

The Kansas City Police Department has a process for conducting Internal Audits of its operations. Equally important, it shares the audit reports with the public by placing them on its web site. Read the reports here:

<http://kcmo.gov/police/audit/>

What to Look For

1. Most important is the fact that the department puts its internal reviews on its web site, open to the public.
2. Notice that the 2013 audit of detention practices examined the record-keeping practices and medical attention for detainees.
3. Notice the 2012 audit of the central patrol district. Notice the review of the handling of property, security procedures, resident complaints received, and the 10% rule on staffing. The point is not that the audit found any “smoking guns,” but rather that the department has a regular process of auditing itself – and makes those audits available to the public.

Strategic Plans

One aspect of self-monitoring is to have a program of periodic strategic plans that identify current or future issues and make recommendations for addressing them.

The Lincoln, Nebraska Police Department has an excellent series of strategic plans. The 2012-2016 Strategic Plan, for example, recommends updating the police radio system that has not been updated since 1997, utilizing retired officers as a way of preserving the “institutional knowledge” about the department, developing public/private partnerships for training efforts that are constrained by the current budget crisis, and many more. Read the 2012-2016 plan here:

<http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/police/pdf/stratplan.pdf>

Community Surveys

A good police department actively engages the community it serves. It can do this in a number of ways, but the basic principle is that it actively seeks out opportunities to engage community groups and leaders, listens to what they have to say, and then acts on what it hears.

A small number of police departments conduct regular surveys of community experiences with and attitudes toward the department. Read the results of the Seattle and New Orleans police departments here. The New Orleans surveys are particularly interesting because they indicate a significant improvement in public attitudes in recent years.

1. Seattle Service Quality Surveys

<http://www.seattle.gov/police/policy/911Survey.htm>

2. New Orleans Community Surveys

<http://www.nola.gov/nopd/about-us/citizen-satisfaction-surveys/>

A WORD ABOUT THE FINANCIAL COST OF ACCOUNTABILITY

A professional, effective and accountable police department is expensive, no doubt about it. Many people will object to the policies and procedures recommended in this report. They will argue that the money is better spent on crime-fighting, or that we just can't afford it in these times of budgetary limits. There are several answers to these arguments.

Merrick Bobb, the highly respected Special Counsel to the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, put it well: **"Money can be spent wisely or imprudently. Money can be spent on short term fixes or, better, on long-term, long-lasting reform that instills a new culture of accountability."**

Sam Walker argues that accountable, constitutional policing is a necessary part of effective crime fighting. Police misconduct undermines community trust and the cooperation the police need to combat crime. Read the op-ed piece here:

<http://samuelwalker.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/constitutionalpolicing.pdf>

CONCLUSION

An effective, professional and accountable police department is within the grasp of every community. Each of the various pieces of the puzzle is in place in other departments around the country. Achieving the best possible department is simply a matter of learning from these best practices and adopting them at home. There is no excuse for not doing so.

Your Comments, Criticisms, and Suggestions

If you have any comments, criticisms, or suggestions for changes in this report, please feel free to contact Professor Sam Walker at samwalker@unomaha.edu