

TECHNOLOGY

Leaders Cultural Awareness

**ENGAGEMENT** Mental Health RESPECT

Diversity Support Community-Centered

HISTORY Training **COMMUNICATION**

**TRANSPARENCY** Transforming

Critical Incidents Data

Technology Unity **NEIGHBORHOOD**

Civility **ACCOUNTABILITY**

**OUTREACH** Compassion

**EDUCATION** Standing Together

**SAFETY TRUTH**

# TRUST INITIATIVE REPORT



**IACP**  
International Association of  
Chiefs of Police

# TRUST INITIATIVE REPORT

OCTOBER 2018

**T**RUTH

**R**ESPECT

**U**NITY

**S**AFETY

**T**RANSPARENCY

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## INTRODUCTION

When I sat down to write my presidential initiatives, I knew one thing for certain: I wanted to inspire law enforcement officials across the world to join members of their communities in healing and building trust. I recognize that the bar is high, but the stakes are even higher.

In my own work as chief of police in LaGrange, Georgia, I recognize that my community looks to me to set the tone for how our officers interact with the public. Like many rural southern U.S. jurisdictions, LaGrange has a history that is difficult to talk about and even more difficult to rectify; however, we had an opportunity as a department to bring our community together to address a terrible incident that occurred in my city 78 years ago. A black teenager named Austin Callaway was arrested and charged with trying to assault a white woman. A band of masked white men arrived at the jail the night of Mr. Callaway's arrest with at least one gun, compelled the jailer to open the cell, and forced Mr. Callaway into a car. He was driven to a spot eight miles away and lynched.

While that unjust act was unknown to the current officers of the LaGrange Police Department, the memory still burned bright within the minds of our black community members. Austin's story had been passed down from generation to generation, accompanied by the distrust toward a police department that, nearly eight decades ago, let an incident like that occur. On behalf of the department, I apologized to Austin Callaway's family and the community for the role the police department played in the tragedy, through both our action and inaction.

While an acknowledgement is not a quick fix, it is a step forward. In order to continue forward in bolstering trust between police and our communities, the TRUST Initiative was born.

The goal of the TRUST Initiative is simple: invite law enforcement agencies to join in the commitment to building stronger communities and provide avenues for how to do that. In the summer of 2018, I and other members of the IACP leadership traveled across the United States to hear directly from communities about their concerns and to capture their suggestions for ways law enforcement can make a difference. These community members were eager to build better relationships and gain confidence in their local law enforcement. Many of them recognized the difficult job that our officers have and the challenges our profession faces every day.

This report includes the themes that arose from four TRUST Initiative listening sessions. If there is one takeaway from this report, it is that commitment to participate from both law enforcement and community members is required. Each group's role in the process looks slightly different, but defining a path forward is not possible without a joint effort.

Our listening sessions made clear that building trust between the police and the community is no different than tending to any other relationship in life—it is often an ongoing process of give and take. However, both law enforcement and the community need to be on the same page when defining what healthy relationship-building is and what contributes to further erosion of public confidence in police. While some of the recommendations contained in this report will require compromise from

one side or the other, other themes focus on collaboration. The ultimate goal is unity while appreciating diversity.

Some law enforcement officers operate as if they are separate and apart from the community they serve. In reality, our officers and our agencies are a central piece of the overall community landscape. Through this initiative, we encourage law enforcement to accept and take pride in their role as community members. We also ask that community members be open-minded and willing to accept their local officers into the fabric of the community. Our listening sessions illuminated the need for progress on both of these fronts. This report provides recommendations for both law enforcement and the public on how to improve trust, increase public confidence in police, and build a stronger community.

I thank the IACP membership for their continued commitment to bettering this profession. I also offer my sincere gratitude and thanks to the community members who seek avenues to improve encounters with law enforcement and who have proven their willingness to step forward rather than back when given the opportunity to engage on this front.

Louis M. Dekmar  
*President*  
International Association of Chiefs of Police

# IACP TRUST INITIATIVE ADVISORY BOARD

**A**s part of the IACP TRUST Initiative, the IACP formed an Advisory Board, which was composed of police leaders, as well as civic leaders from legal, advocacy, and other organizations; academic advisors; and other community stakeholders. These individuals are also representative of additional efforts to improve policing in their communities.

The Advisory Board assembled for a day-long summit in January 2018 to discuss what obstacles need to be overcome to move community and law enforcement relationships forward, what successful programs exemplifying innovative community engagement have been developed already, and what resources the profession still needs to obtain to further progress.

As a result of these discussions, the Advisory Board identified a number of recommendations that might help law enforcement organizations establish a stronger connection with community members. Many of those recommendations and themes were parallel to those identified by communities during the listening sessions that were held.

Since the January meeting, the Advisory Board has convened on a regular basis to review and discuss forward progress and feedback from the listening sessions and to work together toward the next steps of the initiative.

## OVERVIEW OF TRUST INITIATIVE LISTENING SESSIONS

**L**aw enforcement leaders across the globe strive daily to build strong, trusting community-police relationships. Although many departments have made great strides in community policing, there is still more to be done. True change in the area of perceived or real social injustice will take time and commitment from the police profession and communities.

Recent events are a strong reminder that we must never be complacent in our efforts to sustain trust across police and the communities they serve. We must continue to reevaluate, recommit, and renew our focus on sustaining trusting relationships with all segments of our communities.

This movement is not “revolutionary” but, rather, “evolutionary.” It is change that takes time and patience and, when successful, results in the betterment of all. This is an opportunity to lead for both police and community leaders that cannot go unattended.

To ensure that community voices were heard, listening sessions were conducted during the summer of 2018 in four jurisdictions across the United States. Each locality faces somewhat different challenges due to demographic makeup, troubled history, or serious incidents that occurred either recently or in the past. The crux of the TRUST Initiative is buy-in from the community, which cannot be obtained

without providing a platform for community members to share their feedback and concerns.

At these listening sessions, local police officials were not present in the room while community members spoke to President Dekmar and a few select IACP representatives. For individuals to feel free to express their frustrations and even their fears, it was critical that local police officials not be present and that no attribution be made to any comment. Police chiefs and other involved agency officials were debriefed immediately after the session and the community's feedback was shared with them.

The selection process for communities to participate involved a call for participation put out by IACP. Additionally, there were some jurisdictions that were approached directly as being good candidates for a community listening session given recent serious events or a significant history of tension in that jurisdiction. Ultimately, four jurisdictions were selected:

- Three jurisdictions are considered urban.
- One jurisdiction is considered rural.
- Two jurisdictions are under active Consent Decrees by the U.S. Department of Justice.
- One jurisdiction has seen its police chief replaced since the listening session occurred.
- Three jurisdictions have significant immigrant populations, including people who are limited English proficient (LEP).
- One jurisdiction was the site of high-profile riots.

## **LISTENING SESSIONS: COMMON THEMES**

At each site, those who attended the listening sessions expressed a genuine desire to have positive interactions with police and hope that this initiative can be successful in healing the damage in their communities. Each of these jurisdictions has a unique history, demographics, and challenges. However, spanning the four sessions, a few themes consistently arose in discussions that can guide efforts to effectively build trust.

### **TRANSPARENCY**

Across the board, community members expressed a desire for transparency from their police departments. In some jurisdictions, serious breaches of trust had already occurred, where public officials had refused to share details with the public concerning serious incidents. One group described how the local district attorney (DA), in addition to opting not to prosecute an officer-involved shooting case, erected a chain-link fence around the DA's office building. Community members expressed how they felt shut out, literally and figuratively, by their public officials.

In other jurisdictions, law enforcement had done a good job of sharing information and being open with the community. In these places, community members wanted that transparency to continue. They expressed gratitude to the police department for being open and honest with them and emphasized that continued transparency was something they would need to continue building trust.

At each site, community members expressed hope that law enforcement and public officials will be committed to sharing as much information as possible with them. In instances where information cannot be shared, they would appreciate patiently being told the reasons for the restriction.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Coupled with transparency is accountability. To communities, accountability is not a “one-size-fits-all” concept. A single officer can be held accountable or an entire department can be, depending on what occurs. A large source of frustration for communities is when their loved ones or associates experience poor treatment by a police officer or when something systemic occurs within the department and no apparent action is taken to hold those parties accountable.

A key frustration is real or perceived disparity in treatment between members of the community and law enforcement. Many participants shared the belief that law enforcement officers are not subject to the same standards and punishments as the average citizen for both legal and illegal behavior. When officers appear to lack proper oversight, the community feels at the mercy of a police department with unlimited power.

simply being acknowledged and validated made them feel valued by their local law enforcement, even in instances where their requests could not be fulfilled.

For community members who had not experienced positive levels of communication, prior interactions with police officers had left them feeling ignored and dismissed. Some individuals recounted having passed officers while getting coffee and saying hello, only to have the officer stare blankly back. Another person described speaking to an officer who would not take his sunglasses off during their conversation, despite being indoors.

Employing effective communication skills is an opportunity for any law enforcement officer of any rank to play a part in building trust with community members. It is important to remember that effective communication involves both speaking and active listening. When listening to others, officers should be aware of their natural body language and make an effort to demonstrate to the person that they are listening and engaged.

Other small efforts, such as saying hello in public, can leave both officers and residents feeling uplifted. The community members in the listening sessions expressed their desire to get to know officers as people and not only when enforcement is required. Taking a second to smile or wave to someone in the community will help both parties remember that the community is unified.

In these three pillars—transparency, accountability, and communication—we find the building blocks for trust building. In times of crisis or a critical incident, communication must happen quickly, frequently, and honestly. Quality communication requires that police leaders fully engage, give as much information as possible, and take responsibility for actions that might have contributed to issues or incidents of concern. Personal conversations, particularly during difficult

“The findings and recommendations of these sessions offer critical insight into the concerns of community members and provide law enforcement leaders with a head start on how to address them.”

## COMMUNICATION

The common thread tying together most of the feedback from community members is a desire for healthy, open, and consistent communication with law enforcement. Communication is a requirement for any healthy relationship, and both parties mutually benefit when information is shared back and forth in respectful ways.

For those who had experienced open communication with the police before,

times, bolster the perception that police leaders genuinely want to be open and honest. Strong communication, particularly with groups that feel disenfranchised, is necessary for sustaining community-police relationships.

## LISTENING SESSIONS: SPECIFIC AREAS OF FOCUS

In addition to the central themes drawn from the listening sessions, there were several key issues identified in each discussion. An overview of these critical issues follows, along with recommendations on how to address these specific concerns.

### HIRING PRACTICES

Revamping outdated hiring practices can help bring in qualified candidates and rule out individuals who should not be police officers, suggested community members. Requiring higher levels of education, personality exams, or testing recruits on subjects using more sophisticated methods and testing instruments can ensure that the most qualified candidates are offered a job. Research has shown that officers who have a four-year college degree are significantly less likely to use force in encounters with the public<sup>1</sup> and also tend to have negative views of abuse of authority, meaning they are more likely to disagree with inappropriate extensions of police authority, for example.<sup>2</sup>

Another idea that was supported by community member focused on offering hiring incentives to attract a larger pool of candidates. Housing voucher programs can provide affordable, local housing for new officers in exchange for their assignment to

the area around their residence, and signing bonuses can entice interest for agencies struggling to find candidates.

**Recommendation:** Review hiring processes and determine whether updates are needed. Consider raising minimum education levels, if applicable, or offering hiring incentives for applicants who have a college degree. Consider establishing partnerships with local colleges or universities that can provide opportunities for higher education for officers.

### TRAINING

One of the most common suggestions by community members was to provide a library of training options to officers of all ranks. Suggested topic areas for these resources included crisis intervention training (CIT)<sup>3</sup>, Mental Health First Aid, and “interpersonal skills” such as empathy or cultural diversity training. Also highlighted was a the need for a renewed focus on providing officers with training on the history of the civil rights movement. In several jurisdictions, community members felt it had helped officers understand the deep-rooted history of police violence and the generational experiences of people of color.

**Recommendation:** Adopt CIT standards for *all* sworn personnel. Review academy curriculum for new cadets and assess where additional training could be added to address interpersonal skills, cultural diversity, and historical perspectives including civil rights and race relations. Consider offering unique training opportunities throughout the year (e.g., workshops such as Mental Health First Aid), with incentives for officer participation.

- 1 Rydberg, J., & Terrill, W. (2010). The Effect of Higher Education on Police Behavior. *Police Quarterly*, 13(1), 92-120.
- 2 Telep, C. (2011). The Impact of Higher Education on Police Officer Attitudes toward Abuse of Authority. *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, 22(3), 392-419.
- 3 This report uses the term “CIT.” For the purposes of this report, the acronym CIT represents the broad concept of using a multi-disciplinary crisis intervention team when responding to a crisis or a person affected by mental illness. “CIT” can also be used to refer to CIT International, a nonprofit membership organization that facilitates the understanding, development, and implementation of crisis intervention team (CIT) programs throughout the world.

## DIVERSITY

A long-standing effort in policing has been to increase diversity in hiring across the profession. This topic also arose during the listening sessions as community members expressed their frustrations that many local police officers are not actually from the communities in which they patrol. Community members expressed feeling “occupied” by officers who do not identify with them demographically or culturally, do not understand the history of their neighborhoods, and leave the jurisdiction as soon as their shifts end.

Hiring officers who are representative of the community can engender stronger community trust, enable access to more minority communities, and provide additional language skills and cultural understanding to the police agency. For example, religiously observant community members are often unable to effectively participate in the recruitment process when restrictive policies conflict with sincerely held religious beliefs.

**Recommendation:** Implement diversity-focused hiring programs that use data to understand the demographic makeup of the jurisdiction and set a goal of having staff levels representative of the community. Provide hiring incentives for community members to join the agency and consider recruiting from local schools and colleges. Review or develop religious accommodation policies that permit members of minority faith communities to partake in the pre-requisite training and serve as patrol officers. Consider establishing partnerships with national faith and civil rights organizations that can provide assistance in establishing religious accommodations for law enforcement personnel.

## MARKETING

Some community members expressed having had wonderful experiences with officers—officers who provided loved ones with emergency care, regularly called to check in after an incident, or went above and beyond the call of duty. However, many individuals at the listening sessions said they never hear about these positive stories when they happen to others. Community members made it clear that they want to know when good things are happening with their police department so that the positive message can be spread throughout the community.

Positive communication strategies include spreading the word through social media any time the department makes any pledges, commitments, or advancements, such as officers completing new types of training or attending community events.

The other side of the coin is to use marketing to correct misinformation, which was a source of frustration for community members. One method of communicating correct information to the community involves regularly publishing data and statistics on topics such as use of force, incident complaints, calls for service, officer-involved shootings, and hate crimes on the agency website or social media pages. Open data foster transparency, and the public then has access to fact-based information.

When the public is informed of the important work being conducted by their local police department, they become aware that leadership is addressing problem areas, as well as reaching out to share information with them. When rumors are spread, social media can be a place where individuals know to go to get accurate information directly from the police department.

**Recommendation:** Departments should create or enhance their social media outreach efforts. Where possible, they should hire or assign an individual to serve as the public information officer. Make a continual effort to communicate events and other happenings in the community through social media, in addition to important alerts. Consider using social media as means to open a less formal, more robust conversation with the community. Regularly publish data and statistics that inform the public about local crime, community engagement by the police force, officer training, etc.

## TECHNOLOGY

Body-worn cameras are one example of recent technology that has been recently adopted in an effort to build community trust. However, there are other forms of technology that police departments can utilize to make connections with the public and, in effect, build trust. Community members expressed their support for the use of social media as a communication tool. They felt that law enforcement has a responsibility to share salient information with them, and social media platforms offer a simple way to do so.

One jurisdiction had a smartphone app that was created specifically for better communication from municipal officials to the public. Such technology provides an opportunity for the community to feel connected with public officials.

**Recommendation:** Be creative in adopting new forms of technology that can help build trust with community members. Implement a body-worn camera program, if not done already. Brainstorm different ways technology can be utilized to bridge the gap between public officials and community leaders.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Perhaps the most discussed topic in the listening sessions was the need for police departments to get more involved with the communities in which they work. Community members want to see their officers on the streets, know their names, and be able to interact outside of a call for help. Repeated references were made to historical times when officers walked a beat and knew everyone who lived or worked in their patrol area.

Requests were made to see law enforcement representatives at athletic events, community group meetings, town halls, and county fairs, as well as events the departments host themselves. In many jurisdictions, the police appear to be outsiders who remain on the periphery of the community. Embedding the department within other aspects of the community as a way to get to know the citizens was important to the community members who spoke at the sessions.

**Recommendation:** Encourage officers to engage with the community on foot while on patrol, putting officers in the practice of interacting with the community as people rather than as police.

Pledge to have agency representation present at as many community events as possible. Adopt the philosophy that it *is* the role of agency to participate in the community. Be open-minded in developing opportunities to invite the community in to the agency as well. Consider developing a citizens' police academy to teach community members about the duties of agency employees. Implement a Coffee with a Cop program or something similar to invite community members to have open dialogue with officers. Consider reaching out to immigrant groups in the community to form relationships.

## YOUTH OUTREACH/SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS

Children in some communities or community segments grow up wary of police. This distrust is sometimes enhanced in communities where the communities' past negative experiences with police officers and departments are passed down from generation to generation. This is an unfortunate reality that police officials must understand, accept, and work to address.

As a result of this wariness or distrust, young adults from these communities are less likely to be interested in a career in policing. This clearly presents a challenge to agencies as they attempt to promote greater diversity within their agencies. In addition, the lack of local recruits and officers on the police force can diminish the desire by community residents to work as police officers in their own neighborhoods.

Community members had many suggestions for their local officers to improve youth outreach. The groups suggested creating or bolstering youth athletic leagues where police officers volunteer their time to coach and play with the kids. Summer day camps or Police Ambassadors programs are other options that can help kids become familiar with the officers in their community, as well as learn more about the day-to-day work of the police department.

**Recommendation:** Implement youth outreach programs that are geared toward forming bonds with and mentoring local children. The goal of these programs should be to teach kids important life lessons (e.g., good sportsmanship through athletics), as well as to familiarize them with their local law enforcement officers. Visit local elementary schools and pass out literature to familiarize young children with police officers and educate them on age-appropriate safety topics. Consider creating a Young Cadets or Police Ambassadors

program to encourage those youth who may have an interest in the profession to learn and experience what it is that police officers do.

## EMPLOYEE WELLNESS/MENTAL HEALTH/TRAUMA

Ensuring that police officers are healthy and able to properly process trauma they experience on the job was of true concern to community members. Many people recognized the difficulties inherent in being a law enforcement officer and how those stressors can easily carry over into how an officer interacts with people. It was important to community members that officers know how to focus on their own physical and mental health, which, in turn, can ensure better interactions while both on and off the clock.

**Recommendation:** Ensure that agency policies on the topics of employee mental health services, critical incident stress management, post-shooting personnel support, line-of-duty deaths or serious injuries, and early warning systems are up to date. Agencies should always have chaplains and qualified mental health professionals available to officers. An early warning system should be in place to track certain indicators and illuminate areas where an officer may be struggling so an appropriate intervention can be offered.

The findings and recommendations of these sessions offer critical insight into the concerns of community members and provide law enforcement leaders with a head start on how to address them.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITIES

Throughout the listening sessions there was also a substantial amount of feedback *by* community members *for* their fellow community members.

- **Engage with the local police department.** There are often opportunities for community members to get involved. Sign up to ride-along with an officer, participate in a citizens' police academy, or sit on a community advisory committee.
- **Invite the police department to community events.** For officers to engage in community outreach, they need to know when there are opportunities to do so. Make sure the local department gets an invite to any community events where they can have a role outside of being an enforcement presence. They can submit an entry to a chili cook-off, play in a softball tournament, or take part in other ways—a police officer can even be auctioned off in a date auction!
- **Utilize the most respected community leaders.** Many communities have well-known community leaders who are respected and extremely embedded in the community. Take advantage of the face time these individuals get with people across the community and encourage them to spread the word when events are occurring or when the police department has messages they want to disseminate.
- **Canvass the neighborhood during local elections and make sure community voices are heard by local public officials.** In districts where serious incidents occurred and protests erupted, involved public officials were still re-elected. This told community leaders that their fellow neighbors were not truly taking action. Communities need to channel their own voices through voting, educating, and expressing their concerns to the local public officials who make decisions, including the chief of police. Similarly, it is important for the community to know that control of the police department budget often lies with public officials other than the chief of police. Community members

should contact those individuals and advocate for additional resources for the police department in order for certain reforms to be possible.

## NEXT STEPS

Over the past several decades, much progress has been made in policing, particularly on re-focusing policing efforts on community-centered philosophies and ideals. Nonetheless, communities continue to call for deeper, more meaningful relationships with their police. Listening and responding to that call requires an ongoing effort to re-evaluate and adjust policing practices to address the needs of communities served. True inclusion of all and real appreciation for diversity will happen only when trust exists between public servants and all segments of the community.

While building trust and increasing satisfaction for officers and communities is reward in and of itself, agencies should implement meaningful ways to define and measure success in building community-police relationships. Collecting data and monitoring trends in trust-building and satisfaction can help leaders navigate this complex process with ease.

Given the current focus on building community-police relationships around the globe and at all levels of government, it is imperative that police executives take a leadership role in moving these efforts forward. This report is designed to serve as a road map for law enforcement, communities, and all stakeholders as they work to build meaningful, sustainable, trusting, and effective working relationships. The recommendations herein serve as the foundation from which to launch continued efforts to assist law enforcement executives as they strive to improve ties.



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