

# Charting a Path Forward IACP's Tenets for Healing

Community members, police leaders and elected officials all have a crucial role to play in enhancing and improving community-police engagement. As a society, we must be willing to listen and discuss the realities of policing, identify meaningful solutions, and understand that the trust and support of our communities is the bedrock of successful policing. To that end, this Path Forward document lays out several foundational principles that must drive these efforts.

Developed by the IACP Board of Directors, it is the IACP's hope that these key principles will aid community members, police leaders and elected officials as they together chart a clear and constructive path forward.

■ **Ensure the fundamental principle of all police officers and agencies is to value and preserve human life.**

- Incorporate this belief into the mission, vision, goals, ethics, and oath of every police agency.
- Healing of the community means healing of all. There needs to be acknowledgement and empathy shown to all regardless of position, race, religion, gender, or socio-economic standing.
- Police leaders need to continue to emphasize and prioritize equally both the physical safety and mental well-being of officers. This includes having more open conversations about coping with stress and trauma within agencies and informing the public and elected officials of the stress and demands on officers.

■ **Establish shared expectations between the police, the community, and elected officials.**

- The police, community, and elected officials must jointly shoulder the responsibility to share expectations and offer solutions. This responsibility includes listening and weighing outcomes of potential decisions and policies. Wherever feasible, policies and practices should be evidence-based and represent the best interests of all involved.
- Ensure that all voices are welcomed and heard. Communities need to be clear in their expectations for their police agencies. Police leaders and officers need to be able to speak about potential outcomes to operational changes. If communities want changes to police operations, the police should inform the public of potential costs and benefits of that change so communities can make informed and appropriate decisions. Elected officials are responsible for facilitating this process, ensuring thoughtful changes are implemented, and owning the outcome.

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- Acknowledgement that past and present inequities in some communities often shape views that drive calls for change. This acknowledgment promotes a greater level of understanding by all, that certain embedded feelings must not be taken lightly or dismissed and will be taken into consideration when developing and receiving recommendations for changes in policy and procedure.
- Based on shared, understood expectations, develop an objective and clearly established evaluation process for police departments.

### ■ Implement a system-wide approach to policies and legislation so to thoughtfully anticipate benefits and costs for sustainable approaches.

- Many police agencies throughout the world have already implemented community-focused police approaches and have policies and practices in place that emphasize the duty of care as well as strict policies around police tactics to ensure the well-being and safety of the community. Adoption of these approaches must become wide-spread and serve as bedrock principles of law enforcement.
- However, as communities, elected officials, and agencies are developing new and innovative approaches to public safety, the focus should expand beyond just policing to include both the broader criminal justice and public health ecosystems:
  - ▲ Maximize available, thoughtful resources, like recommendations from the Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, an extensive effort in the United States that brought together subject matter experts to study and produce recommendations related

to the entire criminal justice system. The Commission specifically looked at how to make systematic improvements and enhance coordination between police, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and correctional authorities to increase the ability to prevent and control crime, serve the victims of crime, and improve community-police engagement.

- ▲ Embrace proven, evidence-based programs that incorporate broader public health and social wellness into cohesive approaches to community wellness and public safety.

### ■ Hold prosecutors and the judiciary accountable for their decision-making / discretion.

- The decisions and practices of prosecutors and the judiciary directly impact public safety, particularly the trust and confidence communities have in the police. While there are multiple ways to hold offenders accountable, and prosecutorial and judicial discretion is an important tenet of the justice system. As a result, there needs to be alignment between the police and prosecutors to ensure agreement on the enforcement and prosecution of offenses. Police are the arm of the government that enforces the law, but they do not make the laws. If prosecutors and the judiciary are disconnected from the police, and/or the laws they are enforcing, the public loses faith in the police.
- Prosecution and punishment should be proportional to the offense alleged and should not vary by race or the wealth of the defendant.

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### ■ Recognize that policing involves dynamic, unpredictable, and very dangerous situations.

- Police leaders should, wherever appropriate, educate the public on policies, practices, and incidents to further understanding of policing dynamics, advance transparency, and to enhance community-police engagement.
- The public should expect excellence, while also recognizing that police officers are human. Police leaders and officers must hold each other accountable for wrongful actions, and always remember that officers have a duty to intervene to prevent or stop the use of excessive force by another officer when it is safe and reasonable to do so.
- Complaints against police officers must receive thorough, timely, transparent, and objective investigation to determine the validity of the complaint, root causes of failure and work towards improvement.
- When addressing problematic behavior by officers, police leaders should have broad discretion in determining consequences and be able to act swiftly.

### ■ Communities and police leaders must demand, of their elected leadership, improvements to social shortcomings that deteriorate lives and perpetuate cyclical involvement with the criminal justice system to include: poverty, education, substance abuse, and mental health.

- Police officers, as the most visible form of government, are expected to increasingly deal with the social ills that plague society but often lack the authority, training, or expertise to proactively address. These collective societal failures for those who suffer from homelessness, drug addiction, and mental illness have pushed these problems to the street for the police to deal with.
- Good policing contributes to a safer and better world. As communities and elected officials develop policies, police leaders, as public safety experts, should be aware, consulted, and serve as resources to recommend and deliver better policies and solutions.