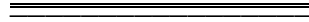
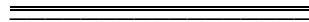


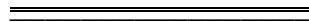
**The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**



Building Trust with the Community



**A Leadership White Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College**



**By
Jennifer Rhodes**

**Arlington Police Department
Arlington, TX
February 2021**

ABSTRACT

The relationship between law enforcement officers and the community can continue to improve together as a team daily. In some areas, this issue has become easy to some and harder for others. Since 2001, there has been some significant changes in how law enforcement operates now (Ellis, 2017). There was an error when law enforcement never had cameras as officers patrolled their geographical areas. Now, it has become mandated for law enforcement officers to wear a body worn camera at all times due to recent critical incidents of citizens and officers being killed. Again, times have changed. According to Ellis (2017) "A law enforcement agency that adopts a prevention-focused policing model of community policing will be more successful in building public trust" (para 35). Having a plan that agencies are willing to execute in a positive direction of what is needed in the law enforcement agencies can solve issues quickly. Law enforcement agencies should become serious about adopting more programs that will continue the growth and trust between them and the community. Law enforcement should consider developing a program called 5-0 Straight Talk that will be discussed later in this paper.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction	1
Position	3
Counter Arguments	8
Recommendation	10
References	13
Appendix A	15
Appendix B	17

INTRODUCTION

A major issue that continues to evolve in law enforcement is building community trust. Trust issues occur in all law enforcement agencies. This issue has been so important that President Obama organized “The President Task Force On 21st Century Policing” (2015).

Pillar 1 focuses on the main issue that exists in law enforcement which is building trust & legitimacy (“Final report,” 2015). Building trust and legitimacy in the community consists of law enforcement officers getting to know who their main stakeholders and citizens are in their geographical area. Routinely talking to law enforcement and citizens on a daily basis shows the citizens of the community that officers really are interested in getting to know who they really are. In order for the trust to work, officers and citizens must be able to feel comfortable in speaking to one another at all times without being intimidated by the officer. The same treatment must occur with the citizens interacting with the officers as well.

When developing a program, the main key in this strategy is to allow for the citizens and the officers to be comfortable around one another. This is important because if a major offense occurs and the citizen knows the suspect that committed the crime, the citizen will be more likely to help the officer identify who the suspect is due to the relationship and bond that they have formed. Decades of research and practice support the premise that people are more likely to obey the law when they believe that those who are enforcing it have authority that is perceived as legitimate by those subject to the authority (“Final report,” 2015). This actually means that as long as the citizens and the police are actually enforcing the laws in an ethical way, the result from the call

should be successful. However, if the officer or the citizen does not cooperate with one another due to either one of their demeanors, the call for service will not get resolved in a professional and peaceful atmosphere. In order to build relationships with the citizens and to get them to be accomplished, citizens must work with officers on a consistent basis in order to achieve their cooperative goal. Ellis (2017) states "Crime is a community problem, not just a police problem" (para 1). The crimes that occur in the community are the citizens problem because a majority of the time it is a known citizen in that area that is committing the crimes. However, if the citizens begin a relationship with the police, then both groups can work as a team in deterring crime in the neighborhood.

Due to the knowledge that the citizen has about the neighborhood, the number of crimes will decrease due to the officer and the citizen working together. In a recent survey, "100% indicated it is important for the police to build partnership with the community to prevent crime" (Ellis, 2017, para 10). Without making that first step of wanting to achieve a positive relationship, the mission will not be accomplished. But if the team does make that first move, there will be a decrease in crime. Law enforcement agencies should implement a program that focuses on the engagement and trust throughout the community on a consistent basis.

Building trust with the community is not as hard as it might sound. Throughout a law enforcement career, simply getting out of the patrol car and walking the neighborhood is all law enforcement has to do. Citizens enjoy the interaction from officers and feel like the law enforcement officers care about them when in reality they really do. The citizens actually assist the community in solving crimes for their

geographic area. This is why it is important to continue building more trust with the community and actually brainstorming activities and programs to increase the partnership in this major effort.

In order to build the trust within the community better, law enforcement officers must start communicating in the police academy by grooming the recruits on how to communicate with them and how to gain the trust in citizens. Academies must teach officers and the in-service department on how to talk to citizens and generate scenario-based exercises while in trainings. After the training center feels that the recruits and the officers from in-service understand the objective of the curriculum, a program must be created to let citizens be at ease and comfortable when talking to officers.

POSITION

One way to build trust within the community is to teach the police recruits about community policing and how it works in the training academy. Instilling the step by step method in the academy can make the learning process for the recruits easier when they have completed the academy and have entered their field training program. One of the major tools that the recruits should be taught in this nature is communication skills. Knowing how to talk to people and connect with them in a professional manner is very important in this nature. For example, if a patrol officer arrives on a call for service talking to the citizen disrespectfully, information will not gather for the report due to the officer being rude. On the other hand, if law enforcement arrives on the call talking to the citizen in a professional manner, more information will be gained from that citizen. It is very crucial that the recruits understand this. As seen on many calls for service, the tone of voice can get either party in fights or in an uncooperative state. Knowing when

to raise voices and when not to raise voices in a lot of scenarios is very important to understand.

According to Miles-Johnson and Pickering (2018) “The solution to the problem starts in recruits being given the right mentoring and training while in the academy so negative perceptions of trust in diverse groups can be diminished” (p. 316). Being able to communicate with all ethnicity groups play a key factor in the community trust within itself. As citizens observe that they have all ethnicity of officers in their groups, the trust awareness increases because it makes the citizens feel at home as well as treats individuals respectfully during stops and calls (La Vigne, Lachman, Rao, & Matthews, 2014).

Being able to resemble the officers in the neighborhoods where officers resemble their community can be good sometimes. However, if the department does not meet its diversity requirements, then some issues might reflect the outcome of that particular area. This is the reason why it is important for recruits to be able to communicate with everyone. According to the Criminal Justice article, Importance of Police- Community Relationships, “Being transparent and accountable” plays a very important part in knowing your community. (Importance of Police-Community Relationships, 2019)

Another way in building trust with the community is reducing use of force measures due to officers understanding how to communicate with citizens. As a supervisor, reviewing reports and the officers body worn camera is a requirement that supervisors must conduct on their officers daily. Body worn cameras are an excellent way of correcting officer’s actions quickly.

As discussed previously, The President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing

(2015) was implemented immediately after several brutality cases that had occurred. One main police brutality case that began this task force was the police brutality case that caused the death of Michael Brown. Due to the perception that this case brought to law enforcement communities, a task force was created in order to prevent officer involved shootings.

According to the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, "Police officers are well trained in use of force tactics, and procedural justice has emphasized as a strategy to ensure citizens feel that they have been treated fairly, courteously, and professionally in their encounters with police" (Todak & James, 2018, p. 510). Law enforcement should begin treating and talking to citizens with respect. It should also be transparent and accountable (Shinnamon, 2018).

If law enforcement officers talk to each citizen and treat them with respect, a lot of answers would be answered during the police investigation. Citizens will cooperate and respect law enforcement more if law enforcement speak with all citizens with respect. The officer can also gain more knowledge in a case if they take time and process the situation from the beginning of the call and listen to all parties involved.

There are all types of ways to be an effective communicator with a person, however, an officer will gain more knowledge with the citizen by being fair and respectful. In an analysis of 3,455 police-citizen encounters, Terrill stated in 2005 that "officers escalated their use of force actions in one in five situations when a citizen was not resisting police" (Todak & James, 2018, p. 514). It is important that supervisors utilize the body worn camera as a measurement tool for the quote and statistic above. The best practice after reviewing the video should be to actually go on an officer call or

service and monitor their call. By conducting this type of practice, the supervisor should be able to identify two things if the use of force might be an issue for this officer. The two factors that the supervisor should recognize is the difference in the tone that the officer uses when they are speaking with the citizen on scene alone, versus when the officer is at the call with another officer. After observing the behavior, and observing that there might be an issue, it would be a good idea to contact that officer and explain to them what the supervisor has observed. Once the officer reviews both scenarios, the issue should be corrected.

Having the body worn cameras is a tool that can continue preventing officers who continuously get involved in too many uses of force calls. As supervisors, it is the duty for officers to connect the officer and the community together after gaining the knowledge and skills on how to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Knowing when to use force is a training tool that must be learned while recruits are in training.

As communities and law enforcement continue to build better relationships with one another, it is important that citizens are shown how much they are appreciated. Knowing the cities geographical community needs will make the citizens feel appreciated. This type of effort is observed by the supervisor and the law enforcement officers that patrols in that geographical area. As officers, when you understand the area that you are responsible for on patrol, it is easy to communicate with the citizens. According to Tsuroka (2018) "The police and community are very familiar with one another. You can talk to any of these residents, and they'll tell you who their beat officer is, who their sergeant is, who they call" (p. 1).

After understanding the police and the community, agencies can then focus on

creating a community program such as “50 straight talk”. 50 is defined as a slang for police officers and/or a warning that police are approaching. Derived from the television show Hawaii 5-0 (Urbandictionary.com, 2002), it implemented this new community approach called “50 Straight Talk.” It is an effective tool to use when communicating with the community. The recommendation simply begins with any interaction with a citizen in a normal face to face conversation.

In the process of becoming effective, the officer and the citizen must be sincere to one another while talking. For an example, a citizen comes up and has a conversation, law enforcement engages in a professional conversation with them and has a normal conversation. During the encounter, the citizen appreciates law enforcement speaking to them with respect and feels as if they made a bond with the officer after speaking to that officer about a topic that they were discussing.

Another example of “50 straight talk” is partnering up with a local YMCA. It would be beneficial for the community and law enforcement to share and gather thoughts with one another in order to solve community issues and make the community better.

It is important that officers continue incorporating programs like “50 straight talk” in every situation when contacting citizens or a community group. It is important that officers understand the importance of this program is to build the trust in the community in order to deter crime at the same time while paying attention to the citizens along with making them happy. Having community events can continue receiving the support from the citizens and the citizens will know that you care through the constant positive relationships. It really shows the community that it appreciates them and that it will always be there for them. The main goal of a community program is for every police

department to be able to pick any community group and to have their officers to be able to talk to them about anything. It is important for citizens and law enforcement to feel comfortable around one another when communicating. This reduces the stress level for both.

COUNTER ARGUMENTS

Many believe there are more important issues than building trust with the community. This is not true. If there isn't trust in the community, law enforcement and the citizens wouldn't be able to solve crimes. According to retired police Chief Don Shinnamon, Port Saint Lucie, Florida, "the community got dropped from policing when agencies began focusing more on CompStat than building relationships with the citizens" (Shinnamon, 2018, p. 1).

CompStat is a database that calculates law enforcement agencies crime data (Shinnamon, 2018, p. 1). It explains where and when major crimes occur along with explaining why there might have been a spike in the geographical area. It is important for law enforcement to understand the crime analysis in their city. After understanding how much crime has decreased or increased, it is important to patrol each geographical area to focus on the citizens main concerns. During this time, officers need to be learning who and what the community has done to improve their issues in the community and what law enforcement officers need to do in order to continue making the neighborhood safe.

Taking this approach face to face in the law enforcement field is the best way to begin this process. Having a meeting with the citizens and law enforcement on a quarterly basis shows the citizens that the officers are consistent and really care about

maintaining a safe neighborhood in their area. Community involvement can work in two ways. The officer gets to know the people, and the people then get to learn about the officers. This can bring closer ties between law enforcement and the citizen. Programs can also help citizens look up to the officers as mentors or role models. These officers would be great assets for the citizens including the adults and teenagers. If an adult or child has an issue with a community member or stranger, then that officer will be approachable and available to listen due to the rapport that has been built with the citizen. The more time spent with citizens, the less crime there will be when law enforcement is consistent. Officers need to get to know people by using their names, knowing their occupation, and being a true community leader to them. Communities need to start a program that will continue teaching citizens what police do on a daily basis. When citizens have an overview on what a law enforcement day to day operations include, a better understanding of what all occurs in that officer's weekly life will be developed.

Building trust in the community is needed because law enforcement officers could explain to the community why officers react the way they do. According to Ransy and Robison, community relationships are important. (Importance of Police-Community Relationships, 2019, p. 1)

They listed five important recommendations for Police-Community Relationship Building. They include: acknowledge and discuss with the communities the challenges you are facing, be transparent and accountable, take steps to reduce bias and improve cultural competency, maintain focus on the importance of collaboration and be visible in the community, and promote internal diversity and ensure professional growth

opportunities.

Acknowledging and discussing the challenges with the community is very important so they will have awareness on what types of calls for service are occurring in their neighborhood. If a major crime occurs in that geographical area, it is best to explain to the citizens at the beginning while information is getting unfolded. Being transparent and accountable includes notifying citizens of major offenses that have occurred in their area. Placing information on social media is the best way due to everyone using the internet and cell phones. Departments should continue taking diversity training so that officers will be well trained for any outcome. Being visible in the community makes citizens feel safe as officers get to know who they really are. It is important that citizens feel as if they can trust the police at all times. Once trust is in, both officer and citizen should have mutual trust.

The last recommendation is promoting internal diversity to citizens who would want to begin their law enforcement career. Recruiting officers need to explain to the applicants how important it is to get out and know what the community does. Applicants need to understand that law enforcement is more than just making arrest, it is about building relationships with the community.

RECOMMENDATION

Law enforcement needs to continue building trust in the community between officers and citizens. Law enforcement should continue building trust within the community by teaching the police recruits about community policing and how it works in the training academy. Setting the tone with a brand-new recruit sets the tone for the expectations on patrol. The recruit will understand how to communicate with the citizen

due to the training role play scenarios that was given in the academy. The recruits will be able to recognize quickly the tone and the movements of a person in order to be prepared if a suspect is going to need use of force or not.

Reducing use of force measures due to officers understanding how to communicate with citizens will allow the citizen to gain more trust with law enforcement. Understanding how to talk to people is important for the officer and the recruit to get annual training on this topic alone. As a patrol sergeant, when officers communicate with a citizen correctly before placing the suspect under arrest, the officer normally does not need to complete a use of force report due to the treatment that was received. The goal of this trust factor is to speak to the citizen respectfully in order to handle a call in a professional way.

Law enforcement officers must continue creating new groups for citizens in order to keep them engaged in working in the community. Occasionally rewarding them with a "back to school event" every year is a positive incentive that they appreciate. When building these relationships, the citizens must know that officers sincerely care about them.

Law enforcement officers should understand the importance of building relationships. It is imperative that officers conduct this type of community service weekly. Conducting this type of service can make the citizen and the officers' relationship build a better rapport.

Overall, law enforcement and the community should not only believe this effort is about them, but this effort includes the cities stakeholders and city departments as well. Having all of these important citizens involved in this type of trust factor should build the

trust quickly amongst all parties working towards the same goal. Everyone in law enforcement serves the public, along with serving the colleges within the city and the agency. Due to different angles that law enforcement target, the better the trust factor will play a huge part in communication. If everyone agrees with the communicating method, positive interactions and relationships will be formed through true leadership amongst each individual, each department, and each citizen.

REFERENCES

- 5-0. (2002, December 28). Retrieved from
<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=5-0>
50. (2004, May 29). Retrieved from
<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=5-0>
- Ellis, G. (n.d.). *Prevention-focused community policing building public trust*. Retrieved from <http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/prevention-focused-community-policing/>
- Final report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing / President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. (2015). Washington, DC : U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.
- Importance of police-community relationships and resources for further reading. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2019, from Criminal justice
- La Vigne, N., Lachman, P., Rao, S., & Matthews, A. (2014). Stop and Frisk: Balancing Crime Control with Community Relations. Retrieved from Office of Community Oriented Policing Services
- Miles-Johnson, T., & Pickering, S. (2018). Police recruits and perceptions of trust in diverse groups. *Police Practice and Research*, 19(4), 311-328. doi: 10.1080/15614263.2017.1364162
- Shinnamon, D , 2018 *When did 'community' get dropped from policing?* Retrieved from <https://www.policefoundation.org/when-did-community-get-dropped-from-policing/>
- Todak, N., & James, L. (2018, December). A systematic social observation study of police de-escalation tactics. *Police Quarterly*, 12(4), 509-543.

Tsuroka, S. (2018). Arlington, TX: A Community Policing Story. Retrieved from
<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov>

APPENDIX A

Beat 460 Back to School Bash at Vandergriff Park

Beat 460 held its 3rd annual back to school bash; it started at 12:30pm and went until 2pm at the Arlington Tennis Center. Arlington Police Department Hispanic Police Academy cooked hot-dogs for everyone that came and provided drinks also. Other participating vendors included Chick Fil A and Tastee Ice snow cones. There were some games for the kids, bounces houses, face painting provided by Arlington Tennis Courts, the Library bus and a Cigna booth during the event. AFD came out with one of their fire trucks, along with Officer Khueling from community support. We had two beat 460 officers and the beat sergeant. There were several volunteers that came from Mission Arlington, and the Hispanic Police Academy to help with games and food.



Prior to the event we had made fliers and handed them out to the apartment complexes in the 460s, posted them at Vandergriff Park, and issued them out to kids in the neighborhood. Officer Khueling was able to get a booth for Cigna insurance to come to the event and also assisted on volunteers helping us. The volunteers helped serve the food and handed out the backpacks to the kids.



Overall, everyone in the community enjoyed themselves. The kids were very appreciative of the backpacks and the food that was given to them. Some of the skateboarders came to the tennis courts and joined the community while eating Chick Fil A. There were approximately 100 people that showed up at this year's turnout. We had a great time, and despite it was a weekend after school had started, all the citizens that came out enjoyed it, and they were all really thankful for us having the event. The atmosphere was really positive, and we hope to continue making the community better for the East District. All of them look forward to this event every year. All the assistance on this event is very appreciative.



APPENDIX B

Beat 260 Back to School Bash at George W. Hawkes Downtown Library (2018)



Beat 260 held its 1st back to school bash on 8/11/18; it started at 12:00pm and went until 2pm at the library. As a supervisor on patrol, this is the 4th annual bash that I have hosted. The Zeta Delta Sigma Chapter stuffed the backpacks along with the CCU on Thursday prior to the event on Saturday. The backpacks were sponsored by various associations in the police department along with businesses in the beat 260 community. Other participating vendors included Chick Fil A and the employees of our own downtown library. Kids were able to receive coloring books, grade school backpacks, along with signing up for library cards. AFD came out with their fire truck and mingled with the kids. Deputy Jeffery Petty attended the event along with me, Officer Parks, Officer Haus, and Officer Cavaseno. There were several volunteers that came from Mission Arlington, the Zeta Delta Sigma Chapter, and the library staff to help with giving away coloring books and food. This event could not have been possible with the assistance of the groups listed above. The volunteers from the Arlington library and the Zeta Delta Sigma chapter were a huge help. We issued out 250 backpacks to the libraries summer book club, the Life shelter of Arlington, Mission Arlington and the Boys and Girls club in the North District. Prior to the event we had made fliers and handed them out to the targeted areas in the 260's mentioned above. The volunteers helped serve the food and handed out the backpacks to the kids. A lot of kids were excited about their new backpacks and the free meal that Chick-Fil-A provided. This effort was a huge success. I believe one backpack made a difference for a lot of families who could not afford school supplies and who could not provide the information that was requested at the AT&T stadium.



Overall, everyone in the community enjoyed themselves. The kids were very appreciative of the backpacks and the food that was given to them. Some of the skateboarders came to the event and joined the community while eating Chick Fil A. There were approximately 250 people that showed up at this year's turnout. We had a great time and the community appreciated the event. The atmosphere was positive, and we hope to continue making the community better for the North District. All of them look forward to this event every year. I appreciate all the individuals involved in this effort that made this event happen.