Achieving Balance

Integrating Crime Reduction and Public Trust in Sumter, SC

Sumter Police Department

A Model in 21st Century Policing
Achieving Balance

INTEGRATING CRIME REDUCTION AND PUBLIC TRUST IN SUMTER, SC

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges facing modern police leadership is achieving balance between effective crime reduction and public trust. Law enforcement alone cannot solve the underlying social issues that give rise to crime, however as architects of change, we must recognize the role law enforcement plays in promoting transparency and fostering public trust. The six (6) pillars established by the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing serve as an important self-assessment tool for all law enforcement and have validated the operating model, programs, and services in use by the Sumter Police Department (SPD). With the belief that success must not diminish growth, SPD is utilizing the recommendations of the Task Force collaboratively, to identify and share areas of strength and provide a roadmap for opportunities. The information contained in this report is intended to provide a summary for stakeholders-City of Sumter officials, local businesses, community groups, and private citizens- of where we stand operationally in regard to the best practice recommendations of the Task Force.

PILLAR 1 | Building Trust and Legitimacy

Public trust and support are critical to building legitimacy in law enforcement. The willingness of a diverse community to cooperate, share information, and follow the law is predicated on law enforcement creating an open culture of inclusiveness. Putting this philosophy into action requires law enforcement to operate in fluid, multi-stakeholder partnerships with schools, clergy, community groups and individual citizens. SPD’s holistic community approach promotes a greater awareness of diversity and a stronger spirit of trust and cooperation that transcends traditional barriers such as age, gender, race and socio-economic class.

Annual Report

- Endeavoring to create transparency, the Sumter Police Department publishes an annual report which is available to interested parties electronically or as a hard copy. Three year crime rates, calls for service, arrest numbers, division highlights and other pertinent data are included.

Positive Youth Interaction

- SPD officers are trained in principles of youth engagement and work closely with our local school district to provide positive and meaningful interaction for all students through structured and informal interactions. Activities include weekly group and individual mentoring, My Community and Me, an annual Back to School Bash, conflict resolution skill building, Black History Month Art and Essay Contest, law enforcement career exploration days, Prom Promise and student mock trial support. Lemira Elementary School principal Dr. Delcia Harper-Baxter is keenly aware of how children benefit from a positive ongoing relationship with local law enforcement.

“Too often children develop a negative view of law enforcement because they are not exposed to positive interactions. We love that our officers in Sumter drop by to eat lunch or read to our students. They reinforce a message that police officers are not only community helpers, they are our friends.”

- Dr. Delcia Harper-Baxter, Principal
  Lemira Elementary School
Community Problem Solving Initiatives

- Sumter Police Department and Sumter neighborhoods maintain a strong partnership through the nationally recognized Neighborhood Watch program. Our Community Services Division actively seeks to organize new groups and serves as a liaison for established areas, attending monthly meetings, providing up-to-date area information and collaborating to resolve community issues before they become problems. SPD partners with all interested community groups to promote strong police/community relationships as part of the annual National Night Out celebration.

> “My neighbors and I appreciate so much that we are made aware of what is going on in and around our neighborhood. Knowing that we can reach Sgt. Sinkler directly whenever we have a concern makes us all feel safer.”
> - Jackie Olsen
> Neighborhood Watch Chair

Engaging Special Needs Populations

- Meeting the needs of a community’s marginalized population requires systemic support. Law enforcement must often take the lead as a result of repeated contacts involving quality of life issues such as loitering and panhandling. SPD utilizes Random Act of Kindness (RAK) Kits as a tool to identify and engage this population in a manner that preserves dignity and promotes compassion. Through partnerships with faith based groups and local businesses, officers distribute kits containing basic personal/hygiene items and a list of helpful community resources. Feedback from the program has been positive with officers relating greater cooperation and businesses reporting a decrease in shoplifting. During summer months, the department sponsors Operation Hydration. The simple act of providing a cold bottle of water promotes positive interaction, builds beneficial relationships, and may reduce the number of indigent cases presenting for treatment in the Emergency Room.

- An unprecedented winter weather event in 2014, created the opportunity for SPD to reach out to the growing number of elderly citizens choosing to live independently in our community. Project CheckMate expanded a long-standing senior call in program by providing a dedicated officer to make weekly home visits to this previously underserved population. Participants receive assistance with basic household chores they may find difficult or unsafe such as changing light bulbs or installing smoke detectors. The information, assistance, and support to community-based seniors also offers peace of mind to participant’s family members.

> “Thank you so very much for all of your help, service, love, and time for my Aunt. What you do and have done for her means so much to us all. May God bless you always.”
> - Sandra G., Conyers, Georgia
> Family member of CheckMate Participant
Promoting Safe Central Business Districts

- Collaborative efforts to reduce crime and the fear of crime in Sumter’s central business district promote a safe area for citizens and visitors to work, shop, dine, and play. Additionally, the strategy has helped stimulate economic development, resulting in an increased tax base, job creation and improved quality of life for all. SPD has a committed team of officers on foot who focus on relationship building with business leaders, merchants and patrons. Officers wear a traditional style police uniform but emphasize a 21st century enforcement approach through active and personal engagement that includes:
  - Business Security Surveys
  - Business and Merchant Crime Prevention Trainings
  - Business Watch Program
  - Downtown Event Participation
  - Bank escorts
  - Zoning input that supports Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles
  - Distribution of timely and relevant crime prevention information

Feedback from merchants and leaders confirms the value of this type interaction.

“\textit{My 6 year old grandson loves to come downtown and get a sticker badge from his ‘friends’, the police officers. It’s impressive that our local police take time to make everyone, especially kids feel valued.}”

- Roy Flynn
  Cut Rate Drugstore

PILLAR 2 | Policy and Oversight

The formal authority of maintaining peace and order that is granted to law enforcement allows broad discretion in enforcement policies and practices. The Sumter Police Department is committed to intentional policing through clear policies and procedures that promote accountability, and has for 20 years adhered to the standards and best practices set forth by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). These include but are not limited to:

- Law Enforcement Role and Authority
- Organizational Structure and Responsibility
- Policy, Planning, Research, and Crime Analysis
- Legal Process
- Allocation and Distribution of Resources
- Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures
- Critical Incidents and Special Operations
- Internal Affairs- Integrity and Procedure
- Criminal Investigations
- Transportation of Detainees
- Evidence Collection and Control
- Victim/Witness Assistance
- Training
- Recruitment
- Community Relations
PILLAR 3 | Technology and Social Media

Technological innovation often serves as a catalyst for crime reduction. From the advent of telephones, automobiles and 2-way radios in the early 20th century to the more recent mobile data terminals and computer-aided dispatch systems, the proliferation of technology has a profound impact on crime and how law enforcement works to prevent it. Sumter Police Department is dedicated to exploring new law enforcement technologies and is firmly committed to the effective research, planning, implementation, training and oversight required to circumvent unintended consequences.

Website Redesign

Endeavoring to increase transparency and access, SPD worked with community stakeholders to redesign the department’s website. The responsive design improves accessibility and includes:

- A content management system that allows for easy updating of information
- Data collection features that promote user engagement
- Social media integration that allows consistency in content sharing
- Up-to-date, data-driven statistical information
- Reachable complaint and commendation ability
- Employment opportunities

Using Cross-Channel Social Media Platforms to Build Trust and Goodwill

Sumter Police Department began using cross-channel social media platforms in 2014 as a way to engage and inform the community. Our Facebook and Twitter accounts have seen a steady increase of organic followers, as Community Services staff have worked to establish credibility through the sharing of accurate, real-time and relevant information. The department’s Facebook, YouTube and Google+ channels showcase new police officers in videos designed to introduce them to the community and highlight off-duty interests that validate officers as a part of the fabric of our community. SPD also creates and shares videos addressing relevant public safety topics, and produces “Mainly Speaking”, a series of short-form videos promoting Sumter’s Main Street businesses, events, and attractions.

“My initial response to suggestions of using social media for community engagement was one of reluctance. Staff convinced me however that if we did not accurately shape the conversation early in the game, we would sit silently on the sidelines. We have worked hard to develop an effective social media policy and to put the right staff in place to interact with and push credible information to our audience.”

- Chief Russell F. Roark
  Sumter Police Department
Collaborative partnerships within communities build support for law enforcement, facilitate trust, and help reduce crime. Successful police/community partnerships incorporate clearly defined goals, best practice methods, and measurable outcomes. Working with community partners in formal as well as informal partnerships allows Sumter Police Department to mitigate issues before they become problems that require graduated enforcement strategies.

Sumter Police Department encourages a culture of information sharing and employs the use of traditional enforcement techniques as a last resort. Intelligence-led policing generates real-time communication among internal divisions to apply resources in areas of greatest need. Externally, officers engage and educate stakeholders on effective crime prevention strategies, and work in partnerships to develop appropriate enforcement techniques which may include:

- Increased officer presence and visibility
- Seatbelt Thank You Ticket Campaigns
- Door-to-door canvassing in neighborhoods experiencing an uptick in opportunistic crimes
- Weekly meetings with multi-housing unit managers to review calls for service and develop enforcement initiatives
- Shift briefings in public areas such as neighborhoods, parks, and local gyms

Community Policing in Action

SPD leadership recognizes that effective community relations exist as a grass roots effort and not always through formal partnerships. Officers are therefore empowered to identify community needs and work collaboratively to develop solutions. This may include a pick-up game of basketball in a neighborhood where teenage youth may fear police interaction, working with community partners to provide beds and basic home needs to a single mother struggling to raise two sons, patrolling with popsicles to engage kids and help beat the summer heat, or helping an elderly man new to town find safe housing that meets his needs. SPD’s programs, services, and efforts focus on the principles of Community Policing, and are designed to promote empathy and inclusiveness, while reducing crime and the fear of crime. The department’s commitment to this philosophy has resulted in a 30.31% decrease in overall crime from 2010-2015.

“When I arrived in Sumter last year, I did not know anything about the community. As a senior citizen, I wanted a safe place to live and I went to the police department to get recommendations. I was shocked that an officer actually took time to show me around and to visit various apartment complexes that cater to seniors. The officers check in on me still. A police department like that is what makes a city great!”

- Bill McDuffie
  Sumter Citizen
PILLAR 5 | Training and Education

Officer Training and Education

The foundation of the Sumter Police Department rests on a guardian mentality of protection and service. Central to this tenet is a training curriculum that promotes empathy, impact of officer action, and parity.

By statute, newly hired officers undergo 12 weeks of basic law enforcement training through the SC Criminal Justice Academy (SCCJA). Post-graduation, officers complete a SCCJA approved Field Training program that incorporates on-the-job training through exposure to all divisions within the department. Additionally, SPD requires annual in-service training, and partners with the Sumter School District, regional colleges/universities, and federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to promote the professional development and training of each sworn officer. Areas of focus include

- Bias Based Training
- Specific Skills Training
- Cultural Diversity
- Ethics
- Legal Updates
- Conflict Resolution
- Criminal Domestic Violence
- Violence Against Women
- Post-Traumatic Stress Identification and Interaction
- Special Population Identification and Interaction- mental illness, substance abuse, marginalized, elderly
- FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Supervisory Leadership

PILLAR 6 | Officer Wellness and Safety

Advancing law enforcement officer health and safety is a top priority for the Sumter Police Department, as well as a requirement for accreditation through CALEA. The mental and physical demands officers face daily require sound tactical training practices and accessible wellness programs that offer on-going assessment, education and support. SPD’s officer safety and wellness programs incorporate the guidelines set forth by the Bureau of Justice and include

- Preventing violent encounters, and teaching officers how to survive violent encounters if they occur
- Providing critical information on how to improve officers’ awareness of situations they may encounter and how to respond appropriately to critical events
- Identifying potential danger and shielding officers from injury
- Reducing overall violence in their communities
- Bringing greater awareness, leadership, and focus to improving officers’ health and wellness
- Supporting officers and their families should a tragic event occur

In partnership with South Carolina Law Enforcement Assistance Program (SC LEAP), Sumter Police Department officers involved in professional or personal crises receive Post Critical Incident Debriefing designed to teach the fundamentals of, and a specific protocol for, individual intervention and increased Emergency Mental Health Skills.

Comprehensive, no-cost wellness screenings and access to a Registered Dietician for education and support are offered to all SPD officers. Through a partnership with Shaw Air Force Base, SPD officers also have access to a no-cost, state-of-the-art fitness facility.
The eighth largest metropolitan area in the state of South Carolina, the City of Sumter is the seat of government for Sumter County. Home to Shaw Air Force Base, headquarters of the 20th Fighter Wing of the USAF and the United States Army Central, the city has a population of 42,700.

The City of Sumter is governed under the Council-Manager form with the Mayor elected at-large and six council members elected to represent individual wards. A City Manager administers the day to day operations of the city.

The Sumter Police Department employs 106 sworn officers and 71 civilian employees.

Mayor
Joseph T. McElveen, Jr.

City Manager
Deron L. McCormick

Chief of Police
Russell F. Roark, III

For additional information on material provided in this report, please contact
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