

Progressive Policing in the 21st Century: A Blueprint for Change

By Gerald W. Schoenle, Jr., Chief of Police, University at Buffalo Police Department

We are all well aware of the need for criminal justice reform. At the heart of that reform should be police reforms, for policing is the most visible part of the criminal justice system. The good news is that progressive agencies constantly make reforms and improvements, for we know policing cannot remain stagnant.

The challenge, of course, is the way policing is set up in the United States. There are more than 18,000 police departments that all operate under different state, county, and local laws, and many more when you add in public safety departments. This article will discuss the ways some of these departments have responded to the call for change and provide a blueprint for progressive policing in the 21st Century.

States around the country have been grappling with how to improve policing, balancing community criticism about excessive force and the concerns of law enforcement agencies under increasing political pressure to tamp down crime rates. Across the country, states have been considering a range of measures to grant more rights to victims of police brutality, roll back special protections for police accused of wrongdoing and allow greater transparency of police disciplinary boards.

– Ricardo Lopez provided this overview of the situation in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 13, 2016.

So where do we begin to address these critical issues? First, start at the top: CEOs (presidents, vice presidents, mayors, and city managers) that

oversee police or public safety agencies need to have hard discussions with their chiefs. CEOs must ask, “Is our police department accredited?” and develop an understanding of the accreditation process along with the benefits of being an accredited agency. If the agency is not accredited, make certain that obtaining accreditation is part of the agency’s strategic plan. University administrators understand the value of accreditation in their numerous programs. Having a police or public safety agency that is accredited shows the agency’s and university’s continuing commitment to keeping students safe. There is no doubt that going through the accreditation process makes an agency a better organization that adheres to best practices in law enforcement.

Many states offer excellent accreditation programs. If your state does not, then the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA) Accreditation program is the way to go for campus law enforcement. If your department has already received state accreditation, pursuing IACLEA accreditation will take you to the next level. This program is campus law enforcement–specific and helps address the many unique aspects of campus policing. The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement (CALEA) is another option for agencies, as well. With more than 18,000 agencies, we need some type of standardization, and accreditation provides that.

For agency chiefs, the accreditation process provides the opportunity to take a hard look at all facets of the department and to use this as a blueprint for change in pursuit of excellence. Accreditation standards provide the framework for developing policies, procedures, trainings, and for adopting the best practices in the industry. While the agency is going through the accreditation self-assessment process, progressive agencies pursue many of the best practices that dovetail with accreditation. The agency must have the support of the CEO to make this happen, as there is a lot of work involved and some plant modifications may be required. However, failure to pursue excellence through accreditation does not seem like an option in these challenging times for law enforcement.

One critical area that agencies must address is bias in policing. The accredited agency will have policies and trainings in this regard. One of the better-regarded programs is Fair

and Impartial Policing (FIP). This philosophy is a new way of reflecting on bias, based on an understanding that all of us have biases. The old way of addressing this was to point out bad behavior and tell cops to stop the behavior. This caused some to feel police departments are full of racist, biased officers, which is not the case.

Dr. Lorie Fridell, former director of research for the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and one of the leaders in this field, has developed a great research-based training program that numerous police agencies throughout the country have adopted. The training examines explicit and implicit biases that we all have and how they may cause

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police to respond as a result. I equate teaching this program to teaching ethics. I do not believe you can teach police officers (or any adults) ethics, as they have spent many years developing their ethical standards. However, you can teach ethical behavior and ethical decision-making so officers use these tools in their decision-making process.

There are several accreditation standards that mandate policy/procedures dealing with use of force. Current programs including de-escalation and tactical retreat training must be part of this. This is often a culture shift from old academy training that implied officers must immediately handle every situation they encounter. Progressive police and public safety agencies have policies that address this, and they train their officers in modern de-escalation techniques including when tactical retreat might be the best immediate course of action.

Interpersonal communications training such as Verbal Judo has proven effective in reducing the likelihood of having to use force. Many agencies have developed and trained groups of officers in crisis intervention and implemented Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT) to specifically deal with individuals with mental illness or other immediate crisis. This is an often-recommended best practice that has the potential to significantly improve citizen and officer safety (see <http://www.iacp.org/onemindcampaign> for additional recommendations).

Perhaps no area is better addressed through accreditation than procedural justice. The concept implies that when fair procedures are followed there is a greater likelihood of a fair outcome. The accredited agency has gone through the accreditation standards and developed policies and procedures as required to maintain consistency, fairness, and transparency. To complement policy adoption, there must be appropriate training to make sure officers understand and follow procedures. Clearly, people feel affirmed if they are treated with respect, and there is a far greater likelihood they will accept the outcome. Every good cop has stories of being thanked after issuing a traffic ticket or making an arrest.

Agencies that put this concept into practice will also be transparent when their actions are called into question. It is

critical for agencies to share information and keep the community informed. Policies and procedures must be in place addressing when and what information or videos can be released; this will go a long way in gaining the trust of the community.

The progressive agency will consider taking advantage of current technology such as security cameras, body cameras, and less-than-lethal options, while being sensitive to budget constraints. Of course nothing is a substitute for a highly trained officer who has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to defuse tense situations. Agency policy will dictate the use of this technology, in accordance with best practices, and mandate appropriate training.

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**IACLEA will convene a day-long training on the
Sixth Pillar of 21st Century Policing: Officer Safety and Wellness
on Tuesday, June 27, 2017**

the day after the conclusion of the Annual Conference and Exposition in Milwaukee. Lianne Tuomey, chief of police at the University of Vermont Police Department, and Tony Leonard, a lieutenant with the Georgia Tech Police Department, will lead the training. For more information or to register, visit My IACLEA at iaclea.org.

A great summary of best practices in policing can be found by reviewing PERF's Guiding Principles on Use of Force (<http://www.policeforum.org/assets/30%20guiding%20principles.pdf>) and the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/TaskForce_FinalReport.pdf).

In 2016, I had the opportunity to attend a forum led by Chuck Wexler, executive director of PERF, that discussed the recommended use-of-force principles in detail. Over the summer, I was one of several hundred law enforcement officials invited to the White House to discuss implementation of the President's Task Force recommendations. Every chief or public safety director should closely read these documents and adopt agency policy, procedures, and trainings as required to comply with these well-researched recommendations. The PERF 30 provides 30 use-of-force guidelines with which agencies should be in compliance. In addition, the President's Task Force has Six Pillars of 21st Century Policing that every agency should strive for: building trust and legitimacy, policy and oversight, technology and social media, community policing and crime reduction, officer training and education, and officer safety and wellness.

President Obama stated in his October 27, 2015, address to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, "Too often law enforcement gets scapegoated for broader failures of our society." While this is true, the progressive agency has worked with the community for months and years in advance to address community concerns so when that critical event occurs, the community will be standing by and supporting our police and public safety agencies.

So, yes, to achieve and maintain excellence, police reform is needed; it always has been and always will be. The good news is many progressive agencies are already doing it; we just need to follow their example.

Chief Schoenle has 38 years of experience in law enforcement and has been the chief at the University at Buffalo for the past 11 years. He is currently an accreditation assessor for IACLEA and New York State (NYS) Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). Previously, he was an assessor for CALEA, and he was an adjunct criminal justice professor. The University at Buffalo Police Department is accredited through NYS DCJS, received CALEA recognition, and in 2016 achieved the gold standard of accreditation for campus police and public safety through IACLEA. 🏆

If your department is ready to seek the gold standard in campus policing, contact Jack Leonard, director of accreditation and LEMAP, jleonard@iaclea.org or (860) 586-7517 x 558.

