

PUBLIC SAFETY

Update From Police Chief Mangseth

Since the tragic in-custody death of George Floyd, I have been repeatedly asked what changes our police department has implemented since the officer-involved shooting of Philando Castile. Police departments across the nation are working on reforming their policies in order to reduce excessive use of force through de-escalation tactics. And at the St. Anthony Police Department, we will remain intentional, focused and proactive to ensure these senseless tragedies do not occur. The perception of police officers needs to change from that of warriors to guardians and protectors. Yet, police departments still have a lot of work to do to make this essential change. What I can offer to members of our community is an overview of how we equip our officers with the training, knowledge and capacity to perform with a service-based mindset.

I remain encouraged by the work we have accomplished, particularly in the area of the Collaborative Reform Initiative for Technical Assistance (CRI-TA). CRI-TA focuses on the following key areas that have been identified through community listening sessions:

- Revision of the department policy manual.
- Developed a data-driven strategic plan for initiating and conducting vehicle and pedestrian stops, community engagement, and enhancing policing practices.

- Continuation of professional development focusing on training, best practices and procedures within specific areas of importance: use of force, de-escalation, encounters with those suffering from mental illness, and leadership.

Policy manual updates and strategic plan

CRI-TA training in Fair and Impartial Policing and Procedural Justice have been intentionally embedded into our department policy manual, training accomplished with certified in-house instructors, and in the creation of a more robust strategic plan. Every police officer and staff member must be able to articulate how every action they make is aligned with our strategic plan.

On-going training

Our officers receive on-going instruction in evidence-based police de-escalation training through Crisis Intervention Team Training (CIT) and Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT). Training focuses on responding to individuals in crisis utilizing the CIT approach, which was developed through the Mental Health Crisis Response Institute and the Barbara Schneider Foundation (BSF). The BSF believes in a community-wide and ongoing collaboration among three community service providers—first responders, mental health and



community advocacy—to work to improve crisis response and prevention.

Professional development in crisis intervention

Our officers also receive a mandated 16 hours of continuing education credits on an every three-year licensing cycle in crisis intervention and mental illness crises, conflict management and mediation, and recognizing and valuing community diversity and cultural differences and implicit bias, as required by Minn. Stat. 626.8469. Additionally, we believe that every member of our community expects to be served by police officers who are healthy in mind, body, and spirit. Our officer wellness program incorporates all of these facets through the implementation of a physical wellness plan, an internal chaplaincy program, and a mandatory annual mental health checkup for every department member by a licensed psychologist. **(continued on page 9)**

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Traffic-safety approach to vehicle stops

We participate in the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Toward Zero Death grant program, placing more officers on our roadways to look for driving behaviors that can lead to crashes, injuries, and deaths, such as speeding, distracted driving, impaired driving, and failure to wear a seatbelt. We also utilize detection devices to determine problem areas so that resources can be better allocated to those locations.

Body-Worn Camera (BWC) program

Two years ago, we implemented a Body-Worn Camera (BWC) program to provide additional transparency for the public. Our officers are required to activate their BWC in nearly all interactions with the public, including all traffic stops. Internal audits of the BWC are conducted on a monthly basis, and supervisors randomly select BWC videos, confirm that a video is present for every call requiring its use, that videos are classified properly, and that our officer's actions are professional and adhering to department policy. In 2019, a total of 482 videos were randomly viewed, with 99% of those meeting the criteria set forth in our policy. BWC video is reviewed following any complaint or concern received to ensure fairness, impartiality, and professionalism, and not deviating from policy.

Mental health aid for public safety

We have met an important strategic goal by participating in mental health aid for public safety.

In partnership with Northeast Youth and Family Services (NYFS) and Ramsey County law enforcement agencies, we contracted to hire a community case worker that performs follow up services on police calls by providing resources to households and individuals with mental health or other basic family needs. This will help reduce repeated police calls and unwanted use-of-force encounters.

Police officers must be equipped with resources to mitigate rapidly evolving, highly intense, emotional situations involving people in crisis. I have personally found it extremely challenging to answer these calls, and disappointing due to limited resources to rely on (beyond a police response) in these difficult situations. Our training over the last several years has been well received and increased our capacity— yet I cannot help but think we can do better. I believe there is room to grow from CIT training and a benefit from receiving community-wide input. I will remain focused on developing our capacity in this area.

Emphasizing a service-based mindset

We will continue to build a culture that emphasizes a service-based mindset. Our focus will be to serve our community by strictly adhering to our Mission, Vision and department policies, which directly guides our training, hiring, and delivery of services. You can count on us to remain focused, proactive, and determined to ensure senseless tragedies do not occur. And we strive to gain your trust to serve and protect you and your fellow neighbors, each and every day. For a comprehensive list of initiatives, visit: savmn.com/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/594 ■