

NIAGARA FALLS POLICE DEPARTMENT

General Order

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I. Purpose:

- A. To increase community interaction and support to improve residents' participation in and satisfaction with police services.

II. Strategy:

- A. The Niagara Falls Police Department (NFPD) recognizes that community policing requires a department-wide commitment to the community policing philosophy. Community oriented policing is a valuable and effective way to build and maintain the communities trust. How well we interact with our citizens and how accessible we are to the community will play an integral part to building and maintaining that trust. Community policing involves decision-making processes that are more open than traditional policing. For the community to be a full partner, the department will continue to share relevant information on crime and social disorder problems and police operations with the community. The NFPD will maintain an environment in which ethical behavior is expected and each individual is responsible for meeting those expectations. The NFPD will utilize the community policing philosophy requiring citizens and police to collaborate to proactively increase public safety within the community. The Niagara Falls Police Department will implement and maintain both internal and external elements to our community policing strategy:

III. Internal Elements:

A. Office of Professional Standards:

- 1. All officer complaints or compliments will be handled through the Niagara Falls Police Departments Office of Professional Standards (OPS) to maintain an ethical, accountable culture within the department that reflects the core values and guiding principles of our organization. OPS will be responsible for building and maintaining a culture of integrity at all levels of the organization through

coordination of training and mentoring and through the management of all internal affairs matters.

B. Recruitment / Hiring:

1. The Niagara Falls Police Departments (NFPD) realizes that it is crucial to recruit and hire individuals who have a service orientation and the character necessary to uphold the high standards of integrity essential for law enforcement professionals. It is the policy of the NFPD (G.O. 114.00) that all prospective police candidates must meet the standards set forth by the New York State Civil Service Law as administered by the Niagara Falls Civil Service Commission. To strengthen our commitment to Community Policing we will utilize the following practices in our strategy:
 - a. Work closely with the Niagara Falls Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEOO) for Compliance and Workforce Diversity and the Office of Human Resources to ensure conformity to the City's policy to provide equal employment opportunities in a way that provides everyone with a chance to succeed. Collaborate with (EEOO) to create and solicit civil service test preparatory classes throughout the city to increase the passing rate on the exam.
 - b. The NFPD will continue to strengthen our relationship with the Niagara University Pre Employment Academy that enables qualified civilian recruits interested in law enforcement to complete Phase I of the NYS DCJS law enforcement officer requirements that will save the department time and money if we were to hire them.
 - c. Continue to utilize our full-time Community Policing Liaison to administer and implement the NFPD's Citizens Engagement Initiative and to help develop a comprehensive recruitment plan that will focus on diversifying the city's police force.
 - d. Implore all NFPD personnel to actively recruit and solicit candidates within the community during their daily interactions and utilize our Citizen Police Academy, Youth Police Academy and Youth Mentoring programs to increase the diversity of those seeking to pursue a career in law enforcement or to get additional information on our many community policing programs and events.

C. Training and Education:

1. The Niagara Falls Police Department supports training and utilizing community policing principles at all levels – academy, field and in-service. Officers are encouraged to exercise creative thinking, correct conditions that could lead to crime, and engage the community to find solutions to problems. Field training officers and supervisors are encouraged to use problem-solving techniques (SARA model) and initiatives for dealing with quality of life concerns and maintaining order. In the police academy, recruit officers receive twelve (12) hours of training in ethics and integrity. Newly appointed supervisors also receive “Ethical Awareness” training when they attend the three-week Course in Police Supervision. In addition to the academy and supervisory training, the NFPD mandates that all officers and supervisors as part of their annual in-service training receive training in Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving, Citizen Encounters and Cultural Diversity.

D. Early Intervention and Evaluation:

1. As part of a larger effort to raise the level of accountability within the department, the NFPD currently utilizes a Risk Assessment System (RAS) that helps supervisors identify, assess, and evaluate employees' performance for the purpose of addressing potential concerns in a timely manner. This is a valuable way to collect and analyze data on an officer's performance, ensuring integrity at all levels of the agency that not only reveals unacceptable performance, it also identifies exemplary performance. The Risk Assessment System records are intended to track employee behaviors and interventions by supervisors, should that become necessary. As data-driven mechanisms of accountability, these programs rely on a broad array of performance indicators, including use-of-force incidents, citizen complaints, department and community commendations and awards, court appearances, and arrest reports. The NFPD employee Evaluations enable supervisors to meet with an employee, discuss his or her performance, and formally record strengths, weaknesses, and expectations. Supervisors will be encouraged to tie performance evaluations to community policing principles and activities that are incorporated into their job descriptions. Evaluations provide supervisors with an opportunity to encourage and praise desired behavior and to notify employees when unacceptable behavior has been reported. The concepts and principles of Community Policing will also be emphasized and rewarded during promotional interviews for supervisory, detective or specialized unit positions.

E. External Elements:

1. Adopt community service as the overreaching philosophy of the department.
 - a. The mission of the Niagara Falls Police Department is to work in partnership with the community to protect life and property, solve neighborhood problems and enhance the quality of life in the City of Niagara Falls while protecting the rights of all and applying the highest standards of professionalism, integrity and accountability.
2. Make an institutional commitment to community policing that is internalized throughout the command structure.
 - a. Create community policing policy and include ethics, integrity, and discretion topics during in-service training.
 - b. Rate officers /supervisors on community policing skills on annual performance evaluations.
 - c. Through community interaction and input, the NFPD will continue to evaluate, assess and if necessary modify existing policies and practices to promote community collaboration as well as options for change to departmental structure and the training of personnel.
3. Tailor police services to the needs of individual communities rather than a one-size-fits-all approach for the entire city.
 - a. Engage specific sectors of the community, such as schools, minority communities (particularly those who previously have felt disenfranchised), and faith-based organizations.
 - b. Conduct outreach to city residents through an engagement process that includes surveys, community events and focus meetings to assess NFPD substation services and community outreach.
 - i. Surveys and outreach will be conducted annually by the Community Policing Liaison professional staff that includes full and part-time employees assigned to the police department.
 - c. NFPD Complaint/Compliment Brochures detailing methods for filing a complaint against an officer will be distributed in accordance with the NFPD Complaint Policy.

4. Empower citizens to act in partnership with the police on issues of crime and quality of life issues.
 - a. Convene monthly meetings with community members.
5. Use problem oriented or problem solving approaches involving police personnel working with community members.
 - a. Establish programs that solicit involvement from residents, such as Neighborhood Watch, Graffiti Removal and the annual Niagara Falls Block Club Council sponsored Crime Night Out event.

F. NFPD Community Policing Commitment:

1. Community Relations Division:
 - a. The NFPD Community Relations Division (CRD) was created by the Superintendent of Police at the request of the community and city leaders.
 - b. This unit consists of police officers and civilian community policing liaisons working together throughout the community and at our various Community Resource Centers and Police Substations.
 - c. The Community Relations Division has adopted the Citizen Engagement Initiative to continue our community policing and neighborhood restoration activities that were implemented under our Weed and Seed strategy. The Citizens Engagement Initiative is a resident driven community policing initiative that focuses on improving the quality of life of all residents while strengthening community-police relations within the city of Niagara Falls.
 - d. Members of the NFPD CRD will have the flexibility to tailor their workday so they are available to attend block club council meetings, community meetings and events and youth programs and school related events as requested.
 - e. The civilian Community Policing Liaisons will act as a liaison between the Police Department of the City of Niagara Falls and Community Neighborhood Associations, Block Clubs and individual citizens. Their work involves planning, directing, and coordinating all police substation crime prevention programs within the community according to the Police Department's

strategic plan to ensure that objectives are accomplished according to federal, state and local regulations.

- f. The liaison communicates and promotes community policing concepts and initiatives to the public as well as coordinating and working with staff of various City departments to resolve a variety of "quality of life" issues like loud noise/ loud party complaints, graffiti complaints, large groups of kids hanging out and loitering on street corners and blocking traffic and loitering for prostitution.
- g. Our community policing liaisons will also provide another layer in the process of identifying, evaluating and responding to breakdowns in communication and community-police relations. Citizens may feel more comfortable communicating their concerns or complaints to the civilian liaison rather than directly to a police officer. They can act as a buffer or a bridge between the community and the police department by expanding the programs offered at substations, to include some general PD services offered at NFPD Headquarters like taking police reports and accepting officer complaints and officer compliments.

2. Citizen Police Academy:

- a. The Niagara Falls Police Department will continue to hold at least one annual Citizen Police Academy (CPA) to foster community trust and to increase community partnerships and collaboration with our citizens.
- b. The Citizen Police Academy (CPA) will be open to all members who live or work in the city of Niagara Falls. The police department will solicit for applications for the CPA through our local media outlets, the NFPD website and through our Community Relations Division officers and liaisons.
- c. The CPA will enable residents to learn about the culture, core values and the overall operations of the Niagara Falls Police Department.
- d. The CPA will provide the community with a first-hand look at the mission, policies, and regulations to which officers must adhere, and allow them to better understand the job of being a police officer, including the stresses of the occupation.

- e. Graduates of our citizen police academies often become advocates and ambassadors of police policy and practices to fellow citizens. We have found that this is an effective way to enhance the relationship between the public and law enforcement.
- f. It will also provide the police department with feedback to help identify, evaluate and respond to possible breakdowns in communication or community –police relations as viewed by community members.
- g. The CPA is an opportunity for the NFPD to recruit for diversity as mentioned under the Internal Elements Section under Recruitment/Hiring.

3. Youth Police Academy:

- a. The Niagara Falls Police Department will continue to hold at least one annual Youth Police Academy for students in grades 9 – 12 in the Niagara Falls school district.
- b. The Youth Police Academy provides the City's youth with an inside look at local law enforcement. Police executives, veteran police officers, civilians, and volunteers instruct students.
- c. Classes are highly interactive, with opportunities to participate in demonstrations and learn new skills.
- d. The Youth Police Academy provides the City's youth with a great opportunity to get an inside look at local law enforcement and to build a lasting and productive relationship with their local police department. Many past graduates have gone on to careers in law enforcement because of their positive experience with the youth police academy.
- e. The Youth Police Academy is an opportunity for the NFPD to recruit for diversity as mentioned under the Internal Elements section under Recruitment/Hiring.

4. Citizen Involvement:

- a. Community policing involves decision making processes that are more open than traditional policing. If the community is to be a full partner, the NFPD needs to share relevant

information on crime, social problems and police operations with the community.

- b. The Niagara Falls Police Department will foster an environment of continuous dialogue between residents and the police department whenever possible. By formally engaging community leaders concerning the internal decision making process, residents will feel that they actually have a stake in programs and crime fighting initiatives that the police may implement.
- c. This will show our community that we are transparent in our decision making, and that we encourage community assistance in improving public safety. Trust is built when citizens feel that the police department listens and appropriately responds to their valid concerns and opinions.
- d. Citizen involvement will also help us gage communication breakdowns and breakdowns in community – police relations and how to address the breakdowns if they occur. It allows the community members to assist in the solutions to the breakdowns and will help the department see things from the community perspective.

5. In addition to some of the Community Policing activities described in the strategy, an additional list of Community Policing activities and events that the Niagara Falls Police Department participates in on a regular basis are listed in APPENDIX A.

APPENDIX A

I. Community Policing Activities / Events:

A. Business District Initiative (BDI):

1. Collaborative effort designating an officer or team of officers to serve as liaison between the businesses of Niagara Falls and the Police Department. Comprised of thorough follow up investigations supported by intelligence based policing and social networking with civilian and law enforcement entities. Initiate follow up contacts with business managers and their staff providing a direct resource between the police and the community.

B. Safe Shopping Days:

1. During a predetermined dates and time officers will set up police command center and provide Bicycle and Foot patrol in business districts to reduce the fear of crime for the community residents who live and shop in the area.
2. Child Safety Seat checks and distribution are also a part of Safe Shopping Day events.
3. The Niagara Falls Fire Department also participates by offering blood pressure checks and smoke detectors.

C. Structured Patrols:

1. Patrol officers assigned a structured patrol will park their marked police vehicle within their designated patrol area and get out and walk throughout the neighborhood interacting with residents and businesses in the area.

D. Block Club / Community Meetings:

1. Officers and patrol supervisors attend monthly block club and community meetings in their assigned patrol area. Officers will also be made available for special events and meetings as long as manpower permits.

E. Community Gun Buy-Back Program:

1. In conjunction with Men against Destruction Defending against Drugs and Social Disorder (MADD DADS), the Niagara Falls Block Club

Council, and the DEA the city recently held its first gun buy -back program. 94 handguns and 56 long guns were recovered at this event.

F. Safe Neighborhood Active Patrols (SNAP):

1. A community policing initiative utilizing walking and bicycle patrols in designated neighborhoods and local business districts to increase police visibility and police presence.

G. Niagara Falls Bicycle Rodeo:

1. NFPD Officers participate in a series of bicycle safety rodeos at all of the city elementary schools in May of each year.

H. NF Housing Authority Annual Thanksgiving Feast:

1. Officers participate in this yearly event to help provide Thanksgiving Dinner to the less fortunate in the community.

I. Christian Youth Basketball League:

1. The goal of the CYBL is to reduce youth violence and substance abuse by offering an alternative to inner-city kids living in high risk neighborhoods. Officers act as mentors to the kids and attend their weekly games. Also provide instruction at their yearly retreat.

J. Shop with A Cop Program:

1. During December of each year several NFPD Officers spend the afternoon accompanying an under privileged child shopping at Wal-Mart for Christmas gifts. The program is sponsored by Wal-Mart and the Niagara Falls Housing Authority.

K. Annual Male Summit:

1. NFPD officers participate in workshops and as presenters. Summit is sponsored by the Niagara Falls Housing Authority and presents speakers and workshops to create, promote and instill positive messages to young men in the community. Topics include importance of education, bullying, employment, self esteem, and roles of men.

L. Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT):

1. NFPD GREAT certified officers teach the 13 week middle school and the 6 week elementary school program at the city middle schools and the high risk elementary schools annually.

M. Niagara Beautification Commission “Beautify Niagara” city clean-up:

1. Several NFPD officers and supervisors work side by side with community volunteers to clean-up sections of the city in the annual NFBC city clean-up event.