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## Community Relations

### 342.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for community relationship-building.

Additional guidance on community relations and outreach is provided in other policies, including the:

- Hate Crimes Policy.
- Limited English Proficiency Services Policy.
- Communications with Persons with Disabilities Policy.
- Patrol Policy.
- Suspicious Activity Reporting Policy.

### 342.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Tewksbury Police Department to promote positive relationships between department members and the community by treating community members with dignity and respect and engaging them in public safety strategy development and relationship-building activities, and by making relevant policy and operations information available to the community in a transparent manner.

### 342.3 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Officers should, as time and circumstances reasonably permit:

- (a) Make casual and consensual contacts with community members to promote positive community relationships (see the Contacts and Temporary Detentions Policy).
- (b) Become reasonably familiar with the schools, businesses, and community groups in their assigned jurisdictional areas.
- (c) Work with community members and the department community services officer to identify issues and solve problems related to community relations and public safety.
- (d) Conduct periodic foot patrols of their assigned areas to facilitate interaction with community members. Officers carrying out foot patrols should notify an appropriate supervisor and Northern Middlesex Regional Communications Center of their status (i.e., on foot patrol) and location before beginning and upon completion of the foot patrol. They should also periodically inform Northern Middlesex Regional Communications Center of their location and status during the foot patrol.

### 342.4 COMMUNITY SERVICES OFFICER

The Chief of Police or the authorized designee should designate a member of the Department to serve as the community services officer. He/she should report directly to the Chief of Police or the authorized designee and is responsible for:

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- (a) Obtaining department-approved training related to his/her responsibilities.
- (b) Responding to requests from department members and the community for assistance in identifying issues and solving problems related to community relations and public safety.
- (c) Working with community groups, department members, and other community resources to:
  - 1. Identify and solve public safety problems within the community.
  - 2. Organize programs and activities that help build positive relationships between department members and the community and provide community members with an improved understanding of department operations.
- (d) Working with the Patrol Division Commander to develop patrol deployment plans that allow officers the time to participate in community engagement and problem-solving activities.
- (e) Attending Town council and other community meetings to obtain information on community relations needs.
- (f) Assisting with the department's response to events that may affect community relations, such as an incident where the conduct of a department member is called into public question.
- (g) Informing the Chief of Police and others of developments and needs related to the furtherance of the department's community relations goals, as appropriate.

#### **342.5 SURVEYS**

The community services officer may arrange for a survey of community members and department members to be conducted to assess the condition of the relationship between the Department and the community. Survey questions should be designed to evaluate perceptions of the following:

- (a) Overall performance of the Department
- (b) Overall competence of department members
- (c) Attitude and behavior of department members
- (d) Level of community trust in the Department
- (e) Safety, security, or other concerns

A written summary of the compiled results of the survey should be provided to the Chief of Police.

#### **342.6 COMMUNITY AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS**

The community services officer should organize or assist with programs and activities that create opportunities for department members and community members, especially youth, to interact in a positive setting. Examples of such programs and events include:

- (a) Department-sponsored athletic programs (e.g., baseball, basketball, soccer, bowling).
- (b) Police-community get-togethers (e.g., cookouts, meals, charity events).

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- (c) Youth leadership and life skills mentoring.
- (d) School resource officer/Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.®) programs.
- (e) Neighborhood Watch and crime prevention programs.

Only employees of the Tewksbury Police Department shall be eligible for participation in these programs. Participation in these programs shall be at the discretion of the Chief of Police. Unless otherwise authorized by the Chief of Police, assignment to these programs shall be on a voluntary basis utilizing members of the Tewksbury Police Department who are in good standing. Preference for participation in these programs may be given to full-time officers before any other member of the department.

### **342.7 INFORMATION SHARING**

The community services officer should work with the Public Information Officer to develop methods and procedures for the convenient sharing of information (e.g., major incident notifications, significant changes in department operations, comments, feedback, positive events) between the Department and community members. Examples of information-sharing methods include:

- (a) Community meetings.
- (b) Social media (see the Department Use of Social Media Policy).
- (c) Department website postings.

Information should be regularly refreshed, to inform and engage community members continuously.

### **342.8 LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS EDUCATION**

The community services officer should develop methods to educate community members on general law enforcement operations so they may understand the work that officers do to keep the community safe. Examples of educational methods include:

- (a) Development and distribution of informational cards/flyers.
- (b) Department website postings.
- (c) Presentations to driver education classes.
- (d) Instruction in schools.
- (e) Department ride-alongs (see the Ride-Alongs Policy).
- (f) Scenario/Simulation exercises with community member participation.
- (g) Youth internships at the Department.
- (h) Citizen academies.

Instructional information should include direction on how community members should interact with the police during enforcement or investigative contacts and how community members can make a complaint to the Department regarding alleged misconduct or inappropriate job performance by department members.

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### **342.9 SAFETY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Department members responsible for community relations activities should consider the safety of the community participants and, as much as reasonably practicable, should not allow them to be present in any location or situation that would jeopardize their safety.

Department members in charge of community relations events should ensure that participating community members have completed waiver forms before participation, if appropriate. A parent or guardian must complete the waiver form if the participating community member has not reached 18 years of age.

Community members are subject to a criminal history check before approval for participation in certain activities, such as citizen academies.

### **342.10 TRANSPARENCY**

The Department may periodically publish statistical data and analysis regarding the department's operations. The reports should not contain the names of officers, suspects, or case numbers.

### **342.11 TRAINING**

Subject to available resources, members should receive training related to this policy, including training on topics such as:

- (a) Effective social interaction and communication skills.
- (b) Cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity and relations.
- (c) Building community partnerships.
- (d) Community policing and problem-solving principles.
- (e) Enforcement actions and their effects on community relations.

Where practicable and appropriate, community members, especially those with relevant expertise, should be involved in the training to provide input from a community perspective.

### **342.12 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UNIT**

The Chief of Police may establish a Community Engagement Unit in order to build and maintain relationships and trust between the Department and community while leveraging the best practices in community outreach and community policing. Members of the Community Engagement Unit should:

- (a) Engage with residents, businesses, youth, seniors and community organizations;
- (b) Attend community events;
- (c) Participate in Community Policing outreach and education;
- (d) Identify and address current community concerns;
- (e) Convey information transmitted from citizens' organizations back to the agency for action or follow-up response; and

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- (f) Develop problem oriented or community policies strategies, as needed.