Proactive Police Practices

G. Michael Sanborn
BA, MBA, MS
603-543-7301
gmichaelsanborn@gmail.com
Purpose

• Support law enforcement agencies in the continued development of ethical and moral cultures
• Encourage citizen involvement
• Generally encourage respectful interactions for everyone
Credentials

• Grandparents’ influence
  • Religious principles

• High School Science

• College
  • Saint Michael’s College
  • Pepperdine University
  • Antioch University

• Commissioned Military Service

• Police Officer

• Corrections Officer

• Government Administration

• Science Teacher

• Published Author
Objectives

• Improve public perception

• Improve morale
  • Pride with high technical and ethical standards

• Organizational development
  • Adapt to changing mission in complex society

• Identify, avoid and address police misconduct
  • Supervision based on improvement
  • Discipline for development
  • Increase positivity and mindfulness
  • Reduce turnover
  • Encourage broader education
Reactive Practices

• After an incident
  • Debrief to improve operations or avoid a similar incident

• Public perceptions, distrust, and outcry
  • Incidents escalate with additional responding officers

• Internal investigation
  • Conducted with professionalism
  • Public distrust

• Other law enforcement agency investigation
  • Improves only when transparent

• Officer(s) reassigned, fired, arrested, prosecuted, jailed
  • Harmful to organization and profession

• Letters of Memoranda, Directives
  • Mostly counterproductive
  • Random, uncategorized

• Policy changes
  • Mostly ineffective

• Return to status quo
Indicators of Poor Morale

• Number of discipline reports
  • Reliance on discipline records is counter productive to morale
  • Purge discipline reports

• Sick leave

• Reporting to work late

• Level of enthusiasm

• Time on the beat, slow to start, breaks, early return

• Individual comments
  • That’s not my job.
  • I don’t get paid enough to...
  • Who cares?

• Selective transparency
  • A partial truth is a lie
Proactive

• Prevents unfavorable incidents
• Open internal communications
  • Apart from the chain of command
• Welcomed public involvement
• Continually evaluating policies and practices
  • Formal assessment procedure, by whom?
  • Are they being followed?
  • Are they effective?
  • Are there too many policies?
  • Solicit feedback
• Frequent assessment of organizational goals and operations
  • More than a mission statement
  • Identifies areas for improvement
  • Identifies areas of strengths
• Frequent assessment of individual performance
  • More informal than formal
  • No surprises
Training vs Education

• Training improves technical skills to do the job
  • The how to do something
  • Specialized police equipment
  • Specialized police practices and tactics
  • Distinguishes police from community

• Education seeks to understand concepts
  • How does it work?
  • Explains why we do things.
  • Increases understanding of culture, history, science, relationships, etc.
    • Addiction, treatment, and recovery
    • Mental health
  • Integrates community
Individual

- Accept personal responsibility
- Seek to improve skills
  - Physical fitness
  - Technical skills
  - Knowledge of police policy, procedure, and organizational goals
  - Communicating with the public
- Maintain superior ethics
  - Beyond your organization’s code of conduct
- Consult frequently with a mentor outside of the chain of command
- Recognize burnout
  - Self care
- Report organizational inconsistencies
- Report misconduct and follow up
Evaluating Credibility

• Objectivity (Facts) vs Subjectivity (Opinion)
  • Experience vs education, its practice and application
  • Training vs education

• Actions
  • Often contradict words

• Reports
  • Make facts clear
  • Call out suspicions, explain

• Testimony
  • Police relationship with the court

• New Hampshire’s Laurie’s List
  • Why it is necessary?
    • Credibility is the foundation of police work
  • How can an officer get to this point under proper supervision?
  • Remediation before and after listing
Supervision

• Direct observation
• Review submitted reports
  • Objectivity
  • Sufficient detail
  • Can someone who was not there understand what happened?
• Compare reports to body camera and other evidence
• Review with officer
• Monitor officer’s physical and emotional condition
  • Remember your own
• Avoid complacency
• Think critically about other perspectives
  • (leadership, overseers, governing body, public)
Organizational Evaluations

• Chain of command
  • Formal communications

• Formal and informal mentorships
  • Formally within the chain of command
  • Informally outside the chain of command

• Open door policies do not work
  • Go to them
  • Communicate where others feel comfortable

• Frequent, thorough, and critical evaluation of policies and procedures

• Formal and informal recognition of individuals and units/sections

• Seek public involvement
  • Perceptions improve with transparency
    • Reduces occurrences and unsubstantiated accusations of corruption
  • Mutual understanding of perspectives and motives
Recruiting Practices

- Application
- Exam
- References
- Work History
- Education
  - Minimum
- Interview
  - Ethics with police scenarios
  - Communicates organizational culture
  - Defines expectations
- Polygraph
  - Indicates stress

- What practices discourage competent applicants?
Preparation for Interview

• People cannot be reduced to a numerical value!
• Have a clear concept of your organizational objectives
• Interviewer, come out of your box
  • Instead of placing interviewee in your box
• What type of candidate will meet organizational objectives?
• Structure questions for diverse answers
  • Respect for different cultures
  • Empathy
  • Value of human life
  • Value of nonhuman life
Initiating Interview

• Selecting interviewers
  • Relationship within or to the organization
  • Credentials
  • Is your greatest credential the number of years on the job?
  • What do you bring to the organization besides years of service?

• Set a welcoming and relaxed tone
  • This is not a good time to assess how someone handles stress
    • Confuses interviewee
    • Discourages open communication
  • Consider how this relates to your organization’s public relations
    • Hiring practices impact public opinions

• The furniture arrangement sets a tone
• Agree on roles during the interview.
  • Each interviewer could be assessing a desired quality

• What will be the next stage in the hiring process?
  • What additional assessments follow this interview?
Interview Format

• Avoid police scenarios
  • Rookie applicants have no police experience

• Open ended questions
  • Tell me about a time when...
  • Describe a challenging situation and how you handled it

• Tell us about your ethical standards.

• What have you done for the community?
• What do you bring to our organization?
• What do you expect from our organization?
• How do you handle stress?
• How do you have fun?
• How competitive are you? Do you feel that you must always win?
• How does your family and friends feel about your decision to join our organization?
Mentor Program

• For rookies
• For probationary employees
• For disciplined employees
• For all employees
• Agent for change, improvement assumed
• To validate and assure individuals and the organization
• Objective feedback to leadership, overseeing officials, and the public
Mentoring Program

• Formal
  • FTO (Field Training Officer)
  • Chain of command
  • Performance evaluations and feedback
  • Identifies ongoing education and training needs

• Informal
  • Someone outside of the chain of the command but understands police work
  • Someone who can be trusted and be nonjudgmental
  • Be able to advise the mentee when right or wrong
  • Refer mentee for assistance
  • Encourage mentee’s reflection
  • Feedback to leadership
  • Advocate for organizational improvement
Summary

- Review and align policies and practices
- Routine assessments, individual, unit, and organizational
- Review personnel files
- Minimal discipline
  - Remediation, training, education counseling (professional and emotional)
  - Continually seek high ethical standards
- Identify organizational strengths
- Develop an organizational development plan
- Communications
  - Formal
  - Informal
    - More open, less structured
    - Avoid toxic rumors
  - Mentors
- Genuine transparency
“If You Always Do What You've Always Done, You'll Always Get What You've Always Got.”

Attributed to

Henry Ford
You can’t put a square peg in a round hold.

Unless you get a bigger hammer...

Damage to peg and hole