



# Ohio Collaborative Community- Police Advisory Board

February 23, 2021 Meeting Summary

The Ohio Collaborative Community Police Advisory Board (Collaborative) is a multidisciplinary group consisting of a diverse group of Ohioans including law enforcement, community members, elected officials, academia and the faith based community. The Collaborative was created by executive order 2015-04k on April 29, 2015, after the Governor's Task Force on Community Police Relations completed its work and produced a report with recommendations on how to improve the important relationship between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

The Collaborative is chaired by Assistant Director Karen Huey, Department of Public Safety. Members appointed by the Governor DeWine, including ex officio members, are identified below:

- Commissioner Lori Barreras— Chair of the Ohio Civil Rights Commission
- The Honorable Michael Bell – Former Mayor of Toledo
- Representative Juanita Brent – Ohio Representative
- Dr. Ronnie Dunn—Cleveland State University, Associate Professor of Urban Studies and Interim Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer
- Dr. Robin S. Engel—University of Cincinnati, Professor of Criminal Justice and Director of IACP/UC Center of Police Research and Policy
- Officer Anthony L. Johnson—Columbus Police Department and member, Fraternal Order of Police
- BCI Superintendent Joe Morbitzer— Ohio Attorney General's Office
- Reverend Walter S. Moss— Pastor and CIRV Project Director, Stark County Prosecutor's Office
- The Honorable Ronald J. O'Brien—Former Franklin County Prosecutor
- Chief Justin Páez—Dublin Police Department and member of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police
- Sheriff Rob Streck – Montgomery County Sheriff's Office and member of the Buckeye State Sheriff's Association

Ex officio members:

- Representative Phil Plummer – Ohio Representative
- The Honorable Tom Roberts—former Ohio Senator and President, Ohio Conference of Units of NAACP
- The late Honorable Louis Stokes— former member of Congress
- The late Honorable George V. Voinovich—former U.S. Senator, Governor of Ohio, and Mayor of Cleveland
- Senator Sandra Williams – Ohio Senator

The purpose of the Collaborative is to advise and work with the Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) at the Ohio Department of Public Safety to implement the Task Force's recommendations, as identified in the Executive Order.

## **February 23, 2021 Virtual Meeting of the Ohio Collaborative Community-Police Advisory Board**

Due to Coronavirus, the Ohio Collaborative meeting February 23, 2021 was again held virtually using Microsoft TEAMS Live. The following members were present at the meeting:

- Assistant Director Karen Huey, Chair
- Executive Director Karhlton Moore
- Commissioner Lori Barreras
- The Honorable Michael Bell
- Dr. Ronnie Dunn
- Dr. Robin S. Engel
- Officer Anthony Johnson
- BCI Supt Joe Morbitzer
- Rev. Walter Moss
- Chief Justin Páez
- Sheriff Rob Streck
- Rep. Phil Plummer
- The Honorable Tom Roberts
- Guest speaker: Sgt. Donald Scaff, Cincinnati Police Department

The meeting started at 10:09 A.M.

Assistant Director Huey welcomed everyone and stated that she is looking forward to continuing the discussion on our officer wellness standard.

Carol Ellensohn read the roll call.

Assistant Director Huey reported that DPS staff are very busy working on the budget. Budget testimony is today, and DPS is in both the transportation budget and general operating budget. She described the Governor's budget, which included significant criminal justice funding, and Executive Director Moore provided further detail.

- Body worn camera program: \$10M for equipment, storage, and/or program expansion.
- Violent crime: \$8M to address violent crime efforts. This includes an expansion of the Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center (ONIC), which works with Ohio's drug task forces. The ONIC is already in Columbus and Cleveland, and regional expansion would allow them to create centers in Cincinnati and Toledo. The ONIC is also expanding their focus beyond drugs to include violent crime/gun crime. Funding may be used to develop Crime Gun centers similar to that in Indianapolis. Also looking to fund evidence-based violence reduction programs.
- Ohio School Safety Center: Funding will provide liaisons to work with schools and SROs, and to further the school tip line. Legislation requires schools to have tip lines and the DPS tip line is free to schools if they wish to use it.
- Law Enforcement Recruitment Office: Funding will be used to expand the work of this group. They are interested in helping policing agencies find/hire more diverse candidates and identifying the 'right' candidates to go into policing. They are available to help agencies develop processes to recruit candidates.

Regarding potential funding for these efforts, OCJS has begun to reach out to key stakeholders for ideas on how best to use the funding, as well as how best to shape the RFPs.

Ed Burkhammer then spoke about the federal certification on use of force. In June 2020, a presidential Executive Order was issued that stated that use of force policies should be maintained nationally. OCJS took on this role. To date, we have certified 606 law enforcement agencies, including state and local departments and task forces. For the Collaborative certification process, we have over 500 certified agencies in the Group 1 standard, which consists of the Use of Force/Use of Deadly Force standard as well as the Recruitment and Hiring standard.

Ed also noted that the 2021 Law Enforcement Certification Public Report will be out at the end of March.

### Officer Wellness Standard

Dr. Robin Engel noted that we have been flirting with the idea of an officer wellness standard for nearly two years now, and she wanted to ensure that new collaborative members are aware of and have access to the information that has been provided on the topic.

Dr. Engel went on to discuss how very real this issue is. In the last five years, we have seen a 26% increase in assaults of officers. It is a dangerous job that can have a staggering impact on officers in the form of PTSD and suicide. It is important to understand the actual personal experience of officers who experience the trauma—not just after a critical incident, but the trauma that can also come from organizational stressors. She then introduced Sgt. Donald Scalf, a 22-year officer of the Cincinnati Police Department, to speak about the effects of trauma on officer wellness. She attested to his bravery in his willingness to speak to our group, and emphasized that Sgt. Scalf's experiences are unfortunately not unique to him, but are the experiences of so many officers today.

Sgt. Scalf provided a brief history of his time on the department, which included references to incidents that shaped his current struggles. He pointed out that officer wellness is not a one-department issue—it is an issue that impacts all departments statewide and nationwide and that it must be addressed. Officers deal with people on their worst days, and officers have to live with every radio call they respond to. Added to this is the civil unrest of late, in which officers are called murderers and are shouted at and spit upon. Sgt. Scalf said despite all of this, he loves his profession and he would sign up for it again. That being said, he notes that if he had sought help early on and continued to build on his mental health, he would be much better off. He states that he is partly at fault for not seeking treatment earlier, but he also notes how critical it is that agencies recognize their role in identifying those in distress and offering help. Sgt. Scalf provided details of the impact of critical incidents and agency response on his current state.

Board members were given the opportunity to provide comments and/or ask questions. Several members spoke up to thank him for his openness and honesty. They expressed gratitude for his courage and service, for his transparency in sharing the impact that his profession has had on him, and for raising awareness to such an important issue. Chief Páez noted that there is much to do to evolve this profession. Executive Director Moore also thanked him for providing the Board with a real world view for the work that they are trying to accomplish, and he also noted his appreciation for Sgt. Scalf's courage.

Executive Director Moore had a few questions for Sgt. Scalf.

- Much of the work of the Collaborative is focused on developing the relationship between law enforcement and the community. How do you interact with the public, while you are dealing with these issues yourself? *It is very difficult, if not impossible, when you are living past experiences in your brain. It is hard to work with the community, to protect yourself and others. You may not see that you have an issue, and you have to be told. You are always in that threat level 'red', and this is why therapy is needed to get out of that fight-or-flight mentality.*
- Is there a mandatory 'check-in' or something that takes the burden off of the officer to ask for help? Would this be helpful? *Our department does an excellent job at this. Administrative leave was offered, but it was not required. Officers know what they need to say to move on in therapy.*
- You indicated you left with a certain understanding [of how things would be], and when you came back it was different. It looks like a lot of stress doesn't come from outside trauma, but from the environment that you work in. What role did that play for you? *It played a very large role. I had the best assignment, the best cops in the country, but it was all taken away from me. I understand why they did what they did, but wish they would have done it differently.*
- What was the communication like during those 39 days? *They were giving me time to get myself fixed. They were also in contact with the city psychologist.*

Dr. Engel spoke about the need to consider officer resiliency skills. We need to start infusing resiliency skills as part of their initial training. Also, we know there are supervisors who have been in the field for a long time and who do not have the understanding or the willingness to talk about mental health and wellbeing, so there is stigma associated with these issues. We need to bridge that gap. There needs to be better training from the onset, including those who have been around for decades. Research shows that most of the stress comes from the organization. We neglect the ongoing long-term stress that builds within an organization. This Board can start outlining what better looks like by developing a standard on Officer Wellness.

Executive Director Moore asked about vicarious trauma—trauma felt by those who were not directly involved in a critical incident—and wondered if there is research on ways to deal with this. In our initial presentation in January 2020 with Commander Rhonda Grizzell, she noted that many officers go into law enforcement because they have already seen things that they want to be a part of fixing. Now they encounter such incidents and become re-traumatized.

Dr. Engel acknowledged that we focus directly on the impacted officers, but neglect those around them, who often don't know what to do. There are opportunities to look across disciplines at some of these matters—we don't have to focus only on law enforcement, as other professions have similar experiences. There is also some good work coming out of Canada that we can look into.

Assistant Director Huey remarked that these are all good points. She noted that OSP is looking into policy that builds into it regular mental health examinations, to which Dr. Engel reiterated that we need to reduce the stigma. She has been working with law enforcement for decades, and the profession needs to change to reduce stigma.

Lisa Shoaf then spoke to the Collaborative about elements to consider in developing a standard, based on literature reviews conducted by the Policy and Research section at OCJS. They include:

- Education of officers and executive-level staff on issues of mental health, to include suicide prevention
- Access to multiple resources for mental and physical support to officers and their families, such as:
  - Employee Assistance Program resources, such as in-house and/or external clinicians, and other wellness staff who have knowledge of the law enforcement experience
  - Peer support teams to augment (not replace) EAPs or in-house/external clinicians
  - Agency chaplains
  - Non-clinical interventions that promote physical and mental well-being, such as physical exercise, dietary guidance, mindfulness/meditation
- Availability of mental health support and resources to officers upon retirement or separation, and for a period of time thereafter.
- Awareness of organizational factors that can impact an officer's mental and physical health on a daily basis. Organizational climate and management techniques should be perceived by officers as fair, transparent, and supportive.
- Development of a Critical Incident Stress Management policy or procedures that should also address how the agency will assess the mental health status of an officer in the aftermath of an incident and for a period of time thereafter.
- If a peer support program is implemented, the policy should address several issues related to its implementation and operation.

Board members added:

- Consider ongoing resiliency training, which can include things like wellbeing, mindfulness training, and others. It should not just be offered at the beginning of an officer's career, but is an expectation throughout the career.
- The standard should highlight the importance of an element of confidentiality as part of policies as they put that in place. There is a stigma associated with needing help.

Executive Director Moore requested feedback from the Board by next Friday. He reiterated that wellness touches on mental and physical wellbeing, critical incidents and chronic stressors. We want to capture everyone's thoughts. This is one standard where we will take advantage of the commentary. Even if some of the elements we discuss are not a part of the overall standard, they can be included in the commentary to make agencies aware of everything they need to consider.

Dr. Engel let the Board know about the IACP Officer Safety and Wellness Symposium that takes place online March 17-19. Dr. Engel will be speaking on the impact of de-escalation on officer injuries.

Assistant Director Huey asked the Board if they have any more comments in general or specific to officer wellness. She is excited to see this standard move forward.

On a separate, but related topic, Dr. Engel asked if we know when the Governor plans to prioritize law enforcement for the Covid vaccine. Assistant Director Huey stated that our department brings this up to the Governor's staff and to the Ohio Department of Health often and is hopeful that in the next few weeks there will be a path forward for additional groups including law enforcement.

One idea that Assistant Director Huey was considering is whether it would be helpful for the Board to hear from the law enforcement recruitment team. It would also be an opportunity for the team to hear

from the collaborative community about thoughts on how to move forward. Chief Páez reported that he heard a presentation from the recruitment team, and that they are definitely trying to help and get people interested in law enforcement. They are a great group that puts on a good presentation.

Superintendent Morbitzer returned to the topic of officer stress, and asked if we invited the Department of Health to look into this. Steve Click is doing work on resiliency. Executive Director Moore responded that we have been in close touch with Mr. Click. He has agreed to look at the standard. Superintendent Morbitzer responded that no matter how you plan for this and how much you think you have it under control, when it happens, you are not prepared for it. Everything that has been said is right on the money. This needs to be more than academy training and being reactive. We need to be proactive and doing more. Executive Director Moore thanked Superintendent Morbitzer and welcomed his feedback.

Commissioner Barreras remarked that as part of her work on the Ohio Civil Rights Commission, she sees cases of officer discrimination, so she is glad to see we are looking at the officer recruitment and screening process. She is interested in understanding the factors that lead to a person being screened in or out. Executive Director Moore agreed that understanding this would be helpful, and noted that several sheriffs he has spoken to have also identified a few issues on this topic that we are going to look into. The lack of law enforcement candidates has been difficult. There is a special focus on women and minorities—people do not necessarily think of themselves in a law enforcement career. About 12.5% of law enforcement are women, and a lot of our research shows women are much better at de-escalation, have far fewer use of force incidents, and there are less costs on settling lawsuits. We would love to get input on things that can be helpful to our overall mission.

Mr. Bell referenced the usefulness of classes he has taken on implicit bias to help people understand that they may be carrying some sort of bias and not realize it. This is particularly important for people who have control over others to understand. Assistant Director Huey responded that he is “spot-on” with the need to continue the efforts for de-escalation and implicit bias training. These are important initiatives that help build trust between the community and police.

Assistant Director Huey concluded the meeting by letting everyone know how helpful the meeting on the officer wellness standard has been. She pointed out that we have been working on this a long time and we want to get it right. A draft will be distributed for feedback and edits, and the Board members are encouraged to respond.

The next meeting is May 25. Reach out if you need anything in the short term.

Thank you to Dr. Engel and to Sgt. Scalf. Sgt. Scalf’s testimony was very impactful.

Meeting ended 11:11.