

The BJA Executive Session on

Police Leadership

2018

The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership is a multi-year endeavor started in 2010 with the goal of developing innovative thinking that would help create police leaders uniquely qualified to meet the challenges of a changing public safety landscape.

In support of an integrated approach to creating safe and viable communities across America, the project directors recruited 20+ principals from a range of disciplines. The principals, in turn, led national field teams of practitioners focused on the work of policing and the organization of the future.

To gain new insights on leadership, the *BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership* engaged police chiefs in documenting their own paths and invited leaders to participate in various audio and video forums to tell their stories and discuss the future of policing and police leadership.

Please visit our website, www.bjaleader.org, to learn more about this project and to access a broad array of interactive, multimedia resources.

The principals are supported in their work by a team that includes project co-directors Darrel W. Stephens and Nancy McKeon, and BJA Senior Policy Advisor Steve Edwards.

What is Your Department Working On?

**The BJA Executive Session
on Police Leadership (ESPL) Meeting,
November 30 - December 1, 2017**

In the opening session of the ESPL meeting, the [participants](#) shared what their departments are focusing on. In this brief, we highlight two questions that emerge from the discussion:

1. Is The Culture of Outreach Growing?
2. How Will Body Cameras Change Policing?

For each question, we provide a link for sharing a comment or an activity your department is pursuing.

1: Is The Culture of Outreach Growing?

One important aspect of the discussion was the intensified focus on the long-term problems police face in dealing with homelessness and mental illness. Helping the homeless into social services and off the streets is meaningful and even rewarding work but it does require significant police time and resources.

It is with mental illness in particular that ESPL participants discussed the need for expanding the range of solutions. In Seattle,

Washington, for example, mental health calls average around 10,000 a year. “The support services are having trouble keeping up. It is a daunting challenge.”

One participant suggested that a paradigm shift was required in the way police deal with mental health crises.

Solutions begin internally by raising the level of crisis intervention training (CIT) for officers. The investment allows a crisis-trained resource to respond to urgent mental health calls.

Departments are reaching out externally to mental health resources and facilities. One department in California partnered with a local hospital that funded a full time nurse to assist officers with mental health calls on the street.

Arlington, Texas, has developed the Mental Health Law Liaison program that provides mental health professionals to respond with officers on critical incidents.

Such innovation is shifting the paradigm. Providers used to wait for the police to reach out to them, and now the police want the providers to take the lead in deploying resources to those who are in crisis.

Expanding the scope of outreach, several of the ESPL participants are leading or participating in countywide efforts to improve public safety and public health. Societal issues like homelessness, mental health, addiction and veterans’ affairs call for integrated approaches.

Using the term “wrap around policing,” one Chief explained the need this way:

Now there are countywide outreach teams. Community policing put the monkey on the back of law enforcement. There is a need for a county model that brings together services for juvenile outreach, mental health and homelessness. Working with the county on crisis mental health teams... This speaks to the police organization of the future.

The participants discussed two major challenges to expanding outreach: helping the public see the value of these programs and to monetizing the benefit. New services can be added to current homeless shelters or included in new facilities built on sites like old hotels with redevelopment funds. We know that, at first, the public may not want these programs housed in their neighborhoods and financial officials and investors may not see the long-term utility and value. However, outreach may be the future as a new public safety landscape takes shape.

[You are invited to share a related comment or an activity your department is pursuing here...](#)

2. How Will Body Cameras Change Policing?

The ESPL participants had a lively exchange about the effects of body cameras. The shared opinion seemed to be that the technology has the potential to fundamentally and positively change how law enforcement interacts with the community.

Body cameras will bring a big change in the investigation of use of force. Having video of the encounter will add a completely new level of information. Procedural justice can be integrated into use of force/defensive tactics training. Incidents can be reviewed and feedback incorporated into training models. Reviews of use of force encounters can determine if the tactics that are used in the field are consistent with what officers are taught in training.

The ESPL participants also discussed the extent to which body camera reviews will raise the role and accountability of supervisors. One person was prompted to suggest that lower levels of supervisors should have more access to attend executive trainings by PERF and other organizations.

In addition, body cameras offer the opportunity to review overall or aggregate incidents of use of force. Doing so would require even more additional time but expanded reviews could help preserve and provide assessments for lower level incidents before they boil over. Sometimes, little things can be done early to change the outcome of an incident. Most use of force incidents are deemed justified, but some may be avoided.

Some in the group suggested that more review and feedback might lead to increased discussion in training sessions. That suggestion led to an exchange about generational differences.

Participants agreed that open discussion and the personal vulnerability that comes with it has not been a cultural norm in policing. A few observed that younger generation officers are more willing to discuss vulnerability and are more open to talk than their older counterparts.

Such a cultural change would require commanders to make the environment more open to encourage non-blaming reviews of use of force. Participants agreed that this might be the biggest cultural change for policing.

[You are invited to share a related comment or an activity your department is pursuing here...](#)

BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership November 30-December 1, 2017 Participants

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Salisbury Police Department

Carmen Best
Deputy Chief
Seattle Police Department

Gail DePriest
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Shawn Hill
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