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## Community Relations

### 343.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

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

### 343.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Easton 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.

The Ten Guiding Principles of the Community Policing as identified by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing, include:

- (a) Crime Prevention is the responsibility of the total community.
- (b) The police and community share ownership, responsibility, and accountability for the prevention of crime.
- (c) Police effectiveness is a function of crime control, crime prevention, problem solving, community satisfaction, quality of life, and community engagement.
- (d) Mutual trust between the police and the community is essential for effective policing.
- (e) Crime prevention must be a flexible, long-term strategy in which the police and community collectively commit to resolving the complex and chronic causes of crime.
- (f) Community policing requires the knowledge, access, and mobilization of community resources.
- (g) Community Policing can only succeed when top management, police and government officials enthusiastically support its principles and tenets.
- (h) Community policing depends on decentralized, community-based participation in decision making.
- (i) Community policing allocates resources and services based on analysis, identification, and projection of patterns and trends, rather than incidents.
- (j) Community policing requires an investment in training with special attention to problem analysis and problem solving, facilitation, community organization, communication, mediation, and conflict resolution, resource identification and use, networking and linkages, and cross-cultural competency.

### 343.3 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.)

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- (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 relations coordinator to identify issues and solve problems related to community relations and public safety.
- (d) Conduct periodic foot and/or bicycle patrols of their assigned areas to facilitate interaction with community members. Officers carrying out foot patrols should notify an appropriate supervisor and Talbot 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 Talbot Center of their location and status during the foot patrol.

#### **343.4 COMMUNITY RELATIONS COORDINATOR**

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

- (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) Organizing surveys to measure the condition of the department's relationship with the community.
- (d) 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.
- (e) Working with the Patrol Commander to develop patrol deployment plans that allow officers the time to participate in community engagement and problem-solving activities.
- (f) Recognizing department and community members for exceptional work or performance in community relations efforts.
- (g) Attending Town council and other community meetings to obtain information on community relations needs.
- (h) 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.
- (i) Informing the Chief of Police and others of developments and needs related to the furtherance of the department's community relations goals, as appropriate.

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### **343.5 SURVEYS**

The community relations coordinator should arrange for a survey of community members and department members to be conducted at least annually 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.

### **343.6 COMMUNITY AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS**

The community relations coordinator 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.)
- (c) Youth leadership and life skills mentoring.
- (d) Conduct routine school patrols and visits, to facilitate interaction with youth.
- (e) Neighborhood Watch and crime prevention programs.

### **343.7 INFORMATION SHARING**

The community relations coordinator 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.

### **343.8 LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS EDUCATION**

The community relations coordinator 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.

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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.

### **343.9 SAFETY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS BEST PRACTICE**

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

### **343.10 TRANSPARENCY**

The Department should periodically publish statistical data and analysis regarding the department's operations. The reports should not contain the names of the officer, suspects or case numbers. The community relations coordinator should work with the community advisory committee to identify information that may increase transparency regarding department operations.

#### **343.10.1 POSTING**

The department should post department policies on the department website and the MPTSC website, as appropriate (Md. Code PS § 3-515.)

### **343.11 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.

### **343.12 OTHER STATE REQUIREMENTS**

The community relations coordinator should ensure that the department's community policing program is filed annually with the MPTSC by October 1st of each year (Md. Code PS § 3-517.) The department shall file the report utilizing the reporting format provided by the MPTSC.

Section I of the report will be completed with the agency's information and demographics on the population that the agency services.

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In Section II, the agency will provide a detailed description of its community policing program. The description shall incorporate within its program the Ten Guiding Principles of Community Policing identified by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing.

Community Policing Programs must be emailed to: [PCTC.CommunityPolicing@maryland.gov](mailto:PCTC.CommunityPolicing@maryland.gov)