

Seattle  
Community  
Police Commission

Our City. Our Safety. Our Police. **Better Together.**

March 13, 2014

VIA EMAIL

Merrick Bobb  
Federal Monitor

J. Michael Diaz  
U.S. Department of Justice

Peter Holmes  
Seattle City Attorney

**RE: CPC Recommendations Related to SPD Training Policies and Curricula**

Dear Monitor and Parties:

The Community Police Commission (CPC) formally adopted recommendations related to SPD training policies and curricula at its March 12, 2014 meeting. These recommendations are shown in Exhibit A below.

The CPC believes that new Seattle Police Department policies intended to support and improve practices in Constitutional policing are vitally important. However, their ultimate value depends on effective training.

A key area of focus in the second year of the Settlement Agreement is to develop and implement training curricula associated with new bias-free policing, stops and detentions, use of force and crisis intervention policies. The CPC was specifically charged with reviewing bias-free policing and stops and detentions training. Rather than review and comment on the details of particular training curricula, the CPC believes it can best contribute by highlighting principles that should be the basis of all SPD training practices and key elements critical to ensuring the Department's trainings and training program are effective, both in the short-term and over time.

Sincerely,



Lisa Dugaard, Co-Chair  
Community Police Commission



Diane Narasaki, Co-Chair  
Community Police Commission

Cc:  
Mayor Ed Murray  
Interim Chief of Police Harry Bailey  
Community Police Commission

## Exhibit A

### Training Recommendations

#### Community Views

The CPC's training recommendations were informed by the feedback it received from community members during its extensive outreach during the fall of 2013.

Many of the outreach participants belong to groups that have historically had difficult relations with the police. A very large majority of them told us that they believe the police do not treat people equally and demonstrate bias. They believe some people are treated unfairly and disrespectfully based on their group status and that police resort to use of force unnecessarily. Some thought the police fail to de-escalate situations because they do not listen or because they misuse their authority. Many of those with direct experience with SPD expressed negative comments, most often citing physical or verbal aggression, rudeness and disrespect, and discrimination.

These are the areas of concern specifically related to training that the CPC heard from participating community members during its outreach activities in the fall of 2013:

- All police officers must receive training that helps them understand the perspectives, values and norms of those from many cultures and backgrounds—members of different races and ethnic cultures, but also those who are immigrant, LGBT, youth, or have experienced homelessness or have disabilities including mental illness or issues with substance abuse. Police officers must also have training on how to interact with those who have limited English proficiency.
- The police must recognize that both their behavior and status can be intimidating. They need training that provides skills in making people more comfortable when interacting with officers.
- Officers must learn how to communicate well—to know how to explain in clear and understandable language and also how to listen.
- Because communication is difficult with those in crisis and those who are challenged by mental illness or substance abuse, it is vital that all officers have skills to effectively communicate and interact with these individuals. There must be universal and mandated crisis intervention training of officers.
- Training must teach officers what they are required to tell people (identify themselves, and explain what they are doing and why).
- Training in use of force and how to de-escalate situations must be mandated and universal; officers must be trained to always first apply de-escalation skills, and understand that treating people with respect is an important de-escalation tool.
- In the area of stops and detentions, officers must know what they are allowed to do; they must also be trained to tell people their rights and to appropriately respond to those who assert their rights.
- There must be periodic and regular re-training of all officers.
- Officers must have the ongoing support of mentors.

#### CPC Training Recommendations

The SPD policy changes regarding use of force, bias-free policing, and Terry stops and detentions were designed to address of the concerns expressed by the community. In the coming months, the SPD needs to adopt effective training curricula to implement these policy changes as well as to meet the community's needs for fair and respectful treatment by the police.

Broadly, the CPC recommendations fall into three areas: a) curricula fundamentals, b) the critical role of SPD leaders and supervisors, and c) system requirements to ensure success.

Many of the recommendations align with the views and suggestions offered by community members. The CPC recommends curricula fundamentals that support fairness, respect, and effective communication. It also agrees that all officers need training in de-escalation and handling crisis situations where individuals are under significant stress and sometimes impaired by mental illness or by drugs or alcohol. The CPC recommends the Department's leaders and supervisors actively and explicitly promote new policies by explaining the Department's rationale for the policy to sworn staff. All SPD staff members serving on the Department's training teams (professional and those who rotate through) must demonstrate knowledge and express support of new policies. Department leaders and supervisors must also support new policies by participating in training, documenting successful completion of training and mentoring officers to ensure a successful training program. Finally, CPC recommendations underscore the importance of having a proper system in place to support regular training and re-training of all officers.

In collaboration with SPD, the CPC will also be developing recommendations related to the training of SPD officers on cultural competency and implicit bias. Particularly in the area of cultural competency, there may be an opportunity for community entities to contribute to the Department's cultural competency curricula and training.

The CPC would welcome the opportunity to work with SPD and its Compliance Bureau in assessing the overall efficacy of the Department's training program, specifically in following the principles and incorporating the key elements outlined below.

❖ Guiding Principles and Key Elements of Training and the SPD Training Program

**A philosophy of Constitutional policing should be the foundation of all of SPD's training curricula.**

1. SPD should collaborate with the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission (WSCJTC) in its work to move from a "command-and-control" focus to a community caretaking and Constitutional policing philosophy in its training curricula. Rather than pursue a separate curricula, SPD should aid the WSCJTC in developing specific curricula appropriate for SPD and other urban police departments in Washington State. Doing so will also allow the WSCJTC to incorporate critical training objectives and elements developed by SPD under the Settlement Agreement, fostering a cost-effective and unified approach to setting high standards in police training of SPD and of officers from other police jurisdictions operating in Seattle.

**Effective communications and fairness should be fundamental in all of SPD's training curricula.**

2. Each of SPD's policy specific curricula should incorporate training to provide officers with skills in communicating effectively and treating the public with respect. Such training will teach officers the values of LEED and provide them the tools to listen and explain with equity and dignity:
  - Individuals should have an opportunity to tell their side of the story.
  - Officers should explain what they are doing, why and what's going to happen.
  - Officers should be fair and free of bias, and their actions should show that they have heard and considered what individuals have told them.
  - Officers should act with dignity and those they deal with should feel they have been treated with dignity.

**All officers should be trained to effectively respond to a range of critical incidents.**

3. Crisis intervention training should be required of all sworn officers of every rank. There may also be other training that is currently reserved for special units which the Department should provide all officers. Such cross-training could provide all officers with a broad overview and basic understanding of special considerations that may help them perform better. Canine, gang, high risk victim, narcotics and domestic violence are potential areas for cross-training. SPD should review these and other areas to identify opportunities for basic cross-training of all officers. Such cross-training will result in a more skilled police force overall, capable of handling the range of situations many officers must handle in the course of their regular work.

**Command staff commitment is essential to effective training.**

4. Rank and file officers will more likely accept revised policies and practices on which they are trained and follow required new standards if the command staff clearly demonstrates support. Not only should command staff articulate support, they also should receive the updated training and actively mentor those below them. The command staff must be committed to holding all SPD officers accountable for meeting the Department's new standards.

**Sergeants play a critical role in ensuring successful training.**

5. A fundamental responsibility of sergeant supervisors is to reinforce training and to provide officers with immediate, regular and ongoing support. This mentoring can help officers more quickly and thoroughly absorb what they have been taught about new policies and practices. Such support also includes ensuring that officer reports are accurate and complete. Because of their critical role, sergeants need to be rapidly trained so they are always current on the Department's policies and procedures.

**A performance management system is required to achieve effective training.**

6. The Department should assess and measure the effectiveness of its training programs. It should establish clear learning objectives for all curricula and methods for measuring training effectiveness (officers understand and absorb material and their field behavior is consistent with the policies and procedures they have been trained on). The Department should also issue reports on its training performance.
7. The Department should have in place mechanisms that:
  - Establish complete and regular training and refresher training schedules;
  - Track training schedules and officer training histories to ensure trainings are timely;
  - Verify officers receive training on new and updated policies and procedures, and periodically receive refresher training;
  - Ensure supervisors document attendance and successful completion of training;
  - Include documentation of successful completion of training in Performance Mentoring Program;
  - Provide supervisory and other forms of ongoing mentoring to officers;
  - Link officer performance and training records;
  - Capture data used to measure training effectiveness; and
  - Allow annual audits by the OPA Auditor or City Auditor of training effectiveness which, in addition to other measures, evaluates feedback on effectiveness from those who received training during the year (e.g. obtain and assess officer opinions, with provision for anonymous input, on how informative the training was, how well they understood it, and how easy it is to apply in the field).