

Fort Worth

2016 STATUS REPORT



FORT WORTH, TEXAS IS ONE OF SIX PILOT SITES FOR THE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

for Building Community Trust and Justice, a project to improve relationships and increase trust between communities and the criminal justice system and advance the public and scholarly understandings of the issues contributing to those relationships. In collaboration with the **U.S. Department of Justice**, the National Initiative is coordinated by the **National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College of Criminal Justice**, with partnership from the **Justice Collaboratory at Yale Law School**, the **Center for Policing Equity at John Jay College and UCLA**, and the **Urban Institute**.

The National Initiative's work involves trust-building interventions with police departments and communities based on three pillars:

- Enhancing **procedural justice**: the way police interact with the public, and how those interactions shape the public's views of the police, their willingness to obey the law, and their engagement in co-producing public safety in their neighborhoods.
- Reducing the impact of **implicit bias**: the automatic associations individuals make between groups of people and stereotypes about those groups, and the influence it has in policing.
- Fostering **reconciliation**: frank engagements between minority communities and law enforcement to address historical tensions, grievances, and misconceptions that contribute to mutual mistrust and misunderstanding and prevent police and communities from working together.

The National Initiative also regularly evaluates its interventions to determine effectiveness, and is committed to building and sharing a knowledge and practice base for communities everywhere.

Fort Worth was selected as a pilot site for its demonstrated willingness and capacity to engage in the National Initiative's research, intervention, and evaluation process, as well as its jurisdiction size, ethnic and religious composition, and population density. This status report describes the city's progress at the midpoint of the project's second year.

Enhancing Procedural Justice

The National Initiative and the Fort Worth Police Department have created a comprehensive, first-of-its-kind curriculum on procedural justice tailored specifically for Fort Worth.

All 1,600 sworn officers in the Fort Worth Police Department (FWPD) are currently undergoing this curriculum—which was developed with the Justice Collaboratory at Yale Law School—and will be equipped with the principles, understanding, and best practices necessary for procedurally just policing that emphasizes giving community members a voice, employing neutral decision-making grounded in transparency, demonstrating respect for citizens' rights and dignity, and increasing the police department's trustworthiness. Research shows that procedural justice can increase police legitimacy in the eyes of a community—regardless of whether police encounters end positively or negatively—and ultimately lead to greater public cooperation and compliance, increased safety, and reduced crime.

The curriculum features several modules that clearly define the concept of legitimacy and highlight ways to increase police legitimacy; define procedural justice and discuss its benefits, and tie back procedural justice practices to policing goals; review the present-day relationship between the police and the community; and help FWPD officers understand the role history—from the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 through the Civil Rights Movement—has played in hindering legitimacy in some communities.

It also features modules that thoroughly explore the real-life application of procedurally just policing principles and provides an in-depth package of discussion points, exercises, videos, and im-

ages that help officers recognize when, where, and how those principles should be applied.

The National Initiative team is working closely with departmental leadership to identify ways to institutionalize the curriculum into FWPD's Training Academy, and sustain it as a core part of FWPD's existing and future policies.

Reducing the Impact of Implicit Bias

As part of the National Initiative's work to address and reduce the impact of implicit bias, a new curriculum is being developed specifically for Fort Worth.

FWPD leadership and procedural justice trainers attended an extensive, three-day "train-the-trainer" program on the new curriculum, and the Center for Policing Equity is working with FWPD on a future rollout to ensure that law enforcement is aware of the many factors that go into rapid human decision making; understands how police officers can make better choices when conscious of the biases and stereotypes that exist in the world; and be mindful of the numerous challenges faced by police officers who actively try to reduce the effects of implicit bias.

Fostering Reconciliation

Over the past 18 months, the National Initiative has developed an exhaustive reconciliation process that draws out the many narratives underpinning mistrust on both sides of the police-community divide and builds a basis for informed, concrete policy and practice changes.

The process involves facilitated meetings between police department leadership and influential leaders from a variety of communities with histories of tension with the police. The meetings will

describe the process to the assembled community members; allow police leadership to publicly commit to the process of reconciliation and acknowledge the importance of overcoming the present state of mistrust; and offer community members an opportunity to respond.

Next steps would include meetings between officers from all levels of the department and residents of communities; a fact-finding report laying out the historical and experiential basis for tension; collecting and sharing narratives from police and community members on their perspectives and experiences relating to police-community trust; and the establishment of a collaborative body charged with reviewing police policies, practices, and norms to improve trust and legitimacy.

The National Initiative team will be working closely with FWPD leadership to begin on-the-ground reconciliation work in Fort Worth in the months ahead.

Enhancing Internal Procedural Justice

A primary focus of the National Initiative team and FWPD has been the development of “internal procedural justice”—structures and practices that lead to police officers believing that the department treats them fairly and respectfully—which is key to officers’ willingness and ability to incorporate the principles of procedural justice in their interactions with the public.

FWPD is working on this concept with other pilot sites via facilitated peer learning opportunities, as well as carefully considering and responding to feedback from officers who have participated in the National Initiative’s procedural justice curriculum.

As a result, new mechanisms for communication and responsive feedback have been developed between the command staff and all other levels of the department. This includes an internal email address for officers to directly contact Assistant Chiefs with concerns and questions, and new ways to responsibly share the outcomes of Internal Affairs investigations which can be a common source of speculation and miscommunication.

FWPD leadership and the National Initiative are continuing to explore other mechanisms for internal buy-in, sustainability, and transparency.

Ensuring Public Safety and Building Trust for All

The National Initiative team is designing and implementing trust-building interventions that address the following populations in Fort Worth: youth and victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

- The National Network for Safe Communities is working with FWPD to implement a Drug Market Intervention (DMI) designed to close down open-air drug markets and reduce associated violence and disorder, while reducing incarceration and strengthening relationships between police and the neighborhood. Unique among the National Initiative sites, the Fort Worth DMI features a tailored reconciliation framework with neighborhood-level police-community conversations to address the historical tensions, grievances, and misconceptions that contribute to mutual mistrust and prevent police and communities from working together.
- FWPD coordinates a Multicultural Committee, whose goal is to expose officers to minority

communities in non-adversarial, positive learning environments. Representatives from the African-American, Latino, Muslim, and others communities meet with police to help remove misconceptions and build the familiarity necessary for more effective and just policing. The Multicultural Committee also conducts trainings within the department.

- FWPD participates in a number of youth-oriented initiatives, including a First Offender/Family Matters program and a Juvenile Court seeking to divert youth responsible for low-level offenses. The program boasts a 79% success rate, with the record of offense deleted after completion of the program. As part of the National Initiative, an FWPD representative also recently attended a Crisis Intervention for Youth training, hosted by the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police, to learn best practices for interacting with adolescents who may suffer from mental health issues.
- FWPD has partnered with One Safe Place (Tarrant County Shelter) to serve victims of domestic violence by providing shelter, job training, and counseling resources. To supplement these efforts, a representative from FWPD's Family Violence Unit attended an International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) "Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Violence Against Women" training hosted by the Birmingham Police Academy, with plans to adapt some of the curriculum for Fort Worth.
- The department also convenes a Policy Advisory Committee to provide direct input into the development, and adjustment, of departmental

policy. The committee includes members of the community, and the National Initiative team is working with FWPD leadership to determine other ways to expand the committee's engagement with the public.

Creating a Baseline for Evaluation

In early 2016, the Urban Institute conducted a survey of residents in the Fort Worth communities most likely to have high levels of police contact and mistrust. The results confirmed that these communities have distrust and suspicion of law enforcement—but the results also demonstrated a significant willingness by residents to work with police to improve public safety, despite that divide. They also provide a baseline from which the National Initiative will build new, or further tailor existing, interventions in Fort Worth, and ultimately measure the impact of those interventions.

FWPD is working with the National Initiative team to publicize the community survey results within the department and to the public in ways that highlight common ground and set the tone for further action and partnership.

And as part of the National Initiative's evaluation efforts, the Justice Collaboratory at Yale Law School will publish reports and scholarly articles on the results of the interventions in Fort Worth and their effects on building community trust and justice.

Looking to the Future

With new curricula developed specifically for Fort Worth on enhancing procedural justice and reducing the impact of implicit bias; a police department with all of its sworn officers undergoing said curricula; a reconciliation process that will start

frank engagements between communities and law enforcement to address historical tensions, misconceptions, and mutual mistrust; development and implementation of further trust-building interventions that address a variety of special populations; and development of a baseline for evaluation, the fundamental aspects of the National Initiative's three pillars are well underway in Fort Worth, Texas.

The National Initiative commends FWPD's strong leadership and commitment to the project, which has been essential to the significant progress detailed in this status report.

Over the remainder of the project, the National Initiative will continue the rollout and institutionalization of its new curricula; raise public awareness of its activities and increase public engagement; measure the impact of its interventions; and develop partnerships with local researchers to address any research gaps identified by its work.

If you are interested in getting involved, or have suggestions, questions, or comments about the National Initiative, please reach out to us at info@trustandjustice.org or contact the National Initiative's Fort Worth Site Liaison, Assistant Chief Abdul Pridgen, at abdul.pridgen@fortworthtexas.gov or (817) 392-4231. We look forward to hearing from you.