

Strengthening Police and Community Partnerships (SPCP)

This report is a compilation of issues and recommended solutions developed
by leaders in in Lawrence, Kansas



Community Relations Service
United States Department of Justice

In cooperation with

Lawrence Police Department, Lawrence, Kansas

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Introduction

The United States Department of Justice (DOJ) Community Relations Service (CRS) was created by Title X of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. CRS assists state and local governments, private and public organizations, educational institutions, and community groups to resolve community-based conflicts stemming from issues related to race, color, and national origin. In 2009, with the passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act (HCPA), CRS's jurisdiction expanded to prevention of and response to violent hate crimes committed based on actual or perceived race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability. CRS's voluntary, confidential and impartial conflict resolution services aim to assist all parties involved in a conflict to improve communication, promote problem solving, improve collaboration and restore positive community relations.

As an agency that has a long history of working in police-community relations conflicts, CRS recognizes the value of facilitating dialogue that assists communities to identify issues and address conflict. This experience led CRS to create the community leader-driven, and police-community relations focused, issues identification and problem-solving process called "Strengthening Police and Community Partnerships" (SPCP). The SPCP process convenes law enforcement, diverse community leaders, ministerial leaders, and city officials to identify and analyze issues impacting the community, as well as to develop solutions they deem most appropriate to resolve these issues. The process applies principles of collaborative problem solving, and community empowerment and engagement to help address public safety and improve community relations.

This SPCP report reflects the issues identified by diverse community leaders and their recommended solutions. CRS's role in the SPCP process is to provide training and process expertise. Specifically, CRS provided: 1) facilitation training to volunteer facilitators; 2) and the issues identification and problem-solving methodology. Please note that all information contained in this report was recorded word-for-word from the notes (flip charts) generated during the small-group breakout sessions, and only minor edits were made to ensure clear understanding of the communication. The services provided by CRS are conducted in confidence and without publicity, and CRS shall hold confidential any information acquired in the regular performance of its duties upon the understanding that it would be so held.

Overview and Methodology

Lawrence is the county seat of Douglas County, Kansas, and the sixth-largest city in the state. It is in the northeastern sector of the state, astride Interstate 70, between the Kansas and Wakarusa Rivers. As of the 2022 census, the population of the city was 114,977. Lawrence, as well as Douglas County, are located within the Kansas City–Overland Park–Kansas City, Missouri Combined Statistical Area. Lawrence is a college town, home to both the University of Kansas main campus and Haskell Indian Nations University, one of the thirty-five accredited Tribal Colleges in the United States.

At the invitation of Lawrence, Kansas law enforcement leaders and city officials, CRS met with city/county leaders, diverse community leaders and others to identify potential services and resources to support the community. Following these meetings, it was agreed upon that CRS would convene a SPCP Planning Group comprised of law enforcement leaders, city/county officials, diverse community leaders, ministerial leaders, advocates, and other key community members. The planning group developed the SCPC process agenda and completed important logistical and planning tasks. CRS convened the SPCP Planning Group on May 30, 2024, June 6, 2024, June 7, 2024, June 20, 2024, June 27, 2024, July 12, 2024, July 18, 2024, and July 26, 2024.

Following the planning sessions, CRS provided facilitator training, on July 22, 2024, July 23, 2024, July 26, 2024, July 29, 2024 and August 2, 2024 to sixteen (16) facilitators: three (3) community/advocates volunteer leaders, two (2) city/local government leaders, three (3) representatives from the NAACP, two (2) representatives from higher education (2) representatives from the Lawrence Public Schools/USD 497 administration and teaching staff, two (2) employees of the Lawrence Police Department, and two (2) entrepreneurs/business leaders. The two-hour facilitation trainings provided volunteer facilitators with an overview of the SPCP process, including the process goals/objectives, facilitator roles, active listening, and process logistics.

On Saturday, July 27, 2024, and on the following Saturday, August 3, 2024, from 9:00 AM to 1:00 P.M., CRS facilitated a two-part SPCP process in Lawrence, Kansas at Lawrence High School, 1901 Louisiana Street, Lawrence, KS 66046. The SPCP process began with introductions of the facilitators and a “welcome” by the law enforcement leadership and community leaders. CRS regional staff provided a CRS 101(overview and history of the agency) and a description of the SPCP program and process. Approximately one hundred diverse leaders from various sectors in the community including K-12 and higher education, public safety, local government, elected officials, faith organizations and churches, community groups, neighborhood associations, victim advocacy organizations, and concerned citizen leaders took part in the process. Participants were placed in affinity groups during online registration or upon arrival.

The homogenous affinity groups, pre-selected by the SPCP Planning Group included law enforcement/public safety, education (including school board and PTA members), elected officials and government representatives, community/advocacy organizations, homeowner associations/concerned citizens, and the faith community including police chaplains. Community leaders were asked to begin the process with a brief icebreaker with the purpose of getting acquainted and building a sufficient level of comfort and trust. They

were then asked to identify strengths of the Lawrence, KS community, as well as areas of concern as it related to police/community relations. While in their breakout sessions, group members were asked to individually prioritize areas of concern using stickers (dots) which were counted to reflect the top three issues of concern to be carried back to the larger group.

After the Issue(s) Identification phase of the process, the individual breakout session concluded, and all parties reconvened into the full group in the atrium of the school. The individual affinity groups took turns reporting their top issues to the full assembly, providing the necessary clarification and allowance to answer refining questions from participants. The participants were then asked to vote on the issues most important to them (see votes below). Each participant was again given five (5) stickers (dots) to place their votes. Following the voting process, which resulted in the identification of priority issues, the CRS facilitation team thanked the groups for their work, stressed the importance of participants returning the following week to complete the solutions development/action plan phase of the process and adjourned the session.

On Saturday, August 3, 2024, the participants reconvened for the second phase of the SPCP at the Lawrence High School. While the previous week groups were identified and divided by affiliation, these groups were randomly divided into five groups to work on developing solutions and action plans. It is notable that two additional facilitator training sessions were held during the week preceding the second session, which included both new facilitators and several facilitators who wished to refresh their skills.

Working with facilitators, community leaders used a five-step problem solving process to develop solutions and action plans. At the end of the process the SPCP Council was introduced to the larger group. Several additional participants requested an opportunity to be considered for the Council based on emerging interest in the process of identifying solutions. The Council will meet in scheduled session(s) with the law enforcement officials to follow-up on the SPCP process and may implement solutions/action plans developed during process. The Council may also work on other problem areas should they arise.

Lawrence, KS Police Department
Strengthening Police Community Partnership (SPCP)
Saturday, July 27, 2024, 8:30 am to 1:00 pm
Lawrence High School, 1901 Louisiana Street, Lawrence, KS 66046
Session One Agenda

Saturday July 27, 2024

- 7:30 - 8:30 CRS Facilitators arrive early for prep/room set up
- 8:30 - 9:00 CRS and Small Group Facilitators Briefing
Participants arrive for Meet and Greet (coffee and pastries)
- 9:00 - 9:15 **General Assembly**
Welcome/Introductions of Law Enforcement/City Leaders
- 9:15 - 9:30 **Overview of SPCP Program – CRS**
 1. Acknowledgement Planning Committee
 2. Housekeeping/Rules of Engagement
 3. Overview of schedule and activities
 4. Introduction of Volunteer Facilitators
 5. SPCP Overview
- 9:30 - 9:45 **Session 1 group assignments & Breakout rooms**
- 9:45 - 10:00 **Disburse to Breakout rooms. (Bio Break)**
- 10:00 - 11:00 **Small Group Breakout Session I**
 1. Ice Breaker
 2. Ground rules
 3. Clarification of Process
 4. Issue identification
 5. Brainstorm Issues- improving trust between LPD and community
 6. Vote to Prioritize identified Issues.
 7. Identify Potential SPCP Council Volunteers
- 11:00 - 11:15 **BREAK**
- 11:15 - 12:15 **Large Group Report Out/Prioritization of Issues**
 1. Small group report out (#1)
 2. Large group prioritization of issues and voting
- 12:15 - 12:30 **Closing Remarks/ Invitation to Commit to Part 2 Next Week**
- 12:30 - 1:00 Debriefing: Planning Group, CRS, Small Group Facilitators

**Lawrence, KS Police Department
Strengthening Police Community Partnership (SPCP)**

**Saturday August 3, 2024, 8:30 am to 1:00 pm
Lawrence High School, 1901 Louisiana Street, Lawrence, KS 66046
Session Two Agenda**

Saturday, August 3, 2024

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 7:30 - 8:30 | CRS Facilitators arrive early for prep and room set up |
| 8:30 - 9:00 | CRS and Small Group Facilitators Briefing
Participants arrive for Meet and Greet (coffee, etc.) |
| 9:00 - 9:15 | General Assembly
Welcome/Introductions of Law Enforcement/City Leaders |
| 9:15 - 9:45 | CRS Overview <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Brief Review of the Previous Week's Work2. Instructions for the Next Steps |
| 9:45 - 10:00 | Disburse to Breakout rooms |
| 10:00 - 11:30 | Small Group Breakout Session II <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ice Breaker2. Ground rules3. Clarification of Process (if needed)4. Brainstorm how do we begin to implement the prioritized issues5. Brainstorm solutions6. Vote to Prioritize most impactful solutions. |
| 11:30 - 12:30 | Large Group Report Out <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Small group report out.2. Announcement of SPCP Council volunteers3. Next Steps |
| 12:30 - 12:45 | Closing <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introduction of SPIRIT advisory council representatives2. Evaluations/ Thank you for participation – Chief Rich Lockhart |
| 12:45 - 1:00 | Dismissal
Facilitators meet for quick debrief/evaluation. |

Step 1: Strengths

Groups were divided into six distinct groups: community/advocacy organizations, public safety/law enforcement, faith/neighborhood groups, victim advocates/concerned citizens/retirees, educational leaders, and civic/local government officials. The small group facilitators began the breakout session with introductions, ice breakers, and review of the ground rules, and worked with participants to identify the community's strengths and areas of concern. Facilitators then used guiding questions, developed by the SPCP Planning Group, to facilitate the group dialogue.

1. **What are current successes related to police-community partnerships and trust? What is working? Why?**
2. **What is a positive interaction you have had with law enforcement?**

Groups identified the following strengths:

GROUP Yellow: Community/Advocacy Organizations

- Police Leadership – Openness
- NAACP and other affinity groups are working with law enforcement
- Great leaders of color in the community working with police
- Chief Lockhart is open and willing to listen
- The organization Justice Matters is active
- Improvement in the city and county working together
- The Criminal Justice Coordinating Council is working
- The police use body cameras
- The police are involved in community events
- The school has input on who is selected to be their SRO
- There has been a return of the foot and bicycle patrol units

GROUP Blue: Public Safety/Law Enforcement

- Success in policing and community trust
- Downtown patrol, safety restored, comfortable
- Police on bikes makes community policing more friendly
- SRO program prevents problems from escalating, summer programs are great
- Departments investment in SRO budget indicates strengthening relations with community – also allows police officers to have personal relationship w/young community members
- Community being able to request private security, funeral escorts, & social events (police blend in aren't intimidating)

- Note- some people, depending on background, react to police department differently

GROUP Green: Faith Organizations/Neighborhood Groups

- Easy to go to the park (feel safe and not over surveilled)
- You know where you are (frame of reference)
- Inclusive group of employees (breath of fresh air)
- How positive and supportive people/community members are to law enforcement
- Haskell – How we integrate the culture in the community
- Cool Messages – handing out bags for those houseless – Bags of Hope

GROUP Red: Victim Advocates/Concerned Citizens/Retirees

- Compassion about personal issues
- Gives warnings during traffic stops/exercises discretion
- Positive SRO interactions
- Basketball camp
- Positive interactions

GROUP Orange: Educational and Civic Leaders

- To be involved-share ideas
- Children are a focus, celebrated at school (SRO presence)
- Great neighborhoods and neighborhood activities supported by LPD
- Friendly neighbors
- So many activities for diverse interests
- Governmental entities are involved in a lot of community issues
- Citizens participate and give feedback @ commission meetings
- Lots of opportunity to be/get involved in organizations and with issues
- A beautiful place
- LPD has good relationship with the faith community
- Community members feel heard
- Helpful interactions
- Family atmosphere in different groups and settings
- Police officers have ability/opportunity to be involved in the community in different ways: coach, parent, teacher, advisor
- Small town feeling means the impact can be developed and expanded- policing with a local perspective
- Quick response when needed

GROUP Purple: Local Government/Elected Officials

- They put themselves between humanity and the profession

- The expectations of officers are high which add a load to their job
- The SRO program
- They work hard to build an ongoing relationship with youth

Step 2: Issues Identification

The second set of questions focused on challenges or barriers impacting partnerships and trust.

1. **What are the current barriers to police-community partnerships and trust? What is not working? Why?**
2. **What barriers exist between law enforcement and the community that need to be addressed?**
3. **What do you feel is the state of the current relationship between the police and the community?**
4. **What issues exist that impact community and police relations?**

The following are areas of concern identified (Problem Identification):

GROUP #1 Yellow: Community/Advocacy Organizations

1. Lack of trust in law enforcement and the justice system - 12
2. General mental health of community members (especially youth)- 6
3. Community sends mixed messages of what we want from law enforcement (community doesn't feel safe – e.g., library and homeless- but then also questions/criticizes police when they act, we don't want to fill the jails, but we get upset over plea deals, compromise is difficult)-21

GROUP #2 Blue Public Safety/Law Enforcement

1. The need for a mental health team: mental health crisis/homeless issues aren't consistently being met (2 overall)
2. Police department's ability to respond and convey transparency (are community expectations met while respecting certain legal responsibilities) (6)
3. Dealing with police department's expectations: realistic versus not, while maintaining trust (3) (seventeen overall votes)
4. Diversity "more female officers – calls tend to go better, people of color – tend to go easier- are calls being met with a diverse police force? (4)

GROUP #3 Green: Faith Organizations/Neighborhood Groups

1. There is a general negative perception of police officers, even when there has not been a personal negative interaction – driven by social media (8)

2. They are being asked to do things that are beyond the traditional scope of police responsibilities like dealing with mental health, homeless and family crisis (9)
3. Police officers are a symbol of authority; some people don't respect authority, and are triggered by the police officer's uniform, which creates a psychological barrier such as fear, mistrust, disgust (18)

GROUP #4 Red: Victim Advocates/Concerned Citizens/Retirees

1. A sense of them vs Us (46)
2. A lack of cultural teaching, racial disparities and cultural differences amongst the police and community (24)
3. Lack of sensitivity or empathy during a crisis (4)
4. Lack of transparency between the police protocols and police policy (3)

GROUP #5 Orange: Educational and Civic Leaders

1. Homelessness – what is the behavior, what is the response? (5)
2. # of police personnel – stretched thin
3. Consistency of messages and how its delivered- hampers how officers respond
4. Decisions- who owns them- lack of accountability (1)

GROUP #6 Purple Local Government/Elected Officials

1. Burden of mental health and family interaction issues (3)
2. The impact of social media and the resulting perception of the police/law enforcement – even without interaction – social media (4)
3. Bullet proof vests, uniforms, etc. causes psychological barriers/sense of threat (3)
4. Police are viewed as a symbol of authority- some people in society don't respect or trust authority (3)

Step 3: SPCP Council Selection and Issues Identification Small Group Report Outs

Following the Issues Identification phase, facilitators asked each small group to select two community leaders to participate on the SPCP Council, along with two community leaders to act as alternates. The small groups reconvened into the large, general session group. Each group, represented by the newly selected SPCP Council members, gave a short presentation on their identified strengths and issues/areas of concern.

Step 4: Voting and Prioritization

After the small group report outs, each participant received five dots. Facilitators asked participants to place dot by the issues most important to them and discouraged them from placing all five of their dots on one issue. The issues were then consolidated and prioritized based on participant votes. The following are the consolidated votes by community leaders:

Issue/Area of Concern	Number of Votes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Them versus Us” (both community and LPD can demonstrate this attitude) 	46
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for transparency/accountability (protocols and policy) 	35
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively addressing mental health calls (how to deal with emotionally dysregulated populations) 	31
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural inclusivity and understanding can be lacking (include gender, age) 	28
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police as authority figures (bullet proof vests, uniforms) symbols that trigger 	24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community sends the police mixed messages 	21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative impact of social media on police/community relations/messaging 	17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LPD is ineffective in the area of crisis management when working with the community (police lack empathy and respect) 	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Houselessness/effectively managing public spaces (how to maintain order in a respectful manner) 	11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing challenges 	5

Step 5: Problem Solving and Solution Development

The next week’s session occurred on Saturday, August 3, 2023. Community leaders reconvened for the purpose of developing solutions for the core issues identified by participant votes the previous week. Participants randomly divided by a “count off” from one to five resulting in five distinct groups. During this phase community leaders utilized the five-step problem solving process to develop solutions and action plans.

The five-step problem-solving method

1. Identify the problem
2. Brainstorm possible solutions
3. Pick the best solution(s)
4. Develop a plan of action and implement the solution
5. Follow-up on the success of the implementation

Facilitators used guiding questions, developed by the Planning Group, to facilitate the group dialogue.

1. What can the police and community do together to address these barriers?
2. What needs to change?
2. How can we strengthen police and community partnerships?
3. How can we improve communication with the community and police department?
4. How can we improve trust between the community and police department?

Community leaders developed the following solutions:

GROUP #1

Issue/Barrier One: Them Vs. Us (Both community and LPD can exhibit this attitude)

Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Training and Engagement (11) • Policies and Procedures written by the community (16) • Community and Law Enforcement Review Annual Training Together (11) • Empathy (put yourself in another’s shoes)

Issue/Barrier Two: Staffing Challenges

Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a secondary career pathway /immersion for youth (11) • Dispatch challenges (education and training and transparency is needed) (3) • Increase community interactions at events (officer role modeling) (3) • Officers need to be role models in and out of uniform • Police management needs to re-evaluate policing • Budget – redistribute funds to address dispatch challenges

GROUP #2

Issue/Barrier Three: The need for transparency/ Accountability (especially as it pertains to protocols and procedures)

Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put a community step into policy changes- formally include the community in the process (29) • When sharing information, respect victim’s desire for privacy and transparency (3)

- Police should have regular information sessions with non-profit and advocacy organizations in Lawrence, KS (7)

Issue/Barrier Four: Effectively addressing mental health concerns and calls (How do we/LPD work with emotionally dysregulated populations.

Solutions

- Effective and comprehensive partnering with agencies (18)
- Give residents and community members grace (2)
- Established an agreed upon code of ethics (18)
- Additional training for sworn and support staff (7)

GROUP #3

Issue/Barrier Five: Cultural inclusivity and understanding can be lacking (includes gender, age, religion, etc.)

Solutions

- Training for desired behavior and incentives for positive interactions. (12)
- Police department needs to be more transparent regarding statistics on policing and its own demographics and efforts to match the community (7)
- Align community standards with PD's – don't measure success in tickets! (7)
- Be conscious and thoughtful, logical in police officer's assignments. Some officers do better than others in certain situations and special duties. (3)

Issue/Barrier Six: Police as authority figures (bullet proof vests, uniforms) symbols that trigger.

Solutions

- Education provided to the community as to why the police wear uniforms (consider changing the color of the uniforms, the style of the uniforms) (5)
- Better association and engagement with the community is needed. Via recreational, volunteering, community service, while being aware of your audience (7)
- Hold culturally relevant, programs, events, and celebrations (example- Blue Santa, but this is not culturally inclusive, you need other events too., have more than Juneteenth and Pride.) (20)
- More exposure, integration, and accessibility (5)
- Everyday lives
- More positive interaction needed
- Follow-up and feedback concerning a crime (advocates, chaplains and other resources needed) (25)

- Creating meaningful and genuine relations with the community (3)

GROUP #4

Issue/Barrier Seven: Dealing with Crisis Management (at crime scenes and in public police can appear to lack empathy and respect)

Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More exposure, integration and accessibility community members in various situations (5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Everyday lives ▪ More positive interaction needed • Follow-up and feedback concerning a crime (advocates, chaplains and other resources needed) (25) • Creating meaningful and genuine relations with the community (3)

Issue/Barrier Eight: The community sends the police mixed messages

Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systemic change/approach (adequate) (11) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Well communicated policies and procedures are needed ○ Unified messaging ○ Community response group needed, not making decisions in a vacuum • Unified strategic plan for the city and the county (isn't that the Criminal justice coordinating council, or no?) • Police need to show up in non-enforcement roles (28) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teen academy ○ Academy for adults ○ Making police assessable (program centered) ○ Evaluating the current recruitment strategy

GROUP # Five

Issue/Barrier Nine: The negative impact on social media on police/community relations (messaging)

Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More positive engagement along with the promotion of it on social media (3) • Promote responsible consumption of social media and how to be discerning/critical of what you read. (11) • The need to distinguish between national narratives on policing and law enforcement and what the LPD is doing (22)

Issue/Barrier Ten: Houselessness and effectively managing public spaces

Solution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The community can't blame this on the police without first checking their own biases (28) • We need actual data about the problem, crime versus perception (32) • The police need to communicate their role regarding the unhoused, so the community understands the police role (17)

Step 6: Solution Development Small Group Report Outs

Following the Solution Development phase, the small the groups again re-convened into the large, general session group. Each group gave a short presentation on their specific recommendations and implementation strategies to address the issues identified.

Step 7: SPCP Council

The process ended with positive exchanges between all participants. Lawrence, Kansas leadership introduced the newly created SPCP Council, including alternates, and committed to follow-up meetings and implementation of several solutions developed by the community leaders. Community leaders and SPCP Council members will utilize steps four and five of the recommended “Five-Step Problem Solving Process” i.e., developing a “plan of action” to maximize success and solution implementation. (The asterisk denotes participants willing to serve as alternates.)

SPCP Council Member Volunteers	
Group #1	Doris Ricks, Brooke Miller, Andrew Dalager, Rita Rials
Group #2	Debarre Johnson, Farris Muhammad, Deb Engstrom*
Group #3	Janine Colter, Cori Wallace, Karen Warner*
Group #4	Laticia Gradington, Mike Garnett, Ursela Minor*
Group #5	Antonique Fleming, Rebecca Murphy, Brittany Hall, Michael Machell

*Alternate members

Step 7: Resources and Next Steps

If requested by community leaders, CRS will provide additional resources and will provide facilitation services to the SPCP Council and city/county leadership during the action planning sessions and subsequent community convenings.

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