

Santa Cruz County Regional Public Safety Agency Policy Review and Analysis: Improving Community Safety, Transparency and Trust

Overview – Santa Cruz County public safety agencies completed the first regional comparative review of use-of-force, technology and privacy policies and procedures in the country.

Challenge – Under the backdrop of a national conversation about police policies and procedures, local communities are grappling with questions about law enforcement response, funding and transparency. Calls for greater community involvement in police policies and improved transparency and trust around law enforcement actions have increased. Yet, no comparative regional review of law enforcement policies and procedures - in particular around use-of-force, technology, oversight and privacy had been conducted.

Solution – Law enforcement policies provide the foundation – the rules and standards - by which agencies operate. Good policies go beyond this foundation and provide a framework for officer decision making in critical situations and build transparency and trust within the community. Under the backdrop of a national conversation about police policies and procedures this report - believed to be the first regional comparative review in the country - provides a comparative snapshot of key policies and procedures in Santa Cruz County law enforcement agencies. The purpose of the report is to see where there is alignment, where there are gaps and where there are opportunities to improve in regards to use-of-force, technology and privacy policies.

The review was conducted by the Criminal Justice Council (CJC) - which was formed over 30 years ago in an effort to provide a more effective criminal justice system for the residents of Santa Cruz County. The CJC has a diverse membership that includes leaders from the Board of Supervisors and local City Councils, all of the Chiefs of Police and the Sheriff, the District Attorney and Chief Probation Officer, the Public Defender, the County Superintendent of Schools, the President of

Cabrillo College, the Superior Court, the County Behavioral Health Director and local non-profit leaders. This analysis provided a transparent look at law enforcement policies and provide a starting point for evaluation by local law enforcement, elected leaders and the communities they serve. All local agencies participated voluntarily, openly, and transparently to provide this information.

Innovation - In conversations with the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the White House it is believed that this is the first-ever regional comparative review of law enforcement policies and procedures (in these key focus areas) conducted in the country.

Results – Following the release, every individual jurisdiction considered the report individually. As a result of this review, multiple agencies updated and modernized their policies regarding use-of-force, technology, oversight and privacy. Departments created independent oversight and review mechanisms, adopted modern policies that improved community transparency, updated policies surrounding training and use-of-force processes and held community-based discussions with their elected bodies and greater community on ways to improve and align procedures across the county. The effort received widespread coverage in local press, helping foster greater community awareness around these important accountability efforts.

Replicability – The County's regional review of policies and procedures is highly replicable. The report (included in the additional materials section) provides the blueprint for conducting a county's own review of use-of-force and other law enforcement policies and procedures.

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Additional Materials – Link to the report is below:

http://santacruzjc.org/meetingdocs/CJC_FINAL_111821.pdf