

Community Relations

339.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Best Practice

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

Additional guidance on community relations and outreach is provided in other policies, including the:

- Hate Crimes Policy.
- Limited English Proficiency Services Policy.
- Communications with Persons with Disabilities Policy.
- Chaplains Policy.
- Patrol Policy.
- Suspicious Activity Reporting Policy.

339.2 POLICY

Best Practice NYSLEAP- 8.7 - 29.1

It is the policy of the Syracuse 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.

339.3 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Best Practice NY_CALEA6.13 - 45.1.2 (e) NYSLEAP- 8.7 - 29.1 (B)

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).
- (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 patrols of their assigned areas to facilitate interaction with community members. Officers carrying out foot patrols should notify an appropriate supervisor and Onondaga County 911 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 Onondaga County 911 Center of their location and status during the foot patrol.

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339.4 COMMUNITY RELATIONS COORDINATOR

Best Practice **MODIFIED** NY_CALEA6.13 - 45.1.1 (a), 45.1.2 (a) NYSLEAP- 8.7 - 29.1 (A)

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 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 Uniform Commanding Officer 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 City 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.

[See procedure for COMMUNITY RELATIONS RESPONSIBILITIES](#)

[See procedure for COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN](#)

[See procedure for COMMUNITY RELATIONS SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES](#)

339.5 SURVEYS

Best Practice **MODIFIED** NY_CALEA6.13 - 45.2.2 (a), 45.2.2 (b), 45.2.2 (c), 45.2.2 (d), 45.2.2 (f)

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:

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- (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
- (f) Citizens' recommendations and suggestions for improvement.

A written summary of the compiled results of the survey should be provided to the Chief of Police.

339.6 COMMUNITY AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

Best Practice **MODIFIED** NY_CALEA6.13 - 44.1.1, 44.2.5 NYSLEAP- 8.7 - 29.3

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) School resource officer.
- (e) Neighborhood Watch.
- (f) Traffic and bicycle safety education.
- (g) Senior citizen identification and safety.
- (h) Department tours.
- (i) Crime resistance programs.
- (j) Drug and alcohol awareness programs.
- (k) Public speaking engagements.
- (l) Civilian rider programs.
- (m) Officer friendly.
- (n) Crime victim/witness assistance program.
- (o) Community Storefronts.
- (p) Community event displays and demonstrations.

339.7 INFORMATION SHARING

Best Practice NY_CALEA6.13 - 45.1.2 (d)

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)

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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.

339.8 LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS EDUCATION

Best Practice **MODIFIED**

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. Examples of educational methods include:

- (a) Development and distribution of informational cards/flyers.
- (b) Department website postings.
- (c) Presentations to driver education classes.
- (d) Instruction in schools.
- (e) Department ride-alongs (see the Ride-Alongs Policy).
- (f) Scenario/Simulation exercises with community member participation.
- (g) Youth internships at the Department.
- (h) Citizen academies.

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.

[See procedure for REQUEST FOR DEPARTMENT SPEAKER](#)

339.9 SAFETY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Best Practice **MODIFIED**

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

Community members are subject to a criminal history check before approval for participation in certain activities, such as citizen academies.

339.10 COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Best Practice **MODIFIED** NY_CALEA6.13 - 44.1.2, 45.1.1 (b), 45.1.2 (b), 45.2.1 (a), 45.2.1 (b), 45.2.1 (c)

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The Chief of Police should establish a committee of volunteers consisting of community members, community leaders and other community stakeholders (e.g., representatives from schools, churches, businesses, social service organizations). The makeup of the committee should reflect the demographics of the community as much as practicable.

The committee should convene regularly to:

- (a) Provide a public forum for gathering information about public safety concerns in the community.
- (b) Work with the Department to develop strategies to solve public safety problems.
- (c) Generate plans for improving the relationship between the Department and the community.
- (d) Participate in community outreach to solicit input from community members, including youth from the community.

The Community Relations Coordinator should arrange for initial and ongoing training for committee members on topics relevant to their responsibilities.

The Community Relations Coordinator should develop modules of training related to the Department's policy and procedures for Community Training Events.

The Chief of Police may include the committee in the evaluation and development of department policies and procedures and may ask them to review certain personnel complaints for the purpose of providing recommendations regarding supervisory, training or other issues as appropriate.

339.10.1 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Best Practice

The Chief of Police and the community relations coordinator should work with the City Attorney as appropriate to ensure the committee complies with any legal requirements such as public notices, records maintenance and any other associated obligations or procedures.

339.11 TRANSPARENCY

Best Practice

NY_CALEA6.13 - 45.1.2 (c), 45.1.2 (d)

The Department should periodically publish statistical data and analysis regarding the department's operations. The reports should not contain the names of 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.

339.12 TRAINING

Best Practice

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.

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- (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.