

CONCERNED CITIZENS FOR JUSTICE

IMPROVING THE CLIMATE OF RESPECT BETWEEN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE COMMUNITY

Concerned Citizens for Justice formed in the spring of 2017 out of a shared concern about officer-involved shooting deaths in our community. We advocate for urgent solutions in practices and policies to shift local policing for the benefit for our community. In spite of efforts by Chico Police Department toward community policing and increased collaboration with Butte County Behavioral Health, there is great need for improvement in law enforcement practices that amount to a change in police culture. Below are Focus Points that we see as priorities for Chico Police Department to enhance quality of life and safety in our community, and to save lives.

A VISION FOR OUR COMMUNITY:

DE-ESCALATION MUST BECOME NORMAL PRACTICE

The goal of policing in response to crisis situations should be de-escalation. This means officers take time to evaluate and respond appropriately to an individual's erratic actions, whether due to health challenges, trauma or any other reason. We expect law enforcement to make every effort to prevent injury, even in challenging situations. Giving our police the tools to do this requires ongoing education and training.

TRAINING IN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CRISIS INTERVENTION AND AVOIDANCE OF IMPLICIT BIAS IS ESSENTIAL

Comprehensive training in behavioral health crisis de-escalation will allow police officers and other first responders, including 911 dispatchers, to respond appropriately to individuals in crisis. Such training should foster a culture of collaboration between the police, mental health professionals, social services and/or family members, with the goal of a more peaceful resolution of each crisis.

It is essential that 911 dispatchers send the appropriate resources to every call. Because bias against certain groups is inherent in our culture and influences even people who are not aware of it, *all* first responders and law enforcement staff must receive comprehensive diversity/implicit bias training. Local police must ensure that incidents of disparate treatment are addressed so that all community members are treated with the same level of dignity and respect.



EXPANDING COMMUNITY-ORIENTED POLICING

Community-oriented policing is a proactive approach to public safety in which police work closely with all sectors of our community. Collaboration is the foundation of community policing. Mutual non-combative communication between local police and all people living in our community will create relationships based on respect, in which police and citizens identify and solve community problems as partners.

DEMILITARIZING OF LOCAL POLICE

Police work depends on trust and respect. When police officers are armed like combat troops they diminish relationships and intimidate citizens. Law enforcement may underestimate the impact of militarized images of themselves. Before the police accept military equipment, from any agency, they must first receive authorization from local elected officials, e.g., City Council, Board of Supervisors. The matter must also be open to the public for comment. A less threatening image will help foster positive interactions between law enforcement and the community and will result in increased public trust and public safety. First and foremost we would like our police officers to serve as guardians rather than warriors.



SUPPORT AND CARE FOR OFFICERS

Our police are essential. We know that police work can be both dangerous and stressful and that first responders have higher levels of post-traumatic stress than the general public. Therefore, full mental health support must be available for officers and first responders whenever needed, and encouraged following any severe crisis situation. Counseling must be mandatory following discharge of a weapon or any use-of-force incident to ensure the mental health of the officer and the safety of the public. Law enforcement personnel involved in use- of-force incidents must live with the consequences of their actions; thus addressing such situations with adequate therapeutic intervention is imperative.

CITIZEN OVERSIGHT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Improvement of our police department requires citizen oversight. An independent, impartial citizen board with the authority to review all police files is essential. As in other cities, this board will review incidents of police use of force. They will hear citizen complaints, recommend disciplinary action when necessary and assess and recommend improvements to police policy. The board will operate transparently and issue its findings publicly. Its members will reflect the diversity of our community. Members of the Board may be appointed by elected officials or elected directly by the voters.

These changes will create a culture within the police department that values the dignity of all citizens and works to preserve human life.

Concerned Citizens for Justice

chicocitizens4justice@gmail.com

March, 2021