

Sonoma County Grand Jury 1997-1998 Final Report Findings and Conclusions

Findings

LF1. Most departments are recruiting from the same pools resulting in women being under represented in most departments and not reflecting the population served.

LF2. Most departments are recruiting from the same pools resulting in minorities being under represented in most departments and not reflecting the population served.

LF3. There is a growing Hispanic community in Sonoma County. In all departments there are few sworn staff who are proficient in Spanish.

LF4. All departments could benefit from an increase in sworn staff.

LF5. Most departments have a staff turnover rate of 5% or less.

LF6. All departments have greatly expanded their training programs over and above the state required 24 hours every two years.

LF7. All departments have special programs to serve the community within their jurisdiction. Such programs include Explorers, DARE, Adopt-A-Cop, Neighborhood Watch, Lunch With A Cop, and MAGNET.

LF8. All departments have outreach programs to their communities such as town hall meetings, community block programs through Parks & Recreation, scholarships for underprivileged youth programs, after school activities, youth partnerships, ham radio operations and vacation house watch.

LF9. Most departments feel it is vital to educate the public about police operations, policies and procedures through such programs as Citizen's Academies and college courses taught by several chiefs and members of department staffs.

LF10. All departments have citizen complaint forms for grievances against police officers available to the public. However, in some jurisdictions, citizens complaint forms are not readily accessible in locations other than the police departments.

LF11. Most departments do not log oral citizen complaints, and therefore these complaints are neither documented nor tracked through the system.

LF12. Most departments keep the complainant informed in writing as to the investigation's progress and its final disposition. However, some departments were lacking in aspects of the follow-up to complainant and do not fulfill their own written procedures.

LF13. While community policing has been a long-time policy in many departments, it is receiving growing emphasis in all departments. Community Orientated Policing & Problem Solving ("COPPS") goals include creating a multi-disciplinary approach to developing trusting relationships with citizens, fostering community partnerships, and improving citizen understanding of and satisfaction with police services. Other goals concern developing lasting solutions to ongoing community problems and working with all segments of the community,

recognizing that cultural diversity gives the community strength. High priority is given to creating a work environment that is driven primarily by values rather than rules, encouraging innovative thinking and problem solving and working proactively to solve crime and safety problems within the community using means such as education and prevention when possible.

LF14. Grant writing is an important part of each department's business. Most departments do their own grant writing to procure funds for special programs.

LF15. The Sonoma County Law Enforcement Chiefs Association fosters discussion and solution of mutual problems, coordinates activities of departments in the interest of justice and increased efficiency, and develops and adopts uniform policies and protocols among the departments. The Association evaluates, promotes and coordinates courses of instruction for the benefit of department officers, works to promote a better understanding of the problems of administration of justice and law enforcement and fosters continuing productive relationships among the Association members and their organizations.

LF16. Some departments do not provide timely and complete information to the public concerning serious incidents involving sworn officers. The handling of recent incidents indicates that timely and full disclosure of such information increases public confidence in the integrity of the incident investigation and the department involved.

LF17. Most departments have a favorable opinion toward a civilian advisory board to provide initial input into budget and policy issues.

LF18. Most departments do not favor a civilian review board which reviews police conduct after serious incidents occur.

LF 19. All law enforcement departments are under the control of civilian authorities. The Board of Supervisors, city and town managers and city and town councils have been conspicuously silent in taking a leading role in the closing of the perceived communication gap between the citizenry and law enforcement.

Conclusions

1. All departments are not doing enough to recruit women and minorities.
2. The insufficient number of Spanish speaking sworn officers in all departments inhibits a closer relationship between the department and the Hispanic community.
3. An increase in sworn staff to support the areas of domestic violence, homelessness, juvenile diversion, gang activity and community policing would be beneficial.
4. Although training is expensive and takes officers temporarily off the duty roster, expanded training in areas such as use of force, management of assaultive behavior, cultural diversity and defensive tactics would be most beneficial.
5. Special programs and outreach programs, such as those described in LP7, LF8 and LF9, enhance community relations.
6. Improvements in the civilian complaint process are needed.
7. Increased emphasis on the implementation of community policing should continue.
8. Because grant writing is an important function in regard to special program funding, the creation of a Grant Writer position shared by all county law enforcement departments is needed

and would be an effective way of increasing the possibility of acquiring funds for special programs.

9. The Sonoma County Law Enforcement Chiefs Association is beneficial and provides a vehicle for the promotion of consistency and sharing of policies and ideas among the departments.

10. The dissemination of information as to timeliness and content relating to serious incidents involving sworn officers needs to be improved.

11. Greater citizen input and oversight is necessary in the operation of all departments as noted in LF17, LF18 and LF19.