



10 Ways Community Members Can Engage with Law Enforcement

EXCERPTED FROM THE IACP BLOG 8/13/2020

One of the most important aspects of effective policing is community engagement. In order to build trust and respect, collaboration of police with the community and the community with police is essential. The following are 10 great ways community members can engage with their local law enforcement agencies. Just keep in mind “It’s hard to trust those you don’t know”. Getting to know your police department will help build much needed trust.

Volunteer

Volunteer Citizen: Volunteers help supplement and support officers and civilian personnel in many ways.

Roles for volunteers may include: performing clerical tasks, assisting with search and rescue activities, writing citations for accessible parking violations, code enforcement, patrolling to provide additional police visibility, reporting graffiti and other quality of life issues, and helping with property and equipment inventories.

SERVE ON A CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD

Many Police departments have citizen boards to advise and assist with implementing effective strategies to reduce crime and disorder, change perceptions and facilitate positive engagement.

These entities strive for diverse representation, including members from local businesses, churches, community groups, youth groups, local government, and law enforcement.

PARTICIPATE IN A CITIZENS POLICE ACADEMY

Classroom information sessions, put on by police for citizens, enable residents to learn about local law enforcement agency's values and mission as well as the overall operation of the department.

Citizen police academies allow citizens a chance to better understand the different aspects of the job and the reasons why officers perform certain actions.

COMPLIMENT OR COMPLAIN

If you had a positive interaction with a police officer in your community that is worthy of praise, share it with the chief's office. You can be assured it will find its way to supervisors and the officer.

Similarly, if you have a complaint or a question, send that in as well. Your police department wants to hear from you, good or bad.

Most departments have information on their website about how to submit commendations and complaints, including how this information is handled.

PARTICIPATE IN NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Neighborhood Watch allows citizens to help police maintain public safety through neighborhood watch groups.

Neighborhood watch members receive training on how to organize particular areas and methods for communicating with the police and with their neighbors.

PARTICIPATE IN POLICE INITIATIVES, PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

Law enforcement agencies often engage their communities by hosting events throughout the year. Examples include neighborhood barbeques, National Night Out, and Coffee with a Cop.

Community members can assist the police in their efforts by participating, donating to, or helping facilitate these events.

ATTEND COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Community meetings are another way community stakeholders, business owners, church groups can engage with local government and law enforcement.

Residents can communicate with police representatives at these meetings to help solve community issues and facilitate a positive, collaborative relationship. Participating when issues are calm ensures civil conversations when issues get heated.

PARTICIPATE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT SURVEYS

Law enforcement agencies may seek community member input to help guide community policing efforts.

Community members can assist and engage with law enforcement by participating in these surveys and providing honest feedback.

GET YOUR KIDS INVOLVED

Youth programs that engage youth with law enforcement are a great way to get kids and their families familiar with local enforcement officers.

Programs such as police explorers/cadets, Police Athletic Leagues, citizen police academies specifically for youth, and mentorship programs are all good examples of how youth can collaborate with law enforcement in a positive methods.

FOLLOW YOUR POLICE DEPARTMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Many police agencies use social media to communicate with the public. Community members can also communicate with law enforcement through social media outlets.

Follow your local law enforcement agency on social media to stay aware of police events in the community, various crime and traffic alerts, and general information regarding the police department.

CREDIT

This list is from a series highlighting best practices in advancing 21st century policing as part of the ICPR (Institute for Community-Police Relations), particularly those that address recommendations from the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing final report. The Institute is funded through the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the Motorola Solutions Foundation