

City of Oakland
Police Chief
Response to Question One

More than a third of my law enforcement career has been as an executive—chief or second-in-command—revolutionizing policing as a reform-minded leader espousing, modeling, and reinforcing a shared vision. My overarching philosophy is that police are community guardians and problem solvers who exemplify procedural justice tenets in their interactions with internal and external stakeholders. The approach encourages officers to think proactively in identifying collaborative solutions to community problems and not rely on arrests as a barometer of success.

I have always been a progressive leader. Decades ago, I recognized that police responsibility was much more expansive than the myopic role of enforcer—with some basking in the statistical insignificance of arrests. I believed it more salient and efficacious to resolve the underlying issues, which give rise to criminal behavior rather than the specious end product defined as a crime. It was not until my position caught up with my perspective that I could drive impactful policy reform. In 2008, I collaborated with a social service agency to diminish the harmful impact crack cocaine had on community members. Officers connected users with agency counselors to wean them off their dependency. Our objective was to remedy the root causes of crime and not its symptoms. The same approach in Seaside has led to increases in juvenile referrals and diversions and decreases in crime and arrests.

According to the Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (Final Report), transparency and accountability are the fundamental building blocks of trusting partnerships. Transparency is the currency of trust, and trust begets legitimacy. I amplified organizational transparency when I promulgated Executive Staff Minutes to the entire department. Historically, Executive Staff Minutes were only circulated among Deputy Chiefs and above. I began uploading After-Arbitration reports to the department intranet as well. They contained arbitrators' rulings from officers' disciplinary appeals. Employees can read about misconduct, and corresponding declarations, to understand the consequences of aberrant behavior.

I strengthened external transparency by placing FWPD's General Orders online. Executive staff members argued that the information was sensitive, jeopardized officer safety, and did not want to make it accessible. I worked with the Legal Department, redacted the troubling verbiage, gained consensus, and ultimately shared the General Orders online. Citizens are now more informed and can hold the department accountable. Also, I had aggregate disciplinary statistics and racial profiling data displayed on FWPD's website.

Serving as the Liaison for the National Initiative for Community Trust and Justice (NI), I learned of the profound benefits which emanate from procedurally just interactions and institutions. The template for building and strengthening relationships between communities and police was proffered by the Final Report, with procedural justice vital to the first pillar—Building Trust & Legitimacy. Consequently, I endeavored to imbue procedural justice principles in every aspect of policing.

Designing a procedurally just workplace, where employees are respected, valued, considered, and listened to, is an ongoing priority. It begins with training officers in procedural justice. Research suggests that police departments that practice internal procedural justice are more inclined to provide citizens an opportunity to share their views. This practice goes a long way in increasing citizen satisfaction with the police. These same officers are also less likely to use force against the community.

The following non-comprehensive list of actions/initiatives are my efforts to embrace and amplify the principles of procedural justice:

- Created Policy Advisory Committee where citizens (felons eligible) helped craft policy.
- Prohibited release of criminal histories of persons involved in critical police incidents.
- Required that officers tell citizens they were under arrest to lower unfair resisting arrest charges.

Although I did not learn of the term procedural justice until I partnered with the NI, it described how I interacted with everyone I encountered—personally and professionally. Once I became fully aware of how procedural justice precepts could engender and fortify trust and cultivate legitimacy, I began in earnest to codify its edicts in policy and practice to bring communities and police closer together.