



Information Item

Date: April 9, 2012

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Al Venegas, Interim Chief of Police
Subject: Racial and Cultural Sensitivity; Training, Tracking, Results

Introduction

This report serves as an overview of the operating guidelines and training surrounding racial and cultural sensitivity as it relates to the employees of the Santa Monica Police Department.

Background

At a recent community meeting and in light of the recent incidents at the local high school, questions were raised regarding the kinds and amounts of cultural and racial sensitivity training Santa Monica Police Department employees receive. The following information addresses the Racial and Cultural Sensitivity training that is provided to all employees, the personnel complaint process, and a five year summary of complaints involving allegations of racial/cultural insensitivity/racial profiling.

Summary

1) Police Department Cultural and Racial Sensitivity Training

The department is cognizant of the need to address racial and cultural diversity. Police Officer Standards and Training (POST), the governing body regulating all police training, mandates that all recruits receive sixteen (16) hours of instruction on racial profiling, cultural diversity, and discrimination while in the police academy.

POST mandates that all peace officers take a racial profiling update every five years. This course provides students with an understanding of the negative impact racial profiling can have on the targeted individual and the entire community. The course curriculum includes: a definition of racial profiling, legal considerations, an overview of the history of civil rights, community considerations, and ethical considerations. The department is currently in the process of coordinating the “Perishable Skills Program” which will incorporate the POST mandated training materials on racial and cultural sensitivity.

Recruits and fulltime sworn and civilian police employees also receive instruction from The Museum of Tolerance (MOT), an educational center dedicated to addressing all forms of prejudice and discrimination in the world. Police employees have attended a variety of presentations at the MOT since the museum’s inception in 1993, which have included Cultural Diversity/Integrity Tools, Racial Profiling, Racial Profiling Updates, and Tools for Tolerance.

2) The Police Department Personnel Complaint System

The police department complies with section 832.5 of the California Penal Code, which mandates that a description of our complaint process be available to the public upon their request. Copies of this process are available at the front desk of the police department or can be obtained by visiting the department’s website. Complaints may be made in person to any supervisor, by letter, electronically, or by using the City of Santa Monica Government Outreach system (GO).

Once a complaint is made, the department logs the complaint and thoroughly investigates it following a formalized process that uses best practices and falls in line with California State Law, the Police Officers Bill of Rights, and department

policy. After the investigation is completed, personnel complaints are classified as one of the following dispositions:

- 1) Sustained – When the investigation discloses sufficient evidence to establish that the act occurred and that it constituted misconduct.
- 2) Not Sustained – When the investigation discloses that there is insufficient evidence to sustain the complaint or fully exonerate the employee.
- 3) Exonerated – When the investigation discloses that the alleged act occurred, but that the act was justified, lawful and/or proper.
- 4) Unfounded – When the investigation discloses that the alleged act(s) did not occur or did not involve department personnel. Complaints which are determined to be frivolous are also classified as unfounded (Penal Code 832.5(c)).

3) Police Department Personnel Complaint 5-Year History

The police department has investigated a total of 318 personnel complaints within the past five years for a variety of allegations ranging from minor to serious. Only eighteen (18) complaints during those five years involved an allegation of some form of racial or cultural discrimination. Out of the eighteen complaints, two were deemed “Not Sustained”, one was deemed “Exonerated”, and twelve (12) were deemed “Unfounded.” One case is currently under investigation and the two remaining could not be completed due to a lack of cooperation on the part of the complainants.

Conclusion

The Santa Monica Police Department is committed to serving the community in a fair, informed, and unbiased manner. Ongoing training and thorough investigation of any allegations are key components to ensuring that this commitment is met.

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