

**8. Inadequate Community Policing Contributes to the Department's Pattern or Practice of Unconstitutional Force.**

Community policing is an effective strategy that enables law enforcement agencies and individuals and organizations they serve to develop solutions to problems and increase trust in

police. The department's leadership does not prioritize community policing, has not communicated its importance throughout the agency, and tolerates a culture that is hostile to community partnerships. These deficiencies have led to a mutual distrust between officers and the residents they encounter. It has contributed to the pattern or practice of excessive force.

Despite references to community policing in its policies and officer evaluations, the department does not consistently support the concepts of community policing. Community policing, also known as "smart policing," involves building partnerships between law enforcement and the people and organizations within its jurisdiction, engaging in problem-solving through proactive measures, and managing the police agency to support community partnerships and community problem-solving.<sup>55</sup> The focus on developing partnerships with the community is to engender trust and encourage the public to participate in identifying and addressing public safety concerns.<sup>56</sup> During our onsite tours, we observed that there was no consistent understanding of the department's community policing program within the ranks. Even commanders had inconsistent understandings of the agency's program. Moreover, commanders have no systems in place to analyze citizen contacts with officers outside of incident reports. They do not consistently review complaints to measure how officers are engaging the community.

The lack of organizational support for community policing was evident in the numerous, credible complaints we reviewed regarding the aggressive behavior of officers. Residents told us of encounters where officers were disrespectful and aggressive in their approach. For example, "Steven" contacted APD after accidentally shooting his wife in the hip. When officers arrived, they approached Steven in his front yard and immediately placed him in handcuffs. Officers knocked on the front door and pointed their weapons at Steven's sister-in-law as soon as she opened the door. The officers then entered the home and pointed their weapons at Steven's son, even though he was rendering aid to his mother. In another example, an officer threw "Rita's" documents on the street after a traffic stop when she challenged the basis of the stop. The citation was subsequently dismissed. The "Omar" incident where the officer grabbed and yelled at a man providing medical aid to an accident victim also shows a disregard for the community. These are but a few of the instances where residents expressed concerns about their negative interactions with officers.

A disconnect exists between officers and residents about the perception of overly aggressive conduct by officers. We observed that many officers were dismissive of community concerns. For instance, many officers complained that the media generated the complaints about their perceived aggressiveness in citizen encounters. Some officers also complained that the citizens were the ones who were aggressive towards them. This perception persists even though the data suggests otherwise.<sup>57</sup> These concerns suggest an unwillingness to embrace community policing. This rejection of one of the basic elements of community policing contributes to the department's pattern or practice of unjustified force.