Transparency, Accountability and Progressive Policing

The Oakland Police Department is an organization committed to positive change. We understand the importance of our role in improving public safety, building stronger relationships with the community, increasing public trust, and implementing reforms. We believe in the power of transparency and honest discussions and are dedicated to engaging in meaningful dialogue around complex issues. The subject of police use of force is an important topic which we take very seriously. Police officers are given great authority and as a result, have undeniable responsibilities to the people they serve. It is our obligation to ensure that police officers are thoroughly trained and consistently supervised, and that our interactions with the community are reviewed and documented.

Our current policies, procedures, and training reflect our dedication to constitutional and ethical policing. Our officers go through more training in the academy, in field training, and by taking continuing development courses than is required by the California Commission on Police Officer Standards and Training. Our 8:1 officer-to-sergeant ratio allows for consistent supervision, and the performance assessment system we have implemented is one of many tools that can identify at-risk officer behaviors, including uses of force and citizens’ complaints. We have high standards for documentation of uses of force and supervisory and command level review. We are also a leading agency in the use of body worn cameras. We've taken the initiative to implement the use of body worn cameras for all field personnel. The ability to capture critical interactions between officers and residents is a huge step in the direction of transparency and accountability. For example, video footage has helped us investigate recent cases and to assess allegations of officer misconduct. Video documentation has led to officers being exonerated of any wrongdoing as well as being disciplined for violations.

We investigate all allegations of officer misconduct and excessive use of force. We value and have a reverence for human life and recognize the gravity of incidents of officer involved shootings. Confrontations of this caliber have cost Oaklanders and Oakland Police officers their lives. When an officer is involved in a deadly force situation, three independent investigations are conducted. The Oakland Police Department Homicide Section, its Internal Affairs Division, and the Alameda County District Attorney's Office complete separate inquiries into the facts of each case and make determinations regarding legality and reasonableness. The legal standard used in determining whether force is or is not justifiable was set by the Supreme Court in Graham V. Connor. Determination of an incident’s compliance with law and/or policy does not negate the impact that a loss of life has on an individual’s family, the community, or the officer involved in the incident. We are dedicated to continuously assessing our tactics, training, and procedures and regularly make recommendations for additions and changes to our policies. Conducting policing in a progressive manner is our priority.

Policing a large, metropolitan city and dealing with violent crime on a daily basis is a complex job that requires continued partnerships and ongoing relationships between the police, city leadership, and the community. We are committed to community engagement and building upon our recent positive gains in regards to public safety. Shootings, robberies, and burglaries
continue to trend down. Since 2013, as we at the Oakland Police Department have increased
our ability to engage in intelligence-based, data-driven policing that focuses on those
committing violence, there has been a corresponding and substantial decrease in misconduct
complaints.

We are dedicated to our role in creating a safer Oakland and we understand that we have the
ability to positively impact our community outside of traditional police enforcement activities.
Identifying at-risk populations and engaging in meaningful ways to disrupt cycles of violence is
important to us. Our school mentoring program, Police Athletics League, and Our Kids
Mentoring program are all focused on proactively bringing police officers into the lives of young
people at risk of coming into negative contact with the criminal justice system. We believe in
the power of intervention, the impact of mentorship, and the ability of positive police
community relationships to transform both police and community perceptions. Together we
can move Oakland forward.