



JEFFERSON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

NEW YORK STATE POLICE REFORM AND
REINVENTION COLLABORATIVE

February 8, 2021

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INTRODUCTION

On June 12, 2020, Governor Andrew Cuomo issued Executive Order 203 directing municipalities that employ police officers to actively engage stakeholders in the local community and develop locally approved plans for the strategies, policies and procedures of local agencies. In accordance with this order, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office in conjunction with the Chairman of the Board of Jefferson County convened the mandatory as well as many suggested community members to discuss what the Sheriff's Office does and focus on what reforms or improvements can be made. The following is a description of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office and the plan agreed upon by stakeholders. It is submitted, with respect, to the entire Jefferson County community for review and discussion.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office (JCSO) serves the law enforcement needs of all of the citizens of our county, and strives to do so in a professional manner, respecting the rights of all of our citizens without regard to race, color, nationality, creed, gender or sexual orientation. Our policies and procedures are developed and carried out with that goal in mind and our deputies are selected, trained and supervised with that goal in mind. The Sheriff is an elected official and is an autonomous office while being a civil service law co-employer with Jefferson County. Sheriff Colleen M O'Neill is the 56th Sheriff of our great county and has held office since January 1, 2015. She oversees the employment of 134 employees, 42 of whom are assigned to the patrol division.

"I am extremely proud of the entire membership of the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, especially during this past year of unprecedented challenges. While most of the country shut down, many businesses were closed and people were holed up at home, JCSO never missed a day. Our deputies and correction officers did not miss one shift, not one hour. We were ON DUTY serving and protecting as we have all sworn to do by our oath of office.

I personally take great pride and am humbled and honored to lead this amazing agency and I strongly believe in our mission statement which reads...

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, established in 1805, is committed to serving the citizens of Jefferson County New York by:

**Respecting the civil rights of each citizen as set forth by the Constitution of the United States and New York State.*

**Educating the public so they do not fall victim to crime.*

**Enforcing all laws and court orders, without prejudice.*

**Training and enhancing the professionalism of our membership so they can perform their duties to the highest degree of efficiency and effectiveness.*

**Work in harmony with all facets of the federal, state, county and municipal governments for the common goal of protecting and serving the people.*

*I believe we live up to those words and that our relationship with our community is positive and that we are fair and professional and that we all share the same goal... to protect others. Law enforcement is not a job. It is a calling, a career and a destiny. Jefferson County is privileged to be served by our deputy sheriffs and correction officers and we consider it a privilege to serve.”
~ Sheriff Colleen M. O'Neill*



The following is presented as consistent with the Governor’s Executive Order and guidelines as published in his Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative dated August 2020.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



The Jefferson County Law Enforcement Division consists of:

Sheriff
Undersheriff
Lieutenant
5 Sergeants
8 Detectives
27 Deputy Sheriffs

On a normal day, JCSO assigns 6 patrols to post coverage encompassing the 1857 square miles of our county. Among those patrols are deputies with specialized training like K9 handlers, SERT (Sheriff’s Emergency Response Team) members, firearms instructors, EVOC (Emergency Vehicle Operators Course) instructors and defensive tactics trainers, field trainers, civil enforcement deputies and school resource officer(s). We have marine patrol duties, utility terrain vehicles and snowmobile patrols and rifle sniper(s).

Generally, a deputy sheriff's duties include but are not limited to: patrol an assigned geographical post, investigate suspicious activities and answer complaints, watch for wanted and missing persons and stolen vehicles, maintain order in crowds, parades, funerals and other public gatherings, serve subpoenas, tax notices, traffic summonses and legal documents, arrest traffic violators, investigate crimes, collect evidence, transport prisoners, attend court and present testimony and evidence, answers questions and direct the public and make a report of such activity on a daily basis. Candidates for hire as a deputy must conform to physical and psychological standards set by New York State Civil Service law and the sheriff. They must reside within Jefferson County, hold a valid NYS driver's license, a high school diploma and be at least 20 years old. Only candidates with excellent moral character and unquestionable integrity are considered by the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office.

The detectives, in addition to many of the duties and qualifications described above, handle serious crimes and investigations. They investigate every natural, unattended or suspicious death, all fatal motor vehicle accidents, all cases involving firearms, children, sexual abuse and elderly abuse. They are tasked with handling thousands of pieces of evidence and lab results every year. They hold firearms for residents who request that service. They interview suspects, victims, children, applicants for employment and pistol permit applicants. 2 detectives are Metro Jefferson Drug Task Force members specifically assigned to illegal drug investigations in partnership with the Watertown Police Department and the District Attorney's Office. Detectives generally work 8am to 4pm but are on call 24/7. They are supervised by a detective sergeant and the patrol lieutenant.

Two sergeants and eight deputies are assigned to the Sheriff's Emergency Response Team. They are very specifically trained for and practice high risk arrest situations, armed standoffs, hostage situations and barricaded subjects, among other dangerous events and situations.

Three deputies are K9 handlers, partnered with a highly trained German Shepard or Belgian Malinois dogs. Two are specifically trained to detect illegal drugs and one is trained in explosive detection. All three are trained in handler protection and tracking. The dogs and their handlers are certified by New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services and their training is constant.

One deputy sheriff is currently assigned as a School Resource Officer at the Indian River School District. JCSO has a comprehensive memorandum of understanding governing the relationship between the school, the deputy and the

sheriff's office. JCSO's SRO has had hundreds of hours of specialized trainings from various and diverse schools. Considering the amount of contact our SRO has with students, an arrest is made a fraction of 1% of the time. So, arresting kids is not the purpose or intention of this program. JCSO's SRO also sits on the New York State Sheriff's Association SRO training committee.

Beyond that, Sheriff's Operation Order 02-2018 dated 4/25/2018 directs each deputy to make safety and security checks at all school buildings and venues on their assigned post on a regular basis. This could be in the form of standing on the sidewalk welcoming kids to school, having lunch with them, dropping in to talk to the principal or a teacher or stopping by a football game. The objective of this program is to provide a highly visible police presence clear to anyone who might be planning violence. Deputies familiarize themselves with the layout of the schools in our county and of course, foster positive interaction and trust between deputies and staff and students.

Special Patrol Officers hired under General Municipal Law 209V work on a part time basis, securing the Watertown International Airport. There are currently 5 SPOs employed. They are scheduled, supervised by and answer to the patrol lieutenant.

Deputies' shifts begin at 5:00pm and 5:00am. A sergeant is considered the first line of supervision on every shift. On the rare occasion when a sergeant is not on duty, the deputy with the most seniority is called upon to supervise *and* to patrol. All serious calls are reported to the lieutenant and eventually to the sheriff through a "chain of command" The sheriff holds accountability for the actions of the entire division.



POLICE REFORM/REINVENTION COMMITTEE

On August 25, 2020, Sheriff O’Neill and Chairman Scott Gray initiated a months long process toward fulfilling Executive Order 203 set forth by Governor Cuomo. The first step was to identify stakeholders who would be called upon to review the practices of the Sheriff’s Office and suggest possible improvements or additions to the policies and procedures currently in place.

The stakeholders who participated included the following: Membership of the local police force, members of the community with emphasis on areas with high numbers of police and community interactions, interested non-profit and faith based community groups, the local office of the district attorney, the local public defender and local elected officials. In addition stakeholders included the probation director, county leadership, residents who have had interactions with the police, resident(s) who have been incarcerated, a police union representative, educators, an LGBTQIA advocate, a healthcare leader and advocate, a mental health professional, a transportation official and a housing and homeless professional.

There have been four police reform/reinvention committee meetings to date. The first meeting consisted of a presentation of the current policies, procedures and responsibilities of the Sheriff’s Office. It included a description of Jefferson County which was founded in 1805. The county consists of 1857 square miles and hundreds of miles of Lake Ontario and St Lawrence River shoreline. The population in 2019 is recorded as 109,834 citizens. There is one incorporated city, Watertown, and 63 towns, villages and hamlets. Jefferson County is the proud home of the United States Army 10th Mountain Division.

Stakeholders were provided with statistical data relative to the Sheriff’s Office’s case load and arrest data. In 2020 JCSO patrol division handled 16,752 calls for service. 781 criminal arrests were made. 60 DWI charges were filed. 1730 UTTs (uniform traffic tickets) were issued last year, 868 motor vehicle accidents were handled. Detectives investigated 120 cases excluding background investigations and pistol permit applications. In the years 2019 and 2020, our engagement with the public resulted in arrest approximately 3% of the time. 499 pistol permit applications and 2186 pistol permit amendments were processed in 2020.

Stakeholders learned that the standards JCSO employees are required to maintain are clearly described in a Code of Conduct Manual, issued to everyone and applicable to everyone. It governs both on and off duty behavior and was most recently updated and reissued September 2, 2020. Two sections worth noting considering the background of the Governor's directive are:

2.8 Attitude and Impartiality: Members and employees of the Sheriff's Office, while being vigorous and unrelenting in the performance of their duties must maintain a strictly impartial attitude toward all persons they contact in their official capacity.

And 2.9 Courtesy - Public/Professional: Members and employees of the Sheriff's Office shall be courteous to the public. They shall be tactful in the performance of their duties, control their temper and exercise the utmost patience and discretion. Members and employees shall not engage in argumentative discussion, even in the face of extreme provocation. In the performance of their duties, they shall not use coarse, violent, profane or insulant language or gesture and shall not make derogatory comments or express any prejudice concerning race, religion, politics, national origin, gender, lifestyle, age or similar personal characteristics.

TRAINING INITIATIVES

Training was discussed at this and subsequent stakeholders meetings. All Jefferson County Sheriff's Deputies attend the Basic Course for Police Officers (BCPO) established by the Municipal Police Training Council and are certified through the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services. The BCPO is described here: "The Basic Course for Police Officers has undergone a continual evolution since it was first established. When mandated effective July 1, 1960, the Basic Course for Police Officers consisted of a minimum standard of 80 hours of instruction in specified areas. The current BCPO consists of a minimum standard of over 700 hours established by the Municipal Police Training Council (MPTC). Staff routinely reviews the content of the Basic Course for Police Officers to ensure that the material remains relevant to criminal justice issues and best

prepares officers to serve their communities. Today's Basic Course for Police Officers covers a wide range of topics including but not limited to, Ethics & Professionalism, Cultural Diversity, Bias Related Incidents, Professional Communication, Persons with Disabilities, Crisis Intervention, Use of Physical Force & Deadly Force, Active Shooter Response and Decision Making. Today's police recruits are also mandated to complete numerous Reality Based Training Scenarios to better prepare them for the situations they will encounter on the job."

This is 52 topics covered over approximately 26 weeks. Ethics and professionalism is a minimum of 8 hours but most academies conduct 16 hours of this training.

Field training is conducted after the conclusion of the academy but before a recruit is allowed to patrol independently. DCJS requires a recruit to ride 160 hours with a trained, seasoned veteran. JCSO adds another 428 hours for a total of 588 hours of one on one instruction with a variety of deputies before they are assigned a post to cover alone.

In-Service training continues throughout a deputy's career. 36 subjects are listed on the JCSO curriculum and they rotate as trainers and administration deems appropriate. Cultural Diversity/Bias Related Incidents and Sexual Harassment were refreshed and presented to all of our deputies at our in-service school this past fall. Leadership, investigative, supervisor and specialty schools are offered and attended by JCSO personnel on a frequent basis.



Transparent citizen complaint procedures. JCSO accepts personnel complaints from any one at any time. Unlike many agencies JCSO accepts “third party” complaints. ALL are investigated fully with complainants advised of the outcome. JCSO receives far more letters of support and gratitude than complaints but all forms of correspondence are welcome. Stakeholders learned that JCSO has 6 policies which govern the recording, handling, investigating and the procedures for personnel complaints. Complaints can be initiated by the public or from within our own ranks. No one is immune from scrutiny and the rules apply equally to everyone. Supervisors are expected to lead by example, including the sheriff and undersheriff.

Discussed were the policies that direct members and employees who know of misconduct by another member or employee to report those actions immediately to a supervisor. Policy 50-14-02 states “An employee of the Sheriff’s Office who is aware of, witnesses or has knowledge of any violation of federal, state, local law or departmental rule or regulation about to be committed, being committed or having been committed by another employee of the Sheriff’s Office shall immediately take action to prevent or stop such violation and notify his/her supervisor through the chain of command. Policy 50-02-02 orders the same action to the witness of a crime. The same policy lists specific strategies, tools and exercises for improving performance. Policy strategies for supervisory staff to employ on a daily basis include, but are not limited to:

- Communicate and maintain standards
- Connect performance to organizational mission and objectives
- Clarify job tasks
- Remove performance obstacles
- Pinpoint key task segments
- Job instruction training
- Visual job aids
- Reward good performance
- Create and maintain a climate where people work well together

JCSO policy goes on to identify levels of response to behavior or actions which require remedy. Including but not limited to:

- Informal observations – removing small gaps in accepted standards and actual performance
- Documentation – Coaching or counseling documentation
- Coaching – conducted to enable members to do their job better
- Counseling – demands a plan of action or solution to the issue

Supervisory Referral – Code of Conduct violations or violations of law must be reported to supervisor.

Discipline – Referred from supervisors to Sheriff/Undersheriff

Cultural Diversity, Bias Related Incidents and Sexual Harassment Training and Hate Crimes were specifically noted in the Governor’s directive. New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services Basic Course for Police Officers devotes training to these important topics. JCSO’s in-service training contains lessons and relevant information regarding these subjects as well, and Jefferson County requires all county employees to complete on-line training pertaining to these topics on a regular basis. Jefferson County has a zero tolerance policy regarding sexual harassment, updated 11/13/2018. The JCSO mission statement, code of conduct, policies and training addresses the impact of implicit bias on one’s behavior. Deputies are trained to recognize the concept and act and react appropriately. Courtesy, professionalism and respect for others is woven through all of JCSO’s training, policies and accountability. Cultural Diversity, Bias Related Incidents and Sexual Harassment is trained in the BCPO (Basic Course for Police Officers) – regulated by DCJS. Ethical awareness and cultural diversity are included in JCSO’s current in-service curriculum.

These topics and the training aspects were discussed during the stakeholders meetings. In the “planning ahead” section of this report, a plan was developed for improving the relationships and discussions regarding some of these topics. BCPO also includes these topics and training hours.

- 3 hours Victim/Witness services
- 2 hours Elder abuse
- 6 hours persons with disabilities
- 2 crime control strategies
- 2 crime prevention
- 1 hour intoxication ...not related to DWI arrests.

Deputy Sheriffs are taught that hate crimes are civil rights violations and terrorist acts and are included in the New York State Penal Law section 485.05. JCSO complies with New York State’s requirement of reporting hate crimes by providing DCJS with monthly statistics from our records management system (Spillman), automatically through IBR (Incident Based Reporting).

Use of Force and Crowd Management were discussed at stakeholders' meetings. JCSO members are trained and certified by Municipal Police Training Council (MPTC). Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) mandates 11 hours of instruction – just in the use of force and deadly physical force, based on Penal Law article 35. Many other courses including defensive tactics and firearms have force lessons woven in. JCSO policy is based on the DCJS model policy and there is a system of checks and balances for every use of force incident – whether there is a complaint related to it or not. All are reviewed by direct supervisors, Lt, U/S and Sheriff. JCSO reported and documented 4 incidences of use of force for the year 2019, 3 for the year 2020.

The Sheriffs Emergency Response Team members (SERT) are equipped for and would be in charge if there was a necessity to deploy personnel for crowd management. An unruly protest or riot is not a situation JCSO has encountered, as these situations are more likely to occur in cities and urban areas. If JCSO were called upon to assist, all necessary personnel would be deployed with the intent of enforcing laws while respecting protestors' rights, as well as the rights of all. Although JCSO has taken advantage of the federal government's 1033 program by securing an MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicle, the policy governing its use specifies when and under what circumstances it may be used. Crowd control is not a permitted use.

De-escalation techniques are part of every reality based training scenario. MPTC defensive tactics training has recently been redesigned to reinforce decision making and communication skills in an effort to achieve voluntary compliance without the need for physical force. Training of crisis intervention skills focuses on understanding emotional crisis, mental health encounters and if possible, redirecting a person in crisis to counselors or services where their problems can be resolved outside of the court system. JCSO recognizes the value of Crisis Intervention Training (CIT).

Restorative justice practices were discussed. Restorative Justice is a response to crime that involves organizing a meeting between an offender and the victim so they share their experience of what happened, discuss who was harmed and how, and to create a consensus for what the offender can do to repair the harm. JCSO's School Resource Officer uses this practice with juvenile offenders. After discussion of this system and these practices, it was unanimous that this is outside the

responsibilities and expertise of law enforcers and that JCSO will defer these meetings to professional counselors.

Problem oriented policing and hot spot policing are similar concepts involving identifying and analyzing specific crime problems and locations and targeting resources toward solving these problems. JCSO employs those concepts, in effect, by analyzing crime stats, mapping, overdose mapping, traffic violation statistics, accident statistics, complaint and calls for service frequency, etc. to assign patrols or detectives. JCSO participates in posted property, vacant home and after hour property checks, underage alcohol sale undercover operations, counter terrorism red team exercises, speed trailer deployment and undercover operations as necessary and appropriate.

Focused deterrence is a crime reduction strategy which aims to deter crime by increasing the swiftness, severity and certainty of punishment, usually directed at a specific crime problem. Law enforcement can play a role in focused deterrence, but the swiftness, severity and certainty of punishment are primarily determined by the courts. Jefferson County participation in drug court, where a member of JCSO sits, and the Bridge Program help.

Attention to environmental design in an attempt to reduce crime can help increase the probability that an offender will be caught. Studies show that increased probability of identification tends to deter the commission of a crime. Environmental design in the sense of creating tree lines or eliminating shrubbery is not feasible in a rural setting but better lighting in vulnerable locations, security cameras, and alarm systems can be suggested and even inspected by members of JCSO. An invitation from JCSO for home and business owners will be forthcoming to advise and suggest how physical, environmental adjustments can be made to better secure their properties.

The Governor recommends police departments ensure that their training programs equip officers to recognize the signs of substance abuse and mental health issues and respond appropriately.

Sheriff's deputies receive 20 hours on Mental Health "Fundamental Crisis Intervention Skills for Law Enforcement". These instructors, besides being certified in general topics, must be a certified Mental Health Instructor. Crisis Intervention Team training was discussed. Overall, the goal of the project is to develop a law enforcement system that responds to mental health crisis in a way that is compassionate, understanding and respectful. Many members of JCSO

participated in this training in January of 2016 and to a lesser degree (due to scheduling conflicts) in 2019. Jefferson County Community Services Office and the Sheriff's Office is in planning stages of offering this important and valuable training again in the fall of this year.

According to the Governor's directive, "the program should include training and equipping officers with overdose reversal drugs like Naloxone". Narcan has been issued to our deputies since February 2016 with many successful outcomes.

The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office is fortunate to benefit from the services of two chaplains. They are invaluable and available 24/7 for support and counseling services. JCSO has trained peer counselors within its own ranks. Three more members were assigned to 30 hours training sponsored by River Hospital just this past November which is another crisis intervention training opportunity. The New York State Police EAP program and counselors are available and have been called upon numerous times.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS

The Governor's guidance asked agencies to look at their "Community Involvement". We discussed this at our stakeholders meetings. The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office is extremely proud of its community outreach and the relationship with the community. Just some of the programs, events, organizations and campaigns participated in are; the United Way food pantry and Over The Edge fundraiser, Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics, Habitat for Humanity, violence awareness campaigns for the Victims' Assistance Center, Shop

with a Cop, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, Parades, the Jefferson County Fair, Mountain Fest and River Fest and numerous media events. JCSO hosted many CRASE Trainings (Citizens Response to Active Shooter Events). JCSO participates in and offers Project Lifesaver which is radio based tracking system but also provides first responders with a basic understanding of cognitive conditions, giving them the necessary knowledge and the physical tools needed to respond to an elopement, and to assess and effectively manage the safe return of an endangered client.



JCSO offers a Child Passenger Safety Program in which trained deputy inspectors make sure child seats are in good condition and installed properly. Through a grant, JCSO is able to provide some families with brand new child seats.

JCSO participates in the Yellow Dot Program which is a free program designed to help first responders provide life-saving medical attention during that first “golden hour” after a crash or other emergency. A yellow dot decal is placed on the rear driver's side window to alert first responders to look in the glove compartment for important medical information.

JCSO participates with Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) and organize mock DWI crashes during prom and graduation seasons to hammer home the dangers of drinking (or texting) and driving.

Operation Safe Child is a program offered by JCSO at many events throughout the year. Tens of thousands of kids have been fingerprinted and their parents provided a card holding important information they would need in the event of a lost child, kidnapping or worse.

Community policing can be challenging for rural police agencies with hundreds of miles of responsibility but JCSO does remarkably well making personal contact with county residents on a daily basis, outside of enforcing laws. The community policing idea works best where a police officer can be assigned to the same area in an effort to create a relationship with the members of a particular community and law enforcement. JCSO participates as much as the geography allows. School resource officers and deputies assigned to satellite stations in Cape Vincent and West Carthage help to keep community involvement at a higher level. Our School Safety Program directs deputies to stop in all schools in the county on a regular basis. This also helps with face to face conversations outside of a formal complaint or investigation.



Social media is an important tool JCSO uses to stay in touch as well. Facebook followers number over 12,500 and growing every day. Crime tips, scheduled events, weather warnings and road closures are shared almost daily. JCSO receives assistance from the community identifying individuals. Both positive and negative feedback is accepted. It is the 21st century way and very useful tool to stay in touch and connected. JCSO policies govern strict adherence to professionalism attached to social media. The Sheriff's Office page is accessible to edit and administered by a detective sergeant, the public information officer and the sheriff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After the conversations regarding all that has been so far described, the stakeholders voiced the following;

1. The D.A.R.E. program should be considered to be brought back to the schools. Drug Abuse Resistance Education is an education program that seeks to prevent use of controlled drugs, membership in gangs, and violent behavior. It is a police officer-led series of classroom lessons that teaches children from kindergarten through 12th grade how to resist peer pressure and live productive drug and violence-free lives. The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office participated in this program 1997 through 2013. It was discontinued due to lack of funding.
2. Diversity training should be taught by diverse individuals. The discussions surrounded the fact that police officers are generally the instructors of other police officers. The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office will coordinate with Jefferson Community College to incorporate civilian led *conversations* on implicit bias awareness. Having information shared with JCSO personnel from members of the public who are affected by decisions and attitudes of public servants will create a better understanding of everyone's points of view, experiences and expectations.
3. That mental health initiatives, training and resources should be a priority of the Sheriff's Office going forward. Crisis Intervention training, which is modeled from a pilot program for police responders in 2018 is being scheduled for later this year. A focus on referrals to services for those suffering with mental health challenges will be a priority through the cooperation of Jefferson County Community Services. Specifically discussed was the possible option or opportunity to have mental health experts respond to calls for service where appropriate. These protocols have been initiated in the past without great success, mostly due to the large geographic area JCSO covers and the length of time it takes for a mental health professionals to respond to an active scene. JCSO is committed to discussing a plan to help those suffering from mental health disorders through understanding and guidance to appropriate services.

4. Cultural humility was discussed at one meeting. Due to the increasing diversity of our world and the intermixing of different cultures, the importance of cultural competence in the professional world, especially law enforcement, has become more salient. Cultural humility is a humble and respectful attitude toward individuals of other cultures that pushes one to challenge their own cultural biases, realize they cannot possibly know everything about other cultures, and approach learning about other cultures as a lifelong goal and process. This process was identified as a training opportunity for more positive, fair and understanding relationships with the people served by the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office will seek those training and conversation opportunities.
5. Although body worn cameras were just briefly discussed at the stakeholders meeting, the Sheriff's Office has taken our first steps toward a pilot program to learn if the cameras serve the agency's purposes, serve the public and are affordable.
6. Civil Service Laws were discussed at length. NYS now requires for most competitive positions that the employer choose a candidate from the top three persons as scored on the applicable eligible list for the position. The list of tied scores can be large but eventually the employer is left with only three choices and must hire one. This rule of three applies to promotions as well but is even more limiting because only candidates that scored in the top three of a competitive exam for promotion can be considered. It almost completely eliminates the agencies' administration from considering qualified candidates who fall below that level and diversifying the supervisory ranks of an agency. Although overall qualifications are *the* deciding factor in the hiring process, the need for diversity in police agencies is obvious and paramount. NYS Civil Service requirements limit the possibility of considering candidates who would benefit a police agency with diverse perspectives.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

On December 11, 2020 Chairman Scott Gray invited the public to participate in a public safety survey as part of this reform and reinvention initiative. The survey was announced to the media and the link was made available until January 5, 2021. Of the 395 people who participated in the survey, 17.8% of those who responded to the question to indicate where they lived, answered the City of Watertown. There was equal participation between males and females. 88.4% reported their race to be white, 1.2% non-white and 10.4% preferred not to answer. Ages ranged from 18 to over 70 with the largest group 50 – 59 years old. In general the results were wide ranging but drug abuse was by far the most concerning problem and safety issue for Jefferson County residents. 88.4% of the respondents believe that JCSO deputies treat people fairly “somewhat” to “a great extent”, and 85.3% responded similarly that JCSO deputies show concern for community members. The vast majority of responders reported that JCSO deputies are respectful and are trusted.

Future surveys will be instituted by the Center for Community Services at Jefferson Community College with the goal of securing community response representative of the community JCSO serves.

CONCLUSION

This report is respectfully submitted by Sheriff Colleen M. O'Neill. It is intended to spark conversations from every and all citizens of Jefferson County to make their concerns heard. Suggestions, comments, ideas, positive and negative feedback are welcomed. Two community discussion events have been scheduled for February 18. Times and virtual connection details are forthcoming. A specific email for the purposes of community interaction and feedback to this plan will be posted on the sheriff's website from February 15 through the 26th.

After the public has had ample opportunity to be heard, a final report will be presented to the Jefferson County Board of Legislators in late March in the form of a resolution to be passed in accordance with Governor Cuomo's Executive Order 203. The final report will be filed with New York State by April 1, 2021.