

# University response to Task Force on Community Responsive Public Safety recommendations

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The Task Force on Community Responsive Public Safety provided recommendations in three broad categories: responses to behavioral health crises; officer conduct issues; and advisory and oversight processes. This document includes point-by-point responses to each of the task force recommendations.

(NOTE: The Office of the Chancellor will convene a group in fall 2021 to review progress on the implementation of task force recommendations and provide updates to the community as needed. That group will comprise the university's chief of police, vice provost for student affairs, vice provost for operations, associate vice chancellor for public affairs, chancellor's chief of staff, and chair of the task force.

## A. Responses to Behavioral Health Crises

### **Recommendation A.1. Better identify, understand, and respond to a person who may be developing or experiencing a mental health concern or crisis.**

The university supports this recommendation, specifically the expansion of mental health first-aid training for Housing staff and anyone on campus who has frequent interaction with students who may be in crisis. The KU Public Safety Office (KUPSO) is partnering with Student Affairs to identify additional staff who would benefit from training, and the offices will work to expand educational opportunities in the months ahead.

### **Recommendation A.2. Increase response and involvement of health professionals (and reduce the involvement of public safety officers) regarding students experiencing a behavioral mental health concern or crisis.**

The university supports this recommendation. Douglas County, the City of Lawrence and local mental health practitioners have been working steadily to improve response to mental health crises in the community. They have established a Crisis Call Center and are working toward the eventual adoption of 988 as the suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline. The crisis recovery center is under construction, and trials of mobile crisis teams have occurred.

As the coordinated community response to mental health crises evolves, we believe the result will include the use of trauma-informed response by multidisciplinary teams, as well as a better understanding of those suffering from mental health crises, including those in marginalized communities. Until that is fully in place, KUPSO will continue the following strategies:

- Continue to train police officers in Crisis Intervention Training so they are prepared to respond to those in a mental health crisis, including how those with marginalized identities may experience a crisis or react to law enforcement involvement.
- Continue to train our police officers in trauma-informed response.

In addition, the university supports the establishment of a working group to explore the use of KU staff with mental health training to respond or co-respond to suicidal/mental health crises while the Douglas County response to mental health crises is under development. The Chief of Police in KUPSO and the Vice Provost of Student Affairs will be the point persons for this effort. The resulting effort may be integrated into the Douglas County response system when that system becomes fully functional.

### **Recommendation A.3. Integrate KU within Douglas County system of mental health care.**

The university supports this recommendation. KU will continue to be integrated with the county response to mental health crises. The working group mentioned in Recommendation A.2. will work with Douglas County officials to coordinate the efforts of KU and Douglas County.

### **Recommendation A.4. Assessment of Public Safety staffing, including steps to reduce officer stress and fatigue.**

The university supports this recommendation. There are several resources available to first responders in Douglas County. The Douglas County Sheriff employs a first responder coordinator who will work with any first responder to provide direction on where to find resources for stress, mental health and post-traumatic events. The county also has provided access to a smart phone application (Cordico) that lists those resources. We also have access to the First Responder Chaplains Association, which can help first responders individually or assist KUPSO at critical incidents or in making death notifications.

KUPSO also has two trained officers who are a part of a countywide peer support group. They are available for confidential support of any first responder, from any department.

Other training opportunities have been identified to support officers. They are:

- Blue Courage: a two-day leadership workshop that provides a holistic approach to developing people so they can touch hearts, awaken minds and ignite spirits.
- Foundations for Resiliency for First Responders: provides information and tools to develop the capacity to recover from difficulties associated with both common and extreme situations in their public service.
- Gold Shield: provides information regarding alcohol/drug abuse, post-traumatic stress, stress/anxiety, depression and suicide within law enforcement.
- Cop Stress: provides health alternatives to mitigate burnout, substance abuse, marital problems, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress injuries.
- Spiritual Fitness and Family Support in Public Safety: attendees explore their spiritual wellness and how spiritual practices can serve as a framework for strong relationships within the home.
- Health and Fitness Plans for Public Safety: provides basic nutritional information and strategies for weight control, performance and general health to help officers cope with daily stressors.

## **B. Officer Conduct Issues**

### **Recommendation B.1. Fully adopt the policies, training, and supervisory procedures regarding procedural justice and de-escalation outlined in the President's Task force on 21st Century Policing and the PERF Guiding Principles on Use of Force, and publicize these policies to the community.**

The university supports this recommendation. KUPSO is committed to using the six pillars of the President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing and PERF's Guiding Principles on Use of Force to improve the department's policies, training and supervisory procedures.

The department has updated its policy on employee conduct to include the four principles of Procedural Justice included in Pillar 1 of the President's Task Force (Building Trust and Legitimacy). The updated policy has been added to the department website (see Recommendation B.5. below). The department will ensure that officers receive training on Procedural Justice consistent with the policy.

The department Use of Force Policy has been adapted to reflect the National Consensus Policy on Use of Force, which makes de-escalation a more proactive practice. De-escalation has always been an important part of the department's use-of-force training, and department instructors will be examining methods and techniques to increase the frequency and prominence of all elements of de-escalation, including those aligned with the Critical Decision-Making Model. (See Recommendation B.4.)

**Recommendation B.2. Publicize department policy on use of force and procedures for investigating and evaluating instances of use of force.**

The Use of Force Policy, which includes investigative procedures, has been added to the KUPSO website. In addition, KUPSO will provide on their website a summary listing of use-of-force incidents that have occurred in the last five years. Summaries of any future use-of-force incidents will be added to the website after the investigation into the incidents are completed.

**Recommendation B.3. Continue initiative to gather data on the race and ethnicity of persons stopped by KU officers.**

The university supports this recommendation. The initiative is continuing, however data collection has been affected by minimal on-campus population and officer/public contacts due to the pandemic. The study's researchers have asked for and received an extension of the timeline of the study.

KUPSO is committed to using results of the study to provide crucial insight of officers' public interactions with the goal of eliminating any disparities that are identified. KUPSO is also committed to continuing to gather this data beyond the end of the current study, and using the analytic tools that the study provides to monitor for any disparities in officers' public interactions on a regular and on-going basis.

**Recommendation B.4. Conduct a thorough review of the KUPSO Use of Force Policy and revise it to bring it into consistency with the principles outlined above and recommendations from the Department of Justice and other authorities.**

The KUPSO Use of Force Policy has been revised to mirror the language of the National Consensus Policy on Use of Force. Notable differences from the Consensus Policy include a prohibition of warning shots and an expansion of the section on use-of-force reporting by officers who use force and by those who witness it.

Presidential Executive Order No. 13929, Safe Policing for Safe Communities, dated June 16, 2020, mandates that the U.S. Department of Justice's discretionary grant funding is only available to law enforcement agencies that have obtained certification that they meet certain standard on use of force. On January 28, 2021, KUPSO applied for that certification. The application included providing our Use of Force Policy and a declarations statement affirming that our use-of-force guidelines adhere to all applicable federal, state and local laws, and that our policy prohibits choke holds, except in situations where the use of deadly force is allowed by law. On January 31, 2021, we received that certification for three years.

KUPSO is committed to adopting the Critical Decision-Making Model, which is training that includes key concepts articulated in PERF's Guiding Principles on Use of Force. Those concepts include using distance and cover to create time to consider appropriate responses, applying de-escalation strategies, considering the proportionality of police actions, and appropriately responding to individuals experiencing mental health crises. The Critical Decision Making model will teach officers to put these concepts into action by providing them with a logical thought process for managing challenging situations. KUPSO has researched the steps necessary to send officers to attend train-the-trainer training as soon as a 2021 schedule is provided by PERF.

**Recommendation B.5. Publicize department policies related to use of force and officer conduct toward members of the public.**

The university supports this recommendation (which, it should be noted, is partially redundant of Recommendation B.2). All relevant policies have been added to a section of the department website. Those policies include:

- D Professional Standards
- E. Use of Force
- H. Complaint Investigation
- J. Racial or other biased Based Policing

**C. Advisory and Oversight Processes**

**Recommendation C.1. Create a police oversight board.**

The university supports this recommendation and believes it could lead to a more open relationship between KUPSO and the university community. A critical factor of any oversight board is a clear statement of its purpose and mission. The Office of the Chancellor is committed to working on a clear statement of purpose and mission, as well as related details, during summer 2021 and having a board in place by the fall semester.

**Recommendation C.2. Develop a distributed complaint receiving process.**

The university supports this recommendation. Training for these offices on campus should be straightforward with the department’s complaint form acting as a guide to gather the information necessary to investigate the complaint.

**Recommendation C.3. Appoint and train several officers as liaisons to groups in the KU community.**

The university supports this recommendation. KUPSO also supports this plan and the active and on-going participation of its officers who would like to be liaisons. KUPSO believes there are some officers who would be interested.