



Aurora Police Department  
**Initiatives for Enhancing  
Community Relations**  
*Serve Community*

Aurora Police Chief Nick Metz





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**CITIZENS OF AURORA**

**CHIEF OF POLICE**  
Nicholas Metz

**INTERNAL AFFAIRS BUREAU**  
Commander Harry Glidden

**LEGAL ADVISER**  
Senior Assistant City Attorney  
Nancy Rodgers

**OFFICE MANAGER**  
Vacant

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER**  
Lieutenant Darin Parker

**MEDIA RELATIONS UNIT**  
Sergeant Chris Amsler

**RECRUITING UNIT**

**DEPUTY POLICE CHIEF**  
Paul O'Keefe

**OPERATIONS DIVISION**  
Division Chief Vanessa Wilson

**DISTRICT 1**  
Commander Mike Dailey

**DISTRICT 2**  
Commander Marcus Dudley

**DISTRICT 3**  
Commander Eric Stewart

**OPERATIONS SUPPORT SECTION**

**METRO DIVISION**  
Division Chief Kevin Flynn

**INVESTIGATIONS BUREAU**  
Commander Ernie Ortiz

**SPECIAL OPERATIONS BUREAU**

**CRIME LAB SECTION**

**COMPLIANCE & PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS DIVISION**  
Division Chief Jim Puscian

**TRAINING SECTION**

**PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS SECTION**

**BACKGROUND AND FIELD TRAINING SECTION**

**BUSINESS SERVICES DIVISION**  
Manager John Schneebeck

**TECHNICAL & SUPPORT BUREAU**

**TECH SERVICES SECTION**

**ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES SECTION**

**RECORDS SECTION**





## 353,000 Residents in Aurora

**The Aurora Police Department (APD) is a major metropolitan municipal law enforcement agency serving just over 353,000 residents.**

APD is nationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, and employs 665 officers and 135 civilians. APD is nationally recognized and respected for its handling of a mass shooting that occurred inside a movie theater on July 20, 2012. This attack involved a lone gunman and resulted in 12 deaths with 70 others injured. Agency members are attributed with saving the lives of many injured victims through direct transports to area hospitals while other public safety personnel were en route or attempted to access the scene.

The department also received national attention for its participation and partnerships with federal agencies and the Denver Police Department while providing security during the 2008 Democratic National Convention.

Despite accolades for performance associated with these and many other events, APD leadership understands this department is not immune to the criticisms and mistrust felt by some in our community. Technological advancements (i.e., body cameras, cellular phone video capabilities, social media, etc.) have provided an unprecedented insight into policing, providing an extraordinary opportunity for transparency for law enforcement.

Conversely, that same technology has also captured and reported on acts by police officers that were questionable, deserving of policy reviews, and in some regards criminal. The increased insight into policing and high-profile officer-involved incidents has had a negative impact on the public's perception of police officers. Agencies across the country are responding to the negative perceptions and issues of mistrust within their community by bringing forward initiatives aimed not just at reducing crime, but also enhancing – and in some instances, developing – community partnerships.

**The APD has an organizational mission: "TO MAKE AURORA SAFER EVERY DAY."** Achieving this mission is simply not possible without the support, trust and cooperation of the community. Since starting as Chief of Police in March 2015, I have identified a number of opportunities for initiatives to enhance the relationship between the police department and the community. Coincidentally, they model many of the recommendations set forth in the "Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing– May 2015." (It should be noted that a copy of the report has been provided to members at the rank of Lieutenant and above, and will be required reading for those taking future promotional examinations for the ranks of Lieutenant and Captain.)

*"In light of recent events that have exposed rifts in the relationships between local police and the communities they protect and serve, on December 18, 2014, President Barack Obama signed an executive order establishing the Task Force on 21st Century Policing. The President charged the task force with identifying best practices and offering recommendations on how policing practices can promote effective crime reduction while building public trust." (Final Report of The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing – May 2015 <sup>1</sup>)*

**The President’s task force identified six areas or “pillars” where law enforcement should focus efforts within their communities:**

1. BUILDING TRUST AND LEGITIMACY – relationship building.
2. POLICY AND OVERSIGHT – ensuring accountability that provides for community input.
3. TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA – developing standards for use of new tools that promote greater access and transparency.
4. COMMUNITY POLICING AND CRIME REDUCTION – addressing matters of public safety through approaches using multidisciplinary teams, community and youth.
5. TRAINING AND EDUCATION – improving the quality of training by establishing partnerships, standards and joint facilities.
6. OFFICER WELLNESS AND SAFETY – promoting internal policies and training that reinforce wellness and safety.

Initiatives I have identified for enhancing community relations in Aurora and the corresponding pillar(s) recommended by the “Task Force on 21st Century Policing” are summarized on the following pages.



## Initiatives

### A. Reorganize the Department (April 2015)

To establish a culture of transparency and accountability, to strive for a more diverse workforce, and to improve the workplace efficiency and operation of the department, the APD was reorganized in April 2015. Highlights of that reorganization are:

- a. **Diversification of staff and promotion of internal procedural fairness** at the Executive ranks.
  1. For the first time in the organization’s 108-year history, a female member was appointed to the position of Division Chief.
  2. For only the second time in the organization’s history, a Latino male was appointed to the position of District Commander.
  3. For the first time, an African American was appointed Executive Officer to the Chief of Police.



## Initiatives

- b. **Creation of a Compliance and Professional Standards Division**, which is responsible for the research, review, amendment and development of APD policies and procedures. This command oversees the agency's training unit and those responsible for completing background investigations for prospective new employees. Also under this division, a newly appointed Division Chief is responsible for review of the agency's use of force policies to make sure APD is following best practices when it comes to the training, reporting, practices when it comes to the training, reporting, investigating, reviewing and tracking of officer Use of Force incidents. Two significant changes have already been implemented under the oversight of this division. They are:
  1. The development of a Tier system for assessing officer-involved incidents where force is applied. The Tier approach identifies officer and supervisor reporting requirements, investigative responsibilities, incident review processes, and specifies methods for tracking Use of Force incidents. This new process collects never-before-tracked information and ensures a standardized approach is consistently applied when investigating such incidents.
  2. The designation of a Force Review Board (FRB) to evaluate officer-involved Use of Force incidents for purposes of identifying areas for improved training and addressing any policy shortcomings.
- c. **Addition of a new in-house legal adviser**, assigned by the City Attorney's Office and located within the Office of the Chief of Police. The responsibilities of the position include:
  - Assisting with drafting and developing policies and procedures.
  - Advising on personnel issues.
  - Assisting staff in handling discovery and records requests from attorneys, law enforcement agencies and the general public.
  - Conducting in-service training for members on matters of federal, state and local law.
  - Preparing and reviewing legal documents, as needed.
  - Monitoring, reviewing and helping to draft legislation—as it relates to enforcement issues.
  - Providing legal updates and alerts to APD personnel.
  - Providing general guidance and advice on criminal and civil law matters.
- d. **Addition of more oversight and responsibilities to the Internal Affairs Bureau.** Operations were previously overseen by a Lieutenant. Now, increased responsibilities and added staffing will be under the direction of a Commander.



## Initiatives

### B. Enhance and Relocate the Internal Affairs Bureau

To reaffirm a culture of accountability and to promote legitimacy internally, the APD made significant changes to the Internal Affairs Bureau, which is primarily responsible for investigating allegations of misconduct involving officers.

- a. **The Bureau was relocated from Police Headquarters** to a new off-site location with a separate entrance to its offices. The move is intended to improve access and service to the community.
- b. **Two additional investigators have been assigned to the Bureau.** The unit previously consisted of a Lieutenant, two Sergeants, and an Administrative Technician. The unit now consists of the newly appointed Commander, a Lieutenant, two Sergeants, two Agents and an Administrative Technician. The increase in staffing (from three to six investigators) will allow for all complaints to come into a central location for screening and investigative assignment, applying a consistent approach.
- c. **Policy and procedures will continue to be reviewed** with the intent of improving the quality and timeliness of investigations, and to ensure appropriate strategies are applied and outcomes achieved to increase trust with the public APD serves.

### C. Work With the Community and City Officials to Educate and Encourage Participation on the Independent Review Board (IRB)

This review board consists of citizens appointed by the Aurora City Council, serving alongside police officers.

- a. **The Independent Review Board is impaneled to review police actions** in controversial incidents. Board members also assist the Chief of Police in a deliberative process to recommend discipline for instances of sustained misconduct by subject members.
- b. **To be appointed by the council to the Independent Review Board**, citizens complete an application and are screened. Upon being nominated and confirmed by the city council, Independent Review Board members undergo training and serve a three-year term as part of a 20-person pool.







## Initiatives

### D. Establish a New Citizen Advisory Board

This advisory board will consist of citizens chosen by the Chief of Police from among public and private sector business partners, community groups, faith communities and private citizens. The member selection process and length of terms also will be determined by the Chief of Police.

- a. **The Citizen Advisory Board will be impaneled to review specific policy or project** considerations, weigh in on strategic planning, and potentially assist in the ongoing examination of personnel practices.
- b. **The Citizen Advisory Board will not set policy or have involvement in managing** the day to day activities associated with policing. However, the board's collective input will have significant influence upon decisions made by police executives, allowing for a more collaborative policy-setting approach between police and community than now exists.

### E. Recruitment Strategies Committee Update

- a. **The committee is composed of internal members and public and private sector business partners** working together to develop departmental police recruiting strategies and approaches.
- b. **After nine months of work, the committee submitted its final report** of recommendations to the Chief of Police. It is seeking not only to enhance the overall quality and quantity of applicants, but also to improve the diversification among applicants and build an organization that more closely mirrors Aurora's multi-cultural community. A determination of the recruiting initiatives the agency will pursue is expected in the coming weeks.
- c. **Ahead of the release of the committee's final report**, the Chief of Police accepted the committee's recommendation to separate the department's Recruiting Unit from the function of conducting background investigations, among various other functions. The Recruiting Unit was moved to the Chief's office from the main city building. The relocation is intended to provide the recruiters greater access to community partners, provide more focused approaches, and make it easier to work jointly with personnel responsible for marketing and branding the police department.



## Initiatives

### F. Departmentwide Body Worn Camera Program Update

Aurora City Council adopted funding in the 2015 and 2016 budgets for the Police Body Worn Camera Program.

1. The funding outfitted uniformed personnel in Patrol districts below the rank of Lieutenant with body worn cameras, as well as some tactical units.
2. The funding also provided for additional staff to process video data and increase data storage capabilities.

It surprises some to learn that many officers, if not most, welcomed use of body worn cameras as a means to validate professional service provided to the community.

From January through April 2016, nine officers wearing body worn cameras have been the subject of complaints. All complaints alleged some form of rudeness or wrongdoing on the part of the officer. An investigative finding for each determined the complaints to be unfounded due to information contained on the video. One complainant was arrested for filing a false police report. As of this reporting, there had not been a sustained complaint against an officer when a body camera was present and recording.

### G. Engage in Increased Community Outreach

#### a. Use of Technology

1. APD maintains a website to share information and make services accessible to the public. The website delineates how to file a commendation or complaint on a police officer, join the agency, participate in citizen academies or volunteer for APD. It also enables community members to self-initiate filing some types of reports online.<sup>2</sup>
2. APD uses social media as a means to interact with citizens. We maintain accounts with Facebook, Twitter and Nextdoor.com. In fact, we proudly host two Twitter accounts – one in English and the other in Spanish.<sup>3</sup>

#### b. Personal Involvement and Commitment

1. Uniformed officers of all ranks are encouraged to engage in positive interactions with community members. Policing is expected to occur outside the patrol vehicle, not solely from within it.

There are numerous examples of officers showing commitment by engaging in self-initiated activities, which resulted in positive interactions with citizens. Described in brevity, the following two examples illustrate but a small sampling of efforts:



## Initiatives

- **Officers responded to a theft call involving children belonging to a Girl Scouts troop** who had their money stolen while selling cookies in front of a store. To help the troop recoup their losses, multiple officers immediately contributed and coordinated purchases and donations in support of the youth.<sup>4</sup>
- **A couple of officers went to a home where a teen had punched a hole in a wall after a heated argument with another family member.** The next day, on their day off, the officers returned to the home with supplies they purchased with their own money to fix the hole. More importantly, the officers did not make the repairs for the teen, instead instructing him how to fix the wall and avoid causing future damage. It was evident to the officers that the teen appreciated their help and advice.<sup>5</sup>
- 2. **Officers of all ranks attend community forums or services involving communities of faith.** Participating members proudly wear their uniform on such occasions to lessen the apprehension it causes some, and to show that the uniform also represents positive community interaction. If event hosts make known concerns that officers wearing the uniform may be disruptive and hosts can't be dissuaded, APD will attend in plain clothes.
- 3. **Command officers regularly attend meetings and events to educate and serve** as resources for community groups seeking equality. Organizations we partner with include the NAACP, Urban League and Rights for All People. The city of Aurora also hosts a group called the Key Community Response Team (KCRT, also pictured), which is composed of community leaders and activists who meet monthly to share information and address matters of concern involving the city's public safety departments.  
**The APD works closely with various leaders to create additional community councils** to undertake and lead in solving issues that impact the perception of law enforcement, both nationally and locally.
- 4. **In the aftermath of major criminal incidents, patrol district personnel engage in a process of "reassurance messaging"** within impacted communities. Officers canvass neighborhoods to encourage citizens to report criminal activity or suspicious behavior, while explaining crime fighting efforts being taken to address the cause for concern.
- 5. **Due to growing anti-Muslim sentiment** across the country, APD appointed a liaison officer to enhance its relations within the Muslim community. Serving a Muslim population of about 35,000 people, an officer of Muslim descent, who speaks Farsi, voluntarily conducts weekly outreach efforts and coordinates engagement opportunities.

6. **APD has a nationally recognized Volunteers in Policing Program** that has existed for over 44 years. The program comprises citizens of all ages. In 2015, a total of 452 volunteers donated 32,149 hours, which saved the city \$741,678. The APD's citizen volunteer program includes:

- Victim Services – provide emotional support and intervention for crime victims.
- Chaplains – provide counseling and support for officers and the community.
- Interpreters – provide translation and interpretation services to assist officers with serving the city's broad and diverse communities.
- Explorers – provide young people interested in law enforcement the opportunity to be mentored by officers, receive training and perform community service.
- Citizen & Teen Police Academies – provide adults and teens condensed versions of training in police services. Participants are then expected to provide support for non-enforcement police activities and serve at special community events.

The partnership with our citizen volunteers has both expanded and enhanced the police services provided to our community, and is integral to APD's operations.

7. **APD sponsors other youth programs for ages ranging from 5 to 18.** These include providing educational programming and an array of prevention and intervention services that build youth resiliency to drugs, gangs and violence.

8. **APD collaborates with youth from area high schools and colleges** to develop a youth guide booklet. It is a guide written for youth, by youth, with the support of department personnel. Some topics illustrated in the booklet are Know Your Rights, Traffic Laws, Complaint - Commendation Procedures, and Policing & Volunteer Opportunities.

## H. Evaluate and Revise Officer Training

To reinforce the value of positive community engagement, entry level academies will be exposed to various community organizations while in training. One of a series of activities involves youth groups playing sports with the recruits during some of the scheduled physical fitness training sessions. There is a renewed focus on training in de-escalation techniques and use of less lethal devices during entry level academies and annual in-service sessions.

APD will be bringing procedural justice training, sponsored by the Department of Justice's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) office, to our agency. This training consists of four pillars (principles): 1) fairness and consistency of rule application, 2) voice and representation in the process, 3) transparency and openness of process, and 4) impartiality and unbiased decision making. Introducing members to the concepts of procedural justice training will increase awareness about how they expect to be treated and assist them in ensuring the practice is promoted within the community we serve.

In February 2016, the city opened the new City of Aurora Public Safety Training Center (CAPSTC). The joint public safety facility enhances the capacity of the training center and compels side-by-side training between police and fire.





## Initiatives

### I. Promote Officer Wellness and Safety

#### a. Personnel Early Intervention System

1. A time-sensitive system designed to monitor risk indicators and promptly identify certain performance and/or stress-related issues to facilitate any necessary or appropriate follow-up activities by supervisors for their employees. Alerts are emailed directly to supervisors for early intervention when indicators are triggered as a result of the automated Performance Appraisal Entry system.
2. It is not a discipline system but rather a system to help APD identify members who may need assistance.
3. Supervisors are responsible for initiating the review process of any activities by the employee that cause the alert. The review, counseling of the subordinate, any recommendation(s) for assistance, and notification up the employee's chain of command are required.

#### b. Wellness for Officers

1. The department created a new Employee Support Unit (ESU) to help employees with
  - a. **Peer Support** – This consists of fellow members trained to provide support to officers experiencing personal or professional crisis.
  - b. **Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Training** – APD will implement tools from this crisis intervention system to assist members with understanding their experience and provide methods to appropriately debrief after critical incidents.
  - c. **Psychological Services** – APD contracts with a service provider that specializes in police psychology, crisis intervention, trauma recovery and violence prevention. APD members are permitted to self-refer, or referrals can be initiated by the employee's supervisor.
  - d. **Long-term light duty and sick leave issues** – helping to prevent officers from going past the city limit on light duty or sick leave to save jobs and keep productive members on the force.
  - e. **Understanding the workers compensation rules and system** – to help officers understand the rules and their responsibility when hurt on the job, so they can heal quickly and completely.
  - f. **Disability retirements** – to help officers who cannot return to work understand their rights and responsibilities to obtain disability retirement.

## City of Aurora Interdepartmental Collaborations

### A. Office of International and Immigrant Affairs

APD participates in integration programs for international and immigrant communities to share public safety information on police services.

A member of Executive Command staff is appointed to the International Cabinet, which is an inter-agency working group that meets on a monthly basis. The cabinet meets to coordinate city services and share resources for improvement in the efficiency and manner by which services are provided as relates to immigrant integration.

### B. Communications Department

The City's Communications Department has overseen a translation services program whereby interns were contracted from the Community College of Aurora to convert documents. APD's Media Relations Unit coordinated with City Communications to have documents and standard forms converted from English to Spanish. We hope to have other language conversion resources and programs available in the not too distant future.

### C. Aurora Fire Rescue

To better serve citizens, APD and Aurora Fire Rescue jointly train at the City of Aurora Public Safety Training Center. The new facility enables personnel from both agencies to more readily work together. One collaboration already exists, which utilizes High Risk Extraction Protocols (HREP) to provide a more rapid response when evacuating critically wounded individuals from active attacks. HREP integrates first responders during high risk critical incidents to preserve life.

## Compliance with Newly Enacted State Laws

### A. Senate Bill 15-217 - Officer Involved Shooting Data Collection

Colorado Senate Bill 15-217<sup>6</sup> requires any state or local law enforcement agency that employs a peace officer - who is in an officer-involved shooting that results in a person suspected of criminal activity being shot at by the officer - to report the information to the state.

Data collected by agencies and reported is to include demographic information on the officer and individual shot and search, citation and arrest information for all shootings that occurred between Jan. 1, 2010, and June 30, 2015, and then information for each successive year until 2020.

### B. Senate Bill 15-219 - Officer Involved Shooting Transparency

Colorado Senate Bill 15-219<sup>7</sup> requires each law enforcement agency to develop protocols for participating in a multi-agency team or involving another law enforcement agency in the investigation of an officer-involved shooting.

To promote transparency and increased credibility to the outcome of an investigation, APD has teamed with the Denver Police Department for officer-involved shooting incidents.

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## Conclusion:

Each of the initiatives described in this report supports the goal of and opportunities for APD to strengthen community relations and to promote agency transparency. We encourage members to think outside traditional means as we seek opportunities to grow existing community partnerships and develop new ones.

I have met with the Department of Justice's Community Relations Service and look forward to an ongoing solid working partnership, as we continue to develop and move forward with implementation of our initiatives.

These are challenging times for law enforcement nationwide. However, we believe that through working together with the members of our community, as well as our local and federal law enforcement partners, we can further connect with our community and "make Aurora safer every day."



Aurora Police Chief Nick Metz



Worth Discovering  
auroragov.org



*In memory of our fallen heroes*

Patrolwoman Debra Sue Corr

*June 27, 1981*

Patrolman Thomas Joseph Dietzman, Jr.

*August 16, 1985*

Agent Edward John Hockom

*September 21, 1987*

Agent Michael Del Thomas

*September 20, 2006*

Officer Doug Byrne

*March 26, 2007*