

Community Relations

313.1 VERSION

Agency Content

Review Date	Effective Date	Approving Authority
01/25/19	07/09/18	Eric D. English, Chief of Police

313.2 POLICY AND PURPOSE

Best Practice **MODIFIED**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for community relationship-building. The Harrisonburg Police Department strives to promote positive relationships between department members and the community by treating community members with dignity and respect and engaging them in public safety strategy development and relationship-building activities, and by making relevant policy and operations information available to the community in a transparent manner.

313.3 ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

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All employees are expected to fully comply with the guidelines and timelines set forth in this policy. Responsibility rests with the supervisor to ensure that any violations of policy are investigated and appropriate training, counseling and/or disciplinary action is initiated. This directive is for internal use only, and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

313.4 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

Best Practice **MODIFIED** VLEPSC - ADM.20.01 (a), ADM.20.01 (c)

Officers should, as time and circumstances reasonably permit:

- (a) Make casual and consensual contacts with community members to promote positive community relationships (see the Contacts and Temporary Detentions Policy).
- (b) Become reasonably familiar with the schools, businesses and community groups in their assigned jurisdictional areas.
- (c) Work with community members and the department community resource unit to identify issues and solve problems related to community relations and public safety.
- (d) Conduct periodic foot patrols of their assigned areas to facilitate interaction with community members. Officers carrying out foot patrols should notify Emergency Communications Center of their status (i.e., on foot patrol) and location before beginning and upon completion of the foot patrol. They should also periodically inform Emergency Communications Center of their location and status during the foot patrol.

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313.5 COMMUNITY RESOURCE UNIT

Best Practice **MODIFIED** VLEPSC - ADM.20.01 (a), ADM.20.01 (b), ADM.20.01 (c), ADM.21.01 (a), ADM.21.01 (b), ADM.21.01 (c), ADM.21.01 (d)

The Community Resource Unit (CRU) is responsible for:

- (a) Responding to requests from department members and the community for assistance in identifying issues and solving problems related to community relations and public safety.
- (b) Organizing surveys to measure the condition of the department's relationship with the community.
- (c) Working with community groups, department members and other community resources to:
 - (a) Identify and solve public safety problems and quality of life issues within the community.
 - (b) Organize programs and activities that help build positive relationships between department members and the community and provide community members with an improved understanding of department operations.
 - (c) Provide community members with an improved understanding of department operations.
- (d) Working with the departments PIO team to inform/educate on community activities through traditional and social media outlets.
- (e) Recognizing department and community members for exceptional work or performance in community relations efforts.
- (f) Attending City council and other community meetings to obtain information on community relations needs.
- (g) Assisting with the department's response to events that may affect community relations, such as an incident where the conduct of a department employee is called into public question.
- (h) Informing the Chief of Police and others of developments and needs related to the furtherance of the department's community relations goals, as appropriate.

313.6 COMMUNITY AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

Best Practice **MODIFIED** VLEPSC - ADM.21.01 (a), ADM.21.01 (c), OPR.04.04 (a), OPR.04.04 (b), ADM.20.01 (a), ADM.20.01 (b)

The CRU should organize or assist with programs and activities that create opportunities for department employees and community members, especially youth, to interact in a positive setting. Examples of such programs and events include:

- (a) Department-sponsored athletic programs (e.g., baseball, basketball, soccer, bowling).
- (b) Police-community get-togethers (e.g., cookouts, meals, charity events).
- (c) Youth leadership and life skills mentoring.
- (d) Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.®) programs.

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- (e) Neighborhood Watch and crime prevention programs.

313.7 INFORMATION SHARING

Best Practice MODIFIED VLEPSC - ADM.20.01 (a), ADM.20.01 (b), ADM.21.01 (a), ADM.21.01 (c)

The CRU should work with the Public Information Officer to develop methods and procedures for the convenient sharing of information (e.g., major incident notifications, significant changes in department operations, comments, feedback, positive events) between the Department and community members. Examples of information-sharing methods include:

- (a) Community meetings.
- (b) Social media (see the Department Use of Social Media Policy).
- (c) Department website postings.

Information should be regularly refreshed, to inform and engage community members continuously.

The CRU acts as the community liaison for the department, by maintain a working relationship with community partners. CRU works closely with the Crime Analyst to facilitate the dissemination of appropriate crime analysis data. They will also work closely with the Crime Analyst to use all available data to guide effective community crime prevention activities.

313.8 LAW ENFORCEMENT OPERATIONS EDUCATION

Best Practice MODIFIED VLEPSC - ADM.21.01 (a)

The CRU should develop methods to educate community members on general law enforcement operations so they may understand the work that officers do to keep the community safe. Examples of educational methods include:

- (a) Development and distribution of informational cards/flyers.
- (b) Department website postings.
- (c) Presentations to driver education classes.
- (d) Instruction in schools (when requested).
- (e) Department ride-alongs (see the Ride-Alongs Policy).
- (f) Scenario/Simulation exercises with community member participation.
- (g) Youth internships at the Department.
- (h) Community Police Academy
- (i) Community Police Alumni Association

Instructional information should include direction on how community members should interact with the police during enforcement or investigative contacts and how community members can make a complaint to the Department regarding alleged misconduct or inappropriate job performance by department employees.

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313.9 SAFETY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Best Practice **MODIFIED**

Department employees responsible for community relations activities should consider the safety of the community participants and, as much as reasonably practicable, should not allow them to be present in any location or situation that would jeopardize their safety.

Department employees in charge of community relations events should ensure that participating community members have completed waiver forms before participation, if appropriate. A parent or guardian must complete the waiver form if the participating community member has not reached 18 years of age.

Community members are subject to a criminal history check before approval for participation in certain activities, such as citizen academies.

313.10 CHIEF'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Best Practice **MODIFIED** VLEPSC - ADM.20.01 (a), ADM.20.01 (b), ADM.20.01 (d), ADM.21.01 (a), ADM.21.01 (c)

The Chief of Police should establish a committee of volunteers consisting of community members, community leaders and other community stakeholders (e.g., representatives from schools, churches, businesses, social service organizations). The makeup of the committee should reflect the demographics of the community as much as practicable.

The committee should convene regularly to:

- (a) Provide a public forum for gathering information about public safety concerns in the community.
- (b) Work with the Department to develop strategies to solve public safety problems.
- (c) Generate plans for improving the relationship between the Department and the community.
- (d) Participate in community outreach to solicit input from community members, including youth from the community.

The Chief of Police may include the committee in the evaluation and development of department policies and procedures and may ask them to review certain personnel complaints for the purpose of providing recommendations regarding supervisory, training or other issues as appropriate.

313.11 TRANSPARENCY

Best Practice **MODIFIED** VLEPSC - ADM.21.01 (b)

The Department should periodically publish statistical data and analysis regarding the department's operations. The reports should not contain the names of officers, suspects or case numbers. The CRU should work with the Chief's advisory committee to identify information that may increase transparency regarding department operations.