



SHERIFF

WASHINGTON COUNTY

CONSERVING THE PEACE THROUGH VALUES DRIVEN SERVICE / SHERIFF PAT GARRETT

February 23, 2023

Dear Community Workshop Attendees,

As you recall, in 2020, we invited national experts at [Polis Solutions](#) to review WCSO use of force policies, procedures, training, and administrative matters to ensure we strongly align with best practices, engage more deeply with stakeholders, and foster community trust and safety. On April 5, 2022, you participated in our community workshop to review the recommendations, provide feedback and ask questions. We are grateful for your help. This project remains critically important because police use of force remains one of the most consequential actions of public safety officers and is directly related to public trust. It is also worth noting the Polis research team found Patrol deputy use of force is significantly lower than the national average.¹

The purpose of this letter and enclosure is to update you about our progress regarding recommendations from the report. Our ability to implement Polis recommendations varies, considering complexity and cost. Several are easily implemented, like adding "Serving Washington County" atop our organizational chart to represent our service to community, and as a values statement that the sheriff and staff are accountable to the public (#31). Other recommendations take more time to plan and resource in a manner that best addresses the salient points of a recommendation and ensures positive organizational-wide impacts, like implementing more robust coursework for all leaders (#61). Several recommendations are cost-prohibitive, like expanding training center operations to become a "regional center for excellence" (#57). At least one recommendation is partially implemented by actions outside the WCSO, like establishing a discipline matrix (#39) enacted by Oregon [House Bill 2930](#) (2021).

After a significant review of the report's 71 recommendations, the status of each recommendation is found in the detailed attachment among four categories, followed by examples for each category.

- **14 Implemented:** The execution or practice of a plan, method, idea, model, specification, standard, or policy for the recommended actions have been taken.
- **10 Partially Implemented:** A portion of the recommend actions have been taken.
- **37 In Process:** Recommendation has been started and is still being worked on.
- **10 Not Implemented:** No recommended actions were taken.

Implemented. Integrating systems for tracking, reporting, and reviewing use of force is accomplished by fully implementing a new reporting system (LEFTA Systems) in 2021 (#25). In internal investigations, we returned to a direct line of communication between Professional Standard Unit (PSU) investigators and the Sheriff and Undersheriff while keeping operational commanders updated (#30). We strengthened the authority of PSU investigators to issue findings based on their fact-finding personnel investigations (#37). Through a Peer Support working group led by the Undersheriff and Senior Chaplain, we increased wellness resource access for staff, increased Peer Support Team membership, and improved their training and organization (#51). It is worth mentioning this work is necessitated, in part, by examples where Employee Assistance Program resources were

¹ WCSO Patrol use of force was .4% of community contacts in 2020, compared to national average of 1 to 2% (page 7, Polis Report).

lacking, especially those required to meet unique primary and secondary trauma experienced by public-safety first responders. In addition, WCSO training plans ensure uniformity, integration, and consistency of use of force training among patrol and jail personnel through joint training events and scenarios (#62 and #63).

Partially Implemented. WCSO maintains three national accreditation programs and conducts over a dozen internal annual audits. Polis recommended we integrate data from all audits and inspections related to use of force to provide continuity between Jail and Patrol Division procedures (#24). Consistent with this recommendation, we merged analysts who support audit work into one team and ensured cross-divisional review to give careful attention to trends in use of force by and against deputies and continuity between Jail and Patrol procedures. However, we do not believe full integration of all audits is appropriate because some are dissimilar; an example includes jail use of force and patrol vehicle pursuits.

In Process. We are implementing the first 23 of 24 recommendations about use of force policy. This makes it explicit that use of force must be grounded in a culture of necessity rather than permissibility, improve information available to staff about the *objective reasonableness* legal standard and other factors when determining the appropriateness of force, and better align policy with national best practices. The new, comprehensive policy provides a more detailed listing of use of force tools and techniques, consolidates five policies into one, and will drive training and internal review. Our policy workgroup expects the new policy will be complete by April 2023.²

Not Implemented. After consultation with legal counsel and much consideration, we decided against explicitly prohibiting warning shots in policy (#12). This policy option is particularly suitable for rural policing where cover is far-off. Current policy language appropriately restricts its use to circumstances "*when the only other resolution to the situation would be the use of deadly physical force*" (Policy 1303). While over 20 years ago, a warning shot resolved a severe encounter without injury where a group of threatening, non-compliant, and advancing individuals in rural Washington County surrounded a lone deputy. Polis supports "improvised tactics and tools when it is reasonable and necessary to do so to safely and lawfully resolve exceptional and unforeseen situations."³ Retaining this policy is appropriate for serious, exceptional, and unforeseen circumstances, mostly fitting rural policing. In addition, recommendations, where budget limitations prevent implementation, include adding patrol lieutenant positions to ensure one is on duty at all hours (#48); adding administrative support positions to largely free sergeants from such duties (#49); and fully integrate our Training Unit, Professional Standards Unit, Survival Skills Committee, and Body Worn Camera Program with continuous outside expert review of incidents and patterns of force (#69).

I am proud of the hard work of our staff, community partners, and the Polis Team for their valuable input, experience, and perspective that enabled us to make sound implementation decisions. As a learning organization, we thank you for providing your voice and perspective to help us best serve our community.

Sincerely,



Sheriff Pat Garrett
Washington County

Enclosure

² New use of force policy is modelled after the Las Vegas Metro Police Department's policy, one of several recommended by Dr. Winder.

³ Winder, Jonathan, "Washington County Sheriff's Office Comprehensive Use of Force Review, Final Report and Recommendations", Polis Solutions, Inc. 2021, page 22