



Research Brief: Assessing Police-Community Relations in Rochester

Practitioner:

Rochester Police Department
Joseph Morabito
Deputy Chief
(585) 428-2190
Joseph.Morabito@cityofrochester.gov

Academic Partner:

Rochester Institute of
Technology (RIT)

Project Completed:

June 2019

Brief Issued:

October 2019

Summary:

Researchers from RIT worked with the Rochester Police Department to assess the relationship between police and the community and to identify areas for improvement.

Background

Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) researchers documented public perception of policing and the criminal justice system in the city of Rochester through focus groups with individuals from the community. Results were summarized under two main themes: community concerns and trust, and police interactions.

Design

Researchers conducted 14 focus groups with primarily justice-involved individuals from re-entry and youth programs, as well as community advocacy groups, faith-based organizations and academic institutions. Discussions centered on police-community relations and procedural justice, which focuses on fairness, transparency and impartiality in criminal justice processes and interactions.

Results

- Concerns expressed across all focus groups included drug activity and gun violence in the community and police-community relations with minorities.
- Almost all participants were dissatisfied with the police response to community concerns, particularly delayed response times to calls for service.
- Participants indicated that mistrust can stem from the perception that police officers enforcing the law in their

communities are not from that community.

- The majority of participants had had contact with the police in the past six months. Interactions were largely initiated by the police, most commonly through vehicle stops, court appointments, or with school resource officers. Interactions were described as neither positive nor negative.
- Factors that influenced participants' perspective of whether the interaction was positive or negative included who initiated the interaction, whether there was perceived bias on the part of either the citizen or the police officer, and delayed response times to calls for service.

Recommendations

To improve police-community relations, researchers recommended the Rochester Police Department take the following steps:

- Expand messaging to the community to include initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for justice-involved individuals;
- Consider creating sustained incentives for police officers who choose to live in the communities they serve; and
- Provide additional training for 9-1-1 dispatchers to ensure information from calls is communicated accurately to responding officers.

About the Research Consortium

An initiative of the state Division of Criminal Justice Services, the Research Consortium promotes criminal justice research and the use of data and evidence by facilitating partnerships between local practitioners and college and university-based researchers. The research design and conclusions detailed here are the sole work product of the academic partner that conducted the research. Neither DCJS nor the State of New York endorse the program, methodology or results.