

Together Lexington
Courageous Conversations
Police and Community Relations
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FUNNELING IDEAS INTO ACTION

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Purpose and Outcomes

Overall Purpose: To encourage meaningful discussion and awareness among all members of our community.

Meeting Purpose: To identify relationship concerns/issues between law enforcement and the Lexington community and share ideas on how to address them

Outcomes:

- Prioritized list of key issues that need to be addressed between law enforcement and the community's relationship
- List of ideas for how these concerns/issues might be addressed
- Recommendations for next steps

Introductory Activity and Opening Conversation

What have you seen nationally in the past year about the relationship between law enforcement and communities?

- I heard that during the recent women's march in Washington, DC some of the women hugged law enforcement who were blocking certain areas.
- The police shooting in Texas.
- Violence in Ferguson, Missouri.

Level of Trust

When participants arrived, they were asked to answer an anonymous survey regarding their current level of trust between the community and law enforcement in Lexington. They were given a five-point scale to respond: No Trust (1), Some Trust (2), Moderate Trust (3), Significant Trust (4), and Complete Trust (5). 18 people completed the survey.

The average level of trust locally was ranked 3.28, how does that surprise or concern anyone?

- I wouldn't expect to see a 1 or a 5 ranking, so it doesn't surprise me.
- I wouldn't want my doctor to get a ranking of trust at a level 3.
- Most of us (police) go to work every day wanting to be ranked a 5.
- There will have to be truth in telling the story to gain trust.

Local relationship examples between law enforcement and the community of Lexington

Where locally have you seen examples of the relationship breakdown between law enforcement and the community of Lexington?

- Sometimes the reaction is too quick and we need to wait for all the facts.
- The perception among community members is that the police use their aerial camera for certain events and don't use it in others. This creates the perception that the police are biased and it causes more distrust.
- The recent incident at the Portofino Restaurant and the follow up march that occurred.
- Young men of color have the perception that if pulled over in a car, they will end up in jail.

Where have you seen examples of positive relationships between law enforcement and the local community?

- I think whenever we see acts of kindness versus violence in the media we're surprised.
- Police working with sports programs and getting out into the community.

In a perfect world, what would the relationship look like between law enforcement and the community in Lexington?

- I can't see a positive vision. My life has been threatened and too much has happened to young men of color.
- I see a table of diverse young people sitting around a table with an officer and having a casual conversation. I see the same with a group of diverse adults in a community having a casual conversation with an officer.
- People need to understand both sides of a situation before judging the other.
- We (the police) are the ones who will have to put our necks out there to increase the trust factor. There's so much history that shows we're the cause of the distrust.

What are the key issues that need to be addressed between law enforcement and the community's relationship?

Participants were asked to answer the key question within their small groups. Once all of their issues and concerns were listed, each small group was asked to identify the two most critical issues for the community to address. Their prioritized responses are presented below.

Critical Issues and Concerns

- Build relationships so trust can be gained
- Communication and media
 - Diverse representations of officers and criminals
 - News, movies, social media
- Cultural awareness
 - Approaching community and those you are not aware of
- Educating
 - Knowing the history
- Identify fears and work to improve them
- Improve communication
- More diversity
 - Look like your community
- People knowing their rights
 - What they can say/protocols
- Protecting all citizens
- Transparency on how police departments works

Additional Issues and Concerns

- Accountability
- Acknowledgement of bias
- Biased storytelling in news reporting
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities
 - Inclusion or exclusion of details
- Commitment of the city to change police/community relations
- Communication
- Cultural bias
 - People don't know they can be or are being biased
 - People don't think it exists

- Dignity and respect
 - Kindness
- Diversification of leadership and police force
- Equality
 - Everyone be treated the same
- Fear of being followed by police for people of color when walking and/or driving
- Honesty and involvement of the faith community
 - Equality and accountability
- Issues between young people and authority
- Justice – unequal perception of deployment in neighborhoods
 - Bringing justice to all crimes – certain neighborhoods have the perception that crimes aren't given the same amount of attention as other areas
- Majority of police are in one area of town and not in affected areas
- National climate
- Reactive responses (sometimes the reaction is too quick and people don't wait for all the facts to be given)
- Recognition of roles and partnership roles for solutions
 - Difference in systems
- Respect
 - For the actions you put out
- Separating the law enforcement function and social services type issues
- Social media outrage
- Training and relationships in listening skills, trust, and restraint
 - Visibility/How to approach
- Trauma of officers and communities
 - Chronic stress
- Trust
 - Can/Will you protect me?

What can be done to address these issues?

Using their prioritized key issues, each small group was asked to answer the key question. Listed beneath each issue or concern are their ideas on how they can be addressed.

Building Relationships So Trust Can Be Gained

- Community advocates for responses
- Standard immersion
 - Faith communities
 - Schools
 - Government
 - Neighborhoods

Communication and Media

- Balance positive reporting with negative reporting
- Consistency when reporting on race and gender (show stories about crimes that include white on white; black on black; white on black; black on white, etc.)
- Projection of positive narratives

Cultural Awareness and Protecting All Citizens

- More training in consistent cultural awareness and bias
 - More community policing engagement

Educating People of Their Rights

- Information sessions
- Social media posts

Identify Fears and Work to Improve Them

- Create a social media forum to capture the fears and reveal what they are
- Have flexibility in police assignments

Improve Communication

- Become more social
 - Engage from outside the police car
- Commit to community meetings – Law enforcement needs to further public conversations and acknowledge the history of racial bias
 - Initiated by law enforcement
- Invest in community meetings in every sector with community based organizations

More Diversity of Officers

- Community ambassadors
- Junior/Citizen police academy
- Put in career academies for law enforcement
- Recruitment
 - Think outside of the box

Transparency in Police Department

- More face to face meetings with communities
- Use social media to build bridges
- Use social media to explain and update on procedures and issues

Key Next Steps

Participants were asked to provide recommendations for next steps based on the conversations.

- Actions that will make changes
- Begin with assumptions and facts at the beginning of the meetings
- Continue conversation
- Do this same type of focus groups for youth
- Invite/Target people who don't usually come to these types of meetings
- Use social media to spread the word

Meeting Debrief

To bring the session to a close, participants were asked to complete an evaluation. The complete evaluation results will be tabulated at the conclusion of the 12 conversations, but the closing three questions are included below to inform the remaining conversations. Duplicate responses are denoted with an asterisk.

1. What worked for you during tonight's session?

- Small group discussion*****
- Meeting format, diversity per table*
- The diversity of tables and good dialogue*
- All
- Free sharing of ideas
- I liked the different perspectives
- Open dialogue
- The views that people want to make it better

2. What would have made tonight's session better?

- More people to come*
- More time for small groups, starting event earlier*
- A little background to accommodate those not from Lexington
- An indication of data and framing
- Continue the small groups and happy to see a diverse group of people
- Dig deeper
- I think it was great, younger opinions would be helpful though
- Include more diversity and members of affected communities
- Information on concrete steps after this
- More participants who are angry

3. Do you have any lingering comments and/or questions?

- Found others who can give a different perspective that are normally unheard
- Great food, great conversations and diversity
- Keep changing the mindset of the world
- Must continue and attendees must act upon applicable ideas
- My second time attending, still not sure how these conversations lead to a bigger outcome
- No socioeconomic diversity
- Thank you!
- Too much preaching to the choir; conversations are more polite than courageous