

21st Century Policing: Pillars 5 and 6

Editor's Note: This, the last article in a series of four explaining The Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, is part of VLCT PACIF's efforts to encourage its member police departments to embrace and implement the principles put forth in the Report. This installment is a reprint of explanations of the main topic areas designated as Pillars 5 and 6 from City Officials Guide to Policing in the 21st Century, a recent publication of the National League of Cities (NLC) written specifically to help city officials understand how they can most effectively support their police departments in implementing the best practices and recommendations listed in the Report. While the NLC guide addresses cities, many of its messages have value for smaller-scale Vermont communities. The 20-page guide is [here](#) and the complete 116-page Report is on the U.S. Department of Justice's [Community Oriented Policing Services website](#).

Pillar Five: Training and Education

Pillar Five focuses on the training and education needs of law enforcement.

City leaders need to understand, support, and encourage law enforcement officers to receive training on community policing principles. Training programs in community policing should explore the dramatic shifts in society, technology, criminal trends, economics, and the very definition of “community” relative to law enforcement. Law enforcement officers need to understand problem-solving tools, practice de-escalation methods, discover examples of successful police and community partnerships, and be educated about directly linking to numerous community-policing resources.

City leaders need to ensure their law enforcement officers are effectively trained to:

- de-escalate incidents before they become violent
- assist individuals who are in crisis or living with mental disabilities
- appropriately interact with people facing drug addiction
- avoid personal and implicit bias and prejudice
- understand and respect racial and cultural differences
- promote the principles of policing in a democratic society
- effectively implement procedural justice procedures
- develop effective communications, social interaction, and tactical skills
- build strong and trusting relationships with the community they serve

Pillar Six: Officer Wellness and Safety

Pillar Six emphasizes the support and proper implementation of officer wellness and safety as a multi-partner effort. Every day, law enforcement officers face dangerous situations that can adversely affect their mental state and future actions, which in turn could affect how they respond to the next incident.

City leaders need to work with their law enforcement executives to ensure police officers are at their best both on and off the job. Law enforcement agencies should be encouraged to embrace injury reduction and mitigation practices, develop nutrition recommendations for law enforcement officers, ensure traffic safety (including the wearing of seatbelts and the proper use of cell phones while driving), develop skills for situational awareness, provide ongoing physical training and endurance programs, and, most importantly, support mental health treatment for officers and their families.

Excerpted from
City Officials Guide to Policing in the 21st Century
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