

First Year Work Plan

Independent Office of Law Enforcement Review and Outreach (IOLERO)

Establishment of the Office

The Independent Office of Law Enforcement Review and Outreach (IOLERO) was established by ordinance by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors in 2015. IOLERO was borne out of the tragic shooting death of a 13-year-old boy by a Sheriff's Deputy in Sonoma County, California in 2013. This unfortunate event led to significant public unrest and ruptured relations between some parts of the Sonoma County community and Sonoma County law enforcement. Sonoma County government responded by establishing a Task Force to study options for healing community rifts through community policing, community engagement and law enforcement accountability models. One proposal that came from that process was the establishment of a new, independent County office charged both with civilian review of law enforcement, and outreach to and education of the community.

With the support of the Sheriff, IOLERO was created to conduct independent reviews of investigations alleging law enforcement misconduct, including excessive use of force, and to engage the community in the review and possible recommendation of policy changes to the Sheriff's Office and the Board of Supervisors. The Office is intended to serve as one of the foundational bricks on which improved transparency and accountability are built for the community. Over time, it is expected that the Office will contribute to the community's healing through renewed trust and stronger relationships between Sonoma County law enforcement and the public they are charged to protect.

Following a nationwide recruitment process, the Board of Supervisors appointed Jerry Threet as the first Director of IOLERO in March, 2016. Mr. Threet began work as the new IOLERO Director on April 11, 2016.

Mission of the Office

The mission of the Department is four-fold: (1) to provide independent review of and instill confidence in the complaint process through objective review of law enforcement misconduct investigations; (2) to conduct outreach to the Sonoma County community; (3) to propose thoughtful policy recommendations to the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office; and (4) to strengthen the relationship between the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office and the community it serves.

Duties of IOLERO

The Department is charged with a number of duties. Among them are the following:

- Accept complaints of misconduct against Deputies of the Sonoma County Sheriff's Office;
- Review Internal Affairs investigations conducted by the Sheriff's Office for thoroughness, fairness, and timeliness;
- Develop a mediation process for resolving some complaints;
- Develop recommendations to improve Sheriff's Office policies and procedures;
- Conduct a robust program of community outreach and education;
- Compile and analyze data on complaints to IOLERO, and analyze data on law enforcement encounters, to identify trends and correlations;
- Prepare annual reports for the public and the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors.

First Year Work Plan

IOLERO is charged with building a new office capable of carrying out complex and interrelated tasks, in an environment that has been characterized by tension and distrust between parts of the community and law enforcement. The office does not begin this task from scratch, but rather builds on the accomplishments of a dedicated, volunteer task force of Sonoma County residents, who met for over a year to complete a comprehensive report of recommendations that serve in part to guide IOLERO. The Sonoma County Community and Local Law Enforcement Task Force Final Recommendations Report includes many items that serve to inform this work plan.

The First Year Work Plan includes tasks in several broad categories, each of which serves to strengthen and inform the others. These categories are: 1) Start-Up Tasks; 2) Public Complaint Intake System; 3) Law Enforcement Audit Protocols and Procedures; 4) Community Outreach and Education; 5) Data Tracking, Review, and Analysis; 6) Mediation Program; 7) Community Engagement Program; and 8) Contract Administration.

The Board of Supervisors approved this Work Plan on August 9, 2016.

Office Start-Up Tasks

As a new department of County government, the Office's first year work plan necessarily includes many tasks that are unique to the initial year of its operations. Among these are the following more significant tasks:

- Set up the physical office space for operation and reception of the public;
- Set up a website presence for IOLERO, including an online complaint intake system;
- Complete recruitment for the Administrative Coordinator position funded by the Board of Supervisors to support the work of the Office;
- Visit other civilian review agencies to learn what procedures, protocols, and programs they have in place, what their experience has been with these, and whether they might be appropriate for or adaptable to Sonoma County;

- Establish internal policies and procedures for IOLERO, including complaint intake and confidentiality protocols for those records;
- Explore alternative service delivery models, including satellite offices, alternative hours by appointment, etc., in order to best meet the needs of target communities;
- Investigate, procure, and set up an effective database system for intake and tracking of complaints, as well as for statistical and trend analysis of data from the Sheriff's Office on law enforcement encounters, and;
- Develop and implement performance measures for IOLERO, including possible survey instruments.

Public Complaint Intake System

One of the key goals of IOLERO in its initial year will be to fully establish a system to receive complaints from the public concerning law enforcement. Among the tasks involved in setting up an effective public complaint intake system will be the following:

- Develop and print complaint forms that are accessible and easily understandable for both English and non-English speaking individuals;
- Set up an online public complaint interface on the IOLERO website;
- Establish relationships with community and government partners that will allow wide distribution of IOLERO complaint forms in multiple geographic locations and various settings;
- Establish internal policies and procedures for receiving complaints, and for maintaining the confidentiality of complaint records that qualify as peace officer personnel records;
- Explore alternative service delivery models, including satellite offices, alternative hours by appointment, etc., in order to best meet the needs of members of target communities who may wish to file complaints;
- Investigate, procure, and set up an effective database system for intake and tracking of public complaints.

Law Enforcement Audit Protocols and Procedures

Also key to the first year success of IOLERO is the establishment of a fully functioning system of audits of the Sheriff's Office administrative internal affairs investigations, which will include the following tasks:

- Negotiate with the Sheriff's Office the protocols and procedures that will govern audits by IOLERO of internal administrative investigations conducted by the Sheriff's Office;
- Monitor protocols for effectiveness and negotiate changes as needed;
- Negotiate access to the confidential peace officer personnel files necessary to conduct IOLERO audits of the Sheriff's Office;
- Make publicly available protocols and procedures governing audits and access to peace officer personnel files by IOLERO;
- Audit investigations of all public complaints filed with IOLERO;
- Audit all investigations of "critical incidents," "uses of force," and other select incidents of alleged misconduct, such as bias;
- Audit sampling of remaining investigations of misconduct complaints such as "disrespectful behavior";

- Report on aggregate audit findings and general characteristics of the investigations, as well as any recommendations for changes in Sheriff's Office policies that may result from audits.

Community Outreach and Education

IOLERO has been charged with developing and implementing a robust community outreach and education plan in order to more fully engage the community and to bridge the gap between law enforcement and parts of the community. Key to achieving these goals are the following tasks:

- Appearances by IOLERO at meetings of community groups throughout the county;
- Public presence by IOLERO at community events, such as Roseland Cinco de Mayo celebration, Sonoma County Fair, local town/city festivals, relevant small community organization events, etc.;
- Meetings throughout the year with community members to educate them on the role and plans of IOLERO, as well as take input on the goals and expectations of the community;
- Meetings with key stakeholders and potential County government collaborators to understand the County government environment in which IOLERO will function, as well as find opportunities to more effectively partner in achieving the goals of IOLERO;
- Identification of "hotspots" where encounters between law enforcement and particular communities are likely or have been high, and targeting of outreach efforts to those affected communities;
- Outreach to disadvantaged communities in order to increase the profile of IOLERO, as well as to engage and involve those communities;
- Work through community non-profits and stakeholders to leverage exposure to IOLERO by their clients and members;
- Partner with members of Board of Supervisors to appear at district town hall meetings;
- Partner with other departments, such as the Public Defender' Office, the District Attorney' Office, etc., to publicize the existence, location and hours of IOLERO;
- Develop, publish and distribute IOLERO pamphlets in both English and Spanish;
- Develop easily accessible web presence in both English and Spanish, with forms that may be downloaded;
- Establish an IOLERO Community Advisory Board (CAB) and begin meetings;
 - develop an application to collect relevant information about each applicant, solicit applications through wide variety of community groups and government agencies;
 - select CAB members, with a goal of 50% participation from communities of color;
 - set up monthly meetings, supported by food and child care so that individuals from all income levels are able to participate, both as board members and public participants;
 - develop a list of policies of the Sheriff's Office to serve as the focus of meetings to determine if specific policies are appropriate and the best fit for Sonoma County, from the perspective of the greater Sonoma County communities affected by those policies;
 - invite Sheriff's Office presentations on select policies and rationale for the current version in place, and also from other jurisdictions that have implemented alternative approaches from those of the Sheriff's Office;

- solicit presentations by experts on policy areas reviewed by the CAB;
- take public comment on current policies and any proposed recommendations for changes to those policies;
- CAB report to IOLERO Director on recommendations for policy changes;
- IOLERO Director either adopts policy recommendation or explains disagreement, then forwards IOLERO recommendations to Board of Supervisors and Sheriff's Office;
- Provide link on IOLERO website to key policies of the Sheriff's Office determined to be of interest to community groups, as well as any recommended changes to those policies;
- Provide simple, easy to understand summaries of processes involved in public complaints against officers, to be published on the IOLERO website, as well as on printed pamphlets;
- Collaborate with youth and youth serving organizations to develop and publish a Youth Guide to Law Enforcement Practices, to be distributed to youth and their parents, covering both appropriate behavior by youth during law enforcement encounters, as well as the legal rights of youth in those situations.

Data Tracking, Review, and Analysis

One of the key ways in which the Office will be able to provide improved transparency is through the tracking, analysis, and reporting of data related to public complaints, and law enforcement encounters. Among the individual tasks involved in successfully implementing this key charge are the following:

- Investigate, procure, and set up an effective database system for intake and tracking of public complaints filed with IOLERO;
- Identify trends and correlations in the public complaint data, and analyze those trends and correlations for meaning;
- Identify and negotiate access to key data sets in the custody of the Sheriff's Office or other criminal justice agencies that relate to law enforcement encounters, identify trends and correlations in the data, and analyze those trends and correlations for meaning;
- Report on findings from IOLERO's data analysis to the Sheriff's Office, the Board of Supervisors, and the public, in the IOLERO Annual Report.

Mediation Program

While serious complaints from the public against deputies will be the subject of investigations by the Sheriff's Office, with an audit of the investigation process by IOLERO, less serious complaints such as discourtesy may not warrant that level of scrutiny. During its first year, IOLERO will explore existing mediation programs that have been implemented by other civilian review offices, with the intention of developing a mediation program to be implemented late in the first year or in the following year. Among the tasks that will be involved in in this exploration are the following:

- Visit multiple civilian review agencies to learn how their mediation programs operate;
- Identify those types of public complaints that may be more appropriate to resolution through a voluntary mediation process;
- Meet with members of the North Bay Area community of mediation professionals to explore the possibility of establishing a mediation program staffed by volunteer mediators;

- Work with the Sheriff's Office and employee union representatives to discuss issues that may be raised by voluntary mediation of complaints filed by members of the public;
- Develop a model for mediation of complaints that will be effective for the unique characteristics of the Sonoma County environment;
- Begin steps to implement such a mediation program under the auspices of IOLERO.

Community Engagement Program

Perhaps one of the most challenging tasks, as well as one of tasks with the most positive opportunities, is that of healing the divisions between law enforcement and some parts of the community. Through collaboration with the Sheriff's Office and perhaps other law enforcement agencies in the County, IOLERO will seek to bring together members of law enforcement and members of communities that experience distrust of law enforcement, in an effort to bridge the differences between them.

This effort will involve the following tasks:

- Collaborate with the Sheriff's Office to set up a series of Community Engagement Circle meetings with the intent of bridging the gaps between law enforcement and parts of the community;
 - involve members of law enforcement (drawn primarily from Sheriff's Office) and community members (with an emphasis on disadvantaged communities);
 - set up a professionally facilitated process for the meetings to enhance their effectiveness and lessen the risk of provocative conflict;
 - each circle to engage in a structured, facilitated sharing of each person's emotional and factual truth about their experiences connected to law enforcement;
 - the goal of these circles will be to humanize each perspective and undermine the process of caricature that often typifies such interactions;
 - goal of six such circles per year at locations throughout the County.
- Mediation Program – as more fully described above, IOLERO will explore establishing a mediation program to resolve less serious complaints against deputies. Modeled on existing programs in several other jurisdictions, this program would allow complainants to sit down with deputies against whom they have filed a complaint, with the goal of each participant more completely understanding the perspective of the other. The experience with this model in other jurisdictions has shown that such mediated encounters achieve understanding and humanize situations that had become polarized in the midst of conflict and confrontation. They therefore serve as another model of community healing.
- Collaborate with the Sheriff's Office in series of "Community Service" opportunities where IOLERO and the Sheriff's Office work on community building projects in disadvantaged communities.

Contract Administration

And finally, once awarded, IOLERO will assume responsibility for the administration of contracts and MOU's approved by the Board to support the following recommendations of the Task Force:

- Expansion of the Student Congress program (one-time award)

- Establishment of a Restorative Justice Collaborative with the Sonoma County Office of Education (one-time award via Memorandum of Understanding)
- Expansion of restorative justice programs for middle school students beyond those already provided to Santa Rosa city schools (on-going support).

CONCLUSION

The Department's First Year Work Plan is an ambitious one. IOLERO is committed to achieving these goals and related tasks during its first year in operation. Only by setting high goals will it be possible to make good progress in realizing the potential of this Office.