

VILLAGE  
OF  
AKRON  
NEW YORK



REFORM AND  
REINVENTION PLAN

# SUMMARY

The formation of the Akron Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative was in part to meet the requirements and aid our municipality in meeting the requirements of Executive Order No. 203 issued by Governor Andrew Cuomo on June 12th. The order required local governments with police agencies to engage the community in a reform effort to “eliminate racial inequalities” by reforming and modernizing police procedures, strategies, and tactics to meet those ends. At the end of this process, the pertinent local governments would be required to submit a plan to New York State or risk losing State funding. The purpose of the Akron Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative was twofold: to create a plan to help guide our municipality with our police agency in our efforts and to create a framework for the Akron Police Department to create our reform plan. The Collaborative was comprised of two groups, the Community Stakeholder workgroup made up of members of the community, ethnic and religious groups and the Municipal workgroup comprised of elected officials, police chief, and Village officials and legal representatives. In addition to bringing together a diverse and driven group of stakeholders to form the Village’s collaborative, two public forums were held, several Police Committee meetings, a public comment forum, a survey was used to solicit input from Akron residents on their ideas for reform. Over the past several months, the collaborative met to discuss needs, priorities, and various topics related to police reform. Throughout that discussion a number of themes became evident:

- Building a law enforcement workforce that is representative of the community it serves.
- Connecting law enforcement to the community.
- Creating better mechanisms for addressing mental health and substance use issues in the Community.
- Increasing lines of communication between the police and the community.
- Ensuring law enforcement officers are held accountable for their actions

## **MOST COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PUBLIC FORUMS AND ONLINE SURVEY COMMENT FORUM**

- Make data available regarding police interactions with the public to identify if they are engaging in discriminatory practices (improve transparency).
- Invest in mental health resources and training for officers.
- Provide additional information to the public about how to file a complaint in a confidential manner against the police (improve communication).
- Have more diversity, sensitivity, and implicit bias awareness training.
- Have the police more visible in the Business District
- All our Citizens are treated equally and fairly under the law, and that our Law Enforcement agency is trained in understanding and eliminating racism and bias in all of our policies and practices.
- Our Law Enforcement agencies use of force policy and practices are focused almost entirely on de-escalation strategies. All officers are trained to utilize strategies that de-emphasize forms of force in carrying out their duties. All officers will be trained and instructed that all persons are to be treated with respect and dignity regardless of the situation.
- That on a continuing basis our Police Committee and Police Command will solicit input from our community stake holders as to the operation and practices of our Police Department and its members.
- That all complaints received, in accordance with our policy, in regards to excessive use of force, bias law enforcement will be fully investigated by the Police Command and a full review will be conducted by the Police Committee, consisting of the appointed Trustees.
- Funding for the Police and all Village of Akron Departments is fully reviewed and re-allocated as necessary to balance care and safety with the desire to eliminate and reverse all forms of systemic racism and oppression, so that we serve all of our citizens equitably.

## **REQUIRE THE REPORTING OF POLICE ACTS OR OMISSIONS RESULTING IN A PERSON'S DEATH TO THE OFFICE OF SPECIAL INVESTIGATION**

Establishes an Office of Special Investigations within the Office of the Attorney General which will have investigative authority and criminal jurisdiction for any incident involving the death of

a person caused by an act or omission by a police officer or a peace officer employed as a correction officer or contracted by an education, public health, social service, parks or housing agency. Where an investigation concluded that the death or matters relating to the death or investigation of the death involved criminal conduct, the Office will be empowered to prosecute any such alleged offense.

***Akron Police Department Actions – Waiting for additional guidance***

## **REQUIRE POLICE OFFICERS TO REPORT THE DISCHARGE OF WEAPONS:**

Requires a police officer or peace officer, whether on or off duty, who discharges his or her weapon under circumstances where a person could be struck by a bullet to verbally report the incident within 6 hours, and file a written report within forty-eight hours.

***Akron Police Department Action – Our agency has already had this practice for several years and we are in compliance currently.***

## **BANNING OF CHOKE HOLDS :**

The Eric Gardner Anti-Choke Hold Act creates the crime of aggravated strangulation (a Class C Felony) and establishes criminal penalties for police officers or peace officers who use chokeholds that cause serious physical injury or death.

***Akron Police Department Action – Annual in-service use of force training that incorporates this. Also added to APD policy and procedure. Choke holds have never been authorized as an acceptable use of force under APD policy or training.***

## **REQUIRE MEDICAL RESPONSE FOR ARRESTEES:**

Requires an individual right to medical and mental health attention while they are under arrest or in custody by a police officer or peace officer. Failure to provide reasonable and good faith medical assistance could result in a cause of action against the officer and or department.

Akron Police Department Action –

***The Akron Police Department already has incorporated this into our policy and procedure and APD is in full compliance. Annual in-service training will be conducted in conjunction with use of force to reinforce this mandated.***

## **REQUIRE POLICING STATISTICS TO BE REPORTED TO THE DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES IN ALBANY:**

Requires courts to compile and publish data concerning arrests and court proceedings involving low-level offences such as violations and traffic offenses. Such reports will include aggregate

and anonymized demographic information such as race, ethnicity and sex. This bill requires police departments to submit annual reports on arrest related deaths to the Division of Criminal Justice Services, as well as the Legislature and Governor.

***Akron Police Department Action – This practice is already in place via the E-Justice portal through Uniform Crime Reporting.***

## **PROVIDE ACCESS TO THE PUBLIC OF POLICE PERSONNEL RECORDS:**

Repeal of Civil Rights Law 50-a, which made all personnel records used to evaluate the performance for continued employment or promotion of police officers, firefighters, paramedics, correction officers or peace officers confidential and not subject to inspection or review without the individual's express written consent or court order. The New York State F.O.I.L. (Freedom of information law) is also amended thus subjecting any record created in furtherance of a law enforcement disciplinary proceeding to disclosure. Under the amendment this law allows for specific, sensitive personal information, including medical history, to be redacted from such records prior to being disclosed.

***Akron Police Department Action – Law has been shared with the Village Board***

## **PUBLIC/COMMUNITY RELATIONS:**

Neighborhood network meetings

Increase our transparency and community relations by continuing our neighborhood network meetings quarterly in an effort to reach our community members in person and share concerns about their community and police force.

***Akron Police Department Action – Hold meetings focusing on different topics conveyed from our public throughout the year.***

***Akron Police Department Action – Provide additional information on our website as well as social media platforms***

Traditional methods Use of traditional "old school" programs to reach the public.

***Akron Police Department Actions – Utilize more foot and bike patrol. Additional Community Programs Establish and/or continue community programs.***

***Akron Police Department Actions – To reach out to the public through our SRO and School security programs.***

## **TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Police Committee shall act as a civilian review board.**

Akron Police Department Action – The Village of Akron currently and has always had a police committee and board of ethics for the purposes of reviewing any issues that may come to light as it pertains to complaints against and Akron Police Officer

**To ensure that citizens have access to police data and arrest activities.**

***Akron Police Department Action – All police reports are available to the public upon request. (That legally are releasable)***

**Police personnel complaint process Establish a process so that members of the public have an outlet to officially file justified police complaints with the department.**

***Akron Police Department Action – Our agency has always had a policy and mechanism for complaints to be filed in regards to officers' actions***

**Body camera program -Ensure our agency has adequate funding for body camera equipment.**

***Akron Police Department Action – Our agency is in the process of acquiring body cameras and instituting a program***

## RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, This Plan, Reform and Reinvention Agreement, which shall be dated February 22, 2021. The Village Board executes this Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan, by and between the VILLAGE OF AKRON POLICE DEPARTMENT, a municipal corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of New York, having its offices located at 21 Main Street Akron New York 14001(hereinafter referred to as the “Village”, and Village of AKRON POLICE REFORM AND REINVENTION COLLABORATIVE COMMITTEE, a COMMUNITY

STAKEHOLDERS GROUP organized and existing under the Governor of the State of New York's Executive Order No. 203. WITNESSETH:

WHEREAS, the Village, through its Police Department, is willing, able, and qualified to perform such services to the community; and

WHEREAS, The Community and the Village recognize the benefits of the Reform Program to the Village and the citizens of the Akron Community; and

WHEREAS, in view of the foregoing, the parties deem it in the best interests of the Village, and the citizens of Akron to establish this reform; and

WHEREAS, the Villages Chief Executive Officer is authorized to execute this reform pursuant to a resolution, adopted by the Akron Village Board.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual promises and covenants herein contained, the Akron Village Board and Akron Police Department hereby agree as follows:

1.) Policy Placement. The policy and procedure of the Akron Police Department is designed to provide clear and legal guidelines to the Officers of the police department. The police department, in an effort to show transparency, will conspicuously publish their policy and procedure and make available at the Akron Village Hall, 21 Main Street, Akron NY 14001.

2.) Implicit Bias Training. The Village shall employ and properly train all current and newly hired police officers in implicit bias and trauma involved care. This will provide for officers to have a better understanding of victims and suspects and how to properly assist them.

3.) Implicit Bias In-Service Training. The Akron Police Department shall have certified instructors provide implicit bias in-service refresher training on a yearly basis to all employees.

4.) Outreach. The Akron Police Department will continue to schedule outreach events yearly in an effort to bring the police department and the community together to help build trust.

5.) Officer Wellness. The Akron Police Department shall train members in peer counseling or reach out to other agencies to assist with members involved with

traumatic events. These members will be specifically trained by a non-law enforcement entity to recognize signs and symptoms of fellow officers before they become unmanageable. They will also provide stress debriefings to our agency.

ADOPTED	CARL E. PATTERSON	- AYE
	E. PETER FORRESTEL	- AYE
	BRIAN T. PERRY	- AYE
	DARRIN L. FOLGER	- AYE