

**Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission**  
Community Policing Program  
Annual Report

**Section 1**

Agency: **Ocean City Police Department**

Region #: **IV**

Reporting Period: **2018**

Agency contact name: **Lindsay Richard**

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**Deputy Communications Manager**

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Number of sworn members: **106**

Non-sworn members: **28**

Population: **6,999** (*\*It should be noted that Ocean City welcomes nearly 8 million visitors every year.*)

Square miles serviced by the agency: **4.41**

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Instructions: Attach or provide a detailed description of your agency's Community Policing Program. The Program should incorporate the Ten Guiding Principles of Community Policing identified by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing. The principles are provided in the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission, Mandatory Adoption of Community Policing Initiatives for law Enforcement Agencies, Guidelines and Reporting.

**Section 2**

At the Ocean City Police Department (OCPD), we view collaboration between community and police as an essential part of our daily policing strategy. The overall coordination of community relations efforts falls under the Deputy Communications Manager (previously known as the Public Affairs Specialist) who reports directly to the Chief of Police. However, the OCPD takes a comprehensive approach to community policing and incorporates this philosophy in our daily activities across the entire department. We strive to practice this philosophy in all that we do, versus the idea that all community policing efforts fall on one staff member.

The Deputy Communications Manager serves as the primary liaison between the community and the police department. This position is responsible for issuing press releases, managing the Department's social media accounts, and ensuring that the Ocean City community remains informed about police activity and safety messages. This

position also coordinates all police-community events. More details on each of these items are listed later in the report.

The daily practice of community policing falls on every member of the Department, at every rank. Our sworn personnel are evaluated each year in several categories, one of which being “community oriented policing”. An exceptional rating in this category states the following:

“Proactive and highly efficient in identifying and resolving problems in the community. Interacts positively with citizens and the public in general. Is highly receptive to individual problems and makes special efforts to provide assistance.”

Each sworn member of our department must adhere to this performance target, among others, regardless of rank or specialty. This ensures that officers, supervisors, and commanders meet or exceed performance targets that exemplify community policing.

#### Ten Guiding Principles

- 1. Crime prevention is the responsibility of the total community.**
- 2. The police and community share ownership, responsibility, and accountability for the prevention of crime.**
- 7. Community policing can only succeed when top management, police and government officials enthusiastically support its principles and tenants.**
- 8. Community policing depends on decentralized, community based participation in decision making.**

The **Police Commission** was established by City Charter and comprises of the Mayor and three Council Members. The Commission provides a forum to explore and discuss public safety issues of concern to the municipal government and the public. The Police Commission makes recommendations to the City Council and further advises the administration of the Police Department in the areas of staffing, special events, departmental policies, procedures, and other matters as may be required.

The OCPD routinely cooperates with members of the community to assist them to be proactive in keeping their own neighborhoods safe.

- **Neighborhood Watch** – In the early 1990’s, several Ocean City neighborhoods created Neighborhood Watch groups. These groups take it upon themselves to patrol their neighborhoods and report suspicious activity to police immediately. Since their inception, the OCPD has been working very closely with each of these groups. Personnel will regularly attend Neighborhood

Watch and/or community association meetings to present relevant safety information. Additionally, the Department regularly provides crime statistics and “heat maps” for each individual neighborhood. Keeping our community informed ensures not only a positive relationship, but also reduces the fear of crime for our residents.

- **National Night Out** – National Night Out is an annual event that promotes community involvement in crime prevention activities, police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie. In 2018, three (3) communities held National Night Out festivities. Several OCPD officers were in attendance at each event, including members of the Command Staff.
- **Crime Tip Hotline** – The Department recognizes that many people are reluctant to notify police about their suspicions and concerns about criminal activity. This is why the Department offers two methods for citizens to submit crime tips. One is by calling the hotline number at 410-520-5136 or by submitting tips through the departmental website, [oceancitymd.gov/police](http://oceancitymd.gov/police). Citizens are able to remain anonymous if they chose to do so.

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The OCPD **Auxiliary Unit** is a group of community volunteers who share the responsibility of keeping this community safe. Since 1999, the OCPD has trained civilians to support personnel and serve the citizens of Ocean City. These citizens provide volunteer to assist with operation duties, such as administrative support, public safety and community initiatives, Citizens Police Academy, and special events held in the Town of Ocean City.

As explained above, officers are evaluated annually on their ability to communicate and problem solve with members of the community.

Additionally, each year the Department hosts the Neighborhood Watch Officer of the Year Award Banquet. Members of the Neighborhood Watch groups are invited to join OCPD personnel for an awards banquet. At the banquet, promotions and commendations are recognized. Additionally, the Neighborhood Watch Area Coordinators are tasked with selecting an “Officer of the Year”.

**3. Police effectiveness is a function of crime control, crime prevention, problem solving, community satisfaction, quality of life, and community engagement.**

The OCPD uses the following initiatives to improve engagement with the community and prevent crime:

- **Social Media** – Social media has become an essential tool to keep citizens informed, ultimately instilling trust and community satisfaction. The OCPD uses Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and has a total of over 35,000 followers. The OCPD also recently began using Nextdoor, a social media platform focused on individual communities.
- **Involvement with Community Groups** – The Department finds it helpful and necessary to be involved with the many community groups throughout Ocean City. Not only is this helpful in building relationships with the community but also in achieving our policing goals. The OCPD is represented in the Ocean City Drug and Alcohol Prevention (Play It Safe) Committee, Seasonal Workforce Committee, Worcester County Homelessness Task Force, Maryland Strategic Prevention Framework Coalition, Ocean City Pedestrian Safety Committee, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Ocean City Development Corp. Boardwalk Committee, and more.
- **Community Events** – The Department holds several community events throughout the year in order to build relationships with the community including Coffee with Cops, Cones with Cops, Mounted Unit Open House, National Night Out, Holiday Toy Drive, Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Maryland, and appearances at schools and local special events.
- **Mounted & K-9 Trading Cards** – In 2017, the Department created the first set of trading cards for our Mounted Unit. Each horse had a trading cards that could be given to children that Mounted Officers came into contact with on patrol or at special events. The cards were so successful that in 2018 a card was made for each of the OCPD K-9's as well. Each year the cards are updated with a new photo and updated information on the back. The cards help the officers engage with the community in a new and fun way. Children often vie to get a card for each of the four-legged partners every year.
- **Business Cards** – Since 2017, officers have been given business cards that include a safety message to hand out to local businesses. This gives the officers, particularly less-experienced seasonal officers, a reason to enter a business, introduce themselves and build a relationship with the employees. This initiative was praised by several members of the business community and

the Department received several comments that it made the employees feel good knowing officers were checking on them.

- **Drug Drop Box – The OCPD’s** Drug Drop Box is located in the lobby of police headquarters and allows citizens to be proactive in ensuring that all unwanted, unused and expired prescription medication is out of citizens’ cabinets and off the streets of Ocean City. Citizens can drop off their unwanted or unused medications 24-hours a day, no questions asked. The Drop Box was donated by the Ocean City Elks Lodge.

***4. Mutual trust between the police and the community is essential for effective policing.***

Citizens must remain confident that they can trust each member of the OCPD. The mission of the OCPD is that personnel “shall provide the highest degree of ethical behavior, professional conduct and quality police services to all residents and visitors.” Personnel within the **Professional Standards Section** ensure that our mission is upheld. This section is responsible for several administrative functions, including internal affairs and quality assurance. In 2017, the Professional Standards Section was responsible for including all department policies on the Department’s website, safeguarding transparency amongst our community. Additionally, citizens are now able to file complaints against officers through the website, rather than having to turn in a notarized form making the process much easier for citizens.

***5. Crime prevention must be a flexible, long-term strategy in which the police and community collectively commit to resolving the complex and chronic causes of crime.***

In addition to several other long-standing initiatives, the department utilizes the following units on a daily basis, particularly in the summer months to assist in resolving chronic causes of crime:

- **Bike Patrol** – The OCPD has used bicycles as part of our regular patrols, particularly in the downtown area, for several years. Bicycles offer our officers increased visibility and mobility. An officer on a bicycle is much more approachable to citizens and can help in building new contacts and trust with citizens. Officers on bike are more easily able to handle criminal activity, as well.
- **Mounted Unit** – Similar to bicycle patrol, the OCPD has had a Mounted Unit for several decades as a way to increase officer visibility. Patrolling from horseback allows the officer to see over crowds of pedestrians. Additionally, the Mounted Unit is an excellent public relations tool. Nearly every night in the summer months, officers and their mounts will stop in popular areas to let

citizens meet the horses. The Mounted Unit is also often deployed to special events throughout the city.

- **Special Enforcement Unit** – The Special Enforcement Unit was created in 2013 and is a proactive, highly flexible, street level criminal investigative unit comprised of detectives working closely with the community to identify problems and solve crimes. The Unit's focus includes the following:
  - Identify and address neighborhood quality of life concerns with an emphasis on reducing crime;
  - Monitor repeat and violent offenders within our community;
  - Rapidly deploy to public safety concerns.

**6. *Community policing requires the knowledge, access, and mobilization of community resources.***

There are several special events that take place that require assistance from law enforcement allies from across the region. Allied agencies often require hotel stays and meals for the officers that they send to assist the OCPD. To make it easier for these agencies to send assistance, several members of the business community will offer free or discounted rooms and meals. This is a direct result of the relationships that the Department has built with the business community.

**9. *Community policing allocates resources and services based on analysis, identification, and projection of patterns and trends, rather than incidents.***

The OCPD currently employs a civilian **Crime Analyst**. This position is within the Criminal Investigation Division. The information that this employee gleans from crime statistics is in valuable. Using this information, patrol officers are able to strategize more effectively, the Special Enforcement Unit is able to focus their efforts more succinctly, and citizens are able to feel comfort in knowing exactly how their neighborhood is doing statistically.

**10. *Community policing requires an investment in training with special attention to problem analysis and problem solving, facilitation, community organization, communication, mediation and conflict resolution, resource identification and use, networking and linkages, and cross-cultural competency.***

The OCPD trains its personnel on a number of topics related to effective community policing and problem-solving, including but not limited to:

- **Crisis Intervention Team** – Nearly every OCPD officer has received training to properly handle incidents involving citizens experiencing mental distress. Crisis intervention training is designed to help officers recognize the signs and symptoms of mental illness, as well as developmental and intellectual

disabilities, that will assist officers in deescalating a crisis and get the individual the care and resources they need.

- **Active Shooter Response** – Every OCPD officer has undergone active shooter response training at various public buildings within Ocean City, including the Roland E. Powell Convention Center.

The OCPD engages members of our community by providing crime prevention and public safety training on a number of topics, including but not limited to:

- **Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE)** – CRASE has been taught by OCPD members to several local private and public organizations.
- **Citizens Police Academy** – The OCPD hosts a Citizens Police Academy in partnership with the Maryland State Police, Worcester County Sheriff's Office, and Ocean Pines Police Department. This 10-week class offers citizens a unique opportunity to learn more about law enforcement in Worcester County and build relationships between the police and the community. During the course, students meet a variety of officers to learn about police topics, such as traffic enforcement, evidence collection, firearm safety, arrest procedures, and narcotics enforcement. Students also participate in practical scenarios, which afford citizens hands-on opportunities to understand various law enforcement applications.