



# **THE SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE REFORM AND REINVENTION REPORT**

In Accordance with NYS Executive Order 203

February 2021

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SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

DR. ERROL D. TOULON, JR., SHERIFF

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## Contributors

### **Sworn Members of the Sheriff's Office**

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Deputy Undersheriff Michael J. Catuosco  
Chief Deputy Sheriff Michael P. Sharkey  
Chief of Staff Anthony G. Papparatto  
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### **Civilian Members of the Sheriff's Office**

Kristin MacKay, Director of Public Relations and Strategic Initiatives  
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### **Sheriff's Office of Management and Planning**

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### *With Special Acknowledgement to our Community Partners*

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Office is a reform-minded agency which has engaged with community partners in the non-profit, government, and educational sectors in substantive and collaborative ways over many years. Its transformation has been progressive, especially in the last 3-years with the addition of many new correctional programs aided by Sheriff's-led community task forces. In creating this report, the Sheriff's Office utilized input derived from meetings with its community partners and the public. Our reform and reinvention process will not end once this report is submitted to the Governor. Thank you to the Community Advisory Board, the Interfaith Council, the Sheriff's Reentry Task Forces, the Student Advisory Board, and the Interfaith Council.

Finally, we would not be the innovative agency we are today without the work of the dedicated sworn and civilian staff at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office.

## Executive Summary

Pursuant to the directives of New York State (NYS) Executive Order 203 and following the subsequent guidance provided by the NYS Governor’s Office, the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Office conducted a comprehensive review of its corrections and police divisions’ policies and procedures, community engagement, recruitment and diversity, employee training and well-being, and Internal Affairs operations. The findings from this review were used to identify Sheriff’s Office strengths, deficiencies, and propose recommendations.

The Sheriff’s Office is comprised of a Corrections Division, a Police Division, and an Operations Division. The Corrections Division has 813 Correction Officers who staff two county correctional facilities which house minimum, medium, and maximum-security inmates.

The Police Division includes the Enforcement Bureau, Headquarters Bureau, District Court Bureau, Domestic Violence Bureau, Criminal Investigations Bureau, Investigative Service Bureau, a Special Operations Bureau, and the Pistol License Bureau. These bureaus provide transportation and security of inmates outside the county jails, general law enforcement services to the public, civil actions, and support to other law enforcement agencies.

The Operations Division of the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Office includes Employee Benefits, the Communications Bureau, Quartermaster Bureau, Grants Bureau, Accounting Bureau, Personnel Investigations Bureau, Personnel/Payroll, Fleet Management, and Research and Development. These Bureaus work together to ensure the Sheriff’s Office continues to run efficiently.

The Sheriff’s Office Corrections and Police divisions are both recognized as Accredited Agencies in New York State. This designation involves a lengthy, rigorous process to meet and exceed high standards. The Office must continually sustain this level of professionalism to maintain its accreditation status.

The Sheriff’s Office is at the forefront of best practices in many areas of operations and has earned national attention for its innovative work in correctional rehabilitation, school-based programming, and intervention services for victims of human trafficking. In 2018, Sheriff Errol D. Toulon, Jr. partnered with the Sandy Hook Promise Foundation to educate young people about the warning signs of a peer in distress, how to intervene, and the concepts of inclusivity.

He also launched a task force called Deconstructing the Prison Pipeline to drive policy discussions and implement solutions to prevent youth from entering the justice system. The County Sheriff simultaneously expanded correctional rehabilitation programming and launched the START Resource Center on the grounds of the Yaphank Jail to provide case-management services and reduce recidivism. Working with Stony Brook University's School of Social Welfare, the Sheriff recruited master's level social work students to participate in an innovative Family Reunification Program which focuses on supportive services for the children of county inmates. He has also advocated for improvements in human services, access to safe housing, and mental health treatment – as well as trauma-informed practices throughout the justice system.

In June 2020, in response to growing social unrest and calls for police reform, the County Sheriff announced the formation of a Community Advisory Board and recruited participants via social media and in the local press. All ninety-four people that applied were accepted on the Board, which comprises a diverse group of residents from across Suffolk County. The Board meets monthly to view presentations, discuss topics of interest and concerns, and make recommendations. Information and suggestions from the Board, as well as from other Sheriff's Office task forces, and the public at large, were incorporated into the Reform and Reinvention Report.

This report identifies recent improvements and recommendations in the following seven areas:

- Reforming and Reinventing Correctional Services
- Reforming and Reinventing Police Services
- Community Engagement
- Recruitment, Diversification, and Retention
- Sheriff's Office Training
- Officer Wellness
- Internal Affairs

### *Reforming and Reinventing Correctional Services*

The Sheriff's Office places emphasis on correctional rehabilitative programming. Various in-custody programs provide gender-responsive group and individual counseling, parenting classes, and educational and vocational training for both male and female inmates. Other programs provide essential services to elderly inmates, veteran inmates, human trafficking victims, and those with substance abuse issues.

The reduction in county inmates due to New York's Bail Elimination Act led to a simultaneous decline in the number of individuals participating in the jail's rehabilitation and reentry programs. This, in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic, prompted the administration to find creative ways of providing services to county inmates, as well as justice-involved individuals living in our communities. This work is now coordinated through the new Sheriff's Transition and Reentry Team (START) Resource Center by a team of Correctional Counselors and Community Correction Officers who conduct intake assessments on all county inmates and provide ongoing case-management during incarceration and after release.

In 2021, the Sheriff's Office will seek to expand the reach of the START Resource Center by developing satellite offices in other parts of Suffolk County. Planning has commenced to offer more services to individuals released from court, and to reduce barriers to employment, safe housing, mental health treatment, and other common issues. Correction Officers will also receive additional training in working with people with mental illness, de-escalation techniques, crisis intervention, and trauma-informed practices. The Sheriff's Office also intends to examine policies and practices relevant to gender expansive communities.

### *Reforming and Reinventing Police Services*

The Police Division is staffed by 240 Deputy Sheriffs that provide critical services for the courts, serve warrants and summonses, make arrests, transport inmates, investigate crimes, and patrol roads and waterways. Recently the Sheriff's Office began training its deputies in Fair and Impartial Policing, a form of implicit bias training. The Office's Use of Force policy was revised to ban chokeholds and carotid holds. The utilization of body and in-car cameras are being phased-in, and language assistance services are now available when interacting with people who have limited English proficiency.

Future plans include an internal review board to evaluate each use of force incident. Customer Service training will be rolled out to civilian staff in the Enforcement Bureau who field frequent phone calls from people who are facing eviction. Trauma informed training will be implemented for deputies who are charged with executing Family Court orders to remove children from their homes. The Sheriff's Office also intends to improve data collection relative to arrests, traffic stops, and stops where no action was taken, as well as language access-system usage, and make that data available on the Sheriff's Office website.

The Sheriff's Office is one of twenty-two police agencies in Suffolk County. Deputy Sheriffs, like police officers in other agencies in the county, receive their recruit training at the Suffolk County Police Academy, which is run by the county's largest police agency, the Suffolk County Police Department (SCPD).

Deputy Sheriffs and police officers throughout Suffolk County operate under a common set of policies and acts governed by federal, state, and local law, but strategies and philosophies still differ by department. As the *Reform and Reinvention* process evolves and changes are incorporated into Academy training, the county's Deputy Sheriffs will adopt the SCPD's reforms in areas where responsibilities overlap, such as in enforcement of vehicle and traffic laws, and penal laws. As such, the reforms outlined in this report are focused on many Deputy Sheriff responsibilities which are dissimilar to that of the Suffolk County Police Department.

### *Community Engagement*

The Sheriff's Office regularly participates in formal and informal community gatherings and events. The Office hosts an annual Open House and Family Day and participates in National Night Out to create more opportunities for positive public interactions.

In the last few years, the Sheriff's Office has become actively engaged in mentoring initiatives through My Brother's Keeper. In 2021, the Office will conduct another mentoring pilot project with the Central Islip School District.

Community engagement is also facilitated through the Office's many task forces and boards, including the Interfaith Council, the Reentry Task Force, the Deconstructing the Prison Pipeline Task Force, the Student Advisory Board, and the Community Advisory Board. Through



these initiatives, the Sheriff's Office regularly engages with hundreds of individuals, non-profit groups, and educators.

### *Recruitment and Diversification*

The underrepresentation of Black, Hispanic and other racial and ethnic minority employees at the Sheriff's Office is a longstanding issue that is also a challenge throughout Suffolk County government. Suffolk County recently appointed its first ever Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, a new role created by the County Executive to promote diversity and inclusion in the Suffolk County workforce. Nearly all Sheriff's Office employees are civil servants, and therefore are not exempt from civil service hiring practices, such as testing and established lists based on scoring. The Sheriff's Office Director of Personnel has been tasked with collaborating with the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer to improve hiring and recruitment practices and increase diversity in its sworn and civilian ranks.

Some recent initiatives undertaken by the Sheriff's Office to aid in diversification include targeted recruitment efforts in local communities, coordinated outreach efforts with non-profits and churches, and social media campaigns. These initiatives had positive results and will continue as new civil service tests are scheduled.

Future plans include teaming up with members of the Community Advisory Board to help with recruitment, targeted marketing campaigns, social media outreach, and identifying and reducing barriers to attracting more ethnically and racially diverse candidates. In 2021, the Sheriff's Office plans to revise its formal Mission Statement to include "developing a more diverse workforce."

### *Training*

Previous to the current administration, in-service training for Correction Officers and Deputy Sheriffs amounted to less than one day per year. Sheriff Toulon increased in-service training to three days per year for all sworn staff, created the Academy's first training course catalogue, and implemented mandatory training for all new supervisors. The recent additions to the in-service training program include mental health first aid training, fair and impartial policing, and crisis intervention training. These curricula include realistic and challenging training scenarios to strengthen learning objectives. A new mentoring program supports new

employees while learning on-the-job and helps to reinforce the ethical foundation of the professional culture at the Sheriff's Office.

The Sheriff's Office also plans to implement trauma-informed training for its sworn members, specialized training to improve interaction with individuals with developmental disabilities, cognitive impairments and those with autism, and customer service training for all civilians sworn staff who engage frequently with the public.

### *Officer Wellness*

Decision making and judgment can be affected by an officer's mental state. Proper mental, physical, and emotional well-being are essential for an officer to be effective in the community. Recently, the Sheriff's Office began an employee wellness program to encourage employees to prioritize mental and physical fitness. The Sheriff's Office Chaplaincy Program provides chaplains from various religious denominations to provide support for those in need. In addition, employee unions have helped connect law enforcement mental health providers with officers seeking psychological and emotional support.

Starting in 2021, the Sheriff's Office will begin officer wellness *check-ins* utilizing supervisory staff. These check-ins will alert supervisors to red flags indicative of a larger problem. New training at the Academy will focus on officer mental wellness education.

### *Transparency and Accountability – Internal Affairs*

Sheriff Toulon and the Executive Staff hold all staff accountable for their conduct and investigate every allegation of misconduct. A progressive disciplinary system for all founded violations of agency policies and procedures is in place. The Sheriff's Office investigates all complaints, whether anonymous or otherwise. Recently Sheriff Toulon established the Quality Assurance and Integrity Unit to evaluate complaint cases for the purpose of decreasing opportunities for re-offense.

The Sheriff's Office already uses various Early Intervention Systems that engage supervisors in detecting and remedying problematic behavior. A database program is being explored to assist in tracking performance and complaints over an officer's entire career. The Employee Mentorship Program will also be utilized as a non-punitive measure for officers with minor disciplinary issues, avoiding the need for a formal disciplinary process.

### *Conclusion*

The Sheriff's Office is always mindful of its unique place in society, and the importance of balancing public safety goals with the basic and fundamental rights of our residents. The Sheriff's Office pledges to earn the public's trust by adhering to its constitutional obligations and by being responsive to public concerns.

We look forward to working as a community to reform and reinvent the Sheriff's Office throughout this process – but we have and will continue to be -- an agency driven to achieve excellence *not* by legislative mandate, but instead by its own standards and its obligation to the People of Suffolk County, New York.

## The Sheriff's Office Mission Statement

The mission of the Sheriff's Office is to provide the highest quality services to improve community safety, protect life and property, reduce crime, and reduce the fear of crime in Suffolk County, New York. The Suffolk County Sheriff's Office shall maintain safe, secure, and orderly correctional facilities and a competent and trained staff committed to ensuring proper care, custody, treatment, supervision, and discipline for all persons committed to the care and custody of the Sheriff. The Sheriff's Office and its employees, both sworn and civilian, pledge to work in partnership with the community, to be responsive to community concerns, and conduct its public services efficiently and effectively, consistent with its legal authority, budgeted resources, and with the highest level of professionalism.

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Office strives to maintain the highest standards of excellence utilizing best practices, innovative training methods, and the latest technology to create a safer environment for Suffolk County residents. The Suffolk County Sheriff's Office shall maintain crime prevention and inmate rehabilitation as its primary goals while vigorously pursuing those who commit crimes.

The following core values shall guide the daily operations of the Sheriff's Office and assist in ensuring that our employees maintain personal and professional behavior:

- Human Life – Above all else, the Sheriff's Office strives to protect human life.
- Integrity and Trust – The Sheriff's Office values honesty, fairness, respect, and the consistent application of objective standards by its employees.
- Pride and Professionalism – The Sheriff's Office consciously and consistently demonstrates a commitment to the profession. The Sheriff's Office is committed to becoming the profession's benchmark through constant attention to self-improvement and development of optimum agency services focused on quality performance and results.
- Community Service – The Sheriff's Office is committed to public service and improving the quality of life in Suffolk County through community partnerships and mutual accountability.
- Problem Solving – The Sheriff's Office values utilizing a teamwork approach to facilitate individual and group creativity to accomplish substantive long-term solutions to community problems.

## Part I: **An Introduction to the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Office**

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“Throughout my 30-year career, I have personally spoken with thousands of inmates, including many incarcerated young black men. They report similar stories: family dysfunction, poor supervision, suspensions in school, and family members and friends who have also been incarcerated.”

– Dr. Errol D. Toulon, Jr.

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### Brief History of the Office of the Sheriff

The Suffolk County Sheriff’s Office is a statutory/constitutional office having exclusive powers and authority under the state constitution. The operations of the Sheriff’s Office are distinct from other police agencies in Suffolk County, which are all departments or divisions of the county, town, and village governing bodies.

The Office of the Sheriff can be traced back to early English history and Alfred the Great's reign in the year 871. During this period, it was the responsibility of appointed “shire reeves” to maintain order. A shire was an area of jurisdiction, and a reeve described individuals with law enforcement powers. The term “shire reeve” was the predecessor to the word Sheriff.

When English settlers began to set up the first colonies in North America, they established a similar enforcement system. On Long Island, from 1664 to 1683, ridings denoted boundaries within the shire. The East riding comprised the territory now occupied by Suffolk County. The West riding consisted of Kings County and Newtown (Queens). The remainder of Long Island belonged to the North riding. Collectively, the three ridings were called Yorkshire. When the ridings were abolished in 1683, the East riding became Suffolk County, and the Governor appointed a Sheriff to administer public safety. This practice continued after the American Revolution and was incorporated into the first Constitution adopted in New York in 1777. At the Constitutional Convention in 1821, the Office of the Sheriff was made elective.

Sheriffs currently serve a four-year term and are considered the Chief Law Enforcement Officer in a county.

The current Sheriff of Suffolk County is Dr. Errol D. Toulon, Jr. He was elected in 2017 and serves as the county's 67<sup>th</sup> Sheriff -- and the first African American to hold the position.

### *About the Sheriff's Office*

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Office is the largest suburban Sheriff's Office in New York State with more than 1,180 uniformed and civilian employees and a \$180 million budget. The Sheriff's Office has broad jurisdiction and responsibilities. It operates two county correctional facilities and two courthouse detention facilities, patrols 420 miles of county roadways, and conducts maritime enforcement for 1,000 miles of coastline in Suffolk County. The Office provides enforcement for all court orders, including warrants, summonses, orders of protection, and civil processes, revenues from which exceed \$2.9 million a year. Sheriff Toulon and the executive staff maintain offices in Yaphank and in Riverhead.

The Sheriff's Office is comprised of three divisions: Corrections, Police, and Operations. Each division is broken down into bureaus with distinct responsibilities.

#### *Corrections Division*

The Corrections Division of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office is comprised of 813 Correction Officers who staff two county correctional facilities. The Corrections Division and its facilities are overseen by the Warden and his Deputy Wardens. Both facilities house minimum, medium, and maximum-security male and female inmates.

The current Suffolk County Correctional Facility in Riverhead was built in 1969 and has undergone multiple additions and improvements over the years, resulting in its current capacity of 840 inmates. The facility has linear and podular housing units, a state of the art medical/dental/ mental health unit, a rehabilitation unit, and a visiting section. The Choose Your Path program for young men is housed at the Riverhead Facility.

The Suffolk County Correctional Facility in Yaphank was built in 1961 and has also undergone multiple improvements and additions over the years, including a state-of-the-art addition in 2013 which added six podular housing units, modern medical/dental/mental health, visiting, and booking units, and renovations of existing housing areas. The current capacity at Yaphank is 976 inmates. The Sheriff's Addiction Treatment Program (SATP), the Veterans Reentry Program, the 55 and Older Pod, and the Choose to Thrive Program for female inmates are all housed at the Yaphank Facility. This facility also houses female inmates with their newborn babies in a fully equipped secure nursery.

The Corrections Division operates the Community Assistance Program which provides a way for county inmates to learn vocational skills like carpentry and landscaping while doing service projects for non-profit agencies, the U.S. Coast Guard, and local government. It also oversees the START Resource Center and the full array of innovative correctional rehabilitative programs offered at both facilities. An increased focus on inmate rehabilitation accompanied by the reduction in inmate levels due to NYS bail reform legislation has created the unique opportunity to increase the number of programs available to inmates in the custody of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office and provide case management services to former and current justice-involved individuals in the community.

### *Police Division*

The Chief Deputy Sheriff oversees the Police Division. It includes the Enforcement Bureau, Headquarters Bureau, Domestic Violence Bureau, District Court Bureau, Family Court Bureau, Criminal Investigations Bureau, a Special Operations Bureau, and the Pistol License Bureau.

The major responsibilities of the Headquarters Bureau are the transportation and security of inmates outside the correctional facilities, general law enforcement services to the public, and support assistance to other law enforcement agencies. They have a Canine Unit and a Marine Unit which patrol the East End of Long Island.

The District Court Bureau is tasked with the secure transportation of all inmates and detainees remanded to the custody of the Sheriff by any of the twenty-two courts working out of the Cohalan Court Complex in Central Islip. The Bureau oversees the main detention center

housed at the First District Court complex and is responsible for the care and custody of new arrestees in the five western townships of Suffolk County as well as Suffolk County Correctional Facility inmates returning for court appearances. The District Court Bureau works closely with law enforcement partners of the Sheriff's Office, defense attorneys, court personnel and the District Attorney's Office to ensure the court process proceeds efficiently. The Bureau transported a total of 24,544 prisoners in 2019.

The Criminal Investigations Bureau is tasked with all criminal investigations within the confines of the Suffolk County Correctional Facility. These include cases involving prison contraband, assaults, violation of orders of protection, and death investigations. In addition, the Bureau handles all felony cases developed by Deputy Sheriffs, serious motor vehicle crashes, aviation crashes at Gabreski Airport, and drug investigations, including undercover surveillance. The investigators within the Bureau undergo a multitude of training that includes death investigation, crime scene investigation, evidence handling, drug field testing, and motor vehicle collision investigation. Responsibilities for investigators include case management, evidence collection, arrest and warrant processing, interviews and statements, and crime scene management that includes fingerprint processing, photography, sketching, and scene narratives. Investigators from both the Police and Corrections divisions continually work with other agencies and on task forces such as the DEA and Heroin Task Force, to uncover crime in Suffolk County and the region.

The Enforcement Bureau is comprised of the Civil Enforcement Section and Special Operations Section. Deputy Sheriffs assigned to the Civil Enforcement Section process property executions for enforcement against real and personal property, income executions, warrants to remove, warrants of arrest, orders of seizure, orders of attachment, service of D.W.I. forfeiture summonses for the County Attorney, enforcement of Health Commissioner orders, and all other actions issued out of any court in the county. The Special Operations Section performs a variety of duties including patrolling and responding to calls for service at the Suffolk County Gabreski Airport and other county facilities and traffic enforcement.

The Investigative Service Bureau, Warrant Section, executes court-ordered Writs of Assistance in family offense and abuse and neglect cases, and transport certain juveniles charged with crimes to court, and return them to where they are housed. Deputy Sheriff Investigators



assigned to the Warrant Section execute warrants of arrest in both family court and criminal court cases. Investigators also coordinate with the county's Child Support Enforcement Bureau to locate parents who have failed to pay court-ordered child support and assist police agencies in tracking down Fugitives from Justice.

The Domestic Violence Bureau serves orders of protection that are created by the Family and Criminal Court systems. During the service of orders, Deputy Sheriffs are often ordered to seize firearms and other weapons in protection of the defendants and respondents. The Domestic Violence Bureau served a total of 3,786 orders of protection in 2019 and 4,023 in 2020. It also seized a total of 282 firearms in 2019 and 378 in 2020. In 2019, Deputy Sheriffs were tasked with the service of Emergency Risk Protection Orders (ERPO). An ERPO is a court order issued when a person may be dangerous to him/herself or others. An ERPO prohibits a person from purchasing or possessing guns and requires the person to surrender any guns he/she already owns or possesses. The Domestic Violence Bureau also investigates cases of individuals who attempt to purchase a firearm in violation of an order of protection and arrest individuals charged with violating orders of protection and those with family offense related warrants. The Bureau also participates in the Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative.

The Special Operations Bureau is comprised of the Air Support Unit, Honor Guard, Stop-DWI Team, Bike Patrol, Emergency Management, Haz-Mat Decon Strike Team, Homeland Security, and Tactical Units that include the Sheriff's Response Team and the Tactical Rifle and Containment Team.

The Pistol License Bureau is tasked with the issuance of all pistol licenses for the five East End towns in Suffolk County. The towns include Riverhead, Southampton, Southold, East Hampton, and Shelter Island. Deputy Sheriff Investigators are responsible for conducting a thorough background check that includes fingerprint and arrest history checks, personal and character witness interviews, residency verification, and mental health checks on pistol license applicants. The Bureau participates in the Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative.

### *Operations Division*

The Operations Division includes Employee Benefits, the Communications Bureau, Quartermaster Bureau, Grants Bureau, Accounting Bureau, Personnel Investigations Bureau,

Personnel/Payroll, Fleet Management, and Research and Development. The Chief of Staff oversees all bureaus in the Operations Division.

Employee Benefits administers all benefits for employees as negotiated by the three bargaining units within the Sheriff's Office. The Communications Bureau administers all Sheriff's Office dispatching functions. The Quartermaster Bureau is responsible for the issuance and inventory maintenance of uniform items and assorted equipment for approximately 1,200 employees of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office. The Grants Bureau locates state, federal, and private sector funding opportunities. The Accounting Bureau prepares the annual operating budget request for submission to the County Executive's Budget Office.

The Personnel Investigations Bureau is responsible for conducting confidential background investigations on all employee candidates for the Sheriff's Office. The primary mission of the Payroll/Personnel Bureau is to monitor employee time and accruals and to ensure that all employees are paid accurately and in a timely fashion. Fleet Services is responsible for the maintenance of the "Fleet" which includes patrol vehicles, unmarked and undercover vehicles, trucks, buses, ATV's, boats, military surplus equipment, and military vehicles. The Research and Development Bureau facilitates decision making, research, and timely responses to inquiries. These bureaus are staffed by Correction Officers, Deputies, and civilians.

#### *Specialized Units Under the Executive Office*

The Sheriff's Office has numerous units that fall outside the division command structure and report directly to the Sheriff and Undersheriffs. The Office of Public Relations and the Community Relations Unit work in tandem to administer programs and services that benefit the public, local schools, and community groups. The Office of Public Relations interfaces with the media and maintains both the Sheriff's Office website and its social media pages. The Director of Public Relations and Strategic Initiatives reports directly to the County Sheriff and oversees the Community Relations Unit.

The Academy Bureau is critical to ensuring that all sworn personnel receive state of the art training and continuing education to achieve operational excellence. In 2019, the oversight of the Sheriff's Academy Bureau was moved to the Executive Office.

The Internal Affairs Bureau is responsible for investigating claims of employee misconduct. In 2019, Sheriff Toulon created the Quality Assurance & Integrity Unit for the purpose of reviewing complaint files within the Internal Affairs Bureau.

The Medical Evaluation Unit ensures that all sworn and civilian staff are evaluated by a medical professional to ensure they can work following an injury, illness, or a medical procedure. The Unit also has an investigative role to aid in the reduction of sick leave abuse and absenteeism.

The Office of Management and Planning (OMAP) is responsible for compiling data and metrics and evaluating the efficacy of programs in meeting their goals and objectives. OMAP staff write reports and briefs for the executive-level staff to aid in informed decision-making.

The Employee Relations Director is responsible for hiring civilian personnel and oversees the Sexual Harassment and Affirmative Action Units.

The Sheriff's Office Organizational chart is included in the Appendix ([Appendix A](#)).

## The Accreditation Process

The Corrections and Police divisions of the Sheriff's Office have engaged in rigorous and separate evaluation processes to receive accreditation by the New York State Sheriffs' Association (NYSSA) and the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS).

### *Corrections Division Accreditation*

The Corrections Division was officially recognized as a New York State Sheriffs' Association (NYSSA) Corrections Accredited Agency in 2013. Accreditation takes years to prepare for; it is a rigorous process that requires agencies to meet or exceed 166 standards and produce proof of compliance for each standard contained in The New York State Sheriffs' Association *Corrections Accreditation Manual* (NYSSA, 1998)

The Corrections Accreditation standards are broken down into twelve specific areas, each with a set of standards that must be met. Some focus areas include recruitment, training, records management, health standards, maintenance of facilities, and Internal Affairs operations. Standards cover many subjects including the maintenance of a written policy defining the parameters for the use of physical force and adherence to equal opportunity and affirmative

action guidelines. The Corrections Division must establish that it has written directives about how supervisory personnel are held accountable for the performance of employees under their immediate control, and how it sets procedures for the monitoring of the fiscal activities of the agency.

To maintain accreditation status, a reassessment is conducted every five years. Documentation and accreditation records are maintained year-round by two employees of the Sheriff's Office, ensuring that policy changes and relevant documentation are updated regularly. A copy of the *Corrections Accreditation Manual* is available in the Appendix ([Appendix B](#)).

The Sheriff's Office Corrections Division will undergo the process again in 2023.

#### *Police Division Accreditation*

The Sheriff's Office Police Division is one of only 160 accredited law enforcement agencies out of the 514 agencies in the State. The New York State Law Enforcement Agency Accreditation Program for Police Agencies is administered by the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS). To achieve recognition, agencies must meet or exceed 110 rigorous standards. Participating agencies are also expected to maintain exceptional standards in between accreditation reviews.

The Sheriff's Office Police Division was officially recognized as a DCJS accredited agency in September 2012. Reassessments of the accreditation standards are required every five years. The 110 standards outlined in the *Standards and Compliance Verification Manual* (NYS DCJS, 2020) include fifty-one *administration*, twelve *training*, and forty-seven *operations* standards. Administration standards cover the Sheriff's Office's organizational structure, its mission statement, how it delineates responsibility, and how it delegates authority. New York State's Municipal Training Council established many training requirements for law enforcement agencies. These requirements make up the bulk of the training standards necessary for accreditation. These standards are divided into four categories: Basic, In-service, Supervisory, and Records Maintenance. The operations standards cover the manner in which a law enforcement agency conducts its public safety work, including patrol, traffic enforcement, criminal investigations, and unusual occurrences.

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Office underwent its first reassessment in 2017 and is looking forward to its next reassessment in the summer of 2022. For more information on the NYS Police Agency Accreditation Program, visit the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services website at [www.criminaljustice.ny.gov](http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov). The latest Standards and Compliance Verification Manual is available in the Appendix ([Appendix C](#)).

## About the Executive Staff

The Sheriff's executive staff plays a distinct role in guiding the development of new programs and policies. Elected officeholders have specific priorities, often described during the runup to their elections. These goals and priorities are unique to each official, and their work shapes the direction of government long into the future. Upon taking office, the Sheriff of Suffolk County appoints certain members to his executive team who work collaboratively with civil servants to help drive their vision forward. The appointed members of Sheriff Toulon's Command staff are Undersheriff Steven J. Kuehhas, Undersheriff Kevin T. Catalina, and Deputy Undersheriff Michael J. Catuosco. Other members of the executive staff are sworn civil servants that have been with the Sheriff's Office through multiple changes in administrations. They include Chief Deputy Sheriff Michael P. Sharkey, Chief of Staff Anthony G. Paparatto, and Warden Michael J. Franchi.

## Command Staff

### *Suffolk County's 67<sup>th</sup> Sheriff – Dr. Errol D. Toulon, Jr.*



**On January 1, 2018**, Errol D. Toulon, Jr., Ed.D., became Suffolk County, New York's 67th Sheriff and the County's first African American to be elected to a non-judicial countywide office. As Suffolk's highest-ranking law enforcement official, he is working to serve and protect the county's 1.5 million residents through innovative programs to reduce crime and recidivism, and by implementing sound fiscal policies.

Prior to serving as Suffolk County Sheriff, Errol worked for 25 years with the New York City Department of Correction, beginning his career as a NYC Correction Officer, and culminating as the Deputy Commissioner of Operations. He was assigned to the Emergency Service Unit as a captain during a challenging time when the department housed almost 25,000 inmates. He was a captain assigned to the Firearms & Tactics Unit when the World Trade Center was attacked. In July of 2014, he was named Deputy Commissioner of Operations for the New York City Department of Correction.

Sheriff Toulon is certified through the Department of Homeland Security in Emergency Planning, Radiological Emergency Management, Incident Response to Terrorist Bombing, WMD Threat and Risk Assessment, and State Disaster Management. He is also certified to teach courses in weapons of mass destruction awareness, National Incident Management Systems (NIMS), domestic terrorism, and hate crimes. He received his master's degree in Business Administration and doctorate in Educational Administration from Dowling College. He earned an advanced certificate in Homeland Security Management from Long Island University and attended leadership courses at the JFK School of Government at Harvard University.

**Sheriff Toulon appointed the following individuals as his Command staff to help lead the Sheriff's Office.**

***Undersheriff Steven J. Kuehhas***



The son of a Suffolk County Correction Officer, Undersheriff Kuehhas began his law enforcement career in 1986 when he joined the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office. He prosecuted numerous serious felony cases, including violent assaults, robberies, rapes, and vehicular manslaughters, in addition to public corruption. From 1996 to 2016, Undersheriff Kuehhas was assigned as the East End Bureau Chief prosecuting crimes within the five eastern towns and Suffolk County villages. After a rewarding career as a prosecutor and Bureau Chief, in July 2016 Undersheriff Kuehhas left the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office to become Undersheriff in the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office under Sheriff Vincent DeMarco and was re-appointed by Sheriff Toulon. He is an adjunct professor of law and an active member of the Suffolk County and Criminal Bar Associations. He is an admitted attorney in New York, New Jersey, and numerous federal jurisdictions, including the United States Supreme Court. Undersheriff Kuehhas holds a bachelor's in History from the University of Dallas and a J.D. from the Oklahoma City University School of Law.

***Undersheriff Kevin T. Catalina***



After serving twenty-six years with the New York City Police Department, Kevin Catalina went on to be appointed as Undersheriff at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office in 2018, under the Administration of Sheriff Errol Toulon, Jr. Undersheriff Catalina is well-known for his expertise in anti-gang violence strategies, gang suppression, and counter-terrorism operations and has lectured internationally on terrorism and site-security subject matter. Prior to joining the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, Undersheriff Catalina served as Deputy Chief and Commanding Officer of the New York City



Police Department's Intelligence Bureau, Operational and Analytical Section. During his time with New York City, Undersheriff Catalina held a range of positions related to counterterrorist operations and investigations, logistical planning, and site security. While Commanding Officer of the Gang Division in New York City from 2014-2016, Undersheriff Catalina developed and implemented all gang investigative and suppression strategies utilized throughout New York City. He is recognized as a subject-matter expert in gang violence and crime reduction strategy and pioneered an initiative in the South Bronx that resulted in a forty percent reduction in shooting incidents. He received a Bachelor of Arts in History from SUNY Oneonta and a Certificate in Police Management from Columbia University's Police Management Institute.

***Deputy Undersheriff Michael J. Catuosco***



After serving as a Warden on Rikers Island, Deputy Undersheriff Michael Catuosco was appointed to Deputy Undersheriff under Sheriff Errol Toulon's Administration in May of 2019. While serving as Warden for the New York City Department of Corrections, Undersheriff Catuosco coordinated the Operations Division's planning, including all facets of financial monitoring, supervision of staff, monitoring overtime and sick leave, as well as evaluating performance measures. While Undersheriff Catuosco also served as the Executive Officer for the Deputy Commissioner of Operations, he oversaw the Total Efficiency Accountability Management System's accountability metrics and the analysis of statistical indicators. During his time with the Department, he achieved significant cost savings and kept overtime within stated quotas while maintaining the facility's overall safety and security. Deputy Undersheriff Catuosco oversees Sheriff Toulon's performance management initiative, providing ongoing analysis of the accountability metrics and reporting system implemented by the County Sheriff in 2018. He is also charged with upgrading and implementing all training programs at the Academy Bureau. Deputy Undersheriff Catuosco has a bachelor's degree in Communications with a minor in Health Sciences from SUNY Oswego.

## Sworn Members of the Executive Staff



**Chief Michael P. Sharkey's** career with the Sheriff's Office spans thirty years. Michael was promoted to Chief in January 2008. As Chief of Staff he was responsible for the Operations Division of the Sheriff's Office. Chief Sharkey assumed responsibility for the Police Division in June of 2014. As Chief Deputy Sheriff he oversees more than 250 Deputy Sheriffs assigned throughout multiple bureaus including, but not limited to: Investigative Services, First District Court, Enforcement, Headquarters and Domestic Violence.

**Chief Anthony G. Papparatto** was promoted to Chief of Staff in 2015. He has more than 34 years of law enforcement experience with the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office. After graduating the Sheriff's Academy as a Deputy Sheriff, he rose through the ranks working in a wide variety of commands including the Enforcement Bureau and Headquarters Bureau. He also worked as the Commanding Officer of the Quartermaster Bureau and the Grants Bureau prior to being promoted to Chief of Staff. He holds an Associate in Applied Science from SUNY Farmingdale and a Bachelor of Science from Long Island University.

**Warden Michael J. Franchi** joined the Sheriff's Office in 1995. After graduating from the Sheriff's Academy, he started work as a Correction Officer at the Riverhead Correctional Facility. In the intervening years, he was promoted to Sergeant in 1997, Lieutenant in 2005, and Deputy Warden in 2011. As Deputy Warden he was the Executive Officer for the Chief of Staff's Office and was responsible for the preparation of the Office's Operating and Capital Budgets. As Warden, he oversees more than 800 Correction Officers, Internal Security and Gang Intelligence, the Sheriff's Emergency Response Team, Inmate Rehabilitative Commands, Jail Medical Units, and the Facility Operations and Administrative Bureaus. Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Stony Brook University and Master of Business Administration in Management from Dowling College.

## Sheriff Toulon's Tenure and Response to Current Events

In his 2018 inaugural speech, Sheriff Toulon outlined his vision for how the agency would evolve: improvements to training and supervision, establishing comprehensive rehabilitation programs and reentry planning for justice-involved individuals, and utilizing technology to prevent crime and improve public safety. Additionally, he made it a priority to enhance data collection and analytics to improve efficiencies officewide.

Early in Sheriff Toulon's term, he reorganized the Executive Office, shifting responsibilities and oversight of specific departments to give him greater insight into staffing and productivity, overtime, and internal affairs. He also created an Office of Management and Planning (OMAP) in the Executive Office. The staff in OMAP provide assessment and analysis to drive innovation and maximize efficiency throughout the organization.

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Office has long had a reputation for innovative programs and services. Still, Sheriff Toulon assumed his position at a pivotal moment of growing public scrutiny and distrust of law enforcement. (Congressional Research Service, 2020) This sentiment was particularly notable in Suffolk County after the arrests of the county's former District Attorney and a former Suffolk Police Chief following numerous investigations and convictions of other public officials. (Hong & Dollinger, 2019) Shortly after taking office, the new County Sheriff faced initial scrutiny over his decision to continue working with the Department of Homeland Security. The decision was based on legal guidance from the Suffolk County Attorney, and it was in the wake of a complex and growing presence of international street gangs developing a stronghold in parts of Suffolk County. (Ramos, Peddie, & Fuller, 2018) There was also a wave of school shootings across the nation, an escalating heroin epidemic, and a notable rise in human trafficking activity on Long Island. This period was also a time of deepening political divisions and a widespread movement to address racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, and systemic racism, in many facets of American life.

Racial and ethnic disparities have long plagued the criminal justice system. Black individuals make up nearly 33% of the nation's incarceration census (Gramlich, 2020) and are incarcerated in state or federal prison at a rate of more than 5.8 times their White counterparts (Carsen, 2020). In Suffolk County, Black individuals represent 8.8% of the population (U.S. Census, 2020), yet they comprise 44% of the county jail population. Hispanics are also overly

represented in the county jail. In Suffolk County, they account for 20% of the general population (U.S. Census, 2020) and 25% of the average county jail census.

Nationwide, and in New York, Black and Hispanic individuals are also disproportionately arrested. In 2019, agencies across the U.S. reported arrest data by race and ethnicity for inclusion in the FBI Unified Crime Report (UCR). (FBI Uniform Crime Report, 2020) The UCR reported 6,816,975 arrests that year, comprised of 69.4% White, 26.6% Black, and 19.1 % Hispanic or Latino individuals ([Appendix D](#)). According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2019, the U.S. population's racial and ethnic demographic composition was 76.3% White, 13.4% Black, and 18.5% Hispanic or Latino. (U.S. Census, 2020)

The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services' Suffolk County data shows arrests totaled 18,741 in 2019 and were comprised of 45.5% White, 27.3% Black, and 24.7% Hispanic individuals. (N.Y.S. DCJS, 2019) ([Appendix E](#)). Sheriff's Office internal arrest statistics reveal a similar demographic pattern. The Sheriff's Office Police Division made 801 arrests in 2019. Of these arrests, 56% were White, 27% Black and 17% Hispanic. The total Sheriff's Office arrests dropped by 53% in 2020. Deputies made 372 arrests comprising 46% White, 29% Black and 25% Hispanic individuals ([Appendix F](#)).

These figures demonstrate a level of disproportionality which warrants ongoing examination from all public sectors to understand and find solutions to the multitude of factors contributing to this public crisis.

In 2018, federal lawmakers from both sides of the aisle came together and passed the First Step Act into law to address longstanding inequities in the federal justice system. Sheriff Toulon was a proponent of this legislation, which gave judges more sentencing discretion for non-violent offenses, eliminated lifetime sentences for certain crimes, and expanded rehabilitative programming. New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo also signed into law a series of criminal justice reforms intended to reduce the state prison population, eliminate barriers to future employment, improve rehabilitation for state offenders, and raise the age of criminal responsibility.

In 2019, state lawmakers passed sweeping bail reform legislation with goals to:

- eliminate racial and economic disparities in pretrial detention;

- reduce the number of people held in jail pretrial throughout the state;
- protect the presumption of innocence;
- ensure access to a speedy trial; and
- align the discovery process to match most other states across the country.

While acknowledging the need to address the racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system, Sheriff Toulon publicly expressed concerns about the effect that the 2019 Bail Elimination Act would have on predominantly minority communities and stated it would likely lead to higher crime rates.

He explained his position in a letter to the N.Y.S. NAACP in January 2020 ([Appendix G](#)), which read in part:

Releasing repeat recidivists, violent individuals, and those with substance use and mental health problems immediately back into communities already beset by higher crime rates poses **significant public safety risks** for innocent victims.

My motto as Sheriff of Suffolk County has been to “get to the kids before they get to me.” **I would urge State lawmakers to consider the potential impact of bail reform on children, especially African American children, who are more likely to be crime victims than other races.** Black youth are victims of violent crime at significantly higher rates than their white peers and are more likely to be victims of child abuse, robberies, and homicides. While I empathize with those that have been aggrieved by the criminal justice system and support certain reforms that can address racial bias where it exists, this law will hurt the very communities it intends to help.

Children who witness – and are victims of – violence are more likely to internalize trauma and engage in the types of risky behaviors that can lead them into criminal involvement. Throughout my 30-year career, I have personally spoken with thousands of inmates, including many incarcerated young black men. They report similar stories: family dysfunction, poor supervision, suspensions in school, and family members and friends who have also been incarcerated. These young men and women were often victims of childhood abuse and neglect, and a good number had been bounced from one foster home or shelter to another. It is not uncommon to hear stories about them using drugs at a young age, being lured into street gangs, and having regrets about dropping out of school. **These youth are typically undereducated, lack important life-skills, and often feel hopeless -- and without appropriate intervention to address the underlying criminogenic factors, many will spend their lives cycling in and out of the**

**justice system.** This cycle affects generations of families, and bail reform will do nothing to address the root of their contact with the criminal justice system.

As a society, **we have failed these children and young adults** over many decades through misguided public policies and a lack of political will to tackle complex and costly human service needs. The millions of general tax dollars that will go to effectuating the changes required for bail reform might be better spent on crime prevention and mentorship initiatives, homeless housing, investments in substance abuse and mental health treatment, and funding for our schools in poor and underserved communities. Unfunded mandates will likely cause many cash-strapped counties to reallocate their criminal justice budgets, possibly diverting money from crime prevention initiatives, programs that promote desistance from crime, and services that safeguard victims.

A 2019 report by the Prison Policy Initiative entitled, *Arrest, Release, Repeat: How police and jails are misused to respond to social problems* (Jones & Sawyer, 2019) found that individuals with multiple arrests were disproportionately more likely to be Black, low-income, less educated, and unemployed. According to the analysis, 49% of individuals with multiple arrests lived below the poverty line, 66% had a high school diploma at most, and individuals with multiple arrests were four times more likely to be unemployed. Additionally, individuals with numerous arrests were more likely to present with serious mental and medical health issues. Of the individuals with multiple arrests, 52% reported a substance use disorder, 25% were diagnosed with a severe mental illness, and individuals with multiple arrests were three times more likely to have experienced severe psychological distress. These individuals were also three times more likely to lack health insurance and eleven times more likely to be HIV positive. The report also indicated that those with multiple arrests were more likely to be “frequent utilizers” of emergency rooms and emergency shelters. Of these individuals, 36% reported they used an emergency room at least twice in the previous year.

While the jury is still out on the effects of bail reform and its ability to address racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system, the racial and ethnic demographic composition of the county jail population has remained largely unchanged since the law’s passage ([Appendix H](#)).

The Sheriff’s Office is continuing to collect data and evaluate the effectiveness of New York State’s criminal justice reforms. Simultaneously, the County Sheriff has advocated for

equity for underfunded schools, access to safe housing and mental health treatment, and trauma-informed policies and practices throughout the justice system.

Penal laws, arrest, and incarceration are some of the tools a civil society can use to control crime, protect public safety, and punish offenders. However, these tools require that those sworn to uphold the law utilize fair and impartial judgement in the exercise of administering justice. The killing of George Floyd while in the custody of the Minneapolis Police Department, along with other high-profile cases involving police officers and the public, has unequivocally eroded public trust in law enforcement. The Suffolk County Sheriff issued a public statement on May 31, 2020 to address these issues:

### **An Open Letter to Sheriff's Office Employees and the Community**

In my 30 years of service, I have never witnessed such a cruel and heinous act of violence by anyone wearing the uniform as we saw in Minnesota last week. The killing of George Floyd is so contrary to the mission of law enforcement, and to the Oath that officials take to uphold the Constitution.

We hear this a lot – that we are sworn to uphold the Constitution. What does this mean? Law enforcement officials take an oath to protect the rights of their citizens which are bestowed upon them by the Constitution of the United States of America. **It does not grant law enforcement extraordinary powers**, but instead entrusts those who are Sworn to “insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity...”

We must never forget that we are here to protect the rights of the People.

Thoughtful individuals throughout our nation will draw their own conclusions about what the killing of George Floyd represents to them. They will also draw their own conclusions about what the ensuing violence, looting, and rage means for America. As the Sheriff of Suffolk County, and the Chief Law Enforcement Officer, my primary concern is that we never forget that we work for the People– and that we are here to ensure their well-being, public safety, and to protect their rights.

To our community, I want you to know that the men and women of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office will continue to protect and serve with pride, professionalism, and honor. We will continue to build on the trust we have worked so hard to establish along with you. Trust, transparency, and collaboration will continue to resonate from our office. Please do not let this criminal act taint

your opinion of the entire law enforcement community. We are here for you when you need us.

To the men and women of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office, I ask that you continue to do the great work you have been doing and not let the actions of these four former officers deter you from your excellent work. I am proud to be your Sheriff, and I know that we are an Organization that continues to shine both in New York State and the nation. Together we and our community will get through this.

In the wake of growing social and racial unrest, and amid a continuing worldwide pandemic, the Sheriff's Office has been confronted with unprecedented challenges. Simultaneously, Sheriff Toulon's administration continues to press forward with its own set of reforms, and the County Sheriff has managed to achieve much of what he set out to do in the last three years.

During his first year in office, in response to school violence, Sheriff Toulon partnered with the Sandy Hook Promise School Safety Initiative to educate young people, teachers, and families on the warning signs often present before a school shooting and how to intervene beforehand by becoming more inclusive. In October 2018, to get to the root causes of youthful delinquency and inter-generational crime, Sheriff Toulon launched a task force called Deconstructing the Prison Pipeline to drive policy discussions and implement solutions to prevent youth from entering the justice system. He greatly expanded correctional rehabilitation programming to decrease recidivism and improve offenders' desistance from crime. In his first two years, Sheriff Toulon created Choose Your Path for young adults, Choose to Thrive for incarcerated women, a Senior Citizen Program POD, and made significant improvements to the Sheriff's Addiction Treatment Program. He also launched the nation's first jail-based Human Trafficking Initiative, which assesses all county inmates for signs of victimization. All programming is offered to both pre-trial and sentenced individuals, addressing the needs and deficits correlated with criminal activity. These needs and deficits include substance abuse issues, mental health issues, limited educational and employment skills, transportation, housing, and identification issues. In February 2020, Sheriff Toulon opened the START Resource Center on the Yaphank Correctional Facility grounds.



## Part II: **The Suffolk County Sheriff's Office**

### **Response to Executive Order 203**

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“We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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On June 12, 2020, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed Executive Order 203 entitled *the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative* ([Appendix I](#)). (State of New York, 2020) It required municipalities to work with local stakeholders to adopt a policing reform plan to improve trust between law enforcement members and the communities they serve. The purpose of the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative is “to foster trust, fairness, and legitimacy” within communities throughout the State of New York and “to address any racial bias and disproportionate policing of communities of color.” The United States Department of Justice has emphasized the need for “trust between citizens and their peace officers so that all components of a community are treating one another fairly and justly and are invested in maintaining public safety in an atmosphere of mutual respect.” (State of New York, 2020)

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Office views Executive Order 203 as an opportunity to review the role of the Sheriff's Office in the community, achieve greater transparency with the public, gain further insight into the agency's relationships with constituents, and improve overall operations. This process began to take shape even prior to the announcement of Executive Order 203.

“Ultimately, I want the public to have more opportunities to interact with the law enforcement community, and to have a direct line of communication. Current events have demonstrated that people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds are frustrated with law enforcement, and they have some legitimate reasons to feel this way. I am looking for a diverse group of people to discuss issues, learn about the Sheriff’s Office, and share ideas.”

*Dr. Errol D. Toulon, Jr.  
June 8, 2020*

## The Community Advisory Board

On June 8, 2020, and in the wake of widespread nationwide protests, the Sheriff’s Office issued a press release and conducted a social media campaign to solicit the public’s participation on a newly forming **Sheriff’s Community Advisory Board (CAB)**. The purpose of the CAB was to give residents an opportunity to meet regularly with the Sheriff and his staff, discuss topics of

interest and concern, be a conduit for information to local communities, and to provide input on Sheriff’s initiatives and policies relating to the Office and its relationship with the public. The Sheriff’s goal was to attract members from all ten towns in Suffolk County representing a diversity of ages, races, and ethnicities. Those interested were urged to send an email to the Sheriff’s Office, along with some information about themselves and their motivation for participating. Ultimately, a decision was made to accept all ninety-four applicants to best ensure independent representation. Members were asked to commit to the Board for one year and attend monthly meetings.



*Figure 1 Locations of Community Board Members*

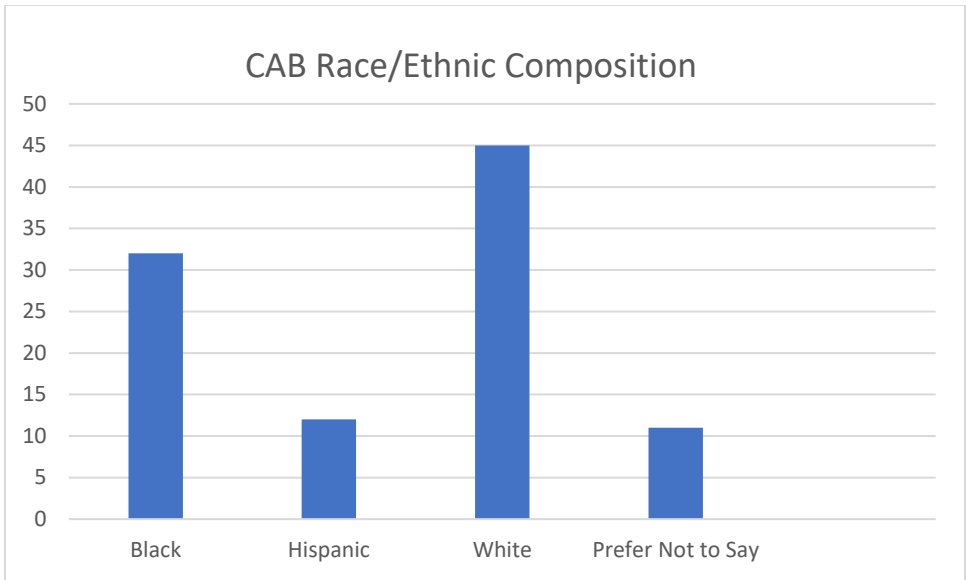


Figure 2 Community Advisory Board by Race/Ethnicity

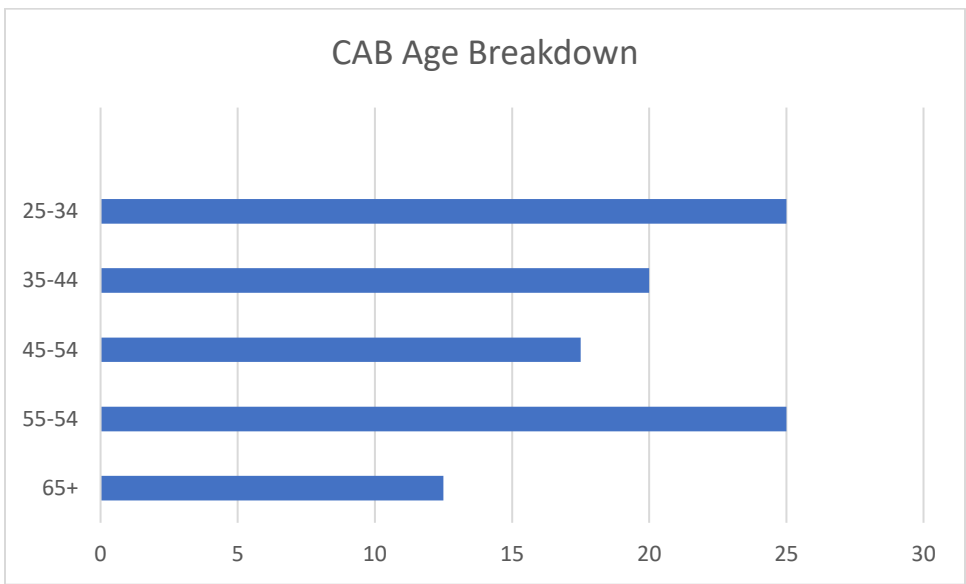


Figure 3 Ages of Community Advisory Board Members

## Approach

In August 2020, The Governor’s Office issued guidance to localities to help them draft a Reform and Reinvolution Plan. The workbook contained information on best practices and questions to help prompt discussions on reforming police departments ([Appendix J](#)). The Sheriff’s Office followed State guidance by developing its evaluation and report in phases while

collaborating with different stakeholders. The Office began facilitating conversations with members of its Community Advisory Board in September 2020 to gain a better understanding of the public’s knowledge about and impressions of the Sheriff’s Office. As this process progressed, the Sheriff’s Office began to share educational information with the Community Advisory Board, while at the same time soliciting feedback and recommendations for improvements. CAB members were also asked to respond to several surveys to gauge their early knowledge of the Sheriff’s Office and measure how it changed over several meetings.

The Sheriff, members of his executive team, and additional staff with subject-area expertise attend each session. Each meeting lasts up to ninety minutes with a minimum of thirty minutes reserved for discussion. Meetings are ongoing throughout the year.

Date of Meeting:	Topics:
Tuesday, September 14, 2020	Introductory Meeting Group 1
Tuesday, September 22, 2020	Introductory Meeting Group 2
Tuesday, October 13, 2020	Corrections Rehabilitation Programs and Personnel Investigations Overview – Group 1
Tuesday, October 20, 2020	Corrections Rehabilitation Programs and Personnel Investigations Overview – Group 2
Tuesday, November 17, 2020 (Combined Groups 1 and 2)	Overview of the Deputy (Police Division) Civil Enforcement Bureau and the Sheriff’s Human Trafficking Initiative
NO MEETING IN DEC. 2020	
Tuesday, January 19, 2021 (Combined Groups 1 and 2)	Overview of the Sheriff’s Office Academy Bureau and the Fair and Impartial Policing Curriculum

*Figure 4 Community Advisory Board Meetings Between September 2020 and January 2021*

## Drafting the Report

The Governor's Office issued guidance and a framework to localities to help them formulate a reform plan. This guidance was used to facilitate analysis of policies and practices within the Sheriff's Office and to help solicit feedback from community stakeholders.

Following the guidance of Executive Order 203, the Sheriff and his staff identified seven areas of focus for evaluation and feedback from the community.

- *Reforming and Reinventing Correctional Services*
- *Reforming and Reinventing Police Services*
- *Community Engagement*
- *Recruitment, Diversification, and Retention*
- *Sheriff's Office Training*
- *Officer Wellness*
- *Internal Affairs*

Each focus area has a synopsis of the topic and how it relates to the goals of the Reform and Reinvention Collaborative, improvements made in recent years, future plans, staff and public recommendations, and deficiencies noted during the process.

The Sheriff's Office of Management and Planning (OMAP) was tasked with coordinating and gathering information to develop the report. After identifying areas where additional public input and reforms would be beneficial, staff from OMAP began to draft an interim-phase report and elaborate on short-term and long-term goals. This was done to solicit more feedback and collaboration in the subsequent public commenting phase.

While working inter-office to create the draft, the Sheriff's Office engaged in a collaborative effort among staff to reflect on the positive work that has already been accomplished and to identify any deficiencies.

In formulating this report, the goals of the process were to:

- review internal policies and procedures and make changes that reflect best practices in delivering critical services to County residents;

- propose long-term strategies that will strengthen the Office’s relationship with the community and improve the bond of trust where and when it has been compromised; and
- study the processes, policies, and culture at the Sheriff’s Office to improve diversity in its police, corrections, and civilian ranks.

### Public Meeting Dates and Times

Considering the current health pandemic, all sessions were conducted via Zoom, an online videoconferencing system.

SESSION	DATE AND TIME
Public Session I	February 16, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.
Meeting Reserved for the Community Advisory Board	February 16, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.
Meeting Reserved for the Reentry Task Force, Interfaith Council, and Deconstructing the Prison Pipeline Task Force.	February 17, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.
Public Session II	February 22, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.

The Sheriff’s Office also created a webpage for the reform and reinvention process. Information was posted on its website at [www.suffolkcountysheriffsoffice.com/police-reform](http://www.suffolkcountysheriffsoffice.com/police-reform). The public was encouraged to participate in public sessions and send comments and suggestions. The request for public participation in the reform and reinvention process was promoted to the local press, posted on social media in English and Spanish, and more than 1,500 emails were sent to members of the public that had previously interacted with the Sheriff’s Office.

As of February 23, 2021, the public will have the opportunity to view the Interim Report and comment and ask questions via email to [Suffolk\\_Sheriff@suffolkcountyny.gov](mailto:Suffolk_Sheriff@suffolkcountyny.gov).

## PART III: **Building Public Trust with Our Communities**

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“The Sheriff’s Anti-Trafficking Initiative is the first unit of its kind in a county jail focused on identifying human trafficking victims, connecting victims with services, and providing a robust community service continuum.”

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### Reforming and Reinventing Correctional Services

The Sheriff’s Office has provided rehabilitative programs to inmates for decades, including some which are mandated by New York State Correction Law, such as religious services and high school-level education for those eligible in accordance with New York State Education Law. Correctional rehabilitation work is driven by the internal culture, and the substance of a facility’s programming largely depends on the level of commitment by the organization’s leadership.

The emphasis the Sheriff’s Office places on correctional rehabilitative programming has evolved over the last several years, with Correction Officers increasingly adopting a mindset that places value on rehabilitation and reentry work. Buy-in from staff is essential to the success of programs and services. Informally, many officers report that their views on the usefulness and benefits of inmate rehabilitation programs have changed since starting their careers. Overall, the workforce feels the administration is supportive of their work, encourages creativity, and gives staff leeway to utilize their skills to impart knowledge and information to people under custody. While many non-profit organizations work in collaboration with the Sheriff’s Office to provide services to current and former inmates, Correction Officers have developed and now run many unique correctional programs. Incidentally, it may be of interest to note that the Sheriff’s Office has not sought any taxpayer dollars to fund any of the new rehabilitative models listed in this report.

One effect of the Bail Elimination Act of 2019 was a 50% reduction in the county jail population, which led to a simultaneous decline in the number of individuals participating in the

jail's rehabilitation and reentry programs. These programs, along with many court-based alternatives to incarceration, provided intensive case management for thousands of individuals each year. Even prior to bail reform, the average length of stay at the county jail was less than ten days, which was often enough time to provide transitional planning for inmates, including appointments for rehabilitation services, mental health treatment and medical stabilization, and connections to other human services. Those who remained in the jail for longer periods of time, whether sentenced or unsentenced, were able to participate in many of the established jail-based, rehabilitation programs and receive transitional counseling and post-release services.

It is also important to note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically affected the ability of the Sheriff's Office to provide some of its services, especially those conducted inside the jails by non-profit organizations and individual volunteers. Once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, all standard programming will resume.

Bail Reform and COVID-19 prompted the administration to readjust and find creative ways to continue to provide greatly needed services to county inmates and those who are justice-involved and living in our communities.

## Recent Improvements and Initiatives

*Sheriff's Transition Assistance and Re-Entry Team (START) initiative.* In 2018, the Sheriff's Office created two new Correction Officer titles, Correctional Counselors and Community Correction Officers, to facilitate inmate rehabilitation and reentry planning. These Correction Officers were charged with carrying out the Sheriff's directive that reentry planning should begin on the first day of incarceration. In February 2020, the Sheriff's Office opened the START Resource Center on the grounds of the Suffolk County Correctional Facility in Yaphank, which became the headquarters for the Correctional Counselors and Community Correction Officers assigned to the initiative.

*The START Resource Center* assists justice-involved individuals with re-entry planning during their period of incarceration/transition and after they have returned home. The process begins during the first week in custody, where an individual's specific needs are identified and matched with applicable programs offered at the correctional facility.



- Correctional Counselors maintain contact with their clients and help to ensure their success during their stay.
- Before discharge, an additional assessment is conducted to create a transition plan that addresses housing, medical insurance, food assistance/benefits, employment, educational opportunities, clothing, transportation, and more.
- Upon release from the county jail, most former inmates follow through by visiting the START Resource Center to access their support services.
- At the Center, clients can meet with a representative from the Suffolk County Department of Labor to discuss employment opportunities and access other services that are known to improve outcomes, such as appointments and connections with mental health and substance abuse service providers and access to safe housing (see [Appendix K](#) for more information on the START Resource Center).
- S.T.A.R.T. also works with justice-involved individuals returning from state prison and those who have had justice-involvement in other states who now reside in Suffolk County.

The following is a list of some of the programs developed in recent years to assist individuals serving time at the Suffolk County Correctional Facility. This is not a complete list; however, it is intended to provide the public with a general overview of the scope of the jail’s rehabilitation programs.

*Choose Your Path* is a program for young men ages 18-25 to facilitate safe re-entry into the community and reduce the likelihood of recidivism. This rehabilitative program provides self-help groups, educational and vocational training, and therapeutic counseling services to participants. It equips them with the skills necessary for success upon re-entry and the ability to “choose their path.”

- The inmates that participate in this program are all housed in the same pod at the Riverhead Facility.
- Participants must work a 40-hour week, which is a combination of work in the jail and schooling. This schedule is supplemented with participation in group meetings run by non-profit organizations, Eastern Suffolk BOCES, and volunteers. Vocational programs

include carpentry, custodial training, landscape design, food preparation/handling, small engine repair, dog handling, and facility maintenance.

*Choose to Thrive* is a rehabilitative program for female inmates in the Yaphank Facility. The program opened in October 2018 and utilizes a holistic rehabilitative approach.

- New Hour for Women and Children is one service provider offering gender-informed services, support, education, and resources to women, throughout the re-entry stages.
- New Hour employs a “wrap-around” re-entry model in the Choose to Thrive program and offers continued support following a participant’s release.
- Programs include Health and Wellness, Parenting Skills Building, Education and Career Development, Re-Entry Support, and New Infant/Mother Programming.
- Numerous other service providers also provide programming, including the Empowerment Collaborative of Long Island (ECLI), whose services emphasize trauma-informed counseling, group meetings, human trafficking intervention, coordination with specialty courts, and post-release follow-up.

*The 55 and Older Pod.* In 2018, the Sheriff’s Office started the 55 and Older Pod to separate aging inmates and provide age-appropriate programming and services.

*The Veterans Reentry Program.* This specialized housing area is for any inmate that served in a branch of the United States Armed Forces. The unique aspect of this program is the collaboration with mentors from VFW Chapter 11-Farmingville. Every participant also receives case management through the Northport VA (this program precedes the current administration).

*Sheriff’s Addiction Treatment Program.* This is an intensive substance abuse treatment initiative designed for incarcerated individuals with a range of criminal charges, all of which correlate to their substance use disorders (this program precedes the current administration).

- The program is staffed with Social Workers and Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselors (CASACs) who provide both group and individual treatment sessions.

Correction Officers are specifically assigned to the treatment dorms, and these officers are part of the treatment team.

*The Family Reunification Project.* Beginning in the fall of 2020, the Sheriff's Office partnered with the Stony Brook School of Social Welfare on an initiative to provide case management and supportive services to the family members of county inmates.

- This initiative pairs second-year social work students with county inmates who have children. The interns assist the entire family unit to address unmet needs, emphasizing support for children coping with the absence of a parent.
- The effects of parental incarceration on children could manifest in poor academic performance, psychological stress, and a higher probability of delinquency and future criminal involvement. Adolescents with current or formerly incarcerated parents may also be at greater risk for mental health issues.

*Sheriff's Anti-Trafficking Initiative (SATI).* The Sheriff's Anti-Trafficking Initiative is the first unit of its kind in a county jail focused on identifying human trafficking victims, connecting victims with services, and providing a robust community service continuum.

- The unit consists of a Correction Officer Investigator and an Investigator Sergeant.
- All Suffolk County inmates are screened for signs of human trafficking upon entry, and victims are referred for additional screening and human services.
- Since its inception, the SATI Unit has conducted over 2,200 inmate interviews and identified 176 human trafficking victims and 120 perpetrators.
- This information, coupled with other data mined during interviews, has led to over 475 victim referrals for various services.
- The unit has also gleaned actionable intelligence from interviews to build criminal cases against traffickers.
- The unit created educational materials for public distribution (see [Appendix L](#) for Educational Materials).

*The Learning Center.* In November 2020, the Sheriff's Office launched a Learning Center, which is a program run by Correction Officers who hold teaching degrees. This program

supplements Eastern Suffolk BOCES high school education services and their Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC™) programs for students under the age of twenty-one.

- Correction Officers tutor inmates over age twenty-one to help them prepare for the New York State TASC™ exam.
- When an individual is eligible to take the exam, appropriate arrangements are made.

*Inmate Book Club.* This program was started by a county Correction Officer in 2020. There are separate groups for males and females. The groups meet weekly to discuss an assigned book, which often touches on subjects like racism, death, addiction, illness, and other life issues. They also meet to watch movies based on the books they have read.

*The Inmate Sewing Program.* This initiative started in April 2020 and has produced over 20,000 masks to date to aid in protection against COVID-19. Since its inception, the Inmate Sewing Program has created and supplied masks to the inmate population and Sheriff's Office staff, and donated thousands of masks for public use.

*Law School Internship Program.* In January 2021, the Sheriff's Office created an opportunity for law school students to work in the jail law libraries to assist inmates in legal research and the filing of legal documents with the courts.

*Inmate Demographics Online.* In the summer of 2020, the Sheriff's Office began posting inmate demographic information online to help the public better understand the jail's population. The information includes the daily jail population number, the total number of inmates housed in the Riverhead and Yaphank facilities, respectively, the jail population by gender, the jail population by age and gender, the jail population by race, the jail population by ethnicity, the number of sentenced inmates by gender, the number of inmates housed out by location, the number of inmates sentenced and unsentenced, the top ten towns by recorded residence, and the top ten holding charges. This information may be found at <https://www.suffolkcountysheriffsoffice.com/demographics>.

## Plans and Recommendations

- The Resource Center is not easily accessible to some justice-involved individuals who must rely on public transportation. Members of the Sheriff's Community Advisory Board

recommended that the Sheriff's Office START Resource Center establish satellite centers to improve access to services. This is an initiative the Sheriff's Office intends to establish in 2021. The Sheriff's Office is also exploring options to utilize its own staff and vehicles to transport clients to social service programs.

- START Resource Center staff frequently confront issues with locating safe housing for homeless individuals. It is recommended that community and government stakeholders work together to create workable solutions. The Sheriff's Office has discussed the possibility of rehabilitating county-owned property for transitional housing and will work towards this goal in 2021.
- START Resource Center staff have encountered roadblocks in connecting some recently released inmates into vocational programs offered by the Department of Labor due to preconditions that require participants to reside in stable housing. It is recommended that community and government stakeholders work together to create workable solutions.
- Inmates with severe mental illness have more intensive needs and more frequently recidivate upon release. The Sheriff's Office plans to focus on this issue by creating a working group in 2021 to address the continuum of support required to protect public safety and connect human services with this high-risk population.
- In 2021, the Sheriff's Office will expand its data capture to track recidivism and other relevant information on county inmates displaying signs of severe mental illness to better address the needs of this population.
- The Human Trafficking Unit plans to create an educational curriculum for community members, and one specifically for middle school students, about the dangers of human trafficking, the tactics used by traffickers to groom people, and the signs of victimization.
- The Learning Center plans to introduce online courses and expand the program offerings taught by Correction Officers and volunteers.
- The Sewing Program plans to partner with the organization, The Giving Doll, to produce dolls used to comfort children. Some of these dolls are regularly distributed by Deputies at the Sheriff's Domestic Violence Bureau to comfort children who visit the office.
- During the Public Sessions, it was recommended that the Sheriff's Office review its policies and procedures regarding the classification of transgender individuals in custody

at the Suffolk County Correctional facility. It was further recommended that the Sheriff's Office adopt policies and procedures that are more responsive to the needs of gender-expansive communities. In 2021, the Sheriff's Office will examine relevant policies and practices, New York State Commission of Corrections' regulations, and national best practices for the purpose of crafting a policy directive on Transgender, Intersex, Gender Non-Binary, and Gender, Nonconforming People in Custody.

- During the Public Sessions, it was recommended that the Sheriff's Office post information online related to inmate grievances on the website. The Sheriff's Office intends to implement this in 2021 and post a flow chart about the process.
- During the Public Sessions, it was recommended that the Office post the Inmate Handbook on the Office website. The Sheriff's Office intends follow through on this suggestion in 2021.

### Reforming and Reinventing Police Services

The Sheriff's Office may be more well-known for its role in corrections, but its Police Division is staffed with 240 Deputy Sheriffs who provide critical services for the courts, serve warrants and summonses, make arrests, transport inmates, investigate crimes, and patrol roads and waterways. Employment as a Deputy Sheriff requires graduation from a standard senior high school or possession of a high school equivalency diploma recognized by the New York State Department of Education by the date of appointment. Many Suffolk County Deputy Sheriffs have pursued higher education or advanced coursework in certificate-earning law enforcement programs. Many hold bachelor's and master's degrees, and for some, they held successful careers in other fields of work and the military prior to applying to the Sheriff's Office. New recruits must attend a rigorous six-and-a-half month training program that includes classroom, field instruction, and physical fitness training and testing. The schedule of coursework is included in the Appendix ([Appendix M](#)).

The Chief Deputy Sheriff oversees the Sheriff's Office Police Division. It includes the Enforcement Bureau, Headquarters Bureau, District Court Bureau, Family Court Bureau, Criminal Investigations Bureau, a Special Operations Bureau, and the Pistol License Bureau.

Deputy Sheriffs have broad jurisdiction but generally are not the primary response agency for 911 calls in Suffolk County.

The public is most likely to encounter Deputy Sheriffs while they are executing court orders, executing warrants, conducting traffic enforcement, processing pistol licenses, and serving Orders of Protection.

*The Enforcement Bureau.* The Enforcement Bureau is comprised of the Civil Enforcement Section and Special Operations Section and it is located in Yaphank. Deputy Sheriffs assigned to the Civil Enforcement Section process property executions for enforcement against real and personal property, income executions, warrants to remove, service of process, warrants of arrest, orders of seizure, orders of attachment, service of D.W.I. forfeiture summonses for the County Attorney, enforcement of Health Commissioner orders, and all other actions issued out of any court in the county.

One of the most difficult services the Sheriff's Office provides is a Warrant of Eviction. This is a specific court order that directs the Sheriff's Office to remove a tenant from a particular premise and return it to a landlord, or rightful owner. Deputies assigned to the Enforcement Bureau must abide by court orders and remain impartial during the execution of evictions. Nonetheless, the Sheriff's Office recognizes the emotional toll that evictions have on individuals and families. It can also be a very frustrating and difficult process for landlords.

The Special Operations Section performs a variety of duties including patrolling and responding to calls for service at the Suffolk County Gabreski Airport and other county facilities as well as traffic enforcement.

*The Warrant Section.* Deputy Sheriff Investigators assigned to the Sheriff's Office Warrant Section execute court-ordered Writs of Assistance in family offense and abuse and neglect cases, and transport certain juveniles charged with crimes to and from court, and to where they are housed. Deputy Sheriff Investigators assigned to the Warrant Section execute warrants of arrest in both family court and criminal court cases. Investigators also coordinate with the county's Child Support Enforcement Bureau to locate parents who have failed to pay court-ordered child support, and they assist police agencies in tracking down Fugitives from Justice on a regular basis.

*Domestic Violence Bureau.* Deputies assigned to the Domestic Violence Bureau serve court Orders of Protection and arrest individuals charged with violating Orders of Protection and those with family offense related warrants. They remove batterers from homes, seize weapons, and execute arrest warrants against the perpetrators of domestic violence.

Acquiring an order of protection is an important step in the fight against domestic violence. Deputy Sheriffs understand that court orders must be served promptly to give the victim peace of mind and an avenue for protection. The Domestic Violence Unit also continues to aggressively seek out and arrest people with family offense related warrants. Having these individuals in custody and brought before a judge reduces the likelihood that they will abuse or assault their victim again. The Domestic Violence Bureau works closely with various domestic violence agencies to assist victims. The Bureau participates in the Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative.

*Pistol License Bureau.* The Pistol License Bureau is tasked with the issuance of all pistol licenses for the five east end towns in Suffolk County. The towns include Riverhead, Southampton, Southold, East Hampton, and Shelter Island. Deputy Sheriff Investigators are responsible for conducting a thorough background check that includes fingerprint and arrest history checks, personal and character witness interviews, residency verification, and mental health checks on pistol license applicants. The Bureau participates in the Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative.

The Sheriff's Office and members of the Police Division are committed to working with all communities to find ways to improve equity, build trust, and eliminate bias in all interactions. Deputy Sheriffs regularly visit schools in underserved communities, teach programs including the Gang Resistance and Education Program and the Sandy Hook Promise curriculum, and participate in mentoring with My Brother's Keeper programs in three county school districts. In recent years, the Sheriff's Office proactively reached out to community stakeholders in predominantly minority communities to foster more engagement and will continue to expand on these outreach efforts.



## Recent Improvements and Initiatives

Deputy Sheriffs, like police officers in other agencies in the County, receive their recruit training at the Suffolk County Police Academy, which is run by the county's largest police agency, the Suffolk County Police Department (SCPD).

Deputy Sheriffs and police officers throughout Suffolk County operate under a common set of policies and acts governed by federal, state, and local law, but strategies and philosophies still differ by department. As the *Reform and Reinvention* process evolves and changes are incorporated into Academy training, the county's Deputy Sheriffs will adopt the SCPD's reforms in areas where responsibilities overlap, such as in enforcement of vehicle and traffic laws, and penal laws. As such, the reforms outlined in this report are focused on the many Deputy Sheriff responsibilities which are dissimilar to that of the Suffolk County Police Department.

*Fair and Impartial Policing.* In 2020, all Deputy Sheriffs received an eight-hour in-service training in Fair and Impartial Policing, and all new Deputy Sheriff recruits will also receive the course as part of their academy training. Implicit bias impacts everyone. Fair and Impartial Policing is an evidenced-based training which applies the modern science of bias to law enforcement. It trains law enforcement officers on the effects of implicit bias and gives them the information and skills they need to reduce and manage their biases. This training addresses racial and ethnic bias, as well as gender, sexual orientation, religious, and socio-economic status biases. It also describes how biases manifest and develop through one's associations. It shows officers how to become more conscious of their biases and actively work to ensure those biases do not impact behavior.

*Use of Force Reforms.* In 2020, the Sheriff's Office revised and lengthened its Use of Force (UOF) Training. On June 9, 2020, the Sheriff's Office revised its policy to ban the use of chokeholds. The Sheriff's directive stated: "Chokeholds and Cartoid Holds - Chokeholds, and similar compressions of the neck represent potential use of deadly physical force and shall never be utilized ([Appendix N](#)).” Furthermore, anytime there is a use of force, the incident is reviewed by both the first-line supervisor and forwarded to the Chief Deputy Sheriff.

*Body and In-Car Cameras.* The Police Technology Management Section, in coordination with the Grants Bureau, procured seventy body worn cameras and ten in-car camera systems in

December 2019. The entire purchase was funded through monies from the NYS Office of the Attorney General's Capture an Account of a Material Situation (CAMS) body-worn camera program and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office Asset Forfeiture Program.

- The Sheriff's Office is currently in the process of deploying this equipment to Deputy Sheriffs in phases. Multiple camera systems were tested during the procurement process.
- The Axon Body 3 and Fleet 2 Systems were chosen as the solution moving forward. The Axon system is comprised of a body-worn camera, in-vehicle cameras, and a robust online evidence repository.

*Language Assistance Services.* It is the policy of the Sheriff's Office to take all reasonable measures to provide timely, meaningful access to individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) to the services and benefits the Sheriff's Office provides in all Office sponsored programs. All Sheriff's Office personnel shall provide free language assistance services to LEP individuals whom they encounter or whenever an LEP individual requests language assistance services (see directive in [Appendix O](#)).

- All Deputy Sheriffs have access to Language Assistance Services to assist in interactions with the public.
- Academy staff recently facilitated the certification of several officers as language translators.

## Plans and Recommendations

- The Sheriff's Office will create an internal Review Board tasked with evaluating each use of force report generated. The goal of the board will be to ensure that proper procedures and guidelines are followed and to learn from each incident. If needed, the Board could establish recommendations for new methods for handling similar incidents. This platform could potentially prevent future injury to our officers and defendants/inmates could be expanded to include other high liability incidents such as motor vehicle crashes.
- Civilian staff in the Enforcement Bureau field frequent phone calls from members of the public facing eviction and landlords who are frustrated with the eviction process. Sometimes these callers are irate and in distress. The Sheriff's Office will implement customer service training for all frontline staff in 2021 to improve these interactions.

- Deputy Sheriffs frequently encounter people in crisis while executing evictions, serving orders of protection, and executing family court orders. The Sheriff's Office will develop an informational resource guide of local services that can be given to those in need.
- The Sheriff's Office will implement a training program for Deputy Sheriffs to increase their understanding and awareness of the impact of trauma. The training will help them utilize trauma-informed practices in their interactions with children and adults.
- Deputy Sheriffs are charged with executing Family Court orders to remove children from their homes for reasons such as abuse and neglect. In addition to implementing trauma informed training for Deputy Sheriffs, the Sheriff's Office will work with community partners to develop a care package of items the officers could give to the children to ease the transition.
- The Sheriff's Office will facilitate coordination between the START Resource Center and Deputy Sheriffs assigned to the courts. Deputy Sheriffs frequently encounter at-risk and vulnerable individuals. The START Resource Center could be an avenue to connect these individuals with human services.
- The Sheriff's Office plans to create a section of the website in 2021 devoted to Police Division statistics on arrests and traffic stops. During the Public Sessions, a question was raised about the Sheriff's Office's ability to track racial and ethnic data during traffic stops. The Office is currently updating technology to ensure that race and ethnicity data will be captured. Furthermore, the Sheriff's Office intends to conduct ongoing analysis of data captured regarding traffic stops and arrests to ensure all sworn members of the Sheriff's Office are utilizing best practices to eliminate any potential bias and to protect public safety.
- During the Public Sessions, it was recommended that the Sheriff's Office improve its data tracking relative to Deputy Sheriff's use of language access services. In 2021, the Office will begin to post quarterly language access assistance utilization data on its website.
- During the Public Sessions, it was recommended that the Sheriff's Office develop protocols and appropriate training to best handle traffic stops and other encounters with people who may have developmental disabilities, autism, or other conditions that may

affect an individual's ability to communicate effectively during police interaction. The Sheriff's Office intends to create a program for its staff in 2021.

- During the Public Sessions, the ability of Deputies to use discretion when deciding to make an arrest or give a warning was discussed. Deputies also have the discretion to direct a person to mental health services rather than arrest the person. It was recommended that the Sheriff's Office track how often Deputies use this discretion and publish the data.

## Community Engagement

The Sheriff's Office is a prominent fixture in local communities. Correction Officers and Deputy Sheriffs are present at many community events and gatherings, including fairs, fire department open houses, summer camp events, and library programs. They actively participate in school programs, food drives, and other community initiatives. Sheriff Toulon has also made a point to visit one to two schools a week prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the County Sheriff hosts an Annual Open House and Family Day each year. The Sheriff's Office also participates in "Sheriff's Summer Camp" where economically challenged children between the ages of nine and twelve are given the opportunity to attend a summer camp in upstate New York. In 2018 and 2019, the Office also hosted its own National Night Out events. National Night out is "an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie." (NATW, 2021)

The Sheriff's Office is committed to collaborative criminal justice policymaking and the implementation of correctional and community-based programs designed to improve people's lives and reduce crime. The Sheriff's Office has numerous task forces comprised of community stakeholders that meet regularly to provide input into Sheriff's Office initiatives. Certain task force groups did not meet in 2020 due to COVID-19-related disruptions.

*The Sheriff's Community Advisory Board.* The Community Advisory Board was formed in 2020 and meets monthly with the Sheriff and his staff to discuss topics of interest and address concerns. Members provide input on Sheriff's initiatives and policies relating to the Sheriff's Office and its relationship with the public. Applications are accepted on an annual basis.

*The Interfaith Council.* The Interfaith Council was formed in 2019 to bring together a diverse group of faith-based leaders in Suffolk County to help the Sheriff's Office expand the network of support for inmates transitioning from jail to our communities.

*Deconstructing the Prison Pipeline Task Force.* Sheriff Toulon established the Deconstructing the Prison Pipeline Task Force in 2018 and held a conference and several stakeholder meetings in 2019. Members of the Task Force include school officials and leaders in the non-profit sector. Task Force meetings will resume in early 2021.

*The Sheriff's Reentry Task Force.* This group is comprised of more than 100 individuals representing many of Suffolk County's non-profit organizations, as well as local, state, and federal government employees. This task force:

- serves as a vehicle to enhance community relations between the government and the county's human service providers;
- collaboratively develops services and programs to address the underlying causes of criminal behavior, thereby reducing inmate recidivism; and
- works as a group to educate policy and lawmakers, the media, and the general public about crime and rehabilitation issues.

*The Sheriff's Veterans Reentry Task Force.* The Veterans Reentry Task Force met for the first time in September 2016 to help plan programming and provide ongoing support for incarcerated veterans. The Task Force is comprised of veterans, correctional staff, members of the non-profit community, and county, state, and local government employees. As of 2019, the Veterans Reentry Task Force and the Sheriff's Reentry Task Force meet together.

*Community Relations Programs.* The following is a list of other programs offered by the Sheriff's Office to further the goals of community engagement. Programs are coordinated through the Community Relations Unit.

- College Internship Program
- Gang Resistance, Education, and Training (G.R.E.A.T)
- Sandy Hook Promise – Start with Hello and Say Something
- Youth Enlightenment Seminars (Y.E.S.)

- Building Security Assessments
- Civilian Response to Active Shooter Training (C.R.A.S.E.)
- Child Car Seat Safety Checks
- Operation Safe Child
- Project Lifesaver
- Senior Medical ID Cards
- Yellow Dot Program
- Shed the Meds

To make programs and services more accessible to all residents, information and scheduling forms may be accessed on the Sheriff's website [www.suffolksheriff.com](http://www.suffolksheriff.com) under Community and School Programs.

## Recent Improvements and Initiatives

*Community Advisory Board.* Sheriff Toulon created the Community Advisory Board in June 2020 in response to social unrest in Suffolk County and the nation. The Sheriff's Office issued a press release and promoted the opportunity for participation on social media to encourage as many applicants as possible. Ninety-four applications were received from across Suffolk County and all were accepted. Members range in age from twenty-one to seventy-seven years old and are geographically, racially, and ethnically diverse.

- Sheriff Toulon and members of the Executive staff are present for all meetings.
- Members hear presentations from various bureaus and then ask questions and share ideas.
- Several recommendations from board members have been slated for implementation in 2021.
- In 2021, Board members will participate in Sheriff's Office-run intensive workshops and have opportunities to participate in community events and recruitment efforts.
- Members will be asked to review the Sheriff's Office response to Executive Order 203 and provide feedback.

*Student Advisory Board.* The Student Advisory Board was created after the County Sheriff met with a group of students involved in social justice protests in the spring of 2020. The purpose is to gain a better understanding of how young adults view the Sheriff's Office and law enforcement, solicit their feedback, and directly answer questions and concerns. There are six college students on the Board and there are plans to open it to additional participants.

- Members of the Student Advisory Board suggested Correction Officers and Deputy Sheriffs engage with more youth in a mentoring capacity to help them develop a more positive view of law enforcement. This led to the creation of a pilot project with the Central Islip School District in 2021.

*Deconstructing the Prison Pipeline.* Sheriff Toulon established the Deconstructing the Prison Pipeline Task Force in 2018 and sponsored a conference and several stakeholder meetings in 2019. The mission of the initiative is to create a more effective criminal justice system and prevent juvenile delinquency by addressing behaviors that could lead to adult justice system involvement. ([Appendix P](#)).

- Task Force Members have raised awareness of the connection between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and future criminality (Reavis, Looman, Franco, & Rojas, 2013), advocated for more school-based intervention services, and have explored ways to utilize evidence-based practices to prevent crime and recidivism.
- The Sheriff's Office hosted a full day training in November 2019 for school-based multidisciplinary teams entitled Comprehensive School Threat Assessment Guidelines, which is a school violence assessment and intervention methodology developed by Dr. Dewey Cornell, Ph.D. at the University of Virginia.
- School threat assessment is a proactive and flexible violence prevention practice that is used when an individual threatens to commit a violent act or engages in threatening behavior. Studies indicated that CSTAG practices reduce suspensions. Studies also found that schools had lower suspension rates and fewer alternative school transfers, with no racial/ethnic disparities for Black and Hispanic students. Students in special education programs received similar outcomes to other students. (Dewey, 2021)
- Additional programs are planned for 2021.

*Sandy Hook Promise.* Upon taking office in January 2018, one of Sheriff Toulon's first initiatives was to partner with the Sandy Hook Promise Foundation to bring its presentations to Suffolk County. The Sheriff's Office offers two programs: Say Something and Start with Hello. Since partnering with Sandy Hook Promise, officers have trained 23,631 Suffolk County students, school faculty members, and parents.

- The Say Something program is geared for students in grades 6-12 and teaches the recognizable signs and signals of a potential threat, especially over social media, and how to Say Something to a trusted adult. It also teaches students to be alert to signs that a peer may be in distress, and how to get them help.
- Start with Hello is for students in grades K-12, with curricula specifically designed for younger and older students. It teaches students how to be more socially inclusive to prevent feelings of social isolation, further preventing the risk of school violence.
- Specially trained Correction Officers and Deputy Sheriffs teach the program in classrooms and to groups in auditoriums.
- Students are taught that peers who are isolated may also be a victim of bullying, violence, and/or suffering from depression, and may need help.
- Students are also taught how to engage with vulnerable peers and to be alert to the sign of a peer's intent on hurting themselves or others.

*Drug Awareness Presentations.* This program was started in 2018 to help communities address the opioid epidemic. It is offered to school districts, parents, and school nursing staff.

- Addictive Drug Effects on the Brain: This program, geared for middle and high school students, focuses on the long-term effects of drugs and alcohol on the brain.
- Drug Awareness for School Nurses: This program teaches school nurses signs and symptoms of drug impairment and how certain drug reactions can mimic medical issues. The presentation goes into greater detail explaining the seven drug categories, current trends in drug and alcohol use, and how to assess impairment.
- Vaping: For students, school faculty, and parents, this presentation reviews the various vaping devices, what they contain, and how they can affect the mind and body. This



presentation also shows parents and educators what signs to be aware of when identifying potential youth vaping.

*Social Media and Website.* An important aspect of community engagement is social media. The Sheriff's Office interacts with the community via Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Additionally, in 2020, the Sheriff's Office made significant updates to its website to improve transparency and make it more informative.

- The Sheriff's Office command staff and biographical information is prominent of the website.
- The website can be translated into multiple languages.
- The website contains the Office's Language Access Policy, Use of Force Policy, and Public Notice of Title VI Program Rights.
- Contact information for various units is now more accessible.
- The website has data on inmate demographics and statistics, as well as the number of inmates who have contracted COVID-19.
- The public can request community programs directly through the website.

[www.suffolksheriff.com](http://www.suffolksheriff.com).

*Volunteer Committee.* The Sheriff's Office started a Volunteer Committee made up of Correction Officers and Deputy Sheriffs that engage in community service projects. The officers have volunteered at food drives, local animal shelters, nursing homes, and raised money and items for numerous non-profit agencies.

## Plans and Recommendations

- The Sheriff's Office intends to continue to build its mentoring program with local school districts. It will expand its involvement with My Brother's Keeper and seek out other mentoring opportunities in schools and community groups.
- The Sheriff's Office is currently planning two sports initiatives to engage with youth in underfunded schools and areas with predominantly minority populations. The

Sheriff's Office teamed up with the New York Rangers Junior Hockey Program and a lacrosse sports program for 2021 implementation.

- During Public Sessions, it was recommended that the Sheriff's Office follow up with the school districts utilizing programs taught by the county's Correction Officers and Deputy Sheriffs and track each program's success rate by various metrics, such as a decrease in bullying over time. The Sheriff's Office will begin this process in the fall of 2021 by creating a survey for partner school districts and students. Information on this process, and sample surveys, will be posted on the Sheriff's Office website under community programs.
- During the Public Sessions, it was recommended that the Sheriff's Office host more frequent town hall-style meetings.

## PART IV: **Overcoming Challenges in Creating a Diverse Workforce**

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“The Sheriff’s Office – and all levels of government – have a responsibility to promote social inclusion. A diverse workforce benefits society because diversity enhances government’s ability to be more responsive and sensitive to the needs of all the people it represents.”

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### Recruitment and Diversification

The Sheriff’s Office recognizes that law enforcement agencies should reflect the gender, racial, and ethnic diversity of the communities they serve. Minority populations are underrepresented in the Sheriff’s Office workforce ([Appendix Q](#)) which is an issue that has been seen throughout civil service in both Suffolk County and New York State. Steps have been taken at the county level and at the Sheriff’s Office to address the lack of diversity, but the Office has a long way to go in realizing a diverse workforce.

The Sheriff’s Office – and all levels of government – have a responsibility to promote social inclusion. A diverse workforce benefits society because diversity enhances government’s ability to be more responsive and sensitive to the needs of all the people it represents. Workforce diversity is, and must be viewed, as a resource for those in public service because different life experiences can help shape policies and practices to improve the provision of government services.

Suffolk County recently appointed its first ever Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, a new role created by the County Executive to promote diversity and inclusion in the Suffolk County workforce. This office is part of the Suffolk County Civil Service Department, and the Chief Diversity Officer is tasked with the development and implementation of Suffolk County’s diversity and inclusion initiatives. The Sheriff’s Office Director of Personnel will work in

collaboration with this new office to improve hiring and recruitment practices in its civilian ranks.

In addition, the Sheriff's Office must do more intensive and targeted outreach into various communities to improve diversity among sworn personnel. Recruitment efforts should occur year-round, not just in advance of the various scheduled exams, and should target Black, Hispanic, and indigenous people of color, as well as women and gender expansive communities.

## Recent Improvements and Initiatives

*Recruitment.* In addition to the compliance with countywide diversification initiatives, the Sheriff's Office made diversification of recruitment and retention a top priority during its most recent recruitment effort. Officers went to local malls, community colleges, and other high foot traffic areas in the community to inform residents that the recruitment process for the Sheriff's Office was occurring and to answer questions about the Office's roles and responsibilities. The Office's Public Relations and Community Relations units issued mailings to all county nonprofits and churches, with particular emphasis on religious organizations serving predominantly Black and Hispanic congregations, coordinated outreach to colleges via emails and flyers, and created social media campaigns to raise awareness throughout the county. Additionally, the Office was also able to use asset forfeiture monies to run radio commercials on Party 105 and La Fiesta to promote the 2019 exam and created the ability for the non-profit Economic Opportunity Council to pay for the exam when the cost was a barrier to registering.

This multifaceted approach did yield positive results in cultivating a more diverse recruitment pool for correction officers ([Appendix R](#)). The Sheriff's Office intends to utilize these same recruitment efforts for the Deputy Sheriff exam, tentatively scheduled for Fall 2021.

*Suffolk County Sheriff's Office Explorers.* The Explorer Program gives youth insight into how a law enforcement agency operates. Law Enforcement Exploring is an official initiative of the Boy Scouts of America. It is a hands-on program open to young men and women who have completed the eighth grade through 20-years old and is geared toward those interested in a career in law enforcement or a related field in the criminal justice system. Suffolk County Sheriff's

Office Explorers are given the opportunity to learn about the different commands in the Sheriff's Office and what Correction Officers and Deputies do each day.

- Explorers make great candidates for future employment with the Sheriff's Office. The Office maintains records on each Explorer and informs current and former Explorers about civil service examinations and job postings to encourage them to take the tests and embark on a rewarding career in law enforcement.
- The Sheriff's Office is currently working on a proposition that will waive the civil service examination fee for individuals who have participated in the Sheriff's Explorers Program.

## Plans and Recommendations

- The Sheriff's Office will work with community partners, including the Community Advisory Board, to form a working group focused on developing a more diverse workforce.
- The Sheriff's Office of Public Relations will work in collaboration with the working group to create a marketing campaign that can more effectively promote employment opportunities in county government, with emphasis on reaching underrepresented groups.
- The Sheriff's Office will revise its mission statement in 2021 to include the goal of developing a diverse workforce that is representative of the communities it serves.
- Technology and social media play a key role in our day to day lives. The Suffolk County Sheriff's Office will continue to use social media for recruitment purposes by creating a separate account aimed specifically at recruitment of underrepresented communities.
- This social media account will include information about the recruitment process, from start to finish; informing potential applicants about the hiring process and the level of commitment needed to see it through to the end.
- Additional video content will be created to help give potential sworn and civilian staff more personal insight into working at the Sheriff's Office.
- Additional mentoring opportunities are being explored to help with recruitment and building diversity in civilian and sworn ranks.
- The Sheriff's Office will seek recruitment assistance from existing staff members from a diversity of backgrounds to help improve its outreach.

- A challenge to recruitment that must be overcome is the low starting pay scale for Correction Officers and Deputy Sheriffs. Resolving this issue will require buy-in from county lawmakers. The Sheriff's Office will continue working towards increasing equity law enforcement salaries and diversification in its workforce.

## Part V: **Training and Well-Being**

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“Effective community relations is inextricably linked to the ability of law enforcement to react with empathy during stressful encounters with the public and county inmates. This is one reason why it is critically important for us all to be attuned to the mental health and well-being of our sworn workforce.”

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### Sheriff’s Office Training

The Sheriff’s Office maintains high standards for its sworn staff. These standards begin at the Academy Bureau with the recruit curriculum and carry over through regular in-service trainings. Correction Officer Recruits currently receive thirteen weeks of training, which is higher than all other Sheriff’s Offices in the state. Deputy Sheriff Recruits receive six and a half months of training in the Suffolk County Police Academy and participate in-service education through the Sheriff’s Academy.

The County of Suffolk is continually under budgetary constraints and for decades, training has traditionally been one of the first items cut when administrations were faced with financial shortfalls. Even in the absence of budget cuts, training was not routinely prioritized by past administrations. In 2017, the average amount of in-service training provided to every officer amounted to less than one day.

In 2018, the current Administration revamped the Sheriff’s educational programs to ensure that every sworn officer attends annual in-service training refreshers, mandatory supervisor’s school, and a variety of other educational classes. In 2020, the Sheriff’s Office also produced its first comprehensive catalog of class descriptions.

The current administration places high value on the development of a well-trained workforce and has sought out and created specific trainings that can help address community concerns. Many of these educational programs involve role-playing activities that can aid in building mutual understanding with diverse groups and aid in supervisory skill building.

## Recent Improvements and Initiatives

*Mental Health First Aid Training.* In April 2019, the Sheriff's Office began to administer Mental Health First Aid training to all recruits in the academy. Mental Health First Aid training became part of the in-service training for all officers in 2020. This course ensures that officers are properly equipped for interactions with individuals with a mental health issue.

*Fair and Impartial Policing.* In October 2020, the Sheriff's Office adopted a Fair and Impartial Policing training program. This program applies the modern science of bias to law enforcement; it trains officers on the effect of implicit bias and gives them the information and skills they need to reduce and manage their biases. The curricula address not just racial/ethnic bias, but biases based on other factors, such as gender, sexual orientation, religion, and socio-economic status. The long-term goal for Fair and Impartial Policing training is to encourage an informal, ongoing conversation regarding implicit biases within the agency and in the community.

- The Sheriff's Office arranged for a group of sworn and civilian staff to become in-house trainers of the curriculum, enabling the Sheriff's Office to provide this instruction to all Sheriff's Office employees in all divisions. The Sheriff's Office worked with the developer of the program to create separate versions of the curriculum that apply specifically to Correction Officers, Deputy Sheriffs, and civilian staff.

*Crisis Intervention Training.* In early 2019 Suffolk County was awarded funding from the NYS Senate as part of a grant for Crisis Intervention Training (CIT). The concept was that an effective crisis intervention program would require a partnership among several stakeholders such as law enforcement, the mental health system, criminal justice representatives, emergency services, and mental health client advocacy groups. The Crisis Intervention Team model originated in Memphis, TN in 1988 and was developed in response to a tragic incident in which law enforcement used lethal force against a person with mental illness. CIT goals are to reduce the number of arrests of individuals with mental illness, refer individuals with mental illness to treatment facilities or other supportive services, and eliminate adverse incidents between law enforcement and those with mental illness.



CIT is a specialized law enforcement-based response program that meets the following criteria:

- It enhances traditional law enforcement roles to provide a new set of response options for frontline personnel that are tailored to the needs of people with mental illness.
- When appropriate, establishes a link for these individuals to services in the community.
- It is based in law enforcement agencies with strong collaborative ties to mental health partners, other criminal justice agencies and community members.

As part of that training initiative, the Sheriff's Office sent Deputy Sheriffs to the five-day course to learn the training and teach other staff. Although the initial funding has been exhausted, the Sheriff expanded the Crisis Intervention Team to include Correction Officers inside the jails who will respond to and assist with de-escalation. Plans are in place to train all corrections personnel and to continue providing the training to all Deputy Sheriffs.

*PREA Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA).* This curriculum is designed to familiarize staff with the terms of Zero Tolerance, Sexual Abuse, Sexual Harassment, and Retaliation. This training sheds light on a Correction Officer's responsibility regarding prevention, detection, reporting, and response to sexual abuse and sexual harassment. All Correction Officer personnel received the PREA training. A refresher was given during the 2020 in-service training block. Approximately 100 Deputy Sheriffs will receive initial PREA training in 2021.

*Employee Mentoring Program.* Officers are continuously learning on the job, from their own experiences and those of their fellow officers. For new officers, the first few years on the job provide many opportunities for informal training, particularly from more experienced staff. The Employee Mentoring Program pairs new staff members with a mentor for their first year on the job. The officers are partnered based on mutual interests, goals, and previous experiences.

- The purpose of the Employee Mentoring Program is to provide opportunities for new staff to gain insight, on the job training, and other practical information from more experienced staff members. These types of interactions foster a sense of continued learning, peer engagement, and positive work relationships, designed to enhance an officer's sense of confidence and belonging within the agency.

- This program is also designed to further the goal of enhancing the culture of professionalism at the Sheriff's Office. This is an important aspect of building a workforce that the mirrors the values of its leadership.

*Three-Day Training Blocks and Supervisor's Training.* All sworn staff must complete annual three-day training blocks. Officers who are likely to be promoted are now included in Supervisor Training preemptively and all supervisors must now take additional in-service training to improve supervisory skills.

## Plans and Recommendations

- In 2021, the Sheriff's Office will seek out and implement trauma-informed training for its sworn members and customer service training for all civilians who engage frequently with the public. The Sheriff's Office will implement a specialized training program for Deputy Sheriffs to increase their understanding and awareness of the impact of trauma. The training will help them utilize trauma-informed practices in their interactions with children and adults.
- In corrections, special needs inmates include any individuals in custody with mental, emotional, or developmental disabilities, disorders, or impairments. Presently, training regarding special needs inmates is presented once in the academy. The Suffolk County Sheriff's Office will be expanding upon this curriculum in 2021 so that all sworn staff will receive on-going special needs inmate training.
- The Sheriff's Office will implement Realistic De-Escalation training in 2021 for all sworn staff. This form of training exposes staff to real-life situations they may encounter on the job and gives them first-hand experience on how to handle these scenarios. This useful and informative training will assist sworn officers in managing conflicts and help them develop problem solving tools to de-escalate situations they encounter.
- The Academy Bureau is scheduled to have four qualified de-escalation instructors by January of 2021. De-escalation training will then be used within the Professional Communication block of annual training.

- The Sheriff's Office will implement a Line-up Training for the Corrections Division in 2021, providing officers with quick overviews of relevant incidents that occurred inside the facility or nationally. This will also be an opportunity to discuss new best practices. Relevant Sheriff's Office policies and procedures will be reviewed during these quick, two-to-three-minute sessions and incorporated into roll call during officer line-ups. The goal is to have officers actively thinking about these scenarios, engaging in conversations with their peers, and remaining vigilant on their posts.
- The Sheriff's Office will implement a Day One Line-Up De-Briefing, giving officers a quick synopsis of any notable events that transpired inside the facilities on their crew's days off. Increasing awareness of the incidents happening within the facilities will aid in curbing complacency and keep officers informed, which will help to improve safety among staff and inmates.
- Deputy Sheriffs and supervisors will also incorporate this concept into their workday to help promote communication and training on a more frequent basis. The Sheriff's Office will put together a work group in 2021 to further this initiative.
- The Academy Bureau is working to facilitate the creation of peer support groups within the Sheriff's Office. These groups will work closely with Chaplains and mental health professionals to provide support to Sheriff's Office personnel in need.
- Sheriff's Electronic Training System (SETS) is being transformed to a new and updated media platform. This platform will make it easier to train and track the training of all Sheriff's Office Employees. The new platform will include the posting of Academy made training videos on a multitude of topics.
- The Academy Bureau is in the process of developing/ implementing a PEER team which will be a first for the Sheriff's Office. The team's primary focus will be supporting fellow officers in times of crisis, promoting mental health, and helping to prevent behaviors that may lead to illness, injury, or death of members.
- The Academy has been working closely with Suffolk County Community College to award college credits for completing Academy training. This will serve as an incentive for staff to continue their education and enhance professionalism.
- During the Public Sessions it was recommended that Academy recruits and sworn personnel receive annual training in LGBTQ cultural diversity. The Sheriff's Office

intends to adopt a relevant training program. The Sheriff's Office also plans to review cultural competency training curricula and provide this training to all staff.

### Officer Wellness

One commonly overlooked concern within the law enforcement community is overall officer wellness – including mental, physical, and emotional well-being. In 2019, the United States Department of Justice produced a report for Congress on issues surrounding the mental health needs of law enforcement officers and the importance of officer wellness in relation to building trust with communities. (Spence, Fox, Moore, Sarah, & Nazmia, 2019) It reinforced the notion that decision-making and judgement can be affected by one's mental state and stressed the importance of assessing and caring for the mental health needs of law enforcement professionals.

A 2018 study published by the Ruderman Family Foundation found that first responders were at greater risk for depression and PTSD than the general population because they are regularly exposed to traumatic incidents and situations throughout their careers. It also found that first responders are at much greater risk for suicide than the general population. (Heyman, Dill, & Douglas, 2018) In another study published in the Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 31% of Correction Officers were found to suffer from psychological distress factors that correlated with high rates of depression. (Obidoa, Reeves, Nicholas, Reisine, & Martin, 2011) These findings were attributed to Correction Officers' high rate of exposure to human tragedy and psychological distress. The study by the Ruderman Foundation is included in the Appendix ([Appendix S](#)).

In recent years, the Sheriff's Office has placed greater emphasis on recognizing the stressors that law enforcement officers face in their daily work and has implemented more services for staff. Effective community relations are inextricably linked to the ability of law enforcement to react with empathy during stressful encounters with the public and county inmates. This is one reason why it is critically important for us all to be attuned to the mental health and well-being of our sworn workforce. The current climate of distrust of law enforcement has exacerbated the stress on men and women in these law enforcement positions. The Sheriff's Office recognizes that there are no easy solutions to these issues, but current events

have prompted the administration to improve opportunities for its sworn and civilian staff to seek and receive help when it is needed.

## Recent Improvements and Initiatives

*Employee Wellness Program.* In October 2020, Sheriff Toulon implemented the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office Employee Wellness Program to encourage employees to prioritize mental and physical fitness by providing guidance for various types of mental and physical workouts and activities, including meditations, yoga, martial arts, mindful readiness, and nutritional advice. The mission of the Employee Wellness Program is "to improve the health, well-being, and quality of life of all Suffolk County Sheriff's Office employees by empowering people to promote and model positive attitudes and behaviors through a lifelong commitment to wellness." Programs are tailored to the unique wellness goals of each participant. In addition, employees can participate in ongoing programs and practices designed to reduce stress and improve fitness, nutrition, and overall wellness.

*Suffolk County Sheriff's Office Chaplaincy Program.* This program was launched in 2018 and provides chaplains from various denominations with whom officers can speak when they feel overwhelmed by the stresses of the job and/or their personal lives.

*Law Enforcement Mental Health Providers.* With the help of the union leaders, officers in need of psychological and emotional support are connected with a mental health professional to ensure they receive the help they need to be able to safely and effectively serve the community.

## Plans and Recommendations

- In 2021, the Sheriff's Office will implement officer wellness "check-ins" with supervisory staff. These check-ins will be conducted regularly to ensure that Deputy Sheriffs and Correction Officers under their commands are taking care of their overall well-being, and effectively managing and coping with stress.
- All staff at the Sheriff's Office will be encouraged to be alert to "red flags" with a coworker, or immediately following a Use of Force incident, sick time abuse, or other issues. Staff will then be offered assistance and referred for counseling or treatment.

- The Sheriff's Office will launch an internal education campaign to alert staff about the higher rates of depression among law enforcement and the signs and symptoms of depression. Resources will be made available on the Office intranet and on signage in employee areas.
- New Sheriff's Academy training and continuing education will focus on officer mental wellness education.
- As part of the reinvention and reform process, the Sheriff's Office hopes to raise awareness of the difficult facets of law enforcement work, its effect on employee mental health, and bridge greater understanding with the community to improve trust.

## Part VI: **Transparency and Accountability**

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“The Sheriff’s Office investigates all anonymous complaints. Statements are strongly encouraged but are not necessary to identify and correct misconduct.”

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### Internal Affairs

An area of concern often raised by members of the public is how to improve transparency and accountability in instances where there may be official misconduct. Other areas of concern relate to how claims are investigated, the repercussions to sworn staff when claims are founded, and how this information is communicated to victims. In the guidance issued to police agencies by the Governor’s Office to help them formulate a reform plan, there were specific questions about how an agency handles officer misconduct.

In preparing the Report, the Sheriff’s Office made the decision to provide a direct response to each question to ensure the highest level of transparency of its policies:

*Does your department respond to officer misconduct with appropriate disciplinary measures? Do officers in your department believe that misconduct will result in an appropriate discipline, or do they believe that it will be overlooked?*

Sheriff Toulon has assured his staff that a response to misconduct is certain. He holds staff accountable for their conduct and has implemented measures within the Office of Internal Affairs to assure every allegation of misconduct is investigated and rectified. Remedies can include all levels of discipline for founded instances of misconduct, including policy review and revision, and the identification of staff training needs.

*Does your department have a continuum of responses to misconduct? Supervisors and department leadership should not be in the position of having to either ignore misconduct or impose harsh penalties that may be disproportionate.*

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Office follows a progressive discipline system for all founded violations of agency policies and procedures. Misconduct is remedied on a case-by-case basis in accordance with all applicable laws.

*What procedures are in place to ensure that substantiated complaints of misconduct and settlements or adverse verdicts in lawsuits are used to reduce the risk of future misconduct?*

If an allegation reveals a founded violation of an agency policy, the findings, aside from any employee discipline, are reviewed by command staff to identify training needs and appropriate supervision to reduce the likelihood of reoccurrence.

*What controls are in place to ensure impartiality when reviewing potential misconduct or complaints? When appropriate, are cases referred to either the District Attorney or another prosecutor?*

In Suffolk County, the Director of Labor Relations is a party to all employee sanctions and stipulations of agreement that are handed down as a result of founded misconduct. Investigations that reveal potential criminal conduct may be referred to the District Attorney, U.S Attorney, or Federal Bureau of Investigation.

*Are investigation outcomes reported to the complainant? Are they reported to the public? Should the department or the citizen complaint review entity, if any, accept anonymous complaints?*

The Sheriff's Office Internal Affairs Bureau does provide the outcome of an investigation to the complainant. The Sheriff's Office is in compliance with all legislation concerning the Freedom of Information Act.

*Disclosing the outcome of investigations to complainants and the public increases transparency and can increase confidence in law enforcement. Some departments choose to disclose this information in aggregate reports instead of sharing individualized data.*



The Sheriff's Office releases annual report statistics and complies with FOIL legislation as requested on a case-by-case basis.

*Accepting anonymous complaints may assuage citizen fears of police retaliation. However, anonymous complaints can be less reliable and are difficult to investigate because the investigator cannot ask follow-up questions or interview the complainant, and they can be retaliatory. New Era of Public Safety recommends that departments review anonymous complaints fully but disclose during intake that anonymity can hinder the review process.*

The Sheriff's Office investigates all anonymous complaints. Statements are strongly encouraged but are not necessary to identify and correct misconduct.

*Is there an easy, accessible, and well-publicized process for members of the public to report complaints about police misconduct?*

The Sheriff's Office Internal Affairs contact information is readily available to all inmates within the facility as well as the public via the Office's website. Complaints can be submitted in person or anonymously by phone, U.S. Mail, or email. The public may send email to [Suffolk\\_Sheriff@suffolkcountyny.gov](mailto:Suffolk_Sheriff@suffolkcountyny.gov). The phone number for the Sheriff's Office Internal Affairs Bureau is (631) 852-2222. Mail may be sent to 400 W. Main St. #202, Riverhead, NY 11901.

## Recent Improvements and Initiatives

**Quality Assurance and Integrity Unit.** In February 2020, Sheriff Toulon established a Quality Assurance and Integrity Unit in the Internal Affairs Bureau. Its mission is to evaluate complaint cases, both past and present, for the purpose of decreasing opportunities for re-offense. The unit reviews all allegations of staff misconduct for the purpose of identifying factors that may be addressed through procedural adaptation and training. The objective is to identify the underlying cause of the behavior and identify and implement appropriate follow-up training, supervision, and accountability.

## Plans and Recommendations

- The Sheriff's Office is already using a variety of methods associated with Early Intervention Systems (EIS) that engage supervisors in detecting and remedying problematic behavior that occurs under their command before there are issues that can lead to more serious consequences.
- The Sheriff's Office will be exploring database programs used to assist in tracking performance and complaints that occur over the course of an officer's career. Often, incidents do not occur in quick succession, and personnel and management change over the years. EIS database systems lessen the reliance on institutional knowledge about incidents and provide a means to analyze individual trends over the course of time.
- In 2021, the Sheriff's Office plans to utilize the Employee Mentorship Program in another arena – as a non-punitive measure for officers with minor disciplinary sanctions and/or issues. By addressing these behaviors early on, the need for more formal disciplinary measures, as well as the consequences to which these behaviors may lead, will be mitigated before they ever become a major problem for the individual and for the agency.
- The process to file a complaint with Internal Affairs is on the Sheriff's Office website but during a Public Session it was recommended that the Office review the website to ensure the public understands the process to file a complaint with Internal Affairs and post a flow chart that provides information on how complaints are handled. The Sheriff's Office intends to follow through on these suggestions.

## Conclusion

The Sheriff's Office is grateful for the opportunity to serve and protect the residents of Suffolk County. The Sheriff's Office understands that with this responsibility come added expectations for integrity, accountability, and excellence. The men and women of the Sheriff's Office remain committed to these values and will work to ensure it meets the high standards that the community has for its law enforcement officers. Moving forward into 2021, the Sheriff's Office will continue to be innovative in its training, wellness programs, community engagement, and rehabilitation programming. It will also seek to enhance data collection that will further improve transparency and develop new avenues to improve diversity in its ranks.

The Sheriff's Office continually strives to be innovative in its work to rehabilitate justice-involved individuals returning to the community. The future will bring more evidenced-based programs, and a new focus on providing services to the whole family unit of those in the custody and care of the Sheriff's Office. This work will be coordinated through the START Resource Center in conjunction with community partners in education, the non-profit community, faith-based and human service sectors.

Sheriff Errol D. Toulon, Jr. has pledged to *Deconstruct the Prison Pipeline*. We can no longer look at pathways to criminality through the lens of one sector, such as the educational system. Discovering the root causes of crime, incarceration, and recidivism requires a much wider approach. The Sheriff's Office will continue to strengthen its research and advocacy work in this area and apply innovative solutions to reducing crime and recidivism through a multi-disciplinary team-based approach.

The Sheriff's Office is always mindful of its unique place in society, and the importance of balancing public safety goals with the basic and fundamental rights of our residents. Sheriff Toulon and the men and women of the Sheriff's Office will continue to serve and protect the rights of all citizens and “insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity...”

The Sheriff's Office pledges to earn the public's trust by adhering to its Constitutional obligations and by being responsive to public concerns. **We look forward to working as a community to reform and reinvent the Sheriff's Office throughout this process – but we**

**have and will continue to be -- an agency driven to achieve excellence *not* by legislative mandate, but instead by its own standards and its obligation to the People of Suffolk County, New York.**

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