

Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation



PRESENTED BY: MPTN POLICE DEPARTMENT CHIEF CATANIA



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Good afternoon,

It is an honor to present before USET today, I am Chief Robert J. Catania, and I proudly serve as the Chief of Police for the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation.

Today I am going to focus on Policy Driven Policing, and how it has transformed the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Police Departments operations, and interaction and engagement with our community.

We have recently completed our annual audit through the Bureau of Indian Affairs and have met the standards of all three tiers of Professional Standards, through the State of Connecticut, Police Officers Standards and Training Accreditation.

The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Police Department has recently applied to CALEA, and has begun the process of voluntary, professional accreditation.

The implementation of these policies, procedures and hiring practices, have and will continue to provide the Tribal Community and its associated enterprises, with professional, community engaged public safety and security.

Core Components of Policy-Driven Policing

Evidence-Based Strategies: Utilizing scientific research to guide decision-making, ensuring practices are effective and reducing crime without over-policing.

Data-Driven Decision Making: Employing crime analysis, such as the "Koper Curve" (10–15-minute spot patrols), to efficiently allocate resources and maximize deterrent effects. This is accomplished through high visibility patrol operations and meaningful community interaction.

Community-Oriented Policing/Engagement: Shifting focus to building relationships through collaborative governance, such as open communication, inclusion of Tribal Elders, youth and community. By attending and public forums and Tribal engagement, we reach the entire Tribal community. From Pre-K to Elders, we have assimilated into daily lives in a meaningful manner.

Accountability & Transparency: Establishing clear policies on use-of-force, adopting body-worn cameras, and ensuring rigorous, transparent misconduct investigations. We are overseen by both the BIA and POST Connecticut. The guidelines are similar and clear and are codified in State and federal Law.

Training & Cultural Competency: Implementing training on implicit bias, procedural justice, and trauma-informed care. Working with and through the Tribal Council and Elders, officers are trained from the day of their orientation as to the history of Mashantucket. In service training and annual training, provides clear direction. The Tribal Court and associated resources, work alongside us to integrate a multi-disciplinary approach.

Key foundational components and related theories include:

Broken Windows Theory: Developed by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, it suggests maintaining community order prevents serious offenses. In Mashantucket, we have developed public trust, and by doing so, we get in front of the problem before it starts. Through communication, and constant collaboration with our law enforcement partners, we have been able to solve and prevent crime both in and outside the reservation.

Problem-Oriented Policing: Focuses on addressing the root causes of recurring crime problems rather than just responding to incidents. Tribal Elders, community leaders and Tribal Court Staff, provide a historical perspective on both individuals and recidivism, getting to the core of the incident.

Social Capital Theory: Emphasizes building trust, partnerships, and relationships between police and community members. This is key in our community and has to be applied every day.

Community Development Theory: Focuses on empowering residents to participate in governance and neighborhood safety. By holding community meetings, we are able to better explain to role of the police in the Tribal community, and our allegiance to Mashantucket in our decision making and application of the law.

Framework for Implementation

SARA Model: Utilizing the Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment model to identify and solve recurring community problems. The first task was changing the culture that existed within the agency, and rebranding the department to reflect the values of the Mashantucket Community. By becoming an active, visible and engaged part of the community, we are able to analyze and target crime, prevent its reoccurrence, improve our response, and assess what was learned from each encounter.

Systematic Evaluation: Conducting regular reviews of strategies to measure success and identify barriers to improvement. By self-evaluating and oversight, we have reduced complaints against officers dramatically, through both transparency and communication.

Key Policy Focus Areas

Mental Health Response: Investing in co-responder models and training dispatchers to divert calls to mental health professionals instead of law enforcement. Working closely with mental health and family services, we are able to divert non-criminal matters to the appropriate Tribal services through our MDT model. Officers are trained in crisis intervention and de-escalation.

Homelessness Initiatives: Implementing alternatives to arrest through partnerships with social services, focusing on housing-first approaches. Working with tribal government and resources, we have been able to place homeless individuals in safe, secure temporary housing, until a permanent solution can be found. Mental health and medical treatment access are part of the equation.

Maintaining public trust: This is an essential element of effective policing. Without trust, public deference to police legal authority diminishes, and minor incidents are more likely to escalate to use of force. A key factor in enhancing an agency's legitimacy in the eyes of the community is reducing the need for use of force through the practice of de-escalation whenever possible

Internal Feedback Systems: Actively seeking internal and external feedback to adapt and improve organizational performance. We currently enjoy open dialogue and communication with the Tribal government and community.

Connecticut's 2020 Police Accountability Law (HB 6004)

This act fundamentally reformed law enforcement by establishing an independent Inspector General for use-of-force investigations. Officer conduct is overseen and reviewed by multiple layers.

Key elements of Connecticut Police accountability include:

Office of the Inspector General: An independent investigator was created to probe use-of-force incidents and deaths in police custody.

Use of Force: Chokeholds are banned, and deadly force is only allowed when all reasonable alternatives have been exhausted.

Duty to Intervene: Officers must intervene and report colleagues using excessive force, with penalties for failure to do so.

Decertification and Training: The Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) can revoke certifications for misconduct, including "conduct undermining public confidence".

Body/Dash Cameras: Mandated for all police and correction officers, with footage release required within 96 hours of an incident.

Qualified Immunity: The law restricts qualified immunity, allowing for civil lawsuits in cases of bad-faith violations of rights.

Transparency: The law created a task force to review police transparency and policies, with an emphasis on minority recruitment.

Hiring and Retention

Modernize Recruitment: Use digital marketing, social media, and targeted advertisements to reach diverse candidate pools. By starting an Instagram and Facebook page, and working with Police App and Police One, along with our own internal marketing resources, we have begun to recruit at a faster rate.

Streamline the Process: Reduce the time from application to hiring to prevent losing candidates to other agencies. This is key to getting the best and most qualified applicants.

Mentorship Programs: Assign mentors to applicants to provide guidance, answer questions, and build retention. Content officers are our best ambassadors.

Candidate Experience: Guide candidates through the process with consistent communication, such as weekly emails or texts. By having a single point of contact, candidates are more focused and committed.

Targeted Outreach: Use data analytics to identify and recruit candidates who match the department's culture and community demographics. We work closely with both our mental health and community leaders in building a template of success for both the officer and community.

Update Standards: Reevaluate, update, or validate physical fitness standards and educational requirements (e.g., allowing degrees to substitute for written exams).

Key Retention Best Practices

Prioritize Officer Wellness: Implement comprehensive, long-term wellness programs, including mental health services, as outlined in both POST and BIA guidelines.

Competitive Compensation: Officer signing/retention bonuses, stipends for specialized training, and improved benefits to increase satisfaction.

Flexible Scheduling: Explore alternatives to traditional shifts, such as 12-hour shifts, to improve work-life balance.

Culture and Leadership: Shift to a supportive, communicative culture with transparent leadership.

Career Development: Provide ongoing training and clear paths for advancement.

Supportive Environment: Ensure officers have adequate equipment and feel like part of the team.



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QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION