

Chief Matthew Murray's Office

200 S 3rd Street | Yakima, WA 98901
Telephone: (509) 575-6211



June 16, 2020

Protests / Community Policing

Naturally, as the Chief of the Yakima Police Department, I, along with my command staff and the entire department, have been paying close attention to the issues and protests (after the horrific death of George Floyd in Minneapolis) in Yakima and across the United States. I feel that some data might assist in determining what future course Yakima might choose to take.

I started as the Yakima Police Chief on May 1, 2019.

- There have been ZERO community-initiated complaints of inappropriate force in the past year.
- In the past FOUR years, department has had THREE complaints of “Discrimination/Harassment” (ONE was sustained in 2017, ONE was unfoundedⁱ in 2016, and the last was not sustained in 2016).
- The total number of community-initiated misconduct complaints in 2019 (not necessarily sustainedⁱⁱ) was FIVE (19%), and misconduct complaints internally-generated within the department was TWENTY-TWO (81%).
- In the past FOUR years, sustainedⁱⁱⁱ allegations included (in descending order): Unsatisfactory Job Performance (10), Conduct Unbecoming (10), Courtesy/Disrespect (4), and Equipment - care of (3).
- In the past FOUR years, the department has referred three investigations to the independent Yakima Valley Special Investigations Unit. One was a suicide in the Yakima Municipal Jail, another was a man who jumped in the Yakima River and drown as officers approached him, and a third is ongoing and involves a woman who died of a medical emergency after being transported to the hospital by police. None of these cases involve allegations of inappropriate force by department. The first two cases are complete and did not result in discipline.
- Since 2016 (one of the cases was from 2014), there have been EIGHT lawsuits closed regarding the department (most were dismissed). None involved claims of racial discrimination. There are currently SIX open lawsuits – none of which involve allegations of racial discrimination. There have been ZERO claims of discrimination against the department by its employees since I was appointed in May of last year.

“Make respect a part of every interaction.”

Chief Matthew Murray's Office

200 S 3rd Street | Yakima, WA 98901
Telephone: (509) 575-6211



- In 2019, the department responded to 54,052 calls for service. Of those nearly 55,000 calls for service, 474 included use of force (336 of those involved use of a “control technique” – in simple terms, a mild twist of a suspect’s wrist to apply handcuffs, as an example). Therefore, last year, Yakima police officers DIDN’T USE FORCE on **99.12%** of the calls they responded to. The Yakima City Jail (operated by the Yakima Police Corrections Division) had 1,812 inmates with 17,031 days served and used force TEN times – **99.95%** of daily interactions DO NOT INVOLVE FORCE.
- The department continually reviews and updates its policies. However, as Chief I have convened a group to review all Use of Force and Anti-Discrimination policies against recognized national “best practices” models. This review will consist of careful and comprehensive examination and analysis of policy, training, culture, reporting, and review of use of force incidents.
- The most immediate and formidable challenge facing the department is the lack of necessary staffing. The department is budgeted for ONE-HUNDRED-FORTY-THREE officers. Currently, the department is staffed with ONE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-THREE officers. However, SIXTEEN of those are new hires in some phase of training and EIGHT are on long-term leave or limited duty. That means that only ONE-HUNDRED-NINE (76%) of our sworn police staff is currently deployable. The department is also down 30% of its captains, and by July 1, 2020 will be down 50% of its lieutenants.
- Although there has been a consistent five-year decline in crime^{iv}, in 2019 Yakima had the 5th highest violent crime rate and 2nd highest burglary rate in Washington State. Simply stated, 92% of cities in America are “safer” than Yakima.^v In a comparison of national cities the same size as Yakima, the homicide rate here ranks as the 11th highest.^{vi}
- The good news is that Yakima has risen significantly in 2020 on the list of Washington’s safest cities (now 56th out of 69 cities – was 65th in 2018).^{vii}
- In the summer of 2019, the department and U.S. Marshal’s Violent Offender Task Force arrested TWO-HUNDRED-FORTY-SIX fugitives in Yakima County (54% were gang related).
- In the fall of 2019, the department’s Criminal Investigations Division assisted the Washington State Patrol’s Missing and Exploited Children’s Task Force (MECTF) and multiple local, state and federal agencies with the THREE-DAY “Operation Net Nanny”. Undercover detectives communicated with hundreds of suspects around our area, SIXTEEN of which were arrested after they arranged and traveled to meet underage children for sex.

“Make respect a part of every interaction.”

Chief Matthew Murray's Office

200 S 3rd Street | Yakima, WA 98901
Telephone: (509) 575-6211



- In 2019, there were ONE-HUNDRED-THIRTY-TWO (132) Criminal Shots Fired Cases, NINE (9) of which were Fatal Shots Fired Incidents and THIRTY-NINE (39) were Non-fatal Shots Fired Incidents. By Comparison, Yakima's shots-fired-per-1000 population is 19; Seattle is 4, Lakewood 10, and Tacoma 16.
- Many of the victims and suspects of violent crime in Yakima are juveniles.
- SEVENTY-SEVEN percent of all calls for police service come from the two police districts east of Front Street. These are the residents who will have the greatest negative impact from a change in police service if allocation changes in the delivery of police services are made.
- Domestic violence incidents in Yakima remained disproportionately high when compared to other cities in Washington State. Although slowly decreasing from 1,699 in 2018 to 1,513 in 2019, domestic violence incidents continue to impact our community at an alarming rate.
- The department has made a significant investment in community policing over the past four years. From establishing "Coffee with a Cop" to the "Beat Officer Program" before I arrived, to the ONE-THOUSAND-SIX-HUNDRED-FORTY-TWO community contacts documented in the department's quarterly reports to the City Council, the department has clearly demonstrated its commitment to strengthening its relationships with the people of Yakima. I have personally walked (as of last week) 1,938 miles of Yakima's streets and met well over 1000 members of the community. I have also attended 33 houses of worship (prior to Covid closures) and met additional thousands of people there.
- There has been an IMMENSE outpouring of community support for the department in the past two weeks. The department has received so many encouraging cards, emails, and calls, which are sent in summary to all officers every day.

The Yakima Police Department is by no means perfect. But neither is it broken. I am committed to continually seek to improve the department so that we can meet the expectation of Exceptional Customer Service in every interaction.

ⁱ There are four outcomes for internal investigations: Unfounded (evidence exists that the allegation did not occur), Exonerated (even if the incident occurred, the officers conduct was appropriate), Not-sustained (there is not enough evidence to prove or disprove an allegation), and sustained (the officer violated policy).

ⁱⁱ ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ ibid

"Make respect a part of every interaction."

Chief Matthew Murray's Office

200 S 3rd Street | Yakima, WA 98901
Telephone: (509) 575-6211



^{iv} https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/crime_and_courts/fbi-homicides-increase-but-violent-crime-falls-significantly-in-yakima/article_72f65003-98aa-5115-a546-71f7fe61d71a.html

^v <https://www.neighborhoodscout.com/wa/yakima/crime#:~:text=With%20a%20crime%20rate%20of,here%20is%20one%20in%2025.>

^{vi} https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/crime_and_courts/fbi-homicides-increase-but-violent-crime-falls-significantly-in-yakima/article_72f65003-98aa-5115-a546-71f7fe61d71a.html

^{vii} <https://www.safewise.com/blog/safest-cities-washington/>

“Make respect a part of every interaction.”