



East Palo Alto Police Department Efforts to Serve the Community

The topic of defunding police departments has risen throughout the country due to the murder of George Floyd and centuries of systematic injustices to African Americans and people of color. Most recently, Governor Gavin Newsome defined defunding the police as, "taking the opportunity to look at the responsibility and role that we place on law enforcement to be social workers, mental health workers, get involved in disputes where a badge and a gun are unnecessary."

As such, the City of East Palo Alto Police Department has been ahead of the curve in this process with its police department. The city defunded their contract for police services with the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office in 1985 in order to build their own police department. The goal was to build a diverse police department that would be more empathetic and understanding to the needs of the community. Over the latter half of the decade, EPAPD has taken measures to make transformative changes to the way it operates in order serve the community in a more compassionate and effective way.

Marked Patrol Cars

Each patrol car is equipped with:

1. **Trauma kits** for rendering aid to a person suffering from serious trauma (i.e., shooting, stabbing, life threatening injuries from an accident).
2. **Naxalone (Narcan)**, this counteracts the effects of a central nervous depressant (fentanyl, heroin, etc.) To date, EPAPD have saved the lives of four community members that were overdosing and near death over the past year.
3. **Automated External Defibrillators (AED's)**, EPAPD has 13 of these devices and officers are trained to make a medical intervention if they locate a community member that is in a cardiac crisis.

Domestic Violence Advocate stationed in East Palo Alto

The City Council, community, and EPAPD identified the need for on-site assistance for victims of domestic violence. Working in partnership with the Council & Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse (CORA), the East Palo Alto Police Department helped develop a program where victims of domestic violence can meet with a CORA advocate to get necessary assistance. Further, EPAPD was successful in securing a substantial private donation to cover much of the cost of the advocate in 2020.

Truancy Program

The city lacked a program that helped with school attendance, so the East Palo Alto Police Department worked with local leaders in education to create a program that focused on locating students who were skipping school and getting them back into the classroom. Additionally, this program is focused away from a criminal intervention and uses a social intervention as the path to get students into class. Lastly, EPAPD secured a one-time grant that will help fund the program for the next several years.

Training

After successfully completing the academy and field training program, each officer is sent to a 40-hour course in Crisis Intervention that is taught by mental health professionals. The focus is on properly assessing and handling of situations involving persons with mental health challenges with emphasis on de-escalating the situation to minimize and eliminate the need for the use of force.

As an example, officers spent 48 minutes trying to de-escalate a situation with a man who was suicidal and suffering a psychiatric crisis that was wandering through the streets of the city. Streets were closed to traffic as the man wandered through the neighborhood and officers used "time and distance" to negotiate with the person. Officers tried to reach his psychologist without success but had paramedics standing by in case someone was injured. During the 48 minutes, officers continued to talk with the man who would periodically charge at them but by keeping their distance, and using time as a tool, officers did not have to use any force until the man armed himself with a spear-like piece of metal and began trying to stab himself. He then turned his aggression toward a Menlo Park police officer (who was there with aiding EPAPD) and tried to stab him; the Menlo Park officer deployed his taser causing the man to stop his attack. He was restrained and placed in a waiting ambulance so he could be transported to the psychiatric service at San Mateo General Hospital.

Community Outreach

During the past 6 years, EPAPD made significant steps to become better connected with the community. The community is involved in making the city a safer place and to their credit, getting involved and working with the police has reduced violent crime by over 60%.

During the current pandemic, the police department and community have worked in partnership to help those in need. The police officers continue to work with the Boys & Girls Club and educators to help facilitate meal and grocery giveaways, support

safe high school graduation ceremonies, and reduce enforcement of some parking violations.

Budget

A cursory review of Bay Area police departments indicates that EPAPD is one of the lowest in terms of department budget to total city budget ratio. The budget ranges around \$12 million.

Demographics

Today, EPAPD has 38 police officers and 14 full or part-time civilian support staff and operates with fewer staff and a smaller budget than nearby departments. The department is significantly diverse and able to serve the community in many languages. Below are three tables highlighting the demographics of EPAPD staff.

SWORN (38) (2.6 per position)					
	Male			Female	
White	14	36.4%		2	5.2%
Black	3	7.8%		0	0.0%
Hispanic	5	13.0%		3	7.8%
Asian	6	15.6%		0	0.0%
American Indian	0	0.0%		0	0.0%
Other	2	5.2%		0	0.0%
Vacant (3) 7.8%	0			0	0.0%
Total:	30	78.0%		5	13.0%

NON-SWORN (14) (7.14 per position)					
8FTE & 6PT	Male			Female	
White	0	0.0%		0	0.0%
Black	0	0.0%		2	14.2%
Hispanic	1	7.1%		4	28.4%
Asian	1	7.1%		1	7.1%
American Indian	0	0.0%		0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%		2	14.2%
Vacant (3) 21.4%	0	0.0%		0	0.0%
Total:	2	14.2%		9	63.9%

All Personnel (52) (1.9 per position)					
8FTE & 6PT	Male			Female	
White	14	26.6%		2	3.8%
Black	3	5.7%		2	3.8%
Hispanic	6	11.4%		7	13.3%
Asian	7	13.3%		1	1.9%
American Indian	0	0.0%		0	0.0%
Other	2	3.8%		2	3.8%
Vacant (6) 11.4	0	0.0%		0	0.0%
Total:	32	60.8%		14	26.6%