



# Washington Association of **SHERIFFS & POLICE CHIEFS**

## **WASPC Principles for Community Trust Revised November 16, 2021**

WASPC advocates for public safety improvements that make everyone safer, including law enforcement.

- Perceptions of Law Enforcement: Law enforcement remains one of the most respected professions in Washington. Retaining and improving public trust is top priority for WASPC. We take seriously concerns about police interactions with the community and continuously work to improve our policies, training, culture and transparency. There is a lack of understanding that the men and women who swear an oath to uphold public safety are required to face violent and chaotic situations. We accept that responsibility while we also ask individuals to take responsibility for their own actions, for policy makers and elected officials to bring our communities together and for all of us to work together for common solutions.
- Rule of Law: WASPC strongly urges elected policy makers to create laws that are clear, supported, and can be consistently enforced. Disagreements or different applications of laws based on political expediency or policy makers' unwillingness to make difficult decisions leads to reduced trust in the rule of law and is harmful to public safety and public trust.
- Deadly Force: WASPC has worked with advocates and community groups to remove "malice" from the legal standard, to come together and build trust. We will continue to work to improve training, focus on de-escalation, and provide transparency. We also expect the community to take responsibility for supporting law enforcement in the split-second decisions required, and to reinforce that reducing officer-involved deadly force incidents will be enhanced by not attacking or fighting with law enforcement. De-escalation is for everyone. We strongly support the following "Tips for Safety" from the Washington State American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU):

**STAY CALM AND STAY PUT.** Don't run or suddenly move.  
**KEEP YOUR HANDS** where the officer can see them

and free of any objects if possible.

**NEVER TOUCH** any police officer.

**FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS.** You can always make a complaint later if you feel your rights were violated.

- Criminal Justice Reform: WASPC acknowledges that implicit and institutional bias and discrimination exist in all aspects of society: criminal justice, education, housing, health care, finance, and more. We will work in concert with policy makers and others to make systemic improvements to understand, reduce and control the implicit and institutional biases and barriers that inhibit every person's success. Reform in the criminal justice system should be based on public safety outcomes and should not ignore concern for law enforcement, victims of crime, and justice. Assisting offenders with re-entry and reducing recidivism is good for public safety. Achievement of these goals are worth our state's investment of time, money, and resources.
- Behavioral Health: WASPC strongly urges our policy makers to fund and support a robust, "wrap-around" system for those with serious and untreated mental and behavioral health problems. This system is underfunded, understaffed and does not have the capacity to effectively replace criminal justice responses at this time, and the system should be in place before removing law enforcement responses. WASPC does not believe that further placement into the community and overall reductions of institutions for those with most serious illnesses is good policy. Placing people with serious health issues out onto the street is not compassionate and can result in increased calls for service, and potential violent interactions with the public and law enforcement. WASPC believes there is a positive role for incentivized treatment through potential criminal sanctions.
- Homelessness: WASPC supports a comprehensive approach to homelessness. There are many complex dynamics that contribute to the issue. Criminal transients and those who willingly commit crimes should be prosecuted within the law. They are not in the same category as homeless persons, including those with behavioral health problems and addictions, who need and will accept help. We urge policy makers to delineate between these two groups and solutions should recognize their differences.
- Basic Law Enforcement Training: Washington should fully fund the basic law enforcement academy. The surcharge on traffic tickets, which formerly funded all basic training, was redirected by the legislature into the general fund many years ago and led to long delays between when officers are hired and can be properly trained. Funding of basic training is a state responsibility.

- Public Safety Funding: Public safety is a core function of government and should be funded that way. The criminal justice system should not be reliant on revenue from citations, arrest warrants, or special funds related to sales of marijuana or gambling.
- Marijuana: WASPC acknowledges that the voters of our state made a specific decision to decriminalize marijuana. We urge policy makers to support necessary enforcement to reduce “gray market” sales, illicit juvenile consumption, and impacts on neighborhoods from illicit grows and organized crime. Regulation of marijuana should be based on public safety, not cannabis sales revenue.