

New Bedford Police create new gang policy

The New Bedford Police department has finalized a new gang policy which will be disseminated to department members this week.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that investigators utilize criminal intelligence systems properly and that a regular purge of stale information is conducted regularly. Chief Paul Oliveira directed that a change be made in the way that information concerning gang affiliation is collected and stored. Input from his leadership committee and community stakeholders was solicited throughout the process. Their areas of concern were taken into consideration and the policy was crafted with their suggestions.

The new policy features an updated point system used for evaluating the criteria by which gang affiliation is determined. The point system is more stringent than the industry standard currently used by law enforcement agencies throughout the state, making it more difficult for an individual to be classified. Once an individual is classified as a gang affiliate, they will be notified via registered mail and given an opportunity to meet with investigators, which is also an innovation.

The new policy stresses the importance of outreach and diverting individuals who are trending towards deeper gang affiliation. The department currently utilizes the Shannon outreach team to service at-risk youth, as well as the SSYI (Safe and Successful Youth Initiative) program which concentrates on violence prevention and intervention. Referrals are made by the department to these New Bedford based programs on a regular basis.

"I'm very pleased that we were able to acknowledge deficiencies in the way we were doing things in the past and set a goal to improve. I'm also thankful that we were able to engage with the community and give them a voice in the process. Their thoughts and ideas set the tone for the policy, which is what we wanted. In the end, we arrived at a new way of doing things which I believe will be a dramatic improvement." -Chief Paul Oliveira.

The New Bedford Police Department is currently in the process of revamping each of its many policies.