

New Bedford Police Department trains officers on updated use of force policies, provides enhanced communications training and investigates body cameras

Earlier this year the New Bedford Police Dept. embarked on making substantial changes to its “use of force” policies based on recommendations from Mayor Jon Mitchell’s Commission to Review Use of Force Policies at the NBPD in the wake of the 2020 death of George Floyd.

Today, Chief Paul Oliveira is announcing that all recommendations have been implemented to policy, all Officers are in the midst of being trained on those changes, and by the end of 2021 all Officers will be trained on the intensive practice of Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics (ICAT) – a sophisticated program developed by the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) to provide police officers with more options and new techniques for handling a wide range of critical skills. PERF is the national organization committed to police training and skill building.

In addition to these efforts, a program to test and implement body cameras is being investigated and policies are being housed in a new electronic platform. More information on the body camera initiative will be available soon.

“These are all powerful steps forward in overall police reform for the City of New Bedford,” said Oliveira, who served as a contributing member of the Commission along with community members from a variety of backgrounds and lived experiences.

Based on the direction of the Commission, the following enhancements were made to policies and training is underway, said Oliveira.

- Substantive guidance on de-escalation
- Duty of an officer to intervene when witnessing abuse and violation of use of force policies
- Duty of an officer to report witnessed abuse and violation of use of force policies
- Training on implicit bias, mental illness, and developmental problems

“While the existing policies and training were solid, there is always room to improve. My goal is to continuously improve our department in alignment with state reforms.

[Click here for all updated policies.](#)

During a six-month period in 2020, the Commission to Review Use of Force Policies embarked on extensive research from many different departments. It recognized language changes to meet the need of strengthening the emphasis on “duty to intervene” and “deescalation” components for all three policies, said Oliveira. For example, when it came to language on “choke holds” the commission recommended that language change to “strangle hold” and other neck control techniques to be clear and precise. In developing the policy recommendations, the Commission focused on verbal communications skills and more reporting to ensure transparency and we are complying, said Oliveira.

“Preserving the public’s trust in police is essential to public safety, and in general trust is strengthened when promises are kept. The New Bedford Police Department has demonstrated yet again that it understands this well, as it promptly has begun to implement the recommendations of the Use of Force Commission,” said Mayor Jon Mitchell.

The Commission was established by Mitchell in June; at that time, the Mayor signed on to the Obama Foundation's Mayor's Pledge, which called on mayors across the United States to commit to reviewing use of force policies, engaging the community for its input, reporting the findings of the review, and reforming community police use of force policies.

The Commission's recommendations, as well as related recommendations, observations and concerns made by the Commission, will be adopted by the Department consistent with the Department's collective bargaining agreement and state law.