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The Future of Policing

Careers in Local Law Enforcement

Law enforcement is the occupation in which members of a community are sworn public employees that are awarded the duty of maintaining order and safety, while also preventing crime and enforcing the laws of the state. Law enforcement officers can be employed by local, municipal departments, or at the state and federal levels. They must be certified by the state or federal government in order to have the power to perform their duties. The duties and responsibilities of law enforcement officers vary. The primary, common mission of police departments in a community is to improve the quality of life for the residents and reduce crime. This mission is typically accomplished through proactive and reactive policing. These policing strategies include patrol, responding to calls for service, school safety, investigation, and building community rapport while enforcing the law (Town of Tewksbury, n.d.). Law enforcement is one of the most rewarding professions despite the rigorous application, recruiting, and training processes.

In Massachusetts, the hiring process to become a law enforcement officer, specifically at municipal departments, typically follows the civil service regulations of the Commonwealth. Civil service is the process where individuals pursuing a career in law enforcement are placed towards the top of the eligibility list for hiring in the town for which they reside. Civil service departments require candidates to attend the state-administered civil service examination. In Massachusetts, the civil service examination is offered every two years. The civil service examination consists of reading comprehension, memory assessments, and surveys to determine work ethic and personal characteristics. Non-civil service municipalities require candidates to complete an entry examination through their department. Once a passing score is received,

applicants may be called by the department to appear for a medical exam and interview, while also consenting to a background check. Massachusetts has more than 350 police agencies comprising of state, county, and local officers, in which over thirty departments do not require candidates to take the state-issued civil service examination (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, n.d.-a). Depending on where a candidate resides and wishes to work, the hiring process to become a law enforcement officer will slightly differ.

Following the initial steps of hiring, candidates must pass a physical fitness exam. This exam consists of running and core exercises to demonstrate dynamic strength, cardiorespiratory fitness, and anaerobic power (Commonwealth of Massachusetts Municipal Police Training Committee, 2019). A hiring police department may also opt to perform a psychological exam on prospective candidates, as well as a drug test. The psychological exam covers an applicant's personality traits and is characteristic-oriented, rather than mental health based. Finally, individuals pursuing a career in law enforcement must complete a police academy, whether they are self-sponsored by themselves or their hiring agency. The police academy has a methodological curriculum of approximately eight hundred hours of classroom instruction and hands-on field training. A police academy in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts incorporates the academic study of different areas of the law, including criminal and constitutional law, as well as defense tactics, emergency vehicle operations, and firearms training. Police recruits are tested on the material and strategies they learn throughout their participation in the police academy (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2021). Once the academy certification is obtained, the candidate may be placed on the force. The hiring process to become a law enforcement officer is complex, requiring several months of training after completing thorough background investigations.

The educational requirements to become a police officer are minimal. Individuals who are interested in law enforcement must have a high school diploma or GED certificate. However, police officers who choose to return to school may receive monetary incentives based on the type of degree that is completed and how soon it is completed under the Quinn Bill. The Quinn Bill, also known as the Police Career Incentive Pay Program (PCIPP) assures officers can earn anywhere from fifteen to thirty percent more given they earn a degree relative to the field of law enforcement from an accredited university (Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, n.d.). Other requirements of applicants are that they are twenty-one years of age, reside in the state, and have a valid driver's license. The candidate must have no prior felony convictions, and should be wary of previous misdemeanors (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, n.d.-b). Though the educational standard is low, persons who wish to enter the career field must demonstrate several sought after skills. Individuals who display professionalism, communication, strong writing and reading comprehension, and adaptability are more likely to be offered a position. Additionally, law enforcement officers are ideally focused, honest, and have self-control (Florida Tech, n.d.). Though the educational requirements to becoming a police officer are manageable, additional training can be beneficial for those interested in the career.

There are many aspects of law enforcement that are not necessarily covered in the extensive curriculum of an entry-level police academy that can be learned through outside coursework and seminars. For instance, police officers are not required to be 51A mandated reporters as they do not typically have to take care of children, though a certificate of completing the training is an enhancement to resumes. Other training such as mental health first aid, fire investigation, domestic violence intervention, or emergency response may also be sought after. Some individuals wishing to pursue a career in law enforcement may also have had previous

experience in dispatch, the military branches, or as another first responder. Law enforcement is a career path where prior experience is encouraged, as it can assist candidates in narrowing down their field of interest, as well as deciphering those who are truly cut out for the job. It is a career that is physically and mentally demanding, and can also be dangerous (National Sheriff's Association, n.d.). Despite the potential toll it can take on one's health, it is still an attractive career path for persons of all ages.

The profession of law enforcement is emotionally rewarding, and the field continues to grow in job prospects. The employment rates of police officers and detectives in the United States is expected to rise by five percent from 2019 to 2029 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). The increase is predicted to be the largest across all occupations, as the need for public safety has increased over the past several decades. Law enforcement officers have become responsible for more tasks and duties within their municipalities, such as school safety and other geographic-specific needs. School resource officers, for example, became a common occurrence in the 1990s following the increase of shootings within schools (Weiler & Cray, 2010). Modernly, additional officers have also been hired by police departments to tackle the opioid and mental health crises, as well as promote rapport between officers and the community they serve. Community relationships are vital to the field of law enforcement, as the officers serve and protect those of the town or city in which they work.

Tewksbury, Massachusetts is a town within Middlesex County with an impressive police force. The community houses approximately thirty thousand residents, and is located off two major state highways. Tewksbury Police Department has sixty-three sworn officers and seven full-time employees (Town of Tewksbury, n.d.). The Tewksbury Police Department adheres to civil service standards and requires prospective future officers to attend the state examinations.

Applicants may register for the examination through the state, and the department will receive the ranked scores of those who claim residency in the town and other individuals who scored highly (Town of Tewksbury, n.d.). The department does not have any educational requirements that exceed those of the state, though they do offer monetary incentives for the type of degree that is held by an officer. Associate degrees result in a ten percent salary increase, while a Bachelor's leads to twenty percent, and a Master's degree receives twenty five percent (Town of Tewksbury, 2018). The department averages fifty-three thousand calls and almost eight hundred arrests per year. The department includes several specialized units; their force includes but is not limited to: criminal bureau; drug unit; K9 unit; community services unit; and school resource officers. Several police officers are also members of Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC), a regional tactical and SWAT team. Personnel at Tewksbury are ranked as civilians, dispatch, patrolman, detectives, sergeants, lieutenants, and police chief (Town of Tewksbury, n.d.). The Tewksbury Police Department is an agency that is dedicated to increasing the quality of life for the citizens they serve and protect.

Law enforcement is not a career without challenges that stretch beyond the physical and mental strength required of the job. Police officers are able to perform their duties with discretion, making choices and plans of action continuously during their shift. However, these choices are not always in the best interest of the community, and are not particularly highlighted in a positive light by the mainstream media. An officer's misuse of discretion, such as making a choice that is not perceived as appropriate for the situation, is where concerns and issues arise pertaining to professionalism and trust. Recent choices made by officers within the field of law enforcement have motivated a widespread national movement of disapproval in the career altogether. A proposed solution to the lack of support for police officers and the issues that are

arising is better training and reform of policies and procedures. Though, legislative action is a timely process and does not always achieve the intended outcomes. A career in law enforcement is not as it appears to be in mainstream media, as officers who report to work every day face the state of relations with the community, increasing lack of national support, and sudden changes to the way they perform their duties.

Challenges Faced by Law Enforcement in the 21st Century

The Relationship Between the Community and the Police

Community relations is arguably one of the most important aspects of a law enforcement agency's focus. As Sir Robert Peel stated in his seventh principle, “the public are the police and the police are the public” (Kilburn & Krieger, 2014). The community and its police must operate together in order to achieve trust, legitimacy, and dependability before attacking larger tasks such as crime control and safety. The Clinton Administration introduced the strategy of combating crime through community policing and prosecution as part of the 1994 Crime Act. The purpose of funding new community police officers was to understand the needs of the public, help fight their perceived fear of crime, and allow for community members to assist law enforcement in their work. On the other hand, community prosecutors were to learn how the community operated and target crime problems with the appropriate policies and legal response. The act also established funding for law enforcement agencies to receive new technology and equipment for fighting crime.

Additionally, Attorney General Janet Reno created the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) to assist in the hiring and funding of the community policing strategy (U.S. Department of Justice, 1999). COPS main goals are to build trust and mutual respect

between the community and police officers, while also providing training, technology, and funding to their strategy for crime control (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, n.d.). Law enforcement agencies that utilize community policing have chosen or combined several strategies to achieve positive community relations and crime control. The three most common techniques are Problem-Oriented Policing (POP), Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), and the SARA Model. These approaches are successful in the way they incorporate the community and their opinions of how to better protect persons and property with law enforcement resources (Fields, 2007). However, it is not always the case that the community is willing to participate with their police department and other legal agencies.

Community policing is dependent on the perceptions of the public, their trust in law enforcement, and the legitimacy that is awarded to the agency. The characteristics of the community are important factors in the support that a respective law enforcement agency will receive. The age, gender, race, education and economic status of the community that the department is serving are key variables in determining public perceptions of police. For instance, older community members are more likely to support and assist a department in crime prevention than younger residents. The collective fear of crime that is present within the community is also important, as community policing strategies target a reduction in this perception, likewise increasing support for the department and their legitimacy. Nonetheless, one of the most deciding factors of trust is the community's experience with police. If an individual or someone they are close to has poor contact or is victimized by law enforcement, there will be a snowballing effect on perceptions and distrust. There have been challenges to community-police relations similar to this scenario since the 1960s, stemming from protests, fear of crime, and

concerns of fairness and quality of treatment (Lee et al., 2019). Modern examples of police opposition were sparked by the beating of Rodney King and the death of George Floyd.

The Nexus Between Policy and Practice

Rodney King was stopped by police in Los Angeles slightly after midnight for speeding, and failing to stop at marked signs before halting. There were a total of approximately twenty-seven officers from various agencies involved in the traffic stop, as well as a helicopter overhead. During the encounter with police, King was beaten, struck, hogtied and handcuffed; his injuries resulted in several skull and facial bone fractures, a concussion, partial paralysis, brain and nerve damage, as well other abdominal and leg trauma. The traffic stop was videotaped by a bystander and posted to the internet. As a result, the community and well-known civil rights groups spoke out with criticism and condemned the actions of the officers during the encounter. The public had become divided in their perceptions of law enforcement: protectors or a violent gang of their own. Following the King incident, complaints to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) increased, and police departments, such as Los Angeles, were subject to legal verdicts and hefty settlements (Solomon & Solomon, 2004). However, the main challenge that still remains is the nexus between police actions and police procedure. For instance, chokeholds are a banned maneuver in several states, such as New York, where Eric Gardner died at the hands of a police officer in 2014. Additionally, despite additional training on de-escalation and implicit bias, there have been other deaths that occurred during encounters with law enforcement, raising tension within the community (Ciaramella, 2020). George Floyd was killed in May 2020 while a Minneapolis law enforcement officer kneeled on his neck for approximately nine minutes. The police were dispatched as Floyd was accused of using a counterfeit bill to purchase cigarettes. Police officers handcuffed Floyd and attempted to get him into the back of the patrol

car, resulting in Floyd lying face down on the pavement and being forcefully restrained. He was later pronounced dead at a hospital, and the officers responsible would later face trial a year later for their actions during the event (Graves, 2020). Law enforcement officers make choices based on their awareness of the situation they are in with each and every encounter, though some do not always align with their training and standards of professionalism.

Police officers are afforded discretion when it comes to their interactions with the public and potential offenders; however, they must also follow the policies and procedures of their department. Police discretion is defined in different ways; however, it is collectively known as the power to exercise free choice in decision making. There are several different factors that go into decision-making, such as the experience of the officer, the seriousness of the offense, and the characteristics and demeanor of the offender (Dymond, 2019). Police encounters with the community can be observed objectively and subjectively with reference to the discretion law enforcement officers are afforded. Objective measures may be whether or not the officer fired a weapon and if it was an accurate shot, while subjective measures need information on the thought process that led to the decision (Di Nota et al., 2021). A current challenge for law enforcement agencies is use of force policy and how officer decisions are perceived based on the information available to the public. There is no universal standard for how use of force is trained to police officers, nor is there a standard for evaluation. Use of force operates as a continuum, or a sliding scale of input and output scenarios, typically used to result in compliance from an offender. The sequence of events is not set and allows for the officer to reevaluate with each new input action (Hough & Tatum, 2012). The most common use of force continuum model is displayed as a pyramid with steps; the left side displays the actions of the offender, ranging from compliant to assaultive; the right side entails the appropriate response from an officer, escalating

from cooperative controls to deadly force. For example, if an offender is passively resisting by walking away from law enforcement, an officer may use verbal commands to get the individual to stop and address them (National Institute of Justice, 2009). Ultimately, the use of force continuum is not black and white, and many instances of its use are controversial in the eyes of the public and other criminal justice agencies.

Philosophy of Movements and Media Coverage

Media reporting and social advances have focused on police in relevance to community relations and use of force. The perception of law enforcement is determined through experience and interactions, as well as knowledge of use of force incidents. The latter may sometimes be observed through short videos and immediate reporting, regardless of completeness and accuracy. Regardless, both traditional and social media have also created a space for individuals to speak on behalf of the justice and reform that is believed to be needed. The greater challenge for law enforcement today is addressing these concerns and how the legislature will direct upcoming reform. Black Lives Matter, the People's Coalition for Safety and Freedom, and Campaign Zero, among others, have spoken out with distrust in the current operations of law enforcement, specifically their allotted budgets, training, and legal protection.

Across social media, "Defund the Police" gained headway after George Floyd's death in 2020. However, the slogan grasped multiple meanings for different individuals and groups. Some wanted law enforcement agencies to be more trained, have their resources diverted, or departments dismantled altogether. "Defund the Police" was also accompanied by "Abolish the Police," yet both are not as simple as face value suggests. Nonetheless, philosophical movements calling for police reform and justice for lives lost during police encounters have had large protests and a successful impact on how law enforcement performs their work.

Police officers across the country, regardless of the department and state they are employed by, are the target of civil and legislative reparations due to the actions of others in the field. Evidently, there has been a shift in the culture of policing due to the constant eye of the media and its users. It can be argued that law enforcement is experiencing another, or continued, Ferguson Effect. The Ferguson Effect stemmed from increased public criticism of police following several controversial citizen deaths at the hands of officers. This effect was described to affect police morale and behavior. As protests against the police increased, officer satisfaction with their work decreased, leading to an exodus of law enforcement professionals leaving the career (Marier & Fridell, 2020). The same effect is present today following the death of George Floyd and others. Police agencies, whether municipal, city, or state, are experiencing increase in retirements and resignations, and a lack of new recruits to fulfill staffing issues (Westervelt, 2021). The lack of police officers is a concern of its own in terms of public safety and who will answer emergency calls, as there is no secondary option currently in place. According to a survey conducted by a nonprofit, departments are seeing a forty percent increase in retirements within the past year (Westervelt, 2021). Additionally, hiring new police recruits is a timely solution; recruits must be vetted and attend an academy for several months before joining the force. Police departments are also not attracting a substantial number of quality candidates due to the negativity surrounding the career (Westervelt, 2021). Police officers across the nation are subject to public cries for accountability, transparency, and a decreased amount of funding and protection.

Community relations, perceptions in the media, and policy reform are three of the greatest challenges facing the career of law enforcement today. The public does not trust the police, though they are individuals who have promised to serve and protect the residents of their

area. The media has highlighted the most controversial police actions, hindering trust and support further between the two groups. Police departments across the nation are facing calls for their procedures to be rewritten and agencies defunded and abolished, regardless of their actions within their immediate community. Law professionals are leaving the field due to low morale and public dissatisfaction in their work. As more controversies and disapproval arise, the more uncertain the future of the career becomes; will law enforcement be downsized, demilitarized or dismissed? The fate of police officers and their job operations lie in the hands of themselves, the community and activists, and legislators at both the state and federal levels.

Directions for the Future

Community Policing Strategies

The challenge of the relationship between law enforcement and the community is multifaceted and simultaneously relies on the perceptions and demeanor of the culture. Law enforcement agencies can aid in bettering their public image through their presence on social media and in the community itself. For instance, police departments who have active media accounts and interact with their community are better able to enhance their relationship. Public perceptions of police performance can be positively influenced if a law enforcement agency has a website with available services and information. Additionally, departments can post annual reports of their activity, procedure manuals for transparency, and forms for how to contact the agency. While websites are primarily for information to be distributed to the public, social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook have become popular for community engagement. Departments can update their area on accidents or construction, upcoming events, or safety tips (Kilburn & Krieger, 2014). Maintaining a presence on social media as a law enforcement agency

allows the department to have a say in how they are portrayed outside of public experience, however it cannot replace face-to-face interactions. Engaging with the community through department or town-sponsored events is a successful way in maintaining a good relationship. Police departments are already active in the majority of their community's school systems through D.A.R.E programs and resource officers. Several departments across Massachusetts at the municipal and state level have also held events for the adults of the community to chat with law enforcement officers over coffee. Events such as these allow for residents to directly communicate their questions and concerns, while also meeting the police officers that are sworn to protect and serve them (Coffee With a Cop, n.d.). Ultimately, the partnership between public relations and law enforcement will continue to suffer without transparency about department activities and a mutual, cooperative mission for keeping the community safe.

Another solution to the cooperative mission between residents and police is local partnerships within the community that benefit both parties and maintains perceptions of positive performance. Law enforcement agencies have recently begun to partner with hospitals and mental health organizations in order to provide better aid to those struggling in their communities (Fields, 2007). The Front Line Initiative in Massachusetts is a collaborative effort between the police departments of Tewksbury, Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut and Tyngsboro to provide behavioral health assistance. Through this initiative, communities can access mental health and substance abuse aid in the forms of prevention, crisis response, and support through recovery (Tewksbury Police Department, n.d.). The Front Line Initiative is a directive that will get residents who are struggling with mental health or substances get the proper treatment, rather than being caught up in the criminal justice system; police departments that can partner with local organizations to offer aid are more likely to be supported by the community. Other

partnerships within the town or city can be beneficial to the public and police as well. Businesses who partner with their agency can assist with crime prevention by offering security footage following robberies, traffic accidents or other crime. Businesses who have a working relationship with their police department may also sponsor community events for the department, such as Coffee With a Cop (Fields, 2007). The relationship between the community and police overall may not return or resolve itself to what it once was, however, through cooperation and understanding the mission of keeping a community safe can still be obtained. A positive presence in the community and local partnerships to offer solutions other than the law is a step in facing the challenge of distrust and lack of support at the residential level.

Regulation of Policy

The distrust and lack of support for law enforcement is a challenge that is also rooted in policy. Communities have had negative perceptions of police for a number of reasons, though use of force incidents have been one of the most documented reasons for public outrage within the past several years. Allowing residents to obtain a department's procedure manual on the website is one direction for change, however justice and reform groups are calling for the regulation of the use of force continuum. Use of force training and evaluation is not standardized, leading to discrepancies in what departments have been legally allowed, or acquitted, to use for compliance maneuvers (Hough & Tatum, 2012). Campaign Zero is a nonprofit activist group that has called for reform and change to use of force policies around the nation. Following the death of George Floyd, Campaign Zero rallied for the unified ban of chokeholds, and called for increased training of officers on additional methods of de-escalation. The advocacy group also proposed that departments provide definitions of the force that are appropriate for the current level of offender resistance, and how to evaluate an officer's decision

to use deadly force (Ciaramella, 2020). An additional step for officers that was suggested is a verbal declaration from law enforcement that there is a need to use force in order to provoke last minute compliance. Similarly, the nonprofit advises that other officers intervene during misconduct and report it to their supervisor, as well as carry first aid kits in their cruisers to provide immediate aid to those who were the subject of force (Campaign Zero, n.d.). California had previously passed a law that exemplified parts of this reform, demonstrating that each and every department in the country is at a different standard; California raised their standard for when police officers are allowed to use reasonable force only when there is a need to prevent death or serious injury, rather than simply during an arrest (Ciaramella, 2020). It is unarguable that the use of force practice will change, whether it be standardization of thorough definitions and policy, or increased training for police officers in how to handle a number of situations with potential offenders. Nonetheless, regulating use of force at the national level is not the only reform that activist groups are arguing for law enforcement.

Federal Bill Proposals

The tragic death of George Floyd inspired two main federal bill proposals regarding police accountability and improving the relationship between law enforcement and their communities. The BREATHE Act was proposed by the Movement for Black Lives, an activist group that has been on the forefront of racial discussions, in 2020 as a reimagining of public safety and allocation of funds. The name of the act is a reference to George Floyd, though the bill proposal is in the spirit of the number of the Black Americans killed by police throughout recent history. The BREATHE Act is based on four changes: cease federal funding from incarceration and policing; new approaches to community safety; allocation of funds towards communities; and accountability for political leaders. Under this federal bill proposal, the solution to repairing

the relationship between communities and police and the controversies surrounding use of force is to “defund” and “abolish” aspects of the criminal justice system. For instance, the BREATHE Act calls for the termination of the agencies and programs that have been primarily responsible for mass incarceration and criminalization, such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). On the other hand, the proposal seeks funding for community-based organizations and other forms of public safety. The funding would go towards child after school programs, housing, reentry programs focused on workforce and educational development, and unarmed first responders, among several other non-punitive and non-carceral ideas. Lastly, the BREATHE Act suggests reparations and healing commissions be designed for past harms, namely slavery, the War on Drugs, and police violence. Most importantly, the federal bill proposal shares the idea of abolishing qualified immunity for law enforcement and increased police accountability (Movement for Black Lives, 2020). However, due to the monetary nature of the BREATHE Act, it has not been a future direction taken by the federal government in the fate of policing.

The George Floyd Justice for Policing Act was presented and passed by the House of Representatives in 2021 for its approach on increasing police accountability and method of changing the culture of law enforcement surrounding racism and bias. The four main strategies of the act are: to standardize how police departments operate; collect data on police interactions; invest in community policing programs; and the establishment of independent prosecution of police excessive use of force investigations. The solutions to end racial profiling and standardize force are based on mandated training on profiling and data collection, with the bill also creating a federal ban on chokeholds and no-knock warrants in certain instances. Additionally, police departments are required to use body and dashboard cameras, and will have limited use of military-grade equipment. The biggest change to come from the policing act is the elimination of

qualified immunity for law enforcement, allowing individuals to seek damages in civil court. Police officers will also be eligible for prosecution on a new standard for police misconduct: recklessness instead of willfulness. The culture of law enforcement will shift to the mission of building integrity and trust with the community through new accreditation standards and additional training programs for police officers. Law enforcement officers who have had problems with misconduct will now be listed on a nationwide registry as they are fired or moving between jurisdictions. This new registry is to prevent an officer from escaping accountability (U.S. House, 2021). Overall, there has been no solidified federal direction for the future of the career of law enforcement, as both bill proposals have not completed the path to becoming law. Yet, the matter of ensuring police accountability and reform is still taking place at state levels.

Massachusetts Reform

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has previously passed a reform act in December 2020 that encompasses accountability and transparency. Signed by Governor Charlie Baker, An Act Relative to Justice, Equity, and Accountability in Law Enforcement in the Commonwealth created a mandatory certification process for police officers and redefined the limits of force and techniques law enforcement can utilize. Professionals in the career will be able to lose their ability to work in law enforcement following decertification or suspension over claims of misconduct. The certification and decertification process will be overseen by the newly created Massachusetts Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST). The commission will hold a majority of civilian seats and will be responsible for investigating and deciding claims, as well as the certification of law enforcement agencies and maintaining career records of all officers. Accountability will be improved as there will be records of an officer's training and any misconduct available to all employers. On the matter of physical force, chokeholds and using a

firearm on a fleeing vehicle have both been banned unless necessary and appropriate to prevent harm. Law enforcement will also no longer be able to use rubber pellets, chemical weapons, or canines when responding to crowds of people. If an officer uses any of the mentioned maneuvers or tools of force, they may be subject to having their certification suspended or revoked by the commission. Similarly to the federal bill proposals, Massachusetts has placed strict limits on no-knock warrants in an effort to increase safety for the officers and uninvolved individuals who may be at risk of harm (Governor's Press Office, 2020). Ultimately, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has taken the direction of licensure and thorough internal records for all officers that are employed by law enforcement agencies in hopes to better the relationship with the community, reduce police misconduct, and change the culture of policing through reform.

A career in law enforcement can be morally rewarding and physically demanding, however it is not a field without overarching challenges. Individuals interested in law enforcement must adhere to a lengthy hiring process and fitness assessments before attending a rigorous police academy for training. Later, these individuals are certified and sworn to act as public servants and protectors, answering calls for aid at all hours of the day and night. Law enforcement professionals are not exempt from scrutiny as they work closely with the members of their community to preserve public order and safety. Police officers' decision-making processes and use of discretion are also under a microscope, and many social justice and reform movements have become loud voices for the way in which police agencies should operate. Nonetheless, the field of law enforcement is filled with individuals who have a strong passion for helping others on the days that assistance is needed most. There are police officers who go above and beyond the call of duty for members of their communities, and others, that depict the true

professionalism and importance of the career. Law enforcement may look different in the future, but the heart and cause of the field will remain.

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