



Oswego County Police Reform and Reinvention

**Working collectively to build
a strong, safe community.**

Oswego County Police Reform Plan Report

To: Oswego County Legislature
From: Oswego County Police Reform Committee
Subject: Police Reform Reinvention Collaborative Report

References:

- 1) New York State Executive Order No. 203
- 2) New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative guide.
- 3) Basic Course for Police Officers Checklist

Attachments:

- 1) Oswego County Police Reform Plan 2021
- 2) Collaborative committee members
- 3) Informational presentation with survey results from OCSO

Executive Summary:

This report is produced as a result of Executive Order 203 of 2020 and as outlined in the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative of August 2020 (Note: see reference#2). A collaborative effort has been made to include members of the Oswego County Legislature, the Police Reform Committee and the Oswego County Sheriff's Office. The following is a report of the activities and outcomes of the Oswego County Police Reform Committee and a Police Reform Plan (Note: see attachment #1) for legislative approval and public dissemination.

The Oswego County Police Reform committee was formed with the Legislature Chairman as its head and is composed of a diverse membership including elected officials, police members, mental health professionals and service providers, legal professionals, and members of the community at large. The goal of the committee is to collect and analyze data and information, solicit public input, and determine a reasonable and sustainable course of action to improve the activities of our Sheriff's Office with special regard and consideration for community interactions.

Public and professional input was solicited, and raw statistical data was obtained from the Sheriff's Office indicating that the performance of the department meets or exceeds all reasonable expectations for service delivery and effectively meets their duty to protect and serve the community without bias or prejudice. The Sheriff's Office provides for the safety of the community with professionalism and efficiency in accordance with all accreditation standards set by New York State Accreditation Program. Furthermore, the relationship between the agency and the public at large is deemed to be professional and cooperative in nature.

Recognizing that government and its agencies must respond to a dynamic public, recommendations are made to insure the best possible results are achieved. The recommendations for improvements to the Sheriff's Office are largely administrative and will allow for increased transparency, for example, providing easier public access to information and activities of the Sheriff's Office.

The recommendations include 7 primary initiatives: 1) on-line publication of policies and procedures, consistent with legal, operational and confidentiality requirements 2) Determine and implement more efficient ways to serve citizens with mental health issues 3) Publish an annual report of agency activities 4) Enhance the process by which civilians submit complaints and commendations regarding Sheriff's Office personnel 5) Educate Sheriff's Office members and inform victims of domestic violence, sexual assault or other crimes of programs and services that are available to aid them 6) Develop and implement a Civilian Police Academy 7) Implement a body worn camera program for the agency.

Report Basis:

In accordance with the collaborative guide and as directed by the Governor, public input has been solicited. As the primary police agency of Oswego County, the Sheriff's Office was tasked with establishing a means to gather public comment. In order to gather initial public input a survey was developed by the Sheriff's Office and made available publicly. The survey contained specific questions relating to public interactions with the Sheriff's Office and public perceptions.

In addition to the survey, a generic response method was promulgated in the form of direct open format e-mail encouraging all remarks directly from the public.

Public hearings were performed on February 3rd and 18th 2021. These hearings were conducted in two separate locations to better facilitate public access. The first hearing was conducted in Oswego and the second hearing in Pulaski. Open discussion was held, and recommendations were encouraged to be brought forth.

These methods produced a significant amount of input. Collating the material gathered was a continuous task during the process. This was done primarily by the Sheriff's Office but also with oversight and input from the committee. The entire raw data was retained and made available to the committee to ensure transparency and allow for discussion of alternate interpretations.

The public input while valid from the individual perspective should be considered subjective in nature. Any persons submitting input will naturally have their individual bias based on their background and interaction with the agency or perceptions based on peripheral influences such as media, vocation, etc. To garner a comprehensive view of the existing state of the Sheriff's Office, it is necessary to gather and include statistical data relating to all levels of activity in the department. The statistical data was gathered from required department records and included training records and operational activity records. It should be noted here that the Oswego County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) is a state accredited agency, meaning that the New York State Accreditation program has been and remains in place to ensure that all NYS requirements for police departments are met. The OCSO meets or exceeds all requirements for accreditation.

All the gathered information was made available to the committee in raw format upon request and access to additional material and data was also available upon request as well as interviews with department members and others with connections to community policing and response.

Specific Information:

The Oswego County Sheriff's Office is a state accredited agency. Accreditation is achieved by performing training and other activities as directed and approved by the New York State Accreditation Program according to the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS).

The New York State program encompasses four principal goals:

1. To increase the effectiveness and efficiency of law enforcement agencies utilizing existing personnel, equipment, and facilities to the extent possible.
2. To promote increased cooperation and coordination among law enforcement agencies and other agencies of the criminal justice services.
3. To ensure the appropriate training of law enforcement personnel; and
4. To promote public confidence in law enforcement agencies.

The Accreditation Program is comprised of a set of standards developed to further enhance the capabilities of an agency and is divided into three categories.

1. Administrative standards
2. Training standards
3. Operation standards

The goals of the accreditation program are met or exceeded by the Oswego County Sheriff's Office in every category. A certification of re-accreditation is performed every 5 years.

The training provided to new officers/deputies of the OCSO is completely in line with the accreditation program and includes additional local training for a total of 1,261.5 initial hours of required training prior to graduating and entering the force full time. In addition, currently serving officers/deputies attend training on a recurring basis and are required to maintain proficiency.

The raw statistical data on demographics indicates that the OCSO is in line with reasonable expectations for hiring and placements in line with the most recent published census data. The department generally reflects the community it serves.

Analysis:

A basis for the Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative as directed by the Governor is the perception or potential reality of significant acrimonious relationships existing between police agencies and local populations. While there is evidence of such relationships in specific areas of the country at large, there is no direct significant evidence of such a state existing here in Oswego County. It should not be assumed that conditions could not occur that have the potential to alter the current state of relations between the Sheriff's Office and the public. Therefore, proactive steps are recommended.

As stated in the basis, the goals of the accreditation program are met or exceeded by the Oswego County Sheriff's Office in every category. These goals as enumerated by the DCJS reflect the essence of the intent of the reform collaborative. Consistently meeting the accreditation requirements also meets the intent and the letter of the reform collaborative.

The data gathered and community input indicates that a cooperative and reasonable relationship exists between the Sheriff's Office personnel and civilians. A proactive approach to ensuring that this condition remains is advisable. As the goals of the DCJS cover the whole range of activities conducted by the Sheriff's Office, it can be safely deduced that the trajectory of the agency is in line to continue to perform and will meet or exceed all established standards going forward. Rather than assume this will occur, proactive measures are recommended to be put in place to ensure the best possible service continues to be rendered. It should be noted the public comment and data collected also identified an opportunity to educate the public on misconceptions about roles, responsibilities, and activities of law enforcement as well as resources available that may be underutilized.

Oswego County is primarily rural with a population of approximately 120,000 people spread over an area of 960 square miles. The cities of Fulton and Oswego and the Villages of Phoenix, Pulaski, and Central Square each have their own Police Departments. The Oswego County Sheriff's Office serves as the primary first responders for the remainder of the County's 21 towns and villages.

As the accreditation process is comprehensive in scope for the training, administration, and operations of the OCSO and as the department continues to be successfully accredited by the DCJS, the public relations is a remaining piece for potential improvement. Transparency is a key component of public trust. The public must have confidence that law enforcement is fair. An emphasis on public relations should be considered as a proactive measure to maintain public trust and cooperation.

Recommendations:

The following recommendations were arrived at as a means of continuing the work already being performed and as a means of improvement and ensuring transparency.

1. Develop an online publication of policies and procedures, consistent with legal, operational and confidentiality requirements. This will allow for public access and increase transparency of Sheriff's Office activities.
2. The Sheriff's Office will work with the existing Mobile Crisis Team (MCT) to find more efficient ways to deal with mental health issues to include, but not limited to, working cooperatively with road patrol and 911 dispatch.
3. Provide an annual report on Sheriff's Office activities. This will allow for the public to see a compilation of annual department activities in a concise format.
4. Develop an enhanced civilian complaint/commendation reporting system by improving accessibility and developing an easy-to-use online reporting tool. Forms can be used to file civilian complaints and for commendations for the actions of officers. Submitted forms will be reviewed by a member of the command staff and assigned to the appropriate supervisor for action. A log of all complaints and the results will be maintained by command staff.
5. Develop a plan to work with OCO SAF (Oswego County Opportunities Services to Aid Families) and other organizations to assist victims of domestic abuse as well as victims of sexual assault or other crimes by educating Sheriff's Office members of programs available as well as providing information to victims at the scene and during follow up interactions.
6. Develop and implement a Civilian Police Academy. The Oswego County Citizen Police Academy will be designed to strengthen the partnership between the police agencies of Oswego County and the citizens of Oswego County. The objectives of this program are: To encourage increased communication and interaction between Law Enforcement Officers and the community which they serve; to dispel misconceptions about the roles, responsibilities, and activities of law enforcement officers; to provide participants with a basic understanding of police powers and limitations imposed by law and police department policy; to familiarize participants with the dangers, difficulties, and ambiguities inherent to modern police work and to foster a citizen police partnership to combat crime and develop a safer community.
7. Implement a body-worn camera program for the Sheriff's Office which will be used to support criminal investigations, collect evidence, and document interactions during police activities.

Conclusion:

The existing state of policing in Oswego County as performed by the Sheriff's Office is done in accordance with established standards as set forth by New York State. Recognizing that in striving for excellence, a program of self-awareness and conscientious self-improvement will be put in place. The police reform plan has been developed to do just that, its implementation and diligent execution will be performed as necessary to ensure the continued highest quality service is provided.

Signature:

James Weatherup. Chairman of the Legislature

cc;

Sheriff

County Administrator

File

Oswego County Police Reform Plan 2021

In accordance with New York State Executive Order No. 203 and in collaboration with the Oswego County Police Reform Committee, seven specific recommendations for police reform have been made. The following plan will ensure that the recommendations are implemented as intended. It is widely acknowledged that the current state of operations in the Oswego County Sheriff's Office already meet or exceed all New York State standards for police department activities. This plan will be implemented under the direction of the Sheriff with oversight by the Oswego County Legislature and should be considered a building block for continuous improvements. Adjustments and updates will be made as necessary when identified. The implementation dates scheduled should be adhered to as noted with variances by exception only.

Recommendation: 1

Develop an online publication of policies and procedures, consistent with legal, operational and confidentiality requirements. This will allow for public access and increase transparency of Sheriff's Office activities.

Discussion:

There currently exists a significant number of policies governing the conduct of Oswego County Sheriff's Office. The policies are broadly divided into categories responsible for Administration, Training and Operations. All these policies are in continuous use and are updated as needs are identified. In order to increase transparency, the policies will be published online consistent with legal, operational and confidentiality requirements.

Actions:

- Develop a list of policies that can be published for public access.
- Develop a public access point on the Oswego County website.
- Complete these actions by August 30, 2021.

Recommendation: 2

The Sheriff's Office will work with the existing Mobile Crisis Team (MCT) to find more efficient ways to deal with mental health issues to include, but not limited to, working cooperatively with road patrol and 911 dispatch.

Discussion:

Understanding that community safety includes traditional police work as well as responding to various emergencies involving, among other things, mental health crisis issues. A coordinated effort to recognize and determine an appropriate response to various potential emergencies must be developed. Immediate assessment and triage of situations is essential. Currently there are several agencies and departments involved in the assessment and triage phase of response. The MCT has been expanded to 24-hour coverage in Oswego County. This allows citizens with mental health issues that do not rise to a level requiring police presence, the ability to work with mental health professionals who can develop a mental health plan. Improving coordination between each entity will enhance our response capabilities and better serve the public.

Action:

- Review existing policies relating to response actions.
- Coordinate with 911 to identify and refine dispatch criteria.
- Provide training to all officers on Mobile Crisis Team capabilities.
- Complete actions by June 30, 2021.

Recommendation: 3

Provide an annual report on Sheriff's Office activities. This will allow for the public to see a compilation of annual department activities in a concise format.

Discussion:

Currently there is significant information and statistics compiled by the Sheriff's Office capturing daily activities. This information is available to elected officials and interested citizens upon request. In order to foster and improve relations with the public, a formal annual report should be developed and presented annually to the Legislature. During legislative sessions the public is always welcome, and encouraged, to attend.

Action:

- Develop a standard format of data, statistics and narrative information detailing the entire scope of activities performed during a calendar year.
- Present the report annually to the Legislature in session no later than February 28th following the immediate previous year.
- This is a recurring action and will be first performed no later than February 28, 2022.

Recommendation: 4

Develop an enhanced civilian complaint/commendation reporting system by improving accessibility and developing an easy-to-use online reporting tool. Forms can be used to file civilian complaints and for commendations for the actions of officers. Submitted forms will be reviewed by a member of the command staff and assigned to the appropriate supervisor for action. A log of all complaints and the results will be maintained by command staff.

Discussion:

Interactions with civilians is the core of public safety. The professionalism of every member of the Sheriff's Office is on the line every day. Recognizing that individual perspectives account for perceptions, it is necessary to ensure that all perspectives are heard and captured. A formal complaint system is necessary to document and record relative statements. In addition to complaints, commendations of best practices and good behaviors is also recommended in order to recognize, encourage and build upon positive interactions.

Actions:

- Develop a policy for soliciting and recording and answering complaints and commendations.
- Develop an accessible web-based site where complaints and commendations can be submitted.
- Completion date May 1, 2021.

Recommendation: 5

Develop a plan to work with OCO SAF (Oswego County Opportunities Services to Aid Families) and other organizations to assist victims of domestic abuse as well as victims of sexual assault or other crimes by educating Sheriff's Office members of programs available as well as providing information to victims at the scene and during follow up interactions.

Discussion:

There currently exists programs and information to assist victims of personal abuse crimes that are inconsistently used. As application of restorative justice is an included item in the police reform initiative, a method to consistently train officers and inform the public and victims will be developed.

Actions:

- Conduct training on personal abuse for all members of the Sheriff's Office to include new recruits and existing staff.

- Ensure materials detailing information to be provided to abuse victims is available for distribution.
- Note: This will be an ongoing initiative following initial roll out.
- Initial training and preparation of materials to be completed by September 1, 2021.

Recommendation: 6

Develop and implement a Civilian Police Academy. The Oswego County Citizen Police Academy will be designed to strengthen the partnership between the police agencies of Oswego County and the citizens of Oswego County. The objectives of this program are: To encourage increased communication and interaction between Law Enforcement Officers and the community which they serve; to dispel misconceptions about the roles, responsibilities, and activities of law enforcement officers; to provide participants with a basic understanding of police powers and limitations imposed by law and police department policy; to familiarize participants with the dangers, difficulties, and ambiguities inherent to modern police work and to foster a citizen police partnership to combat crime and develop a safer community.

Discussion:

It is recognized that there exists a tremendous potential for misunderstanding between police agencies and the public they serve. In order to foster better understandings by the public of police actions, inviting the public to participate in actual or similar training that police receive and educating the public on law standards and requirements may lessen the divide between police and civilians. Target audience may include persons of community influence such as teachers, civil organization leaders and elected officials as well as local businesspeople.

Action:

- Develop a policy for Civilian Police Academy. The policy should include a description of target audience, goals of the academy and a curriculum description.
- Develop a curriculum.
- Develop a schedule.
- Completion September 30, 2021.
- Note: The completion date identifies the development work. The actual conduct of an academy will be performed at a time to be determined.

Recommendation: 7

Implement a body-worn camera program for the Sheriff's Office which will be used to support criminal investigations, collect evidence, and document interactions during police activities.

Discussion:

The use of body-worn cameras has proven to be an invaluable tool for law enforcement agencies. The cost to benefit ratio of body cameras has improved as technology has improved. This recommendation is a high priority endeavor.

Action:

Develop a specific policy for body camera use. Specific areas to address are usage requirements. For example, who will wear the body camera, when will it be worn, and how long will the recordings be retained.

- Develop a purchase request for approval. Considerations are compatibility, service longevity and maintenance.
- Develop training for implementation.
- Implement general distribution and deployment.
- Completion date August 30, 2021.

Each of the 7 recommendations has been determined to be a positive driver in the effort to align with NYS Executive Order No. 203. Actions assigned to the Sheriff's Office with commensurate due dates for implementation will be periodically monitored by the legislature to ensure completion.

Oswego County Police Reform Stakeholders

Position	Name
Chair of Legislature	James Weatherup
The DA or ADA	Greg Oakes
Public defender/ Defense Attorney	Sara Davis/Rachel Dator
Town Supervisor	Tony Bush
Village Mayor (with no PD as they rely on Sheriffs and those with PD will need to do this separately)	Terry Grimshaw
Representative from OCO/SAF - Victim Advocate	Ron Russell
Chair of Public Safety	Terry Wilbur
Majority Caucus Representative or designee	Brad Trudell
Minority Caucus Representative or designee	Marie Schadt
Members of the Community with emphasis on areas with high numbers of police and community interactions.	Don Forbes
Sheriff	Don Hilton
Undersheriff	John Toomey
Deputies Association Representative	Rob Wells
Mental Health	Nicole Kolmsee
Director of Probation	Dave Hall
Director 911	Kevin Pooley
Retired - Police/Trooper/Sheriff/Judge	Rob Heath
HR Director	Julie Bell
OSCO Accreditation Lieutenant	Bill Bazzell
Oswego County Opportunities	Staci France
Farnham	Eric Bresee
Oswego County Sheriff Department's Training Coordinator	James Prior



Oswego County Sheriff's Office

REFORM & REINVENTION OF POLICING

About our Agency

- The Oswego County Sheriff's Office serves the law enforcement needs of all the citizens of Oswego County, and strives to do so in a professional manner, respecting the rights of all our citizens without regard to race, color, nationality, creed, gender or sexual orientation.
- Our policies and procedures are developed and carried out with that goal in mind. Our Deputy Sheriffs are selected, trained and supervised with that goal in mind.
- We use our knowledge, experience and professional judgment, combined with available information, data, analysis and research to develop our Oswego County Sheriff's Office policing strategies, policies and procedures. We will reference some of the relevant strategies, policies and procedures relating to issues set forth below for community discussion and comment.
- We are an Accredited Agency meeting or exceeding the standards prescribed by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services.

Accreditation

- What it is:
- Approximately 150 out of 514 Police Agencies in NYS are accredited.
- The New York State Accreditation Program promotes the public's confidence in its police departments. This program provides an additional level of transparency and public trust.
- 110 Standards relating to policy and practices in the areas of Administration, Training and Operations, all need to be met to achieve accreditation.
- The Accreditation Council consists of 17 members appointed by the Governor. The Council meets quarterly and adopts standards, sets policy, and has exclusive authority to grant accreditation to law enforcement agencies.
- Agencies need to be reaccredited every 5 years.

Accreditation

- What it does:
- It encompasses four principal goals:
 - To increase the effectiveness and efficiency of law enforcement agencies utilizing existing personnel, equipment, and facilities to the extent possible.
 - To promote increased cooperation and coordination among law enforcement agencies and other agencies of the criminal justice services.
 - To ensure the appropriate training of law enforcement personnel
 - To promote public confidence in law enforcement agencies.

Accreditation

- **Local Benefits:**
- Confirmation that our agency policies comply with professional standards set by the Accreditation Council
- Assurance of fair recruitment, selection and promotion processes
- Reduced vulnerability to civil lawsuits and costly settlements
- Enhanced understanding of agency policies and procedures by all members since they are regularly referenced and updated
- Greater administrative and operational effectiveness
- Greater public confidence in the agency

Policy and Procedure

- The Oswego County Sheriff's Office Policies and Procedures are evaluated and updated on a regular basis. General orders (Updates) are documented, reviewed and signed by agency personnel for any changes.

Departmental Training

- We have continuous departmental training throughout the year. We regularly review monthly Sheriff's Updates through an online publication.

Use of Force

- Our current Use of Force Policy follows the objective reasonableness standard that also follows policy set forth by the Municipal Police Training Counsel (MPTC).

Statistical DATA

- From 01/01/2015 – 12/31/2020 our agency handled 14,1,611 complaints. There were a total of 81 reported uses of force reported. It should be noted that 18 of those reported uses of force were simply displaying a Taser to gain compliance (which we have been reporting since well before DCJS required it). In that time, we have had one use of force that resulted in a fatality (firearm discharge).
- The total percentage of our complaints that involve use of force is .00057%
 - Roughly 6 of every 10,000 calls involve use of force based on historical data
- The total percentage of our complaints that involve use of force resulting in a fatality is .000008%.

Statistical DATA

- **Census Based Data:**
- According to the 2010 U.S. census (with certain updates in 2019), Oswego County has 117,124 residents. The generic ethnic breakdown is:
 - White: 95.9%
 - Black: 1.2%
 - American Indian: .5%
 - Hispanic/Latino: 2.7%
 - Pacific Islander: Less than .5%
- The Oswego County Sheriff's Office law enforcement division currently has 66 members. Our generic ethnic breakdown is:
 - White: 95.4%
 - Black: 1.5%
 - American Indian: 0%
 - Hispanic/Latino: 1.5%
 - Pacific Islander: 1.5%

Bias

- We have added additional anti bias and implicit bias training to 2020 Regional Police Academy through NYMIR Online University
- NYMIR's E-University Law Enforcement courses can be used by an agency towards their annual in-service training required as part of the accreditation process.
- This online training is required for all members annually going forward. Anti-Bias Policing Part 1 and Part 2.

De-escalation

- During our most recent Police academy held at our department all members took online courses on De-Escalation and Communication (2 modules), as well NYMIR module on Effective Law Enforcement Communication.
- Current members and recruits all were assigned to watch a Force De-Escalation Webinar by Lexipol.
- As part of Defensive Tactics training members were given reality-based training scenarios with roll players to work on their communication skills with difficult subjects.

Community Based Outreach

- SRO's supported the delivery of several hundred meals in cooperation with meals on wheels and Oswego County Office of The Aging.
- Project Lifesaver PLS to locate people with disabilities.
- SRO's conducted welfare checks on students and did Chrome book deliveries at the request of Superintendents during the pandemic.
- SRO's delivered food and milk during the Pandemic.
- Our agency participated heavily in the Community Safety Initiative program prior to the pandemic.

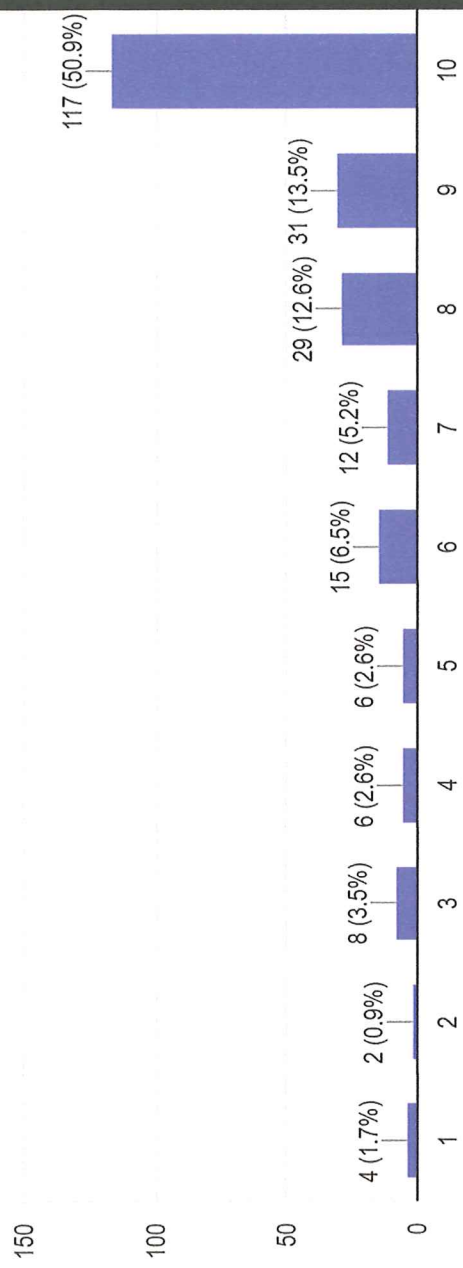
Problem Oriented Policing and Hot Spot Policing

- In 2020, the Oswego County Sheriff's Office developed an Anti-Crime Team to engage in proactive law enforcement actions, rather than the reactive law enforcement that is typical of the road patrol and investigations divisions.
- The Anti-Crime Team is focused on vehicle and traffic enforcement, warrant investigations, drug trafficking interdiction, and problem-oriented policing in areas experiencing high crime rates or unusual increases in criminal activity.
- Recent examples of such problem-oriented policing efforts include investigations into a recent rash of catalytic converter thefts throughout the County, investigations into larcenies from vehicles in the Town of Scriba, and street-level drug sales investigations. The Anti-Crime Team has also focused attention on major drug-trafficking routes in Oswego County and has made numerous arrests and made many seizures of marijuana, narcotics, currency and untaxed cigarettes.

Public Questions and Responses

On a scale of one to ten, how satisfied are you with the Oswego County Sheriff's Department

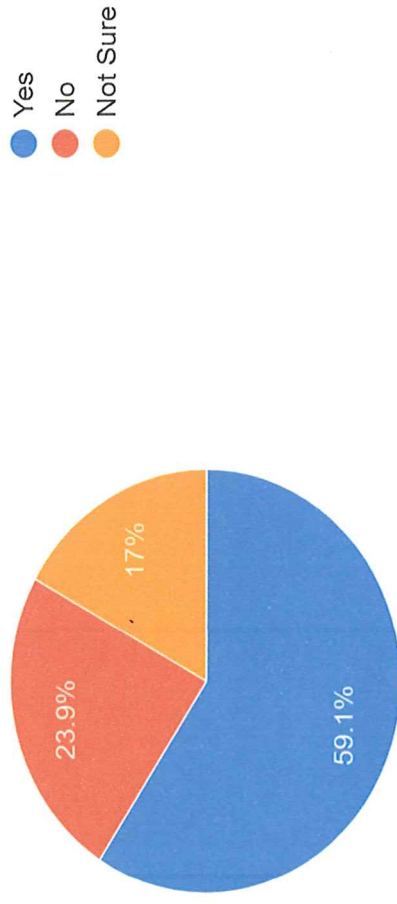
230 responses



- 10= Very Satisfied
- 1 = Not Satisfied
- This shows that over 90% rated us 5 or above

Public Questions and Responses

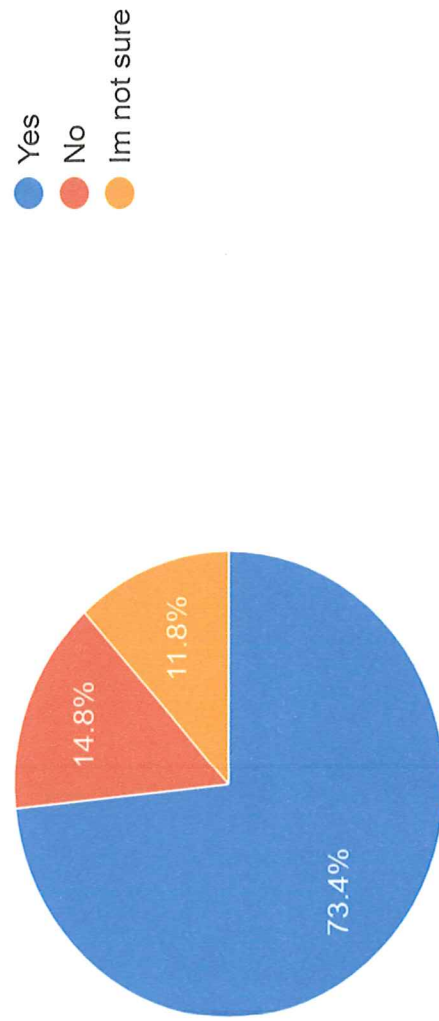
Do you feel Law Enforcement should respond to non criminal complaints? (Property disputes, Civil complaints, animal problems)
230 responses



Public Questions and Responses

Law Enforcement should respond to substance abuse and /or overdose calls.

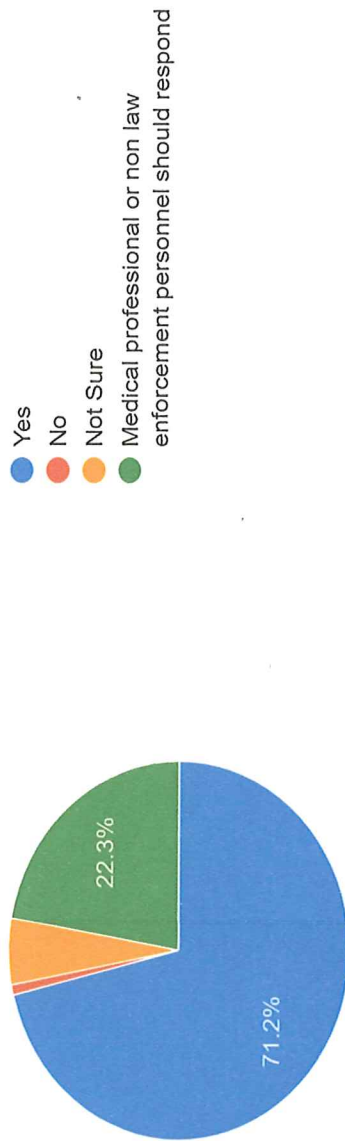
229 responses



Public Questions and Responses

Do you want law enforcement to respond to mental health complaints? (IE Suicidal Person or person displaying erratic behavior)

229 responses



Public Questions and Responses

Should Law Enforcement have a presence in schools?

230 responses

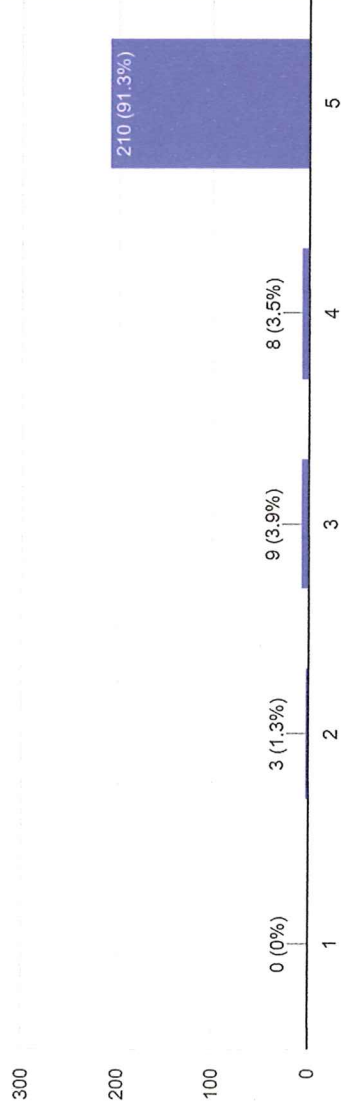


- Our Department currently has 9 sworn officers in 4 School Districts throughout the County.

Public Questions and Responses

I feel Police Officers are a necessary part of my community?

230 responses

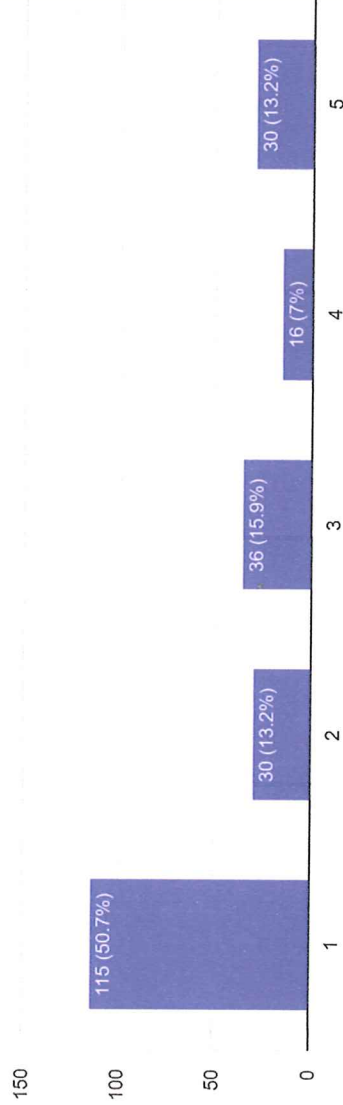


- Scale 1-5 one is strongly disagree and five is strongly agree
- Scale is one= Strongly Disagree and Five = Strongly Agree

Public Questions and Responses

- This Graph shows that over 80% of the public does not feel we are biased in our investigations.

The Deputies of the Oswego County Sheriff's Office are biased in their investigations with certain groups of people.
227 responses



Public Questions and Responses

Should Social Services respond to some complaints instead of law enforcement. Mark only one
229 responses

