



DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Marcus G. Jones
Chief of Police

Mr. Eric E. Sterling, Chair
Advisory Commission on Policing
100 Maryland Ave.
Rockville, MD 20879

January 17, 2024

Dear Mr. Sterling,

Thank you for your letter of Dec. 18, 2023, inquiring about the role of the Montgomery County Police Department in serving the public health needs of the residents of Montgomery County.

I can assure you and the other members of the Commission that the Department understands our primary duty to protect and serve our residents means helping to safeguard their health as well, particularly in the example you cite of circumstances related to drug use. Montgomery County is not immune from the scourge of opioid use that has taken hold in much of the country. We and our partners in other agencies are dedicated to getting those drugs off the streets and to getting help to those who were afflicted using those drugs. This is proven by our partnership with agencies such as Health and Human Services.

Our Special Investigations Division includes a Drug Enforcement Section dedicated to combatting opioid abuse and fentanyl distribution as we have seen a rise in opioid-related overdoses, both fatal and non-fatal, over the past three years. Narcotics investigators respond to every death and incident, with the follow-up focusing on the distributor of the drugs, not on the user.

In 2023, there were approximately a dozen overdoses at John F. Kennedy High School. The narcotic investigators began an intensive investigation into this problem affecting the children in this community. With the assistance of patrol officers, we were able to establish probable cause to conduct a traffic stop which netted the seizure of nearly 1,000 fentanyl pills and an illegal handgun with other narcotics and proceeds. This investigation led to the arrest of a subject who was a major distributor of narcotics to the Kennedy High School students.

Another intensive investigation led by our Drug Enforcement Section identified a fentanyl distribution conspiracy and was pursued with the assistance of our federal partners, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). This led to the arrest of a major source of illegal drug supply who had sold over 4,500 pills to undercover agents and we seized an additional 1,000 pills during his arrest and these pills were kept away from further destruction of lives in our community. These are examples of the preventative measures our department is working with other agencies to prevent pain and suffering for many of our community members and their families.

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In addition, we have not only a dedicated Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) to respond to those who may be having mental-health, drug, or other issues. Our current configuration of the CIT has five officers and one sergeant with advanced training. In addition, we have more than 800 officers who have completed initial CIT training.

We are working as partners with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) through a Behavioral Assessment and Administrative Unit to work with HHS on cases involving high-need individuals. HHS is the primary case management team for behavioral crisis and substance abuse disorder situations, while MCPD handles notifications, research, and safety aspects of case.

Our Community Engagement Division is working proactively to identify and assist those in behavioral crisis or those with substance-abuse issues. We work to ensure that those in crisis are routed to the appropriate medical facility for treatment and/or are given information about what resources are available.

If someone in that circumstance has committed a serious crime and referral is not an option, the Montgomery County Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has its own CIT, which works with our officers to make certain individuals are sent to secure treatment areas.

As you also note, we are active in implementing the County's Vision Zero program to make our streets safer for drivers and pedestrians. Decreasing roadway collisions is a primary goal of our traffic enforcement program.

The Department is in partnership with many County agencies on traffic safety for community outreach, education, and risk reduction. We work with the Department of Transportation's Transportation Safety Team, with Alcohol Beverage Services on curbing impaired driving and with HHS' Minority Health programs for initiatives like Cruzar Con Seguridad. These are but a few examples. We also work with external partners such as MADD on drunk driving enforcement.

We also have several means of traffic enforcement, ranging from automated traffic enforcement to crossing guards near schools to enforcement by police officers, including the work by our Central Traffic Unit that is deployed to areas that data collected from the County's Department of Transportation, state Highway Safety Office and others identifies areas that have high amounts of collisions resulting in serious injury.

As cannabis use is becoming more widespread, MCPD is working on a new "Green Labs" project in which cannabis users and our officers educate each other on responsible consumption. Officers receive advanced training that allows them to better detect driver impairment from cannabis use. There will be additional data in the coming months and years to highlight how impaired driving from cannabis and other drug usage impacts the health and safety of our community.

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I appreciate the Advisory Commission on Policing inquiring upon our agency and its' policies and operational goals in our role regarding the Community Health Needs Assessment. We take our role seriously and with compassion to address the noted needs and we are grateful for our community agency partners who assist us with successful programs working towards a safer environment.

Thank you again for your interest in our activities and let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Chief Marcus G. Jones
Montgomery County Department of Police

Office of the Chief of Police

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