



DATE: March 22, 2023  
TO: Members of the Community Advisory Council (CAC)  
FROM: John Alden, IOLERO Director  
RE: Work Plan from CAC 2023 Retreat

The Community Advisory Council (CAC) held a retreat on Saturday, February 25, 2023, to discuss, among other issues, what policy issues the CAC might address in the upcoming year. This memo memorializes for the CAC the policy issues identified as priorities at the CAC Retreat, the committees the CAC chose to form at that Retreat, and the calendar of meetings for the upcoming year. Together, these comprise the Work Plan for the CAC for the upcoming year.

### A. PRIORITY POLICY ISSUES

The policy issues identified by the CAC were as follows, in the priority order created by the CAC:

#### 1. Traffic Stops / RIPA Report Follow-Up (9 votes)

Racial disparities in traffic stops have been an issue of much discussion nationwide, and for some time. Recently the State of California has begun requiring individual law enforcement agencies to record the perceived race of stopped drivers, among other characteristics. Many agencies in Sonoma County just began to record such data in mid-2021. The state board responsible for gathering and reporting this data to the public is called “RIPA.” The RIPA annual reports summarizing and analyzing this data are far too complicated to recount accurately here. But in short, they do indicate that traffic stops of BIPOC drivers happen at a higher rate than BIPOC residents in California as a whole.

The 2023 RIPA Report showing Sonoma County’s data for the second half of 2021 is now available here: <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/ripa-board-report-2023.pdf> At page 34, one can find the total number of reported traffic stops for the SCSO and the contract agencies of Sonoma PD and Windsor PD. In total, these are just over 3,000 reported stops. This is fewer than the reported stops for Petaluma PD in the same period, and roughly half that of Santa Rosa PD.

Some agencies have begun exploring ways to address these disparities. As noted in the 2023 RIPA Report, some Bay Area cities have considered whether local law enforcement should create local policies changing their traffic enforcement priorities. To date, these ideas have been

met with some debate, including varying responses from different BIPOC communities in San Francisco, Los Angeles and other communities to such proposals.

Questions for the CAC to consider will include, among other issues, what conclusions, if any, can be reached about the impact of SCSO detentions on BIPOC communities in Sonoma County, and what specific changes to traffic stop or detention policies can be recommended in Sonoma County.

The CAC has decided to form an Ad Hoc Committee on this topic.

## 2. Recruitment and Hiring Best Practices / Law Enforcement Culture (9 Votes)

Recruiting new hires has been a substantial challenge for law enforcement throughout the state and nation in the last few years. The SCSO has been assertive in the last few years in recruiting new members, and continues to need more recruits to maintain staffing. See, for example, the SCSO recruiting page: <https://sonomasheriffjobs.wordpress.com/>

Diversification of the law enforcement workforce has also been a priority nationwide. Sheriff Engram has stated his commitment to diversifying the SCSO workforce, as well, both by race and gender. Some studies suggest diversification of law enforcement agencies may lead to increased community trust. See, for example, the US Department of Justice / Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Advancing Diversity in Law Enforcement initiative: <https://www.eeoc.gov/advancing-diversity-law-enforcement>

The CAC will consider whether the CAC can assist with outreach to potential employment candidates, whether the SCSO would benefit from more public attention on this issue through the CAC, and whether the CAC could provide any insight into changes in recruiting, screening, hiring, and retention practices that might assist with diversification and recruitment. The CAC has also identified these practices as key in creating community-oriented culture within law enforcement.

The CAC decided to create an Ad Hoc Committee on this topic.

## 3. Mental Health (6 Votes)

Provision of mental health treatment by first responders is evolving throughout the state. The County of Sonoma and several cities within the County have already created systems to respond to calls for service for those experiencing mental health crises, rather than simply sending law enforcement to handle these issues themselves. For example, the County's Behavioral Health Division within the Department of Health Services offers the "Mobile Support Team":

<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/health-and-human-services/health-services/divisions/behavioral-health/services/community-response-and-engagement/mobile-support-team>

After that first response, continued treatment can be hard to secure. People needing treatment can then receive mental health services from local hospitals, but such resources in Sonoma County are reportedly strained to keep up with demand. As a result, many of the detainees in the jail are suffering from mental health challenges, making the jail the largest single *de facto* mental health treatment facility in Sonoma County.

The Board of Supervisors has prioritized expansion of mental health services. Funding and locating sufficient treatment professionals in Sonoma County remain key challenges.

The CAC will consider these distinct issues:

- a. Assessing how best to support the continuation of alternatives to having law enforcement be first responders, like the Mobile Support Team.
- b. Considering policy or budgetary changes that might support mental health treatment in custody at the jail.
- c. Advocacy in support of additional treatment options other than jail or emergency rooms in order to reduce the need for SCSO to have to respond to mental health crises in the field.

#### 4. Evictions and Unlawful Detainers (5 Votes)

Sheriffs Offices are the only law enforcement agencies specifically charged with handling evictions. The rate at which tenants across California are evicted is wide expected to increase as COVID-era eviction protections slowly roll back. Generally speaking, whether a person is evicted is a decision made by courts, not sheriffs. But local sheriffs do have some control over how they communicate with tenants, and how the evictions are carried out. See, for example, some examples from other communities:

<https://www.sfsheriff.com/services/civil-processes/evictions/get-help-if-youre-being-evicted>

<https://dcba.lacounty.gov/portfolio/eviction/>

To date, how the SCSO approaches evictions in Sonoma County has not been addressed by the CAC. If the CAC were interested in this issue in the next year, the CAC might consider how many evictions are likely in 2023 and/or 2024 as a tool to assess how urgent this issue might be, and whether the CAC might contribute towards policies at the SCSO that might make the eviction process clearer or less stressful for tenants being evicted.

#### 5. De-Escalation (4 Votes)

The CAC previously provided suggested policies with respect to de-escalation of force:

<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Main%20County%20Site/General/Sonoma/BCCs/Department%20Information/Documents/7-12-2021-De-Escalation-Policy-Recommendations-Final.pdf>

The SCSO subsequently enacted a de-escalation policy, as required by state law:

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/542ec317e4b0d41ade8801fb/t/61e07774d365911a737b8270/1642100596719/De-Escalation.pdf>

But since then, the CAC and SCSO do not appear to have followed-up on de-escalation with each other. Given the centrality of de-escalation to modern use of force, the CAC will continue the conversation with the SCSO on this topic by inquiring as to the differences between the recommended and adopted policies, examining current training at the SCSO on de-escalation, and assessing whether any data shows how well de-escalation policy and training have improved outcomes in the field for both the public and SCSO personnel.

The CAC also noted the following policy areas as being of interest should time permit this year (3 votes each):

6. Follow-Up on IOLERO 2017-2019 Recommendations on Improvements to SCSO Internal Affairs Division Investigative Procedures and Practices.
7. Treatment of Transgender Inmates

## B. COMMITTEES

The CAC also agreed to make the following changes to its committee structure to accomplish its goals in the next year:

- a. Wind down the Extremism in Policing Ad Hoc once its recommendations are finalized by the full CAC;
- b. Create a Standing Committee for Community Engagement, since this is an ongoing responsibility of the CAC;
- c. Create two new Ad Hocs on specific policies, as noted above:
  - a. Traffic Stops / RIPA Report Follow-Up;
  - b. Recruitment and Hiring Best Practices / Law Enforcement Culture

Members for these new committees have not yet been selected. Dates for launching each committee are noted below in the Calendar section.

## C. CALENDAR

The CAC also agreed to the following calendar for its future meetings in order to work on the above priorities, modified slightly to reflect work completed at the first meeting in March, 2023:

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March 2023:

IOLERO Annual Report 2021-2022

Investigative Process presentation from IOLERO to CAC

April 2023:

SCSO Presentation on Traffic Stops / RIPA Report

Extremism In Policing Report and Ad Hoc Close-Out

May 2023:

IOLERO Update on Measure P Letters of Agreement

SCSO Presentation on Recruitment and Hiring Best Practices, and Ad Hoc Launch

Consideration of Community Engagement Standing Committee

June 2023:

SCSO Presentation on De-Escalation Presentation

De-Escalation Ad Hoc Launch

July 2023:

No Meeting; Summer Break

August 2023:

SCSO Presentation on Eviction Processes

September 2023:

Mental Health First Response and Alternatives to Jail / ER

October 2023:

Report Out from Recruitment and Hiring Best Practices Ad Hoc on Recommendations