

PCCEP Recommendation

Title of Recommendation	Support for Expansion of the Public Safety Support Specialist Program		
Author(s): (Subcommittee or committee members)	Vadim Mozyrsky, Settlement Agreement and Policy Subcommittee	Date presented	02/23/2021
<p>Summary of Recommendation: The Portland Committee on Community Engaged Policing (PCCEP) supports the recommendation of the Training Advisory Council (TAC), with input from the Portland Police Bureau (Bureau or PPB) Training Division, as well as community feedback individually and through organizations such as Portland Copwatch, that the Public Safety Support Specialist (PS3) program be expanded.</p>			

Explanation of recommendation: A chorus of community organizers, individuals, and elected officials have called for reform within the PPB to re-establish public trust and legitimacy. There are many motivating factors that unite to bring about the need for reform. One such factor is the growing reliance on PPB officers to respond to calls for service outside the scope of traditional law enforcement. To directly address this issue, PCCEP recommends expansion of the existing PS3 program to handle low-level calls and calls not involving crimes. Expansion of the PS3 program is an integral part of the broader reform framework including other initiatives such the Portland Street Response (PSR) program, re-envisioning patrol services, an expanded police oversight board, and the intentional hiring of a diverse, well-trained police force.

Established in 2018, the Public Safety Support Specialists are non-sworn members of the PPB who carry out duties that do not require law enforcement authority. They focus on responding to lower level non-emergency calls for service, assisting community members with livability complaints, and assisting officers in the carrying out of their duties. Unlike officers, PS3s are unarmed except for pepper spray, have uniforms that consist of a simple polo shirt and work pants, and drive transit vans marked with the City of Portland logo rather than police vehicles.

A TAC review of the dispatched call data provided by the PPB suggests that between 25% to 30% of all police calls could be handled by the current PS3 program. The community served by PPB would benefit from the expansion of the PS3 program. The size and composition should be determined based on an analysis of data on the

current call load of PS3s relative to sworn officers, examining the impact of new city programs such as the Portland Street Response being piloted by the Fire Bureau, and examining the potential for additional responses by PS3s. The analysis would include:

- Analysis of police call, custody, and use of force data to identify call types and priority ratings most likely and least likely to require a sworn officer.
- Learned experience over time allowing for adjustments to the PS3 program to better meet community needs and city and bureau directives.
- Experimentation with the goal of expanding the role of PS3s in handling a larger portion of current police non law-enforcement duties, including patrol duties and administrative duties.

It is recommended that the PS3 responsibilities should be broadened, to the extent consistent with the analysis outlined above. Greater use of PS3s creates opportunities to build public trust with communities which view the police as untrustworthy or a threat, avoid using police in low-level situations where the arrival of a fully armed officer may escalate the situation, and increase human interactions and the providing of resources to meet community needs. In order to ensure adequate supervision of the program and safety of PS3 employees, the program should be moved from the Training Division to the Operations Branch.

The Bureau should continue to develop and refine training, directives, and protocols better establish the PS3 as an integral part of 21st century police work. The process should directly involve city organizations such as PCCEP and TAC, as well as community organizations such as Portland Copwatch, Albina Ministerial Alliance Coalition for Justice and Police Reform, and the Mental Health Alliance, to name just a few.

Importantly, transparency and accountability must be factored into each step in the process. The City should evaluating the effectiveness of the PS3 program on public perceptions of trust and legitimacy via an annually conducted survey of public opinion regarding both PS3s and sworn officers.

<p>How does this recommendation redress barriers to racial equity?</p>	<p>These recommendations provides an alternative framework to the current police dispatch framework which may result in the unintended use of deadly force, which disproportionately affects people of color in Portland.</p>
<p>How does this recommendation improve outcomes for people with behavioral health issues, challenges and /or in crisis?</p>	<p>These recommendations provides an alternative framework to the current police dispatch framework which may result in the unintended use of deadly force, which disproportionately affects people behavioral health issues, challenges and/or in crisis.</p>
<p>How were marginalized and underrepresented communities, including those who will be affected by this recommendation, engaged to shape, write and otherwise develop this recommendation?</p>	<p>The PCCEP Settlement Agreement and Policy Subcommittee, together with the Training Advisory Council, has presented on the PS3 framework at community listening sessions and received feedback used to shape this recommendation. Additionally, PCCEP members carried out extensive community engagement efforts to obtain feedback from community members.</p>

Resources

Please list all relevant resources to this recommendation.

1. Training Advisory Council Recommendation on PS3 Expansion:
<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/police/article/763833>
2. Portland Copwatch comments on Public Safety Specialists Directive, e-mail dated February 3, 2021.