

Village of Solvay Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative

Executive Order #203



PREFACE

This document is in response to Governor Cuomo’s Executive Order No. 203 regarding the New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative.

This plan submitted by the Village of Solvay is an addendum/addition to the Onondaga County plan, which is a collaboration of many stakeholders within the entire county. The Village of Solvay is forming a committee of community stakeholders to review police-community relations and to evaluate certain aspects of our police department’s current practices and policies to improve upon the fine work that the members of our police department perform on a regular basis.

Community Stakeholders

William Fitzpatrick, Onondaga County District Attorney

Derek Baichi, Village of Solvay Mayor

James Cometti, Village of Solvay Trustee, Chair – Police Committee

John Fall Sr., Village of Solvay Trustee, Member – Police Committee

William McVicker, Village of Solvay Trustee, Member - Police Committee

Allen Wood, Village of Solvay Chief of Police

Solvay Police Department Staffing & Structure

Chief of Police	Allen Wood
Police Lieutenant	Derek Osbeck
Sergeant	3 assigned at this rank
Police Officer full-time	9 assigned at this rank
Police Officer part-time	3 assigned at this rank
Communication Officers	2 assigned to this civilian/clerical position

Village of Solvay

The Village of Solvay, founded in 1794, is a growing community located in Onondaga County, New York. Solvay covers an area of 1.66 miles and is part of the Syracuse Metropolitan Statistical Area, bordering the west side of the City of Syracuse and located in the Town of Geddes. The population was 6,234 per the most recent 2019 census estimates.

As of the 2019 available information, there were 2,657 households, 52.8% being owner occupied. The racial makeup of the village is 77.5% White, 5.9% Black or African American, 6.1% Hispanic or Latino, 10.4% two or more races and the remainder Asian, American Indian or Native Alaskan. The median household income in the village was \$49,926 with 17.6% of the population below the poverty line.

Overview

The New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative requires local municipalities to develop a plan based on community input. Per the governor, “This executive order is intended to help rebuild the confidence and restore trust between police and the communities they serve by requiring localities to develop a new plan for policing in the community based on fact-finding and meaningful community input.” The Village of Solvay and its Police Department will identify the programming and directives that address the issues outlined in the governor’s order. We will do so by identifying our current policies and procedures which help achieve these missions, as well as identifying new programming and directives that have been developed or are in the process of being developed.

As we begin to address these topics/issues, it is important to know that the Solvay Police Department bases all of its policies and procedures on a mission statement that is outlined in their policy manual. Their mission statement is as follows:

“The mission statement of the Solvay Police Department is to enhance the quality of life in our community by working cooperatively with the public and within the framework of the United States and New York State Constitutions to enhance the laws; preserve the peace; reduce fear and provide for a safe environment for all citizens”.

In Onondaga County, local municipalities partnered with the District Attorney’s Office and worked collaboratively with each law enforcement agency and community to form a county-wide community committee. Along with participating in the county-wide community plan, the Village of Solvay also took its own initiative to address more specific needs of the Village.

Multiple needs and concerns will also be addressed in this plan include, but not limited to:

- Policy and Procedures
- Departmental Training
- Subject Management Policy and Review
- Community-Oriented Policing and Neighborhood Engagement

- Collaborations with Local Service Providers
- Dealing with Mental Hygiene Situations
- Citizen and Internal Complaints
- Statistical Data Collection and Sharing

Policy and Procedures

The Solvay Police Department's policies and procedures are evaluated and updated on a consistent basis. The Department is a New York State Accredited Law Enforcement Agency through New York State Department of Criminal Justice Services, which provides structure and guidance for police agencies to evaluate performance in areas such as administration, training and operational standards. The Accreditation Program 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 that provide criminal justice services;
- To ensure the appropriate training of personnel; and
- To promote public confidence in law enforcement agencies.

As an Accredited Agency, we must meet minimum standards, considered "best practice" in the field, which promote a high degree of professionalism and public confidence.

The Solvay Police department uses Power DMS to allow a more seamless issuance of policies and easier tracking of employee acknowledgement of policies read, along with a training component specific to individual department policies. Policies that have been, or will be, reviewed or modified by command staff and/or Community Stakeholders include, but not limited to:

- Organizational Structure and Responsibility
- Use of Force
- Investigation of Hate crimes
- Training
- Victim Witness and Assistance
- Communicating with Persons with Disabilities
- Community Relations
- Reporting of Arrests, Convictions and Court orders

Departmental Training

It is the policy of the Solvay Police Department, and required by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services Accreditation Program, that all sworn officers receive at least twenty-one (21) hours of annual in-service training. While 21 hours is the minimum established criteria, the Department has averaged over forty (40) hours of training per officer for 2019-2020. Mandatory annual training includes the following areas:

- Firearms Training / Range
- Subject Management / Use of Force Review
- Use of Deadly Force Review
- Legal Updates
- Blood-borne Pathogen / Hepatitis Awareness Review
- Taser Training
- Workplace Violence Prevention
- Sexual Harassment
- Oleoresin Capsicum Aerosol

Prior to 2019 the Department averaged over 70 hours of annual in-service training. The decrease in training hours can be directly attributed to injuries, illness, COVID, and budget considerations. The majority of the training is approved and/or developed by PERMA (Public Employee Risk Management) and NYS DCJS (NY State Division of Criminal Justice services).

In the coming months all Solvay Police Officers will receive training in De-escalation Techniques and Conflict Intervention Training. Officers will also receive training in dealing with individuals with disabilities.

The recently updated NYS Department of Criminal Justice Services Use of Force and Deadly Physical Force program was presented to every officer. In addition, the Solvay Police Department's Use of Force and Deadly Physical Force Policies have been updated and approved by the NY State Division of Criminal Justice Services Accreditation Program during the 2021 Accreditation Site-Visit Audit.

Subject Management and the Use of Force

The Governor's report addresses issues relating to the use of force. Currently, it is the policy of the Solvay Police Department that members, in compliance with Article 35 of the NY State Penal Law and other applicable case law and federal statutes, use only the force that reasonably appears necessary to effectively bring an incident under control, while protecting the lives of their members and others. The department policy outlines each officer's ability to (including, but not limited to):

- Use of force;
- Use of deadly physical force;
- Duty to intervene;
- Prohibited uses of force;
- Less lethal procedures;
- Training requirements; and
- Reporting and documenting procedures.

All subject management incidents must be documented by the officers at the Solvay Police Department. The reports then go through a review process. First, the report is reviewed by a Sergeant, submitted to the Lieutenant, and forwarded to the Chief of Police for final review and logged for statistical recording. It is then reported to the state per NYS Executive Order 837-t.

The reporting process at Solvay Police Department is more restrictive than the state of New York requirements. It requires that all use of force incidents are documented and reviewed. If at any time in the review process deficiencies are identified, they are addressed appropriately. This can be in the form of training, counseling, discipline or even termination. The Solvay Police Department Subject Management (Use of Force) policy is consistently reviewed and updated to stay current with applicable laws and best practices.

Community Oriented Policing and Neighborhood Engagement

The Village of Solvay Police Department has been in existence since 1896 as a typical “small town” police structure and still is to some extent, recognizing the need for community-oriented policing strategies. The main goal is to foster an atmosphere of openness and transparency throughout the department while engaging with the community in true partnership to address crime and disorder, quality of life, education of the law enforcement system and our service to the public. The Department strives to make every police contact an opportunity to engage positively with the community.

The Solvay Police Department further recognizes that Community Policing is comprised of three key components:

Community Partnerships

Collaborative partnerships between the law enforcement agency and the individuals and organizations they serve to develop solutions to problems and increase trust in police.

Organizational Transformation

The alignment of organizational management, structure, personnel and information systems to support community partnerships and proactive problem solving.

Problem Solving

The process of engaging in the proactive and systematic examination of identified problems to develop and thoroughly evaluate.

Many strategies have been identified to help build the appropriate relationships in our community. These approaches use technology and social media communication, as well as direct community policing and crime reduction strategies. Some of these strategies include, but are not limited to:

- Community Oriented Policing and Neighborhood Outreach Officers
- Neighborhood Bicycle and Foot Patrols
- Community Event Attendance
- Neighborhood and Community Group Meetings
- Coffee with a Cop
- Police Department Tours

- Routine School Visits by Officers
- Department Internships
- Child and Senior ID card Program
- Media Relations / Public Information Officers / Social Media Liaison
- Selective Traffic Enforcement Program
- Problem oriented policing to target quality of life issues

By utilizing the outreach and community oriented policing approach, we can build relationships, understand policing practices and share in the responsibility of strengthening our neighborhoods. The development of these programs allows the Solvay Police Department to direct these resources to address a specific problem, issue, “hot spot” or neighborhood concern without diverting patrol officers from responding to calls for service. The administration provides criminal and statistical information that can be used to effectively and efficiently develop policing strategies to target points of concern. All the Solvay Police Department programs may use traditional law enforcement methods or a combination of strategies in meeting community and neighborhood needs. Many times the Department must coordinate efforts with direct community members as well as other local, county, state or federal enforcement agencies and private businesses and charities to create solutions.

In recent years, other programs have been developed by the Department to interact more effectively in the community. With changing demographics, the Solvay Police Department recognized the importance of being able to communicate with all people in the community, including utilizing Voiance Language Services. This is an over-the-phone interpreter service that can be used 24-hours-a-day. It provides the ability to assist communicating in 240 different languages. This program is provided to all law enforcement agencies in Onondaga County and managed through the Onondaga County 911 center.

The Department routinely visits the Solvay Elementary School and the Solvay Jr. Sr. High School. Officers will check in with the main offices and answer questions and concerns of the administration, walk the hallways speaking with students and have been invited by the teaching staff to participate in instruction or to simply stop into a classroom. Additionally, the Department is in discussions with the School Superintendant and School Board on the subject of re-introducing the School Resource Officer. Sadly this program was terminated several years ago due to budgetary reasons for the School District and the Village.

Through our community outreach efforts, we have identified many “at-risk” elements that could use resources and attention:

- Drug addiction,
- Homelessness,
- Mental Heath,
- Domestic Violence

We have, and continue to, partner with non-law enforcement agencies to provide needed services outside of the criminal justice system.

Drug Addiction – The Police Department currently provides access to a Drug Disposal Bin with a “no cost, no questions asked” policy. This is available from 8:00am – 4:00pm, Monday – Friday, or by appointment.

All police department officers have also been trained to administer Naloxone, which they carry and implement when needed. Naloxone blocks or reverses the effects of opioid overdoses.

Mental Health – The Department has an active partnership with Liberty Resources, specifically the Mobile Crisis Unit, to assist people suffering with mental health issues, to avoid the custodial interactions with police for mental health services. This is an on-call, on-site program, utilized to bring mental health services to non-violent, non dangerous individuals. This brings the social workers/mental health professionals to the subject in need, at non-threatening locations, therefore avoiding the feelings of “being arrested” for mental health/medical crisis.

Homelessness – Homelessness is not a crime and should not be handled as such. When officers identify an individual that may be homeless or in need of services, that officer can advise and educate the individual on services available in and around the Central New York area, such as the Rescue Mission.

Domestic Violence – The Department has long maintained a history of collaboration and partnership with Vera House of Syracuse in an effort to better serve victims of domestic violence. This type of relationship allows for quicker interaction from a professional, domestic violence advocate in appropriately related incidents.

Citizen Complaints/Internal Affairs

It is the policy of the Solvay Police Department to have clearly defined policies and procedures for accepting civilian complaints, while ensuring the standards that define the authority, policy, and procedures for receiving, accepting, reporting, and conducting internal investigations within the Department. This process also defines the authority and responsibility delegated to departmental supervisors for the maintenance of discipline.

The Department depends upon the personal integrity and discipline of all officers and staff. To a large degree, the public image of the department is determined by the professional response of the department to allegations of misconduct by members. The Solvay Police Department shall:

- Promptly, competently, professionally, and impartially investigate all complaints relative to the department or its members’ responses to community needs.
- Take appropriate corrective action, to include disciplinary action in all cases where an investigation substantiates a violation of law, orders, rules, regulations, policies, or procedures of the Solvay Police Department.

The Department encourages citizens to bring forward legitimate complaints regarding misconduct by its members. Department members shall receive these complaints courteously and shall handle them efficiently. Complaints, regardless of their nature, can be received in person, by mail, by email, or by phone at any time.

Procedural Justice

The National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice describes Procedural Justice as a “focus on the way police and other legal authorities interact with the public, and how the characteristics of those interactions shape the public’s views of the police, their willingness to obey the law, and actual crime rates. Mounting evidence shows that community perceptions of procedural justice can have a significant impact on public safety.”

Procedural Justice is based on four central principles:

1. Treating people with dignity and respect
2. Giving citizens “voice” during encounters
3. Being neutral in decision-making
4. Conveying trustworthy motives

These principles are imbedded within the Department and are incorporated into our citizen/community interactions.

Statistical Data Collection:

Data is an important tool for improving accountability. The Solvay Police Department currently collects data and monitors situations in a multitude of categories. At this current time specialty data is collected on:

- **Calls for service:** to include locations of hot spot problem addressing)
- **Arrests** (to include but not limited to): Race, Sex, Ethnicity, Age, Class of Main Offense, and Nature of Main Offense
- **Subject management reports** (to include but not limited to): Race, Sex, Ethnicity, Age, Tool/Technique, Reason for Interaction, and injuries to any subjects
- **Drug related cases:** Overdose investigations and the types of drugs involved, Community Oriented Policing / Neighborhood Engagement Activities
- **Training:** Courses and topics completed

Village of Solvay Police Reform and Reinvention Initiatives

In 2019, the Solvay Police Department utilized the services of Syracuse University Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs to assist in conducting a survey of the citizens of the village, soliciting opinions, complaints, concerns and general ideas regarding the services provided by the police department. The Department will continue to utilize these services every other year to maintain awareness of community issues.

As outlined earlier, the Department has a robust training program that far exceeds the minimum standards set forth by New York State DCJS. The Department will continue with this training plan and will incorporate de-escalation components into all use of force training curriculum.

The Department recognizes that law enforcement is a stressful occupation which presents its own unique challenges for the health and wellness of its members. The department will develop and implement an officer wellness program by the end of 2021.

On January 5, 2021 the Onondaga County District Attorney's Office approved the county-wide community input and forum dates to the general public. Onondaga County released this information to local media outlets.

The Department will strive to maintain and improve the close relationship with the Solvay School District, along with continue discussions with the Superintendent and school board regarding re-instituting the School Resource Officer program.

The Department will provide Mental Health First Aid training for any officer who is not certified in Crisis Intervention Techniques.

This plan is a living document, and the Department shall continue to work collaboratively with the Village of Solvay community, along with Onondaga County, to better meet the needs of the citizens of Solvay.

Final Onondaga County Police Reform and Reinvention Plan was submitted for approval at the Onondaga County Legislature.

Onondaga County Police Reform and Reinvention Plan was submitted to the Solvay Village Board of Trustees for adoption and was approved on 03/23/2021.

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