



To the Mayor and Members of the City Council

March 5, 2024

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**SUBJECT: OFFICE OF POLICE OVERSIGHT MONITOR LAUNCHES
COMMUNITY-POLICE MEDIATION PROGRAM**

The purpose of this Informal Report is to update the City Council about the upcoming launch of the Office of Police Oversight Monitor’s (OPOM) Community-Police Mediation Program.

Background

This program aims to bridge the gap between law enforcement and our community by fostering open dialogue and understanding through mediated conversations. With rising national tensions and a growing need for improved relations, OPOM saw an opportunity to initiate a proactive approach to resolve conflicts.

Research and Planning

OPOM began this process by conducting extensive research on similar programs across the country, gathering insights, and understanding best practices. OPOM met with many of these oversight agencies and mediation centers to discuss the successes, failures, and lessons learned in their own mediation programs. This groundwork was crucial in devising our own program structure. Other agencies have reported that 1) a noticeable shift in perceptions, with both law enforcement and community members expressing a willingness to engage further and work towards mutual understanding and trust, and 2) participants in the mediation sessions have reported a greater understanding of each other's perspectives. The structured conversations have allowed for more open communication and empathy.

Cities with Examined Mediation Programs

Denver, Colorado	Baltimore, Maryland
New Orleans, Louisiana	New York City, New York
Washington D.C.	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Seattle, Washington	Miami, Florida

This table captures the cities with mediation programs that OPOM reviewed during the research and planning phases for the development of the Community-Police Mediation Program. It is worth noting the expansive landscape of mediation programs nationwide, reflecting the growing prominence of this field as a tool in police reform efforts.

Stakeholder Engagement

OPOM engaged with various stakeholders, including community leaders, law enforcement representatives, local government officials, and advocacy groups. OPOM held virtual and in-person community forums during the early planning stages of the process. The community expressed their support of the program and desire to have this program available to them. OPOM continued to meet with community leaders and has had on-going conversations with FWPD and the Fort Worth Police Association. All the input received was invaluable in shaping the program's framework and ensuring its relevance. OPOM recognizes the importance of including various perspectives to ensure the viability and success of this program.



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OPOM was able to develop this program with support from the Fort Worth Police Department. The Community-Police Mediation program also has the full support of the Fort Worth Police Officers Association.

Mediator Recruitment

OPOM strategically recruited community mediators by leveraging social media, engaging in stakeholder meetings, and partnering with various community organizations throughout Fort Worth. The two-month campaign resulted in 27 phone interviews, leading to the selection of 13 community mediators and 4 police officer ambassadors. This careful selection process aimed to mirror the demographics of Fort Worth complainants, fostering a diverse and empathetic team for effective mediation.

Training and Preparation

This past January, OPOM provided comprehensive training, consisting of 45 classroom hours over the course of 6 days, to both police officers and community mediators to equip them with the necessary skills to facilitate constructive conversations. The training focused on the inclusive model of mediation. Inclusive mediation prioritizes diverse ideas and experiences for lasting conflict resolution. Mediators allow unfiltered communication, even if it includes intense emotions. This approach upholds participant self-determination and allows participants to come to an understanding via collaboration amongst one another. Mediators learned about active listening, empathy, conflict resolution, and cultural sensitivity. Officer Ambassadors participated in roleplays to provide a valuable perspective and insight to enhance mediators' understanding of the challenges faced by officers and the community alike. An additional 5 hours of training will be completed in the coming weeks by observation of live mediations and ongoing participation in roleplays. Community Mediation Maryland (CMM) conducted the training for the selected mediators and ambassadors and will continue to provide guidance throughout the implementation of the program. CMM has trained community-police mediators in other major cities, including New Orleans, Miami, and Baltimore.

Additional questions should be directed to Director Bonycle Sokunbi,
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