



## Meeting with Your Police Department

In order to begin working towards more effective law enforcement in your community and to address issues of police accountability that may arise in your area, you must try to work with your local law enforcement agency. Often, working together is the only way to make lasting change.

Some units may have a good working relationship with their local law enforcement agency, and if that describes you then be sure to maintain that relationship. However, here are some tips for reaching out to local law enforcement agencies if you do not already have a relationship, or if that relationship may not be an ideal one.

- 1) Reach out to the community liaison official at your local law enforcement agency, introduce yourself, and request a meeting with the police chief (and anyone else you may want to meet with).
- 2) In your communications, be sure to state why you would like to meet and what your objectives are as well as what you would like to accomplish (e.g. discuss community oriented policing program, discuss and begin to resolve a specific law enforcement-involved incident in your community, etc.)
- 3) Prior to the meeting, agree to an agenda for the meeting, specifically laying out what you will talk about during that meeting. Ensure that all items on the list are issues that both you and the law enforcement agency are willing to address.
- 4) If there is tension or mistrust of the police department or vice versa and it becomes difficult to agree upon an agenda, work with an intermediary, perhaps someone who is not a leader of the local NAACP or a law enforcement official -- possible options include church and/or community leaders. Only approach this person after both you and the law enforcement agency/official have agreed upon the chosen liaison. The intermediary will work with you and the law enforcement agency to work out an agreed upon agenda.

- 5) Before the meeting, have an internal meeting with all meeting attendees to discuss agenda and other issues that may arise during the meeting. Your goal is to make the meeting as productive as possible. Often, issues discussed at meetings with law enforcement tend to be emotional. You need to make sure that people's emotions are expressed at the meeting, yet do not get in the way of finding a way to reach your goal.
- 6) Prior to the meeting, write notes for yourself detailing everything that you would like to convey and ask. Bring your notes to the meeting and review them as you go along.
- 7) Write meeting minutes and organize an internal follow-up meeting to discuss the meeting with the police chief/law enforcement agency and decide possible steps forward with the NAACP leadership/members who attended the meeting.
- 8) Write a thank you note, email, or make a thank you phone call to the officer(s) with whom you met and to those that were instrumental in scheduling the meeting.
- 9) Determine next steps and schedule follow-up meetings as necessary.