

11/09/17 Approved by Domestic Policy Task Force
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**Jewish Community
Relations Council**

MILWAUKEE
JEWISH FEDERATION

Racial Justice and Policing

In Deuteronomy (16:20) we are commanded, “Tzedek, tzedek tirdof,” “Justice, justice you shall pursue.” The sages explained that the word “tzedek” is repeated not only for emphasis but to teach us that in our pursuit of justice, our means must be as just as our ends.

The highly publicized killings of unarmed people of color by law enforcement officers has led to increased community conversations about structural racism, implicit bias, police-community relations, and improved policing practices.

Recent studies sharpen the connection between race and policing. A 2015 study by University of California, Davis Professor Cody Ross found “evidence of a significant bias in the killing of unarmed black Americans relative to unarmed white Americans, in that the probability of being black, unarmed, and shot by police is about 3.49 times the probability of being white, unarmed, and shot by police on average.”

The fear of being treated unfairly by police extends to other non-white people. A 2014 national survey sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation shows that more than two in three Latinos fear that the police will use excessive force against them

Long a staunch ally in the fight for racial justice, the Jewish community affirms our continuing commitment to building a shared community that provides equal access and equal protection for all, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sex, sexuality, religion, country of origin, or any other classification used to unlawfully and immorally divide people.

Therefore, the Jewish community stands in support of the following principles:

- Policing is a community effort that requires cooperation among elected officials, law enforcement officers and their union, community groups, and citizens. Trust between those groups is an essential ingredient in effective policing.
- Increased citizen involvement in police practices will lead to more sensitive law enforcement officers, mutual respect, and stronger trust between law enforcement and the communities they seek to protect.
- The majority of law enforcement officers are devoted public servants who put themselves at risk in the name of public safety. All efforts should be made to safeguard their mental and physical health.

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- The police department is responsible for ensuring that all officers feel safe to come forward to report instances of problematic behavior among their colleagues. All efforts should be made to create a healthy culture for officers, and to protect whistleblowers.
- Best practices should be employed to limit or eliminate the effects of implicit bias in hiring and promotion of police officers.
- Law enforcement officers should undergo intentional and ongoing training to ensure the safety of all individuals. That training should include education about implicit bias, de-escalation techniques, mental health, and use of force.
- The community is strengthened with the use of technology and practices that increase the transparency of police practices, such as body and dash cameras and data collection. Footage from such devices should be treated as public record and released to the public as quickly as possible following an incident.
- The community deserves strict oversight of police practices through independent, high-functioning oversight boards that include citizen representation.
- Protections should continue for the right of citizens and the media to photograph and observe incidents with police.
- Allegations of misconduct by law enforcement officers should be investigated quickly and appropriate action should be taken.

The Jewish Community Relations Council of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation will continue to work to ensure safety, dignity, and equality for all.