



PROMISING PRACTICES FOR **Increasing Diversity Among First Responders**

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SITE PROFILE
Dallas Police Department

PREPARED BY



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Site Visit Findings

First responder fields serve a crucial role in the safety and well-being of communities around the country. Public citizens and officials have placed a renewed focus on improving both the representativeness of first responders in relation to the populations they serve, and the agencies' relations with their local communities. The assumption underlying this focus is that a more representative first responder workforce will lead to better community relations and fairer treatment of the public served. *Promising Practices for Increasing Diversity Among First Responders*, conducted by Coffey Consulting, LLC on behalf of the U.S. Department of Labor Chief Evaluation Office in 2016, was an exploratory study that involved five in-depth site visits and a literature review to identify promising practices that first responder agencies and organizations can leverage to increase the diversity of their workforces.

The following site profile is one of five available for the first responder departments and training providers that were selected for this study, based on both the extent to which their first responder workforce is representative of the local population, and their use of practices that align with the human resources literature as being effective for developing a diverse workforce:

- Atlanta Police Department (APD)
- BAY EMT, Oakland, CA
- Camp Fully Involved (CFI), Concord, NH
- **Dallas Police Department (DPD)**

- San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD)

The full study (available at <https://www.dol.gov/asp/evaluation/CompletedStudies.htm>) details a number of common practices along the employment pipeline, from outreach and recruitment to the retention and advancement among those hired. In addition to promising practices, a number of challenges were identified to further diversifying first responders, including a negative public image of first responders in the community, low pay, and restrictive selection and hiring processes.

Dallas Police Department

Background

The Dallas Police Department (DPD) was selected for study based on its representation of the local population and recommendation by experts in the field for its recruiting practices focused on diversity. Fifteen line and command staff at the DPD were interviewed, including one Assistant Chief, two Deputy Chiefs, two Lieutenants, three Sergeants, three Senior Corporals, three police officers, and one civilian employee. Among those interviewed were representatives from the Recruiting Unit, Administrative Bureau, Applicant Processing, Personnel Division, Patrol Division, Training Academy and Division, Internal Affairs, and Community Affairs. It should be noted that the study team visited the site and conducted interviews in April, 2016, prior to the tragic event of July 2016 that led to the deaths of five DPD officers.

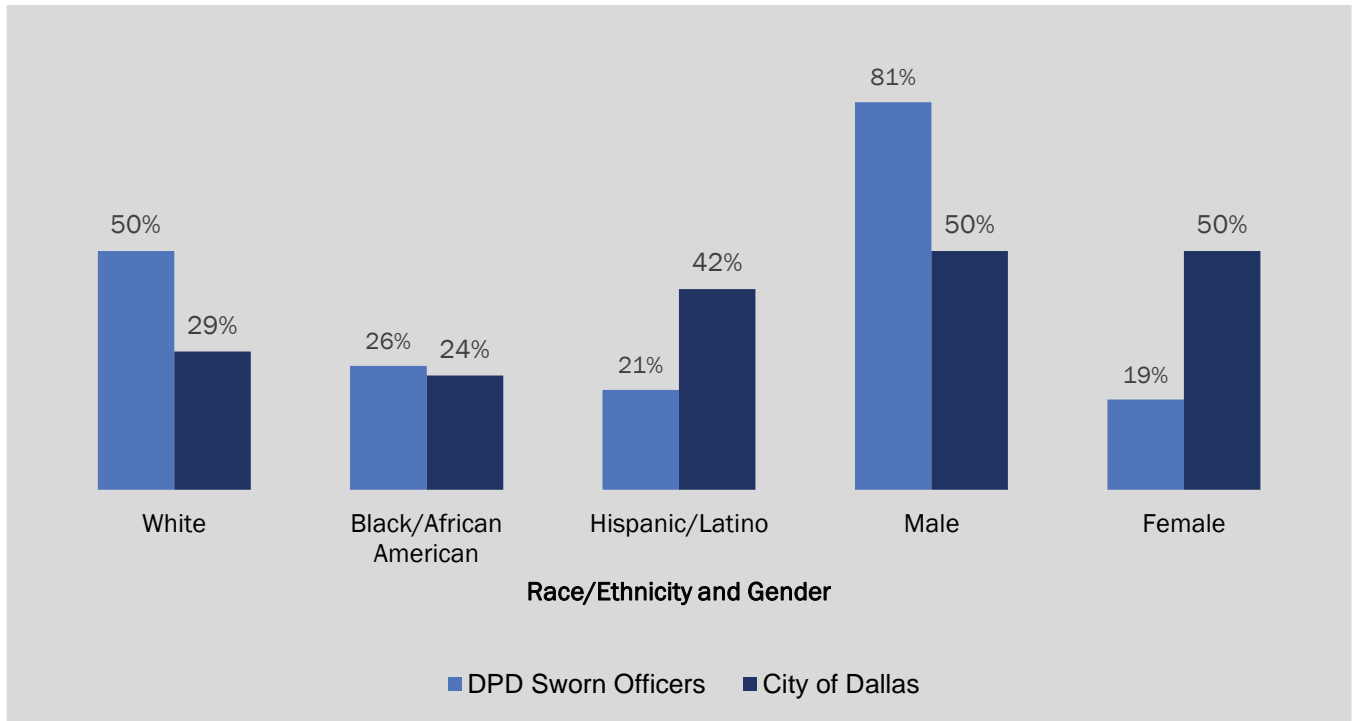
Dallas has a long history of racial tensions and segregation, while also experiencing major growth in the diversity of its citizens over the past 50 years (Nicholson, 2016). To a large extent, Dallas' growing Hispanic population has driven this diversity, increasing its representation from 7.5 percent in 1970 to 42 percent today.

The ninth largest police department in the United States, DPD employs approximately 3,300 officers and hires approximately 200 new officers per year. Police staff interviewed described the DPD as having a family environment despite its large size.

Currently, the DPD has 50 percent racial/ethnic minorities and 19 percent female officers. DPD leaders would like to achieve better representation of females among its sworn officers, although this percentage is higher than the national average of 12 percent.¹ In 2016, African American officers mirrored the city demographics (26 percent), while Hispanic officers, comprising approximately 20 percent of the total, were still underrepresented (see Figure 1).

¹ Based on analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics, Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) Survey, 2013. Note: This survey is conducted every five years, and 2013 is the most recent year available. The representation of women has not changed since the previous survey collection in 2007.

Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of DPD Full-Time Sworn Personnel vs. Dallas General Population by Race/Ethnicity and Gender



Sources: DPD, 2016; U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2010-2014. Note that ACS general population data reflect the total population, including all ages, of the city of Dallas, Texas. White and Black/African American categories exclude those of Hispanic or Latino origins and those reporting more than one race.

Leadership

DPD has made progress at recruiting Hispanic officers since a major push in 2008 to restructure the recruitment team and develop innovative recruiting practices to reach this population (described under Findings—Recruitment). Table 1 displays the increase in both underrepresented groups and female sworn officers at DPD since implementing these changes.

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of DPD Full-Time Sworn Personnel by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, 2008 and 2016

	2008	2016
Total	100%	100%
Race/Ethnicity		
White	57%	50%
African American	24%	26%
Hispanic	16%	21%
Other	0%	0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1%	2%
American Indian/Alaskan	1%	1%
Gender		
Male	83%	81%
Female	17%	19%

Source: DPD, 2016.

Chief David Brown has led the DPD since 2010.² He interacts with the community at various events, such as “Chief on the Beat,” and through what staff refer to as heavy use of social media. Officers interviewed for this study expressed their appreciation for having a homegrown leader who is actively engaged in the community. In 2012, Chief Brown expanded community policing efforts to include the Community Affairs Unit, the Police Athletic League (PAL), and the Neighborhood Policing Unit. Brown maintains strong relationships with the Dallas Mayor and the City Council leadership, who have been supportive of the DPD and its community engagement efforts.

Interviewees said that African American and female officers in the command staff serve as role models for prospective and current officers who can envision themselves in those positions. The importance of diversity is reflected in the DPD’s strategic plan and ingrained in its culture. Staff members are described as having courageous conversations about differences in backgrounds and perspectives. Interviewees noted that the DPD is now in its second generation of officers from underrepresented groups and, at this point, credit word of mouth for helping to sustain diversity.

DPD leadership defines diversity as extending beyond race/ethnicity to LGBT status, age, disabilities, and other background characteristics and experiences. While the DPD has made strides in becoming representative of the local population, both overall and within its leadership ranks, leaders expressed that the DPD still has “room for improvement” when it comes to women and Hispanic officers. Despite being above the national average for representation of both women and underrepresented groups, DPD is always striving for better representation of the local population.

² Chief David Brown announced his retirement in September 2016, during the production of this report. See: <http://gov.texas.gov/news/press-release/22628>

DPD Highlight

At the DPD, a Hispanic woman who now serves on the command staff highlighted the importance of both role modeling and having diverse recruiting staff familiar with cultural norms. Her family was hesitant with the idea of her serving on the police force, given traditional gender roles typical in some Hispanic communities, and having a Hispanic recruiter communicate with her family was critical to gaining their acceptance:

“In my household we were raised where you are here for your family and that’s what you do. If you get a job it will be a nice safe office job. Anything where you’ll be subjected to danger as a girl, with my upbringing, that’s not something they were in favor of. [DPD Recruiter] played a heavy role with me becoming a Dallas police officer with speaking to my father...I was a civilian at the time... [DPD Recruiter] had words of encouragement—‘Don’t limit yourself to handing out equipment and answering phones. You’re capable of so much more.’ My father at the time said ‘no.’ But again, [DPD Recruiter] would express to him, ‘we need her out there because she can relate to the community.’ [DPD Recruiter] has been by my side and one of my biggest cheerleaders ever since...He told me once ‘whether you want it or not you are a role model for all these little girls so you do the best with every opportunity presented to you.’...He has sent that message out of there are no limitations of what you are able to do here...I can’t believe that I am where I am right now. It’s because of [DPD Recruiter].”

Unique Practices

DPD recruiting is unique in its strategy of forming relationships with college campuses. Recruiters go beyond the standard practice of staffing tables at job fairs on campuses to making presentations in college classrooms and spending time with students in common areas. DPD recruiters reach out to students of all majors, not only criminal justice, with the message that policing can provide job opportunities beyond patrolling. DPD is also unique in its training requirements; both basic and in-service training provide diversity-specific coursework and role-playing, and all recruits are required to complete intermediate Spanish—60 credit hours, which is well beyond the state requirement of 12 hours. These practices, along with those shared by other sites, are described in the full report. Figure 2 displays where promising practices identified at DPD fall along the employment pipeline.

Figure 2. Overview of Diversity Efforts Along Key Points in the Employment Pipeline at DPD

