



# Impactful Community Engagement in Prosecution

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# Who is the Community?

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- Community is a geographic area -- the larger area that is within the purview of the elected.
- However, within the larger jurisdiction, there are multiple communities that may require different strategies.
- Bonded by religion, ethnicity and/or life experiences
  - Special attention should be given to identifying the marginalized communities in the jurisdiction - those who do not normally have a voice or may be reluctant to engage in the system.
  - This includes returning citizens, religious/racial/ethnic minorities, people who identify as LGBTQ+, or people struggling with addiction or housing stability.
  - This differs from for instance, the business community, who have regular and easy access to any political stakeholder.

# What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is meaningful interaction with a group of people who live in the same area.

More than attending a town hall meeting.

It's about being truly present and involved with that community - working with, and listening to, communities to build long term relationships and develop meaningful solutions to complex issues.

Community wants the elected prosecutor to actively listen (not just talk at the residents) and take action alongside members of the community to address concerns.

Some concerns may be outside of the realm of a prosecutor but using the proverbial "bully pulpit" to highlight issues, push for legislation, or additional resources will help make safer communities along with building trust.

By deepening these relationships, ideally, allows residents to feel valued as well as empowered regarding the safety of their communities.

# Models and Differences



## Community outreach

- Educating, sharing resources, attending community events and fairs
- More of a lecturing type posture -- "I'll tell you what we do and answer questions about it"
- It is more prosecutor driven, and reactive (attending events when invited)

## Community prosecution

- Having prosecutors based locally to provide resources, meet with survivors, and staff community (branch) courts
- More along the traditional lines of prosecution, with the line prosecutor processing cases, just more local (parallel to community policing)
- Can operate more like a partnership between the community and law enforcement to solve targeted problems (ie spike in gun violence in a particular neighborhood)
- Models include dividing the community into smaller areas, and assigning a community specialist and/or a line prosecutor to each one.

## Community engagement

- The elected prosecutor and their key representatives having a real dialogue and listening to the community, while being vulnerable and transparent.
- It should be community driven, where the prosecutor's role is to be an active listener rather than speaking extensively.
- Sessions should be led by, and be done in partnership with local advocacy groups, who will create the space for the community to pose questions and be heard.

## Engaging with local communities

- The executive team goes on a listening tour
- Working in partnership with grassroots organizations, the PPI team cohosts listening sessions with community groups
- Goal is to hear community concerns, and use their feedback to inform further research/data collections

## How a Community Advisory Board comes into play

- Advise on which PPIs match community values
- Ensure that the public data dashboard is accessible (graphics, messaging, etc.)
- Interpret data trends, serve as a thought partner for policy changes

# Practices to Explore...

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- Engage all prosecutors in the office with CE to do 2 hours per month.
- Incentivize either through time off or annual stipend for attendance
- Provide training on how to handle tough discussions, so that there are no PR nightmares
- Listening tours, with a variety of sessions
  - Can be done around specific topics (hate crimes, gender based violence) or in general
  - Can be open to the public, or do targeted meetings with service providers, survivors, returning citizens, other stakeholders
  - Good way for elected to engage along with line prosecutors to hear what the community is thinking
- Creation of a community advisory board
  - If in person, pay for parking, food and compensate \$50-100 per meeting
  - If remote, still compensate, but may want to do a gift card, or something more personal. Can send food delivery, etc.
  - Great resource is located [here](#).
  - Offices may want to do boards by location (for instance, if the jurisdiction encompasses multiple counties, have one board per county); or by affinity (ie, AAPI Board, African American Board, LGBTQ+ Board, etc).

# Practices con't

- One size does not fit all.
  - For instance, one cannot assume all Spanish speaking community members have the same concerns; must approach based on age, ethnicity, and be sensitive to the cultural differences. If you do not know, ask advocates in advance.
- Keep evaluating
  - Use a local researcher, partner with an outside validator to make sure that this is working
  - Internal surveys of prosecutors; external surveys/discussions with key stakeholders to measure effectiveness of engagement
- Step out of your comfort zone
  - Easy to engage with people who are supportive, or who you have relationships with. Have to confront one's own discomfort with change, criticism.
  - Think about impact - while it is easy to read at a private school rather than discuss the criminal justice system at an under-resourced school in a tough neighborhood, who would benefit from your presence more?
- Be targeted in your approach
  - Identify who you have not been engaging with, and why.
  - Make sure that as you move forward, you have identified the most marginalized communities, and have a plan for meaningfully engaging.
    - Create a list of leaders/organizations who are from said communities
    - Ask about cultural norms so that you do not inadvertently offend anyone.

# Broward County Engagement







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