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ANNUAL TRAFFIC STOP STUDY

The Maricopa County Sheriff's Office contracted with Arizona State University to conduct an annual data and statistical based evaluation of traffic stops occurring within MCSO's organizational jurisdiction. These evaluations are a requirement to meet the directives of the Melendres Court Orders, and they ensure that the MCSO enforces traffic laws fairly and impartially.

In an effort to utilize data as a tool to identify patterns of practice that currently indicate, or may lead to, biased policing, this annual report provides the MCSO with baseline information on practices by deputies that may be unique to their peer group. This data requires further investigation and evaluation to determine the causal effects behind the decision-making process of "flagged" deputies. This report provides the organization with statistical data as a reference to review current practices by enforcement staff, and is used by the MCSO as a tool to ensure the development of effective training standards as well as methodology to consistently identify individuals with patterns of practice requiring additional training, oversight, discipline, or separation.

The annual report does not and cannot determine individual bias based on traffic stop data alone. The report provides information regarding practices by deputies beyond that of their peer group, without the information necessary to establish the intent or unique factors leading to the pattern of practice. It is then incumbent on MCSO to objectively further the inquiry, provide employees with the content leading to the concern, permit employees to articulate the basis for each unique decision (or set of decisions), and then determine the causal effects based on the holistic review of the practices and decision-making process.

The current report is the third annual. This report covers self-initiated traffic stops by deputies for activity from July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017, a time frame for which the first six months occurred under the direction of the previous administration and the second six months under the current leadership.

This report indicates improvements over time by MCSO in two areas key to the issues underlying the Melendres litigation: a reduction in the likelihood of Hispanic drivers receiving a citation when compared to White drivers and a decrease in the length of stop for Hispanic drivers. There is still a disparity in post-stop outcomes between races/ethnicities, including Latinos, as well as some inconsistent behavioral patterns by some deputies. MCSO has made "significant progress" in data collection, and the report states there is a considerable reduction in missing data with duplications reduced or eliminated.

The process for addressing the findings in this report requires ongoing development and evolution to ensure a healthy progression to accomplish intended outcomes. The MCSO is committed to identifying behavioral patterns of concern and delivering a fair and thorough review leading to appropriate responses for the best interest of the community we serve. We also have an obligation to ensure our goals are not solely for the outward objectives of the community at large, but also incorporate the needs of our internal community of deputies. A just, thoughtful, and goal oriented process will serve multiple purposes, all directed toward eliminating discrimination by addressing the challenges of explicit and implicit bias.

The organization has committed a considerable amount of time, resources and staffing in building a division of oversight within the office. This commitment is not set for the short term, nor is it intended solely for purposes of addressing the directives of the Court. This commitment is to ensure the long term health, reputation, and ethical balance for the future of MCSO services on behalf of the community. Our objectives are to identify issues of concern or patterns of practice where the execution of duties does not meet the level of ethical service consistent with our values. The report allows us to utilize data as a first stage in a far more comprehensive review process towards the improvement of deputy behaviors.

Sheriff Penzone takes seriously the findings in this report that MCSO's traffic enforcement activity has led to different outcomes for different racial/ethnic groups. Yet, it would be inaccurate and unfair for anyone to classify an entire organization based on a review of behaviors by only some of its members.

This does not mean the Sheriff fails to recognize issues of concern raised by the annual report. Sheriff Penzone is committed to addressing any and all issues of inappropriate behavior by MCSO staff. He recognizes the benefit this report and the auditing process provide to MCSO's ability to identify and thoroughly investigate issues of concern. MCSO will continue to develop training and oversight in response to the shortcomings of individual employees and push forward with its Constitutional Policing Plan to address the inferential findings. MCSO will also remain steadfast in its intolerance of bias and/or racial profiling.

Law enforcement is an extension of society. Therefore, the bias and racial divisions that are impacting our society are reflected within the law enforcement community. Bias is unacceptable in all facets of life. Law enforcement possesses great power and authority and the abuse of said powers must never be tolerated. Decisions influenced by these attitudes are the greatest violation of the oath of office and must be addressed aggressively and consistently. The profession must lead by example in addressing the problem and building organizations rooted in ethics, impartiality, integrity, and professionalism. This report helps to accomplish these goals.

The full report is available at www.mcsobio.org.