

Multnomah County Sheriff's Office

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Exemplary service for a safe, livable community

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An open letter to the community from Multnomah County Sheriff Mike Reese

This week, the trial of Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd began. I want to acknowledge that the trial may bring renewed pain and trauma for many, especially among Black people and people of color in our community. As I shared with you following Floyd's death last May, I condemn the actions of Derek Chauvin and the actions of other officers for failing to intervene.

Floyd's senseless death challenged all of us in public safety to examine the systemic racism, over-policing and implicit bias that influences the relationship between law enforcement and communities of color. Over the past year, members of the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office have deeply engaged with the community, met with community leaders and activists, attended and participated in marches and rallies, and listened to your experiences, constructive criticism and feedback. We heard you, and we acted. We assessed current policies, procedures, training and systems of accountability to ensure they are considered best practices and that they reinforce equity now and in the future.

In July 2020, the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office hired its first ever Equity & Inclusion Manager. With the introduction of the new Equity & Inclusion Manager, MCSO became an active member of Multnomah County's [Workforce Equity Strategic Plan \(WESP\)](#).

In January 2021, MCSO released the organization's two-year [Strategic Plan](#), which identifies seven goals, each emphasizing the importance of equity as a guiding organizational value. The purpose of the strategic plan is to be a road map for our organization as we work to uphold our values. The seven goals include, by the end of 2022:

1. MCSO operates with equity as a guiding value in order to establish a work environment that is centered on safety, trust and belonging.
2. Achieve a fully-staffed workforce.
3. All adults in MCSO custody receive services or a connection to services, with a focus on individual need, to help them avoid future justice involvement.
4. All persons contacted by MCSO law enforcement who are experiencing substance use or mental health related challenges receive services or a connection to services.

5. MCSO employees have training and development opportunities that enable them to be public safety leaders and professionally thrive.
6. MCSO has aligned and expanded internal and external communications.
7. MCSO operations are more efficient and effective due to improved integration of technologies.

A Strategic Plan Steering Committee will monitor the plan's implementation across the organization to hold ourselves accountable to the goals we've set. In addition to the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan, we have made significant changes to the way we do business at the sheriff's office by:

- Training employees in concepts embodied in procedural justice, de-escalation tactics, equity and bias-free policing.
- Diverting vulnerable people to social programs and services and away from the criminal justice system when possible.
- Expanding peer-led programs and rehabilitation services to adults in custody to reduce the rate of recidivism.
- Improving public safety programs through unique partnerships with local organizations and nonprofits.
- Reaffirming our emphasis on hiring a workforce that reflects the diversity of the community we serve.
- Maintaining our commitment to a community-centered policing model that tailors public safety services specific to neighborhood needs.

We are also advocating for changes to the broader criminal justice system by:

- Collecting, analyzing and disseminating jail data on racial and ethnic disparities to increase transparency and identify where improvements need to take place.
- Building and strengthening relationships with criminal justice partners to address and eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in our criminal justice system.
- Expanding pre-trial release programs to individuals in the adjudication process.
- Speaking up when there are injustices in the system and advocating for transformational change.

I want to assure you the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office is proactively taking steps to continue to improve and build and maintain your trust, and be an agency that reflects the values of the community we serve. We encourage you to continue shaping our agency by providing feedback on our policy directives or by submitting a comment to sheriff@mcsso.us.

As events unfold in Minneapolis, there may be demonstrations or protests, here, and across the country. We strongly support the right to demonstrate and for people to use their individual and collective voices to express grief, joy or outrage. Regardless of the outcome of the trial, we

are calling for any demonstrations to remain peaceful. Violence and property destruction are unacceptable, and they put everyone's safety at risk.

As Sheriff, I am committed to fighting racism and hate. Let's work together to build a community that is welcoming and safe for everyone, because Black lives matter in Multnomah County.