

INTERNAL CHANGES FOR EXTERNAL RESULTS

How **Parsons Police Department** Overhauled Their Internal Systems For Maximum Community Impact



AT A GLANCE

Utilizing Digital Tools

Updating Internal Systems & Equipment

New Training Expectations

Introducing Effective Programming

Results



"We, as an agency, have worked hard to involve our great community and develop a level of transparency that the citizens and our staff can both feel good about. The community collaboration and partnership that we have established is only the beginning of our evolution to become one of the leaders in Kansas policing."

Chief Robert Spinks

Parsons Police Department

OVERVIEW

Recently, Parsons Police Department was awarded LAW Publications' "Excellence in Collaboration Award" for 2021, an extremely fitting honor for a department that demonstrates an admirable level of collaboration with its community and partners. With a population of just under 10,000, Parsons, Kansas, is the biggest city in its county, Labette. Over the past three years, Parsons PD has undergone a significant internal overhaul—implementing a variety of digital tools, new training practices, and partnered programs. The changes come to improve community outreach, transparency, and inclusion.

CHALLENGES

The landscape of modern policing is changing, and with it, a desire for increased transparency has risen across the country. Enhanced accountability has been a hot term for the past few years, leaving departments to figure out what that looks like in their communities. Parsons Police Department took on this challenge with the goal of becoming a leader in the state of Kansas.

SOLUTIONS

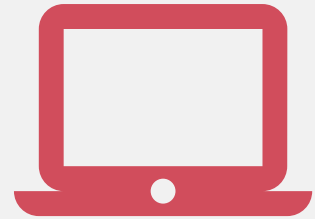
In the age of information and technology, providing a new level of transparency is easier than in years past. Parsons Police Chief Robert Spinks has taken full advantage of the tools and support available to him to provide his community with open communication and his staff with the most up-to-date policies and training

UTILIZING DIGITAL TOOLS

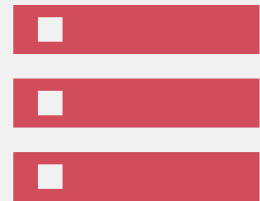
An important part of Parsons' overhaul involved re-vamping the agency website and enforcing regular use of certain digital tools. The intention of re-vitalizing the Parsons PD website was to provide increased transparency to agency operations. Now, visitors to their website can find press releases, videos, podcasts, online crime tips, employment applications, and most-wanted information. Visitors can also sign up for text or e-mail alerts or submit a citizen comment form. To date, over 82,781 unique visitors have explored the website. Their website truly is a wealth of knowledge about their department and local community.

Parsons has also implemented the use of Nextdoor as an online neighborhood watch program as well as Twitter and Facebook for community outreach. These social networking sites provide the department with a way to share information quickly while also engaging the community in the goings-on of the department.

One of the most impressive tools that Parsons has implemented is one that they created themselves—a matrix that inventories 136 state and national recommendations and benchmarks driven by the ongoing national discussion to evolve policing. The matrix includes recommendations from different legislature, organizations, and agencies, such as having public access to lodge complaints and verification of officers receiving bias-based training. Currently, Parsons PD has achieved a 96% compliance rate with the policies evaluated by this matrix. Additionally, it is available online for community members to download and review. According to Parsons, no other agency in the nation has developed such a matrix to guide change in their operation.



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UPDATING INTERNAL SYSTEMS & EQUIPMENT

Since transparency is one of the main objectives of Parsons' overhaul, updating their internal systems was an obvious necessity. An important part of this was developing an extensive Annual Report, which included a Police Strategic Report Card that tracks agency accomplishments and is available to both the community and city officials. This extensive report, available on the Parsons PD website, details what each division has accomplished that year, crime reports for the city and comparative reports for surrounding areas, dispatch review breakdowns, and much more—all of which lends itself to increased accountability to the community.

In the same vein, Parsons has updated and expanded the agency's records management system to include crime mapping, which helps to enhance hot spot policing and community awareness of crime trends.

In addition to updating internal systems, updating equipment has been vital to improving department efficiency.

Several important changes have been made over the past few years. The department raised over \$15,000 in community donations to purchase and fund their first K-9, Karim, who is trained in tracking and narcotics detection. Combatting the narcotics epidemic in Parsons has been a top priority for the department, and the development of a K-9 program will go a long way to helping combat the problem.

To better keep up with the growing number of dispatch calls each year, the Parsons Police Dispatch Center was completely rebuilt and remodeled with state-of-the-art equipment. The Dispatch Center topped over 18,000 calls and handles over 16,000 calls on an annual basis. The department also purchased a radar traffic analyzer to review traffic volume, conduct speed surveys, and identify hot spot speed locations that contribute to the risk of crashes. The city's arterial road speed limits are being evaluated through the use of this data. Crash statistics can also be found as part of the Annual Report.



**DEVELOPED AN
EXTENSIVE ANNUAL
REPORT, AVAILABLE
TO ALL ON PARSONS
PD WEBSITE**



**RAISED OVER
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DONATIONS TO
FUND THEIR FIRST
K-9, KARIM**



**REBUILT DISPATCH
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NEW TRAINING EXPECTATIONS

Now, all of the infrastructure changes being made needed to be matched with administrative changes to effectively overhaul the department. Training—both internal and external—became a vital part of the plan. Parsons created an in-house training cadre of four staff members to provide de-escalation training to their staff, supporting the implementation of a new use-of-force simulator to better train officers in the application of de-escalation.

Internally, they've employed a new performance evaluation system and developed an in-service training program for all supervisors. The department is also requiring all administrative staff to participate in different civic groups to provide further transparency and access for all groups in their community. These improvements not only provide accountability to each other but also to the greater community for which they serve.

To further department morale and culture, Parsons has implemented incentive pay to recognize police staff who achieved instructor level certification or Field Training Officer certification. Field Training Officers act as mentors for fellow officers in real-world environments. Currently, the department boasts a total of 53% of the current staff as instructors. In addition to state training certifications, Parsons is committed to having all supervisors and command staff obtain their Trilogy Award from the FBI-LEEDA (Law Enforcement Executive Development Association), meaning that they have completed the Supervisor Leadership Institute, Command Leadership Institute, and Executive Leadership Institute. Thus far, three Parsons staff members have received the Trilogy Award.



**53% OF THE CURRENT
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AS INSTRUCTORS**

INTRODUCING EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMING

Finally, the last piece of the puzzle was creating effective programming to create a safe and more involved community. Part of that programming included partnering with the Labette County Sheriff's Office and the Labette County Attorney's Office to create an inter-agency narcotics task force called K-CAT or Kansas Combined Anti-Drug Taskforce. This inter-jurisdictional group also works with surrounding law enforcement agencies in an advisory capacity. Its mission is to reduce criminal organizations and gangs operating in the county, region, and state, therefore providing a safer community for its members.

Within the city of Parsons, Parsons PD has also created a twenty-member Citizen Public Safety Advisory Board to educate, involve, and partner with all sectors of the community on prevention, response, and strategic planning. The group is currently targeting domestic violence as a key problem in the community. As noted in the Chief's most recent update, roughly 40% of violent criminal acts in Parsons involved felony domestic violence assaults; therefore, this is a main focus for reduction in the community.

Another new program introduced by Parsons PD is the Parsons Registered Offender Program, or PROP. The goal of this program, much like the others, is to maintain a safe community, which is achieved in two main ways—holding registered offenders accountable as well as providing them with resources to create successful lives post-release and avoid re-offending. The state of Kansas monitors three categories of offenders: sex offenders, violent offenders, and drug offenders, and PROP—supervised by Parsons' Investigation Division Commander—monitors these offenders following the requirements of the Kansas Offender Registration Act. This program is a first for a municipal police department in Kansas to invest in the registration program.

RESULTS

All of these incredible changes have not gone unnoticed or unappreciated. Since implementing these changes, Parsons has been selected to be a regional center for law enforcement training provided by the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center (KLETC). Along with the LAW Publications "Excellence in Collaboration" Award, other organizations have also taken note of these efforts. They've also received the Lexipol Gold Award for superior policies and risk management, placing the agency in the top 10% in the nation, and the American Automobile Association (AAA) Traffic Safety Platinum Award for community outreach and crash reduction. With all the efforts and improvements that Parsons has implemented in the last few years, there's no doubt the department is setting up their community for a successful future.

