



Mark A. Crider
Sheriff



Scott Bieber
Chief of Police



Troy Tomaras
Chief of Police

A LETTER TO OUR COMMUNITY

WASHINGTON POLICE REFORM LAWS HOW WILL THEY IMPACT LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES IN WALLA WALLA COUNTY?

This past session, the Washington State legislature passed multiple bills addressing “police reform” following various tragic police events that have occurred in other cities around the nation. In May, Governor Inslee signed several of these “reform” bills into law. The majority of these laws take effect July 25th and they will profoundly impact policing across the state of Washington. Most of these new laws are ambiguous and require profound legal interpretation. We have been asking and waiting for clarification from the Attorney General’s office. Although there are still questions to be answered about implementing these new laws, we think it’s important to share with the community members in our jurisdictions what we know currently about how these laws will influence the way we deliver public safety services moving forward.

The new laws touch on many principles that are already at the core of policing in our state. For your local law enforcement agencies, our communities and citizens are the lenses through which we view our profession. We make it a point to partner with the people who live, work, and/or raise families in the Walla Walla Valley to create an overall safe living environment. While we may change the methods we use to deliver our services, our commitment to our communities and citizens, and doing our part to keep them safe, will not waiver.

We encourage you to learn about the recent legislation referred to and to contact us if we can answer any questions. The main reform Legislative Bills are: House Bills 1054, 1140, 1223, 1310, and Senate Bills 5051, 5066, 5476. As a result of these recent legislative changes, law enforcement response to non-criminal calls will greatly decrease.

The Walla Walla County law enforcement agencies strive to continuously provide our citizens professional service utilizing our core values of Honor, Integrity, Loyalty, Courage, Commitment, Duty and Fairness. We will adapt to the new changes and look forward to the ongoing positive interactions with our community as we go about providing our best in public safety services. We commit to working alongside other public service agencies such as Comprehensive Health, Fire/EMS, social services and dependency organizations who will be called upon with greater expectation.

Sheriff Crider, Chief Bieber and Chief Tomaras have met and discussed how specifically the legislation will effect law enforcement agency response in their jurisdictions. At a minimum, the following are the areas in which law enforcement response will be eliminated:

- **Welfare checks** - generally local law enforcement will not respond; however, a supervisor may give approval if it is determined there is no other alternative, e.g. A person lives in Kansas and hasn't heard from a relative in over a week and there is no one else local who can check.
- **Involuntary Treatment Act** – A DCR must have completed an evaluation and signed the DMHP form prior to law enforcement response. Officers will still verify the ITA requirements (a danger to themselves, a danger to others, gravely disabled) prior to taking action.
- **Mental health calls** – Generally law enforcement will not respond. Community members should call Comprehensive Mental Health's Crisis Response Team (CRT) at 509-524-2999 for assistance with a mental health issue. If a supervisor determines a crime has occurred an officer will respond.
- **Civil calls** – Generally law enforcement will no longer respond. If an actual crime has occurred, a supervisor will determine if law enforcement response is required.
- Law enforcement will continue to serve no contact orders, orders for protection, etc.
- **Suspicious person calls:** Dispatch will broadcast for information. Law enforcement will drive by if available to be a visible deterrence but will not make contact unless a crime is observed.

Unfortunately, over many years, law enforcement has become the default response when people call 9-1-1. Whether or not the police were the correct resource to respond, we responded. All three of our organizations take a great deal of pride in the level of service we provide our community. The recent police reform legislation which goes into effect on Sunday, July 25, 2021 places our agencies and personnel in a difficult position; One in which we want to continue providing any and all services our community requests, but at the same time must reduce our responses to certain calls for service in order to comply with the law.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mark A. Crider
Sheriff
Walla Walla Sheriff's Office



Scott Bieber
Chief of Police
Walla Walla Police



Troy Tomaras
Chief of Police
College Place Police