

Guidelines for Village Policing

Policing Vision

The Village of Yellow Springs has a progressive police department that helps ensure a safe and welcoming environment for those who live, work, and visit.

The department earns trust through consistent, meaningful engagement in our community, and strives for nonviolent conflict resolution whenever possible. We seek inclusion and compassion in all of the department's workings, and we recognize and proactively address systemic issues of injustice and implicit bias that have led to historic inequities.

Living out this Policing Vision requires intentional policies and management to build an effective culture to match our approach. Our police department is an extremely important institution whose operations encompass nearly half of Village expenditures. We aim for a department structure and size that is appropriate to match our Village needs. Transparency and collaboration in decision-making are crucial for external relations, and are also fundamental to the healthy, strong internal culture we want our department to strive for.

The Village of Yellow Springs prides itself on having a police department that respectfully serves our community, directly responds to the needs of the public, and actively ensures the safety of residents and visitors. This is accomplished through adherence to the following principles:

Safety-Centered

Safety is the primary need identified by Yellow Springs community members with regard to police services. Most community members feel that Yellow Springs is a safe community, which is facilitated by cooperation among residents, officers and other community members. The YSPD supports safety in our Village by being proactive and seeing that – as much as possible – unsafe situations do not occur. YSPD also meets our needs for safety by helping elderly or disabled individuals, responding quickly to medical emergencies and traffic accidents, and defusing potentially violent situations.

The community expects the YSPD to deal effectively with criminal activity - using best practices, data, and research to guide the work. The department will serve victims of crime with professionalism and care.

Peaceful

Our officers will not seek or initiate conflict, but when our police officers must interrupt unlawful behavior, the community expects that they will act with compassion, flexibility and reasonableness, treating everyone fairly and consistently. We work toward nonviolent conflict resolution in every way we can because we care about the safety of both our officers and the public. We oppose the growing militarization of police and seek to minimize the weaponization of the department and reduce use of force wherever possible.

Enforcing the law in the case of a minor offense does not warrant risking the safety of the citizen or officer involved. Furthermore, we acknowledge that our department is part of a larger criminal

justice system that is often heavy on “law and order.” Our goal is that the process of policing in Yellow Springs is perceived as fair, even by someone who has been arrested, because we know this helps create a community that is safe for our officers and for the public. We also aim for the ideal of restorative justice, in hopes of making everyone feel safe and valued, regardless of past circumstances. On a very basic level, we do not want anyone to fear the police in Yellow Springs and we do not want the police to fear the community.

Demonstrably Inclusive

Mutual respect is critical to engendering a sense of safety for all residents and visitors of Yellow Springs, which underscores the importance of appreciating the diversity of the individuals who live and interact in our Village. Inequality shows up in our community in many ways, and in our policing we want to work to combat it whenever possible. We expect our officers to protect human rights and civil liberties. That means proactively working to be fair and impartial - particularly in light of the history of institutional racism and discrimination based on gender, sexuality, class, ability, age, and other injustices in our country and in our community. Our officers must be trained to understand and act with compassion related to mental health issues.

We aim to be not simply tolerant but anti-racist, and we are working to be a model for others around the region and the country on racial justice issues. We prioritize anti-racist practices of hiring and continuing education. Officers should engage with different stakeholders such as youth, business owners, educational organizations and families as well as with groups promoting social justice, equity and human rights to establish relationships, exchange ideas, initiate projects and create learning opportunities. For these collaborative relationships to be successful, the YSPD needs to attract and retain officers who are open to and excited about engaging our community in these ways.

Locally-Minded

The Village of Yellow Springs actively promotes long-term investment and participation in our community by our police officers. Exposure to local culture and events is critical, as developing relationships between officers and the public encourages dedication to and longevity with the Village. It is important that officers are known and respected by community members, with many and varied opportunities for officers to meet people formally and informally. It is important that YSPD team members are a part of our community and feel connected, and the Village needs to facilitate this.

Yellow Springs Village Council and the Village Manager, in collaboration with the Chief of Police and any other relevant individuals and organizations, will use this Vision for Local Policing to guide policy, hiring, training, evaluation, and leadership decisions that are aligned with community values and support best practices in the Yellow Springs Police Department. The department should look for opportunities for innovation to enact this vision and values with the strongest possible models. Village leaders should consistently seek community support for and trust in YSPD officers through communication and community engagement.