

Building Trust, Increasing Safety



What can we do together to assure mutual understanding and trust between community members and police officers?

Community Conversations in Dover, Durham, and Rochester 2015

This event hosted by NH Listens Everyone welcome!

Please Note:

We are delighted to have this event covered by the press, local bloggers, and others who wish to record community affairs. We want to balance your interests with our participants' ability to express themselves in a safe environment, share an incomplete thought, or convey a personal story as a part of this process. We respectfully request that all representatives of the media (formal and informal) please ask permission to tape, photograph, identify, or quote an individual participant directly. Attendees who wish to film may do so from our designated film area. Filming may not be done of or by participants from within the small discussion group. This is so we can promote an open exchange of ideas. We are happy to work with media who want to film and photograph large group activities. Thank you!

Welcome and thank you for joining today's conversation ~

We look forward to your questions, concerns, ideas, and hopes for community and police relationships in your town. This conversation is about building constructive, respectful relationships, mutual understanding, and

identifying proactive steps between everyday citizens and representatives of the law enforcement community. *What is happening now with policing in your community? How do you feel about that? What actions would create the best possible relationship between residents, police, and public officials?* These are the kinds of questions at the heart of our conversation today.

This conversation is focused on your experiences in New Hampshire and asks us all to consider the critical question: ***What can we do together to assure mutual understanding and trust between community members and police officers?***

Here is the general outline of our evening:

5:30 – 6:00 PM	Registration and refreshments
6:00	Welcome and Purpose
6:20	Small group conversations
8:30	Large group summary reports
8:55	Next steps
9:00 PM	Adjourn

What is New Hampshire Listens?

New Hampshire Listens is a civic engagement initiative of the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire. NH Listens works to strengthen New Hampshire communities by helping citizens participate directly in discussions about policies that affect their daily lives. Established in 2011, we engage state residents in local, regional, and statewide conversations on a broad range of topics to bring about informed, innovative solutions to complex issues. At the core of our work, we organize fair, nonpartisan discussions throughout the state, help communities establish their own, independent, local Listens organizations, and train facilitators for public engagement. If you are interested in more information, we look forward to you being in touch with us.

Detailed Outline

5:30 - 6:00 Sign in and refreshments

- Welcome and sign in at registration table
- Please join your small group for introductions and to start the dialogue immediately thereafter.

We encourage you to review the information starting on page 7.



6:00 - 6:20 **Welcome**

- Welcome from Chief of Police
- Remarks from NH Listens Moderator
- ***Your input will influence community-police relationships in the months and years ahead.***

There are three main goals for these conversations:

- To create **constructive, respectful, inclusive conversations** between community residents and representatives of law enforcement
- To **increase mutual understanding** about the goals of community policing, public perceptions of police officers, and the challenges and tensions that can develop on both sides
- To **identify specific, proactive steps** that community residents, police, and public officials can take to assure strong, trusting relationships between the public and police departments

About the process: This conversation is...

- Designed to focus on what is important to *you*.
- Designed for participants to be here the whole time (please do what you need to do to be most present. Feel free to take a break or step outside for a phone call if needed).
- About a constructive focus and looking forward to desired actions and solutions.
- Organized to allow the greatest possible time for everyone to both speak and listen, which is why we use small, facilitated groups where ideas can be explored, differences understood, and preferences for action expressed.
- Respectful of your time. We will keep time and respect yours by ending on time.

Group agreements for a productive conversation...

- Share “air time”
- If you disagree, consider asking a question rather than arguing to prove your point
- It’s OK to disagree, but don’t personalize it. Stick to the issue, not the person who is disagreeing with you
- Speak up if the process doesn’t seem fair
- Speak for yourself, not for others and not for an entire group (use “I” statements)
- Personal stories stay in the group unless we all agree we can share them
- We all share responsibility for making the group productive
- Be respectful and use respectful language
- Respect the facilitator’s role
- Listen first...

6:20 – 6:50 **Introductions in small groups**

- Your small group has a neutral facilitator whose role is to:
 - Help with the process and keeping time
 - Serve as a reminder of our agreements to be fair and respectful
 - Make sure everyone gets a chance to participate, and □ Record key information on flip charts
- Reminder: Your group will need someone to **report out** to the large group at the end.
- **Introductions:** One benefit of these conversations is to be in groups with people whose experiences and perspectives are different from your own. As a way to get to know each other a bit, please share your:
 - Name and a few roles you have in your community...
 - One thing you learned as a child about the police...

In most communities, residents and police departments have good relationships. Yet many communities are looking for ways to improve those relationships. This may be particularly true where cultural tensions, policing practices, and a lot of media attention lead to distrust, anger, and fear. Everyone is affected.

- ❖ Citizens may think police are prejudiced and have unfair policies.
 - ❖ Police may feel blame for all kinds of social problems. They feel they don't get credit for doing their jobs.
- In light of this, describe an event in your life that has shaped your views on police and community.

6:50 - 7:00 **Information Review**

Take the time to look over the information section (starting on page 7) about current trends and information related to police/community relationships. While some data of interest is unavailable, ***this information is incomplete and meant to prompt reflection and discussion.***

- While we won't be able to cover each area in depth, we will focus on what you find important to discuss.

For our purposes, we will be asking you "*what do you notice?*" or "*what is most important to you about this information?*" and "*What about this information rings true or not true for you?*"

- Take a few minutes to read and allow for clarifying questions.

7:00 – 7:20 **What do you notice? A Brainstorm**

To get us started, what key issues and priorities come to mind when you think about building mutual understanding and trust between community members and police officers? What shared responsibilities come to mind? In the information section, *What do you notice? What is most important to you about the information? What rings true or not true for you?*

7:20 - 8:00 **Key Questions and Priorities**

Next, consider the framing question: *What can we do together to assure mutual understanding and trust between community members and police officers?*

- Given your priorities when you came in and the information we have just reviewed, spend some time discussing the key issues and **their importance to you**. It might be useful for **each person to speak briefly about their perspective**. The following questions may be helpful to prompt your thinking (but you will likely not have time to address each one individually):

What are our experiences?

- What is happening now with policing in our community? How do you feel about that?
- How do preconceptions get in the way of police and community working together?

What do we expect from each other?

- How would you describe the *ideal relationship* between police officers and the public they serve?
- What makes a good police officer? How does that compare to what makes a good citizen or community member?
- What should a police officer's role and presence be in our neighborhood/town? How can we let each other know if he or she is doing a good job?
- How does race, culture, or a person's ethnic background affect how police and residents relate to each other?
- What should community members be responsible for when it comes to community safety?
- How do we usually let each other know what we expect? Is this the best way?

8:00 - 8:15 **How can we make progress?**

- Spend time here exploring the ideas and solutions discussed in your group. *What solutions would have the biggest impact on your life?*
- What positive things do we see happening with community-police relations that we can build on?
- What kind of information do you need so you can better understand how your police department works?
- What types of changes seem most important? What makes you say that?
- Which ideas make sense? What concerns or doubts do you have?

8:15-8:30 **Final Priorities**

Based on your group's conversation, *"Are there any common-ground thoughts or ideas in this group? If so, what do we want to say at the end of the evening? If not, what diverse points of view do we want to convey?"*

A consensus is not required, but if one emerges, or perhaps if the group wants to put forward two or three primary points of view, that is fine. These will represent your **key recommendations or findings**.

Your group will need to prioritize their top insights to report out to the large group and *select someone to speak*. The reporting out should include no more than **two or three** specific statements. To arrive at this point, the group should take a step back and look for *both the unique ideas and those that seemed to recur*. Group ideas together that seem to be related, but don't lose track of the unique ones. **List these on one page**.

The **written** flip chart notes from your small group will convey a more complete view of your group's ideas. You will likely not have time to represent **all** of your ideas on the summary sheet or in the large group report out (two minutes!). All notes from the small groups will be used to provide a Summary Report to participants and decision makers.

Finally, please make note of any additional information that your group feels is important to pass along to those compiling information for next steps.

8:30 – 8:50 **Reporting Out**

Each group will be asked to provide a VERY BRIEF summary of their most important findings, concerns or recommendations. If you are asked to speak for your group, please be brief and share what has been compiled *by your group*, including common ground and divergent views. (You will have two minutes!)

8:50 – 8:55 **Wrap up comments – NH Listens Moderator**

- Please fill out the evaluation – it matters to us! Thank you!
- Forthcoming summary

9:00 PM **Thank you for participating!**

We are grateful to our National Partner, Everyday Democracy.
Parts of this guide are adapted from their work on *Protecting Communities, Serving the Public*.