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Board of Supervisors - Chairman



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Jeffrey C. McKay,
Chairman

MEDIA RELEASE: Independent Police Auditor Selects Research Team for Fairfax County Police Department Use of Force Study

February 6, 2020

On May 7, 2019, the Board of Supervisors directed the Independent Police Auditor to search for a research partner to conduct a study on the racial disparities in use of force incidents within the County. They were also asked to report findings and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. The Office of the Independent Police Auditor published a Request for Proposals in July 2019 and led a review committee to evaluate the five competitive proposals received.

On January 27, 2020, the County awarded the contract to a research team from the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) in partnership with researchers from the University of Cincinnati. The study will build upon previous Independent Police Auditor's reviews of Fairfax County Police Department's (FCPD) use of force incidents. It is intended to identify patterns and trends in uses of force by the FCPD with emphasis on racial, ethnic, gender, or similar disparities across subpopulations. The study will address the following questions specific to incidents that occurred between 2016-2018:

1. What factors or combination of factors contribute to the use of force by FCPD officers? Specifically, what role does civilian race, ethnicity, gender, or similar personal characteristics play in the decision to use force?
2. Does the rate of force experienced by persons of different races and/or ethnicities align with those groups' representation among persons at risk for having force used against them by the police? Do disparities exist in rates of force experienced by different racial and/or ethnic groups relative to risk?
3. Is civilian race, ethnicity, or gender related to the level of force used by the police while accounting for resistance and other relevant individual, situational, and environmental factors?
4. How can the FCPD improve its use of force data collection processes to help facilitate future analyses?
5. What steps can the FCPD take to help reduce bias in use of force incidents?

"Our Independent Police Auditor and his team have been working hard to launch this important study on use of force incidents and racial disparity," said Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay. "I'm pleased it's getting started and I'm pleased to have found such strong academic partners to review the data. I look forward to working with them, the Auditor, the Police, and the community on this important topic."

The anticipated completion date of the study is January 31, 2021. The UTSA team will issue a public report detailing the study's methods, findings, conclusions, and recommendations and present it to the Board of Supervisors.

Please direct any questions to the Office of the Independent Police Auditor at 703-324-3459 or IPAPoliceAuditor@fairfaxcounty.gov.

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