

Minnesota Working Group on Police-Involved Deadly Force Encounters
Public Hearing 1: Investigations, Oversight and Accountability
Saturday, Aug. 17, 2019
9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Minnesota State Capitol

The Minnesota Working Group on Police-Involved Deadly Force Encounters was organized by co-chairs Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison and Commissioner of Public Safety John Harrington to explore strategies to address growing public concern about the loss of life during deadly force encounters in Minnesota. The working group will provide a framework for stakeholders statewide to have a voice in developing recommendations that may include policy, procedure, legislation, programming and training.

The goal is to identify meaningful actions that can be taken to reduce loss of life and improve police and community relationships, safety and wellbeing. Members of the working group are a cross-section of law enforcement and diverse community representatives, including families impacted by deadly-force encounters. The working group will hold four public hearings, including public comment and a series of community listening sessions, and they shall accept testimony or information submitted online from the public through the MN DPS website at: <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/co/working-group/Pages/default.aspx>. The working group will produce a report in February 2020 with recommendations to address prevention, policy and law, training, investigations and accountability, community healing, and officer wellness.

On Saturday, Aug. 17, 2019, the Working Group on Police-Involved Deadly Force Encounters, co-chaired by Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison and Commissioner of Public Safety John Harrington, hosted the first public hearing, titled Investigations, Oversight and Accountability, at the State Capitol.

The working group convened at 9:00 a.m. A group of protestors raised concerns about the formation and makeup of the working group and the ongoing number of police-involved shootings. The working group listened to the concerns expressed by those present for about an hour and then adjourned. The meeting was re-convened later in the day.

Due to a shortened timeframe, not all planned presenters were able to address the working group; some were rescheduled to a later hearing. The following panels presented testimony; videos of the hearing are available on the MN DPS website, as are copies of written remarks or materials provided by the speakers.

The hearing began with presentations by Wanda Johnson, mother of Oscar Grant; and Valerie Castile, mother of Philando Castile as part of Panel A: Police Deadly Force Encounters—Perspectives from the Community. Both lost sons to police deadly force encounters. Their testimony provided insights into the extended impact of police deadly force encounters on family members and the affected communities.

The Role of Prosecutors in Deadly Force Investigations (Panel B) was led by Allison Goldberg, policy advisor for the Institute for Innovation in Prosecution (IIP). She introduced the Prosecutor's Tool Kit on Deadly Police Encounters and a link to the IIP webpage with a series of best practices and recommendations for actions to be taken by prosecutors to improve investigations and prosecution of deadly force encounter cases. She was followed by Michael Freeman, Hennepin County Attorney; John Choi, Ramsey County Attorney; and

Anders Folk of the U.S. Attorney's Office. They each reflected on the role of the prosecutor and made specific recommendations to improve investigations and prosecution of these cases.

The third panel focused on the law enforcement perspective on deadly use of force, with testimony by Coon Rapids Police Chief Brad Wise and Dakota County Sheriff Tim Leslie. They each provided specific recommendations for consideration by the working group.

The final presentation was made by Drew Evans, superintendent of the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA). The BCA oversees the investigations of police-involved deadly force encounters statewide. He reviewed the current state of policy and practice regarding the BCA and provided a detailed PowerPoint that is available on the website for the hearings.

Public comment was opened, and testimony was provided by interested parties, including several impacted family members who provided additional detail about their specific concerns with the policies and practices that lead to deadly force encounters, the lack of communication with the affected families, the level of trauma experienced by the loved ones of those killed in police-involved deadly force encounters, and frustrations with the investigation process.

The hearing was closed by the co-chairs. All proceedings were live-streamed, recorded on video, and posted to the working group website.