

HALO | Highly Accountable Learning Organization

As a police department focuses on serious crime and violence, it should also work to improve relations with the community it serves and become a better organized and well-functioning department.

NICJR developed the concept of a Highly Accountable Learning Organization (HALO), a police department that is transparent, accountable, and data-driven, and that adheres to performance management and continuous quality improvement. A HALO police department is continuously assessing, learning, and improving.

Becoming a HALO department may include joining a larger movement such as the Georgetown University Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) Project. ABLE serves as a national hub for training, technical assistance, and research focused on establishing “a police culture in which officers routinely intervene—and accept interventions—as necessary to: prevent misconduct, avoid police mistakes, and promote officer health and wellness.” Through ABLE, law enforcement agencies are able to receive training along with a host of other resources to assist them in advancing their own bystandership strategies.

ABLE was modelled after the Ethical Policing is Courageous (EPIC) program, which was created by the New Orleans Police Department and community partners. The program “educates, empowers, and supports the officers on the streets to play a meaningful role in ‘policing’ one another.” EPIC aims to alter the culture surrounding policing to limit police misbehavior and promote a collaborative environment by training officers to be accountable to each other and intervene before an unlawful act takes place, irrespective of hierarchy.

A HALO police department may also adopt one of several evidence-based policing strategies that have been shown to be effective in reducing crime, resolving incidents, and improving the quality of policing without the use of heavy handed enforcement tactics that can erode public trust and increase the risk of excessive force. Several examples of such strategies are included in NICJR’s report on New and Emerging Models of Community Safety and Policing.

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A HALO POLICE DEPARTMENT:



Recruits and retains a workforce that is reflective of the community it serves



Maintains strict hiring standards designed to screen out candidates who were fired or forced to resign from previous law enforcement positions, candidates who show signs of racial bias, and candidates who approach policing with a warrior mentality



Provides thorough, high quality, and intensive training that well exceeds minimums required by state mandates



Implements Early Warning Systems that use data-driven and technologically savvy approaches to tracking staff performance and identifying emerging issues of inappropriate, abusive, and/or racially biased behavior



Systemically reviews officer performance through regular review of body-worn camera footage, service complaints, uses of force, and more



Has effective mechanisms in place to promptly intervene and hold staff accountable when problematic behavior or misconduct are identified



Has policies in place to limit use of deadly force to situations of last resort where an armed suspect is using or threatening to use a firearm and to ensure that any other use of force is necessary and proportional



Ensures transparency through real-time data dashboards or regular reports to the public on traffic stops, arrests, complaints, and uses of force, including totals and breakdowns by race, gender, neighborhood, and other key outcomes



Requires employees to have strong commitment to learning and engaging with other agencies and professional organizations to ensure the agency uses evidence-based practices for internal police accountability and violence prevention programs in their community