POLICY & PROCEDURE

Document Type
Policy Plan/Guidelines/Implementation/Cultural Awareness Tool for Law Enforcement

Administering Entity
San Diego County District Attorney's Interfaith Advisory Board (IFAB)/ San Diego County District Attorney's Prevention and Intervention programs - CARE Community Center

Approved By
Community Faith Leaders/IFAB Board Members/San Diego County District Attorney's Office/San Diego County Sheriff's Department/San Diego Police Department/San Diego County Probation

A Message from the District Attorney

The San Diego County District Attorney's Interfaith Advisory Board is committed to supporting and fostering culturally competent law enforcement officers. The board conducted focus groups with various cultural groups to gather content for this app that law enforcement officers can use to respectfully respond to non-emergency situations.

The Cultural Awareness Project is a tool that has been created to provide San Diego officers with important cultural knowledge and perceptions of law enforcement which stem from past experiences in other countries or circumstances. This data serves as a mean to reinforce the trust between law enforcement and the diverse community we live in, as well as to encourage cooperation in current and future encounters with the police.

Some San Diegan communities are rich in culture and abide by a common lifestyle and beliefs. Understanding a person's practice of cultural norms can allow officers not only to quickly build rapport and ensure effective communication but also to function effectively within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs of all members of the community. This app aims to help law enforcement professionals to create a sense of cultural awareness in order to provide equitable and effective public safety.

Policy

San Diego's population has been constantly changing and growing in diversity. Therefore, faith leaders and focus groups were dedicated to meet and create this project with the community in mind, aiming to strengthen relations between the greater San Diego community and law enforcement.

This mobile application can become a part of the training process for law enforcement officers, and it may serve as an additional tool to quickly access when encountering different cultures.

The Cultural Awareness Project app goal is to help the officers communicate effectively and efficiently with people of various cultures and help prevent law enforcement from unintentionally offending those who come from different cultural backgrounds.

Procedures

How to download the app:
- App is available on Apple and Android.
- Go to the App Store or Google Play on your phone and search for Cultural Awareness Project, then download.

The core content is provided under the Communities menu:
- Each of the eleven communities has four categories of information and each category provides culturally-based knowledge to guide interactions with members of that community:

  o Traditions and Beliefs
    Every community shares different cultural/ethnic/religious traditions or beliefs in which law enforcement needs to be aware of in order to have effective encounter.

- o Greetings
  This category reflects the appropriate manner of greeting in different cultures, including demeanor, non-verbal, body space, handshake, bow, male-female interaction, etc.

- o Visiting Households
  The information provided under this category helps officers identify who is considered the head of the household in each culture and who should be addressed or acknowledged first.

- o Experiences with Law Enforcement
  This section includes shared views, perceptions and past experiences with law enforcement in different cultures that reflect certain behaviors upon contact with the officers.

When to use it:

The app is intended to help prepare law enforcement before encountering a member of the public from a different culture in a non-emergency situation. It is an easy and quick tool to navigate, before such an interaction out in the field, especially when conducting home visits. The app will also be helpful as a debriefing resource when an encounter has not gone well.

Application Content & Community Example

The content for this application came from discussions with community focus groups and is intended to create a better understanding between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

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MUSLIM

Greetings

What is the appropriate manner to greet you? (demeanor, non-verbal, body space, handshake, bow, male-female interaction etc.)

- Peaceful greeting is very important (verbal, engage in open communication): "Salaam" or any common form of greeting such as "Hello" "Good morning" etc.

- Be mindful of personal space. Physical contact such as a handshake with opposite gender is discouraged.

- Muslims typically avoid direct eye contact and may gaze downward when talking. It can be seen as disrespectful to speak to someone while making eye contact.

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MUSLIM

Visiting Households

Who should be addressed or acknowledged first? Who is the head of the household?

- The eldest male is considered the head of the household. Typically, a male will answer the door. The head of household may ask his wife or his daughters to cover and put on their full dress and hijab.

- If only women are at home, it is important to give them sufficient time to cover.

- Dress code: Mandatory hijab for women vs. optional kufi for men (man may remove from his head).

- Some Muslim cultures feel extreme