



**A Progress Report of the
Suffolk County Sheriff's Department**

2016 – 2021

Summary

Steven W. Tompkins – Sheriff



SHERIFF'S MESSAGE:

On January 22, 2013, I was sworn in as the 31st High Sheriff of Suffolk County, having previously served with the Department since 2002. In November of 2014, I was elected to the position, and was re-elected in 2016.

In my capacity as Sheriff, I manage all operations at the Suffolk County House of Correction, the Suffolk County Jail, the Correction Officer Training Academy and the Civil Process Division. In addition to providing care, custody and rehabilitative support for inmates and pre-trial detainees, I also oversee a management, security and administrative staff of over 1,000.

Our mandate is to provide for the safe care and custody of the men and women who are remanded to our facilities by the courts. As an expansion of that mandate, I am deeply committed to helping our population to return to society better able to care for themselves and their families with increased marketable and sustainable skills. To this end, I have worked with the members of our custody and non-custody staff to create innovative, impactful programming and services which include, among others, the Family Matters Program, which assists inmates and their families in working toward positive relationships that strengthen the family as a unit; the PEACE (Positive Energy Always Creates Elevation) Unit, a specialized treatment housing program that is focused on providing a therapeutic space for young men between the ages 18 and 25; the “Common Ground Institute,” a vocational training and reentry program that teaches marketable vocational skills in a classroom setting; our gender-specific, trauma-informed programming and services for the women in our population; and a host of others.

And, while the COVID-19 pandemic necessarily curtailed some of the many in-person outreach initiatives that we’ve created over the years, we have nonetheless continued to engage the young people in our county with our Summer Enrichment Program, a paid internship for Suffolk County students with interest in careers in law enforcement and criminal justice; our Choice Program, done virtually through the pandemic, which connects youths with our officers to speak about making sound personal choices to help them positively navigate towards adulthood; and we’ve introduced our Real Talk in the Commonwealth “Zoomcast” with leaders from the community who come share with us their experiences and insights; in addition to many more.

We have continued to utilize best practices and merit-based policies for custody and non-custody staff members, including mandatory in-service training for custody and non-custody staff to stay up-to-date on the most current and effective techniques and practices in corrections, while upgrading and modernizing the physical plant wherever possible, in addition to several other advances, which you will read about in this summary and, more fully, in our five-year report, “A Report of Progress of the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department – 2016-2021.”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Tompkins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins
Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department



STEVEN W. TOMPKINS
SHERIFF

Suffolk County Sheriff's Department

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A Progress Report of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department (2016-2021)

INTRODUCTION:

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department is the largest sheriff's department in the Commonwealth and the 30th largest in the United States. It has more than 1,000 employees, including executive managers, corrections officers, investigators, educators, health care providers, caseworkers and administrative staff, whose primary responsibility is to provide safe care, custody and rehabilitative support for over 1,000 offenders daily. The Department's two main facilities are the Suffolk County Jail (SCJ) and the Suffolk County House of Correction (HOC). Its average operating budget is approximately \$124.5 million.

Steven W. Tompkins, M.P.A., is the 31st Sheriff in Suffolk County, making history as the first Black male elected to post. Sheriff Tompkins is serving out his second elected term as the President of the Massachusetts Sheriff's Association, and currently serves as the Vice President of Region I for the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), and is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees for Roxbury Community College.

Now, at the close of his first full term, Sheriff Tompkins has released a report that reaffirms his commitment to public transparency and highlights the many advances, improvements and achievements made during his tenure.

A PDF of the report can be found on the Department's website at: www.scsdma.org.

OPERATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Like the rest of the world and its institutions across the globe, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department experienced a myriad of challenges in fulfilling its prescribed mission due to the global pandemic of COVID-19, with its presence overshadowing nearly every aspect of operations.

But, from the beginning of the pandemic, Department staff took very seriously its collective obligation to protect the people in Department custody, rising to this new challenge by developing and implementing rigorous health and safety protection protocols established in

coordination with Centers for Disease Control and Massachusetts Department of Public Health guidance, which proved to be effective in containing the spread of COVID-19 within its facilities. In addition to several other measures and practices, the Department:

- Engaged with medical experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC), and enlisted the expertise of Infectious Disease Specialist Dr. Alysse Wurcel of Tufts Medical Center to bolster the practical and strategic planning of its COVID-19 response.
- Implemented a mask mandate for all personnel, symptom screening and the administration of temperature testing which was enforced for anyone entering Department facilities. Custody and medical staff were assigned personal protective equipment (PPE), and all staff, detainees and inmates were given masks, to be replaced as needed. Enhanced sanitization and decontamination protocols were implemented for the Department, and, in units in which an individual or individuals tested positive, deep cleaning and decontamination procedures were utilized.
- While in-person visits for families and friends were suspended on a temporary basis as part of infection prevention protocols, the Department enhanced alternative means of communication, which included a range of options like: additional phone calls, mail services and increased access to text messaging and video conferencing.
- In addition to the protection and mitigation protocols, the Department also worked collaboratively with the courts to reduce the population within its facilities in compliance with the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) Order 12926.

MAJOR REFORMS AND IMPROVEMENTS

HIRING

- Over the course of the past five years, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Office has hired 465 new employees. Though 357 of those hires were men, the 108 women hired by the sheriff's office reflects a notable increase in what is typically, due to prevailing cultural and societal norms, a heavily male-dominated field.
- With respect to racial diversity, the numbers have been even more substantial. Of the 465 new hires by the sheriff's office from 2016 to 2021, 199 were Black, 141 were white, 101 were Latinx, and 24 were Asian.

PROMOTIONS

- All promotions are based on merit. Custody staff must pass a written exam, comprehensive interview, review of disciplinary history and peer review in order to achieve higher rank. All staff members of the Department – custody and non-custody – receive mandatory annual performance appraisals.
- Over a similar duration, 191 employees received promotions, reflecting similar demographic characteristics. Of the 191 promotions given by the sheriff's office, 110 were white, 53 were Black, 23 were Latinx, 3 were Asian and 2 were Native American. Broken down by gender, men accounted for 136 of the promotions while 55 women received promotions.

TRAINING

Housed at the 9,500 square foot Correction Officer Training Academy (COTA) facility in Chelsea, MA, the Department's Training Division administers a program that is recognized as a model throughout the world of corrections. The staff of the Training Division is responsible for providing the training of the entirety of Department staff.

- The Training Division gives instruction in a variety of custody-specific topics, and non-custody staff is also required to attend in-service training every year.
- The Department continues to provide training and programming that includes diversity sensitivity in a number of specialized areas including its "Transgender 101" workshop.
- The Department has also partnered with other outside law enforcement agencies, including the Boston Police Department to assist with riot control training, the Chelsea Police Department to deliver suicide prevention training, The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Police to instruct on proper forced cell move technique, and various law enforcement K-9 (Canine) units, among others.
- The Department has graduated 12 academies during the last five years. The number of academy trained staff during that period totaled 372.

Additional improvements include, an updated Academy Entrance Fitness Examination; the implementation of the Power Document Management System (PDMS); a satellite location for training to offer the ability to host larger numbers of new recruits; work with the Municipal Police Training Committee (MPTC) and CRASE (Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events); and many others.

INMATE EDUCATION AND PROGRAM SERVICES

Continued improvements, additions and adoption of best practices within the realm of education and services has resulted in the creation of a wide array of innovative and effective programs, including those listed previously and:

OASIS: “Opioid and Addiction Services Inside South Bay” is a pre-trial detainee intensive drug and alcohol recovery unit, and work on partnerships with other agencies and organizations in Suffolk County designed to divert people with substance use disorders out of the correctional system and into treatment.

PEACE: The PEACE (Positive Energy Always Creates Elevation) Unit, launched by Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins in 2018, is a specialized treatment housing program that is focused on providing a therapeutic space where young men between the ages 18 and 25 will have the opportunity to develop the skills and tools necessary to effect positive change in their lives.

NURTURING FATHERS PROGRAM: Which is based on a curriculum that provides a cognitive (thinking) and affective (feeling) experience that connects the men to their past and helps them to resolve certain issues that might have been repressed.

CULINARY ARTS PROGRAM: Which is designed to provide participants with 360 hours of instruction to begin their path in the food service industry. The Department has also partnered with New England Culinary Arts Training (NECAT) for more advanced training and future job placement opportunities.

SMALL ENGINE REPAIR: Which provides participants with an introduction and training to the repair, maintenance and safe operation of small engine equipment.

BASIC AUTO 101: Which advances participants’ knowledge about owning, maintaining, and repairing automobiles.

URBAN FARMING PROGRAM: Where participants are taught the basics of urban agriculture. They grow a wide range of produce that is then used in the institution’s kitchen.

Education:

In addition to the more traditional HiSET, Literacy I and II, Special Education, ESL and other programming, the Department has created a growing list of additional innovative educational programs, including:

- **Civics:** This class teaches the basics of civic engagement and participation in our government. The course covers current election cycles and the basics of state, federal and city government.

- **Financial Literacy:** Participants learn how to make sensible financial decisions, manage money and credit, as well as negotiate any financial opportunities and/or problems they may encounter.
- **Parenting:** Members of the population are taught positive parenting skills as well as skills on nutrition, discipline, nurturing, and developmental issues. Participants also engage in the Parents Read Aloud program that encourages them to read to their children.
- **Freedom From Violence:** This class leads participants to discover the idea that personal freedom is based more on inner control, rather than, external control or domination through violence. A national model within the corrections community, the Freedom From Violence program teaches inmates about managing anger and learning new, non-violent forms of communication through a series of readings, discussions, and workshops in an effort to engage in more positive social behavior.

The Department encourages the pursuit of education at all levels. In addition to the numerous educational programs provided, we also offer programs to assist individuals in furthering their education to the post-secondary level.

- **College Bound:** This is a transitional program to equip participants with the attitude, skills, and experience to graduate from college.

Program Services:

- Our **Women's Program Services** aim to deliver gender-specific, trauma-informed and individualized reintegration programming to women at the Suffolk County House of Correction. Every woman is enrolled in a three-phase program model that helps address the psychological and educational barriers that have hindered her success in order to better prepare for reentry.
- The Department has served as the de facto medical, behavioral, mental, and substance use treatment provider for populations that have limited access to such services in the community. The Department offers a comprehensive detoxification program for individuals struggling with drug and/or alcohol addiction in order to help them take the first step on the road to recovery.
- Both medical and mental health services at the Department are accomplished 24 hours a day through a contract with a correctional medical vendor. Department staff members work together with the vendor staff to deliver individual recovery counseling services as well as peer-based recovery services like Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous.
- **Vivitrol And Community-Connected Solutions:** The Department's Vivitrol program offers services to offenders who have identified an opiate or alcohol use problem and wish to utilize a medication and counseling approach to treatment.

- **Narcan:** Through shared education and training protocols across counties, Suffolk County Sheriff's Department staff has been trained to administer this opioid overdose reversal drug.
- **Community Health Center Partnerships:** Part of ensuring a pathway to successful recovery post-release is working with individuals to build social networks in the communities where they live.
- Both medical and mental health staff have coordinated with local community providers, DPH (Department of Public Health), DMH (Department of Mental Health), and the Boston Public Health Commission to ensure continuity of care for inmates once released.
- The Department has instituted the **Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)** program for individuals experiencing substance use disorder.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

During the COVID-19 Pandemic - Whether hosting turkey giveaways to family members of participants in the Department's Family Matters Program; bringing outdoor, socially-distant presentations of the Choice Program to teens in our community; co-hosting a virtual CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information)-friendly job fair; delivering toys collected from Department employees for the Toys for Tots program and participating in a revamped Shop With A Cop: Heroes and Helpers event; or broadcasting several live entries of the Department's "Directions for Corrections" community forum series, the Department remained active and engaged despite the challenge of navigating through the pandemic. Pre-pandemic, the Department implemented a number of community engagement programs including:

- Revamping of the Department's public website, which provides visitors with a user-friendly and wide ranging source of information about programming, staff, facilities, news, photo tours, job opportunities, contact information, and more – and a revamping of the sheriff's office's external communication vehicle, the Common Ground newsletter, to reflect the office in its similarly modernized functions.
- A heightened focus on civic participation and responsibility for members of the population and constituents in the community alike with first-of-its kind forums behind the walls featuring candidates for United States Senate; Suffolk County District Attorney, and Mayor of Boston; internal voter registration drives for voting-eligible members of the incarcerated population; the installation of municipal ballot boxes at both the Suffolk County Jail and Suffolk County House of Correction; and more.
- The incorporation of a strong social media presence, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

- The creation of a video podcast, *Real Talk In The Commonwealth, With Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins*, which covers a range of topics and issues of interest to internal and external stakeholders.
- The **Summer Enrichment Program**, which is a paid internship program for motivated high school juniors and seniors, that enables participants to gain insight into the world of law enforcement through job shadowing, weekly presentations by members of law enforcement, roundtable discussions, law enforcement related field trips and educational tours.

CAPITAL PROJECTS AND FACILITIES MAINTENANCE

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department has continued to move forward with enhanced structural stability through efforts that include fostering a more consistent working relationship with the state's Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM), the undertaking of numerous capital projects throughout the Suffolk County House of Correction and Suffolk County Jail, and by the creation of a comprehensive and aggressive preventative maintenance program for both the Suffolk County Jail and the House of Correction.

From 2016 to 2021 a vast array of alterations and additions were made to both procedures and the tools used to carry them out. Whether making structural repairs, modernizing equipment, or working at a greater level with outside agencies, the Sheriff's Department has continued with its efforts to increase the safety and security of those within the facility and the communities within Suffolk County. Some of those efforts included:

- Obtaining reaccreditation from the American Correctional Association (ACA).
- Obtaining of reaccreditation from the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC).
- Recertification as a PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) compliant agency.
- Introducing tablet-based technology for all detained and sentenced residents.
- Introducing fingerprint identification technology to better coordinate identification (new to the Jail).
- In adherence to the Criminal Justice Reform Act of 2018, (Chapter 69), the Department restructured housing protocols, including a vast reduction in the use of Restrictive Housing. Additionally, the Department enacted targeted classification practices for residents suffering from Serious Mental Illness (SMI).
- Implementing of video court in 2017 (which was greatly expanded with the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020).

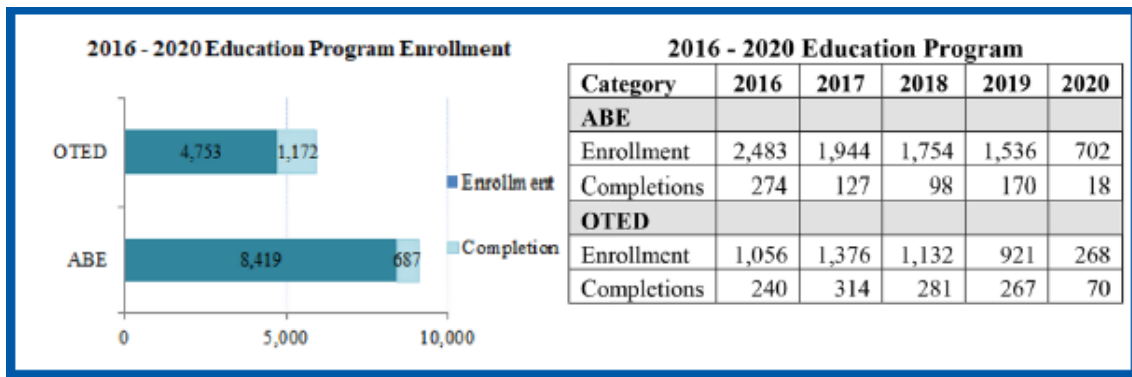
- Ending its relationship with ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) – 2019.
- Accepting and housing female detainees and inmates from Framingham on behalf of Essex, Norfolk, and Plymouth Counties – 2019.
- The creation of a kitchen program to grant women access to work in the kitchen.
- The creation of a sewing work crew to manufacture face masks for inmates in our facilities in response to COVID-19 – 2020.
- Installation and implementation of video visit technology to allow inmates virtual visits with family members during the pandemic – 2020.
- Installation and implementation of virtual attorney visitation technology to allow inmates access to their attorneys during pandemic – 2020.
- Providing inmates regular free calls each month to communicate with family during pandemic – 2020 and 2021.
- Installation of touch-free entrance doors for the front lobby of the Suffolk County Jail (SCJ) to reduce the need for surface contact and potential germ transmission.
- Updating of the HVAC (Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning) systems to energy efficient equipment i.e. heat pumps, booster pumps at the HOC.
- Updating of the fire panel system at HOC.
- Increase of security netting on all recreation decks at the SCJ to prevent contraband entering through windows, and more.

Other Important information included in this report:

- The Office of the General Counsel, which represents the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department in legal matters including, but not limited to those brought in state and federal trial and appellate courts, as well as state administrative agencies such as the Labor Relations Commission and the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD). It also reviews and drafts contracts involving the Department, including those for the procurement of goods and services. The Office of the General Counsel also represents the Sheriff in all arbitration proceedings.
- The Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department Civil Process Division, which assists attorneys and pro se litigants by processing and then delivering or “serving” the legal documents necessary for civil courts to conduct their business and puts relevant parties to legal actions on notice by delivering to them copies of lawsuits, summonses for witnesses, and protective or restraining orders. Additionally, after the courts make judgments, the

division staff may enforce these judgments by seizing property, garnishing wages and performing sheriff's sales.

- The Sheriff's Investigative Division and its implementation of management and administrative processes to dramatically improve the efficiencies of its division, in addition to that of the Gang Intelligence Unit (GIU). The Division focuses upon improvement of skills in crime scene preservation, evidence and data collection/organization, interviewing, interrogations and intelligence gathering and analysis.
- The Financial Services Division and its continued improvement on the delivery of goods and services, centralization and streamlining of the finance-related functions within the Department while promoting greater communication both within the Department and externally as it relates to financial services.
- An extensive statistical analysis of the form and function of the Department, including release data, grievance and disciplinary information, the efficacy of programming and services, among other pertinent figures.



CONCLUSION

Since the beginning of his service as the High Sheriff of Suffolk County nine years ago, Steven W. Tompkins has not only built upon the success of his predecessor, but he has worked with Department staff, external partners, members of the legislature and several other entities to successfully lift the Department even higher in its mission to change the lives of the people remanded to his care and custody and transform the communities from which they come and will, ultimately return.

He, and the members of the Department, are proudly committed to this process of improvement, and equally proud to serve the citizens of Boston, Revere, Chelsea, Winthrop and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a whole. The public safety, law enforcement, educational, workforce development, and public health services provided by the Department play a crucial role in making our communities safer, stronger places to live, work and raise families, and we look forward to continuing to build upon this work in the years ahead.

Visit: www.scsdma.org

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