



VLCT Member Adopted Municipal Policy - 2015

3.0 PUBLIC SAFETY

3.01 PRIORITY ISSUES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Vermont's local public safety officials join with all municipal officials in calling for the following legislative action:

- A. Because drug-related crime in Vermont is a continuing and significant threat to the state's quality of life, provide public safety officials the tools and funding to combat, in a coordinated fashion, the growing drug culture throughout the state.
- B. Any state-sponsored programs or initiatives intended to address quality of life crimes associated with opiate addiction must be supported by evidence-based scientific models.
- C. Prohibit public safety-related cost shifts and mandates to municipalities unless the state provides full reimbursement.
- D. Adequately fund Department of Corrections (DOC) programs and initiatives so criminal justice system decisions will not adversely impact local government. Local governments should not need to address problems that arise locally as the result of those decisions.
- E. Monitor Act 76, Vermont's 2013 law addressing the possession of small quantities of marijuana, to ensure that it doesn't adversely impact the ability of law enforcement to address drug-related crime. Do not expand exemptions to the law. Oppose the legalization of marijuana.
- F. Maintain the independent status and function of the E-911 and Vermont Communications boards.

3.02 CORRECTIONS COMMUNITY

- A. DOC must provide open channels of communication so municipal officials are aware of any changes in the status of offenders in their municipalities and can notify DOC of impacts to the community. DOC must inform local officials of the circumstances of an incarcerated individual's release. Base sentencing for non-violent misdemeanors on the seriousness of the offense, risk, and the probability of recidivism.

- B. Provide funding to ensure that offenders housed in community settings—including juveniles and individuals with drug or alcohol dependencies—receive adequate supervision by DOC personnel and adequate access to support services.
- C. Because many individuals with mental illness do not receive sufficient care, make additional funding available for their support services before they become a threat to themselves or others. Make mobile crisis units available to support the work of law enforcement and emergency services in crisis situations.
- D. Include the local public safety community in proposed host municipalities in decisions about where to place individuals under DOC supervision. DOC must respect municipal zoning in approval of housing for offenders, especially as it pertains to motels. DOC should use public databases, such as court records, to screen potential recipients of housing vouchers. Locate adequate supervision and wrap-around support services where offenders are lodged in close proximity to one another and the general population.
- E. Monitor the release of offenders so there is no undue adverse burden on any individual municipality.
- F. Update 18 V.S.A. § 7505, the statute for a law enforcement official or town service officer to secure an immediate evaluation of a person who might pose a threat to him or herself or others.

3.03 PUBLIC SAFETY FUNDING

- A. Authorize local emergency service agencies to recover all costs associated with complying with any federal, state, or court-ordered licensing, registration, and testing requirement.
- B. Identify and fund the housing and transportation needs of all persons who present a danger to themselves or the public, such as mentally ill individuals or public inebriates.
- C. Reimburse municipalities for uninsured costs of providing emergency medical services for all persons lodged in state-owned or funded facilities, including those who are incapacitated.
- D. Extend the availability of state funding for the operation of public safety answering points (PSAPs) to municipal PSAPs in an amount proportional to the volume of E-911 calls processed by each PSAP.
- E. Restore adequate funding for the Community Drug Interdiction Program (CDIP) and the state drug task force that helps pay law enforcement expenses incurred in drug enforcement. Support implementation of Act 195, the rapid arraignment law of 2014.
- F. Grant municipalities authority to enact ordinances that compel motor vehicle insurers to pay claims filed by fire and rescue personnel responding to incidents involving vehicles.

3.04 PUBLIC SAFETY TRAINING

- A. Provide the Vermont Fire Academy adequate funding for certified training programs for all full-time, part-time, and volunteer firefighters, as well as sufficient resources (manpower, equipment, etc.) to support the certified training activities. Address the particular needs and constraints of volunteer firefighters.

- B. Provide sufficient funding to the Criminal Justice Training Academy to stimulate participation in in-service training programs sponsored by the Criminal Justice Training Council, including supervisory training.
- C. Reimburse municipalities for their costs of training law enforcement officers who are then hired by the state police.
- D. Provide appropriate, affordable, and flexible training for all public safety personnel. Pay for any training requirements mandated for local first responders. Regionalize and diversify the delivery system for the continuing education of public safety personnel.
- E. Provide tuition credits to municipalities that send students to the Criminal Justice Training Academy for training if those municipalities also contribute employees who provide instruction or act as training assistants there.
- F. Include all users of the Criminal Justice Training Academy in any efforts to review and reorganize the structure and funding for local first responder provider training.
- G. Amend 20 V.S.A. Chapter 151 to provide more municipal representation on the Criminal Justice Training Council.
- H. Require the state to provide the best training programs possible, at an affordable rate, for all levels of public safety personnel, including police, constables, fire, search and rescue, and emergency medical services .
- I. The state should assume workers' compensation liability when an officer is injured at the Police Academy in the course of training.

3.05 PUBLIC SAFETY EMERGENCY RESPONSE

As has been amply demonstrated in recent weather-related disasters, municipalities are on the front lines of response to calamities, particularly in their immediate aftermath. The state must partner with municipal officials in planning and executing responses to disasters, both those that merit a national response and those that are localized in scale.

- A. Include local personnel in discussions about changes in laws or regulations governing how local public safety and emergency management personnel respond to emergency incidents, particularly those involving hazardous materials.
- B. Consult with municipal officials to fund effective implementation of the Vermont State Alert Information Center (VTAlert.gov) for hazards, pandemics, and public safety emergencies as well as deployment of communications systems and protocols.
- C. Develop an emergency response fund to cover non-transportation-related disaster recovery costs incurred by local governments that do not meet Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) thresholds.
- D. Establish a two-way electronic data system to provide public safety and emergency management personnel on the scene of a public safety incident and those with the resources to provide assistance with accurate and timely information.

- E. Support the continued development and sustainability of an interoperable communications system that allows all emergency service agencies and personnel to communicate with one another in emergency situations. Develop the system in an efficient and cost-effective manner, not as the result of an unfunded mandate.
- F. Provide seed funding or other incentives to create a program for municipally run regional public safety services.
- G. The state should help with the administrative costs and burdens of securing funds to help with municipal emergency response and long-term recovery efforts from weather-related disasters.
- H. Recognizing (a) the value to the state of voluntary fire departments, (b) the potential endangerment to the travelling public, and (c) the likelihood that other laws might be broken in seeking to comply, no law mandating response time for fire departments or EMTs should be enacted.
- I. The state should not mandate that municipalities must prepare emergency medical services plans or provide emergency management services, without adequate state funding and technical support.

3.06 SAFE DRIVING INITIATIVES

- A. Enact primary enforcement of the seat belt law.
- B. Strengthen graduated driver license requirements by providing that sanctions levied upon a driver under 18 who has been charged with a motor vehicle violation should continue past the driver's 18th birthday until the case is adjudicated.

3.07 LAW ENFORCEMENT ISSUES

- A. Vermont's "Fugitive from Justice" (persons with outstanding warrants for arrest in other states) procedures are complicated, time-consuming, and redundant. Allow a law enforcement officer to make an arrest based on a warrant from another state.
- B. Develop innovative and cost-effective models for collaboration among state police officers, sheriffs, and municipalities.
- C. Enact a law prohibiting a felon from possessing a firearm so that such an offense may be prosecuted under state law in addition to federal law.
- D. Indemnify any law enforcement agency providing field training to a constable.
- F. Accurately assess the number of beds required to accommodate those in need of long-term mental health care. Fund that number of beds as well as others needed for temporarily lodging individuals whose severe mental health care needs are short term and who should not be kept in hospital emergency rooms or other similar places.

