



## EXECUTIVE BRIEF

## Lessons Learned from the Implementation of Statewide Use of Force Reform

In December of 2020, the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General (NJOAG) announced the implementation of a reform package to [reduce police use of force](#). This included changes to statewide use of force policy, mandatory use of force training, and the collection and publication of systematic use of force data. Through external funding, the National Policing Institute led an independent multi-year, multi-method evaluation of the implementation and impact of these reforms in collaboration with the University of Cincinnati and the NJOAG. Collectively, this work represents one of the most extensive examinations of police use of force reform.

As part of this evaluation, the researchers conducted a comprehensive review of New Jersey departmental use of force policies, semi-structured interviews with law enforcement executives and the coordinators of mandated training, and a cross-sectional survey of law enforcement executives. This evaluation adds to the limited research exploring how change is implemented and sustained within law enforcement agencies.

### WHAT WE FOUND

- 168 New Jersey law enforcement agencies provided their use of force policies demonstrating strong compliance with the NJOAG's use of force policy.
- Training coordinator interviews illustrated inconsistencies in how the mandatory use of force training was implemented, particularly regarding fidelity to training models (e.g., duration, integration of skill practice).
- Surveys and interviews with law enforcement executives confirmed that while many observed the value of the reform package's goals, variability in implementation experiences and challenges related to available support and resources for implementation were common.
- Interviews with law enforcement executives also suggested that many agencies' capacity to implement state mandates was affected by factors like agency size, leadership, and culture.

### LESSONS FOR THE FIELD

- Future use of force reform initiatives should use structured implementation frameworks to identify and address factors that may influence implementation success. These factors can include stakeholder perspectives, organizational readiness, and available resources.
- Future initiatives should also incorporate oversight mechanisms such as dedicated personnel, regional implementation liaisons, and scheduled follow-ups to support implementation.
- Law enforcement executives should collaborate early with reform initiators (e.g., external policymakers), identifying potential barriers and facilitators to implementation, to enhance collaboration and capacity for successful organizational change.
- Agencies should develop and implement relevant policies and practices to sustain organizational change efforts in the long term.
- Future use of force reform initiatives should integrate mechanisms to support regular refresher training, expand law enforcement partnerships with community stakeholders, and recognize successful implementation efforts by agencies.

For a complete discussion of the research methodology, findings, implications, and limitations of this evaluation, see the full report [Examining Police Reforms in New Jersey: Lessons Learned from Implementation](#) or access the other reports in this series.

