

# Project 2015

**Onondaga County**  
***SHERIFF'S OFFICE***

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## **SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

### ***INTRODUCTION: INTERNAL SCAN***

The Sheriff's Office has three distinct integrals, with their own mandates and customer: the Police Department, the Custody Department, and the Civil Department. The Police Department takes into consideration demographic trends when deploying personnel. Police officers are assigned to various areas and at various times in order to provide the most efficient level of police services possible. Areas of higher population or lower income generally will require a larger police presence, as calls for service increase.

The Custody Department operates under regulations promulgated by the New York State Commission of Correction, which has oversight of correctional facilities, and mandates a minimum level of staffing for jails. Therefore, the Custody Department does not take into consideration demographic trends when staffing the Justice Center. However, changes in demographics and political philosophy will have a profound impact on the Custody Department as they pertain to the implementation of the action plans listed in Project 2015. However, the primary mission of this department will remain the same; to provide effective public safety for the people of Onondaga County.

The Civil Process Division enforces court orders, enforcement of executions to satisfy judgments and service of civil process. The procedures followed by the Civil Process Division are set forth by the New York State Civil Practice Laws and Rules (CPLR) and the Real Property Actions and Proceedings Law (RPAPL). A majority of the cases handled by the division are the result of money judgments and debts that are owed. As with the Police Department, the Civil Process Division cases are generally located in those areas of Syracuse and Onondaga County with higher population densities and lower income demographics. An increase in lower income demographics would most likely lead to an increase in the Civil Department workload.

### ***Constituency***

As the age of the population increases and becomes more diverse, the Sheriff's Office will have increased interaction with the senior and ethnic populations. As this occurs, it is anticipated that the number of police/elderly and police/minority contacts will increase. This will impact the Police and the Civil departments as they deal with constituents in the community, either on patrol or through management of Orders of Protections and Show Cause Orders that are issued by the courts in matters of domestic violence, custody and support. In the next 5-7 years, the incarcerated population will continue to reflect the general population in regard to an increasing age and ethnic median.

### ***Overarching Policies:***

Over the next 5 to 7 years, all departments of the Sheriff's Office will continue to review policies on a regular basis and make changes to address demographic trends, if necessary.

The Custody Department will continue to provide public safety through the maintenance of a maximum-security facility and the performance of prisoner transportation, along with conducting an annual policy review to address changing demographics. In addition, as new legislation

impacting jail operations is introduced, the Custody Department will review operational procedures and whenever appropriate, implement updates.

The Civil Process Division has maintained close relationships with local court staffs and domestic violence advocates from agencies like Vera House. The division reviews each procedure annually to address the need for changes based on possible changes in demographics.

***Program Considerations:***

Program considerations for all departments of the Sheriff's Office will necessitate increased training relative to aging issues and minority issues. The Police department will attempt to increase training and education for the Community Relations Section in an effort to effectively address the aging population in areas such as fraud, sexual and physical abuse, identity theft, missing/lost persons and traffic safety. The Community Relations Section could also work with the Neighborhood Watch Program to develop alternative crime prevention initiatives that would be applicable to both the elderly and minority populations.

As the incarcerated population ages, the Custody Department along with the Syracuse City School District, will identify and provide specific programming related to the elderly and increasingly diverse population, to staff and inmates. The department will also, when appropriate, modify existing inmate programs to address the changing demographics.

The Civil Process Division will continue to work closely with local, county, state and federal courts to review and revise procedures, as needed, to address the changing population demographics.

***Management Issues:***

With the aging of the population and its increasing diversity, the Sheriff's Office will be faced with several management challenges. As the age of the population increases so will the number of medical assistance calls for service. The department will need to closely coordinate with the various other emergency response providers to avoid any duplication of services.

Language barriers will also pose a challenge for all departments of the Sheriff's Office. This may possibly necessitate training in foreign languages and cultures. Additionally, training in future academy and in-service settings should continue to include classes in diversity and culture familiarity, along with the (re)introduction of practical foreign language for law enforcement.

The aging of the jail population will require that the department continue to work closely with the Onondaga County Department of Health relative to protocols for managing health concerns of this population. We anticipate also establishing a closer relationship with the Onondaga County Department of Aging and Youth on issues having to do with serving the aging population.

Finally, we will explore developing relationships with other government agencies, such as the Department of Aging & Youth. One idea is to establish a liaison within the Civil Division, which would be able to provide advice and assistance to those persons identified by the Civil staff in need of assistance.

***Steps Taken:***

*The Sheriff's Office has assured the on-going training of its staff. Sworn staff within the Police and Civil departments has completed training on elderly abuse and cultural diversity. All Custody Department recruits receive diversity and cultural familiarity training in the basic academy. All members of the Police and Custody departments are required to attend Building Effective Relations in a Diverse Community training, presented by Onondaga County.*

As an ongoing effort to address language barriers that confront the inmate population, the Custody Administration and the Syracuse City School District have promoted the "English as a Second Language" program. This program provides Spanish-speaking inmates housed in the Justice Center a chance to learn to read and write the English language. Successful completion of the ESL program provides valuable communication skills that enable Spanish-speaking inmates to be able to effectively communicate outside their ethnic group, and upon release, to apply their bilingual skills in the work force and community.

The Civil Process Division has made considerable progress in the development of a mutual relationship with the Onondaga Nation Council of Chiefs. Together, we have enhanced service and enforcement of court orders on the Onondaga Nation. The deputies will continue to attend annual in-service training in areas that are determined necessary by the Civil Process Division command staff and the Staff Development Section based on demographic changes in the community.

***PRIORITY ISSUE AREAS***

***Priority 1: Safety & wellbeing of elderly/minority populations***

It is important for Sheriff's Office personnel to recognize the vulnerability of the elderly pertaining to certain types of crimes, in order to be effective in the detection and prevention of such crimes. These crimes may be perpetrated in the community as well as within the jail population. In addition to potential crimes that may be perpetrated by the inmate population against elderly inmates, the health and wellbeing of elderly inmates must be prime considerations in the operation of a jail. The ability to communicate with various ethnicity is imperative to the goals of community oriented policing.

***Priority 2: Staff development***

To be able to protect this growing and vulnerable population, training is needed for sheriff's personnel. Some specifics of training include:

- Recognizing the vulnerability of the elderly to certain types of crimes in order to be effective in detection and prevention, and the need to provide information to the elderly/minority public on how they can avoid becoming the victim of a crime. (Police)
- Education on health issues of the elderly confined population. (Custody)
- Recognizing the vulnerability of older inmates and the detection and prevention of criminal activity directed toward them. (Custody)
- Enhance training in areas of elder abuse and diversity that will provide fast and efficient service of Orders of Protection for victims. (Civil)
- Advanced first aid training.

Training for department members would begin in the basic academy, once the Commission on Corrections has approved lesson plans.

***Priority 3: Jail Physical Plant***

The Sheriff's Office must maintain the jail to assure security for the public and safety for inmates, which will require a wide range of health care and physical design considerations. In addition to the current physical limitations of the Justice Center, there are other pertinent issues that need to be addressed. The administration will consider modifications, with the approval of the New York State Commission on Corrections, which will maintain a secure environment during any emergency inside the jail.

***ACTIONS AND RESULTS***

***Priority Issue One: Safety and wellbeing of elderly/minority populations***

**Actions:** Various opportunities to educate the community will be offered by the Sheriff's Office, some in collaboration with other agencies. Community education will include educating the elderly to avoid becoming victims of crime and fraud, and defensive driving classes. The Community Relations Division of the Police Department could work in cooperation with the Department of Transportation to help in designing new larger road signs to assist drivers with diminished eyesight. The Custody Department will meet with departments such as Aging & Youth and Health to develop protocols for providing services to elderly inmates. The Sheriff's Office will explore the benefit of creating an elderly services liaison within the Civil Department. Larger print and foreign language materials will be utilized.

**Results:** As a result of defensive driving classes, the elderly will be better informed about the changing dangers on the roadways. Providing information to the elderly/minority public on how to prevent becoming the victim of a crime will have a two-fold effect. First, it will reduce the number of crimes against the elderly and minorities that occur. This will ease the strain on Police Department resources due to the anticipated increased volume of calls. Secondly, it will enhance the perception of the police by the elderly/minority public, which in turn will foster better community relations. By collaborating with the appropriate county departments and modifying the physical plant of the jail, the medical and mental health concerns of our aging inmates should decrease substantially.

***Priority Issue Two: Staff Development***

**Actions:** The Sheriff's Office will provide training to help members to recognize the vulnerabilities of the aging & minority populations and to understand their unique needs. A list of trainings is included in the section of Priorities. Training for Custody department members would begin in the basic academy, once the Commission on Corrections has approved lesson plans.

**Results:** Staff of the Sheriff's Office will have an increased understanding of the vulnerabilities of the aging & minority populations, will understand their unique needs, and will seek to modify policies to facilitate improved communication with and service to these populations.

***Priority Issue Three: Jail Physical Plant***

**Actions:** Work closely with Facilities Management to identify areas of concern in the facility. Proposed modifications such as additional ramps and handrails must have the approval of the Commission on Corrections prior to construction.

**Results:** The jail facility will be better able to service the elderly inmate population.

***Summary***

The Onondaga County Sheriff's Office shares the collective concern of all those involved with Project 2015, and will continue to provide the most effective public safety possible to all the residents of Onondaga County.

Finally, if the Destiny USA project becomes a reality, Onondaga County can realistically expect to receive 100,000 additional visitors per day, which equates to a 21% increase in the county population per day. The resultant effect of an influx in population of this magnitude would be a dramatic increase in calls for police, custody and civil service. This would necessitate modifications to adapt to our changing environment, which in turn would lead to modifications to the intended actions reported herein.