



Westminster Maryland Police Department Joins National *ABLE* Project

September 21, 2020 – The Westminster Police Department has been accepted into the Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) Project, Georgetown University Law Center’s national training and support initiative for U.S. law enforcement agencies. Backed by prominent civil rights and law enforcement leaders, the evidence-based, field-tested ABLE Project was developed in collaboration with global law firm Sheppard Mullin LLP to provide practical active bystandership strategies and tactics to law enforcement officers to prevent misconduct, reduce officer mistakes, and promote health and wellness. The Westminster Police Department joins a select group of 30 other law enforcement agencies and statewide and regional training academies chosen to participate in the ABLE Project’s national rollout.

Professor Christy Lopez, co-director of Georgetown Law’s Innovative Policing Program, which runs ABLE, explained: “The ABLE Project seeks to ensure every police officer in the United States has the opportunity to receive meaningful, effective active bystandership training, and to help agencies transform their approach to policing by building a culture that supports and sustains successful peer intervention to prevent harm.”

Jonathan Aronim Chair of the ABLE Project Board of Advisors and Sheppard Mullin partner, added, “Intervening in another’s action is harder than it looks after the fact, but it’s a skill we all can learn. And, frankly, it’s a skill we all need – police and non-police. The ABLE Project teaches that skill.”

Westminster Police Chief Thomas Ledwell stated, “Our participation in the ABLE Project reflects important priorities for the Westminster Police Department. ABLE will give our officers the tools they need to overcome the innate and powerful inhibitors individuals face when called upon to intervene in actions taken by their peers.”

Westminster Common Councilmember Tony Chiavacci added, "The Westminster Police Department has demonstrated time and time again that it serves as model of a community first approach to law enforcement. ABLE training is one more tool that the senior leadership of the Westminster Police Department is providing its staff to further positive relationships with our community, and I commend them for doing so."

Both the NAACP Carroll County Branch #7014 and St. Paul’s United Church of Christ of Westminster provided letters of support for the Westminster Police Department’s application to join the ABLE program. In his letter of support, Rev. Dr. Marty Kuchma, Senior Pastor of St. Paul’s United Church of Christ, stated, “Given all of what I know about the [Westminster Police] Department, I am certain that it will make good use of the ABLE Project training and that the training will strengthen its foundation of community service by building in safeguards against police misconduct, preventing calamitous events, systematizing new levels of accountability, providing new levels of support for officers, and ultimately working for the good of all officers and community members who encounter them.”



The ABLE Project is guided by a Board of Advisors comprised of civil rights, social justice, and law enforcement leaders. For more information about the ABLE Project, visit the program's [website](#).

The ABLE Project Train-The-Trainer event begins later this month. Over the coming weeks, Westminster Police Department instructors will be certified as ABLE trainers; in the coming months, all departmental officers will receive eight hours of evidence-based active bystandership training, designed not only to prevent harm, but to change the culture of policing. We invite you to follow our progress in this critical area at <https://www.facebook.com/Westminster-Police-Department-459073667630115/>.

For more information regarding the Westminster Police Department, contact Captain Nikki Heuer at nheuer@westgov.com.

For more information on the ABLE Project, contact Tanya Weinberg, Director of Media Relations at Georgetown Law, at tanya.weinberg@georgetown.edu or 202-577-7827.

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