

REMARKS
AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

OF

MATT M. DUMMERMUTH
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

AT THE

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE DAY
AT THE
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
“WHAT WORKS AND WHAT MATTERS IN POLICING”

ON

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2018
ORLANDO, FL

Thank you, David [Muhlhausen]. I'm pleased to be here and glad to help you and your team kick off NIJ Day. It's a privilege to be in Orlando with our law enforcement partners and my colleagues from the National Institute of Justice.

I'd like to thank Vince Talucci and Domingo Herraiz and all the leadership and staff of the International Association of Chiefs of Police for collaborating with us and for the good work they do every day to promote evidence-based policing.

I want to thank David and his staff for organizing today's session. In particular, let me single out Howard Spivak, Maureen McGough and Rianna Starheim. They've put together a full line-up of interesting presentations covering a wide range of topics. Thank you all.

I'd also like to recognize our LEADS scholars. I'll have a chance to meet with all of you Monday, but I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for serving as a bridge between research and front-line police work.

And finally, let me thank everyone here – police professionals, scholars and policymakers. You're all working to make evidence foundational to our justice system, and we commend you for it.

When I was named to lead the Office of Justice Programs last month, I saw it as a chance to bring a prosecutor's vantage to the job. As a U.S. Attorney, I had a bird's-eye view of the challenges that local public safety officials face. I saw how officers are whipsawed from one call to the next. They might be dispatched to a meth lab in the morning and then told to staff a county fair that afternoon.

A recent article in the *Christian Science Monitor* captured the challenge nicely. It profiled an officer in rural Floyd County, Georgia. One day, he was investigating the murder of an elderly couple. Another, he was answering a call from a mother who asked him to convince her 7-year-old kid to go to school. A law enforcement officer never knows what the day will bring.

The Office of Justice Programs has an unusual role within the Department of Justice. We don't litigate. We don't enforce criminal laws. We don't go after fugitives or drug traffickers. Our job is to give you the tools you need to do those things – and many other things besides. And I hope to use my practical experience as a prosecutor and as a partner with local law enforcement to find the most effective ways to support your work.

Given that there are some 18,000 independent law enforcement agencies in the United States, there's a need for the kind of quality assurance that a federal office like OJP can provide through best practices and innovative strategies. And there's a tremendous need for the leveling and improving influence of science and research – the kind of resources that our National Institute of Justice offers.

Whether you're an officer in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, or Philadelphia, Mississippi, you're faced with many of the same challenges. Resources are down in police departments across the country. Violent attacks on officers are on the rise – more than 60,000 line-of-duty assaults were committed against officers in 2017 according to the FBI, a five percent increase from 2016. And we're facing the deadliest drug crisis in our nation's history.

With law enforcement resources stretched thin and your responsibilities mounting, it's important that we rely on data, evidence and cutting-edge technology to guide our crime-fighting strategies. David's team is leading our work to equip professionals like yourselves with the best tools and the latest knowledge.

The body armor program is one great example. Since 1972, NIJ has established the only nationally accepted body armor standard – and, as David mentioned, it continues to conduct testing and sponsor research aimed at improving body armor quality. Over the last three decades, ballistic-resistant soft body armor has saved the lives of more than 3,000 police officers.

NIJ bolsters its standards and testing work with social science research. Studies on traffic safety and research on officer stress and fatigue have shed light on the measures agencies can take to reduce risk and optimize performance. Our goal, after all, is not only to help officers do their jobs effectively, but to make sure that they return from each shift safe and healthy.

I appreciate how important it is that we look after our officers' physical and mental health. As an example, as U.S. Attorney I worked closely with officers who investigated child exploitation cases. They viewed some of the most disturbing images you could imagine. It was its own kind of trauma.

It's important to make sure systems are in place to help officers cope with what they witness. We know it can take just one video of a child being molested, one call to a murder scene, or one conversation with a victim to shake an officer. We want to make sure the men and women who do this difficult work have the support they need.

NIJ has made seminal contributions to the forensics field, as well. Among the major challenges faced by law enforcement agencies, especially in metropolitan areas, are the sexual assault kits that have yet to make it to labs for testing. We know that police are committed to investigating these crimes, but for a number of reasons, the evidence hasn't always made it into a forensic lab to be tested.

Staff from NIJ and our Bureau of Justice Assistance are part of a national Sexual Assault Kit Initiative. SAKI, as we call it, is helping police departments across the country reduce the number of unsubmitted kits, which sometimes reach into the thousands.

NIJ did groundbreaking research in Houston and Detroit to understand the challenges behind getting these kits to labs – and to improve the overall response to sexual assault. One of the biggest challenges is comprehending the profound impact sexual assault has on victims. The two projects gave investigators a better understanding of what we call the neurobiology of trauma. We know through medical research that trauma can interfere with the ability to process and store memories. Officers learn in training that a victim might change her story, not because she intends to mislead investigators, but because she needs time to recall and order events.

NIJ has also been working with the FBI to put more DNA profiles in the Combined DNA Index System – more than 1,800 entries so far, and those entries have yielded more than 740 hits. The NIJ-FBI partnership produced a manual that describes best practices for processing and analyzing forensic evidence. One of its biggest take-aways is the critical need for a multidisciplinary response, one that involves law enforcement, prosecutors, the medical community, lab professionals and – this is crucial – victim advocates.

It's worth noting that NIJ's DNA and forensic work extends beyond sexual assault. It also encompasses cold case investigations, helping detectives use degraded biological evidence to solve crimes that are decades old in some cases.

And NIJ's work to find missing persons has been pioneering. More than 600,000 people go missing in the United States every year. Many are found quickly, but tens of thousands remain missing after a year's time. In addition, some 4,400 unidentified bodies are recovered annually, and about 1,000 remain unidentified after a year.

NIJ created the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System – or NamUs, as we call it – to find a way to link missing persons profiles and unidentified remains. To date, NamUs has closed some 15,000 missing persons cases. One notable success was achieved earlier this year when the body of a Pennsylvania woman who disappeared almost 50 years ago was identified.

I'll put in a plug here: NamUs has become a powerful investigative tool, but it's only as good as the information that goes into it. We're strongly encouraging local agencies to enter information about missing persons and unidentified remains into the NamUs database. The more participation we have from local law enforcement, the more robust, and the more successful, the system will be.

And finally, we are deploying science to respond to the opioid crisis. Last year, more than 72,000 Americans died of a drug overdose, the highest death toll from drugs, by far, in our nation's history. To put it into perspective, that exceeds the number of fatalities from any single year of car crashes in the U.S., and it's more than the number of lives lost at the height of the AIDS epidemic. The vast majority of overdose deaths were from fentanyl and other synthetic opioids.

Combating this crisis is one of the Attorney General's top priorities. He's hired hundreds of federal prosecutors and DEA agents, ramped up the Department's medical fraud detection efforts and cracked down on fentanyl trafficking.

Last year, in fiscal year 2017, the Office of Justice Programs invested almost \$60 million in grants to help state, local and tribal governments respond to the crisis. And just last week, we awarded almost \$320 million in fiscal year 2018 grants to support the President's three-pronged approach to this crisis – focusing on prevention, treatment and enforcement.

I believe these grants will go a long way toward helping America's communities tackle drug abuse and addiction, but I'm also concerned about a long-term strategy that will help us get to the root of the problem.

I had the privilege of joining David and the Attorney General at a meeting two weeks ago to discuss this issue. NIJ brought in researchers, law enforcement officials, forensic scientists, medical examiners and other experts to talk about the state of the opioid problem and to figure out how research can help us focus our future efforts on the most effective strategies and ensure the best outcomes.

Working with the RAND Corporation and the Police Executive Research Forum, NIJ is developing a research plan that will guide us in addressing this crisis.

Our investments are advancing crime-fighting in other areas, as well. NIJ has pulled together a working group to guide our forensic research and make sure it's responsive to the technology needs of America's crime labs. And through a partnership with other federal agencies, they're working to strengthen death investigations.

They're also supporting new projects to test the application of artificial intelligence to crime forecasting, gunshot detection, video imaging and DNA analysis. And they're evaluating policing strategies and funding studies that will help us understand what motivates those who use firearms to commit mass violence.

The objective of every one of these research projects is to give officers and public safety officials knowledge they can use on the street. That's why David and his staff make such an effort to involve practitioners in designing their research agenda. They know that the greatest returns on our investments come when officers are able to do their jobs safely, effectively and in a manner befitting the dignity and noble calling of their profession.

The job of a law enforcement officer is not an easy one, but it is absolutely essential – vital to the maintenance of order in an often disorderly world. I commend you for choosing to make it your calling.

We honor your commitment by pledging to do all in our power to support you. It is a privilege to do the work that we do on your behalf. You can be sure that this

Administration, and this Department of Justice, are at your side as you continue this important work.

Thank you for your time, and best wishes during your time at the conference.

###