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JULY 2021



## Final Report

# RACIAL BIAS ASSESSMENT OF THE NORTH CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, POLICE DEPARTMENT

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This document contains the best opinion of CNA at the time of issue.

**Suggested citation:**

Thorkildsen, Z., Bryson, B., Wohl, E., Johnson, K., Monroe, R., & Rickman, S. (2021) *Final Report: Racial Bias Assessment of the North Charleston, South Carolina, Police Department*. Arlington, VA: CNA.

**CNA document number:** IRM-2021-U-029576

**Distribution:**

Distribution unlimited.

July 2021

Preliminary Report

# Executive Summary

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In late 2020, the City of North Charleston hired CNA to conduct a racial bias assessment of the North Charleston Police Department (NCPD). Beginning in March 2021, CNA undertook a comprehensive assessment of NCPD's policies and practices, focusing on assessing racially biased practices and procedures. Assessments such as these, which touch on more than racial and social justice matters, help police departments gauge the status of their community relationships, especially amongst minority and disenfranchised communities. In addition, the assessment can help identify policies and practices that may unintentionally negatively affect the community, especially those who feel they have been marginalized. Through this assessment, the CNA team developed a strong objective understanding of NCPD's operations in various areas including law enforcement operations, community-oriented policing practices, complaints, training, oversight and accountability, and recruitment, hiring, and promotions.

We developed this report by reviewing community engagement programming documents, strategic plans, training lesson plans, training curriculum, general orders, department data, and sentiments from interviews with community members and NCPD personnel and community listening sessions. This report includes findings and associated actionable recommendations for the department. In developing our recommendations, we assessed the NCPD's policy manual against emerging best practices.

CNA's comprehensive assessment of NCPD included an examination of the following:

- Law enforcement operations
- Community-oriented policing practices
- Complaints
- Recruitment, hiring, and promotions
- Training
- Oversight and accountability

Our key findings include:

- Racial disparities are present in many of NCPD's interactions with the community, indicative of potential systemic, organizational, or individual bias, and these disparities are deeply felt by the community.
- Community members have substantial concerns regarding NCPD's police presence and perceived over-enforcement of certain individuals, community groups, and neighborhoods.
- NCPD's School Resource Officer Program has room to improve to better serve the youth of the North Charleston community.

- NCPD lacks proper translation services and information for Spanish-speaking residents in the community.
- Although NCPD emphasizes community-oriented policing practices, not all officers in the department have embraced the importance of community policing.
- Members of the North Charleston community have expressed a desire to better understand the roles, responsibilities, policies, practices, and operations of the department.
- Many community members have not filed complaints even after negative experiences with NCPD personnel, and the complaint process is confusing to most.
- NCPD has a strong commitment to hiring and retaining personnel that reflect the ethnic, racial, and gender composition of the North Charleston community. They have an established plan to specifically recruit women and people of color.
- NCPD's officers have not been consistently trained in topics of critical importance for 21st century policing.
- Community members expressed high confidence in Chief Burgess and his abilities to meaningfully engage with the community.