



Contact:

Karrey Britt
Communications Specialist
785-330-2894 or cell 785-393-4109
kbritt@douglascountyks.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to host community meeting August 9 about Law Enforcement Contact Study

LAWRENCE, KS – Researchers will present preliminary findings from their examination of pedestrian and traffic stop data during a community meeting at 6 p.m. Monday, Aug. 9, using Zoom. The data has been collected from Douglas County law enforcement agencies.

The Douglas County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) and other stakeholders hired Northeastern University in 2019 to provide criminal justice research services through a \$175,000 contract. Researchers Jack McDevitt, of Northeastern University, and Janice Iwama, of American University, helped develop and implement a program for documenting traffic and pedestrian stops in Douglas County. That process involved developing a leadership team, identifying existing data collection possibilities, developing training for law enforcement officers and establishing an audit process.

They began collecting data Jan. 1, 2020, from the KU Police Department, Lawrence Police Department, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Baldwin City Police Department and Eudora Police Department. McDevitt and Iwama have been analyzing data to determine if any disproportionalities exist, and they will provide related recommendations. The Law Enforcement Contact Study will continue through the end of 2021.

"Douglas County is one of the first counties in the nation to request this research without promoting from an incident or federal intervention," McDevitt said. "The goal of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and all of the county's law enforcement agencies is to reduce racial disparities in the criminal justice system. We are working collaboratively to achieve this goal."

Douglas County Sheriff Jay Armbrister said the study has been instrumental in determining who is being stopped by officers, where and why. "We will never run from the numbers. If there is a problem or an anomaly with our operation, we want to know so we can fix it," he said. "We are extremely proud of the work accomplished by our deputies and corrections personnel, and we expect the study to reflect the good work they do day in and day out. But if we identify an issue, I can assure the community that our staff will work diligently to resolve it."

The Aug. 9 meeting will provide community members with an opportunity to hear about the study, weigh in on the process and ask questions.

Additionally, McDevitt and Iwama will provide information about the study during the monthly CJCC meeting, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 10, in the Flory Meeting Hall at the Douglas County Fairgrounds, 2120 Harper St., and by Zoom. CJCC meetings are open to the public.

Zoom link information for both meetings can be found on the CJCC website:

<http://douglascountyks.org/cjcchub>.

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