



POLICY ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From Accreditation to Outcomes

Strengthening the Connection Between CALEA Accreditation Standards and Equitable Policing in Howard County

Prepared by the Police Accountability Task Force of Howard County (PATF-HoCo)

CENTRAL PROPOSITION

Accreditation should confirm not only that sound policies and training exist, but also that agencies examine whether those systems are producing fair, effective, and improving outcomes in the communities they serve.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
A constructive case for the next step	3
A strong foundation — not the finish line	4
Why outcomes complete the cycle	5
Why HCPD is an important illustrative case	6
Persistent racial and ethnic disparities across every measure	7
Youth, traffic stops, and use of force	8
The responsible inference	9
A practical independent study	10
Participation and safeguards	11
Questions the study should answer	12
The public side of accountability	13
The recommended commitment	14
From credential to continuous improvement	15
Sources and Notes	16
About PATF-HoCo	17

Executive Summary

The Howard County Police Department's 2026 reaccreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) is a meaningful achievement. It reflects sustained institutional work to maintain professional standards, written directives, training systems, and evidence of compliance.¹

400+

standards met or exceeded

1990

continuously accredited since

2026

advanced meritorious reaccreditation

That record merits recognition. The achievement also creates an opportunity: Howard County can build on the discipline of accreditation by taking the next—and most consequential—step of measuring whether policies and training are producing the intended results in actual police-community encounters. Persistent racial and ethnic disparities show why that step is necessary.

THE OPPORTUNITY IN ONE SENTENCE Retain the rigor of standards-based accreditation, then add a transparent outcomes process that asks: Are the policies and training working fairly and effectively in practice—and, where disparities persist, what should change?

A constructive case for the next step

The case for an outcomes step rests on four propositions that together move from recognizing what accreditation has built to testing what it produces.

- **Celebrate the foundation.** Best-practice policies, training, documentation, and review are essential components of professional policing.
- **Test the intended result.** Those systems should ultimately improve the quality, fairness, safety, and public legitimacy of police-community interactions.
- **Act on persistent evidence.** When multi-year disparities appear across multiple measures, responsible governance requires rigorous study rather than assumption, dismissal, or indefinite delay.
- **Use independent expertise.** A qualified third party can examine causes, test explanations, connect findings to policy and training, and recommend corrective action with greater public credibility than a self-assessment alone.

IN SHORT Recognition and inquiry are not in tension. The strongest way to honor decades of standards work is to ask what those standards are producing in practice.

A strong foundation — not the finish line

CALEA's publicly available materials describe a substantial standards and assessment system. The Law Enforcement Standards Manual includes requirements covering agency authority, use of force, training, accountability, community involvement, data analysis, and many other operational areas. CALEA also describes written directives, proofs of compliance, self-assessment, remote assessment, site-based assessment, and commission review as elements of its process.³

That breadth is important and should be acknowledged. The issue is not that accreditation has no value or that it examines paper policies alone. The issue is narrower and more consequential: the publicly available standards do not appear to make equitable, racially and ethnically disaggregated outcomes in police-community encounters—or a satisfactory response to persistent racial and ethnic disparities—a decisive condition of accreditation.

THE MISSING LINK A department may demonstrate that a policy exists, personnel were trained, and required procedures were followed while the racial and ethnic disparities documented in Howard County remain unexplained and unaddressed: Black people accounted for 52.6% to 55.5% of adult arrests, 61.5% to 76.4% of juvenile arrests, 41.0% to 43.3% of traffic stops, and 62.8% of use-of-force incidents, against an approximately 20% share of county population. Closing that gap between demonstrated compliance and measured outcomes is why this paper was prepared.^{2, 4}

Why outcomes complete the cycle

Policies state what should happen. Training prepares personnel to carry out those expectations. Compliance review tests whether required systems and practices are in place. Outcome measurement asks whether those systems are producing the intended real-world results. Each component is necessary; none is a substitute for the others.

1**POLICY**

Define expectations

2**TRAINING**

Build capability

3**PRACTICE**

Apply consistently

4**OUTCOMES**

Measure impact

Without the outcomes step, leaders cannot know whether a program is working as intended, whether implementation differs from policy, or whether training needs revision. Outcome measurement is not an attack on accreditation — it is the logical completion of its quality-improvement purpose.

Why HCPD is an important illustrative case

HCPD's long accreditation history and its recent advanced reaccreditation make Howard County a useful test case precisely because the department has invested in professional standards for decades. HCPD's own data, obtained by PATF-HoCo through Maryland Public Information Act requests, document racial and ethnic disparities across every major enforcement measure: Black people accounted for 52.6% to 55.5% of adult arrests, 61.5% to 76.4% of juvenile arrests, 41.0% to 43.3% of traffic stops, and 62.8% of use-of-force incidents, against roughly 20% of county population, while Hispanic people rose from 13.7% to 16.5% of adult arrests against roughly 8%. If racial and ethnic disparities of that magnitude can coexist with a strong accreditation record, accreditation alone cannot answer the central outcome questions.^{2, 4}

The questions accreditation cannot answer

- What is driving the racial and ethnic disparities?
- Which explanations are supported by evidence?
- Are policies and training being implemented as intended?
- What changes are likely to improve outcomes?

WHY THIS MATTERS A department with a weaker record could explain racial and ethnic disparities as a standards gap. Howard County's decades of accreditation remove that explanation and make the outcome question unavoidable.

Persistent racial and ethnic disparities across every measure

PATF-HoCo's August 2026 update assembled HCPD and public data covering adult arrests, juvenile arrests and referrals, traffic stops, and use of force. Although the datasets cover different periods, the pattern is consistent: Black people are represented at rates far above their approximately 20% share of the county population, and Hispanic people are represented above their approximately 8% share in several categories.^{2, 4}

55.5%

peak adult arrest share

76.4%

peak juvenile arrests

62.8%

of use-of-force incidents

Adult arrests, 2022–2025

- Black people accounted for 55.0%, 55.5%, 54.0%, and 52.6% of adult arrests across the four years.
- Hispanic people accounted for 13.7%, 14.3%, 15.1%, and 16.5%—a rising share and approximately twice their population share by 2025.

Youth, traffic stops, and use of force

Juvenile arrests and referrals, 2022–2025

- Black youth accounted for 61.5% to 76.4% of juvenile arrests and 59.2% to 76.1% of juvenile referrals.
- Hispanic youth accounted for 22.9% of juvenile arrests and 22.4% of referrals in 2025—nearly three times the approximately 8% county population share used in the analysis.

Traffic stops, 2020–2025

- Black drivers accounted for 41.0% to 43.3% of HCPD traffic stops, roughly twice the population benchmark used in the analysis.
- Hispanic drivers accounted for 8.6% to 12.6% of stops over the same period.

Use of force, 2025

- Black people were involved in 62.8% of HCPD use-of-force incidents (123 of 196), compared with an approximately 20% share of county population.

All figures on this page: reference 2. Population benchmarks: reference 4.

The responsible inference

WHAT THE DATA ESTABLISH — AND WHAT THEY DO NOT The descriptive data establish persistent racial and ethnic disparities that require explanation. They do not, by themselves, establish the cause of each disparity or prove discriminatory conduct in individual encounters. That is precisely why a rigorous independent study is needed.

The appropriate conclusion is neither that accreditation is meaningless nor that racial and ethnic disparity data alone prove misconduct. A recurring pattern across multiple measures and years creates a duty to investigate. Continuing to cite accreditation without determining why the racial and ethnic disparities persist would confuse evidence of professional systems with evidence of equitable outcomes.⁵

What could be driving the racial and ethnic disparities

The purpose is to identify supported explanations and practical remedies—not to predetermine blame.

- Disparate treatment, including explicit or implicit bias at discretionary decision points
- Enforcement priorities, deployment patterns, and call-for-service patterns
- Offense mix and whether those involved live in or are traveling through the county
- Policy design, supervisory practices, and training transfer into field behavior
- Data quality and broader social conditions

A practical independent study

Howard County leadership should commission a qualified independent third-party expert with experience in policing data, policy, training, disparity analysis, and community engagement. The study should be designed collaboratively enough to secure reliable data, yet independently enough to preserve credibility.

Scope

- **Analyze multiple years of encounter-level data** for arrests, citations, juvenile referrals, traffic stops, searches, use of force, complaints, and other relevant enforcement activity, disaggregated by race and ethnicity.
- **Move beyond population comparisons** by applying appropriate benchmarks, controls, and statistical methods; examine geography, time, reason for contact, offense type, calls for service, residency where available, officer assignment, outcomes, and discretionary decision points. Identify which racial and ethnic disparities depend on the comparison group chosen and which hold regardless, so that each measure is tested against an appropriate comparison group rather than a single population figure.
- **Connect findings to policy and training** by reviewing directives, curricula, scenarios, supervision, early-intervention processes, audit practices, and evidence that training is transferred into field behavior.
- **Examine implementation, not merely design**, to determine whether sound written expectations are applied consistently across units, shifts, locations, encounter types, and demographic groups.
- **Produce prioritized recommendations** with responsible parties, practical timelines, resource implications, and measurable indicators of progress.

Participation and safeguards

Participation

The work should not be a siloed HCPD exercise. A holistic process should include structured participation from:

- HCPD command staff, officers, analysts, trainers, supervisors, and relevant civilian personnel
- The Howard County Sheriff's Office where countywide or comparative issues are relevant
- The County Executive, County Council, and appropriate county administrative leaders
- The Police Accountability Board and other oversight stakeholders
- PATF-HoCo, which has worked on police accountability in Howard County since 2020, monitoring the Police Accountability Board since its creation and tracking this data throughout
- Community members and organizations, including people from communities most affected by the documented disparities

Independence and safeguards

The expert should be selected through a transparent process, disclose potential conflicts, receive secure access to necessary data, use a published methodology, and retain authority to report findings without agency editing or suppression. HCPD should have a full opportunity to supply context, correct factual errors, and respond to draft findings, while final analytical judgments remain with the independent expert.

Questions the study should answer

A credible study should be accountable to a defined set of questions from the outset, so that findings can be assessed against what the county set out to learn.

01

Which racial and ethnic disparities remain after applying appropriate benchmarks and controls?

02

At what stages or decision points do the largest differences emerge?

03

Which explanations are supported, weakened, or ruled out by the evidence?

04

How well do current policies, training, supervision, and accountability systems address those decision points?

05

What specific changes should be implemented, with measurable outcome targets and a named official accountable for each?

06

On what published timetable will progress be reviewed at periodic public checkpoints, and results reported to the community?

The public side of accountability

Public communication should be built into the work from the beginning. Transparency allows the community to understand the evidence, follow the process, assess the recommendations, and see whether promised improvements occur. It also protects HCPD from speculation by creating a shared factual record.

Annual public data

Howard County should require annual publication of standardized racial and ethnic data for arrests, citations, juvenile referrals and diversion, traffic stops and searches, use of force, and complaints. The methodology, definitions, exclusions, corrections, and historical series should be published with the data so trends can be evaluated consistently. Data should be accessible without repeated Maryland Public Information Act requests.

Study communications

- Announce the expert, qualifications, independence safeguards, scope, timeline, and opportunities for public participation.
- Provide periodic, nonprejudicial progress updates that do not compromise confidential information or the integrity of the analysis.
- Publish the final report, methodology, principal findings, recommendations, HCPD's response, and an implementation plan.
- Report publicly on implementation milestones and outcome measures at regular intervals.

The recommended commitment

BUILD ON THE ACCREDITATION ACHIEVEMENT HCPD and Howard County should use the 2026 reaccreditation as a platform for an outcomes initiative that independently studies persistent racial and ethnic disparities, links findings to policy and training, publishes the results, and measures improvement over time.

Positive, practical, and fair to all parties

- **For HCPD**, it recognizes decades of standards work and provides expert evidence to strengthen policy, training, supervision, and public confidence.
- **For county leaders**, it supplies a responsible governance process for addressing a documented, long-term public-safety concern.
- **For oversight bodies**, it creates a reliable factual and analytical foundation for monitoring performance and recommendations.
- **For the community**, it replaces uncertainty and repeated requests for information with transparency, participation, and measurable accountability.
- **For CALEA**, it offers an illustrative case for strengthening the connection between professional standards and the outcomes those standards are intended to produce.

From credential to continuous improvement

HCPD deserves credit for achieving advanced CALEA reaccreditation and maintaining accreditation since 1990. The most constructive way to honor that achievement is to ask what it should make possible next. Strong policies and training are not ends in themselves; their public value is realized when they contribute to safe, fair, effective, and trusted police-community interactions.¹

Persistent racial and ethnic disparities do not justify a predetermined conclusion, but they do require a determined response. Howard County should commission an independent study, engage HCPD and the community, publish the evidence and recommendations, and measure whether resulting changes improve outcomes.

THE BOTTOM LINE That is how accreditation becomes not only a credential of professional readiness, but a dynamic instrument of continuous improvement and public accountability.

Sources and Notes

1. Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, published accreditation record for the Howard County Police Department, showing continuous accredited status since 1990 and the award of advanced meritorious accreditation in 2026. CALEA's public client database is the authoritative source for current status and award level, and readers are encouraged to verify there. HCPD's own August 2026 public announcement of the reaccreditation is the source for the statement that the department met or exceeded more than 400 standards.
2. Police Accountability Task Force of Howard County (PATF-HoCo), New 2025 Data Confirms Systemic, Long-Term Racial & Ethnic Disparities in Policing (revised August 26, 2026). Data sources and methodological notes appear on the individual slides of that presentation.
3. Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, CALEA Law Enforcement Accreditation Program and Law Enforcement Standards Titles, accessed August 19, 2026. Official materials describe the standards framework, written directives, proofs of compliance, self-assessment, remote and site-based assessment, and commission review.
4. Population shares in this paper are approximate benchmarks used in the August 2026 PATF-HoCo analysis. A qualified independent study should select and explain the most appropriate benchmark for each type of encounter rather than rely on population comparisons alone.
5. Disparity describes a difference in rates or representation. Descriptive disparity statistics do not, standing alone, identify causation or establish discriminatory conduct in an individual case.

About PATF-HoCo

George Floyd's murder brought the Police Accountability Task Force of Howard County (PATF-HoCo) together in 2020. We are ordinary residents who chose to act—not just observe—to advance transparency and accountability in policing and public safety in our own neighborhoods.

PATF-HoCo turns community concern into action through research, education, public engagement, and advocacy. Our work promotes equitable and transparent practices among Howard County law enforcement agencies, encourages County leaders to strengthen public accountability, and monitors the Police Accountability Board. Ordinary residents, united around facts and shared purpose, can create meaningful change.

A

Acknowledge inequity

C

Confirm the facts

T

Team up with others

S

Step up and act

CONNECT WITH US

www.PATF-HoCo.com

PATF.HoCo@gmail.com

About this paper

Prepared by PATF-HoCo to support constructive public-safety discussion and informed action, this paper uses HCPD as an illustrative case. It is not a legal finding and makes no determinations about individual officers or encounters.

Prepared August 26, 2026