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## SMU Police Department Joins National ‘ABLE’ Project

DALLAS (SMU) – The SMU 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 committed to building a culture of peer intervention that prevents their colleagues from causing harm or making costly mistakes.

SMU PD joins a select group of more than 60 other law enforcement agencies and statewide and regional training academies chosen to participate in the ABLE Project’s national rollout after demonstrating agency commitment to transformational reform with support from local community groups and elected leaders.

Backed by prominent civil rights and law enforcement leaders, the evidence-based, field-tested ABLE Project was developed by Georgetown Law’s Innovative Policing Program 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.

ABLE gives officers the tools they need to overcome the innate and powerful inhibitors all individuals face when called upon to intervene in actions taken by their peers.

SMU Police Chief Jim Walters said seeking inclusion to join the ABLE Project reflects important priorities for the SMU Police Department.

“Our department seeks to continue to improve the professionalism and capabilities of our officers by participating in the ABLE Project,” Walters said. “We are dedicated to creating that culture here on the Hilltop, and facilitating training, policy, support, and accountability for our surrounding partners as well.”

Those writing letters of support for SMU PD’s application to join the ABLE Project included SMU’s Faculty Senate and leadership from the Black Lives Matter movement at SMU.

“The SMU Police Department has shown outstanding dedication to ethical policing and support for advancing the principles of the ABLE program,” wrote Aurélie Thiele, President of SMU Faculty Senate. “I believe that the SMU PD is in a unique position to provide training and technical assistance for the agency and neighboring agencies, while protecting faculty, students, staff as well as the many residents of Dallas and neighboring communities who attend events at SMU.”

Professor Christy Lopez, co-director of Georgetown Law’s Innovative Policing Program, which runs the ABLE Project, 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



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transform their approach to policing by building a culture that supports and sustains successful peer intervention to prevent harm.”

Chair of the ABLE Project Board of Advisors, Sheppard Mullin partner Jonathan Aronie, 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. ABLE teaches that skill.”

The ABLE Project is guided by a Board of Advisors comprised of civil rights, social justice, and law enforcement leaders, including Vanita Gupta, the president of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights; Commissioner Michael Harrison of the Baltimore Police Department; Commissioner Danielle Outlaw of the Philadelphia Police Department; Dr. Ervin Staub, professor emeritus at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the founder of the Psychology of Peace and Justice Program; and an impressive collection of other police leaders, rank and file officers, and social justice leaders.

- See the complete list of the [ABLE Project Board of Advisors](#).
- For more information about the ABLE Project, visit the program’s [website](#).
- See a list of the [ABLE Standards](#) to which every participating agency must adhere.
- [These articles](#) share more information about active bystandership generally, and the ABLE Project in particular.

SMU Police Department instructors are certified as ABLE trainers; and over the coming months, all of the department’s officers will receive 8 hours of evidence-based active bystandership education designed not only to prevent harm, but to change the culture of policing. Please follow the progress in this critical area on Facebook (@[SMUPolice](#)), Twitter (@[PoliceSMU](#)), and Instagram (@[SMUPolice](#)).

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For more information on the ABLE Project, contact Liza, ABLE Program Manager, at [lba17@georgetown.edu](mailto:lba17@georgetown.edu).