



## Overview

When a major police department is nearing the end of a federal consent decree, the exit is a major moment that demands thoughtful, strategic communications to provide information that is easily understood.

### Goal

Maintain public trust, demonstrate results and progress, and lay the groundwork for the sustainable long-term reform.

Here are best practices for a Top 20 police department exiting a consent decree, organized across three areas: website, media, and social media.

### ✓ 1) Website: Permanent, Transparent, Easy-to-Find

For a Top 20 police department exiting a federal consent decree, the best practices for website communication focus on making critical reform information **permanent, transparent, and easy to find**. This includes:

- Hosting a **dedicated, permanent webpage** that clearly outlines the consent decree process, what reforms have been implemented, and progress made, ensuring public accessibility at any time.
- Providing **easily understandable data and documentation** related to the department's compliance and ongoing reform efforts, including reports on use of force, misconduct investigations, training, and policy changes.
- Ensuring transparency by sharing **agency policies and procedures** openly to build trust and show commitment to long-term reform without hiding non-sensitive details.
- Updating the website regularly with **progress reports**, news releases, and detailed explanations about how the department is sustaining reforms after exiting the consent decree.
- Making the information searchable and organized so community members, media, and stakeholders can navigate content effortlessly.

Such a strategic website presence plays a critical role in maintaining public trust and demonstrating that reform progress is real and sustainable beyond the formal decree period <sup>[1]</sup> <sub>[2]</sub>.

Additional recommendations include:

- Using the website to contextualize reforms with the **community's input and feedback** processes.

- Avoiding overly technical jargon by presenting information in plain language.
- Integrating website communication with media outreach and social media channels for a cohesive strategy that reinforces transparency and accountability<sup>[3]</sup> <sup>[4]</sup>.

In summary, a transparent, accessible, and permanent web presence focused on reform results and ongoing accountability is essential to support a positive exit from a consent decree for a large police department.



## Best practices

For a Top 20 police department, best practices require a website communication that addresses on making critical reform information permanent, transparent, and easy to find. This includes:

For a Top 20 police department, best practices for website communication that focus on making critical reform information permanent, transparent, and easy to find include:

- **Create a dedicated, permanent webpage** that clearly outlines the consent decree process, reforms implemented, and progress made. This page should remain accessible to the public indefinitely.
- **Provide easily understandable data and documentation** on key reform areas such as use of force statistics, misconduct investigations, updated policies, and training initiatives. Present data in user-friendly formats like charts or summaries.
- **Publish agency policies and procedures openly** on the site to demonstrate transparency and accountability, making non-sensitive internal standards available for public review.
- **Regularly update the website** with progress reports, news releases, and other relevant information showing ongoing compliance and reform sustainability beyond the consent decree.
- **Organize and index content clearly**, making it searchable and easy to navigate for community members, media, and stakeholders seeking specific information.

Additional recommendations:

- Use plain language to explain technical topics, avoiding jargon to ensure accessibility.
- Include information on community input, feedback mechanisms, and partnerships supporting reform efforts.
- Coordinate website content with media outreach and social media to maintain a consistent, transparent communication strategy.

By following these best practices, the department can foster public trust, clearly demonstrate meaningful reform progress, and support long-term accountability.

1. <https://www.police1.com/policy-transparency-communication-toolkit/articles/informing-your-community-about-law-enforcement-policy-key-components-of-a-communication-strategy-SWoV51gLv6a9wzL/>
2. [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE154/RAND\\_PE154.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE154/RAND_PE154.pdf)

3. [https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/243806\\_IACP\\_Comm-Pol\\_Trust\\_Building\\_4\\_0.pdf](https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/243806_IACP_Comm-Pol_Trust_Building_4_0.pdf)
4. <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/RIC/Publications/cops-p222-pub.pdf>
5. <https://www.vectorsolutions.com/resources/blogs/consent-decrees-police-training-software/>
6. <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/content.ashx/cops-r1127-pub.pdf>
7. <http://www.crj.org/assets/2019/08/CJI-Consent-Decree-Report-Final.pdf>
8. <https://case.edu/schubertcenter/sites/default/files/2020-04/Consent-Decree-Summary-Edited.pdf>
9. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-supports-seattles-motion-terminate-police-department-consent-decree>
10. <https://bja.ojp.gov/library/publications/monitoring-law-enforcement-consent-decrees-introduction-start-kit>
11. <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/ResourceCenter/content.ashx/cops-w0875-pub.pdf>
12. <https://bja.ojp.gov/doc/monitoring-le-consent-decrees.pdf>