Erin Farley: Okay, great. So, I want to welcome everybody. My name is Erin Farley, and I am a research associate here at JRSA, and for those of you who are less familiar, JRSA stands for Justice Research and Statistics Association. So, we are a national, nonprofit organization dedicated to the use of research and analysis to inform criminal and juvenile justice decision making, and we are comprised of a network of researchers and practitioners, which at the core include directors and staff from State Statistical Analysis Centers.

Erin Farley: It is my pleasure today to welcome you to our webinar, titled Police Community Dialogue. It will be presented by a panel of three, Lorig Charkoudian, I think. Did I get that right? Or, I think I might've butchered it a little bit. Charkoudian. Second time's better? Who is the executive director of Community Mediation Maryland. Tracee Ford, who is a certified mediator, trainer, and evaluator. And, Marvin McKenstry Jr., who is a professional facilitator and youth development executive. And, I believe the fourth individual who is not here today is Zachary Novak, who is an officer with the Baltimore City Police Department. So, I want to welcome everyone, and before we go any further I want to thank our partners at the Bureau of Justice Statistics for helping to make this webinar possible. I would also like to cover a few logistical items.

Erin Farley: We will be recording today's session for future playback. The link to the recording will be posted on the JRSA website; usually posted the following day. Today's webinar is being audiocast via both speakers on your computer and teleconference. We recommend listening to the webinar using your computer speakers or headphones. To access the audio conference, select audio from the top menu bar and then select audio conference. Once the audio conference window appears, you can view the teleconference call-in information, or join the audio conference via your computer. If you have any questions for the presenter, or would like to communicate with JRSA staff, please submit all questions to me, Erin Farley, using the chat feature on the right side of your screen, or you can submit to everybody as well, that's not an issue either way. Discussion is scheduled for one hour, or a little bit over one hour. If you have technical difficulties or get disconnected during the session, you can reconnect to this session using the same link you used to join initially, and you can also email Jason Trask at jtrask@JRSA.org. In the last five minutes of today's webinar we will ask you to complete a short survey, and the information that you provide will help us to plan and improve future webinars, and to meet our reporting requirements.
Erin Farley: And so, with that, I again want to welcome everybody and our panel, and I will turn it over to Lorig and her colleagues. Welcome.

Dr. Charkoudian: Great, thank you so much. It's an honor to be able to do this, so welcome to folks joining us from across the country. My name's Lorig Charkoudian, and I'm the Executive Director of Community Mediation Maryland. We're gonna do introductions in just a second, about who we actually have in the room. First, I want to talk about the context of what we're talking about today.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, today we're going to talk about three distinct approaches to using dialogue to respond to police community relations. Before we do this, we want to honor the fact that the work that we're doing, as powerful as it is and as important as it is, is really just one piece of the bigger puzzle. So, we're not gonna try to address all of the larger issues that we think need to be addressed for us to really have these kind of community relations long term that we need in this country. We recognize that these are complex issues, that there's roots of historical oppression, and that it's impacted really by broader economic and other injustices. So, while we think that the work we're doing is really powerful and we hope to see it replicated in other parts of the country, we also think that it's just one part of the puzzle. And so, we just want to start by honoring the complexities of the issues that we're working on, and just sort of put that out there.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, the three approaches that we're gonna talk about today are Police Complaint Mediation, Police Youth Dialogue Circles, and collaborative policy development, wherein law enforcement and the community work together to develop or to change policies about how policing is done in the community.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, who we are. Community Mediation Maryland is a state-wide organization that supports the work of 17 grassroots community mediation centers. Those mediation centers provide free mediation services for a range of issues across the state of Maryland. The other thing that Community Mediation Maryland does, is that we identify new uses for mediation to respond to complex social challenges. And so, that includes prisoner reentry issues, that incudes addiction recovery, roles for mediation and addiction recovery, in school discipline, and so on. And so, police/community mediation is one of the areas that we do that work in.
Dr. Charkoudian: So, I'm Lorig and I'm the Director, and with me here today is Tracee Ford, who's been a leader, she's our Director of Quality Assurance, and she has been a leader in a lot of the police/community relations work that we've done across the state. She and I have both also done work in New Orleans, developing their Police Complaint Mediation program, so we'll be sharing our experiences both in Baltimore and different parts of Maryland, and also in New Orleans.

Dr. Charkoudian: Also joining us today is Marvin McKenstry, who is with The Youth Opportunity Center. He has been a community leader and very active in the police community facilitated policy discussion that we're gonna talk about later in this hour. And, [inaudible 00:06:24] Smith is one of the young people who's been involved also in that policy discussion. Unfortunately, also, Zachary Novak was not able to join us today. He has been involved in the policy discussion and with Baltimore, but he had to do a [inaudible 00:06:40] meeting today, so all the statistics people who are on this webinar can appreciate the fact that he needs to be there instead of with us today. So, the four of us here will be talking about these experiences.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, the first approach that we want to talk about is Police Complaint Mediation, and Tracee's really gonna take the lead on that part of it.

Tracee Ford: All right. Good afternoon everyone, my name's Tracee Ford.

Tracee Ford: So, a couple of things you need to know about Police Complaint Mediation [inaudible 00:07:08], they all start with a resident complaint about an interaction that they had with a police officer. And, those complaints get directed to the Community Mediation Center, and the mediation centers work to assign their volunteer mediators to those cases. Those mediators that are assigned to the cases have done 60 hours of basic mediation training, and then after they've completed their apprenticeship, done at least five mediation cases, then they do 15 hours of Police Complaint Mediation Training. A lot of the reasons that I have seen, as one of the folks who do the Police Complaint Mediations as a mediator is that, communication and understanding of policies for police officers are some of the biggest reasons that residents are using the services and police officers are using the service, of getting clarification.

Tracee Ford: An example being, we recently had a mediation case where the resident only understood that it was a typical, festive night on the strip where they were on, the local bar strip, and they really just wanted to get home, and traffic was slow, they were irritated, and so they did that to
maneuver around the traffic, and the next thing they know, they are being stopped, they have the light shined in their face by the police officer, they felt like they were yelled at and spoken to disrespectfully, and at the mediation table what they learned was, there was a medical emergency further up the road and that was the reason that traffic was being slowed, not because of a bar crawl or a party. As a result of that conversation, they also found out when they started to maneuver out of the traffic, they couldn't see ahead because of the way the lights were. They didn't realize that they were very close to hitting one of the police officers, and so the sergeant that stopped them was saying, "I have a responsibility to protect my officers, and you were putting my officers at risk, and the medical staff, as well as the person who was having the medical emergency was also being put at risk when you diverted out of the traffic, out of the way that we were trying to direct traffic.

Tracee Ford: So, clarification about what the policies are, and then residents being able to say what they're expectations are from police officers in terms of how policies get implemented, and a lot of times we're talking about communication. Like, "I need you to talk to me like this. If you let me know what is happening, I am happy to comply, but I didn't know." You know? Those kinds of things come up frequently in Police Complaint Mediation.

Tracee Ford: We still uphold what we call our big three, this is still a voluntary process, so both the officers and the residents can say, "No, I do not want to do this." Often, some of the reasons why they would want to do this is, for the officers this does not go to investigation if it goes to mediation, and for the resident they also find that they really just want to have a conversation with the police officer and let them know the impact of their interactions on them, their lives, their family, their home, their employment. Yeah.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, this Lorig now. So, as Tracee was talking you got to hear a little bit about the kinds of cases that get mediated, a couple things about the kinds of programs and what makes the Police Complaint Mediation successful, some of the really important things include having mediators who represent the diversity of the community, serve as mediators, Tracee talked a little bit about the training, making sure they have extensive training, making sure that the mediation is provided by an agency that's viewed as neutral. So, it's really important that both the police officer and the resident believe that this is gonna be a place where they are gonna have a chance to be heard, and where the mediator's job is to help create understanding at a deeper level. The mediations are held
in a time and place convenient to the participants, and generally a co-
mediation model is preferred.

Dr. Charkoudian: [inaudible 00:11:53] data that we want to share with you a little bit about
the program and the success of the program. This data actually comes
from New Orleans, and so that's a program that has been around for a
couple of years now, and so they have a little more data than we have in
Baltimore. And so, you can see sort of scanning down here, a lot of this is
the Post-Mediation Evaluation Form Report, where you can see civilians
talking about getting a better understanding of policing, or police officers
talking about building more mutual respect between the civilian and the
officer. And so, part of what happens through the dialogue that's
different from an adversarial investigative process is that the goal and the
focus is to build understanding and sort of to humanize the officer and
the resident to each other, and then to build a broader understanding.
And the idea is that, as that understanding gets built, both officers and
residents who go through it, and what they share with their family
members and friends will be a piece of what can start to shift in terms of
how communities and law enforcement interact with each other.

Dr. Charkoudian: The other area of evaluation that we do is, we ask a series of questions
before and after the mediation. And so, we look at what civilians' view is
on respect for the community, and again this is an area where there's an
increase in the sense of respect for the community.

Erin Farley: Lorig, I'm gonna interrupt real quickly. We have a quick question, and I
don't know if you might've answered this, but someone asked, "You
mentioned that the Police Complaint Mediations are voluntary for police.
How do you get officer buy-in? What is the incentive for them to
participate?" And, I think you had mentioned that that was because it
prevents it from going forward to an investigation, is that correct?

Dr. Charkoudian: Yeah, so, I think that for both officers and residents, one of the things
that when people understand that they'll get a chance to speak and be
heard without judgment in a confidential setting, that by itself is actually
a really attractive idea for folks. And the confidentiality is a really
important piece of it, because often people are looking for an apology,
and in the context of mediation an apology could happen, and in fact
does. Both officers and residents might apologize to each other,
sometimes both in the same mediation. And because none of the
information that's gathered in the context of the mediation can be used
in subsequent adversarial hearings, there's no danger in being vulnerable
and real about, "Hey, I think I made a mistake." Or, "Now that I
understand your perspective, I would've done things differently." And so, I think at one level, the reason people sign up to do it is because they actually want to be heard and they want to be understood, and I think that that's sort of a normal human experience whether you're coming from law enforcement or from the community.

Dr. Charkoudian: But, more specifically also, there is the incentive of, if it goes through this process then it does not go through the formal investigation process. And so, even if an officer thinks that they would win in a formal investigation process, they may find that process to be burdensome and they may not like having that sort of going on on their personnel file, you know, through what is often a very long and cumbersome process, and so they may choose this as a preferable way to experience it. So, hopefully that answers that question.

Erin Farley: Great, thank you.

Dr. Charkoudian: And the Community Mediation Center spends a lot of time talking to police officers at their stations of, they're in the process right now of going to all the roll calls for, 27 roll calls on all the shifts. So, they're going to the seven a.m. roll call, the 4:00 roll call, and the 10 p.m. roll call to educate police officers about their service and to address any questions that they have before a complaint goes out. So, it's kind of introducing it as early as possible.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, one of the the things ... This, again, is from the New Orleans data, and I won't read all these out loud, but I will leave it up while I talk for a minute. One of the things that we do, of course, in addition to the quantitative data that we're gathering from people, we ask people to share their experiences. And, I think what you can see if you read some of the comments is, when we think about really how do we make shifts in police community relations, one piece of that is police understanding of how their actions affect community members, and another piece of it is community members understanding why police are making the decisions they're making, and also being able to share with the police how those choices are impacting them. And so, what you can see from these comments is this real learning and understanding that comes out of the process. Sometimes, in this last quote here, the very long quote, sometimes it's really some deep conversations about race that get to happen in a safe place, and it's very unusual to be able to have that kind of conversation between an individual officer and a community member, where they can talk about really complex issues and painful issues about race, and those kinds of conversations get to happen in the context of a
mediation process that definitely wouldn't happen in a standard complaint process.

Dr. Charkoudian: And, the next slide we have here is from community members, and what you can see is there's sort of two different pieces to the kinds of comments that are made. There's, again, a lot of learning, like, an understanding why it is that officers make the choices that they make, but also just this chance to really express oneself. And so, this piece, when we think about procedural justice, about having a voice in the process, and that's a really important part that happens in the context of a Police Complaint Mediation, is that people who are directly affected are the ones who have [inaudible 00:17:55] in the conversation, both about building the understanding and also about the possible outcomes.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, quickly, around the country, and this is just a quick overview of some of the programs we're familiar with. I think [inaudible 00:18:12] said there's probably about 40 areas in the country that actually have Police Complaint Mediation on the books. Here's some of the larger ones, and some of them have been around for a long time. San Francisco's been around for a long time. Denver, which is not on here, has been around for a long time. Some of them are newer, New Orleans has been around for about three years, and in Baltimore we just started offering a service in Baltimore in January.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, one of the sort of interesting things that we have in Maryland now that we don't have anywhere else in the country, is legislation that supports the development of Police Complaint Mediation across the state. And so, in 2015, soon after Baltimore uprising, there was the creation of the Legislative Public Safety and Policing Work Group, and that legislative body really looked at issues of policing and police/community relations, and recommended the creation of a Police Training and Standards Commission, which was sort of a hybrid of something that already existed, but it kind of created it in a more formalized way. And then, one other recommendation of this work group was that this Police Training and Standards Commission develop a police complaint mediation program. So, develop basically model standards that they would then encourage every law enforcement agency in the state to replicate and to develop Police Complaint Mediation.

Dr. Charkoudian: And so, that ended up being written into legislation, and in the 2016 Legislative Session that passed as law in Maryland. So, we are now working with the Police Training and Standards Commission, who is almost done with their set of best practices, and then community
[inaudible 00:20:01] will work with them to unveil that and really try to establish Police Complaint Mediation in as many jurisdictions in Maryland as we can. Just to be clear, the legislation encourages it in all the jurisdictions but doesn't require it, so it'll still be up to the individual agencies to decide whether or not they want to implement it.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, do you want to say anything about Police Complaint Mediation before I move on to dialogue circles?

Erin Farley: No.

Dr. Charkoudian: Okay. So, the second scenario that we wanted to share is the Police Youth Dialogue Circles. And so, while the Police Complaint Mediation responds to an acute incident that occurred and a resident complaining about the incident, Police Youth Dialogue Circles is a more, sort of, preventative way to respond to the broader tensions that exist in the community, especially with police and young people. And so, the dialogue circles can happen in any number of contexts. We are doing them right now primarily in schools, and sometimes in summer camps and with recreations departments, where we bring together ten officers and ten youth and they have a chance to have dialogue that humanizes each to the other. The process starts with an hour with just the young people, and then an hour with just the officers. And in those two separate hours, people have a chance to consider what it is that they want to talk about, what it is that they might feel anxious about talking about, what it is that they're gonna need to do to be able to engage effectively and safely in this conversation, and then everybody is brought together for two separate two hour sessions where the conversation goes from sort of safer, easier topics and slowly goes more in depth, and really in the second two hour session there is pretty intense conversation about the challenges of relationships between police and youth, and what sorts of things could change.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, a couple of key things about the way that we're doing these. One of them is that, and this is a really important piece, I've talked to a lot of people around the country, obviously the idea of bringing police and young people together to have conversations is not unique and new, but one of the things that I think is really important in this process is having the same number of young people and officers. So, one of the things that happens sometimes is there'll be 15 youth and two officers, just because of the reality of police staffing issues and how many officers can sort of get to it, but when you have a conversation that's sort of that lopsided, it ends up being more like a DARE class or Officer Friendly, and less of an
opportunity to really connect on a one-on-one level and humanize each to each other. And so, we really think it's important even though it takes a lot more logistical coordination to have the same number of officers and youth. As I mentioned, it begins with sharing personal experiences and stories, and then as trust is built it gets more into the conversation about interactions that the police and the young people have had with each other, and then it shifts to, what could be done differently?

Dr. Charkoudian: One of the key pieces to the conversation is, one of the few, kind of, guidelines that we have, is that people speak from their own experiences, and we find that when people are speaking from their own experiences, even though they're hard conversations, they are ones that have the potential to get to a deeper level of understanding, as opposed to when people sort of give their opinion about some clip they've seen on YouTube. If we're able to stick to people's own experiences, then rather than debating what did or didn't happen somewhere else in the country, people can talk about what they can change in their interactions in their community.

Dr. Charkoudian: We have tested these so far in Baltimore and Takoma Park. There's plans for expansion to other parts of ... Those are both cities ... Well, you probably know Baltimore. Takoma Park is a city, it's a suburb of Washington DC. Plans to expand into other parts of the state of Maryland, and beginning in January of 2017, Baltimore Police Department is incorporating these dialogue circles into their in-service training. And so, every officer in the city, over the course of the next few years, will have a chance to go through these dialogue circles as a part of their training.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, I'm about to move off of Police Youth Dialogue Circles. If there's a question that's specific to this before I move onto the next one, I could take one. I'm not sure, Erin, if you have questions there?

Erin Farley: No, I don't see any questions right now.

Dr. Charkoudian: Okay. So, the third area that we want to talk about is collaborative policy development. And so, unlike the other two areas, what's different about this area is that it is an opportunity to actually affect a specific policy of the police department, or of the way law enforcement is conducted. And, I'm gonna hand this over to Marvin and Tracee, who are gonna talk a little bit about, briefly about the Baltimore uprising, which presumably you've heard something about, and then how that led to this collaborative policy development?
Marvin McKenstr: Good afternoon, I'm Marvin McKenstry. That's me in the picture. I'm a lifelong West Baltimore resident who is, after a life in my youth that involved crime and criminal activity. I probably had my first interaction with West Baltimore Police Officers when I was about 11 or 12 years old, all the way up until I was about 23, 24 years old and changed my life, and really got into community advocacy, but still had a real problem with the police. In that picture is the actual ground zero day at [inaudible 00:25:53], and literally that's my body in between some Baltimore City Police Officers and some protestors, trying to, I guess in my own way, mediate that situation and keep those people from being arrested, and that whole interaction going on with the police.

Marvin McKenstr: A little while after this, I met the new, incoming Western District Commander, who is Major Sheree Briscoe, and we had a very honest dialogue and she helped me to kind of identify some biases that I had towards police, even though I didn't realize they were so intense, and our relationship kind of positioned me to begin to review police officers a little differently. She gave me a call one day and told me to reach out to the then executive director, [inaudible 00:26:47], in community mediation here in Baltimore about this dialogue that was gonna take place, because she felt as though my voice would be valuable there, as well as my ability to gather and bring young people to the dialogue. And, we've brought about six or seven young people to the dialogue, and came in, and there's ...

Marvin McKenstr: You know, I'm 41 years old and it was an amazing life change that happened for me, because even when I stopped breaking the law, I had issues with the police. And now, I have relationships with the police that are literally putting innovative type of approaches to change in the community, kind of on the map. And now, West Baltimore, really across the Baltimore community is developing into some great things, and now a part of our incoming mayor's public safety committee, as well as working closely with the police commissioner, and all of this came after pretty much having great issues with the police and community mediation, given the opportunity in our dialogues to get to know that there were people in those uniforms and not just my perceptions, and that we could work together.

Tracee Ford: So, I want to talk about ... This is Tracee Ford again. So, I want to talk a little bit about how this got started. So, the initial involvement with the Community Mediation Center came directly from the police. And so, the police reached out to Lorig to help them have conversations with the community. And so, we knew that in having this conversation we needed
to engage every level of the police department. So, we needed people in the leadership role who would make sure that conversations were headed in a way that, the decisions that were made were actually decisions that could be implemented, that we had people who were in the middle management of the police department who would help troubleshoot areas, and officers who were on the streets, who were directly touching folks every day. And, in the same way, we needed a diverse range of community members to be involved, and so this whole process involved a lot of grassroots organizing, and it meant that as a mediation center we had to, it was years of networking involved in making sure that when the uprising happened, the police knew that we were the place to call. Also, making sure that we've had a reputation as an organization of people who would follow through with the work that we said we were going to do.

Tracee Ford: We also had to work in developing a facilitation team. And so, this was like a time where everybody was onboard. And so, we made sure that we had a facilitation team, and I'm part of the facilitation team, so I'm a mediator with over 13 years of mediation experience, and also having folks who have experience with the community and representative of the diversity of the neighborhood demographically, and so it involves both police officers, residents, and business owners from the western district. And, in developing the group that would be in the room, we knew that we had to do big outreach. So, if we wanted 12 people in the room, six officers and six residents, we knew that we needed to start off with 25 officers and 25 residents, and that we needed to have individual conversations with them, to make sure that they understood the kind of commitment that they would be making. So, we asked people to make 16 hours commitment for this project. So, those conversations happened as much as possible face-to-face. So, we met with folks individually, talked to them about the policy work that would be happening, what that would involve, before we ever came to the table. So, that's over 25 individual conversations before we ever got to the table.

Tracee Ford: The facilitation team met in advance to talk, to build the agenda together, to make sure that we were not avoiding the big issues, that we were making space, that we were building an agenda that made space for big voices as well as some of our softer voices in the room that folks would not get mixed up. And then, there's always the ongoing issue of making sure that we have a space that's safe for everyone to access, and so we went through a round of several building. We settled on a church in the area that allowed for different entry points for residents, so that there was initial concern about having it known in the community that
residents were having conversations with the police. And so, the building that we wound up using allowed for police officers and residents to come in to different entrances so that it wouldn't necessarily be known that they were meeting together.

Marvin McKenstr: I wasn't actually involved in that part. I came in after the first session because we didn't have any young people at the table, in the room. I believe the first week I was supposed to be there, I actually had another commitment, so I wasn't actually there for the prep. What I can do, is add a little bit about the actual conversation, if that's okay?

Marvin McKenstr: It started off kind of vanilla, not because we weren't being encouraged by the mediators to have an honest and real dialogue, but we had some people that were kind of tiptoeing through the tulips, until this one particular night, I think we were about midway through, it was kind of like, "Look, I don't have to keep coming to this if we're not gonna be honest." And, there was some loud voices, an actual police official broke down in tears out of passion for this change, were it to happen in Baltimore, and then I believe that night was the birthing place of the group that really began to move towards addressing a lot of the hard issues and just having the kind of transparency that would lead to where we are now as a collective group.

Marvin McKenstr: To me, that was the best and most important session because it was kind of when the gloves came off and it gave people a chance to be honest and to see that there were so many parallels between the police and the community, and their issues. And, it was a major embracing point to see that kind of passion out of ... When I say a police officiate, I mean someone who's right next to the commissioner. To see that kind of level of passion is just something that, when you're passionate about your own work you appreciate, and it really helped us begin to move forward under the guidance of community mediation to a great place that we're in now.

Tracee Ford: And, you know, part of, like, getting past that hard point was in the initial interviews with police officers and residents. We were very clear with them to say that, "We're going to come to a point where you do not want to be at the table anymore. We're going to come to a point where it's gonna be a hard conversation." And, part of the work is, that when you come to that place where you don't want to be involved in the conversation anymore, that you make sure that you stay engaged in the conversation.
Tracee Ford: So, right now, the process that we're in, in terms of developing the policy is, that ... Well, can you talk about that Marvin, actually?

Marvin McKenstr: Yes.

Tracee Ford: I think that would be better.

Marvin McKenstr: What we wanted to do, is we wanted to be able to offer some alternatives to what, some sort of a diversion process, because we all began to agree that a lot of the nuisance crimes or lesser offenses were quality of life crimes, and that we would be able to offer options to people who were getting in these types of situations, we would be able to make a difference. And, it kind of came out of something that happened where a couple of our police officers who were in the room, with arrestable offenses on residents. Instead of arresting them, made the choice to give me a call, again working at the Youth Opportunity Center and being someone there that specializes in employment, and diverting those people to me, it was kind of a ask for forgiveness over permission type of deal in diverting those people to me. And we began to have success with getting some of those people employment, those that followed through, which was more than not. And, that idea led to the policy that we drafted, which was a pre-arrest diversion program where instead of the person being ...

Marvin McKenstr: Diversion traditionally has been after arrest, and one of the issues with that is you still have this person that has an arrest record and it costs money to get the charges expunged and that causes a problem with people getting a job. This pre-diversion arrest program kind of takes that person who we believe that diversion would be successful with, and it gives them an opportunity to divert away from being charged or having an arrest on that record and getting moved into services. Primarily we've kind of focused around mental health, drug treatment, employment services, and I feel like I'm forgetting one, but those were the main ... And education. So, if a person needed a GED or a job directed into something in the educational workforce development, someone that may need mental health services or drug treatment directing them in those ways, and that's really exciting to me. Working in workforce development, especially with youth, and having people come in, and that first run in that they had with the police had given them some sort of tag or label that is such a deterrent to employers working with them. This gets me really excited about the possibilities, and about what we've already been able to do.
Tracee Ford: Some other thing that were interesting in terms of what people talked about being important to them that led to the pre-arrest diversion. Several of the officers who were participating, talked about, you know, part of them shifting how the community sees them. Like, they want to be seen as problem solvers instead of just the bad guy who arrests you, so that when diversion happens further downstream, they're the bad guy who arrests you and somebody else at court, or the state's attorney gets to make the diversion piece. But, if they could get to be a part of the direct diversion piece of it, it could start to shift their roles in the community as being helpers or as being problem solvers. So, that was an important piece of the conversation that led to this particular model. I think ... And, let me know if I got this right ...

Marvin McKenstr: [inaudible 00:39:15].

Tracee Ford: Sure.

Marvin McKenstr: One of our actual participants, one of the young people who came into the room, that participated in many of the sessions, we missed them for maybe two sessions and everybody's kind of concerned, and I got a phone call one night from one of the officers who was in our group and they had photographs of this young man, pretty much doing [inaudible 00:39:41] making drug transactions, and instead of taking that evidence and arresting him, the officer actually called me, we met up, he showed me the pictures and said, "Marvin, I'll give you until tomorrow to get a chance to talk to him and let him know what kind of trouble he can be in, as opposed to arresting them, and needless to say we were able to rescue this young man, that conversation that we were able to have with him literally got him out of the drug trade, he's working now, he finished out the process with us, doing the mediation process.

Marvin McKenstr: And, I'm really excited about things like that because his voice is far more valuable than mine is in the community, and that officer who made that decision concerning him is viewed as a good guy in the community because [inaudible 00:40:38] was able to go back and tell people that, you know, "This is what he could've did, but this is what he chose to do." And, I think that that goes a long way in healing the relationship that our residents have with the police department.

Speaker 5: Hello?

Speaker 5: Oh. I mean ... Hello?
Erin Farley: [inaudible 00:41:03].

Speaker 5: Oh, him? Oh. Basically, my experience was, it was a great experience because it was more really informative on how the officers felt. Because, usually, I'm really not friends with the officers. I know them, but I really don't know them personally, and we got really a closer experience to know them, you know, outside of work. And most of us, you know, still at work. But, mostly it was just informative because they got our point of view and we got their point of view, and we understood each other more because, with the Freddie Gray thing going on, you know, there was a lot of tension and everybody, they've been saying, you know, "F the police." But, I've really got a first-hand feel of how they really felt.

Speaker 5: And, some really do want to do their job, you know, they want to go against their policy, but most of them really want to do their job. And, if I see them outside, I'll shake their hand or I'll feel more comfortable talking with them because I know that they really aren't on any ... Can I say that word? Like, any [inaudible 00:42:06] or any ... You know, most officers, they like beating people up, you know, they beat you up if you run from them, or they go against policy, but these officers, these are some nice officers. Like, these are people that really will shake your hand, you know, what does it feel like? "Oh, well, he's shaking the police's hand, you know, he's going against us." I really, you know, I feel comfortable around them basically.

Tracee Ford: Everybody, that was [inaudible 00:42:31] Smith, he's one of the youth involved in the dialogue, and ... You know, one of the things I really wanted to say ... So, if you recall, initially we said that we asked for 16 hours of commitment, so eight meetings, and so those 16 hours ended in May and this group is still meeting. So, we have been at about 100 hours I think, at this point, of meetings and we still are not done, we still have work to do, we're still putting the final touches on our [inaudible 00:43:06].

Speaker 5: No, just to add that it was literally the group's idea to continue to meet. We felt as though we came to a point where we could accomplish so much more. It wasn't encouraged by community mediation. I remember initially, when the idea jumped out around the room, the thing was, "Where are we going to get money for this? We were funded to do these eight sessions, and ... " It was the passion and what developed in the room that caused the people in the room to want to continue, and we were [inaudible 00:43:37] by community mediation. I think we're all better for it.
Tracee Ford: And so, right now, where the group's work is around the policy, we're trying to figure out the funding to facilitate as Marvin's described the diversion process, and so we're looking for funding for the position of referral coordinator, that's the position the group is trying to work out and figure out funding for.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, just from a bigger picture perspective, this is Lorig, I think the really important think about this process, is this group over the course of several months really has reached consensus, and not just agreement but really excitement about a new way to do policing. And I think, as Marvin talked about, this shift from real division in the community to real partnership, and the group calls themselves The Transformative Justice Committee now, and is really excited about this policy, and is in a place where it's working on getting some final pieces approved by the folks in legal, and applying the funding to move the process forward.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, that's kind of the broad overview of three of the major areas that we're doing work, in terms of brief community relations. So, I think at this point we'll stop and take questions, and all four of us can answer depending on what the question is.

Erin Farley: Hi, this is Erin. I don't see any questions right now, but if anybody wants to type in, I can read them for you.

Erin Farley: I was wondering if you could take a moment to just talk more about the process of adopting the pre-arrest diversion program and getting, actually, and challenges or buy-in issues with the law enforcement agency?

Dr. Charkoudian: Do you mean the group's process to reach consensus around it, or do you mean sort of the legal, technical process?

Erin Farley: I guess more of, like, the legal, technical process of how wide-spread is that policy? Or, is is just amongst the officers that are participating in the program? I mean, I'm assuming it is the officers in the program, but ...

Tracee Ford: So, right now, the program will be piloted in just one district.

Erin Farley: Okay.

Tracee Ford: And so, it has not been implemented yet. The group is shooting for a launch date of January, but it will piloted in just one district.
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Erin Farley: Okay.

Dr. Charkoudian: It will be all the officers in the district, not just the officers who participated in the dialogues.

Erin Farley: Okay, wow. Wonderful.

Tracee Ford: It's literally been happening for months now.

Erin Farley: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tracee Ford: The western district officers, as the word spread throughout the district and the western district officers, I mean, the volume of calls that I get from them in a week is tremendous, it's a wonderful thing. It'll be an official policy thing. However, it's been in practice for quite a while now, and I just shared that because I wanted to talk about how the police department, or the police officers themselves have embraced it. Like Lorig said, really wanting to have options to arrest ... It's one thing for us as a community to desire that, but the police officers want to be able to do something different when they run into somebody that they believe would benefit from something other than being arrested.

Erin Farley: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Charkoudian: And so, I think this sort of gets to why it's worth doing collaborative policy development. I think that often policies are developed top-down, and so it's hard, and sometimes there's resistance to implementing top-down policy. But, to Marvin's point, this is a policy that hasn't even been officially signed off on yet, but it's a practice that's happening because the officers as well as the leadership of western district were involved in the conversation. So, when people are involved in creating policy directly, they're more likely to embrace it because they've created it in a way that actually responds to their needs and what they think needs to be done. And so, that process that we've gone through essentially has led to a point where it is de facto happening, even before it's an official policy that everybody in western district is gonna be required to participate in.

Erin Farley: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Erin Farley: Okay, any questions from our ... Oh, we've got ... Okay, hold on one second, we've got one.
Erin Farley: So, here's one question ... "I wonder what plans you have to evaluate the programs?" That's one. And then ... Oh, we'll start with that.

Dr. Charkoudian: Okay. So, at this point, all three of our programs have pre and post, and then one month later followups. And so, just some real basic questions to get an understanding between people, and get a real legitimacy of policing, and, "Would you share information if you knew about a crime in your community?" And, to the police, "Do you think that these residents would share information with you if they knew about a crime?" So, some of those kinds of questions. And, we're looking at shifts from before, to after, to one month later. That's in the Police Youth Dialogue Circles, as well as in the Police Complaint Mediation. The collaborative policy development, the group has actually developed a set of standard metrics that they are interested in collecting data on going forward, once the policy actually is implemented.

Dr. Charkoudian: We have actually applied for funding for more comprehensive evaluations. We haven't gotten any yet. So, I'll just take this opportunity to shamelessly say, since there may be evaluators on the call, if anybody's looking for a project to work on or has access to a funding source, we are actually committed to having a really solid, quantitative evaluation of our programs, and so while what we will get from just the basics of what we have, pre, post, and a month later, I think will be useful. We're also really open to a more comprehensive evaluation that gets deeper than that. And so, we're interested in talking to folks who might be interested in working with us on that.

Erin Farley: Great. Second question is, "How did Community Mediation Maryland begin?"

Dr. Charkoudian: How did we start, like, at all with any of our work, or how did we start in this work, in police work?

Erin Farley: I think ... It doesn't specify, so maybe just the early emergence of it, maybe you could speak to that.

Dr. Charkoudian: Sure. So, this police work is one of many initiatives that we work on. So, in Maryland there are 17 community-based mediation programs, as I mentioned. About 15 years ago, there were just a handful of community mediation programs, and those groups came together and said, "You know, we really have a lot of potential in this grassroots, social change, mediation work we're doing, but how could we do it more effectively? And, one of the solutions was to band together to create a state-wide
association to both support all the centers that existed, and then also to help start new centers, and then also to develop creative responses to using mediation, and response to social challenges like these that we talked about today, and then support all of the centers at a local level to do that work. And so, we've been around for about 15 years and over that time, you know, our ability to do that work, our funding and so on, has increased to where we are now. But, it really started with a handful of local centers saying, like, "Let's come together and support each other and see if as a group we can be stronger than we are, just as individuals across the state."

Erin Farley: Great. Okay, another question is, "You have done youth/police dialogues, but have you done community/police dialogues?"

Tracee Ford: So, that's part of the work that Marvin and I have been talking about. Like, we do have young people involved in it, but we have folks from various ages, longevity in the community, business owners in the community, so yes, we do do community dialogues.

Dr. Charkoudian: And, I think the shorter model of, you know, spending six hours doing dialogue circles with adults and police, I think it's certainly applicable. Generally, in the areas that we've been doing those dialogue circles, the priority for the police department and the community groups has been to have the conversations with youth, but I think it's certainly applicable for adults as well.

Erin Farley: Okay. Let's see ...

Erin Farley: "Do you consider it a hotline for citizens to report issues if they don't feel comfortable in a group setting, that can then be used to evaluate these programs?" Well, wait ... I'm sorry, "Have you considered a hotline?"

Dr. Charkoudian: Yeah, so, I think that, you know, just going back to where I started, when I was saying that this work is really in the context of a lot of bigger picture stuff that I think needs to be done in terms of changes to the way that we interact with each other, communities and police. And so, I think that we don't have a hotline, that's not really consistent with the work that we do, but we do work with, for example, the civilian review board, and in New Orleans it is the Independent Police Monitor who run that police complaint mediation program. And so, I think among the partnerships we have, there are organizations that have hotlines and those kinds of things that could influence the processes that we develop. But, the processes that we run are really focused on having direct conversations between
law enforcement and communities, and a piece of the work that we do, and part of why Tracee talked about all of the early preparation conversations, is talking about, "What do you need to feel safe to have these conversations?"

Dr. Charkoudian: So, we recognize that not everybody feels safe initially, and so that is part of the initial conversation, and as Tracee mentioned one of the things people said is they wanted a separate entrance so that nobody in the community would know they were going to talk to the police. And so, we arranged that. So, we are supporting direct dialogue and we are supporting working with people to make sure that the way that we're doing that direct dialogue is safe for everybody to participate in.

Erin Farley: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Charkoudian: And, wait, there's one more answer here.

Marvin McKenstr: We've also kind of shaken the stick at the idea of developing mediators in different communities and neighborhoods where there have been such gang violence and things of that nature ... Because one of the things that's a reality of the youth dynamic, the urban youth dynamic here in Baltimore, some will never leave their neighborhood. And, yes, that's a great resource like mediation, but if it's not in the neighborhood, then that becomes problem. So, we literally began to identify community leaders, and not the traditional community leaders, guys or people who may be respected in their neighborhoods, to try to bring them to the training to learn how to be mediators, so that they can then take that work back to their neighborhoods where it can be right there on the ground for those people who may not come to the work itself.

Erin Farley: Okay. Another question is, "Can you talk more about how mediation is included, or it might've been the diversion, but whatever the training is that is ... " Let me rephrase this. "That is included in the in-service training." So, I'm not sure if it's the mediation or, I think it's the complaint dialogue, but whatever the ...

Dr. Charkoudian: [inaudible 00:56:24].

Erin Farley: I'm sorry?

Dr. Charkoudian: I think I've got it.

Erin Farley: Okay, okay.
Dr. Charkoudian: It's the [inaudible 00:56:29] included in the Baltimore City In-Service Training.

Erin Farley: Yes.

Dr. Charkoudian: So, in Baltimore City, what happens is that there's roughly 3000 officers and so, to get them all through annual in-service training, about 50 of them a year take a week off of their street duty and go to education and training. So, 50 people a year are in there for five days. And so, what's gonna happen is, one day of those five days, 10 of those officers will be assigned to do a Police Youth Dialogue Circle instead of whatever other training might be happening. And so, over the course of the first year, we'll get 500 officers through the dialogue circles. They'll be going, instead of reporting to the Police Education and Training Division, they'll be going to a school, and at the school there'll be 10 youths who have been selected to have the conversation with them. And so, over the course of the first year we'll get 500 officers through, and then in the subsequent years we're hoping to pull them two days and we'll get 1000 officers through. But, in a few years, the hope is to get all of the officers through the dialogue circles. I think that that's what the question was, because that's [inaudible 00:57:32]-

Erin Farley: Right.

Dr. Charkoudian: Something.

Erin Farley: Okay, great. And then, one possible, one last question of, "Can you highlight the main differences between complaint mediation and a civilian/police review board?"

Dr. Charkoudian: Yeah, so, a civilian/police review board is, generally the design is that you have civilians involved in an investigative process to determine if an officer has violated policy, and if so what the discipline ought to be. The mediation process is one where the mediators are working on building an understanding between the officer and the resident about the incident that occurred, and possibly the resident and the officer have a chance to develop solutions that they think are valuable going forward, but there's not an outcome that the mediators are imposing on the people involved, and it's not a fact finding process, it's one that's working on building a deeper understanding as opposed to determining who was right or wrong.
Dr. Charkoudian: So, we actually work closely with civilian review boards, as I mentioned, in Baltimore City. The civilian review board has the option to refer some of the cases to mediation if they choose to. So, the civilian review board may decide that this would be better investigated, or they may decide this would be better mediated, and so they can refer a case to mediation in the context of the ... In New Orleans it's the Independent Police Monitor, which is a civilian body that has the ability to do that, and again there they make the determination, "Would this better be investigated, or would it be better mediated?"

Erin Farley: Okay. Another question, actually. We had a couple more pop up. "Do you work with Ceasefire/Cure Violence in Baltimore? What is the relationship between these programs and Cure Violence, if there is any?"

Dr. Charkoudian: So, the Community Mediation Center does a number of other kinds of mediation, in addition to the police complaints mediation work, and so in some of those other contexts, there has been some partnership work with some of those other organizations. That work hasn't really, we haven't really worked in partnership with those groups as it relates to the issues that we're talking about today, though.

Erin Farley: Okay. One last question ... "Some would say that pre-arrest diversion was once common years ago. I wonder if any of your participants have a sense that it's a return to a more traditional approach?"

Marvin McKenstr: [inaudible 01:00:02] doesn't have a history with pre-arrest diversion. It's actually, across the country, considered kind of innovative. I know that we've had pre-conviction or pre-disposition kind of diversion stuff, we still have that stuff with marijuana charges and certain things now around Baltimore, but even in conversations with the police commissioner and some of the folks on the public safety committee, it's been considered pretty innovative and most people kind of direct towards what has been done in Seattle, although I believe Baltimore is so unique in and of itself that this is kind of considered cutting edge.

Marvin McKenstr: But, I do think ... To the second part of the question, I do believe that most people are believing it's necessity right now to again kind of take away some of the statements that are happening to people in certain areas because of what can be considered small interactions with police officers.

Erin Farley: Okay, thank you. I think that was our last question. And so, what I would like to do is to implement the poll. And, while we're doing that ... I don't
know, Jason, if you might be able to do that, to open the poll for those people who are still here. There we go. And, with that, I would like to thank the panel today, which includes Lorig, Marvin, [inaudible 01:01:52], and Tracee. So, thank you so much for taking the time to talk about the program, and I would also like to thank everybody who is in the audience for joining us today. We hope that you enjoyed today's presentation and will participate in future webinars. If you have any outstanding questions, I know we have Lorig's contact information and we can always forward on any further interests, Lorig, if that's all right with you? And, I think that's it. So, thank you for joining us.

Dr. Charkoudian: Thank you.

Tracee Ford: It's been a real pleasure.