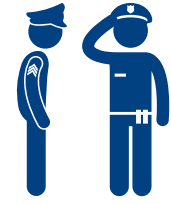# Influence Of Local Culture and History On Interactions With Youth

JDAI stakeholders will achieve greater success in their efforts to forge partnerships with law enforcement if they keep in mind several common facets of law enforcement culture.

Hierarchy and Deference to Authority

- Because they are command and control organizations, like the military, the culture of law enforcement structure can discourage new ideas and initiatives.

- Law enforcement personnel tend to be deferential not only toward superiors, but also to high-ranking officials outside of law enforcement (such as judges, prosecutors, elected leaders of city/county government).

Organizational Change and Unpredictability

- Law enforcement agencies can be buffeted by frequent leadership changes, by senior officials within the agency changing posts, and by the cyclical nature of crime.

- In light of these realities, JDAI stakeholders should seek to build connections with many officials throughout the law enforcement agency.

Uneven Openness to Community Partnerships

- Some law enforcement agencies have strong and longstanding connections with neighborhood organizations and community advocates.

- But others do not, and may look upon these organizations and advocates with mistrust.

- In jurisdictions where law-enforcement connections to communities are weak and unstructured, JDAI stakeholders can play a valuable role in bridging this divide and opening the lines of communication.

Importance of Size and Other Community Characteristics

JDAI stakeholders should tailor their strategies to the characteristics of the law enforcement agencies and the demographics and politics of the communities they serve. For instance:

- **Agency Size**: smaller law enforcement agencies can often communicate more easily and rapidly as well as change practices more quickly. Larger agencies typically have more staff available to attend meetings, organize new training programs, perform data analyses, and develop funding proposals but require more time to obtain permission for any changes in policies and practice.

- **Internal resources:** Better funded law enforcement agencies may have more staff available to participate in and contribute to JDAI efforts.

- **External Resources:** The breadth and quality of local youth-serving organizations will also impact efforts to involve law enforcement in JDAI. Alternatives to arrest and detention often hinge on the availability of programs and opportunities in the community.