



WFPL

Activists, Experts Examine Recent Police Shooting

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Christopher 2X walked up the stairs to his office and gave a grim update on the man shot earlier this week by a Louisville Metro Police officer.

The man, Bruce Warrick, is set to undergo multiple surgeries, 2X said. Doctors have removed sections of his pancreas and other organs.

“He’s got a long road to recovery,” he said.

2X is a community activist and is often the person families of shooting victims call on to help guide them through the media, hospitals, and when necessary, the courts.

Warrick is the second person this year to be shot by Louisville Metro Police and the 29th person shot by city police officers since 2011, according to police data. Of the 29 shootings by Louisville police officers, nine were fatal, according to the data.

Three of those shootings remain open and investigations are pending, data show.

With any police shooting, the department’s public integrity unit conducts an investigation and then presents its findings to the Commonwealth’s Attorney. The Commonwealth’s Attorney will determine if an indictment is warranted.

Families can often struggle with the pace at which investigations are conducted, 2X said. Answers don't always come quick.

For instance, he pointed to the August 2016 fatal police shooting of 57-year-old Darnell Wicker. The investigation into that shooting remains open some six months later.

Jeff Cooke, a spokesman for the Commonwealth's Attorney office, said that's because the office is being "thorough."

"We're leaving no stone unturned," he said.

There's no deadline for which investigations must be completed, he said. Each case presents different demands, though the protocol is largely the same.

"There's no rush to judgement," he said. "We are going to go where the facts lead us."

Jonathan Blanks is a researcher and expert on criminal justice with the libertarian CATO Institute and said it's tough to set a timeframe for investigations to be completed. But, the sooner, the better.

"The more time it takes the worse off the police department looks," he said.

Policy

The Louisville Metro Police Department's standard operating procedure allows officers to use deadly force "in defense of oneself or another when the officer reasonably believes, based on the facts and circumstances, that the person against whom the force is used poses an immediate threat of death or serious injury to the officer or to another person."

The policy also presents officers with an escalating scale of options when using force. The "progression of force" continuum includes eight elements of police action ranging from the officer's presence to the use of a chemical agent and, ultimately, to deadly force.

Policy clearly states, however, that "officers are not required to utilize each of the available options before escalating to another option."

Blanks, with the CATO institute, credits the police department's effort at transparency by their openness to release police body camera footage following fatal shootings.

The department also makes public the general process for investigating a police shooting on their website.

The Shooting

Warrick was shot on Wednesday after officers responded to a call for suspected drug use outside near a vacant house in the 2600 block of Magazine Street in the Russell neighborhood.

Police body camera footage shows the officers conduct a brief search of the house while verbally announcing their presence and pleading for Warrick to make himself known.

Officer Sarah Stumler, an eight year veteran of the police department, found Warrick hiding behind a mattress propped against a wall, the body camera footage shows. She ordered him to show his hands and then quickly fired one shot, striking Warrick in the abdomen.

She is now on administrative leave, per protocol following police shootings.

Stumler has earned more than a dozen commendations during her time on the force and has been disciplined twice, according to a report from The Courier-Journal. The Louisville Metro Police Department has yet to provide WFPL News with her personnel file.

She was not injured, according to a statement from police chief Steve Conrad.

Stumler could not be reached for comment.

Conrad also said during a news conference Thursday that no weapons belonging to Warrick were found at the scene.

‘People need help’

2X joined Warrick’s cousin to view the body camera footage shortly after the shooting.

“He wasn’t mad he was just asking what could justify that shooting,” 2X said.

Warrick, 2X said, struggled with substance abuse and now, after being shot, faces a future of uncertainty.

“The way he digests his food and everything is going to be iffy now, because of the damage,” he said.

Chanelle Helm, a local activist with the group Black Lives Matter-Louisville, said she was disappointed with the actions of the officer as shown in the body camera footage.

She questioned the tactics, but more so took issue with the situations that lead a resident of Louisville to take solace in an abandoned home.

“I don’t even understand the humanity in that,” she said. “And we call ourselves a compassionate city.”

Helm said city leaders need to invest less in the police and more in the neighborhoods being policed.

Areas like the Russell neighborhood, where Warrick was shot, struggle with poverty, blight and a dearth of resources for food, entertainment and employment. Fixing those issues, Helm said, could lead to less crime.

“People need help right now, work needs to be done right now,” she said.

Her group has led several protests around the city in recent years and she didn’t rule out similar action in response to Warrick’s shooting.

“We’re going to do what it is that we need to do, and we’re going to do that through the support of whatever the families ask us, whatever the victims ask us and whatever these communities ask us,” she said.