

LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

PATROL APPROACH TO DEALING WITH STREET NARCOTICS:  
THE SELLERS AND USERS

A LEARNING CONTRACT  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
MODULE II

BY

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Traditional policing methods, such as random patrol, saturation patrol, and other forms of reactive policing, have been found to be ineffective in dealing with certain aspects of the Nation's crime problem. Several new techniques, such as directed patrol and problem oriented policing seem to be meeting somewhat more success. These methods have enabled the police to operate much more efficiently to meet the new demands placed on them by the communities that they serve.

The majority of changes that have been advocated in policing for the past several decades reflect a continuing preoccupation with means over ends; with operating methods, processes, and general efficiencies over effectiveness in dealing with substantive police problems. In essence, police have become overly concerned with the organization rather than the impact of the organization on community problems that the police are expected to handle. Concern over this imbalance led to development of the concept of problem oriented policing 1.

#### Problem Oriented Policing

Herman Goldstein defines Problem Oriented Policing in its broadest context as a;

Comprehensive plan for improving policing in which the high priority attached to addressing substitute problems shapes the police agency, influencing all changes in personnel, organization, and procedures. Thus, Problem Oriented Policing not only pushes policing

beyond current improvement efforts, it calls for a major change in the direction of those efforts. 2

In September, 1988 the Beaumont, Texas Police Department, faced with a rising crime problem and the dilemma of shrinking resources, established a Problem Oriented Policing Program (P.O.P.) to provide more focus to their community crime response efforts.

The first step the department took was to develop a concise definition of a police "crime problem" The Department stated, "A problem is a cluster of similar, related, or recurring incidents rather than a single incident. It must be of substantive community concern and be a unit of police business." 3 P.O.P. is based on two premises. The first premise is that problem-solving can be applied by officers throughout the department as part of their daily work. The second premise is that routine problem solving efforts can be effective in reducing or resolving community difficulties.

#### Problem Solving System

The National Institute of Justice has stated that problem-solving systems follow some basic principles. These include the following:

1. The system must encourage the use of a broad range of information, including but not limited to police data.
2. The system should encourage a broad range of solutions, including but not limited to the criminal justice process.
3. The system should require no additional resources and no

special units.

4. Officers from all ranks and from all units should be able to use the system as part of the daily routine. 4

Since the effects of drug dealing are of particular concern in public housing communities, with direct implications for police service, public housing projects represent a logical place to initiate P.O.P. programs. This was the action taken in Beaumont. The Beaumont Program process was derived from problem solving processes developed through the joint efforts of the Newport News Police Department Task Force. The problem-solving process comprises four stages:

SCANNING - identifying the problem;

ANALYSIS - learning the problem's causes, scope, and effects;

RESPONSE - acting to alleviate the problem; and,

ASSESSMENT - determining whether the response worked. 5

The dynamics of retail drug dealing have particularly harmful effects on poor communities. These effects are very visible in some of our troubled public housing communities. Although there is a wide variance around the nation in the kind and degree of impact drugs have on public housing, retail drug dealing can both harm poor people as individuals and cause the poor community to become dysfunctional. 6

A dysfunctional community obviously complicates the law enforcement role.

In the initial phase of the Beaumont project, several

problems were identified within the public housing community and were labeled P.O.P. Targets. After analyzing the problems it was determined that four of the five P.O.P. targets would be specific public housing units. The patrol division began a active program in these complexes using a new P.O.P. Activity Report (Appendix 1). This report was used to measure the success of the program and to document the activity of drug dealing and loitering.

The Patrol Watch Commander has been involved directly in P.O.P. and is constantly trying to come up with new ideas or tactics that would be beneficial in resolving some of problems observed in the public housing areas. One major problem that confronted patrol officers was the large numbers of street drug dealers. The more successful the P.O.P. was in forcing the dealers out of the housing complexes the more dealers began showing up on street corners in poor neighborhoods. Drive by shootings and other drug related violence increased. The Department felt the need for a program to deal with these matters. One of the primary internal problems discovered was that Patrol did not have a organized plan or method to respond to the narcotics problem. It was decided that Patrol needed to target certain areas and coordinate their efforts with the Narcotics Unit and the P.O.P. coordinator. The Department also needed to gather information and maintain a separate file on each target. In addition, wanted to develop a standard method of information gathering and storage. A decision was made to limit the

project to the First Watch only as a Pilot Program, continue it for a four month period, and then evaluate all phases of the effort. The Department wanted to develop a program that could be accomplished by patrol officers as part of their daily work.

We wanted an approach that would be motivational and rewarding for the officers as well as serving the need to deal with the problem of drug dealing and related crime on Beaumont streets.

## Chapter 2

### TARGET AREA SELECTION

The first step in the target area selection process was to gather information from the Narcotics Unit and then meet with the coordinator of the P.O.P. to compile a basic list of possible locations. We wanted each location to be in a separate patrol sector in order that all officers working in that sector could concentrate their efforts on the single target location. It was also felt that this approach would allow Sector Sergeants to better supervise these special operations.

After considering the various target possibilities, and interviewing patrol officers for their input, we came up with a list of five specific sites. Two of these were current P.O.P. locations with useful information available from P.O.P. reports. Two of the sites were in the southern section of the city, one was central and two north. This provided good geographic spread, but after discussing the choices with the First Watch Officers, a final decision was to submit three locations to the P.O.P. coordinator for his approval. This was done with approval as recommended.

Target Area One is a two city block area on the fringe of the downtown area. This area is about six blocks northwest of Target Area Two. Target Area Two, like Target Area One, is near the Port and includes a lower income area inhabited by predominantly minority citizens. There is a



public housing complex located centrally, between the two target areas. Target Area Three is located in the north central section of the city and covers a three block area. Residents are predominantly Black and economically depressed.

Because these locations are typical of the type of problem areas found in many cities throughout the United States, they were considered good target locations for the Pilot Program.

## Chapter 3

### METHOD OF OPERATION

Identification of the dealers and thier customers was one of our primary program objectives. We also wanted to develop a standardized method of information gathering and storage. Besides gathering written biographical information from actors, we felt it would be particularly useful to photograph them. A call to the District Attorney's office was made and we were given approval to take pictures. We secured five Polaroid cameras and a case of film from the P.O.P. coordinator thereby equipping one officer in each sector with a camera. Photo albums and field notebooks were provided so that separate records could be maintained on each target location.

#### Field Procedure

A procedure was written for the program so that there would be uniformity in operation. When an officer confronted an actor in a target location he would follow the below listed guidelines:

1. Identify the actor and log in the field interview book; name, address, date of birth, social security number, phone number, place of employment, driver's license number, vehicle information, and names of associates.
2. Give the actor the next number in sequence as it appears in the book. This is the same number that will appear on the bottom center of the Polaroid photograph.

3. The photograph shall be of one actor only and should be taken from the waist up to obtain a clear facial picture. If the actor is in a vehicle then have actor stand at the rear of vehicle to the right of the license plate. The photo should be taken so that the license plate is visible on the lower left hand side.
4. If actor is with associates then the associates should be the next entry in the field book. They will be assigned the next number in sequence and repeat Steps 1-3.
5. After completing Steps 1-4, a warrant check should be made on all actors.
6. When an officer makes contact with an actor and he finds that the actor already appears in the field book, he will then verify the information in the field book with the actor. If there is any additional information or new associates he will make an entry in the field book. This entry will be made using the original number assigned to the actor and next to the number the word UPDATE will appear.

#### Program Administration

All information contained in the field notebooks is transferred to floppy disk on a weekly basis. A separate floppy disk is maintained on each target location and is filed in the Watch Commander's office. The Watch Commander, or his assistant, is responsible for maintaining the updated file. The photographs taken by the officers are placed in their assigned target location albums. Four photos appear on each page and each photo is numbered in chronological order in the same sequence as the numbers appear in the field notebook. The Sector Sergeant responsible for that particular target location ensures that photo albums are kept up to date. The index at the back of each target location photo album is numbered so that it corresponds with the

numbers that appear in the field notebooks and numbers on the photos. The index is modified weekly to update the photo album.

### Special Operations

Special Operations were also part of the program and were conducted under the supervision of the Watch Commander. When sufficient manpower was available, weekly undercover activities were conducted at one or more target locations. These operations generally consisted of undercover drug buys made by patrol officers assigned to First Watch. The Watch Commander would normally assign two volunteer patrol officers to work in plain clothes for these assignments. A target location would be selected based on the amount of observed or reported activity and the appropriate Sector Sergeant would supervise on scene support officers. Officers working undercover would not normally be assigned to that particular target area. Those normally assigned to the sector would be assigned to the support team.

All officers working a special operation would work from a designated channel and be free of other assignments until completion of the operation. The officers would enter the area and conduct business as normal, talking to actors, taking photographs, and making entries in their field notebooks. After leaving the area, the undercover team would enter and attempt to make any undercover buys. If a buy was made, the undercover team would give the description and location of the suspects and the sector officers would re-

enter the area and locate the person(s) involved. They would handle them in the usual manner i.e., identification date recorded in the field notebooks and photographs taken. In almost every case, these photographs would be taken without difficulty from the suspects. In the few instances where individuals ran, their reasons were probably varied i.e., traffic warrants, possession, etc..).

These special operations usually lasted for one hour or less because of manpower shortages. After completing the special operation, all officers would return to normal duty. The undercover officers returned to the station and completed their paperwork to be transmitted to the Narcotics Unit where the information would be consolidated with cases active in the Unit. Another benefit of this cooperative approach is that patrol officers learned the role of the undercover officers and became familiar with the necessary paperwork required to make cases of this nature. During the weeks these Special Operations were active, a strong bond developed between patrol officers and Narcotics Unit personnel.

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS PERFORMANCE

We began the program on February, 1st, 1990 and continued it for a four month period ending June, 1st. Detailed records of arrests were maintained for each target area. Arrests were made in all categories from Part One Offenses to misdemeanor possession of drug paraphernalia.

#### Target Area One

The arrests in this target location ranged from a high of 25 in February to a low of five in April. There have been a total of 41 photographs taken and 54 entries made in the target photo album and index. Fourteen Felony drug arrests have been made in this target area and 6 undercover drug cases. Officers made 17 warrant arrests during the program.

#### Target Area Two

The officers entered 50 photographs into the album for this target area and 65 entries into the index. The total number of arrests for the four month period was 43. Of that number, 14 were Felony drug and 13 for warrants. Target area two and target area one both showed a definite decrease in activity in the month of May.

#### Target Area Three

Target area three is our most troublesome area and activity in this location has not been reduced dramatically despite our efforts. We have taken 57 photos and made 71 entries into the index. Officers have made 104 arrests at

this location. There were 30 Felony Possession, three Delivery of Controlled Substance, and 36 warrant arrests.

## Chapter 5

## ANCILLARY BENEFITS

There are a number of by-products and program benefits both to the Police Department and the citizens of Beaumont. Officers directly involved in various phases of the operations feel a deep sense of accomplishment in removing a number of illegal drug dealers from the community. Clearly, it has had a beneficial impact on Department morale.

Also, target location photo books have served many purposes. In general, they have been useful as mug books because of the way they are organized. Six robberies have been cleared after identification of suspects from the target photo albums. The quality of the pictures is excellent and it has been easier for witnesses to make positive identification from them as compared to the common mug shot. The books have been useful training aids for new officers being assigned to a beat in that the albums provide instant familiarization with known drug dealers and users in the area where they will be patrolling. The Narcotics Unit has used the books to identify suspects and make identification of individuals who delivered drugs to undercover officers.

Several of the actors found in one target book also appear in other books thus, enabling officers to track certain dealers from one area of the city to another. This sharing of information is a highly important benefit of the



program. This program has provided a focus for gathering, storing and most importantly sharing, information related to drug dealers to the benefit of Patrol, Detective and Narcotics Divisions. Case preparation on drug arrests have shown marked improvement. During the four month period the program was in effect not a single drug case was refused for prosecution by the District Attorney's Office. This can be attributed to the fact that individual officers became more familiar with the identity of drug dealers and their methods of operations. This improved information makes for better probable cause decisions.

## Chapter 6

### LEGAL LIABILITY ISSUES

Prior to implementation of the program, the issue of legality of these field operations procedures had to be determined. The problem was introduced to the Jefferson County, Texas District Attorney's Office and First Assistant District Attorney, Tom Rugg, took the project under advisement. He researched the specific police actions of reasonable detention for the purpose of photographing and identifying. Mr. Rugg found that the prevailing sentiment of judges, expressed in similar cases with similar issues, was that persons on public streets do not have the expectation of privacy and can have a photograph taken of them. The contentious issue then became whether or not the police had the right of detention of the suspected drug dealers - purchasers, based on the fact they were in our well defined target areas displaying suspicious activity related to drug transactions. Mr. Rugg's review of our program guidelines, along with his suggestions on specific search and seizure laws, gave us the go ahead and backing of the Jefferson County, Texas District Attorney's Office.

During the four months the program has been in effect, not a single complaint has been lodged with any governmental agency, nor the Beaumont Police Department's Internal Affairs Unit, concerning program procedures.

## Chapter 7

## EVALUATION

One of the primary goals of our program was to reduce the number of open sales and the congregating on the streets of drug users and sellers coupled with the reduction of the level of fear in the target locations.

To determine if we were successful in reducing the level of fear in these target areas, residents and business owners of the target areas were interviewed.

INTERVIEW #1, TARGET AREA #1, June 13, 1990:

"It's not as bad for me because the police have taken a bunch to jail. For a while I was seeing officers out alot. There's not the traffic down here there used to be. It must have moved somewhere else. There's still drugs here, but they're not as visible. The dealers are more discrete. The last couple of years were terrible, but it has improved greatly. I don't even see the same prostitutes anymore."

Ruby Lamkin  
665 Langham St.  
Beaumont, Texas

INTERVIEW #2, TARGET AREA #2, June 13, 1990:

"I've noticed a big difference. I sleeps better at night without having to worry about people running up into my house. People aren't scared to come up to the barber shop or around on the street. It is a lot better since the officers started coming by at night".

Nadine Washington  
1112 Gladys  
Beaumont, Texas

INTERVIEW #3, TARGET AREA #3, June 13, 1990:

"When officers started taking pictures and getting out on people, there were fewer people hanging around on the streets. There is less traffic on the streets both day and night. Most time at night there is hardly anyone around".

William Beckett  
Owner, Beck's  
Liquor  
1771 Irving  
Beaumont, Texas

Another method of evaluating the success of the program was in how it motivated the officers working it. Arrests totals are not the only effective means of measuring success, but they do indicate increased productivity and morale. The officers were highly motivated because they felt that they were bonding together to solve a designated problem instead of just running from call to call. It was made clear to them from the start that this was their Program and it's success or failure depended on them. They responded with enthusiasm and dedication.

## Chapter 8

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We found that we were able to impact the problem of drug dealing on our streets in the target areas. Both the officers working the program and citizens living in the target areas were able to see a difference. Since the beginning of the program we have not had a drive by shooting in any of the target areas. These same three locations had been the scene of previous drive-by shootings. The overall level of drug related violence has also been reduced.

Our goal of developing a organized method of information gathering and storage as well as a program to deal with the problem of street drug sales was met. We wanted the program to be motivational and rewarding for the officers working it and in this respect it surpassed our expectations. Even with a heavy call load the officers always managed to find time to work their target areas.

Recommendations

It is our recommendation that the Pilot Program be implemented on all three Patrol Watches as a permanent part of the Problem Oriented Policing Program in the Beaumont Police Department.

## ENDNOTES

1. Herman Goldstein, Problem Oriented Policing, (New York, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1990), 15.
2. Ibid., 32.
3. Ibid., 66.
4. John E. Eck, William Epelman, Diane Hill, Darrell W. Stephens, John R. Stelman, and Gerard Murphy, Problem-Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing In Newport News. Washington, D.C., Police Executive Research Forum, 1987), 4-5.
5. Ibid., 42.
6. Deborah Lam Weisel, Tackling Drug Problems In Public Housing: A Guide For Police. (Washington, D.C., Police Executive Research Forum, 1990) 49.
7. Mrs. Ruby Lamkin, interview by author, Tape recording, Beaumont, Texas, 13 June 1990.
8. Mrs. Nadine Washington, interview by author, Tape recording, Beaumont, Texas, 13 June 1990.
9. William Beckett, interview by author, Tape recording, Beaumont, Texas, 13 June 1990.

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PROBLEM ORIENTED POLICING  
Activity Report

1. INCIDENT # \_\_\_\_\_ DATE / / TIME \_\_\_\_\_

2. OFFICER(S) NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. LOCATION \_\_\_\_\_

4. NARRATIVE

5. Suspect #1 Name \_\_\_\_\_ DOB / /

Incident # \_\_\_\_\_ Offense \_\_\_\_\_

6. Suspect #2 Name \_\_\_\_\_ DOB / /

Incident # \_\_\_\_\_ Offense \_\_\_\_\_

7. Suspect #3 Name \_\_\_\_\_ DOB / /

Incident # \_\_\_\_\_ Offense \_\_\_\_\_

8. OFFICER COMPLETING REPORT \_\_\_\_\_

(Over for additional Narrative)