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LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE OF TEXAS**

Community Policing / Cops Ahead Funding Project

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ABSTRACT

Community oriented policing is an aspect of policing that represents a trend that has proved to be successful in many communities. This information will examine the impact on the community as officers target specific geographical areas.

Different areas of research are examined to discover advantages and pitfalls for this type of display of police presence. Also, the feasibility of implementing such a program with emphasis on the impact of the individual officer will be briefly discussed. Valid recommendations with various resources will be included in the results.

The 1994 Crime Bill's program to put another 100,000 police officers on the streets of America was implemented. One approach developed by the Department of Justice under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act was the "COPS AHEAD" program. The Mesquite Police Department was selected to receive four additional officers under this federal grant. These officers are committed to a "community policing function" in targeted geographical areas. The implementation of the Cops Ahead program is instrumental in helping citizens take back the streets.

Introduction

The purpose of this research project is to develop policy goals for four police officers funded by a federal grant. The impact these officers can have on community relations will be examined. A grass roots community policing program for these officers will be implemented using this research. This information will be presented to the Chief of Police for eventual dissemination to all levels of the department.

The sources of information will include periodicals, news media publications, bulletins, professional journals and police department policies. Enhancement of existing programs and development of new programs for the Mesquite Police Department is anticipated. Continuous cycles of appraisal of community needs will be addressed. The flexibility and ongoing reframing of the program will make an attempt to accomplish the basic goals of community policing. Maximum citizen involvement and maintenance can give the community a sense of well-being. This program is meant to be flexible, not absolute in terms of community policing. Recommendations are being made that will benefit each individual officer.

The Mesquite Police Department intends to target neighborhoods that have been plagued with both crime and physical deterioration. The physical deterioration is evidenced by abandoned cars and buildings, broken outdoor lighting, littered parks and other public places. This program should not be considered a cure-all, but instead will build trust and cooperation between the targeted communities and law enforcement. Community policing officers will have to possess a great amount of initiative and self-motivation to carry the program into the 21st century. Non-traditional methods to combat illicit activities will be used. The use of abatement and civil statutes will be utilized to clear areas used for drug dealings and other criminal activity (*TELEMASP Bulletin 2.6:1995:1-6*).

Historical

After more than twenty years of experience in community oriented policing programs, the Mesquite Police Department has fashioned an individualized approach to community oriented policing that most likely will exist and grow into the next century. The Mesquite Police Department went to the public to unite citizens and police in resolving community

problems. The department's goal was to reach a point where minimal enforcement of law was necessary to maintain order.

Efforts by the Lansing, Michigan Police Department in community policing began in 1990. Two officers were assigned to two selected neighborhoods. As they became involved in these neighborhoods, the officers realized the problems confronting the residents. Both officers became inundated with tasks beyond their traditional scope of law enforcement. They became frustrated and had feelings of inadequacy in meeting the challenges of these communities (Sinclair 1994:74).

A report in the May 22, 1995, *Dallas Morning News*, reported on a New Orleans, LA Community Policing Unit and explained they are "measuring the success of community policing by what they hear and see, and what they no longer hear and see." This report states before, kids and adults alike would look at a policemen in a negative light, but now the police are stopping and talking with them, playing ball with them, they are getting use of the police and seeing them in a different light (*Dallas Morning News* 1995:13A).

Instead of rushing from call to call as they did before, members of the community oriented policing squads now do just what their name suggests. They try to take care of problems that contribute to crime, such as bad lighting, abandoned cars and even stray dogs whether or not they are part of traditional police work (*Dallas Morning News* 1995:13A).

Marquand suggests a community's needs and wants must be surveyed so that law enforcement agencies and citizens can become partners. Trying to implement a community policing program before knowing what the community thinks cannot be community oriented (Marquand 1994:42.12).

Wilson and Kelling portray citizens in foot-patrol areas as having a more favorable opinion of law enforcement personnel than those living elsewhere. Also, officers on foot-patrol seemed to have higher morale, greater job satisfaction and a better attitude toward citizens. The role of a community policing officer is to reinforce informal control in the community while preserving law and order (Wilson 1983:220).

Trojanowicz, Former Director of the National Center for Community Policing, reports community policing takes a different approach than traditional tactics such as rapid response and undercover operations. Traditional policing sets the police as experts with all the answers,

while community policing involves citizens as partners and involves them directly in the police process (Bucquerous 1994:1).

In community policing, officers are permanently assigned beats where they can interact with the same citizens face-to-face each day. This allows formal and informal input from citizens allowing them to set local police priorities and develop creative solutions to their community problems (Bucquerous 1994:1).

According to Trojanowicz, community policing is proactive and a decentralized approach that has been designed to reduce crime by intensely involving the same officers on the same beat on a long-term basis (Sloan 1992:17). He feels residents will develop a trust with this police officer and provide information and assistance to achieve a crime free area (Trojanowicz 1988:17). Community policing ranges from park and walk, to foot patrol, to having an officer in a community to encourage communication and cooperation so residents will assist the police department to set priorities and policies. Officers then carry this information back to the Department so problems can be solved and the quality of life improved (Trojanowicz 1988:17).

A community policing officer should take action with citizen assistance in resolving problems before they begin. The officer will educate citizens in crime prevention methods and crime watch organizations to gather information leading directly to the apprehension of criminals. Officers will have a concrete impact on the day-to-day lives of residents in the community. Also, the officer can target populations for special attention, typically children, women and the elderly (Trojanowicz 1988:17).

Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux describe placing an officer in neighborhoods as an opportunity to take juvenile property crime seriously (Trojanowicz 1991:14-15). It also provides the police an opportunity to make a positive impact on street level drug dealing, which often triggers violence among youth. When the police and community work together it will provide resources to alleviate open drug dealing, reduce the number of potential drug users, and reduce the drug dealers of the future. Community Policing provides the police department with information obtained from citizens to help solve serious crime (Trojanowicz 1991:14-15).

Review of Literature or Practice

In the Community Policing Exchange under “Community Policing Strategies,” an article is devoted to officers working and living on a beat. Officers in Columbia, SC, Elgin, IL and Alexandria, VA are required to live in the city (McPherson 1995:1-2).

According to McPherson, Director of Community Policing Bureau Seattle Police Department, police and community partnerships are difficult, and takes time to build relationships and to learn to trust each other, to find mutual interest and concerns and to learn a common language that results in problems being solved(McPherson 1995:1-2).

This form of partnership is a relationship involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities. Such a relationship requires trust and understanding. Trust and understanding result when one can listen to someone else’s concerns in an open, non-judgmental way. Additional steps in building a partnership are; defining the problem, asking questions about the problem, setting short-term and long term goals, taking action and assessing the effectiveness. Partnerships are difficult, but what we are learning from officers all over the country is that long-term solutions to problems require partnerships(McPherson 1995:1-2).

Chief Mangan, Spokane Washington Chief of Police, believes in order to be successful, community policing has to happen slowly, it has to happen from the bottom up, and it has to allow for adjustments depending on the particular needs of the community and neighborhoods. It’s like water flowing down a hillside. No two hillsides are alike and the water will take a different course on each. You have to be patient and see how things happen (Painter 1995:5).

Footprints, A Community Policing Newsletter, states Community Policing should not be considered a cure-all, but instead trust and cooperation between communities and law enforcement. This program helps neighborhoods in danger of being overwhelmed by crime. Problems in communities range from violent offenses to disturbances and nuisance complaints. Officers permanently assigned to neighborhoods can help to keep the community manageable and making it a safer place to live (Trojanowicz 1992:1-3).

Community policing officers should not only become a catalyst in deterring crime, but should help to lessen the fear of crime. The community should become a more personalized form of policing to break down decay and disorder. Daily contact allows officers to learn who

can be trusted and officers can realize who should be watched. Community policing should be instrumental in helping citizens take back the streets.

Community Policing officers are expected to become involved in the lives of youth, becoming their mentor and friend. Officers walking a beat can give youth a more positive attitude toward law enforcement. In the past, officers in patrol cars were untouchable and the only contact youth had with any law enforcement personnel was negative. These officers should look for ways to provide kids with alternatives to criminal activity (Trojanowicz 1992:1-3).

Critics call community policing social work, not “real” police work. Community policing officers are ridiculed as “lollicops” or the “grin and wave squad.” They should be reminded of the importance of their positions and warned of early burnout. They should be praised for doing the best job possible. Community policing officers are police officers with a special mission. They should not be judged on their productivity, but on their accomplishments in their assigned neighborhoods (Trojanowicz 1992:1-3).

According to Community Partnerships Bulletin published by the U.S. Department of Justice, particular magnets for crime and violence are inner city neighborhoods that have been plagued with both crime and physical deterioration, seen in abandoned cars and buildings⁵, broken outdoor lighting, and littered parks and other public places. Many communities have recognized the connection between neighborhood deterioration and crime, and have worked with government regulatory agencies (such as transportation, housing, health, sanitation and public utilities) and the police department to clean up neighborhoods, making them inhospitable to would-be criminals. Youth have participated and even taken the lead in clean-ups (United States Department of Justice 1994:3).

Issues in Brief, states, a “war on drugs” was declared in many communities, and law enforcement agencies were appointed the task of cleaning up the neighborhoods by clearing out the drug dealers (Hanner 1993:3).

According to Jan Wagnon, a state legislator and executive director of the YWCA in Topeka, KS asserts, “One more government program, one more cop on the street is not going to work.... The community needs to take responsibility and initiate a program that will develop at the grass roots level to reclaim the neighborhood and intervene in the lives of its

youth. We need a whole neighborhood philosophy. No single approach works” (Hanner 1993:3).

Discussion of Relevant Issues

The Community Policing program will develop new technologies to redirect emphasis from reacting to crime to preventing crime. It will permit the community to assist in crime prevention. It will increase the number of officers assigned to community policing. Police officers will participate in multi-disciplinary early intervention teams, providing specialized training in conflict resolution, mediation, etc. Community Policing will:

- Establish programs to reduce the amount of time officers spend in court.
- Develop administrative and managerial systems that facilitate adopting a community policing policy organization wide.
- Coordinate crime prevention programs with existing Federal programs.

The 1994 Crime Bill’s program to put another 100,000 police officers on the streets of America was implemented. One approach developed by the Department of Justice under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act was the “COPS AHEAD” program. The Mesquite Police Department was selected to receive four additional officers under this federal grant. These officers are committed to a “community policing function” in targeted geographical areas. The implementation of the Cops Ahead program is instrumental in helping citizens have a sense of well being (U.S. Department of Justice Fact Sheet 1994:1).

Officers will have to possess a great amount of initiative and self-motivation to carry the program into the 21st century. Officers will take action with citizen assistance in resolving problems before they erupt. Officers will educate citizens in crime prevention methods and organize crime watch organizations to gather information leading directly to the apprehension of criminals. Non-traditional methods to combat illicit activities should be used (Trojanowicz 1988:17). The use of abatement and civil statues will be utilized to clear areas used for drug dealings and other criminal activity (*TELEMASP Bulletin* 2.6 - 1995:1-6).

The community policing concept that is apparently envisioned by the Department of Justice includes the establishment of “walking beats” in high crime, inner-city areas in an attempt to bring the police department closer to the people; the use of police storefronts in

high crime, deteriorating neighborhoods; etc. (United States Department of Justice 1994:3) For the most part many of these programs are more applicable to central cities than to a city such as Mesquite. The Mesquite Police Department has taken the ideas used by other cities and has adapted them to meet the needs of its citizens and has established a formal mission statement. The statement is as follows:

Community Policing is a proactive, decentralized, full service approach that depends on community residents for input into police policy making, priority setting and input on patrol deployment. It is a philosophy and not a specific technique that recognizes that the foundation of the department is a strong mission statement, incorporating the values necessary to deliver equitably, the highest quality of service to each citizen.

Community policing seeks to intervene directly in the twin problems of crime and disorder in the neighborhoods by direct involvement in the community. Community policing acts within the community to deter, inhibit, and prevent crime, but equally an important, takes action with citizen assistance to resolve problems before they erupt as crime (Trojanowicz 1991:17).

Based on a current salary schedule a Mesquite Police Officer will receive salary and benefits totaling approximately \$118,037, plus overtime, during the first three years of service. Funding will cover costs of recruiting, hiring, training or equipping the officer, or the cost of providing and operating their police vehicles. Those costs, projected at approximately \$36,350 per officer, would apparently be a local responsibility. The total projected cost of each position^s over the three year period would be approximately \$154,397 (plus overtime); the grant would fund a maximum of \$75,000 (or 49% of the total cost) while the city would provide the remained^{er}, at least \$79,397 (or 51% of the total) for each officer hired under the program (Ivie 1994:1).

Conclusion/Recommendations

The purpose of this research project was to develop goals for four police officers funded by a federal grant. Although difficult to measure, the impact these officers can have on community relations was examined. A grass roots community policing program for these officers will be implemented allowing a tremendous amount of flexibility. This information

will be presented to the chief of police for eventual dissemination to all levels of the department.

Community Policing takes a proactive approach to crime while traditional policing is reactive. Citizens prefer crime prevention sparing them from being a victim. This effort focuses on solving problems, and uses arrests as one of the most potent tools. Officers are allowed to be creative in developing alternate solutions thus avoiding bottlenecks elsewhere in the criminal justice system. Officers work directly with young children before their problems escalate to the point of arrest. They have time to involve the community in efforts to improve the social and physical environment. Studies show that neighborhoods in decline act like a magnet for crime and drugs. Community Policing has the potential to make an immediate improvement in the quality of life by using efforts to reverse the decay in neighborhoods.

Community policing although old in concept is relatively new in urban areas. Aggressive enforcement of techniques and control have dominated law enforcement for decades. Prosecution and punishment have long been sought to societies unacceptable and deviant behavior. A get to the root of the problem approach has been fashioned into what very much took place in the old west with the town sheriff making an attempt to solve problems rather than get rid of them. Obviously, an occasional horse thief or bank robber was hung, but for the most part the local sheriff knew everybody and all their children. With the family unit deteriorating in a fast moving world, the burden has been placed on law enforcement to pioneer ways of bringing moral and social values to the attention of these dysfunctional families. It is very evident that we now have juvenile offenders being raised by former juvenile offenders.

Officers will take action with citizens support in recognizing problems before they erupt. Officers will educate citizens in crime prevention methods and organize crime watch organizations. Citizens police academies is a definite future option to draw support in closer and educate the community as a whole.

Community policing officers will have a grave responsibility as a last ditch effort on the part of law enforcement to be able to seek alternatives to arrest and confinement. These officers will have to possess a great amount of initiative and self-motivation to enter the 21st century as saviors of our communities.

With community and administrative support, the results of this program should be overwhelming. Pending appropriation of funds, selection of personnel should begin and this program can be initiated at the earliest date.

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