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**Developing and Implementing a University Crime Watch Program for the  
University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The atmosphere of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas (UT Southwestern) campus has been appealing to it's' faculty, staff, and students because it is a good place to meet new friends and to express and expand on new ideas.

Historically, UT Southwestern police officers have practiced the traditional method of policing with little involvement from the university community. However, since UT Southwestern is expanding and growing at a rapid rate, officers have been spending a vast majority of their time responding to calls for service and they have less time to spend developing relationships with citizens reporting crimes. The University Police (UT Police) Crime Prevention Unit cannot completely focus on developing proactive solutions to campus problems because they are currently preparing security surveys for existing structures and providing input for new construction. Therefore, it has become necessary for the UT Police to develop and implement a University Crime Watch Program.

The University Crime Watch Program will be a community based crime prevention program patterned after other successful Neighborhood Watch and Campus Watch programs. In order for it to be successful, the campus community and UT Police will need to form a partnership, work as a team, and participate in all efforts to deter crime on the university campus.

UT Southwestern should benefit from the strengthened communication developed between the UT Police and the campus community. Ultimately, active participation in the University Crime Watch Program should increase crime reporting, increase security, reduce the fear of crime, reduce crime, and promote a safer campus environment for UT Southwestern.

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## INTRODUCTION

The atmosphere of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas (UT Southwestern) campus is appealing to its faculty, staff, and students because it is a good place to meet new friends and to express and expand on new ideas. However, since UT Southwestern is expanding and growing at a rapid rate, neither the University Police Department's Crime Prevention Specialist nor patrol officers will be able to effectively provide adequate services to the entire campus community. Therefore, it has now become necessary to implement a University Crime Watch Program at UT Southwestern.

A University Crime Watch Program is necessary to enable the University police and campus community to work together to form a safer campus environment. Research shows that crime prevention programs based on the crime watch concept is usually the most effective and least costly approach to increasing security threats (Fossey & Smith, 1995). The result of a two-year study conducted by the Citizens Committee of New York City found in part that "active block associations substantially reduced fear of crime, encouraged crime reporting, and stimulated members' involvement in crime prevention". (NCPC, 2000b:1) A separate report prepared by the National Crime Prevention Council published a four-year study conducted on community policing in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The study focused on the Eastside, the toughest 1.75-square-mile high-density area of Bridgeport. Upon completion of the study, the Connecticut Chief of Police reported crime down 40 percent overall and 75 percent on the Eastside. The decline is even more remarkable because police believed that the reporting rate was up in the Eastside community (NIJ, 1997:14-15).

Since research shows that an effective crime watch program will indeed help police reduce crime, the UT Southwestern Police Department will research established crime watch

programs, neighborhood watch programs, and community policing by analyzing books, journals, periodicals, magazines, and internet searches to find common elements necessary for the successful implementation and maintenance of a university crime watch program.

The purpose of this research will assist in determining the security needs of the University and establishing a University Crime Watch Program that can be introduced and implemented in the campus community by the University Police. Essential to the success of the crime watch program, will be, for the community to work together as a team and participate in all efforts to deter crime on the university campus. Participation can be encouraged by conducting educative meetings and other activities designed to peak the community's interest.

Would a University Crime Watch Program be beneficial to UT Southwestern? The method of inquiry that will be used in this research will be a review of literature available. The intended outcome of this research is to present that UT Southwestern will benefit not only at the level of law enforcement, but the campus community will also benefit. UT Southwestern will benefit from the strengthened communication between the University Police and the campus community necessary to have a successful crime watch program. Active participants who work as a team with the University Police to increase security and reduce crime will feel a sense of ownership in the community. Therefore, a cooperative effort between the University Police and the campus community will promote a safer campus environment.

The University Police Department believes a University Crime Watch Program is necessary to address the needs of the growing and expanding campus community. The university crime watch program will reduce overall crime on campus through community involvement. Individuals will reduce their chances of becoming crime victims by utilizing education and training provided to them about crime prevention. Finally, the crime watch

program will allow UT Southwestern to maintain an open campus and remain a positive learning and work environment for all members of the campus community.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

A review of literature helps determine if a successful University Crime Watch Program would be beneficial to UT Southwestern. According to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (2000) an incident that occurs on a college campus or the immediate surroundings, directly affects the quality of the working and living environment. Therefore, implementing a crime watch program could reduce the potential for crime. Research shows that crime prevention programs based on the crime watch concept is usually the most effective and least costly approach to increasing security threats (Fossey & Smith, 1995). The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC, 2000) agree and state that crime watch is one of the most effective and least costly answers to crime and it is the foundation of community crime prevention. Community policing is not new; it is based on Sir Robert Peel's belief that "the police are the public, and the public is the police". (Hochstetler, 2002) Crime prevention and community policing are closely related. Successful crime prevention strategies and programs involve police-community cooperation (Palmiotto, 2000). Police departments across the country are learning that citizen interaction with police is the most effective way of sharing information. "A rapidly expanding crime rate, has placed an extraordinarily heavy burden upon police in general and the patrol force in particular." (Iannone, 1975) Iannone (1975) goes on to state that many times patrol officers are faced with a dilemma as to give superficial attention to all police incidents brought to their attention or only concentrate on the reported incidents, which can be dealt with effectively. In either event, Iannone (1975) contends that service to the public is reduced to a sometimes-unacceptable level. However, before any attempt at problem solving or

introduction of community policing initiatives occurs, personnel at all levels of a police agency should receive education in the theories, advantages, and drawbacks of community policing. By nature, most people, especially officers, automatically resist change (Hochstetler, 2002:35). The values of community policing must be communicated to every level and everyone in the organization ( More, Wegener, Miller, 1999:33) Community policing is not a quick fix to continuing problems. If it is to be successful, it will demand a long-term commitment from both the police and the community. There must be realistic expectations, as to its potential to improve the quality of life in the community (IBID). Because of mistrust and strained communication between the police and the community, the police department has to change its way of doing business (Hochstetler, 2002).

Many police administrators are considering new approaches to policing which include joint efforts with the community. These new strategies include community policing, community-oriented policing, neighborhood policing, and problem solving to name just a few (West, 1997). A fundamental shift from traditional reactive policing, community policing stresses the prevention of crime before it occurs (NIJ, 2003). Through strengthened communication and education, an effective partnership can be formed between the police and the community. A key element to preventing crime is public education (Missouri, 1997). “We must let the public know that prevention is possible, that they are capable of taking preventive action, and that it is worthwhile to do so.” (IBID) Community policing is an organization-wide philosophy, value system and management approach that promotes community, government and police partnerships; proactive problem solving; and community engagement to address the causes of crimes, fear of crime and other community issues (TX Institute For Public Problem Solving, 2003).

Crime control and prevention must be recognized as dual parts of the fundamental mission of policing (NIJ, 1997:9). Campus Watch programs provide a means of reducing the opportunity for crimes to occur through the active participation of the community in crime prevention. Campus Watch is an initiative involving the campus community in cooperation with the police, aimed at maintaining a safe community in which to live, work, and learn (Brock University, 2000). The neighborhood watch concept is designed to target specific geographical areas, assess the citizen's concerns, and to assist citizens in these areas. Police train citizens on how to be proactive by preventing crime, how to recognize and report criminal activity, and creates an information-sharing network (Enid Police Department, 2003). Citizens determine specific needs and share them with police, while the police make them aware of the needs of the department. For community policing to be successful, there must exist a "sense of community". The community can play an important role in deterring crime by watching out for one another. They can send out a message about their community that they will not tolerate crime (Palmiotto, 2000). "A community that is more involved with its police agency translates into a community more willing to cooperate with its police." (Bobinsky, 1994)

"Volunteer programs relating to community crime prevention are believed to enhance the community's capacity to prevent crime, to reduce fear of crime, and to provide more and better information that law enforcement officers can use for patrol and investigation activities." (Lin, Bill, 1990:104) Participants of Neighborhood Watch Programs tend to report crimes to police more prevalently than nonvolunteers. (IBID) The result of a two-year study conducted by the Citizens Committee of New York City found in part that "active block associations substantially reduced fear of crime, encouraged crime reporting, and stimulated member's involvement in crime prevention". (NCPC, 2000b:1) A separate report prepared by the National Crime



Prevention Council published a four-year study conducted on community policing in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The study focused on the Eastside, the toughest 1.75-square-mile high-density area in Bridgeport. Upon completion of the study, the Connecticut Chief of Police reported crime down 40 percent overall and 75 percent on the Eastside. The decline is even more remarkable because police believe that the reporting rate is up in the Eastside community (NCJ, 1997:14-45). However, Lin's (1990) study revealed that although participation in neighborhood watch programs may increase both the awareness of community crime problems and the frequency of reporting crimes, it did not necessarily reduce the level of fear of crime among the participants. (Lin, 1990) Patricia Allison Hall's (1987) study found that those participants with greater levels of involvement in the crime watch program tended to believe that the police are more effective. Police can neither solve nor prevent crime without the assistance of the community. Even when crime prevention has been reduced, crime prevention participation by citizens needs to continue if crime is not to take an upward turn (Palmiotto, 2000:114). The longevity of neighborhood watch is attributed to the fact that the program is flexible to suit the needs of each community, and can be adapted to any environment such as a campus watch program (Stegenga, 1998). Stability of the volunteer program was the measure of success or failure. When crime drops or the initial problem is alleviated, some crime watch programs slowly lose momentum (NCPC, 2000c). It is important to ensure whatever initially motivated the participants, continues to inspire them. (Lin, 1990) Maintaining crime watch programs does not require major expenditures, but it strengthens community-police communications and relations.

Even though crime watch programs are important, they cannot be the only positive interaction between the police and the community. "Even if they had no effect on crime, continuation of the watches could be justified by the increased feeling of safety experienced by

residents and by the improved relationships between police and the community.” (NIJ, 1984) Community policing offers a concept that emphasizes the police as part of the community. Police respond positively to their communities, and they assist in restoring quality of life. Yet, they do not surrender the responsibility of criminal detection and apprehension. It is a winning combination (Cox, 1992:5). The historical reactive law enforcement mode can be augmented, not replaced, by community policing (Hochstetler, 2002:35). Officers make arrests when necessary, but they also recognize the need to solve problems and help facilitate change (IBID).

## **METHODOLOGY**

While the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas (UT Southwestern) campus is continuing to expand and grow at a rapid rate, the University Police (UT Police) department’s staff has not increased proportionately to the university’s growth. Since the UT Police department will no longer be able to effectively provide adequate services to the entire campus, research was conducted to determine whether UT Southwestern would benefit from developing and implementing a University Crime Watch Program.

Would a University Crime Watch Program be beneficial to UT Southwestern? It is hypothesized that adopting a university crime watch program will be a cost effective approach to providing better police services with the additional benefit of improving police-community relations. It is believed that educating the crime watch participants, will strengthen community awareness, communication between police and the community, increase crime reporting, reduce crime, and provide a safer campus for the UT Southwestern community.

Research for this project was conducted by reviewing books, periodicals, journals, magazine articles, and internet searches. There were volumes of material on the topic of community policing, neighborhood crime watch and campus crime watch programs. The

documents were analyzed to find common points amongst the research material that revealed the elements necessary for the successful implementation and maintenance of a university crime watch program.

## **FINDINGS**

The faculty, staff and students of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas (UT Southwestern) enjoy a very open atmosphere on campus, which creates a positive environment for people to meet and study. The University Police has always provided police services to the university with minimal involvement from the campus community. While the UT Southwestern campus is continuing to expand and grow at a rapid rate, the University Police department's staff has not increased proportionately to the universities growth. Iannone (1975) found that sometimes police are faced with a dilemma of giving superficial attention to all incidents reported to them or only focusing on incidents that they can deal with effectively. He suggests that either way, sometimes services are reduced to an unacceptable level. Since the UT Police Department will no longer be able to effectively provide adequate services to the entire campus, research suggests that a successful University Crime Watch Program would be beneficial to UT Southwestern. According to Fossey and Smith (1995) crime prevention programs based on the crime watch concept is usually the most effective and least costly approach to increasing security threats. Michael Palmiotto (2000) said that crime prevention and community policing are closely related. In addition, successful crime prevention strategies and programs involve police-community cooperation.

Many police departments are considering non-traditional approaches to crime prevention. The university police department has primarily practiced the traditional method of policing in the past and the administration presents a very safe and secure image of UT Southwestern to the

campus community. Since community policing is not a quick fix to continuing problems, there must be realistic expectations as to its potential to improve the community (Hochstetler, 2002). Research shows that most people, especially officers, automatically resist change, so it will be necessary for personnel at all levels of the police department to receive education in community policing before trying to implement a University Crime Watch Program on the UT Southwestern campus. West (1997) recommends establishing a partnership between the police and the community. In order to accomplish this alliance, the police must educate the public by letting them know that they can assist with crime prevention by taking preventive action (Missouri, 1997).

Since solving crime is an essential element of police work, preventing it is the most effective way to create a safer environment for the campus community. A University Crime Watch Program would provide a means by which the community could actively participate in an effort to reduce the opportunity for crimes and help police maintain a safer community for them to work and study. According to Palmiotto (2000), citizens determine specific needs and share them with police, while the police make them aware of the needs of the department. The community can play an important role in deterring crime when that “sense of community” exists and they send out a message that they will not tolerate crime. Lin’s research in 1990 confirmed that community crime prevention enhanced the community’s capacity to prevent crime, reduce fear of crime, and provide better information to law enforcement. He also found that active participants in Neighborhood Crime Watch Programs tended to report crimes to police more prevalently than non-participants. The result of a two-year study conducted by the Citizens Committee of New York City supported Lin’s (1990) findings when it found in part that “active

block associations substantially reduced fear of crime, encouraged crime reporting, and stimulated member's involvement in crime prevention." (NCPC, 2000b:1)

UT Police cannot solve or prevent crime without the assistance of the university community. Palmiotto (2000) explained that even if crime is reduced through the crime watch program, participation in the program must continue or crime will take a turn upward. Maintaining a crime watch program does not require major expenditures, but it strengthens community-police communications and relations this is required for the crime watch program to continue successfully. Lin (1990) advised that it is important to ensure whatever initially motivated the participants, continues to inspire them. The National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC, 2000) website recognized the same potential problem with crime watch participation. The NCPC (2000) noted that when crime drops, or the initial problem is alleviated, some crime watch programs slowly lose momentum.

Since police cannot prevent or solve crime without the assistance of the community, crime watch programs are important. The National Institute of Justice (1984) reported that even if neighborhood watch programs had no effect on crime, continuation of the programs would be justified since they improved police-community relationships and increased a feeling of safety among the participants. Although community policing emphasizes the police as part of the community, Cox (1992) writes, they do not surrender the responsibility of criminal detection and apprehension. It is a winning combination. Hochstetler (2002) reminds us that the historical reactive law enforcement mode can be augmented, not replaced, by community policing. In so doing, officers make arrests when necessary, but they also recognize the need to solve problems and help facilitate change (IBID).

## **DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS**

In December 2000, UT Southwestern purchased St Paul University Hospital and UT Police immediately took over the police functions. Although the addition of St Paul only added 25 acres to the jurisdiction of the University Police, it accounted for 35 percent of UT Police activity. By September 2002, UT Police lost funding for most of the officer positions at St Paul University. Then by March 2003, the State of Texas cut the University Police Department's budget. However, the university continues to expand and grow by acquiring new property and constructing new buildings. All of this translates into rapid growth over a short period of time with fewer officers to provide services to the UT Southwestern campus.

Would UT Southwestern benefit from the development and implementation of a University Crime Watch Program? Historically, UT Southwestern police have predominately practiced the traditional method of policing with very little involvement from the community. With the continual expansion of the university over the past two years, officers spend a vast majority of their time responding to calls and have less time to develop relationships with citizens reporting the crimes. It was hypothesized that adopting a university crime watch program would be a cost effective approach to providing better services to the campus community while building police-community relations. The hypothesis is augmented by the belief that educating the community will strengthen the community's awareness of crime problems on campus, increase crime reporting and reduce crime. Further, the best way to reduce crime is to prevent it before it occurs. Therefore, it has become necessary for the university police to form a partnership with the entire campus community by developing and implementing a University Campus Watch Program. The University Police has researched and evaluated crime watch programs throughout the country and believe a successful program can be developed and

implemented for the UT Southwestern campus by combining and using parts of each successful neighborhood watch or crime watch program analyzed while practicing community policing.

The rapport formed with the campus community through community policing will support the foundation on which to build the University Crime Watch Program. Research shows that when the community and police join efforts to address crime, through watch programs, the participants get a sense of ownership in the community and provide more and useful information to the officers. Most research states that active participation in crime watch programs, reduced the participant's fear of crimes. However, other research suggests that participation in the crime watch program doesn't necessarily reduce the participant's fear of crime, but since they are aware of the crime problems and have good communication with officers, they perceive the police to be more effective. In either case, both the police and the university will benefit from the University Crime Watch Program. On their own, some people may not report criminal activity and become very frustrated with the police department for not addressing the crime. However, studies show that areas where crime watch programs were implemented, relationships were bridged between police and the community through communication, which led to reduced fear of crime, increased reporting of crimes and a reduction of crime in those areas.

Research overwhelmingly shows that community policing strengthens police-community relations, bridges communication, and is absolutely necessary to have a successful crime watch program. Since the university police cannot effectively prevent or solve crimes without the assistance of the campus community, UT Southwestern will benefit from a University Crime Watch Program. While officers are a part of the community and play an important role in community policing, they are also responsible for the detection and apprehension of criminals.

Therefore, they must determine when it is necessary for them to make arrests, use the traditional reactive approach, and when to work with the community to facilitate change.

It is believed that by using the University Crime Watch Program to augment the traditional policing approach, UT Southwestern can work together with the university community to reduce and deter crime to form a safer campus. The University Crime Watch Program will allow UT Southwestern to maintain an open campus and remain a positive learning and working environment for all members of the campus community.

This research illustrates why it is important to have an active University Crime Prevention Program at UT Southwestern. Since police staffing is not sufficient to maintain campus security through traditional methods of policing, it will be imperative for the future security of the UT Southwestern campus for each participant in the University Crime Watch Program have a “sense of ownership” in the campus community.



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