Building Solid Community-Police Relationships Through Community Policing Promising Practices From the Field

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For decades, the argument has been made that one of the surest ways to build positive, lasting community-police relationships is through an organizational commitment to community policing.[1] The IACP has a long history of building support for and developing successful community policing practices within law enforcement agencies and is a recognized leader in advocating for the implementation of community policing philosophies and practices.
The promising community policing programs described herein have been identified by the IACP in 2016 as models from which other agencies can draw ideas and lessons learned. These programs come from agencies of all sizes and types across the globe, illustrating the accessibility and adaptability of community policing as a tool for any agency.

Capitol Heights, Maryland, Police Department: Unity in the Community

Capitol Heights is a town in Prince George's County, Maryland, located inside of the Greater Capitol Heights area, a suburb of Washington, DC. The root of crime and disorder within the community was determined to be social factors, such as a lack of employment opportunities, juvenile delinquency and truancy, a lack of affordable health care, and a lack of trust in the police. To address these issues, the Capitol Heights Police Department (CHPD) started the Unity in the Community initiative, which uses collaborative partnerships with community stakeholders to build trust within the community and promotes community policing techniques and strategies to reduce crime and disorder. The CHPD has more than 70 committed partnering stakeholders who enable the agency to provide its citizens with several community programs and opportunities, all of which have reduced overall crime and disorder within the community.

The Unity in the Community initiative is led by a team of several state, county, and local government agencies, as well as community stakeholders, and employs problem-solving strategies and partnerships to tackle social issues such as finding employment possibilities, providing opportunities, providing access to health care, investing in education, and addressing safety issues. The initiative brings all of the community resources under one umbrella to address the social issues at the root of the problem.

Examples of the solutions developed by the Unity in the Community Team include providing shelter for the homeless, family counseling, job training, and job placement programs. Specifically, the team partnered with the Prince George's County Health Department in order to address mental illness and individuals who are in need of affordable health care and access to medical facilities. The partnership was able to get a grant to bring in seven medical practices that will serve community members.

In order to ensure the longevity and effectiveness of the initiative, CHPD Chief Anthony Ayers formed a committee to create a nonprofit named Unity in the Community Central Area Coalition, Inc. The nonprofit will assist in organizing community events, raising funds, and applying for grants to support all community outreach efforts.

Menlo Park, California, Police Department: Community Advisory Group

The Menlo Park Police Department's (MPPD's) model for using partnerships and city resources to solve problems and increase public trust through the integration of a strong community presence, a public engagement philosophy, and the reestablishment of core personnel within the Community Relations Unit, has had remarkable results in a very short time.

MPPD recognized that one of the first steps for the department to become successful in its goal of a safer community is to earn the trust of its community members by connecting more closely with those living and working in the community. MPPD formed a Community Advisory Group, composed of residents and business owners from each of the 20 distinct neighborhoods, that meets monthly. The group provides a forum for the members to identify crime and community issues affecting their respective areas, and the members have collaborated to develop comprehensive and coordinated plans that target neighborhoods with the most pressing challenges. The group assigned 10 block captains for their respective neighborhood watch programs who maintain communication with MPPD officers through an email-based reporting system.

The advisory group also helped improve the department's system of communicating with the community, both socially and during emergencies. Through their guidance, the police department uses numerous social media platforms to disseminate information to the public. In addition to Blackboard Connect and Nixle, MPPD now regularly utilizes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Nextdoor to communicate with residents.

The MPPD's efforts demonstrate how a small agency can work with residents and private entities to create a city government committed to serving the community.

Abington Township, Pennsylvania, Police Department: Abington C.A.R.E.S.

The Abington Police Department (APD) and the Abington School District saw an opportunity to make the community safer by helping at-risk children and families. The coalition recognized that it could develop more effective ways of working with those groups by quickly identifying seriously at-risk children, families, or groups, as well as potentially risky situations, before a tragedy occurred or law enforcement was required to intervene. The coalition also recognized that it was necessary to expedite the application of the precisely selected services to assist those groups.

In order to ensure the coalition's objectives were met, the APD and the Abington School District developed and implemented a new initiative entitled the Abington Collaborative Assessment and Response for Expedited Services or Abington C.A.R.E.S. The initiative brings together operational-level personnel from relevant agencies and disciplines on a regular basis to discuss and analyze the cases of the most at-risk children and families or risky situations, as well as those cases having the most adverse community impact. The initiative decides which agency or partner organization should take the lead on each case and expedites the enhanced, targeted services to solve the problem before it leads to a tragedy. An evaluation of the initial response then determines if further services are needed to solve the problem. The initiative partners with youth-oriented institutions, city management organizations, town government agencies, and others in the community dedicated to serving youth. Regular meetings allow for accurate and current information to be shared among cooperating agencies and organizations, which increases the effectiveness of all groups involved.

The participating agencies and their representatives almost immediately began to see value in the efficiency with which they are able to resolve cases with the ready assistance of other agencies and disciplines who were right

there in the same room, working on the same problems. Situations that were previously taking weeks to simply get participants together are now getting completely resolved in days, due to the diligence and increased effectiveness of Abington C.A.R.E.S.

Office of Superintendent of Police, Balod, India: New Dawn (Navodaya)

Balod, a district in India, is mostly an agrarian area of 1 million people. The area is rife with homicides and property crimes, as well as cybercrimes and online frauds. In an effort to fix the issues in the district, the Balod police developed and implemented the New Dawn (Navodaya) community policing program. New Dawn forged new symbiotic relationships among multiple stakeholders to reduce crime and disorder.

The local police stations visited towns and villages and interacted with the community during weekly markets and fairs. The local police stations also held meetings with the residents to activate mobile police stations in an effect to increase the knowledge and understanding of the specific issues affecting the community.

The New Dawn program isolated and worked to solve key problems through partnerships of the police and the community. Rather than rely on conventional needs, the SARA (scanning, analysis, response, and assessment) model was utilized to identify troublesome situations that might warrant urgent solutions. The data systems provided trends of crime, crime-prone locations, vulnerable communities, shortcomings, and inadequacies of the police, and that information was used to create the best responses to the underlying problems.

The New Dawn program was initiated due to a shortage of police officers and the urgent need to reach more people at once for the most effective delivery of services. Partnerships developed by the community and key stakeholders improved social media communications, responses to victims, traffic safety, and public order.

Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Border Patrol, Falfurrias, Texas, Station: Strategic Planning

The U.S. Border Patrol's Falfurrias Station Strategic Plan (SSP) 2020 clearly articulates and organizes ongoing operational and administrative processes and provides the physical platform for developing, implementing, and sharing the community policing approach. The plan provides a viable, shared roadmap to navigate and prioritize the numerous complexities, issues, and

challenges the agency shares with its community stakeholders to optimize the station's collective efforts to improve border security and community safety.

The SSP 2020, drafted in collaboration with community stakeholders, outlines various initiatives, programs, and best practices that guide the agency toward mission success, while integrating community policing practices into its overall service delivery. Under the SSP 2020, the station established the following four collective community goals: (1) improved operational capability and awareness; (2) enhanced communications; (3) increased institutional and doctrinal development; and (4) focused employee development, improved morale, and team safety.

Santa Fe College, Florida, Police Department: Safe Santa Fe

The Santa Fe College's Safe Santa Fe initiative began after high-profile crimes were reported on campus. These incidents, coupled with active shooter reports and declining trust in law enforcement across the United States, called attention to the need to strengthen partnerships to reduce crime, increase prevention practices, and improve awareness of the dedicated professional Santa Fe College Police Department.

The agency implemented the Safe Santa Fe initiative as an um-brella for its community policing efforts. Concepts are integrated with multiple partners throughout the agency, college, and community, incorporating safety branding and messaging, training for students and staff, extensive staff professional development, victim services, increased reporting, technology, and a college-wide threat assessment and behavioral intervention team that includes the police. The Safe Santa Fe initiative will continue to be the flagship of an array of community policing efforts designed to ensure a safe and secure learning environment for all.

Dubai Police Force Headquarters, United Arab Emirates: Security Education Program

In order to strengthen national identity; instill loyalty; and build a conscious, self-immune to crime generation and stable families, Dubai Police coordinated with different stakeholders and with the community to contribute to the development of an empowered Emirati generation that is able to cope with current and future challenges. A Security Education program was launched to cover Dubai with the vision of preparing and empowering the next generation of residents to manage themselves and their relationships with others. Following the positive results of the program in Dubai, the program has progressed to a higher level to cover all schools and universities in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

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One of the deliverables of the Security Education program that the Dubai Police has developed is electronic awareness games built with cutting-edge video game technology in an Emirati style for communicating awareness messages, strengthening the national identity, and instilling loyalty to the UAE. These video games were developed in collaboration with more than 40 organizations and 1,000 students. The aim of these games is to use innovative and engaging delivery methods to communicate messages, concepts, and different awareness lessons to the community. Electronic games are considered to be one of the best ways to spread awareness because of the widespread use of games on various devices and systems, and the games are designed to be interesting and enjoyable for both youths and adults.

Brattleboro, Vermont, Police Department: Culture Change

In 2014, the Brattleboro Police Department embarked on a concerted effort to increase the trust and confidence of the community in the department. The department realized that a big aspect of the problem was a lack of familiarity based on the absence of police interactions with the community outside of calls for service or investigations. Trust, confidence, and relationships need to be built between conflicts, not during them. The department began a top-to-bottom effort to build relationships with the community outside of traditional law enforcement contexts.

Command staff met with civic groups, religious organizations, neighborhood representatives, and underrepresented populations to refine their understanding of this problem. As the department sought partners for their efforts, skepticism from these groups shifted to curiosity and, then, to optimism. Their desire to collaborate had always been present, but it had gone unexpressed by them and undiscovered by the department. Through the redeployment of resources, structural changes in training and performance evaluation programs, and other efforts, the entire department is making a cultural shift in how it engages the community.

The department recognized that the best way to learn what community members want and need is to ask them. Through open and frank dialogue, the public became educated on law enforcement perspectives while, at the same time, the department learned how its efforts are received.

After initial struggles with external and internal buy-in, the department has had great success. It is now common for groups of residents to contact the police

department to set up meetings and discuss growing problems before they fester into emergencies or tragedies. Increased trust and confidence have resulted from the department's efforts.

Northampton, Massachusetts, Police Department: DART

The Northampton Police Department, along with the rest of the United States, was very concerned with the recent dramatic increase in opioid overdoses. In response to this trend, the department initiated the Drug Abuse Response Team (DART) program. The department partnered with local stakeholders, developed a plan, and implemented the plan in February 2016. DART officers are patrol officers who volunteered to participate in this program—they are in communication with people from local health care resources, they have training in connecting people with these resources, and they attend ongoing training on this subject. They read the police log every day and scan for individuals who have overdosed on opiates. They then actively seek these individuals out and work to proactively encourage and help them seek treatment. DART officers serve as social workers, not enforcers, during these encounters. The goal is to get individuals into treatment and to prevent future overdoses and deaths. Over time, DART officers follow up with individuals to provide ongoing support.

As the department moved forward with the DART program, it developed new relationships with extended community partners including regional hospitals, urgent care providers, and other health service organizations. Health care counselors from these organizations helped the department better understand what treatment resources were available locally and how officers could connect people with these resources. The chief of police, captain of operations, and DART officers met with treatment providers as a way to familiarize themselves with treatment options.

The DART program has improved the department's partnerships with existing service providers, created new partnerships with service providers in the local area, resulted in in-patient and out-patient treatment for several of the individuals who the officers contacted after an initial police encounter, and brought about training for all staff on the science of addiction and the destigmatization of drug addiction.

Implementing the DART program is producing positive short-term and long-term results, and it is a step in the right direction when it comes to best practices regarding law enforcement's response to addiction.

Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Police Service: Neighborhood Resource Centre

The Gore Street neighborhood in Sault Ste. Marie is one of the most disadvantaged neighborhoods in the area. Although it represents only 10 percent of the population, it generates more calls for service than any other area. This fact gave the Sault Ste. Marie Police Service (SSMPS) motivation to pilot a new community policing model combined with intelligence-led and problem-oriented policing, as well as social development efforts. In April 2014, Ontario's Mobilization and Engagement Model of Community Policing was launched in the Gore Street neighborhood. The goal of the initiative was to increase community safety and well-being in the neighborhood by preventing and reducing crime through an engaged and committed network of neighborhood residents and community partners.

Led by SSMPS, several agencies agreed to open the Neighborhood Resource Centre (NRC) on Gore Street, and they committed to provide immediate, coordinated, and integrated response to situations and local issues identified within the neighborhood and focusing on addressing systemic barriers preventing social development. Initially, only 8 agencies joined the department at the NRC, but that number has grown to 30. Colocating with partners has broken down barriers by providing residents with seamless access to coordinated services, readily accessible within their own neighborhood.

The NRC has engaged the local residents to open the Other Side, a community center attached to the NRC that is operated by community residents for their own self-delivered activities, events, and agency-supported programming. SSMPS and its partners collaborate to use the Other Side for resources and events such as Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, a medical and dental clinic, and numerous other neighborhood-based programs and initiatives.

Addressing risk factors through a multifaceted approach involving a broad spectrum of community partners and stakeholders has proven to be one of the best ways to increase community safety and well-being, as learned by the SSMPS. The NRC is an excellent example of the results that can be achieved through these types of activities. By focusing the service's efforts on community policing and mobilizing the most qualified social agencies in risk reduction, crime prevention, social development, and emergency response, community safety and well-being within the neighborhood has improved.

Sarasota, Florida, Police Department: BLUE + YOU

In 2012, the City of Sarasota was facing a public relations nightmare—an event with an officer had led to a drastic decrease in the community's trust in law enforcement.

The Sarasota Police Department (SPD) developed the BLUE + YOU initiative as a way to begin to rebuild public trust. The BLUE + YOU initiative works toward building partnerships with community leaders; getting officers to interact on many levels with citizens; and developing goals together to make the community a safer place to visit, live, and work.

The department partnered with the Ringling College of Art and Design to brand the BLUE + YOU initiative, which launched in the spring of 2014. The college students were able to assist the department in reestablishing the visual and communicative needs of the police department by designing a new website.

When SPD adopted the BLUE + YOU initiative, it quickly became more than a slogan; instead, it was a community policing philosophy driving the department's daily focus and overall mission.

SPD Chief Bernadette DiPino discovered that much of the original resistance to the program wasn't from the community but from the department's officers. Due to the repeated negative portrayals by the media, many officers believed that the relationship between SPD and the community had decayed beyond repair.

Since the BLUE + YOU initiative went into action, a distinct change has occurred in the interactions of the officers and the community members. Citizens feel confident enough to call the police with concerns and issues and are more likely to cooperate as witnesses.

The best evidence that the initiative is taking a strong foothold is the increased level of participation from officers themselves. Those who were once forced to participate in events and communicate with the public discovered that citizens hadn't lost as much faith in them as the officers had thought. They discovered much of the fear people displayed wasn't necessarily from bad experiences; it had been shaped by media and public opinion. The SPD's concerted implementation of a community policing philosophy has made a positive impact on the community.

Hanover County, Virginia, Sheriff's Office: Worship Watch and SHIELD

Colonel David R. Hines, sheriff of Hanover County, has developed measures to ensure a culture of community policing and partnerships within his organization, as well as formally partnered with the community through multiple innovative programs.

The community policing culture of the sheriff's office finds its foundation in mutual participation. With more than 40 formal community policing and partnership programs, Colonel Hines, through his leadership and the agency's mission to continually collaborate with the community, has established a platform for lasting partnerships and seamless communications with the community.

In a recent effort to continue building community partnerships, Colonel Hines developed the Worship Watch program. This program, similar to a neighborhood watch for the faith community, includes efforts to train those from various churches and worship centers together in disaster preparedness. It connects communities in many of the county's rural areas where neighborhoods and businesses are not common and provides access to identified resources in the event of a disaster. Worship Watch consists of approximately 120 churches, estimated to connect with more than 70,000 citizens in Hanover County.

Another innovation in Hanover Country community policing is the HCSO SHIELD initiative. The SHIELD initiative serves as an umbrella connecting all of the agency's community programs to a central communication point, while creating a sharing mechanism through partnerships on trusted information, crime trends, and matters of homeland security. SHIELD connects the local community with communities across the United States—essentially, this program ensures every community group and resident in the county has a partnership mechanism, a "see something, say something" focus, and an ability to connect with the Hanover County Sheriff's Office.

The culture of community policing within the Hanover Sheriff's Office was not developed by a particular community partner or group; instead, it was established by "a vision casting" designed to include the community the agency serves. The sheriff's office considers community vision casting as one of the most effective and inclusive methods of creating a culture of community policing. In any organization, buy-in to a vision is a powerful tool; it will mark a difference in performance as officers and members of the community will be motivated by their inclusion in the vision.

Seattle, Washington, Police Department: Micro Community Policing Plans

Recognizing a one-size-fits-all approach is neither appropriate nor effective in most situations, Seattle Police Department's (SPD's) Micro Community Policing Plans (MCPP) were designed to be the next evolution of the department's community policing model. MCPP are tailored to address the individual needs of each community, with an approach owned by the community. These plans are built from the ground up and the result of direct collaboration between residents, business leaders, stakeholders, and police officers on the beat.

SPD's MCPP initiative helps to move community policing into a broader agenda of community justice. The concept is based on the ideas that communities can be organized around places, people, common personal identities, or shared interests and goals and that community-police relations can be improved with efforts to develop trust, forge relationships, and identify shared goals between law enforcement officers and the many communities they serve.

Under the MCPP initiative, community residents work in partnership with their local police precinct captain and their community policing team sergeant to identify priority problems, analyze existing quality-of-life and crime data, and design individualized MCPP to address neighborhood-based public safety concerns. The SPD MCPP initiative was supported through a partnership composed of the Seattle Police Department, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, and private foundations and corporations via the nonprofit Seattle Police Foundation.

SPD's MCPP process has resulted in a 14 percent reduction in property crime in the first year alone. The MCPP priority areas have all seen a significant decline in auto theft, represented in nearly one-quarter of all micro plans, down 30 percent. These targeted strategies, along with community involvement, will continue to have an impact on crime and organizational legitimacy.

The MCPP is a focal point for SPD's commitment to addressing each and every community it serves. SPD believes this is the next approach to evidence-based policing that focuses on addressing each of the primary elements of community policing to bring together partnerships, problem-solving policing, and organizational transformation.

Many law enforcement agencies are trying to identify ways to build trust in communities and legitimacy, especially in identity and ethnic communities. Through the MCPP initiative, SPD has discovered a new way to work with diverse communities. ♦

- See more at: http://www.policechiefmagazine.org/building-solid-community-police-relationships/#sthash.JC7j3o0O.dpuf