

COMMUNITY POLICING AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Is your community at special risk for crime?
- Are you concerned about the security and safety of your community?
- Would you like to take an active stand for the well-being of your community?

If so, use the community-policing approach to reduce crime and the fear associated with it.

Why Do It?

With the existence of crime in society, law enforcement is greatly needed. Although police are always here to protect us, many people wish they had a voice in how they need to be protected. Community policing enable residents to join with local police to more actively combat crime in their communities.

Elements of Community Policing

Community policing builds on fundamental policing practices with an emphasis on crime prevention and lasting solutions to problems. It requires new commitment from citizens and new thinking from police officers. Central to community policing are three essential and complementary components:

Community Partnerships: Community partnerships recognize the value of bringing people back into the policing process. All elements of society must pull together as never before to deal effectively with the unacceptable level of crime claiming America's neighborhoods.

Problem Solving: Once priority concerns have been identified, problem solving involves analyzing information about the problem to find out who is being victimized and how, when and exactly where the problems occur and what environmental (or other) conditions make it easy for the crime to occur. Once the nature of the problem is better understood, tailor-made solutions are jointly developed and implemented by police and community members. They also work together to define success and measure the impact of their efforts.

Change Management: This requires recognizing that forging community-policing partnerships and implementing problem-solving activities will change the organizational structure of policing. Properly managed change involves recognizing the need for change, communicating a clear vision that change is possible, identifying the concrete steps needed for positive change to occur, developing an understanding of the benefits of change, and creating an organization-wide commitment to change.

How Community Policing Works

Policing Goals: As the police and community become partners to address the problems of disorder and neglect that breed serious crime, community policing places a greater emphasis on crime prevention. As the partnership strengthens, community policing can address the roots of crime.

Active Community Involvement: Community policing recognizes that community involvement gives new dimension to crime control activities. While police continue to handle crime fighting and law enforcement responsibilities, the police and community work together to modify conditions that encourage criminal behavior.

Trust: Establishing and maintaining mutual trust is the central goal of this community partnership. Trust will give police greater access to valuable information that can lead to solving and preventing crimes. Building trust will require an ongoing effort, but it is essential to effective community policing.

Long-Term Commitment: Community policing does not offer a quick fix. It requires a long-term commitment by police to work with community members to reach mutually acceptable goals.

Wide-Ranging Benefits

Police are finding that, in addition to bringing them closer to the people, community policing offers myriad other benefits. Making effective use of the talents and resources available within communities helps extend severely strained police resources. As police interaction with the community becomes more positive, productive partnerships are formed. This may lead to greater satisfaction with police services and increased job satisfaction among police officers. Reduced levels of crime allow more police resources to be allocated to services that have the greatest impact on the quality of community life.

How to Begin

Communication is the foundation for cooperation, coordination, collaboration, and change. Start communication early in the community-policing implementation process.

If you are a law-enforcement agency representative interested in implementing community policing, join your peers in examining the crime-control problems in your community and discuss how a community-policing approach can enhance your current enforcement efforts. Share what you know about community policing with community members and representatives of local groups. Begin talking about their perceptions of crime and disorder in their neighborhoods.

If you are a member of a community organization, contact your local law enforcement agency to discuss its community policing efforts. Ask them how your community organization can assist them in addressing the problems of crime in your neighborhood.

Additional Resources

- U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 1100 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20530, (202) 514-2058 or 1(800) 421-6770
- Bureau of Justice Assistance at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA>
- Community Policing Consortium, 1726 M St. NW, Suite 801, Washington, DC 20036, (800) 833-3085, Fax (202) 833-9295

Additional copies of this Technote are available from the Office of Community Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Room 701, 300 7th Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20024 (1-800-645-4712). Copies may also be obtained at

<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ocd>

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