

Problem Solving Quarterly

A NEWSLETTER OF THE POLICE EXECUTIVE RESEARCH FORUM
FUNDED BY THE BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE

A True Commitment From Top to Bottom

By Diane Hill

Implementing and managing problem-oriented policing, was the focus of a roundtable discussion during a recent PERFBJA sponsored conference in San Diego. The non-traditional policing approach is described as a department-wide strategy aimed at solving persistent community problems. The 70 police officials participating in a roundtable discussion concluded that the problem-oriented approach to drug enforcement would only succeed with the commitment of police officials at all levels.

Participants agreed that *police* officials must first commit themselves to the principles of problem-oriented policing if they are to suc-

ceed in getting cooperation from other agencies. The police officials, who were of all ranks, agreed that police executives need to accept the responsibility of providing necessary resources to assist officers in becoming effective problem solvers. Further, conferees noted that police officers, as well, have to accept the challenge and commitment to do more than just respond to incidents. Officers must *use* available resources to solve problems. The participants acknowledged that commitment at all levels within the police agency is the only means of ensuring that problems are addressed with broader and more effective responses.

Training And Supervision

Police officials discussed key departmental resources needed that would encourage problem solving efforts. As **Inspector Ed McLaughlin** of Philadelphia suggested during this discussion, "Problem oriented-policing can't be done in a vacuum." Existing policies, practices and pro-

cedures may need to be changed in order to provide a more accepting police environment for the problem-oriented approach.

Training on the problem solving process was one of the necessary resources identified by the conference participants. Training that focused on the mechanics of problem solving, as well as on discussions of case examples of successful local problem solving efforts was considered most beneficial. Training for street officers who would most likely be assigned to address problems was considered essential, but Officer Mark Butterfield of San Diego pointed out, "Supervisors must also be motivated to work with the new approach." Thus, the group concluded that training should extend throughout the ranks.

Beyond training, participants suggested that providing appropriate supervision to officers could increase the number and quality of problem solving efforts. **Dr. Ardith Peters** of Atlanta suggested that supervisors in problem-oriented policing agencies may require skills that differ from supervisors in depart-

Problem Solving Quarterly is supported by Grant No. 88-DD-CX-K072 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs, coordinates the activities of the following program offices and bureaus: the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Institute of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of this agency. Problem Solving Quarterly, published by the Police Executive Research Forum, seeks to foster exchanges of information regarding problem-oriented policing. Please submit articles to Diane Hill, Editor, at PERF, 2300 M Street, N.W., Suite 910, Washington, DC 20037.

ments that are more traditional and are strictly incident driven. That difference, according to **Officer Mike Nance** of Tulsa, suggests that the role of a supervisor in the non-traditional policing agency be similar to that of a coach. In that role, the supervisor would be responsible for inquiring about the various aspects of problems, probing for more creativity from officers, encouraging broader solutions and removing barriers, both internal and external. **Lt. Carolyn Robison**, also from Tulsa, proposed that supervisors be more aware of community resources in order to assist the officers in identifying broader responses. Supervisors, then, would be expected to know what community resources were available and to share that information with their officers.

Providing Time

Of critical concern to the participants was the need to allow officers the time to engage in problem solving activities. Several department representatives, including those from Philadelphia and Newport News, indicated that they had conducted patrol log audits to determine whether officers had the time to routinely solve problems. Consistently, the departments' calculations concluded that time was available. However, **Sgt. Lou Arcangeli** from Atlanta attested, "An officer won't have 45 minutes of uninterrupted time." Sgt. Arcangeli suggested that supervisors be flexible in scheduling-allowing flex-time when appropriate and freeing up blocks of time by allowing officers not to handle calls for a specified period.

But, as Detective **Mary** Cornicelli of San Diego and **Captain Bob Seal** of Tampa both warned, it is important that the officers, who must then handle those extra calls, have been informed of the particular problem solving effort. It is equally important that those officers realize that temporarily handling the extra calls will benefit all of the officers if the problem is solved. Under those circumstances, all of the officers in-

doing our jobs," said Inspector McLaughlin. McLaughlin suggested that police agencies must also train the community when to call the police. When the mere expectations of the community dictate the role of the police, officers usually spend much of their time responding to calls that could most appropriately be handled by other agencies. Are police agencies shooting themselves in the foot when they continue to

respond to the sometimes unrealistic expectations of the community? Some existing department policies restrict the available time of officers to do problem solving. **Officer Tom Rhodes** of San Diego suggested that chief executives review and change those policies when necessary.

Recognizing Efforts

An equitable reward system was also identified as a prerequisite for expanding problem solving efforts. Officers need to be recognized and rewarded for problem solving efforts

if problem oriented policing is to become more than a temporary police strategy. Although personal satisfaction was discussed as a significant incentive for many officers, most participants agreed that both formal and informal rewards were appropriate. "Officers want to solve problems on their beat," said **Officer Joe Howie** of San Diego. **Captain Seal** agreed. "They enjoy the autonomy," suggested **Captain Seal**. Giving officers that independence can sometimes be rewarding for them. **Officer John Quicci** of Tampa indicated that his department has placed promotions on hold, so officers realize they are not going to go

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Problem Oriented Approach To Drug Enforcement

Participants in the roundtable discussion were attending a three-day management conference on the Problem-Oriented Approach to Drug Enforcement project, funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. One of the objectives of the project is to increase the effectiveness of police in battling drug problems. Five police agencies are participating in the project: Tampa, Tulsa, Philadelphia, Atlanta, and San Diego. Representatives from each of these departments attended the conference held in San Diego, CA, October 25-28. Additionally, local housing officials from San Diego, Tulsa, Tampa, and Atlanta as well as US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) officials from San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Las Vegas attended the conference. Representatives from the Newport News, VA, Police Department and the Broward County Sheriff's Department in Florida also participated in the conference.

involved, both directly and indirectly, need to be recognized as contributors to the overall success of the problem solving effort.

Shaping Community Expectations

Finally, participants reiterated that the commitment, even as it relates to adequate time, has to come from all levels. First line supervisors can provide the necessary time for problem solving only if chief executives are paving the road that would lead to departmental strategies aimed at providing that available time. "We must look at the way we're

Problem Solving In Practice #1

Clearwater's Police and Housing Authority Combine Forces

By Lt. J.D. Eastridge

Condon Gardens is the largest subsidized public housing project in Clearwater, Fl. Its population of 1,500, mostly single female headed households, resides in 278 housing units. About 500 children under the age of 18 are included in the population.

Since its construction in 1974, Condon Gardens has experienced problems prevalent in other government-subsidized housing projects: domestic violence, open gambling, drug and alcohol abuse, unsupervised children and general lawlessness. With the onset of the crack cocaine problem of recent years, open drug dealing has reached epidemic proportions. An increase in violent and property crimes has resulted as drug dealers fight for turf and drug users commit crimes to support their dependency on drugs.

Concerned officials of the Clearwater Housing Authority and Police Department have joined forces to combat the problems that had gone unchecked by traditional methods.

Police Mini-Station

A community-based policing program was established in Condon Gardens in November 1986. The Gardens' Neighborhood Patrol moved into the housing project, taking residence in a building that

previously housed a classroom and a counseling center. Two police officers were assigned full-time duties at the mini-station.

Establishing a sense of community pride and gaining the support of law-abiding citizens within the neighborhood were two of the first tasks undertaken by the officers. Both police and housing officials realized early on that a major clean-up and repair effort at the housing project was necessary. Junk cars that littered the area were removed, and new parking regulations prohibiting parking on lawns were enforced. Residents formed groups to remove litter that had accumulated, and the Housing Authority improved maintenance of the housing units and grounds.

Officers T.W. "Jack" Mulder and Mark Cairns were the two police officers first assigned to the mini-station. The officers developed a close relationship with a number of the residents as they stopped on their rounds to discuss the resident's problems. This close contact with those living in the complex was important in the initial phase of this effort.

A number of factors affecting the quality of life of the residents were being addressed through the collaborative efforts of the police and housing officials. Early successes included the improvement of the physical appearance of the housing facility and the acceptance of the officers by a majority of the residents. The officers realized that the use of both traditional and non-traditional approaches would be necessary to have any significant impact on the escalating drug problem. Relying on information from informants, as well as their own observations, the officers began carting away drug dealers in handcuffs.

Two issues were important in the fight to remove drug dealers from Condon Gardens. First, after studying the drug problem in Condon Gardens for some time, it became

clear that many of those arrested for drug violations were "invisible tenants" - relatives or boyfriends of residents who were not authorized to live in the housing units. Other arrestees were "outsiders" who came into the housing complex only to deal their drugs. Identifying those "invisible tenants" and "outsiders" was necessary to the successful resolution of the problem.

The first step toward that goal was the establishment of a parking decal program. Decals were issued to all lease-holding residents of Condon Gardens. Strict control of decal issuance was maintained. Signs warning those entering the complex that decals were required were posted. Those vehicles found to be in violation were quickly impounded.

Agents of Housing Authority

The second step was to authorize police officials as representatives of the Housing Authority for the purpose of issuing trespass warnings - an agreement approved by the Clearwater Housing Authority. Now, convicted criminals are given warnings by police officers to leave the complex. If they fail to do so or subsequently return, they are arrested for trespass in accordance with Florida state law. Only one such arrest has been contested in court, and the judge ruled in favor of the officers.

How successful has the Condon Gardens project been? Grass now grows where junk cars once littered the lawns. Bands of juveniles no longer roam the streets, and the drug dealers have been arrested or forced to move out of the area. Community service programs, educational programs, and boys and girls clubs flourish in the new environment. In short, a true community spirit has evolved.

For further information, contact **Lieutenant J.D. Eastridge** of the Clearwater Police Department at (813) 462-6018.

For Your Information

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 has been approved. The act contains several sections with relevance to housing and police officials*:

Termination Of Leases In Public Housing

The act amends existing law concerning lease provisions. It confirms that Public Housing Authorities have the legal authority to evict a public housing tenant, a member of the tenant's household, or a guest, if either is engaged in or is convicted of drug-related criminal activity on or near public housing premises.

Clearinghouse On Drug Abuse In Public Housing

The secretary of HUD is authorized to establish a clearinghouse in the Office of Public Housing to receive, collect, process, and assemble information regarding the abuse of controlled substances in public housing projects.

Regional Training Program On Drug Abuse in Public Housing

Regional training programs for public housing officials will be developed. It is expected that the training will serve to better prepare and educate officials to handle the widespread abuse of controlled substances in the communities.

Denial Of Federal Benefits To Drug Traffickers And Possessors

The act allows HUD to use existing procedures to permit public housing officials the discretion to screen potential tenants for determination of any previous drug use or drug distribution. Tenants may be denied admission into public housing based on results of screening.

*(Memorandum from Timothy Coyle, Asst. Secretary for Legislation and Congressional Relations, November 3, 1988.)

Relying on the Law

By Diane Hill

Provisions of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 may provide further direction for police and housing officials as they continue to develop collaborative efforts to respond to escalating drug problems in public housing. Five departments participating in a BJA-funded project, Problem-Oriented Approach to Drug Enforcement, are completing inventories of the problems associated with drugs in public housing. Police departments in Tulsa, Tampa, San Diego, Philadelphia, and Atlanta are collecting information on drug related deaths, drug abuse treatment admissions, school disciplinary actions related to drug abuse, and emergency room episodes linked to drugs. Additionally, data on arrests for driving under the influence of drugs other than alcohol, drug seizures, and drug arrests are being analyzed by the police officials.

Developing Responses

From the information collected in the inventories, police officials are attempting to get a clearer understanding of the underlying factors contributing to the overall drug problem. With the cooperation of other agencies and with a clearer sense of what the problems are, the police expect to be able to develop more effective solutions to the crime problems plaguing public housing. Findings represented in these departmental inventories could provide impetus for future policies to aid in the war against drugs.

Further, provisions to screen potential tenants for prior drug use or distribution and to evict tenants who are convicted of drug related criminal activities serve as one additional strategy for responding to in-

creasing violence in public housing. Police and housing officials, working together, to enforce this provision can play a key role in restoring a sense of control to public housing tenants. Several departments across the country have already begun working successfully with housing authority officials to enforce such laws.

Who's Who

Problem-Oriented Approach to Drug Enforcement

PERF Program Staff

Darrel W. Stephens
John E. Eck
Deborah Lamm Weisel
Diane Hill

PERF Field Coordinators

Karen Allen
Sandra Hu'uley
Nancy McPherson
John Meeks
Joseph Perez

BJA PROGRAM MONITORS

Richard H. Ward
Chief, Law Enforcement Branch
Donald J. Anderson
Program Manager

Problem-Solving in Practice #2:

The Analysis Model: An Investigative Tool

During February and June of 1988, there was a rash of robberies in Newport News, VA. Many of these armed robberies were committed during operating hours against personnel of motels in the northern area of the city. In the motel robberies, witnesses indicated that the suspect was a black male. The witnesses were able to provide little description of the suspect since the clerk saw the suspect for a very brief time, and the suspect usually wore a woman's stocking over his face.

Complicating the investigation even further, the suspect committed the crimes sporadically, with no easily recognizable pattern. However, the detectives believed that the suspect usually robbed motels within a four to six mile radius. With no prints left behind and with little information from witnesses, the robbery squad was at a stalemate. Even if the suspect were arrested, the detectives realized that they had insufficient evidence for prosecution for any prior robberies. **Detectives Mike Pennington and Dallas Mitchell**, investigators in the robbery squad, were assigned to work on the robbery cases.

Organizing Data

The detectives decided to use the analysis model to organize and maintain the evidence and information in a systematic order. (The analysis model was developed by members of the department and the Police Executive Research Forum under the problem-oriented policing project in

Newport News). Information from the crime analysis unit and the department's record division was gathered. Police reports of hotel robberies committed within the target area were reviewed carefully by the detectives.

Each piece of information was then categorized under the major divisions of the model: actors, incidents, and responses. Pennington and Mitchell organized the information under the subheadings of offenders, victims, sequence of events, weapons used, physical context, neighborhoods affected by the problem, and perceptions of problem by other police agencies. The detectives anticipated that this systematic organization of the information would help in detecting any crime patterns. It would also help in developing evidence of probable cause against the suspect for future charges once he was identified and apprehended.

Seeking Allies

The detectives sought the cooperation of motel managers. The general manager of one of the motels was contacted. The manager and detectives agreed that a business Crime Watch of motel managers in the target area could assist in the apprehension of the robbery suspect and other suspects.

Further, Pennington and Mitchell discussed with the manager how information gathered by the police could assist members of the Crime Watch. For example, adequate motel security could be recommended by police officials. The detectives indicated that preliminary findings of the analysis of the robbery cases showed that some motels in the same target area had not been the victims of any of the recent robberies. Those motels which had not been victimized, however, had several security measures in place. Pennington and Mitchell noted that the exchange of such information among motel managers could assist

managers in developing appropriate preventive strategies. The interest among motel managers in the Crime Watch began to expand beyond the target area. Eventually other motels in the city and the adjoining cities indicated their commitment to participating in a similar kind of organization. What resulted was the organization of the Virginia Peninsula Innkeepers Association, which, among other things, continues to serve as the mechanism for exchanging information among motel managers on crime-related issues.

A Clearer Focus

The analysis of the information collected on the robbery cases resulted in two significant outcomes. First, detectives felt that they had determined the possible area of the suspect's residence and second, the detectives were able to develop a better physical description of the suspect. In addition, the detectives concluded that at least seven of the robberies in the area had similar methods of operation and suspect description. To the surprise of the detectives, the suspect was also linked with other robberies that were not committed against motel personnel.

Based on the conclusions drawn by Pennington and Mitchell, stakeouts were conducted. But there was no success in apprehending the suspect. The detectives continued to review cases as they were brought in. It appeared that the suspect had moved from motels to other locations. Information from the Virginia Peninsula Innkeepers Association and from police in nearby cities suggested that the suspect was hitting establishments outside Newport News.

Bingo!!

In June, a Crestar Bank in the target area was robbed by two black males. One of the black males was apprehended by a patrol officer shortly after the offense and identified by a witness in the bank. The

suspect was arrested. As the officer later described the offender to the robbery squad detectives, the detectives immediately recognized the similarity to the suspect of the motel robberies. The detectives interviewed the offender. Information collected about the suspect of the prior motel robberies was shared with the offender. Pennington and Mitchell were convinced that this same individual was responsible for the seven robberies of motels. The black male also seemed convinced that the detectives had sufficient evidence to convict him. After only a few minutes, the individual confessed and gave detailed information of seventeen robbery cases in Newport News, including the seven motel robberies in the target area. The suspect also gave information that resulted in the arrest of another male who participated in some of the robberies. In addition to the seventeen cases that were solved in Newport News, the arrest also resulted in robbery cases cleared in Hampton, Williamsburg, James City County, and Yorktown. All of the jurisdictions were able to identify the suspect in motel robberies in their localities.

A Useful Tool

The detectives have credited the use of the analysis model as the tool that resulted in the arrest of the hotel robbery cases. The model provided a framework for the the systematic collection of evidence. The detectives were able to organize bits and pieces of information in a meaningful way. What resulted was an accurate profile of the suspect that aided in the arrest and conviction of the individual responsible for numerous robberies in several cities. As Detectives Pennington and Mitchell wrote, "The crime analysis model used by the robbery squad was a vital tool in the interrogation and arrest of the suspect."

For more information, contact Detectives Michael Pennington and Dallas Mitchell, of the Newport News Police Dept., at (804) 247-8706.

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anywhere. Officer Quicci believes that officers assigned to work on problem solving activities consider themselves to be one step above the traditional police officer and thus see their involvement in problem solving tasks as a reward or even a promotion. Inspector McLaughlin added, "This philosophy is motivating. We see them [officers] setting higher goals of performance." Lt. Bill Becker of San Diego suggested, "Police officers do have brains"; he believes that involving officers in retreats to talk about strategies-what works or what doesn't - could be beneficial to the department and rewarding to the individual officers.

"This philosophy is motivating. We see them [officers] setting higher goals of performance."

Of concern to many participants was the continued use of antiquated evaluation systems. Sgt. Ed Newberry of San Diego believes that many existing evaluation systems focus too much on numbers and recommends that problem solving efforts be integrated into new evaluation systems.

Whatever resources are needed to implement and manage problem-oriented policing, conference participants concluded that the bottom line is the realization that this policing approach does not happen in a vacuum. The problem-oriented approach to policing requires changes in departmental polices, organizational cultures, and community expectations. In essence, successful implementation of this proactive and non-traditional way of policing requires commitment at all levels of the police agency.

Diane Hill is a Research Associate at PERF.

Helpful Hints

Marketing Problem-Oriented Policing

We need to market the benefits, not the program."

Lt. Bill Becker
San Diego, CA

"Institutionalize the approach by including it in departmental policies and procedures"

Lt. Steve Smith
Tulsa, OK

"Officers should get involved for personal satisfaction."

Off. Tom Rhodes
San Diego, CA

"The value of problem-oriented policing is being able to present law enforcement with examples that this approach can work. After you use this approach as a tool for a while, the approach becomes a philosophy. You become a problem solver"

Inspector
Ed McLaughlin
Philadelphia, PA

Point of Fact

The analysis model provides a framework for developing a broader array of strategies to solve persistent problems-strategies that impact actors, incidents, and institutional current/past responses.

Submissions

When submitting descriptions of problem-solving efforts for the newsletter; remember to consider the following questions:

- What is the problem?
- For whom is it a problem and how are they harmed? How did the problem come to your attention?
- How has the department handled the problem in the past?
- What information did you collect about the problem?
- Where did you get the information?
- Did you have any difficulties in getting the information?
- Once you were clear what the problem was, what was your goal?
- What strategies did you develop to reach your goal?
- What agencies assisted the police department in achieving the desired goal?
- Did you accomplish your goal? If not, how do you know that your goal was accomplished?
- What would you recommend to other police agencies interested in implementing similar strategies to address similar problems?
- Did you have fun? (Okay, you don't have to answer this one. I wouldn't want anyone to know that you actually had fun at work!!!)

**Police Executive Research Forum
2300 M Street, N.W. Suite 910
Washington, DC 20037**