FLORIDA REGIONAL COMMUNITY POLICING INSTITUTE

Building Bridges: Community Policing Overview for Citizens

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The Florida Regional Community Policing Institute (RCPI) at St. Petersburg College (SPC) operates under a cooperative agreement from the Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). RCPI provides FREE community policing training to law enforcement officers, community residents, city employees, social services agencies, and private sector representatives throughout Florida.

Training Available

- Introduction to Community Policing
- Police-Community Partnerships
- Problem Solving for the Community Policing Officer and Citizen
- Planning a Win for the Good Guys: Crime Prevention/CPTED
- Ethical Issues and Decisions in Law Enforcement
- Reach Your Goals Through Code Compliance
- Managing Encounters with the Mentally Ill
- Changing Roles: Supervising Today's Community Policing Officer
- Effective Media Skills for Law Enforcement
- Grantsmanship 101
- Landlord/Tenant and Hotel/Motel Train the Trainer
- IPMBA: Police Cyclist Course
- Survival Skills for Community Policing Officers
- Adult Ed Principles/Train the Trainer

- Building Bridges: Community Policing Overview for Citizens
- Sexual Predator and Offender Awareness in Your Neighborhood and on the Internet
- Crisis Response: Creating, Reviewing and Implementing Safety Initiatives for Schools
- A three-part Domestic Violence Series:
  1. Dynamics of Domestic Violence
  2. Legal Aspects of Domestic Violence
  3. Resources for Domestic Violence Teams
- A three-part Managerial Series: (for Lieutenants and above)
  1. Managerial Buy-In
  2. Managerial Advantage
  3. Tool Kit for Managing Organizational Change
- Probation/Police Partnership: Protecting, Serving and Supervising through Community Partnerships

Course Material

Course material is provided at no charge to all participants. We can adapt our training to fit your agency/community/business needs. Evening and weekend classes are available. Most training modules are 8 or 16 hours but may be modified to allow for limited time allotments.

Training Locations

Generally, classes are conducted at our SPC training site. However, we will arrange training at your facility or a training center in your area. Students who travel more than 50 miles may be eligible for lodging reimbursement.

Who Can Attend?

- Any law enforcement officer (community policing patrol, crime prevention, campus police), civilian employees, probation officers, and social service agencies

- Community leaders and citizens

- Chiefs and Sheriffs who are interested in starting and maintaining community policing in their communities

- Business managers, executives and employees

- Mayors, City Managers, Council members, trustees and government leaders

Registration

To register for classes, schedule on-site training or become part of our mailing list, please call:

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

Purpose of the Course

T he Community Policing strategy is sweeping the country. More and more police departments realize that Community Oriented Policing works and is here to stay.

The reason you came here today is because you are already involved, to some extent, in working with the police department that serves your community.

This course is designed to give the citizen partner a basic understanding of what Community Oriented Policing is, how it is different from other policing strategies, what some of the common terms and approaches are, and a step by step process for solving neighborhood problems.

Community Oriented Policing is not a "one size fits all" approach to policing and dealing with community problems. Therefore, the course does not attempt to tell you what you or your police department has to do in order to implement Community Oriented Policing in your community. There are, however, two elements that must be present in any community that has undertaken Community Oriented Policing: Partnership and Problem Solving. If either of these two elements are missing from the policing strategy in your community, then a Community Oriented Policing strategy is not being used. The elements of Partnership and Problem Solving are the focus of this course.

Part One–Partnerships
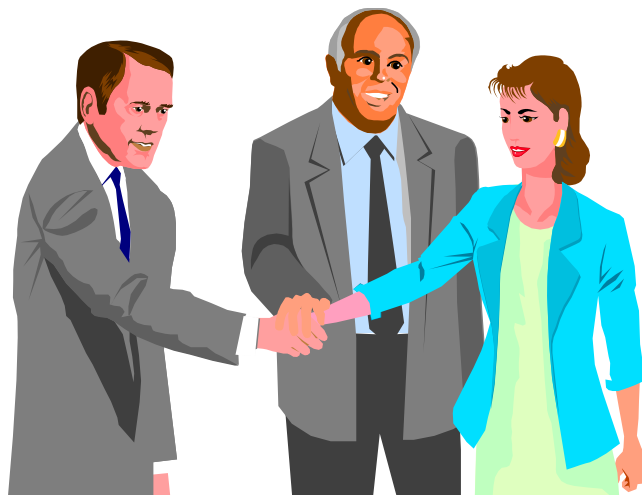
Effective Community Policing through Partnerships and Problem Solving

Purpose of Partnerships

The Partnership module introduces the citizen participant to the basic concepts of community policing: its definition, how it is different from Traditional Policing, and how it involves the community in problem solving strategies to deal with issues of crime, drugs, and disorder. The Partnership module also provides the citizen participant an understanding of how the partnership works, as well as providing the participant with some tools for working together in teams. The latter part of the Partnership module is particularly important as citizens become mobilized in action groups and neighborhood associations and begin working together to solve or deal with problems affecting their communities. Some of these skills include:

- Team Building

- Team Dynamics

- Working in Teams

This portion of the module also serves to lead the participant into Part Two of the course: Problem Solving.

Purpose of Problem Solving

In the Problem Solving module the citizen participant will be introduced to the concept of Problem Solving as a process. The citizen participant will learn the components of the S.A.R.A. problem solving model. The citizen participant will be introduced to a general application of each of the problem solving steps. The citizen participant will practice working together in a group using components of the SARA model.

Course Agenda

This four-hour course is divided into two parts:

- Part One–Partnerships (2 hours)

- Part Two–Problem Solving (2 hours)

Part One–Partnerships covers the following topics:

Introduction to Community Policing

- Community Policing Defined

- Understanding Community Policing: What it is not

- Comparison of Community Policing to Traditional Policing

- The Partnership Element of Community Policing

- The need for Partnership

- The Ingredients of Partnership

- The mechanics of the Partnership

  – Neighborhood Associations

  – Team Building

  – Storming, Norming, and Forming

Defining Community Policing

Defining Community Policing

Community policing is not easily defined. One reason is that community policing is not a *one size fits all* approach to policing. Another reason it is not easy to define is that the problems it attempts to address are equally complex and diverse. And, there are many *authorities* on the subject who have put forth many different understandings and definitions of community policing. Herman Goldstein, who has been regarded by many as the *Father of Community Policing*, observed the following on the use of the term and attempts to define it:

"Indeed, the popularity of the term has resulted in its being used to encompass practically all innovations in policing, from the most ambitious to the most mundane, from the most carefully thought through to the most casual. The label is being used in ways that increase public expectations on the police and create the impression that community policing will provide an instant solution not only for the problems of crime, disorder, and racial tension, but for many of the other acute problems that plague our urban areas as well."

Notes:
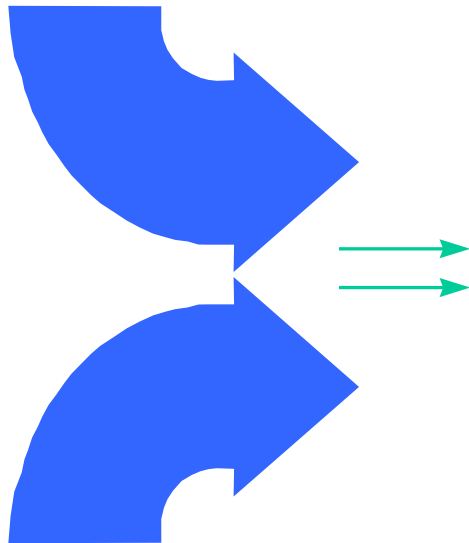
This overuse of the term has forced a need for definition and simplification. There is a danger in oversimplification. It is practically impossible to identify the one pure model of community policing. Community policing in Largo, St. Petersburg, or Plant City may not even remotely resemble one another; yet, if it contains some shared defining characteristics it may indeed be community policing.

Having said this, we can now move on to some attempts by the *experts* to define community policing. "Community policing is a philosophy and an organizational strategy that promotes a new partnership between people and their police. It is based on the premise that both the police and the community must work together to identify, prioritize, and solve contemporary problems such as crime, drugs, fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and overall neighborhood decay, with the goal of improving the overall quality of life in the area." (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux: *Community Policing:* 1994)

And:

"Community policing is a collaborative effort between law enforcement and the community that identifies problems of concern to communities and works to solve them." (*Community Policing Consortium*)

And one more:

"The community policing concept has evolved from a critical examination of how police should respond to citizens and communities and to the problems of crime, drug abuse, and disorder. The community policing philosophy reaffirms that proactive crime prevention, not merely reacting to calls for service, is the basic mission of the police. Community policing fulfills this mission by maintaining a visible police presence in neighborhoods, undertaking activities to solve crime-producing problems, arresting law violators, maintaining order, and resolving disputes. At the same time, community policing is anchored in the concept of shared responsibility for community safety and security. In community policing, the police and citizens are partners in establishing and maintaining safe and peaceful neighborhoods." (*N.I.J.*).

Two Key Elements of Community Policing

One common thread emerges from all of these definitions and these two defining characteristics will tell you if community policing is present in your community:

- Partnership between the police and community and

- Working to solve the problems identified by the partnership

What Community Policing is not

It is also helpful to understand Community policing by looking at some of the things that community policing *is not:*

- Community policing *is not a program*–community policing is not a limited effort to be tried and then withdrawn, but instead is a new way of delivering police service to the community.

- Community policing *is not a public relations campaign*–Encouraging officers to view citizens as partners improves relations between the police and the public.

- Community policing *is not a separate division or squad in the department*–While an organization may choose to identify certain officers as community policing Officers (CPO's), these officers must be part of an overall departmental strategy that buys into the philosophy and strategies of joining the community in partnership and problem solving.

- Community policing *is not social work*–community policing formalizes the notion that solving problems is a basic mission of the police.

- Community policing *is not soft on crime*–community policing officers answer calls and make arrests like any other officer. The important distinction is that community policing officers view an arrest as a problem solving tool when appropriate.
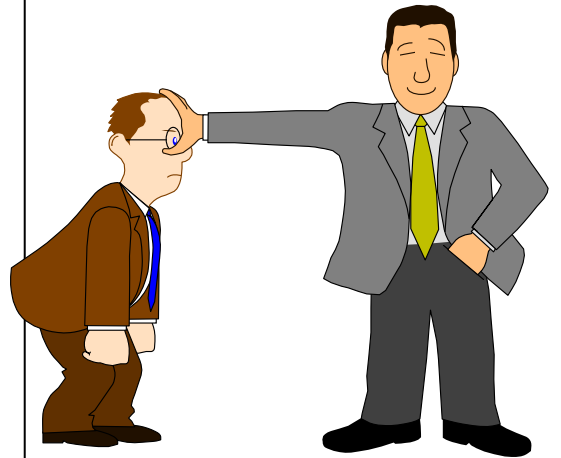
Traditional vs. Community Policing–Questions and Answers

Question	Traditional	Community Policing
Who are the police?		Police are the public and the public is the police: the police officers are those who are paid to give full-time attention to the duties of every citizen.
What is the relationship of the police force to other public service departments?	Priorities often conflict.	The police are one department among many responsible for improving the quality of life.
What is the role of the police?		A broader problem-solving approach.
How is police efficiency measured?	By detection and arrest rates.	By the absence of crime and disorder.
What are the highest priorities?	Crimes that are high value (e.g., bank robberies) and those involving violence.	
What, specifically, do police deal with?	Incidents.	
What determines the effectiveness of police?		
What view do police take of service calls?	Deal with them only if there is no real police work to do.	Vital function and great opportunity.
What is police professionalism?	Swift effective response to serious crime.	
What kind of intelligence is most important?	Crime intelligence (study of particular crimes or series of crimes).	
What is the essential nature of police accountability?	Highly centralized; governed by rules, regulations, and policy directives; accountable to the law.	
What is the role of headquarters?		To preach organizational values.
What is the role of the press liaison department?		To coordinate an essential channel of communication with the community.
How do the police regard prosecutions?	As an important goal.	

The Need for Partnerships

The new emphasis on making community members active participants in the process of crime control and crime prevention is the acknowledgment that the police can not do it alone. With the increases in crime, drugs, and gang problems that have become a part of our everyday lives, traditional policing methods have left the police bouncing from one call to the next–often involving the same suspects and locations–with the ability to apply only "Band-Aid" or short-term fixes to problems. Long-term solutions to problems that plague communities will only occur when the police and citizens collaborate to find the underlying conditions that lead to problems that eventually call for police service.

With the police no longer the sole guardians of law and order, all members of the community become active participants in the efforts to improve the safety and quality of life within neighborhoods.

The Ingredients of Partnerships

Partnerships are difficult. A partnership is a relationship and it takes time to build a relationship. A relationship requires trust and understanding. Establishing and maintaining mutual trust is the main goal of this course and of the future community partnerships that will be forged as a result of this training. The police in your communities recognize the need for cooperation from the community. In the communities represented in this course, the police from your communities have already begun this process by speaking to community groups, participating in business and civic events, and becoming a part of your schools and recreational activities for juveniles. In some communities specialized units have provided a variety of crisis intervention services, such as domestic violence specialists and victim advocates. The chief distinction of police efforts under community policing is that the police become a part of the community and the community assumes responsibility for assisting the police. The community assists by identifying community priorities, providing resources, and providing valuable information on crime and criminal activity.
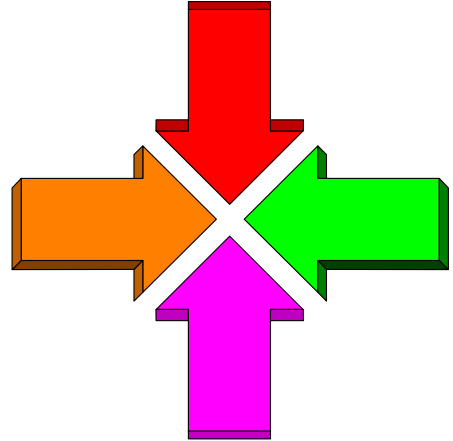
This new outlook by residents recognizes the value of activities that reduce disorder and improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods. The entire police organization, from the Sheriff or Chief of Police on down, must endorse and enlist this cooperation from the community in promoting safe and secure neighborhoods.

This trust does not occur overnight, it requires the ongoing efforts of all those involved. This trust must be achieved before the police can begin to work with community members to solve problems. The cornerstone of building this trust is mutual respect and understanding. The attainment of community support requires different approaches in different neighborhoods or different communities. Community policing is not a one-size-fits-all approach. In those communities where the police have a long history of mistrust by the residents, police have to work overtime to gain that trust. Police officers must support many of the neighborhood institutions, such as schools, churches, and recreational programs, that have been undermined by crime and neighborhood deterioration.

Additionally, the police must view the public as equal partners–not as a passive presence or as a group with limited knowledge or resources to deal with problems. In the past the police have entered the community as the "experts" on crime and disorder. Often they have ignored the vast pool of resources and knowledge found in the community. Just as new management philosophies have pushed decision making downward to the people in an organization who are closest to the problem, the police must recognize that residents are often closest to the problem and have valuable knowledge as to possible solutions.

Where community policing is working, we have seen the police act as the catalysts and facilitators of change. When the police have stepped out of their traditional roles and took on the expanded role of community policing, entire neighborhoods have undergone redevelopment. Businesses can be renewed, crime can be driven out, and residents can again achieve ownership of their neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Associations

Many police officers are familiar with *Neighborhood Watch* programs as part of a neighborhood crime prevention strategy. The problem with Neighborhood Watch groups is the fact that most start as a result of a crisis–a series of residential burglaries, a rape, a series of muggings in a neighborhood, etc. Once the crisis is over with–the burglar or rapist has been caught–most people tend to go back to their business and the group falls apart. Neighborhood associations, on the other hand, can address a variety of neighborhood concerns, not just crime concerns. What follows is a step-by-step suggestion guide for forming a neighborhood association to work with the police in dealing with neighborhood problems. An important point to remember, for both residents and the police, is that the best association is one that is independent of a police agency. In order to obtain credibility within the neighborhood, the police cannot be the ones who set the agenda. Often police priorities are quite different from neighborhood priorities. It is important that the association represents the interests of the neighborhood.

This process assumes that the issues in the neighborhood are clearly identified by the concerned parties and that when the neighborhood eventually meets, there will be a general consensus of the issues.

STEP 1: THE NEED TO ORGANIZE

The concerned individual should recruit a small number of people who share a similar concern over some neighborhood issue(s). This group is known as the core group and will have more credibility as a group than as individuals. A small core group can share the workload and it is much safer working as a group than working alone. This core group will be the ones who launch the neighborhood association. It is important that this group work as a team. Individual agendas and personality conflicts should be set aside. If this group is splintered, the chances of launching an association or keeping it together in the initial stages is greatly diminished.

STEP 2: THE CORE GROUP

When the core group holds its first meeting, group members should decide:

- How the neighborhood is defined: Geographically, what encompasses the neighborhood - what are its boundaries?

- What are the neighborhood issues?

- Do neighborhood businesses share the same concern for these issues?

- What method will be used to kick-off the organizing drive?

  - A letter writing campaign

  - A neighborhood clean-up

  - A neighborhood pot-luck dinner

  - Door to door solicitation of support

Identify the resources needed to organize for the first meeting.

STEP 3: JOINING WITH THE POLICE

If the Police Department designates community policing officers to work within specific neighborhoods, approach or contact these officers and solicit their support. The Police Departments representing this course are always looking for opportunities to collaborate with existing or newly forming neighborhood associations. This should be the easy part. Explain the issues and what has been done so far. See what resources the police can provide in organizing the neighborhood.

STEP 4: PLANNING FOR THE GENERAL MEETING

Decide on a date, time, and place to conduct the first meeting. A weekday evening or a weekend day generally work best for everyone. Pick a place within the neighborhood to conduct the meeting, such as a local church, school, or public building. The police can generally help out here. Make sure that the main consideration here is convenience for everyone.

Also, decide on a meeting format and begin to prepare the agenda for the first meeting.

A good agenda will contain:

- Introductions

- An open discussion of neighborhood problems and issues

- The introduction of and explanation of the method (SARA) to be used to solve problems

- The structure of the organization

- The next meeting

STEP 5: GETTING THE WORD OUT

Letting everyone in the neighborhood know about the first meeting is essential for the new organization. A good method is to print a flyer and either conduct a mailout or delivery door-to-door. The flyers can be posted in local businesses, on public bulletin boards, and the media can be solicited to get the word out. Once again, the police can usually help here. Many police departments have volunteers, AmeriCorps, and explorer groups that can assist with flyer deliveries. Make sure the entire neighborhood gets the word.
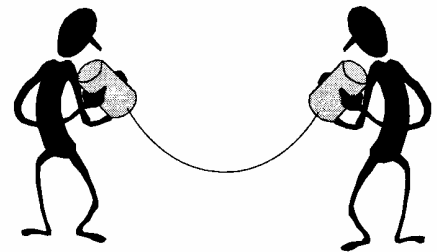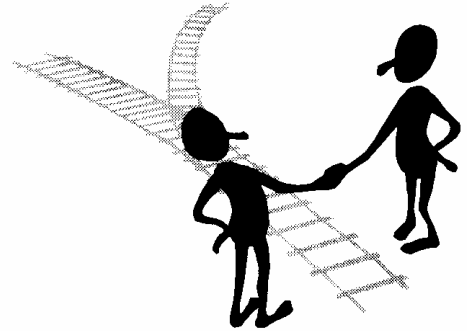
Successful Meetings and Team Building

The reason people don't come back to meetings is because nothing happened. There was a lot of interesting speeches and discussions, but when people get home and start thinking about what actually was accomplished–that is the determining factor for whether or not they will return. By following these suggestions you can insure that something will *happen* at your meeting.

- The meeting should not last more than two hours. After the introductions are made, the next step is to let people sound off. This should be about a fifteen to twenty minute informal session where you can either go around the room and ask people to state what they feel the neighborhood issues are, or just ask them to call them out one at a time. Either way, it is a good idea to set some ground rules for this session, such as no obscenity, no name calling, respect for one another, and no personal attacks. It is important to let people have their say, and these sessions can get pretty emotional, but it is also important for the core group to not let it get out of hand or to continue beyond twenty minutes. Hopefully the police have braced themselves for this, as they usually will be on the receiving end of a good deal of the neighborhood anger.

- Once everyone has had his or her say, it is time to get down to business. The officer who is assisting/facilitating the meeting should now introduce the audience to the philosophy of community policing: Partnership and Problem Solving. After assuring the audience of the departments and their individual commitment to this neighborhood, the Problem Solving model should be introduced very generally and very quickly. Here is what should follow the explanation:

- The officer should explain the mechanics of "Brainstorming" and then initiate a Brainstorming session to identify the neighborhood issues and problems. Brainstorming will work like this: The officer or core group facilitator will ask the audience to take a few minutes to think silently about the neighborhood issues. Then when they are informed to begin, it should be conducted as follows:

- Ask the audience to shout out one or two words that describes the problem or issue.

- Caution the audience that they should do no more than give a couple of words identifying the problem– they should not explain the problem in any way other than this (no explanation of who is doing it, where they are doing it, how long its been going on, how the cops are ignoring it, etc.) Tell the audience they will have a chance to explain it later.

- Instruct the audience that when they shout out the issue they should also give their initials so that we can come back and ask them to explain the issue in detail.

- Instruct the audience not to worry about duplication at this point. Say what's on your mind even if you think someone has already identified the issue–they may have been talking about something entirely different.

- As the issues are being called out, either the facilitator or another member of the core group record the issues and initials on a chalk board or flip chart.

- It is important that the facilitator keep this process moving by prodding the audience to keep coming up with issues.

- When the last issue has been called out, the facilitator gives the Audience a couple more minutes to think of any additional issues and then ending the session.
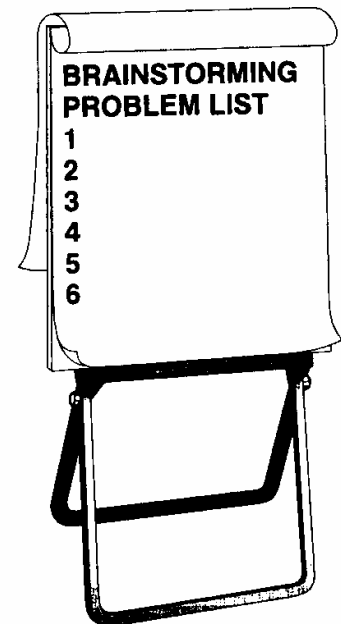
- A consolidation of the brainstormed list should now take place. Consolidation consists of the following steps:

  - Go back through the brainstormed list and ask each person to quickly explain their issue. The purpose here is not to have a second session like the opening twenty minutes, but to identify like problems/issues for the purpose of consolidation.

  - Once everyone has explained their problem/issue, using numbers or different colored ink, try to get the audience to place the issues into categories. For instance, all of the following identified issues could be placed under the heading *Juvenile Issues*

    - Kids vandalizing the park

    - Kids wandering around at all hours

    - Kids breaking into cars

    - Kids blocking traffic at a bus stop

    - Kids skateboarding on sidewalks

  - You will probably come up with six or seven (more or less depending on the neighborhood) categories, such as:

    - Juvenile Issues

    - Code Enforcement

    - Traffic Enforcement

    - Drugs

    - Gangs (not necessarily a juvenile category but could be)

    - Noise

    - Prostitution

    - Etc.

– Once you have consolidated and categorized your list, you are ready to prioritize your list. Prioritization takes place by the following method:

♦ Each member of the audience is given three votes.

♦ Explain that they are attempting to identify the group's priorities by majority vote.

♦ Explain that each member can use all of their votes on one issue or can divide their votes between two or three issues (one vote on each of three issues).

♦ Begin the voting by going around the room and polling each member for how they want to cast their votes.

♦ At the end of the voting, create a prioritized list based upon the outcome of the voting.

♦ Explain that this represents the order in which the problems will be attacked. In other words the issue or problem with the most votes is the first priority to problem solve.

This process has probably taken up the bulk of the meeting at this point and it is now important to do two things: complete the agenda, and then articulate or demonstrate to the group how much they have accomplished in one short meeting. It is extremely important to emphasize this because, as we said earlier, the reason people don't come back to meetings is because nothing was accomplished. Ask the group how many of them are willing to come back and find solutions to their problem list. Make sure everyone knows when and where the next meeting will be held.
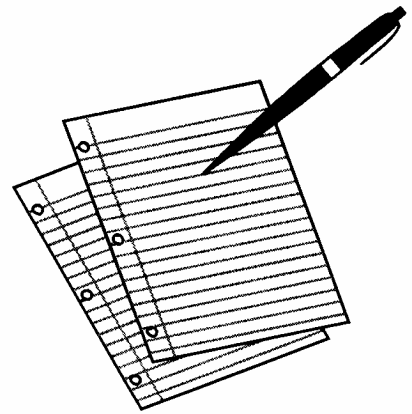
Group Dynamics

The dynamics of any group attempting to work together can be complicated. Groups must go through several different transitions while working toward their objectives. At each of the different stages, the team members will exhibit very predictable actions and behaviors.

The Initial Stage: Groups and teams need leaders, and during the Forming Stage of team development the leader has several responsibilities. The leader needs to help team members get to know each other and provide clear direction. The leader also involves the members in working out their plan of action, helps in defining the other members roles, and finds ways for team members to work together. This initial stage is the starting point and the leader provides the information the team needs to get started.

- During this Initial period, members may feel excitement and anticipation for the job ahead. They also may feel some concern and fear for their safety. They may worry about what will happen as they try to make changes in their neighborhood. The team behaviors may include:

    – Deciding on team rules or how they will work together

    – Deciding what information they will need to gather to solve problems

    – Complaining about the association and how it will never work.

- The next stage could be called the Panic Stage, as team members realize how much work needs to be done. This can be a time of little patience for one another. Some name calling and cliques may begin to form. The methods for solving problems may be very different from the way people in the group are accustomed to solving problems. There may be some disputes over their chances of success.

The panic stage team may:

- Argue among themselves even though they are united by the issues of the neighborhood,

- Begin to question the authority of the leaders,

- Appear to be falling apart.

This is a critical time for the leader who must create consensus on the best way to accomplish tasks and deal with power struggles. This is a good time for crisis intervention techniques such as building the group's confidence or giving them different responsibilities. It is also important for the leader to remind the team that this adjustment period was predicted from the outset and not to panic or give up hope.

- The next stage is when it all seems to come together. Differences have been resolved and everyone is working together on achieving their objectives. Team members are more friendly and people have a respect for the ground rules and for each other. More time and energy can be spent on the tasks at hand rather than dealing with the emotions of the panic period.

The final stage is when the group has sealed their unity and are one in their expectations and goals. The Problem solving process has become comfortable and second nature. The group is able to work through conflicts and problems. You can tell you are at this stage because a lot of the work is getting done. The leader is now mostly coaching and cheering the team onward. Accomplishments as well as mistakes should be celebrated.

What a Team Needs to Succeed:

- Clearly defined team goals or objectives

- A plan of action

- Clearly delineated roles of team members

- Communication–everyone needs to know what is happening, where it is happening, who is making it happen, how it is happening, and why it is happening.

- Team rules for conducting meetings

- Participation by each team member

- Progress reports: where you were, where you are now, and what's left to do.

- An understanding of the process used by the team.

Appendix–Problem Solving

Agenda for Part Two

A two-hour course covering the following topics:

- Introduction to Problem Solving

    – Problem Oriented Policing

    – Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving

    – How Community Policing is Achieved

    – A Problem Defined

- The Crime Triangle

    – How Incidents are Related

    – The Crime Triangle described

The SARA Model

- – Problem Solving as a Process

- – SARA Model Explained

- – Components of SARA

- – Practicum

- Community Resources

- – Community Resource Defined

- Finding Community Resources

Police Models

In the evolution of modern policing, three basic policing strategies can be identified:

- Traditional Policing: The police take a reactive role in dealing with crime problems for the community.

- Problem Oriented Policing: Seeks to take a proactive approach to the issues considered under traditional policing. Deals with crime and crime control through an analytical process. An understanding that crimes reported to the police may be the visible symptoms of a deeper underlying problem within a particular neighborhood.

- Community Oriented Policing: emphasizes the creation of an effective working relationship between the community and the police through a collaborative problem solving partnership.

How Community Policing is Achieved

In the last session we learned the definition of community policing, how it is different from other policing strategies, what it is, and what it's not. In this session we will learn how community policing can be achieved.

In order to achieve community policing, the police must:

- Gather and analyze information to monitor what is going on within the police organization and what is going on within the community.

- Continually establish mechanisms for direct community involvement in determining police objectives and priorities.

- Ensure that management is supporting empowerment of line officers and encourage creativity, innovation, and risk taking.

- Ensure that evaluations of police officers are directly linked to the skills needed for community policing.

- Constantly evaluate results and strategies for effectiveness and make the necessary adjustments to meet ongoing community needs.

In order to achieve community policing, the public must:

- Accept responsibility for their role in controlling crime, disorder, and quality of life issues.

- Enter into a partnership with the police.

- Participate in the problem solving process.

Understanding Problems

Under community policing the police have been made aware that a problem is not just a crime, it is anything that concerns or causes harm to citizens.

The community policing definition of a problem is:

- "Any condition that alarms, harms, threatens, causes fear, or has potential for disorder in the community, particularly incidents that may appear as isolated, but share certain characteristics such as common pattern, victim or geographic location."

How Incidents Are Related

When the police use problem solving skills to solve crimes, one of the first things they look for are *connecting threads* within the crime. This means they want to see if there are any common elements that link this particular crime to other crimes. Sometimes referred to as the *Crime Triangle*, the three common elements present in every crime are:

- Victim(s)

- Perpetrator(s)

- Environment (the location and conditions present at the time of crime)

By looking for links to other crimes, the police greatly increase their chances of solving a crime by increasing their base of knowledge about the crime. For instance, if we have an elderly lady robbed by two masked men at an ATM machine, we look for similar crimes in other precincts or neighboring jurisdictions. Quite often a pattern of crimes will develop. The police compare notes, physical evidence, possible suspects and various other pieces of information about the crimes. As the volume of information and knowledge about the crime increases, so too, the chances of catching the criminals increases.

Citizens, working with the police, will greatly increase their chances of solving neighborhood problems if they too look for the common elements of a problem. As stated earlier, in community policing, a problem is not limited to crimes, but to anything that harms or is a concern to the community. Therefore not all problems will have a perpetrator, victim, or environment. However, they usually have a person or persons who are effected by the problem, and they usually have an environment. It will be important during the information gathering stage to examine the problem for common threads.

The problems within our neighborhoods are caused by a variety of underlying conditions. Underlying conditions may include the characteristics of the people who live in or come into the neighborhood, the interactions between these people, the condition of the neighborhood, and how people in the neighborhood feel about their neighborhood. Problems created by these conditions often result in a call for police service. From the outside these incidents that lead to police calls may appear to be different, but they generally stem from a common source. An example of this would be a call for vandalism to some public or private property within the neighborhood caused by teenagers. Without careful analysis, you may miss how other acts like this may be the result of a lack of recreational services for young people in the area.

Community policing requires input from both the police and community in problem solving. Some of the outcomes can be:

- To eliminate the problem entirely.

- Reduce the number of occurrences of the problem.

- Reduce the degree of harm caused by the problem. (By teaching people how to react to threats or encounters with gang members, or by teaching people how to react to an attack by a mugger or rapist can reduce the chances of being seriously injured or killed.)

- To improve the way the problem is being dealt with. Finding new approaches, new resources, other service providers, etc.

- Changing the environment to reduce or eliminate the problem. (CPTED, for one).

Introduction to SARA Problem Solving Model

SARA is a problem solving model first used by police officers practicing Problem Oriented Policing (POP) in Newport News, Virginia in the mid 1980's. The SARA problem solving model consists of four parts:

S _____

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A _____

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R _____

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A _____

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Understanding the Steps in SARA Process

STEP 1: SCANNING

The scanning step is where the problems are identified. In the first session we showed a way to engage the neighborhood association in brainstorming a list of problems. Once a problem list has been assembled, consolidated, and then prioritized, you have completed your scanning steps. In putting together a problem list, you may want to consider some sources of information outside the association to assist in a problem identification list. Some potential sources of information are:

The Police–make use of the knowledge the officers who patrol your neighborhood have and their agency resources such as the Detective Division, Crime Analysis, Crime Prevention Unit, etc.

- Local Businesses

- Schools

- Other Neighborhood Associations

- A Neighborhood Survey

STEP 2: ANALYSIS

Human nature is to go from the identification of a problem to a response to the problem without knowing everything there is to know about the problem and with even less analysis of this information. This step in the SARA model is the heart of the problem solving process.

The information gathered must be thorough and gathered from a variety of sources. Do not rely strictly on the police for providing the information about neighborhood problems. When you understand all the parts of a problem, you can design a custom made response tailored to the specific problem. Be sure to identify the underlying nature of the problem through a complete analysis of the data. Make sure you understand the problem from the perspectives of the key stakeholders in the neighborhood.

STEP 3: RESPONSE

Clarify, and if necessary, redefine the problem before initiating the team's response. Make sure you have solicited suggestions for a solution to a particular problem from sources outside your group. Remember that not all solutions are designed to eliminate the problem entirely.

What will be the goal(s) of your response toward the problem?

- Will you eliminate, reduce, displace, prevent, or do something else with the problem?

- What do you hope to accomplish by addressing this problem?

What strategies will be used to meet the goal(s)?

- Concentrate on individuals causing problem

- Organize and work with neighborhood citizens

- Refer to other government or private services

- Coordinate response with appropriate agencies

- Correct inadequate or the lack of service

- Use mediation or negotiation skills or services

- Share information with citizens to enable them to solve the problem or conform to the laws and regulations

Who can assist in the development of these strategies?

- Who are the individuals, groups, or agencies?

- How can they assist in designing the strategies?

- How can you solicit their participation and commitment?

What obstacles exist?

- What and who are these obstacles?

- What kind of inhibiting factors do they exhibit?

- What are the alternatives?

- How can these obstacles be overcome?

Your solutions should be innovative and creative and may not fit traditional law enforcement remedies for problems.

STEP 4: ASSESSMENT

How will you know if you accomplished your goal? It is important to go back after a period of time and evaluate if you accomplished what you set out to accomplish. Some of the ways you may assess need to be considered at the assessment step. For instance, if a problem you are dealing with is gang graffiti–you may want to take a before and after photograph of some areas where the problem exists. You may want to rely on statistics and numbers like those used in traffic enforcement studies.

This stage is often forgotten or people get so committed to the solution they designed that they are reluctant to go back to the drawing board.

Principles of Problem Solving

- Don't take anything for granted.

- Old patterns may hinder solutions.

- Trial and error may work as well as logic.

- Find the essential similarities in problems.

- Pay attention to the way the group works.

- Look at problems from different angles.

- Anticipate problems.

- Take the emotion out of problems.

- Anticipate the consequences.

- Learn from losing.

Common Errors in Problem Solving

- The problem is not clearly defined. The group does not have enough information to understand the problem.

- The problem is stated too narrowly. Real problem will not be resolved. Only a symptom is affected.

- Tentative solutions are chosen too early in the process (before the problem is understood).

- The range of information gathered is too narrow.

- Some major constraints to solving the problem are ignored.

- Traditional solutions are preferred despite lack of effectiveness.

- Priorities among problems are not established.

- A plan for carrying out the solution, specifying who will do what when, is not developed or is not well thought out.

- Resources needed to carry out a solution are not clearly specified or obtained early enough in the process.

- The costs of a solution is not weighed against the potential benefits.

- Feedback and evaluation procedures are not built into the solution, therefore, no mechanism exists to monitor progress and determine effectiveness.

Using this model has proved to be an effective way to deal with problems for many communities. We hope that you will be able to take these tools back to your neighborhood and join the police in problem solving. Problem solving is only limited by the imaginations, creativity, and enthusiasm of the people involved in the process.

Problem Solving Exercise

Your group will be asked to use the skills presented in this course to identify problems within your own neighborhood.

Instructions for Exercise:

- Pick a team leader who will facilitate this process.

- Pick a *Team Scribe* who will record the results of your brainstorming on a the flip chart.

- Begin *Brainstorming* to find a total of ten problems within your neighborhood.

- Consolidate your list.

- Conduct a multi-voting session to determine group consensus of the top three most serious problems in your neighborhood.

- Your group leader will be asked to share how the process went and identify your prioritized list.

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