

**THE ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
IN PROVIDING NON-ENFORCEMENT SOCIAL SERVICES
IN THE FUTURE**

Article

By

**Lieutenant Craig Rossiter
Vacaville Police Department**

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This Command College project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue in law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future, but rather to project a number of possible scenarios for strategic planning consideration.

Defining the future differs from analyzing the past because the future has not yet happened. In this project, useful alternatives have been formulated systematically so that the planner can respond to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing the future, creating it, constraining it, adapting to it. A futures study points the way.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College project are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

Introduction

Modern policing has come a long way from the just the facts enforcement era of Adam 12 and Dragnet. Currently, community policing strategies include a large cadre of prevention and problem solving tools. More frequently than in the past, those tools include a number of social services including group and individual therapy, drug use prevention efforts, educational initiatives and mentoring programs.

This article looks at current services, and suggests a possible future where law enforcement may become even more involved in duties that are still largely considered non-traditional and outside the realm of what police agencies typically offer.

Integration of additional social services will require some significant changes in the way many police agencies operate, fill positions, and even in how agencies structure management. Current wisdom that places a tenured, sworn police officer in every key leadership position may be inappropriate for the police agency of the future. Civilians with a variety of talents beyond arresting bad guys may in fact have great value in the police agency of the 21st century, an agency that sees traditional law enforcement not as its primary mission, but one important approach to accomplishing the greater mission of enhancing quality of life for the community as a whole.

The Vacaville Police Department was recently involved in the development of a Youth Master Plan. During the process, the participants, representing the majority of social service providers in Solano County, spent weeks determining the assets necessary to provide for the development and sustainment of a healthy child. No period of the child's life was ignored. In fact, separate committees reviewed positive development assets from fetal development to adulthood. This exercise demonstrated the commitment

of a healthy community to provide social services to its constituents, while demonstrating a solid commitment to the future of its citizens. The participation of the Vacaville Police Department demonstrated the expectation that local law enforcement would play a role in those efforts, not only for the short term, but the long term as well. (Vacaville Youth Roundtable, 2000)

For this article, the Vacaville Police Department and the City of Vacaville will be used as a case study relevant to the topic at hand. Approximately ten years ago during a discussion of parenting an officer assigned to the Vacaville PD Youth Services Unit made the comment that as parents seem to be doing less parenting, police officers are doing more, filling in where parents leave off. Offering rules, discipline, rewards, and consequences is not new to police work. The question remains, where will it go from here? What type of parenting role will the officer of the future play?

Historical Perspective

Local law enforcement has already demonstrated a willingness to play a role in the delivery of social services. In approximately 1975 Vacaville PD received a grant award from the California Office of Criminal Justice Planning (OCJP) to develop a Youth Services Bureau. YSB, as it was known, had three primary functions. First, it served as a diversion program for the youthful offender, diverting the juvenile away from the formal criminal justice system. Secondly, it established a truant officer, a civilian employee who returned truants to school; the measure of success for that program was the reduction of daytime burglaries. The third component of the program was the addition of professional counseling for young people and their parents. The counseling

was provided by a Master Social Worker (MSW), an individual trained in counseling and armed with a master's degree in psychology or social work.

Currently, the Vacaville Police Department employs seven full-time MSWs. Those seven employees provide direct services, program development, and supervision of up to 30 college interns. MSWs also oversee a program called PASSS, Parents and Students Seeking Success. PASSS serves primary school age children and their families with resourcing, skill building and mentoring. Workers assigned to the PASSS program are called Family Support Worker (FSWs). No college degree is required, only life experiences, common sense and good judgement, and good communication skills. (City of Vacaville, 1997) Educated by the college of hard knocks, these FSWs may offer a glimpse of what the future will bring for law enforcement and social services. FSWs work closely with patrol officers and social workers, bridging a gap that once separated the two professions.

Looking further back, the Norman Rockwell painting, The Runaway, demonstrates law enforcement's involvement in offering mentoring and guidance to children. The well known painting of the officer at the soda fountain with the young boy and his traveling gear hangs in many police offices. While frequently used to represent community policing, it also suggests that a century ago the police participated in parenting with the acceptance and permission of parents.

Other agencies are offering similar services. For example, the Vernon Hills Police Department, located north of Chicago, Illinois, has a full time Social Service Director on staff offering social services to all residents of Vernon Hills, IL at no cost.

Services available include crisis intervention, individual and group therapy, and family therapy. (Village of Vernon Hills, 2000)

The 78th and 83rd Precincts of the New York Police Department offer a variety of programs and initiatives, including follow-up social services to domestic violence victims. This program is operated in conjunction with the Victim's Service Agency and the District Attorney's office, an example of public agencies partnering with non-profit service providers. (New York Police, 2000)

In 1983 the city of New Orleans established an approach to deal with people manifesting potential mental illness. Rather than immediately arrest the suspect in such a situation, the mobile crisis service offers specially trained volunteers to provide crisis intervention and mental health assessments. The service is attached to the Special Operations Tactical Division of the New Orleans Police Department. (Wellborn, p.6)

The San Jose Police Department operates a Family Violence Center that offers counseling and advocacy for victims of domestic violence and their children, personal contact with attorneys from the District Attorney's office and with Social Workers from the Department of Family and Children's Services, referrals to 24 hour emergency shelters, and educational programs. (City of San Jose, 2000)

These agencies have identified the opportunity to offer prevention efforts under the umbrella of social services in their arsenal of crime fighting tools. Modern policing has come a long way from the traditional enforcement approach of the last half of the 20th century. Has it come far enough? Will police agencies be offering more extensive services in the next five years? What factors will play a role in those decisions, who will

make those decisions, and what needs to change in today's police department to allow changes that strike at the very core of traditional policing?

The Challenge

The opportunity now is to look critically at social services and to determine what are important to a safe community using Steven Covey's advice, "Begin with the end in mind." (Covey, 1990) With that approach, what social services are critical enough to be incorporated into the everyday operation of a police agency? As previously mentioned, the Vacaville Police Department began focusing efforts on status offenders a quarter century ago. Additionally, a counseling component offered free professional services with no strings attached. The primary reason those efforts have continued and expanded beyond the original grant writer's imagination is the belief that counseling and working with the young offenders is an ounce of prevention that offsets a pound of cure in later years. The proof of its success may be largely anecdotal, but these facts remain: While crime was up generally in California for the first six months of 2000 (Lockyer, Dec. 2000), crime continued to fall in Vacaville during the same period. (Vacaville Police Department, June 2000)

The success of prevention programs with youth has not gone unnoticed. The primary program manager with Vacaville PD was recruited and hired by a Sacramento area police agency, who has patterned a program after the Vacaville PD Family Services Division.

The challenge is to assess successful programs in relation to community needs and develop a plan for the future that maximizes resources to offer social services in a manner that balances traditional law enforcement with new opportunities to serve.

Pushing budget away from traditional law enforcement and toward the delivery of social services will be a bold step for many agencies, and require changes not only in philosophy, but also in budget allocation, organizational structure, training priorities, and hiring standards.

Future Study

William Mitchell, in his study of our electronic future, E-topia, describes a world of unbelievable connectivity and information. Intelligent walls follow employees around the office, adjusting climate controls and lighting. Intelligent clothing monitors the function of major organs, warning of impending heart attack or kidney failure in time to offer prevention and effective treatment. Miniature computers provide the wearer full-time wireless Internet connectivity with the inside of an eyeglass lens functioning as the monitor, invisible to the casual observer. Mitchell does identify a drawback to this wonderland of technology. While the electronic devices will be available to the rich who get richer through science, "...those who find themselves trapped in marginalized, underserved areas and are too poor to move..." and will have no or little access to these electronic items. (Mitchell, 2000) Technology is certainly one trend that will affect our future, but it is not a remedy for many of the problems society will face. What other trends and events will come into play?

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) can be used to develop future trends and events that may come into play regarding this topic. NGT is a focused process that uses structured brainstorming to develop, categorize, and prioritize potential trends and events relevant to the topic under consideration.. The NGT process offered several important benefits, including the opportunity to look toward the future and determine what

opportunities and roadblocks may affect service delivery in the future. That information offers the serious future planner the tools to develop best and worst case scenarios.

The opportunity exists for the Vacaville Police Department and others to look to the future with an optimistic approach to social services delivery. The future of funding in this area is uncertain for most agencies, but law enforcement generally receives the lion's share of public funds. One technique is to define the future in such away that funding the necessary social services, as defined by each agency, is an important consideration for the funding authority. Looking to the future, what goals make sense? A successful exercise in strategic planning by Vacaville PD for the future delivery of services could be based on several assumptions:

- The agency has demonstrated success in delivering social services
- Agency leaders view social services delivery as a viable law enforcement activity
- The community supports the department in offering expanded services
- Federal, state and private funding will continue to support pilot projects in social service delivery
- Crime prevention is an agency focus

With those assumptions in mind, consider the following vision, based on an optimistic view:

The Vacaville Police Department will play a major role in supporting and improving the quality of life for all residents of the community, expanding its focus to include not only crime control and prevention, but assuring through strategic partnerships and creative problem solving that means are available to support the physical, social and emotional needs of those we serve.

Strategic Initiatives

To best determine what priorities need to be addressed in a strategic plan, an assessment of current status is valuable. A tool useful for this is the SWOT analysis, looking at organization Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The figure below illustrates a SWOT analysis for the Vacaville Police Department.

<u>Strengths</u>	<u>Opportunities</u>
Prevention Policing programs and efforts Public Support/Opinion Dedicated and talented employees Training Officers Visionary Leaders Fiscally Efficient School and Business Partnerships Well equipped employees/officers Professional reputation Award winning youth programs Proactive and Productive Policing efforts	Grants, creative funding Extended lobby hours Rewarding performance—Incentives Viability of Peer Counseling Reinforce Mission, Vision, and Principles Thriving Community Development of Cultural Competency

<u>Weaknesses</u>	<u>Threats</u>
Support staff not keeping pace with growth Hiring, retention, monthly training Career Development focus Evaluation Process and Accountability Facility/Building CAD/RMS Division and shift communications IA coordination Training Dispatchers and Clerks Dispatch Staffing Records processing and equipment	Not being “Dedicated to Excellence” Status quo/mediocrity Dwindling applicant pool Community standing/Credibility Internal Stresses, Stressors Growth (Everything!) Potential crime rate increases Impact of Prop. 36 (treatment for drug offenders) Youth alcohol and drug abuse

SWOT Analysis for Vacaville Police Department

A committee consisting of a cross section of the department completed this SWOT analysis in November of 2000. It is current, and reflects contemporary thoughts and views of the Department. In June of 1999 the City of Vacaville adopted a revised

strategic plan that called for an analysis of the five areas of city services, including public safety. To assess public safety, the police and fire chiefs created a Citizens Committee to Assess Public Safety. Their report was published on March 8, 2000. In the report, under the heading "Impact of Proactive and Preventative Programs," the committee said in part:

- Programs in Police and Fire are some of the most proactive in the State.
- A large portion of the budget is allocated to prevention programs. This is a proactive approach that appears to be instrumental in keeping the crime rate down.
- At first glance, the staffing in Field Support and Family Services Divisions seems to be disproportionately high. After looking closer at each unit operation and the impact on the community made by each of these operations, staffing appears to be appropriate.
- The Family and Youth Services Sections appear to have programs in place to proactively address crime prevention. (Citizen's Committee, 2000)

The committee was favorably impressed by the direction the department had taken in the non-traditional proactive areas. Clearly, in this department, the background structure exists to branch out further in that direction if a decision is made to do so. Is this consistent with the mission of the Vacaville Police Department? The mission of the department, which remains unchanged from 1993, is as follows:

As members of the Vacaville Police Department we will vigorously strive to meet the diverse need within the community and our organization. We will greet the future with vision and enthusiasm, working in partnership with the community to

safeguard and enhance the quality of life for those we serve. (Vacaville Police Department, 1992)

The requirement to safeguard and enhance the quality of life for those we serve suggests that continuing to offer more and innovative services is consistent with the mission.

Leadership

To achieve organizational change and a new look at the fundamental way of approaching law enforcement will require a major endorsement by the leadership of the police agency. While Vacaville has already begun a journey in that direction, there is still resistance to placing civilian managers in leadership positions, and the approach of many street level officers is one of cynicism when it comes to any type of service delivery that hints of social work. Even leaders in the organization who philosophically support movement to more socially oriented service delivery have been born and raised on more traditional approaches, and have personal biases to overcome when supporting new and innovative programs. Unfortunately, even the more forward thinkers in organizations can be quite traditional in practice.

The challenge here is to set a clear vision, consistent with the predetermined mission of the organization that can be legitimately tied to crime prevention and maintenance of the community's quality of life. While the traditional cop on the beat may have little tolerance for a new social program being sold by the administration, that same cop will consider strategies that offer ways to avoid paperwork, and repeat calls to the same addresses. In fact, an agency with a strong community policing philosophy and practice will likely find that social service delivery is palatable as a community policing technique, a way of problem solving with approaches unique to law enforcement.

Much of the community policing philosophy is based on problem solving with the goal of reducing repeat calls to the same address. If an officer had a tool that could be used for problem solving, for example a Family Support Worker (FSW) skilled at aligning available resources to respond to an identified issue, that officer would first approach the tool with skepticism, even resistance. After hearing through unofficial channels of some successes, the officer would test the waters, and give the FSW an opportunity to prove or disprove their utility. A leadership supportive of the FSW, and equally supportive of allowing the officer to prove the merits of the program, will have the opportunity to allow the skeptical officer to become an ally and proponent of the new approach to problem solving. For the skeptic, nothing succeeds like success.

Summary

The original question posed by this article asked what role law enforcement would play in delivering social services in the future. Using an optimistic scenario, and a vision that places law enforcement clearly in the middle of maintaining and enhancing the quality of life for its community, it appears inevitable that law enforcement agencies across the nation will see an increased role in this effort. The Vacaville PD model suggests that it is possible, with the correct balance of forward thinking leadership, a structure designed to support a strong social services component coupled with civilian management, and training designed to promote the crime prevention aspects of social services. Forward thinking police departments across the nation are continually looking for ways to provide better service to their customers. Training in cultural awareness, responding to domestic violence, dealing with disabilities, and communicating across ethnic boundaries is commonplace in law enforcement training centers throughout the

country. Understanding why people do the things they do is part of learning the important techniques of the profession.

It is no longer accurate for the modern, well-trained officer to say that he or she is a cop, not a social worker. The future delivery of social services by modern police departments is likely to become a reality. The future success of less modern police departments may hinge on how quickly they adapt to new ways of solving problems and teach their staff members that policing at its finest is social work at its best.

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