

MEETING POLICING EXPECTATIONS IN THE YEAR 2006
USING A COMPREHENSIVE MODEL OF
LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

Article

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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).

MEETING POLICING EXPECTATIONS IN THE YEAR 2006 USING A COMPREHENSIVE MODEL OF LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES

As law enforcement enters the twenty first century, ever increasing demands for a variety of services are being placed upon them. While having made significant changes in policing concepts and philosophies since the mid 1980's, there is still room for significant improvement. During the past ten to fifteen years, many California law enforcement agencies made a major shift from traditional policing philosophies, to those of community oriented or community based policing. This change was made in an effort to have a greater impact on the suppression of crime, make the community more responsible for its own problems and improve the quality of life for those in the community. Additionally, this philosophy helped to improve relationships and brought citizens and officers closer together. Since making this conceptual change in their approach, many police agencies have been trying to further define the role they play within the community they serve, in an effort to meet the ever changing demands and expectations placed upon them.

Reviewing the historical evolution of policing during the past fifty years is helpful in understanding the need to implement a new model of policing services.

Beginning in the 1950's and continuing into the early 1960's, police services in most regions of the United States involved assigning officers to a patrol car, sending them out to respond to radio calls for service and conducting random patrols of their assigned beats. Viewed as an effective use of manpower and technology, the motorized patrols and reactive mentality of the officers began to lead to a separation of the police from the community.¹

In the mid 1960's and into the 1970's, social changes such as the civil rights movement, migration of minorities, anti-war protests and the changing age of the country's population, created unstable conditions.² Incidents of police brutality only worsened the standing of the police in society and undermined their role as keepers of the peace.³ The role of the police was seen as one of doing battle with criminals, who were seen as a definable group of bad people, justifying the crime fighting image traditional law enforcement has adopted and perpetuated.⁴

During this period of time, law enforcement became entrenched in providing traditional policing services, with little concern for solving problems or the prevention of crime. Police agencies focused on three major strategies: (1) routine random patrol, (2) rapid response to 911 calls from citizens, and (3) retroactive investigation of past crimes/incidents by officers and detectives.⁵

In the early 1980's, law enforcement began to rethink its role, how it interacted with the community and what services it provided. During this period many traditional policing concepts and mind sets gave way to the concept of team policing. Under this concept, officers were assigned as teams to work in and address the problems of specific geographical areas on a full time basis. Over a period of years, the team policing concept evolved into the philosophy of community oriented policing. This resulted in a shift from the traditional mode of enforcement, to one of peace keeping and order maintenance.⁶

Since the mid 1980's, community oriented policing, or similar philosophy of policing, has become the policing strategy of hundreds of law enforcement agencies across the nation. With this change in philosophy came a new approach to dealing with crime related issues. Law enforcement now focused on solving problems dealing with: quality of life issues, fear of victimization and the root causes of crime.⁷ The traditional policing definition of crime

prevention, historically equating to target hardening, changed to one of problem identification and solution.

Police agencies have implemented the philosophy of community policing using a variety of methods. Primary among these is the refocusing of the department's overall philosophy and operations in order to view the community not only as a partner but as a consumer of the department's services.⁸

This issue of the community being consumers of police services was noted by freelance writer Harvey Rachlin in 1997 when he wrote:

Community policing has grown to be more than just a philosophy calling for the police to cooperate with the public in addressing crime problems. Today, police agencies are beginning to mirror financial, telecommunications, and other industries and institutions by offering various "products" other than their core services to satisfy the ever-changing public.⁹

As law enforcement continues to move forward with a community policing strategy, more and more issues that are considered not the role of the police are being addressed. In response to these changing expectations by today's society, police agencies are exploring, adopting and implementing a variety of innovative approaches to meet these new mandates. With law enforcement serving as the catalyst, a number of new strategies have emerged across the country.

Recognizing the expanding growth in our nation's youth population, ages ten to seventeen, police agencies across the country are adopting new strategies to deal with youth issues. One of the more successful strategies in dealing with the prevention of youth related crimes, both as suspects and victims, has been the implementation of a recreation component in the department's structure. An example of this concept of recreational activities for youth is the model established by the Redlands Police Department.

In 1997, the City of Redlands combined the City's recreation services with their Police Department to increase the preventative nature of their crime reduction strategies.¹⁰ As part of this strategy, the Department implemented two after school recreation based activities: Rec-on-Wheels, a mobile recreation program consisting of civilian and sworn members serving youth in a targeted neighborhood, and Rec-N-FX, a program held at local middle schools. The potential for these types of programs to have a significant impact on the reduction of crime and delinquency is quite apparent. In 1999, these after school recreation based activities had a direct correlation in a ten percent drop in major crime during after school hours in the areas served by these programs.¹¹

Another growing population in our country is the senior population. A rapid increase in the older population is expected between 2005 and 2030 as the baby boomers reach age sixty and older. While seniors have historically had a low criminal victimization rate, this trend is unfortunately changing. During recent years, growing numbers of seniors have fallen victim to physical and mental abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, scams and frauds.¹²

Serving the policing needs of this segment of the community can be difficult and challenging to law enforcement. To meet these needs, police agencies have formed special units to investigate crimes against seniors. Also, specific training to deal with issues concerning the elderly is being developed and presented to officers. A number of police agencies throughout the country have also implemented programs to assist in the safety needs of their seniors. Given a multitude of names, the basic premise of these programs is to routinely check on the welfare of the senior, either with a telephone call or personal visit by an officer or volunteer.

Although the senior segment of the community can pose unique challenges to law enforcement, they can also serve as a huge resource pool for the department. Many police agencies have instituted volunteer programs in which seniors assist the department in a variety of

non-hazardous duties, such as: vacation house checks, traffic control, extra patrols and towing abandoned vehicles. The benefits of these programs are significant to the department. More importantly, they provide the senior with an opportunity to make a valuable contribution to the community which has a positive impact on their well being.

Issues involving homeless individuals is another growing problem area law enforcement has been tasked with addressing. In years past, many of these individuals were arrested for vagrancy, drunk in public or simply provided with ride to another town to solve the problem. Changes in laws and increasing numbers of these type of individuals has forced police agencies to develop innovative strategies to deal with this issue. One such program was implemented by the Fontana Police Department. The program, called Transient Enrichment Network (TEN-4), is designed to provide food, shelter, clothing and job referrals to homeless subjects found in the city. To be eligible to participate, individuals must cooperate with the police and those agencies who are providing aid and follow through with recommendations and programs to improve their situation. The Fontana Police Department reports this approach has been successful in addressing the welfare of these subjects, along with lowering the number of criminal and nuisance incidents they are involved in.¹³

In an effort to have a positive impact on the quality of life in the community, the relationship between blight and crime is a relatively recent issue being addressed by law enforcement. While most police executives would probably agree criminal activities tend to be higher in a neighborhood where blight and decay is prevalent, few have placed their department in a position to take action and resolve the problem. To address this very problem, the City of Redlands, in 1996, created the Redlands Neighborhood Improvement Team. This team is a multi-disciplinary task force with representatives from: Police, Fire, Human Services, Utilities and

Community Development whose mission is to reduce crime and other neighborhood problems by attacking blighted conditions in the city. In September 1997, the Redlands Police Department consolidated the city's Housing Department with the department, naming it the Community Services Bureau. This consolidation furthered the effectiveness of the project and resulted in a more logical and collaborative approach to addressing the issue.¹⁴

As law enforcement moves forward in the community policing model, many collaborative efforts and programs have emerged to address the issue of crime suppression and intervention. Recently, stronger partnerships have been formed between police agencies and parole and probation departments. These new partnerships have led to the formation of teams of police officers with personnel from these agencies. The tasks of these teams range from; monitoring the activities of the parolee or probationer and arrest for violations, to assisting the subject in finding a place to live and/or employment. An example of such a partnership is the Drug Court Liaison Officer position in the Redlands Police Department. Implemented in mid 1999, the duties of the officer range from screening of potential clients and making recommendations to the court on their suitability for the program, random home searches and testing of clients to arranging and participating in recreational activities with program participants and their families.¹⁵

At the present time, law enforcement is in a position to make significant strides in the type of services(s) it will provide in the future. To best serve the needs and future expectations of our communities, police agencies will need to adopt and implement a comprehensive model of law enforcement services. For the purpose of this plan, the term comprehensive model is used to describe the concept of integrating traditional police functions and duties with other community based programs and services of a social nature. While police agencies may choose a variety of names for this model, the basic concept would remain constant.

Under this model police agencies will continue to provide services tied to traditional policing roots; random proactive patrols, response to emergency calls, investigation of past crimes and arrest of criminal suspects. This new model will add services of a social and preventative dimension, such as: recreation programs for youth, services to assist seniors, and housing services. Additionally, police agencies will have a greater role in intervention programs like: Drug Court, Domestic Violence Court, and Police-Parole Teams.

To some, this model may appear to be even softer on crime than community policing was viewed as when first introduced. The fact is, it is not. This model, building on the community policing philosophy, works to attack crime and related problems at its roots. This model utilizes the concepts of prevention, intervention and suppression as strategies to accomplish this goal. Properly implemented, this model has the ability to have a significant impact and lower the level of crime in the community, while reducing the fear of victimization and improving the quality of life for all citizens.

Community policing has already been recognized and implemented by law enforcement as an effective strategy for focusing law enforcement's energy and resources on the underlying conditions that often give rise to crime. The strength of community policing comes from the ability to involve members of the community in a collaborative effort, focusing them on common issues, to improve the quality of life within the community they live and work.

The next logical step for a police agency, in an attempt to meet policing expectations in 2006, would be the implementation of a comprehensive model of law enforcement services. Building on the community policing philosophy and related strategies, providing services under a comprehensive model allows law enforcement to concentrate on the prevention, intervention and suppression of criminal and problematic behaviors, while also focusing on quality of life issues.

ENDNOTES

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2. George L. Keeling and Mark H. Moore, "From Political to Reform to Community: The Evolving Strategy of Policing," Community Policing: Rhetoric or Reality (Boston: Praeger Publishers, 1988), 4-9
3. Dempsey, An Introduction to Policing, 17-21
4. Gene Stephens, "COP: It Can Work But Only With Creative, Facilitative Leadership"
5. Dempsey, An Introduction to Policing, 23
6. Ken Peak, Robert V. Bradshaw and Robert W. Glesnor, "Improving Citizen Perceptions of the Police: Back To The Basics With a Community Policing Strategy," Journal Of Criminal Justice Vol. 20, No.1, (1992): 26
7. Ibid., 27
8. Dempsey, An Introduction to Policing, 239
9. Harvey Rachlin, "Creative Community Policing Programs," Law and Order (April 1997): 24
10. James R. Bueermann, "Transforming Crime Prevention for the 21st Century: Risk and Protective-Focused Prevention," (May 1998): 9
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12. Linda Frost, "Strengthening the Relationship Between Police and Older Residents," Police and Security News (September/October 2000): 87-91
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