

**JUVENILE CRIME REDUCTION
REDUCING JUVENILE CRIME ONE STEP AT A TIME**

by

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The Command College Futures Study Project is a FUTURES study of a particular emerging issue of relevance to law enforcement. Its purpose is NOT to predict the future; rather, to project a variety of possible scenarios useful for strategic planning in anticipation of the emerging landscape facing policing organizations.

This journal article was created using the futures forecasting process of Command College and its outcomes. Defining the future differs from analyzing the past, because it has not yet happened. In this article, methodologies have been used to discern useful alternatives to enhance the success of planners and leaders in their response to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing it—creating, constraining and adapting to emerging trends and events in a way that optimizes the opportunities and minimizes the threats of relevance to the profession.

The views and conclusions expressed in the Command College Futures Project and journal article are those of the author, and are not necessarily those of the CA Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

JUVENILE CRIME REDUCTION REDUCING JUVENILE CRIME ONE STEP AT A TIME

Since the early 90s, community policing has been a big part of most law enforcement agencies. As is the case with most police departments, they are being tasked with doing more with less. Unfortunately, doing more with less is not always an easy task. With the drastic budget cuts, innovation has given way to a new partnership in crime fighting. That partnership is with community based organizations. Community based organizations (CBO's) are ideal partners in the fight to curb juvenile crime and reduce juvenile recidivism.

Juvenile justice and crime reduction are two issues that go seemingly hand in hand. With a revolving door mentality and very little follow through of the process, law enforcement can no longer afford to introduce our youth to a failed system with hope that change is imminent. When a student was suspended or expelled, his or her likelihood of being involved in the juvenile justice system the subsequent year increased significantly.” (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2012). Society can no longer afford to mistakenly educate our youth on how to be better criminals. We must change the way we do business to rehabilitate our youth.

Entering the juvenile justice system is shocking enough to the younger population but to burden them with possible failure as an adult because of the “System” is unacceptable. “One of the things we've learned is that the minute a youth sets foot in detention or confinement, their prospects for success and having a job decrease dramatically, and the likelihood that they will end up in the adult criminal system increases exponentially," said OJJDP Acting Administrator Melodee Hanes (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2012) Now that we understand the need,

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what is the answer? We have tried a variety of programs, services and other efforts to help kids lead healthy lives; some with great success, others with less sterling outcomes.

Society has experienced trends over the years when it comes to juvenile delinquents, from the DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program to being “tough on crime” and trying juveniles as adults. In the mid 1990’s, the United States experienced a rash of school shootings that fueled the fear of out-of-control children and the need for tougher laws. In 1994, President Clinton signed into law the Gun-Free Schools Act that required at least a one-year expulsion if a student brought a weapon to school. (John Cloud, 1999) After the Gun-Free School Zones Act was applied throughout the Nation, some accomplishments were noted in terms of eliminating the students carrying guns and intimidating other students ((Ozdemir & Yalcinkaya, 2011)). This zero tolerance enforcement was a direct reaction to the numerous school shootings. When the zero tolerance net is cast, all types of students for all types of violations will be caught up in the process. In California alone, 402,855 students were suspended from school at least once during the 2009-2010 school year. That number indicates that nearly 7.1% of all California K-12 students were ordered to stay home rather than reporting to school, oftentimes unsupervised while at home. (Losen, Martinez, & Gillespie, 2012). With the staggering number of students suspended, it is imperative that law enforcement partner with their communities to find a better way to impact the juvenile crime rate and the number of children suspended each year. Juvenile court alternatives can have a lasting effect on the juvenile crime rate and the rate of recidivism. Exploring additional alternatives can also strengthen the relationships with community based organizations and the community as well.

MOVING FORWARD

Community Based Organizations (CBO's) have partnered with law enforcement on many levels throughout the years. This includes partnerships to investigate sexual predators online, counseling services for domestic violence victims, psychological emergency response assistance, and juvenile diversion programs. One community organization was recently touted by the news media as a huge success.

Crime Stoppers, a nonprofit charitable organization has been in existence since the 1970's. The mission of Crime Stoppers is to empower people to make their neighborhoods, schools and businesses safer through anonymous reporting. Since its inception, Crime Stoppers tips have been responsible for 617,653 arrests, 943,823 cases cleared and \$95,120,278 in rewards paid out. The program started in response to the murder of a college student in Albuquerque, NM. Detectives in that agency were frustrated by the lack of leads, and wanted to offer a reward for more information. Members of the community, media and law enforcement came together to provide crime-solving help for this case and others. Crime stoppers now boasts a nationwide 800 number that now covers approximately 76 million people in over twenty-two states across the nation (Crime Stoppers USA, 2012). They are, though, just one example of how a community can come together and assist law enforcement in impacting crime.

A "Juvenile Diversion" program is another example of a community organization supporting law enforcement in an effort to reduce juvenile crime and recidivism.

Juvenile and family courts throughout the country are increasingly aware that innovative court practices and partnerships with Child Protective Services and community service providers are instrumental to achieving safety, permanency, and well-being for children

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and families (Jones, 2006) The Escondido Juvenile Diversion Program is a joint project with the Escondido Police Department and a community based organization “Escondido Education COMPACT”. The program serves juvenile first time offenders. The goal of the program is to provide appropriate services and meaningful consequences to first time juvenile offenders and their families to prevent further involvement in the Juvenile Justice System.

“Juvenile Diversion” programs offer an alternative to the current juvenile court proceedings. Through juvenile diversion, the offending juvenile attends a hearing where he/she is given a contract with a list of requirements that must be completed in a set time. If the offender successfully completes the contract and does not reoffend, their case will not be sent to court and the offense will not appear on their record. In developing the contract the offender’s academics, behavior and family issues are considered which makes the contract also an intervention plan.

CBO’s have been serving their communities for years and recently they have been coordinating problem solving efforts with law enforcement agencies. As local schools and community groups try to improve their communities, an area of particular interest and in need of additional support is that of juvenile crime prevention and intervention.

In May of 2012, the San Diego County Grand Jury released a report titled, Civic Success-Public Service at it’s best. In this report, the grand jury concluded that Escondido Police in partnership with a community based organization, “Escondido Education COMPACT” achieved an 85% success rate in preventing recidivism amongs first-time offenders ages 12-20. The Grand Jury concluded, “The Grand Jury commends the Escondido Police Department and the Escondido Education COMPACTstaff for

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developing and administering a successful program. Peer pressure, parental involvement and community support are key to its success. It should serve as a model for other communities” (San Diego County Grand Jury, 2012).

With the Escondido Police Department and the Escondido Education COMPACT seeing an 85% success rate in preventing recidivism among first-time offenders between the ages 12-20, the direction is clear. Partnering with a CBO specifically in the area of Juvenile Diversion can have lasting effects on the juvenile crime rate and potential adult incarceration numbers. When dealing with early intervention and prevention, addressing juvenile offenders can offer the best chance for success when trying to change social and cultural norms for the most influential age group. “Juveniles in crisis—from serious, violent, and chronic offenders to victims of abuse and neglect—pose a challenge to the nation. Charged by Congress to meet this challenge, OJJDP collaborates with professionals from diverse disciplines to improve juvenile justice policies and practices.” (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2012)

Juvenile diversion and other similar programs have shown significant reductions in recidivism and a cessation of criminal behavior in later years. According to an Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention bulletin, “A larger proportion of child delinquents, compared with later onset delinquents, become serious, violent, and chronic offenders.” (Loeber, Farrington, & Petechuk, 2003). With these alarming statistics, juvenile intervention and prevention has the potential to be the single most important starting point in law enforcement’s efforts to fight crime. There are, though, pitfalls that could derail efforts to partner with CBO’s.

OVERCOMING THE PITFALLS

As a result of this new partnership, problems could potentially surface that need to be addressed in order to increase the overall effectiveness of the CBO/Law Enforcement relationship. “Potential partners often approach the relationship from different places with different goals, priorities, capacities, and needs. If not done well, partnerships for service-learning can discourage participants, thus undermining the impact of the service-learning effort.” (Roehlkepartain & Bailis, 2007)

It is important to understand that working with CBO’s on juvenile justice issues is a relatively new concept. For decades, law enforcement has addressed social problems most commonly through incarceration and suppression. As CBO’s enter the scene, police officers find themselves being able to embrace alternative enforcement options and prevention methodologies. With any new CBO/Law Enforcement collaboration, differing goals and misunderstanding of philosophies can create an unhealthy level of animosity. The misunderstanding of philosophies and perceived conflicting goals are generally not so far apart, rather it is more a matter of understanding each other’s philosophy of doing business. For example, CBO’s generally have a strong need to help as many juveniles as possible and therefore might accept a juvenile into an intervention program that could prove to be destructive to the overall program.

By communicating with the CBO, law enforcement could prevent potential problems that could jeopardize the entire program. Additionally, law enforcement has strict laws when dealing with juvenile crime suspects and that can translate into delays in producing cases and potential program candidates. By

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communicating this to your CBO at an early stage, you could avoid a sense of frustration on the part of the CBO. By communicating perceived program differences often, the relationship between CBO's and law enforcement can strengthen as the program succeeds. As part of his 2012-13 budget plan, CA Governor Brown proposes completing the realignment of juvenile justice by stopping new admissions of offenders to state Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) facilities on January 1, 2013 (Legislative Analyst's Office). This policy and financial change will likely have a significant effect on how law enforcement handles juvenile crime cases and arrestees therefore increasing the need for alternative crime reduction plans and new CBO relationships to fill that need. When a CBO and law enforcement work together, additional opportunities can open up and with those opportunities can come additional funding sources.

There are numerous grant opportunities for crime suppression as long as your department is willing to collaborate with CBO's. By partnering with CBO's, law enforcement agencies can increase their crime fighting effectiveness without increasing their budgets or personnel. A typical collaboration consists of community members, probation officers, school officials, health and human services providers and grant monitors. With these new relationships, CBO's and law enforcement quickly realize their ways of doing business and philosophies are rather divergent. With strong leadership and a singular focus, a quality program model to combat juvenile crime for the future can be very successful. Three areas of effort should be considered at the outset, and then reinforced as the relationship matures. They are:

1. Both entities need to understand the predefined mission and objectives.

When both parties understand the mission and the objectives of that mission, they will begin to see the potential pitfalls, (e.g.) if the mission objective is to service a defined number of individuals, CBOs might be willing to accept anyone into the program while the agency might have a different opinion of who they should service.

2. Both entities need to meet regularly to assure mission success.

When agencies and CBO's partner with a predefined mission, frequent communication can help thwart potential problems and can even help meet or exceed the mission objectives. (e.g.) if a defined objective is to service a defined number of individuals, and it appears the CBO is not getting enough individuals, the sooner that is discovered, the better chances you have of staying on track with the mission. Through frequent meetings, the CBO and the agency can come to an understanding and eventually meet or exceed the mission objectives.

3. Both entities need to communicate any problems in order to keep small problems from becoming big problems. When a problem arises, as a result of a CBO Law Enforcement partnership, the best solution is to address it immediately. Often the problems that arise are a result of misunderstanding each other's mission and values and can be quickly resolved by detailing each other's concerns.

IN THE END, WE ALL WIN

Police officers believe their primary function is to, “Protect and Serve”. So when you add additional roles of collaborator and counselor, some officers will immediately retreat to the job they are most comfortable with. In the 1990s, the concept of partnering with community organizations was novel, but gave rise to innovative efforts such as community-based prosecution, community courts and similar problem-solving efforts focused on juvenile probation. As noted in an article written for the Center for Court Innovation by Robert V. Wolf, “These new experiments shared an emphasis on data analysis, community engagement, crime prevention and problem solving. At their core was the idea that it was no longer enough just to arrest, process, and adjudicate an offender; but law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, and probation officers also needed to try to reduce recidivism, improve public confidence in justice and prevent crime down the road.” (Wolf, 2007). Juvenile crime prevention and reduced recidivism is no longer the sole responsibility of the juvenile justice system, instead it is the responsibility of a meaningful partnerships between the juvenile justice system, law enforcement and the community. As the relationships between law enforcement and CBO’s strengthen, the public will reap the rewards with lower juvenile and adult crime rates and a decreased rate of recidivism.

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