

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

JUNE 1993



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Montgomery County, Maryland Department of Police

Office of Community Policing

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OFFICE OF COMMUNITY POLICING**

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OPERATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

I. PRELUDE

The Operations Committee was responsible for recommending strategies for increasing community participation in our community policing efforts and to recommend possible strategies for the delivery of community policing services. The committee was tasked with developing strategies that would address the following objectives:

- Develop a process whereby the community shares responsibility for the resolution of problems within their community.
- Reduce fear of crime and conditions that contribute to crime and disorder through community policing strategies.
- Establish adaptable strategies for responding to community concerns.
- Recognize and ensure that our diverse cultural, social, and economic communities are active participants within this partnership.

This report by the Operations Committee addresses the first three objectives. The fourth objective is addressed in a report by the Advisory Committee for Community Diversity which is attached as an appendix to this report.

II. *FIRST OBJECTIVE*

Developing a process whereby the community shares responsibility for the resolution of problems within the community.

Introduction

The Operations Committee formed a subcommittee which was charged with developing a process for problem resolutions within a community. This report is the result of the efforts of that subcommittee, which recognized that there are several factors which *must* be in place before the police and the community can work together to resolve problems in the true spirit of community policing. If these factors are not accomplished we, the members of the subcommittee, believe that the concept of community policing is doomed to fail. These factors are outlined below.

Factors Necessary to Perform Community Policing

- 1) The county *must* hire and train new police officers.
- 2) Beat integrity needs to become a priority in the daily operation of a district station.
- 3) Police officers *must* be willing to open up lines of communication with the citizens who live in the communities they patrol.
- 4) Police officers and communities *must* be willing to open their minds to different, non-traditional ways of thinking.
- 5) The public, other government agencies, and private organizations *must* be educated and sold on the concept of community policing.
- 6) Sub-stations *must* be established in designated high crime areas.

Definitions

Community - people with similar values, etc. living together in the same geographical area. The boundaries of the community, which could be both residential and commercial, are established by the people who live in the community. Currently many beats, especially up-county, contain several communities. Each community has its own problems.

Point-of-Contact (POC) - those individuals in a given community who are capable and are willing to serve as spokespeople for their community. POC's should include representatives from all groups within a community, i.e., schools, religious organizations, civic associations, homeowners associations, merchant associations, homeless people, AIDS victims, etc.

Problem - usually a number of events, but it can be one event, i.e., a rape or a murder, that is inconsistent with both the law and the wishes of the members of the community.

A Process for Problem Resolution Within Communities

The subcommittee agreed that the problem solving process known as SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment) is the best method for resolving problems within the different communities that make up Montgomery County. The process is as follows:

- 1) **SCANNING** - Police officers are encouraged to group individual related incidents that come to their attention as "problems" and define these problems in more precise and useful terms. Thus, police officers will be thinking in terms of patterns which may impact upon a particular community located in their beat.
- 2) **ANALYSIS** - In response to a problem, police officers collect information from a variety of public and private sources in order to illuminate the underlying nature of the problem and suggest its causes and a variety of options for its resolution.
- 3) **RESPONSE** - Police officers, working in concert with citizens, businesses, government agencies, and private organizations/foundations, tailor a program of action and solutions, suitable to the problem, which may go beyond traditional criminal justice system remedies.
- 4) **ASSESSMENT** - Police officers evaluate the impact of these efforts to determine if the problem was actually solved or alleviated.

How SARA Can Be Used By Police Officers

- 1) District community relations police officers must open up lines of communication with the various communities within their district and identify those individuals who are capable and are willing to serve as POC's.
- 2) Using the list of POC's, police officers must establish lines of communication with those individuals in their beat through personal contact, including meetings.
- 3) Police officers must be given the time to develop their own POC's in their beat.
- 4) By *SCANNING* various police reports, making observations while on patrol, receiving information from the POC's, etc., the police officer must be able to determine if the pattern is a problem which needs resolution. For example, by reviewing a number of accident reports for a particular road on his/her beat, a police officer may question why these accidents are occurring. After driving on this road the police officer may note several conditions, including the curves in the road, the positioning of the sun at rush hour, etc., which may account for the high accident rate and may want to talk with the POC's to determine whether they see this as a problem.
- 5) The police officer must be willing to communicate this problem to the POC's within the community where the problem is occurring in order to determine whether the community sees this as a problem. To continue with the example, the police officer should contact the POC's to determine if they consider this a problem for the community. He/she may learn that a fatality occurred at one particular intersection two years ago, prior to being assigned to that beat, and that the community was concerned how fast people were driving on the road in question.
- 6) Once the police officer and the POC's determine that this problem is truly a "real" problem within their community, they should work together or independently to *ANALYZE* the underlying reasons which cause the problem. If the two parties work independently, they should discuss their findings with each other before initiating any other action. To continue with the example, the police officer and the POC's recognize that they cannot change the positioning of the sun and agree that the road contains too many curves, that people are driving too fast, and that the intersection lacks any traffic control.

- 7) The police officer and the POC's should either work together or independently to prepare a list of possible solutions, which address the underlying reasons for the problem. If the two parties work independently, they should discuss their findings with each other before initiating any other action. Once the police officer and the POC's agree or come to an understanding as to the best solution(s) for the problem, they should discuss the possible *RESPONSE(S)* with the community before initiating corrective action. To continue with the example, the police officer and the POC's work together and establish a list of solutions to resolve this problem. The solutions are discussed with the community at two public meetings during which it is recommended that a traffic light be installed at the intersection in lieu of setting up radar traps.
- 8) Having obtained concurrence from the community, the police officer and/or the community can initiate the actions necessary to cause the response to be put in place. To continue with the example, the police officer and community representatives meet with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (DOT) and are told that a traffic light could not be installed at the intersection in question without a traffic study. After the Montgomery County Police Department and the community representatives discuss this problem with the DOT, they agree to place 4-way stop signs at that intersection and perform a traffic study. The traffic study would evaluate the need for the light and determine whether the speed limits should be reduced.
- 9) Once the response has been established, the police officer and the POC's can work together or independently to monitor the effectiveness of the response over time. If the two parties work independently, they should discuss their findings with each other before initiating any other action. An *ASSESSMENT* of the response will be reviewed to determine whether it was adequate or whether additional action must be taken. To continue with the example, after the 4-way stop signs are set up at that intersection, the police officer and the community monitor their impact to determine if the people are driving slower and if the number of accidents are down. Once the DOT completes their traffic study, the police and the community can provide comment as to whether additional actions are necessary.

This is but one example of how police officers and community members can effectively deal with crime related issues by utilizing the S.A.R.A. problem solving model. By establishing such cooperative partnerships, this subcommittee believes that we can successfully impact the quality of life in our communities.

III. SECOND OBJECTIVE

Reduce fear of crime and conditions that contribute to crime and disorder through community policing strategies.

Introduction

The Operations committee was responsible for recommending strategies for increasing community participation in our community policing efforts, and recommending possible strategies for the delivery of community policing services.

Problem Oriented Policing - the process to identify and solve problems affecting the police and community using traditional and non-traditional means.

Community Policing

- partnership - team concept
- empowerment - power to solve problems
- problem solving
- accountability - to include everyone
- service orientation
- adaptability - flexibility
 - include all citizens and community groups
 - encourage and assist them in the process of solving their own problems and directing them to various resources
 - movement away from reactive policing to more proactive techniques

Topics to be Included

- deployment of officers
- problem solving
- partnership
- employee development
- staffing needs
- educational issues on the role of the police and the public
- responsiveness of officers
- investigative functions
- transition to community policing
- officer safety
- how to identify and reach the citizen/customer
- encourage people to take responsibility
- identify citizen concerns
- community participation

Police and Citizens Together

Partnership

What the police can do in dealing with crime, public order, and fear is heavily dependent on the kind of partnership they develop with the community. Due to the current staffing and deployment levels of the Montgomery County Police Department, the community must be enlisted to assist the police with crime related issues.

The police must take steps to engage the community in this partnership. The police can make contact by using various methods, such as:

- foot patrol
- two officers per patrol unit
- bike patrol
- storefront offices
- community meetings
- civilian advisory boards
- education
- training
- crime prevention methods
- neighborhood watch programs
- dissemination of all available information and materials
- assign officers to areas for sufficient periods of time to enable them to identify the concerns of the community
- develop the capacity of officers, department management and the community to analyze community problems
- learn when greater community involvement has the potential for significantly reducing a problem
- work with those specific segments of the community that are in a position to assist in reducing or eliminating the problem
- government outreach programs
- encourage community input and involvement in the process to change or create laws, regulations, statutes and ordinances.

Empowerment

Police officers and community members have to be educated to use all resources available to them. Police and community involvement can directly impact the results, which can eliminate or significantly reduce the targeted problem, whether broad or specific.

There will be times when community members may be able to get a quicker response from other resources, enabling them to resolve their concerns faster. The important point is that both have the power to solve problems and their network of knowledge and resources must be used. By making it a team effort, we can avoid getting wrapped up with who is credited with resolving the problem, but rather the fact that the problem no longer exists.

Problem Solving

A problem is defined as a cluster of similar, related, or recurring incidents rather than a single incident and of a significant community concern.

One method that can be used in problem solving, by both the police and community, is S.A.R.A.

1. ***SCANNING*** all available information from input submitted by the police and community to identify the problem.
2. ***ANALYSIS*** reveals facts about the causes, scope, and effects of the problem.
3. ***RESPONSE*** is the action taken to resolve the identified problem.
4. ***ASSESSMENT*** is the follow-up to determine if the response worked or what else still may need to be done.

Additionally, citizens must be educated as to exactly what the police can and cannot do according to the law and departmental policy. Citizens need to know what the department can do to help resolve their concerns by enforcing the various laws and what the citizens may have to do. Citizens need to be educated in the process which they will need to follow after having witnessed a violation.

Alternative actions could improve "quality of life" concerns. The citizens would report an incident to the proper government, business, or private agency for enforcement of rules and regulations. The result for the community would be less time expended, less "buck passing" and quicker resolution of problems. This process would allow the police to direct their resources towards other issues of community concern.

The police department and community as a whole must be trained in the techniques of intervention and other non-traditional methods of action which sometimes means resolving a community issue without an arrest being made.

Accountability

All persons, including police officers, citizens, representatives of government agencies and businesses, will be held accountable to work as a team for the good of the community and to successfully resolve community problems.

The community must provide interest and support for the effort to be successful.

The community must be organized in its effort by such means as neighborhood watch programs.

The community can bring the family structure into the effort by educating parents to properly supervise their children and preventing them from committing acts that are of concern to the community.

Service Orientation

The community must be defined so that the police know who they are servicing. One common observation about communities is that the areas requiring the greatest amount of police attention are usually the ones with the least "sense of community."

Officers and citizens alike must be satisfied with their efforts at dealing with and resolving problems in the community.

Satisfaction with these efforts breeds productivity by both the officers and members of the community.

This subcommittee concurs with a statement made during an earlier meeting of the Operations Committee that the police department will need to substantially increase its current staffing levels to fully implement community policing. Increased staffing levels would ensure the satisfaction, productivity, and safety of officers and citizens alike.

Adaptability

Adaptability is the practice of continually evaluating the success of these efforts and making any necessary changes to refine or improve the process.

The department will have to be willing to try new approaches and techniques. The officers must utilize traditional and non-traditional methods, as well as a combination of reactive and proactive policing to solve problems.

The five police districts and headquarters will need to share information on methods that have worked in various communities.

IV. THIRD OBJECTIVE

Establish adaptable strategies for responding to community concerns.

The operational guidance given to the Operations Committee charges the committee with recommending strategies in four areas. One of these is stated in the above objective.

A basic and absolutely essential step to take before developing such strategies is consulting directly with members and representatives of the respective communities about their concerns. Holding the necessary consultations and developing strategies requires a long-term effort, beyond the capabilities of the members of the Strategy Subcommittee to complete within the time available.

Realizing its inability to develop final strategies, the subcommittee adopted as its goal to design a process for developing strategies. The process developed by the subcommittee consists of eight phases.

The subcommittee believes that success of this process depends on heavily publicizing Phases 4-8 to develop participation from the various communities; committing ourselves to implementing the strategies once they are agreed on; and generating community support for obtaining the needed resources.

Community policing is a heavily labor-intensive endeavor. A police force undertaking such a commitment must continue to answer calls for assistance from the public while employing new strategies and new methods. In time, the new venture may result in fewer assistance calls, but this will not happen overnight. Montgomery County therefore must give serious consideration to hiring more police officers in order to make its community policing efforts a success. The police department's planning and community relations resources may need to be increased as well.

The subcommittee believes that strategy development is a function which must go forward at both the district level and at the county-wide level. The districts, of course, are closest to the communities they serve, and best know the resources and problems of their communities. A process of this magnitude must be observed and coordinated at the county-wide level as well, however, in order to ensure that overall goals are implemented as well as local goals. In order to fulfill this function, the subcommittee recommends that the Chief appoint a planning task force, to be composed of police officers from the districts, Planning Section, and Office of Community Policing personnel and civilian Community Policing Committee members.

1. DEFINE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS AND CRIME

The kinds of crime and the number of crimes per unit time in a given community or area depend partly on well known factors. Some of these are:

- Income levels of the population (low income areas experience higher crime rates)
- Density of the population (more crowded areas experience higher crime rates)
- Presence of certain kinds of businesses (strip shopping areas of small businesses experience loitering, disorderly conduct and robberies; major malls experience some of these to a lesser degree).
- Identifying and further defining these and other factors will help predict what the concerns *might* be in specific areas in the county.

2. DEFINE THE BOUNDARIES OF COMMUNITIES

Once we have defined the kinds of crime-generating factors we think are out there, it's important to set area boundaries so that we can find out what the concerns are of the people who live in the areas. In other words, there's not much point in looking in a five-acre zoning area for the kinds of crime which occur in high-density areas.

Probably the most efficient way to define community boundaries is to use (or adapt, if necessary) existing definitions, rather than starting from scratch. Several agencies of the government, such as the Park and Planning Commission, have collected and collated information about the areas of the county (information about income, population density, kinds of business etc.) Police planning officials should make maximum use of community definitions and other materials the agencies have developed in defining community boundaries for community policing purposes.

As a further method of predicting community concerns, existing information on crime from established police reporting systems should be collated for the communities defined in this phase.

3. IDENTIFY SPOKESPERSONS WHO CAN EXPRESS THE COMMUNITIES' CONCERNS

Once we've defined the communities, many people can be consulted about what's going on and what's needed. These potential spokespersons include:

- Community associations
- Neighborhood watch groups
- Police advisory boards
- Other police departments with overlapping geographic jurisdiction
- Fire departments
- Churches
- Political party precinct workers
- Beat officers
- Social service offices
- Business associations
- Local and County school officials
- Building inspectors
- Housing personnel
- Recreation personnel

4. IDENTIFY THE CONCERNS OF THE COMMUNITIES

There are many ways of doing this. Some of them are:

Conducting interviews with representatives of various groups (this should be done using some sort of standard interview guide, so everyone gets asked the same questions - or at least the same basic core of questions).

Attending community groups' meetings and soliciting their views on problems, priorities and solutions.

Holding our own community meetings, presenting what we are trying to do and soliciting input about problems, priorities and solutions.

5. COLLATE AND ANALYZE THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY THE COMMUNITIES

The interviews and meetings will produce large numbers of concerns and problems. The problems will vary in their significance or criticality; some will be subject to quick fixes while others will take years to address effectively; some will not appear to be "police problems" at all. All will deserve consideration.

For each community area, the problems should be organized into appropriate groups, prioritized according to the importance placed upon them and analyzed for commonality among the communities.

6. IDENTIFY SPECIFIC STRATEGIES TO DEAL WITH SPECIFIC TYPES OF CRIME PROBLEMS

Examples:

- Different patrol strategies for different population densities, ranging from one or two-person foot patrols in central business districts to one-person motor vehicle patrols in low-density suburbs
- Different police strategies for different problems, ranging from one-person vehicle patrols in areas of no specific problems to multi-person single-issue task forces for areas with serious problems of drugs, burglaries etc.

7. RESPOND TO THE COMMUNITIES

Put together specific strategic plans for specific areas. The strategic plans should include descriptions of the problems being addressed, the short and long-term strategies to be used in dealing with them, and issues such as the availability and adequacy of resources for the respective strategies. They should be expressed in terms of our commitment to do specific things within specific time frames, conditioned upon the necessary resources being made available.

Present the strategies for each community area to the citizens in appropriate forums, including community meetings called specifically for presenting and obtaining reactions and input. Reaction of the communities should be accepted in the meetings, by telephone and by mail for specific periods of time.

Collate and analyze the responses, and amend the strategies as necessary. If feasible and useful, go through a second round of presentations, response and revision.

Publish and publicize the strategic plans.

Organize the communities to seek the additional resources that are needed for longer-term elements of the strategies.

8. *IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGIES*

Put into effect immediately those elements of the strategies that can be implemented with current resources.

Put into effect the longer-term elements of the strategies as soon as the resources are available.

Make an assessment annually of the results of implementing the strategies and present the analyses to the communities.

Revise the strategies as required:

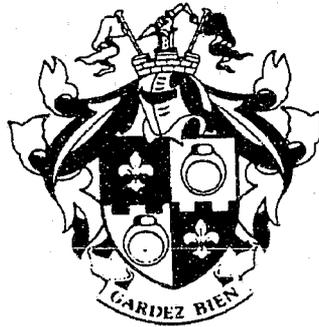
V. CONCLUSION

This report represents the collaborative efforts of the police employees and citizens who comprised the various subcommittees of the Operations Committee. Some of our recommendations are general in nature and, admittedly, are and have already been practiced by some officers and concerned citizens. Other recommendations are more specific and will require reeducation and training for police employees and citizens alike. It is the belief of all of our committee members that we can substantially improve the quality and effectiveness of police services by creating partnerships and working together to resolve community problems and concerns that affect the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

In closing, I would like to thank the members of this committee for their tireless and dedicated efforts to complete this report.

Office of Community Policing

Montgomery County, Maryland Department of Police



ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITY DIVERSITY REPORT

JUNE 1993



ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITY DIVERSITY

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY POLICING

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITY DIVERSITY

The Operations Committee is responsible for recommending strategies for increasing community participation in our community policing efforts, and to recommend possible strategies for the delivery of community policing services.

Specifically, the Operations Committee must recognize and ensure that our diverse cultural, social, and economic communities are active participants within this partnership.

To better meet the department's commitment to serving all segments of our diverse community, the Advisory Committee for Community Diversity was established to represent the diverse needs and issues of the various minority communities within the county, as they directly relate to the Department of Police. The committee serves in an advisory capacity to the Community Policing Steering Committee and the Chief of Police. The committee refer to the CPSC those issues of importance which can best be addressed within the framework of the community policing philosophy.

- Identify and provide training for all personnel to enable them to better understand, respect, and appreciate the many diverse cultures within the community.
- Increase the involvement of the various diverse cultures within the county in an effort to identify and resolve those significant issues which impact public safety.