

FINAL REPORT

N.I. GRANT 74-TA-99-1006

November 8, 1974

NCJRS

OCT 7 1976

ACQUISITION

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FINAL REPORT

DARE/Police Family Crisis Intervention Training  
Project

The Demonstration and Replication Experiments Program/Police Family Crisis Intervention Project was a pilot effort in a strategy conceived to extend innovation in the delivery of police services. In recent years the National Institute has identified innovative, action-research projects in the Criminal Justice field. One of these was the training of police officers for more effective intervention in personal crises and inter-personal conflict.

The basic examination of police officers in the role of third-party intervenors in these situations had been done by Morton Eard, Ph.D., in the New York City Police Department. Support for that research and training effort was provided by the Office of Law Enforcement Assistance. That agency was succeeded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration in which the National Institute is the research and development arm.

To fulfill its mission, the Institute recognized the need to extend the positive findings of action-research programs. In this connection, Institute staff examined various projects where the objective had been improvement in the delivery of a police service or services.

After determining that a number of such projects existed,

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some initiated with Institute support, and some conducted independently, a diffusion strategy called the Demonstration and Replication Experiments program was developed. It was decided that grant support would be provided to a limited number of police departments capable of conducting and interested in undertaking the replication of a selected project.

The first project under the new strategy was directed at what has come to be known as Police Family Crisis Intervention.

To implement the DARE program, the Institute awarded this grant. This "pilot" grant anticipated the preliminary identification of as many as 10 cities to which the grantee's representatives would make orientation-site visits. Orientation materials about the National Institute, the DARE strategy and Police Family Crisis Intervention Training were to be provided in advance of the visits. Discussions were then to be held in each of such cities with city executives, police department officials, representatives of the cities' helping systems, Regional and local Criminal Justice Planning staff members.

At the conclusion of the orientation visits, grantee was to report to the Institute on the interest of each of the cities visited in undertaking a training project and their apparent capacity to carry it out. Institute staff would then select six cities for implementation grants. The second stage of this grant was the planning and delivery of an intensive, one-week

orientation Seminar for project personnel from each of the probable grantee cities. For that phase, the Institute arranged for the development of a Training Guide to be furnished to project personnel in each of the cities ultimately awarded implementation grants.

Detailed progress reports captioned "Phase I" and "Phase II" have been previously submitted in connection with this grant, and with the authorization of the Institute's Program Manager are incorporated herein by reference. The Phase I and II reports, together with interim progress reports in letter form, describe in detail the orientation visits to nine cities as designated by the Institute and our findings. The intensive orientation Seminar is discussed in the Phase II report.

As originally conceived, the DARE strategy contemplated selection by Institute staff of candidate cities. An important element in the strategic design was that implementation would involve police agencies with prior awareness of the Police Family Crisis Intervention concept and the original training project in the New York City Police Department. A second important element was that the Institute would select police departments which had demonstrated prior interest in innovation and the capacity to plan and implement complex projects.

As is more specifically set forth in the Phase I Progress Report, city pre-selection was not exclusively the jurisdiction

of Institute staff. Rather, apparently in an effort to involve both LEAA Regional Offices and State Planning Agency personnel in the selection process, suggestions as to potential grantee-cities were solicited from them. Not surprisingly, the selection criteria developed within the Institute, intended to serve the objective of the DARE program strategy were not adhered to.

Too frequently, a candidate city's executives and its police officials were uninformed about the Institute, its purposes and more specifically, the DARE program strategy. In large measure this confusion about the program must be attributed to the unfortunate failure to centralize and limit contact with the cities to Institute personnel. Where discussions had been carried out by or through the Institute's Program Manager we found that confusion was minimal or non-existent.

Institute staff had anticipated providing each city with detailed materials about the DARE program in advance of grantee's site visits. These materials were intended to orient local decision-makers and prepare them for project discussions. Unfortunately, the pre-selection processes militated against timely transmittal of such materials. This issue should be addressed in connection with any subsequent DARE program efforts. The illustrations of the complications arising in the pre-selection process are set forth in some detail in the Phase I progress

report.

The Police Family Crisis Intervention project of the DARE program was, as noted earlier, only the first step in a strategy conceived to transfer action-research findings in the Criminal Justice system. Since it was anticipated that projects in the Courts, Prosecution and Corrections components of the system would be subsequently undertaken, as well as additional police projects, a geographical limitation was applied for selection of grantee cities in stage one. Institute staff concluded that the cities should be limited to the Eastern third of the country. This limitation was intended also to permit a more convenient interchange of information and personnel between participating cities as training was carried out.

Following grantee site visits, cities expressing interest and willingness to undertake training programs were encouraged to prepare proposals to the Institute. Guidelines to assist proposal development were created by the grantee. On the basis of these proposals, the reports by the grantee's representatives of the site visits to nine cities designated by the Institute, and information available to the Institute from local Criminal Justice Planning bodies, SPA representatives and LEAA regional officials, the Institute made grant awards to six cities. Those included: Columbus, Georgia; Peoria, Illinois; Syracuse, New York; Jacksonville, Florida; New Orleans, Louisiana and the cities of

Portsmouth-Chesapeake, Virginia, which agreed to coordinate a training effort.

As is more specifically set forth in the Phase II progress report, an orientation Seminar was provided by the grantee for personnel from these cities. Observers from other police departments, LEAA and State Planning Agencies also attended. The Phase II project report discusses certain specific problems encountered during the second phase of the grant. These are best summarized as problems which emerged as a consequence of the stringent time limitations imposed upon grant activities.

In general, participants, especially the police officers attending the Seminar, were inadequately informed about the purpose of the Seminar, the roles which they would be expected to play upon their return to their departments and the fact that they were to design and operate training projects. Little, if any, real effort had been made within the police departments represented at the Seminar to commence a "team building" effort for the officers who would be responsible for local project activity. Further, too frequently the written materials which had been made available to each city had not been provided to the officers who attended the Seminar.

In any subsequent effort of this type, a major effort must be directed at familiarizing proposed project personnel with all available written materials, in advance of the orientation Seminar. If a project approach of this type is contemplated for future

DARE program efforts, a second round of site visits to selected cities by technical assistance experts should be made with a focus upon potential project personnel. An essential ingredient in the Institute strategy, as applicable to the Police Family Crisis Intervention project, was the anticipated collaboration between civilian professional experts (psychologists) and police officers. The development of a collaborative relationship between such persons is an exceedingly difficult task. A second round of site visits by technical assistance people would be most helpful in that effort.

The Orientation Seminar was without doubt helpful and informative for those attending. Yet, addressing the theoretical material essential to an understanding of this kind of training while at the same time, providing non-traditional training methodology for police officers was extremely complex. The time available to serve both purposes was very short. It may well be that in future efforts, the two elements should be separated in time and addressed in separate sessions.

Evaluation of the individual training projects is the responsibility of an independent contractor. Yet the subject was of critical concern to the grantee-police departments in this program. Those familiar with the police system recognize the anxiety that police personnel often experience about evaluation efforts involving their projects. They are concerned about

their abilities to participate productively in such undertakings as well as the possible findings. Allowing additional time for exploration of these issues between grantees and evaluators will be desirable in any future programs. Data collection needs and collaborative efforts to achieve them should be given more time and attention.

In this pilot effort the interest and capability of police personnel from different jurisdictions and diverse backgrounds was clear. Police administrators, city officials and many of the representatives of the helping systems in the grantee cities recognized the benefits police crisis intervention training would provide. They were sensitive to the potential for reducing risks to personnel performing critical functions and to improving a basic service which police officers are called upon to provide. The readiness of academic professionals to engage with the police in this program effort was interesting and refreshing.

The interest, knowledge and understanding of the Institute's Program Officer -- who was intimately familiar with the history of the Police Family Crisis Intervention concept -- made a powerful and positive contribution to the project effort.

The major constraint in this project effort was time. Too much activity was, of necessity, telescoped and as a consequence, police officers and administrators were not as well oriented as they might have been. The salient lesson, perhaps, is that when selection criteria have been articulated, it is essential

that those participating in the selection process operate upon those criteria.

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