

Using Knowledge and Teamwork To Reduce Crime

by U.S. Attorneys
Veronica Coleman,
Walter C. Holton, Jr.,
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THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR Coalition is optimistic about fighting homicides

■ Relatively low rates reported in April and May; experts keep tabs on chronic offenders.

By Karen J. McClurg
CORRESPONDENT

Task force will fight youth gun violence

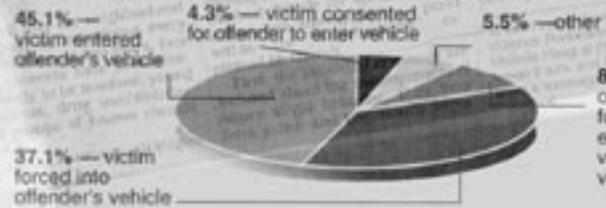
■ Portland Mayor Vera Katz announces 16-member interagency group, which will focus on prevention and accountability

By LAURA TRUJILLO
of The Oregonian staff

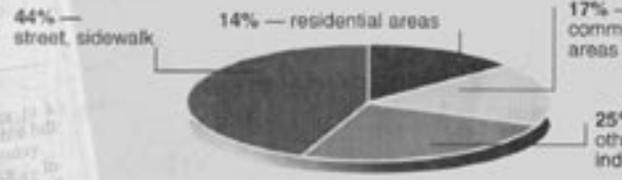
Sexual assault in Memphis

Some of the preliminary research by the team assigned to study ways to reduce the rate of rape in Memphis has focused on cases in which a vehicle is involved. That includes about 19 percent of the rapes. Nearly half of those victims got into the rapist's car. Of the others, 44 percent were forced into the car. Also, 44 percent of the rapes happened on a street or sidewalk. Nearly half were committed by an acquaintance of the victim.

Assaults associated with vehicles



Locations



Relationship of victim and offender



THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

A NEW DAY: 2 weeks shot, teen

By Valerie Bauerlein
JOURNAL REPORTER

Yesterday was one of the worst in Dru Grier's life. And, as happens so often on the heels of one of those old talk-

NEW HAVEN REGISTER NEW HAVEN/ST 2 bullets prove too many

City man's 10-year sentence result of gun project

"We are choosing to pursue the project in a way that it hasn't been before... We are trying to determine if that you make a community son said.

Toward that goal, the New Haven Department recently received a grant from the System (GIS) to help in the project.

In recent years, women in the Memphis area—especially young women—have been falling victim to sexual assault at an alarming rate. General crime rates were falling in Memphis, but sexual assaults continued to rise. The U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Tennessee, Veronica Coleman, is leading an effort to do something about it. She heads a group formed to develop new approaches for reducing sexual assaults in Memphis. “We don’t want to be known as the rape capital of the world,” she says.

This is the story of how five U.S. cities, including Memphis, with five different crime problems are experimenting with a new way of doing business that makes heavy use of statistical data and information analysis, boosts the U.S. attorney’s role as a key community problemsolver, and asks researchers

about the authors

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to serve as navigators—observing, analyzing, and recommending changes in direction. (See “Key Players.”)

The pilot project is called the Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI) and is supported by more than a dozen U.S. Department of Justice agencies.¹

The pilot sites and their targeted crime problems are:

- Indianapolis, Indiana—homicide and gun violence.
- Memphis, Tennessee—sexual assault.

Key Players

Three special roles are key to the SACSI project:

U.S. Attorney. Through SACSI, U.S. attorneys are demonstrating a new, emerging role for Federal lawyers: that of prosecutor as proactive problemsolver. They are taking a more direct, active interest in finding solutions to the problems that jeopardize public safety in particular communities.

Project coordinator. This critical team member manages the daily process, facilitates the conversation, moves the group toward the collective goal, ensures that different components of the partnerships are working effectively, holds the group to task, and works with the research partner to think through the nexus of operational capacities, local data analysis, and crime control theory.

Researchers. Unlike traditional research involving neutral observation, SACSI expects research partners to be fully engaged in problemsolving. The researchers are charged with gathering crime data and street-level knowledge, analyzing it, and reporting on what they find. They bring knowledge of crime control theory and the literature about “what works” into the strategy development and help craft an intervention to reduce the target crime problem.



Attorney General Janet Reno meets community leader Karen McClurg in Indianapolis. Deputy Chief of Police Bill Reardon accompanied the Attorney General on her tour of Indianapolis neighborhoods. Photo: Sergeant Joe Humkey.

- New Haven, Connecticut—gun-related crime and community fear.
- Portland, Oregon—youth gun violence.
- Winston-Salem, North Carolina—youth violence.

(See “The Five Pilot Sites.”)

The sites are in the beginning of the second year of a 2-year project and results are preliminary. The *NIJ Journal* will present findings and further developments, including findings from a national evaluation, as they become available.

The Theory Behind the Program

SACSI is testing the assumption that crime is most effectively reduced by:

- Bringing together the various perspectives and capacities of community groups and agencies to address a major crime problem.
- Gleaning knowledge from street-level practitioners and working hand-in-hand with researchers to determine the exact nature and scope of a targeted crime problem and to design interventions based on the opportunities the analysis reveals.
- Adapting the strategy when ongoing analysis of information reveals failures or inefficiencies in specific aspects of the strategy.

SACSI builds on the lessons learned from crime analysis efforts like the New York City Police Department’s CompStat unit,² which emphasizes using data to solve problems, and the Weed and Seed strategy,³ which emphasizes coordination of resources to revitalize neighborhoods. Most directly, SACSI is an outgrowth of Boston’s highly

successful Gun Project,⁴ which was responsible for dramatic reductions in youth homicides in that city. Key components of the Boston Gun Project included strong emphasis on partnerships, knowledge-driven decisionmaking, and ongoing strategic assessment. David Kennedy, a senior researcher at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government and the chief architect of the Boston Gun Project, is providing guidance to the SACSI sites.

The SACSI model follows five major steps or stages:

1. Form an interagency working group.
2. Gather information and data about a local crime problem.
3. Design a strategic intervention to tackle the problem.
4. Implement the intervention.
5. Assess and modify the strategy as the data reveal effects.

(1) Form an interagency working group.

The U.S. attorneys spearheading the projects are working in concert with a core group of their communities’ decisionmakers and local research partners.⁵ Each site has tailored its partnership to meet local needs and characteristics.

Winston-Salem’s initiative to reduce juvenile violence includes the school superintendent and the local mental health director as key partners. In New Haven, with its focus on gun violence, the core team relies most heavily on law enforcement agencies. In Portland, key members of the group include the presiding judge of the State courts, State and Federal public defenders, and representatives of schools, businesses, faith-based organizations, and medical and public health providers.

One difficulty in forming these groups has been making sure that all the key players are at the table while at the same time keeping the group small enough to ensure efficiency and progress.

(2) Gather information and data about a local crime problem.

Sources of information about a problem differ, but all sources—whether firsthand knowledge from street-level practitioners or data collected by the probation office—systematically address the where, when, what, and how of crime incidents.

All sites are going beyond examination of formal police records. Winston-Salem, for example, is analyzing specific incidents of

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The Five Pilot Sites

Indianapolis

Indianapolis Violence Reduction Partnership (IVRP)

Target problems: Homicide (particularly drug-related homicides) and gun violence.

Goals: To reduce homicides, bring the community into the problemsolving process, and improve communication and relationships among all agencies—Federal, State, and local—operating in Indianapolis.

The IVRP team analyzed data for every homicide in 1997 and 1998 and identified four elements common to approximately 60 percent of them: young men, firearms, drug use and distribution, and groups of chronic offenders known to the police. In response, the team has begun ordering chronic offenders who are on parole or probation to attend meetings with law enforcement, neighborhood residents, and representatives from social service agencies to inform the offenders about the city's intolerance toward violence and link them with services designed to reduce recidivism.

Although it is too soon to confirm any direct causal effect, there are promising signs that the partnership between law enforcement and community groups is having a positive effect. Homicides are down 36 percent for the first 6 months of 1999 compared to the first 6 months of 1998.

Memphis

Strategic Team Against Rape and Sexual Assaults (STARS)

Target problem: Sexual assault.

Goals: To reduce the number of vehicle-related sexual assaults and the number of sexual assaults by

repeat offenders, enforce a policy of intolerance regarding sexual assaults committed by adult males against teenage girls, and increase the effectiveness of investigative methods for prosecuting offenders and services provided to victims.

According to the FBI, the five-county Memphis metropolitan area ranked first in the Nation in 1997 with 107 forcible rapes per 100,000 population. The team's research found that a significant portion of these cases involve teenage girls and older men (generally 25 years old and older) and that approximately 10 percent involve repeat offenders. They also learned that a large proportion involve women who are abducted by men in cars.

Memphis is applying different types of interventions to different types of sexual assault cases. For example, incidents involving vehicles—both forced abductions and situations in which women voluntarily get into cars with men—have occurred in specific areas and suggest the need to combine crime prevention through environmental design techniques with community policing strategies.

New Haven

New Haven Gun Project

Target problems: Gun-related crime and community fear.

Goals: To reduce assaults and robberies with firearms, shots fired, illegal gun possession, and community fear of gun violence.

The larger drug gangs in New Haven have been dismantled through concerted law enforcement efforts, resulting in dramatic reductions in violent crime. However, fear of gun crimes remains high.

The Gun Project team is targeting offenders associated with the most violent groups of drug dealers. Other groups are being specifically advised that they will be targeted next if violence continues. The groups are offered social services and other alternatives to crime—and possibly incentives to use them. The project's achievements will be communicated to the public as part of a broad community effort to more accurately present New Haven as a safe locale for residents, businesses, and entertainment centers.

New Haven's efforts have been enthusiastically embraced by government and community groups that do not ordinarily participate in the research and planning for anti-crime strategies led by law enforcement agencies.

Portland

Strategic Approaches to Community Safety (STACS)

Target problem: Youth gun violence, with special attention to 15- to 24-year-olds and the role of alcohol in youth-related violence.

Goals: To reduce youth gun violence; strengthen and institutionalize interagency, street-level collaborations; and ensure that strategies are culturally relevant and have minimum disparate impacts on ethnic groups and people of color.

Portland linked its project to a standing committee, the city's 35-member Public Safety Coordinating Council. The personal and professional relationships already established through the Council have helped to formalize and institutionalize collaboration among the frontline professionals who deal with crime and street realities every day.

(Continued on page 20)

Five Pilot Sites (continued from page 19)

STACS is concentrating its efforts on a few critical issues:

- Research shows that 60 percent of the city's 400 high-risk offenders are under probation or parole supervision in three of the city's ZIP code areas. These inner-city neighborhoods are receiving special attention through joint law enforcement, parole, and probation intervention and youth outreach strategies.
- The STACS team is anticipating the release of the first wave of prison inmates and juvenile offenders serving time for "three-strikes" offenses. Many have strengthened their gang affiliations during their incarceration. Team members have targeted these youthful offenders to make sure they receive the outreach services and supervision they need to transition smoothly from incarceration back into the community.
- People of color are disproportionately represented in Portland's criminal justice system—both as victims and offenders. STACS has funded research to measure, report, and combat any disparate treatment of ethnic and racial minorities and is designing a youth outreach network to address the unique cultural conditions in Portland's ethnic communities.

Winston-Salem

Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI)

Target problem: Violent and assaultive crimes committed by youth, age 17 and younger.

Goal: In recent years, violent crime arrest rates for youth younger than 18 in Forsyth County generally have been higher than both State and national levels. Although juvenile arrest rates decreased slightly in 1998, arrests for such crimes as robberies and weapons violations increased, as did arrests for simple assaults, which for many youth is a precursor to more violent behavior. SACSI's goal is to reduce violent and assaultive crime below State and national levels.

SACSI draws upon an extensive collaborative process already in place in Winston-Salem called Forsyth Futures, which focuses on youth violence and has helped the community build an electronic network linking youth-serving agencies.

Analysis has shown that juvenile violence is concentrated in four target areas and accounts for 60 percent of overall juvenile violence. Within these areas, there is evidence that older offenders are "recruiting" juveniles into criminal activity, particularly in the drug trade. A small number of repeat juvenile offenders, who are responsible for a disproportionate amount of violent crime, has been identified. As a result of SACSI analysis, Winston-Salem has put several specific strategies in place, including:

- Notifying older offenders to stop involving juveniles in their illegal activity and responding swiftly to violations through Federal and State prosecution.
- Expanding the notification process to include (1) repeat juvenile offenders and their parents and (2) more extensive monitoring by police and probation officers.
- Enhancing collaboration among community groups to ensure that these repeat offenders receive priority for intervention services and treatment needs and developing a case-management system based on the Forsyth Futures electronic network.
- Developing resources (such as mentors, job skills training, and after-school activities) specifically geared toward repeat offenders and others identified through SACSI analysis as emerging offenders.

juvenile violence and discussing them with a diverse group of police officers, school resource officers, and probation counselors.

Indianapolis brought together street-level law enforcement and criminal justice agencies to examine the factors involved in each homicide incident.

Combining data with street-level information helps paint a dynamic, real-life picture of the problem. Many police officers report that they have never before shared information with other agencies in such detail or analyzed it so systematically.

(3) Design a strategic intervention to tackle the problem.

Once the problem has been precisely defined, the teams begin designing the intervention strategies. This is perhaps the most creative part of the project: combining local data, street-level information, crime control theory, best practices, and organizational capacities to develop strategies that attack the soft, vulnerable aspects of the problem that are most susceptible to intervention. Harvard's David Kennedy says, "The groups should continue to explore strategic options until they find a strategy that will have the biggest impact in the shortest amount of time, using the least amount of money and State authority." Sites use Kennedy's basic decision-making questions: How big an impact is the intervention likely to have? How long will it take before we see the impact? Do we have the capacity and resources to do it? Why do we want to use this intervention rather than another? What are the side benefits or drawbacks?

In New Haven, some gun-related cases that would have been declined in the past are now likely to be prosecuted federally because of the strategic impact a serious Federal-level sentence can have on the problem. Recently, police apprehended a 26-year-old suspect after he fled in a high-speed chase. Upon arrest, police found two bullets in his possession. He was identified by police as a person frequently responsible for violent crimes. He was charged in Federal court with felonious possession of two rounds of ammunition, brought to trial, and convicted. He was then sentenced to incarceration for a term of 10 years. This case, and others in which similar sentences have been imposed on violence-prone felons illegally in possession of firearms, are being communicated to key groups of known offenders in the community to deter them from carrying and using guns.

(4) Implement the intervention.

At this stage, to enhance the deterrent effects of their interventions, team members send the message out through their criminal justice and community networks to let potential offenders and the larger community know their plans. For those who continue to break the law, the team then follows through with clear, swift, and certain consequences, as New Haven did in prosecuting the young man mentioned earlier.

Indianapolis sends its message regarding intolerance for violence through an existing network of law enforcement and community leaders.⁶ The project encourages probationers to bring someone who is important in their lives (such as a mother, grandmother, or girlfriend) to mandatory meetings at which they hear the message of intolerance for violence and receive a list of

community resources that can help them make better choices, stay clean, and reduce their risk of recidivism.

When Winston-Salem's research revealed that one-fourth of the juvenile violent offenses involved young adult offenders who were "tutoring" juveniles in criminal behavior, the team began notifying 18-year-old and older suspects not only to stop their own violent acts but also to stop involving juveniles in the violence. If they persist, the older offenders are told, they will face enhanced penalties and prosecution under Federal gun and drug statutes that forbid the use of juveniles in criminal activity.

(5) Assess and modify the strategy as the data reveal effects.

In many ways, the SACSI team operates like mission control launching a satellite: Once it has determined the satellite's path, it observes carefully, takes measurements, makes adjustments, observes again, and makes more adjustments so the satellite's course remains sure and steady.

To accomplish this task at the SACSI sites, the teams' research partners collect and measure data and report back on how the strategy is working. If the original plan isn't having its intended effect or is having unintended consequences, the partners can make adjustments until it succeeds.

Facing the Challenges

As the SACSI partners strive to create new, effective, and lasting relationships across agencies and disciplines, they are recognizing how difficult and rewarding their

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pioneering efforts are and how their agencies' cultures differ.

Although local dynamics present problems and opportunities unique to each site, some common themes appear across all the sites:

- Among the more significant challenges have been balancing the desire for quick action with the need to collect and analyze sufficient information so that the problem and best points of intervention can be defined as precisely as possible and the maximum impact and effectiveness achieved.
- All the sites recognize how easy it is to slip back into the old ways of doing business—for example, for research partners to revert to their traditional role as neutral observer or for police to believe their job is done when they arrest a suspect.
- Balancing the day-to-day workload and integrating the traditional way of doing business into the new and additional requirements of the SACSI approach also has been a challenge.

The SACSI partners don't have the answers yet for overcoming these challenges; they are still devising and revising their responses, but they hope to come up with directions and warnings and to encourage others to follow where they are leading.

Funding the Projects

The Justice Department has funded the SACSI project coordinator position in the five U.S. attorneys' offices, the research grants, technical assistance from experts, and frequent cluster meetings at which the sites share lessons learned.

To increase the analytic capability of each site, NIJ's Crime Mapping

Research Center is helping to develop, design, install, or improve each site's crime mapping and data analysis capability. The resulting system, called the Community Safety Information System, will be an integrated, user-friendly, interagency, Internet-based system that will allow partner agencies to merge data from several sources and analyze information across agencies.

A national assessment of the pilot project, which is being conducted jointly by the University of Illinois at Chicago and the State University of New York at Albany, will document the processes and their impact.

Long-Range Outlook

The five SACSI sites have found that criminal justice agencies are not just doing business differently; they are also defining success differently. They continue to count arrests, convictions, and recidivism rates, but they also are defining success by how much crime they have deterred and by how much safer their citizens feel.

One goal is for the sites to institutionalize the project by the summer of 2000, when Federal support comes to an end. No one thinks that all the problems will be solved

by then, but it is hoped that an infrastructure will be in place to continue supporting this way of working together, analyzing data, developing strategies, and fine tuning interventions so the sites can continue to apply the approach to other crime problems and so the model can be replicated in other sites.

A SACSI infrastructure is already becoming apparent in and around Winston-Salem and the Middle District of North Carolina. The City of High Point has learned from its neighbor Winston-Salem how to implement a SACSI-like approach for reducing gun homicides. High Point experienced 14 murders between January and November 1998—all by guns. Between November 1998, when the SACSI approach began, and July 1999, there have been none. In addition, assaults and robberies with guns have been significantly reduced. Because of High Point's tremendous success, Durham and Greensboro are now applying similar strategies based on data and information analysis.

Cities that have experienced some of the greatest reductions in crime, such as Boston and New York, have learned that cooperative efforts to gather and analyze information

As the SACSI partners strive to create new, effective, and lasting relationships across agencies and disciplines, they are recognizing how difficult and rewarding their pioneering efforts are and how their agencies' cultures differ.

from multiple agencies can reveal opportunities for strategic interventions and illuminate more efficient ways to employ limited resources. Sustaining such an intense new way of doing business will be the challenge for the future of SACSI.

Notes:

1. The Office of the Associate Attorney General; the Criminal Division; Executive Office of U.S. Attorneys; the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services; and the Office of Justice Programs (Office of the Assistant Attorney General, National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office for Victims of Crime, and Executive Office for Weed and Seed).
2. The CompStat (computer statistics) unit of the New York City Police Department compiles and analyzes crime statistics, generates electronic pin maps, tracks crime patterns, and holds twice weekly briefings with high-level officials and precinct commanders in which the participants examine local crime patterns, devise and select tactical plans, and coordinate resources based upon the crime patterns in particular precincts.
3. The Weed and Seed strategy aims to mobilize resources in a coordinated way. Law enforcement efforts work to remove crime, human services and neighborhood revitalization efforts work to prevent and deter further crime, and community policing efforts work to engage the community in problem solving.

For More Information

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4. For a full description of the Boston experience, see David Kennedy, "Pulling Levers: Getting Deterrence Right," *NIJ Journal*, July 1998 (no. 236).
5. Research partners include criminologists, preventive medicine and public health specialists, sociologists, psychologists, and public policy professionals.
6. Indianapolis partners include the mayor's office; the Indianapolis Police Department; the Indiana State Police; the Indiana Department of Corrections Parole Commission; Marion County's Probation Department, Prosecutor's Office, Sheriff's Department, and Superior Court; the Indiana Attorney General; the United States Attorney's Office; The Hudson Institute; Indiana University; Indiana 10 Point Coalition; Weed and Seed representatives; the U.S. Department of Justice's Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Marshals Service, and Immigration and Naturalization Service; representatives of the U.S. Internal Revenue Service; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; the U.S. Customs Service; the Postal Inspection Service; and the Secret Service.