



Successful Practices & Strategies

Vol. 3 | No. 4

Paterson Police Department

Paterson, New Jersey

<http://www.patersonpd.com>

Community policing element

Problem/issue

Community partnerships

Gun violence

Problem description

Reduction in the number of homicides, nonfatal shootings, and gun-related violence and improved police-community partnerships.

Community policing strategies implemented

Thanks to the federal funding received through our COPS Grants, we have been able to expand our Community Policing Initiatives and integrate their mission into other units and division within the organization. At its core, community policing is actually problem-solving policing.

Anti-violent crime deployments and special operations. Our Community Policing Division works in conjunction with our CeaseFire Unit and Special Operations Group to build partnerships with community members and formal civic organizations through a series of initiatives designed to curtail violent crime in identified targeted neighborhoods. Methods include increased police presence, comprehensive investigation of all gun-related violence, education, and training. Targeted hot spots are identified through community-generated complaints, which are analyzed and compared with empirical data and statistics garnered from crime reporting and mapping technologies. Community policing officers then return to those areas to reinforce and stabilize the efforts made by the Special Operations Group while gathering valuable feedback and generating a continuous free flow of information, input, and intelligence and more open and transparent relationships.

The department's website has been significantly upgraded to provide the community with up-to-date information regarding particular incidents or problems based on geographical location. The site is now more interactive and provides community members with community alert bulletins and similar information designed to make the department even more accessible to the community while providing another measure of transparency through information sharing. Also located on our website is information about our TipSoft program, an anonymous tip line community members can use without fear of reprisal or retaliation.



Our CeaseFire unit, recognized as one of the most successful in the state, investigates every nonfatal shooting to its conclusion. Because we identify all individuals involved in each incident, information about their affiliations is often shared with family members and faith-based leaders who may previously have been unaware of the individual's activities and associations. Partnering with family members and community leaders in these investigations builds relationships of trust that can help stem future violence.

In conjunction with CeaseFire, our Special Operations Group (SOG) is deployed to address hot spots with zero-tolerance based enforcement initiatives that combine saturation patrols and community policing principals. Strategies for SOG include the following:

- Imposed curfews (closing hours) for business contributing to loitering in target areas
- Joint enforcement; fire code, building department, health department in target locations
- Saturation patrol deployments: walking posts, traffic enforcement, quality of life
- Deployment of Mobil Command Precinct to target areas on a rolling basis
- Community policing follow-up strategies to gauge resident/business feedback
- Deterrence through increased presence of foot patrols and related strategies

Relationship building. Our Community Policing Division partnered with community groups to bring a play entitled "Uniform Justice" to our local community college. The play is performed by an acting troupe from Memphis, Tennessee, which, through a series of readings, details the lives, interactions, and interpersonal relationships between police officers and community members in a volatile urban setting. The play allows all sides to engage in a conversation that lends a voice and value to differing perspectives while providing insight and understanding. It addresses the topic of perception and misperception by challenging the audience to see events from both sides of the coin in a way that is bold yet engaging. At its core, the play is a relationship building exercise that takes on the sensitive subject of police community relationships in a way that provides meaningful perspective and a greater sense of tolerance and understanding. (Community leaders, civic organizations and the Bronze Shields, a law enforcement organization, were instrumental in assisting with fund raising and organization efforts).

Attorney General Re-Entry Program and John Jay College initiative. The Attorney General Re-Entry Program is designed to integrate non-violent offenders back into the community and provide them with life-changing alternatives for brighter futures. Recently, we partnered with the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to explore bringing their "safe-cities initiatives" to Paterson. The program takes a multifaceted approach to steering young impressionable offenders away from the lure of drugs and crime by combining members of the law enforcement, educational, faith based and business communities to stage interventions designed to let these young men and women know we have not given up on them and that their lives matter to us and have value. The program places an emphasis on



continuing education and job training programs that will show these individuals that their community has a vested interest in their future while opening doors and providing opportunities many of them may have thought were long closed.

Change and/or impact as a result of these community policing efforts

The combined effort of all of the initiatives and programs detailed in this report has led to the following year-to-date statistics (January–July 2015);

- Citywide: Nonfatal shootings reduced by 57 percent
- Targeted Hot-Spot Zones: Nonfatal shootings reduced by 72 percent
- Homicides reduced by 43 percent

Lessons learned through program implementation

The appropriate use of technology, coupled with community outreach and a hands-on approach to problem solving, can significantly increase trust, cooperation, and communication between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Focusing on specific targeted areas through a combination of enhanced enforcement, deterrence, and community policing based initiatives provides the ability to address problems in a meaningful way while building lasting strategic partnerships and greater lines of communication. Interaction and dialogue at every level are keys to maintaining long-lasting relationships with a greater sense of tolerance and understanding. Building good will and human equity is realized when misperceptions are addressed, education is provided, and most importantly when stakeholders trust that the police have their best interests at heart.

The opinions contained herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice. References to specific agencies, companies, products, or services should not be considered an endorsement by the author(s) or the U.S. Department of Justice. Rather, the references are illustrations to supplement discussion of the issues.

The Internet references cited in this document were valid as of the date of publication. Given that URLs and websites are in constant flux, neither the author(s) nor the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services can vouch for their current validity.

Published 2016