



COPS

Community Oriented Policing Services
U.S. Department of Justice

Successful Practices & Strategies

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Auburn Police Department

Auburn, Indiana

www.auburnpolice.com

Community policing element

Community partnerships

Problem/issue

Drug manufacturing/trafficking

Problem description

Illegal drugs continue to ruin lives; destroy families; defile communities; and create large cleanup, rehabilitation, and incarceration costs for local and state governments. Most law enforcement agencies do not have the time, manpower, training, or funding to effectively enforce and combat these drug problems. This is why North East Indiana Law Enforcement has joined forces to create and sustain the IMAGE (Indiana Multi Agency Group Enforcement) Drug Task Force, a pro-active, multi-jurisdictional law enforcement program that serves a four-county area (DeKalb, Noble, Steuben, and LaGrange) in Northeast Indiana.

Community policing strategies implemented

IMAGE was established in 1993 for the sole purpose of investigation and enforcement of drug-related crimes. IMAGE currently has four police officers from four separate law enforcement agencies who work undercover on a full-time basis, where they dedicate 100% of their time to the investigation of drug-related crimes. Each of the participating agencies dedicates and contributes one officer, his or her wages and benefits, a vehicle, equipment, and limited operating expenses to the IMAGE program. Several other agencies contribute limited funds or part-time assistance as able. Even with the full cooperation of these agencies, IMAGE still must rely on grants, contributions, and seizures to operate at its full ability.

Officers assigned to IMAGE are provided the ability to work throughout the four-county area and are not specifically assigned to areas only covered by their agency. Officers are given the flexibility to alter hours, change work days, and work overtime to accommodate the complex and sporadic nature of drug investigations. IMAGE officers are also provided every opportunity for additional and continued training as it pertains to drug investigations.

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

Undercover drug enforcement is not cheap but is effective, and by joining forces and combining manpower and resources, the Auburn Police Department (APD) has learned that a multi-jurisdictional task force is the only real and effective way to combat drug crimes within communities. Undercover



officers can go where a uniformed officer cannot, as the public does not recognize them as a police officer or being involved in law enforcement. Undercover officers dedicate 100% of their time and resources to drug investigations, compared to a regular police officer who must balance and juggle many responsibilities at one time.

Without the IMAGE program, the majority of drug cases, criminal charges, arrests, and confiscated drugs would never occur. Those responsible for drug-related crimes would never have to look over their shoulders and wonder if the person they are dealing with is a cop. IMAGE is a proven program that makes a difference to the communities it serves.

Lessons learned through program implementation

Make no mistake, the war on drugs is not cheap, and it is a war that will never end. The pooling of resources between law enforcement agencies within the four counties has proven to be the most successful and cost-effective manner in which to fight the drug trade within the APD's jurisdiction.

Even with these combined resources, funding the IMAGE program continues to become more difficult each year. IMAGE not only realizes that it cannot wipe out drug problems but also understands that the service it provides helps to disrupt the flow of drugs within its communities and offers a legitimate opportunity for drug offenders to be caught.

Even with the high cost associated with this program, IMAGE realizes that the benefit to its communities well outweighs the cost to society. Without IMAGE the drug dealers, users, and manufactures would have little fear of being caught; the number of children affected or harmed by drugs would rise; the cost to society in the form of environmental impact, rehabilitation, and crimes associated with drugs would skyrocket; and communities would suffer.

IMAGE continues to look for alternative funding and avenues to cut costs. However, IMAGE does not see a time when it will be able to fully function without some assistance from the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute and the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant.

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