



# **COPS** *INNOVATIONS*

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

*A Closer Look*

## **Creative Partnerships** Supporting Youth, Building Communities



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## Creative Partnerships: The Key To Supporting Our Youth

Over the last decade juvenile crime and victimization has increasingly been in the spotlight, especially violence in our schools. It makes for disturbing reading:

- Between July 1, 1998 and June 30, 1999, there were 47 school-associated violent deaths in the United States.<sup>1</sup>
- In 1999 alone, students ages 12 through 18 were victims of more than 2.5 million crimes at school, of which about 186,000 were serious violent crimes.<sup>2</sup>
- Government studies indicate that 10 percent of public schools reported at least one serious violent crime to the police.<sup>3</sup>

These sobering facts require a vigorous response from our nation's law enforcement professionals, educators, and communities alike. Research suggests that youth who are not routinely involved in supervised activities and who lack significant connections to positive influences and role models are more likely to become perpetrators and/or victims of crime. The incidence of drug abuse, violence, and destructive behavior also increases without proper supervision.

However, law enforcement alone cannot prevent school-based violence, violence directed at youth, or factors that contribute to destructive behavior by young people. Providing the safest possible environment for learning and personal development is a shared responsibility and an essential part of community policing.

Since 1994, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) has been a catalyst for innovative community policing practices, facilitating local development of community-wide partnerships that promote safe environments for youth. The following are three examples of the innovative ways that the COPS Office has worked with local agencies to develop partnership-based programs for youth. These programs demonstrate how, by developing meaningful partnerships between law enforcement, schools, and the community, youth can be set on positive paths and youth crime and victimization can be curtailed. It is hoped that these programs may serve as examples of partnerships that law enforcement agencies, schools, and community organizations can form to address issues of juvenile crime and victimization.

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Kaufman, Phillip et al. *Indicators of School Crime and Safety*. U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice. Washington, DC: October 2001.



## **Home Run: School-Probation Partnerships in San Bernardino County, CA.**

The Home Run Program promotes a close working partnership between the San Bernardino County Probation Department and county schools. Originally funded by the COPS Office in 1998, the program assigns individual probation officers to work directly with specific schools or geographically based clusters of schools. The primary aim of the program is for probation officers to work proactively with students to identify and address behavioral problems that may place them at-risk of entering the juvenile justice system in the future. School-based probation officers seek to intervene at an early stage, monitoring the student's attendance and academic performance, and making home calls if needed.

The Home Run Program has grown rapidly since 1998. There are now a total of 26 school-based probation officers on school campuses within San Bernardino County. School-based probation officers work in high schools, middle schools, and elementary schools, depending on the district's needs. The specific duties and functions of these school-based probation officers differ. However, there are certain duties that are common to all:

- Teaching life-skills classes to the student body,
- Working with individual students to address specific truancy and disciplinary issues,
- Serving on official school bodies dealing with truancy and disciplinary issues,
- Conducting in-service training for school personnel,
- Developing innovative truancy reduction and behavior modification programs,
- Acting as the liaison between the school and the juvenile justice system, and
- Conducting home visits to discuss issues with family members and refer appropriate services.



***Because of the unique duties and authority vested in members of the probation service, probation officers are often well suited to working with both parents and school personnel to head-off potential problems.***

As a lack of commitment to school has been found to be a key predictor of future delinquency, there is a strong focus on this issue.<sup>4</sup> Many of the probation officers serve on their school district School Attendance Review Board (SARB) and/or School Attendance Review Teams (SART), and assist in their district expulsion processes. The school-based probation officer works closely with school personnel, often conducting in-service training for school security/police, teachers, counselors, and administrators. Most of the probation officers concentrate on working directly with individual students to address behavioral and attendance issues and act as positive role models. The probation officers also teach classes in subjects such as anger management, conflict resolution, parenting skills, drug and alcohol awareness, and truancy reduction. Several of the school-based probation officers have developed incentive programs for the students to help improve attendance. For example, one high school has developed an incentive/reward program, in partnership with local businesses, which provides rewards such as free lunches, movie tickets, and other teen-oriented incentives to students who have significantly improved their attendance over time.

<sup>4</sup> Garry Eileen M. *Truancy: First Steps to a Lifetime of Problems*. U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Washington DC: October 1996.

*Comprehensive Responses to Youth at Risk: Interim Findings from the Safe Futures Initiative*. U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Washington, DC: November 2000.



The jurisdiction of the school-based probation officers does not end at the school gate. Officers act as the liaison for the school within the court system, with the assigned probation officer from the regional probation office, and with local law enforcement agencies. In all of this work, the focus of the school-based probation officer is to ensure the minor's accountability, attendance in school, and increased academic performance.

Additionally, the school-based probation officers make home visits when appropriate. To date, school-based probation officers have made over 11,000 contacts with students. Many of these contacts have been home calls to truant students, where the probation officer works with the family to address specific problems and conducts follow-up to ensure the student complies with the school's rules and attends classes. During such home visits, the family can be referred to appropriate services and to special programs developed by the probation officer for that particular school campus.

School-based probation officers have also collaborated with the district attorney's office in conducting evening meetings on school campuses, in order to discuss with parents of chronic truants the long-term outcomes for the students if they stay out of school. At these meetings they educate parents about their potential liability that could result from this truancy.

School officials have been impressed with the impact of the school-probation officers program. Mike Snellings, Director of Student Services at Redlands Unified School District, commented that "since the introduction of the school-probation officer program, attendance has increased at each of the schools that has an officer assigned to it. This is great for the kids and for their education. It is also great for the school itself. State funding for schools is tied directly to how many children attend every day. The attendance increases that we have seen because of this program have directly led to an increase in our attendance-related state funding of more than \$500,000. The children win, the schools win, and the community wins."

For more information on Home Run please contact the San Bernardino County Probation Department at 909.387.5855.





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### **STOP the Violence: Empowering Youth To Address School Violence**

The STOP the Violence program is designed to address the issue of youth violence from a youth perspective. In partnership with the COPS Office, the student leadership of the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) developed STOP the Violence—Students Taking on Prevention, as a community-based training curriculum designed to empower youth to find innovative ways to address school violence. FCCLA is a national grassroots student organization focused on the promotion of personal growth, leadership skills, and competency development for youth. The group committed itself to the issue of youth violence when a student member was critically injured in the Paducah, Kentucky school shooting.



While there are many violence prevention initiatives in existence, STOP the Violence is unique in that it was conceived by youth, led by youth and focused on youth. Young people bring STOP the Violence to life in local schools by planning, implementing, and evaluating awareness activities and action projects. Teams of local FCCLA members are trained together with an adult advisor to conduct the STOP the Violence program in their schools. Conducted by youth leaders (current and former FCCLA members), the local team training provides participants with the skills and resources necessary to prevent school violence.

Through STOP the Violence, students define problems, explore solutions, and develop action plans for their local schools and communities. Youth competency development is a key component of this project as students tailor local projects to address specific concerns. Just as youth violence issues vary from community to community, so must prevention efforts vary, adapted to each specific situation by the young people most affected by the problem.

Students develop and implement local action projects to reduce the potential for violence in their school. Local STOP the Violence projects are designed to change attitudes, teach skills, and connect young people with resources that address violence prevention. STOP the Violence is a comprehensive peer-to-peer outreach initiative that empowers young people to recognize, report, and reduce the potential for youth violence in their schools and communities. The program uses the principle of peer education – teens teaching teens – to:

- Empower students with the skills and resources to make their schools safer,
- Reach their peers with violence prevention education,
- Recognize warning signs of potential youth violence,
- Encourage young people to report troubling behavior,
- Collaborate with school and community resources to address youth violence promptly, and
- Develop and implement local action projects to reduce the potential for violence in their school.





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FCCLA members recognize the value of partnering with others to achieve their goal. They reach out to involve other young people and to tap the expertise of law enforcement agencies, school administrators and counselors, other student organizations, health and social services agencies, community organizations, media outlets, and local government agencies.

This year FCCLA offered local chapters an opportunity to showcase their violence prevention efforts through a national award project. Twenty-nine states competed for a cash award and the chance to present their project to over 5,000 students and advisors from across the United States at the FCCLA national conference in July 2001. Projects were judged on the basis of problem evaluation, creativity, and the ability to comprehensively impact student and community awareness through the use of available media. Cameron High School students in West Virginia took first place with their violence awareness campaign.

Cameron High School students began their efforts in November 2000 by conducting a survey to target issues and encourage involvement in the program, while at the same time beginning the process of developing relationships between students. In December and January, bulletin boards were designed, a violence prevention poster contest was held, daily announcements of violence facts and "hug tips" were offered



through the school public address system, and a school wide pledge and signing wall was set up to encourage total student participation. Students wrote and submitted articles to two local newspapers and the school newspaper detailing upcoming projects and describing events and successes. "Kindness spies" kept records of students caught committing acts of kindness and submitted these names to the School Resource Officer (SRO). At a school assembly, the SRO awarded prizes to these students as he reported on their kind behaviors. The culmination of the project was a Valentine's Day Forum officiated by a local media personality. At the forum, community leaders, college students, hospital personnel, counselors, psychologists, and other community members discussed the root causes of school violence and individual students' responsibility in addressing it. Topics included animal abuse, suicide, sexual assault, and drug and alcohol abuse. Assemblies included performances by the high school chorus, drama students and the Teen Challenge Ministry Team. Students participated as curriculum developers and trainers for younger students, as well as in roles such as ushers, caterers, photographers, equipment technicians, and decorators.

The STOP the Violence program presents an exciting opportunity for partnership with agencies and SROs interested in addressing these issues. State advisors offer a ready-to-go team of student trainers who can travel throughout their regions to deliver violence prevention training sessions. Working together, youth participate as full partners with schools, law enforcement, and communities to create and implement projects that empower young people to recognize, report and reduce the potential for violence in what can only be described as win-win partnerships.

For more information please contact the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America at 703.476.4900.



*Police magnet schools involve youth in police agencies, **develop bonds between youth and police officers and encourage youth to view law enforcement as a rewarding career path.***

**Police Magnet Schools: Connecting Students and Police Officers in a School to Work Environment in New York City, NY and Los Angeles, CA.**

Police magnet schools involve youth in police agencies, develop bonds between youth and police officers and encourage youth to view law enforcement as a rewarding career path. The COPS Office is working with community organizations in New York City and Los Angeles to develop police magnet schools that build bonds of respect and admiration between law enforcement and youth, giving young people strong role models in the community. Additionally, it is expected that these programs will expand the overall pool of prospective police applicants, and in doing so increase the numbers of minorities and women applying for law enforcement positions. Magnet schools allow youth that have experienced trouble fitting into the traditional academic environment to belong to a smaller educational community that connects their academic studies directly with career aspirations and goals, and develops strong relationships between students and professional entities. These projects harness the promise that magnet schools have shown in other career fields, for the benefit of law enforcement and the community in general.



### ***East Brooklyn Congregations/East New York High School for Public Safety and Law***

In 1999, a magnet school for public safety and law was established in largely Hispanic and African American neighborhoods of East Brooklyn. The college-track high school program prepares 9-12 grade students to meet the New Standards and Regents requirements, while also exposing them to a wide array of public safety, security, and law courses, developed in partnership with the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. The curriculum emphasizes performance-based assessment, study skills, and research. Graduating students are academically prepared to continue their education, as well as to pursue careers in public safety, law, forensics, and corrections.

This program was developed as a partnership between the COPS Office, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and the East Brooklyn Congregations – a not-for-profit umbrella organization of congregations and associations working in East Brooklyn. This program also partnered with a variety of local and national educational institutions including: the John Jay College of Criminal Justice; the National Partnership for Careers in Public Safety, Law and Security; the Teachers College/Columbia College; Middle College Charter High School; the Justice Resource Center (funded by the New York City Council); and the national organization Educators for Social Responsibility.

Entrance requirements and enrollment standards are exacting and require the full commitment of students. The curriculum includes all of the required academic courses leading to a diploma, as identified by the State of New York and the New York City Board of Education. However, the regular academic courses are infused with concepts related to public safety and law. To augment the classroom instructions, teachers organize special activities involving law and public safety locations, including field trips to courts, penal institutions, and law offices; participation in the NYPD Citizens Committee (a 16-week workshop); mock trials and "youth court"; internships; workshops facilitated by NYPD personnel; and student trips to the FBI Training Academy in Quantico, Virginia.

The John Jay College of Criminal Justice supports the magnet school by providing law-related curricula, guest speakers, and college entrance preparatory classes. They are exploring the possibility for awarding college credits for advanced classes.



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The successes of the academy are widely recognized. For example:

- In the first year of operation, 45 students who were previously seen to be in danger of failing, have raised their grades to above average;
- Attendance has steadily improved to almost 79%, and 99% of incoming 9th graders have been retained;
- Only one superintendent suspension took place during the first year, which was far below the annual performance benchmark;
- Academically, the benchmarks set for passing the Regents tests were exceeded across all academic subjects; and
- Retention and attendance rates in the first two years have exceeded that of the rest of the city.

Additionally, youth previously viewed as "at risk" now interact with law enforcement officers on a daily basis and are developing personal relationships with them. Research shows involvement of adult role models with at-risk youth can reduce delinquency.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Juvenile Mentoring Program, 1998 Report to Congress*. U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Washington, DC: December 1998.

Marans, Steven and Miriam Berkman. *Child-Development-Community Policing: Partnership in a Climate of Violence*. U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Washington, DC: March 1997.



A sub-component to the East Brooklyn Congregations magnet school has been to develop an evening program targeted towards prospective police recruits in the neighborhood. This police recruitment program offers vocational counseling, tutoring for entrance exams, and interview preparation for adults interested in a policing career with one of the local law enforcement agencies.

For more information on the New York City/East Brooklyn Congregation's Police Magnet School, please contact the East New York High School at 718.498.4095.

### ***Los Angeles Police Academy Magnet School Program***

In 1996, a group that included the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) began to put in place a series of Police Academy Magnet School Programs within several schools in South Central and East Los Angeles. The program created "schools within schools" that offer participating students specialized academic, tutorial, counseling, and physical education services designed to assist them in meeting the academic and physical requirements of a police department.

With funding from the COPS Office, this network of Police Academy Magnet School Programs has since expanded to five high schools and a middle school, with nearly 800 high school and 200 middle school students participating. Although still relatively new, to date nearly 200 students have graduated from the program.

This innovative program responds to three inter-related issues: recruitment, diversity, and youth crime and victimization. From 1995 to 1999, the number of people applying to join the Los Angeles Police Department dropped 64 percent, while the number of officers leaving more than doubled. As the importance of recruitment and retention issues increased, so did the importance of increasing diversity within the ranks. At the same time, the LAPD was vigorously pursuing innovative ways to provide youth with the skills and resources to avoid involvement in juvenile crime and victimization. These factors helped highlight the importance of working with bright, committed high school students potentially interested in a career in policing and providing young people with opportunities for positive interaction with law enforcement officers.





***"If I wasn't in the magnet program, I wouldn't be involved in my community. It totally changed my perspective," said Anthony Pena, an 18-year-old senior from North Hills.***

What has made the program particularly successful is the close collaborative relationship between the LAPD and LAUSD. Because of the manner in which the programs are integrated into existing schools, they receive ongoing funding from LAUSD and the State of California. Additionally, officers from the LAPD work closely with students in the program as physical education instructors and counselors. The close contact with officers, including six-week summer internships with school police, provides students with positive role models and mentors, and establishes additional positive influences in their lives. The police officers also manage after-school police clubs, giving students opportunities to pursue activities they could not do during the school day. Students wear Police Academy uniforms, which foster a sense of cohesion and give them the feeling of being valued members of a peer group.

Civilian high school instructors receive additional training on topics such as forensic sciences, police technology, and criminal justice computer applications to infuse these subjects into the regular curriculum and enhance the pre-college curricula with policing examples. Each magnet school also has its own forensic science rooms, police resource rooms, communications center, physical education specialists, specialized tutors, and college and career counselors.



Students have the opportunity to work in police stations during the school year and over the summer break. This experience, as well as their academic lessons in fingerprinting, report writing, and courtroom procedures prepares them for a career in law enforcement. At graduation, these students are still too young to join the force. To fill this gap, the LAPD has re-instituted the cadet Student Worker Program, employing magnet school graduates in police work between high school graduation and the minimum age of entry into the police academy.

Of the 46-graduating seniors from the original three schools, 28 planned careers in law enforcement, and 20 of those signed up to be technical reserve officers in the LAPD. Of the remaining students, two plan to become firefighters, seven plan to enter the military, and others are planning careers in social work, computer science, and journalism. The Police Academy Magnet School Program recently celebrated its third graduating class.

The response from participants and the community has been extremely positive. "If I wasn't in the magnet program, I wouldn't be involved in my community. It totally changed my perspective," said Anthony Pena, an 18-year-old senior from North Hills, who intends to join the LAPD after four years of college. According to Los Angeles Councilwoman Laura Chick, "now more than ever, we have an interested pool of very young potential officers, and we don't want to lose these kids, for their good and for our own good."

For more information, please contact the Los Angeles Police Department at 310.246.0404 or check the LAPD website at <http://www.lapdonline.org>.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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To obtain details on COPS programs, call the  
U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 1.800.421.6770  
Visit the COPS internet address listed below.

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