

COMMUNITY POLICING

**A First-Line
Supervisor's
Perspective**

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Series editor



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Letter from the Director

Colleagues:

Community policing has three core components: community partnerships, problem solving, and organizational transformation. The last of these, organizational transformation, is the process of implementing community policing principles across all levels of the agency and in the agency's own internal policies. This process can look very different from different levels of the organization—law enforcement leadership does not face the same changes, or the same challenges, as middle management or rank-and-file officers.

This publication, *Community Policing: A First-Line Supervisor's Perspective*, and its companion volume, *A Patrol Officer's Perspective*, seek to illustrate what community policing looks like on the ground, and to recommend steps individual officers and supervisors can take to implement community policing practices in their agencies. This volume draws on the examples and reflections shared by the participants in a COPS Office working group; its recommendations are deeply rooted in the lived experience of officers working in the field.

First-line supervisors play a crucial role in shaping, transmitting, and changing the cultures of their organizations. They are responsible for translating leadership's mission and goals into concrete steps that officers can take. They are ideally placed to lead by example—not only inside the organization, but outside it as well. Supervisors can take the lead in creating and sustaining transparent working partnerships with stakeholders and community members.

The ideas and guidelines in this publication are meant to support supervisors as they implement community policing principles in their agencies. On behalf of the COPS Office, I thank the participants in our working group for sharing their insights and thank the author for distilling an actionable set of strategies from their experiences. And as ever, thanks are due to our nation's law enforcement for their service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Keith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "K".

Phil Keith, Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Introduction

What is community policing?

Community policing is a movement to make law enforcement accountable, connected, and useful to the communities it serves. At the organizational level, it promotes “strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.”¹ Community policing rests on three foundational principles:

- **Community Partnerships.** Collaborative partnerships between the law enforcement agency and the individuals and organizations they serve to develop solutions to problems and increase trust in police.
- **Organizational Transformation.** The alignment of organizational management, structure, personnel, and information systems to support community partnerships and proactive problem solving.
- **Problem Solving.** The process of engaging in the proactive and systematic examination of identified problems to develop and evaluate effective responses.

Implementing these principles usually begins with law enforcement leadership, but the ultimate responsibility—and an organization’s success—rests with the patrol officers and first-line supervisors who must translate principles into practice.

Why should police organizations employ community policing?

Police are not equipped to resolve all types of crime and quality-of-life issues that communities face because the solutions are not, or are not wholly, within the realm of police control or responsibility. Often, police departments take a purely reactive approach, addressing problems only once they come unequivocally into the domain of law enforcement. Yet, the police have the responsibility to coordinate the partnerships and lead the problem-solving efforts through which the whole community can come together to address these problems.

These efforts—the backbone of community policing—cannot be implemented in a piecemeal fashion, but should be institutionalized into the normal, everyday practices of a police organization. In this way, police officers become even better at assisting and resolving community problems, because community policing is not just a program or something a few select officers do, but part of the mission and culture of the agency.

1. *Community Policing Defined* (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2014), <https://ric-zai-inc.com/Publications/cops-p157-pub.pdf>.

The role of first-line supervisors in community policing

This publication focuses exclusively on the role of first-line supervisors in carrying out community policing. It has been written for agencies looking to institutionalize community policing across the entire organization, not just in a specialized community policing unit. That is, it focuses on the strategies for implementing community policing practices as a regular police supervisor, not as a “community policing supervisor” (although a supervisor who has been assigned to lead a specialized community policing unit will also find this guide useful.)

Unless otherwise cited, all the examples, recommendations, and reflections in this volume were provided by the members of a police practitioner working group convened by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) in 2013; they are drawn from the participants’ own experiences in the field.

One of the core concepts of community policing is organizational transformation—implementing community policing principles in all levels of the agency, holding people accountable, and evaluating the agency’s effectiveness. The community policing philosophy is an effective means for a police organization to establish trust and a sense of legitimacy in the community to facilitate a collective responsibility for safety and quality-of-life issues by the community and the police.

When an organization seeks to implement community policing, the process begins with the chief and command staff, since they determine the goals and mission of the organization. Once they have laid out their vision and strategies to achieve community policing, it is the responsibility of the command-level and middle managers to provide personnel the proper

support and direction to achieve those goals. In general, first-line supervisors play a significant role in an organization’s ability to fully institutionalize and sustain any type of change into day-to-day practice.

To understand a first-line supervisor’s role and responsibilities in community policing, it is important to begin by differentiating supervision and leadership. Supervision is what most first-line supervisors are best at because it is their most immediate and compelling responsibility in police organizations. Yet supervision is not enough to ensure that line-level officers make community policing part of their daily routine. It takes leadership to convince, motivate, mentor, provide support, and coach officers about the benefits of community policing and how to implement it effectively. Since supervisors have the most access to officers, their influence, leadership, and coaching has the most effect on the officers’ daily routine. Supervisors also serve as the conduit for communication between management and officers. In addition, supervisors can and should lead by example, initiating external and internal partnerships and driving organizational transformation to bring community policing into sustainable everyday practice.

All too often, when chiefs set in motion their community policing visions, their organization’s managers and supervisors depend too much on line-level officers to develop the necessary partnerships with the community. The chief’s message trickles down through the commanders, to managers, to supervisors, and finally to the officers, who hear the following: “Our organization is now doing community policing. You officers, now go do all the work.” However, to successfully institutionalize community policing, supervisors must “walk the talk,” and develop relationships and maintain partnerships themselves in order to serve as an example and mentor officers to do the same thing.

The Role of First-Line Supervisors in Community Partnerships

To be successful in community policing, supervisors must build both relationships and partnerships with the community. A partnership is more formal than a relationship, but the processes of building them are interrelated.

Forging relationships

Supervisors must develop connections and relationships with different individuals and organizations within and beyond their immediate jurisdiction. Relationships are built through regular contact and are intended to create familiarity, foster communication, and dispel myths about police and the community. These connections must be continually developed and maintained through effective communication in order to build trust and respect. Relationships do not necessarily serve any immediate purpose; rather, by letting the parties get to know each other and learn each other's capabilities, they establish the foundation for developing more in-depth and goal-oriented connections—i.e., partnerships. A partnership evolves from a relationship when the partners develop more formal connections to take action and address a particular issue or problem. Once the problem is resolved and action is no longer required, it is important to sustain the relationship.

How can supervisors develop strong, lasting relationships so that partnerships can be created among stakeholders when they are needed? How can they mentor officers to do the same? These can be difficult tasks. At times, some community members may not want to have even a casual relationship with the police—and vice versa. Police-community relationships, like those in our everyday lives, take patience, time, and trust to become meaningful.

Attending Neighborhood Meetings

A neighborhood organization held monthly meetings and would occasionally call on the police to attend and speak to current crime concerns. A sergeant assigned to the neighborhood began attending every month even if there were no specific crime issues to discuss. This provided an opportunity to forge a long-standing relationship with those in the group, develop a better understanding of ongoing neighborhood concerns and needs, and resolve relatively minor issues before they became more serious.

To forge relationships with the community, first-line supervisors should determine who the influential leaders are in their areas of responsibility and convince them through an in-person discussion that the agency is serious about building a relationship with them in order to address crime, disorder, and trust issues. It will take time to earn and develop the trust of the community—community leaders will need to witness a real, sustainable police effort before there is any real movement towards overcoming mistrust. Small wins help the community and the police see the value in developing these relationships. These small wins will expand into a deeper understanding of the community and will strengthen relationships so that partnerships can develop. One way to facilitate ongoing relationships and a small win is to provide officers opportunities to interact with the community and local businesses outside of handling calls for service. Walking a neighborhood or business district and striking up friendly conversations with people, inquiring about concerns, expressing a genuine interest in helping them with any matter (even if not a police issue), and helping them obtain resources to fix the matter can be very effective. This can often result in a quick win that increases police credibility with the community. For example, a quick call from an officer to public works may easily resolve a trash receptacle in a park that frequently overflows on the weekends.

Information Sharing

Many police departments build simple relationships with community members by holding regular information-sharing meetings with community councils or local business councils. This basic relationship-building effort creates a foundation upon which future partnerships can be formed. Regular meetings foster familiarity and communication between police and community leaders. Police can update the community on reported crime, make citizens aware of trends and patterns, and share simple crime-prevention tips. Community leaders can share their vision of the neighborhood's future and development goals and citizens' crime concerns.

Developing partnerships

Once relationships are established, the atmosphere is set for developing partnerships with the community to facilitate problem solving. It is necessary to establish a clear purpose for the partnership. Supervisors should illustrate very specifically—to the officers and to the community—that the problems under consideration are better solved by the police and community working together. Police should have realistic expectations for community partners' ability and willingness to participate. To ensure trust, it is important that officers do not make promises that cannot be kept—breaking a promise is the quickest way to erode partnerships or the relationships on which they are based.

Maintaining partnerships is as important as developing them. Even after a problem has been addressed by the community and police, it is imperative to keep the relationship current. Continuing to spend time with community stakeholders will allow for future partnerships to form quickly; the more often this cycle occurs, the deeper the trust between the community and police.

Partnering to Address a Homelessness Problem

A supervisor can make contact with the local homeless shelter advocates in the area and request a meeting to discuss homeless issues, mutually agree on strategies to assist chronic homelessness, and address community complaints about homeless encampments. The supervisor can ask for the advocates' input and have them ride with them when responding to neighborhood complaints or service calls, since they are knowledgeable about homeless community members and the resources available to them.

Partnering to Address a Problem Location

A small neighborhood market in Cincinnati, Ohio, applied for a liquor permit, although both the market itself and the surrounding area had been troubled by drugs, disorder, graffiti, and violence. An active collaboration between the police and citizens and community leaders to stand against the liquor permit successfully demonstrated to the permitting agency that the permit would not be in the best interest of the community or the police. The voices of affected neighborhood residents, in partnership with the perspective of local police, created a clear, complete, and compelling portrait of the consequences of a specific action on the entire law-abiding community.

Partnering to Stop Drug Trafficking

The police identified a repeat drug trafficking location on a one-way street near an interstate freeway exchange. The police supervisor asked local citizens for their participation and input on how they would solve the problem. The citizens recommended a barricade across the one-way street, even though it would hinder their own movements through the neighborhood. The police supervisor presented this solution to the police department's command staff and the city council, who approved a temporary barricade for 90 days. The police then also partnered with a local university to study the impact of the barricade on crime and found it to be effective.

Partnering to Stop Domestic Violence

Police received repeat calls for service to a specific multifamily apartment building from women who were victims of domestic violence. After analysis of the repeat calls, in multiple cases, it was found that victims had called police three or more times. A police supervisor asked the organizations Women Helping Women and the YWCA to partner with the police department to aid repeat victims of domestic violence in this apartment complex. Both agreed to the partnership and offered services to the women, and expanded their assistance to other geographic areas in the jurisdiction. Repeat domestic violence victimization was reduced. Importantly, although they were instrumental in beginning this partnership, the police ended up playing a secondary role in the full program implementation.

Potential partners and community policing strategies

The following sections provide strategies in specific sub-categories that can be immediately used in the field within your geographic area of responsibility to develop the necessary partnerships within your community.

To begin, here are some general strategies to consider with all potential partners:

- Share information on police investigations, general crime prevention, and neighborhood information with businesses and citizens through the police department's website.
- Encourage specific community members or neighborhood residents to set up a phone or email tree or social media network, with one person in charge of relaying information from the police to the relevant community members. Because police job assignments are transient, it is not recommended that a police supervisor or an officer directly contact the tree (or send texts or develop a neighborhood social media page).
- Use free space in community newspapers and flyers to provide crime prevention tips. Include what the community can and should do to help police. Too often, the police tell the community what has happened but never how they can prevent crime and disorder.
- Establish a citizen observer program website to give individuals an opportunity to observe the daily patrol operations of the police department. This transparency will help develop a relationship of trust with the community.
- Develop a problem-solving resource book for community members. This book should contain contact information and a description of every key city department, including police, so that community members know how to reach out directly to the right department to address an issue, without needing to go through the police.

- Hold community meetings, both in neighborhoods and at the police department, so the community really gets the feeling they are part of the police department.
- Hold quarterly or annual basic training on how to safely be the “eyes and ears” of the police (see next page).
- Consider having a Citizen’s Police Academy where citizens are trained in the critical areas and mission of the police department.
- Send officers to walk around at community functions and introduce themselves. Make sure they have business cards to let the community members know how they can get in touch, and encourage officers to keep citizens’ contact information as well to develop relationships. However, recognize that some officers’ schedules may not allow them to commit to formal meetings with community members, even if they will help on specific projects.
- Encourage officers to conduct door-to-door or neighborhood canvasses following nearly every call for service or crime report. After the initial call is handled, spend just a few minutes knocking on surrounding doors and talking to neighbors to learn what they may know of the problem and warn them of potential future problems.

It is imperative to develop and establish a schedule to make certain that each identified stakeholder is contacted on a regular basis in order to maintain good communication and good partnerships. This contact does not need to be complicated—something as simple as having a cup of coffee with a community member can have a tremendous effect on both parties’ trust and perspectives. Supervisors should have clear and manageable communication guidelines for their direct reports so that expectations can be met.

In order to begin building partnerships, supervisors must determine who are the key stakeholders and potential partners within their geographic areas of responsibility. The following sections present five distinct categories of potential partners. They are (1) community members and groups, (2) other government agencies, (3) non-profit agencies

and service providers, (4) private businesses, and (5) media. Within each category, various subcategories are discussed along with specific strategies for developing partnerships with each one. In addition, practical examples of successful partnerships from various police agencies are provided.

Community members and groups

Individuals who live, work, or otherwise have an interest in the community—citizens, volunteers, activists, formal and informal community leaders, residents, visitors and tourists, and commuters—are a valuable resource for identifying community concerns. These members of the community can be engaged in achieving specific goals at town hall meetings, neighborhood association meetings, decentralized offices and storefronts in the community, and team beat assignments.

Neighborhood associations

Neighborhood associations are meaningful partners as they can reach a large number of citizens. Their key purpose is not necessarily crime and safety, but they are looking out for the good of their communities. Unfortunately, many of the neighborhoods for which you need to develop partnerships do not have strong neighborhood associations and may have none at all. In these cases, partnerships with other community groups might better serve your purpose.

- Identify and list all homeowners and neighborhood associations in your area. Meet with the presidents of these organizations.
- Attend their meetings, or send your officers to attend, at realistic intervals. Participate in each meeting by sharing statistics on crime and calls for service, information on current crime patterns, and relevant crime prevention tips.
- Encourage contact from these groups. Get feedback and use it to adjust your service and strategies. Respond to feedback in a timely manner.
- Help the community create a neighborhood complaint letter for members to use and mail to a problematic neighbor to point out disorderly behavior on behalf of the community. For example, if a

person is having trouble with loud noises from a neighbor, he/she can bring it to the attention of the community group, who can send a letter stating problem and desire to stop the loud noise. Importantly, the letter is from the community, not the police. Most of the time, low-level complaints can be handled this way.

Neighborhood watch

The strategies for connecting with general-purpose neighborhood associations can also be used with neighborhood and block watches. However, neighborhood watches are organized around crime concerns and have more incentive than neighborhood associations to work with the police. This means that additional strategies, such as the following, can also be used:

- Conduct a specific training for the neighborhood watch members on crime prevention.
- Start a “good guy” loitering program in more challenging areas. Have community members who have passed a basic training program stand on problem street segments with a police officer to show support and deter “bad guy loitering.”
- Host neighborhood meetings in a clubhouse or a resident’s home. Identify people interested in participating. Offer to have the police department perform background checks for the association (be sure to consult your legal department for any potential issues in doing so).
- Advocate and assist in developing training for watch members to be the “eyes and ears” of the department. Suggest that command consider providing them equipment, uniforms, and even old police vehicles. You can assign neighborhood leaders and organize patrol schedules. Touch base with them regularly.

Formal and informal community leaders

Community leaders are individuals who have particular standing in your community—people that the community members respect and trust. They could be town or city council members or the state legislator for the area (i.e., formal), or influential non-elected community members who advocate for particular

areas or causes (i.e., informal). In either case, it is important to know these people by name and understand their role and their level of influence in the community.

- Attend community events ready to discuss a specific topic (e.g., crime prevention tips). Be proactive and get to know the individual leaders. Exchange contact information and follow up after the event in a few days or a week with a formal email or phone call.
- Attend city council or county commission meetings and other community meetings at realistic intervals. Identify informal community leaders who seem to stand out, determine what their concerns are, and begin to develop a relationship with them. Be cognizant that both the individuals and the issues may change over time.

Government agencies

Police agencies can partner with a number of other government agencies to identify community concerns and offer solutions. Examples of other agencies include legislative bodies, prosecutors’ offices, probation and parole departments, public works departments, neighboring law enforcement agencies, health and human services departments, child support services, ordinance enforcement departments, and schools.

Within the police department (other units, divisions, personnel)

It is important to develop partnerships within the police agency itself. If community policing is to be a department-wide mandate, rather than a special task carried out by a select few, then developing a fluid and transparent flow of communication among different units and division must be a high priority.

- Work with other individuals at the same level (i.e., other first-line supervisors) to promote and to achieve the community policing philosophy throughout the agency.
- Remember, small wins are important for developing partnerships among units and divisions. Select a straightforward, solvable problem and bring in different units or divisions to address it. Every

division of the department can contribute unique resources and skill sets to the department's overall problem-solving strategy.

- Make sure to give fellow supervisors and officers their due credit when they assist in solving a problem.

City and county departments (e.g., public works, code enforcement, parks and recreation)

Outside the police department, partnerships with other city departments are equally important for implementing problem-solving strategies and working with the community.

- Meet and develop partnerships with other personnel supervisors (equivalent to the police supervisor level) in other municipal departments. Once relationships are established, help direct these departments to blight areas and public areas that need improvement or additional attention.
- Identify areas that need attention from other departments through your interaction with the community. Focus on areas that are run down, have numerous code violations or complaints, or are vulnerable to crime due to the environment (e.g., poor lighting, abandoned homes, or boarded-up businesses).

Neighboring law enforcement agencies

Ongoing relationships and partnerships with neighboring police agencies are also important. These relationships need to be forged at all levels, not merely among command staff. While officers and sergeants often do communicate with their counterparts at other agencies about particular crimes and investigations, talking about community policing practice may require a different type of communication.

- Team up with other police agencies for big events and crime concerns that cross jurisdictional boundaries.
- Get in touch with supervisors from other police agencies. Discuss community policing with those agencies that may not practice it. Discuss inter-jurisdictional quality-of-life issues.

Prosecutors and judges

Developing formal partnerships with prosecutors and judges can be difficult because they may be unable to attend formal meetings on a regular basis. Thus, it will be important to have good individual relationships that do not require regular contact.

- Know repeat offenders and consult with judges and prosecutors about keeping them off the streets. Make judges and attorneys aware of the amount of crime committed by repeat offenders.
- Attend repeat offenders' court hearings.
- Keep historical information on repeat offenders' criminal activity in your jurisdiction.

Probation and parole

Probation and parole departments can share valuable information and assist in addressing crime and disorder issues. As with prosecutors and judges, use caution when setting up formal meetings for probation and parole officers to attend: they have large caseloads and many meetings to attend within their own accountability system. For this reason, it is often more helpful to focus on developing relationships with first-line supervisors.

- Find the probation and parole officers and supervisors responsible for offenders in your particular geographic area. Make sure police officers in the same area communicate with probation and parole on a regular basis. These relationships can pay large dividends—for example, they can make it easier to track frequent offenders after release and to keep track of their parole status and probationary restrictions.
- When working with probation and parole, passing even the most basic information back and forth can have a tremendous impact. Examples of information that probation can provide to police include the following:
 - Who is on probation currently
 - The conditions of probation for an individual probationer

- The residential addresses a probationer has submitted to the probation department or court
- The probation officer responsible for particular probationers and their contact information
- Circumstances under which police officers should contact the offender
- Examples of information police can provide probation include the following:
 - Where police have come into contact with individual probationers
 - Arrests, offense reports, and field interview cards related to probationers

Health and human services, social services, and child protective services

These groups often see the results of the crime and other problematic behavior police deal with every day. While police interact regularly with individuals in these organizations, they usually deal with one case at a time. It is important to also establish relationships with supervisors in these organizations to discuss issues facing the entire community—for example, the identification of abuse of a new designer drug seen in overdoses at the emergency.

- Identify and reach out to supervisors and administrators at hospitals, medical clinics, the Social Security Office, child protective services, etc.
- Provide these individuals with a list of resources and offer to conduct training on crime prevention, relevant to either the social issues they deal with or the crimes that occur in their areas, such as theft from vehicles in a parking lot.

Schools

Schools can be significant partners, in ways that go well beyond staffing a school resource officer.

- Contact principals and ask to meet with them. If there are school resource officers, use their existing relationships with school staff and have them make introductions. Discuss the desire to partner with school staff to address issues that concern them and school-related issues that spill out into the community.
- Assist with facilitating quarterly safety training for teachers, students, and security, or offer to present on a topic the school is interested in—for example, demonstrating working with horses or canines or talking about traffic safety.
- Ask the principals or superintendents of several schools whether the police can attend a teacher in-service training. Teachers and administrators have such training several times a year, and it can be a good opportunity to reach out to a large number of educators with department contact information and crime prevention advice. Attending the first in-service of the school year would allow for a discussion of anticipated issues for the year.
- Schools can be an effective place to hold meetings with parents. Invite school counselors, social workers, nurses, and other key players to partner with police and include them in addressing serious issues such as child abuse, truancy, curfew issues, assaults, and bullying. As a supervisor, try to include police officers in these meetings who would be effective in a school environment and be role models to the school population.
- Let school staff know that patrol officers and supervisors working in their area are a pipeline to the community. Bring community concerns to the school, such as concerns about juveniles after school and traffic issues. This will aid in addressing quality-of-life issues that may stem from the school itself and the students but are not typically addressed by school resource officers.

- Hold training for students on the consequences of bullying and fighting and the use and misuse of social media.
- Don't forget about other staff within the school system. Personnel such as janitors, lunchroom workers, and bus drivers have significant contact with children and can be a great resource for understanding and solving problems. Seek ways to include these personnel's supervisors in meetings and connect with them individually.

Non-profit agencies and service providers

Organizations that provide services to the community and advocate on its behalf can be influential partners. These may include victims' groups, service clubs, support groups, issue groups, community development corporations, and the faith community. Each community will have a different set of influential organizations, and it is important to identify them on an ongoing basis.

Victims and support groups.

Most victim and support groups have direct contact with individuals who have had recent contact with the criminal justice system. Examples include support groups for rape victims and families of homicide victims, as well as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. The perspectives of the group leaders and clients can be important for community policing efforts.

- Invite leaders of these groups to a meeting at the police department. Exchange information and discuss the issues they see and the types of resources they have to assist in addressing future problems.
- Developing an initial relationship may position the police department to request a group's leader to speak publicly in partnership with the police department when needed. For example, if a problem develops which affects a particular set of individuals who are represented by a support group, the police department may wish to make public statements (or press conferences) in partnership with the

support group. This will strengthen police department efforts by working to leverage existing relationships between support groups and those they serve.

- With the local prosecutor's office and police administration, identify what roles victim support groups may take during the course of criminal investigations. They may be able to serve as advocates for victims in court hearings or assist with case status updates.

Advocacy, service, and political groups

When partnering with advocacy, service, or political groups, the police should be sensitive to the nature of the group and its legitimacy in the community. The police department, as part of the local government, is politically neutral, so it should be careful to treat groups equally. Because of their energy and motivation, advocacy groups might take issue with not being treated equally (i.e., being left out of a meeting at the police department).

- Send out a general media announcement to these types of groups offering a meeting at the police department. Provide each group an equal opportunity to participate, but leave it up to the groups whether they do so.
- At these meetings, exchange information, ask their opinions on issues in the community, and provide a list of city resources. Be careful not to commit to putting resources towards any one issue.

Faith community

Faith-based leaders can be very influential stakeholders within a community. Supervisors will need to become familiar with those in their geographic area of responsibility.

- Invite all types of faith leaders from a particular area in for a short meeting, so that it does not appear that some are favored over others. Talk about what the police can provide and ask them

what they might contribute to develop the overall partnerships. Take the names and contact information of all who attend, ask about additional stakeholders who are not able to attend, and provide the resulting list to all the participants so they also can develop relationships among themselves.

- Some faith groups may be particularly involved with specific social issues (e.g., gun violence, drug and human trafficking, or homelessness). Look for opportunities to plug these groups into existing department efforts, where appropriate. For example, if a department's antiviolence efforts include a "moral voice" component, faith groups may provide a source for known speakers to fill that role. Also, faith group members may be interested in citizens on patrol or neighborhood watch opportunities.
- Offer to participate or attend some of the many social or community events that religious organizations frequently hold (cookouts, sports programs, etc.)

Private businesses

For-profit or private businesses also have a great stake in the health of the community and can be key partners, and they often can bring considerable resources to bear in addressing problems of mutual concern. Businesses can help identify problems and provide resources for responses, often including their own security technology and community outreach. The local chamber of commerce and visitor center can assist in disseminating information about police and business partnerships, as well as current initiatives and crime prevention practices. The business community may be better organized and more motivated than community groups or individual citizens.

- Consider establishing business-sector groups in a particular area (e.g., restaurants, retail clothing, electronics stores, gas stations) to bring together businesses experiencing the same issues. These partnerships are small and more personalized.

- When bringing businesses together, ask them when and where they would like to meet. Consider monthly meetings or maybe quarterly. Some police supervisors who partner often with businesses find they like to meet less frequently and handle communication via technology.
- Establish communication protocols and have a resource guide to city services tailored for businesses. For example, create a quality-of-life code booklet for businesses and community members with descriptions of violations and information on who to contact when a violation is observed (e.g., overflowing garbage cans, covered up windows on businesses, loud noises, overtime parking, abandoned vehicles, or litter).
- The business community loves to see officers walking, biking, and visible around their locations.
- They also are interested in learning about the operations of the police department, so consider inviting them to a meeting at your station.
- Train business owners and managers in business security and CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles.

Media

The media represent a powerful mechanism by which to communicate with the community. They can assist with publicizing community concerns and available solutions, such as services available from government or community agencies or new laws or codes. In addition, the media can have a significant impact on public perceptions of the police, crime problems, and fear of crime.

- Provide current crime patterns to the media (e.g., a string of burglaries or robberies in a neighborhood) with crime prevention tips and contact information.
- Specific crime prevention tips posted on a billboard or bus stop can both help inform area residents about a crime of concern in their area and make offenders aware that police are actively working to prevent crime.

- Provide the media with “good news” stories about the police—not just the obvious lifesaving or dramatic stories, but stories on successful police programs and human interest stories that promote the good community policing work an officer is doing with a particular problem or neighborhood.
- Use the relationship with the media to promote other community “good news” stories that don’t necessarily involve the police.

Using Social Media

For many of the strategies and relationships discussed here, social media can be used to establish and carry out communication for the police agency in general as well as for individual initiatives, programs, and partnerships. Importantly, social media is updated in real time—it is not the same as having a departmental website with static information. Information posted today is important today and will likely not be as important the next day or the next week. Because of this, if an agency has decided to use social media then it must commit time and resources to continually maintain communication in a high quality, informative way. This can take significant resources. The last thing a department wants to do is invite people to join social media but then not post often, or not post meaningful information: this lack of follow-through damages relationships.

Suggested Resources

- ▶ **Building Productive Relationships with Media: Dealing with the New Media Culture During Crisis Situations.** A publication on how “new media” can help senior police managers and PIOs improve relations with the communities they serve, and help rank-and-file officers avoid pitfalls.
<https://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-W0643>
- ▶ **IACP Center for Social Media.** A clearinghouse of information and no-cost resources to help law enforcement personnel develop or enhance their agency’s use of social media and integrate Web 2.0 tools into agency operations.
<http://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/>
- ▶ **Policing the Connected World: Using Social Network Analysis in Police-Community Partnerships.** A report on how a violence prevention initiative in New Haven, Connecticut implemented a social network analysis (SNA) program.
<https://ric-zai-inc.com/ric.php?page=detail&id=COPS-W0859>

The Role of First-Line Supervisors in Organizational Transformation

This section focuses on organizational changes that should take place in order to effectively sustain community policing—specifically, the role a first-line supervisor can and should take to engage and facilitate organizational transformation and assist in the implementation and maintenance of the community policing philosophy and its practices.

The COPS Office defines organizational transformation as the alignment of organizational management, structure, personnel, and information systems to support community partnerships and proactive problem solving.² In a community policing context, these transformations may include decentralizing decision-making and accountability, geographic changes to officer deployment, changes to policy and strategic planning, and increased organizational transparency. To effectively institutionalize such changes, the chief executive and the command staff must commit to giving the entire department the ability and resources to make structural changes to support community policing efforts. The role of first-line supervisors is to assist in transforming the policing agency at the operational level by influencing the line-level officers who make up the majority of the personnel in any police agency.

Because of their range of influence, first line supervisors' role in this endeavor should not be underestimated. While police commanders and managers may have the greatest influence in making large-scale changes, a strong argument can be made that first-line supervisors have more influence to infuse community policing ideas and practices in the everyday operations and that community policing cannot be fully institutionalized until first-line supervisors are actively leading and mentoring officers within a community policing context.

Leadership and accountability

Leadership is often described as a process of social influence where one person enlists the help and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. The role of first-line supervisors is to provide leadership and build the foundation for community policing implementation by laying out a strategy and creating focus and direction for officers. As part of their everyday mission, first-line supervisors should guide the actions of the officers, spell out specific goals for them to achieve, and help guide good decision-making. Supervisors must be champions of community policing and actively cultivate a community-policing mindset in others.

A closely related consideration is ensuring that community policing is integrated systematically and consistently through an accountability processes. Supervisors must create expectations and standards for performance, remove excuses, and provide the necessary resources for officers to conduct community policing. They must be willing to do the extra work required to ensure officers are doing what they are supposed to be doing.

2. *Community Policing Defined* (see note 1).

Transparency and change on the small scale

The decision-making processes of community policing are more open than those used in traditional policing. If the community is to be a full partner with the police, the police department needs to have mechanisms for readily sharing with the community relevant information on crime and social disorder problems and police operations. At the smallest scale, supervisors should encourage officers to share ongoing problems with the community in which they work and provide the officers time to do so.

Supervisors should see their units or squads as a microcosm of the agency and institute community policing practices with the officers they directly supervise. This should include soliciting feedback from officers—at the beginning of community policing implementation and at regular intervals thereafter—to ensure officers' needs are being considered and to obtain suggestions for improvements. Line officers will be more likely to support community policing implementation if their input is incorporated into the process.

Supervisors should also dedicate in their units or squads a set amount of time to community policing, to allow officers the time to establish relationships with stakeholders in their assigned areas, conduct problem-solving initiatives, and develop effective responses to problems identified. Supervisors should allow officers time to address long-term issues beyond individual calls for service and crimes.

Performance evaluations and recognition

If an agency is moving toward institutionalization of community policing, first-line supervisors will need to capture the officers' ability to incorporate community policing principles as part of routine evaluations. An evaluation should include the relationships and partnerships that the officer developed, the specific problem-solving steps the officer employed, and whether the partnerships and problem-solving efforts were successful. Officers should not be able to meet standards if they do not engage in community policing.

To assist in organizational change and to encourage officers to conduct community policing, supervisors can recommend formal recognition be given to those who perform outstandingly in community policing initiatives and who follow community policing principles. This might mean developing a specific award for community policing; however, even a quick letter of recognition from a supervisor can be a powerful motivator for officers and can help to facilitate overall organizational culture change.

Training

Supervisors should conduct formal and informal training for their officers on community policing principles. For example, a supervisor can establish a one-hour training once a month on the various community policing principles and tactics for their unit or squad of officers. These training sessions provide a great opportunity to highlight successes and the strategies that have contributed to success and to publicly recognize officers' good work. Focused and intimate training will send a strong and consistent message to officers about the importance of community policing to the supervisor and the organization and will outline what is necessary for the officers to be successful in community policing. They are also an ideal time for supervisors to lay out expectations for officers and explain the criteria on which their performance will be evaluated.

Supervising crime analysis

Often, crime analysis personnel are supervised by first-line sworn supervisors. Crime analysis personnel should also be familiar with and contribute to community policing in the agency. More specifically, crime analysts should understand the problem-solving process and the specific analysis products that are necessary to support officers, supervisors, and managers to effectively address short-term and long-term problems. There are specific community policing resources for analysis at www.popcenter.org.

The Role of First-Line Supervisors in Problem Solving

Problem solving is the process of engaging in the proactive and systematic analysis of identified crime and disorder problems in order to develop effective responses and evaluate their impact on the problem. Problem solving is an integral part of community policing. The role of the first-line supervisor in problem solving varies by agency and by the scope of the problem being addressed.

Effective problem solving relies on the analysis of data, which is only as good as its source. In most policing agencies, supervisors play the most significant role in the quality and accuracy of data, since most police data is collected by line-level officers and detectives. Data sources include police reports, field interview cards, arrests, and calls for service. The more accurate and consistent the information collected by officers, the better the analysis. Supervisors must ensure officers gather data not only for documentation purposes and prosecution, but also for problem solving, such as the environment where a crime occurred and any contributing factors to the incident.

Short-term problems

Supervisors can play a large role in the problem-solving process for both short- and long-term problems. Short-term problems are easily identified at the operational level and typically require traditional police response.

Repeat incidents

Repeat incidents (also called repeat call locations) are situations in which disorder, quality-of-life problems, or interpersonal crime incidents recur at the same location or in small areas. Examples range from kids hanging out on a street corner to ongoing neighbor disputes to domestic violence. Using problem solving to address repeat incidents, police seek to resolve the short-term recurring issues as quickly and effectively as possible so that they do not become larger, long-term problems and expend the organization's resources with additional calls.

A first-line supervisor can have an integral role in solving repeat incidents— using analysis to identify repeat incident locations, determining the underlying cause of the issue, and selecting and overseeing the responses. The following is an example of a supervisor assisting with problem solving for a repeat incident:

- Over three weekends, the department received six late-night calls related to noise complaints and neighbor trouble at a residential home, spilling over into a nearby park.
- The calls resulted in field interview cards, one of which was resolved by disbursing the individuals at the park and another of which resulted in a report.

- Discussions between responding officers and residents indicated that all six calls were related to teenage children playing loud music while hanging out in the garage of a residence right next to the park; the police report was the result of a fight between two intoxicated teens at the park.
- The supervisor sent an officer to identify the main individuals who reside at the home and speak with the parents, who were uncooperative. The supervisor then contacted the owners of the property (as the residents were renters) and encouraged them to warn the residents about the noise and the potential illegal activity (underage drinking).

Patterns

Patterns involve two or more related crimes in which the victim and offender do not know one another, such as robbery, burglary, and theft from vehicle. First-line supervisors can also play an integral role in solving patterns—using the crime pattern bulletins created by crime analysts to direct their officers into the areas for directed patrol and field contacts, and directing crime prevention efforts toward potential victims living in the area of the crime pattern. The following is an example of a supervisor assisting with problem solving for a pattern:

- A pattern was identified after three residential burglaries occurred within a 20-mile radius over two days. Subsequently, four additional residential burglaries occurred in that area within a week. The burglaries occurred during the daytime, the offenders entering the rear of the homes by breaking a window. The primary items taken were jewelry, firearms, and electronics.
- Three known burglary offenders live in the pattern area, and one person who lives nearby has been contacted by police (resulting in a field interview card).
- The first-line supervisor directed officers to patrol in the 20-mile radius areas during the day, contact the known offenders, and notify residents living in the area about how to provide any information about the crimes and about ways to protect their homes against burglary.

- The first-line supervisor also made certain that latent prints and DNA from the crime scenes were checked and compared to known offenders, and that follow-up interviews took place with individuals who were interviewed in the field as part of the directed patrol.

Long-term problems

While first-line supervisors are better suited to leading problem solving of short-term problems, they may also have to lead or contribute to the problem solving of long-term problems. A long-term problem is problematic activity that occurs over several months, seasons, or years, in which opportunities for crime are created and acted upon as part of everyday behavior. These problems are more complex than short-term problems, so typically require more in-depth analysis and response. Long-term problems may be focused on problem locations or problem areas.

Problem locations

A problem location is an individual address (e.g., one convenience store) or a type of place (e.g., all convenience stores) at which there is a concentration of crime or problematic activity. First-line supervisors can play an important role carrying out the responses to problem locations, since they can use their community relationships to identify and engage important stakeholders in responding to the problem and send their officers to implement the responses. The following is an example of a supervisor assisting with problem solving a problem location:

- Theft from vehicle crimes increased dramatically at fitness centers. The analysis showed the crime was occurring during the mornings at two specific locations each near an interstate on-ramp.
- The first-line supervisors approached the managers of the locations in their area (with whom they already had an informal relationship) and asked them to partner with police to develop and implement tailored responses.

- These responses included making customers aware of the problem, encouraging them not to leave valuables in their cars, installing cameras in the parking lots, and having employees take their daytime breaks outside to observe the parking lots at certain times when these crimes tended to occur. The supervisor had the officers working day shift train the employees about what to look for and conduct patrol in the area in peak times.
- The supervisor assisted in the long-term process of installing high-profile CCTV cameras so that there would be a deterrent effect so that directed patrols would not be required permanently.
- Lastly, the supervisor contacted traffic engineering to review traffic patterns of the intersections in an effort to identify whether the traffic pattern was unnecessarily exposing robbery victims to crime opportunities.

Problem areas

A long-term problem area is a relatively small geographic area with a disproportionate amount of crime or disorder activity of one or several types. There can be multiple problem areas across a city. As with problem locations, first-line supervisors can play an important role in responding to problem areas through their relationships with local community members. The following is an example of a supervisor assisting with problem solving a problem area:

- One major street intersection was suffering from a disproportionately high number of street robberies over a two-year period. Analysis of the robbery data revealed that 75 percent of the street robberies occurred within 1,000 feet of the intersection, and other disorder and drug crimes also occurred disproportionately within that area.
- Victim data indicated that the victims did not live nearby, and they did not appear to have any history of drug use. Offender data showed that they were known street-level drug sellers. The analyses concluded that the problem at this location was not related to drug-seeking victims.
- The first-line supervisor initiated high-profile uniformed directed patrols at the intersection during the times and days of the week with the most street robberies while working with drug enforcement officers to deal with suspects involved in the illegal sale of narcotics.



Conclusion

Although everyone plays a role in organizational transformation, first-line supervisors, through active leading and mentoring of officers in the field, have a great ability to infuse community policing ideas and practices into everyday operations. This publication provides insight, specific strategies, and examples of how first-line supervisors can provide leadership to officers, implement community policing strategies themselves, and serve as the foundation for community policing implementation.

About the Author

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About the COPS Office

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem-solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community policing officers and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than \$14 billion to provide training and technical assistance, enhance crime fighting technology, and add more than 130,000 officers to our nation's streets. COPS Office information resources, covering a wide range of community policing topics such as school and campus safety, violent crime, and officer safety and wellness, can be downloaded via the COPS Office's home page, www.cops.usdoj.gov.

Community policing makes different demands at different levels of an organization. This publication, *Community Policing: A First-Line Supervisor's Perspective*, and its companion volume, *A Patrol Officer's Perspective*, illustrate how individual officers and supervisors can implement community policing practices in their agencies. Drawing on the examples and reflections shared by the participants in a COPS Office working group, it contains examples for how supervisors can lead by example to drive cultural change within their agencies and build community partnerships.



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To obtain details about COPS Office programs, call
the COPS Office Response Center at 800-421-6770.

Visit the COPS Office online at www.cops.usdoj.gov.