



## Successful Practices & Strategies

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# Lawrence Police Department

Lawrence, Massachusetts

<http://www.lawpd.com>

### Community policing element

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Problem solving

### Problem/issue

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Drugs

### Problem description

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The city of Lawrence has been affected by the increased use and sale of heroin throughout the United States. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has identified Lawrence as a source city for heroin because of the city's proximity to two major highways (Routes 93 and 495). In addition to the city's accessibility, the low cost and high purity rate of the drug has had the unwanted effect of attracting buyers from surrounding cities and states. As a result, the police department received a significant number of complaints from community members, city councilors, and the mayor's office about drug activity occurring on otherwise quiet side streets. Residents reported seeing quick drug transactions between out of state vehicles (buyers) and predominately male dealers in other vehicles.

### Community policing strategies implemented

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The COPS Office funding has allowed the department to staff a number of officers in the special operations division. The division staffs a street narcotics enforcement unit (SNEU) and several community policing officers. Together, these officers and detectives gather information on the latest drug hot spots throughout the city and develop plans to address the drug activity in those targeted areas. The unit's main source of information comes from communication and interactions with the residential and business communities and with elected officials. The unit gathers information through use of a drug hotline, attendance at neighborhood community meetings, and frequent discussions with elected officials who relay information provided by their constituents. The department's crime analysis unit and monthly CompStat meetings also provide valuable information about the types of crimes being committed and the areas in which they are occurring with the most frequency. The unit then uses a number of tactics in dealing with drug activity in these targeted areas, which include undercover patrols in high drug areas, buy bust operations, sweeps, and the use of informants.



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

In 2013, the special operations division made 1,227 arrests and seized 23 firearms. The unit has seen a reduction in the number of drug deals taking place on many of the streets initially complained about by residents. The unit has also received information from surrounding police departments that have seen an increase in drug activity as a result of the increased and targeted enforcement actions in Lawrence. The ability of the department to address these issues has strengthened the partnership and trust built between the department, the city's residents, and its elected officials.

## Lessons learned through program implementation

The partnership between the department, the community, and the city's elected officials is a valuable asset in addressing crime in the city of Lawrence. The department will make every effort to continue to strengthen this relationship in the future.

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