



Successful Practices & Strategies

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El Paso County Sheriff's Office

El Paso, Texas

<http://www.epcounty.com/sheriff/>

Community policing element

Community partnerships, problem solving, and organizational transformation

Problem/issue

Juvenile delinquency

Problem description

Juvenile delinquents from extreme poverty stricken areas of the county are often undersupervised, left to their own devices for hours on end; they lack alternative extracurricular activities to prevent criminal mischief. The El Paso County Sheriff's Office is addressing this issue with our COPS Hiring Grant—SRO Program by piloting a summer teen and police service (TAPS) program with 26 at-risk juveniles.

Community policing strategies implemented

Because of extreme community poverty and the lack of services in *colonias* (unincorporated, unregulated, substandard settlements) in the outermost part of El Paso County, the El Paso County Sheriff's Office is proud to have implemented a pilot summer program that addresses the needs of juveniles at risk for delinquency. This effort has been a collaborative partnership with the County Juvenile Probation Department, the County Attorney's Office, the 65th District Court, and Clint Independent School District. It specifically allows us to address the continuum of supervision for at-risk juveniles and their re-entry into the school setting with our COPS Hiring Grant—School Resource Officer Program.

Some of the community policing strategies that have been implemented include the following:

- Permanent school resource officers (SRO). Each is assigned to a particular school and feeder pattern for the duration of the program. These officers know best who are the more troublesome students and can work with them on a continual basis. It benefits the school, the law enforcement agency, and the community as a whole.
- Organizational arrangements. Each SRO lives in or near the community that they are assigned to and the school where they work. Each assigned school has an office for the officer, and they are able to visit with parents, teachers, and community members about any issue related to school safety.



- Community member participation. Each SRO attends the parent / teacher organization and helps facilitate dialogue about school safety, implementing school- and community-based organizations (e.g., booster clubs, a Lions Club, and a grandparent mentoring group) and pays particular attention to any calls for service in the nearby vicinity.

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

As a result of implementing the TAPS program, which began on June 16, 2014, the El Paso County Sheriff's Office deputies have seen progress with the high school students who were referred to us by the Juvenile Justice Department. We have been able to develop a closer bond with students and see one another in a more positive light. The negative attitudes the students had the beginning of the program toward law enforcement has decreased significantly. Therefore, we are creating mutual respect, trust, opening communication and having a clear understanding of one another's roles. Many students who would have dropped out of high school are now able to catch up with their high school credits through this program. By doing this, we are affording them a better opportunity of curtailing their criminal behavior. We have exposed them to many positive cultural activities, such as visiting the art, archaeology, history, Ft. Bliss, Border Patrol, War Eagles Air, and Holocaust museums. They have also participated in a mountain hike; going to the planetarium; taking a jail tour; visiting Carlsbad Caverns and the El Paso Zoo; bowling; and touring of the University of Texas at El Paso.

Lessons learned through program implementation

Through an intense, structured curriculum, based on an intervention using a multifaceted approach, and with a dedicated team of mentors (the SROs), we were able to make a huge difference in the lives of 26 high risk juveniles, some of whom have been charged with assaults, drug possession, extreme truancy, and repeat juvenile offenses.

This academically studied evidence-based intervention, with community partners and support from the COPS Office, has allowed the sheriff's office and local school district to form a tighter relationship. The cohesive application of identifying and working with at-risk youth has proven to be a great asset to the traditional school year, preventing possible further violence and opening dialogue between law enforcement, schools, and at-risk youth.

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