



Successful Practices & Strategies

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Phoenix Police Department

Phoenix, Arizona

<https://www.phoenix.gov/police>

Community policing element

Community partnerships and problem solving

Problem/issue

School-based policing

Problem description

The Phoenix Police Department is presently focused on the furthering community-based policing through the schools by utilizing school resource officers (SRO) during the summer months when schools are not in session. The challenge is deploying current SROs during the summer recess to continue youth-based community engagement and law enforcement.

Community policing strategies implemented

During the 2014 summer break period for schools in the city, the Phoenix Police Department's School Resource Officer program became actively involved in the Safe Summer Program. The Safe Summer Program is an educational and enforcement program where existing SROs are assigned to one of four details to focus on juvenile safety during the summer recess. The first component is a youth community engagement component focusing on educating juveniles to prevent youth violence through the Wake Up program. The Wake Up program was developed by the Phoenix Police Department to educate 6th–9th grade students on how to make appropriate life choices, avoid violence, and participate in community service projects. SROs worked in five Wake Up clubs from across the city for a period of seven weeks to lead Law Related Education programs and group activities. The second component focused on community education to deter juvenile crime. Ten SROs worked with community partners to deliver educational presentations to youth on topics ranging from drug use to youth violence. The SROs focused their efforts to work with community and business organizations such as the Arizona Science Center, Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Phoenix, and YMCA to deliver Law Related Education presentations in several locations across the city. The third component focused on enforcement of juvenile related crimes in the community. Eighteen officers are assigned to conduct proactive enforcement in areas of the city experiencing incidents of youth violence, as well as to proactively focus on youth drinking parties and gang activities. The 18 SROs coordinated with the Youth Alcohol Squad, the Gang Unit, and patrol officers to conduct proactive enforcement in the selected areas of the city. The final component focused on improving school safety by conducting school site evaluations for safety



and threat mitigation. Six SROs, working with the department's Homeland Defense Bureau, conducted 41 additional school site evaluations to increase the total number of schools receiving site evaluations to 184 participating schools.

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

The community engagement and education aspect of the program consisting of the Wake Up clubs and community engagement teams saw significant success in interacting and connecting with youths across the valley in a variety of venues. Engagement activities increased interaction with community members and enhanced partnerships between the Phoenix Police Department and several of the city's businesses and social service corporations. The Law Related Education program at the Arizona Science Center was so well received that the SROs were invited back to deliver additional educational presentations during the winter holiday break. The school site threat and vulnerability evaluations conducted during the summer helped to enhance school safety by providing feedback to school officials to reinforce the safe school environment.

Lessons learned through program implementation

The community engagement aspect of the program requires significant planning and coordination as we were dealing with several community partners across the city. The service delivery and scheduling challenges can be offset by starting the planning process several months prior to the summer recess period to include development of lesson plans, coordinating commitments from community partners, and scheduling officers to ensure the program is able to meet the needs and expectations of the community. As for the site evaluations, advance planning is required to coordinate with the schools requesting to receive site evaluations, as well as coordinating the necessary training and certifications for the officers that will be completing the site assessments. In addition, a single coordinator to lead the school site evaluation program should be identified to ensure appropriate scheduling and tracking of the evaluations.

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