



# Fact Sheet

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## Critical Response Technical Assistance Program

Providing technical assistance that is flexible to the changing needs of law enforcement agencies across the United States is paramount to the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office). As a result, the Critical Response Technical Assistance program was designed to provide targeted technical assistance to law enforcement agencies dealing with high-profile events, major incidents, or sensitive issues of varying need. While the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies may differ drastically from one jurisdiction to the next, if left unresolved they can create tension and stress for the law enforcement agency, its officers, and the community they serve.

**"We requested and welcomed this assessment from the [U.S.] Department of Justice COPS Office. The numerous recommendations they have made will only help us improve our department and the proud service we provide to our community."**

Shelley Zimmerman, Chief, San Diego Police Department

The purpose of this program is to provide rapid response technical assistance to law enforcement agencies dealing with specific issues in their department and community. The variety and intensity of technical assistance that could be provided can vary drastically based on the severity of the issue. Services ranging from peer-to-peer exchanges, in-depth review and analysis, and facilitated discussions are among the many tools that can be leveraged to address issues with national implications. Nonetheless, any assistance provided through the Critical Response program embraces community policing as a core fundamental philosophy for law enforcement agencies engaging their communities.

While each site has a specific goal based on the needs of the individual law enforcement agency, there are overarching program goals consistent with every site. The Critical Response program has the following aims:

- Institutionalize and operationalize community policing as a core fundamental philosophy for law enforcement agencies engaging their communities.
- Build community trust through positive community perception of law enforcement legitimacy and fairness.

Once a site has been selected to receive technical assistance through the Critical Response program, the law enforcement agency and the COPS Office identify the appropriate response and objectives of the assistance. Once the suitable form of technical assistance is determined, the COPS Office will release a report with lessons learned that may consist of data analysis and interviews with personnel at various levels in the law enforcement agency, municipal officials, and other community stakeholders on the topic identified. All reports are made public and shared with stakeholders. The Critical Response Technical Assistance program does not include post-report monitoring.

In 2013, the COPS Office delivered technical assistance through its Critical Response program to the Detroit (Michigan) Police Department (DPD) in response to the City of Detroit's bankruptcy filing. The COPS Office coordinated a peer-to-peer exchange between the DPD and the Chicago (Illinois) Police Department to allow DPD personnel to implement Chicago's crime-control strategies focused on gang violence reduction. In addition, the COPS Office assisted the Detroit Public Safety Foundation in identifying unique approaches and strategies for public and private funding opportunities.

In 2014, the COPS Office initiated critical response efforts in Ferguson, Missouri, and San Diego, California. In Ferguson, the COPS Office conducted an assessment of the law enforcement response to the mass demonstrations that took place following the shooting death of Michael Brown. A team of subject matter experts identified findings and provided lessons learned based on interviews, examinations of policy documents, media content analysis, and literature reviews. The COPS Office conducted a short-term assessment of police misconduct and provided technical assistance to the San Diego (California) Police Department. The goals of that assessment were to help identify the root cause of a series of incidents involving misconduct within the department and share lessons learned with law enforcement agencies across the country. In March 2015, the COPS Office released a national report summarizing the findings and delivering recommendations that impacted the San Diego Police Department and the broader law enforcement profession.

In 2015, the COPS Office provided critical response technical assistance in Tampa, Florida; Pasco, Washington; and New Orleans, Louisiana. The goals were to (1) help formalize those cities' community policing strategies across all levels of their police departments; (2) help improve their social media interaction with citizens; (3) provide "Coffee with a Cop" training, which incorporates elements of procedural justice and community policing to promote positive officer-citizen engagement, and (4) fund procedural justice training.