

Community Policing & Crime Reduction

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Public Trust

Public trust is critical for all law enforcement agencies, it refers to the idea that within the public lies the true power and future of a society or community; therefore, whatever *trust* the public places in its officials, that trust must be respected. Once trust is breached or eroded in a community, it is extremely hard to restore and many times instills a sense of fear of the police. A single incident of police abuse has long legs and travels far.

Actions that build Public Trust:

- Embracing the core principles of Community Policing, by developing partnerships and encouraging participation at every opportunity
- Transparency in investigations of complaints against police officers; timely information
- Fostering a culture that embraces empathy, dignity, respect, and hospitality by training and re-training officers
- Identifying the needs and unique challenges of vulnerable populations with a community, i.e., elderly, gay, youth, minorities, and non-English speaking publics.

Constitutional Policing

Recent incidents involving the police encounters have given rise to the national discussion of constitutional policing. Police agencies must always uphold the principles and mandates of constitutional law.

- Ensuring the rights of citizens to fair and impartial treatment is the cornerstone to effective community relations. Trust and cooperation are lost when police engage in unconstitutional and unprofessional conduct. Ensuring Citizen Review Boards are a part of the Disciplinary process promotes transparency and accountability.
- To violate constitutional laws in the commission of one's duty is the ultimate breach of trust, and cast a cloud over the agency as a whole. Constitutional Policing promotes a keen awareness of the civil liberties of people, and violations of such freedoms could mean civil and/or criminal prosecution of law enforcement personnel. Agencies that ensure regular refresher training in use of force and civil liberties tend to overcome community concerns with records of few incidents such violations.

Reengineering Community Policing

Over the last decade, Community Policing has taken on a new look and renewed vitality. While the core principles of Community Policing still exist, other elements of community engagement have enhanced the age old tradition towards more timely and effective problem solving.

- *Technological* advancements have afforded agencies the convenience of communicating through Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter, Neighborhood Next-door and other web based products.
- New generations of leaders in agencies across the country have seized the opportunity to implement new management initiatives aimed at revitalizing community policing programs, while maximizing crime fighting efforts.

- Among the latest solutions in problem solving is the CompStat concept. Today, reengineering community policing involves a new philosophy of police operations and management; hosting an accountability system involving the entire organization.

Defining Community Policing

As defined community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational 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 (COPS, U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). The Atlanta Police Department fully embraces this philosophy at every level. Recommended activities that have proven to promote a culture of Community Policing within our agency are:

*Citizens Police Academies *National Night Out *Town Hall Meetings *Junior Police Academies
 *Police Athletic Leagues *Community Clean-ups *Holiday Community Events
 *Open House Tours *GREAT Programs *Reading Programs *Explorer Programs
 *Atlanta’s Finest Annual 5K Run *Annual Crime is Toast Breakfast

- Effective Community Policing involves open communication with internal and external stakeholders who provide input and resources in collaboratively addressing community concerns, i.e., elected officials (state/local), neighborhood planning units (NPU), school systems, and churches. The community’s input in prioritizing police responses is key.
- Tactical Homicide Canvassing is a technique used by the APD that involves police personnel, community members, elected officials (state/local), and others in walking door to door and business to business to gather information regarding homicides that have occurred in the area. This tactic has been very beneficial in forging relationships and solving crimes.

Institutionalizing Community Policing

Community policing commentators and analysts agree that the endurance of community policing will depend upon the extent to which it becomes both philosophically and operationally integrated with routine police operations. Attaining buy-in at the highest levels of the organization is essential to cultivating an institutionalized culture of Community Policing. Recommendations to achieve a more saturated effect of community policing behavior throughout the organization include:

- Initiate an environmental scan of the organization to identify strengths & weaknesses
- Conduct regular leadership training with emphasis on contemporary Community Policing strategies
- Develop mission and vision statements that convey messages of inclusion and partnership
- Provide opportunities for officers to get up-close and personal with community members, to collectively reach solutions to crime problems
- Utilize language throughout the agency that represents to the public “Who We Are” i.e., *public servants, diversity, sensitive to “all” citizens’ concerns, regardless of race, national origin, sex, or economic status, focused on quality of life, inclusive in problem solving, and strategic in crime fighting.*

Effective Crime Reduction and Deployment Strategies

- Real-time crime analysis through *Predictive Policing* (PredPol) technology, knowing where crimes are trending and strategically deploying resources before they occur.
- Weekly COBRA (CompStat) meetings conducted with command staff to discuss crime fighting strategies, address resource needs, and identify crime trends to better make decisions regarding impending action plans.
- Video Integration Center (VIC) monitoring via city-wide camera network to address crime concerns and problem areas real-time. Through the VIC, APD officers have the ability to monitor 24/7 video feeds of both public and private sector cameras using state-of-the-art “smart” analytical software.
- Utilizing robust intelligence analysis techniques coupled with other crime data assist investigators and field personnel in identifying and apprehending suspects.
- Strategic deployment of discretionary units to target and saturate problematic areas to aggressively impact crime trends
- Implement City-wide Repeat Offender Program that includes the involvement of state and federal entities, i.e. judges, prosecutors, juvenile courts, referral/support agencies, schools, other public/ private sector stakeholders
- Require full engagement and ownership at the police beat level by patrol officers to readily recognize suspicious activity and individuals identified as repeat offenders
- Daily conference calls between Division Commanders and the Chief of Police create an open dialogue to address daily crime trends, promoting collaborative problem solving and sharing of resources to combat emerging concerns.
- Leading an agency that proactively engages citizens in crime fighting & problem solving as stakeholders with a vested interest in the well-being of its community members. For example, hosting community forums and focus groups to survey the concerns of the community.

Organizational Structure

- To operate effectively, police departments must have a highly structured chain of command, yet an environment that empowers thought and inclusion at all levels. While law enforcement agencies vary in size from small town departments to large city organizations, they share many common features. Although pyramid structures served as the common model for police agencies in earlier years, flattened or lateral structures have become more effective in distributing authority and accountability within the organization.
- As evidenced in recent incidents across the country, violence between police and the community can bring to light concerns in the demographic structure of a police department. Agencies should always reflect diversity and mirror the community in which they serve.

Building Systems Partnerships (Internal & External CJ System)

- The City of Atlanta Police Department’s foremost crime fighting tool is through state of the art technology at the Video Integration Center, an environment built on the very concept of strong partnerships with the business community and other private entities.

The system is an open platform allowing for existing video surveillance cameras owned by private business partners such as the Georgia Aquarium, GWCC, World of Coke, CNN Center, AmericasMart, Hartsfield Jackson International Airport and the CDC to be integrated and monitored at one central location.

- The Atlanta Police Department recommends robust and innovative collaborations such as its partnership with the Federal District Attorney's Office in the new Violent Repeat Offender Program. The violent repeat offender initiative, a unique collaboration between federal and local authorities, has led to numerous federal indictments. As in many jurisdictions a relatively small number of individuals are responsible for an inordinate amount of crime, APD is now focusing on the quality, not quantity, of these cases.
- The Atlanta Police Foundation (APF) was established in 2003 to provide vital support to the Mayor, the Chief of Police and the Atlanta Police Department. The organization is based on a public-private partnership model that has proven to be highly effective in the prevention and reduction of crime in other major cities. Since its inception, the APF has worked to secure and leverage private resources to fund high priority projects designed to enhance the City of Atlanta's ability to fight and prevent crime. The APF has also partnered with APD and other local stakeholders in a Repeat Offender Program, targeting youth offenders who need referral programs and structured monitoring to attain needed training promote positive behavior. An initiative of this nature requires a long-term commitment from all stakeholders involved.

Research on Best Practices

- Body Worn Cameras (BWC) – The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and the IACP have provided extensive research on the use of body worn cameras and the issues that may arise as a result of deploying the devices. Best Practice policies have been vetted within the Atlanta Police Department to ensure a seamless deployment of the devices in 2015. Other publishing's from research on this topic include the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the Rialto Police Department, and the Police Foundation.
- Narcan - The Atlanta Police Department has trained more than 100 Officers in the Zone 1 area of Atlanta in the use of Naloxone, commonly referred to as Narcan. Atlanta Police Officers will carry the nasal form of Narcan which is a drug that can reverse an opiate overdose instantly in cases where the overdose is apparent and medical help has not arrived yet. Police are often the first to arrive at the scene, and in many cases those first few minutes are key to saving a life. APD Commanders attending the APD Leadership Institute conducted research and examined best practices in the use of Narcan.
- Predictive Policing (PredPol) - Predictive policing tries to harness the power of information, geospatial technologies and evidence-based intervention models to reduce crime and improve public safety. This *two-pronged approach* — applying advanced analytics to various data sets, in conjunction with intervention models — can move law enforcement from reacting to crimes into the realm of predicting what and where something is likely to happen and deploying resources accordingly. This new way of

deploying field resources has proven effective in the Atlanta Police Department and in other similar urban areas.

Note: The Atlanta Police Department is examining the use of unmanned aerial vehicles as a potential use in the monitoring major events, crowd observation, and searching for lost or missing persons.

Tactical Operations

Effective tactical operations in today's police departments are an essential component in mitigating unusual occurrences such as active shooters, barricaded gunmen, explosive devices, and other challenges. These units provide a ready response to situations that are beyond the capabilities of normally equipped and trained Department personnel.

- Training and sustainment of essential skills is a main priority for the Tactical Operations units, such as SWAT, EOD and Helicopter personnel. Team members continuously attend training events and classes nationwide.
- Ensuring the latest technology is secured to further assist in the overall response during a crisis is key.
- Equipment such as explosive containment devices, aerial support, laser and radar equipment, weapons and other tactical gear should be evaluated annually and replaced
- Conducting a regular assessment of homeland security threats unique to the metro Atlanta areas critical infrastructure is a primary responsibility of the Atlanta Police Department.
- As the designated agency for coordinating response within the UASI footprint, knowledge of local and regional assets is important. Collaborative training such as table-top and full scale exercises, involving multiple jurisdictions is critical in a target-rich environment.