

Community Oriented Policing—a new twist to an established philosophy

Modern day community oriented policing has evolved from an original philosophy developed around 1829. Sir Robert Peel set forth his principles in policing:

“The police is the public and the public is the police. The police are the only members of the public who are paid to give full time attention to duties that are incumbent on every citizen in the interest of community welfare and existence.”

Community Oriented Policing (COP) is a philosophy that enhances the ability of police to work in communities with citizens to address social problems. Although crime prevention and the arresting of offenders are goals of community oriented policing, they also concentrate on solving on-going problems and improving the quality of life in communities. Law enforcement agencies and citizens learn together through education and public awareness. The community at large is given an important role in crime prevention.

Community Oriented Policing is proactive, solutions-based and community driven. It uses the SARA model of problem solving: **Scanning**, **Analysis**, **Response**, and **Assessment**. This model identifies and prioritizes problems through **scanning** multiple data sources, thoroughly **analyzing** the problem, formulating a **response** to the problem based on the results of the analysis, and **assessing** the impact of the response on the problem

The move toward adopting the principles of Community Oriented Policing in communities throughout the United States occurred gradually and were framed in the President's Commission on Criminal Justice findings in 1967. The Commission met as a result of the gradually climbing crime rates in the country and their recommendations stressed the combination of improved policing and community empowerment as some of the ways to reduce crime. Later, drug use and violence became more prevalent in communities and in the early 1990s even more innovative ways of addressing these issues were studied. Congress passed the Crime Act in 1994 which created the COPS Office to advance the principles of community oriented policing.



A Four-tiered Approach

Community Policing occurs when:

A law enforcement agency and law abiding citizens work together to do four things:

- Arrest Offenders—Community Oriented Policing is not soft on crime, but aims to arrest those who harm others and hold them accountable in ways that deter crime while maintaining consistency with societal values.
- Prevent Crime—through community resources and traditional law enforcement activities. Law enforcement and community members work together to ensure personal safety through activities such as exterior lighting, and dead bolts on doors and windows, but the community climate is enhanced through the collaboration of the police and the citizens. This collaboration allows the best use of community resources.
- Solve Ongoing Problems—community members and law enforcement can collaborate on pervasive problems, look at the symptoms and develop a comprehensive plan to eliminate them.
- Improve the Overall Quality of Life—police help communities organize into activities such as Neighborhood Watch, and neighborhood cleanups. These activities engage citizens in their neighborhoods and work toward a long term plan to address crime prevention. (*C.O.P. Times*, Fall 2000, Louisiana Community Policing Institute)

A philosophy—it is a different way of approaching community issues, looking to those citizens who reside in the communities as allies in making the communities safer and improving quality of life issue. It requires a different administrative style than traditional law enforcement, relying on feedback from the lower ranks and sometimes replacing sworn officers with civilians in certain clerical, technical and professional duties.

What it is



What it is not



A public relations program or a social work program, though elements of each are found in comprehensive community policing initiatives.

Promising Practices

- ◆ **LOUISIANA** established the Louisiana Community Policing Institute (LCPI) using federal Department of Justice funds. The LCPI has trained over 8,505 law enforcement and community members on various topics since 1997. A fourth year of funding incorporates the **Safe Communities Model**—five to fifteen communities will apply to become Safe Communities technical assistance sites. This concept is a comprehensive approach to Community Policing, Community Government, Community Renewal and Crime Prevention. The LCPI will continue to provide training and technical assistance to local communities (*C.O.P. Times*, Fall 2000, Louisiana Community Policing Institute)

- ◆ **COPS in Schools**— Community policing officers perform a variety of functions within the school including teaching crime prevention and substance-abuse classes, monitoring troubled students, and building respect between law enforcement and students. School Resource Officers (SROs) combine the functions of law enforcement and education. (*COPS Fact Sheet*, December 5, 2001)

- ◆ **New Haven, Connecticut**— the New Haven Department of Police Services and the Child Study Center at the Yale University School of Medicine have collaborated to address the psychological impact of family and community violence on children and families. Through the Child Development-Community Policing (CD-CP) program police officers and mental health professionals come together to provide each other with training and consultation and to provide direct interdisciplinary intervention for children who are victims, witnesses, or perpetrators of violent crimes. (*OVC Monograph*, June, 1999)

- ◆ **Florida Regional Community Policing Institute**, funded by federal COPS dollars, responded to increasing school violence by recognizing the need to develop preventative measures to address this issue. School Resource Officers from the Sheriff's Department and Pinellas County Safe and Drug Free Schools personnel worked together to develop a CD-ROM entitled "Aftermath: Lessons in School Safety" that was aimed at middle school children. Local school children acted in scenarios on the CD-ROM. This initiative was important in two ways: first it addresses an important problem and second, it is the result of collaboration among law enforcement, educational officials and local youth. (*COPS in Action website*)

Quotable Quotes

"Problem solving without partnerships risks overlooking the most pressing community concerns. This the partnership between police and the communities they service is essential for implementing a successful program in community policing." —*Chief Darrel Stephens, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, 2001*

"Community-based crime prevention is the ultimate goal and centerpiece of community-oriented policing."—*Jerome Skoolnick and David Bayley, 1988*

- ◆ **Boston, Massachusetts**— using federal COPS funds, The Boston Police Department created Peace—a program that partners the police with Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women's Service Groups, the District Attorney's office, the Public Health Commission, and several other community-based service providers. The project ensures that a coordinated response is available for victims who do not seek help immediately. This proactive approach brings together everyone involved, from the front line to city agencies, to link available services with victims of potential repeat offenders. (*COPS in Action, August 19, 1999*)

