The Effectiveness of Community Policing

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Abstract

Community policing is the newest terminology for law enforcement. It is a federally funded initiative. Built on the premise that everyone should be working to reduce the fear of crime. A glimpse at police departments across the nation who have implemented community policing, will reveal if there’s been any change, real or otherwise. Chicago and Detroit as well as many other cities have secured funds to implement this new phenomenon. This paper will review the feelings of the community as well as officers concerning this subject. The writer will examine surveys, Department of Justice reports as well as program evaluations. The major obstacle has always been getting people (police and community) to change from the way we have always done things to accepting new and innovative ideas.
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CHAPTER ONE: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Community policing has numerous definitions. The operational definition for this paper will define community policing as bringing police and citizens together to prevent crime and solve problems, emphasizing the prevention of crime rather than the traditional policing method of responding to crime after it happens.

Instituted in the 1990’s as a way to foster better relations between the police and community. Community policing became a popular term. This philosophy was seen as a way of reducing future crime problems. Federal funds provided substantial incentives and resources for police agencies to adopt this philosophy.

Background of the Problem

In 1994 the Detroit Police Department instituted community policing. A civilian deputy chief was hired and tasked with the responsibility for creating and implementing a community policing program in a department with over 4,500 employees. In an environment where people are resistant to change, having an outsider trying to implement change in the police department. This bright energetic, young man with the ability, but without the necessary support to get the job done, in 1997 the civilian deputy chief resigned. Since, his departure, a police commander, a police lieutenant and now another civilian deputy chief have overseen the community policing program in the department.

There are three essential elements for a successful program: a mutual respect and partnership between the police and community; a new approach to identify the problem as the best; and an opportunity for officers to devote increased attention to problem solving.¹

Recruiting employees to start this program was easy. The program initially effected less than one percent of the department. The officers involved were dedicated, and optimistic about the program. The officers received extensive training in the program. The issues of reorganization,

union concerns, apathy, not wanting to change from traditional would all come later. A major obstacle to implementation was getting people to change their way of thinking. Many officers did not view this program as police work.

Few residents were aware of the department’s community policing efforts or how to get involved. Many employees were uninformed or misinformed about community policing efforts and how the department was involved.

For some programs funding has ended. We were “competing with private industry as well as other law enforcement agencies for personnel.”

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this paper is to identify the goals and objectives of community policing in the Detroit Police Department. What needs to be done to educate the employees and the community about community policing? How can active cooperation between the police and community be elicited?

Statement of the Problem

The problem is that the community is not aware of community policing. A survey (appendix B) was conducted in 1998 in the city of Detroit and sixty percent of residents surveyed were not aware of the term nor that the police department was actively participating in the program. They had never heard of this program.

In addition, most employees hired prior to 1994 have received little or no community policing training. Newly hired police recruits and newly promoted candidates receive minimal training in the area. The only civilian employees that receive any community policing training are the emergency services operators (911 dispatchers).

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Despite the popularity of community policing most agencies have not changed their organizational structure. Has community policing truly been implemented if the police department has not changed? The relationship between the police department and the citizens hasn’t improved. The quality of life for the citizens hasn’t improved.

The Detroit Police Department as a whole has not embraced community policing. The department underwent a major reorganization in 1998. That reorganization was not focused on community policing, its focus was on narcotics enforcement. It is apparent that community policing is needed to address quality of life issues. One of the department’s goals is initiating an effective community policing program. How can this goal be achieved without an active plan? If we needed another indicator of addressing quality of life issues, an annual report that is distributed nationally, listing the safest cities, listed the city of Detroit as the most dangerous city in the United States based upon crime data.³

Debate about restructuring the boundaries of Detroit’s Ninth Police Precinct continues. When the department had the opportunity to embrace community policing, this is what occurred. The department had been involved in ongoing planning for the restructuring of the precinct for at least 2 years. They overlooked the fact, that the community was not involved in the process. Once criticized by the community groups, the department chose to proceed with implementation this year, rather than acknowledge that the citizen groups had a valid complaint. This was a major event in the department and the city. It was a mistake to ignore the community wants and needs. Although this action began as a response to the citizen’s complaints about service in the Ninth Precinct, they were not allowed to have any input into the solution. Our actions towards the community in this event were clearly from the traditional method that the police executives run the department, not the community.

Goals

1. To have a long term sustained impact on crime through community policing.

2. To form long term partnerships between police and residents, and businesses.
3. To change attitudes towards community policing.

Objectives

1. Address and reduce the fear about crime.
2. Raise awareness of community policing.
3. Educate the public about how to get involved with community policing.
4. Elicit citizen involvement in community policing.
5. Educate all employees about community policing.
7. Elicit active cooperation with employees and residents.

Definition

Trojanowicz defines community policing as:

Community policing is a philosophy and an organizational strategy that promotes a new partnership between people and their police. It is based on the premise that both the police and the community must work together as equal partners to identify, prioritize, and solve contemporary problems such as crime, drugs, fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and overall neighborhood decay, with the goal of improving the overall neighborhood decay, with the goal of improving the overall quality of life in the area.

Community Policing requires a department wide commitment from everyone, sworn, non-sworn, and civilian, to the community policing philosophy. It challenges all personnel to find ways to express this new philosophy in their jobs, thereby balancing the need to maintain an immediate and effective police response to individual crime incidents and emergencies with the goal of exploring new proactive initiatives aimed at solving problems before they occur or escalate.

Community policing rests on decentralizing and personalizing police service, so that line officers have the opportunity, freedom and mandate to focus on community
building and community based problem solving, so that each and every neighborhood can become a better and safer place in which to live and work.\textsuperscript{4}

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Literature review will include authors on community policing and a look at research and program evaluations. Next the focus will be on a sample survey conducted for the Detroit Police Department on crime and safety. Finally, a look at bulletins from the United States Department of Justice regarding approaches to community policing.

Community Policing Strategies

The basic idea behind community policing is that the community must be involved with police to solve problems. As simple as this may sound, police must accept the fact that the community has to be involved in the process from the beginning. The goal is to promote police community partnerships. Problem solving is new way of policing to address not only the causes of crime and the fear of crime but all quality of life issues in the community. The “we’ve always done it this way mentality, is still pervading policing to a large extent, may not only be an ineffective means of organizing and administering a police agency but may also be a costly squandering of valuable human and financial resources.”

Many authors list three areas of concern in implementing an effective community policing strategy: “1) the law enforcement administrators perceptions of community policing, 2) how administrators have implemented the principles and strategies of community oriented policing in their agencies, and 3) the skills administrators believe effective community police officers need.”

“The question then becomes are agencies truly implementing community oriented policing, or are they merely trying to obtain the available federal funding.” This is a valid concern. Because there is so much federal funding available for community policing, are we really responding to community needs or just to a financial need to fund hiring of officers?

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5 Peak 18.
7 Breci 16.
Concern over crime is a major issue for everyone. How best to address this and who has control is also an issue. To effectively address these guidelines for changing police service requires developing a long term strategic plan.  

**Detroit Police Department Sample Survey**

Wayne State University conducted a survey for the Detroit Police Department in 1998 (Appendix B). The survey received responses from 1213 residents. They were asked the following questions:

1. In general, how often do you see the police on patrol in your neighborhood?
2. How satisfied are you with the performance of your local police department?
4. How would you rate the relationship that the police have with residents in your neighborhood to solve local problems?

The results were that sixty-four percent of the residents indicated that they saw police on patrol at least once a day or more. Seventy-four percent of the citizens indicated that they were “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the police. Forty-six percent rated police-community relations as “very good” or “good”.

The residents were surveyed about their attitudes towards traditional policing and community policing. The results were as follows: fifty-two percent cited the need for more patrol officers. Seventy-nine percent strongly agreed that police needed to respond more quickly to calls for service. And forty-seven percent strongly agreed that police should concentrate more on catching criminals rather than working with the public. Seventy-eight percent would be willing to work with the police to solve neighborhood problems. Fifty-nine percent had never heard of the term ‘community policing’. Sixty-three percent did not think that community policing was being practiced in their neighborhood. Seventy-seven percent felt that citizens needed to take more responsibility through neighborhood groups in increasing safety. Sixty-seven percent strongly

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agreed that community oriented policing sounds like the direction all police would have to take to reduce drugs, gangs and crime within our neighborhoods.

Citizen participation in crime prevention was also surveyed. Over seventy-eight percent had not attended any meetings in the community in the past year where the issue was crime or improving safety. The same amount were not members of neighborhood or community groups.

The interesting point about the results of this survey is the fact that the residents surveyed were from the empowerment zone. The empowerment zone has three designated areas within the city of Detroit. There is federal funding designated strictly for the empowerment zone. One the empowerment zone’s guideline is to implement community policing. This program actually began in the city of Detroit in 1997, and is scheduled to be funded through the year 2004. Currently there is a community-based organization in each zone that has contracted with the police department to provide a community policing program in their area. These groups actively work with their police precinct to train residents and business owners about community policing. They conduct citizen/business academy to educate the community about the department and how to become involved. The community organization and police officers go out into the neighborhoods once a month, knocking on doors, talking to the residents. They are actively soliciting the community to become involved in addressing the quality of life issues that are important to that community. This is the trust building between community and police in action. From this activity, they’ve focused on auto theft prevention programs, personal safety training, drug raids, abandoned vehicles, environmental concerns, neighborhood and business watches, security surveys, graffiti and all other related issues.

The citizens who are involved with the program know their officers. They have asked for and received a bike patrol, as well as officers assigned to community policing. The community also knows the commanding officers at their precincts. They attend the monthly community meetings held at each precinct. The community has become involved in issues as manpower allocation, crime mapping. The police department is currently in the process of bringing the crime mapping program online throughout the department. It is anticipated that the program will be available to the public
in the near future. At this time, community members can request crime maps through the department’s Crime Analysis Unit. The drawback to this procedure is that it is labor intensive and time consuming.

It is expected that once the funding ends, community based organizations will continue to work with the police department. That the benefits accumulated from the years of close association will encourage the continuation of police-community relations. That the positive results from this program will help gain acceptance of community policing throughout the police department.

**Community Policing in Chicago**

Chicago began its community policing program in 1993. The city aggressively markets community policing. “A survey indicated that awareness levels increased from fifty-three percent to seventy-nine percent of adults are aware of community policing efforts. Sixty-one percent are aware of the community meetings and twenty-eight percent attended at least one meeting in the past year. Participants attend an average of four meetings per year. More than half of the residents contacted the police and eighty percent thought police were helpful and treated them politely and seventy percent were satisfied with the outcome. There is a joint citizen-police training program that provides training and education for citizens and incorporates this training into the department’s training. Citizens involved in training were more likely to get involved in problem solving.”

Computerized crime mapping and analysis is a key component of their program. Police officers can access this information to discover crime patterns, match crime trends with other events and conditions and ultimately develop prevention strategies through the use of ever developing technology. Chicago is planning to make this information available to the public via the Internet. This will allow residents access to create their own crime maps as well as obtain the top ten crime list. This information is important because it allows the resident to know what is occurring in his/her neighborhood or in an area that they may consider relocating. It is also a change from traditional

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10 Chicago Community Policing Evaluation 33.
policing in that it allows citizens access to information that departments previously declined to give. It also does not require the citizen to request this information from the department nor does it require an officer to obtain it. Thereby eliminating the need for additional personnel to perform desk or report duties.

Chicago has obviously made community policing a high priority program. “Chicago is one of the few cities attempting to substantive reform in the organization of its police. Other cities have confined community policing to a select group of volunteer officers and kept the experiment small, so it wouldn’t disrupt the larger organization.”

“Chicago budgeted $1.6 million for their media outreach program.” While there was no mention of what portion of the department’s budget was dedicated to community policing, it must be substantial given the level of commitment to advertising the program.

Chicago’s community policing plan appears to be working well. They are continuously moving forward in their efforts. “For patrol officers, community policing has become an essential way of life because the police department has left them no choice. The community has a high level of commitment to the program.”

The department has acknowledged that the program hasn’t been without its problems, but they are continuing to learn from them and rethink the strategies needed to improve police-community relations. The community appears to be actively involved with the department in providing direction to the program. Although, “diversity does not appear to be well represented.” They’ve also noted the important role that other city agencies play in making this program successful. Noting that citizen concerns are not always crime related.

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12 Chicago Community Policing Evaluation 14.

13 Eig 63.

14 Chicago Community Policing Evaluation. 114.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

I have chosen to compare Chicago, a major metropolitan city that has implemented community policing to Detroit. A major city is used to determine if this program can be implemented successfully in larger police departments. Chicago is considered to have one of the best examples of a community policing department. “After a two year pilot program in five neighborhoods, the program is up and running citywide, it is strongly backed by a well-entrenched mayor, and it is designed with a heavy emphasis on grassroots participation.” Chicago has a force of 13,500 police officers. Detroit has 4,234 officers.

There is a lot of information available about the results of Chicago program, which is very useful in evaluating the program. Looking at their set goals, implementation and achievement.

Is there a significant difference in results when a major implementation has been undertaken long-term solutions? Does the focus on developing practical strategies yield long-term solutions rather than short term fixes? Should maintenance be a part of strategic planning?

15 Eig, 61.
CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION/SUMMARY

Conclusion

It can be concluded that yes community policing can successfully be implemented in a major metropolitan police city such as Detroit. The Detroit Police Department has made some progress in the area of community policing, but there’s a long road ahead. We know that community policing requires the best efforts of everyone. This is the perfect opportunity to work with community based organizations to bring about positive changes. The department must recognize the mistakes that have been made and start supporting the program. One positive step towards expanding the program would be requiring long term commitment of officers assigned to community policing. Three years should be the minimum term to implement and establish a partnership with the community. This would allow the community time to learn their officer as well as time for the officer to learn community members.

Summary

Community policing has proven to be a worthwhile endeavor. We know what needs to be done to implement successful community policing program. Placing limitations on traditional policing. Using measuring levels of neighborhood safety and public satisfaction. Although police are still responsible for vigorous and impartial enforcement of the law and rapid response to serious crimes and life threatening emergencies community policing can become a department wide focus. Realizing that police alone cannot solve the problems of crime will go a long way towards achieving these goals.

Recommendation

The Detroit Police Department should complete its five-year strategic plan and work towards implementing it. Detroit must follow the example of Chicago and dedicate the necessary and appropriate funding for necessary resources: human and technical. Develop a training program that involves the executives of the department as well as the officers and supervisors. The training program must be an ongoing process such as a mandatory part of the annual in-service curriculum.
The time, hard work and dedication as well as all training and continually re-evaluation of the process.

Identify funding sources to bring needed technological resources into the department.

Reorganizing the department to put more officers in the community working towards the common goal encouraging department wide commitment. Require mandatory community policing participation. Develop job analysis and performance evaluations based on community policing.

Allow for officers to become creative, community based problem solvers. Reward officers for implementing new problem solving initiatives. The department has become so specialized that the numbers are spread out too thin. Involve the command officers, supervisors, police officers, citizens, unions and the civilians in this process.

Create a mechanism to collect, analyze and share information on crime to community. Providing crime data to public opens the way for communication. Also provide timely data ad analysis to patrol officers.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


