



Problem Solving Quarterly

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Reporting on innovations in problem-oriented policing.

Complex Crime: Contending with Crime in Public Housing

Three Strategies Employed by the District of Columbia Metropolitan

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Public housing communities provide a place for economically deprived people to live, and serve as transitional housing for people advancing toward independence. Public housing crime and disorder problems, however, create great challenges for law enforcement agencies. Such problems provide prime opportunities for implementing innovative problem-oriented policing (POP) strategies.

This article highlights one of the three successful POP initiatives implemented by managers of the Metropolitan Police Department of the District of Columbia (MPD). Each initiative focused on a major problem plaguing the District's public housing communities: drug dealers' dogs (primarily pit bulls) terrorizing residents, footwear strewn over power lines to commemorate slain gang members and the sale of small ziplock bags for packaging illegal drugs. The initiative highlighted in this article is Operation Bark & Bite, which focused on the first of the three problems listed above.

Public Housing in the District of Columbia

The District of Columbia is a dynamic city that is a symbol of freedom and democracy throughout the world. Not part

of any state, the city of Washington is a federal district, serving as the nation's capital and the seat of our government. The city's population stands at about 600,000, which increases threefold with the daily influx of workers and tourists. The District is also a center of both international and regional commerce and is home to vibrant neighborhoods, commercial corridors, museums, educational institutions and many other community elements. An integral part of the city's composition is its public housing communities, which house thousands of people striving for a better quality of life.

There are 55 public housing communities in the District of Columbia, consisting of 11,000 public housing units and nearly 20,000 authorized residents. Although no definite data exist, the number of actual occupants in public housing (including unauthorized residents) is much higher. In 1995, public housing in the District of Columbia was in crisis. Buildings were in a state of disrepair, crime was rampant and the city's public housing agency was perceived by many as ineffective. That same year, public housing advocates filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court citing the poor conditions of public housing in the District of Columbia. Accordingly, Federal Judge Stefan Grae placed the District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) in receivership; responsibility to operate the DCHA was temporarily transferred from the District government to judge Grae, who appointed a receiver for the agency.

David Gilmore, who was appointed as the receiver, created his own DCHA police force and negotiated with the MPD to create a 30-member Public Housing Division. The MPD Public Housing Division's mission was threefold: to work jointly with the District of Columbia Housing Authority Police Department (DCHAPD), to partner with the community to identify and address concerns affecting public housing residents, and to create innovative strategies addressing those concerns (Gilmore 2000). This spirit led to the initiation of problem-solving strategies in the city's public housing communities.

The Challenges and the Parameters

Many obstacles faced the leadership of the MPD Public Housing Division. As with any implementation of community and problem-oriented policing, one of the greatest challenges was convincing police officers of its benefits. Traditionally, many police officers resist change and actually oppose the community- and problem-oriented policing concept (Sewell 1999). In this case, however, the opportunity for success was ripe. The MPD Public Housing Division was a new unit without a formal "traditional policing" predisposition. Also, officers volunteered for assignment to the unit and were aware of the division's community- and problem-oriented policing perspective.

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Accordingly, MPD Public Housing Division management committed the unit to POP and utilization of the SARA problem-solving process.

Within this vision, management established 10 problem-solving operational parameters with which all the division's endeavors had to comply.

1. Partner with Community Stakeholders

Members of the MPD Public Housing Division actively sought opportunities to collaborate on POP projects by partnering with public housing community stakeholders. It is important to note that these stakeholders were not limited to residents—they included public and private organizations, government agencies and elected representatives at all levels.

2. Be Committed to Planning and Organization

To ensure success, the POP projects had to be well planned, organized and documented. MPD Public Housing Division management felt officers and community stakeholders wanted to be a part of an attainable, focused and organized initiative. They further believed a focus on organization would help the department document its strategic initiatives, increase cooperation and collaboration, and support aspects of other established parameters for success.

3. Collaborate on a Project with Short-Term Start and End Dates

MPD Public Housing Division management held that accomplishing several collaborative goals quickly would convince officers and community stakeholders of POP's viability. After these early successes, the division could turn to more advanced projects. Therefore, initial projects had to have specified time parameters with identified commencement and termination (or at least documented assessment) dates. MPD Public Housing Division management also sought to have individual projects completed within three months.

4. Initially Seek Inexpensive Projects

Budget concerns are always an issue in any law enforcement agency. In addition, police agency executives might be reluctant to commit a great deal of funds to an "unproven" concept. Accordingly, MPD Public Housing Division management focused on projects that would incur little or no expense beyond normal budgetary allotments. The strategy was to attain "quick successes" at little or no cost and demonstrate how financially effective POP could be. Ultimately, the goal was to create a compelling argument for additional funding by demonstrating POP's effectiveness.

5. Empower a Line Officer to Coordinate the Initiative

Empowerment of line officers is the key ingredient for success of any POP initiative (Swanson, Taylor and Territo 1993), and their support of the philosophy is essential. Therefore, MPD officers who brought forward ideas and suggestions for projects were designated as lead coordinators, empowered to facilitate all aspects of the POP project. MPD Public Housing Division managers gave officers authority to advance projects and held them responsible for conducting or participating in measures that line officers in the department had not previously handled. These included meetings with internal and external organization executives, attorneys and media representatives, as well as developing detailed operational plans.

6. Create an "Identity" for the Initiative

Uniting people under a common mission is an important part of success (Phillips 1993). Accordingly, MPD Public Housing Division managers felt it was important to establish "identities" for each POP project. Coupling an operational name with ideas and initiatives fostered a sense of purpose and created a rallying point for involved officers and stakeholders.

7. Check with the Lawyers

POP involves reassessing traditional incident-driven aspects of policing and fundamentally changes how police depart-

ments operate (Swanson, Taylor and Territo 1993). To assess potential liability issues of POP initiatives, MPD Public Housing Division managers consulted often with department and city attorneys.

8. Conduct Research and Gather Intelligence

Information is a core requirement for the success of any project (Scholtes 1988). MPD Public Housing Division officials committed to gathering and analyzing as much information as possible prior to taking any action in the response phase of a POP initiative. They collected information through traditional means (e.g., researching contemporary issues, legal requirements and municipal regulations) and from such nontraditional information sources as suspected drug dealers and gang members.

9. Compile an Operational Booklet

MPD Public Housing Division managers decided to document the POP efforts in operational booklets. Each booklet would serve as a guide for implementing similar projects and a summary of the efforts made to achieve the initiative's goals. Even if the project did not succeed, those efforts could be recognized.

10. Actively Market the Project

To raise both community confidence and internal police support of these projects, MPD Public Housing Division managers believed it was important to communicate the department's efforts to stakeholders. Management sought to focus media attention on the POP endeavors by leveraging each project's identity and operational booklet.

Operation Bark & Bite

Operation Bark & Bite was created in response to repeated complaints from public housing stakeholders. They alleged that drug dealers used dogs—primarily pit bulls—for intimidation and forced dogs to fight for gambling purposes. Additionally,

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stakeholders complained that animal waste and associated animal hygiene issues eroded their quality of life. Operation Bark & Bite was a collaborative problem-oriented effort to address this problem.

Scanning

MPD Officer Tijuana Johnson met with MPD Public Housing Division officials to report on public housing residents' complaints of intimidation by drug dealers with pit bulls. DCHA employees and officers assigned to other public housing sites echoed these complaints. Officer Johnson was designated as the lead coordinator to research this issue and formulate a POP initiative.

Analysis

Officer Johnson interviewed District of Columbia Animal Control officers, MPD Narcotics officers, DCHA employees and public housing residents to gauge the breadth of the problem. These efforts confirmed the allegations that 1) drug dealers used pit bulls for intimidation and gambling purposes, and 2) dog waste was creating a hygiene concern. Officer Johnson also learned there had been 76 police-involved shootings of dogs during the previous three years.

Officer Johnson then researched local municipal regulations and determined that persons improperly handling dogs were in violation of animal cruelty and animal licensing requirements. Moreover, Officer Johnson discovered that DCHA apartment leases prohibited animals on public housing property (except in housing projects designated for elderly or handicapped residents).

Through information supplied by public housing residents, Animal Control officers, MPD and DCHAPD officers, and Housing Authority employees, Officer Johnson identified the location of 250 dogs improperly kept on public housing property. Officer Johnson subsequently arranged a series of meetings with offi-

cial from the MPD Public Housing Division, DCHA, DCHAPD and the D.C. Animal Control Agency. During these strategy/analysis sessions, the MPD suggested removing dogs forcibly from the city's public housing communities.

Next, members from these agencies met with their respective agency attorneys and explored the project's legal ramifications. The strategy group also discussed stakeholder outreach initiatives (i.e., informing residents and the media about the process and results of the project).

Response

Operation Bark & Bite's ultimate goal was to reduce the number of animals used improperly on public housing property. The strategy to achieve this goal was twofold: seek voluntary compliance through education and forcibly impound animals when necessary.

In conjunction with attorneys from each involved agency, the DCHA sent letters to public housing residents warning they would be in violation of their lease if they kept animals on public housing property. Furthermore, the letters warned residents that the Animal Control would impound animals found on public housing property that were not in housing for the elderly or handicapped.

At first, police officers and Animal Control officers focused animal control efforts on public areas on and around public housing grounds. They issued citations and impounded animals for dog leash and licensing violations. The next step was the creation of Canine Removal Teams (CARTs), which worked together to remove animals from inside public housing buildings. Each CART comprised an MPD officer, a DCHAPD officer, a DCHA property manager and a DCHA maintenance engineer who maintained keys for access to apartments. Agency attorneys helped Officer Johnson designate specific roles for each CART member to ensure legal compliance. The CARTS targeted 18 public housing sites during a two-month period, based on the information gathered about the animals' location.

Officer Johnson recorded the entire POP project in a booklet entitled Operation Bark & Bite. Media outlets were contacted to publicize the initiative and further inform residents and other public housing stakeholders.

Assessment

During the assessment phase, the team examined the project's results. Media coverage far exceeded expectations, with extensive local, national and international interest in Operation Bark & Bite. The initiative also stirred controversy among animal rights activists and prompted debate over the right of pet ownership by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Some dog owners felt the MPD was unfairly targeting specific breeds of dogs; others felt people living in public housing should have the right to own pets.

During the analysis and planning meetings, Officer Johnson had in fact raised concerns that the project would hinder young people in public housing from interacting with animals. As a result, the Animal Control Agency agreed to host Youth Education about Animals classes at its headquarters, and police agreed to provide transportation and chaperones to the facility.

The CARTs visited public housing sites and impounded 16 animals, a figure far lower than expected. Intelligence reports indicated almost all of the 250 known dogs had been voluntarily removed from public housing properties. The combination of media exposure and animal impoundment appeared to be a strong deterrent and significantly reduced the number of animals in the city's public housing.

After the project ended, stakeholders expressed concern over how the team would maintain the reduction of the numbers of animals. Based on the decrease of known animals on public housing property, Operation Bark & Bite had to be scaled back and refocused. What was once a random, monthly process currently

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operates only as needed.

Operation Bark & Bite was a success. At little cost to taxpayers, this collaboration of public housing residents, housing officials, Animal Control officers, and police solved a community problem. Operation Bark & Bite is an example of how law enforcement can successfully facilitate a POP project.

Conclusion

Crime and disorder problems in public housing communities offer unique opportunities for innovative POP strategies. The District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department actively implemented such strategies to address community problems.

Adhering to operational parameters based on the POP philosophy, officers assigned to the MPD Public Housing Division addressed three quality-of-life problems within public housing communities. Though these problems were not necessarily the primary responsibility of police, the POP initiatives showed how police officers could help alleviate community troubles. By setting attainable goals and proper planning, units realized several quick successes that fostered a sense of confidence among police, residents and other public housing stakeholders.

Operation Bark & Bite serves as an example of the benefits of collaborative problem solving and problem-oriented policing. It is hoped that consideration of this initiative and the parameters established by the MPD Public Housing Division will help other police departments attain success by following the POP model,

The quality of life for residents of D.C. public housing has improved dramatically and crime has dropped since the Housing Authority was placed in receivership in 1995. POP strategies have contributed to this improvement.

*Editor's Note: This article is excerpted from the forthcoming book **Problem-Oriented Policing: Crime-Specific Problems, Critical Issues and Making POP Work, Volume III**, edited by Corina Sole Brito and Eugenia E. Gratto. This book will continue the series of books based on projects and issues discussed at PERF's annual International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference. The book will be released at the 2000 conference (See page II for conference details). Volumes I and II are available on-line at www.PoliceForum.org, or by calling toll-free 888.202.4563.*

Problem Solving Quarterly Submission Guidelines

PERF invites submissions of articles describing successful problem-solving projects. Articles should discuss the four phases of the effort:

1. **Scanning:** What was the problem? How and by whom was it identified?
2. **Analysis:** What methods, data and information sources were used to analyze the problem? What did the analysis reveal about the nature and extent of the problem? How was the community involved in analyzing the problem?
3. **Response:** What responses were considered? What responses were implemented, and how were they developed as a result of analysis? What was the goal of the response plan?
4. **Assessment:** What were the results? How were results evaluated, and for how long? Was the response goal accomplished? Are there any efforts underway to maintain or monitor the long-term results of the project?

Send submissions to

PERF
Problem Solving
Quarterly
1120 Conn_Ave. NW
Suite 930
Washington, DC
20036
Fax: (202) 466-7826
Email:
egravelly@policeforum.org

POP Training Sessions

sign up on in at www.PoliceForum.org for training. Collaborative Problem Solving or **Supervising Problem Solving** during the 2009 International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference!, Training registration information and the accompanying fee must be mailed separately from the general conference registration form and fee. Certificate of completion for these training programs will be issued at the end of the two-day training.

Collaborative-Problem Solving \$200 per person (includes materials): Provides officers and community members with an overview of the SARA model (including strategies for initiating and maintaining an effective, POP project) and strategies for successful community meetings.

Supervising Problem Solving \$200 per person (Includes materials): Provides supervisors with an overview of the SARA model and strategies for managing, *Wirt solvers and, overseeing operational barriers associated with the implementation of P~

Urban Institute Evolution of the COPS Office

The U.S. Justice Department's National Institute of Justice has recently released a report highlighting the successes and progress of the COPS Offices in its first four years. The Urban Institute (a non-partisan economic and social policy research group) was selected to conduct an independent process evaluation of the COPS program. In particular, the report found that:

- by May 1995, the COPS Office has provided for the funding of 10,000 officers or officer equivalents. The Institute estimated that by the year

2003, there would be an increase of street officer equivalents of between 62,700 to 83,900 full-time officers (net of attrition and other hiring).

The COPS office reports it has already exceeded the estimated lower limits set for 2002 that are suggested by the Institute and has nearly 70,000 more officers on the street at this time. The report also indicated the following:

- The COPS program "accelerated transition to locally defined versions

of community policing." Eighty-seven percent of the country is being served by a police agency engaged in community policing.

- Compared to other law enforcement grant programs, grantees found the COPS applications easier and were overwhelmingly pleased with the grant advisors.

- There was a high participation level by high-crime jurisdictions, with 50 percent of all COPS awards going to the 10 percent of police agencies

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where police embrace an inclusive and collaborative model or succumb to the illusory promise of solving crime and disorder problems through aggressive military-style repression. We have the example of the Soviet Union to show us that crime can be suppressed through such means—for a while. We may well continue to muddle along with policing mired in the middle, but not only are we missing a tremendous opportunity for positive change, each day that we fail to promote and encourage community policing adds to the risk that we will inherit the ugly alternative.

Perhaps for too long, the decision about whether community policing is or is not the future has been considered the exclusive province of the police. Federal, state and local governments have invested millions if not billions of taxpayer dollars in new personnel and training for departments willing to embrace community policing, but many agencies have been quicker to take the money than to implement real change. You would think that rank-and-file police would embrace an approach that makes their jobs demonstrably safer, and that offer them job enhancement, job enlargement and increased job satisfaction. But instead we see notorious cases where departments have abandoned community policing as a result of internal backlash. Even now, roughly 20 years after early community-policing experiments, only a relative handful of police agencies nationwide can be safely identified as

long-term success stories.

If people do indeed want to get the police they deserve, then the solution may be to do more to educate the entire community about what's in it for them. That's a tall order community policing fares poorly in a battle of 10-second sound bites. The philosophy and principles of community policing do not lend themselves to slick slogans. Too many people think that community policing is an officer on a bike or walking a beat, acting as a visible deterrent to crime in neighborhoods that most voters never see. In our short-attention-span culture, even the police who know better have often failed to get the real message across.

What the general public needs to know is that in the long run, everyone benefits when troubled communities require fewer resources and economic value returns to neighborhoods previously in decline. Parents in places like Columbine instinctively know that the problems of guns and violence in low-income, minority neighborhoods inevitably infect their more well-off communities as well. An approach that prevents problems spares future victims and eases the pressure on the rest of the expensive criminal justice system, so that it can focus on violent offenders who pose the most serious threat.

Those who have seen the power of community policing firsthand must tell the broader public the truth about what it takes for the police to provide equitable and effective police service. Those who tell

voters on one side of the political spectrum that all it takes is to pass tougher laws and arrest more bad guys too often pacify those voters. Meanwhile voters on the other side have been lulled into believing that more minority hiring and a citizens review board will do the trick.

The future we will inherit should not be decided by a coin flip between these two simplistic visions. Real solutions demand real changes. Those who know the checklist of changes that community policing demands must not only tell the community what it takes for meaningful reform, but they must find the courage to challenge the prevailing wisdom inside and outside the department when it is clear that the emperor is naked. The choice of whether or not community policing will be allowed to fulfill its potential will dictate the future, and the choice is ours to make. Which path will you choose?

Bonnie Bucqueroux is executive director of the new American Association for the Advancement of Community Oriented Policing and owner of policing.com. For almost a decade, she was associate director of the National Center for Community Policing at Michigan State University, under the leadership of the late Dr. Robert Tmjanowice. The views expressed here are hers and hers alone. Responses are welcome—please send them to Eugenia Gratto Gravely at egravely@policeforum.org.

EMPLOYMENT

Police Chief, Ann Arbor, Michigan— The City of Ann Arbor is seeking a proven professional for the position of police chief for its department of 198 officers and 55 civilians, and a budget of nearly \$20 million. Reporting to the city administrator, the successful applicant must possess strong communication, leadership, strategic thinking, and organizational and management skills. A commitment to community policing and diversity, and experience with a politically active and diverse citizenry, strong union environment and transitioning to new facilities is preferred.

A four-year college degree and a minimum of five years of command-level experience are required. An advanced degree is preferred.

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) (www.PoliceForum.org) is assisting the City with the selection process. The position will offer a competitive salary and a generous benefits package. You may find additional information at the following web sites: www.ainnabor.org, www.ci.ann-arbor.mi.us and www.amiarborchamber.org.

To apply, send a resume, listing five professional references and a one-page letter summarizing your qualifications by October

14, 2000. Apply to Police Executive Research Forum., Attn: Ann Arbor Search, 1120 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 930, Washington, DC 20036.

The City of Ann Arbor is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Police Chief, Lakeland, Florida— Lakeland has a council-manager form of government, with a 7-member council (City Commission), an elected mayor, and a city manager who hires and supervises the police chief. A full-service city with over 2,000 employees, the total operating budget this year is \$325 million.

The police department operates with 350 full-time (231 commissioned) and 27 part-time personnel, and a budget of more than \$20 million. With a new headquarters facility downtown; state-of-the-art dispatch and records management systems; full implementation of community-policing strategies; CALEA and state accreditation; active domestic violence, victim assistance and Weed and Seed programs; the department is a true law enforcement leader.

A Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and four years of command-level experience, or an equivalent

combination of education and experience, are required. A Master's degree is preferred. The successful candidate will demonstrate a record of innovation and creativity; the maintenance of good relations with all elements of the community; a friendly, outgoing personality and a sense of humor; and an ability to maintain and even enhance the standards set by his or her predecessors. The current chief is retiring after serving in the position for ten years.

The salary range is \$62,451 to \$91,808, depending on qualifications. A competitive fringe benefit package and relocation assistance is included.

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) (www.PoliceForum.org) is assisting the City with the selection process. You will find additional information at www.lpd.lakeland.net. To apply, send a resume, a list of five professional references and a one-page letter summarizing your qualifications by November 13, 2000 to Police Executive Research Forum, Attention: Lakeland Search, 1120 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 930, Washington, DC 20036

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with the highest number of murders in the years studied.

- ◆ The Institute describes the technology efforts under COPS More to be "perhaps the largest effort to bolster the development of law enforcement technology since the 1967 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice."

Among the questions addressed by the Urban Institute were the following:

- ◆ To what extent did the COPS office succeed in putting more officers on the street and change the nature of policing?

- ◆ Did the COPS grants take into consideration crime levels in recipient jurisdictions?
- ◆ What was the level of grantee satisfaction with the application and monitoring processes?
- ◆ Have grantees engaged in the targeted community-policing and problem-solving efforts?

For those of you interested in the full report, it is available from the NIJ website: www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij. A summary is also available from the web site as document NCJ 183644 as an August 2000 Research in Brief by Jeffrey A. Roth and Joseph F. Ryan.

In a September 7, 2000 statement by Thomas Frazier, Director of the COPS Office, Frazier stated, "The preliminary evaluation of the COPS office, completed by the Urban Institute, confirmed what chiefs, sheriffs, mayors and officers from across the country already know: the COPS program works... COPS has significantly increased the number of officers on the street, dramatically advanced community policing and helped make it America's predominant crime-fighting strategy, dramatically increased the infusion of federal funds to local enforcement for the purchase of new technologies, and provided top-notch customer service to our 12,000 grantees. We have met the goals set by our Congressional mandate, and have much to be proud of."

THE 11TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING CONFERENCE

December 2-5, 2000, San Diego Paradise Point Resort, San Diego, California, U.S.A.

This annual conference provides a forum in which problem-oriented policing practitioners and researchers share their knowledge of community problems and their experiences in responding to them. In 1999, well more than a thousand police officers and other interested individuals from the United States, Canada, Sweden, and the United Kingdom attended the conference.

Critical Current Issues

The conference program will highlight prominent internationally recognized researchers and practitioners presenting on critical issues of concern. Practitioners will give presentations of creative solutions to community problems and issues surrounding problem-oriented policing. Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing Award winners will present exemplary projects. Practitioners and researchers will also give presentations about the process of making POP work.

Topics will include

- ◆ Repeat Victimization
- ◆ Illegal Gun Markets
- ◆ Traffic

- ◆ Acquaintance Rape
- ◆ Technology and POP
- ◆ Clandestine Drug Labs
- ◆ Strategic Approaches to Community Safety
- ◆ Gangs
- ◆ CyberPOP
- ◆ Construction Site Theft

Who Should Attend

The conference is primarily for police engaged in innovative responses to common problems in their respective communities. The conference also meets the needs of researchers, government officials, and concerned community members.

Sponsors



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**Registration materials available
at the PERF website (www.PoliceForum.org)
or by calling 202/466-7820.**

Should you have any questions, contact the following individuals at 202-466-7820:

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Registration: | Rebecca Neuburger—Ext. 279 (rneuburger @ PoliceForum. org) |
| Herman Goldstein POP Award: | Jim Burack—Ext. 276 (jburack @PoliceForu m. org) |
| Panel Presentations: | Lisa Carroll—Ext. 229 (lcarroll @ PoliceForum.org) |
| Conference Coordinator: | Lisa Carroll—Ext. 229 (lcarroll @ PoliceForum.org) |
| Registration for. Additional Training Sessions: | Corina Sole Brito—Ext. 280 (cbrito @ PoliceForum.org) |

**This conference has
sold out for the past
five years. Please
register early to
ensure there is space
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**Note: A reservation is
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