





THE COMMUNITY PATROL OFFICER PROGRAM

## Problem-Solving Guide

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# PROBLEM SOLVING AND THE COMMUNITY PATROL OFFICER PROGRAM

## INTRODUCTION

The Community Patrol Officer Program is an effort by the New York City Police Department to assist local communities to deal more effectively with the problems of disorder and crime that adversely affect the quality of life experienced at the neighborhood level. As such, it is both a practical response to the needs of the people and a vehicle for adopting and spreading the principles of community and problem-solving policing throughout the agency.

For some, community policing is best understood as a set of philosophical principles that should inform the content and structure of policing. The proponents of the community policing philosophy recognize the importance of law and procedure in defining what the police should do and how they should do it. But they insist that the distinctive experiences, needs and norms of local communities should also influence the goals of policing, the conditions which it addresses, the services it delivers, the means used to deliver them, and the assessment of the adequacy of police service.

For others, the term community policing identifies a wide range of programs being implemented by major police departments throughout the country. Although these efforts differ from each other in major respects, the following operational and organizational principles appear to be more or less common to all:

- continuous assignment of police units to specific neighborhoods or beats;
- insistence that the unit develop and maintain a knowledge base regarding the problems, cultural characteristics and resources of the neighborhood;
- emphasis on the importance of the unit's reaching out to neighborhood residents and business people to assure them of the presence and concern of the police;
- use of formal or informal mechanisms to involve community people in identifying, analyzing and establishing priorities among local problems and in developing and implementing action plans for ameliorating them;
- delegation to the community police unit of responsibility for fashioning solutions to the crime and order maintenance problems of the neighborhood, and for encouraging the commitment of a variety of police and non-police resources to those solutions;

- emphasis on increasing information flow from the community to the police and on the use of that information by various elements of the police agency to make important arrests and to develop intelligence on illegal enterprises in the community; and
- sharing with representatives of the community accurate information on local crime problems and the results of on-going efforts to address them.

These principles are not new to American policing or to the New York City Police Department. Some of them have long been part of policing operations in small towns throughout the country and some were prevalent among major urban departments a couple of generations ago. These principles will be recognized, as well, by those familiar with the Neighborhood Police Team (NPT) programs in the NYPD and other large agencies during the early seventies. While those particular programs faded away for a variety of reasons, the principles of community policing have persisted and are more influential among police administrators and scholars today than ever before. There are several important reasons for this influence.

Research and reflection on the focus, organization and operations of urban policing during the sixties and seventies have yielded some useful lessons. It is clear that the police have a contribution to make toward the control of crime in the streets, but that contribution cannot be realized without the involvement of the people and other public and private agencies at the neighborhood level. While traditional forms of random preventive patrol have little impact on the volume of street crime, special patrol efforts targeted at particular crime problems occurring under specific conditions within confined neighborhoods can be quite productive. The flexible resources needed to implement such specially designed, local problem-solving strategies have been largely consumed by the apparent need to respond rapidly to the millions of calls-for-service received by the police annually. Yet we have only recently recognized that rapid response is necessary only with respect to genuine emergencies such as personal injuries, crimes in progress and officers in need of assistance. And it appears that a thoroughly mobilized patrol force moving rapidly from one call to the next loses contact with street conditions and with the concerns of the people they are to serve.

The 911 system, central dispatching, rapid response and the commitment of an ever increasing proportion of the patrol force to the calls-for-service function were all intended to help in the fight against street crime. Yet we now realize that the vast majority of the calls received are not related to conventional forms of street crime and do not require a rapid response. In fact, although the power of the police to intervene in various situations is usually clear in law or regulation, the bulk of police activity involves the provision of information and referral services, mediating disputes and preventing them from escalating into serious violence and helping to maintain some semblance of order in the streets. Moreover, the people who are most dependent on the police for such services are poor people living in neighborhoods that are often lacking in service resources and the organizations they need to improve the quality of life in the community.

Recent research shows clearly that the levels of fear and insecurity experienced by the people are influenced primarily by their perceptions of quality of life problems and general disorder in their immediate environs, rather than by the actual volume of street crimes occurring there. Moreover as Wilson and Kelling have argued in their now famous *Atlantic Monthly* article entitled, "Broken Windows," alleviating quality

of life problems at the neighborhood level will not only reduce citizen fear but may also reduce the actual volume of crime in the streets.

Given the personnel shortages of the last decade, and the enormous volume of calls received over the 911 system, the response to those calls consumed our patrol resources and left precinct commanders without the people and tools they need to address the street conditions that so aggravate the people they serve. CPOP is a reflection of the department's determination to reverse those developments and to actively assist people on the neighborhood level to maintain order and improve the quality of life on their streets.

In pursuit of that goal, CPOP gives the precinct commander a flexible resource for solving community problems. The program does not require a large commitment of resources or a significant restructuring of patrol operations. Instead, it relies on individual police officers assigned permanently to specific beats to function as a planner, problem-solver, community organizer and information link between the police and the residents of the beat. The officers assigned to each unit work with the assistance of and under the close supervision of a CPOP sergeant. Yet CPOP can help precinct commanders to make deployment decisions regarding all of the resources under their command. For those reasons, the commanders who have the program have welcomed enthusiastically the CPOs and the CPOs themselves experience a great deal of job satisfaction. In addition, the program has proven to be enormously popular with local officials, community organizations and neighborhood residents throughout the City.

Without problem solving as its foundation, CPOP makes little sense.

Intensive involvement with the residents and organizations in the beat, a pro-active, problem-solving approach to the priority problems found there and an effective integration of the CPOP operation with other units at the precinct and borough levels are the keys to a successful unit. This means, among other things, that the officers must operate with more discretion and under a more flexible, but probably more intensive, form of supervision than do RMP officers. It also means that some of the conventional indicators of productivity such as runs per tour, arrests made and summons issued are not particularly good measures of either officer or unit productivity. The number and kinds of arrests made and summonses issued should be dictated by the strategies which the CPO and his or her supervisor undertake to address the priority problems in the officer's beat. Moreover, the level of interaction between the officer and the residents of the beat, the organizational meetings attended, the assistance rendered to block associations, youth groups and self-help organizations, the utility of the information secured and passed on, and the reactions of the community to the officer's efforts, must become meaningful criteria in evaluating the performance of the CPO and the CPOP unit.

In short, CPOP differs from conventional patrol both conceptually and operationally. Those differences require adjustments in the department's procedures for supervising and assessing the work of patrol officers. Experience to date, indicates that such adjustments are being made in dozens of precincts across the City. The benefits are substantial—CPOP helps make the department a partner with the community in improving the quality of neighborhood life and can be used to inform and supplement the entire patrol operation.

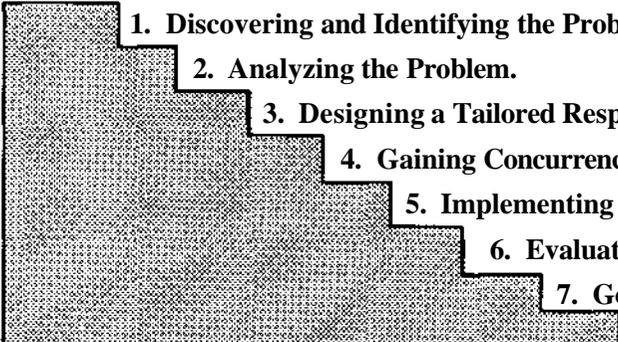
## CPOP AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Police agencies throughout the United States are becoming increasingly aware of the value of developing a problem solving approach to policing. Why this interest? Why has the New York City Police Department established the Community Patrol Officer Program and designed it to provide police officers with the time to identify and work on solving community problems? There are a number of reasons for this trend. Traditional patrol practices are reactive and incident driven. Routine patrol focuses on responding to calls-for-service and maximizing unit availability by closely monitoring response times. As a result, officers responding to 911 calls have little time to do other than make an arrest, take a report, or refer a complainant. This reactive, after the fact response, does nothing to identify the underlying problems which cause the incidents. As a result, the same situation may recur again, and again. This is one reason 911 calls have been growing at the rate of 10 per cent annually. Problem solving policing tries to look beyond the incident in an attempt to discover and correct the underlying problem which caused it. It allows the officer to design a corrective action which is tailored to the specific problem. If successful, problem solving policing can reduce the overall workload of the Police Department.

Another reason for the increasing interest in problem-oriented policing is the growth of research which demonstrates that there is a relationship between crime and quality of life conditions and the level of fear in a community. In addition, other research suggests that there are links between quality of life conditions and the level of crime in a community. If problem solving policing can identify and resolve the problems which underlie quality of life conditions in a community, it may impact significantly on both the level of crime and the fear of crime in that community.

Of all the functions of Community Patrol Officers, the most important, and the one which makes CPOP different from other Department deployment strategies, is problem solving. Without problem solving as its foundation, CPOP makes little sense. Police Officers assigned to RMP Cars can cover more territory than those on foot, can respond to calls for service faster, and are more easily supervised. What makes CPOP important to the Department and justifies the assignment of so many police officers to this form of patrol is the ability of a CPO to identify and correct problems at the community level. CPOP's continuing utility to the Police Department is dependent on the degree to which CPOs continue to effectively identify and resolve these problems.

As with other skills, some people seem to be better problem solvers than others. They seem to have an innate ability to get to the root of the problem and work out an effective solution. However, problem solvers are not born that way, they have learned either through experience or education how to attack a problem. Problem solving skills can be learned. There is a Problem Solving Process, which if followed, can assist anyone in coming up with better solutions to the problems they face. The steps in this process are:

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- 1. Discovering and Identifying the Problem.**
  - 2. Analyzing the Problem.**
  - 3. Designing a Tailored Response.**
  - 4. Gaining Concurrences for the Response.**
  - 5. Implementing the Response.**
  - 6. Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Response.**
  - 7. Going Through the Process Again, If Necessary.**

## DISCOVERING AND IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS

Sometimes problems come right up and bite you. Other times you have to sneak up on them before you can realize that it is a real problem that you're dealing with. In the simplest terms, a problem is anything that can have a negative effect on the community you are working in—something that causes harm to members of the community or is a potential source of disorder. Problems are generally a source of great concern to residents of the community, and they are not likely to go away unless something is done to correct them.

### 1. Learning about problems.

There are a wide variety of ways in which Community Patrol Officers can learn about problems in the community. Some of these are:

- a. Personal observation while on patrol.
- b. Talking to other police officers who work in the area, and members of the precinct staff.
- c. Reviewing Police Department records; not just 61s, but any record which can be used to identify or shed light on a problem. Communications (citizen complaints) received either directly at the precinct or referred through channels are a good source of information on matters which are perceived by the public as being important enough to write the police department about.
- d. Reading the local press. Local newspapers are major sources of information about problems in the community. Every CPOP Unit should subscribe to local newspapers, and all members of the Unit should be given a chance to read them, and not just for the "police" stories.
- e. Conducting crime analysis. Look for similarities in crime patterns, time distribution of crimes, locations, etc.
- f. Talking to representatives of other Government agencies, particularly members of the local Community Planning Board and the District Manager.
- g. Talking to representatives of local merchant's and civic organizations (Block Associations, Tenant Organizations, Churches, Synagogues, etc.)
- h. And perhaps the most important source of all, talking to the people who live and work in your Beat Area.

## 2. Learn more about the problem.

OK, so something has come to your attention; you saw something, someone told you something, or you read something. But is it really a Problem? Some things are, and some are not. A good deal of the time things will be fairly clear. The condition, incident, crime, whatever, will be significant enough to tell you right out, this is a problem, or at least the symptom of a problem. But other times you have to dig a bit to really make sure that it's a problem you are dealing with, and not just a random incident. And then you have to dig to make sure that it's the problem you are working on and not just one of its symptoms. What are some of the ways in which you can go about this? Let's take a look at a few.

- a. Using Police Records: Among the principal sources of information about problems in a Beat Area are the Complaint Reports. Each CPO receives a copy of each 61 reported in his beat area, and should review these on a daily basis. In addition to the information regarding the specific crime reported, 61s should be reviewed in an effort to determine crime patterns. What is important? Consider the following:

In the general scheme of things, 61s regarding lost property are not very informative nor important. However, when CPO Joseph Alanga of the 114th CPOP Unit began to get a large number of lost property reports concerning wallets lost from women's purses in the main shopping district of his beat, he began to doubt that there were that many careless women walking around. Alanga began to call the complainants and question them about their activities on the days when they lost their wallets. Putting together the bits and pieces of information obtained from the complainants, Alanga began to suspect that there was a pickpocket ring operating in the area. The following Saturday, he staked out the location where the majority of women remembered last having their wallets and—you guessed it, made a Grand Larceny collar, breaking up a pickpocket ring which had been operating in the area for some time.

- b. An Incident or a Problem? Every incident that is reported to you, either through a 61 or by way of a citizen's complaint, should be thoroughly reviewed. One of the first questions you have to ask is whether or not it is just an incident or a symptom of a problem. An incident is not necessarily a problem. It may be a one-time thing arising from circumstances not likely to recur. On the other hand, the incident, like the tip of the iceberg, may be symptomatic of a larger problem. What is important is that you begin to look for other incidents which may be similar to or connected to the current one, and which may indicate an underlying problem.

### 3. Verify the Problem.

You've learned something about the problem, now what do you do? One thing you should consider before setting about analyzing it, is to attempt to verify what you have learned from other sources. What is the community perception of the problem? Do a lot of people view it as a problem, or are you dealing with someone's pet peeve? Who else can contribute to what you have learned already? What other records can you go to for more information? Has the precinct ever dealt with this problem before? If so, how? Check all of your sources for additional information and verification.

While we're mentioning pet peeves, we should note that there is nothing wrong with trying to help one citizen deal with something that is a problem to him or her, even though it seems that no one else is concerned about it. The important thing is to make sure that you're not getting involved with some kind of a personal feud, and that you not commit the bulk of your time to unrelated conditions of concern to only one or a few residents in your beat.

### 4. Make Sure You Have Identified "The" Problem.

Analysis will sometimes reveal that what appears to be a single big problem is really a mixture of smaller, discrete problems, each of which may demand its own response. In analyzing information, you should attempt to capture both the big and small pictures, and then decide how to proceed.

Sometimes it is difficult to determine exactly what is the real problem. Very often we deal with results of a problem and have to dig deeper to find out what caused these results. In private industry, correct and specific problem identification is regarded as essential to effective solution development. It's no different in police work; if we develop a solution to a symptom, the real problem may never be dealt with. Consider the following:

CPO Vinny Esposito reviewed a 61 for a shooting which took place in his Beat Area. It occurred on a commercial strip which, over the past several years, has seen a large increase in the number of Asian-American businesses. From the details in the 61, Vinny learned that the shooter was a member of an Asian youth gang and the victim was a member of a White youth gang known to be active in local narcotics trafficking.

From these details, it was possible that the problem stemmed from:

- a. A turf battle between two rival youth gangs.
- b. An attempt by the Asian youth gang to take over drug trafficking in the area.
- c. A private grudge between the shooter and the victim.
- d. A move by the Asians to drive drugs out of the neighborhood.
- e. None of the above.



## PROBLEM ANALYSIS

Problem analysis is simply finding out what the problem is all about. It is important because problems differ in important details and these must be fully understood if a workable tailored solution is to be found.

Analysis is aimed at identifying and understanding the factors which give rise to the problem, contribute to its persistence, or prevent its correction. Once identified, all of these factors become potential targets for change as part of a strategy designed to correct the problem.

**Beginning the Problem Analysis Process:** Problems generally arise from the interaction of people. Someone does something which causes fear or actual harm to someone else. Sometimes the initial action causes a reaction from the person(s) affected by it. To begin to understand a problem, we must begin looking at who the actors are, what they do, how they react, and what the effects of these actions are.

### 1. Actors.

Some problems may only involve a few persons; others may involve whole communities. It is important to identify who is involved in a problem, and in what way.

- a. **Offenders:** While a problem may result from a physical condition (e.g., garbage accumulation), there is generally an offender, the person whose actions cause the harm or fear. Who are they? What are their primary characteristics? Why do they act as they do?
- b. **Victims:** Victims are the persons who are harmed by the actions of the offender. Who are they? What are their characteristics? Do they do anything which contributes to their vulnerability?
- c. **Third Parties:** In many situations there are other people involved. Some of them may be likely witnesses, supports for the victims, or supports for the offender. Who are they? How are they involved? What are their interests?

### 2. Actions.

Looking at what took place involves more than just focusing on what each of the actors did; it involves looking at the whole physical and social context of the incident or incidents.

- a. **Physical Settings:** What is the physical setting in which the incident or incidents took place? Are there environmental hazards which contribute to the problem (e.g., absence of street lighting, obstacles obstructing pedestrian visibility, abandoned buildings, etc.) Where do the incidents take place? Is there something connected to the locations which contribute to the incidents (environmental hazards, focal points of community activity, e.g., subway entrances, etc.)?

- b. **Social Context:** To what groups do the offenders and victims belong? Are they in conflict? What interests motivate the offenders? What actions of the victims contribute to their vulnerability?
- c. **Sequence of Events:** What actions constitute the problem: What do the offenders do? To whom? How? When? Why? Where? What is the sequence of events which produce the problem?
- d. **Results of Events:** What are the effects of the action? On whom? How do they react? Who else witnesses the action? How do the witnesses react?

### 3. Responses or Reactions.

How do persons or institutions react to the actions or problem?

- a. **Institutions:** How do public and private agencies (including the Police) view the problem? What have they done about it? With what results? What might they be interested in doing now?
- b. **Communities:** How do the residents of the neighborhood view the problem? What have they done about it? With what results? What might they be willing to do now?

### 4. How Serious is the Problem?

Is this a serious problem requiring a serious response? If not, why not? If it is serious, how can the community and relevant institutions be made to see its seriousness? If it is not a serious problem, what should be done about it? Is anyone aware of the "total cost" of the problem to society? Concern and cooperation can sometimes be gained if people are made aware of what the problem really costs them, both monetarily and in indirect non-monetary terms.

#### Summary:

1. Problems are generally caused by people's actions affecting other people. (Although problems can result from, or be contributed to, by environmental hazards.)
2. There are generally three kinds of actors involved in a problem: the offenders, the victims, and third parties.
3. Problems take place in physical and social settings which may contribute to them, and which may be possible points of intervention in resolving them.
4. Problems generally result from a specific sequence of events which result in causing harm or fear in a community.

5. People and institutions respond to problems. Their response may either contribute to the problem or be useful in solving it.
6. And don't forget, get as much information as you can from a variety of sources. Don't be limited by traditional (canned) responses or traditional information sources. One source of valuable information that is often overlooked, are offenders themselves. Consider interviewing offenders about why they do what they do. You may need some non-police help in doing this, but then again, you may not.

With all of this in mind, let's take another look at the problem that Vinny Esposito tackled in his Beat Area.

1. Who were the actors?
  - a. The Offenders: Members of an Asian youth gang who were extorting money from Asian Merchants.
  - b. The Victims: Asian merchants.
  - c. Third Parties: Other merchants in the area; patrons of the affected businesses; neighborhood residents.
2. What were the actions?
  - a. Physical Settings: All of the extortion threats and the actions which accompanied them took place inside the affected business premises.
  - b. Social Context: The extortion of Asian merchants by Asian gangs is a cultural problem of long standing in Asian communities throughout the country. It relies on the reluctance of Asians to trust or confide in law enforcement agencies.
  - c. Sequence of Events: A group of youths enter a restaurant or other business establishment and cause a disturbance. The owner is approached by a gang member who informs him that he will have to pay for protection against such occurrences. Any reluctance is met with threats of continued disturbances or violence against the store owner or his family.
3. What were the responses to the problem by:
  - a. Persons: The merchants response was to pay the gang members and remain quiet.
  - b. Institutions: Despite the fact that the racket had been operating for some time, no complaints were made to the police, and there was no governmental response.



## DESIGNING RESPONSES

### 1. Objectives.

In designing a response to a community problem, several objectives must be kept in mind:

- a. The strategy chosen must go beyond the incident and address the underlying problem. Interim actions address incidents, solutions address problems.
- b. The strategy should be aimed at providing a long lasting solution to the problem.
- c. The solution should provide a substantial improvement for the residents of the community, reducing both harm to them and fear of future harm.
- d. The strategy should also be aimed at reducing police workload by eliminating the problem.

### 2. Types of Solutions.

- a. Eliminate the Problem~the best solution, but not always possible.
- b. Reduce the frequency of incidents arising from the problem.
- c. Reduce the harm to the public from such incidents.
- d. Improve the publics' perception of police handling of the problem. This is not an invitation to do a "P.R." job. Be honest with the people and let them know what the Department is trying to do about the problem. And remember, if you don't know the answer, don't make one up. Promise to get back to them, find out the answer, and get back to them.
- e. Clarify responsibility for the problem and advise the public.

### 3. Developing a Strategy to Solve the Problem.

In the sections on identifying and analyzing problems, you were told to gather information on a number of factors, identity of actors, physical settings, social context, sequence of events, results of events, responses to events, etc., as possible intervention points in designing a solution for the problem. Each should now be considered in developing a strategy to deal with the problem.

- a. Altering the Behavior of the Actors:
  - (1) Offenders: If you can get the offender to stop doing what he is doing, you have solved the problem. How you go about that

depends upon whether or not you are dealing with a serious criminal matter or an order maintenance problem. There are a wide range of options which can be tried. Among these are:

- (a) Enforcement: Very often the most effective means for changing the behavior of an offender is through enforcement—arrest or summons.
  - (b) Request for Compliance: For less serious problems, requests for compliance may be all that is necessary to solve the problem.
  - (c) Education: Where the offenders actions are the result of a lack of understanding of the effect of his actions on the community, education may be the answer.
  - (d) Providing Alternatives to Harmful Behavior. CPOs throughout the City have recognized the importance of attempting to provide meaningful alternatives to youth as a means of channeling their activity in positive directions. They have done this through the creation of recreational, educational, and counseling programs designed to deal with specific problems and needs in the communities they serve.
- (2) Victims: Altering victim behavior can be an effective way of reducing the harm caused by offenders' actions, and may reduce future victimization. Consideration should be given to:
- (a) Determining if the victim is doing something which contributes to his victimization-failing to take reasonable steps to protect himself or his possessions.
  - (b) Encouraging the victim to become involved in community programs aimed at improving neighborhood conditions.
  - (c) Encouraging the victim to adopt reasonable crime prevention measures: Become a Blockwatcher, enroll in Operation ID, secure a premises protection survey, furnish information to the police to assist in improving neighborhood conditions, etc.
- (3) Third Parties: Attempts at altering the behavior of third parties depend upon whether those persons may be viewed as potential allies of the persons affected by the harmful behavior, or supporters [directly or indirectly] of the offender.
- (a) Where third parties are witnesses to criminal activities, their cooperation and assistance as witnesses should be encouraged.
  - (b) Third parties who are indirectly affected by harmful behavior should be encouraged to take prudent steps to

avoid future victimization in much the same manner as victims. (See (2), (a) and (b), above.

- (c) In some instances, third parties may be helpful in controlling the behavior of offenders either because of their personal or legal relationship. If you can identify a person who exerts influence over the offender, such as a parent, spouse, clergyman, counselor, athletic coach, landlord, etc. that person may be able to assist in working with the offender to curb his harmful behavior.

b. Change Other Dimensions of the Problem:

- (1) Alter the physical setting. Some problems can be corrected by changing physical settings. One common example of this is to improve the crime resistance of homes and businesses through the installation of effective locks and alarm systems, improved lighting, etc. (target hardening). Consider the following:

When CPO Fred Dwyer was first assigned to his beat in the 49th Precinct he discovered that the nurses who worked evenings and nights in Calvary Hospital were very afraid of walking to public transportation because they had to walk through an unlit railroad underpass. He was told by the hospital administration that they had tried, without success, to have something done about it. Fred began to check it out. The underpass was part of the Conrail system and when Fred approached them, he was told that it was not their responsibility. So Fred dug a little and discovered a City Agency called the Bureau of Public Lighting. It took a few phone calls and a lot of perseverance, but finally the City responded and better than adequate lighting was installed, much to the delight of the nurses.

- (2) Change the Social Context: Problems can sometimes be addressed by changing the social context in which they take place. In our example of the Asian extortion racket, part of Vinny's initial approach to the problem was to make protection payoffs unacceptable to the merchants, despite both a cultural and historical acceptance of the practice. You can also see this approach in the efforts of some CPOP Units to create sports leagues to bring together youth from rival groups within the same precinct.
- (3) Change the Sequence of Events: Some problems can be eliminated or lessened by changing the sequence of the events which create the problem.

In one of the CPOP Units a three to four block area in the vicinity of three different schools became a major order maintenance problem for the CPO assigned to the Beat. Each day, as the three schools were simultaneously dismissed, the streets were flooded with hundreds of children causing chaos. Residents complained about the noise and the pushing and shoving of the youth. Store owners complained of shoplifting. What to do? The CPO met with the principals of the three schools and arranged to stagger dismissal times. The problem was substantially lessened.

- (4) **Change the Results of Events:** Problems can also be addressed by changing or altering the result of the events which cause them.

Examples of this can be seen in the efforts being made by many CPOs to reduce drug trafficking by taking the profit out of it. More than one CPO has arranged with citizens to inform him or her of the locations where the street dealers hide their stashes. Instead of attempting to make an arrest and be lost to the beat for the rest of the tour, these officers use the information to seize and voucher the stashes, thereby increasing the cost of doing business on that block.

#### 4. What Kinds of Solutions Can You Try to Develop?

The Community Patrol Officer program is only as limited as the imagination of the Sergeants and Police Officers in it. You are only limited by your imagination, department policy, and law. And remember, both policy and law can be changed if approached in a proper manner.

There are, however, types or categories of solutions which have been used in the past, both in New York and elsewhere, which may be considered when trying to formulate a plan of action. Some of these will be listed below. This list is not exhaustive, and is provided only to acquaint you with some possible approaches to think about when trying to solve a problem.

Before we look at these categories, there is one more thing to remember. Most problems respond to a combination of solutions. Don't limit your approach to any single tactic. Try to see how a number of different approaches can be combined to have a long lasting effect on the problem.

With all of that said, let's take a look at some types or categories of plans which you can consider when designing responses:

- a. **Identifying high-risk offenders, locations, or victims and targeting them for special attention.** This should look familiar to you, as it is the strategy employed in some of the Department's city-wide efforts to deal with significant problems. The targeting of career criminals by the Career Criminal Investigating Units and the use of Case Enhancement techniques on persons arrested for serious crimes are both examples of this tactic.

Where problem analysis discloses that there are specific individuals responsible for creating a disproportionate amount of problems in the community, or that some locations are the focus of

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Note: The material presented in the next three pages is paraphrased from an unpublished paper by Michael Scott, Legal Assistant to the Police Commissioner, City of New York, when he was engaged in providing research support to Professor Herman Goldstein. This material, more fully developed, will appear in a book being written by Professor Goldstein, with support from the Police Executive Research Forum.

activity which causes harm or disorder in the community, efforts targeted at incapacitating these individuals or at improving conditions at these locations might be part of the answer.

Part of the answer might also be to mobilize (the community in support of your efforts. This might take the form of having community residents correspond with the District Attorney's Office, or actually come to court in support of vigorous prosecution of local offenders. In the case of problem locations, community support might be effective in getting other City agencies involved in dealing with the problem through Code enforcement, etc.

- b. **Supporting existing relationships of social control as a means of influencing and controlling the behavior of persons responsible for creating problems.** Some persons may be in a strong position to influence the behavior of offenders. If the police can identify such persons, they may be able to shift the primary responsibility for the control of the problem away from the criminal justice system and back to those who have a longer lasting, more powerful relationship with those who are creating the problems.
- c. **Organizing and assisting the community to get directly involved in solving their problems.** The solutions to some problems are within the capacity of the community to carry out themselves. CPOs can play a critical role in helping citizens join together to work on a problem and in guiding them through the necessary steps.
- d. **Addressing directly social and economic conditions that may be contributing to problem behavior.** If the police can identify certain conditions in a neighborhood that seem to be precipitating problems to which the police will ultimately be called upon to respond, then perhaps the police themselves can head off future problems by working to change those conditions. This approach is reflected in the efforts of a number of CPOP Units that have instituted a wide variety of efforts to provide constructive activities for neighborhood youth.
- e. **Coordinating the police response with responses of other governmental agencies or encouraging other agencies to alter their responses.** Many problems which police confront are also partly the responsibility of several other governmental agencies. Schools, courts, prosecutors, health officials, corrections agencies, welfare bureaus, social service agencies, traffic engineering departments, and other governmental and quasi-governmental bodies share responsibilities for controlling antisocial behavior or at least have the capacity to help alleviate problems that come to the attention of the police.

With respect to some problems, it may be sufficient merely to inform the citizens of the availability of the services of other agencies. With others, however, the officer may want to go

beyond merely providing information to citizens by making specific referrals to appropriate agencies.

Many of the CPOP Units have adopted this approach by working closely with other agencies on a variety of problems. In a number of Units, CPOs are coordinating their drug enforcement activities with Housing Preservation and Development, seeking to have drug dealers evicted from city owned buildings, and in addition, are utilizing their network of contacts to help drug users get into treatment

- f. **Communicating with the public** The police can sometimes be effective in bringing a problem under control simply by conveying accurate information to the public about the nature of the problem or about ways in which the public can protect itself from the negative effects of the problem. This category of response encompasses at least five specific purposes for conveying information:

- (1) **Educating the public about the seriousness of a problem.** The public is not aware of every problem in their community that they should be. Some widespread but discreet problems have gone unacknowledged for many years. Such was true of the problems of child abuse, spousal abuse, and drunk driving until the relatively recent past. Other more localized problems can also go undetected by the majority of citizens but which call for greater attention.

Before the police can take action to deal with problems of these sorts, they first need to convince the citizenry that a problem does in fact exist. This must be accomplished by being specific about the consequences of the behavior or condition in question and not by sounding a general alarm that may later prove to be unsupported by any tangible evidence.

- (2) **Reducing exaggerated fears about perceived problems.** The reverse of the above situation is one in which the public overreacts to what it perceives is a serious threat to its safety or welfare. In this case, where analysis of the perceived problem discloses that no real problem exists, or that the public's perception of the problem is distorted, the police can effectively deal with the problem by informing the community of the reality of the situation.
- (3) **Conveying accurate information to the public to help them comply with the law or to resolve problems themselves.** At times the public, or more likely, certain segments of the public, either don't know what the law expects of them or, knowing what the law says, don't know precisely how to comply with it. This can result in the police spending inordinate amounts of time in enforcing minor regulations which might be prevented by the police educating citizens about specific regulations.

- (4) **Warning potential victims about their vulnerability and advising them about ways to protect themselves.** Educational campaigns, aimed at informing citizens about potential hazards, are an effective means of reducing victimization, particularly with respect to local problems. Such campaigns can take the form of posting warning signs in local businesses (as did the 5th Precinct CPOP Unit in warning shoppers in the Canal Street area about the sale of bogus gold jewelry by street hawkers), addressing community meetings, or seeking the cooperation of the local press (as did the 114th CPOP Unit in seeking to reduce the theft of expensive radios from parked cars).
  - (5) **Warning potential offenders that their behavior will be monitored and warning them about the consequences for that behavior.** This response seeks to enhance whatever general deterrence effects flow from enforcement efforts. It is only effective, however, if the warnings can be backed up by an enforcement capability that makes apprehension sufficiently certain.
- g. **Enforcing relevant laws intensively to address a particular problem.** Investigation, arrest, and prosecution can be directed either toward a single offender or toward a larger population of offenders. While strict enforcement seldom eradicates entire broad problems, that need not be the goal of police in every case. Depending on how a problem gets analyzed, the enforcement response may adequately correct part of the problem.
  - h. **Increasing rates of police intervention short of arrest or prosecution.** If the problem is such that many easily deterrable people are causing it, significant increases in police efforts to stop, educate, or warn offenders may significantly reduce the problem.
  - i. **Altering the physical environment to reduce the likelihood that problems will occur.** Strategies within this category may include making likely targets of crime less vulnerable; seeking to control behavior that, while not criminal, is nonetheless dangerous or disturbing; or attempting to enhance a sense of security by correcting conditions that either make people less safe or make them feel less safe.

## 5. Get Help in Developing a Solution.

Problem solving is not a one-person operation. Seek and get all the help you can. Among those who can be helpful are:

- a. **Other CPOP Unit Members:** CPOs should discuss the problems they are working on with the CPOP Supervisor and the other CPOs. Brainstorming sessions should be held on a regular basis.



- c. **Identify the Resources Needed to Make the Plan Work:** Get all the help that you can. There are a number of resources which a CPO should always consider in developing a problem-solving strategy. Sometimes all will not be available to him or her, but they should always be considered.
- (1) The most available resource is, of course, the CPO himself or herself. What is your role in implementing the strategy?
  - (2) The next most available resource is the rest of the CPOP team. What help is required from other CPOs in implementing the strategy?
  - (3) Precinct Resources: How can other precinct personnel—RMP Units, Anti-Crime, etc.—assist in implementing the strategy?
  - (4) Other Department Resources: What other Department Units can be of help in dealing with the problem? Can their help be obtained? Who will coordinate?
  - (5) Other City or Private Agencies.
  - (6) Community Organizations.
  - (7) Individual Citizens.
- d. **Develop a Timetable:** Determine how the plan is to be carried out—the order in which the activities need to be performed—and establish a timetable for its implementation.

## 8. Consider Alternate Plans.

Consider different ways of approaching the problem. Review each of these tentative plans in terms of its benefits and liabilities. Sometimes the best plan cannot be implemented either because it is not possible to get the resources necessary to carry it out, or for some other reason. Consider each, and then select the best option available to you.

## 9. Implement the Plan.

## 10. Think Big.

Don't be limited by traditional police responses. There is nothing wrong with enforcement as a tactic, but it has its limitations, and on some problems it just doesn't work. Be creative and go at the problem from several different directions.

Don't limit your response to one tactic. Think in the long term; if the initial strategy is successful in eliminating or reducing the problem, what else is necessary to keep from losing the benefits you have attained? How do you keep it from recurring?

*Summary:*

1. Set realistic goals and then objectives to get you to those goals.
2. Get help in developing a solution.
3. Develop a strategy to address the problem.
  - a. Alter the behavior of the actors
  - b. Change other dimensions of the problem
    - Alter the physical setting
    - Change the social context
    - Change the sequence of events
    - Change the results of events
4. Consider alternate plans and then select the most feasible
5. Develop a timetable for implementing the plan.
6. Implement the plan.

## GAINING CONCURRENCES FOR THE RESPONSE

Designing a response is one thing, getting people to do what is necessary to carry it out is something different. If a plan of action to address a specific problem requires the assistance of resources not under your direct control, it is essential to gain the concurrence of the persons who are in a position to commit these resources. Even when there are no resources involved, it is sometimes important to gain concurrences for a plan of action for other reasons. Understanding is one reason; it is important that people who will be affected by a plan of action to understand what is going on, even if they do not have a direct role in its implementation. Feedback is another reason. It is important to you to get feedback from relevant sources (community, other police officers, etc.) as you implement your plan of action. Unless these sources are aware of what you are doing you will not get the feedback necessary to evaluate your efforts and possibly make modifications to the plan as you go along.

### 1. Who Do You Go To?

Where you go to get agreement on participating in the plan of action depends on what resources you need to carry it out. Let's go down the resource list again and suggest who may be in a position to agree to your plan.

- a. The CPO: Where the plan of action depends solely on the CPO concerned, only the agreement of the CPOF supervisor is required. In gaining this, you should make sure that the supervisor fully understands what it is you want to do, what the commitment of your time is, and what actions you wish to carry out. In doing this, you not only get his input and approval, but you also lay the groundwork for your selection of tours, and his possibly running interference for you to prevent you from being diverted to some less important function.
- b. Other Members of the CPOP team: Where the plan calls for assistance from other members of the CPOP team, the CPOP Supervisor is again, the man or woman to see. Make sure he or she understands exactly what resources are necessary, for what period of time, and for what purposes. If the Unit Van plays any part in the plan, make sure he or she knows that too.
- c. Other Precinct Resources: Yep, you guessed it—the CPOP Supervisor again. If the plan calls for the assistance of other precinct resources—anti /crime personnel, TOP AC, conditions, community affairs, crime prevention, etc., the CPOP Supervisor is in the best position to get the Commanding Officer's approval and commitment, and the cooperation of the other supervisors concerned. If the plan merely calls for the RMPs or Foot Patrol Officers giving some extra attention to a location, you might speak to them yourself. However, even in this case if you really want the plan to work, talk to the supervisor and see if he will carry the ball with the other supervisors and perhaps even get the location listed on the rollcalls for special attention.
- d. Other Department Resources: By now you should be getting the idea—it's the CPOP Supervisor again. There is nothing to prevent you from reaching out and talking to personnel or supervisors

from other Department Units, but as far as formally getting their assistance, it's better left up to the supervisor and the Precinct Commander. Your role is important enough: you have to lay out the plan in detail, specify what assistance is needed, when, how, and with what end in mind. If you do that well, you enhance your chances of getting the help you need.

- e. **Other City or Private Agencies:** Here is where networking comes in—reaching out to find out who does what, and how, and if they don't, who you can call next. Don't be afraid of calling another agency. Begin at the level of execution (the workers) or their supervisors, and work your way up. Find out if they can do what it is you need done. Whose approval do they need? What's the process? Who has to be asked? Does it have to be in writing? Who has to sign the request? After you find all of this out, run it past the CPOP supervisor for his or her approval.

One good place to start when you need help from other public or private agencies is with the District Manager of the local Community Planning Board. District Managers are problem solvers, and their knowledge of city government and the private resources available to help the community is probably as extensive as you're going to find. Get their input, and when possible, their assistance.

- f. **Community Organizations:** The assistance of community organizations can be solicited in several ways. Community Patrol Officers should begin with those organizations with whom they have had prior contact. Where the CPO knows one of the officers of the organization, that person should be approached. If no officers are known, the CPO should begin with whomever he has had prior contact with, and through that person, attempt to reach the organization's leadership.

Where a CPO is aware of the existence of a Community Organization which may be helpful in the implementation of a plan to deal with a community problem, but with which he has had no prior contact, the officer should determine if other members of the Unit have established contacts with that organization. If not, the officer should determine if the precinct's Community Affairs Officer or Precinct Commander has a contact in the organization, and if so, attempt to schedule an appointment with an officer of the organization through that person. If no one in the precinct has had prior contact with the organization, the CPO should attempt to schedule an appointment with one of its officers.

## 2. What To Get Agreement To.

In attempting to gain concurrences for your plan of action, the persons or agencies approached should be fully briefed both on the general scope of the plan, and on their role in its implementation. To do this, it is important to:

- a. Review the objectives of the plan with them
- b. Focus on the kind of solution you are seeking:
  - (1) Eliminating the problem
  - (2) Reducing the frequency of incidents
  - (3) Reducing the harm from such incidents
- c. Outline in detail their role in the implementation
- d. Determine their ability and willingness to participate
- e. Establish a timetable for implementation
- f. Provide a mechanism for getting feedback as the plan is implemented

## IMPLEMENTING THE RESPONSE

If all of the steps leading up to implementation have been successfully completed, the plan should be implemented as scheduled. In doing this, several things should be kept in mind.

1. You should stick as closely as possible to the strategies which were agreed to in designing the plan and gaining concurrences for it.
2. Be flexible. If the initial strategies do not seem to be working, or if conditions change as a result of what you have done, don't be afraid to modify your response accordingly. However, keep in mind that if others are involved in the plan's implementation, keep them abreast of any changes in direction.
3. Provide for as much feedback as you can during the plan's implementation.
4. Keep records as you go along. Make entries in your Beat Book and activity log; keep a file of the 61s arising from the problem, etc.

## EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE RESPONSE

1. Evaluating the effectiveness of the response is an essential part of the problem solving process. Without evaluation, we can never be sure if the strategy we have implemented is having the desired effect, or indeed any effect on the problem.

2. What are we looking for?

Evaluation begins on the day that the strategy is implemented. Too soon for results? Perhaps so, but evaluation deals with more than just results. Information gathered for evaluation purposes can tell us:

- a. Is the solution being implemented? This is the first thing that we should be looking at. Has the plan been implemented as designed? Are other people who have committed to participate in the strategy doing their part?
- b. Do the initial results indicate a need to modify the plan of action?
- c. Do the initial results indicate the need to look for an entirely new solution?
- d. Does the plan appear to be working?

3. Developing Measures of Effectiveness.

To determine if the plan of action is having any effect in dealing with the problem, we must develop measures which show if the strategy is working or not. These measures should be designed to show:

- a. The effect of the strategy on the goals of the plan:
  - (1) Has the strategy eliminated the problem?
  - (2) Has the frequency of incidents been reduced?
  - (3) Has the harm from the incidents been reduced?
  - (4) Has the police handling of the problem been improved, and does the public perceive this?
- b. The effect of the strategy on the dimensions of the problem:
  - (1) What was the effect of the strategy on the actors:
    - (a) How were the victims affected by the strategy?
    - (b) How were the offenders affected by the strategy?
    - (c) How were third parties affected by the strategy?
  - (2) What was the effect of the strategy on the other dimensions of the problem?

- (a) If the strategy was designed to change the physical setting, did this occur? Was it effective in dealing with the problem?
  - (b) Was the social context changed? Was this effective in dealing with the problem?
  - (c) Did the sequence of events change? Was this effective in dealing with the problem?
  - (d) Did the result of the events change? Was this effective in dealing with the problem?
- c. The effect of the strategy on the institutions and organizations involved or concerned:
- (1) Did the resources committed to the implementation of the plan respond as required?
  - (2) How did the community respond to the implementation of the plan?
  - (3) How did institutions, public and private, respond to the implementation of the plan?
- d. Was the plan sufficient to deal with the problem?
- (1) Were sufficient resources devoted to the implementation of the plan?
  - (2) Were the components of the plan (the scheduled activities) done in the order needed for the plan to succeed?
  - (3) Was the plan really directed at the root problem (or problems) or just at the incidents produced by the problem?

#### 4. What Are Appropriate Measures for Determining the Effectiveness of the Plan?

There are a number of techniques which may be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a plan. All are designed to determine if the plan was effective in accomplishing its goals. Whichever method of evaluation is chosen, its underlying goal is to determine if anything has changed as a result of the implementation of the plan. Towards this end, you should gather and evaluate the same kinds of information which led to the identification of the plan in the first place.

- a. Your personal observations while on patrol. Has anything changed? Does the strategy seem to have alleviated or eliminated the problem?
- b. Talk to other police officers who work in the area, and members of the precinct staff. Do they have any information on the problem? Do they observe any change in its magnitude?

- c. Review Police Department records. Are there any changes in the number of incidents, their severity, their frequency, etc.?
  - d. Conduct crime analysis. Has the crime pattern changed—hours of occurrence, location, etc.?
  - e. Talk to representatives of other governmental agencies. Do they have new information on the problem? Has their perception of the problem changed?
  - f. Talk to representatives of local civic organizations (Block Associations, merchants' associations, etc.). Do they have new information on the problem? Has their perception of the problem changed?
  - g. Talk to the people who live and work on the Beat. What can they contribute to your understanding of the success or failure of the strategy?
5. **Keep in Mind That the Basic Purposes of Gathering This Information Are:**
- a. To determine the levels of success or failure of the plan.
  - b. To determine the reasons for the success or failure.
6. **Draw Conclusions From the Data You Have Gathered.**
- a. Did the plan succeed? If so:
    - (1) Make sure that the plan was implemented as designed. If it was, chances are that the solution worked, and you should continue monitoring the situation to prevent recurrence.
    - (2) If the problem was solved but you discover that the plan was not really implemented as designed, try to find out what really affected the problem so that you can use that information in the future for similar problems.
  - b. If the plan failed to impact on the problem, determine:
    - (1) Was the plan actually implemented as designed? If it was, it was not the answer and you should go back to problem analysis to determine a new approach.
    - (2) If the plan was not implemented as designed, try to find out why. Can it be implemented? If not, go back to problem analysis and work on developing a new solution.

**Summary:**

1. Plans must be evaluated to determine if they are working.
2. To evaluate effectiveness, appropriate measures must be developed.
3. Information relative to the measures decided on must be gathered from a variety of sources.
4. The results must be interpreted.

## BEGINNING AGAIN

Not every strategy designed to solve a problem will be successful. When evaluation discloses that the designed response was not totally successful in addressing the problem, the problem solving process should be begun anew.

1. Focus on what you have learned through experience and evaluation. Review what you did and what results those actions produced.
2. Is the original problem description valid? Did you identify the real problem or problems, or were you sidetracked by incidents resulting from the problem(s)? Would you still define the problem in the same terms, given what you have learned through attempting to deal with it? If not, how should the problem be redefined?
3. Go through problem analysis again. See if anything you learned changes the way in which you analyze the problem.
4. Design a new response. Review what you learned from the evaluation of your first plan and make necessary changes. If necessary, change your focus. If you can't make the problem go away entirely, what can you do to mitigate it?
5. Gain necessary concurrences for the new response.
6. Implement the new response.
7. Evaluate the new plan's effectiveness.
8. Begin again if necessary. Some problems are tough, but if you stick with them long enough there is probably something you can do to alleviate them.

## PROBLEM SOLVING—THE LONG VIEW ...AND THE LONGER VIEW

Problem solving, by its very nature, is a long range approach to dealing with the crime and order maintenance conditions facing a community and the police who serve it. It seeks to go beyond incidents to identify and correct the problems which are their cause. It is a proactive approach to policing which holds great promise for improving the quality of general police services.

In subscribing to this philosophy, the New York City Police Department, through its Community Patrol Officer Program, has sought to identify and correct or ameliorate a wide range of problems. In carrying out this mandate, individual Community Patrol Officers and entire CPOP teams have developed a wide range of strategies designed to deal with specific community problems. The majority of these strategies have been narrowly directed at achieving specific goals—the elimination or reduction in severity of problems of concern to local communities. Other strategies have been developed however, which take a longer view towards dealing with one of the most critical problems facing our communities—the care and nurturing of its youth.

CPOP Units sponsor sports leagues, drug awareness programs, child safety programs, youth counseling, bicycle registration, rap sessions, scouting troops, and a number of other youth oriented activities. Why this level of activity? Why are thousands of police hours being devoted to creating and maintaining programs for which there is no proven crime prevention payoff? Why do many CPOs and other police officers devote their own time to working with youth? One reason is because there is a need; a need caused by poverty, a genuine lack of opportunity, an absence of family stability, and a whole host of other socio-economic factors. A need which exists in every community in our city. A need which has resulted in CPOs using portions of their time and energy in attempting to address it. A need which has also resulted in the Police Department devoting substantial resources in attempting to address portions of it. (For example, SPECDA) There is, of course, a direct police objective for such activities, crime prevention. Regardless of the absence of scientific evidence to demonstrate that these various programs do indeed reduce delinquency, that is the hope. And there is after all, other kinds of evidence that these police efforts produce results. This is the evidence of personal experience and observation. CPOs throughout the city see much to encourage belief in the efficacy of these efforts. There are minor miracles out there. Youthful drug addicts who, with the help and encouragement of a CPO, have entered rehabilitation programs for the first time. Neighborhood youth who have not dropped out of school because a CPO linked them to a counseling service or helped get them an after school job. And the thousands of school children who never had the opportunity to know a police officer before and who now not only know their CPO, but also have begun to believe that cops really do care, and are there to help.

There are some who question the Police Department's involvement in these activities. But you can't tell that to CPOs, or to the personnel assigned to SPECDA, or to those other police officers who regularly give of their time and energy in attempting to help the youth in this city. You also cannot tell it to the Police Commissioner and the rest of his command staff, who not only encourage and support these activities, but who believe that they are the right thing to do even though they may not see any measurable results during their careers. It would be easy for a Police Commissioner, recognizing the relatively short tenure of a police chief in large American cities, to emphasize enforcement over prevention. To seize the immediate result rather than to invest

in the future. It would be understandable for a CPO or any other police officer to want to advance his or her career by amassing an impressive arrest record rather than by diverting some energy to try to help some young person make a better life for himself or herself. Programs of this type may not produce immediate results for large numbers of people, but they often have demonstrable effects on individual lives and may provide long-term benefits for large numbers of people exposed to them as youths. That they exist reflects the vision and dedication of all involved. They are your, and the Department's investment in the future; in our greatest resource, our children. We cannot always prove that something we do really makes a difference, but sometimes you just have to believe.