



Community Policing Problem Solving

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ACCURATE NATURE CODES

by Luwanna Stewart
Communication Dispatcher

PROBLEM: As a dispatcher of the St. Petersburg Police Department, I heard several officers, crime report workers and staff members complain about the inaccuracy of our present nature code system. Since the St. Petersburg Police Department is practicing and is committed to the community policing philosophy, I realized the significance of having accurate nature codes.

SOLUTION: As a result of this, I requested a printout from the Records Division of all reports that were written for a one (1) week period, February 21, 1994 through February 25, 1994.

After receiving the printouts I learned the following:

- During a one week period, February 21-25, 1994, 1,064 reports were written.
- Out of the 1,064 reports that were written, 360 of the nature codes **were changed** by an officer or dispatcher for this one week period.
- After taking the 1,064 actual written nature codes and dividing them by the 360 changed nature codes, it appeared that 33.8% of the nature codes were being changed by the officers and dispatchers.

- Out of 360 calls it appeared that another 4% of the calls were being changed by the follow-up officers, because the title of the call didn't fit the narrative.

In my research I learned that:

- Some of the officers do use the proper nature code.
- Some of the officers are not aware of the significance of assigning the proper nature code to a call.
- At times, some of the officers do not take the time to change the nature code because they are too busy.
- The supervisors are not fully aware of the problems.
- The dispatchers are not taking the time to inquire about the nature codes because they are often busy.
- The dispatchers are taking it for granted that the officers are making the proper changes on their reports.
- The Records Division and Criminal Investigations Section detectives are making the proper nature code changes. I also found detectives were changing reports without notifying the officers or Communications.

After learning about why the inaccuracy of the nature codes were being mistitled I suggested the following for a possible

solution:

Citizens - They can be educated in reference to crime reporting by the Crime Awareness Unit.

Police Officers - They can make sure that they advise the dispatcher of the proper nature code.

Dispatchers - They can make sure that they inquire about the proper nature code.

Detectives - They can make sure that a report assigned to him/her has the correct elements in the report to support the title that the officer has chosen.

Records Division - When they discover that a report has been mistitled they should bring it to the attention of the officer. Then if that doesn't work, possibly inform his/her sergeant.

Communications -The Communications Center should play a major role in this since they are the only ones that can issue an offense nature code. I feel that the two most productive people to work on this particular situation would be the dispatchers and the officers. The two are the cause of the problem, mainly because of a lack of communications and commitment. •

I found that the police have responded to the residence 13 times since January 1, 1990 and the area 18 times for calls related to activity coming from that location.

I met with zone units that work the area and we identified all of the juveniles that were hanging out at the residence. During the month of October 1994, I met with the homeowner. She stated that she was divorced and left to raise her two teenage sons alone and that she works during the day and doesn't get home until late in the evening. She advised that her two sons allow the neighborhood kids to hang out when she is not home.

The owner attempted to resolve the problem by disconnecting her phone and sending her youngest to live with his father. She stated that the problem continued because of her older son. She advised that over the summer no one was home and the problem still continued. I advised her of the police departments Blanket Trespass Warning, which she wanted for her property. She then had her sons give her a list of two friends that could visit the residence when she was not home. The authorized names were placed on the Blanket Trespass Warning and she advised her sons of the situation and they were responsible for making their friends aware of the Blanket Trespass Warning.

As of today the word has gotten out about the Blanket Trespass Warning and the neighborhood kids are no longer hanging out at 3868 Neptune Drive South East. •

GANG ACTIVITY

by Officer Terrell Skinner

Problem: This P.O.P. project is in reference to possible gang activity at 3858 Neptune Drive Southeast. I have received numerous complaints of approximately ten to twelve subjects hanging out at this residence being disorderly, committing criminal mischief, brawling, playing loud music, and selling narcotic. The complaints have come in from surrounding neighbors and juveniles in the area.

SOLUTION: I did an analysis of the residence and the crime tract that the residence is located.

HAVEN FOR NARCOTICS

By Sergeant Melanie Bevan

Problem: Repeated calls for service at the Driftwood Motel located at 1600 34th Street South, as well as the surrounding area. It was determined that the area was a haven for narcotic drug law violations as well as

prostitution activities. Displacement of the suspects did not offer a remedy, as they simply moved 8 blocks south to the Skyway Motel where the problem grew more severe, as the prostitutes continued to travel back and forth.

Solution: Several traditional methods of "cleaning up" the motels were utilized to include response by codes enforcement, fire inspectors and frank discussions with the management of the motels. The bulk of this legwork was conducted by Community Police Officer John Moseley. Meanwhile, Officers Vincent Trubilla and John Evans began targeting the dealers and prostitutes littering outside the motel. With the use of trespass warnings and surveillance, several violators were arrested as they traveled between the two locations. Fortunately, with the arrest of several key figures by officers Evans and Trubilla, coupled with a change in the motel management, the problems at the Driftwood were greatly reduced. In regards to the problems at the Skyway Motel, a rarely utilized techniques such as "knock and talk" and directed surveillance were utilized by Officers Evans, Turbiila, and Sergeant Bevan, with phenomenal results. In a two week period over 15 people were arrested for a plethora of felony violations. The motel owners, aggravated by both constant police presence as well as the obvious criminal activity occurring at the motel, closed the motel and put it up for sale.

To date, the Driftwood Motel has changed ownership to Father Armand Lemieus who runs a strictly supervised home for homeless persons. He chose this location only after learning how well the police had cleaned up the motel. Without the combined efforts of Officers Mosley, Trubilla, Evans and Sergeant Bevan, the problem could not have been solved. •

DRUGS ON 24TH STREET

by Officer Byron Merlin

Problem: This is in reference to 3rd Avenue South, 24th Street South, to 27th Street South. I took over the area a year ago. Drug activity on 3rd Avenue South was always and still is the major problem of the area. I identified the locations usually by common characteristics such as several people sitting or standing on a corner for long periods of time, day after day. Sometimes there are chairs left there and if you check the area you find small plastic baggies used to hold the narcotics.

Solution: First, I tried to get to know the dealers after the locations were identified in my CPA. In most cases the people in my area do not like the police and would refuse to talk to me. I would use crime analysis, going through FIR's and checking their address if I knew where they lived.

Next, I contacted Vice and Narcotics and we would team up a group of detectives and go through the areas attempting to buy drugs. In most cases I already knew the dealer so this was very successful. We try to do this once a week. If Vice can not make it, the other CPO's and I team up and we hit the areas looking for drug activity and trying to drive the dealers off the street.

The next step that I take is to find out how the rent is paid. In most cases the dealers are on federal assistance. If I make one drug buy off the property that is on federal assistance I am able to have their funds cut off and hopefully relocated outside my area.

3rd Avenue South is a known drug area as I work the area everyday. Sometimes it slows down and sometimes it is very bad. Community Policing has given me the means, time and the ability to work on the problem. I feel that it is making a difference and in time may be the

people in the neighborhood will get more involved and help push the drug dealers out.

For now I would have to classify this problem as on-going, but I do see that a difference is being made. •

JUVENILES FIGHTING

by Officer Frank Williams

PROBLEM: The Galaxy Lounge has in the past operated on Sunday nights giving juveniles from the ages of 12 to 17 the opportunity to go out and have a good time dancing, listening to the latest tunes or watching a local talent sing for them. The Family Affair Program, for which it is named, started at the Galaxy, then moved to the Enoch Davis Center, to the recreation center at James Park and now again back at the Galaxy Lounge.

The event coordinator has had his share of problems along the way with juveniles fighting or adult subjects coming to the event fraternizing with young female juveniles and this is creating a problem because most of the females are from the age of 8 to 18.

SOLUTION: In May 1994, I was approached by Johnny Robinson who is the event coordinator and he advised that he wanted to have things run differently this time, hopefully without any problems.

Robinson advised that he wanted the police involved and also more parents to attend because the program was designed for the entire family. I assisted Robinson with several ideas he had and I also set up a drug display and explained each drug, what the effect it would have on you and what will happen to a person if they have this drug on their person. I also spoke about guns, violence with youths in America and juveniles with guns.

Robinson also continued to have local talent

groups and soloist perform at the event voluntarily and also have talent shows so that the kids could get involved.

While I attended the event on Sunday nights during the summer months the children were having a good time and there had been no incidents reported because of the positive effect it was having on the children.

I was not able to attend the event for a couple weeks and severe problems began again. There were juveniles fighting at the event, juveniles were smoking marijuana inside the bathroom of Galaxy and there appeared to be narcotic activity outside the event.

Robinson then hired off duty officers at the event and I began to monitor the situation and give him feedback and suggestions of what he should allow at the event.

In September we had an incident of female juveniles fighting in the parking lot and 2 of the females were cut seriously during the fight. Robinson, his hired security company and I agreed to have a meeting about the incident and made more suggestions on what we needed to change so this type of incident would not occur again.

We decided to change the hours of the event and also have the parents that drop off their children be at the Galaxy 15 minutes prior to the event ending. Then we agreed to give trespass warnings to anyone who would attempt to come inside the event smelling of marijuana or alcohol and also any subjects that have been involved in fights. The last thing we agreed upon was to make subjects who were loitering in the parking lot move on or go inside the building where the event was being held.

So far these changes have worked well and the event is beginning to work smoothly once again due.