Proactive Alliance

Combining Policing and Counseling Psychology to Build Relationships and Community Engagement

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https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/31f33e89-b409-4235-91a4-7c1826a57d24/Proactive%20Alliance%20White%20Paper.pdf
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Molly Mastoras is a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in Virginia. She has worked as an assistant program director and probation counselor for the Fairfax County Juvenile & Domestic Relations District Court and as a social worker for the Fairfax County Office for Women and Arlington County Child Protective Services (CPS). Molly has worked extensively with survivors of sexual assault throughout her career, leading to the creation of Safe Night Active Bystander, a sexual assault prevention and intervention-training program. She developed the Proactive Alliance approach, which teaches police and enforcement agencies to develop a relationship-based strategy with the community using adapted counseling therapy concepts. She co-authored *Proactive Alliance: The Ethos of Broken Windows* published in IACP Police Chief Magazine and presented Proactive Alliance at the 2020 American Society of Evidenced-Based Policing (ASEBP) Conference. In 2021, Molly presented at the Law Enforcement and Public Health (LEPH) Conference and co-authored *Proactive Alliance: Combining Policing and Counselling Psychology* in the Journal of Community Safety and Well-Being with Dr. Charlotte Gill. Molly serves on the Board of Directors for the Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) and continues to work as a psychometrist and psychotherapist at a private practice in Northern Virginia.
Origin of Proactive Alliance

- Collaboration of two practitioners from psychology and law enforcement fields
- Arlington Restaurant Initiative (ARI)
Key Findings:

• Proactive problem-solving is necessary

• A high level of engagement from officers is effective

• Bar and restaurant staff need training and policies
University of Virginia

- ARI decreased alcohol related crimes between 9pm – 3am
- Recommendation that ARI continue, citing a sharp decrease in alcohol related crimes
The Challenge...

• Many evidence-based policing strategies rely on meaningful collaboration with the community

• How do police engage the community?
The Challenge...

• Prioritizing community engagement requires a shift in police duties, roles, and leadership

• Lack of organizational change and support can affect officer well-being
Proactive Alliance

Problem-Oriented Policing
Proactive Alliance
- Prioritizes individual relationships
- Public events to elicit community concerns
- Focuses on citizens that distrust or are reticent of police
- Commitment to collaboration with essential stakeholders

Community Policing
- Focuses on broad partnerships
- Public events to show “human side” of officers
- Engages community members who already like the police
- Problem-solving may not include vital stakeholders

“There is a feeling in the scholarly literature that to some extent it has been a buzzword rather than something that has been implemented. Because it is a philosophy or a set of principles rather than a defined model, we see a different level of engagement among police departments.”
- Dr. Charlotte Gill, Deputy Director, George Mason University Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy

https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/community-policing-efforts-success-failure
Proactive Alliance

• Uses collaborative preparation and prevention

• Teaches key concepts from clinical psychology and specific techniques adapted from counseling psychology.
Evidenced-Based Approaches

Proactive Alliance is a transtheoretical model that draws upon theory and research from clinical psychology and evidence-based approaches from counseling psychology to provide an additional set of tools for officers’ “duty belts.”
Goals

• Use fewer police resources with more effective outcomes

• Create safer neighborhoods by developing and maintaining individual relationships

• Promote collaboration with other municipal agencies to improve efficiency
Goals

- Inspire critical thinking and agency for problem solving
- Prioritize officer well-being and job satisfaction
- Modify officer perceptions of the community
- Specify types of accountability and initiate change in police culture
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

(Maslow, 1943)
Building meaningful collaboration across diverse communities

Harnesses police officers’ personalities to facilitate successful community engagement and crime prevention

Provides practical tools based on those used by mental health professionals
Community-Oriented Policing in New Haven, CT


Key Evaluation Findings:

• More positive attitudes about police and police performance

• Greater willingness to cooperate and comply with police

• Greater perceived legitimacy, confidence and warmth toward police
Key Evaluation Findings of CSP:

- **Relationship-based** partnership improves resident perceptions of safety
- Reduced dangerous conditions that fuel violent crime
- Not limited to gang violence, can also be used for other chronic issues such as homelessness
Key Recommendations:

• Strongly recommended: prioritize relationship-based, partnership policing

• Officers need comprehensive training to:
  
  ▪ Build effective relationships with individuals and community-based organizations
  
  ▪ Develop the specific skills necessary to build trust, including how to engage community members with long histories of mistrust of police
Police establish and maintain individual relationships with community members and collateral professionals with the purposeful goal of collaborative problem-solving and management of complex community issues.
Proactive Alliance helps officers to successfully initiate rapport and build lasting relationships with those who are challenging to engage.
Building Relationships

When maintaining lasting relationships, officers are immersed in the community rather than presiding over it.

In this context, when a problem arises the options for addressing it widen and police can “crowd source” and have access to new collaborative solutions.
Proactive Alliance is based on the notion that an individual officer’s “self,” authenticity, personality, and personal judgment, are assets.

Further, the officer’s self is considered a “tool of the trade” that needs care and protection, just as a duty weapon does.
An officer’s “self” is the most important tool in Proactive Alliance. Thus, teaching officers to understand and protect the “self” is crucial.
Protecting Self

Officers are taught the same methods as trained mental health professionals to manage and cope with emotional reactions and increase resilience, allowing for increased productivity, decreased stress, and improved emotional wellbeing.
Boundaries

The concept of interpersonal boundaries originates from Family Systems Theory which teaches the importance of self-differentiation: the ability to have convictions, principles, and reactions independent of a group.  


The Collaborative Perspective

In policing, as in counseling psychology, it is important to meet stakeholders where they are and not where they “should” or “could” be. Beginning from this point allows for a practical, goal-oriented problem solving approach.
Responsive Collaboration

Responsive Collaboration is grounded in the person-centered counseling approach developed by Carl Rogers.

Proactive Alliance adapts the Rogerian concept of Unconditional Positive Regard to the idea of relationship-based policing.

The Proactive Guardian

• Physical and emotional safety as co-equal priorities

• Prioritizing the needs of the community

• Deliberate Restraint
Officer Well-Being & Self Care

- Mental illness
- Being an informed mental health consumer
- Self-care
Proactive Alliance and Co-Workers

• Peer Supervision

• Bystander Intervention and understanding the Bystander Effect

Potential Benefits for Evidence-Based Policing

• Community support for policing initiatives
• Crime prevention
• Diversify problem-solving options
• Improve officer well-being
Proactive Alliance Relationship-Based Policing Has Been Recognized By:

- Center for Problem-Oriented Policing
- Global Law Enforcement & Public Health Association Inc.
- American Society of Evidence-Based Policing
- Law Enforcement Action Partnership
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
- Observatory of Public Sector Innovation
- National Sheriffs' Association
- SafeNight