

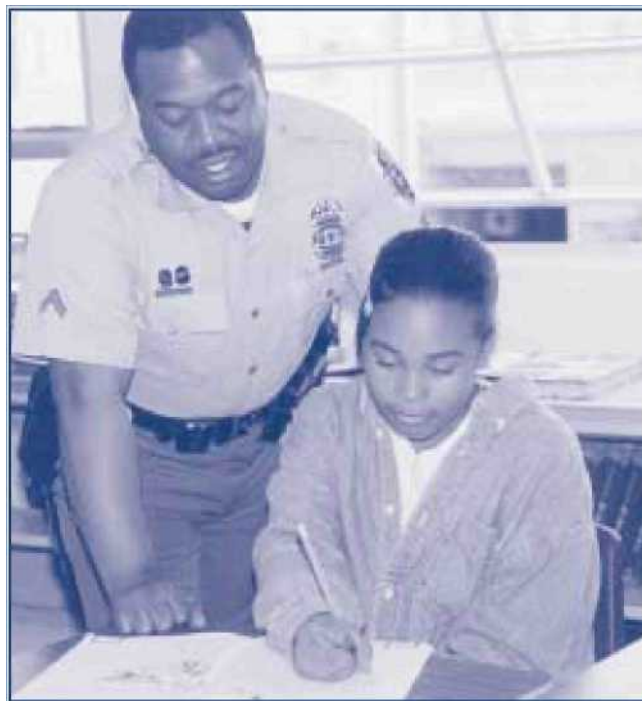


# ***COPS INNOVATIONS***

## **Addressing School-Related Crime and Disorder**

"When analyzing assaults in and around school grounds, one site reported "the principal, teachers, and parents who work at the school said that the children are sleep deprived, eat poorly at home, and come to school angry and resentful. This leads to assaults, "acting out", and disruptive behavior. Using these data, the school and police are developing responses that they hope will affect the community and schools directly."

SBP National Evaluation  
Draft Reports<sup>1</sup>



## **Interim Lessons from School-Based Problem-Solving Projects**

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## History and Purpose:

The COPS funded School-Based Partnerships (SBP) grant program<sup>2</sup> required law enforcement agencies to partner with schools to address crime and disorder problems in and around schools. Grantees utilized problem-solving techniques to better understand the causes of identified problems, apply analysis-driven responses, and evaluate their efforts. Ideally, to ensure manageable problem-solving projects, law enforcement agencies selected one focus school with which to partner and analyzed *one* of the following problem-types:

- Bullying/threat/intimidation;
- Drug dealing or use on school grounds including alcohol use and related problems;
- Problems experienced by students on the way to and from school;
- Assault/sexual assault;
- Vandalism/graffiti;
- Loitering and disorderly conduct directly related to crime or student safety;
- Disputes that pose a threat to student safety; and
- Larceny.

With the advancement of community policing, police have become comfortable with formalized problem-solving techniques. Although practitioners are more comfortable and supportive of problem-solving, the concept is still challenged by such activities as collecting and interpreting the meaning of data. Similarly, school-based problem-solving projects pose unique challenges because police and school practitioners have operated very differently (or independently) until recently. This unfamiliar territory coupled with unfamiliar tasks can be even more challenging than other problem-solving initiatives. As a result, we intend to inform police and school practitioners about what to expect when forming partnerships, explain why it is important to overcome challenges, identify sources of information that each other can share, as well as identify stakeholders that each can partner with to support school-based problem-solving projects.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Effective problem-solving requires the collection and interpretation of data to inform project participants about the nature of problems and to generate appropriate solutions. However, collecting data and conducting analysis continue to present challenges for practitioners attempting to analyze crime and disorder.

*Why is analysis so difficult?* Analysis is difficult because it involves activities that are often unfamiliar to both police and school practitioners as they attempt to tackle school or school-related public safety challenges. In order to effectively analyze a problem, practitioners should consider the following:

- Ask relevant questions about the victim(s), offender(s), and location(s) during problem analysis;
- Identify existing data sources for each question and gain access to those sources;
- Identify data needs and methods for gathering non-existent data (i.e., student surveys, focus groups); and,
- Integrate data and draw conclusions from it once collected.

These practices are fundamental to problem-solving and facilitate the process, and it is critical to ask the right analysis questions and implement a data collection strategy that builds upon the *analysis questions*. For example, a student survey that is intended to shed light on a bullying problem will be of limited utility if the questions asked are not tailored to inform the project participants about the nature of the problem, characteristics of people involved, and the locations where incidents of bullying are most prevalent. It is also important to limit the amount of data collected to those sources that are relevant to the project. Experience has demonstrated that the right combination of information sources that *answer* the critical analysis questions will help to formulate an accurate picture of the problem and facilitate appropriate response selection.

*"Due to minimal supervision and a large student ratio, places such as the hallways, cafeteria, parking lots, and student drop off/pick-up [spots] have high [assault] occurrence rates. . . . One site is considering staggering the release time of students by grade by 10-minute intervals to ease congestion in hopes of diminishing the opportunity for assaults to occur. "*

*SBP National Evaluation Draft Reports*

**There is no question that data collection can be a time consuming exercise.**

In order to make this a manageable task, it is important to take inventory of available data and determine additional data needs before developing surveys and other instruments. Knowing the types of data an agency can provide, knowing how to gain access to the data, and involving personnel with data analysis expertise improves this process. According to SBP grantees, the types of data the police agency and school can provide include:

<b>Schools:</b>	<b>Police Agencies:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demographics</li><li>• Suspensions</li><li>• Attendance</li><li>• GPA</li><li>• Enrollment</li><li>• Dropout Rates</li><li>• Challenges at home (counselor information)</li><li>• Medical records</li><li>• Behavioral records</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Calls for service</li><li>• Juvenile Citations/arrests</li><li>• Criminal History</li><li>• Incident reports</li><li>• Time required for a call</li><li>• Status offenders</li><li>• Repeat calls - specifically day time call rates</li></ul>

Surveys, interviews, focus groups, and physical assessments of the focus school can be conducted to generate information that is not available in police and/or school records. The right combination of these new and existing data sources can help capture pertinent information about victims, offenders, and locations- and help in defining the problem, its underlying characteristics, contributing factors, and in the application of appropriate remedies. Just as a doctor diagnoses a patient's illness before prescribing a remedy, police and school officials should carefully examine the various dimensions of a problem before intervening. More often than not, the extra steps taken to further analyze a problem lead to a successful intervention that targets the appropriate offending population, victim groups, and/or locations.

*"Over 75% of SBP grantees targeting the problem of disputes between students in and around schools identified the following data sources as most useful in the order of relevance: student surveys, incident reports, environmental surveys, suspension and expulsions data, literature reviews, calls for service, and field interviews."*

*SBP National Evaluation Draft Reports*

*Looking for technology to support school incident data collection and analysis? Check out [www.SchoolCOPSsoftware.com](http://www.SchoolCOPSsoftware.com) to order your free software package and manual today!*

## Successful Partnerships:

A primary objective of partnering is to share the burden of crime and/or disorder problems among partners and appropriate stakeholders. This objective is often accomplished through partnerships with non-police entities that support the problem-solving process in many ways. The most successful partnerships have **clear roles** among participants with **strategic goals** and **shared priorities**. Too many partners, internal or extra-organizational conflicts, competing priorities, and limited resources often challenge partnerships. Involving **the right partner at the right time** can reduce such challenges.

Through grantee progress reports and conference surveys, SBP grantees listed at least twenty potential partners involved in police-school partnerships, i.e. media services, neighborhood watch, churches, community centers, realtors, hospitals, and universities. Police indicated that certain partnerships were instrumental in developing a better understanding of problems in and around schools. These include:

- **Students**: provide excellent input regarding the problem and they also tend to be more successful at retrieving information. Grantees also indicated that students should be included in the decision making process.
- **School Administration and Faculty**: can assist in policy change as well as providing program support and organizing programs beneficial to the problem-solving effort.
- **Bus Drivers**: provided intelligence for police and school in addition to supporting programs and providing feedback on results.
- **School Support Personnel** (i.e., security staff, cafeteria workers, etc): can identify areas where problems occur most frequently.
- **Parents**: can complete surveys, provide support, and give insight on health issues (both physical and mental).
- **Local Businesses**: can provide intelligence, financial, and/or political support.

Successful partnerships require thoughtful consideration and mutual agreement about the roles, benefits, and points of involvement for each partner. Although generally helpful, partnerships may, at times, hinder the problem-solving process and must be continuously evaluated and modified according to evolving project needs. Similarly, every problem-solving activity may not require partner involvement. For instance, in some cases, partnerships might prove cumbersome during problem identification, but crucial during response development or another phase of the problem-solving process. Thus, the most effective partnerships are those that are appropriately planned and managed.

## **Other Helpful Tips:**

**Data accuracy and availability:** Project implementation delays are caused by students and school officials underreporting incidents, non-automated school data, data entry delays, procurement delays, and equipment implementation. Be sure to consider and prepare for each of these possibilities when developing project timelines and analysis plans.

**The School Year:** Recognize that problem-solving requires time and detailed planning. Several sites recommend planning for interruptions caused by school breaks and the summer prior to the assessment phase. Summer and school breaks inhibit the ability to collect data year round, shorten the data collection time frame, and interfere with partnership facilitation.

**Survey Implementation:** Before administering surveys, agencies should inquire about state and/or local legal requirements that govern the collection of information from youth populations. Local legal authorities and/or universities can be consulted for guidance in this area.

**Student Representation:** Many sites report the need for and advantages of involving students throughout the problem-solving process, particularly in data collection and response selection. If gaining student involvement appears difficult, or if there is overrepresentation of student types, agencies can involve students through official course work, such as civics classes or math classes, as well as through various school clubs.

### **Additional Resources:**

COPS funded problem-solving resources include the *School COP Problem Solving Manual*, *Tackling Crime and Other Public Safety Case Studies*, *Information Systems Technology Enhancement Project*, *the National Evaluation of the Problem-Solving Partnerships (PSP) Program*, *COPS Innovations: Including the Community for a Change*, and *Problem-Solving Tips*. These and other community policing resources can be downloaded from the COPS Office web site [www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov) or contact the U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 1-800-421-6770 to have a copy mailed to you.

In the months ahead, COPS will release a series of problem-solving related publications including **guides to analysis, assessment, bullying, and disorderly youth**.

### **End Notes:**

1. Through Cooperative Agreement number 1999-CK-WX-K005, the COPS Office funded 21st Century Solutions to conduct a National Evaluation of the School-Based Partnerships Program. Much of this information was collected from draft reports provided by 21st Century Solutions.
2. In Fiscal Years 1998 and 1999, COPS awarded 275 jurisdictions more than \$30 million for law enforcement to partner with school entities to address crime and disorder in and around schools. The School-Based Partnerships program is based on the problem-solving model SARA: Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment, and the majority of COPS funding was used for problem-analysis. All grantees were required to attend training in problem-analysis. The information in this document was gathered from grantee testimonies, grantee progress reports, COPS staff reports, and reports from the National Evaluator.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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To obtain details on COPS program, call the  
U.S. Department of Justice Response Center at 1.800.421.6770

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