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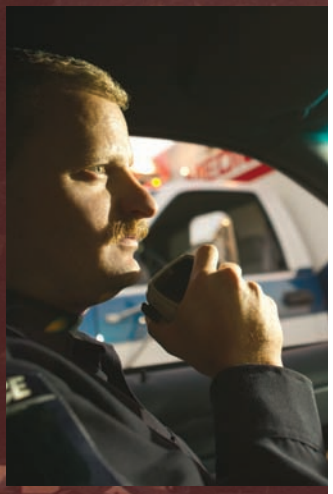
Effective Policing and Crime Prevention

A Problem-Oriented Guide for Mayors, City Managers, and County Executives

Joel B. Plant and Michael S. Scott

Center for
Problem-Oriented Policing



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The Internet references cited in this publication were valid as of April 2009. Given that URLs and web sites are in constant flux, neither the author nor the COPS Office can vouch for their current validity.

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Foreword

As a mayor, and a former police chief, finding and supporting effective and fair ways to reduce crime and improve community safety is a top priority. Too often, mayors and city managers hear from their police chief "we need more cops." No doubt, sometimes they are right but in many cases, the answer is not more, it is that police agencies rely too often on tactics that are heavily dependent on personnel rather than tactics that engage and require others in our community to reduce crime. For example, retail stores are in the best position to reduce shoplifting, apartment owners are in the best position to prevent burglary or drug dealing on their property, malls are the best situated to reduce auto theft from their parking lots, and bars and nightclubs can create crime havens or minimize offending opportunities. Holding these entities to account is less costly than providing the policing personnel to cover their defaults and an added benefit is it appropriately places the responsibility for crime control on those who have the most power, authority, and ability to reduce it. Otherwise, everyone else is subsidizing their defaults.

When we adopt this approach police chiefs fear they will be taken to task as not being 'business friendly.' We need to give our chiefs our support for approaches that are supported by analysis, evidence, and fairness. In that same regard, when our chiefs want to adopt zero tolerance practices against neighborhood communities, we need to express our concern because there is no fairness when all individuals in an area are regarded as criminals. As you know, policing, in this nation, is a complex endeavor. This brief guidebook steers us through the research on policing, the evidence of what works and what we should scrutinize more closely and offers up a series of *legitimate tools* the police have and a city and community can use to reduce crime and build public safety.

Jerry Sanders
Mayor
City of San Diego

Letter from the COPS Office

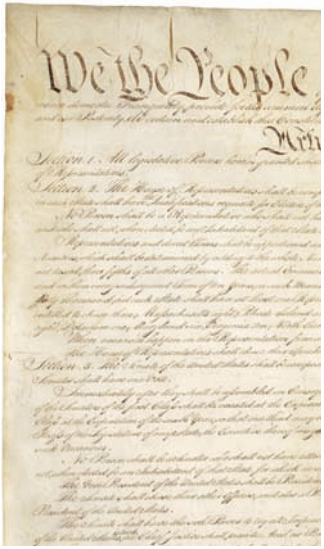
An essential role of local government is to ensure community safety. Elected and appointed local government officials who are held accountable for public safety need to understand how local government can effectively control and prevent common public safety problems. In addition to securing public safety for its own sake, a community's reputation for public safety heavily influences its appeal as a place to raise a family or open a business. Mayors, city and county managers, and council members have been instrumental in developing partnerships with the Federal Government and bringing home the resources needed to better protect their communities.

Community policing remains the strategy of choice for municipal and county executives who understand that policing is a shared responsibility and who are looking to strengthen partnerships, build respect and appreciation between police and communities, and implement effective crime-prevention initiatives. In fact, local government executives have a direct role in addressing crime and disorder in their communities through their ability to develop broad, collaborative partnerships among government agencies, businesses, and private citizens to implement effective public safety strategies.

Effective Policing and Crime Prevention: A Problem-Oriented Guide for Mayors, City Managers, and County Executives is the latest tool from the COPS Office and the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing that is specifically designed for city and county executives actively engaged in public safety. This guide reviews contemporary public safety strategies, from adopting a community policing approach to implementing specific responses to common public safety problems, and offers insight and recommendations on how local governments can work with police to address common public safety problems.

This guide is a companion to the *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* series produced by the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing and funded by the COPS Office. These *Guides* provide valuable information on how local police can more effectively address the multitude of public safety problems that they routinely confront. The COPS Office is proud to make this publication, along with an extensive library of resources, available to municipal leaders eager to learn from best practices and dutifully work to develop their own successful public safety strategies.

The COPS Office



Introduction

Establishing public safety is among local government's fundamental obligations to its citizens. The safety of one's person and security of one's property are widely viewed as basic human rights and are essential to the community's overall quality of life. When the citizenry is not, and does not feel, reasonably safe, other critical local government functions such as economic development, government finance, public education, stable housing, and basic local government services become that much more difficult to provide. In short, a community's reputation for public safety heavily influences its appeal as a place to raise a family or open a business.

If you are a mayor or county executive voters directly elected, or a city or county manager elected officials appointed, you hardly need a guide to remind you of this: your constituents do so regularly. And yet, notwithstanding much popular rhetoric about the nature of crime and what should be done about it, establishing real and perceived public safety is one of local government's more complex and challenging undertakings.

This guide is intended to help you as a local government executive better understand how local government in general, and local police in particular, can more effectively meet public safety challenges. The guide is a companion to several guides in a series known collectively as the *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police*, produced by the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing and published by the COPS Office. The three series—the *Problem-Specific Guides*, *Response Guides*, and *Problem-Solving Tools Guides*—represent a summary of the growing body of knowledge about how local police can more effectively address the multitude of specific and varied public safety problems that they routinely confront.

This guide does not directly address other aspects of the local police function, such as criminal investigation, emergency response, police integrity, or political accountability, although how the police carry out their crime-prevention function has profound implications for those matters as well.

As a local government executive, you are held accountable for public safety, and the perception thereof, in your community. In turn, you likely delegate to your local police agency the primary responsibility for public safety, at least that part of it that pertains to crime, nuisances, disorder, and traffic safety. The voters or other elected officials may hold you personally accountable for public safety and its perception regardless of your actual authority over your local function.[1] While you certainly should rely on your police executives to understand public safety and crime prevention in depth, you need to know enough to ensure that police and other local government functions are being carried out effectively, efficiently, and fairly.

This guide is deliberately brief because you are busy. It is not an exhaustive academic treatise about policing and crime control, but it is nonetheless based on solid research-based knowledge. The guide will do the following:

- Summarize what you should know about policing that directly affects public safety.
- Recommend how you as a local government executive can promote public safety and effective policing.
- Present some of what is known about how local government can effectively control and prevent some common public safety problems.

[1] Local government executives' legal authority over police operations varies considerably across the United States, with some executives having direct and complete supervisory control over police, others having partial supervisory control, and others having little more than political influence. Much of this guide pertains as well to the operations of sheriff's offices as it does to municipal police agencies, and the term "police" is intended to refer to both.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What Local Government Executives Should Know About Policing and Crime Prevention

The Police Function Is Much Broader Than Crime Control

Citizens largely think of police as crimefighters. Certainly, Hollywood plays up this image. They know that audiences won't be terribly interested in watching films and shows about police as service providers, traffic controllers, and conflict managers. Audiences want action and they want stories about the fight between good and evil. Police officers themselves like and perpetuate this crime-fighting self-image, even though they understand it represents but a partial truth about real policing. Real policing is, of course, at least partly about crime-fighting. But it is about much, much more, and it is inescapably complex.

In addition to dealing with such better-known crimes as murder, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, and theft—which combined comprise only about 10 percent of all police business—police are routinely expected to deal with other offenses such as drug dealing and prostitution; such nuisances as excessive noise and panhandling; and such safety hazards as traffic crashes and crowd control, to name but a few. By some counts, police routinely deal with hundreds of types of public safety problems, each one different from another, each calling for different and multifaceted responses.

Moreover, as the American Bar Association has stated so clearly below, the police have multiple objectives that sometimes must be balanced one against another. Police objectives include the following:

- Prevent and control conduct threatening to life and property, including serious crime.
- Aid crime victims and protect people in danger of physical harm.
- Protect constitutional guarantees, such as the right of free speech and assembly.

- Facilitate the movement of people and vehicles.
- Help those who cannot care for themselves, including the intoxicated, the addicted, the mentally ill, the physically disabled, the old, and the young.
- Resolve conflict between individuals, between groups, or between citizens and their government.
- Identify problems that have the potential for becoming more serious for individuals, the police, or the government.
- Create and maintain a feeling of community security.[2]

The police function's complexity may well frustrate some citizens—as well as some police and government officials—who desire simple and straightforward police action, but it is a fact of life in a democracy. The reasons why police might not be able to take certain popularly supported actions might be because police simultaneously are obliged to try to achieve other objectives.

For example, with regard to public demonstrations and gatherings, police must balance the right of the public to assemble with the need to ensure that other citizens can move about freely. With regard to investigating crime, police must balance the search for evidence against citizens' civil liberties. With regard to chronic inebriates on the street, police must balance the general public's interest in safety and order against an obligation to provide care for incapacitated people. And so forth. Much of police work entails balancing and prioritizing objectives.

These competing objectives should not paralyze police into inaction, but good policing demands that the various objectives be reconciled. As a local government executive, you can help the police by reminding citizens of these challenges.

[2] This slightly modified version of the ABA Standards on the Urban Police Function is adapted from Goldstein, Herman, *Policing a Free Society*, Ballinger Publishing Co., 1977. The original ABA Standards are available online at www.abanet.org/crimjust/standards/urbanpolice.html#1-2.2.

The Police Can and Should Do More Than Enforce the Law

In trying to achieve their multiple objectives, police have at their disposal a wide variety of tactics and strategies. Although many people think that the main way police achieve their public safety objectives is to enforce the law, in fact, police commonly do things other than just enforce the law. In most interactions with the public, police do not issue a citation or make an arrest. Indeed, even were it possible for police to fully enforce the law—which it is not—it is unlikely that most communities would tolerate such a thing. Sometimes strict law enforcement is neither fair nor effective; indeed, sometimes it is counterproductive to public safety, as, for instance, when it provokes such widespread public hostility as to engender even more widespread disorder and lawlessness.

Essential to fair and effective policing is the need to expand the range of viable alternatives to criminal law enforcement so that police have multiple tools from which to fashion effective responses to quite varied public safety problems.

Examples of alternatives to criminal law enforcement police commonly use to address particular public safety problems include the following:

- Mobilizing the community (as witnesses, to patrol the community, for advocacy)
- Requesting that citizens exercise informal social control over one another (e.g., parents over children, employers over employees, coaches over athletes, teachers over students, military commanders over soldiers, lenders over borrowers, landlords over tenants)
- Using mediation and negotiation skills to resolve disputes
- Conveying information (e.g., to reduce exaggerated fear, to generate public awareness, to elicit conformity with laws that are not known or understood, to show citizens how they contribute to problems and ways to avoid doing so, to educate the public about the limits of police authority, to build support for new approaches)

- Altering the physical environment to reduce opportunities for problems to occur
- Enforcing civil laws (e.g., nuisance abatement, injunctions, asset forfeiture)
- Recommending and enforcing special conditions of bail, probation, or parole
- Intervening short of arrest (e.g., issuing warnings, placing people in protective custody, temporarily seizing weapons, issuing dispersal orders)
- Advocating enactment of new laws or regulations to control conditions that create problems
- Concentrating attention on those people and circumstances that account for a disproportionate share of a problem (e.g., repeat offenders, repeat victims, repeat locations)
- Coordinating with other government and private services (e.g., drug treatment, youth recreation, social services).

When one views policing in light of the objectives and methods described above, it becomes more sensible to acknowledge that enforcing the law is not an end in itself, but rather is one means among several available to the police toward the objectives previously described.

The Criminal Justice System Is Not the Solution to All Public Safety Problems

When fear of crime is on the rise, the public reflexively turns to its police to "do something about it." Commonly, the "something" the public demands is for police to crack down by boosting arrests. And while calls for police to crack down might satisfy citizens' need to express their frustration and condemnation of a situation they perceive to be out of control, not all police crackdowns prove as effective as one might hope; occasionally, they create their own civic problems.

The criminal justice system lacks both the capacity and the expertise necessary to effectively address all public safety concerns. Its important

safeguards designed to ensure due process and protect defendants' civil liberties help render the criminal justice system ill-suited for high-volume business.

Relying too heavily on this expensive system designed primarily to deal with serious and habitual offenders creates several important public safety risks, including the following:

- It compromises the care and attention that it can give to the most serious offenses and offenders.
- It detracts resources and attention away from other institutions and systems that are equally essential to ensuring public safety. Properly resourced and accessible systems for mental health, substance abuse treatment, victim and witness protection, property code enforcement, consumer product design, school discipline, youth recreation, social services, civil law enforcement, and dispute resolution, to name a few, are as important to police effectiveness as is a well-functioning criminal justice system.
- It places undue pressure on police officers to distort and manipulate their authority in ways not intended under the law and that can lead to abuse allegations.
- It can strain police-community relations and erode public trust in local government generally. This has proven particularly true in some racial and ethnic minority communities.

The Police Exercise Substantial Discretion

Borne of practical limitations, a sense of justice, and the absence of close supervision and immediate review, the police exercise a tremendous amount of discretion at all levels of the police hierarchy, including at the line level, where police officers decide how to handle incidents. Police make discretionary decisions about all sorts of matters, such as where and on what public safety problems to concentrate resources, whether to formally enforce the law when they have legal grounds to do so, and what methods to use in performing their duties.

Although the law or policy might compel or constrain some police discretionary decisions, on most matters there are choices to be made from among a range of options. In some instances, police alone should make those choices, but in many instances, the considered views of citizens, community groups, and elected and appointed government officials should inform police choices. Bringing police discretionary decisions, particularly at the strategic level, out into the open where they can be publicly deliberated and reviewed strengthens democratic policing and can make the police more effective and fair.

Standard Police Responses to Crime and Disorder Are Limited

An abundance of research evidence has demonstrated that some of the common local government responses to crime and disorder, such as hiring more police officers and deploying them in conventional patrol and investigative modes, having police respond rapidly to all incidents, having police patrol the streets in random patterns, and assigning all criminal cases for follow-up investigation by detectives are of less-certain value than commonly believed.[3]

This is not to say that these responses are necessarily ineffective or unwarranted under all conditions, but only that local governments and citizens should have more realistic expectations about what public safety benefits such responses are likely to yield. Moreover, the standard responses are tremendously expensive for local governments, and you might reasonably expect a higher public-safety return on these investments.

As a local government executive, you and other elected officials might be under considerable public pressure to demonstrate your commitment to public safety by pressing for these responses, but you will leave yourself equally vulnerable to later criticism if these standard responses fail to achieve their promise.

[3] For a comprehensive review of research on policing see The National Research Council, *Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing: The Evidence*, The National Academies Press, 2004.

Effective Policing Requires Collaboration

It might seem odd to say that, in spite of their authority, extensive training, and often considerable resources, the police require the support and assistance of others to fairly and effectively control and prevent crime and disorder, but it is true for the following reasons:

- The number of police officers available for duty at any time is far fewer than most citizens imagine, and they cannot possibly establish a physical presence in all places at all times in a community.
- Police authority, great as it is for certain tasks, is often relatively inadequate compared with what people expect of police.
- Police do not directly control most of the conditions that generate society's crime and disorder opportunities.
- Police authority is founded in part, of course, on what the law grants, but the extent to which police can effectively use their legal authority heavily depends on the public's support of and trust in the police, which police must constantly strive to cultivate and sustain.

For police to be effective, they must be able to work effectively not only within the operations of the criminal justice system with which they are most closely identified, but also within other social and governmental systems, such as the following:

- Community organizations
- Government agencies, including local, state, and federal regulatory systems and civil law enforcement systems
- Mental health systems
- Public health and emergency medical service systems
- Government and nongovernment social service agencies, including those for drug and alcohol treatment and detoxification
- School systems
- Corporate and business communities
- Juvenile justice systems
- Alternative dispute resolution systems.

Police must develop effective policies, protocols, and working relationships with all of these systems, as well as with the criminal justice system, to achieve their objectives. As the local government executive, you obviously have the greatest influence over the inter-department working relationships and protocols, but you may well have influence with respect to other systems through which you can encourage or promote good relations with your police agency.

Police Should Be Rated by More Than Crime and Arrest Tallies and Response Times

It should logically follow that if policing is a varied and complex undertaking, one should assess police agencies as a whole, and police officers as individuals accordingly. No more than we would contemplate assessing other important government functions such as public finance, public health, or public education by crude and one-dimensional performance indicators should we assess the policing function the same way. Yet, to a large extent, we commonly do.

We most commonly assess police agencies in terms of reported crime, arrest numbers, cases solved, and patrol response times, but these measures alone grossly distort the true picture of the quality of policing and public safety. For example, since the true aim of policing is to prevent crime and enhance the public's sense of security, and not merely to enforce the law for its own sake, simply counting arrest numbers tells us rather little about police effectiveness.

Crime experts widely recognize that the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports data—the principal crime index—are an incomplete and flawed measure of both crime and police efficacy. Among the system's more widely recognized limitations are the following:

- Based on what is known from crime victimization surveys, as much as one-half of all crimes committed are never reported to police. Even many serious crimes go unreported to police.

- Notwithstanding Uniform Crime Reports coding rules, police agencies vary considerably in how they classify incidents, thereby making comparisons across police agencies difficult.
- The Uniform Crime Reports make no claim to measure other important public safety indicators such as actual crime victimization, traffic safety, nuisance levels and many other forms of disorder, citizen perceptions of their safety and security, or citizen perceptions of police fairness.[4]

There is a need to refine and improve the macro-level measures of policing and public safety. The FBI's new National Incident-Based Reporting System is an important step toward improving measures of reported crime insofar as it provides much greater detail about many more crime types than the Uniform Crime Reports.[5] But other macro measures of policing and public safety are also important, such as:

- The local community's sense of safety, security, and peace of mind
- Its confidence in the local police
- Traffic safety
- The safety and welfare of its most vulnerable citizens (e.g., the elderly, young, mentally ill, suicidal, drug- and alcohol-addicted, or physically handicapped).

In addition, local governments should also improve micro-measures of how well the local government, police included, is addressing specific public safety problems. Each type of public safety problem will warrant a special set of performance measures tailored to that problem type. For example, the measures for how local government and police are responding to child abuse will differ considerably from measures for how they are responding to retail theft.

[4] For an explanation of the methodology and limitations of the Uniform Crime Reports, see the annual reports of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Crime in the United States*. The reports can be accessed online at www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm#cius.

[5] For a description of the National Incident-Based Reporting System, see the FBI's web site at www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm#nibrs.

Crime and Disorder Are Heavily Concentrated

Crime and disorder are not evenly distributed across your community. Rather, they are heavily concentrated: among relatively few offenders, happening to relatively few victims, occurring in relatively few places, and involving relatively few target types. Investing in the data collection and analysis tools necessary to identify the repeat offenders, repeat victims, hot spots, and products most likely to be stolen can greatly help police and local government focus their attention where it is most needed.

Recommended for further information:

Clarke, Ronald V. and John E. Eck. *Crime Analysis for Problem-Solvers: In 60 Small Steps.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2005. www.popcenter.org/learning/60steps.

National Research Council of the National Academies. *Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing: The Evidence.* Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2004.

Goldstein, Herman. *Problem-Oriented Policing*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990.

The Local Government Executive's Role in Policing and Crime Prevention

With all that you have to concern yourself with as the local government chief executive—taxes, budgets, and finance; physical infrastructure; public transportation; water and air quality; economic development; legislation; labor negotiations; personnel matters; public relations; political relations; etc.—it might be tempting to defer public safety to the police to handle. This might be especially tempting if you lack formal authority over and control of the police department. After all, policing can be a complex and messy business, with lots that can go wrong. Establishing a bit of distance from the police can sometimes seem the wiser political course.

But leaving public safety entirely to the police is a mistake. Policing can be done well and effectively with the right leadership and support, including yours. We hope this guide, along with the more detailed information contained in the *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police*, will help demystify policing and crime prevention, providing clear, sensible, and practical recommendations for many public safety problems.

An overarching theme of the *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* is that law enforcement alone, and police alone, will not effectively address most public safety problems. Police have a strong and important role to play, but so do others in local government, other government agencies, nongovernment organizations, the business community, and the general community. As the local government chief executive, you have both the formal *and* the moral authority to insist on sound public safety policies and practices and to compel the collaboration necessary to achieve them.

On the following pages are some recommendations regarding your role in promoting good policing and crime prevention.

Treat Public Safety as a Local Government Function, Not Just a Police Function

Your strongest role with regard to public safety is as the supervisor of the various department heads reporting to you. Although many people think only of the police, fire, and emergency medical services as public safety agencies, in fact, nearly every local government department plays some important role in promoting public safety. The following are examples:

- **Building inspection and code enforcement:** Enforces building codes that help ensure that property owners are responsibly maintaining their properties, which discourages crime in and around them.
- **Economic development:** Influences an area's mix of commerce, which influences the types of people present in the area on various days and at various times of the day, which in turn influences crime opportunities and crime prevention.
- **Government attorney:** Responsible for much of the civil law enforcement, which is especially important for ensuring responsible property management that reduces crime and disorder risks.
- **Mass transit:** Regulates passengers' conduct and its transportation vehicles' and stations' design and security.
- **Mental health:** Responsible for providing crisis intervention and community care for many mentally ill people, some of whom otherwise might become criminal offenders or victims.
- **Parking:** Influences traffic flow through parking regulations and controls the design, maintenance, and security of publicly owned parking facilities, which affects the safety and security of vehicles and the people in them.
- **Parks and recreation:** Responsible for the design, maintenance, and organized activities in parks, all of which influence the parks' crime and disorder levels. Also is responsible for recreation programs that draw youth away from crime.

- **Planning and community development:** Approves site plans at the lot, building, neighborhood, and community levels, the proper design of which can discourage crime through the application of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED, commonly pronounced “sep ted”) principles.
- **Public health:** Responsible for controlling the spread of communicable diseases, including sexually transmitted diseases commonly spread by prostitutes and drug addicts.
- **Public housing:** Establishes and enforces standards of good conduct among tenants.
- **Public libraries:** Regulates patrons’ conduct in the libraries and can provide youth with a safe and productive place to be when not in school.
- **Public works:** Responsible for street lighting, which affects many nighttime crime problems such as burglary, robbery, and sexual assault.
- **Schools:** Controls the design of school buildings and grounds, policies on student attendance and off-campus privileges, after-school activities, and in-school monitoring of student conduct, all of which affect the safety of students and the security of the surrounding neighborhood.
- **Social services:** Responsible for the welfare of abused and neglected people, especially children, some elderly citizens, and domestic violence victims.
- **Traffic engineering:** Designs the roads and establishes speed limits, both of which have much to do with speed, traffic flow, and crash risks.

Accordingly, responsibility and capacity to affect public safety reaches well beyond your police department. Depending on the particular public safety problem at issue, you should ensure that all the local government agencies bearing some responsibility and capacity to influence that issue work together toward its resolution. You should also promote and facilitate, within legal constraints, data sharing among various government departments so that the various departments have the information necessary to work effectively with one another.

You should ensure that those whom you appoint as department heads understand how their departments' work implicates public safety and promote inter-department cooperation and collaboration.

Often, the police are the first agency to detect emerging or acute public safety problems because they handle the critical incidents and are one of few agencies open for business around the clock. As a consequence, police may develop special insights into the problems, but that should not mean that police retain sole responsibility for addressing all the problems they identify.

Adopt a Problem-Oriented Approach to Addressing Public Safety Concerns

The problem-oriented approach (explained more fully in the following section) need not be restricted to policing. It has equal relevance to all local government functions. In brief, it establishes a process through which:

- Problems are identified and defined.
- Problems are analyzed to determine causes and contributing factors.
- Current responses are reviewed to determine strengths and limitations.
- New and alternative responses are considered.
- An improved response strategy is designed.
- Responses are implemented.
- Results are measured.

If deemed successful, the responses might be made permanent and the problem is monitored. If deemed unsuccessful, the problem is reanalyzed or different responses are tried. In most instances, the process and findings are documented for others to learn from.

More specifically, you should do the following:

- Ensure there are multiple systems in place to identify public safety problems demanding special attention, perhaps to include:
  - Monitoring specific reported crime and disorder trends
  - Surveying citizens to identify problems they might not have reported through official channels
  - Consulting with police officers and other line-level government employees
  - Consulting with elected officials who commonly hear citizen complaints
  - Monitoring media reporting on emerging problems
  - Meeting with community groups to hear about chronic and emerging problems.
- Ensure structures, systems, and project leadership are in place to facilitate problem-solving, track progress, and hold employees and departments accountable for follow-up.

Insist on Best (or Good) Professional Practices

- Expect that police and other departments seek out best-practice information to inform their responses to specific public safety problems.
- Ask probing questions about strategies and tactics being applied to public safety problems, such as the following:
  - Is this strategy recognized as good or best practice (remaining open to pioneering work)?
  - Is this strategy based on evidence of its effectiveness?
  - What alternatives have been considered?
  - What data and analysis support this approach?
  - Has the response strategy achieved measurable results in your community or elsewhere?
  - What are the likely consequences (intended and unintended) of adopting this strategy?

- Engage local industry leaders—alcohol purveyors, planners, architects, motel owners, landlords, etc.—and their representative groups in developing, implementing, and enforcing industry-specific best practice.

Insist on Good Data Analysis to Inform Public Safety Policies and Practices

- When feasible, employ professionally trained crime analysts and ensure they have good analysis hardware and software, data management systems, and data-sharing agreements.
- Make sure analysts can focus on their core functions, are knowledgeable about public safety problems, and can influence operational strategies.
- Where available and useful, solicit research assistance from nearby colleges and universities.

Recommended for further information:

Clarke, Ronald V. and John E. Eck. *Crime Analysis for Problem-Solvers: In 60 Small Steps.* U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2005.

Boba, Rachel. *Problem Analysis in Policing.* Police Foundation and U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2003.

The COPS Office has available a number of publications and other resources pertaining to information sharing and technology that are accessible online at www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=111#IT.

Related POP Guides

Enhancing the Problem-Solving Capacity of Crime Analysis Units

Researching a Problem

Using Offender Interviews To Inform Police Problem-Solving

Assessing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide for Police Problem-Solvers

Emphasize Prevention

As important as it often is for the police to apprehend offenders so that they can hold them legally accountable for their crimes, and as important as it is for police to comfort and assist crime victims, it is equally important that police and others work to prevent crime and disorder in the first place. At least in the long term, reacting to crime is nearly always more costly than preventing it.

Do not get bogged down in debates about the "root causes" of crime. While local government shares in the responsibility to remediate some of the social factors that contribute to crime and disorder, such as poverty, joblessness, homelessness, racism, education deficiencies, and class conflict, these factors do not necessarily directly cause crime and disorder. Moreover, many of the causes of crime that are inherent in some people's character, such as greed, lust, laziness, anger, and hatred, are rather difficult for local government to change.

Instead, focus more on the near or immediate causes of crime, typically the situational and environmental conditions from which potential offenders take their cues as to whether or not to commit an offense at a particular time and place. It is these sorts of factors about which police and local government can do much more to prevent crime and disorder.

Recommended for further information:

Felson, Marcus. *Crime and Everyday Life, 3rd ed.* Thousand Oaks (California): Sage Publications, 2002.

Help Broker Responsibility for Addressing Public Safety Problems

As the previous section illustrated, many public safety problems are preventable, yet police and local government do not control many of the conditions that cause or contribute to them. If, through careful analysis, police and local government can establish how particular conditions are causing or contributing to specific crime and disorder problems, you can use your authority and influence to persuade or compel others—businesses and corporations, property owners, citizens, etc.—to take responsible action that might prevent problems. A variety of methods and techniques exist—some merely advisory, some more persuasive, and some compulsory—that police and local government can apply, depending on the circumstances. Such methods might include public awareness campaigns, public shaming, legislative requirements, civil lawsuits, and so forth.

Related POP Guides:

Shifting and Sharing Responsibility for Public Safety Problems

Develop Sensible Public Safety Indicators

Develop and routinely collect data for a set of public safety measures that might include the following:

- Reported complaints about crime and disorder
- Unreported complaints about crime and disorder
- Fear and concern about crime and safety
- Citizen confidence in local government, including police, to address public safety problems
- Visible evidence of blight, such as abandoned buildings and vehicles, litter, broken and poorly maintained infrastructure, and graffiti and vandalism
- Early warning indicators of neighborhood vitality and stability.

Some of these data are already routinely collected from, for example, police crime reports and calls for police service, but other data might not be and must be gathered through other methods such as citizen and environmental surveys.


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How Local Governments Can Control and Prevent Crime and Disorder

General Approaches

The modern policing age has spawned many new approaches to policing operating under a variety of labels and terms, many of which you will have at least heard in passing, but perhaps never completely understood. And while you rely on your police chief executive to understand these approaches and to craft a sensible local approach from among them, having some familiarity with and understanding of the most common approaches will enhance your ability to provide knowledgeable support and oversight to your police agency.

Community policing is perhaps the most familiar term in modern policing. Nearly all modern policing reforms, including most of those described below, have been variously associated with community policing, as variations on or subsets of it. The exact relationship between and among these concepts remains a matter of some academic debate. For our purposes here, community policing is based on the idea that police should work closely with citizens to cultivate public trust in the police and to better address citizens' public safety concerns. The COPS Office defines community policing as follows:

> Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies, which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.[6]

[6] See the COPS Office web site at www.cops.usdoj.gov for further information.

Recommended for further information:

COPS Office web site at www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=36.

Below is a synopsis of the other leading policing and public safety approaches:

Problem-Oriented Policing

This guide is part of a larger body of work known as problem-oriented policing, a comprehensive approach to policing and public safety that takes into account the variety and complexity of public safety issues.

The original proponent of the problem-oriented approach, renowned police scholar Herman Goldstein, of the University of Wisconsin Law School, summarized the approach as follows:

> Problem-oriented policing is an approach to policing in which discrete pieces of police business (each consisting of a cluster of similar incidents, whether crime or acts of disorder, that the police are expected to handle) are subject to microscopic examination (drawing on the especially honed skills of crime analysts and the accumulated experience of operating field personnel) in hopes that what is freshly learned about each problem will lead to discovering a new and more effective strategy for dealing with it. Problem-oriented policing places a high value on new responses that are preventive in nature, that are not dependent on the use of the criminal justice system, and that engage other public agencies, the community, and the private sector when their involvement has the potential for significantly contributing to the reduction of the problem. Problem-oriented policing carries a commitment to implementing the new strategy, rigorously evaluating its effectiveness, and, subsequently, reporting the results in ways that will benefit other police agencies and that will ultimately contribute to building a body of knowledge that supports the further professionalization of the police.[7]

Problem-oriented policing is not a simplistic approach to crime, disorder, and public safety. It does not promise a single solution to all problems. Consequently, it can lack the pizzazz and sound-bite appeal of some other policing approaches. What it *does* offer is very

[7] For this and further descriptions of problem-oriented policing, see the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing web site at www.popcenter.org/about/?p=whatiscpop.

real potential for local government to have a positive and sustainable impact on specific public safety problems. Considerable research and measurable practice back up the approach. For a comprehensive treatment of this body of research and practice, see the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing web site, www.popcenter.org.

Recommended for further information:

Goldstein, Herman. *Problem-Oriented Policing*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990.

Goldstein, Herman. "Improving Policing: A Problem-Oriented Approach." *Crime & Delinquency* 25(2) (1979):236–58. www.popcenter.org/library/reading.

Situational Crime Prevention

Situational crime prevention originated not as a policing approach, but more broadly as a scientific approach to crime prevention. The approach focuses on reducing crime by designing safer environments and more-secure consumer products. It shifts the crime prevention focus away from merely trying to deter offenders through punishment and rehabilitation, and toward convincing offenders that committing a particular crime in a particular place at a particular time is not worthwhile. In five main ways it does so by:

1. *Increasing the effort* to offend
2. *Increasing the risk* to offenders of getting caught
3. *Reducing the rewards* of offending
4. *Reducing provocations* to offend
5. *Removing excuses* for offending

Situational crime prevention has implications well beyond just the police function. As a local government executive, you have significant influence over the design of safe environments through zoning, planning, and land-use regulations, and perhaps even some influence over the design and sale of some consumer products that are likely to be either stolen or used as tools in crime. The situational crime

prevention approach is widely considered to be compatible with problem-oriented policing, and you can read more about its practice on the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing web site.

Recommended for further information:

Felson, Marcus. *Crime and Everyday Life, 3rd ed.* Thousand Oaks (California): SAGE Publications, 2002.

Felson, Marcus and Ronald V. Clarke. *Opportunity Makes the Thief: Practical Theory for Crime Prevention.* London: U.K. Home Office, 1998. www.popcenter.org/library/reading/?p=2.

Clarke, Ronald V. (ed.). *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies, 2nd ed.* Guilderland, New York: Harrow & Heston, 1997. Now available from Criminal Justice Press, Monsey (New York).

Intelligence-Led Policing

Originating in British police forces, intelligence-led policing helps police managers to better use crime and intelligence data to direct police resources and investigations aimed at disrupting organized crime networks and activities, and apprehending active and prolific offenders. The concept has become a standard police management model among British police forces under its official title, the National Intelligence Model. The model heavily emphasizes data collection and analysis to inform policing operations. This approach, too, is generally considered compatible with community policing and problem-oriented policing, although its practice in American police agencies is still evolving.

Recommended for further information:

Ratcliffe, Jerry. *Intelligence-Led Policing.* Cullompton (Devon, U.K.) and Portland, Oregon: Willan Publishing, 2008.

Broken Windows Policing

"Broken Windows" is a phrase coined by political scientist James Q. Wilson and police scholar George Kelling. It asserts that unaddressed signs of minor disorder can cause more serious crime in an area. The idea has significantly influenced American policing over the past several decades, leading police to address lower-level disorder problems more than they previously have. This thesis has been the subject of significant critique by some criminologists who do not believe that low-level disorder *causes* serious crime, and that excessive police enforcement of low-level offenses can overwhelm the criminal justice system without necessarily reducing serious crime. Other scholars and practitioners firmly believe that police attention to minor disorder has substantially reduced more serious crime. Regardless of whether disorder causes more serious crime, it is more firmly established that disorder can generate apprehension among citizens, a matter worthy of police attention in its own right.

Recommended for further information:

Kelling, George L. and Catherine M. Coles. *Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order & Reducing Crime in Our Communities.* New York: The Free Press, 1996.

Harcourt, Bernard E. *Illusion of Order: The False Promise of Broken Windows Policing.* Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2001.

Zero-Tolerance Policing

Zero-tolerance policing refers to the strict enforcement of laws that police officers might otherwise not have enforced, exercising their discretionary authority. The concept has been linked, rather inappropriately and unfortunately, with the Broken Windows approach. While the idea of strict police enforcement is often popular with frustrated and frightened citizens, as well as with some police officers, widespread and indiscriminate police enforcement can have unintended negative consequences for both the local criminal justice system's operations and for police-community relations. Many police officials and scholars are harshly critical of the concept.[8]

[8] For critiques of the zero-tolerance policing concept see Taylor, Ralph B., "Incivilities Reduction Policing, Zero Tolerance, and the Retreat from Coproduction: Weak Foundations and Strong Pressures" in *Police Innovation: Contrasting Perspectives*, D. Weisburd and A. Braga (eds.), Cambridge (U.K).: Cambridge University Press, 2006; Dixon, David, "Beyond Zero Tolerance" in *Policing: Key Readings*, T. Newburn (ed.), Cullompton (U.K) and Portland (Oregon): Willan Publishing, 2005; Cordner, Gary, "Problem-Oriented Policing Vs. Zero Tolerance" in *Problem-Oriented Policing: Crime-Specific Problems, Critical Issues and Making POP Work*, T. O'Connor Shelley and A. Grant (eds.), Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum, 1998; Greene, Judith A., "Zero Tolerance: A Case Study of Police Policies and Practices in New York City," *Crime & Delinquency* 45(2) (1999):171–187; Sanders, Jerry, "Refreshing Copspeak." *The New York Times*, April 16, 1999; and Pollard, Charles, "Zero Tolerance: Short-term Fix, Long-term Liability?" in *Zero Tolerance: Policing a Free Society*, 2nd Ed., N. Dennis (ed.), London: The IEA Health and Welfare Unit, 1998.

CompStat

CompStat (shorthand for "computerized statistics") is a police management tool that originated in the New York City Police Department in the 1990s. It emphasizes statistics-based identification of crime patterns, rapid deployment of police resources to the locations where those patterns exist, and police-command accountability for reducing reported crime figures. Many police agencies have replicated this model, often with variations. To the extent that the approach emphasizes using data to inform police operations and focuses police commanders on crime control, it is commendable and compatible with problem-oriented policing. On the other hand, to the extent that it focuses exclusively on a few types of reported crimes rather than on the broader range of public safety problems of concern to the public, and to the extent that it emphasizes only short-term reductions in reported crime through intensive police presence and enforcement, it can yield only short-term and expensive responses to selected crime problems, and thus be incompatible with problem-oriented policing.

The Traditional Policing Model

As important as the distinctions between and among the above innovative approaches to policing and public safety are, it is equally important to recognize that all of these approaches represent in some respects improvements on what is known in the policing profession as the "traditional" or "professional" policing model. The traditional or professional policing model emphasized crime control through high-visibility policing, random police patrols, rapid response to all citizen calls to the police, and follow-up criminal investigations by detectives. All of these elements were intended to discourage crime by increasing the likelihood that police would catch offenders, who would then be punished through criminal prosecution. While it is not a completely flawed model, the evidence is quite strong that it has not controlled crime, increased the public's sense of safety and security, or enhanced public confidence in the police and local government as much as was

hoped. That is why most police scholars and many police officials have long concluded that while the traditional policing model represented a vast improvement over approaches that preceded it, more of the same is not likely to improve policing or public safety.

Recommended for further information:

National Research Council of the National Academies. *Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing: The Evidence.* Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2004.

Specific Responses to Some Common Public Safety Problems

This section of the guide is intended to give you a sampling of what local government and police can do to effectively prevent and control specific crime and disorder problems. It is not a comprehensive set of recommendations for addressing all public safety problems or even for addressing any particular problem. It does, however, touch on many of the sorts of concerns that commonly generate public fear and therefore demand the attention of political leaders as well as police. Moreover, effectively controlling some of these problems can help prevent even more serious crimes.

You can find more-complete coverage of how to address specific types of public safety problems, and the supporting research evidence and examples of good practice, in the various *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* (www.popcenter.org). Titles of POP Guides related to each topic below are listed at the end of each topic section. You can find summaries of exemplary problem-oriented policing initiatives in this guide's Appendix.

Control Alcohol Distribution and Consumption

Alcohol abuse contributes perhaps more than any other factor to crime and disorder. It contributes strongly to noise complaints, disorderly conduct, public urination, litter, property damage, assaults, sexual assaults, domestic violence, drunken driving, and homicide. Strong policies governing alcohol distribution and consumption can have wide crime and disorder-control benefits. More specifically, you should do the following:

- Ensure there is meaningful enforcement of alcohol regulations.
- Set a tone that promotes responsible alcohol distribution and consumption in your community. Publicly acknowledge both the legitimate interest that licensed establishments have in making a profit, as well as their responsibility to serve alcohol in ways that do not generate crime and disorder problems.
- Encourage and compel responsible licensed-establishment management. Responsible management is the most important factor in determining whether a licensed establishment is safe or unsafe.
- Ensure that sufficient alcohol detoxification and treatment services are available.

Related POP Guides:

Assaults in and Around Bars

Drunk Driving

Underage Drinking

Close Drug Markets

If alcohol abuse is the primary contributor to crime and disorder, drug abuse—of both illegal and legal drugs—is a close second. Drug markets generate tremendous spin-off crime and disorder problems such as assault, robbery, prostitution, gangs, noise, hazardous waste, and loitering. Simply arresting drug dealers and users will not effectively address local drug markets and the problems they create. Work to disrupt and close known markets, especially those operating out in the open. Think of drug markets as business enterprises, albeit illegal ones. Do what you can to make it more difficult for those drug businesses to operate profitably. More specifically, do the following:

- Hold business and residential property owners accountable for managing their properties in ways that do not facilitate nearby drug markets. Use licensing, zoning, code enforcement, civil abatement, asset forfeiture, and other civil law tools to compel responsible property management. Make sure that your local government attorney's office has the knowledge and skill to enforce property management laws.
- Consider changing traffic or parking patterns to make it more difficult for drug dealers and buyers to conduct business.
- Solicit and facilitate community opposition to drug markets. A vocal and visible community stand against drug markets, when combined with effective drug enforcement, can be effective.
- Support the development and operation of drug courts.
- Ensure there are sufficient community drug treatment services available. Enforcement approaches to drug control are not as effective without adequate drug treatment, and vice versa.

Related POP Guides:

Clandestine Methamphetamine Labs

Drug Dealing in Open-Air Markets

Drug Dealing in Privately Owned Apartment Complexes

Expect Property Owners and Managers to Control Activity in and around Their Properties

Residential rental properties, and motels and lodging houses requiring the most police attention are usually those that are not managed or maintained properly. Sometimes, you simply need to remind property owners of their duties and nudge them toward compliance. Occasionally, owners may not know how to manage challenging properties and will benefit from property management training the local government or landlord association provides. Other times, owners refuse to accept their responsibilities, requiring more persuasive measures to get them to take remedial action.

Do not allow irresponsible owners to shift all responsibility for problems at their properties to the police. It is well established that responsible property management reduces crime and disorder problems at and around properties. Police can help, but the owners and managers should have primary responsibility.

Specific measures local government can take include the following:

- Establish a normal or acceptable level of problems at rental properties, motels, and lodging houses, and put owners and managers on official notice when problems exceed that level, after which special government interventions will apply. You might also direct them to resources to improve their management practices.
- Publicly praise responsibly run properties and publicly criticize irresponsibly run ones.
- Bring together property owners and managers to discuss specific problems and how they control them. Owners and managers themselves can pressure and educate one another toward better management.
- Use nuisance abatement procedures to recover the costs associated with policing problem establishments.
- Enforce relevant building and health codes, and business license requirements.

- If the properties are financed, engage the mortgage holders to persuade property owners to address problems at the property.
- Ensure that zoning ordinances do not create incompatible land uses likely to generate crime, disorder, and fear.

Related POP Guides:

Disorder at Budget Motels

Drug Dealing in Privately Owned Apartment Complexes

Design and Manage Parks

Safety problems in public parks range from underage drinking, public urination, and gambling to prostitution, drug use, and sexual assault. Apply crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles to park design and maintenance. More specifically, do the following:

- Control access to the parks through signs, gates, locks, use of natural boundaries like waterways, etc.
- Ensure that park users can both see and be seen by means of lighting, landscaping, roads and paths, site orientation, equipment placement, etc.
- Clearly establish and promote legitimate park uses and prohibit and discourage illegitimate park uses through signs, landscaping, equipment, organized activities, enforcement, etc.
- Attract natural guardians to your parks, such as parents to safeguard their children, coaches to safeguard their players, and licensed park users to protect their park-use privilege.

Related POP Guides:

Dealing With Crime and Disorder in Urban Parks

Using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design in Problem Solving

Promote Safe Schools

Local government shares with parents and school officials a responsibility to ensure that students are safe in and on their way to and from school. Some public safety problems that affect the wider community have links to the schools, such as the following:

- Daytime residential burglary (that truant students might commit)
- Vengeance shootings (that might relate to bullying in school)
- Child abuse and neglect (that school officials might first detect)
- Bomb threats (that mischievous students might call in)
- Retail theft (that students might commit at nearby shops)
- Acquaintance rape (that students might commit)
- School break-ins and vandalism (that students might commit)
- Pedestrian safety (of students coming and going to school).

More specifically, local government can do the following:

- Help negotiate the respective responsibilities of local government, schools, parents, students, and neighboring businesses and residents for preventing and resolving school-related problems.
- Assign police officers in and around local schools to help maintain order, protect students, enforce laws, provide safety and security advice, and promote good behavior among students.
- Work with school officials to improve the design and maintenance of school buildings and grounds to decrease crime and disorder risks.
- Work with school and transportation officials to reduce opportunities for conflict and violence as students arrive at and leave school by, for example, staggering class start and release times, monitoring paths and buses to and from school, creating and monitoring after-school activities, and regulating student conduct in the neighborhood during and immediately after school hours.

Related POP Guides:

Acquaintance Rape of College Students

Bomb Threats in Schools

Bullying in Schools

School Vandalism and Break-Ins

Traffic Congestion Around Schools

Underage Drinking

Reduce Vehicle Crime

Many crimes occur between people who are both somehow complicit in the crime, such as between drug dealers and buyers, prostitutes and clients, or mutual combatants. By contrast, thefts of and from, and vandalism to, parked vehicles account for a substantial number of crimes against innocent victims. These sorts of crimes therefore contribute significantly to the public perception that a community is not safe or secure. These crimes typically occur to vehicles when they are parked either on the street or in parking lots or structures. Careful crime analysis should show you where they are concentrated. Among the specific measures to prevent such crimes are the following:

- Concentrate prevention measures on those lots, structures, streets, blocks, and neighborhoods where the crimes are concentrated.
- Put people in the parking lots and structures. Attendants, whether stationary or roving, are effective in preventing thefts. Unattended lots and structures are especially risky.
- Design parking lots and structures properly: secure the lots' and structures' perimeters with transparent barriers, improve lighting and signs, use video surveillance, and/or require drivers to present a time-stamped ticket received at entry in order to exit.
- Develop a security rating system for parking facilities based on an audit of security features.

Related POP Guides:

Thefts of and From Cars in Parking Facilities

Thefts of and From Cars on Residential Streets and Driveways

Prevent Repeat Burglaries

Most houses and businesses will never be burgled, but some are repeatedly and merit special attention. More specifically, you should do the following:

- Do not depend solely on alarms to prevent burglary. While alarms can help, once burglars trigger an alarm, they typically have sufficient time to steal and flee the scene before someone arrives to check the building. Police do occasionally apprehend burglars in the act, but the odds of doing so are low.
- Neighborhood watch programs, although popular, are not always effective in preventing burglary. High-crime neighborhoods that might benefit from watch programs often have difficulty organizing and sustaining them, while watch programs in relatively safe neighborhoods may increase residents' fear of crime without actually reducing crime.
- Modify building codes to encourage or require good burglary-prevention design and construction.
- Monitor and regulate common outlets for stolen property, such as pawn shops, secondhand shops, and scrap-metal dealerships.

Related POP Guides:

Burglary at Single-Family House Construction Sites

Burglary of Retail Establishments

Burglary of Single-Family Houses

Improving Street Lighting to Reduce Crime in Residential Areas

School Vandalism and Break-Ins

Stolen Goods Markets

Prevent Shoplifting

Retail establishment managers—be they managers of liquor stores, grocery stores, big-box appliance outlets, or mall jewelry stores—are in the best position to prevent shoplifting through their security and merchandising practices. Depending on stores' reporting policies, police can spend a lot of time processing shoplifting cases, many of which retailers could have prevented. Some retailers even account for unexplained losses by reporting them to police as thefts. Specific measures that local government can take to help retailers prevent shoplifting include the following:

- Clarify the circumstances under which police will respond to retail thefts, and the respective responsibilities of the police and merchants.
- Persuade retailers to improve store layout and merchandise displays based on an analysis of what types of merchandise are being stolen, and where.
- Work with the courts to establish a first-time offender program to streamline the adjudication process and minimize the costs to local government agencies.
- Promote the use of effective shoplifting prevention and detection technology.
- Be sure that corporate loss-prevention managers and insurance carriers are aware of chronic theft problems.

Related POP Guide:

Shoplifting

Control Speeding in Residential Neighborhoods

Regardless of your jurisdiction's size, you are sure to hear complaints about speeders. Whether on a freeway, a county highway, a major arterial, or a residential street, excessive speed is dangerous and anxiety-provoking, particularly in residential areas and around schools.

The most important principle in speed control is that motorists tend to drive at the speed at which they feel safe and comfortable, given the road conditions. Therefore, the key to reducing speed is to alter road conditions such that motorists feel uncomfortable speeding.

Consider the following specific measures:

- Identify the most problematic areas based on complaints and crashes, and focus enforcement resources accordingly. Enforcing speed laws merely to generate revenue tends to alienate the driving public and is not particularly effective anyway, at least not for very long.
- Where permitted by law and warranted by complaint and crash data, use photo radar enforcement, varying the camera locations and operation hours. Bear in mind that photo radar enforcement is unpopular in some communities because it is viewed as unfair enforcement, too intrusive, or an unfair revenue generator.
- Install traffic-calming devices like roundabouts, traffic circles, and speed humps or tables. Be cautious of speed *bumps,* however, as they can be dangerous to drivers and are problematic for emergency vehicles. Pay attention to design details; they can mean all the difference in whether citizens support them.
- Have your traffic engineer evaluate parking patterns, traffic flow, and street widths. Narrower streets—or streets that *appear* to be narrow—slow drivers down.

- Encourage citizens to report speeding to police or conduct a publicity campaign to persuade motorists to slow down. Chronic neighborhood speeders—including the teenager with a new license, the commuter rushing to work, or the parent dropping children off at school—may respond to peer pressure from their neighbors.

Related POP Guide:

Speeding in Residential Areas

Minimize Graffiti

Graffiti, or "tagging," is generally categorized as either "artistic" or "gang" and can be found everywhere from street signs and public transportation to buildings and billboards. Many people consider graffiti unsightly and intimidating. Specific responses include the following:

- Clean graffiti early and often. It denies graffiti writers the satisfaction of seeing their graffiti on display, thereby undermining its primary purpose.
- Enact an ordinance requiring property owners to remove graffiti within a certain amount of time (typically 24 to 72 hours after the graffiti is detected).
- Use some government funds to defray the costs to citizens of graffiti removal.
- Set up a graffiti hotline to encourage citizen reporting.
- Establish a graffiti abatement team that includes staff from the police, code enforcement, prosecutor's office, and public works.
- Design building walls and other surfaces so that they are not conducive to graffiti.

Related POP Guide:

Graffiti

Control Disorderly Behavior on the Streets

Panhandlers begging aggressively, chronic inebriates staggering around or passed out on the streets, mentally ill people acting strangely or menacingly, disorderly youth intimidating passersby, and other such disorder, particularly in busy commercial districts, can undermine the general public's perception of safety and the area's legitimate commerce. Police must handle such people and behavior with care. They are obliged to respect constitutionally protected speech and conduct, and protect even disorderly people from harm, while maintaining reasonable order and minimizing undue fear and intimidation. You should do the following:

- Recognize that most courts deem panhandling constitutionally protected activity, but governments can prohibit aggressive panhandling and panhandling at certain locations.
- Ensure that truly needy people have access to emergency food, clothing, shelter, and medical care. If you can ensure that, then discourage people from contributing to panhandlers because doing so typically only enables self-destructive lifestyles that also compromise community order.
- Ensure that police can quickly access mental health services to help them deal with people in mental crisis.
- Restrict chronic inebriates' access to alcohol. Prohibit the sale of alcohol to intoxicated people and known chronic inebriates, and enforce those prohibitions.
- Figure out why youth choose to hang out in places where they are disruptive to others and work with the youth to find more acceptable places to go. Condition any hanging-out privileges you might grant on the youths' appropriate behavior.

Related POP Guides:

Disorder at Day Laborer Sites

Disorderly Youth in Public Places

Panhandling

People With Mental Illness

Control Street Prostitution

Street prostitution demands police attention for various reasons: it offends uninvolved citizens, children may be involved in the prostitution trade, prostitutes are at high risk of being assaulted, prostitutes and their pimps sometimes rob clients, it undermines the area's legitimate commerce, it is often connected with organized crime, and it contributes to the spread of disease. Arresting prostitutes and their clients in undercover operations can be an important part of an effective strategy, but will not suffice by itself. Other specific effective measures include the following:

- Change the physical and commercial environment where prostitution markets exist to make them less attractive to prostitutes. Enhance lighting, redevelop abandoned or blighted property, increase the legitimate use of space, and alter traffic patterns and rules to discourage vehicle soliciting.
- Establish or support programs to educate, counsel, and deter prostitutes and their clients from continuing their activity. These programs are often more effective when reinforced by the threat of criminal prosecution for failing to complete them.
- Be careful about publicly shaming prostitutes or their clients. Some citizens and media outlets find this excessive or unnecessary, and its efficacy is unknown.

Discourage businesses near prostitution markets such as motels, rental housing, and taverns from allowing their properties to be used to facilitate prostitution. Use a variety of civil and criminal enforcement tools, as well as negative publicity.

Related POP Guide:

Street Prostitution

Don't Waste Police Time

The most valuable police resource is officers' time. They spend some of their time responding to crimes and incidents that have already occurred, and they should spend some of their time working to prevent crimes and incidents. Unless patrol officers have sufficient time free from handling calls for service and administrative duties, it will be difficult for them to address chronic crime and disorder problems proactively. While patrol officers cannot always control their time, given the emergency nature of some police work, some common demands on police time do not add much value to public safety. It might be worth reexamining the police response to the following types of incidents to minimize relatively unproductive police activity:

- **911 hang-ups.** These are calls to the emergency line in which the call-taker cannot ascertain whether a true emergency exists, and therefore dispatches a patrol officer to investigate. Many such calls are attributable to juvenile pranks, accidental misdialing (often when a caller seeks to dial a phone number beginning with "91"), inadvertent dialing by the jostling of a cell phone, and deliberate attempts to distract the police. Police should work with the emergency communications center to identify and remedy 911 hang-up patterns.
- **False burglar alarms.** While properly functioning alarm systems help prevent burglary, typically over 90 percent of alarm activations are false, yet consume valuable police time responding to them. Consider various methods of reducing false alarms, including shifting the responsibility for verifying that an alarm is valid to the alarm company operating the system.
- **Chronic and heavy users of police service.** Some people and businesses repeatedly summon police for relatively trivial matters, or for persistent problems that they could prevent. Lonely people who just desire some companionship sometimes call police to report fictitious or trivial matters. Social service programs or access to nonemergency alternative phone numbers such as 311 or 211 can better meet that need. Retailers with high-volume theft problems often fail to implement basic preventive measures. You

might pressure them to do so. Some taverns and nightclubs rely too heavily on police to handle chronic trouble. You should pressure them to reduce the need to call police. Consider charging heavy and chronic consumers of police service extra fees if they refuse to take steps to prevent problems.

Also, continuously look for ways to make routine police tasks more efficient. Consider the following:

- Hire paraprofessionals such as civilian community service officers or use trained citizen volunteers to handle some duties that do not require a sworn officer's expertise and authority.
- Establish a telephone (e.g., 211 and/or 311) and online reporting system for nonemergency and nonpolice matters.
- Enable citizens to file minor incident reports themselves—via mail-in, online, walk-in, or telephone reports.
- Speed up police report writing through field reporting systems or linked systems that reduce the need for duplicative data entry.

Related POP Guides:

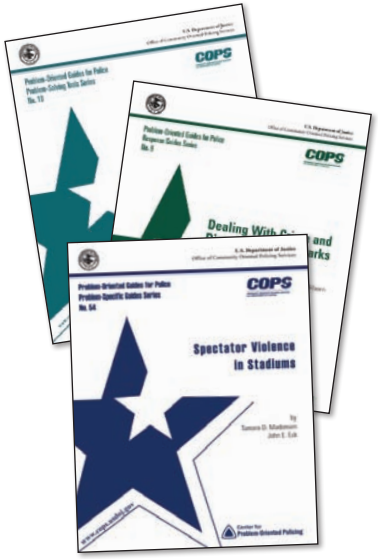
Bomb Threats in Schools

False Burglar Alarms

Misuse and Abuse of 911

Conclusion

While it is impractical to think that police and local government can prevent all crime and disorder in a community, there is a growing body of research and good practice available to you and your staff that can greatly help you toward this goal. Realizing the maximum benefit of this knowledge, however, may require that local governments, police, and citizens alike challenge some long-held assumptions about how crime can be controlled and who bears responsibility for doing so. Availing yourself and your staff—police included—of this knowledge should leave your local government and your community better prepared to respond more effectively to problems as they arise, and to prevent at least some of those problems from arising in the first place.

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Appendix: Good Police-Community Problem Solving: Stories From the Field

Summaries of the Winning Projects for the Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing, 1993–2008

The Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing recognizes outstanding police officers and police agencies—both in the United States and abroad—that engage in innovative and effective problem-solving efforts and achieve measurable success in reducing specific crime, disorder, and public safety problems. This international competition is named after the founder of problem-oriented policing, University of Wisconsin Emeritus Professor Herman Goldstein, and administered by the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing.

You can find full details of the projects summarized below on the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing web site, under the Goldstein Awards.

Santa Ana, California (1993)
Increases in Santa Ana's homeless population and crime threatened businesses and tax revenues in a commercial district. Police devised a plan to remove transients, criminals, and aggressive panhandlers from the area, reduce crime and disorder through environmental design, and educate district employees and patrons. Businesses reported increases in revenues and less crime and disorder.

Los Angeles, California (1993)
The LAPD Rampart Division's northwest section was experiencing increases in narcotic offenses, gang-related activity, robberies, assaults, citizen complaints, and calls for service. Information obtained from citizens, police officers, and calls for service revealed that five area properties generated the increase in calls for service. The police contacted the property owners and solicited their assistance in renovating, securing, or eliminating the properties, and arrested several drug dealers. Calls for service decreased dramatically, as the majority of the transients and narcotics dealers inhabiting the properties left the area.

Kansas City, Missouri (1994)

Kansas City's Creston Apartments had experienced a dramatic increase in violent crime. Residents' complaints and calls for service increased, while government officials pressured the police to respond to the growing problem. The area was draining police resources. The police examined police reports and computer printouts, revealing that the majority of the calls were related to drug sales in and around the apartments. The police cultivated information about the drug trade from the community's residents. Assistance from other government agencies enabled the police to provide 24-hour security at the apartments, which were to be torn down because they were structurally unsound. The police arrested many of the drug dealers or evicted them from the apartments. Calls for police service decreased dramatically.

Calgary, Alberta, Canada (1994)

Twenty-four bars bordered an inner-city residential community in Calgary. Over time, the area became a single-use bar destination from which businesses were forced to move due to the noise, crime, and filth. The area developed a reputation as "the place to go for a good time." Residents complained about noise, garbage, and property damage. A crime-trend analysis revealed that street robberies, auto thefts, theft and damage to vehicles, and drunken disturbances were the primary crime problems. Regulatory, architectural, and operational changes were made to solve the underlying problems and reduce crime. A task force formed to encourage communication and cooperation among businesses and the police. A community partnership also formed to help the police identify and rectify problems. Violent crimes, property crimes, weapons complaints, complaints against police officers, and assaults on police officers decreased substantially.

Georgetown, Texas (1995)

Alcohol-related crimes and accidents, litter, and ecological problems plagued Georgetown's Blue Hole Park. A narrow road to the park created traffic problems and delayed emergency vehicles responding to calls. The lack of a designated parking area led to ecological damage to the riverbank. The police enacted a zero-tolerance policy for Blue Hole Park and strictly enforced city ordinances and state laws. The cliffs, from which drunken visitors would jump and then climb back up, were located on private property, and "No Trespassing" signs were posted. Boulders were used to designate roads and prevent vehicles from parking on the riverbank. Ordinances were passed to alleviate parking and traffic problems. Blue Hole Park was transformed into a safe family park, virtually free of crime and disorder.

North Slope Borough, Alaska (1995)

Alaska's North Slope Borough was experiencing substantial problems with alcohol-related crime and disorder. The costs of alcohol abuse were damaging the entire community. The alcohol-related incidents were attributed to legal sales of alcohol in the community and were more prevalent at social functions. The public safety director and the mayor initiated a campaign to ban alcohol from the borough. Barrow's electorate then voted to ban the importation, sale, and possession of alcoholic beverages. The ban immediately and substantially decreased alcohol-related incidents.

St. Petersburg, Florida (1996)

Over 6 months, there were 30 calls for police service from one location in St. Petersburg, 14 (46 percent) of which were either "911 hang-ups" or "playing on 911." The deliberate misuse of the 911 emergency telephone system could prevent its legitimate use and unnecessarily commit police to responding to the calls. The problem location was a bank of pay telephones installed at a convenience store. School-aged children's use of the area seemed to influence the problem. Dense shrubbery concealed the telephones from the view of passing vehicles' occupants and of pedestrians. Moreover, the phones were purposely installed away from the store to discourage loitering. The shrubbery was trimmed, and the lighting was improved. The calls for service at the bank of pay phones were monitored from November 20, 1995 (the date the improvements were made) to July 1, 1996. There were no "playing on 911" calls, and "911 hang-ups" accounted for only 13 percent of total calls for service.

Sacramento, California (1996)

Four years prior, two patrol officers were selected to work exclusively in what was then Sacramento's most violent area. It consisted of 800-plus units of low-income housing owned and operated by the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency. A gang and narcotics problem created a neighborhood that effectively was a war zone. Police involved the community, used heavy enforcement, reached at-risk children, and formed partnerships to effect change. During the first 40 days, officers made 70 arrests for major narcotics violations. By 1994, police made more than 500 arrests. The partnerships formed with housing management, community associations, schools, local government, and other public and private agencies, improved the quality of life in this inner-city neighborhood. By the end of 1995, robberies were down 73 percent, felony assaults were down 74 percent, and narcotic calls were down 94 percent. A survey indicated that the residents are much more satisfied with their neighborhood.

Fresno, California (1996)
In just one year, El Dorado Park was responsible for 9 percent of the calls for service in Fresno's northeast area. The most serious problem was a juvenile gang. The gang intimidated the community's impoverished residents, who were hesitant to report crimes. The police cultivated relationships with neighborhood residents and encouraged them to report gang members and crime. The police also established the El Dorado Housing Authority, a coalition of city officials, property owners, managers, business owners, and volunteers, to discuss problems and suggest solutions. During the project's first year, calls for service increased by 9 percent, while crime decreased by 26 percent. In the second year, calls for service decreased by 32 percent, with a 53 percent reduction in crime. The area became cleaner, safer, and more desirable to live in.

Peel, Ontario, Canada (1996)
Peel's Turner-Felton Secondary School was experiencing problems with trespassers. While on school property, the trespassers would gather, loiter, and frequently engage in crime. The school was developing a reputation as being unsafe. Constable Tom McKay gathered information through interviews, crime statistics, and an examination of the school's floor and site plans. He discovered some design deficiencies that contributed to the school's disorder. Police used CPTED principles to improve the parking lot, pedestrian traffic flow, and security relying on the school's existing structure. In the three years following the changes, police occurrences at the school dropped substantially.

Glendale, California (1997)
A Glendale community experienced problems related to the activities of casual laborers, who congregated while waiting for work. Residents and business owners complained that the laborers blocked sidewalks and harassed pedestrians. They also urinated on buildings and in parking lots and left trash on the sidewalks, on streets, and in gutters. A managed site was developed where laborers could secure employment in a safe and orderly environment. A "No Solicitation" ordinance was enacted requiring laborers and employers to use the facility. The problems associated with the day laborers decreased.

Boston, Massachusetts (1998)
In Boston, youth homicide increased from 1987 to 1990 and remained high from 1991 to 1995. Police geographically mapped youth homicides, analyzed gun markets, and collected the criminal histories of youth homicide victims, revealing that most youth homicides occurred in three neighborhoods, 75 percent of the homicide victims had been arraigned for at least one offense, and Boston gangs were responsible for 60 percent of the homicides. Police targeted illicit gun trafficking, and they disrupted street drug activity by focusing on low-level street crimes, serving outstanding warrants, and cultivating informants. Firearm homicides decreased by 60 percent among victims under the age of 24.

Green Bay, Wisconsin (1999)
A Green Bay business district experienced high crime rates. An investigation revealed that only 20 people were responsible for most of the neighborhood complaints. The police led a community effort to actively enforce public ordinances, increase liquor license regulation, mobilize citizens at city council meetings, modify the environmental design, use the courts as a liaison for alcoholic treatment, and have alcohol merchants refuse to sell alcohol to chronic offenders. The business district was revitalized, and calls for service decreased substantially.

San Diego, California (2000)
Graffiti impinged on the quality of life in San Diego. Police examined the nature, extent, and location of community graffiti. Most graffiti was located on multifamily housing units and businesses, and in the vicinity of the perpetrators' home or school. The suspects were young males. The police formed a partnership with community and governmental agencies. Chronic offenders were identified, monitored by the police, and participated in bimonthly paint-outs. Volunteers were assigned to keep blocks graffiti-free. Mentoring programs were developed, and junior high school students painted murals on the most heavily tagged walls and helped police by reporting graffiti. Graffiti decreased, and youth became more involved in the community.

California Highway Patrol (2001)
Inadequate shoulders, poor signs, short passing, merging lanes leading to an "unsafe turning movement," and center line-crossing contributed to accidents in a California highway corridor. Many Spanish-speaking drivers were unfamiliar with traffic safety laws, and emergency services were difficult to access in the remote corridor. Intensified police patrol, improved emergency services delivery, and public education were used to improve safety. Both fatal and nonfatal collisions decreased.

California Highway Patrol (2002)
During the 3-year period of 1997 through 1999, in the California Highway Patrol's Central Division, there were an estimated 187 farm-labor vehicle collisions, resulting in 20 deaths and 121 injuries. The California Legislature passed two bills to enhance farm-labor vehicles' safety. The bill made seat-belt use mandatory and strengthened safety requirements. Officers inspected over 3,000 farm-labor vehicles and took more than 500 unsafe vehicles out of service. In 2000, no deaths were associated with farm-labor vehicle collisions for the first time since 1992. Farm vehicle collisions dropped 73 percent.

Oakland, California (2003)

Recurring nuisance and crime at an Oakland motel gained a police officer's attention. The motel's problems included an inordinately high volume of calls for police service, prostitution, illegal drug activity, abandoned cars, an illegal auto repair business in the motel parking lot, and room rentals to minors. Data checks, site visits, interviews, undercover surveillance, and comparisons of management practices with those of other nearby motels led police to conclude that the motel's poor management practices were allowing crime and nuisances to flourish. After meetings, the motel's management failed to resolve the motel's problems, and the police and city attorneys filed a drug nuisance-abatement lawsuit against the motel's parent corporation. After intense negotiations, the parent corporation agreed to improve its management practices and to post a $250,000 performance bond and pay $35,000 to cover the costs of the police investigation. Improvements were made to the motel's physical environment and management practices. Two years after the agreement was signed, there had been few calls for police service at the motel.

Portsmouth, Hampshire, England (2004)

The Portsmouth initiative was launched in 2003 following increases in vehicle crime, despite being a priority and focus for the Crime and Disorder Strategic Partnership in the first year of the 2002–to–2005 strategy. The initiative was based on crime-pattern analysis and evidence-based practice to combine "quick wins" with long-term sustainable actions. Key problem-solving areas explored through the initiative included maximizing forensic potential and intelligence-gathering, developing an extensive three-tier crime-reduction strategy, and initiating a high-profile media campaign. The Portsmouth City Council also worked with the police to redesign parking lots, support a proactive media campaign, and support specific initiatives in hot spot locations. Overall, Operation Cobra was responsible for a substantial decrease in vehicle crime, and the target reduction for the strategy had already been reached during its first 9 months of operation. The combination of enforcement and prevention work led to some dramatic "quick wins," but was truly underpinned by prevention work designed to produce sustainable results. The initiative demonstrated the importance of effective partnerships' working based on informed analysis and evidenced-based practice.

Douglas, Isle of Man, British Isles (2005)

Project Centurion was a multiagency project established in January 2003 in response to public concern regarding alcohol-related crimes occurring on Douglas Promenade. It aimed to reduce crime and disorder there. Analyses revealed three primary contributory factors for the problem: 1. a concentration of assaults, criminal damage, and disorder when customers left nightclubs on weekends, particularly after "pay day"; 2. a lack of late-night public transportation, which extended the waiting period for drunken customers on the promenade; and 3. a lack of facilities and activities for young people, leading to public intimidation by large gatherings of those with little to do. Responses included an increase in intelligence-led policing; the improved cooperation between the police, licensees, and Youth Service; the installation of five new taxi ranks and improved taxi-rank management; the issuance of 12 additional taxi licenses; the improved operating conditions for taxi drivers through a "Taxiwatch" initiative; and a range of events, activities, and facilities for young people. Since inception, a 33 percent reduction in the target crimes of assault, criminal damage, and public-order offenses has occurred. The project also improved working relationships between the project partners.

London, England (2006)

A Metropolitan Police Service analysis showed that illegal minicab drivers committed 212 sexual offenses between October 2001 and September 2002; 54 of these offenses entailed rape. Research revealed that unlicensed minicabs provided a cover for some of the most serious crime in London, including sexual attacks on women. The problem stemmed from a lack of public awareness relating to unlicensed cabs and their dangers, the unregulated and unenforced market of illegal cabs, and the lack of legitimate travel options at night. A partnership was formed to reduce the number of sexual attacks on women in illegal minicabs using both traditional police activity and crackdowns on illegal taxi touts; delivering improved late-night travel services and information; and raising public awareness about the risks of using illegal minicabs. Sexual assaults declined from an average of 18 women a month to 10 women a month being attacked in illegal minicabs since 2002. In addition, the percentage of women using illegal minicabs declined from 18 percent to 7 percent over this period.

Blackburn, Lancashire, England (2007)

In 2003, Blackburn's Family Intervention Program was established to work with families at risk of losing their tenancies through antisocial behavior. The Blackburn project was set up in partnership with Darwen Borough Council, Twin Valley Homes (Registered Social Landlord), Lancashire Constabulary, and NCH Children's Charity, but works closely with other landlords and partner agencies within the statutory, voluntary, and community sectors. Through these partnerships, families involved in the program were no longer a risk for antisocial behavior in the community in 51 percent of cases, and the risk had declined in a further 41 percent of cases. The reduction in evictions also achieved considerable cost savings.

Lancashire, England (2008)

An agricultural area ranked the third worst in the United Kingdom for collisions, with farm vehicles' working a patchwork of fields over 5,000 acres in different parishes being a major contributor. Analysis revealed that collisions were attributable to mud on roads, farm vehicles' emerging from fields with limited forward visibility, and farmers' not using warning signs. With collaboration, a three-point plan was developed to increase awareness, to increase education, and to form partnerships. Warning signs were tested and implemented, and a road-cleaning trailer was put to use. Environmental changes were made at collision hot spots to improve visibility. A media campaign was launched that entailed multiagency "Safety Awareness Days," a celebrity endorsement, and the distribution of leaflets and fliers. In 2007, farm vehicle collisions declined significantly for the first time in 3 years, with serious injuries reduced to zero, and slight injuries down to one. The project resulted in a substantial cost savings of $680,000.

About the Authors

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Joel Plant is a Madison, Wisconsin mayoral aide responsible for public safety and neighborhood issues. On the mayor's behalf, he liaises with the police, fire, city attorney, municipal court, building inspection, and community development agencies on operations, policy, and budget matters. Plant also manages the city's Neighborhood Resource Teams and liaises with the public schools. He was previously the city's first alcohol policy coordinator. Plant has worked as a research assistant for the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing; a crime analyst in the Tempe (Arizona) Police Department; and a teaching assistant and adjunct professor. He also has some criminal prosecution experience, ranging from serving subpoenas to trying felony cases. Plant holds a bachelor's degree from Marquette University, a master's degree from Arizona State University, and a law degree from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

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Center for Problem-Oriented Policing

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- Recommended readings in problem-oriented policing and situational crime prevention
- A complete listing of other POP Guides
- A listing of forthcoming POP Guides

Designed for police and those who work with them to address community problems, www.popcenter.org is a great resource for problem-oriented policing.

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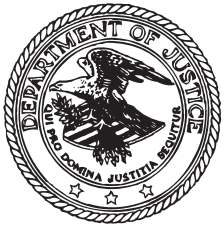

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