Colorado Springs Police Department
Standard Operating Procedure

DL-1020-03 Community and Problem-Oriented Policing
Section 1000 – Patrol Functions

Effective Date: 4/12/2021
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.01 Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to define the philosophy and goals of Community/Problem-Oriented Policing and to give an overview of procedures to be used in its implementation.

.02 Cross Reference

GO 1210 Routine Patrol Functions

.03 Definitions

Community: A group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and have a common cultural or historical heritage. This includes social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists.

Problem: A situation, condition, or issue that is yet unresolved. In a broad sense, a problem exists when an individual becomes aware of a significant difference between what actually is and what is desired.

.04 Procedure

Community policing, or neighborhood policing, is a policing strategy and philosophy based on the belief that community partnership, interaction, and support of law enforcement will reduce crime and lower the level of fear and disorder in the community. Inherent in community policing is the recognition that the police cannot be solely responsible for the level of crime in a community. Members of the community must also take responsibility for influencing conditions that affect their own safety and security.

While community/neighborhood policing is likely to be more frequently used by personnel assigned to the patrol bureau, all department members should use this process to address problems they become aware of.

Supervisors and managers should emphasize problem solving, and the results of problem solving efforts should be documented in monthly reports, or other approved locations.

Problem Solving

The primary strategy of Community/Problem-Oriented Policing is problem-solving. Community/Problem-Oriented Policing philosophy holds that it is not sufficient to only respond to calls-for-service and handle the specific situation. Rather, attention should be directed towards finding a permanent solution to a problem by identifying and correcting the underlying conditions that created the need for the call in the first place.

The problem-solving process developed to implement problem-oriented policing consists of a four-step, decision-making model (referred to as the SARA model) that consists of the following steps:

1. **S**canning
2. **A**nalysis
3. **R**esponse
4. **A**ssessment

Scanning

Scanning is the process of actively looking for and identifying problems that affect the level of crime and disorder in a community. It may be something as clear-cut as identifying a sudden pattern of criminal activity in a neighborhood. It may be something as obscure as identifying the causes for deteriorating property conditions in an area, which sends the message to criminals that a given neighborhood is particularly vulnerable to criminal activity.

Analysis

Analysis is the gathering of information about the problem in order to thoroughly understand it. In this step, personnel gather information about the people associated with the problem (e.g. victims, perpetrators, third parties associated with the incident(s), the physical setting of the incident(s), its social context, the duration, and sequence of events, and the immediate results of the incident). Finally, an analysis is made of the community and agency to the incident. Such a process often requires personnel to identify resources available to other government entities/community partners. Personnel should not be limited to the department's resources.

When formulating the analysis of the problem, it is necessary to understand these questions:

1. What is the underlying problem?
2. What will change if the problem is solved?
3. What will happen if nothing is done?

Response

Response is the implementation of a plan in an attempt to eliminate or substantially reduce the problem identified. When devising a response, department members are encouraged to consider as many potential solutions as possible, to include new solutions and not just ones that have been previously used. This should include involving organizations, community members, and individuals outside of the department, as well as knowledgeable peers and supervisors in the development of solutions.

Assessment

Assessment allows officers to determine if the response is working. If the response is not achieving the desired outcome, personnel should consider conducing an additional analysis so a more effective response can be developed. If the department member's response was the reason the problem was eliminated or reduced, personnel can take credit for the success of a particular response.

Impacting the Problem

Using the SARA model, personnel are encouraged to undertake activities that may impact the problem. While not intended to be an all-inclusive list, the following activities have proven effective in other problem solving processes:

Follow-Up Investigations

Neighborhood follow-up investigations provide an excellent opportunity to contact members of the public, not only to identify sources of information related to specific criminal incidents, but also to identify other problems within the neighborhood.

The process of asking for information from potential witnesses can provide a wealth of information from community members as to underlying conditions within a neighborhood. Personnel should attune themselves to hear not only the information they are requesting, but also other information citizens provide about underlying conditions and problems within the neighborhood.

Park, Walk, and Talk

While the radio-dispatched patrol car is the most efficient way to deliver police services to a large population spread out across a large geographic area, it is not without great social costs. The exclusive use of vehicles to conduct patrols means that officers have a tendency to become isolated from the public they serve, only coming in contact with them after a call has been made regarding a crime.

Since vehicle patrol typically produces inconsistent results, personnel are encouraged to regularly park their cars during uncommitted time and conduct foot patrol. Foot patrol will allow personnel to become acquainted with members of various communities within their regularly assigned patrol areas and within identified crime hot spots and enforcement areas.

This practice can be used in residential neighborhoods, business districts, or as a part of a specific directed activity (e.g., crime patterns, traffic problems, or disturbances). Park, walk and talk can also be used to search out members of various communities, churches, or other identifiable neighborhood or business focal points, so as to become acquainted with residents and their concerns.

When making contacts, personnel are encouraged to provide residents with their business cards so that the officer can be contacted personally regarding non-emergency problems. This practice fosters a sense that department personnel are members of the community, and are accountable for being responsive. In turn, an increased level of trust and loyalty to what is perceived by members of the public to be "their" department representative results. Since most crimes are solved as the result of information provided by citizens, policing effectiveness will be increased.

Neighborhood Surveys

A neighborhood survey form was developed to allow for the easy retrieval of information that is typically held by community members, in the false belief that the police are already aware of the problem. Neighborhood survey forms are comprehensive, yet easy to complete.

Officers are encouraged to distribute neighborhood surveys during uncommitted time, as part of park, walk and talk activities, during neighborhood watch meetings, as part of a directed activity for a problem area, or any other time the use of the survey is determined to be appropriate. Upon completion of a Neighborhood Survey Form, the form may be returned to the appropriate division in person or by mail.

The personnel responsible for the problem-solving project or those responsible for distributing the neighborhood survey forms, will evaluate the survey results and refer the information to other partners. Referrals may include, but are not limited to:

- Problem-solving committees

- Sector officers
- Other city departments (e.g., Zoning, Traffic Engineering, Forestry, Parks, etc.)
- All other resources listed within the department's intranet page

Any research conducted, on substantive problems identified because of responses to neighborhood surveys, must be thoroughly documented as a method of proper assessment.

Community Groups

Much like the benefit of conducting neighborhood follow-up, meeting with and fostering positive relationships with the city's community groups can be an effective way to learn about problems that affect groups. Information provided by these groups (e.g., neighborhood watch groups, leadership groups, etc.) may be beneficial to identify new problems and assist in developing new policing strategies.

There are additional programs within the department that support the community/problem-oriented policing philosophy by increasing communications between various communities and the department. Some examples include:

- Community Relations Officers
- Crime Prevention Officers
- Downtown Area Response Team (DART)
- Homeless Outreach Team (HOT)
- Strategic Investigations Unit (SIU)

Resource Identification

When identifying resources for use in solving a specific problem, members should not limit themselves solely to those services provided by the department, or even solely by public service agencies. As representatives of one of the most visible public service agencies in the community, members should adopt the notion that they are "service brokers" for the public.

Information Sharing

Keeping in mind the goals of community/problem-oriented policing philosophy, personnel from throughout the department should make an effort to keep open lines of communication so they may serve as a resource to the other in problem-solving efforts. For example, investigators should be alert to the emergence of patterns of criminal activity identified by reports taken by patrol officers. Conversely, while conducting follow-up investigations, investigators may gather information about community problems, which can be shared with shift lieutenants for dissemination to patrol officers.

Support Functions

The department has a number of support functions that free officers from a number of routine duties so officers have additional time to engage in activities that support the community/problem-oriented policing philosophy. These include the community service officers (CSOs), the direct line reporting program, and each division's police service representatives (PSRs).

Documenting Efforts

Documentation of problem-solving efforts will determined by the division commander, or individual shift lieutenants for each shift. Lieutenants are expected to inform division commanders of significant problems identified, and the efforts taken to alleviate the problems, in the format preferred by the division commander (monthly reports, crime stats meeting, etc.).

Attachments

CSPD Neighborhood Survey