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Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

COPS INNOVATIONS

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
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Promising Strategies from the Field

Spotlight on Sheriffs

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Acknowledgments

The COPS Innovations *Promising Strategies from the Field* series is a collaborative effort among the Institute for Law and Justice, local law enforcement agencies, and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office). At the COPS Office, Amy Schapiro managed the project and Noah Teates and Kelly Tapp edited the document for publication.

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Promising Strategies from the Field: Spotlight on Sheriffs

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Table of Contents

Section	Page
Letter from the Director	***iii***
Introduction	***1***
Innovative Uses of COPS Funding	***3***
Orange County Gangs Up on Gang Violence	3
Leon County Makes MORE Time for Community Policing	9
Rogers County Hauls Down Trailer Theft	13
Sacramento Communicates MORE Effectively	17
Mohave SROs Go Back to School	21
East Baton Rouge Takes It To The Streets	25
Conclusion	***27***
TellCOPS	***28***

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office) is pleased to continue this new COPS Innovations: *Promising Strategies from the Field* series featuring COPS grantees from around the country. As a former sheriff, I'm pleased to be able to give you this special edition of the new series that focuses specifically on how sheriffs across the nation are leveraging COPS grants to advance community policing and make their communities safer.

COPS programs fund efforts to make communities safer by adding community policing officers and deputies to our streets and schools, investing in crime-fighting technologies, supporting innovative policing practices, and fostering strong problem-solving partnerships. This series highlights community policing practices among COPS grantees. COPS hopes that sharing these approaches will allow other jurisdictions to learn from, replicate, and improve upon these innovative community policing strategies.

The sheriffs' offices represented in this edition of *Promising Strategies from the Field* are just a sampling of the 16,000 grants COPS has awarded to sheriffs' offices since 1994. COPS grants not only help reduce violent crime, they also help law enforcement address persistent quality of life issues.

This COPS Innovations series is one more way in which the COPS Office reaches out to the field to provide information and resources that will benefit your agency. Please note that the *Promising Strategies from the Field* project is ongoing, and we welcome hearing from you about your agency's accomplishments. To do so, please email my staff at TellCOPS@usdoj.gov. All of us at COPS appreciate the opportunity to share our grantees' successes and help law enforcement keep every community in America safe.

Carl R. Peed
Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Introduction

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) has invested more than $9 billion to implement and enhance community policing efforts in tribal, state, and local jurisdictions since 1994. Over those eight years, COPS issued more than 35,500 grants to more than 12,800 agencies across the United States. These grants tackle important and immediate needs of communities across America through 27 innovative grant programs. COPS' Making Officer Redeployment Effective (MORE) grants help agencies increase the number of officers on the street who can engage in community policing activities. The COPS in Schools (CIS) grant program places law enforcement professionals in schools to work on a variety of issues and foster community partnerships. COPS has provided nearly $6 billion in assistance to tribal, state, and local law enforcement agencies through these three programs alone.

Other COPS grant programs focus more narrowly on specific issues. For example, COPS funded agencies facing significant gang-related problems in their communities in 1996. COPS funds helped small communities retain COPS-funded officers through the Small Community Grant Program in 1998. COPS Tribal Resources Grant Program (TRGP) has helped tribal law enforcement agencies keep their communities safer since 1999.

COPS funding has made a difference. By working to put more law enforcement officers on the street, the COPS Office increased the number of officers actively engaged in community policing activities. According to the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics Survey (LEMAS), about 22,000 officers practiced community policing in 1997. That number rose more than five-fold by 1999. Other research conducted by the University of Nebraska (2001) suggests that COPS hiring programs have helped to make a significant reduction in local crime rates in cities with populations greater than 10,000.

In addition to these grant programs, COPS works hard to deliver community policing training and technical assistance to America's state, local, and tribal law enforcement professionals and the communities they serve. COPS funds a national network of Regional Community Policing Institutes, providing innovative community policing training to law enforcement officers, other government agencies, and community members. More than 216,000 people have taken advantage of this training. COPS also funds the Community Policing Consortium, which is made up of five of the leading police organizations in the U.S. and has provided technical assistance to more than 5,000 law enforcement agencies across the country.

The stories that follow highlight the projects of six sheriffs' offices who found innovative uses for COPS funding. As more agencies report back on their progress in implementing COPS-funded community policing strategies, this series will showcase those efforts. The COPS Office hopes that in presenting them that others may benefit from these experiences, and that other agencies can learn from, replicate, and improve on these promising strategies.

Innovative Uses of COPS Funding

Orange County Gangs Up on Gang Violence

A 1996 COPS grant helped the Orange County Chiefs and Sheriffs' Association (OCCSA) assess its response to a surge in gang violence. Orange County, California became aware of an escalating gang problem in the early 1990s. The OCCSA established a countywide, multi-agency Gang Strategy Steering Committee to respond to this problem in 1992. This Committee's goal was to determine the extent, nature, and distribution of gang crime in Orange County. One key element of that project was the development of a centralized database known as the Gang Incident Tracking System (GITS) in 1993, to which county law enforcement agencies report all gang-related incidents. A 1996 COPS grant helped OCCSA partner with the University of California, Irvine (UCI) to assess this response by evaluating both the Committee's effectiveness and the GITS database's usefulness as a law enforcement management and research tool. The project began with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that clearly identified the mutual goals and responsibilities of all participants.

Orange County's gang-related problems were far reaching and ranged from prosecutable crimes to analysis and monitoring difficulties. Gang-related crime was increasing both in terms of frequency and violence, and law enforcement lacked sufficiently detailed information about the nature, extent, and location of gang crime throughout the county. It was also difficult to maintain consistent, uniform reporting of gang crime by 23 law enforcement agencies in 31 cities and unincorporated areas, and even more difficult to track changes in gang crime over time and across jurisdictional boundaries. Perhaps the most significant issue was the lack of analytical resources and expertise to fully evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of new gang prevention and suppression programs.

Anti-Gang Initiative

The Anti-Gang Initiative was created to help law enforcement agencies address gang-related violence, drug problems, and fear in their cities and neighborhoods. COPS provided funding to 15 jurisdictions in 1996 to help them develop innovative programs and strategies that included building partnerships between communities and schools, using geographic information systems to identify gang hotspots, and enforcing curfew and truancy regulations.

A COPS grant helped the OCCSA address the following key project objectives:

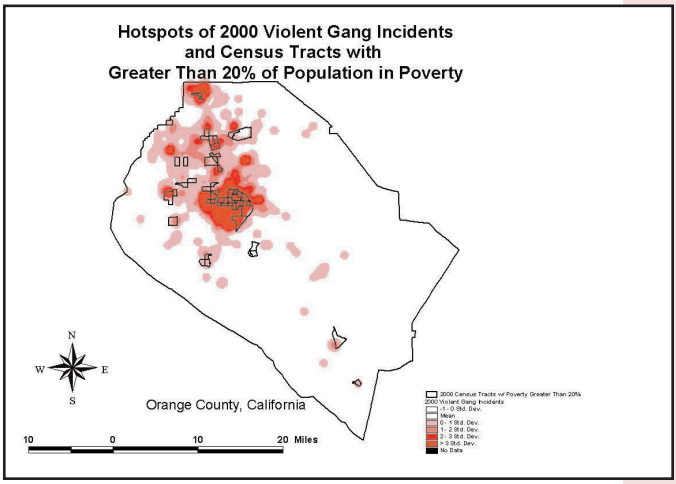
- Determine how completely, accurately, and reliably Orange County law enforcement agencies measure illegal gang activity
- Identify ways to improve collection of data on gangs and gang incidents
- Increase the usefulness of this information for community policing efforts
- Analyze GITS data to better understand the nature and distribution of gang incidents
- Use GITS data to test the effectiveness of various gang suppression and prevention efforts
- Increase the ability of law enforcement and community agencies to more effectively coordinate their work to control gang violence

COPS funds helped UCI meet each of these goals. UCI's Focused Research Group on Gangs is a team of faculty and graduate student researchers that provided the skills and tools to analyze GITS data. UCI supplied the computer hardware and software needed to analyze the GITS data, performed that analysis, and helped OCCSA prepare reports of regional and individual agency data. It also advised OCCSA on the interpretation, analysis, and policy implications of GITS data and applied geographical information systems (GIS) analysis to GITS data.

Approach/Methods

UCI's Focused Research Group on Gangs began by assessing the accuracy and reliability of the GITS database. Every law enforcement agency in the county already reported information on gang incidents monthly to the centralized database. UCI researchers initially sought to ensure that definitions of gang membership, gang activity, gang-relatedness of incidents, and other categories for reporting gang activity were being applied in the same way by all agencies. They conducted regular visits to all 23 county law enforcement agencies to ensure complete and accurate gang incident data collection and reviewed the process by which each law enforcement agency collected GITS data. Researchers also interviewed law enforcement supervisors and went on 50 hours of ride-alongs with eight gang units to observe gang incident data collection in the field. These experiments resulted in a newly revised GITS data form that was adopted in 1996.

UCI researchers then used GIS to translate GITS data into crime maps that showed the relationships between the social, demographic, ecological, and geographical correlates of gang activity. They used these maps to determine the location of "hot spots" of gang activity in Orange County. This information helped law enforcement agencies judge whether they were targeting the most volatile areas of their jurisdictions. Finally, the UCI researchers evaluated the usefulness of the GITS database for assessing the effectiveness of law enforcement responses to gang activity in Orange County.



Results

UCI's assessment of GITS led to several revisions of the data reporting form that improved data quality and usefulness. Researchers found that reporting errors were infrequent overall, but when they did occur, they tended to under-report gang incidents rather than over-report them, as some critics had claimed. For example, contrary to concerns voiced by some activists at the start of the project, it did not appear that law enforcement professionals routinely labeled all young adult males who dressed in what seemed to be gang attire as gang members. Instead, the assessment concluded that officers and deputies were quite sophisticated in making gang determinations. With regard to serious violent gang crime, it appeared that GITS data generally were as reliable as the police reports from which they are derived.

In addition, the GITS database appeared to have great potential for guiding gang control policies and tactics. Analyses of GITS data proved highly effective for determining hot spots of gang activity in Orange County, and for evaluating the impact of gang enforcement efforts. In contrast to traditional methods of gang enforcement assessment, such as examining records for changes in arrests, prosecutions, convictions, and sentencing, the GITS database makes several more sophisticated methods of analysis possible. A gang enforcement team's efforts against a particular gang, for example, can be examined. Gang enforcement

teams can determine not only the annual numbers of incidents committed by specific gangs, but the nature and seriousness of those incidents as well. Finally, the countywide GITS data enables enforcement teams to track a particular gang's activities across jurisdictions. This is important because targeting a gang in one city may affect its level of activity in other areas.

All partners continue to work together on gang enforcement issues long after COPS project funding ended in 1998. GITS data have been used to develop novel gang civil abatement approaches, analyze the effectiveness of curfews, and study how gang incidents should be defined and how best to predict where gang crime will occur. Team members integrated GITS into the Orange County node of the statewide CalGangs database in July of 2001.

Since the activities of street gangs seldom conform to the abstract jurisdictional boundaries, effective measures to prevent or suppress gang crime often must involve many different agencies, each of which has its own goals, political imperatives, and ways of doing business. Orange County's Gang Incident Tracking System shows that a regional data-sharing system can be developed and maintained, but that doing so requires substantial forethought, commitment, and persistence on the part of all participants. COPS is pleased to support efforts like Orange County's that demonstrate so clearly the effectiveness of community policing strategies.

Leon County Makes MORE Time for Community Policing

A 1998 COPS MORE grant gave the Leon County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) the resources to improve the efficiency of its deputies so that more time could be spent on community policing. Leon County is home to the city of Tallahassee, Florida's state capital. Tallahassee is also the county seat of Leon County and the county's only incorporated city. The population of Leon County's 702 square miles increased by almost 25 percent to almost 240,000 during the 1990s. The large geographic area and increasing population encouraged the LCSO to seek ways to maximize the efficiency of its deputies. A COPS MORE grant helped the LCSO to do precisely that.

Making Officer Redeployment Effective (MORE)

MORE grants cover up to 75 percent of the cost of technology acquisition, equipment purchases, or support personnel salaries. MORE grants give American law enforcement professionals tools that allow them to spend more time on community policing activities. COPS MORE grants have provided more than 4,500 law enforcement agencies in excess of one billion dollars to redeploy law enforcement professionals into community policing activities since 1995.

LCSO staff determined that installing mobile data computers (MDCs) in patrol vehicles would save deputies time that could then be used to improve community policing efforts. The LCSO identified three primary objectives.

The LCSO needed to:

1) acquire a system that was sound, reliable, and expandable,
2) deploy MDCs capable of connecting with local, state, and national databases, and
3) effectively disseminate information to deputies in their vehicles so that they would no longer need to commute to and from daily roll calls at the main office.

Approach/Methods

The LCSO carefully researched the technology surrounding mobile data terminals by making site visits to law enforcement agencies throughout Florida, searching the Internet for relevant information, and reviewing technical periodicals. Researchers studied the pros and cons of existing operational systems to avoid making mistakes. The Sheriff's Office concluded that MDCs are a natural and beneficial progression of technology as applied to law enforcement communication. LCSO technologists selected the system best suited to their situation and prepared for implementation.

LCSO staff then worked with information technology employees at the state and local levels to set up inquiry access to the Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS), the Florida Crime Information Center (FCIC), and the National Crime Information Center (NCIC). The LCSO found that as with any large project, the emphasis and direction changed

several times before final implementation. Project team members found that the plan improved each time it was revisited, and credit much of the project's success to its flexibility and exhaustive research phase.

Results

COPS MORE funding allowed the Leon County Sheriff's Office to purchase a base system for wireless communications that was sound, reliable, and expandable. The Sheriff's Office started with 81 MDCs and has successfully expanded the system in the following years. The MDCs have not only proven to be efficient, but also have made both deputies and their communities safer by giving deputies better access to criminal justice databases in the field. Information like that can help deputies respond most effectively to a given situation. MDCs also make it easier for deputies to track and respond to community problems.

The LCSO tracked the hours saved by the MDCs with its computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system. During the grant period the LCSO charted and reviewed this information on a monthly basis. MDCs allowed the LCSO to redeploy the equivalent of 15 full-time deputies per year into the communities they serve. Deputies spent their newfound time in the community in a variety of ways, including walking into businesses to visit with owners and patrons, talking with citizens in community parks, and attending community events to speak on crime prevention or to provide a law enforcement presence. The MDC system continues to grow well after the expiration of the COPS grant. The efficiency improvements MDCs offer allow deputies to spend much more time working directly in their communities.

COPS MORE grants help law enforcement agencies purchase and implement the technologies they need to improve their communication abilities and better serve their communities. The Leon County Sheriff's Office was able to do just that as new technology allowed deputies to spend more time practicing community policing in the communities they serve. This kind of crime-fighting technology helps keep America safe as the challenges to law enforcement continue to evolve.

Rogers County Hauls Down Trailer Theft

A 1997 Problem-Solving Partnership grant helped Oklahoma's Rogers County Sheriff's Office reduce trailer thefts. Theft of general livestock, horse, utility, and flatbed trailers increased significantly in Rogers County during the mid-1990s. This problem adversely impacted the livelihood and recreation of area residents and businesses. Rogers County Sheriff's Office field deputies began to monitor the problem when they noticed unusually high numbers of trailer theft calls for service. Thieves claimed more than 37 trailers during the first eight months of 1996 and only three were ever recovered. These thefts resulted in average losses of $2,500, but losses were as high as $35,000.

Approach/Methods

The COPS Problem-Solving Partnerships grant allowed Rogers County deputies to review crime reports, conduct site visits to theft locations, speak with victims, and conduct a community survey. Theft reports from 1996 and 1997 indicated that thefts of privately-owned equipment usually occurred between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m., while thefts of commercially-owned equipment usually occurred during the early morning hours–between midnight and 4 a.m. In 95 percent of the cases, the theft locations were remote but easily accessible to one of the county's four major highways.

Deputies discovered during site visits to theft locations and interviews with victims that most trailers were stolen from open areas not visible from residential dwellings. These locations proved to be tempting to thieves: they offered no means to secure a trailer, and little opportunity for natural surveillance. Stolen trailers had usually been chained and padlocked to the ground or a tree, which could be overcome with a common bolt-cutter. A random community survey of 200 Rogers County residents indicated that while most citizens had not been victims of trailer theft, they were interested in protecting their property and recovering it in the event of a theft.

While trailers might not seem concealable, it is extremely difficult to determine legitimate ownership by their appearance. Stolen trailers are very difficult to find at a private sale or auction in large part due to lack of legislated licensing or registration requirements. The small number of trailers recovered led deputies to believe that they were being repainted and sold at regional auctions.

Rogers County implemented a four-pronged response strategy in March 1998.

- **Educating the Community:** Sheriff's deputies attended meetings with residents and members of organizations such as the Cattleman's Association to make the community aware of the

increase in trailer theft, identify at-risk locations, and discuss how new tracking and monitoring equipment could help prevent thefts.

Harnessing New Technologies: The Rogers County Sheriff's Office offers the installation of tracking and monitoring microchips into at-risk property for a low fee. Deputies install rice-grain-sized microchip tracking devices into trailers at public clinics for only $35 per vehicle. Once installed in a trailer, these microchip devices permanently identify the owner's name and a description of the property, which is then entered in a police database.

Visually Archiving At-Risk Properties: Deputies also take photographs of microchip-equipped trailers and equipment. This allows deputies to visually confirm the identification of trailers registered in the database and immediately place pictures of stolen property onto the Internet when they are stolen. It also allows deputies to dispatch information quickly to neighboring law enforcement agencies, auction organizers, and community members.

Publicizing the Project to Potential Offenders: The Sheriff's Office also warned trailer thieves and potential buyers of stolen goods through an extended media campaign. One press release stated, "if a trailer is found in the possession of a person other than the owner without the owner's permission, that person will be going to jail." This almost immediately detracted from the value of a potentially stolen trailers.

Problem-Solving Partnership (PSP)

PSP grants promote partnerships between law enforcement and other community-based groups to respond to persistent local crime and disorder problems. PSP grants employ problem-solving approaches along the SARA model, and have responded to auto theft, prostitution, vandalism, and others problems. COPS awarded approximately $37 million in grant funds to 454 jurisdictions in 47 states to implement Problem-Solving Partnership projects in 1996.

The Rogers County Sheriff's Office worked closely during this project with members of the Cattleman's Association, Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association, Quarter Horse Association, and the Farm Bureau, which serves as an insurance underwriter in many rural areas, to learn more about the financial and emotional costs of trailer theft. Sheriff's deputies also worked with the members of these organizations to spread the word of the Office's response to the problem and to seek their participation in the microchip program. National Microchip Horse Registry technicians installed the microchips in the trailers, and the mass media helped publicize the program throughout the state of Oklahoma.

Results

Trailer theft dropped 69 percent during the first year of the response program. Trailer theft was virtually eliminated in Rogers County shortly thereafter. Only one trailer was stolen in 2000 and 2001, and the owner of the stolen trailer had not participated in the Rogers County theft reduction program. The program has saved residents and the insurance companies serving Rogers County an estimated $300,000 since 1998.

Community participation in the program is strong–there is currently a list of over 100 trailers waiting to be registered and tagged. The success of the trailer program has led the Rogers County Sheriff's Office to expand the installation of microchips to include tractors, recreational vehicles, and all-terrain vehicles. Demand for the program is so high that the Sheriff's Office is working to purchase a mobile microchip installation unit so that owners will no longer need to transport their equipment to central locations for tagging. This mobile installation unit will greatly increase the number of participants in the program and the types of property it can protect.

Collaborative partnerships and problem-solving projects are two core elements of community policing. The Rogers County Sheriff's Office proved once again how effective community policing strategies can be–Rogers County deputies essentially eliminated the targeted crime problem in a single year. COPS is pleased to support agencies like the Rogers County Sheriff's Office as they work to keep their communities safer through community policing.

Sacramento Communicates MORE Effectively

A series of COPS MORE grants enables the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department (SSD) to acquire and deploy several new technologies. The SSD serves a population of 1.2 million residents in northern California. As the county's population and calls for service grew steadily over the past two decades, the SSD did not keep pace with technologies to evaluate service needs and help deputies perform their duties. The department expanded its community policing program in 2000 by decentralizing the patrol division to six district station houses, each located in the community it serves. Deputies were trained to work with neighborhoods to solve recurring problems, but they often did not have the necessary resources.

Making Officer Redeployment Effective (MORE)

MORE grants cover up to 75 percent of the cost of technology acquisition, equipment purchases, or support personnel salaries. MORE grants give American law enforcement professionals tools that allow them to spend more time on community policing activities. COPS MORE grants have provided more than 4,500 law enforcement agencies in excess of one billion dollars to redeploy law enforcement professionals into community policing activities since 1995.

The department's aging computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system required considerable time and funding to maintain. Even worse, data entry and retrieval for CAD and the record management system (RMS) were independent and not user-friendly. District deputies found it difficult to access crime and calls for service (CFS) information. Crime analysis was available, but not in a timely manner. It could take days for district deputies to receive feedback from a written request for information, making it difficult for them to identify recurring neighborhood problems. Older mobile terminals had limited capabilities. The SSD believed that better integrated information systems would greatly improve its service to citizens.

The SSD determined to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the department by integrating new technologies. The SSD selected crime-fighting and time-saving technologies to give deputies more time to partner with residents to resolve neighborhood problems. The new technologies enabled the SSD to:

- Upgrade information technology and booking systems
- Reduce response times to calls for service
- Analyze the deployment of personnel within geographic boundaries of patrol districts
- Provide deputies immediate access to CAD, DMV, and criminal databases
- Offer Supervisors more effective tools to manage patrol personnel and calls for service

- Improve access to crime analysis information for deputies
- Deploy integrated portable information technologies

Approaches/Methods

COPS MORE grants in 1995, 1996, 1998, and 2001 enables the SSD to acquire and deploy several new technologies. The SSD used 1995 COPS MORE funding to purchase off-the-shelf resource optimization software. This software helped the SSD reevaluate the boundaries of its six patrol districts and the number of personnel assigned to each district station house. Station houses are full-service facilities that house representatives from a variety of public safety organizations, including a District Attorney for Community Prosecution and the California Highway Patrol. These agencies work together with residents to resolve neighborhood problems.

The SSD partnered with several organizations to implement its grants. The Institute of Social Research at California State University, Sacramento conducted a community survey to evaluate public perceptions of such issues as crime, fear of crime, and the SSD's performance. The Remote Access Network Board for Sacramento County (RAN Board), authorized by the California Penal Code, contributed more than $850,000 toward the matching funds portions of the SSD's COPS MORE projects.

COPS awarded the SSD its largest MORE grant in 1998 for the purchase of 230 Mobile Data Computers (MDC'S). These MDC's provided deputies access to all CAD information and instantaneous responses from the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and criminal justice database inquires. This grant also funded the CAD and Records systems and an upgraded wireless network.

A 2001 grant is currently funding the SSD's deployment of 170 personal digital assistants (PDAs) and the development of a super query that will gather information from multiple county systems. The PDAs will be capable of transferring communications and data-sharing to deputies to MDC's in their vehicles. CDMA technology will link MDCs with the agency's local area network (LAN), providing deputies access to email,

training calendars, departmental policies and procedures, and other departmental resources.

Results

COPS MORE funding led the SSD into the 21st century technologically and greatly improved its community policing and problem-solving capabilities. The resource optimization software helped redesign patrol's geographic boundaries and the number of personnel assigned to each of the six districts at a time when the department was expanding its community policing program.

The SSD staff reports a high level of satisfaction: deputies appreciated how much easier new technologies made their jobs. MDC technology helped reduce response time and redeploy a great deal of time to community policing activities Access to CAD and crime analysis gives deputies and other agencies working at community resource centers the information and tools they need to partner with neighborhood residents to solve problems. The SSD estimates that the MDC inquiries alone save an estimated equivalent of more than 14 full time deputies annually. Investigators also report saving time by using laptop computers at crime scenes. Improved crime analysis and CAD data gives deputies more accurate information to educate community members at the monthly community policing meetings.

These overall time-savings allows the department to increase the number of the SSD's sworn staff deployed into community policing activities, such as working with high school students and implementing problem-oriented policing projects. The SSD reports that its efforts to improve its services to the community are evidenced in the research conducted by the Institute of Social Research at California State University, Sacramento. Current research shows the department enjoys high public approval ratings.

The SSD shows how COPS MORE grants can help American law enforcement agencies improve their communication capabilities and more effectively engage the communities they serve. As local law enforcement faces new challenges, quick and effective communication is imperative. Crime-fighting technologies help agencies like the SSD better serve their jurisdictions through community policing.

Mohave SROs Go Back to School

A 1999 COPS in Schools grant helped Arizona's Mohave County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) bring two school resource officers (SROs) to its two local high schools. Mohave County consists of 13,500 square miles of essentially rural areas that include ranches, farms, and tribal lands, and 90 full-time sworn members of the MCSO serve more than 60,000 citizens.

The tragedy at Columbine prompted the MCSO to assign patrol officers to each of the two high schools within its jurisdiction, Kingman and River Valley. The students' positive response to the officers led the school districts and individual high schools to request that the arrangement be made permanent. SROs were the most effective response to persistent problems of school code violations, disorderly conduct, criminal activity, unauthorized individuals on campus, and bomb threats.

COPS in Schools (CIS)

CIS grants enable law enforcement agencies to hire law enforcement professionals to work in and around primary and secondary schools. CIS has helped to hire and train nearly 6,000 School Resource Officers (SROs) since 1999. COPS has allocated a total of $672 million to help hire SROs and an additional $21 million to train SROs and the school administrators with whom they work.

SROs were given considerable flexibility in this project. Mohave SROs focus on identifying and addressing emerging trends before they become problems. By fostering a better understanding of the SRO role as both educator and law enforcement professional, the SROs built strong working relationships with both students and staff that enabled them to more quickly resolve problems. Patrol officers now refer all school-related calls for service to SROs. SROs are solely responsible for incidents that occur on campus, on buses, at bus stops, and in areas traveled between home and school.

Responses

SROs needed to focus first on increasing school safety. Each officer developed a safety plan with his respective site council, which consists of teachers, students, parents, and school administrators. The safety plan assessed both the school climate and the entire campus, using such tools as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), aerial photography, and interviews. The SROs developed safety products like crisis kits and emergency procedure pocket cards, which offer guidance in case of evacuation.

The SRO at Kingman High School created and monitors a "Silent Witness" telephone hotline program. This hotline has helped resolve criminal acts including several bomb threats. Kingman's SRO also worked to place metal detectors at the school entrance, require students and staff to wear visible identification cards, change the school crosswalks to create one main entryway onto school grounds, and construct a student checkpoint. All students must enter through the main gate and present proper identification before proceeding to the front doors. Backpacks, coats, and persons are examined with metal detectors when special situations–such as bomb threats or reports of weapons–warrant.

The Kingman SRO works with the Robotics Club, which took third place in a national competition two years in a row. He also helped create a tobacco cessation program–the first of its kind in Arizona. According to the program, the SRO must once a year teach a class during the school day to inform students about the dangers of smoking tobacco. Students caught smoking while on school grounds can participate in a five-week diversion program to avoid the normal three-day suspension. The University of Arizona partnered with Kingman to develop and mail out a tobacco awareness and education package once a week for five weeks to the student's home. The students must review and complete a test covering the materials. The SRO monitors the program, and students who do not complete the program receive the three-day suspension.

River Valley's SRO is also one of the school's football coach. He developed and chaperones a "Safe and Sober Night" graduation ceremony. As part of Safe and Sober Night, the SRO receives donations from local businesses, such as a used car, dinners, manicures, and tuxedo rentals, which are raffled off before the event.

The SROs also teach classes in the high schools on subjects like Driver's Education, Criminal Justice, and Careers in Law Enforcement, and they address community groups through presentations and safety programs. The officers have completed training from the National Association of School Resource Officers (Basic, Advanced, and Supervision certification), the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, and are state certified law enforcement trainers. Outside of the school calendar year, the SROs assist in patrol in addition to addressing youth problems.

Results

Interviews with students show a reduction of the fear of crime on school campuses. The SROs have freed up time for patrol officers, since SROs handle all calls on campus, can make arrests, and follow up school related incidents initially handled by patrol. At first, patrol officers were reluctant to rely on SROs, but the difference they make with the youth and the community earns them increasing levels of acceptance and trust. The two officers chosen for SRO detail were graduates of the high schools they now serve. Their sergeant suggests that the officers have a deep sense of commitment and pride in part because of this.

Staff, students, parents, and other community members also increasingly trust the police thanks to the SROs' work. The SROs have also helped forge a stronger working relationship with Juvenile Probation. This has led to better case management and an ability to more effectively identify and intervene with students who are on probation or have been on probation and are still struggling to comply with school rules and policies.

Innovative policing programs like the smoking cessation program and the Safe and Sober night show how community policing can make a difference in the lives of America's youth. Mohave's SROs–and thousands of others like them around the country–demonstrate one way community policing efforts reduce crime and the fear of crime nationwide.

East Baton Rouge Takes It To The Streets

A COPS hiring grant enabled the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office to expand its forces to meet the needs of its rapidly growing population in 1997. After the first COPS hiring grant helped the Sheriff's Office add 25 deputies in 1997, a 1998 COPS MORE grant provided funding to arm them with new mobile laptop computers, making them even more effective.

Hiring Grants

Various COPS programs help law enforcement agencies hire officers to implement or expand community policing efforts. COPS hiring grants have helped 12,800 American law enforcement agencies hire more than 116,500 new community policing officers by distributing close to $7.1 billion dollars since 1994.

The new COPS-funded personnel faced tough challenges. The growth of major businesses and subdivisions outside the city limits had a negative effect on the Parish's economic viability and, ultimately, on the city's crime rate and overall quality of life. Increasing calls for service kept existing supervisors from devoting full attention to their roles as supervisors and trainers.

Making matters worse, the volume of calls soon overburdened the existing dispatch system. Call overflows frequently required supervisors to answer non-emergency requests for service. New line personnel worked to deploy community policing teams to saturate problem areas, dismantle illegal activities, and establish Neighborhood Watch programs in the community. These teams faced persistent crime problems including drug trafficking and the illegal manufacturing of controlled substances in public housing.

The East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office partnered with community members and civic and business associations to help launch community policing strategies. New COPS-funded personnel gave the Office the resources to significantly expand its participation in these activities in an effort to achieve their goals.

- Reduce crime and enhance the safety of the community
- Make the 911 dispatch system more effective
- Decrease overall response time and increase staffing allocation in patrol
- Free supervisors' time to supervise and train
- Improve the community's quality of life

- Develop partnerships between law enforcement and the community

Approach/Methods

The East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office conducted a work force analysis of the dispatch system to determine peak call periods, and adjusted schedules to best support those hours. The study also found that the 911 system's efficiency was impeded by a high number of non-emergency calls and lack of an automated system. The office addressed these problems by pulling two new communications positions from existing clerical positions and reclassifying them as criminal deputies. These deputies serve as the initial contact point for all 911 calls and either provide the information requested or forward the calls to the dispatcher on duty after gathering preliminary information. The system was made even more efficient by the addition of a computer-aided dispatch system with geographic capabilities.

The Sheriff's Office organized the additional deputies into eight- and twelve-person planning teams based at each of three substations. The planning teams maintained high visibility in troubled areas so that both the citizens and criminal elements noticed a constant police presence. They also moved quickly from one trouble spot to another and saturated any areas where problems arose. The teams implemented community policing programs and strategies to reduce drug demand at the neighborhood level in both urban and rural areas. The planning teams maintained a communications network with residents to help exchange information and monitor progress.

Making Officer Redeployment Effective (MORE)

MORE grants cover up to 75 percent of the cost of technology acquisition, equipment purchases, or support personnel salaries. MORE grants give American law enforcement professionals tools that allow them to spend more time on community policing activities. COPS MORE grants have provided more than 4,500 law enforcement agencies in excess of one billion dollars to redeploy law enforcement professionals into community policing activities since 1995.

The deputies delivered 100 Neighborhood Watch presentations to approximately 4,900 individuals, and interacted with civic groups, parents, and children. Neighborhood Watch meetings currently involve the presidents, secretaries, and council members of more than 200 civic associations. Each problem-solving project is chosen by a needs assessment, developed using the SARA method, and followed up with an evaluation.

Results

Last year, the Sheriff's Office effectively managed 80,000 calls for service. The automated dispatch system decreased dispatch time by almost four minutes. The new sworn communications personnel have relieved the supervisors from answering non-emergency calls, and are able to devote full attention to delivering quality information in response to citizen calls.

The addition of 22 deputies has freed the supervisors to supervise and support a better trained team of deputies. Supervisors use new laptop computers–made possible thanks to a COPS MORE 98 grant–to train deputies in the field and provide training for all new deputies on the streets. The Sheriff's Office receives additional community policing training at the Louisiana Community Policing Institute in Shreveport.

The improved ability to be highly mobile and saturate problem areas has helped to assure that high-crime areas, such as open-air drug markets, are a very undesirable place for criminals to enter, thereby eliminating them. The success of this strategy is obvious on several levels: not only are property values beginning to rise, but children once again play in their yards. Input from both the general public and law enforcement professionals in the field suggests an increase in residents' trust of law enforcement and a reduction in their fear of crime–all of which contributes to an improved quality of life for the whole community.

Improved communications between deputies and residents has not only helped to educate the community about crime, it has also increased the flow of intelligence from the public to the Sheriff's Office. The community policing planning teams work successfully with residents to identify criminal activity and quality of life issues and then develop responses to eliminate the problems based on the principles of community policing. Businesses and private organizations such as nursing homes and utility companies now increasingly request presentations by the Sheriff's Office on subjects such as theft.

For example, the Gardere Area was so overrun with crime in 1997 that the bus system stopped transporting to the area and pizza businesses stopped delivery for fear of robbery. Many residents moved out of the area and property values dropped. A community policing team of 12 deputies responded by saturating the area on foot and in vehicles and making initial contacts with residents to begin documenting the problems. In addition to enforcement and arrests, the community policing team coordinated block parties to demonstrate that residents were taking back their neighborhood. This strategy succeeded in driving out much of the criminal element. Citizens moved into the area and services such as pizza delivery and bus service were restored.

The renewal of the Gardere Area is a testament to the effective problem-oriented policing and community policing strategies of the East Baton Rouge Sheriff's Office. By providing funding for agencies to hire more law enforcement professionals and providing them with crime-fighting technology, COPS helps keep America safe, one community at a time.

Conclusion

COPS programs have advanced community policing across the country by putting more than 116,000 officers and deputies on the street, placing innovative crime-fighting technologies in the hands of law enforcement professionals, providing training to law enforcement and community members alike, and spending more than $50 million on law enforcement research since 1994. COPS has also produced a wide variety of publications for training, technical assistance, and research purposes.

COPS continues to fund state, local, and tribal implementation of innovative and effective community policing strategies. COPS looks forward to continuing to work with local law enforcement in 2003 and beyond.

Tell Us About It!

COPS values feedback from law enforcement practitioners, and we want to hear from you! Please send us an email letting us know about your successful community policing efforts to reduce crime. You can send us an email at TellCOPS@usdoj.gov – we look forward to hearing from you.

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