

Public Relations and Community Relations: A Contrast

I think it is important for the police officer who works a beat to be involved in going to meetings of neighborhood associations and civic clubs, getting to know the people so they can know him. It is important for the managers (police supervisors) to do the same thing. Oftentimes there is a historical tendency to have kind of a one-way communications system. It's equally important for the police to receive feedback.

—L. P. BROWN, INTERVIEW IN THE NATIONAL CENTURION, AUGUST 1983

KEY CONCEPTS

Community Advisory Councils/Committees	Foot Patrol Programs Neighborhood Team Policing	Problem-Oriented Policing
Citizens Police Academy	Neighborhood Watch	Ride-Along Program
Community Crime Watch	Operation Identification	Rumor Control
Community Relations	Police Auxiliary Volunteers	Speakers' Bureau
Crime Prevention		Storefront Centers

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Studying this chapter will enable you to:

1. Describe the origin of police–community relations as a separate operational concept.
2. Distinguish between police–public relations and police–community relations.
3. Identify the major purposes of community relations activities.
4. Provide examples of existing programs.
5. Describe community relations issues regarding crime-prevention programs.

Police–community relations programs in the United States have been built on already existing public relations programs. However, though community and public relations may be related, they are by no means the same. The differences become especially apparent when the two are compared with reference to their purposes, the activities they involve, and the type of

citizen reaction or interest they presuppose. Public relations activities are designed to create a favorable environment for agency operations by keeping the public informed of agency goals and operations and by enhancing the police image; the target is a citizen who passively accepts (and approves) what the police department is doing. There is no feedback or input. **Community relations**, on the other hand, seeks to involve the citizen actively in determining what (and how) police services will be provided to the community and in establishing ongoing mechanisms for resolving problems of mutual interest to the community and the police—feedback and input.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND/OR COMMUNITY RELATIONS?

During the short history of police–community relations, there has been little agreement on what it actually is. This lack of agreement among law enforcement professionals has resulted in the development of programs and approaches to community relations that reflect the personal views of local administrators more than they reflect any widely accepted body of knowledge. As a result, considerable confusion exists as to what community relations efforts should accomplish, and how they should do so.

It is generally accepted that police–community relations as a separate operational concept originated in the St. Louis Police Department in 1957. Since that time, the police–community relations concept has experienced sporadic growth throughout the nation. Although the need for community relations is widely accepted today as a crucial part of police administration, its current prominence is of short duration.

The rapid growth of community relations programs resulted from the violent confrontations of the mid- to late 1960s. In larger cities and urban centers, law enforcement administrators realized that they were confronting problems that traditional police tactics were not capable of solving. Administrators in smaller cities, usually on the urban fringes, recognized the possibility that violence might spill over into their communities. In both cases, the creation of specialized units, or the assignment of so-called community relations duties to specific officers, was the response. It was widely felt that such specialized responsibilities could help improve communications between increasingly activist minority groups and the police. In fact, the primary goal of such units at the outset was usually to serve as go-betweens, interpreting the attitudes, desires, and intentions of minority citizens and police agencies to each other.

Over the years, additional duties have been assigned to the community relations specialists. Thus, the community relations function has been variously described as a problem-avoidance methodology (International City Manager's Association, 1967), an "art" that is embodied in police administrative philosophy (Earle, 1980), a way of integrating police operations with community needs and desires (Brown, *n.d.*), and a way of accommodating the reality that the police are part of the political system (Attorney General's Advisory Commission on Community-Police Relations, 1973). In the early 1980s, it was often described as synonymous with police-organized community crime prevention. The concept of community policing has now added new meaning to the traditional understanding of police–community relations in the 1990s and beyond (Trojanowicz et al., 1998). The community policing philosophy broadens the scope of police–community interactions from a narrow focus devoted exclusively to crime to an examination of community concerns, such as the fear of crime, disorder of all types, neighborhood decay, and crime prevention. The philosophy seeks to change police–community relations from the traditional reactive approach of police agencies dealing with community problems as they define them to a proactive approach by partners in the definition and solving of community problems.

These diverse views have resulted in police involvement in remedial educational projects, employment counseling, encounter groups, intensive training in human relations, teaching school, inspecting residences for antiburglary campaigns, organizing block meetings, and dozens of other activities. This dispersion of effort both reflects and intensifies the lack of agreement on just what community relations is. However, most theoreticians and practitioners agree

on one point: What community relations should not be. The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice stated that community relations is:

not a public relations program to "sell the police image" to the people. It is not a set of expedients whose purpose is to tranquilize for a time an angry neighborhood by, for example, suddenly promoting a few Negro officers in the wake of a racial disturbance. (President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, 1967)

Despite this warning, and despite the fact that most professionals recognize that community relations must go further than mere image improvement on the part of law enforcement, there is still considerable confusion between the concepts of public relations and community relations.

The Relationship

There is a definite relationship between community relations and public relations. It is important, however, to recognize their differences and to practice both concepts in a way that will meet the needs of the contemporary police agency most effectively. Doing so requires (1) developing an acceptable definition of each; and (2) developing an analytical framework within which they can be examined and measured, which is no easy task in an area generally considered to be intangible.

Defining Community Relations

We have already noted the problems involved in defining community relations. However, for purposes of the following discussion, it is necessary to construct a definition that includes the most significant characteristics of those definitions discussed earlier. We also need a definition that can generally be applied to a wide range of police efforts. The following definition is suggested by the Attorney General's Advisory Commission on Community-Police Relations (1973):

Community-police relations is a philosophy of administering and providing police services, which embodies all activities within a given jurisdiction aimed at involving members of the community and the police in the determination of: (1) what police services will be provided; (2) how they will be provided; and (3) how the police and members of the community will resolve common problems.

Such a definition includes the key characteristics of community relations. It must incorporate the following:

- Be a philosophy of police administration and service.
- Integrate police operations with community needs.
- Involve the police and community in problem solving.
- Be reciprocal.
- Be ongoing.

Defining Public Relations

Admittedly, the preceding definition is not too specific. It must be as broad as it is, however, to include the many activities that make up community relations. Any definition of public relations is also broad. It, too, must include the wide variety of operations carried out in its name. For example, *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (2003) defines public relations as "The business of inducing the public to have understanding for and goodwill toward a person, firm, or institution."

A review of various texts on public relations reveals a variety of definitions. They all have one element in common: Each holds that public relations includes those activities that

attempt to explain agency goals and operations to the public and to gain public support for those goals and operations.

These two definitions should not lead to the conclusion that either community relations or public relations can be isolated or explained easily. Neither concept is as simple as a basic definition might imply. Rather, the two are complex and can be understood only when several of their individual characteristics are examined.

COMMON FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Because they are related and both properly part of police activity, the differences between community and public relations should be understood. A useful analytical framework for this purpose focuses on three characteristics of their activities:

1. The *purpose* of the activity.
2. The *processes* involved in the activity.
3. The extent of *citizen involvement*.

The Purpose of the Activity

All police operations have, or should have, a stated purpose or goal. The purpose of an activity generally embodies the values that the police agency intends to live by. Purpose is an administrative guide. It answers this question: Why has this activity been designed? Purpose, in this sense, is largely philosophical. It describes a hoped-for end. In practice, an activity may serve several purposes. Some activities may be given great administrative importance and others very little.

Why an activity actually takes place and what it accomplishes may have little to do with its stated purpose. Suppose that in an agency, fewer than 7 percent of the agency goals are to "improve the police image," yet some 30 percent of all programs described by the agency fit into a public information category in which most public relations or image-enhancement activities are contained. Officers who participated in the programs probably would rate their programs as highly successful. Their own goals for the programs have been met. The values that the police agency intended to adhere to have not. Understanding the purpose of an activity requires careful observation of what is actually being accomplished versus what was expected.

Public Relations

One common purpose of public relations activities is to develop and maintain a good environment in which to operate. For the police, this involves influencing attitudes in three areas of the environment. They must influence the public, from whom they need support (or, at least, noninterference). They must influence politicians, who are the source of funds. They must influence staff in other elements of the justice community who process those people the police usher into the system. Public information through the media can increase the preventive activity of the mass media when they cover security topics important to the public.

In order to achieve this purpose, the police must minimize obstacles and encourage support. The obstacles result from conscious opposition to what the police have done, are doing, or plan to do. They can include anything from subtle refusal to cooperate to overtly undermining police function. Support for police, on the other hand, could mean anything from passive acceptance to active support and cooperation. Passive acceptance may not be helpful, but neither is it harmful. Active support, such as that required for a campaign to target-harden a residence, is helpful to both the citizen and the police.

In general, the police have employed two ways of achieving their public relations purpose: public information and image enhancement. Public information is perhaps the most routine and

widely applied public relations activity in which the police and most other organizations engage. Image enhancement is a logical extension of the public information effort.

PUBLIC INFORMATION A strongly held value in our culture is that the informed and educated citizen is the best participant in democratic government. Applied to police performance, the theory is that if people understand why an agency (such as the police) performs as it does, they will be supportive of their performance. Information received by the public, however, often is misinformation, fostered in part by the popular entertainment media, which frequently spotlights and glamorizes the police crime-fighting role.

A check of TV listings for a one-week period in November 1982 revealed that 39 hours of prime-time (4:00–10:00 P.M.) scheduling were dedicated to police or police-related shows. The listings came from four major networks, one independent station, and one pay-TV station. In the six-hour period covered by the study, at least one hour was dedicated to newscasts (sometimes crime drama in themselves, but not counted as part of the 39 hours). Omitting that hour, a person conceivably could have watched police or police-related shows for the entire prime-time period on Saturday, Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday, and for four hours on Wednesday. Mondays and Fridays offered less than three hours of this type of material. These shows ranged from serious drama/adventure to light, humorous entertainment programming. A reexamination of TV listings for a one-week period in April 1999 revealed similar results. In a check of TV listings from 5:00 to 10:00 P.M., 43 hours were devoted to police or police-related shows.

Complicating the effect of these programs on public information is the fact that the image portrayed is often distorted. Officers are most often white and criminals and suspects shown are more likely to be black or Hispanic. Police aggression is overplayed. Popular shows like *CSI*, *Law and Order*, *Without a Trace*, *Cold Case*, and *NCIS* exaggerate the occurrence of violent crimes such as stranger murders, kidnappings, and serial killings. The programs leave the impression that crimes are easily solved and justice always prevails. Many of the technologies portrayed are more fiction than fact. There is concern that jurors often have a distorted image of police evidence gathering because of television portrayals.

News coverage of police activities focuses on their crime-related duties because these are the most newsworthy. Such emphasis is understandable: Because much public information activity by police is in response to media inquiries about crime, police public information campaigns may underwrite misperception by stressing criminal themes, rather than the totality of the police job, which actually consists mainly of noncriminal responsibilities. Los Angeles Police Chief William Bratton has asked the media to stop providing real-time coverage of police chases because some run from the police to seek fame in the media spotlight. Television executives declined the request because police pursuits were newsworthy and popular.

IMAGE ENHANCEMENT Promoting a positive image is a logical extension of public information activity. Police realize that community-wide respect and cooperation are difficult goals to achieve. There are many negative aspects to the role that society has assigned to the police. Police are charged with seeing that large numbers of people adhere to sometimes unpopular standards, and even the fact that a police force is necessary is distasteful to many citizens. Police need to promote a positive image of themselves whenever possible. In most cases, this is done by stressing the “helping” and “emergency” attributes of the police role. Public information campaigns that focus on an officer rescuing lost children, capturing armed robbers, and providing assistance at the scene of an automobile accident serve the image-enhancement purpose well.

Community Relations

Community relations programs can (and often do) share purposes and subpurposes with public relations efforts. In this context, however, public relations is a part of a broader, more complex goal. Community relations efforts are geared toward integrating community forces and law

enforcement agencies into active partnerships for dealing with the many social and criminal problems assigned to the police. Within this framework are the following specific objectives of community relations programs:

- To determine the appropriate range of services the police will provide to the community.
- To determine how these services will be provided (in the sense of appropriate tactics and procedures).
- To identify and define potential problem areas and move to correct them.
- To establish ongoing mechanisms for resolving problems of mutual interest to the police and the community.

The philosophy of community relations stresses the interrelationships and mutual dependencies of police agencies and citizens. Community relations seeks to involve citizens actively in determining what (and how) police services will be provided to the community and establishes ongoing mechanisms for resolving problems of mutual interest. The police must depend on the community as a source of their legitimacy. If they cease to be the "people's police," they no longer achieve their basic mission. Protecting and serving must be defined in terms of the community's needs and wishes in order for the police function to be legitimate. The community is in turn dependent on the police to provide services essential to maintaining an atmosphere of stability. Ultimately, then, community relations serves to create and maintain mutually supportive relationships between police and citizens—something that is needed by both.

PROCESSES INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITY

Several interesting differences arise when public relations and community relations activities are compared with respect to a set of process questions that apply to both:

1. To what degree are the activities standardized?
2. Is the activity agency oriented, community oriented, or both?
3. What is the direction of information flow?
4. What is the hierarchical level of police agency involvement?
5. What is the breadth of agency involvement?

Public Relations

STANDARDIZATION Public relations activities tend to be routinized and specialized wherever possible. This makes them easier to control, facilitates their repetition, and prevents wasteful duplication or diversion of staff energy from other more highly valued tasks. An excellent example is the agency-initiated press release, which is the basic tool of the public information function. Preparing such a release is largely a matter of following a standardized form, taking clearly defined steps to obtain administrative sanction, and using regular distribution channels. These steps guarantee a logical, predictable base for the information function.

AGENCY ORIENTED, COMMUNITY ORIENTED, OR BOTH Public relations activities are agency oriented. They include a range of services designed primarily to serve agency needs. Even services to those outside the agency are designed around the benefits that can be gained by the agency. The agency press release, for example, serves the news media by providing newsworthy information in a readily digestible form. The selection of material and its initial presentation, however, are structured to maximize their image-building or support-gathering potential for the agency.

INFORMATION FLOW In public relations activities, information flows outward. This one-way pattern reflects the belief that if those in the agency's environment are properly informed about police operations, they will support them.

HIERARCHICAL LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT Because virtually all police agencies are hierarchical in nature, it is relatively easy to pinpoint management responsibility for agency activities once that responsibility has been assigned. Assignment is generally made in direct relationship to the importance given to a specific program by top administration. In other words, if the program is regarded as important, a high-ranking officer will be in charge of it.

BREADTH OF AGENCY INVOLVEMENT Agency involvement in public relations is narrow. Public relations is a tool of police management, not an essential component of operating philosophy. It is an easily compartmentalized function, even though it attempts to represent all segments of departmental activity. Public relations activities are generally assigned to a specific unit, and they do not require heavy commitments from other elements of the department.

Community Relations

STANDARDIZATION In general, community relations activities are difficult to routinize and standardize. Some of their elements may become routine, but the function they are supposed to perform—linking the police to a wide array of publics and interests—usually requires flexibility and capacity for rapid change. Police administrators who prefer the familiar “standard operating procedures” find the concepts of flexibility and capacity for rapid change difficult to understand and accept—and sometimes difficult to permit.

AGENCY ORIENTED, COMMUNITY ORIENTED, OR BOTH If the function of the police is to protect and serve, then to be community oriented ultimately serves the needs of the agency, too. The aim of community relations is to provide services that are considered important (not by some police administrator but by the people) to the public served. For example, a police storefront center in an urban neighborhood can serve the police by being a place to collect information on criminal activity and by functioning as a complaint center, thereby improving communication with area residents. If the center is truly a community relations activity, it also will provide citizens with services that they identify as crucial, such as liaison with other government agencies, assistance in domestic crises, conflict mediation, and referral and counseling services. In this way, an intentional balance of self-serving and citizen-serving processes is achieved.

INFORMATION FLOW Two-way information flow is critical to community relations. The communication process must publicize the police point of view, stimulate discussion of issues, and solicit feedback from members of the community or communities involved. In practice, many agencies continue to emphasize the outward flow of messages, sometimes undermining their own community relations efforts.

HIERARCHICAL LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT As in the case of public relations, the hierarchical setting of responsibility for community relations activities is so varied that it defies generalization. If community relations activities are specialized, their responsibility would undoubtedly be that of a ranking agency person. But if the activities are expected to pervade the entire organization or involve only specific, line-level units, responsibility might be assigned to lower levels. Each instance is evaluated independently.

BREADTH OF AGENCY INVOLVEMENT The breadth of agency involvement is a different matter. Although certain aspects of community relations may be assigned to specific departmental units, involvement generally crosses divisional boundaries. This requires a distinction between *specialized programs*, which may have relevance only to a certain geographical or functional unit, and *general practices* aimed at accomplishing community relations objectives across the department and the community. The former are likely to be successful on a long-term basis

only if the latter are part of the department's operating philosophy. Here, a reliable system of internal communication is essential in ensuring that the agency presents a "united" community relations philosophy, particularly in areas where news media take special interest in discovering and publishing contradictions among units of the department.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

Although the police have either assumed or have been assigned responsibility for dealing with many of our more complex social problems, it is folly to think that they alone can solve any of them. In reality, the police are only able to provide limited specialized attention to the most crucial problems, usually in a crisis-reactive fashion. Real solutions require much broader efforts by many segments of the community. Even effective crisis reactions often require the involvement of nonpolice resources. In terms of citizen involvement, public relations and community relations activities provide a definite contrast.

Public Relations

In most public relations activities, citizen involvement is kept to a minimum. It is generally passive; the citizens receive information dispensed by the law enforcement agency or utilize services that primarily serve agency purposes. In most cases, citizens are reasons for, but not participants in, the activity.

Community Relations

Community relations activities often rely heavily on citizen involvement. The citizen is, by definition, an active participant. The police agency does not relinquish responsibility for administering agency programs or practices relating to community relations. It does, however, ensure that citizen resources are properly accommodated, both to provide assistance in accomplishing police goals and to stimulate feedback on issues and problems. Table 4.1 summarizes the characteristics of public relations as compared to community relations.

WHY PUBLIC RELATIONS IS NOT ENOUGH Public relations activities can and should be part of a properly applied community relations program, but they cannot substitute for it. The analysis in the following section pinpoints some very real weaknesses of public relations programs.

TABLE 4.1 Characteristics of Public Relations as Compared to Community Relations

	Public Relations	Community Relations
Purpose	Attain/maintain good environment	Develop police–community partnership
	Inform public	Integrate community needs with police practices
	Enhance image	
	Minimize obstacles	
	Stimulate support	
Process	Routinized functions comprise activities	Flexible and adaptable functions comprise activities
	Agency-oriented services	Community-oriented services
	One-way (outward) information flow	Two-way information flow
	Responsibility compartmentalized	Responsibility dispersed throughout agency
Citizen Involvement	Consciously kept to a minimum	Actively sought and stimulated

BOX 4.1**Police–Community Relations Must Involve Citizens!****Philosophical Framework**

To achieve its mission, a police agency needs the support and active participation of the citizens served. Such a mission requires that the agency seek to develop the following:

- A high level of police–community understanding and trust.
- Effective and meaningful two-way communication.
- Increased community awareness of crime problems and ways to reduce the probability of being victimized.
- Alternative resources for the agency that will increase productivity and more effective use of certified officers.

The list above constitutes the mission of the community relations section of the Pima County Sheriff's Office. Programs developed to fulfill this mission meet nationally recognized criteria for crime-prevention practices. They are also unique. They meet the specific needs of the agency and population served. They are innovative in recruitment, training, and utilization of citizen volunteers. The Pima County Sheriff's Office has received national recognition for seeking meaningful participation of citizens in almost every agency function.

Specific Projects and Programs

As Lewis and Salem (1981) stated, "Community crime prevention strategies prevent crime by altering the relations between the criminal, victim, and environment, reducing the opportunity for victimization." Programs developed seeking to apply these strategies with the help of citizen volunteers in the sheriff's office are listed below. Some of these exist in similar form in many communities in the United States. Others are unique to this agency.

- *Suspicious activity cards.* All sheriff's auxiliary volunteers participate by documenting their observations, which are then routed to the appropriate agency (see Figure 4.2).
- *Business identification program.* Citizen volunteers maintain a cross-indexed file of businesses and their owners or managers, allowing officers quick access to relevant information in the event of a fire or crime on the premises after business hours.
- *Emergency response program.* Certain volunteers have developed additional skills and have citizen band radio

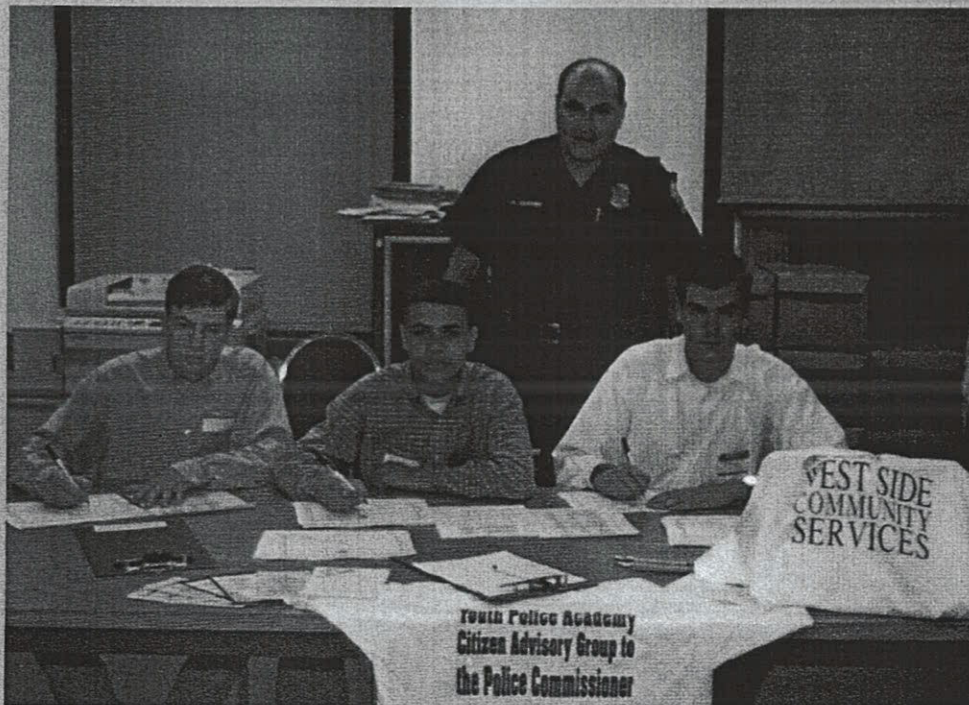


FIGURE 4.1 Volunteer auxiliary teams involve citizens of all ages in police support activities.

Courtesy of Buffalo Police Department.

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SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY CARD							
SUSPICIOUS PERSON # ONE:				<input type="checkbox"/> DRIVER	<input type="checkbox"/> PASSENGER	<input type="checkbox"/> PEDESTRIAN	
Sex	Race	Hgt	Wgt	Hair	Eyes	Skin	Approx. Age
SUSPICIOUS PERSON # TWO:				<input type="checkbox"/> DRIVER	<input type="checkbox"/> PASSENGER	<input type="checkbox"/> PEDESTRIAN	
Sex	Race	Hgt	Wgt	Hair	Eyes	Skin	Approx. Age
Manner of Dress & Identifying Marks (Person # One)						<input type="checkbox"/> Glasses <input type="checkbox"/> Moustache or Beard	
Manner of Dress & Identifying Marks (Person # Two)						<input type="checkbox"/> Glasses <input type="checkbox"/> Moustache or Beard	
Possible Occupation or Activity of Subject(s)							
Location of Suspicious Activity				Sub-Division	Time	Date	
Type Veh	Make	Model	Year	Color	Lic No.	State or Color Plate	
Additional Information:							
Submitted by:						C. Bear #	

FIGURE 4.2 Suspicious activity card used by volunteers to report suspicious activity to appropriate agency.

Courtesy of Pima County Sheriff's Department.

- capability. They have a call-out system devised to put "eyes and ears" into specific areas on request of the department.
- *Neighborhood Watch program.* The backbone of community involvement with crime prevention. Neighborhoods are organized into manageable groups that meet four times per year. Members are given initial and follow-up information on crime-prevention techniques. Neighbors are encouraged to be more observant and involved in their areas (Figure 4.3).
 - *Home security survey.* All residential burglary victims are contacted by mail and offered a personalized survey of their home to help prevent being victimized again (Figure 4.4).
 - *Operation Identification.* Normally included within home security checks or Neighborhood Watch presentations. Citizens who demonstrate compliance with suggested procedures receive free Operation Identification stickers.
 - *Crime watch program.* A minicourse of instruction for public nonpolice officials and private/commercial organizations that have radio-equipped vehicles operating in the community. The course is aimed at making the operators more efficient observers and reporters of criminal or suspicious activity (Figure 4.5).
 - *Interdepartmental people power assistance program.* Many volunteers have provided support to the department

by assisting with administrative duties. Help has been provided to the records section, burglary detail, auto theft detail, district level administration, and management services division, which is where the volunteer program is coordinated. The burglary and auto theft units use volunteers to maintain their multi-indexed intelligence files of stolen property.

Public Awareness Programs

The volunteers have participated in various crime-prevention awareness shows or programs. They have worked closely with other local crime-prevention groups, including the Crime Prevention Fair and Crime Resisters. At the crime fair, volunteers staff an informational display. This fair is a highly successful, countywide awareness event held for one week each October. At the annual county fair, held each spring, the volunteers staff and maintain an informational and recruitment display. Volunteers also assist local shopping malls in presenting specific crime-prevention themes during weekend expositions. Topics typically include auto theft, burglary prevention, and child safety.

Recruitment

The minimum age for adult citizen volunteers is 18. No upper age limit or restriction exists. A separate county volunteer program exists for teenagers through Explorer Scout posts.

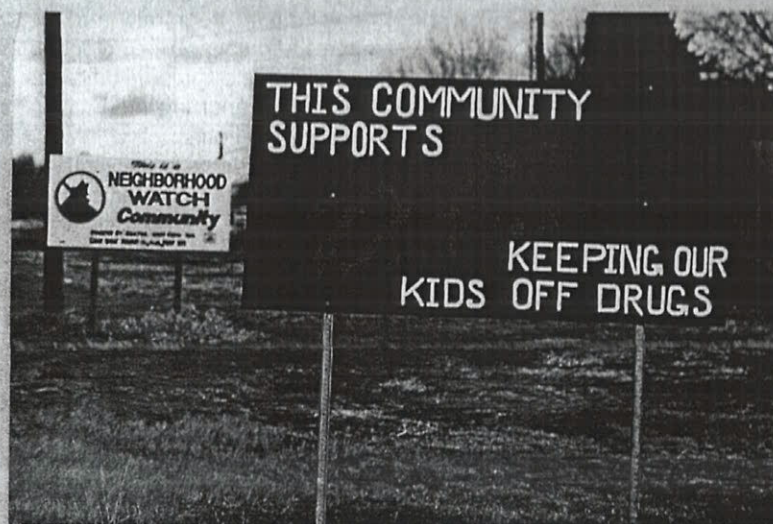


FIGURE 4.3 Neighborhood watch sign.

David R. Frazier, Folio, Inc.

Sheriff's Auxiliary Volunteers of Pima County, Inc.

P.O. BOX 910 • TUCSON, ARIZONA 85702

INFORMATION FOR ALL NEIGHBORHOOD WATCHES:

The Sheriff's Auxiliary Volunteers has a program in which we video tape the property inside of your home. This service is free and you are given the tape to be put in safety deposit box or in a safe place.

We also have home inspections. An inspector comes to your home and checks locks, windows, doors, etc.

We have an engraver to loan so you may etch your drivers license number on the TV, microwave, etc.

For more information call the phone numbers listed below.

George Meyers--741-4972
Home Inspections

Isabel Powers--741-4685
Crime Prevention

FIGURE 4.4 Sheriff's Auxiliary Volunteers information sheet regarding its home security survey.

Courtesy of Pima County Sheriff's Department.

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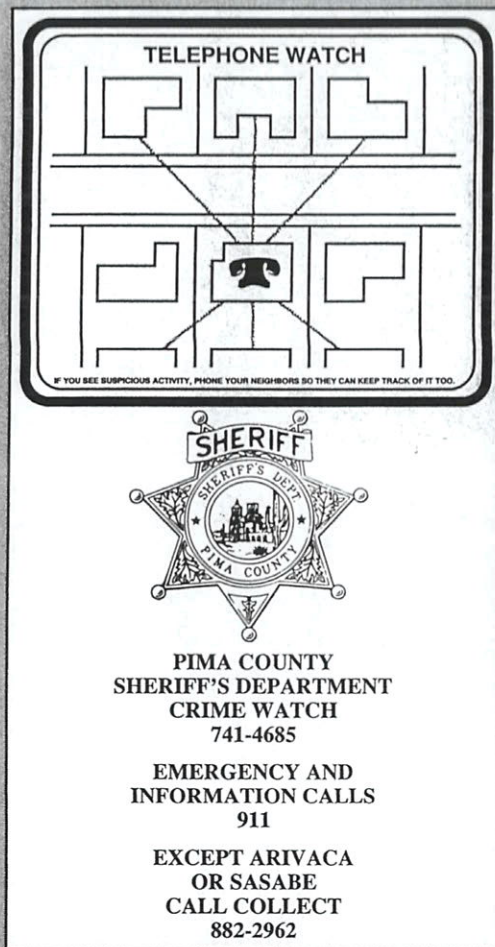


FIGURE 4.5 Pima County Telephone Watch program.

Courtesy of Pima County Sheriff's Department.

Recruitment is countywide. Both officers and volunteers are involved in recruiting efforts. There are no physical requirements for admission. Screening is thorough. A background check for arrest or prior contact with law enforcement is routine. Prior arrest does not automatically bar an applicant from participation. Circumstances surrounding the event and lapse of time since the offense are considered. The agency seeks responsible volunteers who are sincere in their service goals and who will fulfill the citizen volunteer standard of conduct.

Training

The foundation of a successful volunteer program is training. In addition to an orientation to the agency and crime prevention (four to six hours), each sheriff's office volunteer is trained in basic civil liability; the goals, structure, and procedures of

the volunteer programs; introduction to law enforcement systems and agencies; cardiopulmonary resuscitation; basic medical first aid care; identification of criminal or suspicious activity and reporting methods; and traffic accident scene assistance (20 hours).

Advanced skills training is offered in specialized areas. For example, a 44-hour advanced course is required for volunteers who wish to be crime-prevention instructors and program facilitators. This training includes the history and theory of crime prevention and risk management; the concept of creating barriers; security lighting; locks; alarm systems; how to do home security surveys; how to develop Neighborhood Watch programs; public speaking and instruction skills; how to facilitate citizen emergency response training; and civil liability for instructors.

Class members must demonstrate proficiency through oral board and written examination prior to certification by the department.

Identification

All volunteers who successfully complete the training are issued identification cards that remain the property of the department. Volunteers in specialized support programs may also wear identifying patches when on duty (Figure 4.7a).

Supervision of Volunteers

Effective supervision is critical to program success. Supervision is required to accomplish the following:

- Ensure that the skills and interests of the volunteer are matched to departmental needs.
- Facilitate acceptance of the volunteer by departmental personnel.
- Identify any problems early and work toward their solution.
- Encourage cooperation and teamwork among volunteers and between volunteers and agency personnel.
- Effectively coordinate the many volunteer programs and projects.
- Continue to challenge the interest and support of volunteers.
- Maintain the flexibility necessary to meet changing community and departmental needs.

Communication Connections

Information exchange, support, and recognition, always necessary to the success of volunteer programs, are facilitated through a regular newsletter. The *Community Connection* is published at least bimonthly.

Comments

The Volunteers in Prevention, Prosecution, Probation, Prison and Parole (VIP) division of the National Council on Crime

FIGURE 4.6 Citizen Volunteer Standard of Conduct.

Members shall conduct their private and professional lives in such a manner as to avoid adverse reflection upon themselves or this department.

Members shall obey all federal, state, and local laws as well as the rules and regulations listed herein.

Members knowing of any other member violating any laws shall report such violation to their District Volunteer Liaison Officer (DVLO) or District Commander.

Members shall treat their peers and associates with respect. They shall be civil and courteous at all times in their relationships with one another.

Members shall make no false reports or knowingly enter or cause to be entered in any departmental report or record any inaccurate or false information.

No member shall willfully misrepresent any matter. Members shall not release any official business of the department without the direct consent of the District Commander or their DVLO.

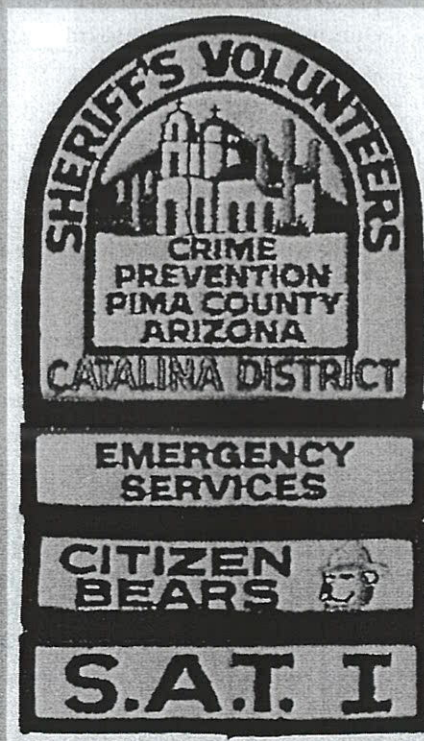
While acting in an official Sheriff's Auxiliary Team capacity, members shall not recommend to any person the employment of a particular attorney, bail bondsman, towing company, or any other service for which a fee is charged.

Members shall not solicit or accept any personal gift, gratuity, or reward for services rendered in the line of volunteer duty. No member shall purchase, consume, or be under the influence of any alcoholic beverage while acting in the capacity of a Sheriff's Auxiliary Team volunteer.

Members shall not possess or use any controlled substance, narcotic, or hallucinogenic except when prescribed by a physician or dentist.

Members shall keep their liaison deputy informed of any unusual activity, situation, or problem with which the department would logically be concerned.

Source: Pima County Maternal: Deputy L. R. Sacco, SAU Coordinator, Pima County Sheriff's Department.

**FIGURE 4.7** Special identification for auxiliary volunteers.

Courtesy of Pima County Sheriff's Department.

(continued)

and Delinquency (NCCD) estimates that at least 350,000 volunteers are currently active in direct-service juvenile and criminal justice programs. If volunteers in all capacities of criminal justice are included, the total number would be closer to 750,000 volunteers.

Not every justice agency has had the positive experience with volunteer programs that Pima County has had. What are the ingredients that make this and other volunteer programs successful? A study of programs in a variety of justice agencies in the United States suggests that the critical ingredients for success of volunteer programs are as follows:

1. Strong administrative commitment to the concept.
2. Clearly defined program goals and functions that relate to community and agency need.
3. Careful screening of volunteers.
4. A strong training program, including ongoing training in specialized areas.
5. Assessment of volunteer interests and skills and assignment of volunteers to meaningful tasks.
6. Sensitivity to the needs and fears of agency personnel regarding volunteer services and early resolution of problems in this area.
7. Development of support of agency personnel for the volunteer concept.
8. Effective supervision of volunteers and monitoring of volunteer activities.
9. Involvement of volunteers in recruiting and supervisory activities.
10. Feedback system that encourages recognition, evaluation, and recommendations for change from volunteers and staff.
11. Sensitivity to the needs of volunteers.
12. Willingness to encourage and accept change within the program that is necessary for its vitality.
13. Application of group dynamics principles in strengthening volunteer cooperation and coordination.
14. Strong personal commitment on the part of those who supervise the project.
15. Inclusion of line personnel in every phase of the program development and implementation.

Failing to Provide True Problem-Solving Mechanisms. Public relations techniques aim to preserve and enhance a department's image, not cope with operating problems. In contrast, community relations programs make a point of identifying problems and working with the community to prevent or resolve them.

Reaching the Wrong Targets. Public relations efforts are often directed at intermediaries, usually respected, organized groups whose members are likely to support the agency in any case. For example, providing public speakers is a common public relations device. The department thoughtfully provides informed officers to speak to civic groups, business concerns, clubs, schools, and so on, in basically an educational effort. The target group is generally already supportive of the police. The speaker may talk "at" the audience, answer a few questions, and return to headquarters. In most instances, everyone is pleased. No dialogue has taken place, however, and the citizens have rarely been encouraged to take an active part in solving police-community problems. The department hopes that group members will act as intermediaries, carrying the department's message to others, thus building support to avert future problems. In contrast, community relations programs are directed both to groups that are supportive of the police and groups that are not. Active citizen assistance and feedback are sought from both.

Alienating Concerned Citizens. The pure public relations approach alienates concerned citizens by convincing them that the department is merely interested in image building, not in dealing with problems or in effective communication with the community. Similar feelings may disenchant intermediaries with their role. The community newspaper, for example, receiving only superficial news releases that fail to discuss significant issues of concern, will soon refuse to print them. Only limited descriptive material about training courses, medal-of-valor awards, and number of arrests made during a month will be printed if real problems of rising crime rates, citizen dissatisfaction with police performance, or similar issues are ignored. Alienating concerned citizens is one of the greatest inherent dangers of a pure public relations concept.

Dealing Ineptly with Crucial Issues. The purpose of public relations is essentially to change perceptions, not to solve substantive operational problems. Thus, when internal change or real communication between police and community is needed, the superficiality of the public relations approach may simply aggravate matters.

Limited Decision-Making Power. Public relations is a secondary element of police management, and it is compartmentalized. Those in charge of its activities have little power to influence policy or procedural decisions; their responsibility is merely to secure acceptance of the decisions others make.

How Public Relations Can Strengthen Community Relations

The public relations concept has a distinct and valuable place in agency operations as an element of an overall community relations program when the latter is truly part of administrative philosophy. There are at least five functions that are essentially public relations in thrust but which complement community relations efforts.

INFORMING THE PUBLIC ABOUT CRUCIAL ISSUES The public relations purpose of informing the public can be valuable to both police and citizens if it extends to critical issues. The “whys” of police policies and procedures can be explained to the public. Alternatives to current practice, as seen by the agency, can be explained and any trade-offs outlined. These explanations must be straightforward and honestly portray the police intention to inform, not to sell the status quo. This is the point at which the public relations effort supports the community relations effort. Proper performance of police tasks, not public relations techniques, must do the selling.

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY SUPPORT Public relations can work to stimulate active citizen support, including cooperation in crime control and prevention activities. This is a change from the traditional public relations orientation. Generating support must be part of an overall mission of involvement, and it must be done with scrupulous honesty. The agency will need to be wary of passive lip service that has characterized purely public relations approaches in the past. Stimulating true citizen involvement can secure the strongest support any criminal justice agency can promote.

SUPPLEMENTING AGENCY OPERATIONS AND PROGRAMS As an outgrowth of a balanced community relations philosophy, police agencies may implement special operations and programs. Public relations techniques can be used to explain the reasons for and goals of these activities, to stimulate discussion, and to elicit feedback about them.

For example, both public and community relations techniques are useful in initiating a Neighborhood Watch program. The former can help to sell the concept, and the latter can help to define a specific neighborhood’s needs and develop and maintain community feedback and support.

PRESENTING AN ACCURATE PICTURE OF THE AGENCY AND ITS FUNCTIONS The modern police agency performs a confusing variety of tasks, from catching criminals to providing on-site assistance in serious emotional crises. The mundane and sensational, the dull and controversial—and how they relate to one another—are important aspects of agency function. By presenting an accurate and balanced picture of the police organization, public relations efforts can promote true public understanding of the police role and mission. This is perhaps the most important function that public relations can perform as part of a community relations effort.

ENHANCING THE AGENCY’S IMAGE Public relations can continue to perform many of its traditional functions, even when operating in a community relations mode, but these functions become subordinated to the principles of the broader concept. For example, it is unrealistic to ask any bureaucratic organization to abandon its efforts to achieve support for its programs. The realities of competing for scarce operating resources—money, personnel, and material—preclude such simplistic proposals. Nevertheless, the achievement of support, including image enhancement, must be accomplished in accordance with a strict set of guidelines requiring

honesty and integrity in the tactics used. Building the agency's image should be a conscientiously controlled means of providing better service, not the ultimate goal of the agency's community relations program.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES

Thus far, this chapter has focused on the differences between the concepts of public relations and community relations as they are commonly applied by the contemporary law enforcement agency. In this final section, attention will turn to examining several public relations and community relations programs. There are few "pure" programs, just as there are few agencies that embody only the characteristics associated with the concept in the preceding pages. Any evaluation of an agency's orientation must be made by examining the total structure of its operations. Some representative examples of community outreach efforts are described in the following pages.

PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAMS Whether or not a program is purely public relations oriented or is part of a larger community relations thrust is often determined by its long-range goals and the population it seeks to reach. Although most of the programs listed below as public relations could possibly be incorporated into community relations, they frequently exist for short-term enhancement and reach a population that is already supportive of the police.

SPEAKERS' BUREAU Most law enforcement agencies are ready on request to provide speakers to civic groups, business concerns, schools, and other organizations. The speakers usually give a short, informative talk on a topic such as drug abuse, traffic safety, or crime and protection. They may also distribute descriptive literature to an audience.

RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM Another common program is the citizen ride-along. This program allows members of the general public to accompany a police officer on routine patrol. Although some jurisdictions place few restrictions on the **ride-along program**, many require that the rider be free of a criminal record or meet requirements of age, occupation, or other significant conditions. The ride-along program does have elements of mutual education for both citizen and police officer, but its primary purpose is to help the citizen "understand" the difficulties of modern police work.

POLICE STATION TOURS Guided tours of police stations have become standard fare for civic organizations and school groups. Depending on the size and sophistication of the agency, such tours include visiting the jail, crime lab, lineup room, communications center, records center, and various operating bureaus or divisions. Tours are often arranged in conjunction with "police week" ceremonies.

SAFETY LECTURES Lectures on traffic laws, crossing streets, and other safety topics—usually geared toward children—are conducted in shopping centers and schools and are often accompanied by films and demonstrations.

CITIZEN RECOGNITION Many agencies give awards to citizens who provide particularly helpful services to the police. Such awards may be given for bravery or merely for reporting a suspicious person who turns out to be a burglar or armed robber. In either case, the agency makes a formal presentation of a plaque or some other suitable award to show its appreciation for an informed and involved citizenry.

CITIZENS ACADEMIES One of the most popular public relations programs at all levels of police agencies in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom are citizens academies.

They are, like many U.S. police innovations, a cultural transplant from Great Britain. In 1977, the British Constabularies of Devon and Cornwall established a "Police Night School" to familiarize citizens with their police agencies. Today, citizens academies are found in the United States in state police agencies, sheriff's agencies, and local police agencies of all sizes. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) also has citizens academies throughout Canada. All citizens academies have the common purpose of creating a better understanding and communications between the agency and the citizens through education. Citizens academies produce informed citizens. They show how police officers perform their duties and serve the community. In many communities, they are strictly public relations efforts, although the departments refer to them as community relations; in others they are a part of the overall community relations strategy of the agency.

Programs with a Major Community Relations Focus

Successful community relations programs also serve a public relations function. Improved public relations is a by-product of these programs, not the sole or even primary goal of these (Trojanowicz et al., 1998, p. 15). The following programs were designed as community relations programs. Although they are not universally implemented in ways that realize their optimum effectiveness, the dominant focus of each is community relations. They generally share the common characteristics of community partnership and reciprocal police community feedback/input.

RUMOR CONTROL The **rumor control** program is most often used during violent street confrontations, generally between the police and residents of racial and ethnic minority neighborhoods. It involves developing networks for gathering, sorting, and clarifying information. Unfounded or exaggerated rumors are identified and exposed. Facts are provided before the rumors can precipitate disturbances. Local civic leaders such as businesspeople, teachers, and religious leaders usually assist in this process. In some communities, the rumor control operation has been used ineffectively simply to provide information to the community by the police. Where it has been optimally used, however, the control network has developed into a useful forum for discussing common police problems in many neighborhoods. The prevention of civil disorder requires that police leadership and management recognize rumors and the problems that caused them in order to put into place a speedy and effective response through their community networks.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCILS/COMMITTEES **Community Advisory Councils/Committees** are known by several names in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom but they all have the common purpose of offering community groups and individuals a forum to discuss community issues with the police. Community groups with members on these councils include representatives from all ethnic and cultural populations, as well as business and social welfare agencies depending on the diversity of the community. The groups provide input and feedback on the policies, programs, and practices of the police agency.

STOREFRONT CENTERS **Storefront centers**, a well-publicized method of bringing the police officer closer to the people, have been complaint reception centers, mini-precinct houses, and meeting places and have served many other purposes. Their effectiveness depends on whether they embody the one-way principles of public relations or the two-way principles of community relations.

NEIGHBORHOOD TEAM POLICING Community-based teams, under a team commander, have been used to deliver police services to particular neighborhoods. The team has responsibility for deployment, assignments, methods of operations, and other organizational and operational decisions, and offices for team members are located within the policed area. This policing style

provides several community relations opportunities. These opportunities include closer, more stable ties with neighborhood residents; citizen participation in planning and delivery of services; and participation and input from all team members with regard to team management and activities. Effectiveness of community-based teams varies widely. Those that are most effective work as a team and consider themselves part of the community they serve.

BOX 4.2

Neighborhood Policing in the United Kingdom and the United States

Neighbourhood Police Teams (United Kingdom)

Neighbourhood Policing is provided by teams of police officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) [nonsworn constables who assist police officers and handle incidents not requiring full police powers] often together with Special Constables, local authority wardens, volunteers, and partners.

It aims to provide people who live or work in a neighborhood with:

- **Access**—to local policing services through a named point of contact.
- **Influence**—over policing services through a named point of contact.
- **Influence**—over policing priorities in their neighbourhood.
- **Interventions**—joint action with partners & the public.
- **Answers**—sustainable solutions & feedback on what is being done.

This means that neighbourhood teams:

- publicize how to get in touch with them
- find out what the local issues are that make people feel unsafe in their neighbourhood and ask them to put them in order of priority
- decide with partners and local people what should be done to deal with those priorities and work with them to deliver the solutions
- let people know what is being done and find out if they are satisfied with the results.

Source: National Policing Improvement Agency, www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk/

Neighborhood Police Teams (United States)

Ferguson, Missouri Police Department (54 sworn officers)

The Neighborhood Enforcement Team (N.E.T. squad) formed in 2004, identifies neighborhood public safety concerns and crime problems. Policing strategies and action plans are then developed to address these concerns and problems. . . . Citizen input, data analysis, and interdependent communication help the N.E.T. Squad concentrate their enforcement

activities to make Ferguson neighborhoods safer and minimize crime. The N.E.T. Squad engages in numerous policing activities from traffic enforcement to criminal arrests to quality of life issues, such as issuing summons or taking suspects into custody for noise violations, manner of walking in the roadway, and other disruptive behaviors.

Source: www.fergusoncity.com

Spokane, Washington Police Department (300 sworn officers)

Starting in 2008, the Spokane Police Department will begin its implementation of a Neighborhood Policing Plan. In a series of several phases, the current north/south patrol response format will be separated into four precincts, each composed of two districts. Partnering with local Community Policing Services (COPS) Shops, patrol officers will be permanently assigned to these smaller geographical areas, creating the opportunity to build lasting partnerships with community members. Each precinct will have at least one Neighborhood Resource Officer (NRO) and each precinct will have one crime analyst specifically examining crime trends for that precinct.

Source: www.spokanepolice.org/patrol/beats

St. Louis County, Missouri Police Department (465 sworn officers)

Neighborhood Policing is a philosophy—one of a partnership between police and law-abiding citizens to create permanent solutions to problems that lead to crime. . . . Neighborhood policing is a partnership of the police, the community, and other agencies of St. Louis County government. Armed with the philosophy of neighborhood policing, these groups come together to identify, analyze, and solve the crime and disorder problems that are unique to each area neighborhood . . . a knowledgeable team of neighborhood beat officers is formed, to serve and provide service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This team is assigned to each of the St. Louis County Police Department's police beats. Each beat is grouped together to form a neighborhood policing sector.

Source: www.co.st-louis.mo.us/police

FOOT PATROL PROGRAMS The reestablishment of police foot patrol in many cities has reintroduced a traditional method for intensifying the interaction between citizens and police. A strict reliance on motorized patrol creates a situation where there is little or no face-to-face interaction between citizens and the police and prevents the development of communication and trust. Skolnick and Bayley reported that their observations of foot patrol and research studies pertaining to it revealed four meritorious effects:

1. Since there is a concerned human presence on the street, foot patrol is more adaptable to street happenings and thus may prevent crime before it begins.
2. Foot patrol personnel may make arrests, but they are also around to give warnings either directly or indirectly, merely through their presence.
3. Carried out properly, foot patrol generates goodwill in the neighborhood, which has the derivative consequence of making other crime-prevention tactics more effective. This effectiveness in turn tends to raise citizen morale and reduce citizen fear of crime.
4. Foot patrol seems to raise officer morale (Skolnick and Bayley, 1986, p. 216).

PHYSICAL DECENTRALIZATION OF COMMAND Many police organizations are decentralizing the police bureaucracy to provide for quality interaction between the police and the community and, as in neighborhood policing, a heightened identification between the police and specific areas. This has led to the creation of fixed substations, ministations, and the creation of additional precincts.

Although these programs share some of the characteristics and objectives of neighborhood team policing, they are quite different, in that they provide for the creation of small autonomous commands and involve the assignment of police personnel to specific areas for long periods of time.

PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING Problem-oriented policing, which includes a number of different programs undertaken in a large number of police agencies, provides for a new approach to the delivery of police services. In this approach the police go beyond individual crimes and reactions to calls for service by attacking the problems that caused them. It moves the police from a reactive response to individual incidents to a proactive approach to citizen concerns.

In practice, police examine the reasons why particular crimes or calls for service occur in certain locations or at particular times and then map out a strategy for dealing with them. The strategy for dealing with these events involves active participation by the community members affected. The following are four features of problem-oriented policing:

1. As part of their work, officers identify groups of similar or related events that constitute problems.
2. Then they collect, from a variety of sources, information describing the nature, causes, and consequences of each problem.
3. Officers work with private citizens, local businesses, and public agencies to develop and implement solutions.
4. Officers evaluate solutions to see if the problems were reduced (Spelman and Eck, 1986, p. 4).

Crime Prevention: Another Name for Community Relations?

Almost all of the program examples mentioned could be included under a broad crime-prevention umbrella, and many others could be added to the list. Several hundreds of millions of federal and local funds have been spent on crime-prevention projects in recent years. There is no doubt that **crime prevention** is a well-advertised, whether or not a well-executed, focus of police function. Citizen demand for crime-prevention programs continues to grow. A National Crime Prevention Institute has been established to provide specialized prevention training and consultation.

Some of these programs are oriented toward community relations and have become citizen action-centered. In these, citizens and police are involved in defining what crime problems exist in a particular area and population and what actions can be taken to prevent such crimes from occurring. Implementation and evaluation are part of the prevention program.

Most programs that are tagged as "crime prevention," however, continue to be, at least in practice if not in original purpose, almost entirely informational—from the police to the citizen. As Krajick stated, "in what some crime prevention experts term a 'knee-jerk reflex,' popular programs like brochure distribution and security surveys are picked up by police departments without any study as to whether those programs address a particular problem in their jurisdictions" (Krajick, 1979, p. 7).

Some programs are considered very successful, and their success is defined in terms of several criteria. These include (1) the number of neighborhood crime watch teams formed; (2) number of volunteers in the program; (3) measurable decrease in a particular type of crime in a given neighborhood; (4) number of brochures distributed; (5) number of presentations made; and (6) number of households following the security advice of police representatives.

Some projects have not been successful by the most generous, short-term criteria for success. Even the design or methodology of program evaluations are sometimes suspect.

Do successful crime-prevention programs also meet long-range community relations goals? The answer is difficult to determine from the short-term rationale used to test for a program's success. Involving the community in an ongoing program of crime prevention requires an underlying community relations perspective. The characteristics of neighborhoods and their problems must be considered. Two-way communication must exist, and a structure must be provided that will encourage continuing involvement of the community.

Even this level of crime prevention will be easier to achieve when working with neighborhoods that already have a positive view of the police. It is much more difficult (and therefore seldom attempted) to build the same relationship in neighborhoods that have had more negative confrontations with police. However, it has been found that police efforts that help minority parents protect their children (DARE, McGruff, Safe Kids, etc.) are more positively received.

In recent years, many agencies have defined police-community relations in terms of their crime-prevention activities. Given the criteria discussed in this chapter for true community relations programs, for prevention services to qualify, they would have to be broadly based, meet long-range goals, and be set up to address far more than just "crime-specific" problems. Rarely is this the case in practice. Therefore, where crime prevention has been substituted for community relations, the community relations concept has usually been narrowed. Crime-prevention activities can support a total police-community relations effort, but they are only part of it.

The following are crime-prevention programs that are among the most public relations oriented:

- *Security surveys* in which the police, by invitation or request, visit a home or business and suggest ways in which security can be improved.
- *Clinics* in which individual citizens and businesses are advised how to prevent specific types of crime (e.g., rape, shoplifting, bank robbery, and burglary).
- *Awareness-alertness programs* in which bulletins about particular crime problems occurring in the community are issued. During the holiday season, many police agencies will issue to businesspeople circulars pointing out various shoplifting techniques. Some agencies also insert burglary-prevention messages in public utility billing statements or bank statements. Although these awareness notices often call upon the citizen to help the police by making it hard for the criminal to consummate an unlawful act, they seldom follow up on such requests, nor do they provide any realistic means for helping the citizen to do so.

Under the umbrella of crime prevention are several programs that include both the elements of public relations and community relations. The ultimate impact of these programs depends on the emphasis placed on the various elements and on the context in which they are applied.

Neighborhood Watch

The many varieties of area watch programs range from those in which residents of a neighborhood are asked to watch for strange activities at their neighbors' homes to those in which citizens are mobilized into committees to work with local police units in identifying local problems and developing responses to them. In the first instance, the police ask citizens to report any suspicious activities occurring in the neighborhood. The citizen merely becomes an extension of the police patrol apparatus. In the latter instance, the police officer on the beat and the citizen endeavor to perfect their partnership responsibilities in identifying those problems that can ultimately be corrected by police intervention. Neighborhood Watch programs can successfully reduce crime. For example, a Neighborhood Watch program was created in the Korbow subdivision in Fayetteville, North Carolina, in 2006. In the initial month of creation, the subdivision reported 63 crimes; in their first anniversary month, five crimes were reported; and in the second anniversary month, only two crimes were committed (Barksdale, 2009).

OPERATION IDENTIFICATION In an **operation identification** program, police encourage citizens to mark their possessions with their Social Security numbers or other identification recognizable as belonging to them, in order to discourage theft and to increase the possibility of apprehending the offender and restoring the goods to the original owner. Usually, citizens can bring items to the station for identification marking or they will be provided with an etching tool so that they can mark items at home.

POLICE AUXILIARY VOLUNTEERS The elderly are a prime target of crime today. Senior volunteer programs combine police expertise and elderly citizen volunteers, who work together to find ways in which the elderly can assist in preventing crime and in providing support and assistance to elderly victims. Many volunteer auxiliary programs involve citizens of all ages in a broad range of police support activities. (See Reality Check for a discussion of this project.)

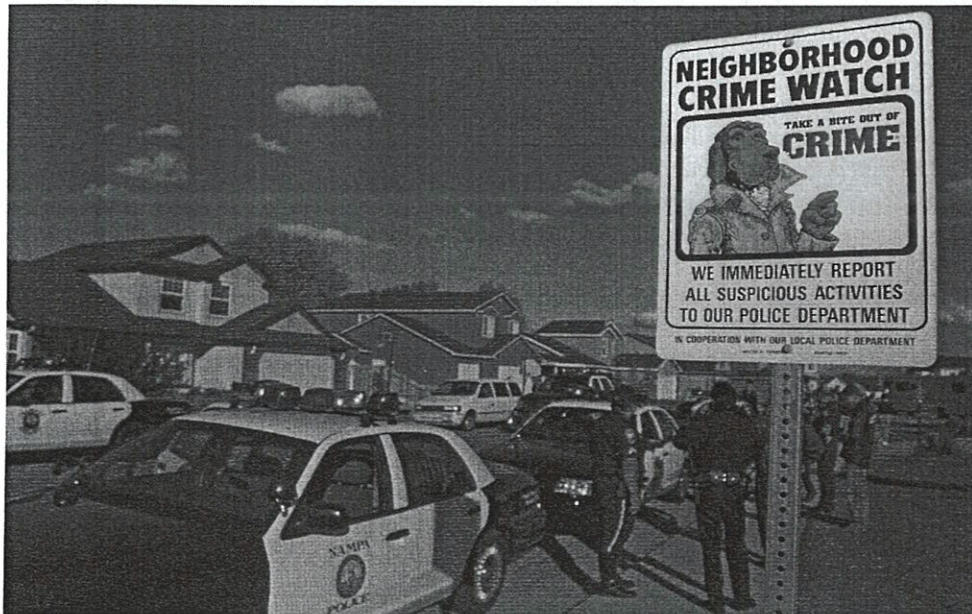


FIGURE 4.8 A crime-prevention billboard.

Joe Rowley, AP Wide World Photos.

COMMUNITY CRIME WATCH In some communities, public utilities, such as telephone, gas, and electric companies, have been trained and organized as part of a crime-watch team. Because of the extent of their community access and their frequent opportunity for “patrol,” employees of such agencies can provide a unique community service. Once trained in what to look for, they become an excellent police support group. If they observe suspicious behavior or circumstances, they are asked not to intervene but to report.

CRIME STOPPERS The programs included in this category are known by several names: Crime Stoppers, Crimes Solvers, Secret Witness, Crime Line, and so on. These programs join the news media, the community, and the police in a concerted effort to enlist private citizens in the fight against crime. The program is based on the premise that some citizens who know of or observe crimes will not report them because of apathy or fear but will report them for a cash reward.

The first Crime Stoppers Program was begun by police officer Greg MacAleese in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in 1976. Since that time the number of such programs has steadily increased in the United States and in Canada and New Zealand. In 1985 there were 600 programs, resulting in 92,000 felony arrests, 20,000 convictions, and the recovery of \$500 million in stolen property (Rosenbaum, Lurigio, and Lavrakas, 1987).

REALITY CHECK

The Need for Discretion within Community Programs

Within this chapter, and throughout this text, you will see examples of numerous citizen and community programs that police agencies are encouraged to utilize in order to enhance police–community relations. We wholeheartedly endorse the programs discussed within this text. However, as with everything in life, discretion is necessary. There must be adequate screening mechanisms for these programs to ensure they do not create liability and/or embarrassment for the agency. In addition, if citizens are going to be involved in positions of trust, background checks and training should be mandatory. Three examples of good intentions that went awry follow:

1. When a Florida police department first began ride-along programs, any interested citizen was invited to participate. They merely had to complete a card that freed the agency from liability if they were injured during their ride-along. One young man (who had stated that he was interested in becoming a police officer when he graduated from college) became a frequent rider with the midnight shifts. He was good company on slow nights and did as he was told when required to stay back from hazardous or delicate situations. This came to a halt several months later after he was arrested for burglary. At his booking we learned that he had an extensive record of thefts and burglary that a background check would have revealed. When questioned about his activities, he stated that he had really enjoyed his interactions with the police officers and also had gained very useful information for his occupation.
2. In an effort to help the families of police officers gain insights into their loved ones' occupations, children and spouses were encouraged to participate in the (now more restrictive) ride-along program with their wives or husbands. One officer brought his wife to ride with him almost every weekend. All went well until one night when the officer was injured in a traffic accident. His wife accompanied him in the ambulance to the hospital where he was treated for minor injuries. Not knowing that his wife was riding along, a dispatcher called

his home to inform his family that he had been injured. Imagine the surprise of the police supervisor when the officer's real wife showed up at the hospital and found another woman by the officer's bedside. Clearances to participate in ride-alongs suddenly became even more restrictive.

3. Another Florida agency developed a senior volunteer program somewhat like the examples provided from Pima County, but without the training and oversights that they utilize. One elderly lady was found to be quite useful within the Records Section where her typing and filing skills were greatly appreciated. She volunteered several hours each week and was quickly accepted into the police "internal community." Unfortunately, after confidential information from a controversial child abuse case became public knowledge, it was learned that the dear lady had seen nothing wrong with regaling the members of her quilting club with the inside information that she gained from her access to police reports.

Conclusions

The difference between public relations and community relations is not always clear-cut. The guidelines presented in this chapter can help an observer to make informed judgments about the nature and purpose of police activities, but only if the activities are studied in the context in which they occur. To what extent do primarily self-serving principles and practices affect a police agency's receptivity to community input? The answer to this question ultimately determines whether the agency is operating under a public relations or community relations philosophy.

Public relations by itself can often prove valueless and even harmful to police agencies because its activities are agency oriented (and thus basically self-serving). Public relations officers are not agents of change and may gloss over

or misrepresent crucial issues. On the other hand, every police agency must rely on public relations to some extent to help ensure its position in relation to other forces at work within the community. Public relations activities can play a valuable role in community relations programs provided they follow strict guidelines of honesty and integrity and make a goal such as image enhancement subordinate to providing better service.

Crime prevention has become a household phrase, although not necessarily a household effort. For crime prevention to be synonymous with police-community relations, crime-prevention efforts will need to meet police-community relations goals, something that seldom occurs in practice.

Student Checklist

1. Describe how police-community relations originated as a separate operational concept.
2. Describe the difference between police-community relations and police-public relations.
3. What is the major purpose of police-community relations activity?
4. List three examples of police-public relations programs.
5. List three examples of crime-prevention programs.
6. List three examples of programs with a major community relations focus.
7. Describe the characteristics of a crime-prevention program that meets police-community relations goals.

Topics for Discussion

1. Discover what activities and programs your local police agencies participate in. Are these oriented predominantly toward public relations or community relations? Whom do they serve and involve?
2. Devise a community relations project in crime prevention that could be initiated in your community. What are the characteristics that make your project oriented toward community relations rather than toward public relations?
3. What are the disadvantages of community relations programs?

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