

Policy and Practice



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Community-Based Planning: Promoting a Neighborhood Response to Crime

Introduction

States and units of local government increasingly are embracing a “bottom-up” approach to criminal justice planning and adopting strategies to empower local officials and community members in their fight against crime. Planning models of this sort focus on locally defined concerns and priorities and promote collaboration between state and local agencies and among community members and neighborhood institutions. The models may also involve the state coordinating various funding streams -- both federal and state -- to help communities maximize available resources. In states where this type of planning has been implemented there is evidence that struggling communities have been able to form important partnerships among agencies and institutions whose activities traditionally have been isolated. In these models, the state relinquishes its traditional agenda-setting capacity and provides support to community coalitions through leadership, training and technical assistance, and financial resources.

This NCJA *Policy and Practice* describes multidisciplinary, community-based planning efforts in four states: Colorado, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Although these strategies share the common goal of encouraging community mobilization to address crime and public safety problems, they differ in their evolution, scope, and stage of implementation. The NCJA presents them as examples of approaches to developing and implementing community-based planning, and not for the purposes of comparing or judging which is the most effective.

Colorado

In Colorado, a long history of decentralized political power and autonomy in local decisionmaking has supported community mobilization around a number of public policy issues. In keeping with this tradition, the Colorado Department of Public Safety (DPS), Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ) supports a number of community-based crime prevention and

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Policy and Practice

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intervention programs that use empirical data to identify gaps in services and sociological predictors of risk to plan program strategies and incorporate strategies that have been proven effective or show promise.

On a broader level, Colorado is in the process of developing a long-term, locality-driven plan for all of its substance abuse, delinquency prevention, and children, youth, and families programs. Participants in the multi-agency effort are considering many of the planning and grants management principles the DCJ developed for inclusion in the state strategy.

Evolution

Several factors have influenced Colorado's adoption of a strategic, community-based response to crime prevention and reduction planning. In Colorado, the Office of Drug Control and System Improvement (ODCSI) within the DCJ and its Drug Control and System Improvement Program Advisory Board are charged with developing a statewide anti-drug and -violence strategy in consultation with other pertinent state agencies, consistent with federal grant program requirements.

To develop the strategy, Colorado officials for many years compiled information from communities to produce aggregate, state-level data. However, they recognized such data's limited value, due to the significant variations in the state's economic, demographic, and social composition. To ensure that the state anti-drug and violence strategy would best serve the needs of local jurisdictions, officials realized that those charged with collecting data at the local level were best situated to interpret it.

In addition, the DCJ began supporting community-level initiatives in two other ways. In response to the growing number of state and federal funding opportunities that require local-level planning, the DCJ promoted collaborative efforts among these local planning groups to create a more purposive and strategic local planning process and maximize the impact of the funds these communities receive. The DCJ encourages this local-level cooperation by giving priority in the administration of grants funds to communities that engage in a collaborative planning process.

To encourage strategic, coordinated planning in Colorado communities, the ODSCI in 1994 made several changes to its grantmaking requirements. Specifically, it requires that local planning boards collaborate across disciplines when developing crime and drug prevention and public safety initiatives and subgrantees inventory current resources and develop a "gaps analysis" to determine where there is a need for services.

Applicants also must implement one of several proven programs to be eligible for funds. The DCJ provides information about successful programs through its *Program Abstracts*, brief outlines of proven and promising criminal justice initiatives, to make the planning process, project replication, and application for grant funds easier.

The DCJ also commissioned Delbert Elliot at the University of Colorado's Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV) to identify successful programs for preventing or reducing levels of violence. The CSPV reviewed more than 400 violence prevention programs and developed short publications called *Blueprints* for 10 programs that meet three criteria of effectiveness:

- demonstrate reductions in violence, deviance, or substance abuse with careful experimental study;

- sustain impact for at least one year after participants leave the program; and
- can be successfully replicated at multiple sites with diverse populations.

In the *Blueprints*, Elliot will document step-by-step instructions to help communities plan and implement youth crime and violence prevention strategies for programs ranging from prenatal and early childhood intervention strategies to those that encourage at-risk youth to graduate from high school and attend college.

The DCJ also promotes community-based efforts through its Build a Generation initiative, which is administered by the DPS' Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ). The initiative stems from the growing body of research on risk and resiliency factors and was designed to promote community-initiated programs to prevent the development of problem behaviors among youth. It is based in part on the Communities That Care (CTC) model developed by researchers at the University of Washington at Seattle (see sidebar). The OJJ uses a complementary approach focused on building both youths' and their surroundings' assets as a strategy to reduce maladaptive behavior. The OJJ encourages communities to incorporate the research findings on risk-reduction efforts and protective factor and asset enhancement to ensure appropriate and comprehensive interventions for youth.

The philosophy behind the DCJ's efforts to foster local collaboration and planning has become a critical component in a broader state-level effort to encourage crime prevention and healthy families. In March 1997, Gov. Roy Romer created by executive order the Interagency Prevention Council (Council), which is composed of 10 state agencies that provide prevention support and services to Colorado communities. The Council's primary responsibility is to collaborate at the state level to develop a five-year plan to better coordinate various funding streams based on locally defined needs. The plan will allow for a seamless system of prevention programs and services, with coordinated funding cycles, common grants standards, shared technical assistance, and consistent performance evaluation criteria. The Council must submit to the governor the state action plan by June 30, 1998.

Implementation

The DCJ has actively embraced its role of providing support and assistance to communities that choose to implement a strategic approach to solving their crime problems. It offers on-site visits and technical assistance and training to local officials interested in

Communities That Care

The Communities That Care (CTC) model is a community-based planning approach developed by J. David Hawkins and Richard F. Catalano at the University of Washington at Seattle that focuses on juvenile crime prevention. It is based on research findings that the presence of certain characteristics in the lives of young people increases their likelihood of developing health and behavioral problems in the future. According to Hawkins and Catalano, these characteristics, or risk factors, may exist in four domains: community, family, school, and peer groups. Hawkins and Catalano suggest that protective factors, such as characteristics unique to the individual; bonding, or positive social relationships; and healthy beliefs and clear standards about appropriate behavior, may offset the effects of risk factors to prevent problem behaviors.

According to Developmental Research and Programs, Inc. (DRP), the company that copyrighted the Hawkins and Catalano risk-focused approach and developed training and technical assistance for communities interested in the CTC model, there are several key features necessary for successful strategy implementation, including:

- participation from key community leaders and their acceptance of community-based delinquency and crime prevention;
- creation of a community prevention board that assesses the community's crime problem, risk factors, and existing resources and guides the community in its approach to address the most serious risk factors; and
- evaluation tools to determine whether there has been an impact on problem behavior and risk factors.

According to information published by the U. S. Department of Justice, a five-year study of the CTC program funded by the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services demonstrated that the CTC model can be effective in helping communities mobilize and implement a coordinated set of interventions.



incorporating proven and community-defined criminal justice strategies. In collaboration with other state agencies, the DCJ also has developed a community strategic planning homepage on the World Wide Web to provide communities with information about planning issues.

The agencies participating in the Web site have endorsed a set of four minimum elements of strategic planning, all of which require a high degree of input and involvement from the community:

- identifying the community's problems, gaps in services, and duplicative programs and services, where they exist;
- assessing the community's risk and protective factors;
- developing benchmarks, or baseline measures and performance indicators, for evaluation; and
- creating an action plan to describe the steps necessary to achieve the identified objectives.

This state role also is consistent with Colorado's decentralized political system and deference to local decisionmaking. According to ODSCI Manager John Inmann, communities in Colorado have a long history of local involvement in shaping the programs and services provided by public agencies. However, by making collaboration among these local planning groups a requirement of receiving state and federal funds, the DCJ is able to ensure a more purposive and strategic approach to local decisionmaking.

Although collaboration at the local level makes sense to both state officials and community participants, its implementation has not been without obstacles. Inmann says a key factor at the community level is leadership among local officials. When the message is clear that communication and collaboration will foster the most positive impact on the community, the relevant players often come together to share the responsibility of policymaking. At the state level, there has been some resistance to using the risk and resiliency and assets theories as the basis for the development of a statewide prevention strategy, but Inmann says he is confident that the shared vision of safe and healthy Colorado communities will overcome these issues.

Evaluation

The DCJ has developed a multilayered approach to program evaluation. Subgrantees must submit an evaluation plan for each project to measure the

community's progress toward accomplishing predefined objectives and quarterly reports to allow the DCJ project monitors to track projects and their adherence to the program parameters.

The DCJ also encourages localities to invest a portion of their grant funds in analysis of a program's impact, but Inmann says that in many cases, formal research is not necessary when programs are based on initiatives that have proved effective in preventing crime. The DCJ may support programs that fit within the design and structure of a *Blueprint* for implementation and replication rather than for rigorous research purposes or process evaluation. The DCJ also sets aside funds each year from the state's allocation from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)-administered Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance program (Byrne) to support its Office of Research and Statistics in conducting rigorous evaluation of relevant program areas and contracts with outside researchers to conduct program and project evaluation.

Future

The DCJ plans to continually improve its grants management process to support strategic and community-based planning structures. In its 1997 requests for proposals, it modified its grants administration process to elicit information from communities about their local planning process and how decisions were made and to require communities to report their top needs and priority areas. It plans to use this information to develop its 1998 strategy. Finally, it modified the existing application to make it easier to apply for funds for programs described in the *Program Abstracts* and *Blueprints*.

The DCJ also is working closely with colleagues from the Department of Local Affairs, Community Partnership Office (CPO) to create a joint agency position in the southeastern section of the state to help communities there engage in strategic planning. The field staff would help community organizations promote local collaboration and provide grant monitoring services for the CPO.

DCJ officials also are working closely with the other Council members to meet the governor's June deadline for the development of the five-year prevention strategy. The Council is considering creating a position that would act as a liaison between agencies to encourage the adoption of practices that foster interagency collaboration and multidisciplinary

approaches to policy setting and grants administration.

According to Inmann, the DCJ staff hopes that its efforts and the work of the Council will serve as a model for other states that wish to foster locally crafted approaches to community problems. The BJA is supporting, through a technical assistance grant, a facilitator for the Council in its work to develop the state plan. The BJA will document the planning process and provide information about it to interested officials from other states.

Maryland

The Maryland HotSpot Communities initiative provides communities with tools to define and address their crime problems. An initiative of the Governor's Cabinet Council on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (Cabinet Council), the HotSpot Communities strategy promotes coordinated, multidisciplinary, and community-based strategies to combat violence and its destructive consequences and targets crime-fighting resources to those neighborhoods where crime is most concentrated. The Cabinet Council supports these efforts through funding, training, technical assistance, and program evaluation. The goal of the HotSpot Communities initiative is to achieve a 25- to 35-percent reduction in crime over two to three years in communities that actively and consistently implement its core principles.

Evolution & Program Components

According to the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP) Executive Director Michael Sarbanes, the HotSpot Communities initiative evolved as a result of Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend's experience with the Comprehensive Communities Program (CCP), which she helped develop while serving as deputy assistant attorney general at the U. S. Department of Justice (see box on page 7).

According to Sarbanes, Kennedy Townsend was impressed by the CCP's impact in Baltimore, where the effects of the initiative were dramatic: violent crime in the Boyd Booth neighborhood -- the location of one of Baltimore's most virulent open-air drug markets -- dropped 56 percent in two years, and crime in surrounding communities dropped 25 to 40 percent in that same period. Upon her election as lieutenant governor of Maryland in 1996, Kennedy Townsend made it her

goal to adopt the principles of the CCP as the centerpiece of the state's approach to crime control and prevention. The multi-agency effort is coordinated by the GOCCP.

In addition to the CCP's effects in Baltimore, the impetus for creating a similar statewide initiative stemmed from national research findings on the prevalence of crime in certain high-risk neighborhoods that approximately 50 percent of violent crime occurs at about 3 percent of addresses. The HotSpot Communities strategy uses this knowledge as its cornerstone and targets resources to those neighborhoods plagued by the recurring incidence of crime.

To qualify for HotSpot Communities funding, a local jurisdiction must demonstrate that it has adopted certain "core elements" of crime control and prevention. These elements incorporate proven crime-fighting techniques to elicit short- and long-term reductions in crime, fear, and neighborhood disorder:

Community Mobilization. Community residents must come together to "own" the crime problem and its solution, reclaim public space, and work cooperatively with local government agencies.

Community Policing. Intensive patrols and investigations in high-crime neighborhoods are augmented with a neighborhood community police officer and routine communication between officer and community.

Community Probation. Adult, juvenile, and federal probation officers operate from offices within the community and meet at least weekly as a team with community police officers and community members.

Community Maintenance. Community and local officials respond to public nuisances in an expedient manner and enforce provisions allowing for nuisance abatement.

Youth Crime Prevention. Officials and community members develop after-school activities for adolescents and enforce truancy and curfew ordinances.

Local Coordination. One official or community member is designated to coordinate HotSpot communities' activities to maximize the strategy's impact.

Eligible agencies may, but are not required to, implement additional "enhancing elements," including the development of community prosecution initiatives, juvenile intervention programs, and graduated sanctions; crime prevention through



environmental design efforts; victims' services; community support for addiction recovery; and economic and community development initiatives. Communities are selected for funding based on three factors: 1) their crime rate, 2) their residents' fear of crime, and 3) their willingness to mobilize a coordinated response.

Maryland has designated approximately \$10.5 million for three years for the HotSpot Communities initiative. This averages approximately \$100,000 per community per year, with actual grants ranging between \$35,000 and \$200,000. Neighborhoods that are not designated as a HotSpot community remain eligible to apply to the GOCCP for other crime control and prevention funds. Currently, there are 35 HotSpot communities operating in 23 Maryland counties. Six of these are located in Baltimore and another six are in the two Maryland counties that border Washington, D.C.

In addition to state and federal grant programs, the GOCCP relies on the participation and technical assistance of various state agencies and organizations, such as the Maryland State Police and the Departments of Juvenile Justice, Public Safety and Corrections, Education, Human Resources, Business and Economic Development, Housing and Community Development, and Health and Mental Hygiene. It also relies on Volunteer Maryland, the state agency that promotes voluntarism, and AmeriCorps, the federal program that encourages young people to volunteer in exchange for a living allowance and an educational stipend.

Implementation

A community's response to crime must be "owned" by its residents, according to Sarbanes. He also says that it is critical to reach a point, through community collaboration, at which residents begin to look to each other as a primary source of decision-making authority and accountability. Other essential elements needed to implement a successful community-based planning initiative, according to Sarbanes, include mechanisms for engaging community participation, the development of effective coordination and interagency communication, and local leaders' commitment to the effort.

To promote community members' involvement and encourage their collaboration, the GOCCP requires there to be a community coordinator in each HotSpot neighborhood. In a small number of communities, there are designated community organizers through whom all activities are coordinated. Other jurisdictions assign criminal justice practitioners, such as community policing

or probation officers, the responsibility of coordinating the neighborhood's effort.

Community mobilization efforts that build on existing neighborhood organizations and leadership also facilitate consistent community participation. Once this initial infrastructure is recognized, community coordinators and other local leaders will be better able to identify other resources and key players whose involvement will build upon the existing base of support.

It also is essential for local officials to achieve a point at which they communicate across agencies to achieve the common goal of community safety. Sarbanes notes that this transition is a difficult one, and does not happen naturally because it debunks organizational norms that have developed in many agencies over time. Finally, Sarbanes stresses the importance of leadership in developing a successful community strategy. To foster leadership and collaboration, the GOCCP requires that each application provide detailed and specific information about community mobilization activities and certify that a local elected official has signed off on the HotSpot Communities application.

The leadership of state officials has been critical to the strategy's implementation. Maryland Governor Parris Glendening's and Kennedy Townsend's commitment to the initiative encouraged local officials' "buy-in" to the concept. This leadership also has encouraged state agencies with common goals to work together more frequently than they have in the past.

There are challenges inherent in implementing community-based planning initiatives, according to Sarbanes. In addition to maintaining residents' involvement and achieving inter-agency communication, in some cases it has been difficult to help communities translate their ideas and concerns about crime control into feasible goals and objectives. Initially, says Sarbanes, some localities had trouble formulating strategy objectives in a manner that could be implemented and measured, consistent with the GOCCP requirement that applicants complete a community mobilization work plan describing the neighborhood's activities and how they incorporate the strategy's six core elements. The GOCCP views the grants application process as one that will evolve with the strategy's implementation, and feels that most communities have improved their plans since the initial application process began.

Implementing a community-based approach to criminal justice planning also requires changes in the way

state agencies conduct business. Sarbanes says that because communities are developing their own plans and applying to the state to be eligible for resources available from several different state and federal funding streams, the GOCCP has had to significantly alter its approach to the grant application review and budget planning process. Also, GOCCP staff have had to cultivate relationships with key players in each HotSpot neighborhood and with state-level officials from other agencies to comprehensively address specific neighborhood crime problems.

Evaluation

The GOCCP's goal for communities that are successful in implementing the HotSpot Communities strategy is to reduce crime by 25 to 35 percent over two to three years. To determine the initiative's effects, the GOCCP has planned a rigorous, multilevel evaluation.

The first element of the evaluation is the establishment of performance measures -- inputs, outputs, and outcomes -- for each element of a community's strategy to assess the effectiveness of different approaches. Each HotSpot community also will survey residents to measure whether there have been improvements in the quality of life and their perceptions of the area's crime problem and changes in their sense of hopefulness about their community.

The second part of the evaluation will examine crime patterns in and around each HotSpot community and develop maps to help community members and an evaluation team identify where crime occurs and whether or not crime has been displaced to surrounding areas. This research will be conducted by Lawrence Sherman at the University of Maryland with support from the U. S. Department of Justice. GOCCP officials are hoping to augment the university's research with a more detailed analysis of eight to 10 HotSpot communities that will concentrate in depth on their practices and their impact on local crime patterns.

Future Efforts

Because it is in its second year of the initiative and embarking on an extensive evaluation, the GOCCP does not intend to make major changes in its implementation at this time, but will make minor adjustments to the grant application and management process. The GOCCP publishes a newsletter to provide a forum in which communities can share experiences and ideas and provides technical assistance to help communities identify and effectively use available resources.

Comprehensive Communities Program

The BJA describes its Comprehensive Communities Program (CCP), which is administered through its Byrne discretionary grants program, as an "innovative, comprehensive, and integrated multiagency approach to comprehensive violent crime control and community mobilization." Community participants in the CCP take the lead role in developing crime control and prevention partnerships to "take back" their communities and work collaboratively with state and local officials to meet their defined goals. The objectives of the program are to:

- develop a comprehensive, multi-agency strategy within each community to identify the causes and origins of violence and prevent it from occurring;
- incorporate a strategy of community policing and other efforts to mobilize community members; and
- coordinate federal, state, local, and private agency resources to maximize their impact on violence.

Although activities focus on community mobilization and community policing, the program encourages the jurisdictions to integrate a wide range of responses to crime, including youth and gang violence prevention efforts, dispute resolution, community prosecution, drug courts, and alternatives to incarceration.

The CCP has been administered in two phases between 1994 and 1996, and today is being implemented in 16 communities nationwide.



Pennsylvania

According to James Thomas, executive director of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), the objective of Pennsylvania's community-based planning effort is to afford citizens, local officials, and practitioners the opportunity to respond to community-specific crime problems with locally crafted solutions.

The PCCD, the state agency charged with enhancing the function of the justice system and administering federal and state crime control and prevention moneys, promotes collaboration among local leaders on a number of criminal justice issues. Its most comprehensive initiative encourages the development of community-based juvenile justice planning and crime prevention strategies. The state's approach has allowed communities to make policy choices based on their own crime trends, risk assessments, and demographic data. The state's role is to determine which funding streams may be tapped to support community efforts and provide training and technical assistance to augment local capacities.

Evolution

The impetus for Pennsylvania's community-based planning efforts developed from interest at all levels of government in working more collaboratively to protect and enhance the lives of youth. The idea evolved when officials with the PCCD were introduced to the CTC model at a national conference in 1994 (see sidebar, page 3).

The PCCD and its gubernatorially appointed Juvenile Advisory Committee (JAC), the juvenile justice planning, coordinating, and policy development body for the state, felt that the CTC model would empower citizens and local officials to craft community-based responses to youth crime, enhance communication among local officials, and encourage coordination among local youth services systems. These leaders, in conjunction with the Center on Juvenile Justice Training and Research (CJJTR) at Shippensburg University, developed a plan for implementing the CTC in eight pilot counties.

According to Thomas, the leadership of Gov. Tom Ridge, who was elected in 1995 and created the Governor's Community Partnership for Safe Children (Children's Partnership), significantly enhanced support for the community-based approach to juvenile delinquency prevention. The Children's Partnership promotes

local and comprehensive responses to at-risk youth by creating public, private, and interagency partnerships among state agencies, educators, business and community leaders, and clergy. According to Thomas, the cohesion of the Children's Partnership and the CTC model has been key to fostering local interest and collaboration in community-based, strategic, and multidisciplinary justice planning.

In planning the transition to the CTC approach, PCCD officials took several steps to ensure that key participants from several disciplines were "at the table" during the CTC strategy development process. The PCCD created an internal team to determine the appropriate scope for the strategy's initial introduction and planned a training and technical assistance network to support its implementation. It relied on members of the JAC and representatives from the CJJTR, which had contracted with DRP to provide its training and technical assistance materials.

In 1995, eight Pennsylvania counties applied and were chosen to participate in the DRP training seminars and implement the CTC approach. A second cycle of six counties began program implementation in 1997. Currently, 21 communities are using the CTC approach and 15 others have begun the initial planning and training phase. PCCD officials plan to expand the CTC effort to another 24 Pennsylvania communities in 1998.

Implementation

According to Thomas, the development of a successful community-based strategic planning approach requires local officials to authorize the community's involvement and role in the process. He says deciding which community leaders -- a mayor, city council member, or a civic, business, or religious leader -- take a lead role in implementing the strategy is less critical than identifying leaders who are among the community's "movers and shakers," will commit to the strategy, and engage other officials and residents in its development. He also emphasizes the importance of including practitioners whose diverse perspectives can enhance others' understanding of juvenile justice, delinquency, and appropriate prevention strategies. It also is crucial, says Thomas, for a community to assess its crime problem and choose specific solutions from those that have proved effective in addressing similar problems in other states and communities.

The community-based strategic planning concept

in Pennsylvania has been well received by local officials and citizens. Thomas reports that “the word is out” in Pennsylvania about the CTC effort and communities’ success stories, heightening other jurisdictions’ interest in the initiative. Until recently, more communities have asked for assistance than the state has been able to provide. However, officials expect to address this demand with augmented funding for expanded CTC training and technical assistance efforts based at the CJJTR. Ten CTC participants have been selected to undertake a year-long “trainer apprentice” program, which will certify them as CTC trainers in Pennsylvania.

Thomas says information sharing between communities has enhanced implementation of the CTC strategy. Participating communities have formed a network of representatives who assemble periodically to discuss the CTC planning process, its implementation, and their successes and failures. Representatives from the CJJTR facilitate these meetings, but the local practitioners and participants develop the agenda. These meetings have provided the PCCD with important feedback about its role in supporting the community-based planning process.

Interagency communication at both the state and local levels has been challenging at times, according to Thomas. As with any new initiative that requires collaboration and changes in decision-making responsibilities, some state agencies initially were resistant. However, there have been significant gains in interagency communication since the PCCD began supporting the CTC effort. On more levels than ever before, according to Thomas, state agencies are collaborating with one another. At the local level, the challenge seems to be related to misunderstandings about the workings of different “systems,” and usually is overcome when those involved become more cognizant of the perspectives of the other participants and all parties relinquish enough individual power to work collectively as a team.

Evaluation, Plans for the Future

The PCCD encourages all recipients of grant funds to consider evaluation standards and criteria when developing new criminal and juvenile justice programs. The agency sets aside 10 percent of its allocation for new projects under the Byrne program for evaluation, and works with localities during the program planning stages to develop appropriate data collection practices.

The PCCD recently awarded funds to Mark

Greenberg at the Prevention Research Center at Pennsylvania State University to support a statewide evaluation of the CTC initiative. The evaluation objective is to assess the extent to which CTC jurisdictions have successfully implemented the program and to determine whether specific programs have been successful in achieving their goals. The researchers will elicit process information about community mobilization efforts and collaboration, risk assessment, and program choice and implementation. They also will collect information about the interventions the communities have chosen and their effects on juvenile delinquency and community risk and protective factors. Finally, the evaluation will assess which approaches and factors are associated with successful CTC projects.

Virginia

In an 18-month planning and development process, Virginia state and local elected officials, criminal justice practitioners, and community members worked together to develop a strategic plan to guide the commonwealth’s criminal justice system. The document, titled *Community-Oriented Justice: Strategies for Virginia*, adopts a community justice approach, which focuses on the objective identification of community crime problems and broad collaboration in problem solving.

Many communities in Virginia already have begun implementing programs consistent with the state plan, and all grant programs, training, and technical assistance administered by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) have been standardized to be consistent with the document. The DCJS supports outreach to communities interested in expanding their criminal justice and public safety programs consistent with the model.

Evolution

The Virginia Criminal Justice Services Board (CJSB), the state’s multidisciplinary entity charged with formulating criminal justice policy, and the DCJS are required by statute to “develop a comprehensive, statewide, long-range plan for strengthening and improving law enforcement and the administration of criminal justice throughout the Commonwealth, and periodically update that plan.”

A combination of factors led to the development of



community-oriented justice in Virginia. In developing previous plans, officials focused on state-defined goals and objectives. Upon reviewing the plan in

1995, officials realized that the state's social and economic demographics; crime, arrest, and law enforcement trends; available crime-fighting technology; and crime and public safety laws had changed significantly since the previous plan was developed. The DCJS also assessed existing research and national criminal justice trends in other jurisdictions and concluded that a community-based approach to delivering justice would likely be successful in promoting a collaborative and coordinated response to crime in Virginia.

The community-oriented justice model was consistent with then-Governor George Allen's perspective on policymaking, an approach that supported locally driven responses to problems. The DCJS also had the support of the CJSB, whose members include officials from all branches of state and local government and the private sector. The CJSB strongly supported enabling communities and local governments to formulate crime policy decisions.

The objective of the strategy is to "promote the values of safe communities, crime and delinquency prevention, effective sanctions and treatment, and a quality of life which reflects accountability, responsibility, and justice throughout all segments of the community." Specifically, the plan includes five primary focus areas: community enhancement and cooperative efforts; program support, such as changes in legislation and financial support to promote the strategy; incorporation of planning, evaluation, and research into policymaking decisions; technological advancements; and training and education. Within each of these areas, state and local criminal justice officials and practitioners have developed implementation strategies to guide communities in achieving these goals. Under the plan, localities have a significant amount of discretion in establishing their own programs and policy priorities.

To develop the Virginia community-oriented justice model, the DCJS convened several meetings and focus groups to identify critical issues. The first meeting, the Governor's Crime Forum, was held in October 1995 and focused on the impact of recent changes in Virginia law to abolish parole and establish a structured system of sentencing and how those actions would affect the local response to crime policy and criminal justice programming.

As a followup to the Governor's Forum, the DCJS convened a series of constituent focus groups to brain-

storm the key factors in adopting a community-oriented approach to criminal justice. The focus groups were convened to address specific criminal justice disciplines, including law enforcement, prosecution, courts, juvenile justice, adult corrections, community enhancement, crime prevention, victims' services, education, and private security. According to the plan, the focus groups were designed to generate as many ideas as possible from individuals with diverse, expert opinions. Each focus group drew members of the CJSB, community leaders, local government officials, business representatives, criminal justice professionals, and other concerned citizens.

The focus groups considered technological trends, innovative programming, interagency cooperation, legislative initiatives, training and education, and community-oriented justice. In sum, the focus groups formulated approximately 200 recommendations critical to enhancing public safety in Virginia. To translate the recommendations into a working document, the DCJS convened the *Renaissance 2000* symposium in May 1996 where teams from different geographic regions worked together to refine the focus groups' recommendations. After further consolidation of the recommendations and review by the CJSB, the DCJS, focus group participants, and other criminal justice professionals, the plan was adopted by the CJSB in January 1997.

Implementation

According to Donna Wells, policy and planning coordinator at the DCJS, there were several key factors in developing the community-oriented justice model in Virginia. The initial planning the agency undertook with the focus groups and larger, statewide meetings was crucial in fostering support for the effort. These forums allowed constituent groups to work together to generate strategies and collaborate on policy and program issues that cross disciplines. Further, the planning meetings allowed the DCJS to receive feedback from key stakeholders and to incorporate their diverse perspectives and disciplines into the final product.

Support for the community-oriented justice model among high-level officials also was critical to advancing the effort. The CJSB's prioritization of local control in criminal justice program development encouraged integration and collaboration among community members. This, coupled with support from Allen, helped cultivate support for the effort at all

levels of government.

According to Wells, there have been some challenges. A significant obstacle to implementing the community-oriented justice strategy has been to shift policymaking responsibility from the state to the local level. It was somewhat challenging at first, Wells says, to convince all members of the DCJS to support the concept of community-oriented justice and the critical decision-making role localities play in that model.

One example of this shift was the DCJS effort to standardize program guidelines and application procedures, which was identified at many of the initial focus groups as an important task. Although this undertaking represented a significant time investment for DCJS staff, it was consistent with the pledge of state government to provide support to localities engaging in community-oriented justice.

Another challenge for DCJS officials is to develop relationships that enhance and support interagency communication and collaboration. At the state level, communication between agencies has been somewhat informal in the past, but is being institutionalized through the community-oriented justice initiative. With respect to local information sharing, Wells says, building an integrated network where different agencies and service providers are communicating actively with one another takes time. She concludes that local collaboration is an evolving and continually improving effort.

Evaluation, Future Efforts

The DCJS encourages local jurisdictions to incorporate evaluation mechanisms into their program planning process. Wells says that most localities want to ensure that their programs are having an impact on local crime problems and have incorporated program evaluation measures. The DCJS supports, through training and assistance, any community that wishes to learn more about incorporating evaluation measures into its programming.

In moving toward the future, the DCJS envisions the strategy as one in which the agency and the state will continue to invest. State officials rely heavily on feedback from local practitioners and policymakers to guide the initial implementation of the plan, and try to incorporate into the plan and subsequent training sessions appropriate comments and feedback. Treating the guide as a living document, Wells says, will give the DCJS the flexibility to be responsive to the public safety concerns of Virginia's citizens.

Common Themes

Although these strategies differ significantly in evolution, scope, and stage of implementation, there are general themes that are common to all four states' strategies:

Changing Role of State Government. In community-based models, primary policymaking is conducted at the local level, while the primary function of the state is to support the community with technical assistance, funds, and other resources. Officials from all four states indicated that efforts to decentralize decision-making power required a change in mindset, as well as a shift in responsibility at the state-agency level.

Communication. All four state officials with whom the NCJA spoke indicated that interagency communication, both at the local and state levels, is key to promoting collaboration among local-level participants.

Evaluation. Although the nature and scope of the states' evaluation efforts vary, all states emphasize and encourage local-level evaluation or are initiating their own evaluation of the strategic planning process.

Feedback. At some point during the initial planning phases or during the implementation process, all four states solicited feedback from local practitioners, officials, and community members and used it to drive and improve the state strategy.

Leadership. State officials said that leadership at both the state and local levels is reported as a critical component of introducing community-based planning, and the commitment of these leaders to the approach has fostered its implementation in all four states.

Resources. States implementing community-based systems of justice have tapped a variety of resources from both federal and state programs and agencies to support their efforts. All four states use funds from the federal Byrne and JJDPA formula grant programs as a consistent source of support.

All of the state officials with whom the NCJA spoke said that they and their colleagues are optimistic that their states' investments in community-based strategic planning will realize significant benefits for participating communities and serve as approaches for other states and local government to replicate.

Resources

Publications

Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado-Boulder, *Blueprints for Violence Prevention*, 1998.

U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders*, June 1995.

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, *Community Oriented Justice: Strategies for Virginia*, 1997.

State Contacts

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