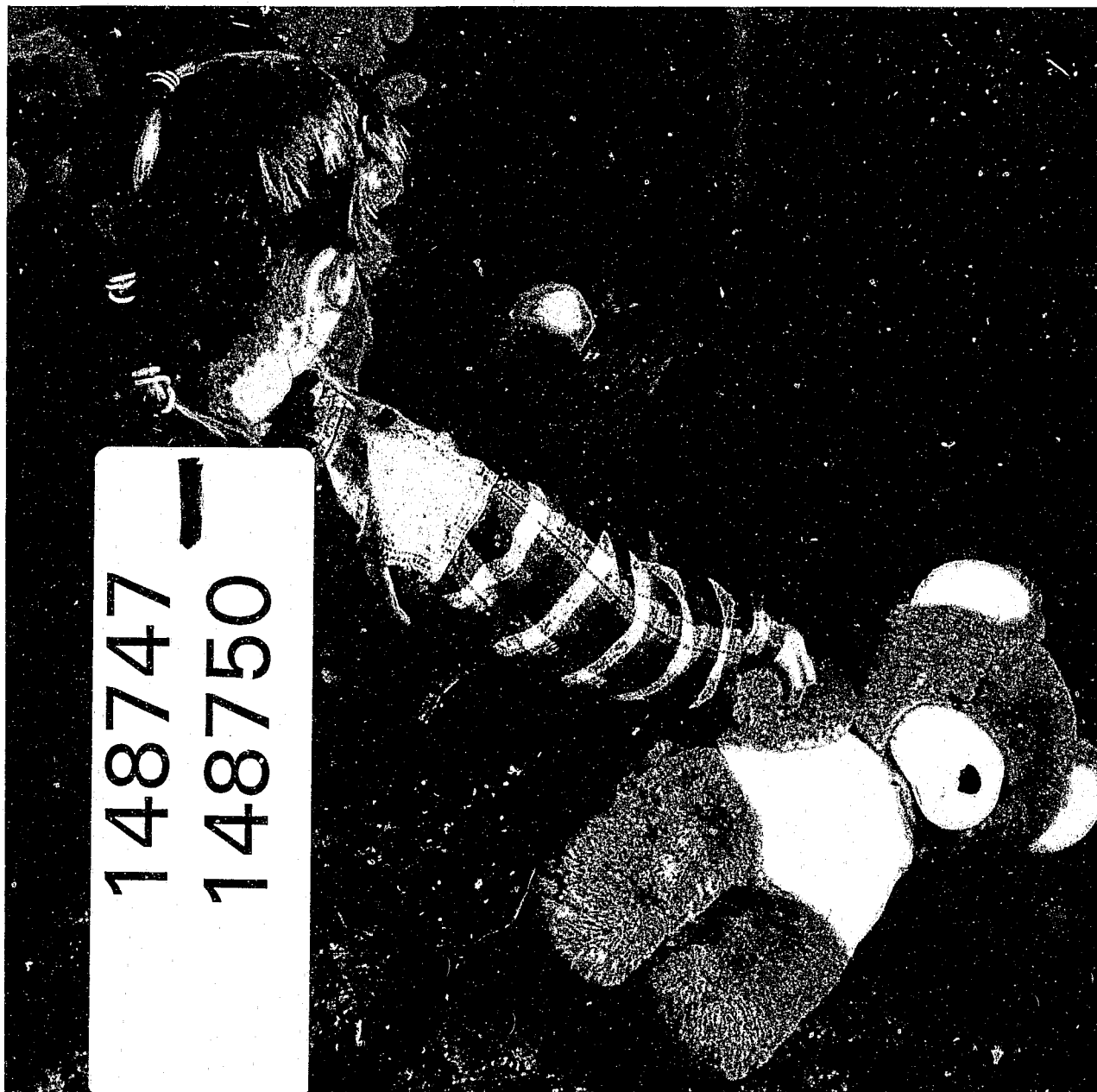


U.S. Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of Investigation

JUN 1992



148747

148750



June 1994  
Volume 63  
Number 6

United States  
Department of Justice  
Federal Bureau of  
Investigation  
Washington, DC 20535

Louis J. Freeh  
Director

Contributors' opinions and statements should not be considered as an endorsement for any policy, program, or service by the FBI.

The Attorney General has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law. Use of funds for printing this periodical has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* (ISSN-0014-5688) is published monthly by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, 10th and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20535. Second-Class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI Academy, Quantico, VA 22135.

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# Roadblocks to Crime

## Travel Restrictions for Convicted Prostitutes

By  
JOHN M. GNAGEY III, M.Ed.  
and CHASE LEONHARD, J.D.

**D**uring 1986 and 1987, the City of Champaign, Illinois, suffered a serious problem with prostitution in its downtown area. Prostitutes solicited customers from the street, stopping cars and blocking traffic. Collateral crimes—including theft, robbery, assault, and “John rolling”—resulted in a significant drain on police resources. Local merchants, citizens, and members of the city council lodged complaints, making this problem the number-one priority for the Champaign Police Department.

After several nominally successful overt attempts at enforcement, the department tried two different covert approaches, which also met with some success and resulted in numerous arrests and successful prosecutions for a number of months. Unfortunately, the problem did not disappear; it merely moved to a residential area west of the downtown area and actually worsened. The prostitutes became more brazen, even using a local church parking lot to perform sexual acts openly. In fact, the area developed such a bad reputation that women who lived there were approached by men who thought that any woman in the area was a prostitute.

The worsening of the problem despite successful arrest and conviction rates convinced

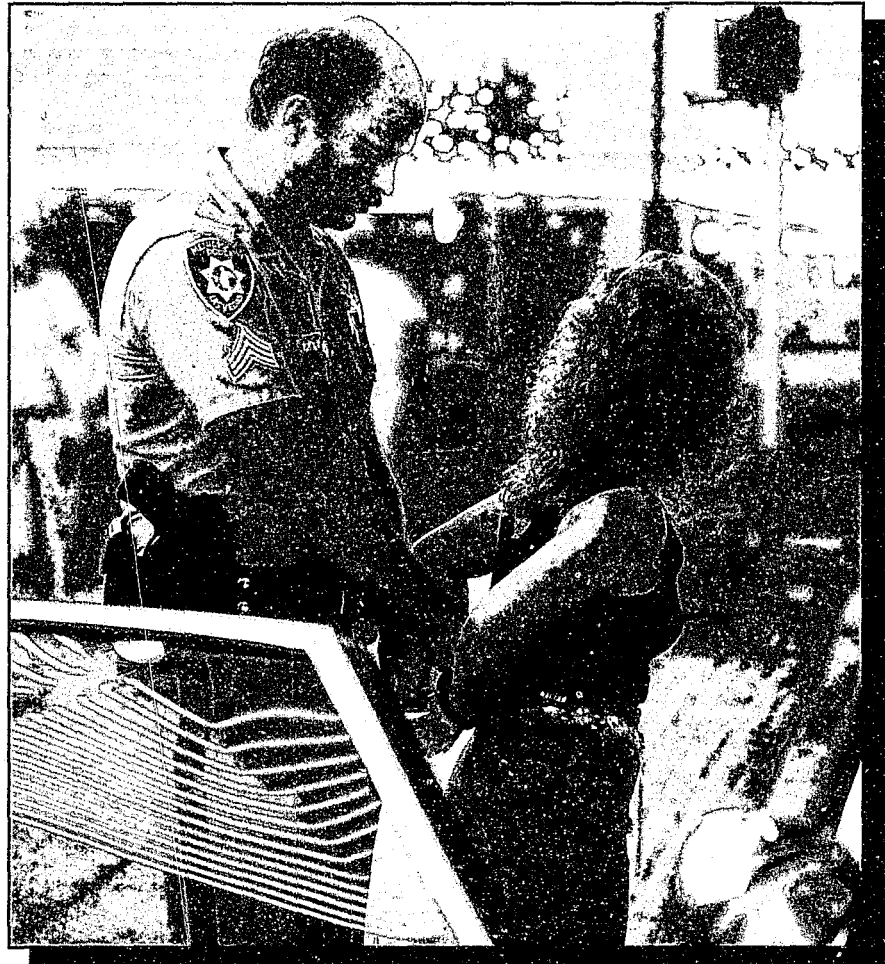


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department administrators that nearly 2 years of routine prosecution had not served as a deterrent to street prostitutes. Over the course of time, recidivism rates exceeding 90 percent illustrated the need for a new strategy. Careful planning and a joint effort between police and prosecutors ultimately

led to the creation of a unique and comprehensive system of travel restrictions for convicted prostitutes.

### Historical Background

The failure of the criminal justice system to provide a remedy had many causes. In Illinois,

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in the community, conducting crime prevention programs and speaking to residents. In this way, the advocate identifies individuals in need of assistance before any contact with the police becomes necessary. Further, the East Providence Protective Services Council—which includes members of the city's police, fire, mental health, welfare, social services, housing, zoning, and planning departments—meets monthly to discuss specific cases involving elderly citizens.

### CRIME PREVENTION

To assist senior victims of crime further, the department focuses on prevention. In cooperation with local church groups, the Rotary Club, and senior citizen residential complexes, the community crime prevention officer presents quarterly talks on different topics involving personal safety, such as avoiding accidents, recognizing frauds and scams, and upgrading security. The success of these programs depends on involving as many seniors citizens as possible, and the department uses every means available to inform residents of upcoming meetings.

### RESULTS

Once the Senior Citizens Police Advocate Program was in place, the advocate began to receive calls directly from the dispatcher, which eased the workload of patrol officers. And, while these calls grew in number each year since the program's inception in 1991, they now demonstrate an awareness of the existence of the department's advocate, as well as the citizens' new willingness to report crimes to the police. In fact, East Providence's program proved so successful that every department in the State of Rhode Island now has its own senior citizens advocate, appointed by the chief of police.

### OFFICER TRAINING

The advocate program relies on the knowledge and experience of its officers. Without proper

training, the senior citizens police advocate cannot effectively execute the program. Most important, all officers in the department need to learn about the aging process in order to deal effectively with elderly citizens and to know when they require referral to the advocate. The Rhode Island Municipal Training Academy, in conjunction with the American Association of Retired Persons and the Rhode Island Department of Elderly Affairs, provides training for new recruits, veteran officers, and senior citizens police advocates.

Cadets receive 4 hours of instruction dedicated to the aging process so that they may deal effectively with seniors. Inservice training is conducted semiannually for experienced officers, and all senior citizens police advocates receive yearly training. This training ensures that officers are using proper procedures and are aware of the resources available to assist elderly residents. Further, because most municipal police officers in the State attend the

same academy, Rhode Island's citizens benefit from the uniform training that officers receive.

### CONCLUSION

Police managers often discuss the need to practice proactive law enforcement. This approach requires anticipating the needs of the community before they become dire.

The aging population presents unique challenges to police departments throughout the Nation. The success of the East Providence Senior Citizens Police Advocate Program in meeting the needs of the city's fast-growing elderly population can serve as an example for other departments, as they prepare for the future today. ♦

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Lieutenant Gilfillan is the Senior Citizens Police Advocate for the East Providence, Rhode Island, Police Department.

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