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Office of Community Policing

Montgomery County, Maryland Department of Police



**GOVERNMENT
COORDINATION,
LEGAL
AND
LEGISLATIVE
COMMITTEE
REPORT**

JUNE 1993



**GOVERNMENT COORDINATION,
LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE**

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY POLICING

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GOVERNMENT COORDINATION, LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

I. PRELUDE

The community policing committee, Government Coordination, Legal and Legislative, is responsible for recommending strategies for involving other governmental, community service providers, and neighborhood and community groups in our community policing efforts. Two objectives were presented to the committee, and they are as follows:

- *Maximize the coordination, cooperation, and communication with governmental agencies, community service providers, and neighborhood and community groups.*
- *Identify changes needed to existing laws and ordinances and propose new legislation to facilitate community policing strategies.*

II. FIRST OBJECTIVE

- ***Maximize the coordination, cooperation, and communication with governmental agencies, community service providers, and neighborhood and community groups.***

To facilitate this endeavor, the committee has broken down into three sub-committees. They are:

- Service Agencies/Government Agencies
- Neighborhood and Business
- Criminal Justice

Each committee recommended strategies to achieve this objective. The following represents the Government Coordination, Legal and Legislative Committee recommendations, followed by strategies suggested to achieve them.

1) *Route calls for non-police service to the appropriate agency when they would not be best served by the police department and develop referral coordination with other county agencies.*

- Develop education programs to help the public find the appropriate agency on the first call (especially for after hours non-emergency calls). Consideration of three digit non-emergency number, i.e., 511.
- Establish a comprehensive, computerized information and referral system.
- Develop and distribute a problem solving guide/comprehensive resource manual.
- Train all employees in the use of information and referral systems.
- Establish an information and referral specialist in the police department, to become part of an I&R team with designated I&R specialists in each department/office/agency/division.
- Develop a network of points of contact (POC) in each department to achieve better coordination and identification of joint problems and strategies.
- Work neighborhood groups into problem solving techniques. Define the community's role and responsibilities under the community policing philosophy.
- Study multi-lingual issues related to improved information and referral procedures.

2) ***Maximize communication and coordination with other county and local government agencies and departments to fully utilize each one to help eradicate conditions breeding criminal activity.***

- Inform the County Council of goals and objectives of community policing.
- Evaluate the possible use and role of other departments and facilities in community policing.
- Train the personnel of other county departments and local governments to recognize public safety concerns and report criminal behavior.
- Train police personnel to recognize and report civil code violations and behaviors to appropriate departments and local governments.
- Expand resource sharing with departments and local governments where feasible (through points of contact, etc.)
- Develop methods for communicating major neighborhood issues to the appropriate primary agency.
- Participate in, or formalize, the inter-departmental cooperation teams which can be tools for problem solving.

3) ***Maximize communication with government and non-government service agencies that respond to persons who cause or are affected by activity which has a negative impact on the community.***

- Identify, list, and establish liaison with social service providers and government centers.
- Identify, list, and establish liaison with public service providers (utilities, etc.).
- Evaluate possible rotation of employees through key public and social service agencies.
- Reevaluate the system for dealing with people or groups who cause chronic problems at the beat level, and develop useful procedures to resolve such problems.

4) *Maximize communication and coordination with neighborhoods, community organizations, businesses, and private security representatives.*

- Community definition: Integral to this aspect of community policing is a definition of *community*. Community, as referred to in this plan, includes not only geographic subdivisions such as villages, towns, cities, areas of neighborhoods, but also includes networks of interaction or of common sets of interests such as religious organizations, professional, business, or trade associations, homeowners groups, clubs, political organizations, or any group, organized or not, that shares common interests, beliefs, or opinions.
 - Develop methods for the community or community organizations to effectively communicate problems to the appropriate police agency.
 - Develop methods for the police to actively monitor community concerns even when these may not be brought to the attention of the police.
 - Develop methods for communicating information, concerns, responses, etc. from the police to other government agencies or targeted neighborhoods or neighborhood organizations.
 - Develop alternative mediation methods for community problem solving.
 - Analyze feasibility of establishing a Police Athletic League (P.A.L.) or a test P.A.L. project.
 - Identify neighborhood and community resources and develop programs around this existing infrastructure.
 - Study the issues surrounding the use of private security where appropriate.
 - Analyze the feasibility of additional mini-stations.
 - Encourage the formation of neighborhood/business watches, patrols, and/or block homes.
 - Discuss methods of implementing empowerment for citizens, neighborhoods, communities, and community organizations.
 - Develop methods for objective evaluation of community policing programs as related to neighborhoods and communities.
 - Develop a citizen's guide similar to a resource guide for police. Distribute through new homeowners, real estate companies, public schools, etc.

5) *Maximize communication and coordination with the Criminal Justice System and other law enforcement agencies.*

- Revise and structure mutual aid agreements with police agencies/departments operating in Montgomery County to maximize flexibility with the ultimate goal of improving service to the citizens of Montgomery County.
- Encourage regular quarterly meetings of senior field services staff of all law enforcement agencies within the county to maximize communication and improve coordination of services.
- Encourage formation of inter-agency operations to facilitate community policing strategies and provide training when necessary.
- Encourage the development of alternative criminal justice system responses for low priority cases.
- Conduct periodic seminars for law enforcement officers and citizens on information resources and problem solving.
- Establish quarterly meetings between court administrators and law enforcement agency representatives to inform courts of goals and activities of community policing and to develop strategies to maximize the efficiency of law enforcement and court resources.
- Establish quarterly meetings among law enforcement agencies, Juvenile Court, Juvenile Services Administration, and school administration to maximize coordination on juvenile issues.
- Assure that statistical and computer information systems allow for exchange of information among all criminal justice agencies within the county.
- Develop problem solving guides (one for citizens, one for police) that allow quick identification of services and resources (including municipal, state and park resources). Develop a key word index to improve the user's ability to identify the correct resource.
- Have the Pre-Trial Services Unit, Pre-Release Center, and Detention Center inform appropriate police agencies of the release of arrestees/offenders. Develop a liaison between the Corrections Department and police agencies.

III. SECOND OBJECTIVE

The Government Coordination, Legal and Legislative Committee's second objective was to:

- *Maximize the coordination, cooperation, and communication with governmental agencies, community service providers, and neighborhood and community groups.*

To accomplish this, the subcommittee was divided into two groups. One, entitled the Grants Coordination/Legislative Liaison Committee, examined methods of accessing additional sources of funding and improving the coordination of legislative issues. The second committee, Decriminalization, identified key areas that, when acted upon, would increase officer effectiveness and availability.

The following are recommendations from those subcommittees.

Grants Coordination/Legislative Liaison Subcommittee

This subcommittee explored ways to provide quicker access to legislative information, better departmental input, and more proactive departmental involvement in critical public safety, police and crime issues through better departmental participation in the legislative process and better coordination of governmental activities.

To be successful, the department needs to provide for the function of coordinating legislative testimony and legislative information, as well as being proactive on local, state and federal issues affecting the police department. This subcommittee recommends the following strategies:

- The Chief should designate a single departmental Government Affairs Coordinator. The Chief should consider the advantages of using a police officer for this position. In conjunction with the Workload Analysis and Organizational Structure subcommittees, the department should evaluate staffing requirements to determine whether this Governmental Affairs Coordinator should be a new full-time or part-time position or a reassignment of a current position.
- The Office of State Affairs needs to be made continuously aware of police legislative interests and needs. There certainly needs to be better coordination between the department and the Office of State Affairs. The police department's Government Affairs Coordinator should coordinate efforts with the Office of State Affairs.

This subcommittee further explored ways to provide better community services and access to additional sources of funding through self-funding sources.

The subcommittee believes the department needs to provide for the function of coordinating public and private grants, as well as corporate and community contributions. We make the following recommendations:

- There should be a single coordinator within the Office of Planning and Policy Management to coordinate grants and outside funds. This person may be non-sworn or a contractor.
- The Grants/Funding Coordinator should undertake an evaluation of potential resources to determine availability and accessibility of sources of funds.
- The Grants/Funding Coordinator should develop and propose internal guidelines regarding solicitation and distribution of funding within the department.
- The department should consider the establishment of a Police Foundation.

Decriminalization Subcommittee

This subcommittee looked for ways to increase patrol officer effectiveness in the community. In order to accomplish this, we felt there should be more time spent on the street by officers. We could increase officer availability by impacting on duties not related to law enforcement. This would enable officers time to develop problem oriented policing projects by:

- Reducing officer time spent in court.
 - Decriminalize non-incarcerable traffic and parking citations - modify to civil citations.
- Central Processing
 - Evaluate/explore advantages of ending patrol officer involvement with prisoners at time of release to a Central Processing Unit.
- Explore the advantages of expanding categories of offenses which may be charged by citation in lieu of physical arrest.

The Decriminalization Subcommittee further believes that we can increase effective use of patrol officers' time in the community by:

- Improving non-emergency dispatch to other county agencies. Identify those calls for service best handled by other government agencies.
 - Minimize impact of non-police calls on patrol officers by proper and timely referral and response by other agencies.
- Improving communication between the police, the school system, and public agencies dealing with juveniles including, but not limited to, the Juvenile Services Administration.
- Exploring the feasibility of broadening these enumerated offenses, by charging juveniles as adults. For example, charging juveniles as adults for felony drug and weapons charges.
- Improving understanding and application of the Montgomery County Code by patrol officers to solve community problems.
- Increasing patrol officers' awareness of their role as an "early warning system" for potential community problems.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Government Coordination, Legal and Legislative Committee of the Office of Community Policing views the next step in the process as reorganizing the subcommittee to work on these and the recommendations previously offered. We recognize that we may not be the appropriate persons responsible for implementation of the recommendations. They will no doubt require changes in the committee membership to include those persons responsible for policy/decision making. We strongly urge the Department of Police to continue in their community policing efforts.