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ANTI-CRIME PROGRAMS FOR THE ELDERLY:

A SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT

by

Lawrence J. Center

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National Council of Senior Citizens, Inc.  
1511 K Street, N.W.  
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
1.1 Background of the National Elderly Victimization Prevention and Assistance Program . . . . .	1
1.2 Sites and Objectives . . . . .	2
1.3 Purpose of this Report . . . . .	4
CHAPTER 2 VICTIM ASSISTANCE . . . . .	8
2.1 Project Activities . . . . .	8
2.2 Lessons Projects Learned . . . . .	12
CHAPTER 3 CRIME PREVENTION . . . . .	14
3.1 Project Activities . . . . .	14
3.2 Lessons Projects Learned . . . . .	19
CHAPTER 4 PUBLIC POLICY AND PROJECT VISIBILITY . . . . .	22
4.1 Project Activities . . . . .	22
4.2 Lessons Learned by Projects . . . . .	25
CHAPTER 5 NEIGHBORHOOD STRENGTHENING . . . . .	27
5.1 Project Activities . . . . .	27
5.1 Lessons Projects Learned . . . . .	30
FOOTNOTES . . . . .	32

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the National Elderly Victimization Prevention  
and Assistance Program

The recent and growing interest in the problem of crime against the elderly is a direct outgrowth of our elderly citizens' increasingly vocal insistence that something be done about the harm resulting from the fear of crime and victimization. In response to these demands for action, in early 1977, four Federal agencies launched an unusual coordinated program aimed at learning about and reducing the incidence and effects of crime against the elderly. The national program consisted of seven local demonstration projects and a central coordinating arm, the Criminal Justice and the Elderly program.

The \$4.4 million effort was supported by grants from the Administration on Aging (AoA), the Community Services Administration (CSA), the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Ford and Edna McConnell Clark Foundations.

The program's central arm, Criminal Justice and the Elderly (CJE), was tasked with both assisting and evaluating the seven demonstration projects; in addition, CJE took on a role as a national research and resource center for information on the problem of crime against the elderly. CJE's evaluation was divided into two components. An impact evaluation was funded by a \$200,000 grant from HUD. One hundred sixty thousand dollars of this amount was subcontracted to the Behavioral Sciences Laboratory of the University of

Cincinnati for surveys of the projects' impact in selected neighborhoods. To supplement the information collected by BSL, AoA and CSA provided \$75,614 for CJE to track the progress of the seven projects and to conduct a process evaluation of each project. From these data, a number of separate reports have been prepared on the process evaluation in each of the sites and on BSL's findings from their neighborhood surveys.<sup>1</sup> This report will attempt to combine and summarize the findings from these reports in order to provide the most important lessons learned about how to implement a successful elderly anti-crime project.

#### 1.2 Sites and Objectives

Beginning in early 1977, seven demonstration projects aimed at preventing crime against the elderly and assisting elderly crime victims were established in six major cities--Chicago, New York (two projects), New Orleans, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and Washington, D.C. Six of the projects focused their activities on selected neighborhoods with high crime rates and high concentrations of senior citizens, while the Chicago program adopted a city-wide approach.

Three of the projects--New York City's Senior Citizens' Crime Assistance and Prevention Program (SCCAPP), New Orleans' Elderly Victimization Prevention and Assistance Program (EVP&AP), and Milwaukee's Crime Prevention-Victim Assistance Program for Senior Citizens (CP-VAP)--were sponsored by local community action agencies with Federal funding for two years of some 1.6 million from the Community Services Administration.

The other four projects--Chicago's Senior Citizens' Community Safety Program, Los Angeles' Security Assistance for the Elderly (Senior SAFE), Washington, D.C.'s Elderly Antivictimization Project, and New York City's Senior Citizen Anti-Crime Network (SCAN)--were supported by the Administration on Aging with two-year funding of 1.8 million.

The seven projects had a number of common objectives:

- o Helping the elderly avoid victimization. Most of the projects developed an education program for senior citizens on techniques for reducing their chances of being victimized. Several of the projects brought their crime prevention services into the homes of the elderly, helping them, for example, identify security weaknesses, upgrade the quality of their locks, and engrave their property with an identifying number to deter burglaries.
- o Re-establishing social networks and strengthening neighborhoods. It has always been true that isolated individuals are more vulnerable to crime than people in groups. Several projects helped elderly neighbors conduct their shopping together or stayed in regular contact by telephone. Others sought to reduce the dangers of urban living by helping citizens form intergenerational block clubs or a "Neighborhood Watch" program, attempting both to reduce residential crime and to bring neighbors in contact with each other, and thus reduce fears.
- o Aiding elderly victims of crime. In cooperation with police and social service agencies, all the projects provided assistance to elderly crime victims to help them recover from the psychological, physical and financial effects of the victimization. The types of service provided included crisis counseling, transportation, home care, legal aid, replacement of lost documents, emergency food and clothing, and temporary shelter.
- o Expanding public awareness of the problem of crime against the elderly and activities needed to combat it. Projects advocated for public policy changes which would reflect the seriousness of the problem of crime against the elderly. Each project had its own local advisory committee, which helped to plan project activities and to insure that the interests of all segments of the community were represented. As many local organizations as possible were contacted in an effort to sensitize them to the problems of elderly crime and to ensure

that elderly clients would receive efficient care and attention.

Although the seven projects pursued similar objectives, their emphases were quite varied. For example, Security Assistance for the Elderly (Senior SAFE) in Los Angeles and the Senior Citizens Crime Assistance and Prevention Program in New York concentrated on victim assistance. The Senior Citizen Anti-Crime Network in New York City focused on expanding public awareness of the problem of crime against the elderly and ways to fight it. Other projects, such as Chicago's Senior Citizen Community Safety Program and New Orleans' Elderly Victimization Prevention and Assistance Program, emphasized the dissemination of crime prevention education to groups of senior citizens. The other two projects, the Elderly Antivictimization Project in Washington, D.C., and the Crime Prevention/Victim Assistance Program in Milwaukee, stressed neighborhood strengthening activities. The D.C. project established a very successful escort service for seniors, while the Milwaukee project helped citizens form block clubs to protect one another, and implemented a comprehensive home security program for senior citizens.

### 1.3 Purpose of This Report

This final report summarizes the findings of both the process and impact evaluations. The process evaluation focused on project activities rather than the effect these activities had on their intended audience. Its primary goals

were to supply data to project administrators so that the projects could be improved, to subsequently provide information to administrators who would be attempting to institutionalize some of the projects' components, and to assess the quality and extent of project activities for the agencies which funded the projects. In order to take into account the varying goals and activities of each of the seven projects, the process evaluation design was tailored to each of the projects and kept flexible over the course of the effort. For all projects, however, conclusions were based on knowledge gained from three site visits to each project, comprehensive reviews of available data, regular telephone contacts, the projects' quarterly progress reports, and interviews with individuals who dealt with the projects.

These included officials from public social service agencies, staff from private community organizations, members of the local police departments, members of the projects' advisory groups, staff from senior citizen centers and programs, and representatives of the local media. CJE also interviewed virtually every staff member for the seven projects.

The impact evaluation was designed to assess the effects the projects had on their intended target populations. It was conducted through a series of three surveys. A two-wave telephone survey of the general elderly population living in the target neighborhoods yielded data concerning neighborhood strengthening, crime prevention education, and public policy activities. BSL conducted the first wave in the fall of 1977 to gather the baseline data.

Because the projects were just getting underway at the time, it was felt this survey would provide the basis for determining changes over time. This wave also gave the local projects an up-to-date profile of the population they were trying to serve. Twelve months later, BSL reinterviewed the same people, plus replacements for those who dropped out, to determine if any improvements had occurred.

The third telephone survey interviewed crime victims who had been contacted by the projects. These respondents provided information about the extent and quality of victim assistance services and insights into the problems faced by elderly crime victims. The evaluators were also able to match the victim data with the general neighborhood surveys to ascertain the manner in which victims differ from the general population.

By integrating conclusions reached by CJE's process evaluators and those reached by staff at the Behavioral Sciences Laboratory, we will attempt to present a comprehensive overview of some of the seven projects' accomplishments and impacts. Moreover, we will use the data which has been collected during the CJE process evaluation to provide a broader understanding of the major findings of the BSL study. By combining these findings, we are able with a better sense of their reliability, to provide major recommendations about how to conduct successful elderly anti-crime projects. These recommendations, grouped according to the various project objectives, are intended to be helpful to people planning or operating future projects. More detailed recommendations for planning and implementing

a crime prevention and victim assistance program for the elderly are contained in three other CJE manuals prepared for HUD. These are Anti-Crime Programs for the Elderly: Combining Community Crime Prevention and Victim Services; Anti-Crime Program for the Elderly: A Guide to Planning; and Anti-Crime Programs for the Elderly: A Guide to Program Activities.<sup>2</sup>



## CHAPTER 2 VICTIM ASSISTANCE

### 2.1 Project Activities

Both the process and impact evaluations produced data indicating moderate success in the projects' victim assistance components. Project achievements at reaching large numbers of clients seemed most directly tied to the efficiency of the victim referral process. And this efficiency varied greatly.

Perhaps the most efficient referral process existed at Senior SAFE in Los Angeles. There the Police Department extended exemplary cooperation, providing the project with names of elderly victims on a daily basis. Police officers encountering older victims explained Senior SAFE and asked the victims if they were interested in receiving assistance from the project. If they indicated an interest, they were asked to sign a victim consent form. Copies of this form were channeled to several police divisions for accountability purposes, and one copy placed in a special box at all target area precincts. A Senior SAFE staff member picked the forms up every day and delivered them to the projects' offices. Thus counselors were able to telephone or visit all victims within twenty-four hours. By contrast several other projects encountered problems in establishing a referral process with the police, and thus could not serve a large number of victims. For example, the Milwaukee police chief refused to release the names of victims to the Crime Prevention Assistance Program, forcing project staff to engage in extensive outreach efforts to reach only a small number of elderly victims.

All the demonstration projects found counseling to be the most needed victim service, and consequently this was the service most frequently provided. Judging from the BSL surveys, one reason for this need was the fear of future victimization which the crime apparently caused.

The BSL findings show that the fear of crime resulting from a victimization spreads from a victim to his friends and neighbors. Three-fourths of the victims they contacted stated they were very fearful that they would be victimized again. Echoing this finding, many project counselors told CJE that fear is as great a problem for the elderly--if not greater--than crime itself.

Despite agreement among projects that counseling is the most frequent service provided to elderly victims, opinions about its value varied. At several projects, counselors were very frustrated; they asserted that they could provide "only counseling" and that victims really needed more "tangible" services. They described the lack of responsiveness from the social service system and complained that they could do "very little" for the victims. Conversely, counselors at other projects felt that counseling is indeed a critical service whose importance should not be underestimated. They believed that effective counseling is a tangible service, one in which the counselor is giving of himself--his time and effort--trying to reduce the trauma, fear or depression felt by the victims.

It is likely that much of the frustration vented to CJE evaluators by counselors was an accurate reflection of the large number of victim needs which went unmet. BSL

found that victims often reported that the projects did not resolve specific problems associated with the crime. Yet almost one-fifth of these victims refused offers of help or did not tell the project about the problems. Moreover, many of the problems which victims mentioned were things with which most victim assistance programs are not equipped to deal. For example, financial assistance, direct medical care, relocation and property replacement are not services generally provided by the projects. Victim dissatisfaction expressed to BSL may thus be a reflection of the lack of social services available to victims, rather than dissatisfaction with the projects' services.

The importance of counseling was underscored by BSL's finding that the great majority of victims--despite their statements about lacking certain kinds of help, welcomed the care and concern shown by the projects' staff members. Nine of ten victims surveyed would recommend the project to a friend who had been victimized.

In light of the victims' need for and receptivity to counseling, the skills of victim assistance counselors are a critical variable in the success of a victim assistance component. CJE's process evaluation concluded that education may not be as important a qualification as temperament and training. Victims often mask their feelings; for example, BSL found that one-quarter of those victims who experienced increased fear said that they did not reveal this to project counselors. This put a premium on training victim assistance workers to recognize the signs of emotional stress and to relieve some of this anxiety. CJE found that projects'



ability to provide ongoing training to victim assistance staff was an important variable in their success or lack of success in helping victims.

The particular strengths of the projects' victim assistance components varied depending on the resources available in their cities, their linkages with social service agencies, and counselors' abilities at individualized advocacy. For example, SCAN was able to provide victims with emergency compensation through a pilot program operated by the Community Services Society of New York. The EVP&AP in New Orleans was able to channel victims to a new restitution program run by the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office and could expeditiously resolve victims' housing problems because a staff member was on the Board of Directors of the New Orleans Housing Authority. Chicago staff were able to provide a host of social services to victims because they were tied into the Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens and Handicapped's extensive information and referral network. In Los Angeles, project staff established close relationships with several important local programs, such as an emergency loan program and a home repair service, so that clients received quick attention.

Despite the fact that the projects' victim assistance components were able to make a generally favorable impression upon their clientele and were able to help victims with a number of services, their "overall success rate," as measured by BSL and as reflected in counselor frustrations expressed to CJE, was not overly impressive. Clearly, this

is as much a result of the limited scope of the victim assistance components as any other factor. The implications of this conclusion are that victim assistance projects in cities where adequate back-up services do not exist will be unsuccessful in performing the functions they were designed for unless their services are expanded or refocused to coincide with the services victims feel they need.

Several of the demonstration projects, in fact, began providing direct services to victims which they had originally not intended to give. For example, one of the Los Angeles project's offices established its own emergency food closet. SCCAPP began helping clients in landlord-tenant court cases, testifying on the clients' behalf in court. SCCAPP and EVP&AP also hired their own carpenters to perform hardware repairs for victims.

## 2.2. Lessons Projects Learned

The opinions of the seven projects' victim assistance workers, the observations of CJE's evaluators and the findings of BSL's survey have produced a number of conclusions about victim assistance components of elderly anti-crime programs. The major ones serve as guides to people planning future programs.

- o The speed of the referral process may be the most important variable in the success of a victim assistance component. Recent psychiatric literature on victims reveals that to be optimally effective, victim counseling should take place within one or two days of the crime. After that period, victims often become embittered or withdrawn. Thus, projects should begin early to negotiate with the police, striving for a referral process that imposes minimal additional responsibility on police officers. In fact, without an efficient victim referral process linking a project with the police,

victim assistance may not be a cost-effective activity at all.

o Emergency counseling is probably the single most important service anti-crime programs can provide for elderly victims. Because of the skills required, training, both pre-service and in-service, is important for victim assistance staff.

o Individualized victim advocacy is a crucial skill. With referrals to social service agencies, it can be easy for a victim counselor to "lose control." Yet victims will "blame" projects if their needs are not met. Thus, projects need to follow up on victims as often as possible and lobby with agency staff for the provision of services.

o Because of the lack of responsiveness from many social service agencies, projects should try to provide as many services as possible directly. This may require an expansion or realignment of project structure. Because a victimization can exacerbate other problems previously affecting a client, it is difficult for victim assistance workers to confine their efforts to the consequences of the crime. Often they must be prepared to help senior citizens with non-crime-related problems.

o Home visits are an integral part of effective victim assistance services. By viewing victims in their own environment and seeing their reactions to their victimization, workers can best assess their emotional and physical needs.

### CHAPTER 3 CRIME PREVENTION

#### 3.1 Project Activities

Because victim assistance only helps people "after the fact," all seven projects provided services to reduce the opportunities for crime against elderly citizens. These efforts included crime prevention training and "target hardening" programs. The former usually consisted of educational seminars directed at large groups of seniors. The latter included activities such as home security surveys, hardware installations, and property engraving.

Clearly, the potential for reaching seniors with crime prevention information is encouraging. A solid majority of those surveyed by BSL remembered receiving some such information during the year. Almost half said it actually affected their behavior, usually by making them more cautious and watchful. However, CJE found that certain project efforts to tap this potential--to interest the elderly in crime prevention--were limited in their effectiveness by the current state of the art in crime prevention education.

Crime prevention training as currently conducted follows a very traditional approach to education, using standardized packaged lectures to large groups. These lectures can last from ten minutes to one hour, but cover the same topics: tips to avoid purse-snatching, home security hints, precautions to take while walking and actions to take before going on a vacation. This approach is almost universally in use by police crime prevention units across the country

and was adopted by the demonstration projects, several of whom made their presentations in combination with police officers. However, a number of staff members conducting the seminars doubted whether they were really "reaching" the majority of their audience with this type of educational program.

Nonetheless, several projects did engage in significant crime prevention training activities. SCAN joined with New York police department officers to prepare a useful crime prevention manual for the elderly, as well as a training module for police crime prevention officers. The New Orleans project held training sessions just for crime victims, providing crime prevention information to the people who need it most. It also held training in projects and high-rise complexes, drawing senior citizens who did not necessarily belong to existing groups or clubs. In Chicago, the ex-policemen who conducted crime prevention training first talked to beat patrol officers to obtain a precise picture of crime in the particular neighborhood where they were scheduled to speak.

Projects which used audiovisual and participatory approaches to crime prevention training found they worked much more effectively than lectures. For example, some Chicago staff members asked seniors to volunteer for role-playing skits in which preventive techniques were demonstrated. Some used films which focused on burglary prevention or street safety. However, according to staff members themselves, those which followed the films with discussions or demonstrations to ensure that the movies' illustrations were

fully understood appeared enjoy to better results than those which used no organized follow-up techniques.

Probably the most popular crime prevention service provided was home security surveys and installations. These services were "tangible,"--the hardware could be seen and touched by the clients--it reduced both fear of crime and chances of victimization, and it was free. Most of the demonstration projects did not originally intend to provide hardware to seniors. However, it quickly became clear that the so-called home security surveys, by themselves, were of minimal value to many low-income elderly clients (who constituted a majority of those served). If defects were discovered, clients without resources to correct them could be left with even greater anxiety about their safety.

However, once the projects coupled these surveys with the provision of appropriate hardware, they were very warmly-received. The Milwaukee project, which had the most comprehensive home security program, provided surveys, equipment, and installations for over 750 elderly citizens. The Chicago project, which provided locks to seniors but did not have the resources to install them, was pleasantly surprised when its follow-up showed that the great majority of clients who received them were able to secure assistance to have them installed. Other projects which could not install hardware referred clients to existing programs; these programs, often burdened by waiting lists and boundary restrictions, produced mixed results. In fact, their slow

responses sometimes resulted in blame being placed on the demonstration projects themselves.

One of the major issues faced by the projects performing home security activities was services for apartment-dwellers. Many of the clients of all seven projects lived in apartments; in fact, two-thirds of those surveyed by BSL lived in rental property. Most projects did not provide home security aid to apartment-dwellers. They were wary of conflict with landlords and unsure of their legal right to alter the landlords' property. However, because the poorer elderly live in apartments and, as BSL found, elderly apartment-dwellers are more likely to be victims of crime than elderly residents of single-family homes, these people should—and can be—serviced in a number of ways. For example, SCAN, with the help of the Vera Institute's Victim/Witness Program, provided locks to elderly apartment dwellers.

Despite the less than optimal educational programs provided by the projects, BSL found that the crime prevention message—whether disseminated by the projects or others—was getting across to seniors. While there was no large number of statistically significant changes in people's attitudes, more residents were indeed taking precautions to protect their household in 1979 than in 1978. These actions most often consisted of increased use of bars or special locks for windows and greater surveillance with peep-holes or similar screening devices. This increase was particularly true in Flatbush, a SCAN target area which suffered from the highest crime rates of any area in New York City; there was a statistically significant rise in percentage of people reporting that they use special bars or locks on windows.

In Milwaukee's Sherman Park, where the Crime Prevention-Victim Assistance Program conducted its comprehensive home security efforts, residents also reported a substantial increase in using special bars or locks on windows and in having peepholes or some other way of seeing people before letting them in. BSL's findings are encouraging since the two largest, and statistically significant changes occurred in neighborhoods for which BSL had strong evidence that the local demonstration programs were highly visible. Thus, it is possible that the positive changes in home security measures were attributed to the projects' activities.

BSL also attempted to assess whether elderly residents in project neighborhoods increased their sense of personal security when outside their homes by having someone with them, by taking something with them for protection like a whistle, or by simply avoiding certain places in the neighborhood because of their association with crime. Such measures were, in fact, taught as part of the crime prevention training conducted by most of the projects. BSL found that residents of the Central City area of New Orleans were significantly more likely to take these measures than a year previously; this is an encouraging result for the EVP&AP, which emphasized crime prevention training throughout its two years. Furthermore, the data collected by BSL show a tendency of the elderly in the other project neighborhoods toward taking more protective steps when going outside. It is impossible, without more detailed information, to link this tendency to the projects' activities. Nevertheless, it is encouraging

to learn that elderly citizens are willing to adopt procedures for protecting their safety.

However, it must be stated also that BSL found that no significant changes occurred in the fear levels of those surveyed. Moreover, the only statistically significant results indicated increased fear in Flatbush and Central City. Thus, it is conceivable that senior citizens in those neighborhoods took more precautions not because they were heeding project advice, but because they were simply more fearful. This possibility is supported by BSL's findings that the majority of people received information about crime prevention from televisions in each of the four cities BSL studied, none of the other volunteered sources exceeding 10%.

### 3.2 Lessons Projects Learned

In performing both crime prevention training and home security activities, the demonstration projects found that the method of providing the service was an important determinant of the clients' receptiveness to it. In crime prevention training sessions, techniques which involved the participants and called on them to respond or react seemed more effective.<sup>3</sup> Providing home security services to seniors proved more effective when a comprehensive program could be promised--surveys, hardware provision and installation.

Other lessons learned by the projects and conclusions reached by CJE include:

- o Crime prevention training should be organized and planned according to a number of factors: The neighborhood, the identity of the audience, the location of the training, and the size of the audience. The same approach should not be used for all presentations.

- o Other factors to consider in planning a crime prevention training session include the people's living situation (apartments vs. homes), the interests of the participants, the crime pattern in the neighborhood and the way in which crimes are being committed.

- o The subject of awareness is generally ignored in crime prevention training; too often project staff assumed people were gathered because they wanted to learn how to prevent crime. Trainers should address this issue before delving into the "how's" of crime prevention. Until people understand the scope of the crime problem and want to learn, it is difficult to effectively transmit information to them. However, in making people more aware it is important trainers provide an opportunity to express their fears and discover the real risk of being victimized.

- o It is likely that the more participants can become involved in crime prevention training, the more effective that training will probably be. Thus, seniors will better remember points made in films, slides, exhibits or demonstrations than in lectures or handouts. Similarly, they will learn even better while "doing" things such as role-playing crime situations or simulating real life experiences.

- o Crime prevention training for the elderly can be improved only if it is evaluated. Several projects used one form of evaluation--written questionnaires to elicit immediate participant reaction. However, two other valuable forms of evaluation should be considered. They are self-assessment (for the trainers themselves) and impact evaluation. The latter, which can be very difficult to conduct, can tell projects what participants remember and whether they converted any of what they learned into action.

- o Home security strategies should be based not on what "looks good" but on the actual crime problem in an area. For example, providing all seniors with new locks is inappropriate if most burglaries are being accomplished through unforced entries.



o Security surveys should always be done with a written checklist; this guarantees that the surveyor will not forget to inspect any part of the residence, will allow later analysis of elderly residents' security problems, and can be used for evaluating effectiveness.

o Whenever financially possible, projects should install hardware themselves. When they are forced to depend on other programs, problems often arise. If such reliance is necessary, however, places to contact include: existing home security programs funded under the Older Americans Act, CETA programs with carpentry components, local victim/assistance programs, trade schools, local community colleges or universities, and retired carpenters.

o Apartment dwellers should not be ignored when home security programs are being planned. Even if hardware installation cannot be conducted, projects can help residents organize campaigns to get better security provided by building owners or managers. These may include various types of tenant actions to enforce or change housing codes or pressuring local officials to change policies or laws with respect to security for multiple dwellings.

#### CHAPTER 4 PUBLIC POLICY AND PROJECT VISIBILITY

The demonstration projects' third primary objective was to increase visibility for both themselves and for the overall problem of crime against the elderly. To promote their own activities they engaged in a variety of public relations efforts. To bring the problem of elderly crime to the attention of the public and public officials, they undertook activities which included the dissemination of newsletters, the organization of coalitions and public hearings, and the holding of seminars and training sessions.

##### 4.1 Project Activities

Good visibility is very important for a neighborhood-oriented crime prevention and victim assistance program. It gives a project credibility with residents whom it will be serving and with agencies on whom it will have to rely. It attracts clients to the program, clients who may be in serious need of service. And it can serve a project in good stead when it seeks future funding at the local level.

Both the process and impact evaluations found that overall, the public relations efforts of the projects were a moderate success. During the twelve-month period of the impact evaluation, awareness of the four projects BSL studied increased, although not by as much as they probably desired. And in two cities BSL did not study--Chicago and Washington, D.C.--CJE found a number of indicators that project visibility had also increased.

Those projects which experienced difficulty in gaining local visibility usually suffered from a lack of professional staff to whom authority to carry out a public relations campaign was specifically delegated.



The investment of those projects which hired a full-time public relations specialist paid large dividends. These projects obtained coverage on radio and television shows, published regular newsletters, and even (in the case of the D.C. project) were able to obtain a weekly program on a local radio station.

A project which emphasized public visibility from its inception was the Senior Citizen Anticrime Network, SCAN, in New York City. SCAN's full-time public relations specialist spent considerable time simply planning a full-scale public relations campaign, including a citywide mailing list with over 1,500 entries, a newsletter and a bulletin, public speaking engagements, and connections with staff of all local papers, radio and television stations. The project eventually enjoyed good visibility throughout New York City.

The value of recognition levels should depend on the project objectives being considered and the emphasis the project places on these objectives. For example, assisting victims is not dependent upon prior knowledge of a project's existence, as long as the referral system with the police works well. In such cases, victims can be referred to the project by police, whether or not they ever heard of it. (However, prior knowledge may mean a faster "breaking of the ice" and more willingness to accept a home visit from a stranger, albeit a victim assistance counselor). This can be seen in Los Angeles, where Senior SAFE consciously decided to concentrate on victim assistance and did not conduct a widespread publicity campaign, and yet, because of their efficient referral process, were able to reach a large number of victims. In Milwaukee, however, cooperation from the police was almost nonexistent. There, publicity and

extensive outreach were needed to make victims aware of project services as well as to reach clients for their crime prevention efforts. This outreach was extremely active, but as pointed out earlier, was probably not sufficient, in terms of the number of victims served, to merit a separate victim assistance component. Nonetheless, it may have been a major reason for Milwaukee's success in the other areas of the program: block organizing, crime prevention education and advocacy for public policy changes.

This last area, publicity aimed at making the general public and public officials more aware of the serious nature of the elderly crime problem, with a view toward influencing public policy in favor of changes to reduce that problem, was also common to the seven projects. This form of activity was originally only a priority for SCAN--but the others gradually came to see its value.

Thus, the Crime-Prevention Victim Assistance Program organized public hearings in Milwaukee on amendments in the Wisconsin Victim Compensation Law. The Senior Citizen Community Safety Program organized and conducted training programs for Chicago police recruits and transit aides, teaching them how to communicate and interact with elderly people. SCCAPP organized an ad hoc coalition on crime and the elderly, then helped the group draft resolutions concerning the elderly and crime for the New York State Assembly Committee on Aging. These included recommendations for emergency financial aid for elderly victims, expansion of senior citizen crime prevention and assistance programs, stricter enforcement of municipal security codes, and the development of elderly

witness assistance projects to encourage older victims not to drop out of the criminal justice system.

The staff of the EVP&AP in New Orleans organized the New Orleans Federation on Aging, a coalition of approximately 20 representatives from local groups. The coalition was incorporated and meets regularly. It worked with the State Legislature and State Legislative Council on several issues affecting the elderly and crime.

SCAN's leadership in this area continued over its lifetime. Its efforts included lobbying for policy changes or improvements, serving as a clearinghouse of information for city organizations, and providing technical assistance to anti-crime groups throughout New York City. Perhaps its most important advocacy roles were in helping organize Senior Citizens Crime Prevention Week in the city and in lobbying at the State level to obtain approval for the release of state Title III funds to the New York City Department for the Aging; almost one half a million dollars was released by the Governor to be used in projects combating crime against the elderly.

#### 4.2 Lessons Learned by Projects

Two trends developed as the projects resolved start-up problems and began implementing planned activities. They increasingly realized the value of public relations activities and the importance of local visibility, and they became more interested in influencing public policy as it affects elderly crime victims--and potential crime victims. Acting on these realizations, the projects learned several things about such efforts.

- o Full-time public relations help can be very valuable to an elderly anticrime project; professionals have the knowledge and skills to obtain better visibility for a project. Even if full-time help is not affordable, projects should consider hiring a part-time public relations person.
- o Successful service delivery can itself be an effective "visibility-creator"; satisfied clients will "spread the word" about a project which helped them.
- o "Different" kinds of community public relations activities can be particularly beneficial. These include holding "open houses" for local residents and officials, something the D.C. project did, or organizing a crime prevention fair in which representatives from many local agencies or programs can participate; this proved very successful for the Milwaukee project.
- o Projects should rely on other print media than just major daily newspapers to receive publicity; these other publications are often read more thoroughly. They include: Church bulletins, community paper shoppers' guides, and agencies' newsletters.
- o The value of television as a means of disseminating information about an individual project or crime against the elderly cannot be overestimated. BSL found that over 50% of the elderly get their information on crime prevention via television. No other category of response exceeded 10%.
- o A significant way to obtain feedback on the needs of the elderly and to influence public officials is through advisory committees. These groups should include elderly residents of the project's target area, representatives of social service organizations, members of the police department, elected officials, representatives of the criminal justice system and people from community-based planning and action organizations.
- o Advocacy activities can and should grow naturally out of project activities and local problems. Examples of various activities which can be implemented to affect public policy include: training citizens to monitor court cases involving elderly victims or witnesses, lobbying for changes in local laws or ordinances; testifying at public hearings; holding demonstrations showing support or opposition for certain policies; or taking legal action against conditions adversely affecting the elderly.

## CHAPTER 5 NEIGHBORHOOD STRENGTHENING

### 5.1 Project Activities

Perhaps the project's most ambitious--and also their least successful--activity was "neighborhood strengthening." Under this objective, they tried to convince neighbors to join together to combat crime. Although the immediate goal was to reduce crime and fear, the projects hoped a byproduct of this community crime prevention approach--perhaps ultimately the product--would be increased neighborhood unity or cohesion.

All seven projects make an effort to reduce crime through organizing citizens into collective action. They embarked on this goal, however, with different strategies. In Los Angeles, Senior SAFE sought to enroll people in the police department's "Neighborhood Watch" program, in which citizens are organized by block to watch out for their neighbors and to be sensitive to signs of potential criminal activity. The Elderly Antivictimization Project in Washington, D.C. tried organizing several hundred senior citizens in three high-rise apartment buildings floor-by-floor to run a similar program.

The SCAN project in New York initially "organized" its two target neighborhoods by forming task forces made up of representatives of local groups and agencies. These groups chose to implement several localized crime prevention strategies. They included civilian street and auto patrols, tenant lobby patrols, and "buddy systems" in which senior citizens would be responsible for checking on the safety and knowing the whereabouts of each other on a regular basis. During the summer of 1978, SCAN employed CETA youth workers who patrolled

local streets and senior citizen centers, wearing SCAN shirts and using walkie-talkies linked to police precincts.

The Crime Prevention-Victim Assistance Program in Milwaukee was the most successful of the projects in organizing a network of neighborhood groups. Staff were able to establish 56 citizen clubs by going door-to-door and convincing people to attend block meetings, then chairing these meetings and addressing citizens' concerns. Although the project did an admirable job of organizing block meetings, it too encountered problems. Staff had difficulty sustaining interest in continuing to hold meetings; the majority of clubs met only one time. Moreover, the project confined its community organizing activities to only one target area after achieving little success in a nearby neighborhood. Despite these problems, this project's efforts in the Sherman Park area are impressive. Staff persistence resulted in over 80 community crime prevention meetings involving almost 1,000 senior citizens.

Other projects' difficulties with neighborhood strengthening are reflected in the findings of the BSL survey. BSL measured whether residents felt they could work together to reduce crime in their neighborhood, both in 1978 when projects were conducting neighborhood strengthening activities and in 1979, hopefully after residents had been exposed to the projects' efforts. If neighborhood social networks had been strengthened--one of the projects' objectives--it was assumed more people would feel that, by working together, they could combat crime. However, BSL found that this "working together" indicator of neighborhood strengthening

did not improve and in fact declined slightly.

The projects' limited success at achieving this objective raises important questions for policy makers and for administrators of future projects: Why didn't the projects perform better in this area? Were their failures a function of their own inabilities or the neighborhoods in which they were operating? Were the strategies they chose inappropriate for their areas? Although no quantitative data exists to definitively answer these questions, our experience with all seven projects would support several explanations.

For one thing, community organizing skills and expertise are not easily achieved. The seven projects, and CJE as well, tended to underestimate the extraordinary perseverance, planning and skills required to establish effective community crime prevention programs. Moreover, information on how to accomplish this type of organizing is limited in both its quantity and its quality, since evaluations are few and most local programs are just now in the process of digesting their experiences for others to use and build upon. Thus, as in the case of crime prevention education, the "state of the art" in neighborhood organizing around crime is rather limited and required the projects to invent new ways to circumvent obstacles to success.

One of these obstacles to success was the neighborhoods where the projects operated, which were chosen as targets because of the high crime rates against senior citizens there. As it turned out, most of these target areas were transitional neighborhoods, where people are steadily moving in and out

and where there is a clear lack of community identity. These high-crime, urban neighborhoods, usually with a preponderance of renters, are traditionally the toughest to organize, according to experts.<sup>4</sup> The projects certainly found this to be true. And not surprisingly Sherman Park, which was the best success story among the neighborhoods, was probably the most stable and affluent of any of the target areas.

## 5.2 Lessons Projects Learned

Despite their lack of success at neighborhood strengthening activities--and often because of it--the seven demonstration projects learned many valuable lessons about these strategies. Unfortunately, frequently these lessons were learned too late to make a real difference. Still, they are important for those people who will be implementing similar anticrime programs in the future.

- o As with victim assistance, neighborhood anti-crime organizing seems to largely depend on the personal qualities of the organizers; their effectiveness may come partially from education and experience, but more likely from their personal characteristics and acquired skills. Someone with an outgoing assertive personality--a natural salesman of sorts--appears to be the best kind of staff to hire for this task.

- o Staff members should "get to know" a neighborhood or block before trying to organize it; they can talk to people such as clergymen, local officials, staff of senior centers, police officials, leaders of tenant or civic groups, and directors of local social service programs.

- o Staff should gain the support of the police. Their expertise and knowledge of local crime patterns can be very helpful, and their endorsement can open peoples' doors.

o Recruitment for block clubs is a time-consuming and frustrating job. It should be done in a personal way--through face-to-face interaction. And the team approach is safer and more impressive in appearance to residents.

o Staff should start in neighborhoods or on blocks where there exists a strong likelihood that organizing will be successful; this gives them confidence and allows them to practice their techniques in a receptive environment.

o Staff should not be wedded to an exclusively anti-crime approach to organizing. The key is to organize residents to attack their most important common problems, which can include traffic, sanitation, schools, or deteriorating housing. Continuing groups might mean turning to some of these issues as well.

o Neighborhood organizers from a project should act as facilitators, not leaders; citizens should be made to feel it is "their" group, and the selection of a committed resident leader is important.

o There are a variety of anticrime strategies, which can be implemented by neighbors, whether they live in apartment buildings or single family homes. These include: civilian observation foot and car patrols, tenant and lobby patrols, group lobbying for increased security protection, whistle or airhorn distribution, and telephone assurance or escort services.

o The maintenance of block clubs and other programs, after an initial push has been made, is critical and sometimes difficult. To avoid a decline in interest staff should plan steps to be taken at future meetings, such as the distribution of materials, the attendance of guest speakers, or the showing of films. A newsletter is often key to keeping up communications.

Because recent research indicates that "neighborhood strengthening" programs may represent the best chance for communities to reduce their crime problems, it is particularly important that these lessons learned by the demonstration projects be considered by others in the crime prevention field.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. CJE prepared three reports on each of the seven demonstration projects. These were: "A Case Study of the First Nine Months of the Senior Citizens Community Safety Program" (January, 1978); "Evaluation Report of the Senior Citizens Community Safety Program" (July, 1978); Final Report: Senior Citizens Community Safety Program (May, 1979); "A Case Study of the First Nine Months of the Senior SAFE Program (March, 1978); "Evaluation Report of the Senior SAFE Program (August, 1978); Final Report: The Senior Safe Program" (July, 1979); "A Case Study of the First Nine Months of the Milwaukee Crime Prevention-Victim Assistance Program" (January, 1978); "Evaluation Report of the Milwaukee Crime Prevention-Victim Assistance Program," (November, 1978); "Final Report: The Milwaukee Crime Prevention-Victim Assistance Program (June, 1979); "A Case Study of the First Nine Months of the Elderly Victimization Prevention and Assistance Program," (January, 1978); "Evaluation Report of the Elderly Victimization Prevention and Assistance Program," (September, 1978); "Final Report: The Elderly Victimization Prevention and Assistance Program," (July, 1979); "A Case Study of the First Nine Months of the Senior Citizens Anti-crime Network," (January, 1978); "Evaluation of the Senior Citizens Anti-crime Network," (September, 1978); "Final Report: The Senior Citizens Anti-crime Network," (July, 1979); "A Case Study of the First Nine Months of the Elderly Antivictimization Project," (March, 1978); "Evaluation Report of The Elderly Antivictimization Project," (July, 1978); "Final Report: The Elderly Antivictimization Project," (April, 1979); "A Case Study of the First Nine Months of The Senior Citizen Community Assistance and Prevention Program," (December, 1978); "Evaluation Report on the Senior Citizen Community Assistance and Prevention Program," (September, 1978); and "Final Report: The Senior Citizen Community Assistance and Prevention Program" (June, 1979). The Behavioral Sciences Laboratory submitted an interim report, "Interim Report on Elderly Victims' Assessments of Crime Prevention and Assistance Program," William R. Klecka and George F. Bishop, (November, 1978) and a final report, "An Impact Evaluation of the National Elderly Victimization Prevention and Assistance Program," George F. Bishop, William R. Klecka, Robert W. Oldendick and Alfred J. Tuchfarber, (September, 1979).

2. These three manuals were prepared by CJE for the Department of Housing and Urban Development under Grant Number H 2696 RG. They are available from CJE for the cost of reproduction and will soon be published by HUD and available through the Government Printing Office.

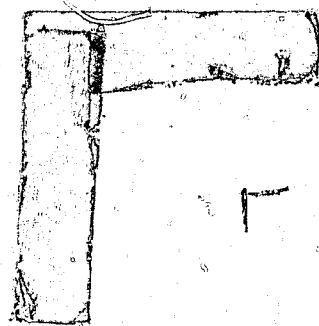
3. This technique is explained in "Trainer's Manual: Crime Prevention for Senior Citizens," Rita Nitzberg (Criminal Justice and the Elderly, June, 1979).



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4. Frequently, community organizers ignore apartment dwellers because they believe organizing them would be unproductive or too difficult. They believe that an apartment house or complex's environment militates against any effective community crime prevention program; that tenants simply do not possess the self-interest in their household that homeowners do. This attitude was recently echoed by Dr. Conrad Weiler, testifying before the Senate Committee on Aging as a representative of the National Association of Neighborhoods. Weiler admitted that the neighborhood organizing movement has paid scant attention to urban tenants. He said that "in part, it is a question of attitude (Among neighborhood organizers), I know there is a common prejudice against tenants; they don't care, they don't participate, they see themselves as transitional..." Hearings Before the Special Committee on Aging, United States Senate, Ninety-fifth Congress, Second Session (December 1, 1978), Page 71. The actions urban tenants can pursue to combat crime are discussed at length in Anticrime Techniques for Elderly Apartment Dwellers: Organizing Strategies and Legal Remedies, Lawrence J. Center, (Criminal Justice and the Elderly, 1979).





**END**