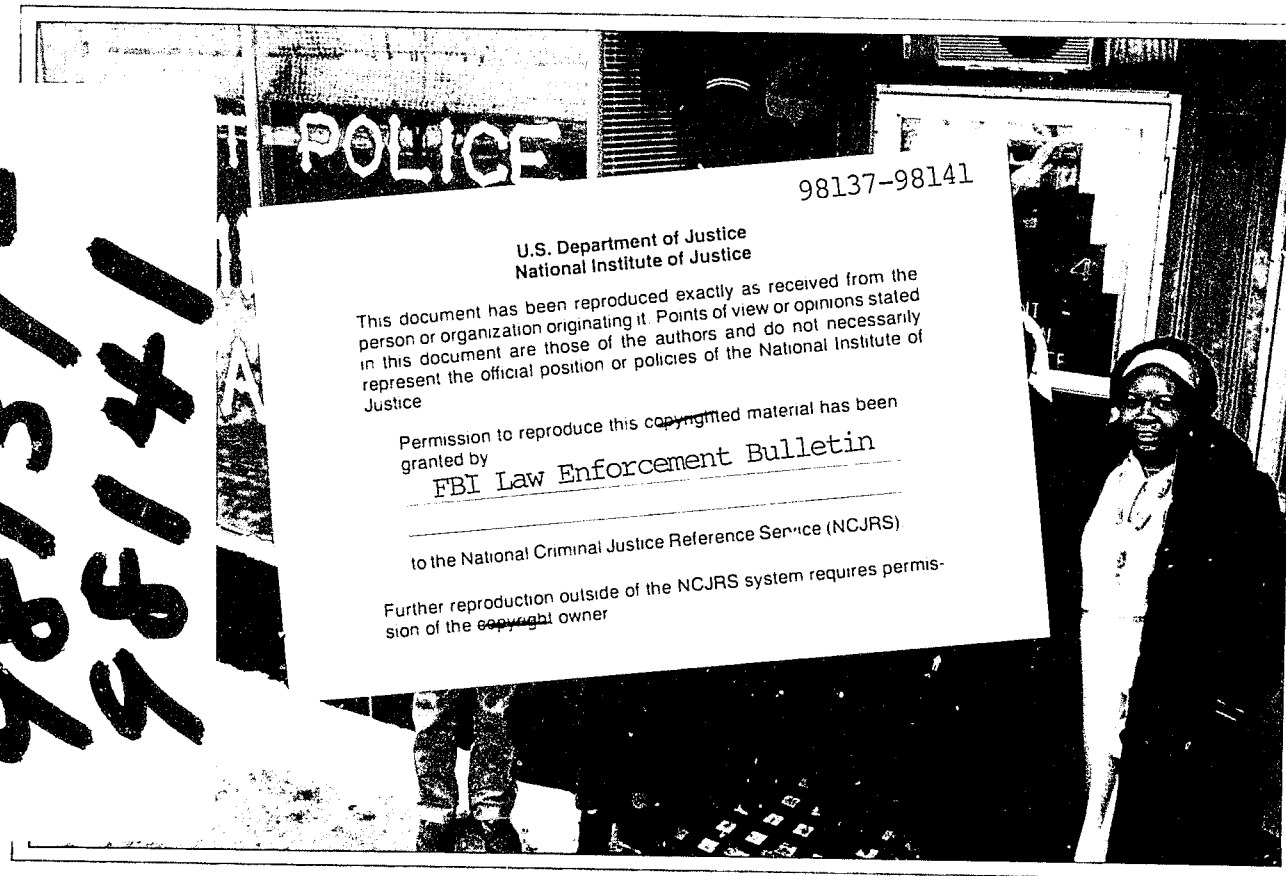


SH 11/8/85 B 2132

FEBRUARY 1985

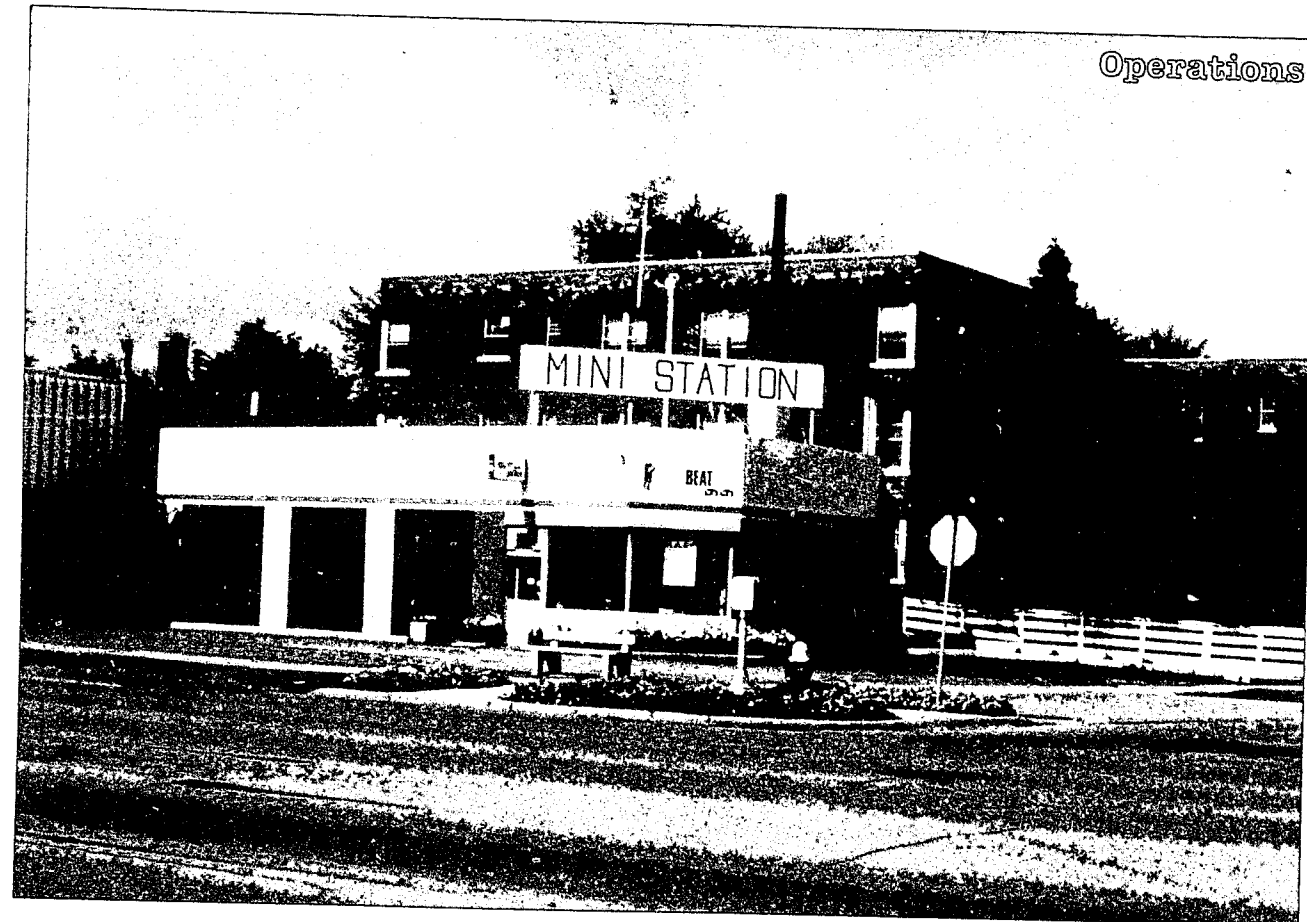


FBI LAW ENFORCEMENT BULLETIN



95/37

Operations



Police and the Community **The Detroit Ministation Experience**

By

INSP. LAWRENCE H. HOLLAND

*Commanding Officer
Ministation Section
Detroit Police Department
Detroit, MI*

The Detroit Police Ministation Program evolved as a result of a campaign promise made in 1973 by a mayoral candidate, who promised to bring the police force back into the neighborhoods and make it more accountable to the residents of the city. After the election, the mayor and his staff began to work on making the promise a reality. Of all the ideas suggested, the ministation concept was the most promising. It included a permanency not evident in the other suggestions.

The concept of a police ministation was then sent to the police department, where it was studied and investigated, and several operational plans were developed and submitted for approval. The current program is the result of the original concept; however, most of the components have been changed to arrive at the working model.

The original goal was to place these police ministations in storefronts and public housing units throughout the city. The criteria for



Inspector Holland



William L. Hart
Chief of Police

site selection, still valid today, consists of the following:

- 1) Areas which house large numbers of senior citizens will receive high priority;
- 2) Areas which consistently experience a disproportionate amount of crime, specifically street crime;
- 3) Business districts which experience undue crime victimization either to places of business or to citizens who patronize these businesses;
- 4) Areas housing large numbers of low income persons, such as public housing projects; and
- 5) Sites which sustain high use patterns or pedestrian traffic.

As stated in the ministration handbook, "... it is deemed critical to the effectiveness of ministrations that they can be situated where substantial citizen support has been expressed and can be maintained."

The object of the ministration program is also most aptly defined in the introduction of the ministration handbook:

"Ministrations can most readily be viewed as analogous to parked scout cars. They are fixed positions from which officers may reach out within certain prescribed geographic limits to render police service. Ministrations are not public relations stations. . . . Their value is to be measured by the quality of service launched from them."

Once the basic goals and organizational plans were set, the department submitted a request for seed money in the form of a Federal leap grant to begin operation. The grant was approved, and shortly thereafter, locations were selected, police officers trained, and equipment made available to start the program. Even though the Federal grant ended in 1977, the mayor, chief of police, and department executives decided to continue the program and incorporate it into the police budget.

Early success was brief, and the program suffered because of the attitudes of some police officers and management who disliked this new method of policing.

Originally, the ministrations were staffed 24 hours a day by police officers assigned from the local precinct.



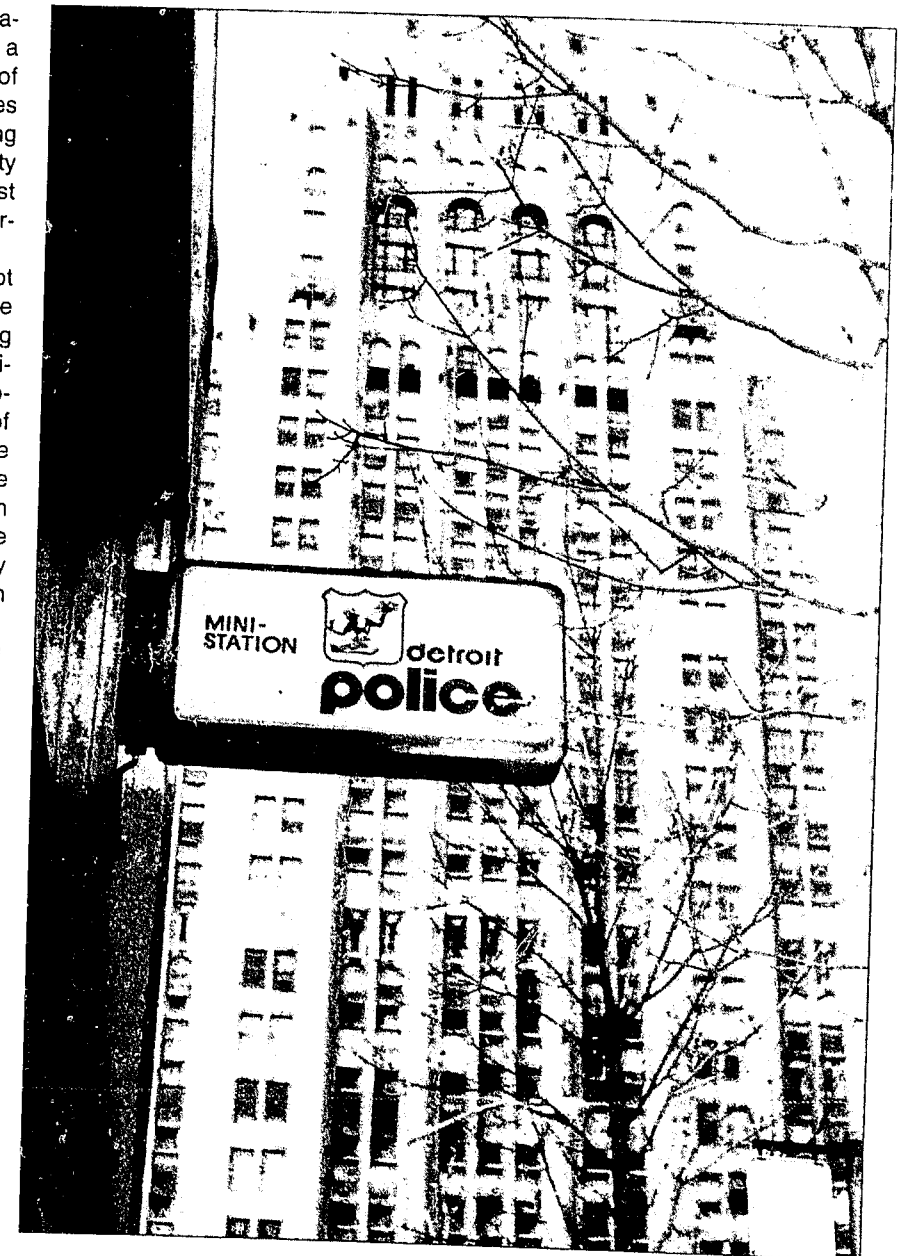
"Ministrations are not public relations stations. . . . Their value is to be measured by the quality of service launched from them.'"

The officers were to stay in the station and provide all the services of a precinct station, with the exception of detention facilities. The officer's duties included report writing and working with the local community. Community members were encouraged to assist in the ministrations staffing and operation.

This original operational concept failed for several reasons. First, there was little activity in the stations during the late night hours, which made officers and supervision decide the program was unworkable and a waste of manpower. Also, police officers were moved from shift to shift and were rarely assigned to the same station with regularity. Because of this, the close relationship with the community which this program hoped to establish never materialized.

Over the next several years, the program was continually enlarged to approximately 36 stations, and several methods of staffing were attempted. At one point, two beat officers were assigned to each station. After walking their assigned neighborhood area, they would return to the station for 15 minutes each hour to assist community volunteers who manned the ministration and citizens who required police assistance. Another problem surfaced in that assignment to a ministration became a "penalty box" for police officers who were in disfavor with their immediate supervisors. Oftentimes, community volunteers were treated harshly by these "penalized" officers and would not return to work at the ministration.

Other methods of staffing included assigning three police officers to the ministration scout car, with one of the three always on duty in the station. At one time, officers who were on restricted duty were used to staff



“... the [ministation] program is built around [the citizen volunteer].”



the facilities. All of the programs suffered the same fate—nonuse and nonacceptance by the community. The ministation program gradually began to be considered totally ineffective by officers and citizens alike.

During this time, from mid-1974 through August 1980, the organizational placement of the administration of the program shifted from one entity to another, yet always within the patrol division. The program essentially was directed from a central ministation administration office where building acquisition, leasing, equipment, and other administrative activities were handled. This unit was also responsible for recruiting and training civilian volunteers to work in the ministation.

The critical job of staffing was the precinct's patrol operation responsibility. Those supervisors and officers who could see the value of the program worked to see it succeed. Many, however, not only were passive but worked to defeat the program by making the assignments a place where problem officers were assigned.

In mid-1980, the chief of police made the program a part of his staff. Immediately, several staff meetings were held, and it was decided that the ministations would be directed from a central entity—the Ministation Section. Police officers would be selected to man the ministations based on their ability to do crime prevention and work with the community. They were told they would be responsible for recruiting, training, and scheduling civilian volunteers to man the ministations from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. daily. The police officers were to be trained in crime prevention and were responsi-

ble for neighborhood and business watch programs in the area of their ministations. They had to be dependable, flexible, and citizen-oriented. It was envisioned that they would eventually become responsible for a majority of police activities of a minor nature which occurred in their areas. This method of staffing required the police officer to be accountable and responsible for the activities in his ministation, contrary to other methods used previously.

All ministation candidates were screened carefully, transferred in, and assigned by their request. They immediately entered a 2-week basic crime prevention course, and upon completion, were sent to their ministations where they were to begin meeting community leaders and recruiting and training volunteers.



The officers met with varying success at first; however, once the community realized that the officer was sincere in his effort to help them live in a safer and more secure environment, a measure of success came to all. In most instances, the officer's attitudes, abilities, and concerns are important factors for a successful ministation. The assigned officers should not be "community relations" officers, and no one is more adept at spotting a phony than long-suffering citizens embattled in a war to improve their "quality of life." The assigned officers, who are concerned and show this through their actions, found that an active and able community was available to assist them in their goal.

Many officers, after meeting and working in and with the community, became resource centers and found themselves elected or appointed to local business or community organization boards. In addition, most have a regular column in the community newspaper or newsletter, which generally deals with crime prevention tips, needs of the ministation, or information regarding local crime statistics.

Contrary to what many police executives and officers might expect, community relations-type officers were not highly recruited nor did they volunteer for this service. Many of the officers who eventually found their way into the ministation program were considered to be "good street cops." They believed there had to be a better and more productive way to serve.

Most ministation officers became such a force in their local community that citizens no longer thought of the Detroit Police Department but of indi-

vidual officers they knew personally. When minor problems arose, most of the citizens in a ministation area didn't bother to call the 911 number, but waited to contact their officer who responded with a service tailored for that problem and community. While most citizens across the country do not know the names of officers assigned to patrol their communities, it is a rare occurrence when a citizen doesn't know the ministation officer. Frequently, these officers show their concern by regularly calling the ministation or dropping by on off-duty hours or days off to see that things are running smoothly. Officers will also give their home phone numbers to ministation citizen volunteers and encourage them to call if problems occur. How many other officers would even consider this?

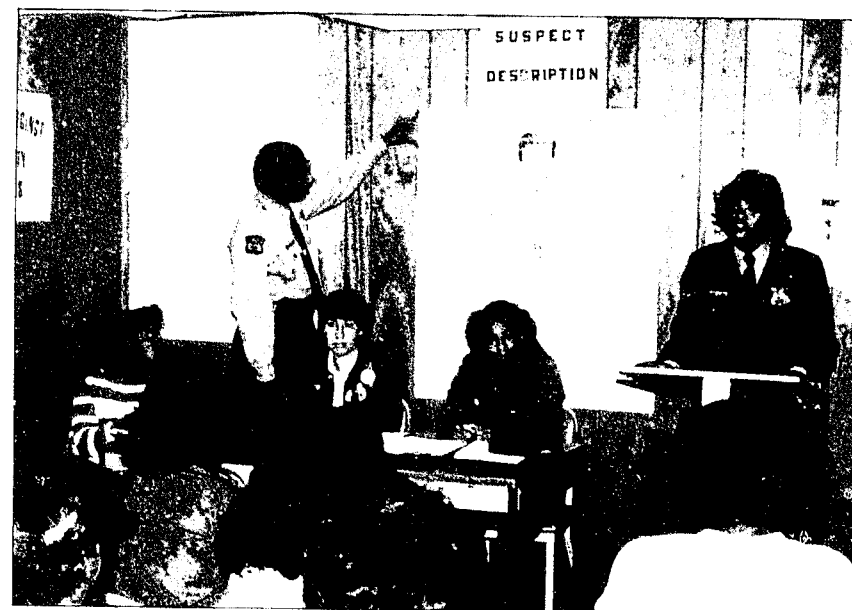
“ . . . the officer's attitudes, abilities, and concerns are important factors for a successful ministration.”

A good ministration police officer is a special breed and a crest to the wave of the future. However, in many instances, he is a throwback to the past as many of his contacts and duties were done by beat officers long ago. We seem to have come full circle with this modern innovation.

One cannot conclude a discussion of the ministration program without considering the importance of the civilian volunteer, since the program is built around this individual. The ministration belongs to the community and it is their responsibility to man it daily from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. with volunteers. It is expected that the assigned officer be in the ministration a minimal amount of time, spending most of his day on the street involved in crime prevention and routine patrol activities.

This means that citizens must be trained in the basic operation of the station. These duties include such things as handling walk-in and phone complaints and requests for referral services. In addition, they assist in the crime prevention mission, blotter posting, filing, typing, and other related activities.

Many of these individuals become a real asset to the community, as well as the police department through this service. Tips regarding criminal activities, which would probably never be received, are now funneled through the volunteer to the police officer and subsequently to the Vice, Narcotics, or Detective Bureaus. In addition, they rarely request aid in taking care of



their station. The community routinely decorates and fixes the small problems that occur. There is always a plumber, electrician, or carpet layer in the group who would consider it an affront to have anyone else work in their station.

The final chapter has not been written on this program. However, experience so far would indicate that there may be no final chapter as new and innovative procedures and programs are being suggested regularly by police officers and volunteers who work in these facilities.

In early 1984, the chief of police, who was personally responsible for the activities of the Ministration Section, created a new division, the Community Services Division. This action brought together all community-related programs to make a coordinated effort toward the realization of all our goals.

Visitors from police departments across the Nation and abroad have shown a sincere interest in the ministration concept. Of all the questions asked regarding this program, the most difficult to answer is, "What do the statistics show with regard to effectiveness?" While no definitive study has been undertaken since August 1980, because of cost factors, statistics in a changing city given to problems of unemployment might not be reliable at any rate. However, after visiting the facilities, no one questions the effectiveness and value of a ministration to the citizens of our city. **FBI**

END