

The Implementation of Community Based Policing and Related Strategies: A Case Study

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Abstract

This case study chronicles the efforts of the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office to implement Community Based Policing (C.B.P.). The purpose of the study is to share the methodology used and lessons learned with those who are considering the implementation of C.B.P. The effort begins November 5, 1992, and concludes in late November 1993 with the creation of a single position dedicated to the philosophy, in a pilot program in Safety Harbor, Florida. The case study includes the utilization of community and personnel surveys, personnel selection, pilot area selection, activity and crime analysis in the pilot area, and estimated costs of the position. Sources of support and opposition common in implementation efforts are presented.

Introduction

The Community Based Policing (C.B.P.) philosophy is enjoying significant success throughout the country. Research indicates the public, police agencies and law enforcement officers benefit after C.B.P. is introduced.

As opposed to the reactive, incident driven, service delivery of traditional policing, C.B.P. offers a pro-active service delivery facilitating police-citizen relationships. Police and citizens "co-actively" develop a partnership in problem identification, goal setting, and problem resolution. This approach is similar to the police and public relationships are successfully utilized in School Resource Officer programs and Drug Awareness and Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) efforts.

This paper will present the differences between traditional policing and C.B.P., and offer a brief history of C.B.P. It includes a case study that chronicles a "pilot" C.B.P. program implemented by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office in Safety Harbor, Florida. The case study will offer those contemplating the implementation of C.B.P. a "guide" to improve successful transition and advantage from some lessons learned. It is essential that an organization has a firm understanding of the C.B.P. philosophy prior to any level of implementation.

Traditional Policing Versus C.B.P.

Traditional Policing. Traditional policing procedures emerged in the 1960's and early 1970's as a result of perceived ineffective police practices. Energies were expended in technology and "professionalization." Departments scrutinized and improved their education, training, hiring practices, and management techniques. Greater accountability through command and control was introduced to combat corruption. According to Brown (1989, p. 2), traditional policing developed a number of identifying characteristics:

- The police are reactive to incidents driven by calls for service.
- Information from and about the community is limited. Planning efforts focus on internally generated police data.
- Planning is narrow in its focus -- centering on internal operations, policies,

- procedures, rules and regulations.
- Recruitment focuses on the spirit of adventure rather than the spirit of service.
 - Patrol officers are restrained in their role. They are not expected to be creative in addressing problems.
 - Training is geared toward the law enforcement role even though officers spend only 15% to 20% of their time on such activity.
 - Management uses an authoritative style and adheres to the military model of Command and Control.
 - Supervision is control oriented as it reflects and reinforces the organization's management style.
 - Rewards are associated with participating in daring events rather than conducting service activities.
 - Performance evaluations are based not on outcomes but on activities (arrests/citations).
 - Agency effectiveness is based on data, particularly crime and clearance rates (UCR).
 - Police agencies operate as entities unto themselves with few collaborative links to the community.

Widespread fear of crime and record crime rates are not the result of lack of effort by law enforcement officers. The "mission" itself is flawed. Brown, (1989) reminds us that no data indicate more police and faster response times solve crime. Technology cannot reduce crime or allay fear. Law enforcement officers must do that. They cannot achieve these goals when entombed in their cruisers with their computers. They remain strangers to the general public and are often perceived as "occupational troops." Incident driven traditional service delivery has offered, at best, inconsistent random results.

C.B.P. "Community Based Policing has emerged from an evolution of police thought. It is the result of police leadership's challenging the assumptions they held for decades" (Brown, 1989, p.2). C.B.P. seeks a new higher commitment from the police and citizens of each community to reduce fear and improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods.

"Co-active" relationships with the public, e.g., problem identification, establishing goals, defining strategies, and solving problems, are the fundamental elements of C.B.P. Empowering properly trained staff at the line level is essential. They must have the authority and flexibility to perform. Creativity is enhanced. Officers must have the ability to utilize external resources without unnecessary bureaucratic barriers. Solving problems, neighborhood by neighborhood, will be the future standard of excellence. Decentralized, personalized law enforcement utilizing grassroots creativity and support will build the future.

Law enforcement officers often enjoy a greater sense of job satisfaction when serving as Community Officers. (Green, 1989). A problem identified, approach developed, and goals achieved co-actively with the public is gratifying to a dedicated officer. Public perception of the police usually improves after the introduction of C.B.P. as it did in Reno, Nevada. (Peak, 1992). Clearly, the C.B.P. philosophy enhances the safety and quality of life for everyone who lives and works in a community. The public

must have positive attitudes toward the police if domestic order is to be maintained.

The C.B.P. philosophy is not without critics who raise legitimate questions. Reichers and Roberg (1990) recommended departments explore some underlying assumptions prior to implementation efforts. These assumptions effectively summarize the concerns of others, some of which need to be discussed in more detail.

The dominant concern is possible misconduct by newly empowered and somewhat autonomous front-line personnel. However, C.B.P. opponents underestimate the power of the press and the public's social activism in the 1990's. Citizens serve in the partnership as an excellent "internal" agent of accountability. Reporting, training, and auditing systems can be developed to increase accountability. Many sources also believe the merits of "command and control" as an effective management approach was more illusion than substance. Kelling, Wasserman, and Williams (1988) expound on leadership through values, accountability to the public, and administrative mechanisms of control as the approach to a successful C.B.P. management culture. "Auditing, rewards, and peer control offer significant opportunities for officer accountability." (1988, p.7).

Reichers and Roberg also question whether the introduction of C.B.P. really reduces crime or the fear of crime. These concerns are answered, however, in later research. Significant fear reduction was realized in Reno (Peak, 1992). Due to a greater police "presence" and problem solving techniques, crime generally declines after the introduction of C.B.P. Another concern raised asks if it is the function of the police to shape the norms or values of a neighborhood. However, when utilizing C.B.P., the police are found to be far less the "shapers" of community values as much as the "facilitators" for improved public services.

Reichers and Roberg are concerned whether the public is as homogeneous as many believe, and that some members of a neighborhood may be disenfranchised. This concern is legitimate, but certainly fewer citizens are disenfranchised when community problems are addressed co-actively, neighborhood by neighborhood, than when "solutions" are dictated to an entire community. Improved sensitivity for each citizen's needs can be further achieved by proper training.

Other concerns raised are often effectively resolved by the flexibility of the participants. Many objections would be legitimate if those involved were restricted by the present bureaucratic system that retards the pursuit of excellence.

Implementing C.B.P

Organizations anticipating any level of C.B.P. implementation should diligently research the philosophy. Sparrow (1988) warns of the dangers of underestimating the task. He advises that the entire police "culture" and self-image require change. The resistance to change is enormous. Success can only be achieved with the complete support of the Chief Executive and top executive staff.

Kelling and Bratton (1993) warn that middle managers often see C.B.P. as a threat to their power. "Mid-managers demonstrate considerable creativity and resourcefulness in project or tactical innovations. The critical issue is whether mid-management can play an equally positive role in strategic innovation." (1993, p.7). They later explain that as long as mid-managers (usually Lieutenants) are involved in the planning, introduction, and training (i.e., team building and problem solving) required for C.B.P., and those

involved are given the opportunity to succeed, they will be supportive and creative.

Consensus must be achieved concerning the shortcomings of traditional approaches. However, many managers incorrectly believe that commitment to implementation requires an immediate complete departure from present policy. It does not. According to DeWitt (1992), traditional policing and C.B.P. are quite compatible in Seattle's highly successful program, but he warns, "The rhetoric of community policing has slowed its actual implementation and that developing and implementing successful community policing models should take immediate priority" (DeWitt, 1992, p. 10).

Existing programs reveal that implementation be achieved in phases. Brown (1989) suggests a transition in two phases. The first creates opportunities for the public to participate (i.e., Neighborhood Watch programs and forums, etc.). Phase two would require significant change within the organization. A philosophy would emerge affecting organizational structure, values, power, supervision, training, and fundamental service delivery. The second phase took five years in Houston.

In Madison, Wisconsin, the Police Department found the most important ingredients for successful organizational change were:

- Having a clear vision of where you are going.
- Having a strong, unyielding commitment from the Chief Executive.
- Empowering employees and permitting them to participate in the direction and decisions of the organization.
- Developing the skills and abilities of leaders as well as employees.
- Operating the organization for the long term with persistence and patience (Couper & Lobitz, 1991, p.87).

Research in the "mechanics" of C.B.P. implementation is sparse or dated. Implementation methodology must vary. Significant differences in the size, structure, and maturity of the organization affects implementation. The size, density, and desired services in the "target areas" are critical factors.

There are a few fundamentals that must be recognized and requirements met. These fundamentals are found throughout the reading and existing programs.

- Get a commitment from the C.E.O. Be sure he/she understands the philosophy of C.B.P. and how comprehensive the effort will be. Meet with the C.E.O. personally. Follow-up the meeting in writing. Avoid misunderstanding.
- Task dynamic supervisors to take an active part in implementation. Select wisely, empower early. Make all research materials available to them. Allow them to disengage if they desire. Commit them to the effort. Include them in all subsequent decisions.
- Identify your "target area." Limit the effort geographically. Attempt to select an area in need of service. Seek an area with clear boundaries and if possible, a "sense of neighborhood."
- If possible, conduct a historical search of calls for service in your target area including all crime data.
- Be sure city (and/or) county government is aware of your efforts and supports the philosophy.

- Be prepared to conduct a community survey in the target area. Attempt to achieve your survey using volunteers from the affected area. Train them. Be sure they know you are sincere.
- Mobilize existing internal resources.
- Mobilize existing external resources.
- Establish problem-solving oriented strategies utilizing empowerment and co-active relationships.
- Establish time guidelines.
- Establish a selection process for active participants and those in support roles.
- Conduct training for active participants.
- Consider developing alternate response systems concerning calls for service (i.e., teleserve, etc.)
- Consider problem-solving training for citizens and public officials.
- Anticipate expansion of the philosophy.
- Anticipate significant resistance. You will be dislodging numerous people from their sterile bureaucratic comfort zones.
- Survey the officers chosen to participate in C.B.P. and ask them about public priorities and the public's image of present service and officers.

Case Study

Chronology. The following is a chronological case study concerning the efforts of the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office to introduce the C.B.P. philosophy in Pinellas County. The effort began in November 1992. As the study indicates, many of the "fundamentals" presented earlier were incorporated into this effort. The following accounting of events is meant to aid those attempting or considering some level of Community Policing implementation.

November 5, 1992	A discussion with the Sheriff outlines the potential for "C.O.L.E." (Community Oriented Law Enforcement, or C.B.P.). The Sheriff requests that staff study implementation strategies. The Sheriff agrees that Safety Harbor may be an excellent initial effort due to a significant need in one economically depressed area of that city. Federal funding for the effort may be available through Project "Weed and Seed" (to be discussed later).
November 6, 1992	The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office has provided law enforcement services to the City of Safety Harbor (pop. 15,124) through contractual agreement for approximately 15 years. Community Policing is introduced at a meeting with the City Manager concerning federal grant opportunities. The City Manager explains she has prior experience with the concept. She asks that the concept be included in a grant request limited to a geographic location which is predominantly residential and economically depressed. Any initial community policing will be introduced there, although additional positions could be utilized

	<p>city wide.</p> <p>Safety Harbor offers numerous advantages for introduction and potential expansion of C.O.L.E. The city is economically and culturally diverse, geographically compact, and has clearly delineated "downtown," residential and industrial sections. City officials are progressive, positive, "futures" oriented and receptive to new ideas, for example, nuisance abatement ordinances.</p>
November 23, 1992	<p>A "memo of intent" outlining initial strategies is prepared for the Sheriff. The memo addresses possible expansion and the need for inter-agency support. It also names a project coordinator (Captain), operations coordinator (Lieutenant), and operational supervisor (Sergeant).</p>
December 3, 1992	<p>A study is prepared for Research, Planning, and Development exploring supplementary funding sources for the federal "Weed and Seed" grant in a 1.5 square mile target area. Approximately 90% of the area is residential and 10% light industrial. The residential area includes approximately 600 residences and 4,000 residents who are 55% white and 45% African-American. Approximately 25% of the residences are rentals and 80% of the residences are single family structures. The document includes data on:</p> <p>(1) Prior law enforcement efforts within the target area, e.g., Neighborhood Watch, Business Crime Watch, D.A.R.E., School Resource Officer Program (middle and high school), Student Crime Watch, Special Drug Tactical Unit, Community Partnership Program, School Mentoring Program.</p> <p>(2) Prior federal funding proposals and requests concerning capital improvements, i.e., parks, drainage and roads.</p> <p>(3) Local community development capital projects (1977-1993). Total expenditures exceed \$1,000,000. Unfortunately, the project coordinator was not aware of the Project Weed and Seed until late November, almost one full year after other participating municipalities actively joined the effort.</p>
December 21, 1992	<p>The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office publishes (FY 1993 94) "Goals and Objectives." "Community Based Policing Operations" is formally offered to the Executive Staff of the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office as a potential operational reality.</p>

January 24, 1993	<p>The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office Patrol Bureau conducts a semi-annual shift change. Time restraints prohibit the development of a personnel selection process for C.B.P., but analysis reveals similar abilities in Field Training Deputies and both district stations have Field Training Units. They are professional men and women who are motivated, intelligent, possess excellent communication skills, and considered on a favorable career path. If the Sheriff's Office is to embrace C.B.P., future FTOs will have to have a strong background and experience in the philosophy.</p> <p>With these factors in mind, the Field Training squad assignments in the North District are reassigned to the Safety Harbor and immediate surrounding area. The most effective personnel will be "in place" to attempt implementation.</p>
January 29, 1993	<p>The "Goals and Objectives" (fiscal year 1993 94) for the North District Patrol Division are published. The first objective is to evaluate and implement a Community Based Policing Program.</p>
March 1993	<p>Training begins for key personnel relating to the C.O.L.E. project. Twenty members attend three separate three day sessions presented by the St. Petersburg Police Department. St. Petersburg is a leader in the field and initiated C.B.P. in 1991. Three Pinellas County captains, one lieutenant, five sergeants, and ten deputies attend the training.</p>
March 8, 1993	<p>The Sheriff is apprised of progress in training, project location(s), personnel and implementation schedule alternatives.</p>
March 12, 1993	<p>Multi-year Plan is published for the North District Station. The 1993 94 projected needs include five deputies and one sergeant to support a district-wide concept.</p> <p>A similar plan is published at Central District requesting ten deputies, one sergeant and one lieutenant for C.O.L.E.</p>
March 15, 1993	<p>A survey is developed and administered to the FTO deputies who will be participating in C.O.L.E. by Sergeant Brian Anderson, the C.O.L.E. operational supervisor. The predominant intent of the survey is to ascertain training needs related to participants' perceptions prior to implementation. The survey reveals the perception of time spent on actual "crime fighting" is much higher than actual data indicates. Training priorities for C.O.L.E. are discussed, as are plans to enhance "service" and positive "citizen contacts."</p>

	<p>A community survey is being developed regarding public perceptions of crime and present law enforcement effectiveness. A correlation study is planned.</p>
<p>April 8, 1993</p>	<p>A 1993 94 fiscal year budget presentation includes a plan to implement the C.O.L.E. concept/philosophy utilizing a total of 18 personnel assigned in six key areas under the Sheriff's jurisdiction (including the Safety Harbor location). The six areas are considered "fertile" -- crime is high, population density high, and all are geographically compact and definable.</p> <p>Unfortunately, a "no-growth" budget posture is announced. All new positions are eliminated. Any realignment of existing resources to support this concept is avoided as personnel resources have already been "encumbered" to support major projects initiated the prior fiscal year (D.A.R.E. and School Resource programs). Alternate resources must now be found to implement the concept in Safety Harbor. The "initial" target area now becomes the only target area. Further training is suspended.</p>
<p>April 13, 1993</p>	<p>The City Manager of Safety Harbor formally requests the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office estimate the costs involved in possibly incorporating the C.O.L.E. concept into the law enforcement program in the 1993 94 fiscal year. The Sheriff's Office responds by adding an additional position for contractual review.</p> <p>Unlike "posts" that must be staffed 24 hours day, seven days a week with relief factors applied, this position is budgeted on a "one position" concept, with evening shift differential added for flexibility. Because the position requires bicycle patrol, recurring vehicle costs (mileage) should decline, although the cost of a bicycle and related gear are added. The annual projected cost is \$43,134.85.</p>
<p>May 5, 1993</p>	<p>The North District Patrol command requests a six month summary of "calls for service" in the original Safety Harbor target area. The summary report lists 404 events, 238 of which are crimes. However, a large majority of these reports are related to criminal or suspected criminal activity.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the system does not record "minor" calls for service (including non-criminal traffic enforcement), that traditionally number over three times those of incident/offense. It is therefore logical to believe over 1,600 service units were expended in the target area in this six month period.</p> <p>Other factors must also be considered. Many residents of this area historically have not reported crime to the authorities. The</p>

	<p>area is compact and closely networked by residents. The area seeks and enjoys a tradition of autonomy. Significant drug activity is unreported and investigated with sporadic results. In summary, significant activity which is of interest to law enforcement does not appear in the Crime Analysis.</p>
August 16, 1993	<p>The Sheriff and the C.O.L.E. Project Coordinator (Captain) meet with the Safety Harbor City Commission concerning the 1993 94 contract to provide law enforcement services. The city offers office space to the Community Deputy at an annex building located in the center of the target area. The City Council unanimously approves the new position dedicated to C.O.L.E.</p>
August 18, 1993	<p>Now that a Community Policing position is a reality in Safety Harbor, the Project Coordinator proceeds with a community survey that will identify the public's concerns, expectations, and present level of service satisfaction. The surveys are distributed by citizen volunteers to every residence in the target area. If a resident is home, the volunteer can offer an explanation beyond the cover page. To avoid cost to those responding, the city agrees to participate in the survey collection by allowing residents to return the survey with their monthly water bill (by mail or in person).</p>
September 7, 1993	<p>There is no reason to believe that the economic conditions will improve, so the program must use existing human resources more effectively if any expansion of C.O.L.E. is to be realized. It is believed that the public will request expansion of the philosophy once initial efforts begin.</p>
September 8, 1993	<p>Patrol command requests a singular radio and computer designation for the deputy selected for the C.O.L.E. position. This designator will allow easy retrieval of data concerning the activity attributed to the C.O.L.E. deputy.</p>
October 3, 1993	<p>The C.O.L.E. deputy is selected after careful review. He possesses an intimate knowledge of the target area, a sincere desire to serve in this capacity, is an experienced field training officer, and attended the Community Police training. The deputy was selected by the District Patrol Commander (C.O.L.E. project coordinator), lieutenant (C.O.L.E. operations commander) and sergeant (operational supervisor) with the concurrence of the City Manager. The C.O.L.E. deputy's immediate supervisors are the Patrol day shift and evening shift sergeants assigned to Safety Harbor.</p>

	Both sergeants review the deputy's reports and actively participate in the C.O.L.E. philosophy. Both have attended C.B.P. training and communicate daily.
October 4, 1993	The C.O.L.E. deputy, his immediate day shift sergeant and District Commander are interviewed by the city's newspaper, the Tropical Breeze. The C.O.L.E. philosophy is discussed and goals presented.
October 1993	The C.O.L.E. deputy, evening shift sergeant, and District Commander meet with various groups and organizations to discuss the C.O.L.E. philosophy and goals. The deputy becomes a member of the Safety Harbor Drug Objectors (S.H.A.D.O.) Committee and joins an effort to introduce a mentoring program for Safety Harbor youth in need of guidance.
November 9, 1993	Two Trek 9000 mountain bicycles are purchased. The C.O.L.E. deputy and immediate supervisors are scheduled to attend a one day bicycle safety and tactical course conducted by the St. Petersburg Police Department. Bicycle patrol will commence immediately.
November 10, 1993	<p>Of 596 community surveys distributed only 58 are returned (9.7%). The median age of the respondents is 50 years old, 12 years older than the estimated average age of residents of the target area. Over 88% of the respondents are property owners, although only 75% of the area residents are believed to own their residences. Only 17% are active members of a Neighborhood Watch program which indicates significant effort to revitalize the programs is required.</p> <p>Drug concerns are identified by almost 30% of the respondents as the most serious crime problem. Noise violations are the second greatest concern, followed by burglary and other property crime. Drugs, overall crime, and juvenile problems dominate quality of life issues identified by respondents.</p> <p>The level of law enforcement service satisfaction is gratifying. Over 92% of the respondents are satisfied with their service. The comments indicate the community is already cognizant of the philosophical change in service and related efforts introduced in January.</p> <p>The survey effort is very useful in understanding the desires of the community. Service satisfaction level is high, but would be more relevant had the survey been conducted prior to the introduction of new personnel and procedures in January 1993.</p>

Conclusion

The events which led to the creation of C.O.L.E. at the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office provided little new methodology data which may enhance others' implementation efforts. The dynamics which were presented in earlier research were certainly repeated and reinforced in this case study.

C.B.P. is truly an evolution of police thought. In challenging assumptions held for decades, enormous internal resistance is encountered. The commitment from the Chief Executive must be more than unyielding. The Chief Executive must be ready, willing, and competent enough to ensure that his entire staff's commitment be unyielding. This process requires a consistent, sustained, intelligent effort to educate all members of an organization to this "conversion of thought." It must be done without recrimination. This conversion is desired not due to the failure of traditional law enforcement, but a fundamental adjustment to the shortcomings of the Criminal Justice System overall.

The lessons learned here are perhaps best explained as a revitalization of the spirit of service and accomplishment. The C.O.L.E. effort was isolated to a specific target area and supported by a Field Training Unit which was educated to the mission and fundamental philosophical change. These experienced law enforcement officers found this philosophy to be exciting and felt greater accomplishment in their work than they had in years.

The public's reaction was unbelievably positive. The C.O.L.E. officer and those actively practicing the philosophy were not strangers, but problem solvers, community assets, with active concerns for the community's future. Through C.O.L.E., this highly diverse community found a relationship of hope within a system that had been, at best, "aloof."

Here we find the greatest lesson: those who actively participated benefitted greatly. Nonparticipants resist the philosophy and ongoing effort. It would be prudent for those who anticipate implementing C.O.L.E. to plan complete participation of a component. This does not mean the entire organization or Patrol Bureau must be converted at once. However, the effort should be accomplished precinct by precinct (or district).

It is further noted that a complete effort of conversion of philosophy "component by component" does not mean the elimination of traditional response. A level and need for traditional policing will always exist. Remote locations and hours dictate the need. Some members, after training and exposure to C.O.L.E., will still prefer the call-driven response. We should appreciate their educated decision and the need for their continued service.

The C.O.L.E. effort must be commanded by Patrol commanders at the district/precinct level. This will ensure continuity of effort and communication. The effort is further enhanced if detectives assigned to the district are also under the same command.

The future of C.O.L.E. with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office is bright. The leadership by the Sheriff and the city government of Safety Harbor has resulted in an explosion of creativity and positive relationships. After those actively involved with the C.O.L.E. effort were interviewed by the city's newspaper, Tropical Breeze, the publication's editorial identified C.O.L.E. as one of the positive developments in the city's future. C.O.L.E. was a factor in "helping to define a community that has a strong

sense of identity ... and an eagerness for positive approaches to problem solving ... it combines some of the best of the new and the old, getting to know members of the community as individuals, gaining the trust of the community ... growth and change are part of life, if not life itself."

Those of us involved in C.O.L.E. concur. We believe all participating members and the high level of satisfaction of the community will catapult C.O.L.E. as the dominant philosophy of our agency. The Pinellas County Sheriff has made application to the Federal Government for 25 positions dedicated for C.O.L.E. concerning President Clinton's crime reduction initiative. This pilot program may be remembered as the humble beginning of the most fundamental change of philosophy of our organization in many years.

Captain Cliff Voegel is a Division Commander for the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office. He served in the United States Army Infantry during the Vietnam War. Captain Voegel's education includes an A.A. degree from Farmingdale, New York and a B.S. degree from the State University College at Buffalo, New York. He is a master's candidate at the University of South Florida, and is married and the father of two.

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