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COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

# Call Management and Community Policing: *A Guidebook for Law Enforcement*



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## Foreword

Community policing has shifted police departments' attention toward new policing goals, such as working more closely with community members to solve problems and prevent crime. Although it seems obvious that officers must have blocks of time available to do the work of community policing, this reality often is not fully acknowledged or addressed. Innovative call management strategies can aid in freeing up officer time, yet it is not always easy to see how those strategies fit with community policing. In fact, many alternatives for handling citizen calls to the police—for example, telephone reporting units, responses by civilian community service officers, and more recently, 3-1-1 systems—were not necessarily introduced to further community policing goals, but to contain operating costs or to handle an overload of non-emergency calls coming in on 9-1-1 emergency lines. As police departments continue to address those needs, they are also seeking ways to accomplish additional goals under community policing and to measure the success of their community policing efforts.

A primary concern in preparing this *Guidebook* was to balance ideas about "what could be" with a clear picture of what currently exists. To begin addressing this concern, a national survey of police departments was conducted. The survey focused on identifying existing call management strategies, the types of community policing activities actually being implemented, and the data currently available to police from their computer aided dispatch (CAD) systems and other sources. We discovered that departments do in fact capture a significant amount of data that can help them plan for and evaluate their community policing



efforts. We also discovered various differences and similarities based on jurisdiction population, which were particularly valuable in preparing the *Guidebook*.

Research for the *Guidebook* also involved conducting case studies, interviews, and document reviews to better understand how individual departments are making direct links between their call management strategies and community policing. As a result of these efforts, the *Guidebook* is able to provide specific examples of how current call management practices throughout the country support community policing, as well as discuss the potential of various strategies for improving community policing efforts in the future.

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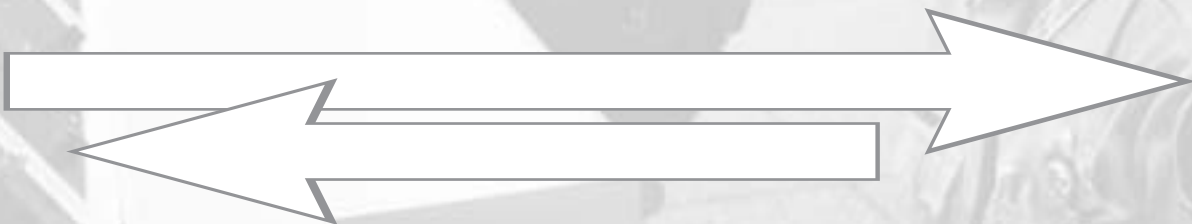
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# 1

**Chapter**

## **Introduction and Overview of Key Concepts**







# Introduction and Overview of Key Concepts

Chapter

1

## Purpose of the Guidebook

Call Management and Community Policing: A Guidebook for Law Enforcement focuses on police call management strategies and how they affect the practice of community policing. In preparing the guidebook, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) worked with the Institute for Law and Justice (ILJ) to address these questions:

- | How are police departments around the country currently managing calls for service? How are they handling non-emergency calls?
  - | What are some specific examples of call management strategies that police departments consider successful?
  - | What issues and challenges should be addressed to successfully implement various call management strategies?
  - | How can police departments make better use of data on calls received and call responses?
  - | What key steps should departments take to plan call management strategies that enhance community policing?
-



All police departments manage calls for service by making important decisions on call handling and dispatching. Over the past 30 years, most departments have come to rely heavily on computer aided dispatch (CAD) systems to ensure that officers are dispatched quickly to emergencies, and to help manage the tremendous volume of non-emergency calls and requests for information that come into their communications centers. In addition, CAD and other technology improvements have made it much more feasible to capture and analyze data on calls for service.

Community policing does not change this, but it does shift attention toward new policing goals. For example, police officers are expected to be more proactive, working with the community to solve problems and prevent crime. Officers must have blocks of time available to do this work. The introduction of innovative call management strategies has become increasingly important to free up officer time, meet other goals for responding effectively to citizens' requests for service, and still respond to life-threatening and other emergencies in the shortest possible time.

This guidebook focuses on the direct relationship between community policing and managing calls for service effectively, and includes practical examples from police departments around the country. The goals of the guidebook are to (1) provide information on innovative call management practices; (2) address key issues involved in implementing call management strategies in a community policing organization; (3) offer ideas for obtaining and managing data on calls for service; and (4) provide resource information for departments that want to learn about promising call management practices.

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## Overview of Contents

This section offers a brief overview of major topics covered in the guidebook.

- | **Key Concepts.** The next sections of this chapter discuss the two key concepts of *call management* and *community policing*. These sections provide background information and context for the more detailed information contained in later chapters.
  
  - | **National Survey.** One of the first steps in preparing the guidebook was to obtain a clear picture of the "state of call management" in the country by conducting a survey of police departments, as well as interviews and site visits to selected departments. Highlights of the survey findings are noted at the end of this chapter, with other results and examples of promising strategies presented throughout the guidebook. The appendix contains a complete report on the survey methodology and results.
  
  - | **Call Intake Strategies.** Call intake strategies are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. In addition to 7-digit numbers and 9-1-1, intake strategies include walk-in reporting to police stations and storefronts, 3-1-1 as a non-emergency telephone number, mail-in reports, and the Internet for reporting. The chapter describes how each strategy works and the benefits of each strategy for community policing.
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‡ **Managing Call Response.** Chapter 3 covers response strategies such as call stacking and delayed response, and transferring and referring calls to other agencies. It also discusses special teams, civilian personnel, and volunteers to handle certain types of calls; management of calls from the field; and examples of innovative call responses.

‡ **Considerations for Successful Implementation.** Chapter 4 discusses policy and procedure changes, getting buy-in for new call management strategies, and challenges associated with implementing various call intake and response strategies.

‡ **Using the Data.** Chapter 5 discusses using the data on calls for service—regardless of how they come in to the department—to enhance community policing efforts.

‡ **Summary of Recommendations.** Chapter 6 reviews important steps agencies should take when implementing new call management strategies.

‡ **References.** At the end of the guidebook is a list of selected websites and other references on call management and community policing.

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## Community Policing Concepts

Providing a concise definition of community policing is a challenge, since local law enforcement agencies describe a variety of activities as community policing. Many agree with the COPS program evaluators who said "community policing *should* look different from city to city and within a city, from neighborhood to neighborhood, as police respond to local needs and desires."<sup>1</sup> Because cities and counties differ substantially in a variety of ways, there is no universal way in which police departments envision and practice community policing. However, most people working in law enforcement do agree on two broad principles that represent the foundation of community policing:

- | An emphasis on problem-solving, as envisioned in problem-oriented policing<sup>2</sup>
- | Community involvement and building partnerships among police, citizens, community-based organizations, local government, and others

The Community Policing Consortium, an organization of national policing associations,<sup>3</sup> emphasized these two principles in 1994 when it stated: "Community policing is, in essence, a collaboration between the police and the community that identifies and solves community problems."<sup>4</sup> More recently, the Consortium has added "change management" as a third core component of community policing, along with problem-solving and community partnership.<sup>5</sup> This addition recognizes the importance of organization-wide support for community policing, including support in terms of how calls for service are managed.

<sup>1</sup> J. Roth, et al. National Evaluation of the COPS Program - Title I of the 1994 Crime Act. U. S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, August 2000.

<sup>2</sup> For background information on problem oriented policing, see Herman Goldstein, *Problem-Oriented Policing*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990; John Eck and William Spelman, *Problem-Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in Newport News*. Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum, 1987; and Michael Scott, *Problem-Oriented Policing: Reflections on the First 20 Years*. U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> The Community Policing Consortium is a federally-funded organization composed of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), National Sheriffs' Association (NSA), Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), and Police Foundation.

<sup>4</sup> Community Policing Consortium, *Understanding Community Policing: A Framework for Action*. U. S. Department of Justice, 1994.

<sup>5</sup> [www.communitypolicing.org/about2.html](http://www.communitypolicing.org/about2.html) (November 20, 2001).



The national call management survey conducted for this guidebook showed that police departments around the country are putting these principles into practice. For example, more than three-fourths of departments (77 percent) assign patrol officers to specific geographic areas, and more than half (55 percent) have adopted problem-solving techniques. Only about one-third report having changed communications procedures for call handling as part of community policing, although many indicate that they plan to adopt new call management strategies in the future.

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## Call Management Concepts

Police departments' ability to manage and analyze calls for service has been steadily improving ever since the first computeraided dispatch (CAD) system came on line in 1966. A primary objective for CAD was to help departments get officers to the scene of life-threatening and other emergencies in the shortest possible time. CAD became increasingly important with the advent of the 9-1-1 national emergency number, which was first introduced in 1968 (see sidebar, "Calling the Police"). This 3-digit number was selected for three simple reasons: it was not an area code, it was easy to remember, and it was easy to find on the dial.

In one sense, 9-1-1 became too successful. It resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of non-emergency calls coming in to the police. To manage the overload, departments assigned priorities to incoming calls based on the seriousness of the problem and the need for an immediate response. Aided by CAD's call stacking capabilities, police were able to more efficiently manage delayed responses to certain non-emergency calls.

CAD also gave police a quick way to systematically analyze the calls they received, for example by type of call, location, day, and time. In addition, CAD's time stamp function made it relatively easy to calculate response times and the time officers spent on each call. When officers called the communications center and reported self initiated activities such as court duty and lunch, CAD captured that time as well.

### Calling the Police

- | 1938. Great Britain began "9-9-9" service, providing residents with an emergency number that was easy to remember and easy to find on the dial.
- | 1968. The first 9-1-1 system in the U.S. became operational in Haleyville, Alabama. Before that, residents called the police by dialing a seven digit number (or "O" to have a telephone company operator connect them).
- | Mid-1980s to present. Enhanced 9-1-1 has been installed in an increasing number of departments, giving police instant access to a caller's telephone number and address.
- | 1997. The U. S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) designated 3-1-1 as a national, voluntary, non-toll number for non-emergencies.
- | 2005. FCC regulations call for wireless services to make technologies available by 2005 that allow police to identify the number and location of cell phone calls to 9-1-1.



By analyzing CAD data, police departments were able to confirm what patrol officers and communications personnel knew from their daily experience. First, certain days, times, and geographic areas needed more coverage than others to handle the volume of calls and still provide rapid responses to emergencies. Resource allocation planning became critical for anticipating staffing needs and for ensuring that enough officers were on duty at the right times and in the right areas. Second, a high percentage of 9-1-1 calls—while they were of great concern to the caller—were not true emergencies. The police response to many of these calls could be delayed without compromising either citizen safety or officers' ability to solve the crime. In fact, many non-emergency calls to 9-1-1 did not require an in-person police response at all. Instead of dialing a 7-digit police numbers for such questions as, "Is my husband in jail?" or "When is the power coming back on in my neighborhood?" many citizens were dialing the more convenient 9-1-1 number.

### ***Differential Police Response***

Police departments were faced with a dilemma. Many departments saw advantages to providing an in-person, sworn response to as many crime-related calls as possible. In fact, a significant number of departments today are still attempting to do this. But by the 1970s and 1980s, the tax reform movement resulted in reductions in traditional funding sources for many police departments, as well as a new emphasis on cutting costs throughout municipal government. Police were under pressure to "do more with less" and adopt "cutback management" strategies. These mandates to cut costs influenced police departments to examine how calls for service could be managed more efficiently without compromising citizen safety. In addition, research had shown that rapid response had little effect on the ability of police to solve "cold" crimes,

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and that random patrol did little to deter crime.<sup>6</sup> Many departments started experimenting with alternative call handling strategies, collectively referred to as "differential police response" (DPR).

In addition to having call takers answer certain questions themselves or refer callers to more appropriate agencies, DPR included delaying patrol officers' responses, having trained civilians handle certain calls, taking reports by telephone, asking callers to file reports at police stations, and sending report forms (for initial reports, addenda, or property lists) to be returned by mail. Evaluations of DPR in the mid-1980s found that

- | Most call handling alternatives helped police better manage their patrol resources and in turn reduce the response time to true emergencies, and
- | Citizens were satisfied with the alternative responses *if certain conditions were met*: the call taker was courteous, explained why a patrol unit would not be sent right away, and provided information about the alternative response and how long it would take.<sup>7</sup>

Police continue to balance sometimes competing goals to respond quickly to emergencies, manage limited resources efficiently, solve crimes and problems, and more importantly, prevent crimes. At the same time, several major changes have had a profound effect on police work, including call management. One is the organizational shift toward community policing. This has gone hand-in-hand with an increased emphasis in policing and throughout government on accountability and such concepts as "seamless customer service." Finally, rapid changes in

<sup>6</sup> For a summary of this research, see L.W. Sherman, D. Gottfredson, D. MacKenzie, *et al. Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*, Research Report, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> M. Cohen and J.T. McEwen. "Handling Calls for Service—Alternatives to Traditional Policing." *Research in Action, NIJ Report*, September 1984; J.T. McEwen, E.F. Connors, and M.I. Cohen. *Evaluation of the Differential Police Response Field Test*. Alexandria, Virginia: Research Management Associates, 1986.



information technologies, with advances such as Enhanced 9-1-1, cell phones, 3-1-1 non-emergency numbers, and the Internet have created new options as well as challenges for call management.

***Linking Call Intake and Response  
to Community Policing***

Community policing retains many of the same goals as in the past for managing police resources efficiently. These goals include controlling the time officers spend handling calls for service and other activities, as well as managing "available" time (officers are in service but not on a call). But community policing includes additional goals for involving officers in problem-solving and other pro-active work with community members. These goals underscore the importance of

- | Freeing up significant blocks of officers' time, and
- | Using that available time for problem-solving and other work that fosters police-community partnerships.

Police departments around the country are now experimenting with ways to better manage calls to promote problem-solving and support other community policing activities. They continue to identify two practical reasons for developing innovative call management strategies. First, a significant number of calls are related to crimes that were committed hours or days earlier, with little chance of identifying a suspect by responding in person right away. Second, other city agencies or community organizations sometimes are better suited for handling the matter. In these cases, law enforcement is helping to meet community needs by making referrals or transferring the call. The problem

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comes when these needs are not true police matters to begin with and are also coming to police attention via the 9-1-1 emergency number.

### ***Call Intake and Response Strategies***

This guidebook discusses call management in terms of two main elements, as illustrated in the graph that follows. First, **intake strategies** are the methods by which departments enable the public to contact or report a crime to the police. These methods include 3-1-1, telephone reporting, Internet, mail, and walk-in reporting at police stations or storefront operations, as well as calls to emergency 9-1-1 and 7-digit numbers.

Second, **response strategies** involve the methods, personnel, and other resources needed to respond to calls received through the department's intake strategies. As discussed in Chapter 3, response strategies include various types of delayed responses by sworn officers, as well as innovations such as community service officers and 3-1-1 systems for referral and call tracking. Several examples in Chapter 3 illustrate how departments have accepted additional challenges to help free up more time for problem-solving and other community policing activities.

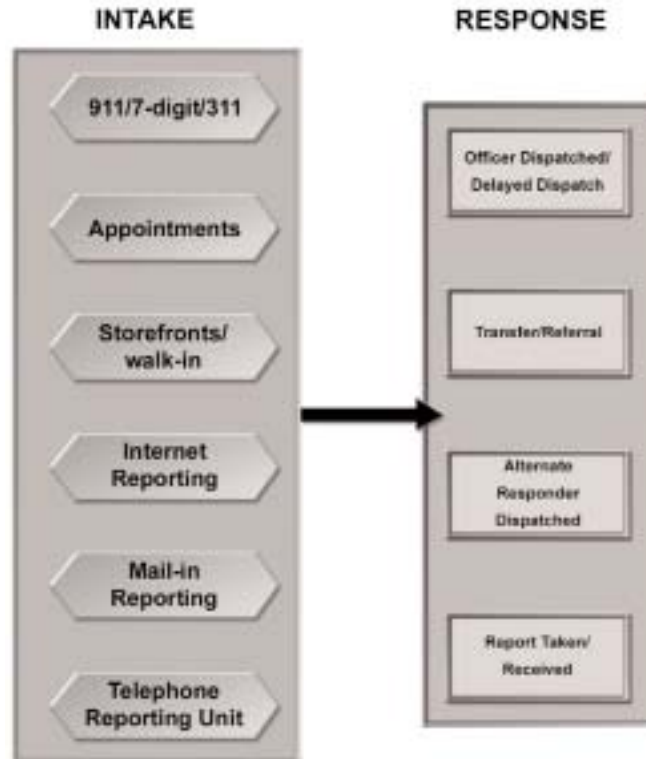


Figure 1

### State of Call Management

In July 2000, ILJ conducted a nationwide survey to document the extent of various call intake and response strategies by police agencies. The survey also asked about community policing practices and about applications of call for service data—particularly data captured by CAD systems—to identify and analyze problems and help measure the success of community policing activities. Survey follow-up included telephone interviews and site visits to several departments.



Survey results provided insight on the extent to which police departments currently have various types of call management strategies (see Chapters 2 and 3). In addition, the survey showed that most departments were considering the implementation of at least one additional call management strategy in the future. The survey was also helpful in identifying specific departments that have implemented several different call management strategies and are also involved in many different community policing activities. Some of these departments are highlighted in examples throughout the guidebook.

While some call handling options were similar for departments in jurisdictions of all sizes, other results varied greatly. For example, most police departments in jurisdictions with populations of 50,000 or more had telephone report units (TRUs) but were unlikely to make use of scheduled appointments, while the majority of departments in jurisdictions of less than 50,000 offered scheduled appointments with officers but did not have TRUs. The introduction of mail-in, walk-in, and Internet reporting was not related to jurisdiction size.

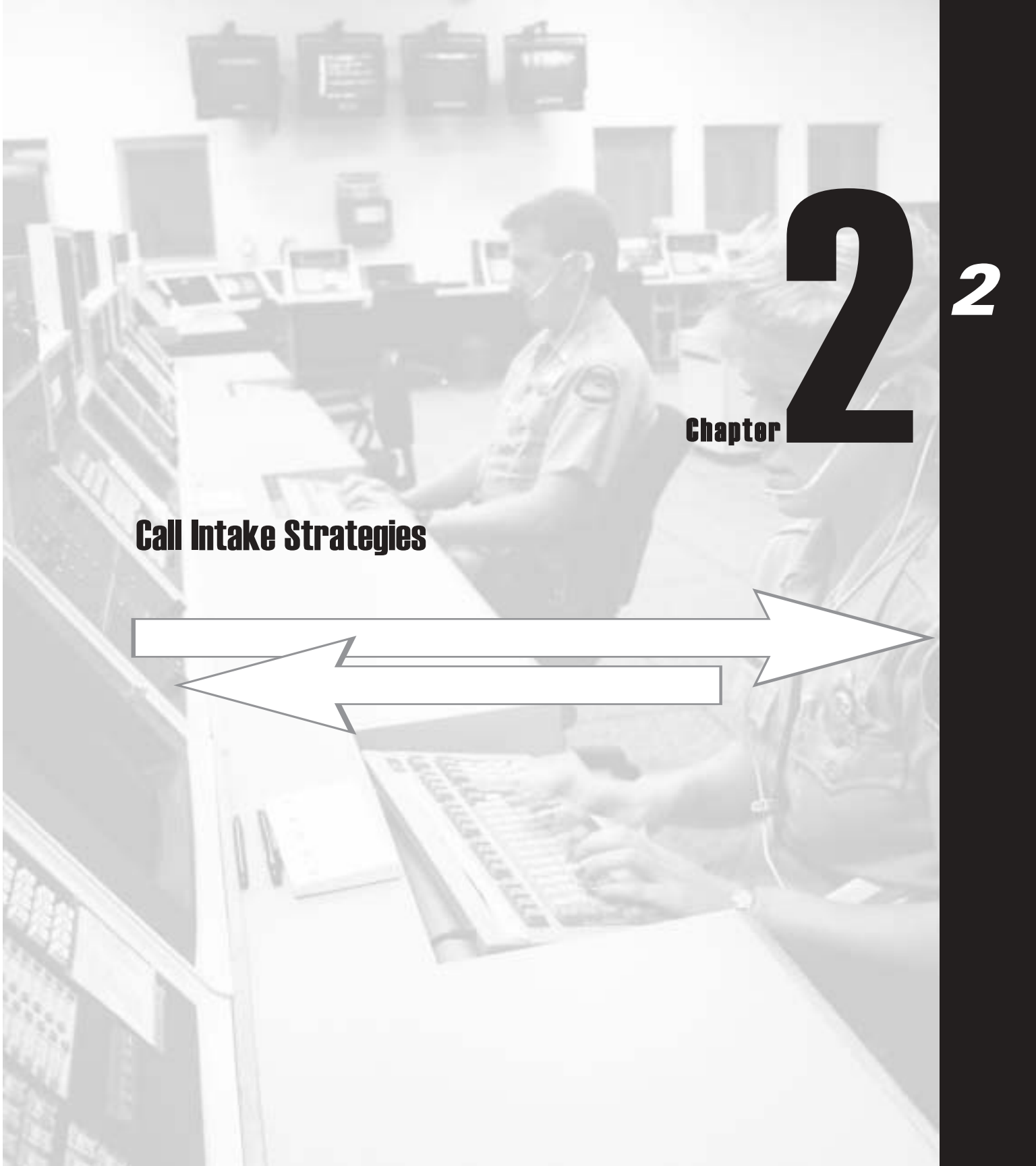
The remainder of the guidebook describes various call management strategies, provides illustrations of current practices, and offers ideas and recommendations on how call management strategies can enhance community policing.

### **Call Management Survey Sample**

For the ILJ call management survey in 2000, questionnaires were sent to 695 police departments, including all departments in jurisdictions with populations of 250,000 or more and a sample of departments in jurisdictions with populations less than 250,000. Nearly 70 percent of these departments completed the survey.

Respondents were grouped into four categories based on the jurisdictions' population: less than 25,000 (27 percent of respondents); 25,000 to 50,000 (33 percent of respondents); 50,000 to 250,000 (27 percent of respondents); and 250,000 or more (13 percent of respondents).





**Call Intake Strategies**

**Chapter**

**2**

**2**





## Call Intake Strategies

Chapter

# 2

Effective policing would not be possible without some means to prioritize calls for service and handle different types of calls in different ways. Although officers must be dispatched immediately to certain calls, events requiring an emergency response are only a small percentage of total calls for service. For many departments, the overuse of 9-1-1 for non-emergencies and routine inquiries has been a driving force behind the development of new call intake strategies.

This chapter first provides background information and findings on call priorities and classifications from the national survey, then focuses on specific call intake strategies and how they can enhance community policing. Response strategies are covered in Chapter 3, and Chapter 4 discusses factors to consider when planning to implement various call handling options, including challenges that police departments have had to overcome.

### Call Priorities and Classifications

In the call management survey, departments were asked to provide the total number of calls received in 1999 and a breakdown of those calls by priority level. As a first step in analyzing these responses, we took a closer look at six departments that reported handling between about 294,000 and 607,300 calls annually. These departments did not represent the total number of survey respondents with call volumes in this range, but they provided documents detailing call classifications, definitions of call types, and policies. Just within this small "snapshot" of departments, there was significant variation in the percent of calls classified as highest priority, ranging from a low of 0.2



<sup>8</sup> ILJ bases this finding on its own experience conducting more than 60 comprehensive police management, staffing, and resource allocation studies for local jurisdictions.

percent to a high of 19.1 percent. Similarly, in four of these departments, fewer than 20 call types were included in the highest priority code, while two departments had over 35 call types under priority one. The main point is that policies classifying calls as priority 1, priority 2, etc., can be expected to greatly influence patrol officers' workload and the time they have available for self-initiated activities.

The six departments illustrate how call classification policies differ among police departments but are not a representative sample. In fact, great care must be taken in making comparisons across jurisdictions because of variations in priority code definitions, associated response options, call classifications, and state laws defining crime types. (Call priorities and classifications are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4). Over the years, the guidebook authors have found that on average, emergency calls comprise only about 10 percent of the total calls a department receives.<sup>8</sup>

Although cross-site comparisons are difficult, departments' ability to analyze their own CAD data has steadily improved. The survey showed that 83 percent of departments routinely analyze CAD data by types of calls and 75 percent analyze CAD data by beats or service areas.

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## Overview of Intake Strategies

The national survey showed that virtually every responding police department has implemented at least one call intake strategy in addition to 9-1-1 and 7-digit police numbers. Walk-in reporting at police stations or storefronts is the most frequent alternative (see survey results in sidebar). Although police departments have implemented these call intake strategies for a variety of reasons, many agencies now take advantage of them to support community policing. The sections that follow discuss how different call intake strategies have been applied and how they can enhance community policing (challenges associated with implementing these strategies are discussed in Chapter 4).

### 3-1-1 Systems

By the 1990s, an overload of non-emergency and non-police related calls on 9-1-1 had created serious problems, with 9-1-1 callers receiving busy signals or getting placed on hold at peak times in some cities. One solution has been to establish 3-1-1 as an easy-to-remember telephone number for contacting police about non-emergency situations. In October 1996, the first 3-1-1 system was launched as a pilot project in Baltimore, Maryland,<sup>9</sup> and in February 1997, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) designated 3-1-1 as a national, voluntary, non-toll phone number for non-emergencies.

### Percent of Departments Using Alternative Call Intake Strategies

<u>Strategies*</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Walk-ins/storefront reporting	95
Telephone reporting	56
Appointments with officers	42
Mail-in	23
Internet reporting	6
3-1-1	3

\* On the survey, all strategies listed, with the exception of 3-1-1, were referred to as methods for filing police reports.

<sup>9</sup> The Baltimore Police Department 3-1-1 service was included in a recent evaluation (Lorraine Mazerolle, *et al.*, *Managing Citizens Calls to the Police: An Assessment of Non-Emergency Call Systems*, draft report to the National Institute of Justice, 2001). Baltimore now offers a more comprehensive system that integrates most city services.



<sup>10</sup> Between 1996 and 1999, COPS 3-1-1 grants were awarded in Baltimore, San Jose, Birmingham, Dukes County (Massachusetts), Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Rochester, and South Pasadena (California). In 2000, Austin, Framingham (Massachusetts), and Orange County (Florida) received COPS start-up grants for "public service model" 3-1-1 systems.

<sup>11</sup> Baltimore publicized the "urgency but no emergency" slogan as well when it began 3-1-1, but with the expanded service, the city's web site states that "3-1-1 is now Baltimore's call to City Hall."

The national call management survey showed that in mid-2000, only 3 percent of police departments had 3-1-1 systems for non-emergency calls. Half of these were jurisdictions with populations greater than 1 million. However, another 31 percent of responding police departments, mostly large agencies, said they were considering the possibility. Between 1996 and 2001, COPS Office start-up funding helped launch 3-1-1 systems in 12 jurisdictions.<sup>10</sup>

The two most common types of 3-1-1 systems are police operated systems, where 3-1-1 is promoted as a number to call for non-emergency police matters; and 3-1-1 systems operated by another city or county agency, where 3-1-1 is intended as a number to call for all city or county services (including non-emergency police matters). For example, Chicago and Dallas implemented 3-1-1 for citywide services, with Chicago describing the number as "your call to city hall." The police department in Las Vegas, which established 3-1-1 for non-emergency police services, encourages citizens to call 3-1-1 "when there's an urgency but no emergency."<sup>11</sup>

Within these two types of 3-1-1 services, there is considerable variation in terms of staffing, records management, and follow-up. The advantage of the 3-1-1 number for citizens is the convenience of having only a 3-digit number to remember, rather than the 7-digit non-emergency police telephone number (or the 7-digit numbers of other local agencies).

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Operationally, the telephone company converts the 3-1-1 number to a 7-digit number. For police managed systems, this would usually be the non-emergency 7-digit number normally dialed to reach the police department. Depending on how and why the jurisdiction implemented 3-1-1, the intake strategies vary.

Police departments with 3-1-1 numbers usually have a designated group of call takers to receive 3-1-1 calls while another group is devoted to 9-1-1 calls.<sup>12</sup> An alternative is to have the same call takers handle both types of calls and identify the emergency line with a distinctive ring or light on the phone. The introduction of 3-1-1 has no effect on the CAD system. Call takers enter the same information into the CAD system as before, and the system then takes appropriate actions for handling the non-emergency event, such as assigning a lower priority to the dispatch or routing the call to a telephone report unit. If the 3-1-1 call, such as a stray dog, might be more appropriately handled by another agency, such as animal control, the caller can be transferred directly or referred to the appropriate agency.

<sup>12</sup> In Chicago, the service center for 3-1-1 (a citywide service) is housed separately from the emergency communications center, but 3-1-1 staff includes police officers on light duty as well as civilians.



<sup>13</sup> The Dallas 3-1-1 system is operated by the Fire Division.

### ***Enhancing Community Policing***

The primary reason most jurisdictions implement a 3-1-1 strategy is to reduce the number of non-emergency calls and information requests coming in to 9-1-1. Another goal of 3-1-1 is to quickly connect citizens with appropriate agencies to serve their needs. The 3-1-1 number also has the potential to benefit community policing in other ways. For example,

- | It can alert other agencies to citizen problems for which they, rather than the police, have mandates to assume primary responsibility.
- | It eases the burden on police personnel who answer emergency calls.
- | It can facilitate communication between community members and agencies by attempting to connect citizens with the right agency, department, or person the first time.
- | It can improve accountability for follow-up. Some 3-1-1 systems provide callers with a "tracking number" so they can check on the status of their service requests.
- | It can promote coordination of city services. Regardless of which agency staffs the 3-1-1 line, planning the service and operating it effectively requires significant police involvement.

In Dallas, where 3-1-1 is a city service,<sup>13</sup> call takers noted that 3-1-1 reduced the number of times citizen callers were transferred when trying to reach various city departments. In addition, the 3-1-1 call takers felt they were knowledgeable and helpful regarding all city services, and that by knowing the bigger picture, they could deal with an extensive range of citizen problems.

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The 3-1-1 number can also serve as a data collection tool. The call system captures information that can help police and municipal government identify and analyze crime and disorder problems, as well as other types of complaints ( for example, broken fire hydrants, power outages, and potholes). This can serve as a starting point for determining a plan of action.

For 3-1-1 data to be valuable in identifying and analyzing problems, however, it is important to carefully plan what information the system will collect. For example, in one police-managed 3-1-1 system, the only calls entered into a computer system were those where an officer was dispatched or police reports were taken. The 3-1-1 calls referred to other city agencies were not entered into the system, eliminating any possibility of systematically analyzing those calls.<sup>14</sup> In addition, a CAD system that captures 3-1-1 calls may not differentiate how calls enter the system.

### Telephone Reporting Units

More than half of the surveyed police departments (56 percent) have telephone reporting units (TRU). The national survey showed TRU were operated by police in 93 percent of jurisdictions with populations of 250,000 or more and in 77 percent of jurisdictions with 50,000 to 250,000 residents. In contrast, 43 percent of departments in jurisdictions of 25,000 to 50,000 and only 29 percent in jurisdictions of less than 25,000 had TRU. TRU staff take reports over the phone on incidents that do not require an officer to be dispatched. A call may reach TRU in various ways, depending on the agency. The unit may have a direct number, a call taker may route the call to the unit, or the reporting party's contact information may be passed on to TRU to call the individual back. Although agencies vary as

<sup>14</sup> Lorraine Mazerolle et al., *Managing Citizens Calls to the Police: An Assessment of Non-Emergency Call Systems*, draft report to the National Institute of Justice, 2001.

### Teleserve Cadets in Knoxville

In addition to sworn personnel permanently assigned to the unit and those on temporary assignments or restricted duty, police cadets staff the Knoxville Police Department's Teleserve Unit. In 2000, cadets took 42 percent of the reports coming into Teleserve. Using cadets not only allows patrol resources to stay in the field but also provides individuals who are pursuing a career in law enforcement a way to become familiar with the department's policies, organization, and personnel.



to what call types are routed to TRU, the common thread is that the incidents are non-emergency situations with limited chances of apprehending a suspect at the scene. TRU can be a particularly efficient response to handling lower priority calls for service.

One advantage of any specialized unit is that the personnel develop an increased efficiency and mastery of the task. Some agencies staff TRU with patrol officers on limited duty (due to injury), who bring to the job considerable report taking and field experience. Other agencies find that staffing TRU with trained, experienced civilians can be even more cost-effective. Civilian personnel are often motivated by the responsibility involved in taking reports from community members and can be trained to provide thorough, well-written reports.

### **MPDC Telephone Report Unit**

The Metropolitan Police, District of Columbia (MPDC) operates a Telephone Report Unit (TRU) that handles reports for the following: "damage to or destruction of property, stolen vehicles or bicycles, lost property, stolen/lost tags, injury reporting (except those occurring on public space), animal bites, all thefts from auto, Theft II's and those Theft I's which do not exceed \$1,000 in property loss, certain hit and run accidents, larcenies from mail, and additional information on all reports."

*MPDC General Order No. 401.10*

### ***Enhancing Community Policing***

Minor incidents handled by TRU do not require field responses by patrol officers and can be more quickly and efficiently handled by TRU personnel. Delegating non-emergency, non-suspect incidents to TRU frees up patrol resources, providing officers with more time and opportunities for community-oriented, proactive work.

Citizen satisfaction with TRU (and other intake strategies) tends to depend on how the alternative is explained to the caller. Department policies typically state that if a citizen insists on seeing an officer, one will be sent. In many situations, though, citizens may appreciate having their needs met more quickly via TRU. The average time for an officer to handle a call is 30-45 minutes; and for minor incidents reported during busy times, citizens may have to wait several hours for an officer to arrive. For example, if



the caller simply needs to file a report for insurance purposes, TRU can be an excellent alternative. Before implementing a TRU, departments may want to survey citizens about various levels of service; for example, if residents can file a report over the phone within an hour or receive a patrol response within four hours, which service would they rate higher?

Finally, TRU reports are almost always captured by a department's records management system. (Chapter 5 discusses how data can help provide a more complete picture of non-emergency requests for police service).

### **Mail-in Reports**

Some departments have developed processes for distributing special report forms that citizens can complete and mail back to the department. With mail-in reporting, citizens can mail an incident report form to report a crime or quality of life issue, provide intelligence or anonymous tips, file a complaint about police performance, or provide supplemental information to the police about a prior incident. Citizens can do this anonymously or provide contact information.

### ***Enhancing Community Policing***

When callers have time to provide supplemental information after an initial report, they can be more thorough in identifying property and providing descriptions. Because the national survey did not ask follow-up questions about mail-in reports, it is not clear how many contain valuable details and how many provide only minimal information (e.g., reports on minor traffic accidents filed for insurance purposes). However, mail-in reports should not be overlooked as a potential source of information for

### **Mail-in Reports in Knoxville**

The Knoxville, Tennessee, Police Department reports that giving citizens the option of mailing in information when they are less upset or have time to provide more details puts the citizens more at ease. It is one way of showing that the police are interested in doing a thorough job, as well as accommodating the caller's needs.



<sup>15</sup> According to the *San Jose Mercury News* (12/19/99), several California jurisdictions began Internet reporting services prior to San Jose, including Sacramento, Santa Rosa, and Salinas.

### **Citizens' Online Incident Report Form, Arlington County**

The Arlington County, Virginia, Police Department uses several call intake methods for non-emergencies, including an Internet reporting form ([www.co.arlington.va.us/police](http://www.co.arlington.va.us/police))

The form includes several pull-down menus. For example, options under "type of offense" include destruction of property, fraud, simple assault, eight types of theft (vehicle license plate, bicycle, cell phone, etc.), and threatening or harassing phone calls.

Before citizens can submit the form, they must check a box indicating they are aware that it is a crime to submit a false report. Several fields for providing contact information must also be completed.

problem-solving. In addition, tips and intelligence received through mail-in reports can contain background information about a neighborhood or other factors, helping officers analyze problems more thoroughly. Feedback about police performance can be beneficial for training and education purposes. Of course, anonymous information must always be verified.

### **Internet Reports**

A law enforcement agency's website or email address can be available for citizens to report crime and disorder, provide feedback on police performance (compliments or complaints), or provide investigative information. An agency may have forms for citizens to fill out and submit, or simply an email address. Personal email and online reporting systems do not guarantee anonymity and may preclude anonymous tips, except from individuals who believe the channels to be secure or untraceable. If an agency is receiving online information, it can be stored in a database (through forms) or simply in a file for later retrieval.

Internet reporting was in place in only 6 percent of police departments responding to the national survey. The technology of police agencies is often influenced by the technological sophistication and support of the surrounding community—state and local government, private industry, universities, etc. For example, the San Jose, California, Police Department, located in the heart of Silicon Valley, has had online reporting for several years, receiving 25-30 online reports daily.<sup>15</sup>



### ***Enhancing Community Policing***

Despite the rapid growth of Internet communications, relatively few people access the Internet for reporting incidents and information to the police. Use of this technology can be expected to increase as people become more familiar with computers and online resources, and as police departments make greater use of online opportunities. The Internet allows residents to file a crime report any time of day or night and take whatever time they need to explain what happened in their own words. However, the "digital divide" is still a reality in today's economy. Although citizens can access the Internet from many public locations (libraries, community centers, cyber cafes, etc.), those who have personal computers in their homes obviously have an advantage.

Community policing and problem-solving can be enhanced by online reporting's capability to rapidly exchange documents with detailed information, data, and pictures. Community leaders, among others, may find the Internet a convenient way to exchange information with the police. The Internet also offers possibilities with respect to crimes that are typically underreported. For example, people who have witnessed or have knowledge of gang related crimes may be apprehensive about having a police officer come to their home, but may be willing to file a report online. Quality of life issues can also be reported quickly and easily over the Internet. The more information the police have, the more readily they can identify, analyze, and respond to problems.

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<sup>16</sup> *The Washington Post, Alexandria-Arlington Extra*, P. 3, January 24, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Koban is a Japanese word for "mini-station." In Japan, a koban is usually staffed by two police officers and located in a residential neighborhood.

Arlington County, Virginia, Police Chief Edward Flynn has expressed hope that his department's new online reporting will encourage citizens to report more crimes. "We are challenged as an industry to create time for our officers to be proactive with community problems," Chief Flynn has stated. "The less time we spend chasing our tails and taking false alarm calls or minor crime reports, the more time we have for prevention."<sup>16</sup>

Internet reporting is relatively new. In the near future, however, it is likely that departments experienced with this option will shed more light on citizen satisfaction with Internet reporting, the extent to which citizens take advantage of it, and for what purposes.

### **Police Storefronts in Greensboro**

Greensboro, North Carolina, Police Department storefronts, implemented with input from neighborhood block captains, community activists, and city council, were customized for each district. They put the department closer to the community, increased police availability, and were found to be more inviting, leading to more community involvement and participation in policing issues.

### **Walk-Ins to Police Stations and Storefronts**

Almost every police department accepts crime reports from people who walk in to the police station or a district substation. Many departments have expanded their walk-in reporting options by opening storefront facilities and other types of police service centers, sometimes in cooperation with other government agencies.

Storefronts in this country initially became popular in retail areas in cities and in suburban "strip" shopping centers. Vacant retail space, which often invited crime, could be converted to provide a visible police presence as a deterrent to crime. As interest in community policing grew, the Japanese system of operating neighborhood kobans<sup>17</sup> also influenced the development of police storefronts in this country.



Today, police storefront facilities provide services in a variety of neighborhood settings, including shopping malls, restaurants, apartment complexes, and community centers. They tend to be small and often are not permanently staffed. Storefronts have been set up by police for several purposes: (1) provide a visible police presence in a community; (2) hold community meetings and encourage informal interaction between police and residents; (3) house police services, such as distributing crime prevention information or conducting youth programs; and (4) serve as office space and a meeting place for officers. Residents may also visit storefronts to report crime or suspicious persons, ask law-related questions, or discuss other issues with the police.

Some years ago, several studies of the impact of storefronts on reducing crime and victimization produced mixed results.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, a recent case study in Savannah, Georgia, describes how four storefront offices appear to have contributed to significant reductions in crime.<sup>19</sup> In addition, storefronts are often requested by residents, and there are positive citizen evaluations associated with them.<sup>20</sup>

### Enhancing Community Policing

A storefront setting has many potential benefits for community policing. It is usually set up with the particular needs and culture of the neighborhood in mind and is often more accessible by public transportation than the precinct station. These factors may encourage people to stop in, particularly those who are not comfortable with the more formal setting of a traditional precinct or district facility. Storefronts provide opportunities for police to foster and maintain contacts with residents; develop better rapport with members of the public; and build partnerships. They also encourage community leaders to meet with police informally.

<sup>18</sup> See M. A. Wycoff and W. Skogan, "Storefront Police Offices: The Houston Field Test," in D. Rosenbaum, editor, *Community Crime Prevention: Does It Work?* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1986; W. Skogan, *Disorder and Decline*, NY: Free Press; J. H. Skolnick and D. H. Bayley, *New Blue Line*, Free Press, 1986; C. Uchida, B. Frost, and S.O. Annon, *Modern Policing and the Control of Illegal Drugs: Testing New Strategies in Two American Cities*, Research Report, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 1992.

<sup>19</sup> C. Coles, "National COPS Evaluation Organizational Change Case Study: Savannah, Georgia," one of 10 case studies conducted by the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management, Harvard University, published online at [www.ncjrs.org/nij/cops\\_casestudy/savannah2.html](http://www.ncjrs.org/nij/cops_casestudy/savannah2.html) (December 2002).

<sup>20</sup> L. Sherman, D. Gottfredson, D. MacKenzie, et al. *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Doesn't, What's Promising*, Research Report, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 1996.



### **"COPS Shops" in Spokane**

The Spokane, Washington, Police Department currently has ten "COPS Shops" (Community Oriented Policing substations) operating in different neighborhoods throughout the city. Police personnel, parole officers, and community volunteers staff the shops. Each shop can develop programs based on that neighborhood's needs. At one shop, Neva-Wood, there are over 160 projects and programs, including Block Watch, Restorative Justice, Juvenile Justice, Fax Back, NOPS, and Graffiti and Fingerprint training.

In addition, larger police or multi-agency service centers may offer some of the neighborhood-oriented features of storefronts while providing a wider range of services. In line with community policing goals, these centers involve police collaborations with other criminal justice agencies, social services, public works, and others who seek to make their services more responsive to community needs. For example, in Spokane, Washington, parole officers from the state Department of Corrections work in COPS Shops (see sidebar) along with police personnel and local volunteers.



## Appointments

Another call intake strategy involves citizens making appointments with officers to report crime and other information. If the incident is not an emergency and the caller would like personal contact, appointments often can be made to meet with specific police personnel, such as the beat officer. Generally, this is offered as a convenience to the caller, with the appointment scheduled at the caller's home, place of business, or a police facility. It can also be a convenience for officers, allowing them to schedule responses to minor calls when time permits.

Citizens usually request appointments by calling a general, non-emergency number, although appointments can be offered as a response option for people calling 9-1-1 with certain types of complaints. A citizen may also have a direct number to a detective for arranging appointments related to an ongoing investigation. Finally, some departments have set up voice mail for individual officers, and some have provided officers with cell phones. As part of community policing, officers may encourage citizens to call them directly and hand out business cards listing their office, voice mail, or cell phone numbers.

### *Enhancing Community Policing*

Appointments can be convenient for both citizens and officers and can show the police agency's willingness to be accommodating, which can help build positive relationships between police and citizens. Encouraging community members to interact more with police can, in turn, improve problem-solving efforts. Community leaders and individuals who have specific quality of life complaints or who are concerned about persistent crime problems need personal time with police. Appointments can help police and citizens discuss these issues in detail at a time when interruptions are less likely.

### **Appointments: Call Management Survey Results**

As a reporting method, appointments were much more likely in jurisdictions with fewer than 50,000 residents than in larger jurisdictions. Approximately half of departments in cities and counties of 25,000 to 50,000 (49 percent) and in jurisdictions with less than 25,000 population (53 percent) report that they schedule appointments, compared to 34 percent of departments in jurisdictions of 50,000 to 250,000 and 19 percent in jurisdictions of 250,000 or more.

In the survey comments, a number of respondents listed voice mail, pagers, and cell phones as call intake options that their departments were considering.



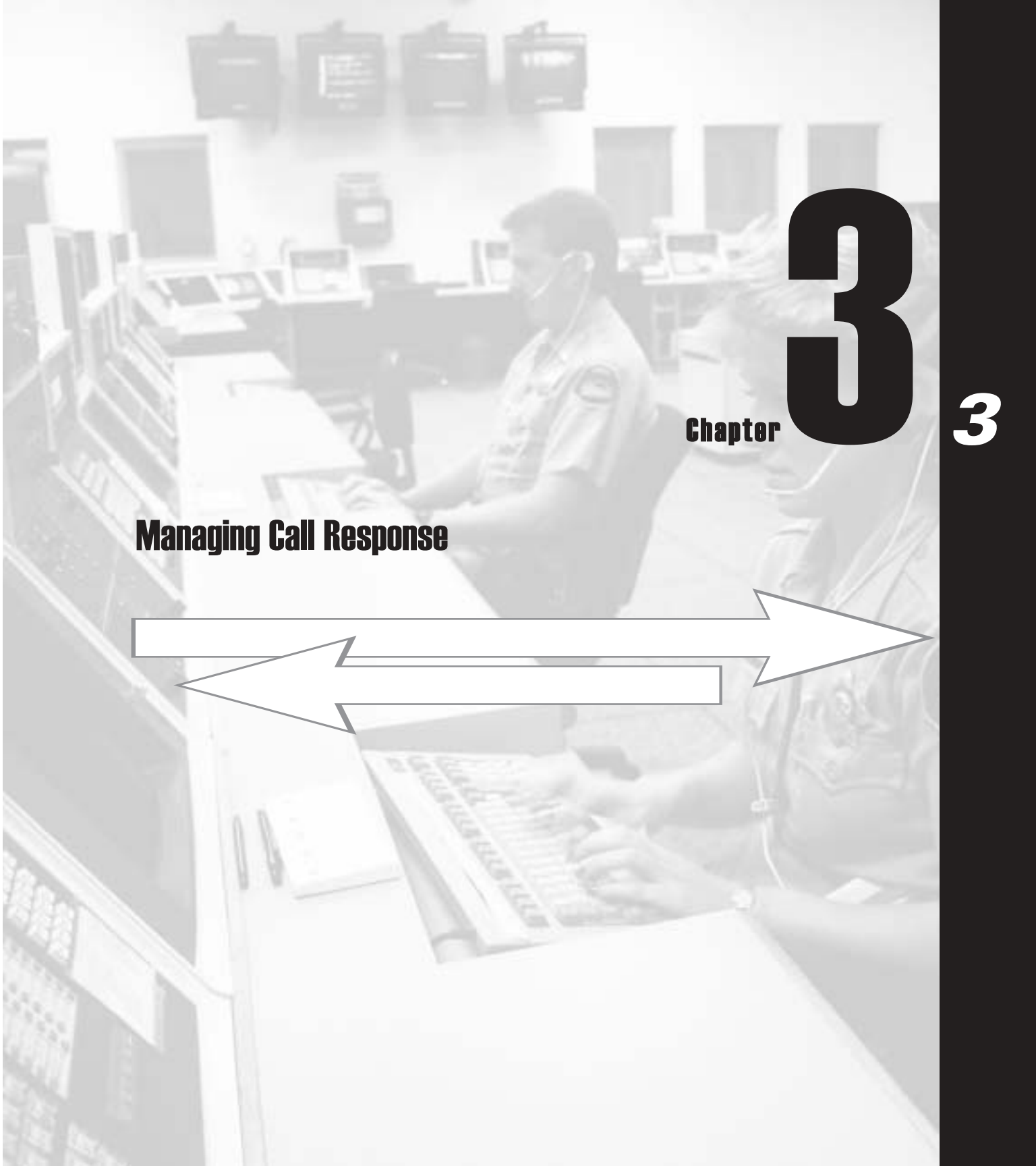
<sup>21</sup> Another option is seen in the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). The number 800.ASK.LAPD is a non-emergency information line, which directs callers to operators handling non-emergency calls for service. The city also maintains a 3-1-1 number for non-public safety citizen calls.

## Summary

In the survey comments related to call intake strategies, a number of departments mentioned preventive steps taken to reduce the number of 9-1-1 calls for certain problems. These included passing alarm ordinances to encourage businesses to adjust or replace faulty alarm systems; using "Reverse 9-1-1" to communicate information or alerts to selected areas of the community; and conducting public education campaigns, along with providing clearer directory listings, to encourage use of existing 7-digit police non-emergency numbers.<sup>21</sup> Another way to reduce calls is to address conditions that create problems as part of a department's community policing efforts. Examples of this are included throughout the guidebook.

This chapter discussed call intake strategies with which departments have considerable experience, as well as others (such as 3-1-1 and Internet reporting) that have evolved more recently. The focus here has been on how the strategies are employed and their benefits for community policing. The next chapter (Chapter 3) provides similar information on managing call response, followed by a discussion in Chapter 4 of issues that should be addressed to successfully implement various call intake and response strategies.

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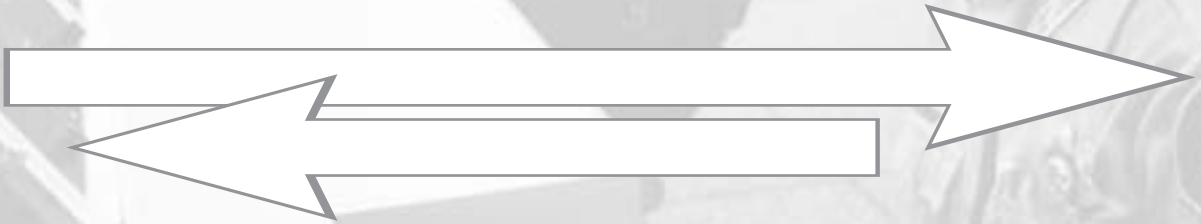


**Managing Call Response**

**Chapter**

**3**

**3**







## Managing Call Response

Chapter

3

Managing implies making thoughtful decisions based on knowledge, experience, and priorities. Police executives must manage the call for service response—think about it, study it, and reach decisions based on data analysis, recent history, employee input, and community acceptance.

This chapter discusses call stacking and delayed response and the process of transferring or referring calls to other agencies. It also provides information on civilian employees, special teams or units, volunteers and others as alternative responders to calls for service and discusses the management of call responses from the field.

### Call Stacking and Delayed Response

Call stacking is a process that the CAD system performs in which non-emergency, lower priority calls are ranked and held or "stacked" so that higher priorities are continually dispatched first. The objective of call stacking is to reduce cross-beat dispatches and allow the unit in the area of responsibility to handle as many calls in that area as possible. This has significant advantages for community policing, which in the majority of departments involves assigning patrol officers to specific geographic areas such as beats or neighborhoods. As officers spend more time in their beats, they gain opportunities to become familiar with conditions, problems, and resources in those areas. Cross-beat dispatches reduce those opportunities by taking officers out of their assigned areas, as well as adding to the time required to respond to calls.



Call stacking occurs in two types of situations. The first is when the patrol unit in the area of responsibility is busy and a lower priority call arrives in the communications center. Rather than recommending a unit from an adjacent beat, the CAD system holds the call until the primary unit becomes available. Many CAD systems alert the dispatcher after holding the call for a period of time (for example, 30 minutes). The dispatcher can then make a decision on whether to dispatch an adjacent unit or continue to stack the call. Another option, discussed later in this chapter, is to refer the call to a field supervisor.

The second situation that creates call stacking is when every unit in the city (or command area) is busy on calls and another call comes into the communications center. If the call is low priority, the same process occurs in that the call has to be held until a unit—hopefully the unit in the area of responsibility—becomes available. If all units are busy and a high priority call comes in, the dispatcher may send out a plea for "any units available."

With delayed response, lower priority incidents do not get an immediate response. They can be held until a quieter time during the shift, e.g., waiting until later in the evening to get past the busy time of 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. or, alternatively, they can be held until the next shift, e.g., passing the call from the evening to the day shift when complainants are more likely to be available.

Because CAD automates call prioritization and call stacking, departments can manage limited resources much more efficiently than in the past. Some departments still attempt to provide an in-person, sworn response to all calls as soon as possible, whether or not their CAD system stacks calls. In contrast, departments may not have their CAD

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systems stack calls but may still have policies for providing delayed responses. For most busy departments, though, call stacking and delayed response to certain calls have become the norm. As a lieutenant in one department noted, call stacking aids community policing because "it puts officers at critical places at critical times." In addition, it can help make larger blocks of time available to patrol in between high priority calls. One challenge for police management is to determine the extent to which officers are using those blocks of time for problem-solving and other community policing activities.

Nearly 60 percent of police agencies responding to the national call management survey have call stacking/delayed response to handle certain call types. Although there were no major differences among departments serving jurisdictions with populations of 25,000 or greater, departments in jurisdictions of less than 25,000 were much less likely to have these strategies (36 percent, compared to approximately two-thirds of departments in other jurisdictions).

### **Transferring and Referring Calls**

Under community policing, public safety is viewed as a local government and community-wide responsibility, not simply a police responsibility. Coordination of local government services is vital. Developing an organized system of referring citizen calls to the appropriate agency has the potential to accelerate service delivery and allow police to focus on crimes and problems they can affect. In many departments, call takers work from comprehensive lists of government and other community agencies. Their experience and knowledge can help callers connect to the right agency.

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*"The entire department (civilian and sworn) received training on community policing so that information or referrals can be given to any citizen contact without forwarding them to another person for the information."*

Survey Respondent

The national survey showed that overall, 59 percent of departments transfer non-police calls to other, more appropriate agencies. Approximately 70 percent of departments in jurisdictions with populations of 50,000 or more transfer calls, compared to 59 percent in jurisdictions of 25,000 to 50,000 and 42 percent in jurisdictions of less than 25,000. These differences are understandable, since larger jurisdictions generally have an array of agencies and organizations that can handle referrals.

Transferring and referring calls can also reduce the number of calls erroneously directed to the police. If communications personnel carefully explain to callers which agency can better meet their needs and why, callers may remember the next time a similar situation occurs. These explanations may also prevent feelings of frustration when a caller is transferred or asked to hang up and dial another number. The 3-1-1 systems previously described have similar objectives for reducing red tape by directing callers to the appropriate agencies for services.

### Percent of Calls Responded to By Type of Responder

<u>Responder</u>	<u>Percent of Calls</u>
Patrol Officers	87
Community Policing Team/Unit	4
Uniformed Civilians	2
Special Team/Unit	6
Volunteers	1

### Alternative Responders

The departments surveyed were also asked about the personnel who respond to calls for service. The sidebar table illustrates that although some departments employ alternative responders, patrol officers handle an overwhelming majority of calls. But some departments have community-oriented policing teams, uniformed civilians, special teams and units, and even volunteers to respond to certain calls. These departments note that alternative responders can allow patrol officers to devote more time to thoroughly addressing emergency calls, as well as free up patrol time for problem-solving and other proactive police work.



The following sections provide descriptions of non-patrol responders and some of their duties in departments throughout the country.

### ***Community Policing Teams***

Many departments began community policing with specialized teams, although some have eliminated them in favor of making all patrol officers community police officers. Departments that have community policing teams often see advantages in providing communities with an experienced and consistent group of officers for problem-solving. The team approach also limits the number of officers who need specialized training in problem-solving and related techniques (for example, data analysis, group facilitation skills). Historically, a drawback to community policing teams has been resistance from officers who perceive them as elite squads. For example, depending on the department, they may not handle routine calls for service or may have greater flexibility in setting their own schedules. In short, community policing teams have advantages and disadvantages that must be weighed by each department.

In general, community policing teams are not responsible for traditional responses to citizen calls to 9-1-1, although they may take certain types of calls and reports. More often, they work closely with communities to identify and respond to specific neighborhood issues, such as graffiti problems; and they may work in conjunction with patrol officers on problem-solving projects to address almost any type of crime or condition related to crime.

### **Types of Calls Handled by Civilians**

Depending on the department, civilians handled calls in the field, on the phone, or at a storefront or station. National survey respondents noted a variety of duties for which civilian personnel are responsible, including these:

- | Calls not involving dangerous situations, suspects, or follow-up (cold calls)
- | Traffic accidents (no injury), traffic control, parking issues, abandoned vehicles
- | Vehicle lockouts, building checks
- | Burglary, theft, lost and found property
- | Vandalism, criminal mischief
- | Runaways
- | Paperwork relays and services, subpoena service, funeral escorts
- | Animal complaints
- | Bicycle stops, park patrol



*"Reports of ongoing narcotics activity (drug houses) are not responded to by patrol officers. This policy has successfully eliminated situations where patrol officers have unexpectedly encountered plainclothes/undercover officers."*

Survey Respondent

### ***Civilian Personnel***

Examples of civilian, or non-sworn, personnel responding to dispatched calls include community service officers (CSO), traffic controllers, and cadets. Civilian personnel, who cost less than patrol officers, can be employed successfully to handle calls for service that require a report but not the presence of sworn (and armed) legal authority. Various departments have trained civilians to respond to traffic accidents, staff a TRU, process mailed or emailed reports, or handle incident reports or collect evidence in the field (see sidebar on page 39, "Types of Calls Handled by Civilians"). In these instances, civilian personnel collect the pertinent information and notify patrol or detectives as appropriate.

### ***Specialized Teams or Units***

Specialized teams and units also enhance community policing. They can be a resource for patrol, or alternate responders themselves. In addition to special units that are permanent parts of the organization (for example, homicide, fraud), specialized teams or units can be created on an as-needed basis. For example, if there is a persistent problem in a neighborhood or citywide, such as street narcotics hotspots, a specialized unit might be created to better manage the problem and large call volume. School Resource Officer (SRO) teams are another example. Where SROs are assigned to work at specific schools, they are available to respond to incidents there, as well as handle other appropriate calls (for example, general complaints about crime in and around the school).

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The consistent response to calls and community complaints by specialized teams has several advantages for community policing. Team members gain insight into conditions that contribute to crimes and problems, and they can identify community members who want to become part of the solution. By working together with patrol officers assigned to the area, a more focused, collaborative response can be developed.

### ***Volunteers***

Volunteers can offer specialized skills and knowledge to police departments. Many departments appreciate volunteers' service in programs like Neighborhood Watch, and they may have volunteers to handle clerical tasks like filing. But some departments use volunteers in other important roles, including call response. One example is the Chaplains Corps in Knoxville, Tennessee (see sidebar). Another example is the San Diego Police Department's volunteer programs,<sup>22</sup> which make a major contribution with respect to freeing up officer time for community policing. To give just a few examples, SDPD volunteers are involved in fingerprinting and in lifting selected latent prints, responding to emergencies with officers and assisting victims, taking cold crime reports, and working with officers on various problem-solving projects.

The more ingenuity and time a department puts into finding responsibilities for volunteers, and the more training the department can provide, the more helpful those volunteers will be. Clearly, sharing responsibility with citizen volunteers can be an important step toward meeting community policing goals for partnerships and problem-solving.

<sup>22</sup> SDPD volunteer programs include the Reserve Police Officer Program, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Volunteers in Policing, Crisis Intervention Unit, and Emergency Management Volunteers.

### **Chaplains Corps in Knoxville**

The Knoxville, Tennessee, Police Department makes excellent use of some residents' specialized skills. Volunteers in Police Services (VIPS) program volunteers do a range of work in the department and community. Since 1994, VIPS has also included a Chaplains Corps. Currently, 40 chaplains, representing every major religion, share on-call duties to assist with death notification, crisis intervention, and stress management. Members of the corps save patrol time, while also assuming some of the more stressful responsibilities required of police.



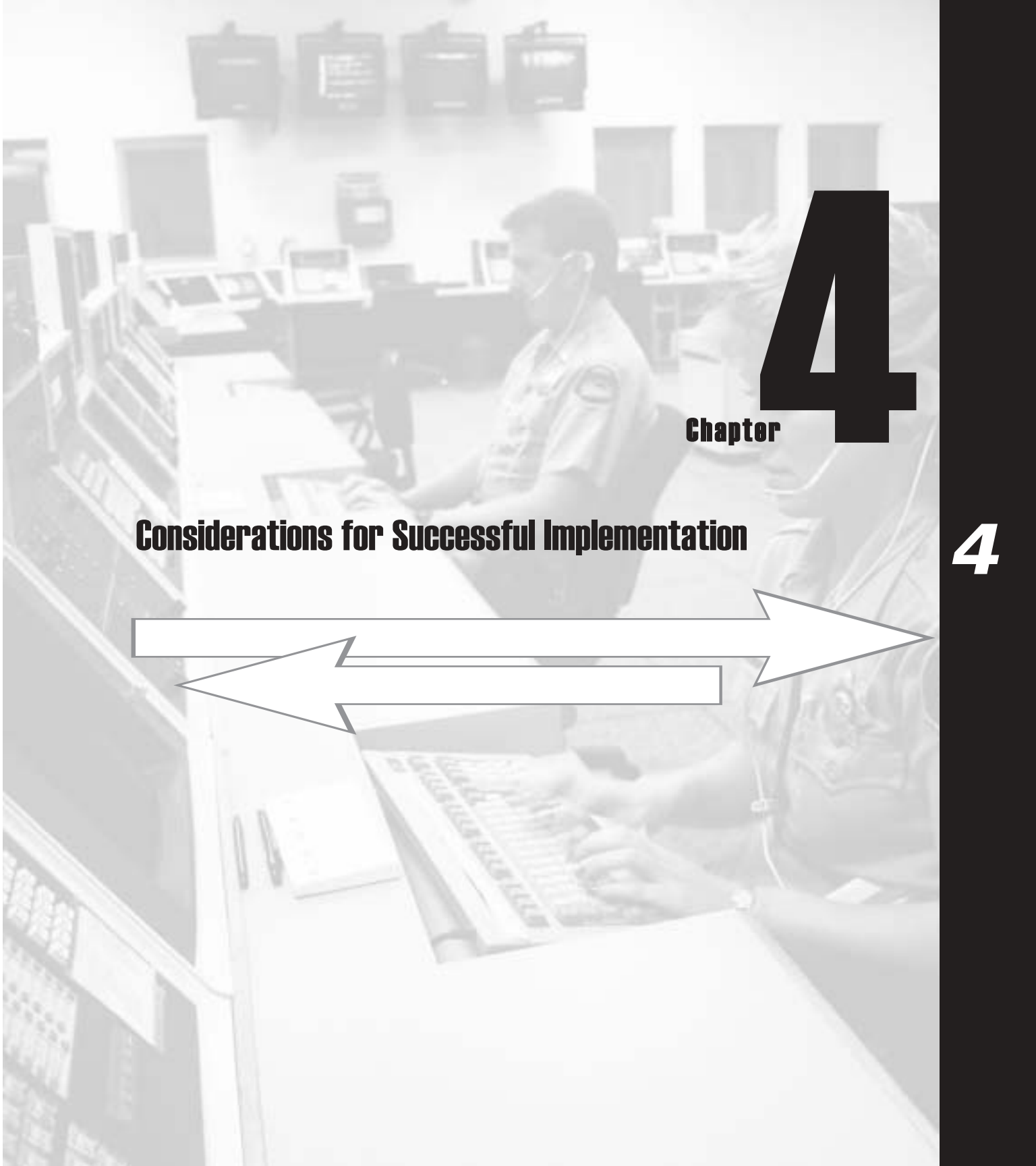
### **Managing Call Response from the Field**

Traditionally, calls for police service are received in and dispatched from a communications center. Phone operators, call takers, and dispatchers decide whether calls require officers to respond or whether they can be handled in some other way (referral to another agency, TRU, etc.). Where dispatching an officer is the indicated response, this is done according to unit availability and location.

Some agencies have increased the responsibility of the field supervisors in call management. Instead of communications having complete responsibility for the call, dispatchers inform field sergeants of calls pending, empowering them to "own the calls." They can review calls and have authority to upgrade, downgrade, or cancel the calls. The sergeant may also contact callers directly, or have an officer make the contact, to gather information and prioritize the calls. Once familiar with the situation, the officer or sergeant can inform the caller of viable options. For example, the caller might be told that dispatching a patrol officer to a residence for vandalism may take six hours, whereas the report can be filed immediately by phone or at a storefront.

The major benefits of having field supervisors manage calls are that they are held more accountable for, and become more knowledgeable about, activity and problems in their geographic area. By being more aware of calls their area, they are better informed when they make decisions about problems and lead their officers' efforts. Currently, patrol sergeants in Reno, Nevada, are managing calls, but must access station computers to view calls from the CAD system. In the near future, supervisors will be able to manage calls with mobile data computers in their vehicles.

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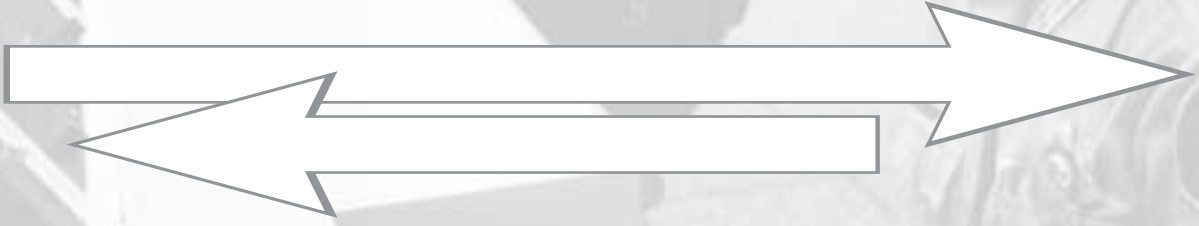


# 4

**Chapter**

## **Considerations for Successful Implementation**

**4**







## Considerations for Successful Implementation

Chapter

# 4

Community policing has not always been the driving force behind adoption of particular call management strategies. Other priorities, such as the need for more efficient allocation of patrol resources, may have been the impetus. For example, even before contemplating community policing, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, like many law enforcement agencies, created a TRU to reduce the workload for patrol officers. Once community policing became a priority, the department recognized that available patrol time created by the TRU allowed officers to pursue a variety of problem-solving and community policing activities.

This chapter addresses the following key areas, which police departments must consider to help ensure successful implementation of new call management strategies:

- | Planning and evaluation
- | Policy and procedure changes, especially policies related to
  - Call classifications and priorities
  - Resource allocation and staffing
  - Acquiring technology and other resources
  - Public information and training
- | Department-wide buy-in and community participation
- | Challenges to implementation.



Some of the topics discussed—for example, planning and evaluation, training, and staffing—apply to almost any new strategy, and most considerations are important whether the department's community policing activities are extensive or more limited. However, the focus of the discussions is on introducing new call management strategies toward achieving organizational goals for enhanced community policing and problem-solving.

### **Planning and Evaluation**

Efficient and effective call management requires a systematic approach and a team effort. Several important planning steps need to be taken before figuring out how a strategy will operate technically or who will do what. First, from patrol officers through chief executive, there must be a shared vision. A vision is broader and more idealistic than a goal, but it can and should be spoken and written down. For example, the goal might be to operate a TRU, but the vision might be "a city where citizens are safer because all calls to police are handled efficiently" or "a proactive police department where the communications workload is under control and officers have time to solve persistent crime problems."

Advice for developing a shared vision can be found in almost any book on strategic planning, but it is not always taken seriously. When it comes to linking call management and community policing, though, it should be. If call takers and dispatchers were not directly involved in planning for community policing, they may not understand what field operations wants to accomplish in the blocks of time available between calls. Similarly, officers may not be aware of various technical or cost issues involved in call management. Citizens may not know how much time communications staff spend on non-police matters called in

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to 9-1-1 and how this can affect their safety. To succeed, the new strategy will require concerted efforts, a willingness to perform new duties, and unselfish participation. A shared vision will help achieve the department-wide buy-in and community support that is vital for successfully implementing any new call management strategy.

It is also important to think about evaluating a new strategy during the planning stage, before the strategy is up and running. Evaluation does not have to be complicated or intimidating, but it does raise this question: How will you know that your goals and objectives have been accomplished? Before community policing, the answer might have been, "when the average response time to priority 3 calls is 30 minutes," or "when officers have an average of one hour a day of available time." You would know this had been accomplished by analyzing call data on dispatch, arrival, and completion times, and you would plan to collect that data.

These may still be important objectives. But in linking the new strategy to community policing, departments also need to address additional questions. For example: What community-based tasks are officers are now pursuing with this new available time? How satisfied are citizens with the new strategy? How will you know? The "how will you know" question has important implications for the *planning* stage. Would it help to create new call classifications for "self-initiated activities" (for example, "community meeting," and "problem-solving project")? Will you want to add new questions to the next citizen survey (for example, "Have you ever tried the TRU option?" "How satisfied were you with the response?").

*"We have implemented a new schedule and department reorganization that reduced the number of supervisors, established teams, and provided a daily block of time (with overlap) to allow officers time for self-initiated problem-solving. Doing an assessment of that change right now; do not know if we have criteria set that will tell us if we are successful."*

Survey Respondent



### **Incident Management Units, Merseyside, England**

The Merseyside Constabulary, in England, created Incident Management Units (IMU) as a key component in its shift to problem-solving policing. They recognized that a change in call management strategies was vital in order to implement POP department-wide. The primary purposes of IMUs are:

- | Filter incoming messages
- | Track non-urgent calls
- | Support the more effective deployment of resources
- | Facilitate the early identification of problems, especially repeat incidents.

All messages, calls to the police, correspondence, complaints, items raised by the community, and essentially anything requiring a police response, will be graded and directed through the IMU. Non-emergency calls received on the emergency line get logged and forwarded to IMU. Channeling all calls and correspondence through one location ensures that accurate scanning can take place and patterns of incidents can be identified and analyzed.

Chapter 5 on "Using the Data" offers more information on how data analysis can help measure the success of call management strategies. The main point here is to avoid being caught short, without the data that can demonstrate success and also point to areas that need improvement.

### **Policy and Procedure Changes**

In addition to creating new policies directly related to the new call management strategy, departments may need to change other policies that are affected by it. For instance, if a TRU is implemented, patrol officers will no longer be handling certain call types in the field (a major policy change). The department will also need a new procedure to ensure that officers learn about crimes that the TRU processed. Patrol officers need this crime information because they are no longer personally involved with taking certain types of crime reports. One department's policy, for example, states that after a report is taken by telephone, the TRU will send a message "to the police district and detective division where the incident occurred. This keeps the police district and detective division informed as to crime patterns that may develop. It also gives patrol units information that may be beneficial in the prevention of crime."

With new call management strategies, the more common policy and procedure changes are related to call types and priority classifications, resource allocation, and the acquisition of technology. Finally, all stakeholders, including department and community members, should be informed of policy and procedure changes and trained to handle any tasks that have changed.



## Call Types: Classifications and Priorities

Because most calls for police service are not emergencies, how a call type is classified and prioritized is critical to call management. Regardless of whether the call comes through 9-1-1, a seven-digit line, 3-1-1, or as a walk in, calls should be classified by subject matter and type of response needed (see page 48 sidebar, "Incident Management Units, Merseyside").

Call subject matter is defined by the caller's descriptions and aided by question-and-answer protocols from call takers. For example, if critical information is not volunteered by the caller, such as presence of weapons, extent of injuries to persons, etc., call takers are prompted by protocols to ask for such information.

Call classification schemes reviewed for this guidebook ranged from 20 different classifications in some agencies to 60 different classifications in others. By nature, many call classifications are broad because, at this early stage before officers or others have assessed the scenes, agencies have limited verifiable information. For example, classifications such as "suspicious persons" and "loud noise" are common. In departments with larger classification schemes, the call types are broken down more specifically. For example, vandalism may be broken down into graffiti and destruction of property. Distinctions like these can aid in problem-solving.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> For background on the value of better call classification schemes for developing police responses to problems, see H. Goldstein, *Problem Oriented Policing*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990; and J. Eck and W. Spelman, *problem-solving: Problem Oriented Policing in Newport News*, Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum, 1987.



Priorities are then assigned to calls for service based on the department's judgment about the emergency nature of the call (e.g., harm to a person imminent; crime in progress), response time, need for back up, and other local factors, if any. While call priority schemes vary across the country, many have four or five levels, as shown in the abbreviated illustration that follows.

<b>Priority</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Numbers of Units</b>
1	Emergency	Immediate; lights and siren; exceed speed limit	2
2	Immediate	Immediate; lights and siren; maintain speed limit	2 if requested
3	Routine	Routine	1
4	Delayed	Delay up to one hour; routine	1
5	TRU	Delay up to two hours	TRU

It is also common for departments to have nine or ten levels, with some of the priority numbers reserved for self-initiated activities.

In a police organization committed to community policing, the community should play a role in setting and reviewing police call priorities and response policies. The community has a vested interest in how quickly officers are dispatched, the extent to which police expedite through neighborhoods, the extent to which multiple units are dispatched or stay at the scene, whether calls are handled by alternative means, and related issues.



In some departments, field sergeants have authority to assign and adjust call priorities as they deem necessary. Call classifications and priorities are sometimes changed after further information is obtained regarding the status of the caller and incident.

### Resource Allocation

Call and incident report information is vital for resource allocation. Agencies have traditionally used call data, such as location, number of units responding, response times, length of time on scene, etc. to allocate patrol resources. When applying call management techniques in a community policing environment, departments should examine additional factors. The national survey asked departments to indicate whether they used or planned to use several measures for resource allocation. The results revealed that only one resource allocation measure, evaluating self-initiated activities, is currently being done by a majority of police departments. In fact, as the following table indicates, many agencies are not even planning to review out of area dispatches or analyze either TRU or call stacking data. More information on call management strategies and resource allocation is provided in the next chapter on "Using the Data" (Chapter 5).

**Percent of Departments Using Resource Allocation Measures**

Measures	Currently doing	Plan to do	No plan to do
Evaluating self-initiated activities	58%	27%	15%
Analyzing time spent at a location or on problem	46%	34%	20%
Analyzing TRU activity	27%	21%	52%
Reviewing out of area dispatches in regard to beat responsibility	24%	23%	53%
Performing call stacking analysis	19%	28%	53%



## Staffing

Departments also need to examine the expertise, training, and job responsibilities of the persons assigned to the various response strategies. It is important to assign staff to positions in which they feel invested and that are compatible with their skills. For example, some agencies staff TRU with sworn officers on temporary limited duty. Although TRU may not be their first choice of assignment, these officers have the skill to take reports over the phone. In addition, officers on limited duty often appreciate the opportunity the TRU provides to stay in direct contact with citizens and crime situations. But if they do not really enjoy the assignment, they may display a lack of enthusiasm that can be detected by callers.

As noted in Chapter 1, evaluations of differential police response (DPR) consistently found that citizen satisfaction was dependent on the courtesy of the call taker, including the call taker's willingness to explain the reason for the alternative response and how long it would take. As innovative call management strategies are implemented, the new policies, procedures, and job descriptions should clearly state the department's expectations for courtesy in dealing with the public.

Agencies also need to examine resources to ensure that the number and type of staff are adequate. In addition to personnel directly responsible for implementing the strategy, support staff or other resources may be necessary. For example, the Reno, Nevada, Police Department wanted visitors to its storefront facilities to include people whose first language was not English. The department contracts with a service that storefront CSOs (and other department members) can call any day or time for translations into 21 different languages. Paying close attention to who will

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benefit from the strategy and how it will actually be applied helps develop an accurate staffing plan and adequate budget (for equipment and facilities as well as staff resources). If possible, a new strategy should be field tested before full implementation begins.

It is also important to recognize that part of a strategy's utility depends on its hours of operation. For example, the department might expect people to visit a storefront after their own workday ends. As a result, it may want to keep the storefront open into the evening or even 24 hours a day, which will require staffing two or three shifts.<sup>24</sup> The department will need to determine how many people should work each shift, and then regularly analyze data on the volume of the facility, modifying the staffing plan if necessary.

Another consideration is the emphasis that community policing places on geographic responsibility—assigning the same personnel to the same service area or beat for extended periods to get to know the community. For a storefront to be most effective in community policing, staff need to be familiar with the neighborhood, people, and problems. This is true regardless of whether CSOs, officers, or volunteers staff the storefront.

An Internet reporting system requires different types of staffing considerations. In addition, the numbers and types of staff will depend on the way it is implemented. In some systems, messages are sent via email, and someone must be assigned responsibility for reading and answering the messages or forwarding the information to appropriate department members. Someone else may be needed to enter the information into a computer application for storage, reference, or analysis purposes.<sup>25</sup> Other Internet reporting

<sup>24</sup> Some cities house the police storefront at the fire station, so that it can be open 24 hours per day for emergencies without necessitating the police department staffing it at all times.

<sup>25</sup> A mail-in reporting system also requires staff to receive, process, and input reports and information.



### Information Technology Acquisition

Major information technology acquisitions require a thorough, detailed process that includes a needs assessment, precise descriptions of technical and user requirements, requests for proposals, and a systematic way to evaluate available products. The whole process needs to be coordinated with the agency's overall technology plan.

For an in-depth discussion of information technology acquisition for law enforcement, see ILJ's *RFP Guidebook* and case studies of IT acquisitions by policing agencies (available at [www.ilj.org](http://www.ilj.org)).

systems allow for information to be entered into a pre-set form that transfers the information into a departmental database. If the information transfers to a database, staff or a contractor will need to create and manage the database. In both cases, the department needs to identify someone in charge of trouble-shooting technological problems.

### Acquiring Technology and Other Resources

Implementing new call management strategies often includes acquiring new technology. This can be one of the most challenging and costly aspects of call management changes. The acquisition of other resources, such as an office or a building for a storefront, can also be a significant cost item.

Technological innovations for call management may include a new CAD (that includes call stacking applications), Internet access (for online reporting), laptops in patrol vehicles (for field reports), or a new phone system with automated, menu-driven answering and routing. Various technologies can be applied to accomplish different community policing goals. For example:

- | Online reporting to improve the community's accessibility to the police
- | Telephone reporting to free up officer time for problem-solving, and
- | Laptops to allow officers to spend more time in the field and remain visible to the community.

Regardless of the strategy, new information technology (IT) acquisitions should fit with the department's overall IT plans, needs, and capabilities (see sidebar, "IT Acquisition").

As an alternative form of TRU, outsourcing for telephone



reporting services is an option that departments may want to consider (see sidebar, "Contracting Out for a TRU in Reno.")

There are several things to consider when outsourcing the telephone reporting process.

- | Vendor must be reliable and be able to produce timely, quality reports.
- | Departments should conduct background checks on vendors.
- | Vendor's reports should be customized to meet the department's needs.
- | Data from the vendor's reports should transfer effectively into the agency's computer system for management analysis.
- | Department must develop safeguards to ensure the confidentiality and security of the information.
- | Department should conduct quality control monitoring, including reviewing sample audio tapes.

### Information and Training

It is important to gain support for innovative call management strategies by providing information, education, and training. These efforts must be directed internally to all department members and externally, to encourage appropriate application of the strategy. Internally, police can send out department announcements and handouts, develop roll call briefing videos, and take advantage of in-service training. In addition to patrol and communications personnel, crime analysts, investigators, and others should also be informed of policy changes, with particular emphasis on how the new strategy affects their own work.

### Contracting Out for a TRU in Reno

The Reno, Nevada, Police Department outsourced the operation of its telephone reporting unit. A private vendor handles many types of non-emergency calls.

An evaluation of this service found that the cost of report taking was reduced dramatically, and a customer satisfaction survey showed positive results.

*"We tried a deferred call response; however, we did not properly prepare our residents and there was a great deal of misunderstanding and political fallout; within six weeks we had to abandon the program. We continue to look at reviving it with a better sales job to the community and politicians."*

Survey Respondent



An agency's implementation plan for a new call strategy should also include marketing the strategy to the community. The same marketing approach may not work in all communities. Departments must become more sophisticated in marketing new call management plans to increase community awareness and obtain acceptance and support, especially in underserved or minority communities. For example, if a department plans to open a storefront in an Hispanic neighborhood, flyers, posters, and website information must be written in Spanish to reach the widest audience.

Some types of media may be called upon more frequently than others by particular populations. Older residents tend to subscribe to and read newspapers; younger residents get most of their news from TV; and middle to upper income residents more often have access to the Internet. In short, the department needs to tailor its marketing approach and message according to specific demographic groups to have the most impact.

In addition to informing the public, the department needs to educate residents by explaining the goals and reasons for the new call management strategies. This involves explaining to citizens the advantages of new call procedures and advising them of any changes they may experience. For example, to educate the public about new 3-1-1 procedures, examples may be provided of the types of crimes, situations, or concerns for which 3-1-1 should be dialed, along with reminders to call 9-1-1 for emergencies. Public education messages should also explain that the new 3-1-1 service or TRU could unburden 9-1-1 so that police have more resources to handle true emergencies. Public

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education campaigns can reduce dissatisfaction among callers by letting citizens know that a delay in response does not mean their call is not important.

Public education does not need to be restricted to formal means. Informally, officers, call takers, CSOs, and other department members can disseminate information to the community. For example, when an officer responds to a residence on a delayed (minor) call, she can explain to the citizens that they could have received faster service by calling TRU. Department representatives should also attend community meetings and distribute information to community leaders, who can, in turn, inform other residents and groups.

Departments need to address training on two levels when implementing a call management strategy specifically in support of community policing. First, the department must train those personnel assigned to work with the strategy on how to implement it, the proper channels of communication, and the particular goals associated with the strategy. Second, community policing also requires training in problem-solving, and this training should not be limited to officers who solve problems in the field. A wider array of personnel (e.g., dispatchers) can become valuable channels of information to patrol, if trained in this area.

*"With a positive approach from call takers, many citizens are very satisfied with TRU (telephone report) or a mail in. Positive approach meaning "We can handle that call for you by . . ." instead of "We don't send a police officer . . ."*

Survey Respondent



### **Getting Buy-In**

One of the keys to implementing change in any organization is to get buy-in and commitment from all of the groups and people who will be affected by the outcome. Most police departments would not mandate a major change in officer uniforms without the support and buy-in of officers. Likewise, new call management strategies and information technology changes should not be implemented without support and commitment from the people most affected. When implementing a call management strategy, the major stakeholders are usually management, communications personnel, patrol officers, and the community. Other members of the department, such as analysts, investigators, and data systems staff, may also be affected depending on the strategy.

Work on the goal of obtaining buy-in and commitment should begin in the initial idea and planning stages. Once some people are on board, it is always easier to get more. People want to know how their jobs will be affected. Will they have to learn new skills? Change their work hours? Create new products? Interact with different people? No one likes to be *told* of major change. By soliciting input early on, people will be more likely to cooperate with, or implement, the change. What should be done depends on the strategy, number of people affected, and size of the department. At a minimum, it is vital to make people aware of the strategy's goals and intended benefits and keep them informed throughout the process. This can be done through department announcements, roll call discussions, staff meetings, or accessing the department's email or website. Input should also be obtained on perceived needs and other

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ideas from a cross representation of all ranks and units within the department, as well as members of the community. Focus groups can be held to involve smaller groups; surveys may be needed to reach a larger population.

### **Challenges to Implementation**

When implementing call management strategies, like any change, police departments will inevitably face some challenges. Many departments throughout the country have already dealt with these issues and should be consulted for lessons learned. The sections that follow focus on concerns in four areas: technology, policies and procedures, community involvement, and citizen and police acceptance. In addition, challenges associated with specific strategies are noted.

#### ***Technology***

Technology challenges involve hardware, software, and databases. Departments must develop comprehensive plans for computer hardware and software acquisition and implementation, and for training developers. While most agencies have some level of CAD, RMS, or other system that collects call data, the challenge is to integrate and coordinate decentralized systems. Disparate systems need to collect data in compatible ways so that data migrations from one system to another can be successful. Data systems also need to identify the source of reports according to intake strategy and the responding unit.

The important overall concept is that no matter how a request comes in, the data need to be captured and analyzed to get an accurate picture of demands for police service. This concept is addressed in greater detail in Chapter 5, "Using the Data."

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### ***Policies and Procedures***

Agency policies and procedures, whether new or modified, must coincide with call management strategy goals. In the planning stages, departments must determine what types of reports will be handled by which strategy, what the response will be and by whom, and details of the process. For example, in Reno, Nevada, the call takers' protocol was changed to allow them to suggest alternate reporting methods to callers for specific call classifications.

### ***Community Involvement***

One of the challenges of community involvement, a key component of community policing, is to get a cross-section of the community involved, so that support is not limited to the neighborhoods that already have a history of working with the police. Often, community members who would derive the most value from certain call management strategies are the least involved in providing input because of language, cultural, or other barriers.

Community needs also have to be balanced with public safety resources. If a neighborhood wants a storefront open 24 hours a day, the department must weigh the perceived need versus available resources and costs. A compromise may be reached to open the storefront 12 hours a day during the times when residents most need the services, and to publicize Internet, TRU, or other reporting options. Keeping the community involved in developing and implementing call strategies may require new outreach efforts, some of which may be time-consuming, but these efforts are important for making the strategies work as planned.

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### ***Citizen and Police Acceptance***

For many departments responding to the national survey, alternatives such as TRU have become an accepted way of providing services. As noted earlier, these departments typically have a policy stating that if a citizen insists on a response by an officer, one will be sent. However, some departments said they were not considering new call management alternatives because they felt citizens would not accept them, their call volume was low enough to permit personal responses by officers to most calls, or they did not want officers to "lose touch" with citizens. Yet even these communities may have to make difficult decisions in the future about managing calls. Many small and rural jurisdictions, as well as larger cities and counties, are facing budget shortfalls combined with demands on the police to work on homeland security efforts. Citizens today may be more willing than in the past to file routine reports by phone or with CSOs, for example, if it helps give police the resources they need for other priorities.

Another challenge relates to the call handling duties of special teams, such as community policing teams. When departments limit community policing team officers' responsibilities for responding to routine calls for service, those officers can devote a great deal of their time to problem-solving and related activities. On the other hand, departments historically have experienced resistance to this approach and have had to combat perceptions of community policing teams as elite squads. This challenge is complex, affects organizational acceptance of community policing generally, and must be resolved by individual departments. The main point here is to fully recognize the potential consequences as well as benefits of call handling and call response strategies with respect to this issue.



### ***Special Challenges for Different Service Options***

There are also several challenges unique to storefronts, Internet and mail-in reporting, TRU, and 3-1-1. These are discussed below.

#### **Storefronts**

Implementing a storefront as a call management strategy involves staffing and funding challenges. Agencies must first be clear on the storefront's purpose: Is it primarily a location for officers in the community to write reports, meet with each other, and take a break; or is it intended as a place where residents can go for police-related services? As noted earlier, the answer has a direct bearing on the storefront's hours of operation, space requirements, and staffing. Storefronts for officers are not consistently staffed, but community storefronts must be customer-service oriented and present staffing challenges. While departments typically staff community storefronts with sworn officers or civilian personnel, some are finding that trained volunteers can also be effective.

Funding for storefront offices may be supplemented by community donations or businesses that donate space and possibly equipment. "Full service" police or multi-agency centers can be costly to implement, both in terms of office and meeting space and the need to connect computers to the department's network.

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### **Internet Reporting**

Internet reporting, the newest and most technologically advanced call management strategy, presents unique challenges. Some of the issues that should be decided for Internet reporting prior to implementation include the following (the last four items apply for mail-in reports as well):

- | What will the user interface look like?
- | Who will receive the reports and in what capacity?
- | Will reports go directly into an existing computer system or does a new one need to be created?
- | How will the information be analyzed and distributed?
- | What are the confidentiality issues?

### **Telephone Report Units**

Like storefronts, TRU present staffing challenges. During the planning stages, analysis of call for service data will be especially important for anticipating the volume and type of calls that might be handled by the TRU. In addition, staffing issues must be resolved, such as the following:

- | What should be the hours of operation and how many staff are needed to handle calls in a timely manner?
- | Who should staff the TRU (sworn officers on limited duty, civilians, or both)? Is it feasible for cadets or volunteers to handle some of the workload?
- | What staff resources are currently available? Is the TRU a budget priority for the department?

Another significant challenge in administering TRU is the call routing technology. Departments must determine

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<sup>26</sup> The COPS Office and individual states have provided funding to local jurisdictions to implement 3-1-1. Several studies and evaluations have been conducted related to these projects.

whether existing 9-1-1/CAD can transfer calls, whether TRU will be centralized (located within or outside of the communications center), or if there will be a separate, direct telephone number for citizens to call.

### **3-1-1 Non-emergency Telephone Number**

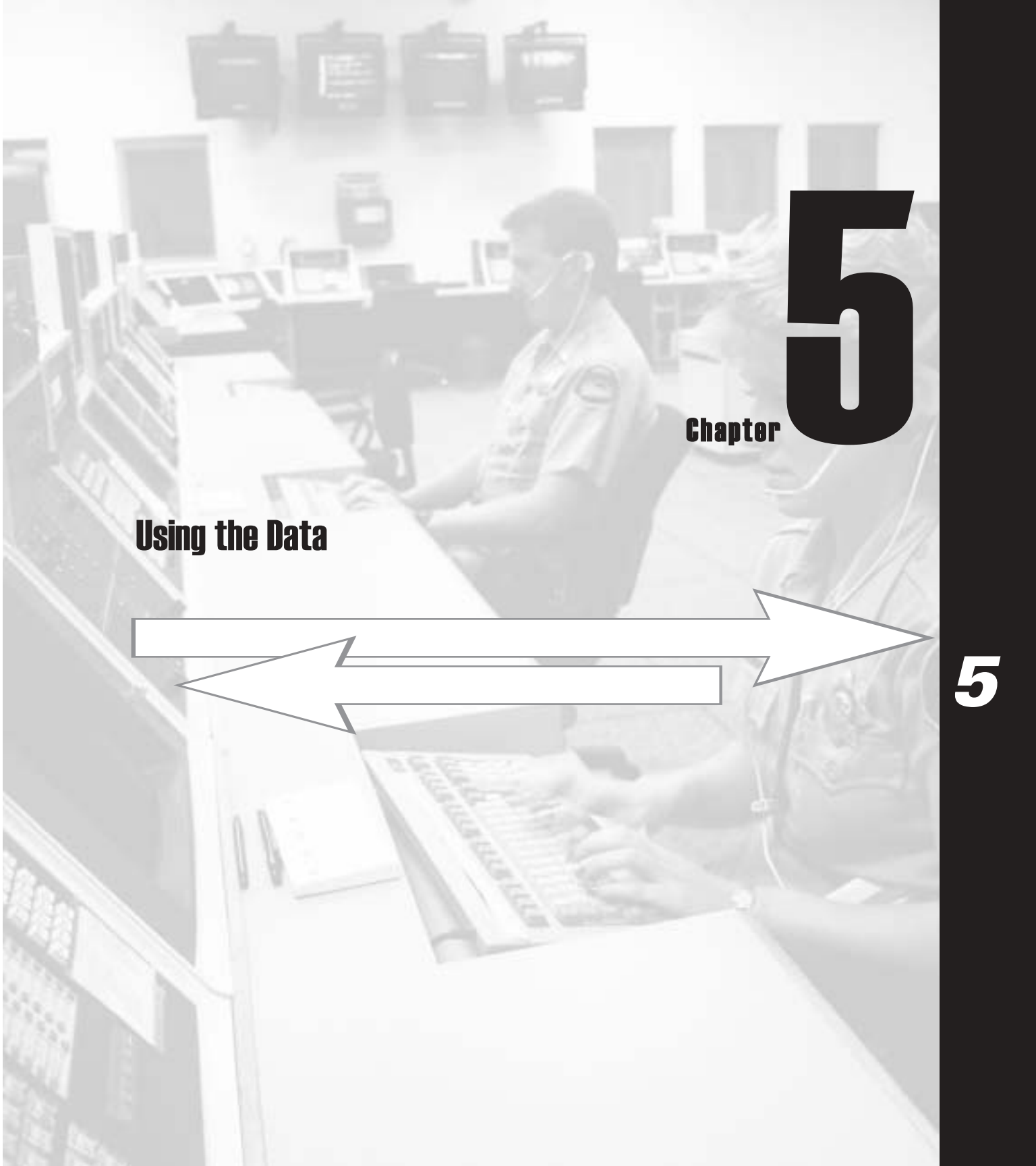
A unique challenge in implementing any type of 3-1-1 system is coordination with multiple local government services.<sup>26</sup> If the system is managed by the police department and promoted as a service for non-emergency police matters, the staffing and technology issues are more easily managed. If a citywide 3-1-1 system is implemented, the additional challenge is political—getting department heads to agree on a system and process. In any case, the below issues must be addressed.

- | Will there be separate call takers who only answer calls coming in on 3-1-1 and 7-digit lines?
- | Will the 3-1-1 call data go into CAD?
- | How will the calls be transferred and tracked?
- | How will citizen satisfaction with the service be measured?

### **Summary**

Police managers need to identify priorities and select the call management strategy that will best accomplish the department's objectives. Appropriate resources must be allocated to make a new strategy work. Without these commitments, there is an increased likelihood that any one challenge will prevent the strategy from being adopted, or from being successful if it does go forward. Although some of the above challenges appear extensive, they can be managed or overcome with enough planning, analysis, and commitment.

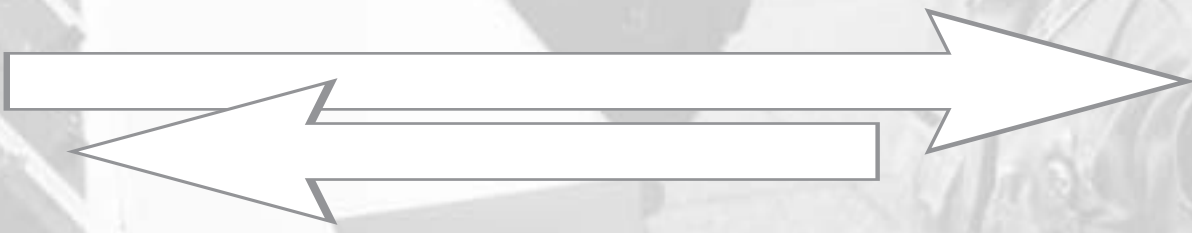
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# 5

**Chapter**

**Using the Data**



**5**





## Using the Data

Information on citizen calls for service is critical to the entire police organization. Analyzing call data can help police agencies increase their understanding of crime, disorder, and quality of life problems; develop and evaluate call responses based on a comprehensive picture of community needs; and allocate resources more efficiently and effectively.

Over the last 20 years, CAD systems have undergone a series of improvements, including expansion to handle multiple unit dispatches, mobile digital terminals in patrol units, citywide emergency communication provisions, and applications linking to police records management systems. Even so, many challenges remain in terms of capturing and analyzing information on *all* requests for service and using that data to enhance the department's call management strategies and community policing efforts. This chapter addresses the following issues:

Chapter

# 5

- | Types of information and the need for additional data to support community policing.
  - | Data analysis concepts related to solving problems and measuring the success of call management strategies.
  - | Officer access to data.
  - | Issues related to problem-solving in the field, including freeing up and managing officer time, resource allocation, and management accountability.
  - | Using data to assess and encourage community involvement.
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### **Using Data to Modify TRU Procedures in Knoxville**

In Knoxville, Tennessee, auto theft reports were generally taken in Teleserve (TRU). Through data analysis, a pattern was identified in one area of the city, revealing that drug addicts were exchanging their cars for drugs and then reporting the cars stolen. Deciding that it was too easy for these people to make false auto theft reports over the telephone, the Knoxville Police Department temporarily altered its auto theft reporting procedures so that officers were dispatched to take reports from that particular area.

### **Types of Information**

Each call management strategy can be designed to capture a variety of beneficial information. Ideally, the data on each call for service—whether it comes in through 9-1-1 or some other means—should transfer directly into an agency's master database. For example, information from 3-1-1 calls should be captured in the CAD system; and TRU reports, as well as report information collected at storefronts, should be included in the department's records management system (RMS).

Regardless of the report source, departments can collect data on location, type of call, date and time received, means of response, responding officer (or civilian), and disposition (i.e., report taken, arrest made, etc.). CAD systems capture these and other data, including time of dispatch, arrival, and completion; and final call type when this is reported by the responding officer. In addition, CAD applications record information about self-initiated activities by patrol officers, including time and type of activity (car stop, suspicious person stop, etc.). CAD captures this information not only for patrol officers, but also for any other personnel in the field—sergeants, detectives, traffic units, canine units, and others.

The reports produced from these data are a good example of how a CAD system can provide support to community policing without any changes to the system itself.

Departments often analyze data on type of call and call location in planning for a new strategy such as a TRU or storefront. But to determine whether a strategy is effective in handling non-emergency calls, and to enhance community policing and problem-solving, several information needs should be addressed.

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***Data on Source of Call and Responder***

As departments implement call management strategies, they will need to know what calls or reports are coming in via which strategy, and they will need an easy way to determine who responded to the call. These data can assist in allocating resources, and they can also aid in evaluating a strategy's effectiveness. For example, if storefronts were implemented to receive walk-in reports from citizens, and the data show that a high percentage of reports were being handled by storefront personnel, the strategy would be successful in accomplishing that objective. Some departments in the national survey could determine who took the call or report on an individual basis from complaint numbers, but most had no way of quickly determining TRU versus field report or patrol officer versus CSO.

***Definitions of Call Types***

Precise definitions of call types can also enhance community policing and problem-solving. Departments need to review call type categories periodically to be sure they accurately reflect current community issues and to help measure policing activities. Some agencies define call classifications too broadly or put too many calls into an "other" category. Breaking these down into sub-categories could produce data that is much more beneficial for problem-solving. For instance, if all noise calls are recorded as "loud noise," it is difficult to distinguish construction noise from loud parties from barking dogs. This is significant because these are different problems that warrant potentially different solution strategies.



*"Our CAD system was put in place long before the community policing activities, etc. were started. Therefore, our next system alterations will incorporate many of these activities."*

*"We have made the technology commitments required. We have mobile computers, a new CAD system, and will have a records management system on line this year. It seems our next step would be a culture change for policing to be a success."*

Survey Respondents

**Final Call Type.** A related issue is the need for data on "final call type." The national survey showed that the vast majority of departments (88 percent) analyze call for service data by type of call as recorded at dispatch, but only 64 percent capture the final call type based on officer assessment. Relying only on the initial assessment can give a misleading picture of the types of incidents officers are actually responding to.

**Self-Initiated Activities.** Police departments also need to review the classifications they have for self-initiated activities. A good way of capturing and measuring patrol time spent on community policing is to have officers call in special codes for dispatchers to enter into CAD. These can include codes such as "problem-solving project" or "community meeting." The exact codes will depend on a department's particular community policing objectives and the types of activities associated with them. For example, one department responding to the survey developed codes for "citizen assist," "foot patrol," "community policing meeting," and "community policing, schools." Another department had codes for "eye on the elderly program," "foot patrol," and "problem-solving project." Codes for community policing activities in other departments included "bicycle patrol," "gathering information," "abandoned building check," "community contact," and others.

### ***Integrated Information Management Systems***

Technology today offers many new possibilities for collecting and managing police-related information. From simple databases through complex, interactive applications, departments are gathering more information than ever before. Some agencies, however, have a variety of independent computer systems, with no means of linking data between systems. When this is the case, a solution

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should be implemented to combine the data into a single database or establish connectivity between systems. The advantage of this latter approach is that it allows the systems to remain intact while providing the means to merge data.

<sup>27</sup> For a COPS Guidebook on problem analysis, see Timothy S. Bynum, *Using Analysis for Problem-Solving: A Guidebook for Law Enforcement*. U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2001.

## Analysis

Strategic planning for call management begins with data collection, but it relies heavily on analysis to understand the data. Careful data analysis is also critical to effective problem-solving and community policing. National survey results, as reflected below, show that most police agencies do analyze call data. But it is common for action-oriented people, including police, to skip over pieces of the analysis task and move quickly from identifying a crime pattern or problem to trying to resolve it.<sup>27</sup>

**Percent of Departments Using Call Data for Analysis**

Measures	Currently doing	Plan to do	No plan to do
Identifying top problem locations	92	7	1
Reporting/analyzing frequency of call types	84	13	3
Conducting "hot spot" analysis	66	23	12
Identifying repeat callers	65	17	18
Reporting/analyzing calls by problem types	71	16	13
Reporting/analyzing calls by problem locations	75	17	8



### Using Internet Reports to Identify Problems

Police in Lansing, Michigan, and San Diego, California, both use Internet websites to provide the public a means to report neighborhood problems and request extra patrol. Lansing's "On Your Street" ([www.lansingpolice.com](http://www.lansingpolice.com)) and San Diego's "Citizen Request Form" ([www.sannet.gov/police](http://www.sannet.gov/police)) allow users to report quality of life issues by completing a form online. Similarly, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation's "Tip Sheet" ([www.accesskansas.org/kbi](http://www.accesskansas.org/kbi)) allows the community to report suspicious drug activity anywhere in the state.

### **Crime and Problem Analysis**

Analysis sheds light on the *who, what, when, where, how,* and *why* factors of the crimes or problems being studied. To be comprehensive, agencies will want to analyze many different characteristics of crime and problems, and they will need many different data sources. For example, in addition to analyzing call data specifically related to drugs, it is important to consider the factors and circumstances that support a local drug market. Call for service data on graffiti, vandalism, or broken street lights in the area could provide a more complete picture. Housing department data on absentee landlords and abandoned buildings might also be needed. In addition, it is important to obtain an historical perspective by reaching back and analyzing comparative data: What was the neighborhood like five years ago? Agencies can also obtain and analyze information from a variety of sources within the department—crime analysts, patrol officers, investigators, communications personnel—as well as other organizations and community members.

Analysis includes arranging data in easily understood formats, but it also involves offering interpretations and perspectives that will aid decisionmaking. While the "gut feelings" of experienced officers are important, agencies need to show that their analysis has been thorough to gain support for changes in policy and practice.

Developing comprehensive and coordinated databases helps provide rich information for problem-solving. Departments must ensure that call information from all sources enters the databases. Most agencies collect adequate information when incident information is captured on report forms. However, in the majority of calls for service, officers do not prepare reports; they just provide disposition codes to dispatchers. Where reports are not prepared, agencies must ensure that



CAD information (and information from other sources) is also available on these activities; it will be important for identifying and tracking problems. In addition, some agencies encourage citizens to access the Internet to report quality of life issues that may not be crimes (see sidebar, "Using Internet Reports to Identify Problems").

### ***Measuring the Success of Call Management Strategies***

Police agencies should also call upon several data sources and techniques to analyze issues that are important for effective and efficient call management. For example, data collection and analysis can help determine why the community was not taking advantage of various police services like storefronts or online reporting. Data on numbers and types of reports taken measure the level of service, but these numbers do not answer the "why" question. The storefront's hours of operation may be a factor, the online reporting form may be too complicated, or the service alternative may not have been well publicized. The department may need to conduct follow-up techniques such as surveys or focus groups to find out. These types of assessments can indicate whether the strategy can be modified, or whether a different response should be implemented. The assessment might also suggest a need to re-analyze the problem that the strategy was intended to address. Whatever the issue, responses or changes in strategy should be informed by data-based on the results of the analysis.

### **Reporting "Petrol Drive-Offs" in Beenleigh, Australia**

The importance of efficient resource allocation and the use of an alternative response is highlighted in the Beenleigh, Australia, Calls for Service Project. The problem for the police department was frequent petrol drive-offs (people filling auto gas tanks and leaving without paying). The department calculated an expenditure of \$53 per police response. The average loss per gasoline station owner was \$25 for the tank of gas. The loss did not outweigh the cost of the police response.

The new strategy implemented was to have gas attendants immediately fax incident and offender details when the thefts occurred. The benefit was two-fold—the department saved money and the immediate provision of the offender description increased the likelihood of apprehension.



### **False Alarm Calls in Salt Lake City**

The Salt Lake City, Utah, Police Department (SLCPD) solved a costly 20-year old problem using call management strategies in its problem-solving efforts. SLCPD identified that 99 percent of alarm calls, representing 12 percent of dispatched calls, were false alarms. Each call consumed up to 40 minutes of patrol time. The city passed a *verified alarm response* ordinance and the SLCPD conducted training for private security. Private security now performs the critical duty of initial verification into the alarm. Benefits of the new strategy included:

- | Alarm call response by SLCPD reduced by 90 percent
- | Workload reduced in communications, alarm unit, city treasury, and courts
- | Backlog of calls reduced
- | More than 9,000 officer hours (in one year) redirected to other calls and activities.

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### **Officer Access to Data**

If officers are expected to identify, analyze, and track problems, they must be given access to the department's data on calls and problems. In some agencies, depending on size, crime analysts may be available to provide data and analysis for officers. In others, officers need to learn to access department data and conduct some rudimentary analysis themselves. In both situations, the starting point involves both centralizing the information and making it accessible.

As discussed earlier, if call and other data are maintained in a variety of decentralized databases, analysts, but especially officers, will often lack information that may be pertinent. For example, some agencies collect very little information on abandoned vehicle calls; most are handled by phone and sometimes by contractors (tow companies). However, detailed information on the history of the vehicle may be needed by an officer working a problem-solving project related to stolen cars.

### **Problem-Solving in the Field**

Effective call management strategies streamline handling, processing, and responses to calls for service. The innovative application of call management strategies can allow patrol officers to have more time in the field to engage in community policing and problem-solving. Departments need to help officers manage this time. In addition, community policing's focus on geographic deployment involves an increased emphasis on holding managers accountable for solving problems in their service areas.



All departments interviewed for this guidebook felt that the agency's call management strategies, whether telephone reporting or field CSOs, freed up patrol officer time. There were differences among those departments in terms of how much available time was generated and what officers were doing with it. The challenge is that most available (freed up) patrol time comes in unplanned blocks—15 minutes during the shift's first two hours; 22 minutes in the next two hours; etc. Without management's help, it is difficult for patrol officers to accomplish much problem-solving with such intermittent available time.

The more proactive officers are able to take advantage of time between calls to work on some types of community policing and projects, such as establishing or maintaining community contacts, doing specific directed patrol, and interacting with crime analysts. Agencies that encourage problem-solving may have alternative responders and other call management strategies to provide patrol officers blocks of uninterrupted time in the field, during which they are not responsible for answering radio calls and can work on projects. A remaining challenge for police management in many agencies is to determine more precisely the portion of that time that is actually being devoted to problem-solving and other community policing activities.

### ***Resource Allocation***

Police agencies benefit by analyzing call management data for resource allocation decisions. Resource allocation, particularly in patrol, has become much more "scientific" in recent years. In large agencies, small shifts in patrol resources can equate to thousands of dollars. Effectively



<sup>28</sup> The Compstat approach originated in New York City and has been adapted and modified in other departments. It includes management accountability meetings where data (crime reports, arrests, calls for service, etc.) is presented and discussed.

and efficiently matching resources to crime and problem workload requires accurate analysis of call management data. No national standards exist on determining police staffing. Analyzing workload provides the most accurate resource allocation decisions, and the most accurate picture of patrol workload comes from call for service data in CAD systems.

As the number of call management strategies increases, resource allocation becomes more challenging. In order to determine effective strategies, departments should examine call data broken down by:

- | Priority and type of call (because of different ways of handling different calls)
- | Source of call (9-1-1, 3-1-1, Internet, storefront, etc.)
- | Geographic location
- | Time of day and day of week
- | Units assigned (include TRU)
- | Types of personnel (basic patrol units, supervisors, volunteers, etc.)
- | Amount of time devoted to calls (including backups)

### ***Management Accountability***

Call data can also be analyzed to assess management and supervisory accountability. Nearly two-thirds of the police departments responding to the national survey analyze call data to assess management accountability—for example by looking at numbers and types of calls in the manager's geographic area of responsibility. A good example of using call and report data for accountability is the success of Compstat in some police agencies.<sup>28</sup> Instead of solely



looking at crime or arrest numbers, analyzing calls for service of a particular type, such as noise complaints, provides a more complete picture of the issues that concern citizens enough to call the police. Comparing the data before and after a police intervention can help determine if measures taken by officers were effective in reducing problems.

In addition, management, supervisors, and officers can be held accountable for the successful implementation of a particular call management strategy. If telephone reporting is supposed to free up time for officers to do problem-solving, call data can show whether this is actually occurring. Call data can also help to identify the success of teams or special units assigned to problems. For example, the combination of vandalism and graffiti complaints, arrests, and tip information to a graffiti hotline can assist in assessing the effectiveness of a special anti-graffiti task force.

### **Interacting with the Community**

Call for service data can also be valuable in conducting victim call-backs and surveys to measure police-community interactions, an integral part of community policing.

Community participation in surveys, focus groups, and beat meetings is important not only for problem-solving projects or volunteer programs, but for implementing successful call management strategies. The community can become involved in call management strategies in several ways.

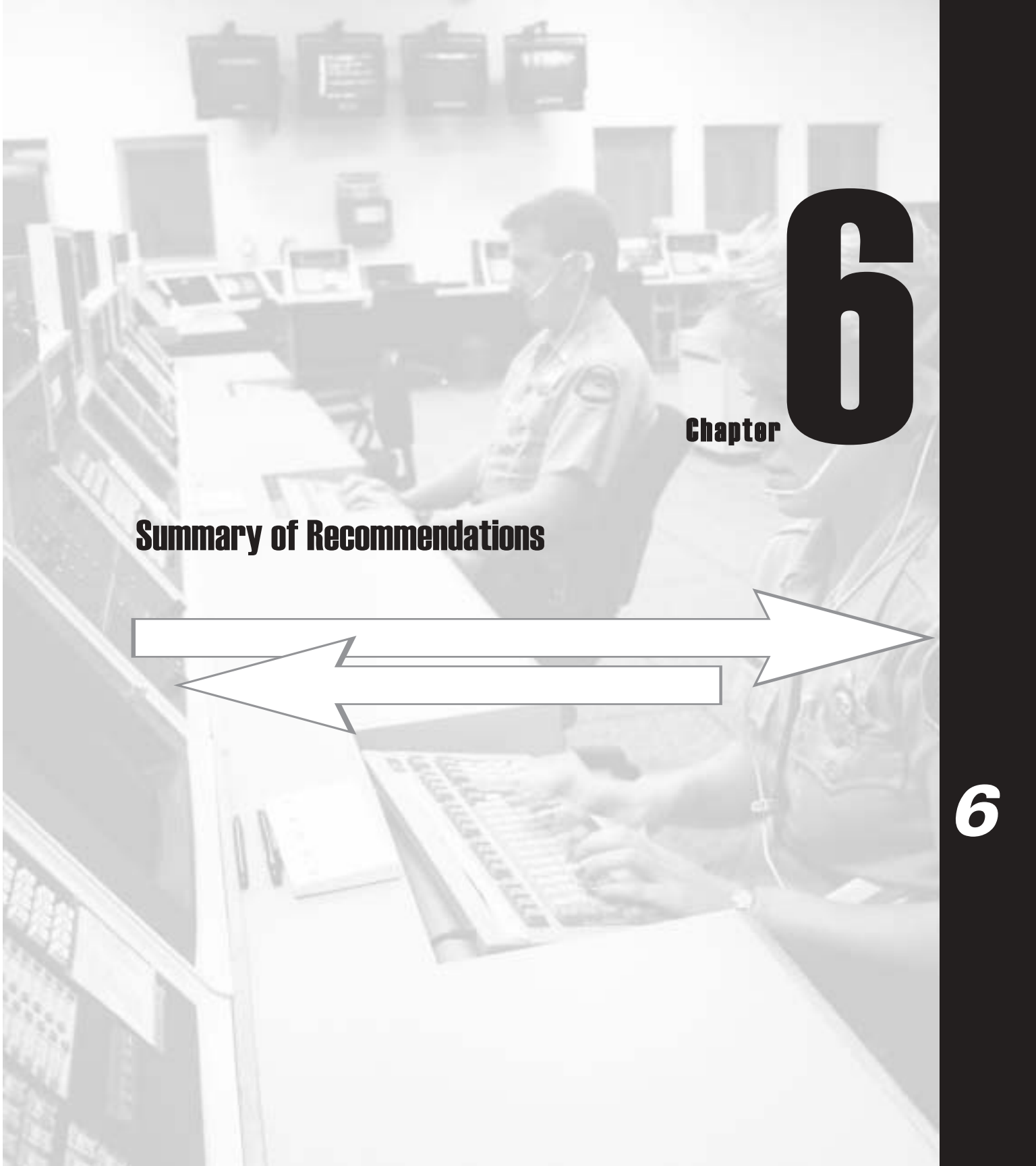
- | The community can indicate a need or desire for a new strategy.
- | The community can be involved in developing the strategy. For example, when prioritizing calls, the community's main concerns may be different from what the department perceives them to be.



- | The community can become part of the strategy, for example, by participating in a problem-solving activity or by serving as a volunteer.
- | The community will be using or be affected by each strategy. If citizens accept and use alternative call management strategies, they are actively contributing to the overall goal of community policing.
- | The community interacts with the police department by providing feedback, both positive and negative.

Community participation in evaluations and surveys needs to be seen as valuable input by the department. Soliciting information about citizens' views and experiences can encourage their involvement in finding solutions to problems. Results from the national survey revealed that police agencies are attempting to measure the pulse of the community through surveys and other data collection and analysis. For example, 57 percent of departments conduct citizen satisfaction surveys, and another 23 percent are planning these surveys. In addition, 38 percent of police agencies analyze various measures of fear of crime, and another 29 percent are planning to collect this information.

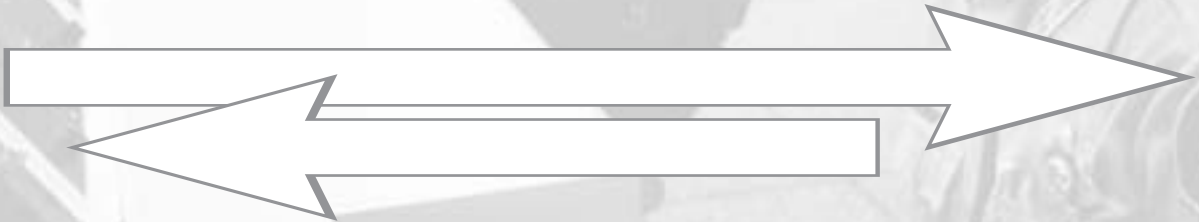
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# 6

**Chapter**

## **Summary of Recommendations**







## Summary of Recommendations

### Chapter

# 6

When police agencies examine call management strategies to support community policing, executives should review the information and challenges in this guidebook and address key issues in the planning stages. This chapter provides a summary of activities that can help agencies systematically move through the process of adding one or more call management strategies to support community policing.

Before beginning step 1 below, agencies should develop and review some key background information. In this preliminary stage, a number of questions need to be addressed.

- | What are the department's philosophy, mission, and goals?
  - | What are the existing call management strategies? Why were they implemented and how well are they working to meet agency goals, especially those associated with community policing?
  - | What new call management strategy or strategies would best serve the department's community policing and problem-solving needs?
  - | Who are the stakeholders for the planned strategies and what are their interests?
  - | What resources are needed to implement the strategy? Will these resources come from the current budget, future budget, grants, donations, other?
-



## **Call Management Steps to Enhance Community Policing**

### ***1. Conduct a Needs Assessment***

The development of a specific call management strategy should be based on an agency's needs rather than employee sentiment or political pressure. The first step is to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, obtaining input from various work groups inside the agency, other local government agencies, and the community. Means of obtaining input include surveys, interviews, focus groups, and community meetings.

The agency also needs to conduct a thorough analysis of call for service data to determine trends and workloads. After personal experience and statistical information are examined, departments will have a more comprehensive and detailed understanding of call management needs and strategies best suited to address them.

### ***2. Create a Representative Planning Team***

Some call management changes can be far reaching and affect the entire police department. In planning such change, organizations should include a representative group of employees, including communications, crime analysis, patrol, and others, to help steer the process. This planning team should also meet periodically with community groups. Involving staff in the change process helps generate a variety of ideas and encourages commitment to the process and outcome.

### ***3. Choose the Most Appropriate Strategy***

Develop call management alternatives, weigh the alternatives, and choose a call management strategy based on the department's strategic goals. These are different from

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tactical goals, which are important for day-to-day policing. Strategic goals are broader agency and local government goals, and the call management strategies selected should have these broader goals in mind. Certain call management strategies are better suited for different jurisdictions because of department philosophy, community characteristics, and available resources. Consider all these factors before launching a new call management strategy.

#### ***4. Budget Adequate Resources***

Budget adequate resources for technology, personnel, marketing, and training so that call management strategies can be implemented effectively. Identify resources inside and outside the agency before beginning implementation.

#### ***5. Recognize the Importance of Training***

Organized training is needed on the new call management policies and procedures and also on problem-solving. Department personnel and the community need to be educated on the strategy's purposes and goals. Departments should take this change opportunity to further develop and refine problem-solving practices. Personnel who represent problem identification and analysis sources, such as communications, TRU, crime analysis, and others, should also receive training in how they can contribute to and support the process.

#### ***6. Market the Strategy***

Extensive marketing of the new call management strategy will have an impact on its acceptance by staff and the public, and in turn, affect its success. Don't just depend on a newspaper article to assume the public knows about the strategy. Make sure information and education about the strategy reaches any particular groups (e.g., those with English as a second language) who are targeted by the

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strategy. Conduct focus groups with different populations the strategy is intended to reach. Learn about people's concerns and understand what messages will attract their attention. Use a variety of advertising media to publicize the changes: flyers, direct mail, web site, newspaper articles, signs, community meetings, and more.

### ***7. Evaluate the Strategy***

Prepare during the planning stage to collect the information that will be needed to evaluate the strategy periodically. Data will be needed to evaluate efficiency (e.g., the number of calls handled per hour by responder before and after implementation) and effectiveness (e.g., citizen satisfaction). Some key questions to address include the following:

- | Is the strategy meeting the intended goals?
  - | Is the strategy meeting the needs of the community?  
If not, why not?
  - | Have there been any unforeseen consequences, positive and negative?
  - | Is there redundancy in the strategies? For example, are the same people who reported incidents by mail just as willing to complete an Internet report? If so, you may be able to eliminate mail-in as a reporting strategy; automated reporting relieves staff from time-consuming data entry.
  - | Are staff taking advantage of the strategy to its fullest extent? If not, is it a training issue, technology issue, personnel resources, etc.?
  - | What is the department doing better because of the strategy?
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***8. Be Willing to Change and Innovate***

Although police departments cannot control change, such as community development and growth, agencies can control organizational responses to change. As changes occur in communities, e.g., annexations, new multi-family housing developments, and new shopping areas, the community's perceptions of its safety and problems change as well.

Community policing calls for flexibility, problem-solving, and participation by community members and a broad cross-section of department members in developing solutions to problems. These principles clearly apply as police agencies and communities work together to create call management strategies that improve public safety.

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## Additional Resources and References

### Resources

- | American Association for the Advancement of Community Oriented Policing. [www.aaacop.org](http://www.aaacop.org)
- | Community Policing Consortium. [www.communitypolicing.org](http://www.communitypolicing.org)
- | United Kingdom Home Office. [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/index.htm](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/index.htm)
- | National Center for Community Policing. [www.cj.msu.edu/~people/cp/](http://www.cj.msu.edu/~people/cp/)
- | National Institute of Justice. [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij)
- | Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice. [www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov)
- | Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) International. [www.apcointl.org](http://www.apcointl.org)
- | National Emergency Number Association (NENA). [www.nena.org](http://www.nena.org)

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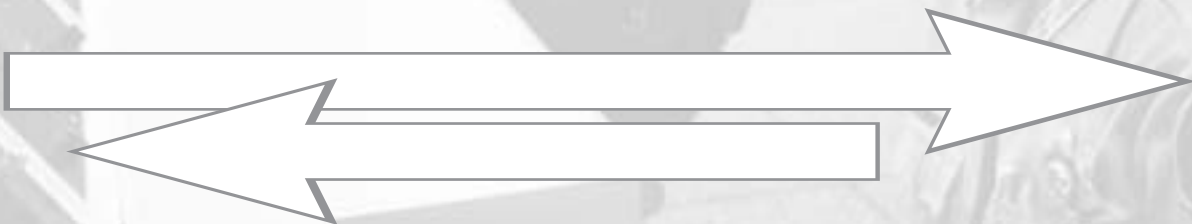
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**Appendix**



**Appendix**





## Appendix

### Introduction

This report provides details on the methodology and results of a national survey of police call management strategies and community policing activities. The survey was conducted as background research for preparing the *Guidebook on Call Management for Community Policing*. The survey and *Guidebook* were completed by the Institute for Law and Justice (ILJ) under a cooperative agreement with the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office), U. S. Department of Justice.

In publishing the *Guidebook*, the COPS Office wanted to show how a range of strategies for managing calls for service could help police agencies (1) free up more officer time for problem-solving and other community policing activities without compromising emergency responses or citizen satisfaction, and (2) make better use of call for service and other data to plan and measure the success of their community policing efforts. When work on the *Guidebook* began, the community policing literature contained discussions of these concepts, as well as some examples of related agency practices. However, very little research had been done on what police departments nationwide were actually doing to manage calls for service, or on the link between call management practices and community policing.



Because this information was lacking, the national survey was an essential starting point for preparing the *Guidebook*. The survey was designed to address such key questions as these:

- ‡ To what extent are police agencies currently using various alternatives to providing immediate, sworn responses to non-emergency calls for service (e.g., call stacking/delayed response, telephone reporting units (TRUs), mail-in and walk-in reporting, 3-1-1 systems, Internet reporting)?
- ‡ To what extent are police agencies using data captured by their computer aided dispatch (CAD) systems and other sources to help plan and measure the success of their problem-solving and other community policing efforts?
- ‡ What types of activities and organizational changes commonly associated with community policing are actually being implemented?
- ‡ How do call management practices and community policing activities vary with the size of jurisdictions?
- ‡ What can be learned about promising and innovative call management practices currently being employed to enhance community policing?

### **Methodology**

The survey sample was drawn from a database that had been used in previous projects, containing contact information for almost all of the police departments in the country (but not sheriff's offices). The sample of 695 included all departments serving jurisdictions with populations of 250,000 or greater and a random sample of departments with jurisdiction populations less than 250,000.

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A 24-item survey questionnaire was developed with input from ILJ staff, COPS Office staff, and reviewers with backgrounds in CAD, differential police response, and community policing and problem-solving. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended items. Because the survey was designed to serve two different projects,<sup>29</sup> questions were asked about departments' computer aided dispatch (CAD) system, as well as their call management strategies and community policing activities.

The survey was mailed to the 695 police departments in May 2000. A second wave was mailed in August 2000 to departments that had not yet responded. By the end of October 2000, 467 surveys (67 percent) had been returned to ILJ and 420 surveys (61 percent of the 695) were available for analysis.<sup>30</sup> In addition to analyzing response frequencies for all survey items, crosstabulations were used to provide insight into how call management strategies and community policing activities vary based on jurisdiction size. Respondents were grouped into the four population categories shown in Exhibit 1.

<sup>29</sup> At the time of the survey, ILJ was conducting a related National Institute of Justice project, "CAD Support for Community Policing," in which surveys needed to be sent to the same police agencies. ILJ staff and the funding agencies agreed that there was enough overlap of purpose to combine the questionnaires.

<sup>30</sup> Although the survey instructions asked departments without CAD systems to complete the community policing items in the questionnaire, 46 surveys were returned blank with the notation that the department did not have a CAD system. These were consequently dropped from the analysis.

**Exhibit 1: Survey Respondents by Population of Jurisdiction**

N = 420

Population of Jurisdiction	Percent of Respondents
Under 25,000	26
25,000 - 50,000	32
50,000 - 250,000	29
250,000 or more	13

Thirteen jurisdictions with populations greater than 1 million completed the survey (3.1 percent of all respondents).



## Findings

The extent to which call management strategies directly support community policing could not be established by analyzing the questionnaire responses. However, departments did provide examples of how call management strategies help them achieve community policing goals. In addition, departments were encouraged to attach information concerning different call type classifications, community policing policies, and call management policies, and approximately half of the respondents did so.

The survey findings presented in this section are divided into two major categories: (1) findings on call management strategies, and (2) findings related to community policing activities.

### *Call Management Strategies*

Departments were asked to identify the percentage of all calls for service handled by each of six categories of responders (patrol officers, community policing team members, uniformed civilians, specialized units (e.g., detectives), volunteers, and others). Exhibit 2 shows that, as might be expected, a large majority of calls (87 percent) are handled by patrol officers.

**Exhibit 2: Percent of Calls Responded to by Type of Responder**

<b>Responder</b>	<b>Percent of Calls</b>
Patrol Officers	87
Special Team/Unit	6
Community Policing Team/Unit	4
Uniformed Civilians	2
Volunteers	1
Other	1



The questionnaire also asked about the use of call stacking/delayed response to handle certain types of calls. Overall, 59 percent of departments reported using these techniques. There were no significant differences in responses for jurisdictions with populations over 25,000; however, jurisdictions with populations less than 25,000 were significantly less likely to use call stacking/delayed response (only 36 percent, compared with two-thirds of jurisdictions with populations of 25,000 or greater).

Similarly, 59 percent of police departments said they transfer certain calls that come in on a police number to other, more appropriate agencies. The likelihood of transferring calls to other agencies increased significantly with the population of the jurisdiction. In jurisdictions with fewer than 25,000 residents, 42 percent of police departments said they transfer calls, compared to 59 percent of departments in jurisdictions of 25,000 to 50,000; 68 percent in jurisdictions of 50,000 to 250,000; and 72 percent in jurisdictions with populations of 250,000 or greater. Transferring calls is most likely a more viable option in larger jurisdictions because they have a greater number of agencies and organizations available to handle these calls.

Departments were also asked to indicate what types of methods they provide for citizens to file police reports, in addition to having an officer or other police representative take a report at the scene or call location. Exhibit 3 shows the percent of departments that employ each of the following reporting methods: walk-ins/storefront reporting, telephone reporting unit (TRU), scheduled appointments with officers, mail-in reporting, and Internet reporting. The result for walk-in/storefront reports is high (95 percent) because the questionnaire did not distinguish between



reports taken at the police station or substations (which most departments accept) and walk-in reporting at storefronts.

**Exhibit 3: Percent of Departments Using Alternative Reporting Methods**

<b>Reporting Method</b>	<b>Percent of Departments</b>
Walk-ins/storefront reporting	95
Telephone Reporting Unit	56
Appointments with Officers	42
Mail-in	23
Internet Reporting	6

For two alternative reporting methods, there were significant differences depending on the size of the jurisdiction (see Exhibit 4). The use of TRUs increased dramatically as the jurisdiction size increased. This is most likely because departments in larger jurisdictions generally have more personnel available to staff a TRU, as well as enough calls for service to justify its use. In contrast, the use of scheduled appointments with officers was much less common in larger jurisdictions, suggesting that officers in larger jurisdictions have less time available for appointments or less control over their daily schedules. The use of mail-in reporting, walk-in reporting, and Internet reporting was not related to jurisdiction size.

**Exhibit 4: Use of TRUs and Scheduled Appointments by Size of Jurisdiction**

<b>Size of Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Percent Using TRUs</b>	<b>Percent Using Appointments</b>
Less than 25,000	29	53
25,000 - 50,000	46	49
50,000 - 250,000	77	34
250,000 or more	93	19



Nearly half of departments (49 percent) indicated that they have discussed implementing one or more of the alternative reporting methods not currently in use in their agency.

Of the responding departments, only ten (three percent), reported that their departments currently use 3-1-1 as a non-emergency number. Half of those departments were in jurisdictions with populations greater than one million, and the other five were in jurisdictions whose populations varied from 16,000 to 230,000.

Thirty-one percent of departments not currently using 3-1-1 for non-emergencies indicated that they have discussed the possibility. There was tremendous variation depending on the size of the jurisdiction, however. Less than 20 percent of departments in jurisdictions smaller than 25,000 or between 25,000 and 50,000 said they had considered 3-1-1. This increased to 43 percent of departments in jurisdictions between 50,000 and 250,000 and 78 percent in jurisdictions larger than 250,000.

### ***Community Policing***

The survey asked two types of questions related to community policing. First, a set of questions asked respondents to indicate whether they are currently doing, plan to do, or have no plans to do various types of data analysis that might aid in measuring community policing efforts. These questions asked about measures related to problem-solving, resource allocation, community involvement and satisfaction, support for special units, and management accountability. Second, respondents were asked about the extent to which their departments are involved in twelve different activities that are typically associated with community policing.

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### ***Problem-Solving Measures***

Call for service and other data can be valuable both for identifying problems and measuring the success of problem-solving efforts. Survey respondents were asked about their use of nine different measures that might support problem-solving. As shown in Exhibit 5, almost 92 percent of departments identify top problem locations, and 84 percent report and analyze the frequency of certain call types (alarm calls, drug complaints, accidents, etc.). Two-thirds of departments identify repeat callers, two-thirds conduct "hot spot" analysis, and more than half capture and use information on premise history (61 percent) and predict emerging problem locations/areas (58 percent). Fifty-one departments (twelve percent) perform all nine types of analysis listed in the questionnaire under problem-solving measures. This twelve percent includes departments of all sizes, with almost half (22 departments) located in jurisdictions of 50,000 to 250,000 population.

**Exhibit 5: Percent of Departments Using Problem-Solving Measures\***

<b>Measures</b>	<b>Currently doing</b>	<b>Plan to do</b>	<b>No plan to do</b>
Identifying top problem locations	92	7	1
Reporting/analyzing frequency of call types	84	13	3
Conducting "hot spot" analysis	66	23	12
Identifying repeat callers	65	17	18
Capturing and using premise history	61	27	12
Predicting emerging problem locations/areas	58	32	10
Assessing problem-solving efforts through change in number of calls	50	29	22
Determining which officers are performing problem-solving efforts	44	30	26
Assessing problem-solving efforts through displacement	32	28	40

\* Totals may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.



Jurisdiction size was related to whether departments are using three of the nine problem-solving measures. Larger departments are more likely to conduct "hot spot" analysis, assess problem-solving efforts through analysis of changes in call volume, and assess problem-solving efforts by analyzing displacement. Exhibit 6 shows the use of problem-solving measures by jurisdiction size.

**Exhibit 6: Percent of Departments Using Problem-Solving Measures  
by Jurisdiction Population**

<b>Measures</b>	<b>250,000 or More</b>	<b>50,000- 250,000</b>	<b>25,000- 50,000</b>	<b>Less than 25,000</b>
Identifying top problem locations	98	90	92	91
Reporting/analyzing frequency of call types	94	90	78	80
*Conducting "hot spot" analysis	82	72	63	55
Identifying repeat callers	69	65	62	68
Capturing and using premise history	69	65	60	54
Predicting emerging problem locations/areas	65	60	56	55
*Assessing problem-solving efforts through change in number of calls	60	60	45	40
Determining which officers are performing problem-solving efforts	56	46	43	39
*Assessing problem-solving efforts through displacement	40	40	29	24

\* Jurisdiction size was statistically significant at  $p < .05$



### ***Resource Allocation Measures***

The questionnaire asked departments to report on their use of five measures related to resource allocation: analyzing time spent at a location or on a problem, evaluating self-initiated activities, performing call stacking analysis, analyzing TRU activity, and reviewing out-of-area dispatches with regard to beat responsibility. The results are shown in Exhibit 7. Only the evaluation of self-initiated activities is currently done by a majority of police departments (58 percent).

**Exhibit 7: Percent of Departments Using Resource Allocation Measures\***

<b>Measures</b>	<b>Currently doing</b>	<b>Plan to do</b>	<b>No plan to do</b>
Evaluating self-initiated activities	58	27	15
Analyzing time spent at a location or on problem	46	34	20
**Analyzing TRU activity	46	19	35
Reviewing out of area dispatches in regard to beat responsibility	24	23	53
Performing call stacking analysis	19	28	53

\* Totals may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

\*\* These figures represent the percentage of departments that reported they have a TRU. Of the 234 who so indicated, 214 (91%) also indicated the degree to which they analyze TRU activity.

Only five percent of responding departments said they use all five resource allocation measures listed in Exhibit 7; in fact, over half of departments (53 percent) indicated they have no plans to review out of area dispatches or analyze call stacking data.

Jurisdiction size was related to the use of three resource allocation measures: analysis of TRU activity, review of out-of-area dispatches, and call stacking analysis. The latter two activities are still performed by fewer than half of



departments in the largest jurisdictions. The differences in TRU analysis are more striking, with departments in larger jurisdictions much more likely to analyze TRU activity. As noted earlier, 58 percent of respondents (234 departments) reported having a TRU, and 214 of those departments answered the question about analysis of TRU data. Their responses show that 84 percent of departments in jurisdictions of over 250,000 analyze TRU activity, compared to 54 percent in jurisdictions of 50,000 to 250,000; 25 percent in jurisdictions of 25,000 to 50,000; and seven percent in jurisdictions with 25,000 population or less.

### ***Community Involvement/Satisfaction Measures***

Many police departments appear to be actively involved in measuring community involvement in policing initiatives and citizen satisfaction with policing services. Exhibit 8 shows the extent to which respondents report using five measures of community involvement/satisfaction. In fact, analyzing measures of fear was the only activity not being done by a majority of departments. Eighteen percent of respondents (77 departments) report using all five measures listed in Exhibit 8, with no significant difference in these responses based on size of jurisdiction.



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**Exhibit 8: Percent of Departments Using Community Involvement and Satisfaction Measures\***

<b>Measures</b>	<b>Currently doing</b>	<b>Plan to do</b>	<b>No plan to do</b>
Providing referrals to non-police agencies	93	4	3
Doing victim follow up	76	13	10
Capturing community meeting times and locations	67	15	18
Conducting satisfaction surveys	57	23	19
Analyzing measures of fear	33	29	38

\* Totals may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

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Jurisdiction population appears to be important only with regard to capturing community meeting times and locations. Eighty-four percent of departments in jurisdictions with populations of 250,000 or more perform this activity, compared to only 56 percent of departments in jurisdictions smaller than 25,000.

***Support for Special Units***

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents provide support to special units by reporting and analyzing calls by problem locations (75 percent) and problem type (71 percent), as shown in Exhibit 9. Sixty-three percent of departments reported using both types of measures to support special units, with no significant differences based on jurisdiction population.

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**Exhibit 9: Percent of Departments Providing Support for Special Units\***

<b>Measures</b>	<b>Currently doing</b>	<b>Plan to do</b>	<b>No plan to do</b>
Reporting/analyzing calls by problem locations	75	17	8
Reporting/analyzing calls by problem types	71	16	13

\* Totals may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

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problem-solving measures, resource allocation measures, community involvement and satisfaction measures, support for special units, and management accountability. Of these eight departments, five serve jurisdictions with populations between 50,000 and 250,000, while two are in jurisdiction of over 250,000 and one serves a jurisdiction of less than 25,000.

### ***Community Policing Activities***

The questionnaire asked respondents to report the extent to which their departments were involved in each of twelve activities that are often associated with community policing. A number of the activities suggest significant changes in organizational structure (e.g., decentralizing detectives, opening substations), while others (e.g., conducting community surveys) would not require major organizational change. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they were performing each activity to a great extent, moderate extent, limited extent, or not at all. The results are shown in Exhibit 11.

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**Exhibit 11: Percent of Departments Engaging in Community Policing Activities**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Great extent</b>	<b>Moderate extent</b>	<b>Limited extent</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
Gave geographic responsibility to patrol	51	26	16	8
Have a citizens police academy	48	10	13	29
Conduct beat/neighborhood meetings open to the public	32	35	21	12
Opened neighborhood substations	26	19	18	37
Adopted problem-solving techniques	22	33	31	14
Developed information systems to support problem-solving	17	31	37	16
Conduct citizen surveys on a regular basis	17	23	37	24
Decision-making occurs in lower ranks	16	45	36	4
Developed evaluation criteria for determining success of community policing	14	22	43	22
Decentralized detectives	10	11	18	61
Changed communications center procedures on how citizen calls are handled	9	24	36	31
Eliminated one or more ranks	5	7	13	75

No department indicated that it was performing all twelve activities listed to a great extent. In fact, giving geographic responsibility to patrol was the only activity that a majority of departments (51 percent) reported doing to a great extent.

Responses with respect to two items—changing communications center procedures for call handling and developing evaluation criteria for community policing—are of particular interest in light of the study's focus on call



management strategies and analysis of call for service data to support community policing. Only one-third of respondents report having changed communications center procedures to a moderate extent (24 percent) or great extent (nine percent). The percent of departments that have developed community policing evaluation criteria is only slightly higher (36 percent), with 14 percent having done this to a great extent and 22 percent to a moderate extent.

The survey results indicate that the extent to which many community policing activities are conducted is related to the population of the jurisdiction. As shown in Exhibit 12, this is true for 8 of the 12 community policing activities listed in the questionnaire. (Exhibit 12 includes data only on performance of community policing activities to a great extent). The four activities for which there was no significant difference based on population were: giving geographic responsibility to patrol, decision making in lower ranks, developing evaluation criteria for success, and eliminating one or more ranks.

It is not surprising that smaller jurisdictions would not find some of the activities useful or feasible (e.g., opening substations, decentralizing detectives). For other activities, however, jurisdiction population was not expected to be so influential. For example, 42 percent of departments in the largest jurisdictions, but only eleven percent in jurisdictions of less than 25,000, have adopted problem-solving techniques to a great extent. These differences were not as pronounced, however, with respect to use of problem-solving techniques to a moderate extent (reported by 40 percent of departments in the largest jurisdictions, compared to about 25 percent in jurisdictions of less than 25,000).

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The size of the jurisdiction a department served was expected to be an influence on the types of call management strategies employed, as well as on many of the types of community policing activities being performed. For example, it is logical that stacking/delayed response techniques are employed much less frequently in jurisdictions of less than 25,000 population, since they are unlikely to have the large volume of calls that would make call stacking necessary. The use of telephone reporting units (TRUs) and scheduled appointments with officers was also related to jurisdiction population. Most of the largest jurisdictions (93 percent) had TRUs but were unlikely to schedule appointments (only 19 percent); about half of departments in jurisdictions of fewer than 25,000 (53 percent) scheduled appointments, but only 29 percent had TRUs.

It is interesting that for some activities, jurisdiction size was not a significant factor, indicating that there are reporting methods and activities that all departments can consider. Internet reporting, while used by only six percent of departments overall, was no more likely to be offered in a large jurisdiction than in a small one and may be driven more by demographics other than population size. Departments in areas where residents have easy access to the Internet and are accustomed to using it may be more likely to provide Internet reporting methods. As Internet use continues to increase, this reporting strategy will require further examination, particularly to see whether the public actually takes advantage of Internet reporting where police departments make it available.

The most common alternative reporting method was walk-in/storefront reporting (reported by 95 percent of departments). Because the questionnaire did not

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differentiate between walking into the police station or a substation to make a report and reporting at a storefront office, we could not determine the extent to which departments offer storefront reporting alternatives (although several examples of this are featured in the *Guidebook*). The viability of storefront offices for reporting purposes should be examined in more detail.

One strategy of interest to municipal government in recent years is 3-1-1, which is intended to serve the dual purpose of keeping 9-1-1 lines free for emergency calls and directing appropriate non-emergencies to the agencies best suited to handle them. Analysis of 3-1-1 call data may also prove valuable for identifying and addressing citizen concerns before they escalate into serious problems. Only a few departments responding to the survey reported operating 3-1-1 systems, although 31 percent said they had discussed the possibility. It was not surprising that a large majority of that 31 percent were departments in jurisdictions of 250,000 or more. However, there is some suggestion that 3-1-1 may be practical for smaller jurisdictions, since half of the departments that had already implemented 3-1-1 were in jurisdictions with fewer than 250,000 residents.

The responses to survey questions about community policing measures indicate that a significant majority of departments capture various data that could be valuable for evaluating success. For example, 92 percent identify top problem locations; 84 percent report and analyze the frequency of certain call types (alarm calls, drug complaints, etc.); 66 percent identify repeat callers; and 66 percent conduct "hot spot" analysis. Similarly, nearly three-fourths of departments support special units by analyzing calls by problem type and location. These results are



encouraging, although the survey could not determine the extent to which these analyses are specifically aimed at enhancing community policing. Departments were less likely to identify which officers were performing problem-solving activities, to assess problem-solving efforts through changes in numbers of calls, or to analyze displacement. These were also the activities that the greatest percentage of departments said they had no plan to do in the future.

A significant number of police departments are employing measures to help assess community involvement/satisfaction. For example, more than half of departments are conducting victim follow up (76 percent), tracking community meeting times/locations (67 percent) and conducting citizen surveys (57 percent). There were no significant differences in these activities based on jurisdiction population.

With respect to departments' involvement in the twelve community policing activities listed in the questionnaire, only one activity—giving geographic responsibility to patrol—was being done to a great extent by a majority of departments (51 percent). Some of the activities (e.g., decentralizing detectives) were not expected to be widespread, either because they require significant organizational change or they are not practical for smaller jurisdictions. However, we did expect to see more involvement in some activities, particularly the adoption of problem-solving techniques, which has received a great deal of attention in recent years. In fact, the adoption of problem-solving techniques and performance of seven additional activities were significantly related to jurisdiction population, with larger departments more likely to conduct those activities. However, development of criteria for measuring the success of community policing was not

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dependent on jurisdiction population and appears to be an area where more work is needed across the board; only 37 percent of departments have developed such criteria to a moderate or great extent.

### **Conclusion**

The survey had a high response rate and was largely successful in providing a picture of the types of call management strategies and community policing activities currently being used in the nation's police departments. It also was useful in identifying specific departments that have a variety of call management strategies in place and are also engaging in more than an average number of community policing activities. These departments are the source of the examples presented throughout the *Guidebook*. The survey analysis could not determine precise linkages between call management strategies and community policing activities. However, it provided valuable information on the foundations that departments have already built and confirmed that many departments are capturing data that can help them plan and measure problem-solving and other community policing activities in the future.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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