

Essay on the chicago alternative policing strategy

[Business](#), [Strategy](#)



Introduction

This essay examines the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS), discussing its administrative and operational considerations in relation to functions of patrol, crime investigation, emergency and critical incident response, and future trends if applicable.

The Background

The CAPS program official beginning date was in April 1993, on what at the time was on a “ prototype basis” (Daley, 1996). The concept involved a radical change to the City’s system of policing, making the police officers part of the community, and is reliant on the community residents working with the police to reduce crime. In addition, under CAPS the police work more closely with other agencies. From that beginning in 1993 when only five of Chicago’s 25 police districts were involved, today all of those districts use CAPS, in which the city as a whole is divided into 279 “ beats.”

Program Goals

According to an Office of Justice article entitled “ Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS)” (n. d.), the program “ is a community-based program established to transform policing efforts into an efficient five-step process for law enforcement.” The program’s goal is to solve neighborhood crime, rather than just react to its consequences.

- Identify and prioritize perceived problems, taking onboard community inputs;
- Analyze the problems, including information obtained about offenders, their victims, and locations of the crimes;

- Design strategies to deal with the highest priority problems, in particular “ thinking outside the box” in terms of traditional police tactics, and utilizing new resources;
- Implement those strategies – utilizing special efforts and skills by not just the police and the community but also other departments of the city administration;
- Evaluate the program’s effectiveness, determining not just the measure of success of the implementation of the planned strategies but also the positive benefits.

Included in the process were monthly meetings between the police and community committees, and regular training for both the police and the residents committees. The article also mentioned what it described as the “ efficient use of city services and new technology” as key elements of the overall strategy, collaborating to manage minor crimes before they escalate into what would be more serious issues. The article also reported that to promote civic awareness of CAPS throughout the local neighborhoods, various means were used including educational programs, leaflets and brochures, advertising on billboards, etc.

CAPS in Operation

As mentioned above by Daley (Mayor of Chicago 1989-2011), the city’s policing is divided into 25 districts. Under CAPS, Daley encouraged his beat officers to work within their communities and utilizing other officers in so-called rapid response units to deal with emergency calls and major crimes. Those beat officers work with the residents and hold meetings to deal with any pressing local issues. As Daley put it “ We have not just added police

officers; we have returned officers to the communities.” Under Daley’s administration the force strength was increased by over 1, 000 officers. Daley explained that the success of CAPS required hiring and training new officers (at all levels) to ensure that the role of community policing was fully understood and implemented.

Under CAPS, officers patrol their assigned beats, within which they hold regular “ beat meetings” to discuss with residents and other local community groups issues that have arisen as a result of their patrols. At district level, district commanders discuss issues with specially-established advisory committees. As Daley expressed it, the system allows the local beat officers to “ cut through the red tape” bringing benefits to their local communities such as encouraging the city to demolish abandoned properties, remove abandoned vehicles from the streets, install better street lighting, cut down graffiti and even remove pay phones that are habitually used by drug dealers. Daley also reported that the greater information flow resulting from CAPS has allowed the city to utilize new technology for analysis of crime and thus to help solve more crimes committed in the neighborhoods.

One such application of technology mentioned by Daley was ICAM (Information Collection for Automated Mapping). Created by the Chicago police themselves, ICAM is a PC-based program application installed in all of Chicago’s 25 police district stations. Any officer “ from beat officers to commanders” can readily use it to generate crime pattern maps for their neighborhoods. They can share that information with the residents in the community, so that they can work together for crime reduction.

Future Trends

According to “ Community Policing in Chicago, Year Ten: An evaluation of Chicago’s Alternative Policing Strategy” a report produced by a consortium dedicated to that task, identified weaknesses in the area of headquarters meetings (p. 151-152) are: a) lack of active community participation; b) insufficient time assigned to discuss management concerns; c) lack of constructive dialog, e. g. to change less successful policies; d) more active involvement needed from senior departmental executives. In addition to those issues and others that need addressing for the future, the report recommended more training including refresher training (p. 155), not just for police officers but for all parties involved.

References

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