

Community policing



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Community Policing 2007 The California Attorney Generals Office defines community policing as “ a philosophy, management style, and organizational strategy that promotes pro-active problem solving and police-community partnerships to address the causes of crime and fear as well as other community issues” (Safe State 2007). It is underlined that it is a philosophy and not a program or a project, an approach to be learnt by all the members of the police from the top to bottom, as well as community members, governments and public organizations. Unlike the traditional policing approach it recognizes that crime is a community and not exclusively police problem, so that the effective solutions may be found only in case of the community involvement into the problem solving. It is a long-term process of identifying, analyzing and developing solutions to community problems. Community policing is rather directed at community issues and fear of crime problem than at the actual crime. Besides, crime prevention, the three core components of community policing are community partnership, problem solving and organizational change. They are represented in three major principles: shared responsibility, prevention, increased officer discretion. Shared responsibility means that there is frequent and on-going interaction between the community members and police, built on mutual trust and cooperation. It is recognized that ‘ police work is not an isolated activity performed in a social vacuum and even traditional police work, including preventative patrol, rapid response, and apprehending offenders, cannot be performed without the regular cooperation of the citizens’ (Bad-Boys Net. 2007). The community members are to be actively involved in crime prevention through timely reporting crimes and organizing volunteer patrol groups. Though traditional arrests are necessary, there are alternative, less

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traditional ways of effective dealing with crime problem. Currently, these methods are used after the arrest has taken place. Police is to react to all the problems distinguished by the community, demonstrating respect for all residents. An officer is given enough time to get acquainted with the community and participate in community activities. Prevention is directed at diagnosing the problem before the crime has been committed, or analyzing the criminal conditions with the aim of altering them. This presupposes the involvement of police and community, public and non-profit organizations. Increased officer discretion suggests that community policing is based on the leadership and non bureaucratic, flexible management approach supporting officers' creative decision making, allowing each officer to act non-traditionally in accordance with a given situation, which allows quicker and better problem-solving and customer service. This should lead to organizational decentralization and reduction of the command, top-down structure. In fact, community oriented policing requires special approaches to such aspects of organization as performance appraisal, recourse allocation, information flow, recruitment and selection, promotion and communication of the mission. It is necessary to provide citizens with the information on the philosophy and encourage them to participate in the interaction with the police and deal with the problems. It also requires the readiness to change, adapt and develop from the police officers. There is no single community policing program, it should be developed locally and adapted to the local necessities. Community policing may be implemented in combination with the traditional approaches. The establishment of separate departments is also a common practice. Specially trained officers are assigned to such departments. Their task is to develop effective strategies

for addressing the locals issues. As a rule, they are “ off radio” to have time to communicate with the residents and deal with problem solving. At the activity level the wide range of actions can be restricted only by the creativity of the police officers (Bad-Boys Net 2007; Rohe 2000, pp. 1-3). As we can see, community policing differs from the traditional approaches in many aspects. It empowers the community, rather than dictates it. It is proactive, and not re-active as the traditional policing. It is focused on crime prevention. It is directed at the development of trust and cooperation, which is not the common practice for the traditional policing. It is aimed at solving problems often staying out of sight of the traditional policing: such as community issues and crime fear. It requires creativity from the officers and flexibility from the policing organization.

References:

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