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**COMMUNITY POLICING  
THE CONTEMPORARY LAW ENFORCEMENT ROLE  
IN THE  
NEW YORK CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT**

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**U.S. Department of Justice  
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**LAW ENFORCEMENT EXPLORER PROGRAM  
TRAINING GUIDE**

**THIS TRAINING GUIDE CONTAINS  
EXCERPTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT  
PUBLICATION "POLICING IN THE 1990'S"**

The beat cop is coming back to New York City. That is what this lesson is all about. It outlines how New York City will be policed during the decade of the 1990s and spells out what steps the Department will take to make community policing the dominant style of policing throughout the neighborhoods of the City. It is the Department's blueprint for change.

After undergoing a thorough assessment, including a historical review, the Department has made an organizational commitment to radically alter its traditional way of policing the City and managing its operations. The new strategy is community policing, which is tough on crime and builds on the Department's rich history of creativity and experimentation.

The future strategy for policing in the City of New York aims at making community policing - the work of police officers in the City's precincts at the neighborhood level - the Department's highest priority. With community policing, every neighborhood will have one or more police officers assigned to it and responsible for helping the residents of the community prevent crime, develop a capability for order maintenance and improve the quality of life. In this way, the Department can increase its substantial contribution to controlling crime and improving the quality of life throughout the City. This new orientation assumes the following mission for the Department:

**The New York City Police Department exists to protect life and property under the law, maintain community order, and reduce crime and fear of crime in the neighborhoods with full respect for human dignity and according to the highest standards of professional skill, integrity and accountability.**

The key components of the transformation to community policing are:

- **A community policing presence will be provided for every neighborhood of the City.**
- **Problem-solving will become the standard way in which members of the Department respond to situations brought to their attention, whether on patrol or in administrative, investigative or support assignments.**
- **The Department will manage its operations in a manner that stimulates employees and is based on a commitment to a written set of values that guide its actions.**
- **Policing the City's neighborhoods, uniformed patrol will have the stature, support and rewards necessary to make it as desirable a place for an officer to spend his or her career as any other assignment in the Department.**

- **Police officer creativity will be formally recognized and used in problem solving. Likewise, officers will be held accountable for their actions within the context of the Department's mission, values, objectives, policies and procedures.**
- **New measures of Departmental performance will be developed to provide meaningful feedback to the Department and provide the community with an assessment of how well the Department is achieving its objectives.**
- **911 work demands will be controlled. An improved system for call classification, referral and processing will be designed and implemented. All police officers assigned to a given neighborhood will assist in responding to calls for service that come from their neighborhood.**
- **The Patrol Allocation Plan, the system used to assign personnel to the various precincts, will be revised to reflect the integration of all precinct personnel into the community policing strategy.**
- **The base from which new employees are recruited will be broadened. People willing to accept the Department's commitment to a police organization representative of the community - who view the police job as service to community rather than individual adventure - will be identified and sought out.**
- **The selection process will be modernized. Improved selection tests, enhanced background investigation and revised psychological testing will be developed to recruit with a community policing orientation.**
- **Civilians and uniformed personnel will become equal partners in the transition to community policing.**
- **Department training systems will be enhanced, and in some instances, totally revised. They will teach new skills required for community policing, such as problem-solving, crime prevention and community organization.**
- **Revised performance evaluation mechanisms will be developed to provide officers with meaningful feedback on their performance and assist them in strengthening their effectiveness.**

- **New reward systems will be developed to reinforce community policing values and ensure that recognition is given to those who excel in carrying out the philosophy of community policing.**
  
- **Integrity Control mechanisms will be thoroughly reviewed to ensure maintenance of the highest level of integrity throughout the Department, while still encouraging and supporting the exercise of discretion by precinct personnel in dealing with the problems on their beats.**

These actions constitute the policing strategy for the 1990s. This lesson explains where we are, where we are going and what must be done to get us there.

We all make important life choices based on our sense of safety: where to live, where to locate a business, how to spend our leisure time and when to venture into the streets. It is the responsibility of the New York City Police Department to provide for the safety of our citizens and to help them feel safe. Crime patterns are not static. And neither should the Police Department's response be static. This lesson plan, part of a larger report, will provide us with information on the implementation of community policing as the Department's dominant strategy; to see what works best to serve New York City rather than simply building on existing projects and to ensure that the Department operates efficiently. The residents of New York City are entitled to know where we are, where we are going and how we are going to get there.

To this end, the Police Department started a massive self-assessment in May, 1990. That assessment - a snapshot of where we are today - became the basis for an Executive Staff Retreat in September 1990. At that retreat, the uniformed and civilian Executive Staff spent three days of intense discussion on how to transform the New York City Police Department from the incident-based policing of the past to the problem solving community policing of today. Community policing is an evolving strategy that alters the fundamental way in which the police fight crime and respond to other problems in the community. It means having officers in neighborhoods working cooperatively with the people to address the problems of crime, drugs, disorder, fear and other elements that have a disruptive influence on the quality of life in the city. At the core of this new strategy of policing is the realization on the part of the police that today's overwhelming and complex problems that affect our neighborhoods cannot be confronted in a truly meaningful way unless and until the total community - the police, other institutions of government, the private sector and the community at large - mobilize for an all-out collective assault against the many dimensions of these problems. Community policing demands the commitment of resources to the process of achieving quality results rather than continuing to simply respond to and handle a multitude of incidents that so often result in little or no resolution. For New York City, it also means getting officers out of their cars and back on the beat.

#### How the Assessment was Done

The purpose of the assessment was to describe current conditions in the Police Department, City government and the community as they relate to:

**Crime**

**Drugs**

**Violence**

**Quality of life in the City's Neighborhoods**

**Organization of the Department**

The assessment involved every uniformed and civilian unit in the Department and covered every neighborhood in the City. There were four levels of review:

**Bureau review**

**Community profiles**

**City government review (as it affects the Police Department)**

**Historical review**

Each bureau review identified the mission of the bureau and its sub-units along with its organization, staffing, resources and training needs. Work generators and their results were evaluated along with the obstacles that hinder performance. The interface of each unit with other government agencies was also examined.

Each community was assessed as well. We looked at each distinct neighborhood and its customs, the population mix and how it is changing, land use and demographic trends. We examined local crime patterns, calls for service and their causes. We addressed local fears and how the community deals with them. Finally, we reviewed the way in which community leaders had formed partnerships with the police to address the problems of fear and crime.

The review of City government initiatives and operations focused on identifying areas in which the Department's activities meshed well with those of other government agencies, as well as areas in which improved interaction was desirable. Governance changes, such as Charter Revision, were reviewed in the context of how they affected the functions of the Department.

The Historical Review looked at the 1970-1990 period in order to locate the antecedents of the Department's current programs and policies. Every major initiative of the period was reviewed in the context of the central driving events, priorities, solutions, successes and failures; thereby making it possible to trace the evolution of the key initiatives that brought the Department to the present time.

A working group - chaired by the Department's First Deputy Commissioner and made up of the Chief of Department, the five Bureau Chiefs and three outside consultants - reviewed the presentations of all the reporting units. The working group sessions took place once a week and lasted all day. They provided an opportunity for probing the assumptions that guide the way we do police work. The New York City Police Department is so large that many units do not have the opportunity to interact with other units on a regular basis, so the working group sessions also turned into an important forum for sharing information.

The outcome of this assessment is probably the most complete analysis ever done of the Police Department. Based on these reviews, the Working Group identified a series of critical issues that became the basis for the Retreat that took place in September 1990. These include:

- **What do we need to do to make community policing the style for all police operations?**
- **How can we upgrade the patrol function?**
- **How do we merge motorized patrol into community policing?**
- **What should be the involvement of non-patrol units in community policing?**
- **What information needs does community policing generate?**
- **What kind of technical support does community policing require?**
- **What kind of internal research and development capability do we need to support community policing?**
- **How can we improve two-way communication and get more feedback throughout the Department?**
- **What new crime strategies are suggested by community policing?**
- **Does the Department need to be so reactive to 911 work demands?**
- **How can we make the self-image, personal appearance and pride of members of the Department consistent with community policing?**
- **How do we slow the attrition among civilians and uniformed employees in order to maintain levels of staffing and experience needed for community policing?**
- **How can we increase civilian participation in community policing?**
- **How can we improve relations between civilian and uniformed members?**
- **How should the Department be reorganized to put like functions together?**

- **How can we promote community policing within the Department and the City?**

Many of these issues are ongoing and the Department has addressed them before. We have no interest in re-inventing the things that have been done well in the past. Therefore, the consultants were asked to produce a historical review of the major initiatives, trends and issues of the past twenty years. This review gave the Assessment a good grounding in the Department's recent history and established the context for why and how it reached its present condition. Among the issues it helped to clarify was how the Department came to be so specialized, centralized, diffused and dependent on uniform staffing.

- **It became obvious that many specialized functions had arisen in response to a particular crisis. As such, each developed its own constituency, command structure and a life that sometimes exceeded its usefulness.**

These observations - along with the mission statements and staffing patterns identified in the unit reviews - became the foundation of a Resource Allocation and Staffing Study submitted to the Mayor in October 1990. That study's purpose was to review how personnel are presently being used and delineate the staffing requirements of the future community policing strategy of New York City. The study concluded that:

- **The Department is highly specialized with many small units and functions designed to deal with particular problems;**
- **Uniformed personnel are used to perform tasks that could be performed by civilians because historically the Department has been unable to fund needed civilian positions;**
- **There is no consistent standard of determining whether a function should be performed by a centralized headquarters unit or decentralized to the borough or precinct level;**
- **Precincts have consistently suffered the most in their staffing needs because the centralized, specialized units tend to draw personnel away from them.**



The task of the Resource Allocation and Staffing Study was to identify the staffing needed to achieve our main goal:

- **The Department's goal is to have every section of the City, every neighborhood and every street, policed by officers working under the community policing philosophy.**

The community policing philosophy reaffirms that crime prevention, not merely responding to calls for service, is the basic mission of the police. Crime prevention is accomplished by having a visible police presence in neighborhoods, undertaking activities to solve crime producing problems, arresting law violators, maintaining order and resolving disputes before they result in violence. In community policing, it is understood that police and citizens are partners in the maintenance of safe and peaceful neighborhoods. The police bring into the relationship their constitutional and legal values and their professional knowledge and skill. Citizens bring into the relationship their intimate knowledge of neighborhood conditions, a commitment to civility and good citizenship and their willingness to participate fully in controlling crime and maintaining order in their communities.

To achieve this, the following principals have been established to guide our staffing decisions:

- **Police activity will be decentralized to the precinct level unless there is a good reason to deal with problems on a borough or city-wide basis.**
- **The 911 system will be integrated with community policing assignments. In this way, non-emergency calls will be handled by community officers who have a close knowledge of the people, problems and issues of their assigned neighborhoods.**
- **The load on 911 will be reduced by using other ways to respond to non-emergency calls. The police will focus on solving problems rather than just responding to incidents. The public's concerns will receive more attention and emergency situations will get a faster response.**
- **Neighborhood police officers will be encouraged and trained to act as advocates for the communities they serve, assisting them to solve their problems.**

- **Police officers will be highly visible and will spend time getting to know neighborhood residents, merchants and young people.**
  
- **Civilians will perform all the functions that do not require the training or powers of a police officer. Skilled civilians will be hired at all levels and they will become an integral part of the Department.**

## WHERE WE WANT TO BE IN THE FUTURE

The strategy for Community Policing represents a basic change in the values, orientation and commitment of the New York City Police Department over the next few years.

- **The dominant philosophy and strategy for policing the City will be community policing. The Department will return to block-by-block policing throughout the City.**

Every neighborhood in this City will have one or more police officers assigned who know about that neighborhood, its people, their concerns, the crime problem, the makeup of the blocks, the crises of daily living and the support systems available to help people live better.

The police officer or officers assigned to these neighborhoods will be responsible for solving problems, not just walking around or responding to incidents. Precinct supervisors will be responsible for ensuring the success of these officers by providing them with the skill, information and support needed to help neighborhoods build a capacity to deal with crime, disorder and fear.

Being a community police officer assigned to a specific neighborhood will become one of the premier assignments in the Department. It will become a job in which young police officers will want to stay. Indeed, the Department will move toward selecting as police officers, men and women who have a commitment to serving the community, not simply seeking adventure.

Police Officers will strive to be assigned to the neighborhoods of this City because that assignment will be one of the most satisfying jobs a police officer can have. The Department will provide rewards to the patrol officer so they will want to remain in neighborhood policing, an assignment that will have status equal to others in the Department.

- **The neighborhood police officer, the Department's greatest asset, will be available to residents throughout the City.**

Every neighborhood in the City will have a police officer to serve as a neighborhood advocate and to deal with its needs. Some congested neighborhoods may have more than a single police officer, but every neighborhood will have at least one.

This police officer may cover the neighborhood on foot (when the neighborhood area consists of a small number of blocks) or by scooter or by car (when the neighborhood covers a larger area). But community police officers will not remain in those vehicles; they will walk and talk, learning about the needs of the community, meeting residents and business people, assessing crime conditions, becoming neighborhood advocates and working with residents to resist crime, reduce fear and maintain order.

A majority of personnel assigned to precincts will assume the responsibilities of neighborhood police officers. No longer will the precincts have only a small number of officers assigned to community policing activities. Every police officer in the precinct will have community policing responsibilities, and most of them will have a specific neighborhood responsibility. The Department will encourage the re-drawing of some precinct boundaries where there have been significant neighborhood changes since the boundaries were originally developed in the 1970s. This is important because precinct boundaries should match the natural neighborhood boundaries.

The precinct will also have a number of rapid response units consisting of two officers available for immediate response to life-threatening 911 emergency calls and to backup other officers when responding to hazardous calls. This will permit officers assigned to specific neighborhoods to remain in their areas for their full tour of duty.

Even police officers assigned to specialized functions, such as emergency service and task forces, will have community responsibilities. The members of these units will have a precinct assignment where they will spend their uncommitted time engaged in problem solving activities under the guidance of the precinct commander.

**- The entire police organization will reflect this commitment to community policing**

The police bureaucracy will be tightened, with a minimum of bureaucratic layers between top management and community police officer. The number of police officers assigned to administrative or technical duties will be greatly reduced, reflecting the movement of large numbers of officers from staff assignments to line operations at the precinct level.

The orientation of the headquarters Executive Staff will change. Members of the Executive Staff will view themselves as corporate executives concerned with one common goal: providing high quality police service in the neighborhoods of this City. The division of responsibility between members of the Executive Staff will result in a collective effort to build a management capability for direction and oversight of a highly decentralized policing effort in each of the City's neighborhoods. The Department will curtail the tendency for bureaucracy to focus on its own needs. Instead, the full capabilities of the Department will focus outward, toward life in the City's neighborhoods.

Uniformed personnel will be employed in situations requiring police powers. For tasks not requiring police skills; civilians will be hired. These civilian employees will be treated as an integral part of the Police Department.

People at every level of the organization will focus on problem solving and thinking about how to make a difference in the quality of life in this City. The Department will move from an incident responding bureaucracy to a creative high-performing organization fielding police who are neighborhood advocates, problem solvers and crime controllers.

The Department will invest a substantial portion of its assets in trying to do its job better. This will result in a strengthened capability for problem solving and crime analysis. The dominant operational philosophy of the Department will be community policing, and the focus of community policing will be neighborhood police officers. These officers will be linked with other government and community agencies, building the capacity of neighborhoods to improve the quality of people's lives.

The New York City Police Department will become an agency that shares with neighborhoods the responsibility for controlling crime and maintaining order. In turn, neighborhoods will share with the police the responsibility for what happens in their areas. Only by assigning police officers to be responsible for every block of this City can such a collaborative relationship with neighborhood residents be achieved.

- **The Department's efforts to manage the daily crisis of the City will draw upon the strengths of community policing but will not impair its commitment to the City's neighborhoods**

Crises will always occur in New York City, and the New York City Police Department will always play a major role in ensuring that these crises are resolved with a minimum of disruption. But dealing with daily crises will not be permitted to impair the Department's commitment to community policing or to divert the police officers assigned to the neighborhoods of this City to other duties, except as a last resort. Committing police officers to carry out their community policing responsibilities on the streets of the neighborhoods requires a consistent police presence, attainable only if the officer is permitted to remain in that assignment on a permanent basis.

This change in orientation means the Department will no longer form a unit to deal with each special condition. Instead, the Department will assign a manager to assume responsibility for the condition and coordinate the work of other existing units for a specified time period. After the initial stages of a crisis have been resolved by existing units, dealing with the underlying problem or issue will be an on-going commitment. Few additional special units will be formed. Many will be eliminated as the move toward decentralization and community policing takes hold.

- **The department will retain its commitment to rapid response to 911 emergencies when a life is in danger or there is a strong possibility of apprehending the violator. Many non-emergency calls will be handled by neighborhood police officers who will assume responsibility for finding solutions to the underlying causes of the problem.**

The Department will move from an incident responding orientation to a problem solving orientation. Problem solving focuses police officer attention on the underlying causes of problems that are reflected in a pattern of citizen requests for assistance. Repeat calls to the same problem will not be treated simply as isolated incidents. This will require substantial education of citizens on how the 911 emergency telephone number should be used, as well as changes in how the Department responds to those calls for service. The 911 telephone number will be used for its original purpose ... emergencies.

- **The Department's policing strategy will focus on neighborhood problem solving by community police officers rather than simply having police officers rapidly move from call to call.**
- **Members of the Department will develop new skills and competencies to reflect the change in policing strategy.**

New York City police officers will be highly skilled in problem solving techniques. Their training will make them sophisticated in crisis intervention, investigating crimes and disorders, and assisting people in trouble. Community police officers will be skilled in community organizing, crime prevention, problem analysis and interpersonal communications. They will have the skills and orientation to assist a neighborhood build its own capacity to resist crime. They will improve the quality of life in the City by knowing how to galvanize neighborhood energies toward solving problems of crime, disorder and fear.

The Department will obtain better quality information about neighborhood crime and who the violators are because the police officers will remain in neighborhood sectors, increasing their positive contact with residents and business people.

- **Because community police officers will have a greater ability to share information with detectives, improved criminal apprehension will be an important outcome of the community policing strategy.**

Detectives assigned to the Precinct Squads will become area specialists and crime generalists. They will be given defined areas of the community as their primary responsibility. They will work closely with the community police officer(s), thereby ensuring a constant exchange of information about crime, crime conditions and wanted persons in the neighborhood. The detectives will be an integral part of a neighborhood's crime control and problem solving efforts. As such, their ability to apprehend violators will be enhanced

**The role of first line supervisors and managers will change. They will work to ensure the success of the community police officers.**

Sergeants will help community police officers succeed in their objectives by adding to their responsibilities as supervisors a broader role of facilitating the police officer's problem solving activities. Lieutenants will assume management responsibilities for organizing broader Department and city-wide resources to solve neighborhood problems and ensure that the community police officers and sergeants are adequately trained and supported. In short, all ranks above police officer will be responsible for assisting the community police officer to successfully achieve his / her objectives in the neighborhoods throughout the City.

Community Policing is the New York City Police Department's blueprint for the future. This will be our dominant style of policing.

