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PROVIDENCE POLICE DEPARTMENT
SCHOOL/COMMUNITY GANG INTERVENTION TEAM



9-26-94
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INTRODUCTION

The School/Community Gang Intervention Team was introduced on November 18, 1992, however, its inception was actually a year earlier with the establishment of the "school squad".

Presently, the team consists of six uniformed officers of the Patrol Bureau who are detailed to the Youth Services Bureau for scheduling and assignment purposes.

These members were selected for an array of reasons, but most importantly for their ability to relate with school aged youngsters. In addition, their compassion and patience displayed were also considerations.

There are presently five (5) male officers, and one (1) female officer assigned to the unit. The unit is scheduled for a standard 8:00am through 4:00pm day during the academic year, but during the Summer months and vacation periods, their schedules are adjusted to accomodate special conditions that may arise.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the program is to maintain safety and order in and about school properties. In additon, efforts are directed at creating an atmosphere of cooperation and encouraging positive relationships between the student body, police, and school administration. These teams also gather intelligence involving matters relative to gang, or criminal activity which may have a direct impact on the local community.

DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Team members regularly communicate with teachers, security, maintenance, and school administrators.

Officers are instructed to treat each student with respect.

Officers are encourgaed to maintain a visible presence on school property.

Officers follow-up on pertinent information regarding criminal activity which may disrupt the school's operations or endanger staff/students.

Officers are instructed **NOT** to patrol the school corridors but rather remain outside the physical structure, however, they may do so if there exists just cause and their intent is communicated to school officials.

Physical restraint, or force are not recommended but are acceptable if the safety of the officer, or other persons is at risk of bodily harm or in imminent danger.

SCOPE

The key to the school/community gang intervention team lies in its ability to effectively communicate with the school administration. This exchange of information must be open, honest, and to the point.

It is necessary that school officials relate any information regarding weapon possession, gang activity, or physical confrontation, or rumors thereof to team members. What may appear petty, may indeed signal a greater problem to police officials. On the other hand, it is also important that team officers alert school officials to any problems which may effect the safety of students, or staff. Regardless of the circumstances or information conveyed, SAFETY is paramount and must remain the # 1 concern of officials.

The Program has been very successful in the communication's area. Monthly meetings are scheduled between police and school officials so that incidents may be reviewed and critiqued for improvement/change. Additional meetings are presently being planned for review and improvement purposes.

MEDIA POLICY

It is the policy of the Commanding Officer, Youth Services Bureau to keep information disseminated to news media at a minimum. The purpose of said policy is to eliminate any false perception or fear on the part of the students or parents as a result of an isolated incident at school. This policy of limited information has been effective and has been responsible in maintaining an orderly atmosphere at the schools.

Conversely, all efforts are made to publicize any positive or favorable team activity at schools, which again inspires a secure but subtle sentiment.

PROCEDURES

Arrests

When warranted, team members may make an arrest inside the schools, however, members are directed to notify either the principal, or vice-principal when practical. It is preferred that one of these officials escort the student to their office, where an arrest may be effected. Arrests within the schools are strongly discouraged and should only be made under emergency or exigent circumstances where time is of the essence.

Searches & Seizures

Unless someone's life is at stake, ONLY Police officers will seize firearms/weapons from students. School officials are directed to provide pertinent information to police referencing the student's name, physical description, identifying information relevant to the weapon and its location on their person. Officers will make every effort to disarm a student away from the general populous when practical.

Weapons seized by school officials are to be turned over to police officials and a decision on whether to charge rendered after a meeting between team and school officials..

Witnesses

Team members shall consult with school officials prior to the removal of a student or staff member for the purposes of obtaining a statement from such individual. This procedure is simply a courtesy to the school official and intervention members will ultimately dictate who, when, where, and how to question witnesses during an ongoing investigation.

Public Relations

A major portion of the intervention team's role concerns public relations. Therefore, all efforts are directed at establishing a good rapport with the community at large, and the individual school communities serviced. These officers are the spokespersons for the Police Department and must pose as positive role models for the students that they interface with on a daily basis.

Team members have enhanced their police/community relations by coordinating field trips to the Providence Bruins home hockey games and also have assisted in job placement, and other personal interests. Additionally, officers regularly attend student assemblies and discuss such topics as: gangs & violence, drug abuse & prevention, crime, and a host of other related topics.

ASSIGNMENTS

The three (3) intervention teams consists of two (2) police officers who are responsible for one (1) high school, two to three (2-3) middle/intermediate schools, and three to four (3-4) elementary schools. Assignments are made within a particular geographical area. Special attention is provided during lunch and dismissal periods at the local high schools.

Each officer is required to compile and furnish a daily activity report at the end of each working day which identifies arrests, investigations, intelligence obtained, and all pertinent information relevant to the day's activities. The teams also maintain logs of graffiti sites in their respective areas of concern.

SUMMARY

In closing, the Providence Police School/Community Gang Intervention Team is indeed a positive, pro-active approach to dealing with concerns that arise in our school system. By utilizing police officers who are open-minded, fair, and aggressive; and combining these traits with an effective communication network, we believe that we have developed a strong preventative violence strategy for our schools, while also providing alternatives to our youth today.