



# National Institute of Justice

## Research Preview

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# Community Policing in Chicago: Year Two

In April 1993, following a year of planning, Chicago's Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) was field-tested in five selected districts before being implemented on a citywide basis. The program was designed to increase the responsiveness and effectiveness of police problem solving by linking these efforts directly to a broad range of city services and involving the public in identifying and seeking solutions to neighborhood problems.

Ongoing evaluation of the planning, implementation, and impact of CAPS in these five prototype districts—supported by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, the National Institute of Justice, the Chicago Community Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation—indicates that police and residents have successfully negotiated various effective partnerships and that CAPS has reduced levels of crime and serious neighborhood problems.

## Restructuring for community policing

Implementation of the CAPS program was based on reorganization of policing around the city's 279 police beats. To enable beat officers to work with residents and community organizations to identify and address neighborhood problems, some of the burden of responding to 911 calls was shifted to rapid response teams. Tactical units and youth officers worked more closely in support of beat officers and shared responsibility for working with members of the community at beat meetings. New police recruits were trained, and several training sessions for officers and supervisors were conducted.

At the district level, advisory committees composed of citizens and police personnel were formed to review and discuss strategic issues with district commanders on a monthly basis; a prioritizing system was developed for coordinating the delivery of municipal services to support local problem-solving efforts; and new computer technology was introduced to aid analysis of local crime problems.

## Evaluation of CAPS in year two

Focusing on the five prototype districts, researchers gathered information from surveys of neighborhood residents, interviews with officers from all levels of the Chicago Police Department, discussions with community leaders, observations of meetings and training sessions, analysis of official crime statistics and other data, and a systematic survey of neighborhood activists.

**Decrease in disorder and crime.** An analysis of reported crime figures and resident victimization survey results found that perceived crime problems had decreased significantly in all prototype districts. There was evidence of decline in robbery and auto theft in three districts. Perceived physical decay declined significantly in three districts. At least some of the most frequently identified problems (i.e., gang violence, drug dealing, building abandonment, and littered streets/sidewalks) in each district were perceived by residents as having declined significantly. Citizen and police effectiveness in mobilizing city services corresponded clearly to improvements in the physical environment.

**Citizen assessments of police.** Whether homeowners or renters, most respondents registered positive attitudes toward the police. African-American and white residents perceived a significant increase in police responsiveness to public concerns, but the views of Hispanic residents did not change. Although program recognition was somewhat higher in the prototype districts than in non-CAPS comparison areas, on a citywide basis, program visibility decreased after 1 year—more among African-Americans than among whites.

**Police opinions.** In the spring of 1994, researchers compared views of the program held by "veteran" CAPS police with those who had served in non-CAPS districts during the previous year. Prototype supervisors were much more optimistic than their counterparts about the impact of CAPS on:

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■ Addressing traditional policing concerns (e.g., increased arrests, police responsiveness, balanced officer deployment).

■ Reducing opportunities for corruption.

■ Resolving neighborhood problems.

However, the CAPS supervisors were no more optimistic than their counterparts about the program's impact on police-community relations, relations with minorities, the effective use of crime information, or police autonomy. They were as likely as non-CAPS supervisors to fear being burdened with too many problems and unreasonable demands and as wary about the blurring of boundaries between police and citizen authority. In addition, they were equally skeptical of the impact of CAPS on the rate of citizen complaints about police.

**District advisory committees.** The researchers found that advisory committees with strong leadership, realistic short-term goals, and specific views about issues facing the district were more successful than committees with divided citizen-members and unclear citizen-police roles. Advisory committees that focused on broad issues requiring major shifts in public policy that were beyond their competence seemed to make less progress, as did those that were distracted or sidetracked by organizational issues. None of the committees prioritized long-term goals or developed a plan of action.

**Beat meetings.** Observations indicate that police leadership of beat meetings increased over time in four of the five districts, hindering the development of police-citizen partnerships. In many areas neighborhood relations officers, rather than beat officers, took leadership roles. Differing approaches contributed to the lack of progress at these meetings: citizens emphasized community organizing and action as a problem-solving technique, while police focused on traditional solutions that relied on police action. Four districts experienced a few adversarial encounters between police and citizens at beat meetings.

**Partnerships in action.** Case studies documented the forging of partnership links among the police, citizens, private organizations, and public agencies to solve local problems. The development and implementation of solutions were most successful when citizens were organized, developed strong leadership, and initiated problem identification. Once individual citizens placed a problem on the public agenda or involved agencies or organizations, their role in developing solutions declined, and the initiative for creating and implementing strategies shifted to the police and other city agencies.

**Involvement of community organizations.** A study of 253 community organizations in the five prototype districts revealed variation in levels of involvement in

CAPS-related activities. Formally organized groups, and those with a citywide focus, a client-oriented service mission, or with cultural or religious goals, were less involved in CAPS than those with a crime prevention or economic development focus. Locally oriented, membership-based volunteer groups were much more involved. Their efforts were important in generating turnout for beat meetings and fostering citizen involvement in problem solving.

**Court advocacy.** CAPS included a court advocacy component, but without much early guidance or direction. Three of the prototypes were involved in court advocacy efforts before CAPS began, and they experienced more success in developing program leadership, identifying relevant court cases, and recruiting volunteers to track cases. The two prototypes that launched new efforts experienced difficulty in these areas and accomplished little during the first year.

## Looking toward year three

Efforts to implement CAPS citywide are in full operation. All 25 police districts have formed advisory committees, officers have been committed to beat work, beat meetings are being held throughout the city, municipal agencies are being called on to provide expedited services citywide, an ambitious police-citizen training program is under way, and further technological innovations and efforts to raise citizen awareness of CAPS are planned.

This evaluation, led by Wesley G. Skogan, Ph.D., of the Chicago Community Policing Evaluation Consortium, was supported, in part, under NIJ grants 94-IJ-CX-0046, 93-IJ-CX-K014, and 94-IJ-CX-0011. To request copies of the interim report, contact Sal Perri by e-mail at [73244.2726@COMPUSERV.COM](mailto:73244.2726@COMPUSERV.COM), or call the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority Resource Center at 312-793-8550.

As part of NIJ's Research in Progress Seminar Series, Dr. Skogan discussed this study with an audience of researchers and criminal justice professionals and practitioners. A 60-minute VHS videotape *Community Policing in Chicago: Fact or Fiction?* is available for \$19.00 (\$24.00 in Canada and other countries). Please ask for NCJ 157273.

Use the order form on the next page to obtain this videotape and any of the 11 other tapes now available in the series.



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