Community Policing and D.A.R.E.®

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Over the past decade, two new initiatives in the law enforcement field--D.A.R.E.® and community policing--have gained momentum within police departments. A closer look at these two creative approaches reveals their commonalities and potential for integration.

Community Policing

Community policing represents a fundamental shift in the philosophy of policing. Its essence is full-service law enforcement which focuses on addressing citizen concerns and on providing high quality services. The concept draws from customer service-oriented management strategies like Total Quality Management (TQM) and on law enforcement research.

By reallocating patrol officer's time, it makes better use of personnel. In addition, the department becomes closer to the community and establishes a dialogue with citizens. This has a number of positive effects including:

- providing the public with a more accurate gauge of the effectiveness of officers and the department as a whole
- encouraging citizens to define and prioritize their community's needs
- increased public satisfaction and improved police-community relations
- the enrichment of police officers' responsibilities to include new roles as a community organizer, facilitator, educator, and referral source

Drug Abuse Resistance Education--D.A.R.E.®

Drug Abuse Resistance Education is a comprehensive preventive education program designed to stop drug use by educating children about the dangers of drug abuse and the influence of peer pressure. Its curriculum emphasizes self-esteem, taking responsibility for personal behavior, and making responsible decisions.

The D.A.R.E.® curriculum was specifically written by educators for specially trained uniformed police officers to present to school children. Over time, the training has expanded to include education on avoiding violence and gang involvement. In addition, a range of curriculums have been developed: Kindergarten--Fourth Grade Visitation Program, Fifth/Sixth Grade Program, Middle School Program, High School Program, D.A.R.E.® Plus (Playing and Learning Under Supervision), and a Parenting Component. D.A.R.E.® relies on formal socialization to influence the development of children's attitudes and beliefs. Positive exposure to a police officer over time can help students develop good citizenship skills. The extent of influence will depend on the child's previous socialization; the quality of the D.A.R.E.® instruction; and the follow-up the child receives from parents, friends, teachers or other police officers.

D.A.R.E.® and Community Policing

In philosophy and practice, D.A.R.E.® complements the tenets of a community-based approach to policing. The D.A.R.E.® program fosters the same kind of close and prolonged contact with the community that is fundamental to community policing. The D.A.R.E.® officer is removed from the patrol car and interacts closely with school administrators, teachers, parents, community members, and young people over an extended period.
of time. A rapport is developed which fosters communication and problem solving which extends beyond the formal curriculum. A number of benefits can be seen for community policing when a D.A.R.E.® program is implemented. These include:

- Humanizing the police. Young people begin to relate to officers as people, not just as a uniform or institution.
- Permitting students to see police officers in a helping role, not just an enforcement role.
- Opening lines of communication between youth and the police.
- Opening lines of communication between the school district and the police. This can encourage discussion of a wide range of issues, such as violence in the schools, drug abuse, and other mutual concerns.
- Providing feedback to the police department to allow it to better understand the fears and concerns of youth. The police may then develop problem-solving efforts beyond the drug issue.
- Adults within the community, including parents, teachers, school staff, administrators and board members may begin to view the police in a new light.
- Officers perspectives on public school life and community concerns may be broadened.
- D.A.R.E.® training introduces officers to a measure which gauges success by community acceptance and support rather than numbers of crimes and arrests.
- D.A.R.E.® officers may become a resource for the department in developing problem-solving initiatives.
- D.A.R.E.® officers can provide important information on a range of law enforcement issues beyond the drug problem to young people in question and answer sessions.
- D.A.R.E.® may stimulate interest in other police activities, such as the Police Explorers or the Police Athletic League, and in other youth-oriented programs.
- D.A.R.E.® can reduce peer pressure, help youths to balance their values, and encourage many forms of responsible behavior.

Building on ideas of partnership, open communication, reciprocal education, and mutual respect, community policing and programs like D.A.R.E.® can make significant progress in increasing the quality of life in our nation's communities.