

# Smarter Solutions for Crime Reduction: The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority Strategic Planning Initiative

## SMARTER SOLUTION SNAPSHOT: ROCKFORD & PEORIA DRUG MARKET INTERVENTION INITIATIVES

The Rockford and Peoria Drug Market Intervention Initiatives (DMI) address the challenge of effectively responding to illegal drug markets and their associated crime, violence, and disorder that has proven challenging for communities and law enforcement for decades. DMI is a strategic problem-solving initiative aimed at permanently closing down open-air drug markets. The strategy targets individual drug markets using focused deterrence with transformational elements. The most violent offenders are targeted and prosecuted as examples. The strategy then targets low-level offenders and stages an intervention with families and community leaders. Law enforcement mobilizes community residents, leaders, and family members of low-level drug dealers to voice their intolerance for this criminal behavior and to create opportunity and support for the offenders. Offenders are given the option to straighten up or face lengthy prison sentences and are provided assistance in locating employment, housing, transportation, health care, and access to other social services.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. How did you know you had a problem?

A number of factors converged in both Rockford and Peoria, but the recurring theme was the exposure to other sites that implemented the strategy as well as motivated personnel who decided they too would like to take on the challenge of disrupting a local street drug market. Upon identifying the need for a strategic intervention, a detailed problem analysis was conducted where research analysts generated crime hotspot maps, which identified the potential 'high-risk' areas where later efforts would be focused. The analysts specifically examined the prior years' crime trend data along with calls for service to generate a better understanding of the places most in-need of proactive policing.

### 2. What was the problem you needed to address?

Open air drug markets and the illegal distribution of drugs by street-level dealers in specific locations within high crime communities. In addition to illegal drug sales, a number of additional and related problems plagued these geographic areas, which has been shown to include prostitution, illegal gambling, property crime, and in some cases violence against people within the neighborhood. In essence, these drug markets were hotspots that supported a host of illicit activities that undermined generated crime and undermined community confidence.

### 3. Who was the leader in addressing the problem? Has that changed through the life of the strategy?

There were multiple leaders involved in these crime prevention strategies. Within the police departments, the upper-administration made it a priority for the department in terms of

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<sup>1</sup> Drug Market Intervention Program Overview, Retrieved on September 7, 2010 at: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/topics/DMII.pdf>

committing resources and manpower. In addition, a specific unit commander facilitated the identification and investigation of habitual offenders. Also, the prosecutor's office committed a key prosecutor to give credibility to the deterrent message. All of these pieces were vital given different people needed to take charge at different times, as the strategy unfolded.

#### **4. How did you determine your strategy (policy, program, or practice) for addressing the problem?**

We became familiar with our strategy through the dissemination of information provided by other police departments who had implemented a few years prior. For example, RPD became familiar with the program at a COPS meeting. However, follow-up such as bringing in an expert in this strategy to the department (i.e., Rockford) or sending officers down to additional agencies who had already participated in the program (i.e., Peoria) to gain a better understanding of program process was very important in terms of identifying the strategy and committing to the core principals of the intervention.

#### **5. What are the core components of your strategy that make it effective?**

In addition to first getting a firm commitment from key personnel (within the police department, as well as prosecutors, probation/parole, and social service providers), which is the foundation of the program -- we believe that identification, notification, and resource delivery are the key components of the strategy. Analysts and key personnel had to identify the problem area as well as problem offenders within the area. Later, detailed investigations were conducted to 'build cases' against these individuals. This took several weeks to several months in some cases. The public notification to these offenders was also a vitally important part that occurred in a public setting in an effort to let the surrounding community know of our firm commitment to change the pattern of offending in these areas. Finally, resource delivery to offenders who committed to the program and were successful in their attempt to quit offending was also important.

#### **6. Who are the key partners?**

The primary partners include: law enforcement, prosecution, probation/parole, social service providers, key community personnel (i.e., neighborhood leaders).

#### **7. How much did it cost?**

We do not have the exact figures but it took a lot of economic and personnel resources. A lot of the stakeholders put in a lot of extra time to make it pay off.

#### **8. What type of reorganization of existing resources did you undertake?**

The police took advantage of their investigation strategies and buyers to make the cases against the dealers. This took a lot of pooling of existing resources to make it work.

## **9. How did you garner public support for your strategy?**

The public in these target areas wanted something done. In particular, key community personnel were constantly seeking additional support from the police in terms of addressing crime problems. Once the strategy unfolded and community members were invited to the call-in notification, people became more aware of the program and supported our efforts to do something positive to address crime in the community.

## **10. In retrospect, what would you have done differently to plan for, develop, and implement your strategy?**

Both sites were comfortable with how the strategy was conducted.

## **11. How do you know your strategy is working?**

A detailed process and outcome assessment is vital to understanding the potential changes in crime and the likely driving force behind those changes. This involves more than a simple comparison of incident trends before and after the strategy. It is important to outline the overall process of the intervention and to identify areas where there was strict adherence to program fidelity and where there was divergence (for whatever reasons). In terms of assessing change, it is important to assess changes in specific crimes as well as calls for service (which are less-susceptible to criticisms of 'police control') and community responses (e.g., surveys or interviews) to see what residents think of the program as well as whether there were appreciable differences in the community.

*For more information about the Rockford or Peoria Drug Market Intervention model, contact:*

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