



Program Evaluation

Summary

Vol. 1, No. 2

April 2003

Community policing

Accountability in Management in the Chicago Police Department

By Wesley G. Skogan, Lynn Steiner, and Jill DuBois,
the Chicago Community Policing Evaluation
Consortium*

This evaluation summary highlights findings from the most recent examination of Chicago's Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) that pertain to accountability in management within the Chicago Police Department.¹ CAPS has evolved to include new information technology and management initiatives that will focus the Department's resources on resolving chronic crime and disorder complaints.

The move toward managing for accountability is one of the most important innovations in contemporary American policing. The concept was popularized by New York City, where police headquarters uses

crime data to identify priority trends. Local commanders select the most effective tactics for addressing them and are responsible for rapidly deploying their officers. Management analysts at headquarters assess how well the precincts have done, and at frequent "Crime Control Strategy Meetings" commanders appear before department executives to defend their effectiveness. Since their inauguration in 1994 these meetings have become famous and have been emulated across the nation.

In February 2000, the Chicago Police Department's Office of Management Accountability (OMA) was established for a similar purpose. Directed by a deputy superintendent, this unit works to ensure that all CPD personnel and resources are linked to strategies developed to address crime and disorder jointly identified by the community and police. Each of the 25 police districts is responsible for identifying



Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor
Candice M. Kane, Executive Director

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

120 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 1016
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Phone: 312-793-8550, TDD: 312-793-4170,
Fax: 312-793-8422
website: www.icjia.state.il.us

Program Evaluation Summaries are derived from program evaluations funded or conducted by the Authority. The full evaluation reports are available from the Authority.

For more information about this or other publications from the Authority, please contact the Authority's Criminal Justice Information Clearinghouse at or visit our website.

Printed by authority of the State of Illinois, April 2003.
Printing order #03-214.

** The Chicago Community Policing Evaluation Consortium is coordinated by the Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University. It also includes faculty and students from the University of Illinois at Chicago. The Consortium is supported in part by grants from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.*

The full 2002 report, "Community Policing in Chicago, Years Eight and Nine," and copies of earlier reports can be found at the Institute for Policy Research website (www.Northwestern.edu/IPR/policing.html) or they can be requested from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

local priorities, planning strategies to address them and executing those plans effectively. This especially applies to newly emerging crime trends, which districts are expected to identify rapidly. Consistent with Chicago's commitment to community policing, districts are responsible for identifying and responding to a broad range of community concerns as well. Finally, there is increased oversight of the efficiency of district managers, including how they deal with such mundane but important issues as abuse of medical leave.

The role of OMA is to oversee this process, holding district commanders and area deputy chiefs (the commander's immediate superiors) accountable for spotting crime trends and identifying and responding to community concerns and management issues. Because it was a departure for the Chicago police, the accountability process was introduced slowly, and discussions of their new responsibilities were held with each district's management team.

Creating, implementing, and evaluating the results of the districts' Strategic Operational Plans (SOPs) lies at the heart of the accountability process. These plans identify the offenders, victims and locations that district management teams have prioritized, the specific steps they will take to counter them, and their crime reduction goals. At any given time Chicago's districts are working on about three SOPs, so commanders have to make hard decisions about the level of resources they can devote to them.

Their effectiveness is reviewed at the Area level. The five districts comprising each police Area participate quarterly in formal sessions at which their plans and accomplishments are evaluated. There are also Area-level plans, which are formulated when it is apparent that a problem transcends district boundaries. More formal still are the upper-level evaluation reviews held at police headquarters. During these sessions, senior executives assess the effectiveness with which the department's core missions are being addressed. Each session focuses on one district and its management team. OMA analysts have examined in advance whether or not the district's strategic plans were actually carried out; whether "cops are on the dots" (if they are working where the crime is); whether concerns expressed by the community are being attended to; and if the department's numerous and highly independent specialized units are contributing to the effort. Their findings are displayed on giant screens that focus attention on district trends.

Accountability as a change strategy

The accountability process is not just a series of meetings. Foremost, it is intended to set in motion internal organizational processes that must happen for the four requirements – reducing chronic crime and

disorder, responding quickly to emerging trends, speaking to residents' concerns and managing efficiently – to be realized.

Clarifying the Mission

Organizations can drift away from their core missions, especially in the public sector where success at "the bottom line" does not directly translate into individuals' paychecks. Organizations tend to become self-serving when they can, focusing on problems that comfortably fit their practices and letting internal administrative issues and bureaucratic infighting take precedence over their real work. The accountability process has refocused police efforts on chronic crime and disorder. An examination of the problems prioritized by the districts and the work of their management teams indicates that serious crime and disorder problems have taken first place on their agenda. Forcing district managers to divert attention from administrative and bureaucratic tasks and refocus their energy on crime in their district was one of OMA's goals, and it has been achieved.

Developing a culture of accountability

The long-term goal of the department is to pass control of the accountability process from headquarters to the five police Areas, decentralizing responsibility for keeping the organization on its toes. For this to work, accountability must become part of the culture of the organization. This requires managers to know their district. They must use the technological resources available to them to discover their own hotspots, crime spikes, and crime patterns. Unlike New York City, they cannot rely on headquarters to tell them what to do. We found that the pressure of the accountability process, combined with the availability of increasingly useful information systems, has led to greater attention to the details of district crime.

Managers are also expected to more effectively use resources that are already in their hands. This includes taking measures to curb complaints about officer misconduct, avoiding unanswered 911 calls, making sure officers are spending the right amount of time on assignment, and keeping overtime expenses under control. These issues are routinely brought up at all levels of the accountability process. There is broad agreement that this process has promoted teamwork. Identifying and overcoming shortcomings that they may be called upon to explain binds management teams together. Although commanders are responsible for their districts, only a team can succeed. Assembling a competent management group is more crucial now than it has ever been. Savvy commanders delegate responsibility for answering some questions they anticipate at headquarters meetings to the members of

their staff who were responsible for dealing with the issue, giving them an opportunity to shine when they have done a good job.

The districts also must learn to stay focused. As one lieutenant described it: "In the past, there was a lot of good police work done, but it was in a spaghetti fashion, [that is] you would throw everything to the wall and something will stick." One of the challenges of policing is that there are always more things that need attention than there are resources to address them. The accountability process emphasizes focusing on priority problems, specifically targeting situations where the district's resources will have the greatest impact. Utilizing crime analysis, districts are expected to decipher the exact nature of their problems, so they can deploy their resources efficiently.

Districts must be able to demonstrate they have carried through on their plans. Implementation is called "punching the ticket," and this is a major focus of accountability sessions at all levels. There is evidence that districts are doing just this. However much district managers moan about oversight by "OMA's computers," the constant pressure of the accountability process forces them to execute their plans effectively. But unlike cities where top management sets specific crime reduction goals and police chiefs can find specific crime reduction targets in their employment contracts, Chicago has consciously chosen not to require commanders to "make their numbers." They need to be able to point to measurable successes in alleviating crime and disorder problems, but recognizing that expectations must differ from district to district, the department's long tradition of not holding commanders strictly accountable for crime trends in their district continues to be the order of the day.

Overcoming the bureaucracy

Like most departments, the CPD is divided into separate bureaucratic fiefdoms, but with sufficient pressure they can be pulled together to collaborate on specific problems. There were visible effects of the accountability sessions on the insularity of two units – Detectives and Special Operations – during the first 18 months of the new accountability process. They are now more willing to share information and focus on district goals rather than their own priorities. Units such as the CAPS Implementation Office, the city's attorneys, and the department's own computer systems unit are also more focused on supporting field operations.

Practicing intelligence driven policing

The capacity to link management accountability to new information technology represents a major change in the way police departments can be run. In

the past, computers simply stored the immense flow of data into police departments. Increasingly they are flexible enough to give back needed information, in the form of analytic reports and crime maps. A great deal of knowledge about what is happening in a district is now available to everyone. Information can easily be organized to reveal crime patterns, as well as to reveal how police officers are spending time and whether they are having any impact.

Disseminating best practices

Accountability meetings provide one forum for discussing "best practices." OMA tries to encourage creative problem solving; a familiar refrain at accountability sessions is "You've got to think outside the box . . . we should constantly be looking at different ways to knock down the problem." Whenever a district comes up with a new approach or initiative, OMA staff and senior executives offer praise and talk about making details of these efforts available to all districts. An internal department web site includes access to an inventory of best practice reports.

Accountability issues

Measuring what matters

Chicago's accountability process currently focuses primarily on traditional crime and unit performance measures to determine whether something is a problem, if something is being done about it, and whether the problem is getting any better. Even while they acknowledge that keeping track of these traditional numbers is necessary, managers in the field recognize that these measures undervalue important elements of community policing, including public satisfaction and the formation of police-community partnerships. There are no measures of two objectives set out in the department's mission statement: fear of crime and satisfaction among the department's "customers," who contact and are served by the police. Except for beat meeting attendance and numbers of people attending court advocacy groups and other activities, little is monitored on the citizen side of the CAPS partnership. More attention needs to be devoted to learning about community concerns and the strategies that can involve the community more directly in problem solving.

Rewarding performance

In order for the accountability process to be credible, districts need to be rewarded for doing a good job – not just for doing their job – and they need to be disciplined when they are doing a poor job. According to department executives, district managers have been removed because of their performance, but this is not

visible to many. In the field, managers believe that, at best, the only reward is pride in a job well done. They can be frustrated because their efforts are not rewarded, while colleagues who don't appear to put in the effort suffer no consequences. There is no visible "grading" of districts on the basis of their Area or headquarters sessions. Currently, the only apparent penalty for not doing well is losing face. This is not trivial – no commander wants to be embarrassed by performing poorly in front of superiors and his or her own management staff. Except for the occasional "I congratulate you," there is no other apparent feedback.

Institutionalizing change

Support for the accountability process seems strong among those who are actually involved in it: Area and district executives and members of district management teams. However, such detailed oversight of district effectiveness runs counter to tradition in the CPD. The process has been discomfoting for districts and special units accustomed to operating with little administrative scrutiny as long as nothing is obviously wrong. Because it is new and (critics argue) it diverts resources from field operations to management tasks, those who are skeptical about accountability manage-

ment can hope it will wither away in future administrations. The need to stay the course is highlighted by the special difficulty of changing the culture of police organizations. Accountability is now an official feature of the department. It will not be enough, however, to label new boxes and arrows on the organization chart. Senior managers all over the city must believe in the process and remain committed to making it work. ■



Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority

This project was supported by Grant #00-DB-MU-0017, awarded to the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions contained within this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority or the U.S. Department of Justice.

PERMITS NUMBER 4273
CHICAGO, IL
PAID
U.S. POSTAGE
PRESORTED STANDARD

ILLINOIS
Criminal Justice Information Authority
120 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 1016
Chicago, Illinois 60606
312-793-8550, TDD: 312-793-4170, Fax: 312-793-8422
www.icjia.state.il.us