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On Good Authority is a periodic briefing on trends and issues in criminal justice program evaluation. This report was written by staff Research Analyst Karen S. Levy McCanna and Wesley G. Skogan, Ph.D., of Northwestern University. It is the third in a series of four summaries highlighting the most recent program evaluation of the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy. The evaluation was conducted by the Chicago Community Policing Consortium, coordinated by the Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University. Copies of the evaluation are available from the Authority's Research and Analysis Unit.

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Neighborhood order and community policing in Chicago

Defined as mutual trust and a willingness to maintain public order, collective efficacy is a key component of the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS). This *On Good Authority* examines collective efficacy in Chicago neighborhoods and the city's efforts to create collective efficacy in targeted communities.

The Chicago Community Policing Evaluation Consortium continued an evaluation of the CAPS program last year and published its latest report, "Community Policing in Chicago, Years Five and Six: An Interim Report," in May 1999. The evaluation was funded by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority using federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act funds. The National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation provided additional funding.

Research has shown that communities with high levels of collective efficacy are safer and more secure. Collective efficacy is lowest in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty and in racially or ethnically heterogeneous areas.

The community mobilization project is a Chicago initiative to create collective efficacy in targeted areas. Reflecting the city's commitment to CAPS, the project attempts to build a strong organizational infrastructure that will support community policing. Community organizers are hired to work with community members, agencies, and

governmental entities to promote resident involvement in problem-solving activities on behalf of the community.

The project aims to:

- Bring block-level organization to areas where there is none.
- Involve existing organizations in the problem-solving process.
- Identify and secure the resources required to solve pressing problems.
- Train community members to solve problems in their neighborhoods in accordance with local beat officers and city service agencies.

Organizational structure

CAPS organizers are hired by the city or by nonprofit community agencies that have a contract with the city. Funding for the project comes from the city's corporate budget and from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), a national, nonprofit, community development support organization. Community organizers hired by nonprofit agencies work independently of the CAPS Implementation Office. The CAPS manager meets monthly with the contracting agencies to discuss activities, conflicts, bureaucratic issues, and future events.

The hierarchy of organizers hired by the city begins with the CAPS project manager who provides overall project direction and guiding philosophy. The field coordinator manages a team of five area coordinators who supervise small

teams of community organizers. Each organizer works on projects in several beats in their district. Figure 1 illustrates the number of beats served and the number of organizers employed by the CAPS Implementation Office and by contracting agencies.

Implementation to date

Community empowerment and self-sufficiency are the program’s main goals. Organizers coordinate a variety of activities to encourage participation in CAPS, build relationships and develop problem-solving skills within the community, and foster a partnership between the community and police.

A number of tools are available through CAPS to help communities solve problems and improve the quality of life. These tools include the city service request process; the Strategic Inspections Task Force, which enforces Chicago’s anti-gang and drug house ordinance; the landlord training program; Fast Track demolition; and liquor license control. A variety of community-action tools also are available, including court advocacy, block club organizing, citizen and parent patrols, safe school zones, and a program in which parents develop safe routes and walk groups of children to and from school. Other available resources include CAPS monthly beat meetings, the police department’s computerized crime mapping and analysis system, and problem-solving training.

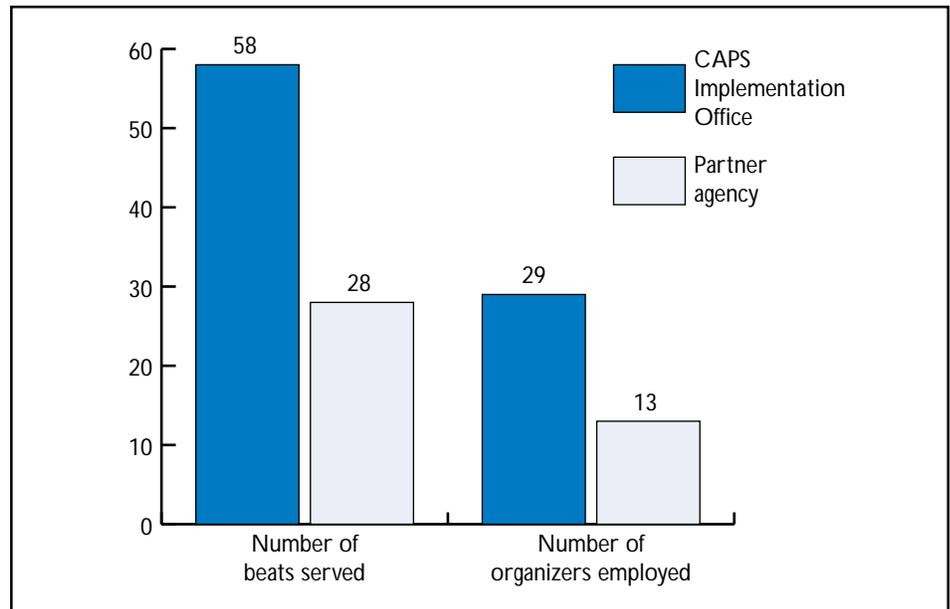
The evaluation

Evaluators analyzed 19 beats in five clusters. Focusing on collective efficacy as part of a large overall evaluation, three clusters represented the work of the nonprofit agencies in African-American, Latino, and racially diverse beats. The other two beat clusters were assigned to city organizers and were mostly made up of African Americans and Latinos.

Data collection activities included observation of planning and training meetings, interviews with key activists, public meeting attendance, and ride-alongs with beat officers. An inventory of each beat’s organizations and resources were compiled to understand how effectively communities were

Figure 1

Beats served and organizers employed by CAPS



mobilized in support of the program and to monitor how the program coordinated with police activity at the beat and district levels.

The evaluation also included a telephone survey of 1,880 community residents involved in the mobilization project. Survey data enabled evaluators to establish a baseline profile of conditions within the community. Survey questions examined residents’ views of neighborhood problems, their awareness of CAPS, and their involvement in beat meetings. The survey also touched on the quality of police services within the community.

The survey included questions designed to measure a neighborhood’s capacity to deal with problems. These questions examined residents’ participation in community-based organizations, their perceptions of the willingness of their neighbors to intervene to reestablish order, and their views on what neighbors would do if the local police station were threatened with closure or if public housing were to be constructed in their community.

The survey also gauged the strength of informal social control with questions about the likelihood of neighbors intervening in three incidents: children spray-painting graffiti

on a building; a teenager harassing an elderly person; and a fight in front of their home. Just more than 70 percent of respondents thought that neighbors would be very likely or likely to intervene if teenagers were harassing an elderly person, or if they witnessed someone spray-painting graffiti. Fewer respondents believed that neighbors would intervene during a fight in front of their homes. Just more than 40 percent believed it was unlikely or very unlikely that their neighbors would stop a fight. Another 15 percent said their neighbors would only call the police.

Residents were asked how likely they believed their neighbors were to become politically active by organizing a protest of the closing of a local police station or the building of public housing in their neighborhood. Responses indicated that nearly 75 percent of the residents surveyed believed their neighbors were likely or very likely to organize to protest against the closing of a local police station. Sixty percent said they believe it is very likely or likely that neighbors would organize to stop the development of public housing in their neighborhood.

Twenty-one percent of respondents reported that someone in their household was involved with a block or community

group, 14 percent said a household member was involved in a neighborhood watch or patrol, and 13 percent said a household member was in a school-based group. Only 11 percent reported that their household was involved in two or three civic groups.

The survey also contained questions used to measure the quality of police services. Four questions regarded police performance in the areas of crime prevention, maintaining order on the streets and sidewalks, dealing with neighborhood problems, and collaborating with residents to solve problems. Another question was asked to gauge police responsiveness to community concerns.

More than 75 percent of respondents rated police responsiveness to community problems as good or very good (Figure 2). Police were given the lowest rating in the area of collaborating with residents to solve problems. About 55 percent of respondents gave police a fair or poor rating.

Organizational struggles

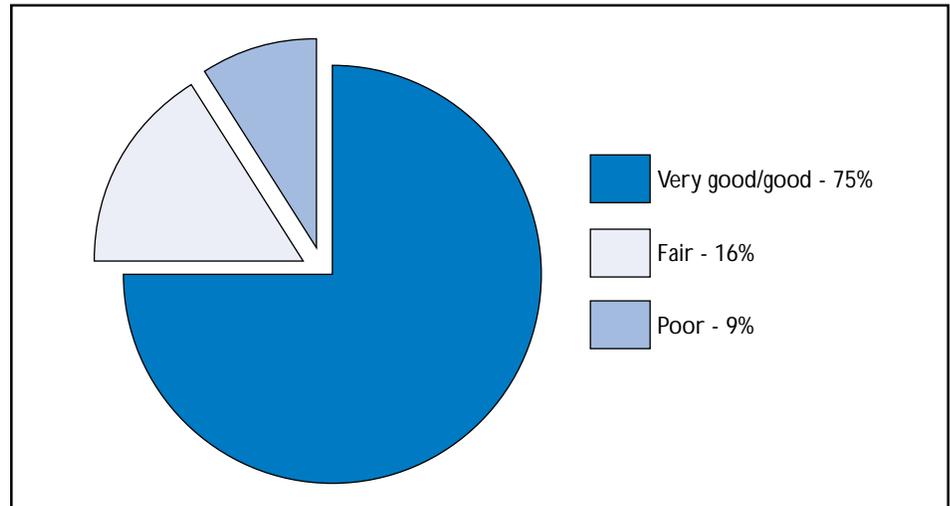
The community mobilization project has experienced implementation problems, some typical of newly formed agencies and others rooted in the organization and tasks associated with the project. During the first months of the project there were glitches in the city bureaucracy that caused delays in payment to the partner agencies, creating some distrust and anger. The financial problems did not affect LISC-supported agencies, and the situation increased public awareness that these agencies were not connected to the CAPS Implementation Office in the same manner as city-funded agencies.

In 1999 about a dozen partner organizations had contracts to provide organizers to the project. The city's organizing staff had grown to 29, and other city staff members supported the CAPS court advocacy project, youth services projects, and programs targeting blighted buildings.

Frequent staff turnover is a recurring problem. Reasons for the turnover rate range from contractual problems to job dissatisfaction. Many organizers find the work demanding, citing a

Figure 2

CAPS resident survey results: How responsive are neighborhood police to community concerns?



burdensome amount of paperwork required to document the autonomous work in their beats.

In addition, organizers have different philosophies. Some prefer to work within the system gaining and utilizing resources and tools. They believe recognizing system-wide guidelines and building working relationships reinforces a sense of cooperation between communities and agencies. Other organizers believe a confrontational approach is more productive. By putting the spotlight on individuals in positions of power, they believe they can force a response to their concerns. They strive for a unified vocal group to wield a political force strong enough to affect change.

Evaluators observed that organizers from contracting agencies have tremendous liberty to implement their versions of CAPS, while city-hired organizers have adopted a more standardized version of CAPS under the supervision of area coordinators.

Program update

This part of the summary is based on an evaluation that ended in March 1999. Because the scope of the Implementation Office's responsibilities expanded, the office's staff grew, and the number of beats involved in the project increased during the evaluation, it was difficult to

provide an accurate assessment of the program. Chicago's community mobilization efforts continue, and since the completion of the interim report, evaluators have focused on the role of CAPS organizers.

CAPS organizers are expected to fulfill a variety of responsibilities. They organize antidrug and anti-gang marches, prayer vigils, and other crime prevention and awareness activities. In addition they staff booths at city fairs, attend and speak at CAPS beat meetings, and provide city service information. Organizers also meet with police, beat facilitators, clergy members, and aldermen, and organize parent patrols and safe school groups.

Organizers try to establish block clubs and networks of community stakeholders through churches and community leaders, and sometimes by rallying residents who live near drug houses. They facilitate training and educational sessions for residents on topics such as city services, landlord training, and problem solving. They also educate their communities on the city's 'vote dry' ordinances, which can help them deal with problem liquor establishments. In addition, they nail up posters, distribute flyers, and visit door-to-door.

Many organizers also were actively involved in supporting projects sponsored by district advisory committees. They worked to build support for

neighborhood safety legislation, including Chicago's gang loitering ordinance and the Illinois Safe Neighborhoods Act, turning out busloads of residents for rallies supporting these initiatives.

Organizers are expected to support resident problem-solving projects, but routinely face the dilemma posed by their goal of community empowerment — in the end, they must stay in the background and let residents solve problems on their own. Organizers also have to move on. Once they build a solid base in a community, organizers are expected to take on another neighborhood.

In addition, organizers face conflicts posed by the dual role of representing the community and the police. The public's greatest concern — street drug sales — often creates a degree of hostility between residents and police at beat meetings. The issue is a major source of public frustration with the quality of police service in Chicago. Residents cannot understand the perceived inability of police to control

what they consider continuous and blatant drug dealing by well-known local toughs. They complain of police disinterest in the information they offer about local drug markets.

Organizers also became enmeshed in the heated debate over the city's gang loitering ordinance. Evaluation surveys indicated gang loitering is one of the public's most highly rated problems, especially among African Americans. Organizers worked to build support for the ordinance's reenactment during 1999, but felt the heat of the debate in communities that were not united over the wisdom of the policy and its implementation by the police in poor neighborhoods.

Finally, organizers became involved in disputes over which factions of the community they represented. Gentrification concerns were at the forefront of a conflict in one beat, where residents charged that the partner-agency organizer principally represented the

economic interests of his employer, rather than the community.

Looking ahead

Questions for future consideration:

- Should the city give financial support to independent community groups, essentially contracting out community organizing, or is it more effective to directly employ organizers managed by a city department?
- Can grassroots organizers separate themselves from politics? What should they do when their organizing efforts run afoul of the views of elected officials? Should they get involved in pressing political issues that impact their work, such as the gang loitering ordinance?
- Are the efforts of individual organizers, even when supported by a broad range of city services and working in conjunction with local police, enough to make a difference in the targeted beats? ♦

