

Focused Deterrence
And
The High Point Police
Department

The High Point Police Department was introduced to David Kennedy in 1997. David was visiting Greensboro, NC to share Boston Police Department's approach to confronting an upsurge of youth violence. The approach used in Boston seemed to be working and was getting a lot of attention.

Members of the High Point Police Department were intrigued and subsequently, took a trip to Boston. Representatives from the High Point Police Department and City of High Point accompanied personnel from the US Attorney's Office, Middle District of North Carolina, to Boston MA. This was an opportunity to meet all the players and figure out how to replicate Boston's success.

By 1998, the High Point Police Department implemented its own version of the Boston approach. The High Point Model focused on violent repeat offenders. Like Boston, the efforts resulted in significant reductions in violent crime. The agency was moving away from being a "response to calls for service agency."

We started engaging the community in a meaningful way, identifying our crime problem and focus on the individuals driving it. We discovered that we could actually arrest fewer people, be more strategic with our prosecutions and drive down violent crime. These ideas are in contrast with the larger law enforcement community. Most still believe crime problems are solved by arrest and lengthy jail sentences.

Since 1998, the High Point Police Department has applied focused deterrence in a number of ways. We have used it to deter violent repeat offenders, street level drug dealers, gang members committing robberies and, on identified offenders in crime hot spots. We are excited to announce that we will soon apply focused deterrence to domestic violence offenders.

Employing focused deterrence has helped the department continue driving down violent crime. We have also banked a tremendous amount of community capital. I believe the trust the community has in our Police Department is at an all time high.

In spite of all of our accomplishments, we continued to struggle with the cultural changes required by individuals to institutionalize this new way of policing. In addition, like most agencies across the country, we were still structured to respond to calls for service and investigate crime as it occurred.

In 2003, new High Point Police Chief, Jim Fealy, made some bold changes. He brought David Kennedy back to High Point to address the crime surrounding open

air drug markets. However, Chief Fealy's approach was very different. His initial meeting with Kennedy would include his entire executive staff and other key players.

This act ensured that all staff members heard the idea from its inception. At the conclusion of David's presentation, the Chief asked if everyone on staff was committed to the idea. The answer was yes. The Chief created the vision, and his staff would follow. Buy-in from the agencies top executive is a key to successfully implementing any initiative. Especially one that involves a major cultural change like focused deterrence.

We find that most individuals in law enforcement are so engrained in doing things the old way that they will go to great lengths to fight the changes. In some cases they will attempt to sabotage what they see as a worthless waste time. When the agency head steps out and declares that, "this is how our agency will police," one greatly improves his chances for success.

Once the Chief secured commitment from his staff, he restructured the agency so that our structure would support our primary mission, violent crime reduction. Units that are directly involved in reducing violent crime were placed in the same division under key personnel. This created a seamless response to acts of violence while facilitating all intelligence gathering and strategic planning from one division.

Why Consider Realignment?

- Make our structure support our primary mission, which is to reduce violent crime. Institutionalize what we say we do. Be able to push the envelope and try new experiments.
- As it stands only one detective is assigned as the VCTF. Who else is backing up our promise of special attention to VCTF call in offenders who re-offend?
- Who is looking at the big picture? Who is studying the relationships between repeat offenders and violent crime trends? Who is looking at the data? Researching what we learned.
- Almost all violent crime involves drugs, guns, gangs and persons crimes. The units that should be involved with reducing violent crime are in different Divisions. (serving different masters)

- Formalize our major case review and response to acts of violence.
- To facilitate our intelligence gathering, data analysis, strategic planning, implementation, coordination with our VCTF partners and to have multiple units responsible for violent crime reduction rather than one.
- Involve investigators in deterrence and prevention, as well as detection and arrest. A more comprehensive approach to violence reduction. Apply the logic model we perfected on drug markets to other violent behaviors.
- Preserve the North / South geographic accountability for the majors but add Violent Crime Reduction accountability to a major.
- Involved all three majors in crime fighting. Administrative duties should be spread among the majors eliminating the need for a purely Admin Division.

Realigning your agency can create a structure that facilitates violent crime reduction. It will, to an extent, aid the cultural change necessary to further focused deterrence. However, administrators also need to expose their personnel to experts in the area of focused deterrence and provide the appropriate literature and training to help personnel understand how focused deterrence works.

After realignment, the Major Crimes Division issued a number of readings to personnel in each unit. The first reading was “Pulling Levers.” The Pulling Levers article would provide the basis for why we use focused deterrence. A discussion followed all the readings so that all personnel understood the direction the division and agency was moving in.

Our focused deterrence efforts in High Point include responding to acts of violence and response to hot spots. Explanations for both were also provided.

WHY SHOULD WE RESPOND TO ACTS OF VIOLENCE?

Since 1998, the High Point Police Department has been transforming the way we address violent crime. For many years we, like jurisdictions throughout the country, have followed the belief that locking up offenders for lengthy periods of time would deter others from committing similar crimes of violence. We have also learned that

other crime reduction efforts, especially those regarding drug crime fighting, have alienated the communities we have taken an oath to protect and serve.

Since 1998, we have demonstrated that by using focused deterrence, even in areas where crime is excessively high, that we can significantly reduce crime. In addition, we have proven that this can be done making fewer arrests. This combined with transparent methods, community involvement, and assistance to would-be-offenders has pushed our department to the nation's forefront of violent crime reduction. Most important, it has earned us the support and respect of our community.

The two strategies employed by our department, Repeat Offender and Street Level Drug, are based on deterrence strategies used in Boston, Massachusetts. Professor David Kennedy, of John Jay College, explains how focused deterrence works in an article called, "Pulling Levers." Our strategies are based on the efforts in Boston, and David Kennedy helped craft those strategies.

The steps involved in both strategies include: Identification, Investigation/Prosecution, Notification, Resource Delivery, Response to Violent Acts, and Evaluation. While all of these steps are critical to the strategies, our response to acts of violence sends some of the most important messages to the community and offenders needing to hear it. When we respond to violent acts in a coordinated and focused way, using all available resources, we let everyone know that there is a new day.

Our response to violent acts, need to be focused on the appropriate offenders in the right locations. The message we deliver and the sanctions we employ may be the most important part of deterrence. We are letting them know they are our new focus lending certainty to prosecution and/or serious sanctions where before they may have been arrested by chance. For that reason, incident reviews are required after violent criminal acts. The incident review will bring out the information needed to determine where and how to employ focused deterrence and whom we focus on. Our ability to develop a meaningful system for responding to acts of violence will allow us to further our success in reducing violent crime in our city.

Employing Deterrence for Violence And “Hot Spots”

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The same deterrence methods used for responding to acts of violence can be applied to other problematic crime areas. Such areas are often identified by spikes or obvious increases in crime and are referred to as “Hot Spots”

Law enforcement has adopted new technology and functionality related to Crime Analysis. Map based analysis with tools to identify specific crime types or areas in a city where there is a concentration of crimes are now common. Links to record management systems, 911 data, probation and gang databases allows crime analysis to reveal the what, where, when, and who of criminal activity.

High Point PD is fortunate to be at the leading edge with use of GIS and integrated databases. Standard tools to generate density maps are common place; the resulting maps are typically referred to as hot spot maps. Hot spot maps of specific crime types or activities, along with time and day of week patterns, allows for law enforcement to develop specific response plans to what is occurring “on the ground”.

Information related to new crimes or arrests allow for near real time reanalysis of the data and the regeneration of hot spots and associated list of offenders or crime. The identification of a new hot spot initiative an incident review which can escalate to initiating a focused deterrence response.

Identification of a "hot spot can be achieved by general investigative observation or through the use of crime mapping. In general, we continuously look to identify "hot spots" of violent criminal activity like robbery, homicide and shootings. We also look for violent crime activity "indicators" such as drug calls and shots fired calls. In cases where incidents or increases of violence are detected, we use crime mapping to unpack incidents to determine what and/or whom we are dealing with. Reading related reports could help identify target locations and bad players. Identification is achieved by using the same mapping application as in our drug initiative.

Once we identify a location and determine what and/or who may be driving the increased activity, we bring our personnel together from the Major Crimes Unit and discuss data and related reports we have gathered. We invite other units throughout the department to seek any additional information. This is referred to as *incident review*.

Department restructuring has placed units critical to violent crime investigation and suppression under one umbrella. This facilitates an expedient gathering of the necessary personnel needed to evaluate and formulate a proper response to violent incidents and identified "hot spots".

The incident review identifies locations, bad players and gang members fueling the "hot spot activity". Once individual offenders and locations are identified, we employ focused deterrence methods to them. In all cases, we begin by identifying individuals on probation, those with outstanding warrants for arrest and those who are involved in narcotics dealing and those with cases already pending in court.

A deterrence message is crafted and communicated face to face with offenders, the criminal element and community members in the targeted area. Flyers are distributed with our deterrence message. We state that acts of violence will not be tolerated. We tell offenders that the police and the community will no longer tolerate acts of violence and specifically describe what acts will get them our undivided attention. (Robbery, assault, murder, gun violence etc.)

All units involved are deployed to the "hot spot" location. Probation checks and violations are enforced. Outstanding warrants for arrest are served, drug houses are searched with warrants, street level drug arrests are made and, our message of deterrence is delivered.

Our message states, "You are getting significant police attention because of a recent act(s) of violence in our community." (We specify the act.) "We cannot arrest everyone for every crime; however, if you commit acts of violence in our community, we will focus all of our attention and resources on you." The flyer we distribute, depicts examples of past federal gun prosecutions and/or recent arrests in their neighborhood in response to the violent act. Offenders now know the expectation of the community and the consequences for not following it. They see that a multitude of agencies are working together with the community.

During this process, it may be determined that a gang is responsible for or is active in the identified area. In this case, we will run the gang through probation checks, check for pending cases and execute outstanding warrants for arrest. Search warrants and street level drug arrests are executed against gang members. We consult with the District Attorney to ensure they are aware of the gang's involvement. We work with the District Attorney to ensure gang members with pending cases are prosecuted with their gang affiliation in mind.

Members of the gang on probation are called in to the Police Department to receive a face-to-face message of deterrence. The message is delivered by law enforcement and community.

We tell them we know who they are and what they are involved in. We use specific examples and names to demonstrate our knowledge of them. We give them the same deterrence message used with all other violent offenders.

"You are getting all of this police attention because of a recent act(s) of violence in our community." (We specify the act.) "We cannot arrest everyone for every crime. However, if you commit acts of violence in our community, we will come at you with all of our resources." "Tell your friends that if anyone in your gang, clique, crew or group commits a violent act, we will punish the entire gang."

The High Point Police Department has employed these deterrence methods on "hot spots" and in response to acts of violence several times since August 2007. In all instances, mapping shows a clear reduction in the type of crime the deterrence was focused on after the deterrence was employed.

Once reductions in the hot spot area are attained, the crime analyst will continue to monitor the area. Any acts of violence in the area are followed by an incident review and action plan.

Personnel from each unit within the division were provided core values defining unit objectives. The language used supports our mission using focused deterrence.

Violent Crimes Unit Core Values

It is our responsibility to ensure that the actions and efforts of the Violent Crimes Unit fit the core values of The High Point Police Department. The following framework describes the actions of the Violent Crimes Unit as they pertain to our core values.

Crime Fighting

We will work vigorously to identify and pursue perpetrators, and potential perpetrators of violent crime. We will use open case review and share pertinent information to identify perpetrators. We will employ all of our resources in a proactive manner to bring those perpetrators swiftly to justice.

Our Community

We will demonstrate to the community our commitment and intolerance to acts of violence through overt focused response to acts of violence. Our response can include direct communication and legal sanctions with the criminal element in those communities where violence occurs. We will be open with and share as much information as possible with the community and utilize their support to help make them part of the solution.

Our People

As a unit, we will recognize our responsibility to support and assist each other, in every way possible, to accomplish our mission.

Performance

We will work together to constantly review and evaluate our investigative methods, and response to violent crimes to ensure we are providing the best services for our citizens, and ensure that violent criminals are resisting our very best efforts.

Problem solving

We will employ focused deterrence and comprehensive responses to acts of violence while continuously communicating with the community. We will use the community for focus and direction, always reminding them that they are part of the solution.

Most recently we have added a reading from The Kennedy School of Government Case Program, A Community Responds: Boston Confronts an Upsurge of Youth Violence. I believe this case tells the story of the Boston experience and helps frame

focused deterrence to agencies about to use it. Chief Fealy has asked the Command Staff to read the case.

Most agencies use performance evaluations to determine the level of reward an employee will receive. Most are done on at least a yearly basis. As a Division Commander I reward those Supervisors who perform in ways to support the agencies focused deterrence efforts. Since I review the evaluations of all personnel under those supervisors, I ensure employees who act in ways to support the mission are rewarded.

The High Point Police Department is now approaching year twelve using focused deterrence. Our agency views focused deterrence as a way to police not a special project. Our experience tells us that with proper focus and dialogue we can arrest fewer people and have a greater impact on violent crime. At the same time, we can recapture the trust and respect of the communities we serve.

Managers who are tasked with directing units responsible for focused deterrence have a number of challenges. A lack of support from upper management will make it impossible to marshal the necessary resources and create the cultural changes required to be successful.

Implementing focused deterrence requires a change in a thought process that has driven law enforcement for years. This is not a special project. This is a way to police.

I believe there are a number of key things required for any agency head to do to support management and successfully implement focused deterrence:

- Take the steps necessary to understand what focused deterrence is. The agency head must understand it and support it.
- Create the vision for the executive staff and provide them the necessary education.
- Put the proper structure in place to support the change.
- With executive staff, share the vision with command staff and provide the necessary education.
- Select personnel who buy-in to the vision who can help change the agency culture.
- On a daily basis, follow the model prescribed for focused deterrence.

- Reward and recognize those who perform in ways that support focused deterrence and change departmental culture.
- Continue to train new employees and those who transfer to key units responsible for focused deterrence.
- Work closely with other agencies using focused deterrence to stay on top of other methods.