

Models for Community Policing Evaluation: The St. Petersburg Experience

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While community policing is being touted by some as the panacea for all problems in the criminal justice system, others believe that it is just "old wine in a new bottle." Many departments around the country have embraced the tenets of community policing, yet few can answer the bottom-line question: Is it a better way to police?

Community policing's ultimate success or failure rests on the ability to evaluate the process and impact of this "new" way to police. The St. Petersburg Police Department has developed a unique approach to measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of community policing and problem solving. This approach is predicated on the development of technology-based evaluation processes and models. These systems provide real-time data access for reported crime, arrests, repeated calls for service, problem-solving nature/location, and community officer daily activity. The models represent the most comprehensive and technologically advanced approach to evaluating community policing in the country.

This paper will provide a comprehensive history and evolution of Community Policing; give a history of community policing and lessons learned-in St. Petersburg, Florida; illustrate the importance/results of pre/post community surveys for evaluation variable identification; present a Crime-Tract Analysis Model for Geo-Based Community Profile/Assessment; and profile a Problem-Oriented Policing Data-Base Management System. These models represent the means for validating/evaluating the impact and process of community policing initiatives through the use of technology.