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BJA
Bureau of Justice Assistance
U.S. Department of Justice

Targeting Offenders

Prospects, Practices and Concerns

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What is Offender Targeting?

- ❖ Identifying chronic, high rate or particularly troublesome offenders
- ❖ Coupling the identification of those offenders with a prosecution, supervision and intervention strategy
- ❖ A SMART practice in using resources where they will do the most good
- ❖ A means of involving community members in your SMART Policing Strategy
- ❖ A valuable tool that produces results

Why employ Offender Targeting as part of a SMART Policing Strategy?

- ❖ Efficient use of Resources

- ❖ Allows the police to focus efforts

- ❖ Produces force multipliers

Enhances Officer Safety

Demonstrates to the community that their crime problems are being addressed

Enhances deterrence by focusing resources on high rate offenders

Increases the awareness of high rate offenders throughout the criminal justice system

Who is targeted?

- ❖ High rate offenders
- ❖ Offenders who have been chronic problems in the criminal justice system
- ❖ Offenders who reside in the target community or who commit their crimes there
- ❖ Probationers or parolees who continue to offend

How are they targeted?

- ❖ Identify high rate offenders using an **objective** set of criteria (i.e. multiple arrests, committing offenses while under supervision, specific offenses, convictions)
- ❖ Through the participation of multiple agencies, including the police, prosecutors, probation and parole
- ❖ “Threshold” criteria, for example three felony arrests in a four month period

Developing the list

- ❖ How long? A manageable number (25-50)
- ❖ What information to use? Arrests, Convictions?
- ❖ Objective versus Subjective information? (Can nominations be made to the list by law enforcement, prosecutors or the community?)
- ❖ Should points be assigned to rank order the list?
- ❖ How many jurisdictions should be involved?
- ❖ How many agencies should be involved?

Maintaining the Validity of the List

- ❖ The list is only as good as the information used to put it together.
- ❖ Names should be removed from the list based on certain agreed on criteria, such as no arrests in a six month period. Offenders who are inactive for a period of time should be removed from the list.
- ❖ Use current information
- ❖ Where possible use information from two or more different sources (arrest AND probation data)

Using the List

- ❖ Lists are more effective when they are widely shared, so have them accessible electronically and from CAD systems.
- ❖ Specialized units (CID, Narcotics) and patrol both can use these lists effectively
- ❖ Officer alerts when pedigrees of individuals on the list are run through RMS
- ❖ Web based applications that display criminal background information for individuals on the list
- ❖ Review progress periodically to improve the strategy.

Inviting Participation in the Webinar

- ❖ For those of you participating today, how many of you have such a list?
- ❖ What information do you find to be most helpful from the list?
- ❖ What did you include that you later dropped?
- ❖ What advice would you offer to sites just getting started with this process?

Operational Questions

- ❖ Should offenders be told they are on a chronic offender list?
- ❖ How do we assure the public that this is not another form of racial profiling?
- ❖ Are nominations to the list allowed?
- ❖ What is the role of probation and parole in the process of finding the individuals on the list?
- ❖ What input should the community have in placing individuals on the list?

The Role of Technology

- ❖ Technology can enhance the use of offender lists.
- ❖ CAD based information
- ❖ Officer alerts when an individual on the list is stopped
- ❖ Communication between law enforcement, prosecution and probation and parole when an individual on the list is contacted

Challenges Faced and Overcome

- ❖ Are there specific challenges you faced in devising, implementing or using such a lit?
- ❖ How did you maintain the confidentiality of the list? Was there a formal agreement among partners?
- ❖ Did anyone consider using information collected from offenders about problem assessment or the most effective levers to use?

Some examples

- ❖ St. Louis Project Safe Neighborhoods and the WOW (worst of the worst)
- ❖ Three or more of the following must be present to appear on the WOW List:
 - 2 or more arrests for first degree assault
 - 6 or more felony arrests in the prior 9 months
 - Documented gang member
 - On probation at the time of the last arrest
 - Two or more felony convictions

Indianapolis VIPER Program (Violence Impact Enhanced Response Program)

- ❖ 18-30 years of age
- ❖ Two or more arrests for murder, robbery, carjacking, rape, felony weapons possession and criminal recklessness
- ❖ Identify and target for prosecution individuals who meet these criteria
- ❖ Careful coordination between police and prosecution

The Boston Police Department and “Impact Players”

- ❖ Number of prior arrests a key measure to get on the list
- ❖ Nomination to the list is also possible, for things like known involvement in gangs, guns or drugs, for example
- ❖ 800 individuals identified citywide
- ❖ Offenders were targeted for arrest OR placement in a prevention or intervention program

Keeping the strategy “fresh”

- ❖ Periodic assessment of “how it is going”
- ❖ Willingness to change elements that aren’t working
- ❖ Working with community partners
- ❖ Validating information and keeping it current
- ❖ Making successes public and using news media to help publicize successes
- ❖ Knowing when to move on to another strategy

More on Keeping the strategy “fresh”

- ❖ Meet regularly to review the list
- ❖ Revise the names on the list (dropping and adding)
- ❖ Change up the strategy for each offender from time to time
- ❖ Review the criteria to get on the list to enhance effectiveness

Questions to consider

- ❖ How does an offender list compliment our other SMART Policing strategies?
- ❖ Can we use technology to make our lists more effective?
- ❖ Do we have a strong enough community partnership to involve them?
- ❖ Is our criminal justice partnership strong enough (police to prosecutor, police to probation) to make this work?

Wrapping it up

- ❖ Are there any final thoughts to be offered?
- ❖ Any unresolved questions?
- ❖ Thank you everyone for your participation, this has been a most interesting and useful discussion.