

Community of Taunton



OPERATION: OUTREACH



03/01/11

Operation: Outreach Overview

As with most cities in the country, Taunton, MA has seen its share of Violence. Murder, Robbery, Domestic Violence, Drugs and even Gang activity are all on the rise. In Southeastern Massachusetts alone, cities like New Bedford and Brockton have been among the most notorious for their gang-related violence. Those cities have initiated numerous programs, such as the one proposed herein, to help reduce violence, and it has worked. Unfortunately, violence spreads like a plague, affecting surrounding communities who are unprepared to handle it. Such is the case with Taunton.

The youth in any community are always the most susceptible, and those between the ages of 9-15 are among the most vulnerable, in that their entire futures can be determined by what transpires within those years. Therefore it is imperative to identify those individuals most “At-Risk” and provide the support and services necessary to ensure they have an opportunity to become contributing members of society. This is a community wide issue, and not just an issue for law enforcement.

While Law Enforcement is essential, in the reduction of violence, sometimes the youth of the community perceive the Police as uncaring and self serving. Even adults can be somewhat apprehensive to ask for, or accept help from, their local police. This is a cultural issue and not a local one. However, the presence of Faith-Based partners, along with the local police, can assist in developing a more trusting and caring relationship, between those who serve, and those they are serving. The Clergy and Police, working in conjunction with the local School District, as well as area Human Service Agencies, can identify the youth and families most at risk. By providing the necessary support and services, we can then ensure that the youth identified, have an opportunity to become community leaders helping the community to thrive, and not a gang members thriving off of it.

The **GOAL** of Operation: Outreach is to simply Improve and Enrich the “**Quality of Life**” for families and youth living within the Taunton community. It is our hope that the Police and Clergy, Teaming Together, will be able to help steer both youth (and young adults) away from crime, using visitations, education and community support programs.

Program Mission:

The Mission of **Operation: Outreach** (hereby referred to as the Clergy/Police Ride-a-Long Program) is to assist in the emotional and social well being of “At-Risk” Children, [Pre-Teens (9-12) and Teens (13-17)]. This is accomplished by meeting with the youth, and their parents, in the comfort of their own homes in the early evening hours. The purpose of these visits is to provide support alternatives to the youth and/or their parents and give the family an opportunity to talk with both Clergy and the Police, in a setting conducive to all. This support includes:

1. Counseling the youth regarding the consequences of committing criminal acts.
2. Making the youth aware that the Community, Clergy and Police do care & wants to help them.
3. Allows the youth to talk openly & freely about any problems they may be having.
4. Provides the Parent(s) with an opportunity to speak openly and freely about their child.
5. Makes the family aware of Community Resources they may not be aware of & can access.
6. Makes the family aware of all the Religious organizations & Programs available in the community.
7. Shows the Family that both the Police and Clergy are resources available to them.
8. Improves the relationship between the Police Department, Clergy & the Community at large.

Projected Program Benefits:

1. Reduced Truancy.
2. Reduced Gang Recruitment and Proliferation.
3. An overall decrease in Teen Violence
4. An opportunity for the community to get to know their Police Officers & Area Clergy.
5. An opportunity for Police Officers & Area Clergy to get to know individual families.
6. An Educated community whereby families know where to turn for assistance.
7. Greater Respect between the Police Department, Clergy and the Community at large.

Program Components:

This effort has three main components: Identification; Intervention; and Prevention.

- **Identification:** This component is simply about identifying the families of youth, at risk from Drug Abuse, Gang Activity, Violence tendencies, etc. This can come from several areas: The Middle/High Schools, the Taunton Police Department, the Taunton Area Clergy, DCF, Health Services, etc.
- **Intervention:** This Involves actual in-person visits to the homes of “At-Risk” youth by a Police Officer and Chaplain. Confidential face to face discussions with the Youth and their parents, will then allow for any problems to be openly identified and addressed. We can then make the youth and family away of any programs that are available that may provide assistance. At some point, it may be necessary to get other Civic Organizations or State Agencies involved: DCF, New Hope, United Way, Health & Human Services, Teen Center, etc.
- **Prevention:** Involves educating the families on the host of new and existing programs, including youth services that are available to the youth and their parents. This could include The Boys & Girls Club, Girls Inc, YMCA, United Way, Teen Center, Church Programs, etc. In addition, the hope is that a foundation of trust can be attained whereby forums can be created allowing for Police and Clergy together, to meet with Delinquent Youth Group (Gang) Members, in an attempt to resolve any conflicts before they can escalate into violence.

Program Resources:

The success of this program is dependent upon five (5) major resources working together for the good of the youth and family. These resources are identified as:

- **School District (Taunton Area Middle & High Schools)**
- **Taunton Police Department**
- **New England Association of Community Chaplains (NEAOCC) & Other Area Clergy**
- **The Youth, their Parent(s) or Guardian(s)**
- **City Services: HHS, Youth Services, DCF, DMH, Boys & Girls Clubs, United Way, Etc.**

The identification of “At-Risk” youth is initiated at the school level, but can also be initiated by a DCF worker, Teen Center, Police Officer, the Parent/Guardian, or any other Agency working with the child felt to be “At-Risk”. This can also include children who already have a troublesome history or even a police record. The program will also work alongside the “**Youth Court**” program at the high school level to help ensure the issues are not repeated. The Clergy/Police visitations could also be incorporated into various programs as a requirement for program completion.

Program Logistics:

- **School District:** The program begins in the Taunton Middle & High Schools. The SROs (School Resource Officers), in conjunction with the Headmasters/Principals and Guidance Councilors or even Teachers, will be the primary focus in identifying the “At-Risk” Youth. Once identified, the youth’s Contact Information and Risk Assessment will be forwarded to the Taunton Police Department liaison. This can also be initiated by a parent or guardian, concerned for their own child. The originator will complete a Confidential “**Rick Assessment Form**” that will be forwarded to the Police Department contact.
- **Taunton Police:** The Police Ride-a-Long Coordinator will accept the “**Rick Assessment Form**” in addition to any additional data, if applicable, such as previous Police Records, or anything that will assist in accessing the issues with that individual youth. They will then contact the Community Chaplain next in the rotation, and schedule a Ride-a-Long with the Chaplain and the designated CPO (Community Police Officer) or Patrolman.
- **Clergy:** The Chaplain and Police Officer will then make an impromptu visit to the home of the child. This will occur on a weekday evening between the hours of 6:00pm-8:00pm. The Chaplain and Officer will, together with the parents & child, discuss the current situation, potential causes and options for providing a solution. They will also talk with the youth in question about the cause of their individual concerns and discuss options. The family will then be provided with a Community Resource Guide (CRG) as well as a list of local Church programs available to them. The CRG is a list of all Civic and Private Resources and/or Programs the family can access if needed, developed jointly by the Cities Local, State & Federal organizations.
- **Reports:** Following each visit, both the Officer and Chaplain will fill out a “**Visitation Form**” detailing the results of the visit. This report will be filed at the Police Station and a copy will be sent back to the originator. Future visits to the same youth will be determined by the originator, based upon the youth’s future performance and actions.

Police Department:

The Police Department will be responsible for assigning an individual who will coordinate the flow of information between the Schools, Police Department and Community Chaplains. They will also schedule the actual visits of the Community Police Officer (CPO) and the “On-Call” Chaplain. Once a “**Risk Assessment Form**” is received, the coordinator will determine if that youth has a Police Record, etc. and all the information will be confidentially distributed to the CPO and Chaplain assigned to the visit (ONLY). No one else will have access to that youth’s information.

Community Chaplains:

The NEACC was established to develop a “**Community Chaplain**” Corp. This is a group of Professional, Ordained or Vowed men and women in the Religious Community, from a variety of Faiths, who volunteer their time and talents to the City of Taunton and the Police Department, as Chaplains. Each Chaplain will be vetted and approved by the NEACC and Police Department before initiating a Ride-a-Long.

Community Chaplains are required to receive specialized training by the NEAOCC and the Police Department, before initiating home visits. The NEAOCC will be responsible for developing and training the Chaplains on family interaction, while the TPD will be responsible for developing and training Chaplains on Patrol Car/Radio operation and Emergency Procedures as required by the TPD.

Responsibilities:

This Program is sponsored by the Taunton Police Department and The New England Association of Community Chaplains, in cooperation with the Clergy of the Faith Community as well as the Taunton School District and various Civic Agencies. The Community Chaplains, who will be visiting homes, as well as the NEAOCC and the Taunton Police Department will all have a set of expectations they will be responsible for maintaining, some of those include:

Chaplain Association (NEAOCC):

- Maintain an updated Community Resource Guide (CRG) to Provide Families with a listing of Programs available in the city.
Develop a listing of Churches & Faith Programs available to the community-at-large.
- Recruit Clergy for continuation and expansion of the program.
- Establish Training programs for Community Chaplains.
- Communicate the requirements & expectations of the Program to area Clergy.
- Provide Administrative & Pastoral Support for Clergy members involved in the Program.
- Work with the Police Department & Clergy to monitor monthly Chaplain attendance.
- Work with the Police Chief and School District to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Taunton Police Department (TPD)

- Provide Training for the Clergy & Officers on emergency procedures & protocols.
Training includes in-car Radio operation, emergency codes and procedures, etc.
- Provide basic emergency response training in the event of an emergency
- Match the Clergy and the Police Officer (CPO or Patrolman) for the Ride-a-Long.
- Provide the necessary ID and Uniform, as agreed upon by the Chief & NEAOCC.
- Schedule Ride-a-Longs between 6:00pm and 8:00pm, Mon.-Thur. as needed.
- Provide Chaplains with a Bulletproof Vest for each shift, if required.
- Maintain monthly records of Home Visits and Results.
- Work with NEAOCC to evaluate and enhance the Program as necessary.

Community Chaplains (CC)

- Attend Training provided by the TPD & NEAOCC.
- Commit to volunteer a minimum of (2) Hours/Month during evenings.
- Participate in the Evaluation of the program.
- Wear the Uniform & bulletproof vest as provided by the TPD.
- Agree to a Background/CORI Check.
- Notify the NEAOCC & TPD of any Scheduling conflicts.
- Distribute Community Outreach Guide (CRG) to the family during each visit.
- Make themselves aware of any and all new Community programs available to families.

Costs:

The Implementation of this program can be initiated with minimal outlay of funds. The Schools should have very little additional overhead in just filling out an Assessment Form. The Clergy members are donating 2 hours of their time toward this program. The CPO's/Patrolmen can have these 2 hour blocks designated as part of their regular duties. The only additional costs would include the cost of printing ID's for each Chaplain and the purchasing the approved attire for each Chaplain.

Attire:

For the safety of the Chaplains and for easy identification, Community Chaplains will wear the approved Jacket or Shirt and Cap that clearly identify them as a Community Chaplain. The Jacket, Shirt & Cap will be of a color and design as determined by the Chief of Police as to avoid any similarity to area “Gang” colors or styles. The jacket will have a back panel clearly displaying the word “CHAPLAIN” with “Operation: Outreach” Shoulder/Chest logo patches (TBD). The shirt will have the word “CHAPLAIN” across the left chest and the Cap will be a color matching the jacket/shirt displaying the word “CHAPLAIN” across the front. Chaplains may wear the shirt or Standard Clerical or other appropriate attire beneath the jacket. The cap is optional. Appropriate faith group insignias may also be attached to the Shirt, Jacket or Lapels. *See Below for an EXAMPLE.* CPOs may wear casual clothing with a Jacket, Shirt or Cap identifying them as “POLICE” or their official uniform.



NOTES: *This Document represents an overview of the “Operation: Outreach” Program, its basic Operation and responsibilities. All the specifics and details included herein are being developed jointly by the TPD, NEAOCC, Taunton School District and several other Civic Organizations. This document IS a “Work in Progress” and as such is not to be considered complete or binding. Any suggestions, ideas or commentary is welcomed!*

Similar programs are currently in operation in cities throughout the US with varying levels of success. This specific program was created using a model developed by the New Bedford Interchurch Council and New Bedford Police Department as a guide. The NEAOCC and TPD offers their sincere appreciation to Rev. David Lima, Pastor Steve Rodrigues, Deirdre Lopes and Police Chief Ronald Teachman, (and their staffs), for their support and assistance in developing this program. The NEAOCC would also like to sincerely thank the New Bedford PD and their Community Offers for allowing our Community Chaplains to ride with them for several weeks to get a feel for how the program works.

Please forward any comments or suggestions regarding this document or program to:

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