

**LOCATION:** Spokane, WA

**REQUESTOR:** Spokane Police Department (SPD)

**REQUEST:** In June 2015, the SPD requested the Diagnostic Center's assistance in 1) identifying strategies for officer deployment to effectively meet community policing and community outreach objectives; and 2) identifying opportunities to further enhance SPD's community policing programs and community engagement initiatives.

## Overview

Beginning in 2009, police department budget cuts and population growth contributed to an overall decline in community engagement. The SPD attributed the reduction in the quantity and quality of police-citizen interactions to reduced staffing levels and limited resources. In 2014, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) released a Collaborative Reform Report, which documented the need for SPD to improve community engagement and increase proactive measures to reduce overall crime. Following the release of the report, the SPD requested assistance from the Diagnostic Center to examine existing resources and capacity to fully implement community policing strategies. The Department also requested assistance to identify opportunities to further enhance SPD's community policing programs.

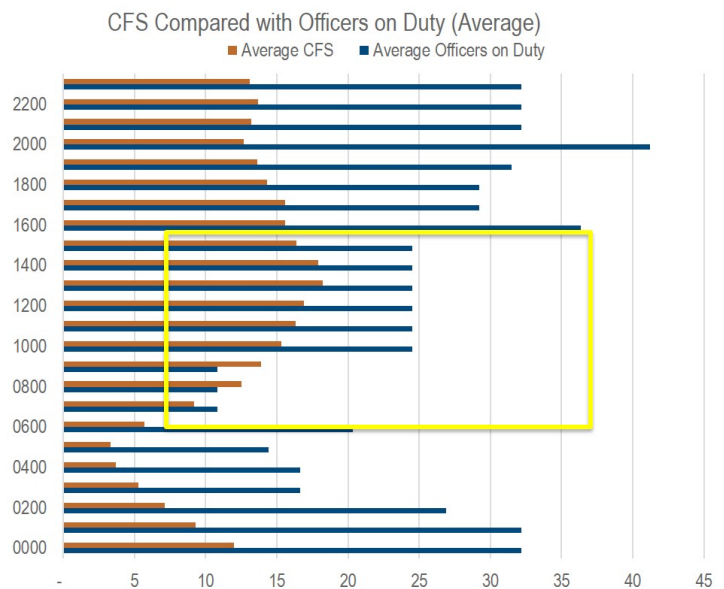
In response to SPD's request, the Diagnostic Center conducted an in-depth Diagnostic Analysis. Elements of the analysis included examining historical authorized staffing and population data to understand general trends within Spokane, reviewing program documentation to understand the community partnerships and other initiatives and conducting 50 onsite interviews with criminal justice, city government and community stakeholders. These data showed that full-time staff for SPD remained flat for 16 years while the overall population of the City of Spokane experienced higher rates of population growth than the state average over the past 15 years (15 percent and 11 percent respectively). The Diagnostic Center also analyzed officer deployment data, officer availability, calls for service (CFS) and crime data to develop a baseline understanding of staffing and deployment workload.

The Diagnostic Center presented the community its findings and matched a series of recommendations and data-driven approaches to address the SPD's needs.



## Diagnostic Center Findings

- SPD has implemented innovative community policing strategies, including partnerships with community groups focused on mental health and domestic violence
- During a few daytime hours, the number of CFS exceed the number of available officers
- The existing call handling method does not maximize SPD resources
- Community members perceive that local media casts a negative light on SPD
- Lack of awareness within the SPD and the community about certain community policing and community engagement initiatives
- Limited implementation of community policing concepts throughout the department, including formal problem solving methods



The yellow box indicates hours with very high call demand relative to the number of officers.



## Diagnostic Center Recommendations

- Develop an organizational action plan that focuses on operationalizing SPD values, including community policing
- Refine deployment and operational plans to more fully implement community policing
- Create and implement a comprehensive communications strategy, which includes internal and external audiences and focuses on communicating information about positive SPD activities

## Community’s Response - Spokane Police Department

SPD selected to implement multiple Diagnostic Center training and technical assistance recommendations, listed below, aimed at improving organizational culture, strengthening internal and external communications, measuring community trust and improving problem solving:

1. Working with “Blue Print for Building a Culture of Trust” to develop an organizational culture action plan focused on operationalizing community and agency values
2. Utilizing a subject matter expert to help SPD build a strategic communications plan that includes improving communications with local media, enhancing community understanding of police work and community policing practices, promoting SPD’s positive outreach initiatives and successes in crime reduction and improving department transparency and community trust
3. Working to implement problem oriented policing concepts throughout the department to maximize available resources
4. Implementing citizen contact survey to measure changes in community satisfaction as SPD implements new initiatives focused on community engagement

### Priorities

- Identify model practices and approaches to improve community-police relations
- Identify opportunities to better align personnel and resources to address community policing priorities.

***“Our work with the OJP Diagnostic Center has provided excellent assistance from professionals who are passionate about helping police agencies improve their services both externally and internally. The SPD is a stronger agency because of the involvement of OJP staff in aligning our efforts with our mission and vision.”***

***- Chief Craig Meidl, Spokane Police Department***

### What is the Diagnostic Center?

The Diagnostic Center is a resource designed to provide customized assistance to law enforcement and communities in order to address persistent and emerging public safety problems using evidence-based strategies. This assistance builds local capacity for data-driven decision-making, ensuring that limited local resources are invested wisely and federal assets are leveraged where they are needed most. The Diagnostic Center’s work is driven by local needs and priorities focused on improving public safety and officer safety and wellness.

### Contact the Diagnostic Center:

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## Lessons Learned and Next Steps

- Police agencies that struggle with reduced capacity and limited resources can benefit from community policing deployment strategies that are designed to maximize existing resources to have the greatest impact on improving community engagement
- Organizational culture is recognized as a powerful force that impacts the behavior of its members. Agencies that have the support of leadership and a clear plan and mission are more likely to be successful at developing an organizational culture that aligns with agency and community values
- An evaluation of existing community policing programs can reveal program strengths, challenges and areas for improvement, such as enhancing the use of formal problem-solving methods and inclusion of community groups in crime reduction efforts
- A comprehensive communications strategy to address negative events as well as promote positive initiatives allows agencies to most effectively communicate to both external and internal stakeholders.

