Location:
East Haven, CT

Organization:
East Haven Police Department (EHPD)

Description:
Town-wide police department with approximately 50 law enforcement personnel, including 32 officers, serving a population of over 29,000.

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Overview

The Town of East Haven and the Department of Justice (DOJ) reached a settlement agreement following a federal investigation into biased-based policing. This resulted in a consent decree aimed at reinforcing constitutional policing, increasing community trust and improving EHPD officer professional treatment of citizens. As part of its reform efforts, the EHPD began implementing new measures, such as holding community meetings, using dashboard and body-worn cameras and employing a variety of other methods to improve community-police relations.

In 2012, the EHPD requested assistance from the DOJ Office of Justice Programs Diagnostic Center in supporting its reform efforts, which included: (1) identifying promising practices for the implementation of body-worn cameras, (2) assessing EHPD’s Problem-oriented Policing (POP) strategies, and (3) using data to inform decision-making.

In response to this request, the Diagnostic Center conducted interviews within the community; analyzed local data; drafted a literature review to address EHPD’s need for effective implementation of body-worn cameras, Police Officer Body-Worn Cameras: Assessing the Evidence and provided EHPD with promising practices and data-based recommendations.

In addition, the Diagnostic Center leveraged the expertise of a subject matter expert (SME) in POP in conducting an assessment of the EHPD’s capacity for transitioning to a POP agency. To support the diagnostic activities, the SME analyzed EHPD’s organizational structure, operational and deployment strategies and its crime analysis capabilities.

Data-driven Programs and Practices Recommended to Address the Issue

- Structured municipal interaction
- Management system improvements
- POP
- Data-driven decision-making
The Diagnostic Center

The Diagnostic Center is a technical assistance resource provider designed to build community capacity to use data to make short- and long-term evidence-based decisions about criminal justice and public safety. Diagnostic Center engagements enhance the ability of public safety executives to collect and use local data to understand the jurisdiction’s issues, make decisions about programs and practices and support efforts to integrate data and evidence into policies. The Diagnostic Center invests in what works by bridging the gap between data and criminal justice policy at the state, local and tribal levels.

Six Factors Contributing to the Issue

1. **Complex Municipal Environment**
   East Haven’s complex municipal environment impacts EHPD’s ability to set its strategic direction and leverage resources to maximize its effectiveness as a police agency.

2. **Weak Organizational Culture and Past Practices**
   EHPD’s organizational culture and past practices are not rooted in strong management systems, accountability and performance management.

3. **Lack of Foundational Elements Supporting POP**
   Past practices and operations resulted in limited systems foundational to POP, such as management and organizational structure, data and information sharing, staff skills and capacity as well as coordination and collaboration across EHPD.

4. **Reactive Policing Operations and Strategies**
   Historical approaches to policing operations and strategies focus on meeting high service level expectations and a reactive workload, rather than leveraging data to inform decision-making.

5. **Minimal Focus on Management Systems**
   Management practices focus on patrol and investigative functions with minimal effort focused on developing management systems to enhance EHPD’s performance and effectiveness.

6. **Limited Data Systems and Information Sharing**
   Information management system use is limited to data capture and record management, and does not address analysis and information sharing.
Descriptions and Details of the Recommended Evidence-based Programs and Practices

Structured Municipal Interaction

This practice formalizes contact with stakeholders. It creates regular, proactive communication with key stakeholders, such as the Mayor's Office, town Council and Board of Police Commissioners. By conducting annual, strategic planning sessions with local leaders, law enforcement organizations create opportunities for sharing information on operations, strategic activities and outcomes.

As new town leaders and elected officials take office, law enforcement organizations conduct briefings through structured municipal interaction. These briefings include an overview of the department, workload, strategic activities, structure of policy and administrative oversight of key groups.

Management System Improvements

Establishing strong management systems enables agencies to support efficient and effective execution of their core business objectives. An analysis of the EHPD's management systems that compared its approach to promising management practices identified key opportunities to strengthen the department's management controls, which ultimately better positioned EHPD to implement POP.

For example, providing incentives to implement data-driven decision-making and recognition and reward programs can positively impact the workforce. The incentives create a formal mechanism to set behavior expectations that support the core concepts of POP. Achievements are aligned to those behaviors, which are then recognized and rewarded. Furthermore, effective management systems can increase accountability and reinforce policies and procedures.

In addition, management systems should enhance internal systems of communication and information sharing. Strong communication and information sharing increase a department's ability to problem solve by improving access to data and sharing the subsequent analysis throughout the department. An effective management system is set up to empower all parts of an organization to use data to inform decision-making, prioritize resources and implement proactive and effective policing strategies, rather than reactive responses. Such systems allow departments to better allocate resources to address public safety challenges.

Times of organizational transition can provide a favorable environment to implement and improve such management systems.

POP

POP is a policing strategy where clusters of similar police incidents are analyzed to determine the causes and conditions that lead to the circumstances that generate unfavorable incidents. The information collected is used to formulate new and more effective strategies to address the problems. POP values preventive responses that are not wholly dependent on the use of the criminal justice system. Additionally, it engages other public agencies, the community and the private sector. Police departments often leverage POP because of its ability to be scalable, flexible, applicable and achievable.

Data Driven Decision-making

This practice leverages technology and data capture systems to support analysis that identifies the areas of highest demand for and impact on resources. Data analysis allows departments to do several things, including:

- Identify areas for differential or alternative police response strategies to allow for more effective deployment of existing
- Develop strategies to utilize uncommitted time to effectively maximize proactive policing efforts, such as incorporating POP projects into operations.
- Evaluate calls that place high demand on resources to determine policy implications (e.g. false alarms, non-injury accident response protocols).

A geographical analysis of the top 10 locations for CG calls illustrated the high demand locations for EHPD resources
Diagnostic Center’s Recommendations

- Enhance the elements that are foundational to POP in the EHPD
- Capitalize on the transition to positively influence culture
- Provide a structure for municipal interactions
- Leverage data to implement POP and inform decision-making
- Improve management systems to support POP
- Utilize existing technology to support data integration

Community’s Response

EHPD accepted the recommendations detailed in the Diagnostic Analysis and is now working with the Diagnostic Center to begin the implementation process. In April and May of 2015, the EHPD received training and technical assistance (TTA) from the Diagnostic Center focused on POP and crime analysis. The TTA covered critical topic areas, such as POP concepts and principals, research and resources basics, community collaboration in POP and crime analysis.

In addition, Diagnostic Center SMEs delivered technical assistance to command staff in the EHPD focused on supporting leadership decision-making with respect to the implementation of POP (e.g. identifying crime analysis resources, establishing mechanisms for disseminating data) and the selection of POP projects.

The training provided to first line supervisors on POP gave an overview of key concepts and theories; outlined the research and promising practices; addressed the role of data and crime analysis; reviewed the scan, analyze, respond and assess (SARA) model and highlighted the role and importance of community partnerships and collaboration.

Insight Gained

Implementing reform efforts requires a multifaceted approach.

To make changes, the police department must take both internal and external actions. These actions include structured municipal coordination and internal staff skill development such as training.

An honest gap assessment is required to determine agency goals.

Agencies willing to conduct an independent assessment of their challenges, resources and organizational structure can better align actions and activities to determine goals that will lead to reform and organizational transformation. Organizational change may be inhibited if only individual skill development is supported without accompanying organization and management change.

Crime analysis capability can be implemented in departments with limited resources.

Even small police departments that do not have the resources to establish a dedicated crime analysis unit can still build crime analysis capacity to promote routine use and sharing of crime data and trends to better use data to inform decision-making.

“The OJP Diagnostic Center is a great technical assistance resource. Their team of experts were great to work with and adapted specifically to our community.”

– Sgt. Anthony Rybaruk - East Haven Police Department

Data Driven Decision-making

Mapping the number of citizen-generated (CG) calls for service to specific locations is one way in which a department can leverage data to drive decision-making. Figure 2 provides an example of a heat map that identifies the top 10 locations for CG calls to which EHPD responded. Using this data, a department can apply a structured approach to problem-solving – such as the scanning, analysis, response and assessment model – to identify the underlying causes contributing to a high demand location.