Overview

Across America, many neighborhoods are confronting the challenge of improving community-police relations. Police-involved shootings and aggressive tactics have increased attention to some longstanding issues between law enforcement and communities of color.

For the FPD in North Carolina, a series of traffic stops and police-involved shootings during the late 2000s contributed to a culture of mistrust between the African American community and the police department. In addition, violent crimes within the city increased 48% between 2000 to 2010.

In response to rising community tensions and concerns for violent crime, both the FPD and the city manager’s office commissioned reports by independent organizations to identify recommendations to improve policing in the city. In 2010, the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) analyzed policies and procedures to determine if racial profiling practices occurred within the department. Key recommendations from this report changed FPD’s traffic stop data collection process and implemented car cameras for patrol vehicles. Also in 2010, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) evaluated FPD’s policies on crime prevention, crime enforcement and operational structure. PERF identified policing best practices within FPD, while also making recommendations on enhancing the use of community policing and intelligence-led techniques to address crime and quality of life issues effectively.

While these evaluations took place, crime continued on an upward trend and by the end of 2012, the violent crime rate in Fayetteville had risen to its highest level in a decade.

Harold Medlock was appointed Chief in 2013. Under his leadership, the FPD began the long process of restoring the pillars of community policing and addressing crime and community-police relations within the city. To achieve community safety objectives, Chief Medlock enlisted assistance from a broad range of partners with specific expertise, including the Diagnostic Center. Chief Medlock requested the Diagnostic Center’s help in two areas: (1) Strategies to address violent crime among youth and (2) Enhancing community-police relations.

The timing of his request coincided with two critical points in Fayetteville: historical tension between the community and police and a momentum for change and collaboration from the community and police.

The Diagnostic Center coordinated with the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) to respond to the FPD’s request. The Diagnostic Center was responsible for evaluating qualitative and quantitative data to develop strategies for addressing violent crime and improving community-police relations while the COPS Office focused on evaluating the internal policies and practices relating to police misconduct. This coordinated effort offered the FPD a customized response to its request and ensured a tailored outcome to address its needs.

Data-driven Programs and Practices Recommended to Address the Issue

- All-media communication strategy
- Neighborhood collaborative policing project
- Community policing and conflict management training course
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.

The Diagnostic Process

The Diagnostic Center applied its three-phased approach and brought in a community-police relations subject matter expert to provide technical assistance. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to understand the types of youth crime and perceptions of policing in Fayetteville. Interviews were conducted with law enforcement, a broad range of community stakeholders and youth and young adults from high crime areas. Quantitative data indicated violent crime rates in Fayetteville were higher among youth offenders, consistent with national trends. However, 79 qualitative interviews with adults and youth underlined two different primary areas of concern: (1) Lack of awareness of available projects, programs and resources; and (2) Limited knowledge of police or community processes. Furthermore, there were different perceptions of the police department shared by youth and adults in the community that highlighted the need for community-policing techniques and a departmental all-media communication strategy. The data and these interviews uncovered five factors contributing to their two areas of concern.

Five Factors Contributing to the Issue

1. **Strained community-police relations**
   Past claims of racial profiling or use of force incidents against African American community members complicate relationships with the police department. The different perceptions held by adults and youth indicate need for varied methods of officer communication.

2. **Limited positive interaction between police and youth**
   Interactions with community youth have traditionally been limited to times of crisis (e.g. domestic violence, shootings). As such, youth have limited knowledge of police processes (i.e. patrol techniques), which have often caused confusion or negative experiences during police interactions that further frustrate residents. There is an opportunity for police to conduct outreach with youth in times of less stress (e.g. police athletics leagues, school resource officers).

3. **Limited awareness and availability of resources and services**
   Youth and adult residents reported frustrations about resource and service availability within the community, offered by the city and police department.

4. **Communication barriers**
   The police department’s limited approach to social media, traditional public relations and communications limit the information that reaches residents, particularly youth.

5. **Lack of holistic research and evaluation opportunities with academic institutions**
   Partnership between the FPD and academic institutions are often complicated by each institution’s procedures (i.e. research board v. patrol-shift needs); however, implementing partnerships between FPD and local universities can facilitate research and evaluation of police practices beneficial for the entire community.

---

“The Diagnostic Center gave officers, residents and stakeholders a voice in the process...We, as a community, are once again investing in one another and our social ties are rebuilding our common goal of a safe community.”

- Police Chief Harold E. Medlock
Descriptions and Details of the Recommended Evidence-based Programs and Practices

All-media Communication Strategy

During interviews with community members and police department personnel, Diagnostic Center staff heard a common theme: finding information about resources, services or events in the community were difficult. In some neighborhoods, residents did not know what was happening just a few streets over.

Communication SMART goals – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic or Relevant, and Time-bound goals – are used across the industry to develop strategies and campaigns to engage with audiences. SMART goals can be applied to public safety communications in order to enhance engagement and reach key audiences.

In addition, the use of social media within public safety agencies is also important for quick, informal communications. Applying SMART goals to social media use by implementing more graphics, hashtags and other communication techniques can inform residents of community events – not just crime. Highlighting a department’s successes and sharing information about community groups enables more engagement and positive interactions with the community.

Neighborhood Collaborative Policing Project

Communities across the country have developed community-policing strategies to address neighborhoods with significant crime issues. In 2008, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department developed a neighborhood collaborative policing project in the Sherman Gardens neighborhood – termed the Safe Village Initiative – in order to create intervention and prevention programs for youth. The Las Vegas model included engaging with faith-based leaders, non-profits and other community groups through a steering committee. The group developed processes to address quality of life issues collectively and become the driving force to decrease violent crimes and increase community involvement. These efforts enabled Las Vegas residents to organize and increase collective efficacy within the neighborhood, resulting in a decrease in crime.

Community Policing and Conflict Management Training Courses

Critical to changing an organization’s culture, community-policing principles must be implemented throughout an agency’s training environment. Community-policing principles should be delivered through the basic training academy and in-service courses. In addition, academia and policing experts should teach subject matter-specific courses on community policing principles. The Diagnostic Center’s recommendations to the FPD included deploying methods to create a strategic training plan with nationally recognized training courses and opportunities to insert local academic and policing experts.

Diagnostic Center’s Implementation Plan

Create a social media and communication strategy

- Create a systematic process for SMART communication goals and strategy
- Develop positive and engaging content to increase community awareness of events and resources
- Engage with community members across multiple media platforms
- Measure community engagement via social media platforms and other events

Build a practice-based partnership with academic institutions

- Leverage relationships with and capabilities of higher education institutions to enhance the department’s translational research capabilities
- Identify opportunities for internships or other supportive roles for students to integrate academic learning with the police department
- Support ongoing academic research and restore anchor points in the community

Pilot a neighborhood collaborative policing project focused on crime awareness and community engagement

- Select a high crime neighborhood where there are community stakeholders interested in participating in a pilot collaborative project with FPD
- Identify business owners and residents for a steering committee
- Develop collaborative projects to address neighborhood issues (e.g. lighting, frequently visited addresses)
- Engage with residents at various events to increase positive interactions
The Process of Building Trust in the City of Fayetteville

January

Murchison Road Empowerment Day

FPD Process Changes in 2014

• Changing technology platforms across the department
• Evaluating training practices
• Evaluating policies and implementing changes
• Restructuring command staff ranks

February

FPD begins to implement the Diagnostic Center’s recommendations, addressing the need for communication, strategic practice-based partnerships, and neighborhood collaboration efforts.

March

FPD launches a Police Activities League partnership, seeking to raise public awareness and community awareness.

April

FPD holds a meeting with student advisors to discuss the Police Activities League’s youth enrollment and youth engagement.

May

FPD officers and staff receive training in anti-violence programming.

June

FPD offers local business owners and interested youth financial training.

July

FPD continues developing a systematic survey to determine local capital and assess performance of community outreach.

August

FPD officers participate in an officer training held at FSU.

September

FPD and FTCC host an event for high school students.

October

FPD initiates discussions about the need for neighborhood collaboration efforts.

November

FPD launches a Police Explorers Academy for youth ages 14-17, sponsored by Learning for Life, First Police Explorers Academy.

December

FPD holds an event to engage youth in civic education and leadership skills.

FPD launches a Police Explorers Academy for youth ages 14-17, sponsored by Learning for Life, First Police Explorers Academy.

FPD begins to implement the Diagnostic Center’s recommendations, addressing the need for communication, strategic practice-based partnerships, and neighborhood collaboration efforts.

FPD holds a meeting with student advisors to discuss the Police Activities League’s youth enrollment and youth engagement.

FPD continues developing a systematic survey to determine local capital and assess performance of community outreach.

FPD officers participate in an officer training held at FSU.

FPD offers local business owners and interested youth financial training.

FPD initiates discussions about the need for neighborhood collaboration efforts.

FPD launches a Police Explorers Academy for youth ages 14-17, sponsored by Learning for Life, First Police Explorers Academy.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.

The Diagnostic Center interviews historical community-police relations and their perceptions of officer engagement.

The Diagnostic Center conducts 47 face-to-face interviews with youth in the Murchison Road area.
Community's Response

FPD has begun to implement the Diagnostic Center’s recommendations. To assist the FPD in communicating more effectively and efficiently with its citizens, the FPD is creating consistent messaging, improving communication metrics and effectively utilizing multiple media platforms. The baseline analysis of the department’s social media accounts initially appeared to serve a large audience with low levels of engagement (e.g. number of likes, re-tweets or shares of posted material). After working with a subject matter expert on social media communications, the department now has a better understanding of their social media audience, comprised of mainly women (65 percent), primarily between the ages of 25-34 on Facebook, and split between male (52 percent) and female (48 percent) on Twitter. Followers are also primarily homeowners. The FPD also now has a better understanding of social media analytics (e.g. trends in impressions, trends in number of likes), which enables them to evaluate what works. The department is continuing to develop SMART goals to increase social media engagement.

The FPD is also working with representatives from the Curry College Master of Criminal Justice Program Research Collaboration with Boston Police Department to develop Fayetteville’s practice-based partnership with a university. This partnership will leverage local academic expertise to assist with assessing and evaluating police department programs. In addition, the FPD has begun modeling a neighborhood collaborative project based on the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department’s Safe Villages Initiative.

Impact and Outcomes:

The conversations facilitated by the Diagnostic Center between the FPD, community and academic institutions laid a foundation for Fayetteville to move forward. Through the process, insight, tension and healing occurred, resulting in increased FPD transparency and greater collaborative effort from the community. Actions taken include:

- Increasing FPD and community awareness of local business owners and groups who provide after-school activities
- Improving internal communication among FPD commanders
- Developing a comprehensive communication strategy
- Creating consistent messaging
- Improving communication metrics
- Utilizing multiple communication platforms
- Developing a practice-based partnership with a local college
- Participation in peer to peer visits and meetings with Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and the Boston Police Department to gather information and gain understanding about implementing evidence-based practices

Insight Gained

- Transparency earns trust. Opening doors to community members and requesting their involvement helps to change perceptions and can begin healing process from past actions.
- Collaboration is key. Engaging community members in the process of data collection and analysis enhances community police relations and strengthens overall collaboration in the community.
- Communication increases engagement. Developing communication goals centered on the audience enables the department to better engage with the community and increase two-way communication.

Contact the Diagnostic Center:

[Contact Information]

September 2014 – FPD safety event with kids