

POLICE OUTREACH
TO THE HISPANIC / LATINO COMMUNITY:
A SURVEY OF PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

A REPORT BY THE

**Police Professionalism Initiative
University of Nebraska at Omaha**

AND THE

National Latino Peace Officers Association

NOVEMBER 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this Report

Executive Summary

Chapter 1

Police Response to a Changing America

Chapter 2

Representative Programs

Chapter 3

Issues for Consideration

Appendix:

Outreach by Citizen Oversight Agencies

Notes

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report provides a brief overview of programs designed to provide outreach from American police departments to the Hispanic / Latino community*.

The need for such outreach programs is becoming increasingly important. The Hispanic /Latino community is rapidly growing and will soon become the largest racial or ethnic minority group in the country.

Because of issues related to language, cultural heritage, immigration status, and economic status, the potential for police-Latino community problems is great. Outreach programs are designed to address these issues.

This report describes selected outreach programs. It is not intended to be a comprehensive survey, and there are undoubtedly many programs that are not included here. We have selected those programs that represent different approaches to the organization and delivery of outreach.

The purpose of the report is three-fold.

First, it describes the different kinds of outreach programs that currently exist.

Second, it discusses the major issues that need to be considered in establishing and maintaining a successful police-Latino community outreach program.

Third, it is hoped that this information will assist other communities in establishing their own outreach programs.

*Throughout the report the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino" are used interchangeably except in cases where the term "Hispanic" or "Latino" is associated with a specific program, such as being included in the program title.

This report was prepared by:

Dr. Samuel Walker
Dr. Leigh Herbst
Dawn Irlbeck, M.A.

Police Professionalism Initiative
Department of Criminal Justice
University of Nebraska at Omaha
Omaha, NE 68182
402-554-3590 402-554-3104

www.policeaccountability.org

National Latino Peace Officers Association (NLPOA)
351 E. Washington St.
Petaluma, CA 94952

www.nlpoa.org

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The rapid growth of the Hispanic / Latino community in the United States has created a number of real and potential police-community relations problems.

Some police departments around the country have taken active steps to create outreach programs to the Hispanic / Latino community to prevent these problems.

These programs include such activities as:

- Appointing bilingual police officers
- Creating special outreach teams of officers
- Holding Hispanic / Latino community meetings
- Conducting Spanish language Citizen Police Academies
- Appointing Hispanic / Latino recruitment officers
- Providing direct social services (e.g., Thanksgiving meals)
- Other activities

Several Programs include two or more different activities.

In some cities, an initial activity led to the development of additional activities.

All communities with significant Hispanic / Latino populations in the United States need to consider developing outreach programs.

Police departments have also established outreach programs to other racial and ethnic communities.

More research is needed on what kind of outreach programs are most effective, and what elements are necessary to make a program effective.

CHAPTER 1

THE POLICE AND THE HISPANIC / LATINO COMMUNITY

The Hispanic /Latino community is rapidly growing and will soon become the largest racial or ethnic minority group in the country.

There is substantial evidence of police-community relations problems between the Hispanic / Latino community and the police. These problems arise from issues involving language, cultural heritage, immigration status, and poverty.

Surveys of public attitudes about the police consistently show that Hispanic Americans have less favorable views than white Anglo Americans (although not as negative as those of African Americans).¹

A report by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) states that "There is a strong perception in the Hispanic Community that Hispanics are frequently subjected to illegal arrests, arrests on weak suspicion, illegal detention and corporal handling by the police."²

At its September, 2002 convention, the Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association sent a letter to President George W. Bush protesting "institutional racism and rampant discriminatory practices continually directed against Hispanic Americans by federal law enforcement agencies"³

Language barriers can create special problems. Most American police officers speak only English and cannot communicate effectively with Hispanic / Latino community members who either do not speak English at all or have limited English skills.⁴

On August 11, 2000 President Bill Clinton signed Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency. The order requires federal agencies providing federal financial assistance to offer guidance on how recipients can ensure compliance with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This includes guidance on assessing the need for ensuring access to services and on how to provide oral or written guidance. Many law enforcement agencies may not be in compliance with this regulation.

Cultural differences can also create additional problems. Many recent immigrants to the United States, for example, are not familiar with the American legal system or standard police procedures. A report by Building Blocks for Youth, *Donde Esta la Justicia?* called for all criminal justice agencies to have bilingual services and culturally competent staff to deal with Latino and Latina youth.⁵

In some cities, well-known problems between the police and the Latino community have not been addressed. In 1991 there was a civil disturbance in the Mt. Pleasant area of Washington, DC, a predominantly Latino neighborhood. Eleven years later, a report by the Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs found that allegations of misconduct by Washington, DC police “continue to be legion
....”⁶

Hispanic/Latino officers are consistently underrepresented among rank and file officers in local law enforcement agencies. The problem of underrepresentation is especially serious at the command level.⁷

Outreach programs can facilitate the recruitment of Latino police officers. The PolicyLink report, *Community-Centered Policing: A Force for Change*, argues that “continuous outreach” to racial and ethnic minority communities is an important component of an effective officer recruitment program.⁸

A number of organizations and reports have endorsed the creation of police outreach programs to the Hispanic/Latino community. In its follow-up report on the 1991 disturbance in Washington, DC, the Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights recommends that “the Chief of Police should appoint a Latino liaison.”⁹

CHAPTER 2

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

This chapter describes a selected group of police-Hispanic / Latino community outreach programs.¹

It is organized according to the type of program sponsorship: the police department, the mayor's office, Latino police officers, and community groups.

A. Police Department Sponsored Programs

► Phoenix, Arizona

The Phoenix Police Department has recently introduced a bilingual detective to serve as a community liaison for its Silent Witness program. The greatest challenge, according to the newly appointed liaison is convincing members of the Hispanic community to contact the police if they have information about a homicide. In light of the treatment by police in their native countries, concerns about immigration status and the general unfamiliarity of police in the United States, if Hispanic residents call the police, the liaison officer explains, "they don't know if INS is going to respond, or if they are in fact actually contacting INS, or if the police will be like the Federales."

While the primary goal for the community liaison officer is to obtain information on violent crime, the officer states that the focus is on "community building" with Hispanic residents. While he has received a few calls since transferring into Silent Witness in August 2002, the liaison officer is actively involved with attending community block watch meetings and informing the Hispanic community of his new position.

¹ *Programs were identified through a combination of a systematic web search, phone interviews with staff members of programs who were asked to identify other programs, and meeting with leaders of the National Latino Peace Officers Association.*

► **Corcoran, California**

The Corcoran Police Department annually offers a Spanish-language citizens police academy, entitled “Amigos de la Comunidad” or “Friends of the Community.” The material for the academy was translated from the English-speaking citizens academy curriculum, and then tailored to meet the needs of the Hispanic community.

Since the academy’s inception, many graduates of the class have continued their involvement with the police department through a volunteer community patrol program. Citizens in the patrol serve as extra “eyes and ears” for the department and are equipped with cell phones and identification badges. In addition, volunteer patrol members participate in a variety of community services which include collecting toys and clothing for children and “adopting” families in need during the holidays. Before the academy, there were few Hispanic citizen-initiated calls to the police department. Now, however, as one coordinator for Amigos de la Comunidad explains, a cooperative relationship has developed between the police department and its Hispanic residents. “Once they get to know you, they trust you.”

A web search found at least 20 other Spanish-speaking police Citizens Academies in 12 states.

*For more information see Hard, S. “‘Amigos De La Comunidad’ Makes New Friends in Corcoran.” *Community Policing Exchange* (January/February 2000) Phase VII No. 30 at www.communitypolicing.org/publications/exchange

► **Storm Lake, Iowa**

In the late 1970s-early 1980s Storm Lake, Iowa experienced an influx of Southeast Asian refugees, followed by a large increase in Hispanic residents in the early 1990s. An official with the Storm Lake Police Department estimates that 30-35% of the community’s 10,076 population is minority and that 1 out of 4 contacts with persons on the street and 1 out of 3 contacts with persons who come into the police department involve a language barrier.

In 1995 the Storm Lake Police Department began a Community Service Officer (CSO) program in which civilians were hired to write parking tickets, handle motorist assists and other non-emergency types of calls, thereby freeing up officer time. The department hired one CSO who can speak English and Spanish and a second who is bilingual in English and Lao. The CSO’s wear uniforms and bullet-proof vests, carry pepper mace and radios and operate marked vans that are equipped with emergency lights. Finally, all public signs around the police department are now in English, Spanish and Lao.

► **Las Vegas, Nevada**

The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) established the Hispanic American Resource Team (H.A.R.T.) in June 2001 to build and maintain positive relationships with the Hispanic community. H.A.R.T.'s goals include establishing mutual understanding and respect, reducing crime, victimization, and fear of police, particularly among undocumented Hispanic community members.

H.A.R.T. consists of a team of officers who are fluent in both Spanish and English, and who are from a variety of cultural backgrounds (Puerto Rican, Cuban, Mexican, Guatemalan, and Nicaraguan). Team members include two sergeants and six officers who work full-time with H.A.R.T. and are also on call if needed by other units in the department.

H.A.R.T. originated with the National Latino Peace Officers Association-Community Policing Partnership (NLPOA-CPP) in 1997 and was funded through a Local Law Enforcement Block Grant. H.A.R.T. is now funded by the LVMPD. In order to meet the growing demand for H.A.R.T. services, however, the LVMPD recently applied for, and received a \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Senate to hire bilingual civilians to assist the team by answering phone calls, providing information and referral, and assisting with translation.

H.A.R.T. members implemented the "Mí Casa es su Casa" program. On the second Tuesday of every month, Spanish-speaking residents are invited to visit police stations. Team members also frequently coordinate with other investigative units when criminal activities impact the Spanish-speaking community, as well as working with the Spanish-speaking media in order to keep the Hispanic community informed as to issues of particular importance to their communities.

H.A.R.T. members also assist community members in matters which extend beyond just departmental business. For example, team members network with other agencies and are often called in to translate/provide information regarding landlord tenant disputes. In this capacity, and others like it, they frequently serve as general community ombudsmen, as facilitating interagency cooperation has always been a goal of the H.A.R.T. program.

For more information on the H.A.R.T. programs go to http://www.lvm pd.com/help_homeless/hart.htm

► **Charlotte, North Carolina**

Created in December 2000, the International Relations Unit (IRU) of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department focuses on issues and concerns among residents representing a variety of nationalities. The unit is comprised of 6 full-time officers and 1 sergeant who are either fluent in a second language or have an understanding of a second culture.

Among their activities within the Latino community, the IRU has implemented a Latino Robbery Initiative which focuses on decreasing Latino victimization, addressing environmental crime factors in apartment complexes and promoting bank programs among the Latino community. The IRU also distributes crime prevention pamphlets and videos in Spanish, coordinates a Spanish volunteer program and has worked with the Mexican Consulate on identifying issues of concern. In addition to the IRU initiatives, the police department has mandated cultural awareness training for all employees, and provided basic Spanish instruction for officers.

*For more information go to
www.charmeck.org/Departments/police/crime+info/international+relations/home.asp

► **Des Moines, Iowa**

In order to more effectively serve a growing Hispanic community in Des Moines, Iowa, in 2000, the Des Moines Iowa Police Department expanded its Neighborhood Policing Unit to include a Hispanic Outreach Neighborhood Resource Advocate (HONRA, which means “honor and trust” in Spanish). The advocate is a full-time sworn senior-level officer who is both bilingual and bicultural, and whose time is devoted exclusively to meeting the needs of the Hispanic community. The HONRA officer travels in a police vehicle which is clearly marked “Hispanic Outreach Des Moines Police Department,” and also lists the officer’s cell phone number. In addition to answering calls for service, the resource advocate is involved in outreach to the Hispanic community via schools, churches, and neighborhood associations, and works closely with various social service agencies in order to help address community needs.

► **Green Bay, Wisconsin**

In Green Bay, Wisconsin, the Green Bay Police Department is providing a variety of outreach programs through an extensive crime prevention program, which includes a Southeast Asian Liaison Officer and a Hispanic Liaison Officer. In addition, the department has developed the Hmong Teenage Citizens Police Academy and the Latino Teenage Citizens Police Academy. The academies have been offered for two and three years respectively, with over 30 teens graduating from the Hmong Teenage Citizens Police Academy and over sixty teens graduating from the Latino Teenage

Citizens Police Academy. Academy goals include familiarizing youth with the American legal system, helping to dispel the mistrust of police officers that many immigrant youth have based on negative experiences with law enforcement in their country of origin, as well as encouraging academy graduates to consider employment with the Green Bay Police Department in the future.

▶ **San Diego, California**

In order to overcome language barriers in the delivery of police services, The San Diego Police Department actively recruits volunteer translators from the Hispanic community to assist police officers in many areas of law enforcement including witness/victim/suspect interviews and critical incidents.

▶ **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has an extensive outreach program to the Hispanic / Latino community. NHTSA has a special concern with increasing seatbelt use among Hispanics and Latinos in order to lower the rate of injury and fatality sustained during traffic accidents.

For additional information go to www.nhtsa.gov

B. Mayoral Sponsored Programs

▶ **Indianapolis, Indiana**

The Mayor's Commission on Latino Affairs focuses on a variety of issues that include increasing Latino participation in local government, education, race relations and improving Latino residents' access of city services. Sixteen members appointed to the Commission represent various community interests such as government, business, schools, public safety and public health. The Commission has initiated a number of efforts such as a Spanish-language Hot Line to report crime, drug and gang activity, crime

prevention programs in the Latino community, the Latino Census Task Force to focus on census outreach activities, and promoting Latino health issues through the Indianapolis Hispanic Health Access. The Commission has also sponsored Spanish language classes for municipal employees, police and firefighters.

While the Commission operates through the Mayor's Office, it receives much of its funding from work programs and private corporations. The Commission's executive director explains that the Commission's activities and efforts have been very effective in part because "we try and bring everyone to the table" and that the "key for the success is that the mayor has to support this."

* For more information go to www.indygov.org and click on "Mayor" to find the link for the Mayor's Commission on Latino Affairs.

► **Baltimore, Maryland**

The Mayor's Hispanic Liaison Office of Baltimore participates in several on-going initiatives to assist Hispanic residents in areas of community development, home ownership, public safety and civic pride. For example, the Liaison office organized a community meeting with the police commissioner to address crime issues and police relations. Its recommendations led to the appointment of a Hispanic Recruitment Officer, and a Hispanic Community Relations Officer. The result was a significant increase in the number of Hispanic police officers.

While the coordinator's position (along with an assistant) is funded through the Mayor's office, most of the funding for workshops and other community activities is donated from the private sector. In addition to an office housed in city hall, the Liaison Office maintains an outreach office in the community. Collaboration with the South East Baltimore police station and the Pentecostal Church of Evangelical Mission led to the placement of a police substation in the church enabling officers to speak to local residents and conduct foot patrol in the area.

*For more information go to www.baltimorelatino.com

► **Durham, North Carolina**

Confronted with an increasing number of home invasions and violent crimes against the Latino community in late 1990s, the city of Durham implemented the Hispanic Outreach and Intervention Strategy Team (H.O.I.S.T) to assist the police department with investigations, interviews and victim assistance with Spanish-speaking residents. The team maintains an office at the Criminal Investigations Division of the Durham Police Department and shares an office with victim services in a building situated between the Hispanic credit union and Latino-Hispanic Center.

In addition to H.O.I.S.T., the mayor recently announced the creation of the “Latino Initiative,” a proactive strategy in which 4 bilingual officers will be assigned to various neighborhoods throughout the city. Officers assigned to the initiative will receive training on language and cultural barriers to help prepare them for their interactions with the Hispanic community. The coordinator for H.O.I.S.T. explains that the key to the program’s success has been its emphasis on allaying fear of the police among the Latino community. “If you make it known that you are not threatening, they will come to you for help.”

C. Latino Officer Sponsored Programs

▶ Hispanic Illinois Law Enforcement Association (HISLEA)

The Hispanic Illinois State Law Enforcement Association (HISLEA) is a professional association of Hispanic law enforcement officers employed by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in the state of Illinois.

Since its inception in 1987, HISLEA has sponsored special Hispanic community outreach programs such as the Thanksgiving Sharing Program, where members create and distribute complete Thanksgiving dinner baskets to underprivileged Latino families, and the Operation Santa Claus Program where HISLEA members purchase and distribute toys to disadvantaged Hispanic children every Christmas season. HISLEA also sponsors an annual Safety Fair which is aimed at reaching out to area Hispanic children in order to facilitate a relationship of understanding and trust with Illinois law enforcement. Additionally, each year HISLEA members offer scholarships to assist Hispanic college students who have met high academic standards and who have demonstrated leadership qualities and community involvement.

▶ National Latino Peace Officers Association (NLPOA) Mentor Program

The National Latino Peace Officers Association (NLPOA) maintains a Mentor Program to assist fellow Latino officers. NLPOA members volunteer their time to serve as advisors/counselors to all interested Hispanic cadets and probationary officers. Once a mentoring relationship is established, NLPOA members meet bi-weekly with new officers to provide ethical/moral support, encouragement, and direction. The ultimate goal is to ensure that each officer successfully completes his or her probationary period. This arrangement adds an important dimension to the retention of Latino officers, benefitting both law enforcement agencies and the Latino community. Similar

mentoring relationships have also helped facilitate the promotion of Latino officers into supervisory and managerial ranks of law enforcement.

▶ **Minnesota National Latino Peace Officers Association**

Members of the Minnesota chapter of the National Latino Peace Officers Association (NLPOA) established a reading program for first and second graders, where NLPOA members go to elementary schools in the Hispanic/Latino community every week and read stories to the children in both Spanish and English. NLPOA members also participate in the community's Cinco De Mayo and Ecuadorian Day Parades, and sponsor a taco feed during the Latino Career Fair.

Latino officers also initiated a partnership with Minnesota's Chicano/Latino Affairs Council. In order to inform Latino community members what to do if stopped by the police they published a ten-point list in the Council's statewide publication, *El Dia*. The list included items such as, "Be prepared to show the officer your drivers license and proof of insurance," and "Don't be offended if the officer asks you to put your hands on the steering wheel during the stop; it is simply an officer safety issue."

▶ **New Haven (Connecticut) Hispanic Officers Society (NHHOS) and the Connecticut National Latino Peace Officers Association**

Members of the New Haven Hispanic Officers Society (NHHOS), which was established in 1978, and the newly founded Connecticut chapter of the National Latino Peace Officers Association (NLPOA), voluntarily have money deducted from their paychecks and placed in a fund for Hispanic families in need. Every Thanksgiving NHHOS and NLPOA members provide hundreds of meals to needy Hispanic families, complete with a turkey and all the trimmings. The officers deliver the meals personally throughout the city. At Christmas-time the officers partner with a local Hispanic-owned McDonald's to put on a Christmas party and distribute hundreds of gifts to needy families in the Hispanic community. In addition, members of the NHHOS and the local NLPOA give cash donations and scholarships every year to Hispanic youth, provide financial backing for Hispanic community events, and provide voluntary security services for Hispanic festivals, pageants, parades, and other gatherings.

D. Community Sponsored Programs

▶ **Clearwater, Florida**

“Joining Hands: Operation Apoyo Hispano” is a community-based partnership which emphasizes crime prevention through building trust and a working relationship with the Hispanic population in Clearwater Florida. In collaboration with several groups including the YWCA of Tampa Bay, the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the Regional Community Policing Institute, the Mexican Government and the local community, the Clearwater Police Department has established ten key areas in the program. This includes assigning a group of bilingual interpreters trained in police procedure and available upon request to assist officers in translation assistance, bilingual victim advocates from the YWCA program, community education and crime prevention, and language and cultural training for police officers.

The department has also partnered with the YWCA of Tampa Bay to open a Latin Outreach Center which is within walking distance of the department. The Outreach Center, which is scheduled to open in November 2002, will house a hi-tech training facility for use by the department and other community groups, the department’s Hispanic Liaison officer and space for the Mexican Consulate and Hidalgo, Mexico government. The Florida Regional Community Policing Institute’s (RCPI) video chronicle of Clearwater’s program is available in both English and Spanish.

*For more information on Operation Apoyo Hispano go to www.clearwaterpolice.org and click on “Hispanic Outreach.” Also see Weiss, J. and M. Davis “Clearwater’s Operation Apoyo Hispano” *Law and Order* (April, 2002) at www.clearwaterpolice.org/hispanic/apoyo.pdf

NOT JUST THE HISPANIC / LATINO COMMUNITY

In addition to police-Hispanic outreach programs, some police departments have established outreach programs related to other racial/ethnic minority groups as well. Several agencies across the country, for example, have focused their outreach efforts on Southeast Asian immigrant communities such as Cambodians, Vietnamese, Lao, Thai and Hmong.

The Charlotte/Mecklenburg International Relations Unit, described earlier, is probably the most comprehensive program.

► Lowell, Massachusetts

In an effort to build police-community relations, a bilingual civilian community liaison for the Lowell Police Department spends much of her time outside the department interacting with the Cambodian residents. The liaison routinely rides with officers who are working in the Cambodian community, and frequently assists with service calls and criminal incidents involving non-English speaking residents. To help Cambodian citizens learn about police services, residents are given one hour tours of the department which includes visits to the cell block and communications center. The liaison explains that because the “police in their countries are a nightmare” there is a large number of unreported crimes among the Cambodian community. Therefore, during the police tour residents are educated on how the police can assist them and alert them about information that they should provide when contacting the police.

The liaison also participates in a monthly race relations council meeting which involves representatives from all multi-cultural groups in the community. In addition to discussing community issues at the meetings, various officers attend as an opportunity to learn more about other cultures. The liaison emphasizes the importance of creating a relationship between the police and the Cambodian community in Lowell. “I want to make a difference-try to bridge that gap between the department and the Cambodian community...we need to connect with the community.”

► **Minneapolis, Minnesota**

To improve communication and working relations with the Southeast Asian community, the Minneapolis Police Department initiated the Southeast Asian Community Leaders Forum in the mid 1990s. While no one is permanently assigned to the Forum, approximately 15 officers, which includes a lieutenant, and 2 sergeants are involved in outreach outside of their departmental duties and regularly participate in picnics, sporting events and educational opportunities with the Hmong community.

Several officers involved in the outreach and in the police department are Hmong and/or bilingual. A sergeant who helped create the Forum explains that while many believe these officers should be assigned to work in their own ethnic neighborhoods, this ultimately “puts a lot of pressure on the officer” to negotiate demands and address potential political issues (i.e. belief that the officer is favoring some families over others) among the residents. Therefore, in their experience, they have found that it is better to have a group of officers who come from varied racial/ethnic backgrounds to work with the Asian community. In addition to the Forum the police department mandated cultural diversity training on Southeast Asian communities for all employees several years ago and requires the training for new officers coming into the department.

* For more information see W ulff, D. "Winning Strategies Offered for Working with Different Cultures." *Community Policing Exchange* (January/February 2000) Phase VII No. 30 at www.communitypolicing.org/publications/exchange

► **Saint Paul, Minnesota**

In collaboration with Saint Paul's Public Housing Authority, the Saint Paul Police Department hosts A Community Outreach Program (ACOP), an initiative that focuses on drug elimination and prevention, community relations and providing police services to public housing residents, 60% of whom are Hmong. Primarily funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD), Public Housing Drug Elimination Program (PHDEP), ACOP is staffed with 2 sergeants, 11 officers and 3 Community Liaison Officers (CLO's), and is housed in a dwelling unit in one of the family sites. Resident volunteers also staff three ACOP storefront offices in the public housing hi-rise sites.

CLO's are paid entry-level police positions for bilingual students attending school with plans to become police officers. They provide support services for ACOP which includes helping residents that come into the office needing assistance and answering the approximately 20 Hmong calls received daily. CLO's also ride with uniformed officers and respond to incidents when translation assistance is needed. Because CLO's can later apply to become police officers, the program is considered a valuable recruitment tool, for youth in the Hmong community. ACOP also works with other organizations within the Southeast Asian community such as a women's association with the Hmong and Lao and sponsors a cops and kids reading program where uniformed officers read and autograph books to give to children.

*For more information go to www.stpaul.gov/depts/police/acop.html

► **Dallas, Texas**

In 1990-1991 the Dallas Police Department's Office of Community Affairs and Employee Communications established a program for members of the Asian community wishing to seek American citizenship. Five bilingual police employees who speak various Asian languages teach the five week course which is held in municipal courtrooms. The manager of the community affair's office explains that scheduling the classes in courtrooms serves to help citizens become familiar with the environment; at the end of the course a judge visits the classes to role play the citizenship process. Since the first class of 89 residents, over 60 have become citizens.

In addition to the citizenship program the community affairs' Asian-American unit provides outreach to the community through translated materials utilized in crime prevention programs offered on such topics as child safety, robbery, holiday safety and family violence. The unit also participates in the Asian Health and Safety Fair. The community affairs' outreach to the Asian population has not only educated residents on community services and police assistance, but has helped in recruiting potential Asian police officers as well.

*For more information see Ward, J. "Dallas Opens the Door to New Citizens to Flex Their Participatory Powers." *Community Policing Exchange* (January/February 2000) Phase VII No. 30 at www.communitypolicing.org/publications/exchange

CHAPTER THREE

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

This chapter discusses the important issues surrounding police -Hispanic / Latino outreach programs.

A. TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

As Chapter Two indicates, there is a wide range of different activities that outreach programs can engage in. The examples cited above undoubtedly do not cover the full range of possibilities. As the earlier descriptions indicate, a number of programs engage in two or more activities at the same time. Also, in some cases the success of one activity led to the development of additional activities. The different activities can be grouped into the following categories.

Crime-related Activities

- Appointment of bilingual detective
- Crime prevention education
- Crime victim support
- Spanish-language hot line
- Hispanic community outreach team of officers
- Hiring non-sworn community liaison personnel

Community Education Activities

- Spanish language Citizens Police Academy
- Community Block Watch meetings
- Meetings with Police Chief/Commissioner

Police-Community Cooperation Activities

- Hispanic Community Relations Officer
- Toys and clothes for children program
- Thanksgiving meals programs
- Volunteer community patrols (graduates of police academy)
- Bilingual interpreters
- Facilitating interagency cooperation

Police Officer Recruitment Activities

Appointment of Hispanic Recruitment Officer
Community meetings that facilitate recruitment

B. PROGRAM SPONSORSHIP

As Chapter Two indicates, existing outreach programs are sponsored or initiated in different ways. Most programs are sponsored by police departments, while some others located in the mayor's office or some other city-wide agency.

Police department-sponsored programs have the advantage of a clear focus on police-related issues. City-wide outreach programs, on the other hand, are positioned to address the full range of issues facing Hispanic / Latino residents, including non-criminal justice ones.

All things considered, the authors of this report believe that police department-sponsored programs are the best approach. Because of the unique role of the police and the long history of police-community relations problems in this country, the authors believe that a clear focus on police issues is important.

There is no necessary reason why programs with different sponsorship cannot coexist. The fact that a police department has an outreach program does not mean that community groups cannot also maintain their own programs designed to address police issues, or that the Latino police officers association cannot also sponsor its own activities.

C. STAFFING

As Chapter Two indicates, there are a number of different possibilities with regard to staffing: sworn officers vs. civilian staff members; full-time paid staff, part-time paid staff, and community volunteers.

The authors of this report believe that outreach programs should have full-time paid staff director.

The issues involved are sufficiently important to require direction by a paid staff member. Volunteers can make valuable contributions to many of the specific program activities, but a full-time paid staff director is necessary to develop and coordinate those activities.

D. FUNDING

It is essential that outreach programs have adequate and secure funding. This may come from the regular police department budget or other public agency budget. Continuity of programming is essential. While short-term grants are often an attractive option, the pressure to secure grant renewal or alternative funding can be highly disruptive on a program.

Consequently, it is not recommended that an outreach program be launched unless adequate funding is secured.

E. RECOGNIZING DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

In developing police-Hispanic / Latino Community outreach programs it is important to recognize that different community contexts will have different program needs. Large metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles represent will have very different problems and needs than, for example, small Midwestern towns where a food processing plant has attracted a large Hispanic population to a previously almost all-Anglo community. Communities with established Latino communities, with a well-developed network of organizations and leaders, represent a very different context than a community where the Latino population is relatively new.

F. EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUTREACH PROGRAMS

This report describes existing police-Latino community outreach programs and makes no attempt to evaluate the success of these programs.

Program evaluation is one of the important needs for the immediate future. It is important to document that outreach programs are in fact delivering the services they claim to deliver and that they achieve their goals.

A *process evaluation* examines the extent to which a program is successfully implemented and delivers the intended services. It examines such issues as:

- ▶ Did the program begin operation on the originally planned date?
- ▶ Was the program fully staffed as planned?
- ▶ Did the program maintain continuous operation during the period covered?
- ▶ Did the program engage in all the planned activities during the period covered?

An *outcome evaluation* examines the impact of an outreach program. It examines such issues as:

- ▶ Was there a meaningful level of participation in program activities (e.g., attendance at community meetings)?
- ▶ Did community participants have positive evaluations of activities?
- ▶ Do police officials feel that the program is worthwhile?
- ▶ Do community leaders feel the program is having a positive impact?
- ▶ Do elected and appointed public officials feel the program is having a positive effect?
- ▶ Are community residents (other than participants) aware of the program, and if so do they have a positive evaluation of it?
- ▶ Are there objective indicators of the impact of the program (e.g., fewer reported crimes, reduced gang activity, fewer citizen complaints, more positive attitudes toward the police, etc.)?

Any evaluation needs to control for the impact of the local community context, including the total population, the relative size of Latino community, growth trends, and so on.

Well-designed and executed program evaluations are essential for improving existing outreach programs and developing new programs in the future. It is important to know what kinds of programs are most effective in achieving their intended goals.

APPENDIX

OUTREACH BY CITIZEN OVERSIGHT AGENCIES

In addition to police departments themselves, citizen oversight agencies represent an important point of contact with the community.

There are now over 100 citizen oversight agencies in the United States responsible for receiving and investigating citizen complaints against police officers or auditing the complaint process.

A review of citizen oversight web sites found that very few have taken steps to facilitate the filing of complaints by people who do not speak English or who have a limited command of English.

Outreach to non-English speakers can be done by (1) having a button for languages other than English clearly displayed on the home page; (2) providing an explanation of the complaint process (how to file a complaint, what to expect regarding the outcome, etc.); (3) providing an on-line copy of the official complaint form itself.

The Cambridge, Massachusetts Citizens Police Review and Advisory Board has probably the best language outreach. The home page has buttons for Spanish, Portuguese and Creole very prominently displayed. The pages in these languages include a series of Q & A's about the complaint process and the complaint forms. www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/prc

The Denver Public Safety Review Commission also provides excellent services. The home page clearly displays buttons for eleven languages other than English, including Spanish. www.198.202.202.66/PoliceComplaints/default.asp

The Las Vegas Citizen Review Board web site has a prominently displayed button marked "En Espanol." www.citizenreviewboard.com

The Miami-Dade Independent Review Panel offers material in Spanish and Creole. www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/irp

The Washington, DC Office of Citizen Complaint Review offers complaint forms in seven languages including Spanish. www.occr.dc.gov/main.shtm

The San Francisco Office of Citizen Complaints has complaint forms in Spanish and two Asian languages. www.ci.sf.ca.us/occ

The Independent Review Office (IRO) of the Police Oversight Commission in Albuquerque, New Mexico, has a button for a Spanish language version of the complaint form prominently displayed on its web site.

The San Jose Independent Police Auditor (IPA) has published A Student's Guide to Police Practices. It is being translated into Spanish and Vietnamese.

The San Diego County Citizens Law Enforcement Review Board (CLERB) has complaint form and information and about the complaint process in Spanish.

The Seattle Office of Professional Accountability (OPA) has arranged for printing brochures about the complaint process in Spanish and four other languages.

Information on these and other citizen oversight agencies can be found at www.policeaccountability.org.

NOTES

1. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 2000 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2001), Table 2.29, p. 119. The most recent edition of the Sourcebook is available at www.albany.edu.
2. League of United Latin American Citizens, Civil Rights Manual, Chapter 4, "Law Enforcement," (Washington, DC: LULAC, 1999), p. 48. www.lulac.org
3. Arthur R. Parra, President, HAPCOA, Letter to President George W. Bush, September 3, 2002. Copy available at www.hapcoa.org.
4. Leigh Herbst and Samuel Walker, "Language Barriers in the Delivery of Police Services: A Study of Police and Hispanic Interactions in a Midwestern City," Journal of Criminal Justice, 29 (2001): 329-340.
5. Building Blocks for Youth, Donde Esta La Justicia? (Washington, DC: Building Blocks for Youth, 2002), pp. 12-14. . www.buildingblocksforyouth.org
6. Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, A Place at the Table: Latino Civil Rights Ten Years After the Mount Pleasant Disturbances: Conclusions and Recommendations of the Civil Rights Review Panel. (Washington, DC: WLCCRUA, 2002), p. 7. Available at www.washlaw.org.

Previous reports (in 1981 and 1993) on the need for better relations with the Hispanic / Latino community are: U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Police-Community Relations in Washington, DC (Washington, DC: U.S. Civil Rights Commission, 1981), and U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Racial and Ethnic Tensions in American Communities: Poverty, Inequality, and Discrimination, V. I: The Mount Pleasant Report (Washington, DC: U.S. Civil Rights Commission, 1993).
7. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics - 1997 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1999).

8. PolicyLink, Community-Centered Policing: A Force for Change. (Washington, DC: PolicyLink, 2001), p. 29. Available at www.policylink.org.

9. Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, A Place at the Table, p. 9.