Course Learning Outcomes for Unit IV

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

5. Explain the importance of a good relationship between law enforcement and the media.

6. Discuss police-community relationships regarding the media, gangs, and the process of assimilation.
   6.1   Discuss police-community relationships regarding the media.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 7:
Building Partnerships: A Cornerstone of Community Policing

Chapter 8:
Forming Partnerships with the Media

Unit Lesson

If you are a fan of some of the older detective shows, the ones that were in black and white or maybe produced just shortly after color television was invented, then you are familiar with the notion of law enforcement having partners. This concept of law enforcement having partners that work with them to investigate crimes, help citizens, and engage in other social activities is embedded in the history of law enforcement. Thus, it should be no surprise that when we talk about community policing, it is necessary for partnerships to be established between various community entities to ensure that the entire community is protected and served by law enforcement.

In communities, partnerships take on many forms. They can be between two individuals, an organization and individual, multiple individuals, multiple agencies, or multiple individuals and agencies. The term *collaboration* is often used to represent the coming together of various agencies and individuals that are working together to achieve a common goal. In addition to working together, these agencies and individuals pool their resources together to help achieve the goal. In order for collaboration to be successful, trust between the individuals and agencies involved must be at the core of that collaboration process. Once trust is at the core, that trust must then be surrounded by the following components to ensure a successful collaboration results: key stakeholders, shared visions and common goals, expertise, teamwork strategies, open communication, motivated partners, sufficient means (resources), and an action plan (Miller, Hess, & Orthmann, 2014).

It is imperative that law enforcement agencies make time for the development of partnerships and problem-solving. Changing beats and shift assignments can be a hindrance to building partnerships because it makes it difficult for the establishment of trust and the maintenance of active community involvement. Thus, there must be deliberate efforts by management to facilitate partnerships for problem-solving. Such efforts could include call management, call stacking, non-emergency call systems (e.g., 311), and online reporting.

Citizen involvement is essential to the development of partnerships between law enforcement and communities. Citizen police academies provide an opportunity for law enforcement to educate citizens about police work and encourage them to become involved in helping to prevent crime and solve problems in the community. In addition to citizen involvement, the involvement of key collaborators from every aspect of community is also essential to the development of partnerships between law enforcement and communities. Such key collaborators include prosecutors, courts, corrections, government agencies, private security agencies, victims, volunteers, and other community groups (e.g., taxi drivers, correlations) (Miller et al., 2014).

Partnerships have various benefits such as fostering a sense of accomplishment resulting from bettering the community, an opportunity to meet other community members, providing an opportunity to contribute to the community. However, partnerships can also be very costly and time-consuming. Thus, partnerships must be pursued in a matter in which the benefit to the community and law enforcement outweigh the negative aspects of forming partnerships (i.e., time and money).

Law enforcement also needs to foster partnerships with the media. Both law enforcement and media desire to serve the public. In addition, the police are as dependent on the media as the media is dependent on the police to accomplish their goals. There are constitutional amendments that govern the actions of media and law enforcement. The first amendment to the U.S. Constitution is associated with freedom of the press because it protects the public's right to know information. The sixth amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees a speedy trial and guarantees the defendant certain rights. Subsequently, this amendment is also relevant to criminal investigations, which involve law enforcement.

Conflict between the media and the police often arise because of the methods used by the media and the police to obtain information and protect the community. Conflict between law enforcement and the media originates from competing objectives, contradictory approaches to dangerous situations, and stereotyping (Miller et al., 2014). For example, there are certain statutes, such as the Freedom of Information Act, that protect victims of sex crimes from having to disclose certain information. However, it is possible for members of the media to obtain consent for an interview from a victim of a sex crime without that victim fully understanding the potentially negative impact of the interview on the criminal investigation. In addition, in a desire to keep the public informed, the media may release graphic images, inaccurately report information, release sensitive documents, retraumatize victims (including children), and compromise criminal investigations.

The media is often criticized because of the fame that its coverage can provide to infamous criminals. There is also concern that the media's coverage of high-profile cases has an impact on how the criminal justice system processes cases and sentences convicted offenders. Regardless of the sentiment law enforcement may hold toward the media, requests for information will continue. Thus, many agencies have developed policies concerning media relations. Such policies require officers to be professional during interviews and to speak in soundbites, avoid lying to the media unless it is in the best interests of public safety, designate public information officers, and follow strict guidelines regarding photographing and videotaping especially at the crime scene.

Researchers found that a significant factor that influences the relationship between the media and law enforcement is the perception of accessibility of law enforcement personnel and data to the media (Miller et al., 2014). There are many strategies that can be implemented to develop and sustain partnerships between the media and law enforcement. Such strategies can begin with keeping journalist informed about the department policies and procedures related to media accessing crime scenes. Law enforcement agents could also attempt to avoid using jargon and try to meet media deadlines. Seasonal news press releases could also provide media with a sense of accessibility to law enforcement personnel and data. Managers of law enforcement agencies can allow members of the media to "ride-a-long" on reporting calls or to be part of the group of law enforcement personnel assigned to large events, such as protests.

In addition, one of the key components to implementing community policing strategies is to have the support of the community. The media can be a significant asset or hindrance in obtaining the support of the community. Thus, partnerships with the media and law enforcement are necessary to ensure the fostering of community involvement in the implementation and sustaining of community policing strategies. For example, the media can be part of a marketing strategy that informs the community about community policing initiatives and encourages community involvement. However, such endeavors can be difficult for public information officers because of the amount of time that is spent responding to the media's inquiries about crime. "Despite such constraints, police departments should take every opportunity to forge creative, supportive, and respectful partnerships with the media" (Miller et al., 2014, p. 231).

Reference

Miller, L. S., Hess, K. M., & Orthmann, C. H. (2014). *Community corrections: Partnerships for problem solving* (7th ed.). Clifton Park, NY: Delmar Cengage Learning.

Suggested Reading

To learn more about the topics found this unit, you must first log into the myCSU Student Portal and access the General OneFile or ABI/Inform Complete databases found in the CSU Online Library.

The articles listed below highlight policing partnerships:

Douai, A. (2014). "The police and the populace": Canadian media's visual framing of the 2010 G20 Toronto summit. *Canadian Journal of Communication, 39*(2), 175-192.

Lasley, J. R., & Vernon, R. L. (1992, May). Police-citizen partnerships in the inner city. The FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, *61*(5), 18.

Thacher, D. (2004). Interorganizational partnerships as inchoate hierarchies: A case study of the community security initiative. *Administration & Society, 36*(1), 91.

Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

Community Partnerships

Community policing partnerships are integral to the successful implementation and sustainability of community policing strategies. One of the key partners in community policing partnerships is citizens in the community. However, citizens must be aware of the existence of community partnerships and be able to identify and address the need for additional community partnerships. To assist you in learning more about community policing partnerships in your community, respond to the following questions:

- How much do you really know about the community policing partnerships in your community?
- To what extent have you participated in community policing partnerships in your community?
- How could you get involved or become more involved in community policing partnerships in your community?

Note: It may be necessary to access the website of law enforcement agencies in your community and/or to use web search engines to identify related media that describes community policing partnerships in your community.

Non-graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to complete or submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.