

# TELEMASP BULLETIN

## TEXAS LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE STATISTICS PROGRAM

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### Formal Interagency Collaboration in Policing

#### Introduction

The police do not function in a vacuum (Peak and Glensor 1999). It is apparent that they alone cannot solve the problems of crime, fear, and public safety that society faces today (Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy 1990). The advent of community policing expanded law enforcement to include "quality of life" issues. Reliance on other agencies for assistance and cooperation is of paramount importance, because problems addressed are "too complex and intractable for a single organization to solve" (Brodeur 1998, 17) and beyond the scope of the police to address them by themselves through traditional means such as arrests and filing reports (Oettmeier and Brown 1988). From a police perspective, the creation and utilization of interagency partnerships and collaboration represent a significant departure from the traditional police role (Brodeur 1998). Many assets needed to address problems are outside the boundaries of police agencies (Eck and Rosenbaum 1994; Rosenbaum and Lurigio 1998).

Despite the popularity of community policing, literature is sparse about the extent and nature of interagency involvement. Sadd and Grinc (1995) report that interagency involvement appears to be the least discussed and implemented component of community policing. In their study of eight "Innovative Neighborhood-Oriented Policing Programs," they found that involvement by other public agencies was limited in all the sites with the exception of one. According to Rosenbaum and Lurigio (1998, 205), the "process of working together and the barriers to cooperative relationships are essential topics for future research." The purpose of this bulletin is to promote a better understanding of formal collaboration between police departments and other city and/or county agencies (hereafter usually referred to as "other" agencies) in Texas.

#### Method

A survey instrument was constructed to assess interagency collaboration and to explore formal structured relationships, not sporadic or incidental communications, between the police and other agencies. Thirty-five police departments within the state of Texas responded to the survey.

In developing the survey instrument, an area of concern was the community policing variable. "Community policing is a complex innovation that has been defined in a number of ways" (Maguire et al. 1997, 388). Continued debate exists in defining the term. A focal issue is whether the concept refers to: (a) a particular kind or set of operational programs; (b) a particular set of administrative reforms in the police department; or (c) an overall philosophy, strategy, or style of policing that is meant to change the entire department's operations (Moore 1994). For the purpose of this bulletin, community policing is considered an underlying philosophy operationalized through a variety of programs and practices.

It is postulated that if departments are asked whether or not they have a community policing program or adhere to its philosophy, the tendency would be "yes." Thus, the first question explored the degree of adherence to community policing ideals by asking if the respondents participated in specific listed activities. Reporting a high level of participation in various activities does not, however, guarantee that a department has made the philosophical shift from rhetoric to reality.

The remaining 25 questions concerned collaboration issues. Respondents were asked about the existence of structured programs, meetings, training, formal agreements, written policies, communication barriers, and perceptions of the need for communication.

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## Results

### **Participation in community policing related activities.**

Respondents were asked to indicate if they participated in 24 community policing related activities. Table 1 shows the breakdown of involvement in each activity. All of the agencies had formal programs. The Austin Police Department (PD) took part in 21 activities, followed by the Arlington, Euless, and Tyler police departments, each participating in 20. The Travis County Sheriff's Department (SD) participated in 17 activities, representing the most for sheriff departments.

Crime Stoppers was practiced by 91.4% of the departments surveyed. Surprisingly, only 34.3% reported participating in the Police Activities League (PAL), a program dating back to the 1930s. Another unexpected finding was the number of agencies (57.1%) that conduct citizen satisfaction surveys, despite the expense. Another expensive program to maintain is Citizens on Patrol; yet, 62.9% use this approach to reduce crime. Nuisance abatement and problem-solving efforts are two community policing related activities that outwardly involve collaboration with other non-policing agencies. Problem-solving efforts ranked fifth, with 85.7% of the departments reporting involvement, while nuisance abatement and organizational value and philosophy statement each ranked eighth, or 77.1%. This is relevant because community policing is viewed as an underlying philosophy operationalized through a variety of programs and practices.

**Existence of formal ride-along program.** When asked if there was a formal ride-along program with any of the other agencies, 51% indicated that the program exists with at least one other agency. Code enforcement had the highest number (11) participating in a formal ride-along program. Others that participate most frequently with the surveyed agencies include emergency management (9), fire department (8), adult (7) and juvenile (6) probation, and schools (6). Austin PD reports that a formal ride-along program exists with 13 of 22 other agencies. Two other departments reporting a high number of formal ride-along programs were Victoria (11) and Waco (10).

**No formal ride-along program.** Eighty percent of the surveyed respondents indicated that even if there is not a formal program, employees of other agencies have ridden along to foster cooperation. Emergency management had the highest involvement (13), followed by animal control and regulation (12), code enforcement, fire department, adult probation, and schools (11), and municipal courts (10). Corpus Christi PD has a non-formal ride-along program in existence with 15 of 22 other agencies, while Arlington PD reports a non-formal ride-along program with 11 other agencies.

**Frequency of meetings.** Eighty-six percent of the responding departments meet regularly with other agencies. Emergency management (30) is met with the most, followed by schools (27), fire department (26), and code enforcement and municipal courts (25). The Austin, Corpus Christi, Deer Park, San Antonio, and Waco police departments, and the Travis County Sheriff's Department, conduct meetings with all city and/or county agencies.

**Neighborhood meetings.** Of the surveyed police departments, 68.6% indicate that other agencies participate in neighborhood meetings with them. Code enforcement (20) and fire department (19) participate the most. Austin PD had the most other agencies (21) participating in neighborhood meetings with them. The remaining ranged from zero to 12.

**Inform other city and/or county agencies about policy changes.** Only 20% of the surveyed departments have a structured program to inform other city and/or county employees about new policies and/or procedures that would have an impact on them. Code enforcement, fire department, and legal department (5) were informed of new policies and/or procedures more than other agencies. Austin PD has a structured program consisting of the most other agencies (15). The remaining departments inform only two to eight other agencies.

**Other city and/or county agencies inform policing agencies about policy changes.** Only 20% of the surveyed police departments have a structured program whereby they are informed when other agencies adopt new policies and/or procedures that would have an impact on policing duties. Animal control and regulation and code enforcement (5) are indicated most. Austin PD is involved in a structured program with 17 other agencies. The remaining police departments are involved with only one to 11 of other agencies.

**Officers receive training on duties and responsibilities of other city and/or county agencies.** Respondents were asked to indicate whether their police officers receive training in the duties and responsibilities of other agencies. Accordingly, 62.9% indicated that a training program exists concerning at least one of the other agencies. In addition, 20% have a training program concerning at least ten of the other agencies: Houston PD (17), Austin PD (15), Corpus Christi PD (14), Carrollton and Garland PD (12), and El Paso Co. SD and Plano PD (10). The fire department (14) had the most police agencies participating in a training program concerning fire station duties. Other agencies listed most were emergency management (13), county and municipal courts (12), and animal control and regulation, code enforcement, and adult and juvenile probation (11).



Table 1

## Community Policing Related Activities

Activity/Participation by Policing Agencies	Number	Percent
Crime Stoppers	32	91.4%
Neighborhood association meetings	31	88.6%
Enforcement crackdowns	31	88.6%
Citizen Police Academy	31	88.6%
Problem-solving efforts	30	85.7%
Block Watch Programs	28	80.0%
Organizational value and philosophy statement	27	77.1%
Nuisance abatement	27	77.1%
Explorers' Posts (BSA)	25	71.4%
Business group meetings	23	65.7%
Citizens on Patrol	22	62.9%
DARE program	21	60.0%
Citizen satisfaction surveys	20	57.1%
Victims centers	19	54.3%
Service club meetings	19	54.3%
Truancy program	16	45.7%
Advertising campaigns	16	45.7%
Mini-stations	15	42.9%
Storefronts/resource centers	14	40.0%
Community newsletter	14	40.0%
PAL (Police Activities League)	12	34.3%
GREAT program	6	17.1%
Fire department arson/safety education	6	17.1%
No formal programs	0	0.0%

**Other agencies brought into planning stages of major changes.** Of the police departments that responded to the survey, 60% indicated that they brought other city and/or county agencies into the planning stages of any major changes in the policing agency's operations. In addition, 20% indicated at least ten of the other agencies are brought into planning stages: Arlington PD, Austin PD, and Houston PD (15), Irving PD and San Antonio PD (13), Wichita Falls PD (11), and Bryan PD (10). The fire department (14) was brought into planning stages the most. Municipal courts (13) and code enforcement, legal department, and schools (12) were also highly ranked as being included in planning stages.

**Formal cooperative agreements with other city and/or county agencies.** Departments were asked if they had a formal cooperative agreement with any other city and/or county agency. There were 62.8% responding in the affirmative. Bryan PD (16) and La Marque PD (15) had the most, with other departments reporting from one to five. Schools (15) had the highest number of formal cooperative agreements between police departments. Other agencies

listed the most were fire department (13) and emergency management (11).

**Informational cards.** When asked if police officers carry informational cards to give to the public regarding contacts for other city and/or county agencies, 45.7% responded favorably. Austin PD listed the most other agencies (22) on informational cards. The remaining departments listed from one to eight agencies. Social/human services (15) was listed overwhelmingly, followed by code enforcement (6).

**Authority/policy to refer.** Respondents were first asked to indicate whether they have a written policy ensuring that their police officers have the authority to refer citizens and/or problems to other agencies. Next, they were queried whether the written policy applied to specific city and/or county agencies. They were then requested to rank the methods of referral used (i.e., telephone, email, fax, or other). Fifteen responding departments (42.8%) have a written policy, and of those, eight have a written policy that applies to specific agencies. Six of the eight agencies listed



social/human services as the particular agency for which a policy has been developed. The telephone is the primary method of referral.

**Length of time to address policing agency's problems.** Police departments were asked to indicate how long it takes other agencies to address problems that they have referred. Fifty-three percent indicated that it takes three or less days, 28% indicated four to seven days, 10% specified eight to fourteen days, and 9% implied that it takes fifteen or more days for other city and/or county agencies to address referral problems.

**Formal procedure if no cooperation.** The survey questioned whether a formal procedure exists for an officer to follow if cooperation or assistance is not obtained from another city and/or county agency. Only 8.6% expressed that their agency has a procedure, that of following the chain of command.

**Formed a partnership.** Departments were then asked if a partnership was formed with other city/county agencies to solve a particular problem. The responses showed that 88.6% have formed partnerships.

**Barriers to communication.** Because there are many reasons why communication and/or cooperation does not take place between entities or organizations, departments were asked whether they face any barriers in communicating with other agencies. The responses signified that 42.9% of the responding police departments do face barriers. The most common are lack of a structured program and constant turnover of personnel.

**Communication between policing agency entities and city and/or county agencies.** Departments were asked to indicate which entity, the chief or equivalent, patrol, investigative units, or special units, communicate most frequently with other agencies. Twenty-seven percent responded that the police chief or equivalent is the communicator, and 29% indicated patrol.

**Perception of need to communicate.** When departments were asked to rate the other agencies on the necessity to communicate with each, rankings ranged from "1," almost no need, to "5," a critical need. Twenty of the police departments ranked legal department as a "5," and 16 ranked business license records as a "2," somewhat need to communicate. Ten departments also ranked business license records as a "1." Fourteen police departments ranked tax assessment office as a "1," and eleven ranked it as a "2." It can therefore be surmised that business license records and tax assessment office are perceived to be agencies with the least need to develop communication ties.

**Rank order need to communicate.** The departments were then asked to rank-order the other agencies overall on their perception of the need to communicate with each, with "1" representing the most important. Eleven departments ranked legal department first, which corresponds with its ranking in the previous question.

**Extent of change in communication.** When asked to evaluate the extent to which there is communication with the other agencies today as compared to five years ago, schools overwhelmingly received the most tallies (16) with which there is "much more communication." Schools also had 11 tallies for "somewhat more communication." They, therefore, represent the institution with which there has been the most change in communication. Code enforcement had 12 tallies for "much more communication" and 14 for "somewhat more communication." Emergency management (18) and fire department (19) had the most tallies for "somewhat more communication." The only two agencies to receive a response of "much less communication" were tax assessor offices and transportation.

**Most open/worst communication.** When asked to indicate those agencies with which there was the most open or the worst communication, fire department (30.6% of the responses) was listed as the agency with which there is the most open communication. County planning (23.8%) was identified as the agency with the worst communication.

**Community policing and changes in interagency cooperation.** Finally, respondents were queried as to whether conscious efforts to implement community policing had made a difference in interagency collaboration. Fifty-seven percent responded "greatly expanded contacts," and 34% responded "somewhat expanded contacts." None of the departments reported that there was no difference in contacts. However, 8% responded that no conscious effort had been made to implement community policing. The responses suggest that if an effort had been made, there would be a change in interagency collaboration.

## Interagency Collaboration

**Degree of interagency collaboration.** To ascertain if interagency collaboration presently occurs in Texas police departments, survey questions specifically pertaining to interactions between police departments and other agencies were enumerated. The highest possible number of interactions is 13, as shown in Table 2.

Referring to Table 2, questions two and three are combined to form an interaction involving the existence of ride-along programs. The second interaction is taken from question four and concerns whether there are meetings between police departments and other agencies, and so on down the list.



Table 2

Degree of Interagency Collaboration

Possible Interactions	Question No.	Question synopsis
	2	Formal ride-along program
1	3	Have ridden, but no formal program
2	4	Meetings between agencies and/or county agencies
3	5	Other agencies attend neighborhood meetings
4	6	Structured program to inform other agencies
5	7	Structured program to inform policing agency
6	8	Training about other agencies' duties
7	9	Planning stages
8	10	Formal cooperative agreement
9	11	Informational cards with contact information
10	12	Written policy to refer
11	16	Formal procedures if cooperation/ assistance is not obtained
12	17	Formed partnerships
13	19	Which entity has communication

For example, all of the police departments indicated that employees of other agencies ride-along with patrol officers, be it formal or informal participation, to foster cooperation between agencies. While this type of interaction requires little forethought on the part of the police, when interactions that require a higher level of interface are examined, the level of participation is lower.

**Level of interagency collaboration.** As shown in Table 3, a "Level of Interagency Collaboration" scale was developed based upon what appears to be a logical separation between the series of 13 possible interactions. Of the police departments represented, 20% had a low level of interagency collaboration, 57.1% had a moderate level, and 22.9% had a high level.

**Weighted degree of interagency collaboration.** Taking into account the differences in importance, each interaction was weighted on a three-point scale. The assigned weightings were based on those interactions which were seemingly more important in the collaboration process. The weighting for each of the possible interactions is shown in Table 4.

**Weighted level of interagency collaboration.** A "Weighted Level of Interagency Collaboration" developed from the 13 possible interagency interactions is depicted in Table 5. Of

Table 3

Level of Interagency Collaboration

Collaboration Level	Number of Interactions	Number of Agencies
Low	0-5	7 (20%)
Moderate	6-9	20 (57%)
High	10-13	8 (23%)

the police departments surveyed, 25.7% have a low level, 42.9% have a moderate level, and 31.4% have a high interagency collaboration level. At the low end of the scale, the actual percentages demonstrate little change with the use of the weighted scale. There are, however, more agencies with a high level when the weighted scale for interagency collaboration is used. The ranking order of the top eight agencies does not vary with the use of the weighted interactions.

When a comparison was made between the possible interactions that could occur (cf., Tables 2 and 4), not all 22 agencies interface with police departments. Emergency management and fire department personnel interact the most, followed by code enforcement, which is not unexpected considering the role that these agencies play in policing.

**Cross-tabulation of Variables**

The second research objective was to determine if a relationship exists between police department size, type, or community policing programs and the extent of interagency collaboration.

**Community policing level.** Departments were assigned a community policing level according to their total number of community policing related activities. A scale was developed based upon what appears to be a logical separation between the series of activities. Activities ranged from zero to 24. As shown in Table 6, 8.6% of the departments reported a low level, 45.7% a nominal level, and 22.9% a moderate or high community policing level.

**Cross-tabulation of community policing level by size and type.** Tables 7 and 8 show the cross-tabulation between community policing level and agency size or population level. The row percentage is used to detect any association. Thirty city and five county police departments are represented in the sample. A population level was assigned based on the citizen population over which the department has primary jurisdiction. This was obtained from the 1998 Population Estimates Program of the U.S. Census Bureau.



**Table 4**  
**Weighted Degree of Interagency Collaboration**

Possible Interactions	Weight	Survey Question #	Question Synopsis
		2	Formal ride-along program
1	1	3	Have ridden, but no formal program
2	2	4	Meetings between police agencies and/or county agencies
3	2	5	Other agencies attend neighborhood meetings
4	3	6	Structured program to inform other agencies
5	3	7	Structured program to inform policing agency
6	3	8	Training about other agencies' duties
7	3	9	Planning stages
8	3	10	Formal cooperative agreement
9	3	11	Informational cards with contact info
10	2	12	Written policy to refer
11	1	16	Formal procedures if no cooperation occurs
12	3	17	Formed partnerships
13	1	19	Which entity has communication

**Table 5**  
**Weighted Level of Interagency Collaboration**

Collaboration Level	Number of Interactions	Number of Agencies
Low	0 - 12	9 (2%)
Moderate	13 - 20	15 (43%)
High	21 - 26	11 (31%)

**Table 6**  
**Community Policing Level**

Community Policing Level	# Community Policing Interactions	Percent of Agencies
Low	0 - 8	8.6
Nominal	9 - 13	45.7
Moderate	14 - 18	27.9
High	19 - 24	22.9



The results indicate that there is some association between community policing level and department type. The probability is greater of a high level of community policing in city rather than county departments. These results are consistent with research conducted by Lyons (1997).

Referring again to Tables 7 and 8, an association exists between community policing level and agency population level. For example, the difference in percentages at the nominal level of community policing ranges from 0% to 71.43%. There is also a strong linear relationship at the nominal community policing level. The larger the population, the more community policing activities.

These results are consistent with research conducted by Maguire et al. (1997). Their sample involved a large collection of agency-level police data obtained from the Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services. One-way analysis of variance tests were used to assess whether population size, department size, or area of the jurisdiction influenced levels of community policing. Maguire et al. (1997) found that the larger the population served and the larger the police agency in terms of sworn officers, the greater the level of community policing activities.

As mentioned previously, 77.1% of the surveyed departments have an organizational value and philosophy statement. The association between having a statement and community policing level is cross-tabulated in Table 9. As shown, there is a positive association in that departments with statements tend to have higher levels of community policing. Only 12.5% of those without statements are classified as having moderate or high levels, while 56.6% with statements are in these categories.

**Cross-tabulation of interagency collaboration by variables.** Tables 10, 11, and 12 represent the cross-tabulation of the data. Interagency collaboration level is treated as the dependent variable, and agency type, size, and community policing level are the independent variables. The row percentage detects any association between the variables.

The relationship between low interagency collaboration and agency type is linear, but not very strong because the differences in percentages reading down the columns are small. The relationship between low and moderate interagency collaboration and agency population level are curvilinear and not very strong. The differences between the subgroups of agency population level for the high interagency collaboration level are so small resulting in a non-existent relationship (21.43%, 23.53%, 25%).

There is a fairly strong positive relationship between interagency collaboration level and community policing level. A high level of interagency collaboration does not that

take place in interagency collaboration, the weighting scale for interagency collaboration was applied to the cross-tabulation of the variables (Tables 13, 14, and 15).

The percentages and relationships between interagency collaboration level and agency type and population level remain exactly the same when the weighted scale is applied to the interagency collaboration level. However, the positive relationship between interagency collaboration level and community policing level becomes even stronger for the high interagency collaboration level. The differences between the subgroups become more pronounced when the weighting scale is applied to interagency collaboration. The large differences between the subgroups show the relationship is strong. The percentages for the high (un-weighted) interagency collaboration level and the subgroups of community policing range from 0% to 42.86%. However, the percentages for the high (weighted) interagency collaboration level and the subgroups of community policing range from 0% to 62.5%.

## Conclusions

Approximately 80% of the police departments surveyed have a moderate to high level of interagency collaboration. In addition, respondents indicated that if an effort had been made to implement community policing, there was a difference in interagency collaboration, with 91% reporting either "greatly expanded contacts" or "somewhat expanded contacts." In comparing the relationship between interagency collaboration and the variables of community policing levels, departmental size (population level), and departmental type, there is a strong positive relationship. By comparing only the relationship between community policing and departmental type and size (population level), some association is found.

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**Table 7**

**Cross-tabulation of Community Policing Level by Agency Type**

		Community Policing Level (DV)			
		Low	Nominal	Moderate	High
Agency Type (IV)	City	2 6.67%	13 43.33%	7 23.33%	8 26.67%
	County	1 20.00%	3 60.00%	1 20.00%	0 0.00%

**Table 8**

**Cross-tabulation of Community Policing Level by Population**

		Community Policing Level (DV)			
		Low	Nominal	Moderate	High
Agency Population Type (IV)	Small (≤99,999)	1 7.14%	10 71.43%	1 7.14%	2 14.29%
	Midsized (100,000-999,999)	1 5.88%	6 35.29%	5 29.41%	5 29.41%
	Large (≥1,000,000)	1 25.00%	0 0.00%	2 50.00%	1 25.00%

**Table 9**

**Cross-tabulation of Community Policing Level by Organizational Statement**

		Community Policing Level (DV)			
		Low	Nominal	Moderate	High
Organizational Statement (IV)	Yes	1 3.70%	11 40.74%	7 25.93%	8 29.63%
	No	2 25.00%	5 62.50%	1 12.50%	0 0.00%



**Table 10**

**Cross-tabulation of Interagency Collaboration by Agency Type**

		Interagency Collaboration Level (DV)		
		Low	Moderate	High
Agency Type (IV)	City	13 43.33%	7 23.33%	8 26.67%
	County	3 60.00%	1 20.00%	0 0.00%

**Table 11**

**Cross-tabulation of Interagency Collaboration by Agency Population Level**

		Interagency Collaboration Level (DV)		
		Low	Moderate	High
Agency Population Level (IV)	Small	1 7.14%	10 71.43%	3 21.43%
	Midsize	4 23.53%	9 52.94%	4 23.53%
	Large	0 0.00%	3 75.00%	1 25.00%

**Table 12**

**Cross-tabulation of Interagency Collaboration by Community Policing Level**

		Interagency Collaboration Level (DV)		
		Low	Moderate	High
Community Policing Level (IV)	Low	1 20.00%	4 80.00%	0 0.00%
	Nominal	2 13.33%	11 73.33%	2 13.33%
	Moderate	0 0.00%	4 57.14%	3 42.86%
	High	0 0.00%	5 62.50%	3 37.50%



**Table 13**

**Cross-tabulation of Weighted Interagency Collaboration by Agency Type**

		Interagency Collaboration Level (DV)		
		Low	Moderate	High
Agency Type (IV)	City	4 13.33%	18 60.00%	8 26.67%
	County	1 20.00%	4 80.00%	0 0.00%

**Table 14**

**Cross-tabulation of Weighted Interagency Collaboration by Agency Population Level**

		Interagency Collaboration Level (DV)		
		Low	Moderate	High
Agency Population Level (IV)	Small	1 7.14%	10 71.43%	3 21.43%
	Midsized	4 23.53%	9 52.94%	4 23.53%
	Large	0 0.00%	3 75.00%	1 25.00%

**Table 15**

**Cross-tabulation of Weighted Interagency Collaboration by Community Policing Level**

		Interagency Collaboration Level (DV)		
		Low	Moderate	High
Community Policing Level (IV)	Low	1 20.00%	4 80.00%	0 0.00%
	Nominal	3 35.71%	8 42.86%	3 21.43%
	Moderate	1 12.50%	4 50.00%	3 37.50%
	High	0 0.00%	3 37.50%	5 62.50%

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