



Community Engagement Resources

SUPPORTING PSN TEAMS AND THEIR MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY¹

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) seeks to reduce violent crime and enhance community health and vitality through collaboration between local, state, and federal criminal justice agencies; local government; social services; schools; and a variety of neighborhood and community partners. PSN builds on four pillars: community engagement, focused and strategic enforcement, prevention and intervention, and accountability. The community engagement pillar is based on research findings demonstrating that meaningful collaboration and partnerships between the justice system and the community (individuals, neighborhood groups, associations, schools, social services, faith communities, etc.) is characteristic of safe and healthy communities.

This series on community engagement was developed by Rev. Dr. K. Edward Copeland from Rockford, Illinois. Dr. Copeland has worked locally with community groups, the Rockford Police Department, and other justice and community partners to address crime and safety issues while at the same time building meaningful relationships between community groups and the justice system. He has also worked nationally with the PSN Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) team to provide training on focused deterrence strategies, including the drug market intervention strategy and re-entry strategies. The series includes four training modules and a list of associated resources. The four training modules are:

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY'S MORAL VOICE: MODULE 1

This introductory module presents the evidence-based strategy known as focused deterrence. This strategy has been demonstrated to reduce levels of violent crime. The strategy seeks to identify individuals and groups at high risk of violent crime and directly communicate a two-fold message. One element of the message is that violent crime will not be tolerated, and every effort will be made to hold those involved in violence accountable. The second element is that support is available to assist people who are at risk of being involved in violence. A key theme of the module is that the community

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has an important role to play in the focused deterrence strategy. Dr. Copeland makes the point that both justice officials and community partners need to think differently about responding to violent crime and take a highly focused and proactive approach to violence reduction.

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY'S MORAL VOICE: MODULE 2

Module 2 focuses on some of the common barriers and roadblocks that arise when planning and implementing focused deterrence. These include mental roadblocks and questions regarding the roles the community can play in successfully implementing these strategies. The lesson contains practical advice on how to recruit team members, the essential ingredients of the team, and the role the team will play in the strategy. The advice includes the critical element of engaging the small group of individuals driving violent crime in the community. Dr. Copeland emphasizes the importance of the community's moral voice — “we care about you, but the violence has got to stop.”

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ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY'S MORAL VOICE: MODULE 3

One of the main elements of the focused deterrence strategy is the call-in meeting. The call-in typically involves individuals on probation and parole, identified for their high risk for involvement in violent crime, who hear the focused deterrence message from a variety of justice officials, community members, and service providers. Dr. Copeland offers advice on the critical elements of the message with a focus on the moral voice of the community.

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ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY'S MORAL VOICE: MODULE 4

One of the challenges observed during focused deterrence strategies is sustaining the effort over the long term. Successful implementation of focused deterrence strategies has often resulted in significant declines in violent crime — what some have described as a “light switch” impact. Ironically, this has sometimes resulted in leaders “declaring victory” and moving on to other initiatives and priorities. The unfortunate consequence is that violent crime has then resurfaced. In this module, Dr. Copeland offers guidance on “maintaining the momentum.” Specifically, he gives advice for sustaining the program and, thereby, sustaining the reductions in violent crime.

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