

## Community Policing

Community policing is a law enforcement technique that establishes relationships with the community, thereby building trust between the people and the police. According to Community Oriented Policing Services (2012), “Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.” Building trust helps people find the courage to speak up about issues they encounter in the community, allowing the police to develop solutions that decrease crime in the area. They explained that there are three key components to community policing: community partnerships, organizational transformation, and problem-solving.

Community partnerships establish a collaborative relationship between the law enforcement system and the community it serves, including residents, local organizations, and businesses, to develop solutions to crimes and foster trust. It is essential to engage with residents and local leaders to identify concerns and develop solutions for the problems they face. Without their help, it would be difficult for law enforcement to understand the problems within the community. Similarly, it is important to build relationships with people in other government agencies, such as schools and social services, to gain more insight into community concerns; they can also help offer solutions. Private businesses within the community can also voice out concerns and offer resources that help solve problems (Community Oriented Policing Services, 2012). Community involvement will help police departments identify problems in different parts of the community.

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On the other hand, organizational transformation is the process of reshaping a police organization's management, structure, personnel, and technology to align with the community policing ideology. To build relationships with the community, police officers must be proactive and make citizens feel comfortable with their presence. They must be trained in communication, analysis, and innovation, but can also emotionally connect with individuals. It is important to have great leadership within law enforcement that serves as role models. Good influence starts with a great leader; they must enforce the values of community policing to other police officers. Another important part of organizational transformation is its information systems. They must have up-to-date technology to improve problem-solving and decision-making, as it is essential for them to communicate not only with each other but also with the citizens. Examples of this include email alerts, online reports, and interactive applications such as surveys (Community Oriented Policing Services, 2012). Community policing begins with law enforcement's ability to connect with the citizens.

The last component of community policing is problem-solving. According to Community Oriented Policing Services, problem-solving is "the process of engaging in the proactive and systematic examination of identified problems to develop and evaluate effective responses." They must be able to identify problems and create solutions before any more crimes occur. They address causes of the problems through the SARA model: scanning, analysis, response, and assessment. Scanning is the process of identifying and prioritizing problems (Community Oriented Policing Services, 2012). They must find the root of the problem, determine how serious it is, and establish measures to address the crime. With the help of the community, law enforcement should identify problems and decide how to respond to the seriousness of the situation.

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Growing up, I experienced different forms of community policing without realizing it. Living in a military base, I would always see police cars driving around. Naturally, I would feel nervous, but they would always smile and wave to reassure me that they were there to keep the community safe. That was only the start of my interactions with police officers. The places I have lived in do a great job of community policing. Throughout middle and high school, we had police officers on campus to ensure everyone was safe, and they did a great job. Specifically in middle school, many students, including me, would talk to the police officer every day and have a casual conversation with him. At the time, I did not realize they were slowly getting young kids used to the idea of having police officers in their vicinity. It made me feel safe and realize that police officers were not against the citizens, but they were there to keep the community safe.

In regard to community partnerships, the Norfolk Police Department does a great job of collaborating with the community. Since 2014, Norfolk Police has made an effort to create relationships with the community before graduating from high school. They host events for young kids and teenagers to collaborate and build a connection from an early age. One example is Cops and Curls. It is an annual event that allows police officers to uplift and motivate girls aged 6-13 years old. Police officers also make efforts to host back-to-school activities and movie and holiday parties (The City of Norfolk). Another example of Norfolk Police collaborating with the youth is the Teens with a Purpose event. They engage with teens to educate them about the local and national data on officer-involved shootings, what actions to take when stopped by the police, and probable cause. These events help children grow up knowing how to handle police interactions while feeling safe during these interactions. It builds a sense of trust and security with the police.

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While hosting these events is easy in theory, the efforts start with the police department and its officers. For community policing to be effective, police officers must put effort into creating relationships with the people of the community. Management must ensure that police officers do not approach citizens harshly, but rather stay calm unless a situation arises. The more negative interactions officers have with citizens, the less trust they will have in the police department. Police officers who fail to do so must also be held accountable. Community policing is a long-term strategy, so it is important to stay patient with the people in the area.

Not only is it important to build trust and connections within the community, it is also important for the police department to create solutions to arising problems while actively being out in the area. Once trust is established, the people of the community feel more comfortable in approaching the police about certain issues they have within their neighborhoods. Police can then decide how to go about situations to ensure others feel safer.

Community policing is a team effort between the police department and the citizens. However, it is also a team effort within the police department itself. With police brutality being broadcast on the news, citizens are losing more and more trust in the police. Not only does it harm the community, but it also harms the police department's ability to do its job as best as it can. It is important to be compliant when interacting with a police officer to avoid trouble, but it is also essential for them to respect citizens.

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### **References**

*Community Policing Defined.* (2012). U.S. Department of Justice-COPS.

*Cops and Curls | City of Norfolk, Virginia - Official Website.* (n.d.). Norfolk.gov. Retrieved November 6, 2025, from <https://www.norfolk.gov/4752/Cops-and-Curls>