

Safer Neighborhoods through Precision Policing Initiative: Arlington, Texas, Police Department



*Roberto Villaseñor, Strategic Site Coordinator, CNA
Denise Rodriguez, Operations Analyst, CNA*

INTRODUCTION


The Arlington, Texas, Police Department is one of 15 departments selected to participate in the Safer Neighborhoods through Precision Policing Initiative. SNPPI provides policy review, assessments, training, and technical assistance to a cohort of law enforcement agencies across the nation. The four goals of the initiative are to identify promising strategies that **reduce crime, protect officer's safety and wellness, establish productive interagency partnerships** with law enforcement and community stakeholders, and **implement innovative and effective technologies** to assist police departments to safeguard neighborhoods.

METHODOLOGY

Each of the 15 selected departments is assigned a CNA Strategic Site Coordinator (SSC) and an operations analyst to assist with planning, implementation, coordination, and delivery of technical assistance. CNA worked with the Arlington Police Department to develop a customized strategy to capitalize on the great work already in progress across the four policing principles. To do this, CNA looked at the Arlington Police Department's policies and practices related to: crime reduction efforts, policy effectiveness, technological capabilities, training structures and offerings, and officer safety and wellness philosophies. The CNA team then helped identify the TTA opportunities and additional tools and resources to enhance areas related to the principles of precision policing. These strengths and initiatives were documented by CNA and will be available to police departments nationwide to implement proven policing practices that promote public safety.

BACKGROUND

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ARLINGTON, TEXAS¹



Square Miles 133.2

Population (2016) 392,772

% Over Age 25 with High School Diploma or Greater 84

Median Household Income \$53,547

Per Capita Income \$25,957

The Arlington Police Department (APD) has more than 600 sworn personnel and is led by Chief Will Johnson. Since his appointment in 2013, Chief Johnson has made numerous strides toward advancing the department, such as increased transparency, enhanced community outreach efforts, and renewed training efforts

1 United States Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program (PEP), Updated annually. <http://www.census.gov/popest/>

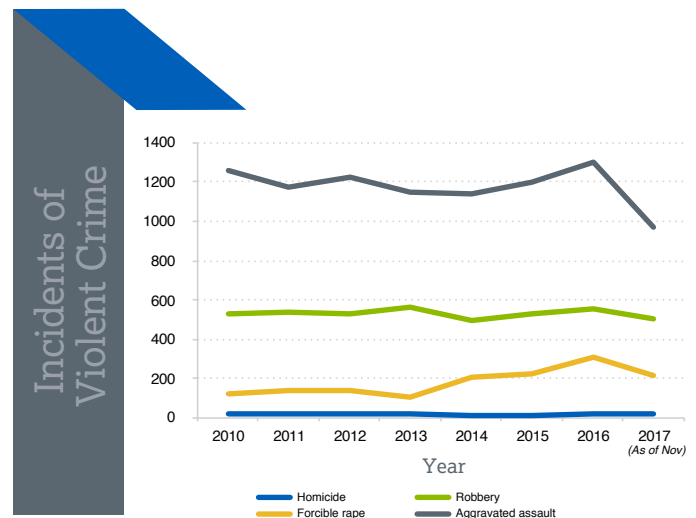
“ The APD strives to reduce crime, increase transparency, and better engage the community through its numerous public safety and community outreach efforts

focused on procedural justice. The APD also strives to reduce crime, increase transparency, and better engage the community through its numerous public safety and community outreach efforts, such as: the Citizen Police Academy, Citizens on Patrol, and a prominent social media presence. Most recently, APD has placed a renewed emphasis on reducing violent crime by combating illegal guns and drugs and targeting known offenders. In 2017, APD implemented initiatives to address these issues, including Operation Safety Net and the Violent Crime Reduction Program. Together, these programs ultimately contributed to a 6.12-percent decrease in violent crime.

Historical Crime Rates and Trends in Arlington

Violent crime rates in Arlington over the past seven years have been relatively low. Although APD saw an increase in violent crime from 2015 to 2016, like many cities across the country, it has seen notable decreases in violent crime within the past year.² APD credits the decrease in violent crime from 2016–2017 to the work of its Violent Crime Reduction Programs.

FIGURE 1. INCIDENTS OF VIOLENT CRIME IN ARLINGTON, TEXAS, 2010-2017



Crime reduction efforts and strategies like the Violent Crime Task Force, the Project Raise, and ongoing efforts to engage the community in public safety efforts such as Citizens on Patrol have played a significant role in the overall trend in low rates of crime and the recent reductions in violent crime. ▀

2 Arlington Police Department, Arlington Police Department 2013 Annual Report, <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/police/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2015/01/2013-APD-Annual-Report.pdf>; MPAC Arlington, “Arlington Police Chief Will Johnson,” <http://www.mpacarlington.org/events/Police%20Chief%20Will%20Johnson.pdf>.

IDENTIFYING PROMISING PRACTICES TO REDUCE CRIME

The APD employs many crime-reduction strategies, but recent efforts place greater emphasis on addressing violent crime. The following section provides an overview of the various programs and initiatives APD has put into place to address violent crime.

Operation Safety Net

Operation Safety Net (OSN) was conducted in 2016. The focus of this operation was an intelligence-based response to robbery-related offenses in Arlington. The operation utilized: the department's crime analysis unit (CAU); Hot Spot Enforcement Action Team (HEAT); SWAT Team; robbery investigations; gang unit; Tactical Intelligence Unit (ATI); the U.S. Marshals; and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, and formed a multidisciplinary approach to specifically locate robbery offenses and robbery offenders.

The CAU identified 5 focused zones within the city. Efforts were concentrated in Zone 1 first, and so on. APD used saturation patrols, covert units for surveillance, and rapid warrant service (when a unit cut a warrant for a known offender, the OSN group would serve it immediately). This was one of the first times APD used intelligence and coordinated a multidisciplinary approach to solve an issue. As a result of this operation, APD increased clearance rates for robbery cases, made a total of 639 arrests, seized 57 weapons, 198 gang member contacts, seized over 413 (g) of drugs, recovered more than \$308,587 from outstanding warrants, and resulted in overall reductions in violent criminal offenses citywide. Operation Safety Net was concluded in early fall of 2016.

Violent Crime Reduction Program

The Violent Crime Reduction Program was implemented from May through August 2017. The program had many components similar to those of Operation Safety Net. Although the program involved many of the same units, APD did not identify "zones," but rather enforced the program within geographic districts that included violent crime hot spots. As a result of this Task force, APD



made more than 2,500 traffic stops, issued 1,045 citations, made 295 arrests, and seized 22 firearms and a large amount of illicit drugs. Overall, this initiative resulted in a reduction of 11.2 percent in violent crime with a 3.9-percent reduction in robberies and a 12.9-percent reduction in aggravated assaults.

Project Raise³

Project RAISE (Risk Assessment Intervention Safety Engagement) consists of a multidisciplinary team of social service, community and criminal justice agencies partnering together to focus on addressing the issues that repeat family victims face by offering a support system to help develop a safe and healthy climate for them.

In August of 2015, the Arlington Police Department initiated a pilot program that focused on methods to reduce family violence cases, aid in the reduction of resource hours being utilized on domestic violence calls for service and reduce the incidence of having to respond to repeat locations. The pilot program operated from August 2015 to December 2015 and saw significant reductions in repeat domestic violence service calls. As a result of the success of the program, the project was awarded the 2016 Texas Municipal League Municipal Excellence Award and moved from a temporary pilot status to a fully implemented program.

³ Arlington Police Department. Arlington Police Department Recognized for Texas Municipal League Award. <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/police/2016/10/05/arlington-police-department-recognized-for-texas-municipal-league-award/>

“As a result of this operation, APD increased clearance rates for robbery cases, made a total of 639 arrests, seized 57 weapons, 198 gang member contacts, seized over 413 (g) of drugs, recovered more than \$308,587 from outstanding warrants, and resulted in overall reductions in violent criminal offenses citywide.”



Key components of the program included more effective documentation and analysis of repeat domestic violence call locations. On a monthly basis, the multidisciplinary team which consists of representatives from approximately ten different agencies discuss cases and offer services to repeat domestic violence victims. Detectives also attend the meetings at the request of the counselors to provide case updates and prioritize case assignments and investigations. Additionally, investigators provide arrest warrants to the fugitive unit for suspects and coordinate protective order follow-ups on repeat locations and case dispositions with the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office.

Arrests made by law enforcement are not enough to deter repeat cycles of family violence. Awareness of these ongoing situations provides an opportunity to intervene before further violence occurs. The program effectively creates an environment where families can receive multiple layers of assistance that is available. In the end, families coupled with the community and the police department have all benefited from Project RAISE. By receiving assistance from the many social service organizations, families are able to receive adequate resources to prevent repeat domestic occurrences.

APD continues to experience success in this program; in 2017, APD saw significant reductions in repeat calls for service, over 80 percent. Project RAISE has become one of the most innovative programs taken to improve on saving time and streamlining processes while documenting and tracking repeat domestic violence service calls and/or domestic assault offense investigations for the Arlington Police Department. ▀

IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE TECHNOLOGIES TO ASSIST POLICE DEPARTMENTS WITH SAFEGUARDING NEIGHBORHOODS

Small unmanned aircraft⁴

In 2009, the Arlington Police Department deployed its first unmanned aircraft for research and observation. This technology is capable of traveling into dense areas and places where traffic accessibility is limited or determined unsafe for officers and the public. Similar to the police helicopter, this technology provides officers with "eyes in the sky." APD is currently expanding its fleet of unmanned aircraft and has 13 officer pilots who can deploy this technology at any time day or night when the authorization for its deployment is granted. The unmanned aircraft have been deployed on high-risk search warrants, K9 searches, missing persons, and community events. Each deployment helps the Arlington Police Department achieve its goals of preventing and reducing crime in a variety of ways.

Social media networking

Arlington finds immense value in social media networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Social media platforms like these are being used to connect the community with its police

⁴ Arlington, TX, Police Department. Policing in the 21st Century: A Report to the Community. <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/police/policing-in-the-21st-century/>

department. Using social media, APD shares crime alerts and engages the public in efforts to prevent and solve crime. In 2017, APD was able to identify and arrest 19 suspects it profiled using social media.

APD regularly uses social media to highlight its great police work and community partnerships and benefits from the social media commentary about the department, its program, and issues. The feedback received via social media allows the department to identify and mitigate safety concerns in the community.⁵ APD social media networking efforts include:

- Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/cityofarlington>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CityofArlington>
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofarlington>
- Pinterest: <http://pinterest.com/cityofarlington>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/cityofarlington/>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/city-of-arlington>
- Nextdoor: <https://nextdoor.com/>



PROTECTING OFFICER'S SAFETY AND WELLNESS⁶

Wellness for life

The City of Arlington Wellness for Life program offers the tools necessary to help employees make lifestyle choices that can improve their overall health. Officers who choose to participate in this program receive a cash payout along with a reduction in healthcare costs. During the program, officers earn points by completing the annual physical exam, tracking workouts, and attending employee health fairs and workshops. In addition, all employees are provided access to City of Arlington recreational facilities at discounted rates.

Alternative work schedule

The Arlington Police Department implemented an alternative work schedule comprised of four 10-hour work days to all patrol officers and select civilian staff. The department has a goal to reduce absenteeism, decrease stress, and improve the mental and physical health of officers. Research findings from a Police Foundation Shift-Length Experiment revealed that officers working an alternative work schedule enjoyed a significantly higher quality of life. They also gained more hours of rest, and the number of overtime hours was significantly lowered. APD allows patrol officers to bid for their shifts each year based on seniority, which enables everyone to plan vacations and training around their regular days off. The alternative work schedule is another example of the value that APD places on overall safety and wellness.

Crisis Intervention Stress Management

The APD Crisis Intervention Stress Management team includes mental health professionals as well as peer support members. As of 2017 6 mental health professionals and 18 team members are on the team. Members receive 24 to 40 hours of training in crisis intervention. The team provides resources and peer support for all officers in the department, especially after a critical incident. ▾

PRODUCTIVE INTERAGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

Non-enforcement activities

Arlington officers have a long history as mentors. They have been leading programs like the Police Activities League (PAL Camp) and Police Explorers for many years, but a number of new initiatives have more officers involved in non-enforcement activities across the city.

The Mentoring Arlington Youth program (MAY program): The MAY program, started in July 2015, was created to serve young African-American and Hispanic male students in the seventh and eighth grades. This 18-month program offers interactive workshops on leadership, team building, education, and career development. To emphasize the importance of giving, this

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.



populations greater than 300,000, Arlington ranks #2 in the nation in National Night Out participation. This program is sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch. Around the country, National Night Out is a celebration of police and community partnerships. Officers visit neighborhoods to thank residents for their active participation in crime-prevention efforts and to improve personal relationships with the community.¹¹ National Night Out is an opportunity for non-enforcement activities as well as educational exchanges with the public. This is another platform for dialogue to take place as questions arise from the community about crime, police policies, and tactics.

program also includes community service-learning modules.⁷

The Coach 5-0 program: The Coach 5-0 program is a collaborative effort involving the Arlington Independent School District Athletic Department and the Arlington Police Department. Officers serve as mentors for high school student athletes. The goal is to help inspire success on the field and in life for student athletes and is helping to build trust.⁸

Citizen Police Academy: APD first began offering the Citizen Police Academy (CPA) in 1987. The CPA offers community members the opportunity to become better informed about APD and its efforts to reduce crime in the neighborhoods it serves. Topics provided during the annual CPA include: community policing, use of force, traffic stops, human trafficking, auto theft, and drug interdiction.

Youth Explorer Program: The Arlington Police Department's Explorer Post 602, first established in the mid-70s, is one of the longest running posts in Texas. Explorer Post membership is open to anyone age 14 to 20 who is interested in pursuing a law enforcement career. Members receive police-related training and exposure that includes "rideouts" with APD patrol officers and courses in Crime Scene Investigations, Bomb Scene Searches, and Hostage Negotiations. Explorer Post members are also involved in many community service projects in Arlington. As of 2017, more than 250 youths have participated in this program.⁹

School Resource Officer Unit: The School Resource Officer Unit is part of the Arlington Police Department's Youth Services Section and works closely with the Arlington Independent School District. This unit comprises 17 officers and 2 sergeants. All secondary schools in the city have assigned SROs. Assignments mirror the department's geographic policing philosophy and are divided into four districts.¹⁰

The role of the community in crime-fighting strategies

National Night Out is one of the best examples of community involvement in crime fighting. In a comparison of U.S. cities with

Arlington Clergy and Police Partnership: Arlington Clergy and Police Partnership (ACAPP) is a coalition of clergy from every faith and denomination who partner with APD. ACAPP members and their organizations are called upon to pray for the police department members, build relationships with police officers and other governmental officials, and be available for various situations involving the APD community. Members of ACAPP are provided with training to increase their knowledge of the police department. The training covers topics like patrol procedures, critical incidents, gangs, juvenile/crimes against children, and so on. As of 2017, more than 33 community members participate in ACAPP.

Citizen volunteer programs also play an important role in the department's crime-fighting strategies. APD's citizen volunteer programs include:

- **Citizens on Patrol:** APD launched the Citizens on Patrol (COP) program in the 1980s. The program empowers citizens to actively patrol their neighborhoods and take steps toward solving problems and preventing new issues. The mission of COP members is to reduce crime in their specific patrol area through teamwork with citizens and cooperation with the Arlington Police Department. Community members who participate in COP must complete a background check and undergo training. Currently, APD has more than 200 community members who play an active role on the COP program.
- **Citizens on Patrol Mobile:** APD began its Citizens on Patrol Mobile in 2012. The COP Mobile program is designed to reduce property crimes such as auto and residential burglaries by directing strategic patrols to areas in need of a visible presence. Community members who participate in this program must pass a background check and undergo training that includes a 12-hour Citizens on Patrol Course and 12 hours of field training. COP Mobile members are provided with a city vehicle and directed to contact police immediately if they view suspicious activity, a crime in progress, or even a medical emergency.¹²

⁷ Arlington Police Department. Youth Initiatives: Mentoring Arlington Youth. <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/police/mentoring-arlington-youth/>

⁸ Arlington Police Department. Youth Initiatives: Coach 5-0. <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/police/coach-5-0/>

⁹ Arlington Police Department. Youth Initiatives: Youth Explorer Program. <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/police/youth-explorer-program/>

¹⁰ Arlington Police Department. School Resource Officer Unit. <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/police/school-officers/>

¹¹ Arlington Police Department. Clergy & Police Partnership. <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/police/crime-prevention-initiatives/clergy-police-partnership/>

¹² Arlington Police Department. Citizens on Patrol Mobile. <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/apdvolunteer/citizens-on-patrol-mobile/>

“ APD is committed to more efficient methods of minimizing unnecessary police interaction with those in need of mental health treatment, and directing their needs to mental health professionals.

- **Sky Watch Tower:** The Sky Watch Tower program first began in 2009 and empowers citizens to watch for any abnormal activities on large parking lots by observing from an air-conditioned post approximately 20 feet above ground level. The towers are stationed by Arlington Police Department personnel at strategic locations based on the level of criminal activities. Volunteers normally work 2-hour shifts. They will only report unusual activities they observe to the police dispatch station. Volunteers are provided with training on how to operate the tower safely and how to notify police dispatch.¹³ ▀

LESSONS FROM SNPPI TARGETED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The SNPPI project included the development of TTA Action plans for each participating law enforcement agency, laying out a transition plan for implementing precision policing principles. The SNPPI teams worked with each site to develop a tailored, site-specific TTA plan to address challenges and to segment existing policing strategies. APD focused its TTA Action Plan on strategies to examine the role of civilians in the oversight of the police department, to strengthen its training programs, and to review its mental health response strategies.

As part of this assistance, the APD conducted a peer site visit to the Tucson Police Department (TPD) to learn more about its civilian participation in department oversight. This site visit included both an in-depth look at two methods employed by Tucson that give community members an option to discuss their interaction with the department, and a review of the processes the department uses to investigate citizen complaints.

The two methods APD examined were TPD's:

1. **Independent Police Auditor:** The Auditor can serve as an intake point for complaints about police service, as well as an auditor of the work of the police Internal Affairs office. This position works outside the police department and reports directly to the City Manager.
2. **Citizen Police Advisory Review Board:** This formal body is appointed by Mayor and Council. It can review completed internal investigations of internal affairs to ensure that the department conducted a thorough and complete investigation of complaints brought to it concerning its

members. This entity is advisory only and does not have subpoena or disciplinary power, but, by virtue of its transparency and availability to the public, it helps serve as a useful tool to maintain trust in the department.

APD plans to apply the lessons learned to seek opportunities to leverage citizen participation on its Training Advisory Board.

In addition to the peer-to-peer exchange with the TPD, representatives from APD also attended the TEAM Conference (Together Everyone Achieves More) in Spokane, Washington. The TEAM Conference is a collaborative partnership that delivers expert-level training to first responders and mental health professionals from across the country. This conference provided members of APD with training on how to best leverage mental health and public safety partnerships to improve police response to incidents involving mentally ill community members. APD will apply the insights and lessons gathered at this conference to its related policies, procedures, and training.

APD also conducted a peer-to-peer exchange with the West Valley City Police Department, UT and Salt Lake City, UT Police Department in February 2018. Both agencies operate full-time Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) units, and, because APD is expanding its mental health field response and CIT programs in Arlington, the collaboration was of great help. Officers evaluated personnel assignments, types of field responses, types of follow-up action, and the integration of multiple community partners in the mental health field. APD is committed to more efficient methods of minimizing unnecessary police interaction with those in need of mental health treatment, and directing their needs to mental health professionals. APD will apply the lessons learned from this site visit to further improve and enhance its organizational response to mentally ill subjects. ▀



¹³ Arlington Police Department. Sky Watch Tower. <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/apdvolunteer/sky-watch-tower/>

CONCLUSION

Arlington Police Department has wholeheartedly adopted the principles of the Safer Neighborhoods through Precision Policing Initiative. The deployment of Operation Safety Net was an intelligence-based policing initiative to target robberies, which resulted in more than 600 arrests and contacts with close to 200 gang members. The Violent Crime Reduction program was a similar effort to attack all violent crime through targeted enforcement activities that resulted in an 11.2-percent reduction in violent crime. The APD has continued this work and has implemented a number of programs to directly impact crime levels, which, through 2017, seem to be working. At the same time, it has also implemented community outreach programs that connect with elements of the community in both an educational and a partnership profile, thus truly taking into account the concepts of community policing. These programs include: Citizen Police Academies, National Night Out, Citizens on Patrol, and the use of Sky Watch Towers that are staffed by trained citizen observers.

Several other programs target the youth population, recognizing that inroads made into the youth community will pay greater dividends as they mature. Examples of these programs are: Coach 5-0, which is a sports mentorship program; the Mentoring Arlington Youth (MAY) Program that works with youth of color to provide leadership and mentoring opportunities; and the continuation of the Police Explorer Program for youth that may be interested in careers in law enforcement.

Arlington Police Department has proven to be one of the nation's foremost model agencies that the Safer Neighborhoods through Precision Policing Initiative was hoping to highlight as an example for other agencies to follow. ▀

“ It's truly an honor that Arlington was chosen to lead these efforts that will have profound impacts on policing organizations around the country. – Chief Will Johnson



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