

Safer Neighborhoods through Precision Policing Initiative: Kewaunee County Sheriff's Department



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INTRODUCTION

Wisconsin's Kewaunee County Sheriff's Department (KWSO) was one of the 15 departments selected to participate in the Safer Neighborhoods through Precision Policing Initiative (SNPPI). 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 safety and wellness**, produce **productive interagency partnerships** with law enforcement and community stakeholders, and implement **innovative and effective technologies** to help police departments 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 KWSO to develop a customized strategy to capitalize on the great work already in progress across the four policing principles. CNA looked at the KWSO's policies and practices related to crime reduction, policy effectiveness, technological capabilities, training structures and offerings, and officer safety and wellness philosophies. The CNA team then helped identify the training and technical assistance (TTA) opportunities, tools, and resources to enhance precision policing. The team documented these strengths and initiatives, which will be made available to help police departments nationwide implement proven policing practices that promote public safety. ▀

Kewaunee County Sheriff's Department Profile

KWSO is one of the smallest agencies to participate in SNPPI, and one of two sheriff's departments. Kewaunee County has historically experienced low violent and property crime rates. The community has occasionally experienced drunk driving incidents and auto accidents involving drivers without insurance, domestic violence, drug use, and theft.

Leadership: Sheriff Matthew Joski
(since 2006)

Population: Approx. 20,405 residents

Area: 400 sq. miles

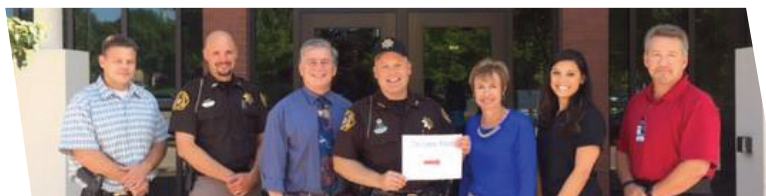
Sworn Deputies: 34 *(as of January 2018)*

Total Crime (2016): 84 offenses

- **Violent Crime:** 17 offenses

- **Property Crime:** 67 offenses

Website: <http://www.kewauneesherriff.com/>



PROTECT OFFICER SAFETY AND WELLNESS

KWSO places great importance on policies and programs supporting officer wellbeing, which Sheriff Matthew Joski believes to be key to all other strategies. According to Sheriff Joski, "If there are deficiencies in the wellbeing of individual officers, this will reflect in the wellbeing of the department, which will ultimately impact the department's relationship with the community." In 2016, KWSO created a new training program with officer input to increase the overall physical health of the force. The "Fit for Duty" program encourages employees to participate in various activities related to flexibility, endurance, strength, and nutrition.

Fitbits are distributed to employees to track progress and promote goal setting. Officers can access a training facility 24 hours a day.

In September 2017, SNPPI supported a two-day training called Breach Point. The training was meant to help officers and family members gain new perspectives about the challenges of the job and build stronger personal and professional relationships. According to Sheriff Joski, he saw the training as a means to "build a better department and ultimately improved community relations." KWSO deputies and representatives from other departments in the area—Kewaunee Police Department, Door County Sheriff's Department, Sturgeon Bay Police Department and Algoma Police Department—attended this training. ▀

ESTABLISH PRODUCTIVE INTERAGENCY PARTNERSHIPS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

The sheriff has ingrained a “servant leadership” philosophy in his 34 uniformed deputy department to serve the small but vibrant Kewaunee community. By focusing on the growth and wellbeing of people and the community, the sheriff and his deputies have developed a strong, positive relationship with the public. Sheriff Joski was first elected in 2006, again in 2011, and most recently in 2014, continuing a legacy of helping others with a priority of identifying and meeting the needs of the community.¹ While in office, the sheriff has built a team of public servants with unwavering integrity and dedication in all areas of the department, including the command staff, the Patrol Division, Emergency Communications, Investigative Division and the Jail Division.

Members of the community, including Kewaunee County City Council members, describe the sheriff as “approachable, connected, trusted, [and] forward thinking.”² Deputies are well integrated into the county’s small, tight-knit community.³ Three years ago, the chief of the Algoma Police Department (APD), located within Kewaunee County, retired and the city council contracted with the KWSO to take over the APD’s leadership and administration, due to the challenges in unifying the community and police. As a result, the KWSO established more effective leadership, coupled with consistent communication about officer expectations. These changes resulted in a more positive relationship with the Algoma residents and furthered community policing.⁴

The KWSO also relies upon collaboration and coordination to respond to mental health calls, which are taking up a larger share of deputies’ time. These calls are difficult because of the lack of mental health services in the county—including the lack of a local hospital.⁵ KWSO deputies received crisis intervention training, participated in a community training on trauma-informed care, and work closely with the Kewaunee County Department of Human Services to determine the most appropriate course of action and develop a resolution plan for individuals with mental illness.⁶ Although mental health remains a significant challenge for the Kewaunee community, KWSO actively seeks to improve their response to mental health calls. ■

1 CNA Site Team, interviews with Kewaunee County Sheriff’s Department command staff, 2016.

2 CNA Site Team, interviews with Kewaunee County government officials, 2016.

3 CNA Site Team, interviews with Kewaunee County community members, 2016.

4 CNA Site Team, interviews with Kewaunee County Sheriff’s Department command staff, 2016.

5 CNA Site Team, interviews with Kewaunee County Sheriff’s Department deputies, 2016.

6 Ibid.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP DURING A CRISIS

In recent years, communities nationwide have experienced critical incidents that have tested the relationships between police and communities. Some incidents resulted in strengthened relationships while others fractured the bond between the police and community, leaving community members with a heightened distrust for the police. An officer-involved shooting in Kewaunee County provides an excellent example of how small law enforcement agencies can prepare for and effectively respond to such incidents in rural areas. The first officer-involved shooting in Kewaunee County occurred the evening of August 21, 2017. Officers responded to a disturbance where they found a 22-year-old man threatening a woman and community members with a knife. According to the Kewaunee County District Attorney, the assailant and the woman were walking in the neighborhood, under the influence of drugs. The assailant then broke into a house, stole a 5-inch knife, and used it as his weapon to threaten the community and officers. The officers tried to talk to the man as he began to approach them. The dashboard video shows the man suddenly running towards an officer with the knife raised and another officer fatally shooting the man.

Per state statute, the Wisconsin Department of Criminal Investigations was called in to conduct an independent investigation of the incident. Based on the evidence presented, the Kewaunee County District Attorney found the officer’s use of deadly force justified and did not charge the officer with misconduct.⁷

According to Sheriff Joski, the Kewaunee community rallied behind

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— Sheriff Matthew Joski

the police department during the entire incident, from investigation to outcome. From social media posts and emails to feedback from press conferences, the support from the community during this incident was unprecedented. Sheriff Joski attributes the community’s unity to years of positive contact with the department, the sheriff’s open-door policy, and the way the department is imbedded in the community. Many deputies participate in business- and church-sponsored programs, coach sporting teams, and mentor youth in their spare time. Sheriff Joski recognizes all of these efforts contribute to a productive community relationship, strong community support, and a high level of trust. The community’s response to the officer shooting proved to the department the importance and significance of its overall philosophy and approach to law enforcement. ■

7 <http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/story/news/2017/10/10/kewaunee-sheriffs-deputy-not-charged-shooting-death/747182001/>

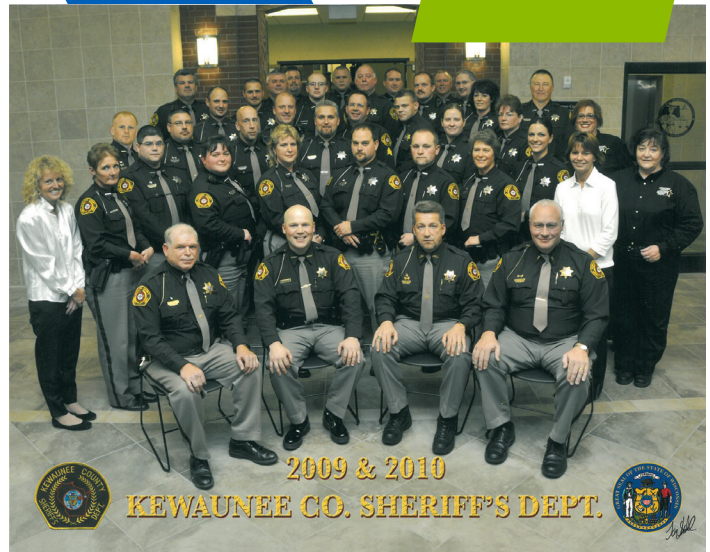
LESSONS FROM SNPPI'S TARGETED TTA

Working with KWSO, the CNA team helped identify two main areas for TTA: officer safety and wellness and external and internal communications. CNA supported a training program for KWSO deputies and their family members focused on the culture of law enforcement and its long-term effect on individual officers and their families.

The department's well-established relationship with the community and its new focus on social media allowed the KWSO to respond effectively to the officer-involved shooting. The day after it occurred, KWSO was scheduled to receive SNPPI-supported training from a

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social media and community outreach expert. Given the gravity of the situation, the technical advisor quickly revised the training to incorporate best practices for communicating with the public during critical incidents. This “Tell Your Agency's Story through Social Media” training helped KWSO establish a more active presence on Facebook, laid the groundwork to expand its social media presence, and established new methods of generating proactive news coverage of the department's efforts to keep its citizens safe. The outreach training led to the development of a new protocol that enabled KWSO to immediately monitor social media—a crucial step for establishing the agency as the source of accurate information during a high-profile event and preventing a false narrative from shaping public opinion. By capturing public comments through several social media tools, the advisor was able to provide the agency with a broad understanding of the public's opinion which could then be factored into the department's communications decision making. Through the SNPPI-supported TTA, KWSO had the opportunity to strengthen their social media presence and connection with the community. Sheriff Joski stated that social media “is both a method of building community trust as well as a weapon to misinform and distort realities.”



CONCLUSION

Community policing is the cornerstone of KWSO policing practices. The department's deputies are well integrated into the community and participate in a wide range of local activities and programs. But what stands out in Kewaunee County is the philosophy of law enforcement's leadership—devotion to others by identifying and helping meet the needs of the community. The community-focused and collaborative practices of KWSO ensure high levels of police legitimacy and community trust. These practices are just as important to effective rural policing as to policing in larger urban jurisdictions. While training and technical assistance helped extend community outreach to benefit from social media and focus further on officer wellbeing, the Kewaunee County Sheriff's Department is well positioned to serve as a model for small agencies and rural law enforcement. KWSO hopes to serve as an example and inspiration for small, rural agencies across the nation and other sheriff's departments that are interested in developing, maintaining, and benefitting from a positive and productive working relationship with the public.

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