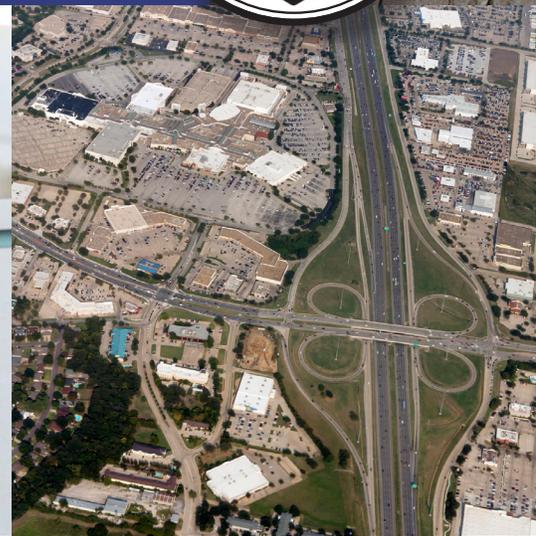


Safer Neighborhoods through Precision Policing Initiative

ARLINGTON (TEXAS) POLICE DEPARTMENT



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Introduction

The Arlington (Texas) Police Department (APD) is one of 15 law enforcement agencies selected to participate in the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) 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 officers' 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, implementing, coordinating, and delivering technical assistance. CNA worked with the APD 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 APD'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 training and technical assistance (TTA) opportunities and additional tools and resources to enhance areas related to the principles of precision policing. The CNA team documented these best practices and will share these initiatives with police departments nationwide to promote public safety.

Background

Figure 1. Demographic characteristics of Arlington, Texas (2017)*

Square mileage	133.2 square miles
Population	396,394
Percentage of the population with a high school diploma or greater	84.7
Median household income	\$55,562
Per capita income	\$26,627

* "Population and Housing Estimates," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed May 6, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest.html>.

The APD has more than 600 sworn personnel¹ and is led by Chief Will Johnson. Since his appointment in 2013, Johnson has made numerous advancements within the department, such as increased transparency, enhanced community outreach efforts, and renewed training 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, the APD has emphasized reducing violent crime by combating illegal guns and drugs and targeting known offenders. In 2017, the department 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.

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

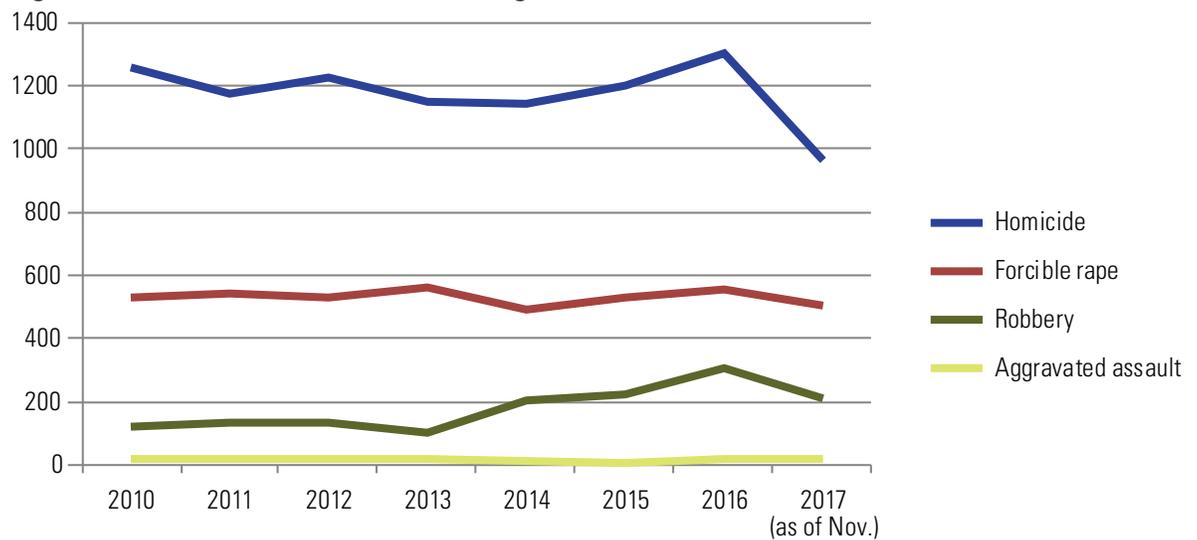
1. *Arlington Police Department 2017 Annual Report* (Arlington, TX: Arlington Police Department, 2018) https://www.arlingtontx.gov/city_hall/departments/police/reporting/public_reports/annual_report.

Historical Crime Rates and Trends in Arlington

Violent crime rates in Arlington since 2010 have been relatively low. Although the APD saw an increase in violent crime from 2015 to 2016, it saw notable decreases in violent crime in 2017.² The APD credits the decrease in violent crime from 2016–2017 to the work of its Violent Crime Reduction Programs.

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

Figure 2. Incidents of violent crime in Arlington, Texas, 2010–2017



Identifying Promising Practices to Reduce Crime

The APD employs many crime-reduction strategies, but its recent efforts have focused on violent crime. The following section describes the APD's programs and initiatives to address violent crime.

Operation Safety Net

Operation Safety Net (OSN), conducted in 2016, was an intelligence-based response to robbery-related offenses in Arlington. The department's crime analysis unit (CAU), Hot Spot Enforcement Action Team (HEAT), SWAT Team, robbery investigations, gang unit, and tactical intelligence

² *Arlington Police Department 2017 Annual Report* (see note 1).

unit (ATIU) joined the U.S. Marshals and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms in a multidisciplinary approach to specifically locate robbery offenses and offenders.

The CAU identified five zones within the city and ranked them by priority, initially concentrating efforts in Zone 1. The APD used saturation patrols and covert units for surveillance. It also used rapid warrant service, which meant when a unit cut a warrant for a known offender, the OSN group would serve it immediately. OSN, which concluded in early fall of 2016, was one of the first times the APD coordinated a multidisciplinary intelligence-based approach to an issue.

As a result of this operation, the APD increased clearance rates for robbery cases, made 639 arrests and 198 gang member contacts, seized 57 weapons and more than 413 grams of drugs, recovered more than \$308,587 from outstanding warrants, and reduced violent criminal offenses citywide.

Violent Crime Reduction Program

The APD implemented the Violent Crime Reduction Program from May through August 2017. The components of this program were similar to those of Operation Safety Net, and it also involved many of the same units. However, the APD did not identify zones for this program. Instead, it enforced the program within geographic districts that included violent crime hot spots. As a result of this program, the APD made more than



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

Project RAISE

In August of 2015, the APD initiated a pilot program that focused on reducing family violence cases, resource hours devoted to domestic violence calls for service, and responses to repeat locations. The pilot program operated from August to December 2015 and saw significant reductions in repeat domestic violence service calls. Because the temporary program was so successful, the project was awarded the 2016 Texas Municipal League Municipal Excellence Award and gained the status of a fully implemented program—Project Risk Assessment Intervention Safety Engagement (RAISE).³

3. Arlington Police Department, "Arlington Police Department Recognized for Texas Municipal League Award," news release, October 5, 2016, <http://www.arlington-tx.gov/police/2016/10/05/arlington-police-department-recognized-for-texas-municipal-league-award>.



Project RAISE supports repeat victims of family violence by providing a support system to help develop a safe and healthy climate for them. The project's multidisciplinary team consists of representatives from 10 social service, community, and criminal justice agencies. Project RAISE saves time and streamlines processes while documenting and tracking repeat domestic violence service calls and domestic assault offense investigations.

Key components of the program include more effective documentation and analysis of repeat domestic violence call locations. On a monthly basis, the multidisciplinary team discusses cases and offers 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 and coordinate protective order follow-ups on repeat locations and case dispositions with the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office.

Arrests are not enough to deter repeat cycles of family violence. When law enforcement agencies are aware of these situations, they can intervene before further violence occurs and create an environment where families

can receive multiple layers of assistance. With support from the many participating social service organizations, families can muster adequate resources to prevent repeat occurrences of domestic violence. In the end, families, the community, and the police department—which saw a reduction of more than 80 percent in repeat service calls in 2017—have all benefited from Project RAISE.

Implementing Innovative and Effective Technologies to Assist Police Departments in Safeguarding Neighborhoods

Small autonomous aircraft

In 2009, the APD deployed its first autonomous aircraft, or drone, for research and observation. This technology can travel into dense areas and places with limited traffic accessibility, or that are unsafe for officers and the public. Similar to police helicopters, autonomous aircraft provide officers with eyes in the sky. The APD is currently expanding its drone capabilities and has 13 officer pilots who can deploy this technology at any time, day or night, when the deployment authorization is granted. The APD has deployed the drones for high-risk search warrants, K9 searches, missing persons searches, and community events. Each deployment helps the APD 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 connect the community with the police department. Using social media, the APD shares crime alerts and engages the public in efforts to prevent and solve crime. In 2017, the APD identified and arrested 19 suspects it profiled using social media.

The APD regularly uses social media to highlight its great police work and community partnerships. It benefits from social media commentary about the department, its programs, and issues. The feedback received via social



media allows the department to identify and mitigate safety concerns in the community. The APD social media networking efforts include the following accounts:

- 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 Safety and Wellness

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 participate receive a cash payout along with a reduction in health care 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 have access to City of Arlington recreational facilities at discounted rates.

Alternative work schedule

To advance its goal of reducing absenteeism, decreasing stress, and improving the mental and physical health of its officers, the APD implemented an alternative work schedule of four 10-hour work days for all patrol officers and select civilian staff. Research findings from a Police Foundation shift-length experiment revealed that officers working an alternative work schedule enjoyed a significantly higher quality of life.⁴ They also gained more hours of rest, and overtime hours

4. Karen L. Amendola et al., *The Shift Length Experiment: What We Know About 8-, 10-, and 12-Hour Shifts in Policing* (Washington, DC: Police Foundation, 2011), <https://www.policefoundation.org/publication/shift-length-experiment/>.

were significantly lowered. The 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 the APD places on overall safety and wellness.

Crisis intervention and stress management

The APD Crisis Intervention Stress Management team includes both mental health professionals and peer support members. As of 2017, six mental health professionals and peer support members were on this 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

Nonenforcement activities

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



The Mentoring Arlington Youth program. The Mentoring Arlington Youth (MAY) program, started in July 2015, serves 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 program also includes community service learning modules.

The Coach 5-0 program. The Coach 5-0 program is a collaboration between the Arlington Independent School District Athletic Department and the APD. Officers serve as mentors for high school student athletes. The program's goals are to inspire success on the field and in life for student athletes and to build trust between youth and the police.

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

Police Explorer Program. APD Explorer Post 602, first established in the mid-1970s, is one of the longest running posts in Texas. Explorer Post membership is open to anyone aged 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 community service projects in Arlington. As of 2017, more than 250 youths have participated in this program.

School Resource Officer Unit. The School Resource Officer (SRO) 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 two sergeants. All secondary schools in the city have assigned SROs. Assignments mirror the department's geographic policing philosophy and are divided into four districts.

The role of the community in fighting crime

National Night Out. National Night Out is a nationwide program sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch to celebrate police and community partnerships. Officers visit neighborhoods to thank residents for their active participation in crime-prevention efforts and to improve their personal relationships with the community. Among U.S. cities with populations greater than 300,000, Arlington ranks second in National Night Out participation.

Arlington Clergy and Police Partnership. The Arlington Clergy and Police Partnership (ACAPP) is a coalition of clergy from many faiths and denominations who partner with the 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 receive training to increase their knowledge of the police department. The training covers topics like patrol procedures, critical incidents, gangs, and crimes against children. As of 2017, more than 33 community members participated in ACAPP.

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

- **Citizens on Patrol.** The APD launched the Citizens on Patrol (COP) program in the 1980s. This program empowers citizens to actively patrol their neighborhoods. The mission of COP members is to reduce crime in their patrol areas through teamwork with citizens and cooperation with the APD. Community members who participate in COP must complete a background check and undergo training. Currently, more than 200 community members play an active role in the COP program.
- **Citizens on Patrol Mobile.** The APD began its Citizens on Patrol Mobile program in 2012. The COP Mobile program intends 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 see suspicious activity, a crime in progress, or even a medical emergency.

- **Sky Watch Tower.** The Sky Watch Tower program began in 2009 and empowers citizens to watch for abnormal activities in large parking lots by observing from air-conditioned posts approximately 20 feet above ground level. The towers are stationed by APD personnel at strategic locations based on the level of criminal activities. Volunteers normally work two-hour shifts and report unusual activities they observe to the police dispatch station. Volunteers receive training on how to operate the tower safely and how to notify police dispatch.

Lessons Learned from SNPPI TTA

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. The 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 (Arizona) Police Department (TPD) to learn more about its civilian participation in department oversight. During this site visit, the APD examined two methods Tucson employs to let community members discuss their interactions with the department:

1. **Independent Police Auditor:** The auditor can serve as an intake point for complaints about police service and can audit 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:** The mayor and city council appoints this formal body. It can review completed internal affairs investigations to ensure that the department conducted a thorough and complete investigation of complaints concerning its members. This entity is advisory only and does not have subpoena or disciplinary power. By virtue of its transparency and availability to the public, it is a useful tool to maintain trust in the department.

The APD also reviewed the processes the TPD uses to investigate citizen complaints. The APD will apply the lessons learned to seek opportunities to leverage citizen participation in its Training Advisory Board.

In addition to the peer-to-peer exchange with the TPD, representatives from the APD also attended the TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More) Conference 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. At this conference, members of the APD received training on how to best leverage mental health and public safety partnerships to improve police responses to incidents involving mentally ill community members. The APD will apply the insights and lessons gathered at this conference to its related policies, procedures, and training.

The APD also conducted a peer-to-peer exchange with two Utah departments—the West Valley City Police Department and the Salt Lake City Police Department—in February 2018. Both agencies operate full-time Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) units. Because the 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.

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



The APD will apply the lessons learned from this site visit to further improve and enhance its organizational response to subjects with mental illnesses.

Conclusion

The APD has wholeheartedly adopted the principles of the Safer Neighborhoods through Precision Policing Initiative. Operation Safety Net was an intelligence-based policing initiative to target robberies, which resulted in more than 600 arrests and contacts with almost 200 gang members. The Violent Crime Reduction Program was a similar effort to address all violent crime through targeted enforcement activities, which resulted in an 11.2 percent reduction in violent crime. The APD has continued this work and has implemented programs to directly impact crime levels, which have been successful through 2017. It has also implemented community outreach programs to educate and partner with the community. These programs include Citizen Police Academies, National Night Out, Citizens on Patrol, and the use of Sky Watch Towers staffed by trained citizen observers.



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

The APD has proven to be one of the nation's foremost model agencies. SNPPI is proud to highlight it as an example for other agencies to follow.



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