

**Kankakee City Police Department**  
**Kankakee, Illinois**

**Problem Solving Approach to Drug Enforcement Using a Metropolitan  
Enforcement Group**

# Kankakee City Police Department

## Problem Solving Approach to Drug Enforcement Using a Metropolitan Enforcement Group

The City of Kankakee is a municipality that has been plagued for years with a high quantity of street level crime, much of which revolves around narcotics and **dangerous** drugs. **Though** drug related problems occur **throughout** Kankakee County, street level crime and obvious street level drug distribution seems exclusive to the City of Kankakee. For years, the gradual deterioration of several city neighborhoods was painfully obvious, as the Kankakee City Police Department slowly lost the war on drugs and the confidence of its citizens. The Kankakee City Police Dept. relied heavily on drug enforcement efforts of area's metropolitan enforcement group - KAMEG, to address the city's needs. This unit was a traditional covert undercover drug enforcement unit that specializing in the mid to upper level drug distributors.

Through years of frustration addressing the drug related issues and needs in Kankakee, and no financial means to implement any additional enforcement concepts, the police department reached out to the community for help. Several neighborhood groups and family forums were established to improve communication between the citizens and the police. The people in Kankakee were not interested or concerned with large drug seizures and arrests from outside the area, but for quick attention to drug related problems on their street, and in their

neighborhoods. The people in Kankakee had lost hope, interest, and confidence in the police department, and its ability to address their needs.

In January 1998, the policy board reinvented the Kankakee Area Metropolitan Enforcement Group, and added local police officers including eight Kankakee City Police Officers, and conceived a street suppression unit to address street level crime and drug enforcement in Kankakee. This is in conjunction with the established covert unit, providing multifaceted approach to drug enforcement.

The unit has experienced success with a problem-oriented approach toward all neighborhood problems. Success is not measured by numbers, though the unit's numbers are staggering, but by customer satisfaction. Our clients, the Kankakee citizens, have strongly voiced their approval for the department's innovative approach toward their needs. As time progresses and the city changes, so will KAMEG and the Kankakee City Police Department. We will remain fluid in our approach, and open to using all available legal means to fulfill our obligation as police officers in Kankakee.

The city of Kankakee is located in Kankakee County, which is in northeastern Illinois approximately 60 miles south of Chicago. An area of 684 square miles is contained within the county's borders, and the total population of the county, including rural and urban areas, is approximately 104,000 residents. Kankakee is the largest city in the county with approximately 28,000 residents. The social makeup of the county, not including the city of Kankakee, is approximately 96% Caucasian, 3% African American, and 1% Hispanic. The city of Kankakee has approximately a 55% Caucasian, 44% African American, and a 1% Hispanic population.

Kankakee is a city that has been plagued for years with a high quantity of violent and street level crime, much of which revolves around narcotics and dangerous drugs. The surge of criminal activity was evident upon the arrival of crack cocaine in the Chicago land area in the early to mid 80's. Since its arrival, Kankakee has experienced one of the highest crime rates in the state of Illinois. This is an area with a high unemployment rate, limited job opportunities, and stagnant economical growth. Couple this with its near proximity to metropolitan areas: Chicago, Joliet, Aurora, and Champaign: Kankakee is an area prime for a variety of drug related problems. Kankakee is influenced with the street level distribution problems of Chicago, the gang influence of Aurora, Joliet, and Chicago Heights, and attracting the large distributors of narcotics and dangerous drugs with its close proximity to metropolitan areas and 1-57. Along with the recent upsurge of methamphetamine labs across rural areas of the state from Iowa and Missouri toward Chicago, present new challenges for Kankakee.

The drug of choice in Kankakee is crack cocaine. It is literally everywhere. Since its arrival in the early to mid 80's, there has been a dramatic change in the city. its neighborhoods, business life, and crime. The appearance of street level distributors of cocaine in minority communities was evident, though the narcotic was not confined to those areas. Kankakee became the drug mecca for the entire Kankakee County area, as literally hundreds of people dedicated their time and energy to its distribution. With limited employment opportunities in Kankakee, street drug "salesman" continually appeared for their attempt at "easy" money. With this new available circulation of crack cocaine throughout the community. crime exploded in Kankakee. Street level sales of narcotics present a dangerous environment. With illegal dangerous drugs and narcotics, several participants and rival gang involvement. the need to protect the illegal product and illicit gains was evident. In the five years prior to the birth of our project, 1993-1997, there were 68 homicides in Kankakee. This environment produced more than violence. It generated addiction victims, dilapidated neighborhoods, and a frightened community.

Neighborhoods were being torn apart with the increased sales of cocaine. When a distributor moved into a residence or worked a particular street corner, that neighborhood suffered. The increase in vehicle and individual traffic in the neighborhood was evident, along with the horn honking, garbage, shooting incidences, public urination, damaged property, and intimidation of local residents. As time expired so did the patience of several loyal citizens who had grown tired of addressing these concerns to the police with little or no results. This resulted in some citizens putting their house up for sale and

moving away, while others let their property deteriorate, tired of cleaning and fixing up time and time again. and accepted this as life in Kankakee. The police department was slowly losing neighborhood after neighborhood to the drug distributors and its culture.

Even though the city crime structure was changing, the police department remained stagnant. There were no answers to combat the surge in crime, but to apply the resources that the city had available toward the drug explosion, increased patrol calls, and criminal activity. This included approximately 70 sworn officers and a drug/tactical unit. The patrol division was inundated with calls for service. The increased workload produced officers in the department that merely answered calls and cleared for the next call with very little interaction with the public. This approach toward the public created an atmosphere with no communication or trust, between both parties and an attitude of "us and them" with the officers. Officers were too busy dealing with their own designated calls through dispatch leaving them little or no time to follow through with citizens inquiries.

The drug/tactical unit was small with limited resources to address the street level drug enforcement needs in the community. The unit consisted of 5-7 officers who executed search warrants, performed buy/bust operations, and attempted street suppression of drug distribution. The patrol division relinquished its role in drug enforcement to this small unit.

There was another drug enforcement unit in the area, known as the Kankakee Area Metropolitan Enforcement Group (KAMEG). It is an Illinois State Police operated, multi-jurisdictional task force that addressed mid to upper-level drug distributors in a three-county area (Kankakee, Iroquois, and Ford.) It consisted of approximately 10-12

officers from several participating agencies, including an officer from the Kankakee City Police Department, to approach drug enforcement needs. Its focus of operation was long-term undercover drug operations with an attempt to work to the next distributing level. This concept is based on working up the "drug food chain," thus affecting the amount of an illegal product left for the street distributor. This simply did not work in Kankakee. The unit was constantly working its cases into the Chicago suburbs, having little or no effect on the drug problems in Kankakee.

KAMEG's inability to have a noticeable effect on the drug culture was not due to a lack of desire on the unit's part, but by design. KAMEG is one of many metropolitan enforcement groups in the state of Illinois, each abiding to general operational standards and goals set by the Illinois State Police. The paperwork system incorporated for the group was an accredited investigative system, designed after the Federal Bureau of Investigation paperwork system for completeness in reporting. The incorporated paperwork was not designed as a short term or quick system, but a long-term investigative approach.

In the mid 1990's, the Kankakee police department began looking at different means to solve its many problems. A Community Oriented Police Unit was formed with admirable intentions, but the officers in the department did not readily embrace its concept. Working with the public to solve police related operations was not considered "real" police work. The police administration began to address the public at community related events, churches, schools, and community organizations. This was difficult and often not appreciated or accepted by the public. Many of the speaking engagements turned into a war of words over past failures of the department, and its lack of ability to

solve any future problematic needs. A survey was distributed to several government, business, and neighborhood leaders searching for input on the communities needs. It was evident that there was a desire for the public to interact and have input with the police department. Through time, several neighborhood groups, a citizen police academy, teen police academy, landlord training, and family forums, were formed to revive communication between the two warring parties. Dealing with what was painfully obvious is that the police department was not addressing the needs of the community. As communication increased, it was apparent that street level drug distribution was at the core of many other related difficulties in Kankakee. The citizens in Kankakee were not concerned with numbers, large drug busts with offenders from Chicago, or any matter outside of their neighborhood. There was a need for a quick approach and resolution to street level drug distribution to stop the slow erosion in the city neighborhoods.

Kankakee City Police Department had tremendous data from its citizens and budding community involvement, with little ability to respond. The finances and resources to properly address the immediate concerns of the community were not available. When searching for assistance with the drug problems, it was a point of frustration to have a MEG in the area that could not assist. It was even more difficult to position an officer into the group with little to show for the effort. The unit had tremendous resources and funding. KAMEG was not only state funded but also federally funded by the Edward T. Byrne Grant through the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (I.C.J.I.A.). KAMEG, like the other metropolitan enforcement groups, is governed by a policy board, consisting of department heads from contributing agencies.



Their contribution could be made by placing manpower in the group or financial assistance.

In late 1997, Kankakee City Police Chief Bill Doster, addressed all local police agencies in Kankakee County. This included agencies not currently involved in KAMEG. Citing that the corner on street level drug and violent crime was owned by the City of Kankakee, this culture had no boundaries. Simple jurisdictional limitations did not restrict related crime from infiltrating their communities. Kankakee's problems were every ones' problem. Many ideas were considered including removing their officers from KAMEG and starting a "new" task force to address street level crime and drug enforcement, but limiting resources prohibited this concept.

This provided insight to the restructuring project, adding a street suppression unit to KAMEG. The policy board of the unit felt that the Illinois State Police concept for metropolitan enforcement groups was good, but very general. It addressed concerns in larger metropolitan areas, with larger distributors, where local municipalities had the resources to address community needs. This was not the case in Kankakee. The "newly" formed tactical group was not to be strictly a drug enforcement unit - but a problem solving unit for neighborhood needs.

The idea of a tactical group is not innovative, nor is a problem solving group. However, the newly formed street suppression unit added to an established drug investigative group was new and innovative in Kankakee. Though both existed in the mid to late 1980's, neither worked well with the other, nor with the community. The concept of this newly conceived unit was the immediate and quick response to the needs of the community in Kankakee.

The newly formed unit would thrive on the concept of communication based on three levels to be effective.

- The first level was communication inside the group. The established covert operations unit and the street suppression unit had to exchange investigative information that fit into their role in the unit. This is conceivably difficult due to the covert nature of drug enforcement, and the desire to be the one who solves the problem. A strong team concept, commonly shared goals, and an unmistakable understanding of each team member's role eliminated any of these problems.
- The second level was communication with all local police entities and municipal groups. Since the unit thrived on information, local officers usually had a better grasp on persons and problems in their jurisdiction. When the communication lines were opened, it was discovered that many of the local agencies were dealing with many of the same defendants.  
  
KAMEG also started to work closer with code enforcement and probation. The information that is gained by a cooperative effort with these groups is obvious, since both agencies are in direct contact with drug offenders on a daily basis.
- The third level is the most important - communication with the community. KAMEG had to establish a complaint system, which included assigning officers to a specific area of the city of Kankakee. That officer would be responsible for attending the community meetings, recording their needs, and

addressing the group for a quick response to a particular request. This system would give each individual officer accountability for that specific area, and responsibility to address the citizens' concerns regularly.

In January 1998, the Kankakee City Police Department placed eight (8) officers into the newly formed street suppression unit, and other local agencies added another five (5) officers. This is not including the six (6) officers assigned to the covert group. The job responsibilities for the covert unit would not change. It was to continue targeting larger distributors of narcotics and dangerous drugs and work closely with the street suppression unit. The accredited paperwork system would not change because of the ongoing investigative nature of this unit. However, a new streamlined paperwork system, approved by the Kankakee County State's Attorney's Office was implemented for the street suppression group. This assured that the unit would remain as visible as possible and not be confined to continual paperwork in the office. It also made the street suppression unit available for the next community concern.

The different paperwork system for the new group caused tremendous Controversy. The Illinois State Police indemnifies all officers assigned to their metropolitan enforcement groups who abide by their policies and procedures. This indemnification provides officers in the unit Attorney General defense in civil hearings and cases. and statewide police jurisdiction. The state police would not indemnify the officers working in the street suppression unit because state guidelines for paperwork were not met. Hence, the policy board felt that the new paperwork system was a vital part of this new concept and decided to waive the indemnification for the street

suppression unit. The Sheriff of Kankakee County deputized each of the street suppression officers, providing county wide jurisdiction.

With this new approach, the policy board communicated with the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (I.C.J.I.A.) about the need to have an outside evaluation completed on this new concept in problem solving. ICJIA thus funded Justice Research Associates to evaluate the unit over a two-year period and determine effectiveness. Their evaluation included surveys and interviews with community leaders, police officials, and regular citizens. Justice Research Associates also rode along with the street suppression unit regularly; checked vital statistics for consistency and visited policy board and community meetings. The evaluation was an overwhelming success. It displayed the effective design of this problem-solving unit, meeting community needs.

More important, the citizen's response has been tremendous. Not only is there a staggering amount of requests for KAMEG involvement in city neighborhoods, but a respectful appreciation for the work that has been accomplished. There are instances when the group is working and local neighbors are outside their residences applauding the officers for their efforts. This provides officers with newfound purpose and pride for patrons that their request for help does matter.

It was difficult to measure effectiveness on paper. The unit's goals and objectives are as follows:

**KAMEG Goals:**

- 1 To improve the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of drug law enforcement, making communities safe.
- 2 To ensure a greater degree of safety for officers.

KAMEG Objectives:

- 1 Measure the number of complaints taken, responded to, and how timely the unit responds to the problem, and maintain that response at 100%.
- 2 Seize (75) guns during fiscal year.
- 3 Execute (100) search warrants during fiscal year.
- 4 Make over (1,000) arrests during fiscal year.
- 5 Make over (400) narcotic arrests during fiscal year.
- 6 Identify over (100) individuals who are self-proclaimed gang members.

All of the objectives are all a result of the first objective. We must maintain trust with the Kankakee community, assuring them that their input is important, and useful. The remaining objectives have been met for the past three years, because of aggressive work, use of community information, reaching for resources foreign to many drug groups, and assisting in solving neighborhoods needs. For example, the City of Kankakee has established working with local business and landowners that prohibit habitual loitering from warned trespassers. This limits the ability of many drug distributors from "setting Op shop" in an area and thus stops all the problems associated with the drug culture. Many of the drive-by shootings, fighting, and gun related problems have declined dramatically since the new unit's inception. An example of this is the fact that there have been only nine (9) homicides in the city of Kankakee since the street suppression unit was formed (1998 - present), compared to 68 homicides in the previous five years (1993 -1997). Many violent incidents occur repeatedly with the same individuals. KAMEG works closely with probation and parole to monitor certain troubled individuals. Monitoring their whereabouts helps to keep their criminal activity at bay.

The city of Kankakee also introduced a nuisance and abatement ordinance for Kankakee. This ordinance *helps* police and assists landlords with the ability to remove drug-distributing individuals from neighborhood rental property, and helps rid the community from that nuisance. When KAMEG arrests someone in a rented property for drug possession or distribution, the Chief of Police is advised and sends correspondence to the owner of the property advising them of the nuisance and their responsibility to bring it to compliance. This has been a very successful ordinance and has provided the police another tool to combat crime-riddled areas.

The formation of the "new" KAMEG by the Kankakee City Police Department has been one of the most successful drug enforcement strategies assembled in Illinois. Success is measured not only by numbers, though the unit's numbers are staggering, but by customer satisfaction. Our clients, the citizens of Kankakee, have strongly voiced their approval for the department's innovational approach toward their needs. As time progresses and the city changes, so will KAMEG and the Kankakee City Police Department. We will have to be willingly fluid in our approach and open to using all available legal means to fulfill our obligation as police officers in Kankakee.

## **Agency and Officer Information**

The Kankakee City Police Dept. administration first adopted the problem solving initiative. This was not necessarily due to training, but from their attendance at the first established community related meetings and listening to the neighborhood concerns. This has gradually made its way through the ranks, as officers experience the success of problem solving using all available resources, including the community involvement.

The Kankakee City Police Department has established training on problem solving and community policing through Institute for Public Safety Partnerships in 1999 and again in 2000.

Training was not necessary to see what the largest obstacle for the group would be - manpower to meet the demand. Kankakee County consists of several small police entities with between (5-15) officers. Placing an officer in KAMEG, even on a part time basis is very difficult for smaller municipalities. However; Grant Park, Manteno, Bourbonnais, and Bradley; all sacrificed the needs in their own communities to address the more significant necessity in Kankakee, that affect everyone in Kankakee County. Beside the donated manpower, KAMEG supplies all of the officers training and equipment needs to properly execute the requirements for the position.

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