

Denver Police Department Law Enforcement Advocate Program

Summary

Scanning: When a developmentally delayed youth was involved in a police shooting in 2003, the incident increased neighborhood distrust towards law enforcement. Citizen input related to the incident suggested that police needed more effective ways of developing positive relationships with residents living in lower socio-economic areas of Denver, while concurrently supporting public safety.

Analysis: The Denver Police Department had several meetings the Denver Juvenile and Family Justice Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities (DJFJ TASC) of the Colorado Judicial Branch to form an analysis team to discuss the potential of a collaborative partnership that would develop solutions to problems and improve the community perception and trust in the police. These brainstorming sessions were especially timely due to the unfortunate police shooting of a developmentally delayed youth which occurred that same year. The incident occurred in a high crime area of the metro Denver area. Clients seen by DJFJ TASC were traditionally residents in these areas who were on probation and receiving aggressive case management services. These clients were from families of multi-generational cycles of criminal involvement and substance abuse who exhibited high levels of distrust towards the police. Both agencies were seeking to accomplish the two interrelated goals of developing innovative solutions to address the problems faced by drug endangered families and improving public trust.

Response: The Denver Police Department partnered with DJFJ TASC to create the Law Enforcement Advocate (LEA) Program whose overall purpose is to enhance the public perception of the police, promote youth and family advocacy, increase offender accountability

*Denver Police Department LEA Program
Herman Goldstein Award Submission*

and maintain public safety. The program consists of off-duty police officers who perform home or community based visits with DJFJ TASC clients both through scheduled appointments as well as unscheduled “drop-in” visits that may occur in the evening or weekend. In addition to client accountability (i.e. curfew checks, welfare checks, drug testing, etc.), the officers also provide advocacy through mentoring and role modeling and foster positive community/police relationships.

Assessment: Creation of the law enforcement advocate positions have assisted the department in: 1) enhancing community/police relations, 2) developing effective strategies to reduce crime, 3) developing strategies that gain compliance and reduce the risk of serious adult and youth offenders on probation, and 4) problem solving with community and other justice agencies. The program has demonstrated significant success in positively impacting families, communities and law enforcement officers. An external evaluator has monitored the program since inception and has created benchmark data that is being continuously used for program improvement.

Description:

A. Scanning: Once it was determined that police needed more effective ways of developing positive relationships with residents living in lower socio-economic areas of Denver while concurrently supporting public safety, the collaborative partnership created the Law Enforcement Advocate (LEA) Program, whose overall purpose is to increase the public perception of the police, promote youth and family advocacy, increase offender accountability and maintain public safety. Using a top down, bottom up leadership model, an operating team was formed to include probation officers, clinical specialists, and assigned law enforcement officers. The operating

*Denver Police Department LEA Program
Herman Goldstein Award Submission*

team provided continuous feedback and assisted with the identification of local variables in establishing data analysis benchmarks for program evaluation.

During the first year of the project, goals were developed as the result of direct input from each agency in addition to community feedback which included, 1) Improving citizens' perceptions of the police, 2) Enhancing Police/Community relations, and 3) Improving client outcomes through officer/client relationships that focused on accountability and public safety. The initial program included specially trained officers who were assigned to work with extremely high risk juvenile offenders living in neighborhoods known for high levels of calls for service by law enforcement. The officers were trained in motivational interviewing and stages of change techniques designed to promote positive behavior change for clients. In addition to neighborhood and home based accountability checks, the officers were charged with forming supportive relationships with project participants and their families that would hopefully continue beyond justice system involvement. Outcome data resulting from the initial program supported all original goals of the LEA program, and identified several others which included: reducing police calls for service to high profile addresses, lowering criminal recidivism and substance abuse, and increasing the identification and early intervention services for drug endangered families. Based on the successful results of the initial LEA partnership with juvenile offenders including a positive effect on community relations, positive client level outcomes and increased officer satisfaction, the LEA concept was expanded in 2006 to additional adult and juvenile projects within the Denver Courts and has since seen equally impressive results.

Continuous communication between the partner agencies has resulted in methods to expand and enhance the project. Collaborators have been expanded to include representatives from the

*Denver Police Department LEA Program
Herman Goldstein Award Submission*

Denver Department of Human Services, Denver District Attorney's Office, treatment providers, and Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect. The multi-systems collaboration has resulted in a shift in knowledge, attitudes and practices within the Denver Police Department.

Today the LEA project continues as an intense effort between the local police, justice, welfare and treatment systems. Throughout the expansion of the LEA project, roles and responsibilities of the law enforcement advocates have been clearly defined through a consensus based decision making process among key stakeholders resulting in a manual that outlines the program and officers roles, focusing on the development and maintenance of positive relationships with and advocacy for families while concurrently enhancing accountability and public safety through extensive outreach.

B. Analysis: To learn more about the specific nature of the problem in Denver, research was conducted regarding actions that could be taken to improve outcomes. In order to develop an understanding of the dynamics of the problem as well as an understanding of the limits of responses at the time, the Denver Police Department reviewed past initiatives that were related to decreasing juvenile and adult crime rates, improving competencies for at risk families, and increasing positive community partnerships and perceptions. There had been recent shifts in the traditional model of policing towards problem oriented policing (POP). Various efforts employed by the DPD involved POP models such as enhanced prosecution, focus patrols, neighborhood police officer community meetings, and increased one to one contacts between neighborhood police officers and at risk youth. Enhanced prosecution has ensured longer sentences for serious offenders which improves public safety and hopefully deters future criminal activity. Focus

*Denver Police Department LEA Program
Herman Goldstein Award Submission*

patrols emphasize increased law enforcement contacts with known adult and juvenile offenders thought to present ongoing threats to community safety. Community education programs have provided information to parents related to juvenile crime trends and prevention techniques. Neighborhood police officer community meetings have provided an open forum for neighborhood residents to voice concerns specific to criminal activity. Finally, one to one contact efforts between police officers and at risk youth has provided positive adult role models for children, which is known to be effective in reducing future delinquent behavior.

These traditional methods were not producing the desired results despite efforts that had been made to effectively utilize POP principles. While each initiative has demonstrated some success, they have concurrently created significant barriers. Enhanced prosecution has contributed to an increased number of juveniles being sentenced as adults. Although a small percentage of defendants are sentenced to prison, the great majority of youth are allowed to remain in their communities and continue with criminal activity. Focus patrols have increased knowledge related to gang activity and offender whereabouts however the effort has been labor intensive and is often viewed as a racial profiling technique. Community meetings have been useful as a means of increasing neighborhood involvement, however most meetings focus on problem solving with regard to specific criminal activity, versus innovative and solution focused methods of crime prevention, and ongoing accountability for juvenile offenders. One to one contacts between police officers and at risk youth have contributed to positive relationships, but officers simply do not have the resources available to provide long lasting support for the at risk youth population. Finally, none of these initiatives has been able to address the fragmentation and duplication of services that occurs among different systems working with the juvenile offender population.

Further research was conducted on promising approaches, including the focus on prevention rather than prosecution, and the POP principle of building partnerships and problem solving. It was determined that one of the most promising approaches to community policing is that police legitimacy prevents crime (Sherman, 1998). Several studies have demonstrated that there is a strong correlation between citizen perceived legitimacy of police and their willingness to obey the law, that legitimacy is measured by citizen evaluations of how police treated them in previous encounters, that citizen fear of police can be reduced by door-to-door visits, that citizen perspectives on the threat of crime are reduced when police are seen to be “most responsive” to citizen needs and that repeat crime can be lowered among arrestees who thought police had treated them respectfully and had simply taken the time to listen to the offender’s side of the story. Various other impacts of increased police legitimacy have been documented. The most typical improvements seen in these various experiments included: reduced crime rates, a reduction in the rate of calls for service, an improvement in citizen perceptions of crime and personal safety, enhanced community satisfaction with law enforcement, improved police cost-effectiveness in responding to crime and improved police officer job satisfaction. This information, combined with the POP principles of partnerships, problem solving and crime prevention in a proactive rather than reactive way became the basis for the LEA model.

C. Response: The LEA program was chosen as a solution towards the problem because since it would provide law enforcement with the ability to implement the major concepts of problem oriented policing (POP) in an innovative, research driven and cost effective manner. The LEA program allows police officers to integrate all POP elements associated with enhanced prosecution, focus patrols, community input, and face to face contacts. The greatest innovation is that all components are implemented in a manner that interfaces directly with the court,

*Denver Police Department LEA Program
Herman Goldstein Award Submission*

probation, treatment, and community systems from arrest to case termination. Research tells us that police who assume a nontraditional role in combating drug abuse by working closely with community and other segments of the criminal justice system by providing community education programs that increase public awareness of the ill effects of drug abuse and thereby reduce the demand for drugs improve police/community relations (Parks, 1988). It was expected that this innovative approach to improve offender accountability could improve citizens' perceptions of the police among a high risk population who has traditionally had intense mistrust of the police.

Strategies included:

- Assignment of LEA's to participants to facilitate positive relationships between law enforcement and offenders while enhancing accountability and public safety through extensive outreach.
- Information sharing and coordination, and facilitate identification of potential participants via law enforcement activities.
- 12 month commitment of officers to participate in the program.
- Training in adolescent development, motivational interviewing, strengths based philosophy, and stages of change techniques designed to promote positive behavior change for clients.

The LEA program was structured to include an initial mentor/mentee meeting at the TASC office. After the initial meeting, all other meetings and activities were conducted either in client homes and/or social settings such as parks, sporting events, etc. LEAs continue to use personal vehicles and do not conduct activities in uniform. The officers were charged with forming supportive relationships with project participants and their families that would hopefully

*Denver Police Department LEA Program
Herman Goldstein Award Submission*

continue beyond justice system involvement. Initial contact involved one hour per week which had to include a structured activity at least monthly. Since then, the process has been refined to include a manualized approach to the LEA program. Training at all levels has been developed to support community and problem oriented policing principles and tactics. It encourages creative thinking, proactive orientation, communication and analytical skills, and techniques for dealing with quality-of-life concerns and maintaining order. Officers are encouraged to take a team approach to collaborative problem solving and partnering with the community through their interaction with clients. This team approach integrates communication and service among the judiciary, probation, law enforcement, treatment, and community at large. The collaboration supports law enforcement as a partner from the point of arrest through sentencing and supervision. Officers are empowered as key decision makers, and are provided a forum to support clients while maintaining accountability. Because of daily communication among team members, LEAs communicate outreach activity and recommendations to probation officers who in turn present information to community review boards, thus reducing the amount of time officers spend in court. LEAs are ensured that all reported criminal activity or non-compliance is dealt with immediately, and are partners in deciding the nature of services and supervision afforded to youth. Police are able to form positive relationships with families through intensive advocacy, thus improving community perceptions of law enforcement.

The LEA initiative has now grown to include involvement with 8 adult and juvenile programs at DJFJ TASC, and there are a total of 14 current Law Enforcement Advocate Officers who work with both juvenile and adult offenders. The average number of clients LEA officers see on a yearly basis is 11, and the LEA relationship typically lasts one year.

D. Assessment: Since 2003, there has been an effort to identify the best methods for collecting and analyzing project data and defining how it can be used in meaningful ways. Data collection tools have been revised yearly to ensure useful data elements are being collected, and the results of the ongoing data collection have been shared with project stakeholders throughout the process. The operating team created in the first year of the project continues to meet weekly, and provides policy and procedure recommendations to members of the executive committee.

The evaluation of the project examines both client level and system level change brought about by the implementation of the project. To analyze the effectiveness of the project, several analysis techniques have been employed. Both qualitative and quantitative data are collected, and a broader scope of traditional police outcomes have been the focus of the evaluation to include items such as officer morale, community perception of the police and family contact with law enforcement. The current evaluation of the LEA program includes a bi-annual review of LEA officer attitudes, a bi-annual review of client attitudes, and an examination of the use and impact of LEAs on client behaviors. Ongoing process evaluation through the use of staff surveys also examines attitudes about the nature and frequency of treatment resources provided to clients by LEAs. These surveys and interviews combined with quantitative data provide a clear perspective of how well this innovative concept works. Feedback information has been used extensively to improve program components.

Ongoing process evaluation through the use of staff surveys also examines attitudes about the nature and frequency of treatment resources provided to clients by LEAs. These surveys, combined with the statistical impact of LEA on quantitative client level measures, provide a clear perspective of how well this innovative concept works with this target population.

*Denver Police Department LEA Program
Herman Goldstein Award Submission*

The LEA program has shown great promise in positively impacting families and communities, reducing police contact for families, improving communication, improving officer morale and job satisfaction, reducing recidivism and substance abuse, and increasing multi-systems collaborations.

LEA Officer Outcomes

For purposes of data collection, an annual survey was developed after the first year of project implementation to record LEA attitudes and perceptions associated with the programs. A recent administration of this survey produced the following results:

The typical LEA is 44 years old, with an age range of 35 – 53 years. Eighty -two percent are male, 55% are White and 45% are Hispanic. The average LEA has worked in law enforcement for 15 years.

The table below describes the attitudes of officers in the LEA program (N=13).

LEA Attitudinal Survey	Rating/Percent
Satisfaction with career at time of becoming and LEA	High – 60% Moderate – 40%
Morale at time officer became LEA	High – 27% Moderate – 73%
Overall satisfaction with LEA role	High – 64% Moderate – 36%
Has your role as and LEA enhanced your overall job performance	Yes – 64% No- 36%
Police administration attitudes about your participation as an LEA.	Supportive and encouraging – 27% Neither supportive nor unsupportive – 73%

*Denver Police Department LEA Program
Herman Goldstein Award Submission*

Level of support for you as an LEA by other police officers.	Supportive and encouraging – 18% Neither supportive nor unsupportive – 82%
Impact of being an LEA on your ability to be a police officer.	Improved sensitivity and skills – 73% No impact – 27%
Would you recommend being an LEA to other officers?	100% Yes
Has being an LEA improved your job satisfaction?	70% Yes
Has being an LEA improved your morale?	70% Yes

Making a positive difference in clients and families lives was a recurrent theme present in the surveys. 90% of the officers felt that their efforts helped “some” clients function in the community and stay out of trouble, and 10% felt their efforts helped with “most” clients. When asked the question “**Do you think being and LEA has an overall positive impact on client families?**” 60% responded that there was a positive impact on “most” families, with the remaining 40% stating that there was an impact on “some” families. The majority of the positive responses included information on accountability for the family:

“The families benefit because regardless of how serious the client is about the program the rest of the family is better off with a family member that is accountable to someone.”

“You are as much a resource for the rest of the family as you are for the client.”

Similarly, officers felt that the LEA program was making a difference in the community. When asked “**Do you think that being an LEA has an overall positive impact on the client family’s**

community?” 80% of the respondents stated that it had made a positive impact in certain communities.

“I believe the role of an LEA shows communities a positive view of police officers”

This innovative way of improving offender accountability has also improved citizens’ perceptions of the police among a high risk population who have traditionally had intense mistrust for the police. Officers were asked to share the three most satisfying aspects of being an LEA. Results almost always (72% of the time) included a statement that described the relationship that develops between LEAs and clients, and the **impact the program has on community perception of the police.**

“When my clients are initially hesitant about having a police officer in their life, but eventually don’t see me that way and learn to trust and confide in me.”

“Better relations with the clients and the police...”

Intelligence from clients was often given to the LEA’s by clients and families, with 67% of the officers reporting that they received some sort of Intel from clients.

In terms of the guidance and supervision provided to LEAs by TASC, 73% of the survey respondents indicated that it was “good”, and the remaining 27% felt that it was “adequate”. Training provided by TASC was considered “good” by 73% of the LEA’s and 27% reported that it was moderate.

Client Level Outcomes

Outcomes for the clients involved with LEAs have been excellent. Data from 2009 programs indicated that the use of LEAs positively impacted treatment and supervision compliance while enrolled, client discharge status, and arrests after program discharge. The table below describes

*Denver Police Department LEA Program
Herman Goldstein Award Submission*

the client outcomes for youth working with LEA’s and a comparison group of similar clients who received comparable treatment and supervision but did not receive LEA services.

Client Outcome	LEA Services	Comparison Group (Non-LEA Services)	Difference
Zero revocations while enrolled	47%	36%	+11%
Institutional commitment while enrolled	36%	64%	-28%
Failure to appear/comply while enrolled	43%	58%	-15%
Discharge Status - Commitment to Detention Facility	30%	53%	-23%
Discharge Status – Successful Termination	43%	17%	+26%
Zero arrests since discharge	93%	87%	+6%

For the adult LEA outcomes study, a comparison was made between case specialist observations of client functioning at intake into the program and the most recent measurement. The average length of time between first and last ratings was 405 days. There was a significant improvement in most domains, as describe below.

Case Specialist Observations of Adult Client Functioning at Last Measurement.	Rating at Admission (Mean Score 1=low functioning - 5 = fully functioning).	Rating at Last Measurement Mean Score 1=low functioning - 5 = fully functioning).	Change between Admission and last Measurement. Average Duration Between First and Last Measurement = 405 days.
Family Functioning.	3.18	3.25	+2.2%
Emotional Stability.	3.33	3.17	-4.8%
Respect for the Law.	3.37	3.71	+10.1%
Benefits from	3.33	3.62	+8.7%

*Denver Police Department LEA Program
Herman Goldstein Award Submission*

School or Work.			
Motivated to Remain AOD Free.	3.15	3.59	+13.9%
Overall Cooperation with Treatment and Supervision.	3.33	4.11	+23.4%

A confidential client survey was administered to gather information on the self-reported impact the LEA program has on an individual level. Clients were asked to rate the services they received from LEA’s as “Never Used”, “Sometimes Useful” and “Very Good”. The results are described below. Services rated as very good included **home visits** (75%), **advocacy** (60%), **assistance with abstaining from AOD** (56%) and **accountability** (50%).

Service	Percent Rating Very Good
Help accessing employment	20%
Help with abstaining from using drugs and alcohol	56%
Help with family problem solving	47%
Acting as your advocate	60%
Drug testing	20%
Holding me accountable for my behavior	50%
Helping me stay out of trouble with other police officers	40%
Home visits	75%
Recreational activities	47%

In the table below, results are provided on the extent of impact the LEA had in various domains. Ratings were “No Impact”, “Negative Impact” or “Positive Impact”. Extremely positive results were seen related to **increases in communication within families** (69% positive impact), **changes in families attitudes towards police** (63% positive impact), **reduced contact with police** (56% positive impact), and **increases in neighborhood safety** (63% positive impact).

*Denver Police Department LEA Program
Herman Goldstein Award Submission*

Results related to client compliance with probation and treatment plan was also very positive (94%).

Domain	Impact	Percent
Communications between police officers and you and your family	Positive Impact	69%
	No Impact	19%
	Negative Impact	12%
Changed your and your family's attitudes towards police	Positive Impact	63%
	No Impact	6%
	Negative Impact	31
Reduced your contact with police in general	Positive Impact	56%
	No Impact	31%
	Negative Impact	12%
Reduced the calls by your family for police	Positive Impact	25%
	No Impact	75%
	Negative Impact	0%
Your ability to comply with probation or treatment	Positive Impact	94%
	No Impact	0%
	Negative Impact	6%
Generally change police/community relations in your neighborhood	Positive Impact	44%
	No Impact	50%
	Negative Impact	6%
Make your neighborhood more safe	Positive Impact	63%
	No Impact	37%
	Negative Impact	0%

Denver Police Department recognizes the development and implementation of the LEA concept, and encourages other law enforcement agencies to consider this model as a best practice in raising the quality and effectiveness of law enforcement. These quality principles can be tailored to fit other programs within the community. DPD successfully replicated the model within several court based programs that deal with youth and adults, and the LEA concept is easily replicable and adaptable within all urban and rural justice systems.

Agency and Officer Information:

- Key Project Team Members

Chief Steven Cooper (Ret)

Lieutenant Steven Addison

Lilas Rajae, Director of TASC

Jennifer Corvalan, Coordinator, TASC

- Project Contact Person. Include:

Name: Steven Addison

Position/Rank: Lieutenant

Address: 1331 Cherokee St

City/State: Denver, Colorado 80204 - 4527

Phone : 303-961-1406

Fax: 720-913-4255

Email: Steven.Addison@denvergov.org