

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES IN PUBLIC SAFETY

AMERICORPS AT WORK



National Crime Prevention Council

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The National Crime Prevention Council is a private, nonprofit tax-exempt [501(c)(3)] organization whose principal mission is to enable people to prevent crime and build safer, more caring communities. NCPC publishes books, kits of camera-ready program materials, posters, and informational and policy reports on a variety of crime prevention and community-building subjects. NCPC offers training, technical assistance, and national focus for crime prevention; it acts as secretariat for the Crime Prevention Coalition of America, more than 125 national, federal, and state organizations committed to preventing crime. It also operates demonstration programs and takes a major leadership role in youth crime prevention. NCPC manages the McGruff "Take A Bite Out Of Crime" public service advertising campaign, which is substantially funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Proceeds from the sale of materials funded by public sources are used to help support NCPC's work on the National Citizens' Crime Prevention Campaign.



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National Crime Prevention Council
 1700 K Street, NW, Second Floor
 Washington, DC 20006-3817
 202-466-6272
<http://www.ncpc.org>

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EFFECTIVE PRACTICES IN PUBLIC SAFETY

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

Representatives of 15 AmeriCorps projects – in the areas of domestic violence, community policing, and youth violence prevention – participated in a three-day meeting designed and conducted by the National Crime Prevention Council under the auspices of the Corporation for National Service (CNS). The purpose of this meeting was to identify the most important trends and emerging issues in community public safety as experienced by the diverse communities represented at this meeting, and to share some of the effective practices that they have developed or adapted in their daily work. In this report, we will provide you with the results of that meeting in hopes that your community or national service project might benefit from the successes of your peers.

The meeting, held March 15-17, 1999, at The Bolger Center for Leadership Development in Potomac, Maryland, brought together affinity groups in domestic violence, community policing, and youth violence prevention. The National Crime Prevention Council, which provides training and technical assistance to National Service grantees under a cooperative agreement from the Corporation for National Service, launched the first affinity group — for domestic violence grantee staff — to develop ongoing communication, exchange information, and solve problems. Groups in community policing and youth violence prevention were subsequently organized.

Affinity groups are a highly effective way to deliver technical assistance to a large group of programs. Through group empowerment, programs take active leadership in helping each other solve problems in implementation, operation, and management and are able to exchange effective projects for replication.

EMERGING ISSUES AND TRENDS

In order for an AmeriCorps project to bring about effective change in a community, it is crucial that the programs initiated reflect community realities. What is the norm in one community may not even exist in another. Diversity issues are also important. Some traditional cultures are more private than others with regard to domestic violence issues. Some view domestic violence not as a crime but as an acceptable familial pattern.

To effectively sort out these concerns, it is helpful for project staff to include in their strategic planning the identification of emerging issues and trends. Emerging issues are changes that are just being noted in a given community or in several communities within a region, while trends are widely recognized changes already in place. While not necessarily negative, emerging issues and trends will certainly affect the





way that groups carry out their work. For example, if the composition of a community is changing, this must be recognized so that information and services are provided in a way that is understood by the majority of its residents.

Participants in the affinity group meeting at The Bolger Center spent considerable time identifying some of the most important emerging issues. Further, they reported on trends in their communities and discussed anecdotal events occurring elsewhere. Among them

A. Violence as a value

Statistics show that younger kids are increasingly turning to violence as an acceptable way to solve problems. They are desensitized to violence through the constant barrage of television and media, which can be reinforced when they see similar behavior in friends and family.

B. Lack of trust between communities and law enforcement

Many communities are becoming intolerant of police treatment of young people and culturally insensitive police practices.

C. Kids and guns

More kids are using guns to resolve conflict with no apparent thought given to consequences. Gun violence is also occurring in open, public areas, such as malls and main streets, and, increasingly, in our schools.

D. Changing face of gangs

Girls are increasingly involved in gangs. As law enforcement officers are not always aware of this trend, girls are often invisible and protected participants in gang activity. Hiding drugs for male gang members when police try to crack down on a gang is just one way that this trend has presented new challenges to law enforcement. Gang names are also changing. Many are now called “crews” or cliques. Battle scars are also extremely important as a way to gain gang acceptance.

E. New immigrants and changing ethnicity of neighborhoods

A new awareness is being generated to address the diverse ethnic groups, including new immigrants, in AmeriCorps communities. These groups may require new techniques and methods of communication that are sensitive to language, cultural, and religious differences. In terms of domestic violence issues, women from different cultures may not feel they have the right to speak out about problems.





F. How children are affected by living with violence

In the past, women in battered relationships were the main focus of intervention groups and services addressing domestic violence. The current trend is to recognize the ways in which children are also affected by domestic violence, including violent patterns that they may learn in the home and repeat as adults.

G. State standards for treatment of men who batter

Many state legislatures are now mandating standardized treatments for perpetrators of domestic violence. This “one size fits all” approach often ignores important differences among the aggressors, such as identifying who is able to unlearn abusive behavior and who is a sociopathic batterer.

H. Better coordination of services

One of the most positive trends has been the creation of domestic violence councils. These councils include judges, attorneys, counselors, clergy, shelter representatives,

and advocates who are able to coordinate services, share experiences and information, and provide support to reduce worker burnout through regular meetings.

I. Welfare reform

As more and more states are limiting the time that beneficiaries can be on welfare, some women are staying in abusive relationships because of economic reasons.



SOLUTIONS CHECKLIST

After identifying trends and emerging issues, the meeting participants brainstormed a checklist of recommendations that communities might consider to address these issues. They include

- ___ Provide conflict resolution training for children in elementary school
- ___ Introduce school-based interventions
- ___ Ensure that neighborhood residents are aware of AmeriCorps services in your community by publishing phone numbers in prominent places; leafleting the community, where appropriate; and perhaps sponsoring displays or a booth at community events
- ___ Maintain an anti-violence hotline, especially for reporting domestic violence. AmeriCorps volunteers could be trained to operate the help-line, along with professionals.
- ___ Work with local law enforcement agencies to establish a positive image for them in the community. Having one officer assigned to a neighborhood would help residents identify him/her as someone interested in their well being and not just someone who arrives when there is trouble. Police organizations might be encouraged to sponsor athletic leagues or one-time events, again to build a positive image.
- ___ Sponsor community clean-up events. Get the city to bring in a “dumpster for a day” so residents can dispose of large trash; organize an alley or neighborhood cleanup.
- ___ Sponsor a community vegetable garden with AmeriCorps volunteers providing some seed — literally — money and some labor, too. Families or groups of families could have a plot to plant and then share the harvest.
- ___ Work with neighborhood libraries or schools to encourage literacy programs: free tutoring for children and adults, “get-a-library card” day to encourage usage, story hour for young children with older children encouraged to help out as readers or “book buddies”
- ___ Sponsor or encourage other community groups to sponsor parenting classes, especially for young, first-time parents. “Fathering” classes also have been tried in some areas focusing on the importance of fathers in children’s lives and the need for strong male role models.
- ___ Reduce economic/cultural barriers: English as a Second Language (ESL) training, access to jobs
- ___ Coordinate services with immigration issues
- ___ Provide more legal services
- ___ Work with National Service to secure supplemental services and to facilitate community involvement
- ___ Maintain an awareness of religious and cultural differences
- ___ Screen volunteers for alcohol and drug problems
- ___ Expand youth-oriented spaces and activities
- ___ Develop youth courts where peers serve as judges, juries, lawyers; sanctions applied, such as letters of apology and community garden cleanup
- ___ Work to include new immigrants in the community: use skits to cross language barriers
- ___ Address environmental issues in public safety: demolition of crack houses; use of barriers to cut off traffic from highway; community design to limit drug trafficking
- ___ Instill professionalism in AmeriCorps members: allow members access to trainings that their site offers to employees; respect opinions; encourage ownership of project
- ___ Use volunteers to reach out to different groups and populations, building community trust
- ___ Be sensitive to members who may not like assigned sites: pre-assessment – ask what interests/likes are; three week probationary period; three month rotations; inclusion of site visit and interview in selection process; analysis of recruitment – right type of member?; site supervisors participate in selection process
- ___ Facilitate a sense of identity among members throughout the country
- ___ Stress the importance of wearing AmeriCorps uniform for positive advertisement and visibility, positive image
- ___ Encourage respect and responsibility in terms of community-Corps relations: find an “inside champion” to give your program instant credibility

AMERICORPS EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

From helping elderly people feel safe in their homes to counseling youngsters who face the horror of physical violence toward them or their parents, AmeriCorps is working across the country to make homes, families and neighborhoods feel more secure.

***AmeriCorps at Work* shows some of the work that affinity groups are doing in places such as Bridgeport, CT, Brooklyn, NY, and Memphis, TN. Their efforts are bearing fruit, making people realize the horror of domestic violence and deteriorating neighborhoods, while attempting to find cures for these ills.**

But their work is only a beginning. They must continue, and the rest of us must learn from their examples and develop “best practices” of our own for our own communities and families.

Safe Homes

- The Model:** The Regional Youth/Adult Substance Abuse Project and the Bridgeport Police Department (Connecticut) partner to enhance home and community safety in the Bridgeport area through the Safe Neighborhoods AmeriCorps Partnership (SNAP). Safe Neighborhoods AmeriCorps Partnership and the Weed and Seed Program work in collaboration to implement this program.
- How It Works:** AmeriCorps members are trained to do safety assessments and then security hardware installations for the elderly, physically challenged, and residents who have reported numerous burglaries. Depending on the need, they then install deadbolt locks, motion sensors, peepholes, smoke detectors, etc. at no charge to the family. Applications for services are distributed to interested homeowners through neighborhood action councils, police posts and community associations. The program also receives requests from victim assistance and domestic violence centers. Licensed professionals (police, firemen, electricians, and locksmiths) provide free or reduced-cost training for members. All SNAP members participate in a two week orientation which includes trainings that are instrumental to doing service in the community, such as conflict resolution, organizational culture, neighborhood surveying, etc. Specialized technical training is provided on an ongoing basis to the Safe Home members.
- Community Impact:** SNAP has completed 1,849 assessments and 1,529 security installations since the project began in 1994. Only one of these secured homes has had an attempted — and unsuccessful — break-in. Clearly, the existence of home security deters crime in these neighborhoods and helps residents feel safer. The cost of hardware and labor is offset by savings in personal property loss and police investigations. These safety installations have also resulted in lower insurance premiums for homeowners and tenants.
- Challenges/Benefits:** The Safe Neighborhoods AmeriCorps Partnership has an auxiliary benefit in the training it provides the AmeriCorps members who carry out the safety assessments and installations: members become sufficiently skilled to set up their own home security business if they so choose, according to Joyce Pratt of Safe Neighborhoods AmeriCorps Partnership. She also notes that traditionally the home security business has been considered a “male” occupation, but one woman has completed two terms of trainings and has been hired by SNAP as the leader for the newest class.
- Contact:** Joyce Pratt, Project Director
Safe Neighborhoods AmeriCorps Partnership
753 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604
203-335-8835; 203-335-1898 (fax)
ambassadors@snet.net

Teen Courts

The Model:

Teen courts sponsored by AmeriCorps in Philadelphia, PA; Montgomery County, MD; and Brooklyn (Red Hook), NY, serve as an alternative to the traditional court system to judge and punish/sentence teens for minor offenses.

How It Works:

Within either a high school forum or a more formal setting such as the state attorney general's office, a court composed of teenagers judges peers who have committed offenses ranging from being disrespectful in class and truancy to possession of knives. The teens serve as jury members, judges, lawyers, and youth advocates. The offenders must agree to teen court, and the judgements are consequently recognized by the traditional court system. Sentences often entail letters of apology and community service. There is some variance in the different program models.

In Montgomery County, for example, where the court is overseen by the state attorney general's office, the teen must be a first-time offender. The court accepts teens who have committed misdemeanors, other minor offenses, and felony charges that would not normally go to court. Each case is reviewed on an individual basis.

In Red Hook, where the court is housed in the Red Hook Justice Center, referrals come from the police precinct or from police officers. The program is voluntary for the offenders. They go through the regular court system if they choose not to participate. Sentencing has included letters of apology, graffiti removal, and community gardening. Many offenders are paired with AmeriCorps members to do their community service. Teens who are interested in participating apply to serve in the Youth Court. Following an initial volunteer phase, they eventually receive a small stipend for their service. "The kids really like it," notes Alice Tapia of Red Hook Public Safety Corps. "The offenders feel that they are given a second chance."

In Philadelphia Teen Court Program is a collaborative effort of the Philadelphia School District; Communities in Schools; Norris Square Neighborhood Project; Temple Law, Education, and Participation Program (Temple LEAP); and Safety in the Empowerment Zone AmeriCorps. The Philadelphia Teen Court mostly hears cases involving high school students whose violations include disruption of school violations, offensive language, some destruction and/or theft of school and private property, and minor incidents of fighting. One of the primary goals of this program is to hold youth accountable for their actions through positive approaches to reform, such as community service, restitution, letters of apology, and mediation. Confidentiality is required. Students involved with the court participate in a summer training course provided by the Beasley School of Law, Temple University.

TEEN COURTS, CONTINUED

Community Impact: The teenagers who participate as judges or jury members tend to be tougher on offenders than the traditional court system would be. Teen courts give young people more responsibility and empowerment for keeping their neighborhoods and high schools safe. Teenagers also get trained in the legal process, gaining a better understanding of the court system.

Challenges/Benefits: In several cases, local law schools have gotten involved to train and assist the participating teenagers, providing positive role models and career options for young people. In Philadelphia, the Beasley School of Law at Temple University ran a six-week summer program for teens on law education.

Patricia Schwartz of Safety in the Empowerment Zone AmeriCorps has noted that, while in general the program has been very successful, one challenge has been occasional retaliation carried out by the offender or his or her friends. She also notes, however, that the teens are often harder on their peers than an adult court would be.

As Alice Tapia of Red Hook Public Safety Corps explains, one of the prime benefits of the program is that kids who were offenders eventually have the opportunity be part of the legal team or jury. Many of them are proud to be part of the system.

Contact: Patricia Schwartz
Safety in the Empowerment Zone AmeriCorps
PO Box 29283
Philadelphia, PA 19125
215-739-7950; 215-739-7951 (fax)

Patricia Beauchamp
Montgomery County Police Department
9125-A Gaither Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
301-840-2664; 301-840-2546 (fax)

Alice Tapia
Red Hook Public Safety Corps
135 Richards Street, #HIC
Brooklyn, NY 11231
718-624-3120; 718-624-3016 (fax)

Community Assisting Police

The Model: AmeriCorps members in Montgomery County, MD, serve in a public safety program that promotes crime prevention. It is notable that the average age of members is 26 and most have a college degree in criminal justice or social work. This program allow them to provide service and get experience in the field.

How It Works: AmeriCorps members provide victim assistance and crime prevention training to residents of Montgomery County. The program is part of the Montgomery County Police Department and is an extension of its commitment to community policing. One example of their work: when someone calls an emergency number and a report is filed by the police, one of the members calls the victim to provide that person with both information on their rights and tips on navigating the justice system. They then send a letter as follow-up. Court accompaniment can also be provided. The members also collaborate on cases such as telephone misuse and credit card fraud.

The program has two types of members — victims assistants and community mobilizers — who are strategically placed throughout the county. Victim assistants are placed in such areas as district police stations, state attorney general's offices, domestic violence units, etc. (Members assigned to the state attorney general's office screened 300 domestic violence cases last year and provided one-on-one follow-up assistance for all of them.) Community mobilizers are placed in crime analysis, alcohol enforcement reduction, collision reconstruction, and animal control/humane treatment agencies; after-school programs; community outreach offices; and more.

Community Impact: Last year, AmeriCorps members assisted over 500 victims of crime. And currently, community mobilizers are working with over 250 mentally- and developmentally-challenged citizens with a crime prevention curriculum designed to empower these individuals so that they will not become victims. By educating the community on public safety and crime prevention techniques, the incidence and recurrence of crime is reduced. The program enhances community policing in high-risk neighborhoods to reduce the fear and reality of crime, specifically targeting highly vulnerable populations, such as senior citizens, at-risk youth, victims of family violence, people with disabilities, and new immigrants. It also frees up police officers to pursue other work instead of victim follow-up. As a result of the success of this particular program, three new victim assistance units have been opened in nearby communities.

Challenges/Benefits: Several AmeriCorps members have gone on to become police officers, attorneys, and court advocates.

Contact: Patricia Beauchamp
Montgomery County Police Department
9125-A Gaither Road, Gaithersburg, MD 20877
301-840-2664; 301-840-2546 (fax)

Park Rangers

The Model: Cityworks AmeriCorps members in Worcester, MA, serve as park rangers to provide a uniformed presence to increase safe park usage and deter criminal activity. The program enrolls young adults between the ages of 16 and 25 who are both motivated and self-disciplined. Cityworks is the only AmeriCorps program in Massachusetts that offers participants the opportunity to serve as park rangers.

How It Works: Cityworks AmeriCorps park rangers are trained by the police academy in emergency management, basic self-defense, public speaking, and parks-oriented interpretation, and receive First Responder Certification. To obtain this certification, members participate in a 40-hour program equivalent to three to six hours of college credit. Once certified, the park rangers have first aid and emergency assistance training and are certified in CPR. In addition to this important public health training, members also carry two-way radio communication that allows them direct contact with police, emergency services, the fire department, and other municipal services.

Community Impact: The park rangers provide and promote safe and enjoyable use of city parks. They are able to provide emergency assistance, including CPR, first aid, and searches for lost children. They also provide general assistance and information to park visitors, prepare and conduct tours and workshops, assist with crowd control and protecting park resources during special events, educate the public at swimming and boating areas, and assist in D.A.R.E. camps and other community policing programs. Park rangers plan and implement community strengthening events such as a health and fitness fair and a family fair focused on activities in and around Worcester. In one situation, a gentleman was suffering a heart attack in the park. The park rangers were able to give life-saving CPR, control the crowd of onlookers, and contact the police department and emergency services.

Challenges/Benefits: The program provides young adults with training and responsible roles in the community.

Contact: Justina Lachapelle
WCAC/Cityworks
484 Main Street, Second Floor
Worcester, MA 01608
508-754-1176 x158; 508-754-0203 (fax)

Children's Program

- The Model:** The Exchange Club Family Center in Memphis, TN, sponsors a program that addresses the needs of children in homes where domestic violence occurs while reducing domestic violence in the community.
- How It Works:** A nine-week program, which meets twice a week, for children ages 4 to 13 provides lessons and sessions for the children and their mothers in the areas of safety planning, conflict resolution skills, trauma issues, and parenting skills (for moms only). The children's needs are assessed both before and after the program using such testing measures as a trauma checklist, anger response, and a satisfaction survey. The Center is currently creating a manual and videos. AmeriCorps members participate in the Center by co-facilitating lessons and sessions and helping with or running daycare.
- Community Impact:** The Center seeks to respond to the needs of children who traditionally have been overlooked victims in domestic abuse situations. Teaching children new and positive patterns of behavior also helps to break the cycle of violence as learned behavior.
- Challenges/Benefits:** There are many benefits to this program. The Center in Memphis is centrally located, does not charge for the program, and provides daycare and tutoring. The center also tries to have both male and female therapists so that boys and girls can be exposed to positive role models.
- Contact:** Mike Gooch
Exchange Club Child Abuse Prevention Center
2180 Union Avenue
Memphis, TN 38104
901-276-2200; 901-276-6828 (fax)

Domestic Violence Assessment Center

- The Model:** This new program sponsored by The Exchange Club Family Center in Memphis, TN, serves as an assessment center for the courts for men who are domestic batterers.
- How It Works:** The objective of this program is to provide an assessment of offenders in order to determine the risk levels to victims and make recommendations to the court. The profile that the Center develops is provided to the victims, courts, probation officers, and victim advocate groups. The program uses the following to assess abusers: SARA (Spousal Abuse Risk Assessment), MILA (personality inventory), Conflict Tactic Scale (looks at the frequency of violence and police reports), SASSI (substance abuse information), Shipley (measures intelligence), CAP (child abuse potential and relationship satisfaction), attitudes about spousal abuse, and the social desirability scale. The program is court ordered and the court schedules the first appointment.
- Community Impact:** By assessing men and women who have been convicted of, or pleaded guilty to, "family violence offenses," the center can draw conclusions about the personalities, attitudes and behaviors of abusers. It then not only recommends treatment as part of their probation requirements, but also eventually will be able to suggest specialized courses to address different rehabilitation needs of abusers, rather than one "catch-all" class. The center assessed about 600 people in its first six months of operation, 95 percent of them men. Once they have completed probation, these individuals will return to the center for "post-testing" that measures changes in attitudes and behaviors, such as drug and alcohol abuse, that serve as indicators of future abusive conduct.
- Challenges/Benefits:** As the only program of its kind in the country, the center is geared to research. Teams from the University of Tennessee and University of Memphis already monitor its work. One of the outcomes of this research, which is still in its early stages, will be to identify the abusers who are likely to benefit from treatment, as well as those who are less likely to benefit and whose behavior will have to continue to be monitored and controlled. The information from the assessments is also made available to victims' advocates and the victims themselves, if they request it.
- Contact:** Mike Gooch
Exchange Club Child Abuse Prevention Center
2180 Union Avenue
Memphis, TN 38104
901-276-2200; 901-276-6828 (fax)

Legal Services

- The Model:** The National Service Legal Corps (NSLC), an AmeriCorps program coordinated by National Association for Public Interest Law, provides direct client services at 12 sites around the country in partnership with local legal services providers. Services are offered in the areas of housing and domestic violence. The attorneys are restricted from certain activities like lobbying and fundraising so that they can focus on client services.
- How It Works:** The NSLC places new attorneys (54 year-round members and 100 summer law students) into service alongside community educators, social workers, and paralegals at local legal services offices nationwide. The service that the members provide focuses on protecting victims of domestic violence, preventing homelessness, creating jobs, and locating affordable housing. The members expand legal services for vulnerable populations and promote community economic development, as well as embark on careers in public interest law. In the case of Western Massachusetts Legal Services, a binder that includes a step-by-step explanation of legal processes and sample forms is given to victims of domestic abuse. The Monroe County Legal Assistance Project of New York collaborates with community agencies to ensure comprehensive service delivery to homeless individuals with mental disabilities.
- Community Impact:** AmeriCorps members on the NSLC teams have provided direct legal services to over 4,900 survivors of domestic violence and their families, helping them obtain protective orders, resolve custody or paternity problems, learn about other resources, and find permanent freedom from their batterers. The teams also distributed domestic violence educational materials to thousands of low-income individuals, conducted outreach, and made educational presentations to hundreds of medical practitioners, law enforcement staff, social service agencies and shelter staff, and victim advocacy groups. The NSLC teams helped more than 5,300 adults and children find safe and affordable housing, improve their housing conditions, and stay in their homes. The community outreach and educational activities taught more than 22,300 low-income individuals and families about their housing rights and responsibilities and about preventing themselves from becoming homeless. In addition, the members worked with about 600 community-based organizations, helping them build, weatherize, and rehabilitate over 600 homes, create 100 new jobs, establish water facilities for 300 rural families, and offer education and job training to thousands of youth.
- Challenges/Benefits:** NAPIL has developed an important summer program that exposes law students to public interest law. Many participating students are subsequently hired by their host agencies.
- Contact:** Pam Schiffleger and Jennifer Tschirch
National Association for Public Interest Law
2120 L Street, NW, Suite 450
Washington, DC 20037
202-466-3686; 202-429-9766 (fax)

Conflict Resolution Training

- The Model:** AmeriCorps members or ancillary groups in Philadelphia and Brooklyn conduct nonviolent conflict resolution training in schools.
- How It Works:** In Philadelphia's Safety in the Empowerment Zone, members receive 40 hours of nonviolent conflict resolution training from a private trainer certified in conflict resolution. They then form three-member teams that go into area schools to provide a series of four workshops. (The training is offered to the schools by the Safety in the Empowerment Zone project.) The first workshop is an introduction to the basic concepts of understanding what conflict is and how our perspectives help us define conflict. The second workshop concentrates on feelings and acceptable strategies for dealing with feelings. (For example, anger is okay, but hitting is not.) The third workshop explores how communication affects conflict. For instance, what you say can be understood in many different ways depending on how you say it. The teams involve students in role playing in order to understand how emotions can send different messages and to practice alternatives to violent conflict resolution. During this session, the students also write an oath of nonviolence. In the last session, the students pledge an oath of nonviolence based on what they wrote in the previous session and receive certificates for completing the workshops. Police officers are also invited to talk about real experiences. The workshops are not offered unless the teachers are present in the classroom (for class management and in order to promote the strategies in their classroom). In Red Hook, the 100 Black Men program brings police officers into the classroom to conduct seminars for teens, often engaging them through role reversal scenarios. They also instruct teens on what to do and how to act if stopped by police. The Unity team, composed of AmeriCorps members, has provided nonviolent conflict resolution trainings for three and a half years. Unity team members are trained by the Brooklyn Mediation & Victim Services.
- Community Impact:** Most of the students have never been taught nonviolent alternatives for resolving conflicts. They are exposed to a new way of thinking about conflict through these programs.
- Challenges/Benefits:** In Philadelphia, teachers report they have seen results from this series of workshops. They have observed students using alternative nonviolent conflict resolution strategies in the classroom. For instance, some students have tried to use "I" statements (accepting their responsibility in the conflict), instead of accusatory "you" statements.

Contact:

Patricia Schwartz	Alice Tapia
Safety in the Empowerment Zone AmeriCorps	Red Hook Public Safety Corps
PO Box 29283	135 Richards Street, #HIC
Philadelphia, PA 19125	Brooklyn, NY 11231
215-739-7950	718-624-3120
215-739-7951 (fax)	718-624-3016 (fax)

Youth Baseball League

- The Model:** The Red Hook Public Safety Corps in Brooklyn, NY, sponsors and runs a youth baseball league for children ages 7 to 12.
- How It Works:** Local groups, individuals, and businesses provide funds to run a summer baseball league. The league currently has 180 children participating. In exchange for participating in the league at no cost, the young people attend conflict resolution and mediation workshops and participate in community service projects such as graffiti removal and park and garden clean-ups.
- Community Impact:** In a low-income neighborhood that has been plagued by drugs and crime, young people are given a positive and safe outlet for their energies, in addition to providing important community services. The coaches and other adults involved in the league represent positive role models for the children. Darryl Chavis, the league's founder, says that the children learn such lessons as self-respect and respect for others, sportsmanship, and interpersonal skills. This is the first baseball league this community has had in the past 18 years.
- Challenges/Benefits:** The baseball league is a project that successfully fills the need for safe, positive activities in many urban neighborhoods. Funding for equipment and uniforms can be the biggest hurdle.
- Contact:** Alice Tapia
Red Hook Public Safety Corps
135 Richards Street, #HIC
Brooklyn, NY 11231
718-624-3120
718-624-3016 (fax)

Alternative Sentencing

The Model: Alternative Sentencing maintains public safety and community protection in a way that builds competency, capability, and accountability in nonviolent offenders who would otherwise be incarcerated.

How It Works: Phoenix House has 85 AmeriCorps members who are placed throughout the state at prevention agencies, in counselor/trainee capacities, and at court-out-reach centers, help-lines, and methadone maintenance programs. Several have been placed at the Washington County Alternative Sentencing program to serve as counselor trainees.

The Alternative Sentencing program incorporates day reporting, a four-phase program that allows offenders to "graduate" to each new level. The program also incorporates components of the balanced approach/ restorative justice model. These components include

- 1) **Restoration** — Offenders must restore both victims and the community to pre-crime state, to the highest degree possible.
- 2) **Community Protection** — Only nonviolent offenders can be part of the day reporting program. All are electronically monitored.
- 3) **Accountability** — Offenders are held accountable for their actions and encouraged to take responsibility for their lives, including active participation in a job search.
- 4) **Competency Development** — Offenders may be placed in educational programs that best suit their needs. When applicable, they attend substance abuse counseling and mental health counseling.

Referrals are received from town, village, and county courts and the Washington County Probation Department. Funding is provided by the New York State Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives, Washington County. The program serves offenders ages 16 to 35.

Community Impact: The day reporting program helps nonviolent offenders become productive members of society without compromising the safety of the community.

Challenges/Benefits: Alternative sentencing proactively helps nonviolent offenders make significant and positive changes in their lives.

Contact: Victoria Roseboro
Phoenix House — Jay Street Project
50 Jay Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201
718-222-6632; 718-222-6681 (fax)

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Patricia Beauchamp

Montgomery County Police Department
9125-A Gaither Road
Gaithersburg, MD 20877
301-840-2664
301-840-2546 (fax)

Charles Brown

Ferry County Community Services
46 Klondike
Republic, WA 99166
509-775-3341 (phone and fax)

Mike Gooch

Exchange Club Child Abuse Prevention Center
2180 Union Avenue
Memphis, TN 38104
901-276-2200
901-276-6828 (fax)

Justina Lachapelle

WCAC/Cityworks
484 Main Street, Second Floor
Worcester, MA 01608
508-754-1176 x158
508-754-0203 (fax)

Joyce Pratt

Safe Neighborhoods AmeriCorps Partnership
753 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604
203-335-8835
203-335-1898 (fax)
E-mail: ambassadors@snet.net

Victoria Roseboro

Phoenix House — Jay Street Project
50 Jay Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201
718-222-6632
718-222-6681 (fax)

Patricia Schwartz

Safety in the Empowerment Zone AmeriCorps
PO Box 29283
Philadelphia, PA 19125
215-739-7950
215-739-7951 (fax)

Pam Schiffleger

Jennifer Tschirch
National Association for Public Interest Law
2120 L Street, NW, Suite 450
Washington, DC 20037
202-466-3686
202-429-9766 (fax)

Nicole Spitale

JustServe AmeriCorps
PO Box 31151
Seattle, WA 98103
206-694-6703
206-694-6777 (fax)

Alice Tapia

Red Hook Public Safety Corps
135 Richards Street, #HIC
Brooklyn, NY 11231
718-624-3120
718-624-3016 (fax)

Patsy Thomas

Citizen's Crime Prevention Commission
605 East Berry Street
Fort Worth, TX 76110
817-314-7400
817-314-7401 (fax)