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Strategies for Reducing Homicide:

The Comprehensive Homicide Initiative in Richmond, California



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Strategies for Reducing Homicide:

The Comprehensive Homicide Initiative in Richmond, California

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Introduction

In 1995, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) in the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, funded the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative to pilot the application of multifaceted strategies to reduce homicide in local communities. The strategies, which were based on the recommendations of participants in a murder summit convened in 1995 by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), incorporated prevention, intervention, enforcement, and prosecution components, with police executives serving as leaders of the process. The cities of Richmond, Virginia, and Richmond, California, were selected as the first two demonstration sites.

The Comprehensive Homicide Initiative was designed to be carried out in two phases—planning and implementation—that could be fully documented and ultimately replicated in other jurisdictions. During the planning phase, the sites crafted a process to examine local homicide-related problems and then developed a multifaceted strategy to address them. To receive funding for the implementation phase, sites were required to submit to BJA for approval an implementation plan reflecting the spirit and substance of the IACP recommendations.

This BJA monograph describes the implementation strategy developed and set in motion in Richmond, California, the first site to reach the implementation stage. Based on an interim report submitted to BJA in July 1997 by the Crime and Justice Research Institute (CJRI), the findings reported in this monograph represent an important first step in the process of documenting and critically assessing the impact of the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative. In preparing their findings, the authors of this report conducted site visits, reviewed project materials, and participated in BJA-sponsored meetings to review and critique Richmond's implementation strategy.

Richmond's early experiences will provide critical information that succeeding implementation sites can use to make their homicide strategies more effective. To be successful, the sites that follow Richmond will need to know how well core homicide prevention strategies have worked in a community facing challenges similar to their own.

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The Changing Nature of Homicide in the United States

Despite recent decreases in rates of reported crime and victimization in the United States, violent crime, homicide in particular, remains unacceptably high in many jurisdictions. The 1995 IACP report from the murder summit, *Murder in America*, cited Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data generally showing higher rates of homicide nationwide over the past three decades, particularly in core urban areas, with increases in stranger homicides and in drug-, gun-, and gang-related homicides. Although the largest numbers of homicides occur in the Nation's largest cities, sizes of urban population and per capita crime rates do not necessarily correlate. In 1994, for example, New York, the largest city in the United States, produced the largest number of homicides (1,561) but one of the lowest rates per 100,000 population (21.1). In contrast, New Orleans generated the highest homicide rate that year at 86.4 per 100,000 population. At the State level, homicide rates typically are higher in the South and West than in the East and Midwest.

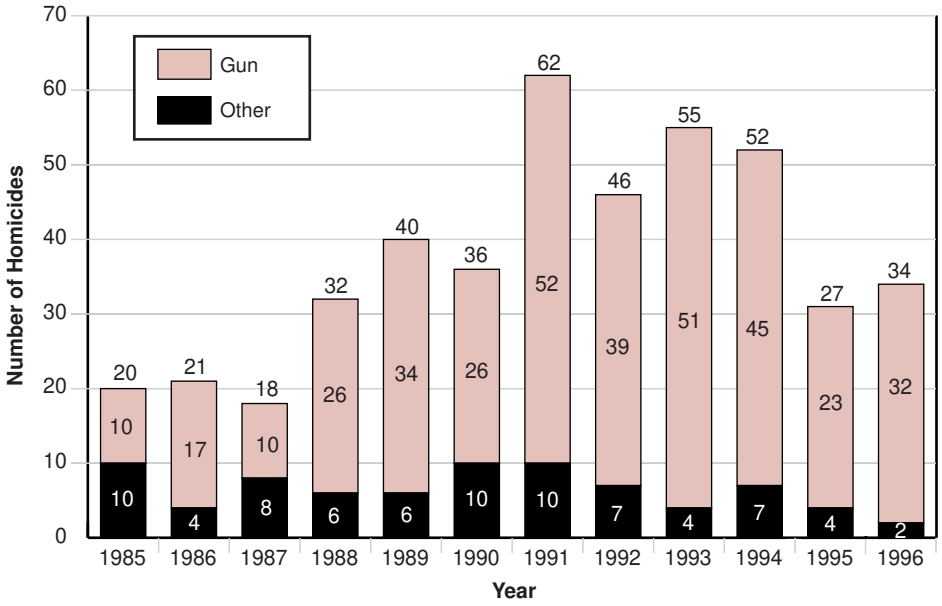
Murder in America discusses murder as the extreme end of a violence continuum that comprises different types of confrontation with different characteristics which occur in different areas of a city and affect different segments of a problem-oriented population. The report includes 39 recommendations for reducing homicide. In general, the recommendations focus on developing communitywide strategies involving law enforcement, community, government, legislative, education, and training initiatives. Multidimensional and multidisciplinary, the recommendations call for greater cooperative problem solving among agencies, organizations, and the community and for recognizing the need for both short-term solutions and longer term goals to address the root causes of violence.

Homicide in Richmond, California

Richmond, California, is to San Francisco as Newark is to New York, as Gary is to Chicago, and as Camden is to Philadelphia: a blue-collar adjunct to a larger and more prosperous city and its suburbs. Richmond's problem-oriented population of slightly more than 92,000 is ethnically diverse—42 percent black, 33 percent white, 14 percent Hispanic, and 11 percent Asian.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, before the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative was implemented, Richmond suffered the economic setbacks and increases in drug-related violence common to many urban jurisdictions during that period. Along with this violence came a dramatic increase in homicides. As shown in figure 1, the number of homicides reported in the city from 1985 to 1987 held steady at around 20. In 1988, however, the year the Richmond Police Department considers the beginning of a period of increased drug- and gang-related violence, the number jumped to 32. In 1991, Richmond police recorded 62 homicides (67.2 per 100,000), a rate 300 percent higher than that for 1985 (21.7 per 100,000), and more than 7 times the 1991 nationwide rate of 9.5 per 100,000. More recently, homicides in Richmond have decreased, with 27 homicides reported for 1995 and 34 reported for 1996.

Figure 1 Number of Homicides in Richmond, California, 1985–1996: Gun and Other

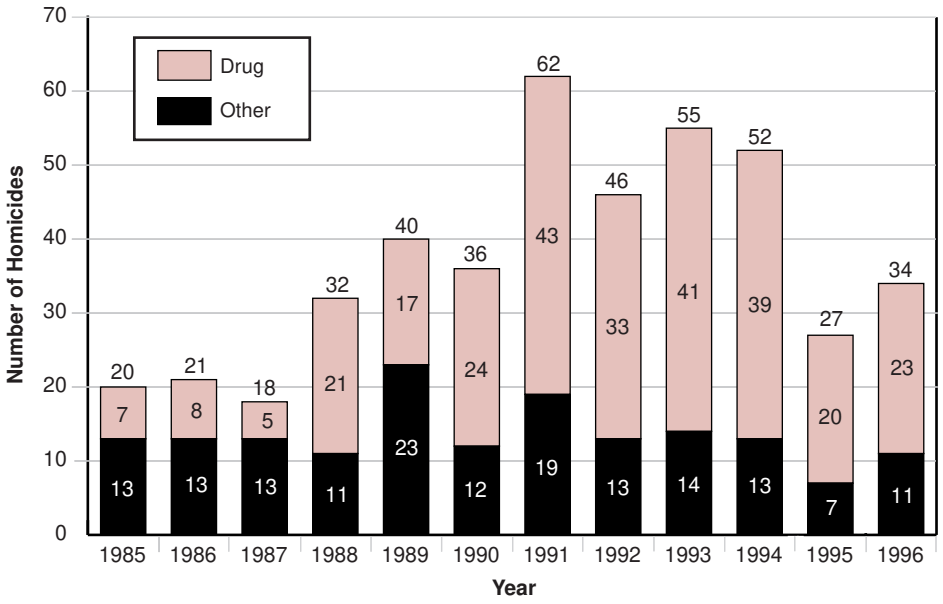


Just before BJA initiated the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative in 1995, the Richmond Police Department extensively analyzed the nature of homicides in Richmond during the years of 1985 to 1996. As figure 1 shows, the increase in homicides was attributable to gun killings, which rose from 10 in 1985 to a high of 52 in 1991, with an annual average of 38 thereafter.

The police department's study found that the nature of homicide in Richmond had changed in significant ways. Dramatic changes were found in the kinds of homicides being committed. Richmond's homicides became more of a "street problem," and many, according to the police, were driveby shootings. From 1985 to 1989, about half of Richmond's homicides (61 of 131) occurred outdoors, while from 1990 to 1994 more than two-thirds (172 of 251) occurred outdoors.

Figure 2 shows that increasingly large numbers of homicides in Richmond are classified as drug related. From 1985 to 1989, drug- and gang-related homicides accounted for 44 percent of all cases, while homicides stemming from domestic violence accounted for 15 percent. In the 5 succeeding years, 1990 to 1994, drug- and gang-related violence comprised fully 72 percent of all homicides reported. African-Americans, males, and individuals under 30 years of age are significantly overrepresented among the victims of these homicides (78 percent, 83 percent, and 64 percent, respectively).

Figure 2 Number of Homicides in Richmond, California, 1985–1996: Drug Related and Other



Prior to its involvement in the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative, the Richmond Police Department had taken several steps toward addressing the city's homicide problem. In 1992, it transferred officers from staff and specialized units to patrol, and, in 1994, it initiated and entered into new cooperative agreements with Federal and State enforcement agencies as well as with neighboring police departments. By 1995 the department was fully involved in its version of community-oriented policing, and realizing that the enforcement model by itself did not appreciably reduce violence or address wider quality-of-life issues. Part of this operation involved establishing small substations in targeted areas of the city. Staff at these substations included local volunteers who contributed to community policing in important ways such as informally counseling youth and helping them with their schoolwork.

Members of the partnership also created a strategy to interrupt any gun trafficking closely associated with area violence.

The Richmond Police Department already was rethinking its strategy toward violent crime when it received an award from BJA to begin the planning phase of the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative. In 1993, Richmond had joined with several neighboring cities in the East Bay area of Northern California to form the East Bay Public Safety Corridor Partnership, an initiative designed to improve the flow of crime-related information and cooperation between police and other government agencies.

A number of cooperative efforts grew out of this association, including the development of a uniform domestic violence and battered women protocol, as well as a process to create an inner-city computer network. Members of the partnership also created a strategy to interrupt any gun trafficking closely associated with area violence. The strategy employed a gun expert who had developed a protocol to define and identify "junk guns," instituted local policies that prohibited gun dealers from selling junk guns, required that trigger locks be sold with all guns, and prohibited gun shops from operating within 1,000 feet of schools. (For more information on this innovative partnership, see Bureau of Justice Assistance, *East Bay Public Safety Corridor Partnership: A Voluntary Regional Collaboration in Northern California*, Monograph, June 1997, NCJ 165695.)

Changing the Conventional Wisdom About Homicide

In recent decades, conventional police wisdom treated homicide as a crime relatively immune from police suppression efforts. Homicide was regarded as a product of forces over which the police had little control. Absent was the ability to change social and economic conditions and the psychology of groups most prone to lethal violence. Traditional reasoning concluded that there was little the police could do to combat homicide. As a consequence, police efforts to deal with homicide generally consisted of enhancing strategies and techniques used in case-by-case, after-the-fact investigation.

Instead of treating their work as a series of unconnected episodes... police agencies placed individual incidents into a larger context.

Recently, however, two trends emerged to change this complacent view. One was the large increase in the mid-1980s in the number of homicides in the United States. Virtually every analysis showed that this increased violence took its highest toll among young people in core, inner-city neighborhoods. These neighborhoods, traditionally marked by greater levels of violence than other communities, became killing fields in which drug-, gun-, and gang-related homicides proliferated.

The second important development was the movement to community and problem-oriented policing. Instead of treating their work as a series of unconnected episodes exclusively of their own domain, police agencies placed individual incidents into a larger context. By taking this approach, they hoped to identify and address the causes of violence and to involve the community in crime prevention. This movement pushed nearly all police departments and law enforcement agencies to reconsider their operating procedures and strategies and helped to change the prevailing vision of what police could accomplish.

A New Approach in Richmond

One of the most significant findings from the first phase of the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative was that the police in Richmond, California, came to see homicides as part of a larger and more general problem of violence. This important change in perspective was congruent with increasing recognition that the manner in which police and others categorized police problems had been too narrow, constricting the range of approaches available to address them. This broadening conceptualization of police problems and of the strategies and institutions that could be involved in

addressing these problems was reflected in the recommendations of the 1995 IACP murder summit and began to take hold with the advent of community and problem-oriented policing.[1]

The view of homicide as part of a more general violence problem developed even though the demarcation between homicides and other serious but nonfatal assaults had become clearer. When Wolfgang (1958) studied homicides, he reported that many were outcomes of violence not specifically intended to cause death. Some bar fight stabbings proved fatal, for example, but others did not. Since that time, the nature of violence has changed. There is now little ambiguity between homicides and nonfatal assaults. When homicides are committed by emptying high-capacity pistols and automatic weapons into victims' bodies, the offenders' intent is unmistakable. Thus, the new view of homicide as part of a larger web of violence comes at a time when there is more reason than ever to distinguish between homicide and other types of violence. The distinctions that might be drawn, however, are irrelevant to—or even impede—effective homicide strategies.

Most important, the adoption of problem-oriented policing has marked a return to a principle defined by Sir Robert Peel, the "father" of modern policing (see Miller, 1977; Lane, 1980). According to Peel, good policing was identifiable more by the existence of stable public order and the absence of police business rather than by police success in solving crimes and coping with disorder. While problem-oriented policing acknowledges the importance of aggressive police crime-solving efforts, it has placed a premium on Peel's preventive ideal and on police ingenuity in short-circuiting problems before they grow into violent incidents involving homicide.

This changed view of successful policing is at the core of the questions raised by BJA's Comprehensive Homicide Initiative. How can these perspectives affect homicide investigation, one of the most isolated and reactive of all police activities? No matter how estranged from their communities some police agencies are, the constant presence on the streets of patrol officers, narcotics investigators, and vice officers has caused these personnel to enjoy a great deal of contact with ordinary members of the public and noncriminal justice officials and agencies. This has not been true of homicide investigators, the police officers who heretofore were tasked with almost exclusive responsibility for police homicide-related activities.

Within their departments, homicide investigators have operated almost as independent agents, responding on an ad hoc basis to cases called to their attention but generally doing little to anticipate or prevent such problems. As their caseloads have risen over the past decade, homicide investigators' contacts with the community and other official institutions generally have

[1] The starting point was Goldstein's 1979 article, in which he pulled together many loosely connected ideas under the rubric of "problem-oriented policing."

been limited to cultivation of informants and interaction with victims, witnesses, suspects, prosecutors, and coroners. Their expertise has involved interrogation, deduction, and detection and preservation of evidence. By experience and inclination, they are among the least likely candidates among police professionals for outreach programs such as community-oriented policing.

An important proposition underlying the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative asks whether the lessons and methods of community and problem-oriented policing—as highlighted by the IACP murder summit—can be applied to homicide investigation and prevention. Putting homicide into the context of the problem of violence generally has broadened thinking about which police officers have a responsibility to "do something" about homicide, how they may do it, and whether and how they should enroll the community in their efforts.

Forming the Richmond Homicide Strategy

After a year of planning, the Richmond Police Department produced a Comprehensive Homicide Initiative implementation strategy that provided a coordinated focus for all programs and practices designed to address homicide in Richmond. The strategy grouped activities to be supported by BJA funding into two broad categories: community-based nonenforcement strategies and investigative and enforcement strategies. Richmond's plan emphasized the need to focus on longer term prevention as well as strengthening local law enforcement agencies' ability to respond to and investigate homicides immediately after they occur.

Community-Based Nonenforcement Strategies

The Richmond Police Department identified the following nonenforcement strategies, which focus heavily on youth and prevention:

- Collaborating with the community, the Richmond Public Works Department, and the Housing Authority in a crime reduction planning process emphasizing aesthetics and community pride.
- Using the Richmond Police Athletic League Computer Center to provide job skills training to Richmond youth and adults.
- Collaborating with the Richmond public schools to enlist officers in an adopt-an-elementary-school program and to develop a middle school mentoring program involving Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) officers and high school students.
- Collaborating with the Contra Costa County Probation Department to develop a probation-officer-on-campus program for high schools.
- Collaborating with the juvenile justice system to develop a youth court program.
- Collaborating with the Battered Women's Alternatives (BWA) and the Rape Crisis Coalition to support programs and practices to reduce domestic violence.

Investigative and Enforcement Strategies

To make its homicide prevention efforts more effective, the Richmond Police Department proposed to strengthen traditional investigative and enforcement functions by taking the following actions:

- Developing an intensified team approach to obtain information on high-profile homicides.
- Obtaining the assistance of the FBI in reviewing old, unsolved ("cold") homicide cases.
- Obtaining the assistance of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the FBI, and the California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement in targeting violence-prone members of the drug culture.
- Assigning an evidence specialist to the Richmond Police Department's detective bureau.
- Improving information sharing and technology.

The process through which the Richmond Police Department identified and refined these goals included a variety of community input as well as agency staff input. The department sponsored two Community Violence Reduction Summits, during which members of the community and various agencies of government discussed violence-related problems in the community and possible solutions. An important objective of the police department at these summits was to solicit ideas from the community on how to address the reluctance of some residents to provide information on homicide cases or serve as witnesses in court.

In addition, the police department conducted a survey of community residents living in an area targeted for violence reduction efforts called the Iron Triangle. The groundbreaking survey revealed that about 72 percent of Iron Triangle residents indicated that they or someone they knew had been a victim of a violent crime. When asked to indicate the reasons violent crimes were occurring in the community, residents mentioned drugs and social/economic conditions most frequently. To the question "What do you think police can do to reduce violent crime in the community?" residents most commonly answered that more police were needed and that police needed to spend more time with citizens and juveniles. Nearly one-third of the residents stated that the community should be more involved and most replied that they felt safer since the implementation of community policing in Richmond. As many as 70 percent indicated that they would participate in programs designed to reduce violence in the community.

The Importance of Employing a Multifaceted Strategy

Richmond's project started as a homicide reduction initiative, but as planning and community input progressed, its focus broadened considerably to include all criminal violence. The Richmond Police Department recognized that although the methods and motives of murderers often differ from those of other violent offenders, their criminal acts are not a breed apart from other nonfatal forms of crime and misconduct that often serve as precursors to homicide. The types of criminal behavior Richmond police believe are most likely to lead to homicide include:

- Domestic abuse, which accounts for the majority of violent crimes against women and children. Witnessing or suffering from domestic abuse often leads young people to believe that intimidation and brute force are acceptable means of resolving disputes.
- Trafficking in and possession of guns, the most common instruments of death in Richmond.
- Truancy, which short-circuits opportunities to learn and may expose kids to or further enmesh them in a delinquent subculture characterized by the avoidance of responsibility and disdain for legitimate achievement.
- Schoolyard thuggery and shakedowns, in which the lessons learned in abusive homes are applied on peers.
- Rape and other sexual violence, which define relations between the sexes in terms of exploitation and which often precipitate fatal violence.
- Drug abuse and involvement in drug traffic, which have been associated with increases in Richmond's homicide rate.

Richmond's strategy represents an important departure from the traditional police definition of homicide as a unique offense in which the appropriate police role is largely limited to after-the-fact investigation. Underpinning Richmond's initiative is the recognition that homicide prevention is a critical police responsibility that can best be accomplished by identifying the paths that frequently lead to homicide and closing them through early intervention. The initiative is an acknowledgment that police officers have a better opportunity to prevent homicides (and other criminal behavior) by cooperating with institutions in the community. In Richmond, the police department's move from isolation to concerned involvement in the community is a watershed change.

Measuring the Impact of the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative in Richmond

With the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative, BJA sought to fund a demonstration of the kinds of multifaceted strategies for homicide reduction reflected in the IACP murder summit recommendations. Of critical importance was creating a process to document and assess the implementation and impact of these strategies and sharing this information with other demonstration sites.

As part of its planning process, the Richmond Police Department established 11 measurable goals for the initiative in 2 broad categories. The first set of goals assesses the initiative's process in each program or plan of action by determining, for example, the number of persons contacted, the number of class hours, or the number of documents obtained or disseminated. The second set looks at outcomes for each activity, including (1) measuring the frequency of crime and violence; (2) evaluating actual street conditions through onsite assessments of the presence, number, and nature of street users; (3) measuring the presence, persistence, number, and nature of deleterious conditions and nuisances on streets and public places (for example, abandoned buildings and vehicles, graffiti, and broken glass); and (4) surveying citizens' perceptions of violence in the community, the conditions that generate it, and the efforts of police and other institutions to address homicide and other violent criminal acts.

Goal 1: Encouraging Collaboration Among the Richmond Police Department, the Richmond Public Works Department, and the Richmond Housing Authority

This broad goal suggests (and may have been originally conceived as) an effort to increase communication and cooperation among officials from different government agencies through a variety of interrelated activities. The Richmond Police Department's original Violence Reduction Summit and community survey, however, revealed considerable interest in crime reduction planning among the public. The department has since worked hard to channel that interest into meaningful contributions.

Violence Summits. To date, the Richmond Police Department has convened two Community Violence Reduction Summits. The first summit, held in March 1996, helped define a basic course of action for the department's strategies. The second, held in March 1997 and cosponsored

by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, enlisted citizens to volunteer in the department's efforts to reduce homicides and solicited ideas on how the department could overcome residents' reluctance to serve as witnesses and share information about crimes in their neighborhoods.

Process measures for this goal include:

- Requests to the Richmond Police Department from members of the community for followup activities related to the subject matter of the two Violence Reduction Summits, including police meetings with community groups and discussions of problems and strategies.
- Participation in violence reduction activities by an expanded array of government agencies, community institutions, civic groups, and citizens.
- The number of participants in violence reduction activities.
- Changes in police strategies and programs attributable to information provided to the Richmond Police Department by summit participants.

Outcome measures could include:

- Percentage of violent crime cases in which members of the community provide information or serve as witnesses.
- Number of items of information concerning crime subsequently provided by community members.
- Arrests on charges of witness intimidation, illustrating the willingness of community members to "take a stand."
- Testimony in trials or pretrial proceedings subsequently provided by community members.
- Convictions attributable to information or testimony from community members.

Gun Programs. In addition to its cooperation with other communities in the East Bay Public Safety Corridor Partnership to control the illegal use of guns, the Richmond Police Department attempted to take guns out of violent environments by operating two closely related programs: gun buybacks and gun rewards.

The Richmond Police Department's first Violence Reduction Summit produced a recommendation, since adopted, to begin a police-operated gun buyback program in which citizens receive "no-questions-asked" cash payments for guns. More recently, the department initiated a program encouraging citizens to provide information anonymously about illegal guns. If this information results in an arrest and seizure of weapons, the citizens providing the information are eligible for a $100 reward. The program was inaugurated with assistance from the local media, which prominently covered the

first citizens providing information. One citizen call led police to several automatic weapons hidden by youth on the roof of a local school.

Like many gun reward programs around the country, Richmond's program faces challenges involving the constitutionality of police actions in response to anonymous tips about illegal weapons. Although it is important for police to solicit information about illegal guns, they cannot search people or private places on the basis of uncorroborated tips from people with questionable or unknown reliability. Richmond's strategy requires officers to use any information provided as a basis for surveillance and confirmation of the information. Only with this independent confirmation is it appropriate for Richmond officers to search individuals on the street for weapons or to apply for search warrants.

Outcome measures for Richmond's gun reward and buyback programs could include:

- Number of guns taken out of circulation.
- Weapons seized as a result of information provided by community members.
- Amount of money paid out in rewards for citizen information.
- Number of citizen contacts or tips not yielding useful information.
- Number of gun arrests from information provided through the gun reward program.
- Number and percentage of such cases dismissed on successful motions to suppress.
- Absence of evidence of retaliation against persons providing information to the gun reward program.

Model Lease Agreement. In cooperation with the Richmond city attorney and the Richmond Housing Authority, the Richmond Police Department developed a model lease agreement, which facilitated code enforcement, renovation of buildings, temporary relocation of residents, removal of abandoned autos, and a variety of measures to address the "broken windows" syndrome of public housing and the crime-related behaviors associated with them. The model lease requires tenants to avoid involvement with drugs and crime on penalty of eviction and has been adapted for use in private rentals as well. The agreement allows police officers to seek restraining orders, based on convincing evidence, against residents involved in drug-related criminal activity. Violation of a restraining order results in eviction.

Process measures for this program include:

- Number of model lease agreements executed in public housing.
- Number of private landlords adopting model lease agreements.

- Number of private lease agreements executed.
- Number of evictions obtained through lease agreements.
- Number of renovation projects in relevant housing areas and the total sum spent on improvements.
- Number of abandoned autos removed.
- Number of code violations recorded.

Outcome measures could include:

- Number of complaints of crime and/or public nuisances in and around premises subject to model lease agreements.
- Number of arrests of tenants who are parties to lease agreements.
- Results of surveys of street conditions in and around premises subject to lease agreements.
- Results of surveys of citizen perceptions of street conditions and safety in and around premises subject to lease agreements.
- Improvements in street and neighborhood conditions attributable to model lease provisions.

Restraining Orders. Preventing drug dealers and gang members from frequenting public housing developments and sensitive street and neighborhood locations is a priority for the Richmond Police Department. Officers have already begun working directly with the city attorney to obtain court restraining orders against these individuals, but the department may have overestimated its ability to obtain and use such orders. The police prefer to seek restraining orders on the basis of evidence, with or without conviction, that subjects are drug dealers or gang members. The city attorney, however, would like to require a documented history of crime problems, including arrests, before seeking a restraining order. In response, the Richmond Police Department has established criteria for determining gang affiliation, and the courts recently upheld the constitutionality of both the restraining order process and the gang affiliation criteria.

Working in conjunction with the Richmond Housing Authority, the department's drug elimination officers have issued 139 citations, made 74 arrests, towed 33 vehicles, written 71 reports, and excluded one drug dealer from a public housing development. These officers' investigations and reports have resulted in 15 requests for evictions and four requests for counseling. Although the Richmond Police Department's temporary restraining order process survived its first legal challenge, additional court challenges are likely. If a more exacting standard is required, use of such restraining orders will be narrowed considerably, making them a much less effective tool to combat gang activity and drug dealing in or near public housing.

Process measures for this program include:

- Number of restraining orders obtained.
- Number of restraining orders executed.
- Number of persons arrested for violating restraining orders.

Outcome measures could include:

- Number of complaints of crime and public nuisances in and around locations from which individuals have been barred.
- Results of surveys of street conditions in and around locations from which individuals have been barred.
- Results of surveys of citizen perceptions of street conditions and safety in and around locations from which individuals have been barred.

Citizen's Guide to the Drug Problem. In July 1996, the Richmond Police Department prepared and began distributing a citizen's guide to fighting drug trafficking and drug houses. The guide, *How to Eliminate Drug Dealing, Drug Sales, and Public Nuisances*, is an extensive resource manual on neighborhood drug and crime prevention that will give community groups a resource to link their efforts to police strategies. The manual's topics include:

- The business/public nuisance of drugs.
- How do I know if a drug house is active in my neighborhood?
- Whose responsibility is it to get rid of a drug house?
- How do I get rid of a drug house?
- Goodbye drug house.
- How to settle your dispute.
- Inaction by property owners.

It is difficult to measure the manual's direct impact on reducing neighborhood drug dealing activities. The guide's effectiveness as an information resource, however, can be evaluated through interviews with key members of the community and through process and outcome measures such as those presented below.

Process measures include:

- Number of inquiries about and requests for the guide.
- Number of guides disseminated.
- Knowledge of the guide within the community.
- Number of neighborhood groups using the guide.

As dissemination of the guide grows, outcome measures could include:

- Number of persons or community groups implementing procedures outlined in the guide.
- Number and types of actions taken and results produced.

Crime Prevention Course. A related crime reduction effort sponsored by the Richmond Police Department is a crime prevention course taught by the department's officers for members of the public. The course offers participants an indepth look at effective crime prevention, including an overview of crime prevention programs in California; a discussion of physical hardware and lighting; and a review of prevention strategies such as environmental design, security surveys, codes, ordinances, procedures, and implementation of formal crime prevention strategies.

Like the citizens' guide to eliminating drug dealing, the benefits of this strategy are hard to measure directly, but the Richmond Police Department hopes the course will play an important role in improving citizens' ability to protect themselves and their neighborhoods from crime, particularly in high-crime areas. The program's contribution could best be understood through process measures such as:

- Number of courses taught and hours devoted to the program by the department and the community.
- Number and attendance of participants.
- Surveys of participants before and after the course.

Goal 2: Using the Police Athletic League Computer Center To Provide Skills Training, Summer Employment, and a Youth Academy for Richmond Youth and Adults

The traditional notion of a Police Athletic League (PAL) facility involves a gymnasium, sweat, and lots of noisy youth engaged in boxing or basketball under the guiding hand of volunteer police officers. The Richmond Police Department has transformed this model by focusing PAL services on preparing young people for meaningful employment and extending PAL job training to Richmond's adult community.

In a small strip mall across the street from Richmond's only middle school is the heart of PAL's success in Richmond: a thriving and very innovative computer training center used by at least 500 youth a month. The center, funded with both public and private money (including a major contribution from baseball player Willie McGee, whose roots are in Richmond), has 50 computers, an extensive software library, a network, a Web page, Internet access, and the tools necessary to teach computer diagnostics, service, and repair. The center also sponsors a mobile computer training center—a converted recreational vehicle donated by a local corporation that roves throughout the city.

Youth come to the PAL computer center to learn to use the center's word processing, database, and communications capabilities; to use the computers to do their homework; or simply to spend productive time in a safe haven. The center is open to all ages, and adults also participate in the various courses of instruction offered. The Richmond Police Department has identified the computer center as a resource in its Comprehensive Homicide Initiative plan and has directed Richmond's Employment and Training Department to refer youth to the center who have requested assistance in obtaining computer training. California Governor Pete Wilson has visited the center in recognition of its innovative role in the community.

Process measures to assess the center's contribution to reductions in crime, violence, and homicide should emphasize the investment of training in youth (and adults) in constructive, employable skills. These measures might include:

- Number of children and adults using the computer center for both formal and informal training.
- Number of hours of formal training delivered.
- Number of hours spent by children and adults in learning at their own pace for vocational or recreational purposes.

Measures of the center's impact could include:

- Success of youth in school and in avoiding delinquency.
- Lower dropout rates at schools in the Richmond area.
- Jobs obtained by the center's participants.

Summer Jobs. Cutbacks in government-funded summer jobs for youth has prompted the Richmond Police Department to work with other institutions to obtain employment commitments from local private employers. Police staff reported that the department obtained 1,100 such commitments for the summer of 1997.

The program's process measure could be the number of Richmond Police Department contacts with potential employees. Outcome criteria could include the number of jobs made available for placement, the number of youth placed in jobs, the number of hours those youth work, and the attitudes of youth placed in employment.

Youth Academy. In October 1996, the Richmond Police Department joined with the San Pablo Police Department and the El Cerrito Police Department to establish and operate a youth academy. The academy provides a constructive, educational experience for local youth while increasing their interest in policing and community service careers. The academy, which is open to youngsters aged 14 to 20, teaches alternatives to life on the street and offers an introduction to the methods and technologies of policing. Academy

students wear uniforms and are graded simply on attendance. Because the program is designed to provide its participants with both substantive knowledge and a successful experience, students who attend regularly cannot fail. Among the subjects studied in the academy's first class were community-oriented policing, criminal law, firearms safety, patrol, defensive tactics, crime scene investigation, jail operations, investigation, barricade/hostage situations, traffic, and drug and alcohol awareness.

Admission to the program is selective and is based on the applicants' desire and need. Screening includes an application and interview process in which interested youth are asked to describe their personal goals, gang affiliations, academic records, and histories of drug or alcohol use. Their responses are rated for presentation, communication skill, self-confidence, decisionmaking, and parental support.

Process measures for the academy could include:

- Number of applications received.
- Number of participants who enroll in and complete courses.
- Number of contact hours produced.
- Attitudes of participants and graduates about the program and its content.

Outcome measures could include:

- Number of successful participants.
- Participant dropout and arrest rates.
- Participant grades and positive attitudes.

Goal 3: Encouraging Collaboration Between the Richmond Police Department and the Richmond Public Schools

An important goal in Richmond's Comprehensive Homicide Initiative recognizes the critical role of the education system in preventing the involvement of youth in drug, gang, and gun activity that too often leads to violent crime, including homicide. The Richmond Police Department's strategy under this goal of collaboration focuses on two activities: enlisting officers in an adopt-an-elementary-school program and developing a middle school mentoring program involving D.A.R.E. officers and high school students.

Twenty-three Richmond police officers are assigned to the Richmond Police Department's Adopt-a-School program. These officers meet regularly with teachers, conduct D.A.R.E. programs, and develop reading and mentoring programs for middle schools. In addition, they conduct truancy roundups after which youth are returned to the school system through a

special program designed to deal with students who are frequently truant and at risk of dropping out of school. The truancy program is nonpunitive, with an emphasis on returning truants to school and involving their parents. Continued violations can result in youth being referred to the city's probation department for review and placement.

The police department's school liaison officers conduct the truancy round-ups because they are most familiar with the area's truant youth population. This police role may appear inconsistent with the "officer friendly" approach that characterizes the rest of the program's operations; however, it is perfectly consistent with the department's crime prevention mission. In Richmond, as elsewhere, a considerable number of crimes (including violent and property offenses) are attributable to youth who have chosen not to go to school. Over the long term, truancy reduces the prospects that city youngsters will become involved in legitimate educational and employment opportunities and increases the likelihood that they will form criminal contacts and lifestyles.

Process measures for the Richmond Police Department's adopt-a-school and mentoring programs could include:

- Number of schools and officers participating in the programs.
- Number and nature of officer contacts with students, teachers, and parents.

Measures of the programs' impact could include:

- Crime, truancy, and dropout rates among students in participating schools compared to those of students in other local schools.
- Surveys of physical conditions in and around participating schools.
- Interviews of teachers, students, police officers, and families on the value and impact of the programs.
- Surveys of citizen perceptions of street conditions and safety in and around participating schools.

Goal 4: Encouraging Collaboration Between the Richmond Police Department and the Contra Costa County Probation Department To Develop a Probation-Officer-on-Campus Program

The Contra Costa County Probation Department assigns resident juvenile probation officers to two of Richmond's four mainstream high schools. The Richmond Police Department works with these probation officers on a regular basis to address crimes that may occur on school property. The probation officers check daily on probationers' school attendance and monitor their activities in an attempt to keep them in school. The Richmond Police Department pays their officers overtime to accompany

unarmed probation officers when they make after-hours visits to clients in dangerous neighborhoods.

Measures to assess the program's implementation could include:

- Surveys of student, teacher, and parent perceptions of the program's effectiveness.
- Number of contacts involving police officers, probation officers, probationers, teachers, and parents.

Outcome measures could include:

- Crime, truancy, grades, and dropout rates among probationers at participating schools.
- Surveys of citizen perceptions of street conditions and safety in and around participating schools.

Goal 5: Encouraging Collaboration Between the Richmond Police Department and the Juvenile Court To Develop a Youth Court Program

Richmond's Youth Court, an afterschool program supported by the Richmond Police Department and working with the area's juvenile court system, represents one of the department's most important collaborative efforts to divert youth from serious crime. In the Youth Court, prosecutors and public defenders train youth participants to present minor cases to juries of teenagers' peers and a juvenile court judge. The program's rationale is that it is an effective vehicle for the communication of positive peer pressure on minor offenders before they evolve into serious criminals. In addition, the Youth Court experience of "judging" a peer offers an important educational and constructive experience in decisionmaking and individual responsibility.

The court meets once a month and hands down sentences that typically consist of community service. The Richmond Police Department identifies cases for trial and administers court logistics. During implementation of its Comprehensive Homicide Initiative, the department will assign an officer to the program and increase the number of cases the court hears from 15 to 20 each year.

Process measures to assess the program's implementation could include:

- Number and types of cases heard.
- Number of youngsters participating in the program as jurors, court actors, and "defendants."
- Surveys of court officials, students, teachers, and parents concerning their perceptions of the program's effectiveness.

Measures of the program's impact could include:

- The kinds of decisions made in Youth Court dispositions.
- Crime, truancy, and dropout rates among both juror and defendant participants as well as student "prosecutors" and "attorneys."

Goal 6: Encouraging Collaboration Among the Richmond Police Department, the Battered Women's Alternatives, and the Rape Crisis Coalition To Reduce Domestic Violence

Over the past decade, victim advocates and criminal justice agencies seeking to improve procedures and practices have focused considerable public attention on domestic violence. Through these efforts, domestic violence is now viewed as a criminal rather than private matter.

Recent studies have focused on the impact of domestic violence on children, documenting that it breeds acceptance of using forcible criminal means to resolve differences and can ultimately contribute to their willingness to be involved in street violence. Rates of violent crime and personal victimization appear to be declining nationwide, but domestic violence has not shown comparable decreases. The reduction in nondomestic homicides may in fact be displacing some violence in the home. Hidden in recent overall decreases in New York City's homicides, for example, is an increase in domestic murders. A recently completed study of a community policing program in Jersey City also found that as nondomestic violent crime decreased over time, domestic violence increased (Braga, 1997).

The Richmond Police Department's Comprehensive Homicide Initiative implementation strategy proposes to deal with the problem of domestic violence in several ways. Consistent with prevailing police practice, the department has in place a policy statement that:

- Distinguishes between criminal domestic violence and simple domestic disputes.
- Mandates arrests in cases of felony violence.
- Mandates official action in misdemeanor cases but leaves the decision of whether to arrest or to issue citations up to the discretion of officers, with instructions to base their decisions on their assessments of the likelihood of continued violence.
- Instructs officers to remove from victims' premises any cited defendants who do not reside there.
- Authorizes police to make temporary (48- to 72-hour) seizures of firearms in cases where officers perceive a threat of renewed violence.
- Mandates the reporting of all domestic calls and provides for monthly summary reports to the California Attorney General.

- Provides officers with instructions on various types of protective orders and related duties and arrest powers.
- Instructs officers on obtaining emergency protective orders in cases of apparent immediate danger.

In addition, a May 1996 departmental order closed an important loophole. In recent years, tragedies have occurred around the United States because of delayed, inaccurate, or totally absent recording and implementation of domestic violence restraining orders and orders of protection. This departmental order assigns responsibility for the prompt entry of new orders into a central recording system where they can be accessed quickly and reliably by officers in the field when responding to domestic disputes.

The Richmond Police Department plans to supplement these basic policies with a program of line-up, or roll-call, training for officers to be led by the director of the legal program at the BWA program based in Richmond. The training involves discussion of effective intervention techniques (for example, victim dynamics, first response, on-scene contacts, children and other victims, and followup investigations), understanding other cultures, legal requirements, and resources available in the community to victims of domestic violence. The department has high expectations for this program and intends to work with the BWA and Rape Crisis Coalition programs to establish a method to gather statistical data to show increased reports, arrests, and prosecutions due to more effective police response to domestic violence disputes.

Measures of the program's implementation could include:

- Number of roll-call training programs developed.
- Number of roll-call training contact hours related to domestic violence procedures.
- Number of officers completing the training.

Measures of the program's impact could include:

- Number of domestic reports filed by officers.
- Number of arrests for domestic violence.
- Number and success of prosecutions.
- Number of firearms and other weapons seized at the site of incidents.
- Number of defendants removed from the premises of incidents.
- Number of arrests for violating protective orders.
- Number of requests for temporary restraining orders after incidents.
- Number of women referred to supportive services after incidents.

Goal 7: Developing an Intensified Team Approach to Obtaining Information Concerning High-Profile Homicides

This goal prescribes a two-stage process for focusing on high-profile homicides. In the first stage, homicide cases are systematically identified that could be closed through a quick and intense attempt to gather information on them. In the second stage, a protocol is developed for mobilizing such attempts whenever high-profile homicides occur. The Richmond Police Department is in the process of writing guidelines to define high-profile homicides. Its tentative definitions include:

- "Set-on-set" gang- or turf-related murders in which retaliatory violence is likely and possibly preventable.
- Homicides likely to draw extraordinary public attention (e.g., random violence, stranger violence, or multiple homicides).

For the first type of homicide, the Richmond Police Department's plans are preventive as well as investigative. The department believes that having up-to-date knowledge of gangs and their disputes will help to interrupt reciprocal violence by arresting the murderers before their enemies can strike. This approach has been shown by the department to be particularly relevant to gang homicides occurring within the city's Iron Triangle area.

For the second type of homicide, the Richmond Police Department's experiences suggest that high-profile homicides are more likely than other types to lead to successful evidence collection precisely because they are so visible and notorious. Thus, instead of draining away existing resources, the department seeks to add extraordinary resources to these cases while making sure it does not jeopardize its efforts in less visible homicide cases. A recent example is the "Zimmerman" case, in which two men attempted to carjack a woman's vehicle in the city's marina area. When she resisted, she was shot and subsequently bled to death as she apparently tried to drive for help. Because of its random, violent nature, the crime and the highly traveled roadway on which it occurred drew a great deal of public attention and generated information not typically available to investigators. When similar cases arise in the future, the Richmond Police Department plans to immediately mobilize, solicit, and analyze such information.

One method the department has already employed in such cases is the "bike flood" program. At present the department deploys 10 to 12 officers on bicycles to problem neighborhoods for 4 hours at a time. These officers, by interacting with residents in a nonadversarial manner, have broken down old barriers to communication. The Richmond Police Department believes their presence following high-profile homicides to be an important information-gathering tool.

Another planned tool, likely to be funded by overtime, is to mobilize the entire detective bureau to form a bureauwide investigative team for brief, intensive information gathering immediately following high-profile cases. This approach was first employed following a double murder in the spring of 1997. At that time, 14 detectives were deployed to the scene to obtain information from possible witnesses. The detectives knocked on the doors of 300 residents over a 2-day period and generated information that led to two suspects.

Measures to assess the implementation of these programs could include:

- Written guidelines for mobilizing and operating the bureauwide investigative team and its other components.
- Written guidelines for the "bike flood" program.
- Number of personnel hours devoted to such efforts.

Measures of the impact of this approach might include:

- Number of high-profile homicides.
- Number of incidents of retaliatory violence.
- Clearance and conviction rates for high-profile and gang-related homicides and retaliatory violence.
- Arrests made during or as the result of bike patrols.
- Reported crime during bike patrol periods.
- Number and nature of citizen contacts with bike patrol officers.

Goal 8: Obtaining the Assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Reviewing Cold, Unsolved Homicide Cases

Given recent advances in the technology of weapons, ballistics, and fingerprint and DNA identification, "cold case" squads and investigations into old, unsolved homicides have become widespread. The Richmond Police Department currently operates on several fronts in this area, such as:

- The department submits materials from old cases to the Contra Costa County Crime Laboratory.
- The department operates under a State of California requirement that it obtain and preserve rib cage samples from all murder victims for possible future analysis.
- The California prison system takes blood samples from prisoners released after serving sentences for violent crimes. The Richmond Police Department runs periodic checks of DNA from unsolved cases against database samples, and the department recently had its first "match," which solved a sodomy/homicide case.

The Richmond Police Department has proposed to obtain the assistance of the FBI in its efforts to look into such cases as part of its Comprehensive Homicide Initiative implementation strategy. Should the program be approved for funding, process measures would include FBI and Richmond Police Department person hours dedicated to the program and the number of cases reviewed. Appropriate outcome measures would include homicide clearances, convictions, and reductions in "cold" caseloads attributable to FBI assistance.

Goal 9: Obtaining the Assistance of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement in Targeting Violence-Prone Members of the Drug Culture

In December 1996 and January 1997, the Richmond Police Department participated in a drug enforcement task force formed in response to a marked increase in drug dealing and violent crime in certain parts of the city. The goal of the task force was to reduce street crime and drug-related violence by targeting drug traffickers and dealers who had the greatest propensity for violence. The task force was made up of personnel from the Richmond Police Department, Drug Enforcement Administration, FBI, California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, Contra Costa County deputy sheriff's department, and State parole department. The task force operated for 5 weeks (December 2, 1996, to January 5, 1997), during which time it made 113 arrests (including 108 felonies) and 33 drug seizures (valued at over $35,000). It also seized six guns. Its strategies were traditional but intensive, consisting of surveillance, informants, search warrants, and buy/bust operations. Under its Comprehensive Homicide Initiative implementation strategy, the Richmond Police Department identified continuation of this operation as a top priority.

Process measures include:

- Number of hours and personnel devoted to task force activities.
- Number of arrests and convictions attributable to task force activities.
- Number of searches.
- Seizures of drugs, weapons, and other contraband.
- Seizures of stolen property.

Outcome measures could include:

- Number of dealers and gang leaders targeted.
- Number of targeted offenders removed from the streets.
- Surveys of physical conditions in and around targeted areas.
- Surveys of citizen perceptions of street conditions and safety in and around targeted areas.

Goal 10: Improving Information Sharing and Technology

During the first phase of the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative, the Richmond Police Department's Homicide Unit obtained eight personal computers capable of emulating mainframe terminals. The computers presently operate as free-standing workstations while the department waits for the installation of the mainframe simulation software. The department plans to identify and acquire investigative database software and to use it to build a network that is accessible to all Homicide Unit personnel.

Process measures for assessing the implementation of this project will consist of the successful installation, operation, and compilation of a useful database. Once a database is installed, measures of its usefulness might include number of inquiries, savings in investigation time, number of cases cleared, arrests made, and convictions obtained by using the computer's capabilities. The true measure of the project's success, however, will be how investigation is improved by computerization over traditional information collection and analysis.

The Richmond Police Department is still developing an understanding of the limits and capacities of the computer network it plans to develop. Issues related to implementing the network will be addressed later in the project.

Goal 11: Assigning an Evidence Specialist to the Richmond Police Department's Detective Bureau

In the past, all Richmond Police Department evidence technicians were assigned to the Patrol Division, a situation that created several problems. There was little opportunity in the Patrol Division for these generalist technicians to develop the expertise necessary to handle rapidly changing homicide evidence technology. In addition, there was little continuity in assignments. Consequently, connections between homicide cases that might be apparent to people handling them on a steady basis were missed.

The department has attempted to address this situation by assigning one evidence technician to the Homicide Unit on a continuing basis. This technician, who is on call 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, has, according to department staff, greatly improved evidence flow and efficiency. He also trains technicians assigned to the Patrol Division and serves as the department's liaison with the Contra Costa County Sheriff's technicians and crime laboratory. Full implementation of this interdepartment and interagency cooperation should increase the department's homicide expertise and reduce the workload of the other technicians.

In preparing for this new approach, the evidence specialist interviewed current and past homicide personnel, prosecutor staff, and crime lab technicians. The interviews pointed to the need to address evidence-related problems, identify programs that would improve the evidence portion of

investigations, and determine how to implement the planned improvements. In addition, the interviews uncovered five principal problems that needed to be addressed: a lack of uniformity in evidence collection, the need for a computer-aided design program to describe crime scenes and the location of evidence, problems with packaging evidence (bloody clothing and ballistic evidence), poor quality of photographic evidence and poor crime scene searches for evidence, and a need for monthly meetings between prosecutor staff and crime lab technicians.

Process measures to assess the implementation of this program could include:

- Number of cases analyzed by the evidence specialist technician.
- Number of training hours provided by the Homicide Unit evidence specialist to other department personnel.

Measures of the program's impact could include:

- Number of times crime software is used in the courtroom.
- Additional problems identified in monthly meetings.
- Number of cases lost because of evidentiary problems.
- Number of cases cleared, arrests made, and convictions obtained because of the enhanced expertise and efficiency of the Homicide Unit technician.
- Number of cases cleared, arrests made, and convictions obtained because of the enhanced effectiveness and reduced workload of other department evidence technicians.

Conclusion

Although the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative in Richmond, California, is still in its implementation stage, this pioneering community's early experiences will help shape the next stages of the program.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance created the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative program not to funnel large sums of money to selected sites to start hosts of new programs but rather to catalyze local efforts focused on homicide. In practice, this focus on homicide reduction has widened to include a focus on violence reduction because homicide is understood in that larger context. In Richmond, this perspective has led to a multidisciplinary, multifaceted strategy that recognizes that homicide, and violence in general, must be addressed on fronts that encompass the needs of youth and adults in education, training, employment, and alternatives to drugs and guns.

Perhaps most compelling in Richmond's experience is the natural extension of problem-oriented and community policing approaches to the last bastion of traditional policing—the homicide unit. Under the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative, homicide prevention and investigation are no longer isolated from the rest of policing and community crime problems. Richmond's initiative recognizes the critical role of the police/community relationship, both in solving current cases and in devising community strategies to reduce the likelihood of future homicides.

Richmond's implementation plan has been effective because it incorporates a wide range of goals both within and outside conventional notions of law enforcement. However, these goals, while disparate in substance, share a central theme—transforming the relationship between community and police. In preparing its homicide reduction plan, Richmond Police Department officials saw an immediate need to improve police services and a longer term need to invest in youth who are most at risk of becoming both perpetrators and victims of violence.

The Comprehensive Homicide Initiative has passed an important first hurdle in Richmond. Its early success there shows that an effective strategy can be led by an effective police department, but not by the police working in isolation. The involvement of other agencies and an active community are key ingredients, without which the most inspired police approach will not succeed.

As the Comprehensive Homicide Initiative enters a new phase in fiscal year 1998, BJA will continue to assess the Richmond strategy as a model of communitywide planning and will work with partners at the Federal, State, and local levels to develop initiatives in other sites.

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Sources for Further Information

For more information on community efforts to combat violent crime, contact:

Bureau of Justice Assistance
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Indepth Information

For more indepth information about BJA, its programs, and its funding opportunities, requesters can call the BJA Clearinghouse. The BJA Clearinghouse, a component of the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS), shares BJA program information with State and local agencies and community groups across the country. Information specialists are available to provide reference and referral services, publication distribution, participation and support for conferences, and other networking and outreach activities. The Clearinghouse can be reached by:

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