



Criminal Justice Knowledge Bank

An initiative of the Division of Criminal Justice Services

Rochester: Retaliatory Disputes Project

Practitioner:

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Summary:

Rochester's Smart Policing Initiative-Retaliatory Disputes Project is a policing strategy used to identify, assess, and intervene in violent retaliatory disputes.

Problem

From 2006 to 2013, Rochester had some of the highest homicide, homicide by firearm, aggravated assault by firearm, and shooting victim rates among the state's large urban centers outside New York City. Research on shootings that occurred from 2010 through June 2013 showed that 58 percent of shootings were due to a dispute. Findings also showed that dispute-related shootings were more likely to result in a fatality and more likely to have multiple fatalities. Based on this information, the Rochester Police Department sought to develop a systematic approach to address dispute-related violence involving firearms.

Program Description

The Rochester Police Department created the Smart Policing Initiative-Retaliatory Disputes Project to better identify, assess, and intervene in violent retaliatory disputes, defined as containing the following criteria: (a) an interaction involving conflict; (b) over a period of time; (c) between two or more individuals and/or people associated with them; (d) marked by two or more events involving confrontation or intimidation; and (e) at least some of those events involve violent acts or credible threats of violence. The Department worked with the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and developed an assessment that

would help law enforcement identify disputes likely to be followed by retaliatory violence. The assessment is performed in two stages. If police officers suspect an incident – such as a shooting or aggravated assault – involves a dispute among groups, they immediately complete an initial review. Officers use their discretion to assess several factors: whether they believe the risk of violence is immediate, ongoing, or long-term; if the event has the potential for further violence; the cause of the dispute; and specific actions needed to address the dispute. The primary goal of this initial review is to determine if an immediate enforcement response is needed to prevent further violence.

Within 24 hours of the initial assessment, a designated dispute analyst at the Monroe Crime Analysis Center completes an in-depth secondary assessment that uses data and intelligence to examine whether characteristics previously identified are present during the dispute. Final assessments are forwarded to Department command to develop a response strategy.

The Rochester Police Department's patrol commander convenes regular Dispute Meetings, which are attended by representatives from the Monroe County District Attorney's Office, county Probation

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Department, Monroe Crime Analysis Center, state Parole, and community stakeholders. The group shares intelligence, reviews actions taken on active disputes and brainstorms potential response tactics for new disputes. The designated dispute analyst presents case summaries and backgrounds of the participants and evaluates place- and offender-based tactics. The group thoroughly reviews each case and decides on the appropriate intervention strategy.

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The Department uses various investigative, offender-based and place-based response strategies. An offender-based tactic prevents dispute participants from engaging in further retaliatory violence and may include enforcement actions directed at those individuals. A place-based prevention strategy focuses police resources at locations where dispute-related incidents occurred or where active dispute participants frequent.

Data and intelligence informing these strategies are collected from the initial and secondary assessments, dispute intelligence and intervention assignments, related cases, and deployed intervention strategies.

Funding

From 2013 through 2016, this program was supported in part through a federal Bureau of Justice Assistance Smart Policing Initiative grant. Funding was also provided through the state's Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE) initiative, which is administered by the state Division of Criminal Justice Services. Currently, the Rochester Police Department administers the program using existing resources.

Supportive Research

The Rochester Police Department created a database of shooting incidents, which included information on 539 shootings in Rochester between 2010 and 2013. RIT also conducted a literature review, focus groups with police officers, and incident reviews to support assessment development. The Department used the results from RIT's work, in conjunction with the analyses

of shooting incidents, to develop the violent dispute assessment.

Program Reviews or Evaluations

At the completion of the initial grant period, RIT reviewed the Rochester Police Department's documentation processes and found that while the Department informally tracked dispute information prior to this project, the formalization of record keeping on dispute-related assessments helped the Department to identify potential violent retaliatory disputes more effectively. In 2019, the department and its research partners authored the [Retaliatory Violent Disputes Guide](#), published by the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing.

Critical Success Factors

The Rochester Police Department's partnership with RIT and the Monroe Crime Analysis Center were critical to program success. RIT assisted in initial data collection and analysis, and development of the assessment. The Crime Analysis Center provides critical analysis of crime patterns of dispute-related violence.

Buy-in from command staff is essential. Implementing a violent retaliatory dispute program requires a commitment to a strategy that targets disputes, rather than individual incidents. This requires agency command staff and officers to view disputes, as opposed to individual cases, as the unit of analysis.

Identifying potential links between incidents also is crucial. The program needs dedicated personnel to perform assessments of violent incidents. A local Crime Analysis Center can aid in intelligence gathering and analysis, but agencies need to manage the project.

Lessons Learned

Previously, interventions often relied on traditional enforcement-based responses. The Department recognized the need to evolve and expand existing police strategies when focusing on disputes as the unit of analysis, rather than individual incidents.

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