

The BJA Executive Session on

Police Leadership

2013

The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership is a multi-year endeavor started in 2010 with the goal of developing innovative thinking that would help create police leaders uniquely qualified to meet the challenges of a changing public safety landscape.

In support of an integrated approach to creating safe and viable communities across America, the project directors recruited 20+ principals from a range of disciplines. The principals, in turn, led national field teams of practitioners focused on the work of policing and the organization of the future.

To gain new insights on leadership, the *BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership* engaged police chiefs in documenting their own paths and invited leaders to participate in various audio and video forums to tell their stories and discuss the future of policing and police leadership.

Please visit our website, <http://bjaleader.org>, to learn more about this project and to access a broad array of interactive, multimedia resources.

The principals are supported in their work by a team that includes project co-directors Darrel W. Stephens and Bill Geller, project strategist Nancy McKeon, and BJA Senior Policy Advisor Steve Edwards.

Five Police Departments Building Trust and Collaboration

Innovations in Policing Clinic
Yale Law School
Seattle, Washington

What We Learned

by

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What We Learned

In the 1980s and 1990s, Seattle, Washington, experienced a rise in drug use and sales. The Seattle Police Department (SPD) fought back with the traditional tools: arrest, prosecution, and incarceration.

More recently, Seattle has considered alternative approaches. One promising strategy is Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD): a non-punitive policing strategy that diverts eligible low-level drug and prostitution offenders to community-based treatment and support services rather than arrest and prosecution. Its principles are non-displacement, ensuring LEAD participants do not “skip” in line for social services; a strategy of harm reduction, acknowledging that rehabilitation is a long process and focusing first on the greatest threats to personal and community wellbeing; and peer-to-peer counseling, reinforcing the program’s rehabilitative efforts.

As of the writing of this report, LEAD has been in operation for fewer than six months. While it is not yet possible to formally analyze LEAD’s outcomes, LEAD offers police leaders and reformers several significant lessons.

What the Field Can Learn from Seattle

1. *The power of collaborating with unlikely allies.*
 - A broad coalition of legal and political organizations contributed to the creation of LEAD. Participants included the Racial Disparity Project, the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington, the King County Prosecutor’s office, the Seattle City Attorney’s office, the Seattle Mayor’s office, and the SPD.
 - Nobody got everything they wanted. But by incorporating so many different organizations into the design of the new program, LEAD organizers ensured that the program had broad political support.
2. *Building buy-in throughout the department.*
 - Seattle used officer focus groups to introduce the program to officers and community members.
 - Focus group responses enabled planners to adjust the program design before roll-out. This led to a better program design and increased officer buy-in.
 - Incorporating officers’ suggestions into the program design made it easier for line officers to buy into LEAD.
3. *Discretion—but not extra paper-work—for officers on the street.*
 - The LEAD model invests street-level police officers with substantial discretion in selecting individuals to divert from arrest.

- The intervention is easy to administer. Line officers only have to fill out a single sheet of paper—really a series of check boxes—in order to recommend an individual for LEAD.

The Yale Law School Innovations in Policing Clinic is made up of Rebecca Buckwalter-Poza, Kyle Delbyck, Jamil Jivani (lead author for Milwaukee case study), Jeremy Kaplan-Lyman (lead author for Seattle case study), Jessica So, Trevor Stutz (lead author for High Point case study), Carolyn Van Zile (lead author for Charlotte-Mecklenburg case study), and Alyssa Work (lead author for Philadelphia case study).

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The principals on our team include John Crombach, Gail Christopher, Darrel Stephens and James Forman, Jr.

Cite as: Kaplan-Lyman, J. (2013) “Five Police Departments Building Trust and Collaboration, Innovations in Policing Clinic, Yale Law School, Seattle, Washington.” A paper of the BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice; and St. Petersburg, FL: Center for Public Safety Innovation, St. Petersburg College.

9/25/2015

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This project was supported by Grant #2009-D2-BX-K003 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, to St. Petersburg College. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the SMART Office, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.



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