



BJA Fact Sheet

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BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE • OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS

DENISE E. O'DONNELL, DIRECTOR

Smart Policing Initiative

By Michael Medaris, BJA Senior Policy Advisor, and
Alissa Huntoon, BJA Policy Advisor

Offering tools and knowledge that will assist state and local law enforcement in providing quality police services is an important and fundamental responsibility of the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). In the current economy, many law enforcement agencies are facing personnel layoffs and resource reductions while struggling with chronic crime. Developing tactics and strategies that are effective, efficient, and economical—as measured by reduced crime and higher case closure rates—would be of great benefit to law enforcement agencies in this era of budget constraints and limited staffing. The goal of the Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) is to identify those tactics, practices, and strategies.

To do so, SPI seeks either to build on the concepts of offender-based and place-based (“hotspot”) policing by replicating evidence-based practices or to encourage exploration of new, unique solutions to public safety problems and criminogenic circumstances. Several authoritative longitudinal projects, in the United States¹ and the United Kingdom,² have demonstrated that a small number of offenders commit a disproportionate amount of crime. It is also well documented³ that crime reports and calls for service often cluster predominantly at specific locations or in narrow, easily defined areas. Substantial research demonstrates that, although random patrol and rapid response do not measurably reduce crime, place-based policing can reduce violent crime and neighborhood disorder. These findings reveal that effective policing requires a tightly focused, collaborative approach that is measurable; builds on sound, detailed analysis; and includes policies and procedures that promote and support accountability.

In fiscal year (FY) 2009, FY 2010, and FY 2011, BJA awarded a total of 31 SPI grants to 28 law enforcement agencies throughout the United States. These agencies were selected to create a sampling that is diverse in the size of its agencies and in the type of crime problem or criminogenic circumstances under consideration. BJA required applicants to enlist a research partner, demonstrate the ability to collect and analyze data, and incorporate realistic and meaningful performance measures to assess the effectiveness of their efforts.

¹Wolfgang, M.E., Figlio, R.M., and Sellin, T. 1972. *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

²Home Office. 1989. *Criminal and Custodial Careers of Those Born in 1951, 1958 and 1963*. Statistical Bulletin. London: Home Office.

³Weisburd, D., Bushway, S., Lum, C., and Yang, S. 2004. Trajectories of crime at places: A longitudinal study of street segments in the City of Seattle. *Criminology* 42(2):283–321; Sherman, L.W. and Weisburd, D. 1995. General deterrent effects of police patrol in crime hot-spots: A randomized, controlled trial. *Justice Quarterly* 12(4):625–648.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Providing awards totaling more than \$11 million, BJA is working with 28 local law enforcement agencies to test new or confirm existing solutions to chronic crime problems. These agencies are tackling gun violence, street and commercial robberies, neighborhood drug markets, persistent burglary patterns, prescription drug abuse, and other crime challenges that regularly confront law enforcement. The results of their efforts—defined as a scientific finding that an approach worked, had no effect, or was deleterious—will be published for other agencies determined to provide quality police services.

KEY POINTS

- For more information on the Smart Policing Initiative (SPI), including lesson summaries, downloadable presentations, podcasts, and other resources, visit www.smartpolicinginitiative.com.
- The goal of SPI is to identify law enforcement tactics and strategies that are effective, efficient, and economical.
- SPI seeks to build on offender-based and place-based policing by replicating evidence-based practices or to encourage exploration of new, unique solutions to public safety problems.
- Grantees describe a process to identify crime problems they will address and enlist a research partner to assess the effectiveness of their SPI efforts.

BJA believes that the experiences of these 28 agencies will add to the body of knowledge of effective police tactics and strategies. To support the SPI grantees with training and technical assistance, BJA also awarded a grant to the CNA Corporation (CNA), which has extensive experience in law enforcement operations and evaluation.

CNA has been assisting SPI agencies in developing and implementing strategies and, based on the availability of funds, will provide training and technical assistance to other law enforcement agencies in coordination with BJA.

For more information, please contact either Michael Medaris, Senior Policy Advisor, at michael.medaris@usdoj.gov, or Alissa Huntoon, Policy Advisor, at alissa.huntoon@usdoj.gov.

CONTACT US

Bureau of Justice Assistance
Office of Justice Programs
810 Seventh Street NW.
Washington, DC 20531
Phone: 202-616-6500
Toll free: 1-866-859-2687
E-mail: AskBJA@usdoj.gov
Web site: www.ojp.gov/BJA

