

A Collaborative Approach to Eliminating Street Drug Markets Through Focused Deterrence: A Process and Outcome Evaluation

Summary of Preliminary Findings and Scope of Current Evaluation



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ABSTRACT

This evaluation focuses on collaborative focused deterrence strategies to eliminate open air drug markets. Drug markets that operate in public spaces are toxic to the neighborhoods they operate in. High Point and Winston Salem, North Carolina have implemented a strategy, created by David M. Kennedy of John Jay College of Criminal Justice, aimed to eliminate open air drug markets. Research on these efforts have found that such strategies significantly decrease the violence and crime associated with open air drug dealing *and* include specific benefits for the drug dealers and the neighborhood. Current evaluation efforts are focused on deeper analysis of this novel, police- and community-driven strategy to address illicit drug dealing in street-level, open-air markets.

OVERVIEW

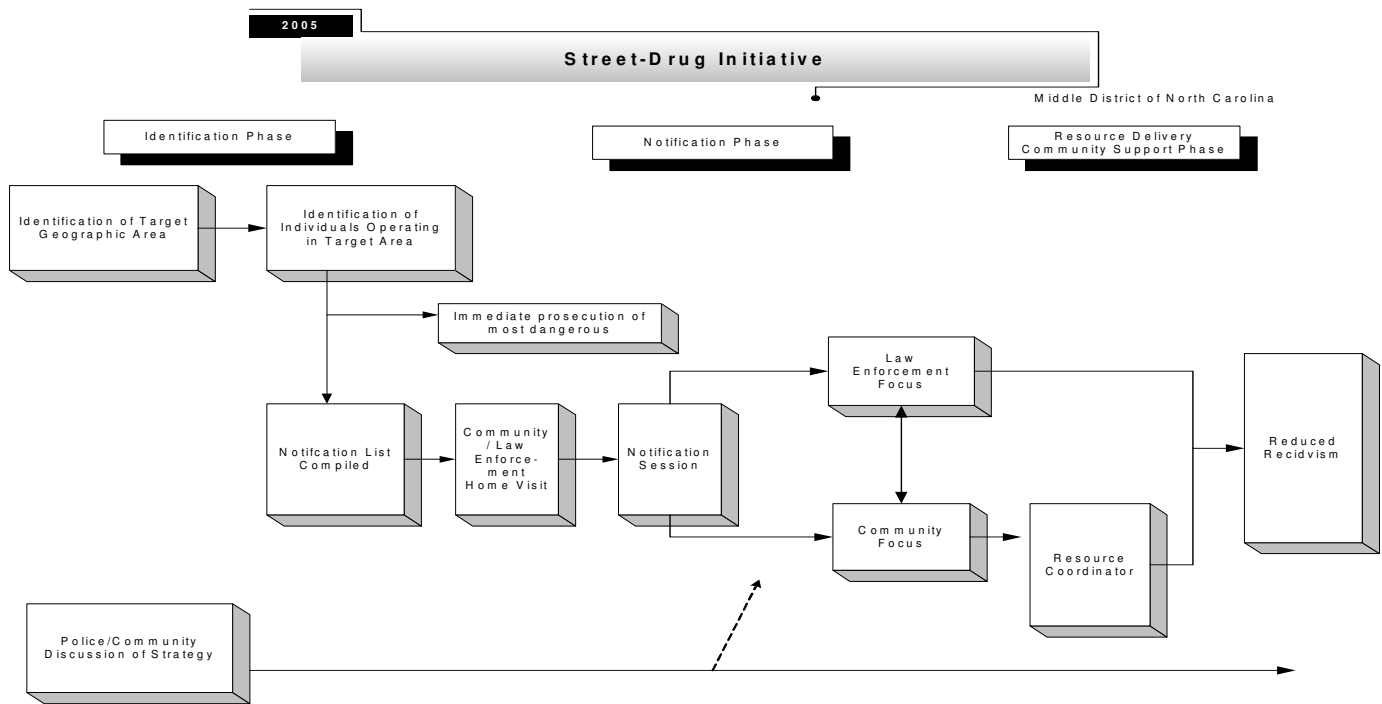
Open-air drug markets and the related crime they bring to their respective neighborhoods constitute one of the most serious and seemingly intractable problems of contemporary American cities. The failure of both enforcement and prevention strategies traditionally employed against such markets led David M. Kennedy, director of the Center for Crime Prevention and Control at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, to suggest a new approach.

During 2003 and 2004 a concerted effort to reduce street-level drug crime in the City of High Point, North Carolina, based on Professor Kennedy's approach, termed the West End Initiative was developed. Due to the positive developments of the West End Initiative, in 2004-2005 the High Point Police Department decided to implement the same strategy in the Daniel Brooks neighborhood, and the Winston-Salem Police Department followed suit. The approach assumes that a collaborative community-based approach -- combining strategic law-enforcement action and provision of services and support to drug dealers willing to change their lifestyles -- can effectively shut down an open-air drug market. It further asserts that committed follow-up can prevent the market's reemergence, resulting in a quick and sustainable improvement in the quality of life for neighborhood residents.

Several assumptions served as the basis for initiating such an effort (Harvey, 2005): (a) Open-air drug markets are associated with numerous negative impacts on the neighborhoods in which they operate; (b) traditional law enforcement approaches to suppression of open-air drug markets result in only short-term impacts on a market and limited benefits to the neighborhood; (c) a collaborative community-based approach, combining strategic law enforcement action and provision of services and support to drug dealers, can effectively shut down an open-air drug market; (d) reemergence of an open-air drug market shutdown using this strategy can be prevented; (e) crime and other negative neighborhood effects associated with an open-air drug market will be reduced once the market is shut down, resulting in an improved quality of life for residents of the neighborhood.

The effort uses crime-mapping information to target drug dealers, drug suppliers, and street-level drug sales that impact community safety. Building on a statistical and mapping foundation, extensive intelligence is gathered both on networks of individuals involved in the local drug scene and individual patterns of criminal behavior. The project then used a joint police-community partnership to identify individual offenders, notify them of the consequences of continued illegal activity, and provide supportive services through a community-based resource coordinator (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Project logic model for the street-drug initiatives.



The implemented drug strategy has been synthesized into ten major steps:

1. Mapping – The focus area is identified by mapping crime data. A density map is created by overlaying all crimes related to open air drug markets. The “hot spots” are then analyzed and the neighborhood to be focused on is selected.
2. Mobilize Commitment of Community – A series of public meetings are scheduled in the target area to identify and inform the stakeholders in the community. City Council members, the Mayor, and the City Manager are also briefed.
3. Survey – Survey police officers, probation officers, vice officers, and community members to identify persons actively involved with street dealing in the focus area.
4. Identification – A list of offenders is created from the surveys. Exact locations involved with dealing are compiled.
5. Incident Review – Vice/Narcotics detectives conduct a complete incident review of all offenders. The list of offenders is refined to include only the street dealers based on the review. A final list is approved.
6. Undercover Investigation – Each location and offender is investigated. Drug houses are photographed. Undercover purchases are made from individuals. Each buy is video-taped with audio. The investigation requires only a judge’s signature to make the arrest.
7. Contact with the Offender’s Family – Small groups of officers, community members and ministers visit immediate family members of the offenders. The team explains the initiative goal and invites the family to join in asking the offender to quit. Family members are encouraged to attend the call-in with the offenders. A letter from the Chief inviting the offenders to the call-in and promising they will not be arrested that night is delivered.
8. The Call-in – Face-to-face call-in (i.e., offender notification session) with offenders, law enforcement partners and community. Face-to-face takes away their anonymity. First, the community group offers help. Second, law enforcement delivers a two-pronged message that street drug dealing and violence will no longer be tolerated, and offenders are hereby put on official notice. The use of notification sessions in this initiative is a natural extension of their original intent (directed at chronic, violent offenders).
9. Enforcement – Any reports of dealing are immediately investigated. Any involving an offender who was called-in results in the warrants being signed and their immediate arrest.
10. Follow-up – Follow-up contact is made with offenders about one month later to see if they are getting the help they need. Community members are encouraged to keep in contact with those notified through phone calls or visits. Newsletters to the community contain information of arrests or success stories. Officers attend community watches in the area and maintain the lines of communication

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

* Note: The following findings from the drug intervention strategies implemented in Winston Salem and High Point, North Carolina are preliminary results based on a specific period of time following the implementation of the strategy in each area. The assessment and examination of the long-term effects of the strategies are ongoing.

New Hope Initiative

Outcomes. The drug dealers and the neighborhood as a whole have obtained a number of specific benefits from the Community Safety Partnership. Recorded outcomes for the dealers include substance abuse/ mental health treatment, Project Fresh Start, work experience, assistance with job searches, support, mentoring, and coaching, and help obtaining food, clothing, and emergency cash.

Benefits for the Cleveland Avenue Homes neighborhood as a whole included:

- A Community Clean-up Day on June 13.
- A total of 470 youth and other neighborhood residents attended five free ice cream socials during the summer, supported by two churches outside the neighborhood.
- Thirty-five middle school and high school students from the neighborhood actively participated in Youth Crime Watch activities during the summer at the Cleveland Avenue Homes Teen Center, compared with five registered members in 2004.
- An average of 45 children, 5-12 years of age, took advantage each day of the variety of activities, including educational programs presented by other agencies and a trip to Carowinds amusement park, at the Cleveland Avenue Homes Community Center.
- Nine students from Cleveland Avenue Homes received academic assistance through an intensive four-week Summer Enrichment Program.
- Ten Cleveland Avenue youth participated with 21 others in a Conflict Resolution Workshop at Pilot Mountain in July, assisted by CSP Streetworkers.
- Participation by Cleveland Avenue children and youth in a Running from Crime Field Day doubled from the previous year's level.
- Younger children also received coaching from Youth Crime Watch members as part of a Crime Prevention Basketball Camp in July.

Impact. The impact of the New Hope Initiative on quality of life in the Cleveland Avenue neighborhood can be examined both quantitatively and qualitatively. Comparing WSPD records from March 30 through June 30, 2005, with the same dates from 2004, shows the following:

- Calls for service from the neighborhood declined 22.3%, from 708 in 2004 to 546 in 2005.
- All offenses increased by 32.3%, from 341 to 451.
- The number of Part 1 crimes fell from 61 to 54 (down 11.5%).
- The number of Part 1 violent crimes stayed about the same, rising from 16 to 17, while Part 1 property crimes fell from 45 to 37 (down 17.8%).
- Part 2 crimes rose 41.8%, from 280 to 397.
- Arrests and citations in this period of 2005 were more than two and one-half times the number during the same period in 2004, 1243 vs. 475, a 161.7% increase.

Daniel Brooks Initiative

- Significant decrease in ability to purchase drugs by informants: From 100% success rate (24 purchases out of 24 attempts) to 13% success rate (2 purchases out of 15 attempts). Such numbers were sustained throughout a 250-day period.
- Data received through questionnaires during a follow-up interview with 9 residents of Daniel Brooks revealed:
- 67% of respondents reported their life improved after the April 5th notification.
- Graffiti and abandoned buildings were longer a problem.
- More than half agreed that their neighborhood is clean and that vandalism was not common.
- A decrease in noise complaints (44% after initiative vs. 56% before initiative).

Perceptions of Neighborhood Safety

- Before and after notification, 44% of respondents indicated too many people loitering on the streets near homes
- 33% of residents reported that there is too much crime in the neighborhood, and 66% of respondents reported that drug use continues to be a problem for their community.
- During both rounds of interviewing, 33% of respondents reported that their neighborhood was safe.
- Prior to the initiative, most respondents indicated that people within Daniel Brooks watched out for each other. After notification, approximately half of the respondents continued to feel this way.

Although most respondents disagreed that people watch out for each other within the community, more respondents reported trusting the people in their neighborhood subsequent to the inception of the initiative.

Open-Ended Interview Responses.

- While all the respondents were aware that the goal of the initiative was to “try to get the drugs out” and to “keep drugs out of the community”, interviewees reported the community feeling safer at the beginning of the initiative, with an increase in police presence, but less safe after July as the initiative continued.
- Furthermore, during our pre-interviews in April 2005 residents cited drug activity “down by the store” [Daniel Brooks Grocery Store] as a major source of trouble. Recently, interviewees stated that “there are too many people that hang out there” and some residents said that this may be due to having a new housing authority manager.
- A large majority of the residents believed that the increase in police presence is a definite strength in the community.
- The majority of respondents believe that more residents need to come out for monthly meetings to address current problems and develop better relationships with each other.

SCOPE OF CURRENT RESEARCH

The current action research efforts build on the preliminary/pilot studies referenced above.

The first goal of the project is to model and describe the elements, developmental stages, and operational steps of the street-drug intervention. There are four objectives within this goal: (a) describe the law enforcement strategies, central actors, and setting conditions of the intervention; (b) transition from a simple measure of occurrence of intervention activities to the relationship between components, participants, actors, and outcomes; (c) delineate a hierarchy of outcomes for each stage of the intervention that contribute to successful implementation of the strategy; and (d) finalize the logic modeling process by detailing the key ingredients within each component of the model.

The second goal of the project is to measure the impact of the strategy across three existing sites and an emerging site. Objectives within this goal include (a) determining the long-term impact at each existing site; (b) testing the generalizability of the strategy’s impact at an emerging site through comparison with a matched control site; (c) focusing on intervention dynamics in a single site including the nature of drug market change and displacement; and (d) focus on drug market dynamics in a single site based on qualitative inquiry with dealers, offender family members, key community stakeholders, law enforcement partners, community residents, and drug users.

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Preliminary Findings from: High Point West End Initiative, <http://www.uncg.edu/csr/pdfs/west%20end%20report.pdf>

High Point Daniel Brooks Initiative, <http://www.uncg.edu/csr/pdfs/daniel%20brooks%20report%20final.pdf>

The New Hope Initiative, <http://www.wssu.edu/NR/rdonlyres/1BF7A584-539A-41A6-B860-94EED7C3FD2C/0/NewHopeBluePrint.pdf>

