

Submission

1997 Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem Solving Award

"Adult Living Facility (ALF) Task Force"

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Introduction

This is a Problem Oriented Policing project that began as a simple measure to address repeat calls for service at Assisted Living Facilities (ALF's) in the city of St. Petersburg, Florida. ALF's provide a congregate or group living environment for mentally ill adults who require assistance or supervision in their daily routine. Through our research and analysis, it became apparent that many of the problems and complaints associated with ALF's were not merely a "police problem", but a shared responsibility among several governmental agencies. It was further noted that little, if any, coordinated problem solving had occurred with regard to the aforementioned concerns.

A major goal of the St. Petersburg Police Department (SPPD) is to encourage teamwork between departmental members, other service providers and the community to mutually address quality of life issues. In keeping with this philosophy, we took the initiative to create an "ALF Task Force" with the objective of creating such partnerships while at the same time engaging in coordinated problem solving pursuits that were heretofore lacking. This collaborative effort has resulted in the closure or sale of several problem ALF's and accompanying reductions in calls for service originating from these locations.

Scanning

Since December of 1991, the St. Petersburg Police Department has embraced the concept of community policing. The SPPD model places a community officer in a geographically defined area and empowers that officer to engage in problem solving and community engagement activities. The most important method used by community officers to gauge problems is the tracking of repeat calls for service. Community police officers (CPO's) review CAD system data on a monthly basis and record those locations where four or more calls originate.

Since becoming a CPO in October 1995, I noticed that one particular ALF, the Claridge Hotel, frequently appeared on my monthly repeat calls for service list. In July, 1996, I decided to take a closer look at the problems associated with the Claridge and undertake a review of what types of calls were being received from the location. While engaged in planning a course of action, Officer Buggle was addressing the problems of two ALF's in his district: the Mari-Jean Hotel and the Heart Inn. We met to discuss our mutual problems and decided to work together in order to eliminate duplication of workload and increase project efficiency. As an example of our research, the results of the Claridge analysis follow.

In evaluating the calls for service originating at the Claridge Hotel, we found that a large number could be attributed to the mentally ill clients living on the property. These types of calls included attempted suicides, trouble with individual complaints, and the transport of unstable subjects to emergency psychiatric facilities. From January 1996 through June 1996, there were 60 calls for service from the location with 29 (48%) being one of the nature codes listed above. In order to obtain a clearer historical review of the calls from the Claridge, we ran calls for service as far back

as the CAD systems parameters would allow. We found that from 1-1-94 through 6-30-96, the location was responsible for 184 calls for service with a total of 68 (37%) connected to the nature codes discussed above.

In connection with the call for service data, I was receiving complaints from zone officers in reference to the number of times they were being called to the location. I was advised that most of the calls were petty or frivolous in nature and originated from the clients living on the property. Nearby senior citizen homes and small businesses were also complaining of Claridge residents trespassing on their property, urinating and defecating in public, and acting in a disorderly manner.

It was clearly apparent that an inordinate amount of police patrol time was being committed to problems originating at the Claridge. Applying the statistical data to the crime triangle, we found that the problems affected the "Guardian" and "Victim" categories. The Guardians were defined as the service providers (Police, Fire, EMS) expending valuable time at the location addressing questionable complaints. The Victims were found to be taxpayers, citizens, and business owners affected by the diversion of services and forced to deal with the actions of mental subjects as they roamed the streets. The mentally ill subjects were also identified as Victims since the Claridge provided little in the way of treatment or activity to enhance their quality of life.

The conclusions made above could easily be applied to the other problem ALFs in the city.

Almost exact results were discovered when analyzing the Mari-Jean Hotel and the Heart Inn.

After reviewing the data, Officer Buggle and I concluded that our project should not be limited to merely reducing calls for service. We decided that our project would center around forming a

partnership with other agencies and the community which would in turn develop strategies to address the three side of the problem solving triangle. Reducing calls for service would be just one of the several benefits of this collaboration.

Analysis

We started the analysis phase of the project in early August, 1996. The main part of this phase was the formation of a Task Force of agencies with jurisdiction over ALF's. Once the Task Force was formed, we could go tailor our responses in a coordinated and united manner. In this way, we would be able to solve problems faster and ensure that any positive resolutions would remain permanent and not be displaced to another area.

Our initial step was to meet with the owners and managers of the Claridge, Mari-Jean and Heart Inn. Our task was made easier when we ascertained that the same company, 2900 Management Inc., owned and operated these facilities. In meeting with representatives from the facilities, we were advised were indigent and received a monthly stipend from the state of Florida (Optional State Supplement or OSS) to house, clothe and feed them. Apparently, the amount of (OSS) money received (\$612) was barely able to cover the items mentioned above and was no where near enough to provide for recreational activities or additional on-site staff. Ultimately, we received little help from the ownership group and soon realized that only through the state's regulatory and licensing process could we achieve our project's goals and objectives.

Our next step was to contact and schedule a meeting with those agencies involved in the oversight

and operation of ALF's. The agencies we contacted included:

State of Florida

Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA)

Long Term Care Ombudsman Council (LTCOC)

Department of Children and Families (DCF, formerly HRS)

Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA)

Pi Delias County Government

Health Department

City of St. Petersburg

Fire Department

Codes Compliance and Assistance Division

Meetings with representatives from this group indicated that input from the community and other members of city government was warranted. Accordingly, Officer Buggle and I conducted surveys and met with neighborhood residents and business owners affected by the ALF's. Results of the survey showed that while there was little objection to ALF's in the affected areas, there was broad based concern over the poor operational and management methods utilized by ALF owners. We also coordinated with the city's Neighborhood Partnership Office to solicit their input and assistance. A member of that office became a member and integral part of the emerging Task Force.

In working with Neighborhood Partnership, we found that there were 97 ALF's operating in the city of which over 50% were located in District II, which encompasses the north side of town. We decided to meet with the president of the Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA) and representatives from six (6) neighborhoods with the highest concentrations of ALF's in order to prioritize which should be dealt with first.

The meeting was held in early September 1996 and a list of ten (10) properties emerged, which included the Claridge and the Mari-Jean. Each priority property was analyzed for ownership, location and numbers of calls for police service and passed to the Task Force for evaluation. During our monthly meeting in September, the Task Force agreed to accept the list of priority properties and to enter the response phase of the project.

Response

The response phase was slated to begin in October 1996 with a surprise inspection of two facilities. Two other ALF's were scheduled to be inspected in November with members of the Task Force as part of the inspection team. Unfortunately, two civil disturbances in the city forced us to postpone the inspections.

In the meantime, steps were taken to contact state legislator Margo Fischer of the Florida House of Representatives. Rep. Fischer was elected in November 1996 and her district includes the north side of St. Petersburg where many ALF's are located. Officer Buggle and I met with Rep Fischer in her office and advised her of the many problems we identified as part of our membership in the Task Force. Shortly thereafter, we escorted Rep Fischer on a tour of the Mari-

Jean and Claridge ALF's and she was appalled at the conditions she observed at the locations. As a result of the tour, Rep Fischer contacted several high ranking officials in the state of Florida which led to a massive inspection of the Claridge. The inspection led to the closure of the Claridge and sent Shockwaves through the ALF community in St. Petersburg. We have continued our relationship with Rep Fischer and she has agreed to sponsor future legislation aimed at addressing ALF related problems.

Another important response has been our attendance at ALF Core Trainers School sponsored by the DOEA. As part of the Task Force, Officer Buggle and I felt it necessary to learn as much about ALF's as possible. Based on our attendance, we are now certified ALF administrators and are familiar with all facets of ALF operations. This will assist us in evaluating facilities we visit during future operations.

Future responses to the ALF problem will include the integration of the Pinellas State Attorney's Office (SAO) and the Florida Department of Corrections (DOC) in to the Task Force. We also hope to work with city codes and planning to insure new and existing ALF's abide by municipal ordinance and building guidelines. CPTED strategies will be included in this effort as well. Lastly, we will explore how the Task Force can improve the community based mental health model to insure ALF's are not used as dumping grounds for the mentally ill.

Assessment

For the calendar year 1996, there were 117 calls for service to the Claridge. Since the closure occurred in January 1997, there has been one (1) call to the property. The closure further

resulted in AHC A forcing 2900 Management to surrender their license to operate ALF's throughout the state. This resulted in the sale of three other ALF's owned by the group (including the Mari-Jean) and the voluntary closure of one other. The calls for service reduced at these locations are similar to the results found at the Claridge after closure.

Of the 10 original priority ALF's on the Task Force list, 4 have been closed and 2 are operating under new ownership. The other 4 properties have shown marked improvement and we are in the process of adding more facilities to the list as needed.

Conclusion

At this point, we will be working diligently towards the goal of new legislation governing ALF's. We further hope to develop some type of curriculum to teach other police departments how to deal with these facilities in an efficient manner. It is obvious that our project has expanded past its original scope and we hope to continue our efforts in the future.

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OFFICERS:

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District II (North Side)

Officers Buggle and MacDonald are Community Police Officers (CPO's) assigned to work with neighborhood and business associations and other governmental agencies in solving problems which affect the quality of life in the areas that they serve. Both officers have attended ALF core training and are familiar with the operation of these facilities.

As part of the ALF Task Force, Officers Buggle and MacDonald generate computerized information on calls for service involving ALF's in the city of St Petersburg. Both officers can assist members of the Task Force in background screening of ALF clients and employees as well as investigating criminal or non-criminal incidents occurring on an ALF's property.