

Fontana Police Department Submission for the 1998
Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-
Oriented Policing

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Herman Goldstein Award Abstract

SCANNING:

For several years the City of Fontana has been experiencing significant problems involving large homeless and transient populations. Businesses identified homelessness as the largest single public safety-related problem in the city. Police Department personnel had become relatively proficient in developing localized strategies that resulted in displacing homeless from one area of the city to another. The department decided to develop a city wide strategy that would reduce problems related to homelessness by reducing the number of homeless individuals on our streets.

ANALYSIS:

There were several factors that were contributing to the homeless problem. Fontana has two major freeways, a large trucking industry and several major rail lines offering easy ingress into our area. Fontana had more churches and other groups that were supplying free meals and clothing to the homeless than any other area city. These groups by helping the homeless were inadvertently making Fontana a more desirable place for the homeless and attracting homeless people. We found there were numerous groups and agencies in Southern California that had existing programs to help rehabilitate the homeless that were not being used and that nobody in our city was aware of.

RESPONSE:

The police department working with local churches, charities, and businesses formed the Transient Enrichment Network for Fontana (TEN-4). We developed a plan that called for opening a referral facility. Subjects would be referred to that facility by police officers contacting homeless subjects or by churches or charitable groups. The facility was staffed by volunteers, who would then refer the homeless to organizations and programs that would help them get off the streets. Police Officers would also become more aggressive in enforcing violations of nuisance laws committed by homeless subjects in the city. Local business groups also agreed to supply jobs and job training programs for homeless individuals. Charitable groups that have been supplying free homes, free meals and clothing to homeless subjects would instead refer those subjects to the TEN-4 Program.

ASSESSMENT:

The TEN-4 Program opened in October 1996. Since that time the number of homeless people in the City has been reduced by about 90 percent and calls for service directly related to homelessness have been reduced by more than 50 percent. All but 13 of the 410 individuals that have entered the program are presently in permanent housing or in some type of shelter or rehabilitation program. Sixteen percent of those subjects have full time employment.

SCANNING:

Fontana, California is a city of approximately 108,000 people, located 50 miles east of Los Angeles. The city is 38 square miles and has two major state highways running through it. The largest single industry in the city is trucking.

For several years the city of Fontana has been experiencing significant problems involving large homeless and transient populations. Businesses were unhappy because of the effect the panhandlers had on their businesses and because they were frequently victimized by crime related to homelessness. Citizens often felt intimidated by aggressive panhandlers and feel they distract from the aesthetics of the community.

The police department was receiving an average of three calls a month from irate business owners complaining about crimes caused by homeless individuals or the negative impact that homeless individuals were having on their business. In some areas of town where large numbers of homeless people were known to live or panhandle, thefts from businesses and public facilities of easily sellable items, such as tools and scrap metals, were becoming epidemic. The police department was also responding to an average of over 55 calls for service per month directly attributable to homeless persons.

The Fontana Police Department has had an extremely active community policing program since the early 1990's. As part of that program, all patrol officers are required to become involved in

problem solving projects in their assigned patrol areas. When a business owner or private citizen would complain about a continual homeless problem in/or around a specific location, the beat officer would frequently be assigned to deal with the problem. Our officers became extremely proficient at developing strategies that would cause homeless to relocate. Unfortunately most of those strategies simply resulted in displacing the homeless to another location within the city. The homeless person would simply relocate and new business owners would complain. Officers would then start the process over again.

The Fontana Police Department routinely holds meetings with community and business groups throughout the city. Residents generally rated homeless subjects and problems caused by homelessness as the #2 priority for the police department. Businesses routinely rated homelessness and problems caused by homelessness as the #1 police issue in the city.

By early 1996 any person driving down a major street in Fontana was likely to see large numbers of obviously homeless people sitting on the sidewalks, walking down the streets or panhandling. Both the city council and business community were concerned that this was affecting not only existing businesses, but the city's ability to attract other new business projects to the city.

In April 1996, department staff decided to reevaluate how we were handling problems related to homeless individuals. We decided that we needed to develop a city wide strategy that would actually reduce the number of homeless subjects on the street. One of the department's sector

coordinators, who is responsible to coordinate community policing in a specific area of the city was assigned to come up with a city wide strategy for addressing the homeless problem, using the S.A.R.A. model.

ANALYSIS:

During the analysis process, several local cities, social service groups providing services to homeless people and homeless people themselves were contacted. We discovered that the city of Fontana actually had a significantly greater problem with homeless individuals than did any other city in the area. There were several factors in our community that were contributing to the problem. There is a large railroad switching yard located just outside the city limits, in addition to several major rail lines running through the city. These rail lines coupled with the two major freeways running through the city give homeless and transient individuals easy inlets into our area. The area's large trucking industry also furnished transportation for homeless individuals and also a source of part time work that attracted some homeless and transients. We also found that there were a number of groups, mostly churches, in our city that were supplying meals and clothing to the homeless. These groups by helping the homeless were inadvertently making Fontana a more attractive place for the homeless. No other city in our area had the amount of resources devoted to helping people who were living on the street.

We talked to several homeless individuals that had a list of locations in Fontana showing where they could go every single day of the week, in order to receive a free meal. Despite all these resources, there was not one single homeless shelter or program devoted to helping get homeless

people off the street in our city.

The Department's goal in this project was to come up with a strategy that would ultimately reduce the amount of homeless and transient individuals in Fontana. By doing this we hoped to increase the quality of life for all citizens in the community and reduce the amount of police resources that were being spent dealing with problems related to homelessness. Of all the factors identified as contributing to the homeless problem, we felt that the only one we could have any serious impact on would be those organizations in the community that were inadvertently contributing to the problem. We decided at the beginning of the project that we would have to deal with those organizations, as well as the community as a whole, to have any impact. In late April of 1996, the police department corporal assigned to the project chaired a meeting attended by several community business and church leaders to address this problem. That group agreed to form the Transient Enrichment Network for Fontana(TEN-4). They agreed on seven goals for that group:

- *To recognize and deal with continuing problems of homelessness in Fontana.*
- *Develop a plan with a goal of improving the individual condition of homeless subjects by the joining of resources by the city of Fontana, Fontana Police Department and different community service groups.*
- *Design and develop a facility that will serve as a temporary processing center equipped to feed, bathe, clothe, and find housing for the homeless.*
- *Design and implement a program to rehabilitate those individuals and integrate them*

back into society through training provided by local rehabilitation centers and churches.

- *To determine a convenient location site for facility, in an area impacted by problems related to homelessness. Example: Sierra and Valley*
- *Establish a committee to develop guidelines and procedures for the implementation of this program and the promotion of this project*
- *To serve as a liaison to assist the homeless in entering existing programs to rehabilitate them.*

At the first meeting everyone agreed to meet weekly until a solution and specific strategy could be worked out. By the third meeting members working with the city had developed a program, methodology and implementation strategy that appeared to offer the best chance of meeting all of the group's goals.

RESPONSE:

Neither the city nor any of the groups involved in the TEN-4 Project had budgeted any money for the program. The lack of resources required that all groups involved be extremely creative and to the extent possible, use existing resources to deal with homeless problems. We found that there were a number of organizations in place that offered housing services, rehabilitation programs and free medical care to qualified homeless individuals. A number of local business groups were willing to supply money and services to assist the homeless if they were given an

effective outlet. The plan that was developed called for opening an office where homeless individuals could be given counseling and processed for entry into various public and private programs. A homeless person entering the TEN-4 Program would be interviewed, given a meal, shower, clean clothes, and medical care if required. They would then be transported to either some type of long term care or rehabilitation facility or some short term housing solution until they could be admitted into some type of long term program.

Since the TEN-4 Program originally had no money budgeted, members of the group led by Fontana Police Department personnel went to businesses, community groups and individuals who were most affected by the homeless problem. They solicited donations of time, materials and money. An office location was found in a strip mall that was an area in the city that had been heavily impacted for many years by problems caused by homelessness. The city worked out a creative financing plan, allowing for the owner of the strip mall to receive a significant discount on sewer fees, in exchange for 18 months free rent.

The building needed significant repairs. Volunteers agreed to do a major renovation on the building. Four thousand dollars in cash and construction material were donated by more than 20 local businesses and community service groups and 40 individuals. Volunteers mostly supplied by local churches staffed the facility. Several local public service agencies, including the California State Employment Development Department and Veteran's Administration agreed to supply trained personnel. One trained counselor with extensive experience dealing with the mentally ill also volunteered. Transportation from the facility to various shelters and

rehabilitation programs would be supplied largely by police department volunteers using vehicles dedicated to police volunteer use. Whenever a police patrol officer contacts a homeless person or transient individual, they offer to voluntarily transport that person to the TEN-4 facility. When church or community service agencies that supply free food and other benefits to the homeless contact homeless people, they also try to talk those people into entering the TEN-4 Program. Many of the churches that had been supplying services to help the homeless have cut back, or eliminated those services and instead refer people to TEN-4.

The department and TEN-4 volunteers are constantly reevaluating how TEN-4 supplies services. When we originally opened, we thought the main focus would be on placing people in other organization rehabilitation programs, with little emphasis being placed on job counseling and placement. Since the program has been operating, we have found that there are a large number of not only organizations, but individuals in the community that want to provide job opportunities. The best example of this is Lewis Homes, one of the largest land developers in our area who has hired several TEN-4 clients and has a standing offer to employ any qualified candidate referred to them. In addition numerous other local companies supplied permanent jobs. One local trucking company, a local rental company and a local kennel have all supplied part time jobs for numerous TEN-4 clients involved in rehabilitation programs. As a result of this we have increased our emphasis on job placement.

The TEN-4 Program is not a stand alone solution to the homeless problem in the city of Fontana. All Fontana police officers were advised of the program and encouraged to refer clients to TEN-

4. Officers during the past who have sometimes been reluctant to issue citations to obviously homeless persons for minor infractions became more aggressive once they knew that any homeless person on the street in the city of Fontana could find a place to stay and a job, simply by entering the TEN-4 Program. All individuals who have agreed to enter the TEN-4 Program have had lodging that same day. Officers were encouraged to and became more aggressive in enforcing nuisance laws against sleeping on sidewalks, in parks and on private property without permission, aggressive panhandling and drinking in public. Many aggressive panhandlers, some of who were actually not homeless but only pretending to be, have found it easier to work in other cities, since Fontana officers were immediately able to call their bluff by finding them a place to live.

hi initiating this project, the Fontana Police Department hoped to achieve the following goals:

- *Reduce the total number of homeless people on the street in the city of Fontana*
- *Reduce complaints from business and community members, related to homeless persons.*
- *Reduce crime related to homelessness.*
- *Reduce the number of calls for services related to homeless individuals and homeless problems.*
- *Improve the general quality of life for all citizens in the city of Fontana, by reducing nuisance problems caused by homelessness and homeless individuals.*

In October of 1996, less than six months after the initial meeting to discuss the problems, the

TEN-4 opened its doors for the first time. While one of the department's corporals was assigned to develop the original strategy, all of the department's patrol and bicycle units were involved in contacting and supplying homeless individuals for the program. City staff was involved to the extent that the city manager personally approved the sewer financing agreement that helped pay the facilities rent for the first 18 months. All city fees were waived and building inspections were conducted free of charge.

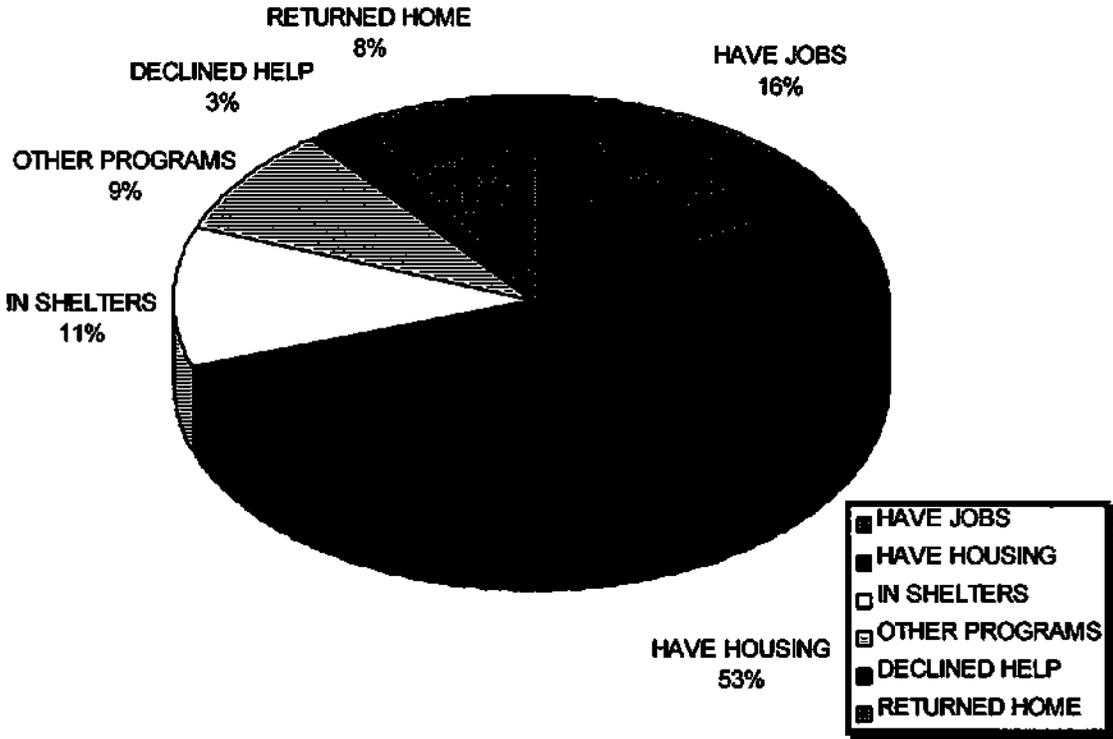
There were some problems early in the program. We had originally intended that staffing of the TEN-4 facility would be handled by volunteers on a rotating basis. We learned early in the program that it was necessary to have at least one volunteer that was extremely knowledgeable in dealing with homeless subjects at the facility at all times. Two local ministers were willing to take the program on and agree that one of them would be on the site whenever the facility was open. Initially, we received a great deal of resistance from the other businesses in the shopping complex where the TEN-4 facility was being placed. They were concerned that their homeless problem which was already severe, would get even worse. Police department personnel and TEN-4 volunteers talked to each of the business owners in the area and assured them that subjects would not be dropped off at the TEN-4 facility, unless they agreed to enter the program. Any subject that was taken to the facility for evaluation and did not agree to enter the program would be given a ride away from the area by the person that brought them. It was also agreed that homeless persons who did not enter the TEN-4 Program would not receive any food, clothing or be able to use any of the TEN-4 facilities. We found that by holding to these simple rules, we were able to satisfy other business owners, to the extent that they are now the biggest

supporters of the TEN-4 Program. Several area business owners, including all of the other occupants of the mini mall where the TEN-4 facility is located have talked in support of the TEN-4 Program, when the program was evaluated by outside groups. These evaluations have included a team from the National League of Cities, United States Congressman George Brown's office and numerous area police departments

ASSESSMENT:

Between the opening of TEN-4 on October 2, 1996 and June 1, 1998, 510 subjects have entered the Program. All but 13 of those subjects have been successfully rehabilitated or are still in a rehabilitation or housing program. To be considered successfully rehabilitated, a subject must be in permanent housing or be self supporting, or returned to their families. All subjects in the TEN-4 Program are tracked until they are in permanent housing, unless they have returned to live with family members out of state. More than 53 percent of TEN-4's clients are presently in permanent housing. More than 16 percent of all TEN-4 clients have permanent jobs. All the other subjects that have entered the TEN-4 Program, with the exception of the 13 that have dropped out are presently in some type of rehabilitation program or shelter. The following chart demonstrates graphically what has happened to the 510 subjects that have entered the TEN-4 Program.

CLIENT DISTRIBUTION

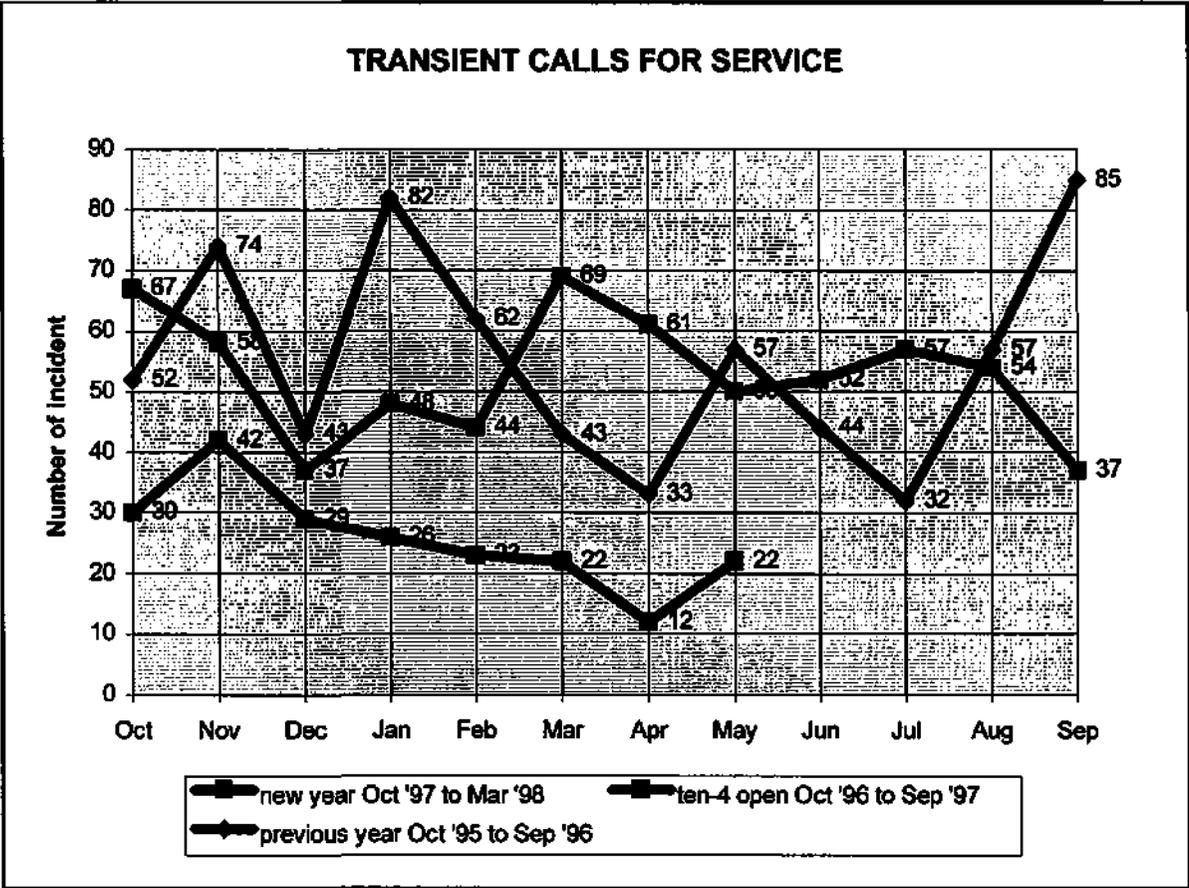


Prior to start of the TEN-4 Program the city had no census as to the number of homeless people who were actually on the streets. The fact that over 500 subjects that were homeless are not on the streets in a city of 108,000 people has had a significant impact. Department and city staff are estimating that the total number of homeless people actually living in Fontana has been reduced by more than 90 percent. It is now not only possible but normal for a person to drive through Fontana without seeing a single homeless person.

Prior to instituting the TEN-4 Program the city was averaging approximately three complaints each month from business owners, reference problems related to homeless individuals. In 1997 the department received one complaint from a business owner, about homeless individuals. So far in 1998 we have not received any complaints. Issues involving homeless people are simply no longer important to the business community in the city of Fontana.

The Police Department has no way of tracking crimes specifically committed by homeless individuals. Prior to instituting the TEN-4 Program, we felt that a significant number of crimes, especially property crimes in the city were related to homelessness. In 1997 the first full year after the TEN-4 Program was implemented, the city of Fontana had a 15.6 percent decrease in Part 1 Crimes. Fontana had the largest decrease in Part 1 Crimes of any city over 100,000 population in the state of California. We feel that a significant factor in this reduction was the reduction of homeless individuals and the TEN-4 Program.

While it is impossible to determine how many total calls per service were indirectly related to homelessness, it is possible to track the number of calls that were directly related to homeless individuals. The following graph shows the number of calls for service, directly related to homeless individuals from one year prior to the opening of the TEN-4 Program, until June 1, 1998.



The graph demonstrates that as soon as the TEN-4 Program opened the number of calls directly related to homeless individuals started going down. Several months after the program opened, calls for service related to homelessness actually went up. We feel that this was likely caused by the increased publicity and spotlight on homeless issues created by opening of the TEN-4 Program and the numerous newspaper articles written on the program. During the first year of the program, calls for service fluctuated when compared to the year prior to opening TEN-4 but were still reduced to an average of 48 a month. Since October of 1997, calls for service for homeless people are averaging 25 a month or less than half of what they were the year prior to the opening of TEN-4.

While the city has no way of specifically tracking quality of life, for its residents we feel confident that there has been a significant improvement. The aesthetics of the city have definitely and noticeably been improved by the lack of obviously homeless and destitute individuals camping on our city streets.

All of the initial goals established by both the Police Department and the TEN-4 task force have been accomplished by the program. One initial concern that we would simply displace our homeless people to other communities has not been a problem. While we realize that some homeless and some panhandlers have been displaced to other cities, the overwhelming majority of the subjects that have entered the TEN-4 Program are off the streets permanently.

The police department has had several unexpected bonuses from the TEN-4 Program. There have been over 20 articles, including several editorials, that have been extremely positive written in area newspapers. Neither the police department nor any other agency in the city of Fontana has ever been involved in a program that has received so much publicity. The Fontana Police Department won first place in the National League of Cities, Excellence in Community Policing Program in the Business and Community Policing category in 1997. While the police department's entire community policing program was evaluated, the TEN-4 Program was the center piece of the award proposal. The TEN-4 Program also received a county award as the best community policing project in San Bernardino County in 1997.

TEN-4 has and continues to be funded without the use of any city money. One of the problems

that the TEN-4 Program has encountered in recent months has been generating funds from local churches and businesses to continue to support the program. The main reason for this difficulty is that most business and community members no longer perceive that the city has a homeless problem and they tend to be more reluctant to donate money for a problem they cannot see.

The TEN-4 Program and other police responses associated with it have been so successful that the TEN-4 facility has had to adapt and change the services they were supplying. Initially the largest number of referrals for homeless was by city police officers. Most of the referrals the TEN-4 Program is receiving now are coming from San Bernardino County Welfare and Social Service offices. A great many of the people being referred by these people are not physically on the street, but are rather subjects that have lost their jobs or welfare benefits and are in eminent danger of being evicted or living with friends, in order to stay off the streets. TEN-4 provides these people with housing referrals and job placement services to help them stay off of the streets, thus eliminating homeless issues before they occur.

The department intends to continue monitoring both calls for service and other problems related to homelessness and homeless individuals within the city. We also intend to continue using the TEN-4 Program, as it is evolving into a more general social service organization for the city.

The community relationships developed during the TEN-4 Program have been extremely useful and we have used many of these relationships with community businesses and especially with area churches to assist us in developing strategies and responses to other community problems.

AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION:

The TEN-4 Program has been developed and worked on at every level of our organization. All officers in the Fontana Police Department receive ongoing training in community policing and problem oriented policing. All of the department's Sector Coordinators and officers assigned to the community policing unit have received a minimum of 24 hours of C.O.P.S. Training. All officers have received a minimum of four hours advanced officer training in Community Policing and Problem Solving. The Police Department's Field Training Officer Program requires all trainees to receive at least 10 hours of C.O.P.S. and P.O.P. training from the Community Policing Unit.

The Fontana Police Department encourages community oriented problem solving at all levels. All patrol officers are evaluated in part on their problem solving strategies. Promotional testing at all levels specifically includes an evaluation of the employees' commitment to community policing and in demonstrated problem solving abilities, hi the last two years patrol officers for this department have initiated and completed over 175 problem oriented policing projects.

The TEN-4 Program has been run with no expenditure of city resources. Initially we were able to completely fund the program by a combination of community donations and an agreement for sewer services to the facility property owner. As we began finding that donations were harder to come by, once homeless people starting disappearing from the streets, we started looking for other ways to continue funding the program. The Police Department in conjunction with the city's housing agency applied for grant monies to continue operating the TEN-4 Program. On

June 1,1998, we were advised that the TEN-4 Program had been awarded \$94,000 a year for the next two years from the U.S. department of Housing, to continue supplying homeless and job counseling services in our community. That sum will not only completely fund the program, but will also allow the volunteers that had been running the program to receive some salary and help the city expand the program to deal not only with homeless problems, but with other social service problems within the city.

The Fontana Police Department has produced and distributed over 150 manuals discussing how the TEN-4 Program was developed and how it runs. These manuals have been sent to agencies across the United States, who have heard about our programs and are interested in developing a similar program. The Police Department and TEN-4 personnel have made presentations on the TEN-4 Program at both local and regional P.O.P. Conferences and did a display on the program at the National League of Cities Convention in Philadelphia in November of 1997.

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