

3RD GEAR POLICING:

BUILDING TRUST AND PROMOTING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



The Gloucester Township Police Department implemented a community wide violence prevention program entitled “ 3RD Gear Policing” in 2011. The focus was simple – as a police department we needed to implement strategies beyond 1ST Gear (Arrest) and focus on more holistic actions such as 2ND GEAR (Prevention) and 3RD Gear (Intervention). It became clear that police officers are often in a unique position to identify young people and families who need assistance, learn of the adverse experiences that children have been exposed to, and assist in providing appropriate protective measures to

children and their families succeed. Since 2011, every call for service involving a child or home where children reside, results in the child and his/her family being discussed at the department’s weekly meeting entitled the Juvenile Unit Huddle or “JU Huddle”.

We believe that our 3RD Gear Policing model together with our School Resource Officers, helps make the community, including our schools, safer. In our community of nearly 70,000 people and 9,000 school students we have implemented a model where every incident involving a juvenile must be reviewed to determine how we can help that child or family. Our commitment to this process is not only to prevent violence in the short term, but also to assist young people in achieving their academic potential, greater lifelong success, avoiding substance abuse, staying clear of the criminal justice system even into adulthood, and simply creating overall community wellness.

This program specifically involves:



The "JU HUDDLE"

The Juvenile Unit Huddle or *JU Huddle* involves all members of the department who are assigned duties that work with or protect children and families. Prior to a juvenile being discussed at the *JU Huddle*, a comprehensive review takes place of the juvenile's history and overall household history including all past calls for service at the home involving the child and anyone in his/her family.

The JU Huddle results in an action plan for every youth who has been involved with a police related incident both within the school or in the community, is reported missing, has been truant from school, had a crisis or mental health issue, has been subject to violence including domestic violence, witnessed a parent/guardian or loved one arrested, and more. Youth who have experienced such adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) are at an increased risk of poor health, substance abuse, suicide, and more.¹ The JU Huddle was implemented in 2011 and has resulted in actions plans and assistance for hundreds of youth and their families.

Common action plan items and outcomes include:

- Connecting youth with a broad spectrum of social and developmental resources.
- Identification of the child's "trusted adult" in the school.
- Participation in one of our numerous diversion programs for first time juvenile offenders
 - avoiding the school to prison pipeline.
- The School Resource Officer visiting and "checking in" with the child at school.
- Informing the school principal, school social worker, or counselor of the child's needs.
- Family counseling with a licensed social worker at the Police Family Resource Center.
- Invitation to our peer support group, *The Gathering Space*, where young people develop leadership and personal coping skills.
- Ongoing follow up and casual check- ins by the school resource officer in a mentoring role.
- Involvement in the Community Children's Garden at the Police Family Resource Center providing therapeutic support while fostering community spirit.
- Participation in the department's PAUSE Program which is school suspension reduction program sponsored by the Gloucester Township Police Department



¹ Jane, E. S. (2017, May 2). Addiction doc says: It's not the drugs. It's the ACEs - adverse childhood experiences. Retrieved September 20, 2017, from ACES Too High: <https://acestoohigh.com/2017/05/02/addiction-doc-says-stop-chasing-the-drug-focus-on-aces-people-can-recover/>

The juveniles that are discussed at the *JU Huddle* are identified by:

Juveniles who have committed a delinquency act

Juveniles who have committed a criminal offense are diverted whenever possible from the formal criminal justice system and participate in our community based assistance program at the Gloucester Township Police Family Resource Center. Such programs include the six week “GT Focus” Program for those 13-17 years of age and the one night “Handshakes Not Handcuffs” program for children 12 years of age and under. This Gloucester Township model has reduced first time offending youth

recidivism by nearly 50%.



Children exposed to violence and trauma

Officers are required to complete a Juvenile Exposed to Arrest and Trauma form whenever a child is present during the arrest of a parent/guardian or has witnessed a traumatic event (overdoses, search warrants, medical assists, assaults, and more). This form and process was created by the Gloucester Township Police Department.

While on domestic violence calls for service, officers must complete the Home Safety Worksheet to assist in identifying children who live in homes where domestic violence has taken place. The Home Safety Worksheet was developed by the Gloucester Township Police Department.

Youth who are reported missing

Officers personally interview every juvenile who has run away from home upon their return or recovery using the Juvenile Return Questionnaire. The Juvenile Return Questionnaire was developed by the Gloucester Township Police Department and it is a screening tool to help identify children who have been exposed to violence, physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, depression, and more. A review of missing person incidents after implementation of this process found a reduction of 64% in repetitive missing person reports.

Juveniles in crisis

Whenever it is learned that a juvenile has suffered a crisis episode the juvenile's past history and household history are reviewed at the JU Huddle for the development of an action plan.

Children who are chronically absent from school

School administrators report chronically absent students to the municipal court for action against the parent. Prior to the 3RD Gear Policing Policy there was not involvement of the police department. The new procedure requires the school administrator to notify their assigned School Resource Officer who then ensures that the juvenile's past history and household history are discussed at the JU Huddle for the development of an action plan.



Officer Contact

All officers are required to carry with them "3RD Gear Policing" cards which have contact information for the Gloucester Township Police Department Family Resource Center. The Family Resource Center is staffed by a Licensed Clinical Social Worker who speaks with parents and makes referrals which often includes bringing the juvenile's case to the *JU Huddle* for assistance.

IMPACT ON CRIME

Since the implementation of the 3RD Gear Policing model overall crime has fallen by nearly 34% (2010-2016)

3RD GEAR TRAINING AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Training

Every Gloucester Township Police Officer has received training in:

- Child Brain Development
- Community Policing and its impact on youth and the community
- Tactical breathing techniques for children when exposed to a traumatic incident
- Effects on children when exposed to violence and trauma
- Proper arrest procedures when arresting a parent or loved one in front of a child
- School based policing
- Appropriate responses to children who have run away

Policy Considerations

The below Gloucester Township Police Department policies govern the administration of the 3RD Gear Policing model:

- Juvenile Justice Guidelines
(Arrest procedures in front of children, diversion programs, tactical breathing, and children exposed to violence/trauma form and more)
- Information Sharing with Schools
(Connecting out of school incidents to potential in-school violence, community wide bullying prevention, information exchange for action plan development)
- Missing Persons
(Juvenile Return Questionnaire, changing mindset from “runaway” to child in need of services)
- Project HIVIS (Home Involved Violence Strategies)
(Home Safety Worksheet - identifying children in homes of domestic violence)
- Project SAVE (Substance Abuse Visionary Effort)
(Assistance with addiction)

TRAINING AND PRESENTATION OPPORTUNITIES

Training and speaking engagements are available regarding this 3RD Gear Policing model. Programs range from brief thirty or sixty minute information sessions to full day or more on- site training programs.

Interested in a presentation or training? You may contact:

Chief W. Harry Earle

Hearle@gtpolice.com

856-374-3539



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR PROGRAMS AND THE COMMUNITY WE SERVE AT:
GTPOLICE.COM