



CEDAR CREST COLLEGE

Center for Police Innovation and Community Engagement

Summary of Services

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In March 2021, Cedar Crest College, in partnership with the city of Allentown, announced the opening of the Center for Police Innovation and Community Engagement (CPICE). The aim of the Center is to evaluate and support police practices in four areas: police strategy and practice, community outreach, police organization, and the transferability of nationally recognized police interventions. Through the sharing of data and the development of progressive measurement strategies the college and partnering police departments are attempting to implement practices that enhance the quality of life for city residents.

This brief report summarizes the work that the Center has completed and/or is currently engaged in. In presenting a summary of our work, we would like to thank Chief Roca and his entire command staff for their continued support and dedication to progressive thinking.

I. Mental Health Survey Administered to Police Officers

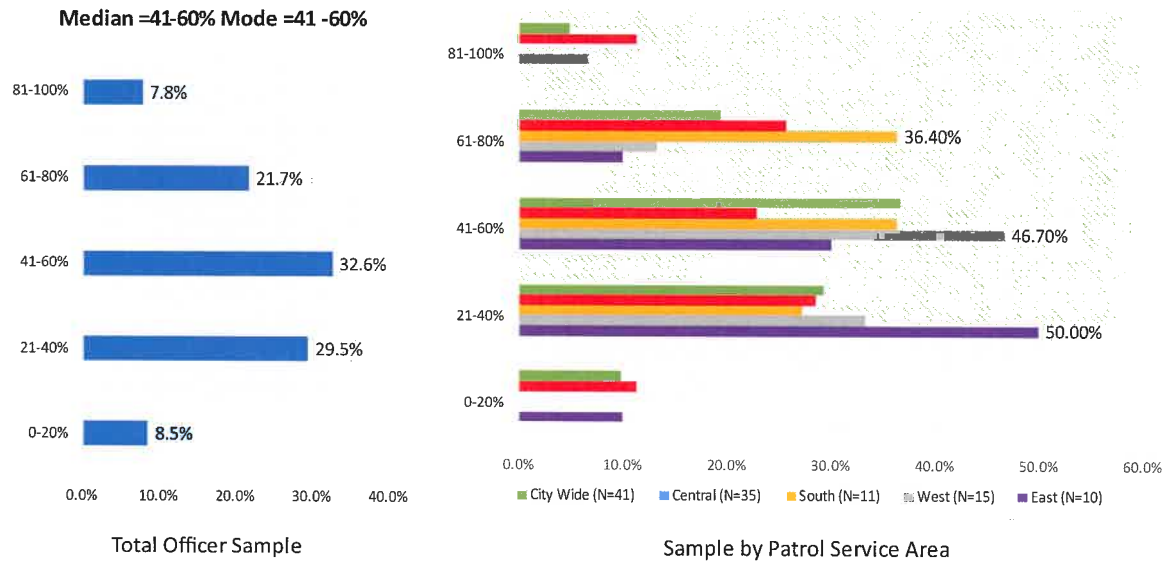
A 5-page, multiple-item paper-and-pencil questionnaire was developed to survey Allentown Police Department officers. The questionnaire collected information about mental health calls, in order to understand how police officers view their response to a call. The survey instrument focused on 6 key areas:

- 1- demographic information including biographical data, workforce information, and mental health training
- 2- the various types of calls and responses (incident context)
- 3- signs and symptoms that individuals display
- 4- resolution of calls based on use of force model
- 5- results and follow-up after call
- 6- officer familiarity with mental illness and perceptions of their knowledge, skills, and abilities to handle a call for someone with a mental illness.

The main results of this study are as follows:

- Using RIIC data, the percentage of calls-for-service that could be accurately identified as mental health calls was in fact very low (1.42%) for Allentown from 2013 to 2020. Yet, officers' estimates of mental health calls to which they respond are much, much higher than what the call data shows. They appear to use a broad definition of mental illness since most officers believe that 41-60% of all calls-for-service involve someone who has some sort of mental illness.

How often do you respond to a call for someone with some sort of mental illness?



- Officers do make referrals to appropriate agencies. It should be noted that many officers commented on the need to address repeat callers.
- Over half of the officers rarely circle back to the family, individual and/or neighborhood, supporting the need for an embedded social service position (CIS) to perform this function of circling back.
- Officers have received various types of training and have gained experience on the job to deal with individuals with mental illness. Subsequently, officers report feeling confident that they can identify the signs and symptoms of a possible mental health or related issue and handle the situation.
- Officers reported that a large majority of mental health-related calls end with the subject being cooperative, wherein the officer may use persuasion, advice, warning, or de-escalation techniques. Resolving a situation with means other than verbalization is reported to be a very rare occasion.

II. CIT Evaluation

For the past several years, researchers from Cedar Crest College worked with Lehigh County officials to evaluate the effectiveness of CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) training offered to local police officers and related personnel (e.g., community intervention specialists, social workers). We collected data from 6 different training events and completed a comprehensive review of the results to the Lehigh County funding source. A summary of the results are as follows:

We created an assessment instrument to measure officers’ self-reported level of competency (on a 5-point Likert scale) on several dimensions. This rating was completed at the beginning and end of the training program. We evaluated the differences between the two points in time to assess whether participants felt the training experience had enhanced their skills. Participants self-reported their ability to:

- Greet and engage with another person
- Assess mood
- Assess mental health history
- Engage in active listening skills
- Assess orientation
- Assess dangerousness

The following table presents the results of the mean scores recorded for each of the subject areas. In all six areas identified above, there were statistically significant, positive changes (at the .05 level) in the participants’ assessments of their abilities. This suggests that the participants’ level of skill and confidence had increased as a result of the training.

Self-Assessment Results

Subject area	Pre-testMean	Post-testMean
Greet and engage with another person	3.73	4.45*
Assess mood of a person	3.55	4.36*
Assess mental health history of a person	3.18	4.09*
Provide active listening during your interaction	3.45	4.45*
Assess orientation of a person	3.45	4.27*
Assess dangerousness of a person	3.91	4.64*

* Indicates a statistically significant change ($p \leq .05$)

With respect to the comprehensive CIT assessment, the evaluative data and results indicate that Lehigh County offers its police officers (and other professionals) a very comprehensive, informative, and effective 5-day Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training. Participants acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities from their training experience needed to engage, de-escalate, and resolve a mental health-related situation.

III. Staff Scheduling Analysis

In February 2022 we conducted a comprehensive review of the staffing schedule used by the Allentown Police Department. We compared the current model to several other common police models (10-hour & 12-hour shifts schedules) and evaluated potential schedule changes based on the distribution of call volumes by hour. Some of our conclusions are identified below:

- The literature suggests that police departments are moving to a variety of 10-hour workday schedules, with the 4, 10-hour days on, 3 days off workweek being the most popular. Researchers note several advantages in working a compressed workweek, citing

favorable officer attitudes and enhanced morale. But there is not a “one size fits all” schedule for everyone.

- Although 10-hour shifts are more attractive in some ways than 8-hour shifts, they may not live up to the high expectations that many police departments have. The financial and administrative impact of a compressed workweek must be calculated, as it not only affects a police officer’s individual schedule but also the whole department’s staffing, facilities, and budget requirements. On the surface a compressed workweek appears to provide many benefits to officers, but there are many hidden costs associated with it. Introduction of a new schedule would need to be proposed to all the stakeholders (e.g., Mayor’s office, City Council, officer’s union leadership, officer incumbents) and thoroughly vetted to ensure understanding and buy-in. The complexity of all necessary factors must be carefully considered to craft the optimal schedule for Allentown’s police officers to best serve the Allentown community.

IV. Evaluation of the Citizen’s Police Academy

In June 2021 we completed an assessment of the Allentown Police Department’s Citizen’s Police Academy. Although the department has been offering a citizen’s police academy for several years, an official outcome assessment had never been completed. In addition, this was the first time that the Department (APD) offered a Citizen’s Police Academy in Spanish. The Citizen’s Academy ran from in May and June of 2021, meeting on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The classes were held at the Allentown Police Academy on Park Drive in Allentown, PA.

An evaluation instrument was created to measure changes in citizens’ perceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of police operations. A summary of the results is presented below:

- The results show that all individuals perceived a substantial gain in knowledge about all 19 topics covered in the Academy. Many attendees said they did not know anything about the topics before training but now do. Interestingly, 14 of the 19 subjects covered during the academy sessions received votes from participants as being most informative. They also provided information about what they want to know more about that was not covered in the Citizen’s Police Academy curriculum.
- Comparisons were made before and after the training on 5 items, including trust in police officers to keep you safe, acceptance of police authority to enforce laws, appreciation of the complexity of the officer’s job, comfort around the police, and confidence that they perform their job by the rules. The results show that there were statistically significant increases in each of these items when comparing before to after training in the Citizen’s academy.

- Similar results were found when we evaluated changes in their knowledge and understanding of certain subjects (e.g., understanding of how policing is conducted in the community) before and after the Academy. Again, results showed statistically significant increases in each of the items when comparing changes over time.
- Citizens' beliefs and views of police officers also significantly improved over time. Their average overall perception of police officers and their view of officers' contact in the community did increase.
- 80% of the attendees said the changes in their ratings on all the items were mostly due to the Citizen's Police Academy, indicating they perceived the Academy to be very effective. Ninety percent indicated they were highly satisfied, and everyone said they would recommend the Academy to someone else.

V. Burglary Intervention Program

In 2017 Cedar Crest College researchers and students began working on a series of analyses related to residential and commercial burglary and noticed a statistically significant pattern of *repeat victimization and near repeat victimization*. As a result of that research, Cedar Crest College and administrators from the Allentown Police Department created an intervention (named the BASE Program) designed to reduce the risk of repeat victimization for residents. *Repeat victimization* exists when a home is burglarized more than once in a relatively short period of time. For the BASE Program intervention, police personnel committed the resources to have a patrol officer (or sergeant) visit the residential burglary location in the days immediately following the burglary. The police personnel were directed to speak to the resident(s) about the risk of re-victimization and complete a 30-question survey related to the circumstances of the crime. While police reports contain some data about the crime, the reports are not all-inclusive. So, the purpose of the survey was twofold: 1) to gather information (which may or may not be redundant to police reports) in an easily accessible and organized format; and 2) to provide opportunities for police personnel to interact with community residents. Once completed, the surveys were turned over to the researchers at Cedar Crest and analyzed for identifiable patterns

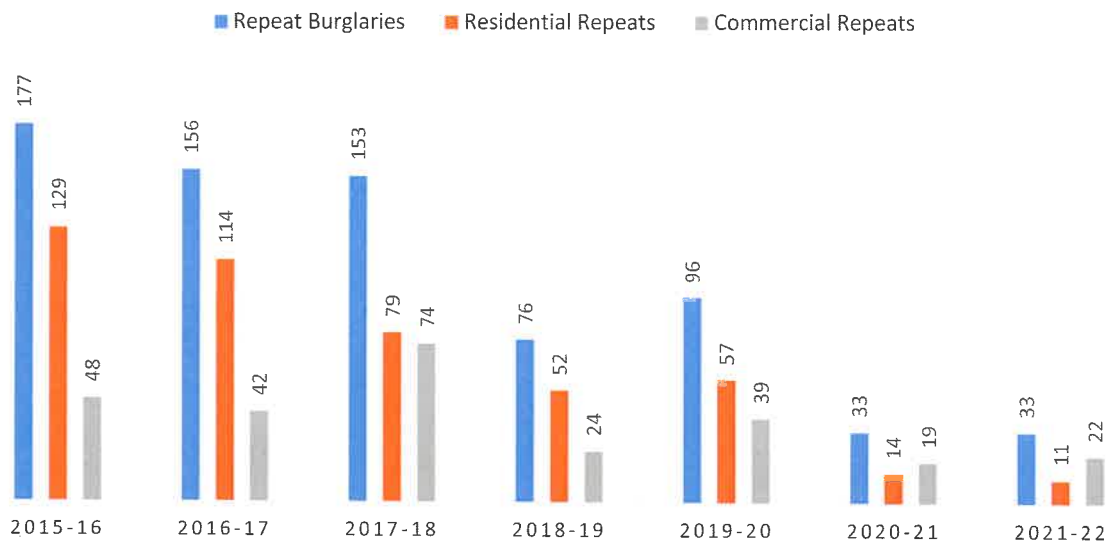
The program began on May 1, 2022, and data collection ended on April 30, 2022. In summary, the survey results suggest the following trends:

- Typical victims of burglaries in the city of Allentown live in an apartment, which is their primary residence.
- The apartment is vacant when burglarized, entered by either a door or window. Signs of forced entry are present about 50% of the time, forced by various methods (e.g., kicked, pried open), at the front or back of the residence.
- The point of entry usually is not concealed by any trees, shrubs, walls, or fences, and in over 1/3 of the burglaries there is an access-way (e.g., alley) to the rear of the property.
- Two-thirds of attempted burglaries tend to be successful, resulting in the theft of various items.

- Only 1% of residences reported a security alarm, and in over 60% of the cases, no one was home during the crime.
- In about 1/3 of the cases, a potential suspect was identified by the victim, and 1/5 reported some sort of vandalism during the crime. Less than 10% reported being repeat victims, while almost half were not sure. No one reported hearing about others nearby being burglarized.

The following figure summarizes the results of the analysis completed on the frequency of repeat residential burglaries during our study period.

Number of Repeat Burglaries



The data show positive declines in the number of burglaries and repeat burglaries in recent years. Also, as expected, elevated risk declines as more days elapsed after the crime. The BASE Program intervention appears to have influenced a reduction of repeated crimes at residences in the city of Allentown. Results of analyses on the risk of re-victimization for all reported burglaries indicate that there was no elevated risk of repeat victimization in 2021-22.

VI. Analysis of Police Patrol Districts

We are currently in the process of evaluating whether there is a more efficient geographic design that can be adopted to help reduce the disparity in call distribution that exists for the current police patrol districts. To date, we have created and evaluated 8 different geographies to see if one might help reduce the volume of calls in select areas of the city. This evaluation is expected to be finished in December 2022.

VII. Evaluation of the CIS Program

Currently, Lehigh County, APD, and Cedar Crest College are nearing the end of an evaluation of the entire mental health emergency response system used in the county. One of the components of the evaluation is an assessment of and recommendations for the CIS program used in Lehigh County and the city of Allentown. We have worked with our partners to establish a data collection system that allows outputs and outcomes to be effectively measured. The evaluation cycle concludes at the end of the second quarter of 2023.

- Case notes entered into CRP-Web are being used to track some of the output data associated with the case outreach.
- The volume of case note entries has increased quite noticeably during the study period. The mean number of case note entries made by month for the period between November 2019 – September 22 was 295. The median value over that same time span was 224. However, if we calculate the number of case note entries between the period of November 2020 – September 2022, the mean value per month increases to 365 and the median value to 399.
- 78% of cases referred to the CIS county-wide are related to mental health concerns.
- The majority of the support work conducted by the CIS staff is done via telephone (41%) or email (27%).

