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Taking a Smart Approach to Community Problems: One View¹

By

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When negative events persist, sometimes for years, and the solution approach utilized is not working, change is needed. Rather than continue along an unsuccessful path, a new tactic is needed. The model, the sustainable community capacity building, provides the steps for achieving successful and lasting change.

Public and private partners from within the community (neighborhood, business, volunteers, other geographic configurations and professional services) are critical in the examination of needs and the development of sustainable programs. Progress is adopting a course of action that includes problem identification and drills down exploration, community building, prevention strategies and sustainable solutions.

Community collaboration is all about people, families, business, schools, volunteer groups and other services and assemblies to which we belong and seek to live in harmony with each other. The goal of community capacity building is to enable stakeholders to resolve an identified issue, return to harmony and balance and enhance the quality of life.

Community capacity building is strengthening the ability of individuals, organizations or systems to perform appropriate functions effectively, efficiently and sustainable. It enables citizens and organizations to be adaptable and solve problems and achieve sustainability. Moreover, through collaboration and planning, change can occur with positive results.

Community Collaboration.

Working together does not double the power of cooperation; it is much larger than the sum of the two parts. Considerable gain is achieved where individual effort is not as successful. A community of citizens must never abdicate its role as a collection of citizens who work together to address community problems and issues. There are not enough “hired” the addition of citizens strengthens agents (e.g., law enforcement, fire, EMTs and others) – as the limitations of those entities.

¹ From: "Reducing Gun Violence: Utilizing Community Capacity Building Strategies to Achieve Sustainable Change." By: Richard C. Lumb, Author. Amazon.com.

The goal is the sustainable change that equates to improved community well-fare and quality of life. We have become remote from one another, using e-mail, texting, cell phones and not enough face to face discussion to get into an issue in some depth. Looking at one another adds to the conversation, makes it personal. The goal for all is to maintain a high quality of life for our citizens. Not only does this include police, but it also goes to:

- Healthcare
- Financial well-being
- Food
- Transportation
- Air quality
- Housing
- Peacefulness of life

When well-being is threatened, calling 911 might not achieve the outcomes desired. If additional effort is needed, post-incident, it becomes critical to work with appropriate people to achieve sustainable change.

There is a need for community and public safety partnership, one that shares the same beliefs, information, knowledge, and goals. Neither should operate on their own for the combined power of both is a powerful combination.

We use the term “community capacity building,” and we do so as it is important that citizens’ work together, address problems, seek solutions, and help them achieve improved quality of life.

The following key strategies assist in the process of capacity building.

Key Community Building Strategies

1. A Phased Approach.
2. Strengthen Existing Processes.
3. Partnership for Problem Solving.



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1. **A phased approach** - engage stakeholders from the start; begin with small, carefully monitored pilot projects designed to fill identified capacity gaps; expand gradually within a clear strategy and action plan.

2. **Strengthen existing processes** - harmonies the new program with existing systems and resources; avoid creating parallel systems.

3. **Partnerships for problem-solving²** - ensure local ownership; partners should have a common purpose, shared responsibilities and obligations, and clearly delineated roles; mechanisms for sustainability are built in from the outset. When we have community problems, such as high violence, it falls to the police to handle. The rest of us take a “hands-off” attitude – not our problem; it is someone else’s.



There is an “*it is your problem mentality*,” and if that were the solution, it would be simple. However, the social problems that police engage in are much larger than actions they might take, and it demands citizen involvement. “Community” includes **all** of us!

We share responsibility for our police and law enforcement, for it demands that cooperation or we lose effectiveness.

² . From: "Reducing Gun Violence: Utilizing Community Capacity Building Strategies to Achieve Sustainable Change." By: Richard C. Lumb, Author. Amazon.com.