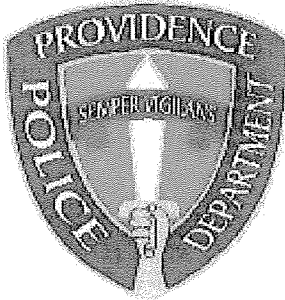


Providence Police Department & Family Service of RI

Police-Social Work Partnership

In 2003, Providence, RI Mayor David Cicilline hired Colonel Dean Esserman to become chief of the Providence Police Department—and, most importantly, to introduce a culture of innovative policing.



In 2004 Colonel Esserman met with Margaret Holland McDuff, CEO of Family Service of RI, an acclaimed non-profit based in the city. Together they created a partnership to serve victims of crime using best practices, adopting a model developed at Yale with the guidance and assistance of Colonel Esserman: the Child Development-Community Policing Model.

Beginning with the training of police and Family Service of RI staff at the Yale Child Study Center, Providence became a replication site for serving children and families traumatized by crime and violence.

A Family Service of RI worker is on a nightly ride-along with the police when they respond to a domestic violence call. While the officers question the mother, the worker spends time with three young girls found huddled together in a bedroom: one has just thrown up. The worker provides crisis intervention and--because the worker is Spanish-speaking--the mother is more willing to give information to the police than in the past. The girls reveal there is a loaded gun in the bedroom, and police seize it. Soon the perpetrator is arrested. The worker and a police officer assist the family in enrolling in a social service program to reduce the trauma from the incident and help the girls cope with the arrest of their father.



The partnership continues to evolve and expand to respond 24/7 for specialized interventions for

- drug busts where children are present;
- frail elderly in crisis;
- neighborhoods on the verge of violence;
- domestic violence.

The partnership handles other types of calls, including homicide, home invasions, child abuse, sexual abuse, DUI/DWI, incest, carjacking, robbery, hostage situations, arson, drive-by shootings, larceny and, increasingly, homelessness. Follow up takes place at the weekly police command staff meeting, which is attended by Family Service of RI.



Family Service of RI has developed a multicultural/multilingual team, including Spanish and Portuguese-speaking members, Cambodian team members, and back up team members with a multitude of languages and cultures represented.



The partnership includes attendance with police at neighborhood community meetings to provide information, listen to complaints, and to respond directly following a crisis. Family Service of RI also assists families in filing wayward petitions for unmanageable youths and provides families case management *before* court proceedings.

Each year the partnership serves about 300 crime victims and 200 other residents, of whom 55% are children 19 and under. About 50% of those served are Hispanic/Latino.

Does the partnership work? Victims overwhelmingly report it does and so do police officers, according to surveys. And violent crime has been trending down.

The partnership has been the catalyst for creation of a Safe Start project, funded by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. It spurred development of the first-ever Rhode Island State Victim Assistance Academy funded by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crime. The academy was created by Family Service of RI and the Justice Studies Program at Roger Williams University.

“Police and mental health workers are learning from each other. Officers can better handle situations with increased sensitivity.”

---Providence police officer

“The police are doing amazing work under difficult situations. It is doubly positive to be able to help the families of victims and also help with the challenges officers face with victims of violence and other crimes.”

---Family Service of RI worker

The U.S. Attorney for RI’s office and the RI Attorney General’s office have called upon the partnership to help in their work prosecuting criminals and assisting victims. And Family Service of RI is now working with the RI parole board, providing services to victims, and teaching victim impact classes at the RI Adult Correctional Institutions.

A serious car accident involving a Spanish-speaking husband, wife and 2 year old. Police arrest the husband for driving with an expired license. The man’s wife is distraught and verbally combative. The Family Service of RI worker deescalates the situation and calms the mother down to prevent her arrest. She and her child are given a ride home by police. The worker educates her about police procedures and explains how to get her husband released. In addition, the worker secures a donation of emergency funds for the child’s basic needs.

For more information, please contact Margaret Holland McDuff, CEO of Family Service of RI at 401-331-1350. More information may also be found at Family Service of RI’s website: www.familyserviceri.org.