The Canadian National Committee for Police/Mental Health Liaison,

of

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

Vancouver, B.C.

20-22 November 2005

"Policing with a Purpose"

Terry G. Coleman

20 November 2005

Good morning.

The theme, if you will, of this year's Psychiatrists in Blue Conference is "Policing with a Purpose". It's a bit of an odd title when you think about. Isn't policing always with a purpose? Do some police just wander around with no purpose? It sounds absurd when you put it that way, but the fact is that policing with a purpose—some may call it targeted policing, some may call it directed policing or some may use the rather worn expression – intelligence-led policing —does represent a change in culture from traditional policing.

When we talk about ways that the police might interact with people with mental illnesses, the scene will look very different depending upon what model you are working from. Let me explain so that we can create a context for the next two days. Consider the traditional police organization—the one some of us can remember from the pre 1970s and 1980s and unfortunately one we may still be able to find, at least in part, in 2005.

Because the culture of traditional policing was rooted in scientific management and "the traditions of military command,"[1] which valued and emphasized efficiency over effectiveness and stressed quantity rather than quality, the real outcome of policing was not addressed and, thus, was essentially out of the public view.[2] If you asked a traditional police agency what its overall goal was, you would probably have received stereotypic answers like "fighting crime." That's a vague goal and one that does not really reflect the way that police actually spend their time.

Did you know only a small percentage of a police officer's time is about criminal activity? Did you know, depending on what part of town or the countryside you are in, police only spend on average about 10 – 20% of their time on criminal issues – in some places, it is even lower. While, as a rule, the numbers are usually not quite so dramatic with respect to repeat calls-for-service, we often spend a disproportionate amount of time and resources dealing with the same issues, and/or issues at the same address or locale. Given this information and these statistics, the goal of fighting crime does not seem to really reflect what policing is all about.

So what exactly IS policing all about? Historically, police organizations have been poor at focusing their activities on an end purpose – an ultimate outcome of all their activities. In addition, police have not only thought they had all the answers, but our communities and our various levels of government expected the police to have all the answers. Well – we didn't, and we still don't, have all the answers. We never did.

Not surprisingly, as public expectations of the public sector increased, including expectations of police organizations, we found that we were floundering. Traditional indicators of police performance did little to help anyone understand the impact of policing because policing has been "steeped in the tradition that good performance depends primarily on inputs and processes."[3] For example, police leaders often justified budgets based on the notion that there is a direct relationship between the numbers of police officers and the crime rate and therefore they usually responded to crime and disorder by adding resources; e.g., personnel and various technologies.[4]

Police generated and measured outputs rather than outcomes. That is, we were preoccupied with what we generated from our activities. E.g. the number of arrests or the amount of traffic enforcement. Rather than being concerned about what difference we are trying to make and what difference we have made.

---

[1] Moore & Stephens, 1991: 1

[2] Kelling, 1999; Peak & Glensor, 1999; Trojanowicz & Bucqueroux, 1990

[3] Carter, Klein & Day, 1992: 54

[4] Carter, Klein & Day, 1992; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992

However, although this traditional, and still unfortunately somewhat prevalent, model of policing casts the community as passive participants and the police as the active participant, the success of policing relies on relationships and values developed through internal and external consultation; accountability; decentralization of authority; the sharing of power internally as well as externally and a firm focus on outcomes as opposed to process.[5] Consequently, the more open system of "community policing" (contemporary policing) began to evolve in the 1960s when it was realized that traditional policing was not effective in reducing crime and disorder. This evolution continued in the 1980s with the advent of public sector reform.[6]

The reform of the public sector began when the concerns of taxpayers about what is achieved with public funds not only increased demand for public services, but also significantly increased public expectations of equity; fairness; responsiveness; accountability and of value for money of public services.[7] Consequently, to satisfy the public's expectations of quality service, and thus satisfy customers/clients–our communities–the public sector began to implement private sector performance-based management practices such as value added management, corporate re-engineering, Total Quality (TQ) and strategic management, which focused attention on measurement to improve the services delivered and to reduce costs of public sector services.[8]

Traditionally, public sector managers were "held accountable for the prudent use of the resources they were given, the authorities they used and the activities they carried out."[9] This led to a narrow cost-centered focus of staying within budget and strictly following policies and procedures. This was problematic in that, although public sector services must satisfy the needs of the public at an acceptable cost,[10] "[w]hen operations are in a primarily cost-centered environment, managers and staff are likely driven inward to focus on their operation rather than outward to reach toward their clients/customers."[11] The consequence is a compliance culture, whereby the focus, the preoccupation even, is on following internal rules and policies instead of the desired focus on our clients and thus on results.[12]

To meet the demand for cost effective programs which are also valued by those receiving, and hopefully benefiting from, our services, we must focus on the outcome instead of focusing just on inputs, processes and outputs.[13] Albeit that inputs, processes and outputs are important, well at least some are, in getting to a satisfactory outcome. With a focus on outcomes – results – and a recognition that police are not the "thin blue line" between good and evil, but require cooperation, collaboration and consultation with the community at large and, in particular, with agencies such as health, education and the numerous "components" of the justice system, we can organize our professional activities to target the issues, the areas, and even the people who we need to direct our attention to.

For partnerships and relationships to work, and thus achieve the intended outcome, the partners must have mutual trust and believe the police are transparent and accountable. To make a true partnership, each partner must give a little of their organization to make things work. After all, we

---

[5] Brown, 1993; Friedman & Clark, 1999

[6] Corriera, 2000; Zhao, 1996; Dantzker, 1999; "Public sector reform" is also known as NPM [New Public Management]; "the reinvention of government" and "managerialism".

7 Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Flynn, 1997; Kettl, 1968. Since the 1980s, the thrust of the value for money movement in United Kingdom policing has been to, "energize the principles of NPM and institutionalize the performance culture [of police services]" (Leishman, Loveday & Savage, 2000: 1).

[8] Kettl, 1998; Ammons, 1995; Cohen & Brand, 1993; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992

[9] Auditor General, 1997: para. 11.9

[10] Bates, 1993

[11] Lavelock et al, 1987

[12] Auditor General, 1997

[13] Auditor General, 1997

aren't about to give up part of our organization and are apt to remain within our own "world" unless we believe in the common purpose and believe others can help find a solution. To be successful, we must involve stakeholders such as interest groups, non-government agencies and ethnic communities, to thus increase the public's confidence and trust of their police agency.

This is essential because increased confidence in the police will lead to improved relationships and more partnerships, which ultimately leads to an increased capacity of the police without always necessitating an increase in the number of police officers. But above all, it can lead to a far better and more relevant service delivered to those who need or require that service. However, partnerships and relationships are often not possible without the commitment from those at the top of our organizations. Partnerships have often failed because many initiatives and changes have been stalled or blocked at the mid-management range in our bureaucracies. It takes support and encouragement from the top and, sometimes, it even takes a push from the top to enable and effect change.

The point is that change is inevitable and partnerships are essential. But we are slowly getting smarter. When we accept that our job is more than investigating criminal offences - as important as that is when it is necessary - and that it is about providing a service, a unique service I admit, and is about the quality of life for those who live, or in some cases unfortunately barely exist, in those communities, we are well down the road to success. Success that is, for all of us - but in particular, for those in our communities. To achieve this, we must not only build and maintain these necessary multiple relationships but we must constantly look at, and assess, what needs our attention.

Let me ask a question – rhetorical as it is for this moment – which is one of the most important positions in a progressive police service? I say one because, depending on the circumstance, there are several such positions. One of the most important positions is that of the "analyst" – the tactical analyst and the strategic analyst. This is a fairly recent concept in many police services.

While most of the progressive police organizations now have one or both of these positions, as well as a position that measures performance of the organization, research I am concluding across Canada shows that many police organizations; in particular, mid-sized Canadian police organizations and police detachments, still do not have an analyst or systems in place to measure outcome performance. Why is this important?

The analyst is essential if we are to "police with a purpose". It is the analyst who takes a long, hard and methodical look at what is happening, it is they who can identify trends, it is their advice that can be important for decision-making about where to deploy resources or what new relationships and partnerships are required, what new programs are necessary, or even what existing programs are no longer necessary. The analyst(s) is key to how we direct our resources so that we can "police with a purpose". However, the point is that an analyst – a well-trained analyst - who does not have to be a police officer – is critical to contemporary policing and the vital focus on results – the purpose for our being. Similarly, positions and systems tasked with determining the success of our programs and the success of our organizations are essential to improve service delivery so that we can accountable to our communities and those responsible for our governance and funding.

This brings us back to the issue of our overall goal. So what is the ultimate outcome of policing? It is, I suggest – a safe community free from a fear of crime and disorder. It is one where police work hard with others, and I stress with others as opposed to charging along on our own as we used to, to improve the quality of life in our communities. Frankly, there are far too many variables over which police alone have no control or influence for police to go it alone. No wonder we were floundering.

While all this talk of models of policing might tend to make one's eyes glaze over and may appear to some to be pie in the sky academic fluff, it has real implications for how services are delivered. Let's look specifically at the issue of provision of services and police interactions with people with mental illnesses. If we take a look at typical police response to those with mental illness under the traditional model, we would see that:

- police are/were reactive and primarily just responded to Mental Health Act (MHA) calls and other mental illness crises;
- much time is/was spent by frustrated police officers waiting in the emergency wards of hospitals for assistance with the person they have brought in as it is essentially the only alternative;
- police do not/did not have a specialized response to calls for assistance with the mentally ill;
- essentially police are/were reactive rather than proactive;
- police at best collected limited data with respect to their responses to the mentally ill. At least there were no specific focused data collected or records maintained. Unfortunately, police have relied heavily on output data which is required by and collected by Statistics Canada – Uniform Crime Reporting [UCR] data. These are poor data related to criminal activity;
- police actions were conducted in isolation of other systems/agencies – we went ahead alone.

In the contemporary policing model, that is, when we police for a purpose with a focus on our clients, we see the police role somewhat differently. For example, we see:

- the identification of significant community partners and the establishment of relationships;
- the development of specialized policies and service agreements;
- the commitment of dedicated police resources;
- focused data monitoring/gathering and analysis;
- the designing and implementation of individualized approaches particularly for repeated service calls-for-service;
- a long term rather than an incident by incident perspective.

Not surprisingly, the move from traditional to contemporary policing is not dissimilar to the move from traditional to community based psychiatric care. My colleagues in the mental health system tell me that traditional hospital based care was also largely reactive—you dealt with admission as they arrived at the door, you discharged them at the end—or relegated them to back wards—and moved on to the next case. Measures of success included output measures such as the length of stay, and the number of cases processed rather than outcomes like quality of life measures.

The changes in the mental health system have to a large extent reflected the same public sector reform issues as experienced by policing, in combination with increasingly proactive demands and initiatives by the people who are variously called patients, clients, consumer and survivors. An interesting observation of reforms in the public sector is that even as they were taking place, the mental health system did not talk to the criminal justice system in general, or police organizations in particular, and vice versa. Alas, that may be why we are here today.

Although Canada is progressing well down the road with one or the other of the several multi-agency models for a specialized response and slowly some data are not only being collected but are also being analyzed, we still have quite a way to go. As an aside, although they are starting to make progress, we are way ahead of what is happening in England, Wales and Scotland. They are starting to change though so we can probably now expect them to move rapidly. It is, I suggest, where we should be watching closely for further ideas to implement here in Canada. But in many ways we lag behind the US. Again, I refer you to the Consensus Project in the US as indication of the many varied initiatives that are developing south of the border. We also await eagerly the work of the Senate Committee here in Canada which Senator Keon will be telling us about later this morning. But I digress.

When we identify relevant indicators of our performance and collect and analyze those data, we can tell whether we are making a difference and what adjustments are necessary to what we are trying to achieve. But that brings us back to what it is that we are trying to achieve. But more on that shortly.

Let me give you some examples in Canada of where some data have been identified and have been, or currently are being, analyzed:

- first and foremost is the ground breaking and revealing data captured and analyzed by the London Ontario Police. If you haven't seen this analysis, then I suggest you speak with Lisa and access it;
- over the last couple of years with the help of the Coroners and Medical Examiners across Canada, Dr Cotton and I have analyzed the situations where mentally ill persons have died during an interaction with police. However, this still requires some more work;
- there are data coming out of Victoria which may provide some real indication of the immediate and long term effects and costs of their joint response;
- mental health courts are another area of interest but again we actually know little about their effectiveness. Some anecdotal data suggests that they may suffer from the "if you build it they will come" syndrome—that is, while they seem to be a good and humane option, they may actually have the effect of bringing more people into the system. Whether that is a desirable or undesirable result depends on how you define your purpose and whether you are talking about outcomes or outputs;
- diversion programs present a similar dilemma. Some of us will be hearing about Calgary's diversion program tomorrow but overall we are still not clear about the relative merits and benefits of "pre" versus "post" charge diversion as compared to informal approaches.

These are just a few examples, but as you can see, we have a long way to go. In many of these cases, careful analysis suggests that as well-meaning as our activities are, they do not always lead to the goals we expected. They also show that we are missing some key pieces of information

While policing with a purpose is more than collecting and even analyzing data, it does presuppose that data is available and we have access to that data. This is an area that is problematic from the privacy and confidentiality perspectives when we encounter people with mental illnesses.

The whole concept of police as part of the mental health care team is new and is continuing to evolve. Can a police officer be part of someone's circle of care? When can you and can you not exchange information? Indeed what exactly is the role of the police in this whole area?

So, in the context of this conference – what IS our purpose? What is the outcome - the results - that together in partnerships we are working so hard to achieve? I submit our primary purpose is to ensure that those we encounter with mental illness are handled appropriately and referrals made as necessary. But I suggest it goes further than just the work between dedicated first responders of mental health and of police agencies. It requires a host of ongoing relationships, as well as services, including innovative programs such as perhaps Mental Health Courts, and then ongoing reflection and assessment to ensure that over the long-term we the police, we in the justice system, encounter those in a mental health crisis less frequently and, ideally, not at all. We need to know, and be able to articulate clearly, what it is we are trying to achieve and then be able to articulate clearly whether we have achieved the desired end result and if not, then why not.

This group, the Canadian Police/Mental Health Liaison (CPMHL) group, manifested by your presence today, is dramatic evidence of where policing must be in the future not only with respect to mental health, but with respect to all aspects of the justice, education and health systems – it is about community wellness. It is about quality of community life. Because we have a larger cross section of disciplines and expertise in this room today than police, this brief historical perspective of policing can indeed provide us with an idea of where we have been, where we are – and where we need to be not only today but for all of our tomorrows.

What do we still need to know and be clear about vis a vis policing and people with mental illnesses? I suggest that we need to really figure out is what is our goal? What are we trying to achieve? If it all works out where is the benefit? When you face really tough questioning to justify continuing funding, what is your response? Is our goal:

- to facilitate entry into treatment (and what do we mean by "treatment?");
- to avoid unnecessary criminalization of the mentally ill?
- to decrease the number of encounters that result in violence and injury to either the person with a mental illness or the police officers?
- to reduce the stigma that results from involving a person with a mental illness in the criminal justice system;
- to save money;
- to improve the quality of life for persons with a mental illness;
- to aid in matching client needs and wishes with available services.

We also need to know the frequency and the cost of those encounters between police and persons with a mental illness. Remember, the cost can be more than just directly financial. What is the relative efficacy of the different intervention models—are there different actions and outcomes depending on whether you choose joint response versus specialized police programs versus tactical responses? What types of training are effective—and how are they effective? What are the long-term results of any of these interventions on the person with a mental illness and on our respective systems?

There are many, I submit, unanswered questions that we must not lose sight of as we diligently work each day. A concluding thought…How does you own work fit into the paradigm? Do you have a clear sense of what the goal for your program or activity is? What difference are you, and the program you are part of, trying to make? Are you purely reactive or purpose/goal driven?

What I know, and firmly believe, is that we must police - that is we must work together for a purpose – an end result. The agenda for this conference has been designed not only so that your can learn some specific tactics but to also to stimulate you to think about what it is that we are trying to achieve. What can, and should, we be doing differently in our various communities?

After the next two days you will leave here with new connections, you will be wiser and you will be invigorated to continue to WORK TOGETHER FOR A PURPOSE.
What is that purpose??