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# Community Policing and Violence Prevention in Oakland

## Measure Y in Action

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Sponsored by the City of Oakland



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## Summary

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### Introduction

In response to rising crime and violence, Oakland voters passed the Violence Prevention and Public Safety Act of 2004, more commonly referred to as Measure Y. With a nearly \$20 million annual investment, Measure Y is a 10-year initiative designed to facilitate community policing, foster violence prevention, and improve fire and paramedic service. The community-policing and violence-prevention components of Measure Y, which are the focus of this report, have as their overarching goal the reduction of violence in the city of Oakland. This goal is to be achieved by increasing police presence and effectiveness and expanding the availability and utilization of services for youth, former prisoners, and victims of violence. The legislation set aside funding to be provided by the city for an independent evaluation of the progress being made toward reaching these goals. That evaluation, described in this report, was funded by those resources and was a joint effort by Berkeley Policy Associates (BPA) and the RAND Corporation.

The report evaluates the progress of the programs funded by Measure Y and presents findings from the first year of implementation. It provides answers to the following key performance questions, which were adopted by the Measure Y Oversight Committee:

1. Are the funded programs implemented as intended by Measure Y?
2. Are Measure Y resources being spent to provide services to the target communities?
3. What are the main achievements of programs funded through Measure Y?
4. What implementation challenges do those programs face?
5. How are these challenges being addressed?
6. Do the individuals being served appreciate and benefit from the programs?

This report also offers lessons for improving implementation of the Measure Y programs, based on the assessment. The focus of the first-year evaluation is primarily on implementation (questions 1, 2, 4, and 5 in the list above); in subsequent years, the evaluation will focus more on outcome and impact-related questions.

To perform our assessment, we used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative methods include structured interviews with department and program managers and staff, review of program and management documents, and focus groups with community stakeholders and program participants. The quantitative methods include analysis of program data on officer deployments, crime reports, and violence-prevention program data, which include participant background characteristics, participation patterns, and achievement of program milestones.

## Components of Measure Y

The Measure Y funding supports community policing (implemented by the Oakland Police Department (OPD)), violence-prevention programs (implemented by different public and private agencies across a range of program strategies), and fire and paramedic services. The latter are not included in this evaluation, which focuses exclusively on community policing and violence prevention. The community-policing component of Measure Y provides funding for 63 new police officers, as well as their equipment and training. The violence-prevention component supports street outreach, violence-prevention activities in schools, prisoner reentry services, after-school employment and sports programs, gang-prevention programs, and services for victims of domestic violence and sexually exploited minors. Altogether, 2,302 people received individual services funded by Measure Y through these programs during the first nine months of the first program year, and 22,173 participated in group activities (City of Oakland, Office of the City Administrator, May 2007). The Measure Y funds are administered by the City Administrator's Office, with oversight from the Measure Y Oversight Committee. The day-to-day operation and oversight of the violence-prevention program, including the Measure Y database, are performed by the Department of Human Services (DHS).

## Findings on the Community-Policing Program

The early evidence on the implementation of the Measure Y community-policing program is not altogether positive. The deployment of problem-solving officers (PSOs), which is the cornerstone of the community-policing initiative, has been delayed because of a lack of available PSOs and has been frustrated by a lack of equipment and training, frequent transfers of officers out of their beats, and infringement on the PSOs' time. It appears that a combination of financial constraints and administrative challenges has undermined this implementation. It is unclear whether the current reorganization of OPD will improve the department's focus on community policing or will further compromise its implementation by diverting discretionary resources into the reorganization effort. Our research found that PSOs can make a positive difference in the neighborhoods they serve when they are given time to establish relationships with the residents and time to do their jobs. This suggests that the city should make finding ways to fully implement and adequately support the deployment of its PSOs a priority.

Aside from insufficient deployment of PSOs, the implementation of community policing in Oakland is compromised by a lack of community participation. Community meetings involving the PSOs are generally poorly attended by residents and business leaders, and some of those who do participate report being intimidated and harassed by neighborhood criminals, particularly in high-stress neighborhoods.

## Findings on the Violence-Prevention and Reentry Programs

The violence-prevention programs—27 programs run by 18 grantee organizations within 15 strategies—have generally been implemented according to plan, albeit in some cases with expected start-up delays. For the most part, programs appear to be providing the services they are intended to provide. However, attracting new participants, especially from traditionally

underrepresented groups, such as truants and individuals who are not connected to existing community infrastructure, is an ongoing challenge for some programs. Staff turnover also has been a problem for several of the Measure Y grantees. Because most grantee organizations are small, staff turnover or other organizational turmoil has sometimes resulted in significant disruption of program services and implementation delays.

The requirement to use a city-administered database to monitor enrollment and participation was an important start-up challenge for many programs. Although meetings to introduce the database were a productive networking opportunity for Measure Y–funded programs and effectively supported the introduction of the database to the funded programs, moving from using the database as a quarterly reporting tool to using it as an effective ongoing program-management and planning tool is a challenge for both the programs and DHS. The database also has not reached its full potential in terms of supporting and facilitating collaboration among programs that serve similar populations of at-risk youth. However, it has proven to be a powerful tool for analyzing and monitoring Measure Y program participation patterns over time and will greatly facilitate future outcome-data collection and analysis.

Early analysis of participation data collected by Measure Y–funded programs suggests that program retention and the intensity of services received are relatively low. The programs appear to have little trouble attracting program participants and reaching out to the city’s youth, but they often report providing fewer hours of service than planned. Promoting intensive and consistent participation at the individual level is a challenge for many programs. In some cases, this may be a function of inconsistent data entry, but it may also represent a more fundamental problem that is inherent in implementing programs targeting at-risk youth. The extant literature on youth programming suggests that social and educational programs need both high intensity and strong retention to make a lasting difference in the lives of young people. Some of the funded programs are quite successful at this, however, and could function as models for others.

Focus groups of participants in Measure Y–funded service programs indicated that these programs are appreciated by the youth who participate in them. Key positive characteristics of programs cited by focus groups include the provision of safe spaces, role models who are old enough to be accomplished but young enough to be able to relate to and communicate with participants, other positive relationships with program staff, development of new and useful skills, exposure to the outside world, and activities that replace boredom and “hanging out” with meaningful and enjoyable pursuits.

Review of program data and discussions with program managers and staff suggest that DHS has provided little day-to-day oversight or direction to individual Measure Y–funded programs and to public agencies that receive Measure Y funding. City staff report that they withhold program funds when quarterly contractual benchmarks are not met, and several programs had not recorded any program data as of January 2007. While most of these program-data issues were resolved in later iterations of the Measure Y database, staff at a number of programs acknowledged that they did not enter program data in the database until the end of their contract quarter, thereby making the data unusable for day-to-day program management and monitoring by DHS or the program managers themselves. Discussions with program staff indicated that city administrators do not regularly monitor program intake statistics and participation rates more frequently than quarterly. DHS organizes regular meetings that bring funded programs together for networking and training and has secured separate foundation funding to support these meetings. However, we did not observe a widespread increase in col-

laboration and synergy among the funded programs or between the programs and their public partners. On the other hand, there have been some examples of successful collaboration, and these are documented in Chapter Three of this report.

The City Administrator’s Office and DHS engage in dialogue with the other public partners funded through Measure Y—OPD and the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)—through established channels and meetings. OPD also makes monthly reports to the Measure Y Oversight Committee at its regular meetings. Aside from these meetings, we did not see much evidence that the city actively engages its funded public partners about the implementation of their Measure Y program activities or coordinates Measure Y activities across these agencies. This is understandable, because DHS and OPD administer distinctly different funding streams within Measure Y. However, such lack of active coordination fails to fully support the integration of funds and activities toward the single citywide objective that Measure Y is intended to foster.

## Recommendations

We offer some recommendations for improving the Measure Y programs and the city’s oversight of them, based on our findings and analyses.

### Overall Recommendations

- The city should consider *increasing its day-to-day oversight* of Measure Y–funded activities and programs to ensure that individual programs have maximum impact and that programs and public agencies increase their collaboration and the coordination of their services.
- The city and its partner agencies should be *more forthcoming, deliberate, and strategic in their communications with the general public*, to increase the initiative’s reach, leverage, and impact.
- The city should expand its efforts to *host periodic seminars, conferences, or roundtable events* to promote collaboration and networking among funded agencies and programs.

### Recommendations for Community Policing

- The city should *actively manage police workforce levels* by formally assessing its police personnel experience to develop and implement evidence-based lessons for building and maintaining the workforce.
- The city should *deliver on the mandate of providing one PSO per beat*.
- OPD should *stabilize PSO assignments* by creating a way to limit transfers and make them more transparent, and to smooth the transitions when they occur.
- The city should *foster broader community participation* by fully staffing the PSO workforce, limiting PSO transitions, and incorporating community input and greater transparency in the PSO deployment process; developing a process to make the Community Policing Advisory Board (CPAB) reflect more of the desires of the communities it represents and limiting the time members can serve; and finding safe places for community residents to meet.



- OPD should *enhance and institutionalize problem-solving training and resources* by such means as developing a community-policing guidebook and creating a community-policing resource website.
- OPD and the Neighborhood Services Division should consider working together to *integrate and utilize problem-solving databases* to catalogue problems, document progress, and summarize outcomes, potentially featuring the database on a community-policing website.
- OPD should *promote coordination among police units* by strategically leveraging all its (and the community's) resources to develop creative ways to facilitate collaboration and information exchange among OPD's units.
- OPD should *leverage funding for equipment* and secure the resources necessary to equip the PSOs.

### **Recommendations for Violence-Prevention Programs**

- Programs should *use graduates of violence-prevention programs* as peer mentors where possible.
- The city should *use the Measure Y database more proactively* to monitor program activity, encourage program collaboration, and provide guidance for program recruitment, retention, and service provision.
- The city should *encourage programs to use the Measure Y database* to actively manage their caseloads and monitor their own program performance and participation patterns.
- The city and programs should *promote Measure Y citywide* by encouraging more-active engagement with community members (individual residents, businesses, and community organizations).
- The city should *continue to leverage other funds and resources*—including financial resources, volunteer activity, and citizen awareness—to maximize the impact of Measure Y on the community.