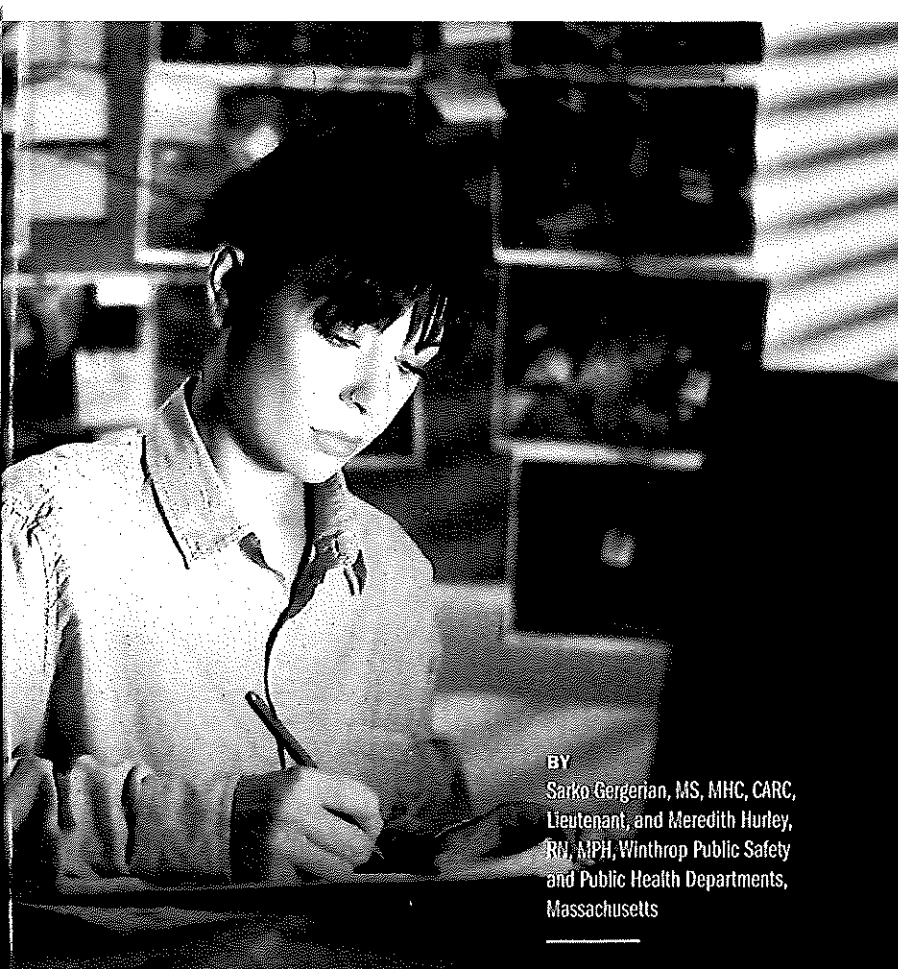


A RECOVERY-ORIENTED MODEL FOR COMMUNITY POLICING

Community and Law
Enforcement-Assisted
Recovery



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AT THE WINTHROP POLICE DEPARTMENT IN WINTHROP, MASSACHUSETTS, OFFICERS WORK A SCHEDULE OF FOUR DAYS ON AND FOUR DAYS OFF.

Shifts are 10 hours long, and the jurisdiction's patrol officers have learned to review dispatch logs and incident reports prior to the start of their shifts in order to be up to date with the narrative of the community. In 2014, agency personnel realized these logs and reports were amazing sources of valuable information in narrative format about community needs, and, often, personal or community-wide challenges of one type or another. Department leaders began thinking about possible uses for this important information other than traditional policing. For example, patrol officers in Winthrop, as in many communities, field a high number of calls involving community members affected by mental health (MH) issues or substance use disorders (SUDs). Rather than merely continuing to respond to these frequent calls, closing them out, and responding again and again, the department's leadership recognized an

opportunity to guide community members to assistance and resources. Law enforcement has a monumental opportunity in this data set to target police action from a guardian perspective, transforming policing into a restorative process. This led to a complete shift in the officers' mindset and set the stage for patrol officers to begin flagging what came to be known as "matters" on which to conduct follow-up and outreach. These matters were easy to identify and included calls for service about MH and SUDs. The dispatch logs and police incident reports have information about the type of call, the person who made the call, and where the incident occurred. This type of information is also available for calls related to well-being checks, mental health crises, domestic violence, and other related calls for service.

The newly identified moral imperative hidden in the police data caused a subtle but massive shift to the routine way of doing things. The department was leaving the service loop open by failing to use the data generated by the initial

calls for service to connect the people involved to appropriate services. There was more work that needed to be done on each call for service—the service loop had to be closed by finding the people involved and connecting them to appropriate help.

Some people at the department were skeptical that the new approach of conducting follow-up outreach and connecting community members with resources would work. They could not fathom people would agree to speak with a uniformed patrol officer about their vulnerabilities and challenges, some of which were connected to criminalized and stigmatized actions (i.e., substance use). Ultimately, Winthrop Police Chief Terence Delehanty agreed to give this new approach a try, which set the stage for a powerful moment in Winthrop policing history in the community.

One officer with a passion for community engagement took the lead in testing out the new approach. After receiving approval to try using police data to target police outreach to people identified

“Officers with the right mindset and passion to help can build relationships with community members.”

as persons of concern in flagged matters for MH and SUDs, the agency realized how valuable the opportunity truly was. It was valuable because it allowed the officer to go back to the person of concern and have a conversation. It allowed the officer to not only slow down and focus on identifying people in need of services, but also to connect them to those services. The officer no longer had to clear a call as fast as possible to take the next emergency call for service.

The patrol officer who grasped the opportunity began reviewing the dispatch logs and police incidents in earnest to get a read on the narrative of the community and flag all matters for follow up that indicated the presence of an MH need or SUD. The goal was to find and reach out to people before they needed emergency assistance again and engage with them about what they needed to be well. In the first year of

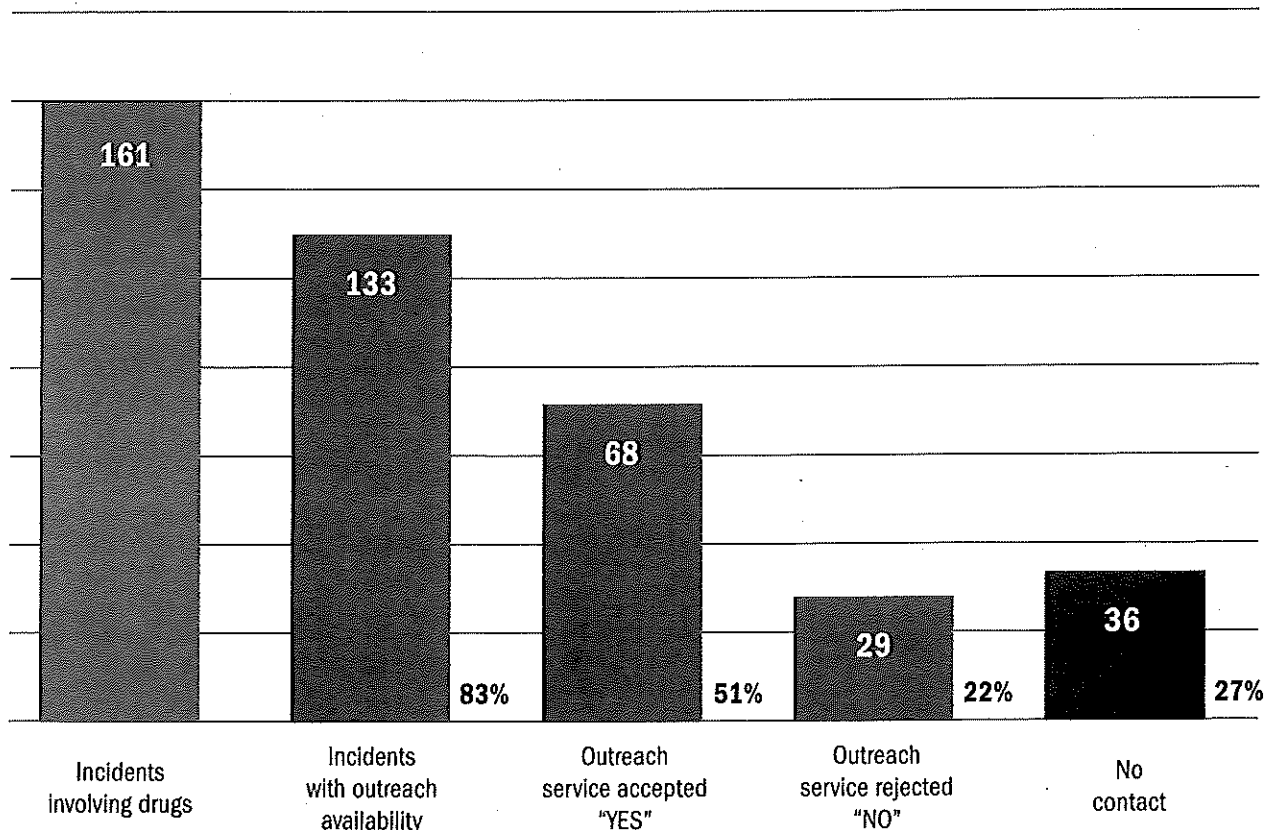
this initiative, many matters were handled by the public health department instead of the courts (see Figure 1).

Despite the initial skepticism of some at the agency, it quickly became apparent that if officers with the right mindset and passion to help can build relationships with community members and develop trust, people will feel comfortable opening up to them.

A SOLUTION TO A GOOD PROBLEM

By 2015, Chief Delehanty was presented with a “good” problem. Community members were not only willing to speak with an officer about their challenges, there were so many individuals who were confiding in the outreach officer about their MH- and SUD-related challenges that it became clear the outreach would require full-time focus.

FIGURE 1: DRUG INCIDENT AND OUTREACH TOTALS



Data collected from W.P.D call log & outreach team data 04/29/2016

“A recovery orientation has a powerful impact... and such a perspective can be a powerful antidote to cynicism.”

The need for a solid partnership with the public health department became evident, as well.

While these changes were taking place within the police department, the director of the Winthrop Public Health Department hired two people with lived experience to assist in determining how to help community members who were living with SUDs. In 2014, the Winthrop Departments of Public Safety and Public Health connected to begin practicing recovery-oriented community policing, which marked the beginning of a new community-wide approach.

The public health department, like the police department, wanted to search for, find, and help people who need assistance. The unified mission became to protect and serve by keeping people out of coffins and cages. This collaboration led to the development of the Winthrop Community and Law Enforcement Assisted Recovery (C.L.E.A.R.) Team. At this point, Chief Delehanty realized the department needed to develop a police policy, only

to learn how novel this program was when the agency was unable to find sample or model policies that spoke of multidisciplinary response teams across police and health departments. The newly formed C.L.E.A.R. Team realized they had an opportunity to be leaders in the field, and the Winthrop Police Department created the Recovery Team Deployment Policy. Like many police departments across the United States, Winthrop Police Department already deployed naloxone to every officer, and a policy was in place with the express goal of keeping people alive with the emergency response. Similarly, the Recovery Team Deployment Policy closed the service loop by going back to the person struggling with mental health and substance use challenges. The department shared its innovative policy with the IACP in 2015 to ensure other agencies could benefit from its work.

A recovery orientation has a powerful impact on the mindset and hearts of helpers, and such a perspective can be a powerful antidote to cynicism. It helps keep hope alive. When one interacts with people during their most difficult times continuously over long periods of time like patrol officers do, it is easy for a person to develop a narrowed perspective. The safeguard for this inevitability is the connection with those in need.

Building the C.L.E.A.R. Team

When the department realized that patrol officers would be able to warmly hand off, after verbal consent, matters to people with lived experience in the Public Health Department, the next step was to identify training to sustain this new mindset with the proper evidence-supported material. This specialized course work, these best practices, and the supervision

recommendations were found in the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services in the Massachusetts Certified Addiction Recovery Coach training, supervision, and certification pathway.

The lead officer at Winthrop Police Department also attended a Recovery Coach Academy. It was at this training where a second “ah ha” moment occurred. The patrol officer was the only police officer in the room of 30 people, 29 of whom were in recovery from substance use disorders. After identifying himself as a law enforcement professional and an ally to the group, there was a powerful moment where the energy of two groups, who have historically been antagonistic toward one another, united instead of collided and moved toward the same mission. Over the course of the next few years, the officer took all of the required courses and was certified as an addictions recovery coach.

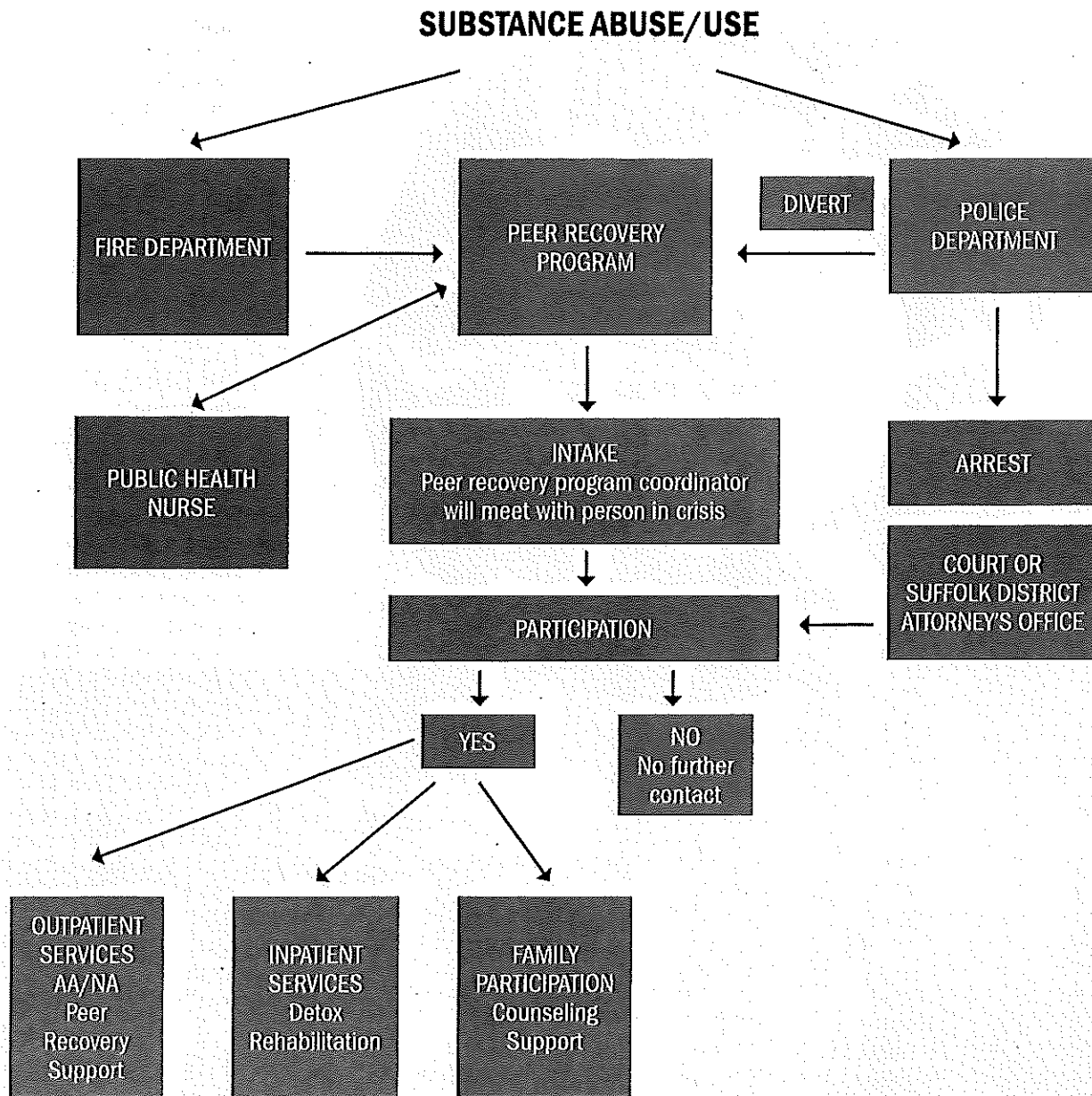
Over the course of the next seven years, the lead officer rose through the ranks to lieutenant and has grown the C.L.E.A.R. Team extensively. The lieutenant's office is embedded in the public health department right next to the director of public health. Additional patrol officers are trained in the methodology each year. The team has grown to include a certified recovery coach who leads with their lived experience and assists with meeting people exactly where they are at with the goal of identifying what they want to do to move forward along the stages of change. The team also includes a licensed mental health professional who is supervised by Boston Medical Center through a memorandum of understanding. The mental health professional provides people with clinically oriented support services.

A resource navigator and senior resource navigator supervisor have also been added. Many people have no idea what resources are available—nor do they know how to apply for support. Resource navigators help connect people to the services and aid they are eligible for in the Town of Winthrop and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In 2022, the team was enhanced by the presence of a Police Assisted Addiction Recovery Initiative (PAARI) Recovery-Corp

Logo created by Chip McHugh.



FIGURE 2: RECOVERY RESOURCE PIPELINE



volunteer, and recently, a domestic violence advocate/case worker was added to the team. The entire group is assisted by a program manager who answers directly to the director of public health.

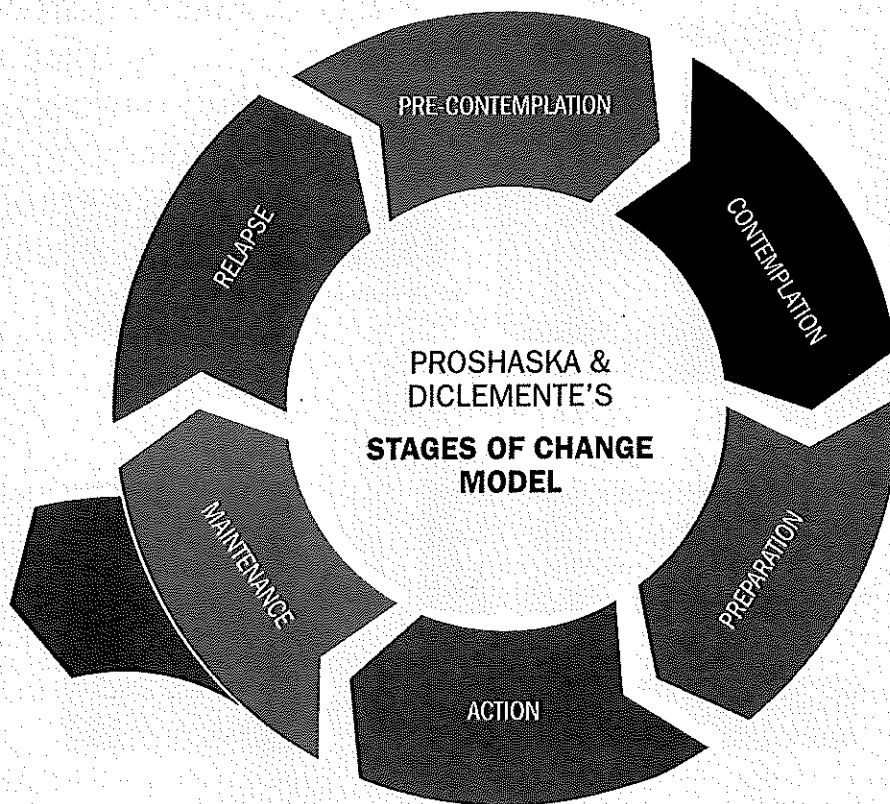
Street Coaches

The main pipeline of work for the team is still the police data captured

by patrol officers. As the program evolved, Winthrop Police Department discovered another professional development path for law enforcement professionals that helps officers to become street coaches. The street coach sees every community member as a member of one team. Players on a team don't all play the same position—they each have different knowledge, skills, and abilities that must be

“The unified mission became to protect and serve by keeping people out of coffins and cages.”

FIGURE 3: STAGES OF CHANGE



identified and celebrated to bring out the best in them for the sake of the entire team. To a coach, people are resources. Resources have value and must be protected. Street coaches rely on the strength of their relationships with community members to inspire movement along the Stages of Change, as outlined in the Trans-theoretical Model by researchers James O. Prochaska and Carlo DiClemente, toward wellness and recovery.

In Winthrop, any officer aspiring to become a street coach is required to complete all the course work outlined in the Certified Addiction Recovery Coach Application. The courses include the Recovery Coach Academy, Motivational Interviewing, Addiction 101, and many more. Street coach applicants are also required to complete 500 hours of supervised work. This includes meeting with a

recovery coach supervisor (a person with lived experience overcoming SUDs) to discuss what did and did not work in terms of building trust with identified persons of concern. Conversations of this type—ones that bring together police and people with lived experience overcoming and managing addiction—are extremely important. The officers who aspire to be street coaches must feel safe to step out from the shadows to do things differently. They should be encouraged to continue their education in such areas as psychology, social work, counseling, philosophy, religion, coaching, and more at the highest levels. These development tracks should be incentivized in the way enforcement is currently incentivized. Agency culture should encourage officers to use police data to find and connect with people, driving home the message that the police and criminal justice system do

not want people to die or get arrested. These street coach officers can become the nexus point of real-time information from the community to those partners skilled at assisting with mental health, problematic drug use, overdose, domestic violence, food scarcity, and housing challenges. The only way to expand the police tool set is by broadening perspective and shifting the mindset from solely warrior to warrior and guardian.

CULTURAL AND PROCEDURAL TRANSFORMATION

One of the ways the Winthrop Police Department helped move the police department's culture toward embracing such a cutting-edge concept was to embrace the IACP One Mind pledge very early on. The agency adjusted the requirements and trained over 90 percent of the department in Crisis Intervention Training and Mental Health First Aid.

In addition, the police department partnered with Boston Medical Center not only to supervise the team's licensed mental health professional, as previously mentioned, but also to have a pathway to their robust medical services.

The outreach officer began going to the two jails that hold residents who get sent to corrections, while the certified recovery coach built relationships with the courts in the community, two of which have specialty courts such as a drug court and mental health court. The Winthrop Police Department recognized that all people are worth searching for, connecting with, and helping, wherever they may be. They identified the teams of helpers and resource providers in neighboring communities, and systems have been put in place to share information about community members who have

emergencies in another community. The safety net has become large and robust because a department dared to imagine a new future where everyone is looking to find and help one another.

Police can go back to the location of an emergency call for service to investigate quality-of-life issues and social determinants of health and wellness. Agencies can identify empathetic officers who want to work with public health to prevent arrest and death and can extend training and supervision to broaden the knowledge, skills, and abilities of officers so they can initiate coaching on the streets. Communities can create robust multidisciplinary teams of helpers in public health departments who are close in proximity to one another while they wrap around and help those in need of services. In closing the service loop, a police department will discover the truth behind what is driving harm in their community and then respond appropriately. Continuing education can prime police officers who are high

in empathy to see people as future assets and resources. This will set the stage for communities to begin viewing the police as allies. This is the circle concept from restorative justice in action on the street initiated by officers. It allows for the reciprocal flow of energy from the community to the police department and back to the community. The integration of a community- and law enforcement-assisted recovery-oriented community policing methodology as outlined in this article will move public safety and public health closer together as law enforcement strives for effective and compassionate policing in the 21st century. Approaches and partnerships such as those developed in Winthrop can guide the transformation of policing into a restorative process. ♡

IACP RESOURCES

- Sobering Centers: Implementation Guide

theIACP.org

- Changing the Goal to Relationship Building: How to Bring Positive Change to Public Safety
- Building a Multijurisdictional Deflection Program: Rhode Island's HOPE Initiative

policechiefmagazine.org

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