

Colin Murphy  
murcoil@gmail.com  
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## **The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy: A Program Analysis**

### **Executive Summary**

The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) began in five Chicago police districts in 1993 and became a citywide program in 1995. The program tied routine police patrol work to individual beats, where officers could become increasingly familiar with neighborhood-specific issues. Central to the strategy is the beat community meeting, where community members and police on their beat could exchange information, gain mutual trust, and open lines of communication. As a backdrop, crime in Chicago and other big cities has been in a sustained fall since the early 1990s.

***Operational and Budgetary Context*** CAPS is administered by the CAPS Implementation Office, an all-civilian office within the Police Department. Since 2000 the office has had its Corporate Fund appropriation separate from the main Police Department. The office's appropriation and staffing was highest in 2000 and has gradually dropped since then, with a significant drop in the 2009 appropriation and staffing due to citywide financial pressures.

***Performance Measures*** The office's most consistent performance measures since its outset have been beat meeting attendance and participation in a court advocacy program. Annual beat meeting attendance peaked in 2002 and has plateaued at around 53,000 since then. The program recently shifted focus to a new volunteer-based strategy, but there is little performance data on this aspect of the program. Meeting attendance seems to move in tandem with changes in the violent crime rate, and there is little apparent connection between CAPS spending and the level of participation. Going forward, the program must work with significantly tightened resources.

### **The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy: A Program Analysis**

The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) is the city's community policing program. It was launched in 1993 as an experimental pilot program in five of Chicago's 25 police districts, and expanded to the current citywide program in 1995. (Skogan and Steiner, 2004) The program is officially described as "as a way to bring the police, community residents and institutional stakeholders and other City departments and agencies together to identify and solve neighborhood crime and disorder problems." (Chicago 2009 Budget) The program was a central component of a reorientation of the police department's structure, which assigned patrol officers to specific neighborhoods where, over time, they would become increasingly familiar with the people, issues, and problems specific to their pieces of turf. These patrols would be supplemented by floating units that could respond to low-priority or overflow calls within the beats. Integral to the program was the idea of improved community relations, both through increasing personal familiarity between police and the residents of the neighborhoods they patrolled daily, and through a campaign of awareness raising and formal exchange of information between police and community. The program's primary geographical unit is the beat, and the locus of communication is the regular beat meeting, open to the public and attended by the beat's regular patrol officers. These meetings are coordinated by a team of civilian community organizers and support staff, who also work on district-level initiatives and handle citywide publicity for the CAPS program. (Greene, 2007)

The tenure of the CAPS program has intersected with a long period of decline in crime rates in Chicago. Since several other large cities experienced a similar decline during the same period and it was also a time of relative prosperity and urban renaissance, this decline certainly

can't be attributed solely to CAPS, and social scientists have reached little consensus on the drivers for this generational change. Researchers have found that levels of satisfaction with the police have also risen during this time, as has the proportion of people from across the city who feel that things are improving and that police are working with them and on their behalf to solve crime problems in their neighborhoods. Since these are central goals of CAPS, the program has been seen as having some level of success. (Greene, 2007; Skogan & Steiner, 2004)

This paper will examine the operational and budgetary context of the CAPS program, look at the evolution of its performance measures over time, and attempt to assess its effectiveness at accomplishing its central goals. Finally, it will consider the program's prospects for continued accomplishment of these goals in the face of the city's severely constrained revenue picture in 2009 and beyond.

### **Operational and Budgetary Context**

The CAPS program is administered by the Department of Police CAPS Implementation Office. In the CPD organization, this all-civilian office sits within the Office of the First Deputy Superintendent, the administrative site of many of the department's prevention and community-relations programs. Since 2000, the office has had a separate program appropriation within the Department of Police in the Corporate Fund.

CAPS operations first show up by name in the 1994 program budget, which counted 1993 attendance at and community awareness of CAPS meetings among the Police Department's annual performance measures. Other relevant performance measures at this point and through the turn of the millennium concerned information gathering and profiling of the department's 279 beats and increasing contacts between beat officers and the Bureau of Investigative Services (de-

teatives and follow-up investigations), pointing to an overall effort to reorient the department to a beat-based, decentralized structure for addressing crime and disorder. At that point, however, there was no trace of CAPS in the appropriation itself—at least not in the form that it took in later years, with a staff based on civilian community organizers and outreach coordinators. This suggests that the workload was almost entirely on sworn personnel and normal departmental support staff in the program's early years. The CAPS Implementation Office first appears in the 1999 budget; it is within the main Department of Police appropriation, so only personnel and salaries are broken out from the department's other spending. The 1999 budget appropriated \$2.115 mil. (including adjustments) for 45 civilian positions, of which, by job classification, 19 were supervisory or administrative and the remainder dedicated to direct community contact or coordination.

The first full and separate appropriation for the CAPS Implementation Office was in 2000. The office's headcount more than doubled to 96 (73 direct contact positions) for a final personnel expenditure of \$5.35 mil. out of total spending of \$9.29 mil. This was the office's single largest budget, to some degree reflecting higher startup costs in spending on material and supplies, but also the highest staff levels in the office's short history. After 2000, staffing soon dropped to levels in the 70s, with 17–20 in supervisory and administrative support positions and the remaining 50–60 in community organizing and coordination roles. In 2008 the office had 18 in the back office (including 3 supervisors earning an average of \$120,500 annually) and 54 on the street.

The relatively incremental change that had characterized the annual appropriations process up until then came to an end with the widespread financial collapse of 2008. For the 2009

budget, the CAPS Implementation Office appropriation was cut from \$6,616,777 in 2008 to \$5,145,262, a decrease of some \$1.47 million, or 22% from 2008; revenues were entirely from within the corporate fund. More than half of the cut was in personnel services, with that amount almost entirely from the elimination of \$600,000 budgeted for overtime. In addition, 18 positions were eliminated: 12 direct-contact positions and 6 support staff (none were supervisors). Of the remainder of the cut, the bulk comes from savings on transfers to delegate agencies and large cuts in technical meeting costs and equipment rental. Beyond the facts of the economy, these decreases reflect the CAPS office's plan in 2009 to shift focus from organization of new block clubs to training and development of existing ones. Since much of this training will be, in theory, led by volunteers in the community, it will involve less coordination and assistance from the CAPS office and thus require fewer staff resources. The Transfers to Delegate Agencies line item, as far as can be discerned, reflects an intradepartmental transfer for the salary and overtime of sworn officers attending CAPS meetings (meeting guidelines suggest that all shifts should be represented at beat meetings, and off-shift officers are paid overtime for their participation [Greene, 2007]). Under the program summary, this amount is attributed to the Office of the Superintendent. Between 2008 and 2009 this item falls by more than half, from \$807,860 to \$400,000. So patrol officers will be present at fewer CAPS meetings in 2009, and more meetings will rely on volunteer rather than city staff coordination. More broadly, this reflects the police department's making do with a reduced pipeline of new officers, and concentrating resources on core patrol and investigative functions.

### ***Performance Measures***

The operational focus of CAPS has evolved since its inception in 1993, from a focus on

beat meetings to a more recent focus on block clubs and training of volunteers. During its first decade, the program focused on beat-level meetings as the key operational unit. Since its beginning, the program's performance measures within the police department (i.e., in department reports and publications, rather than in the budget program book) count the number of meetings and their attendance as the primary measure of success. As such, performance-improvement efforts in these years often focused on increasing the number of meetings and turnout and participation at the meetings, and not necessarily on their outcomes or effectiveness. The number of beat meetings increased each year from 324 in 1993 to a high of 3,163 in 2002, and total attendees generally increased over the same period, peaking in 2002 at more than 70,000. Over the next five years, the total number of meetings leveled out around 2,950, while annual attendance steadily fell to about 53,000 in 2007, the last year for which full data is available. In terms of attendance per meeting, the high point was 24 in 1997 and 1998, with a decline to 18 over the last three years.

A second area of performance analysis is court advocacy participation, in which community members attend the hearings of defendants whose alleged crimes were committed in CAPS-organized beats. The idea here is twofold: first, court advocates can report back to the community on the outcome of cases from their neighborhoods, in order to track cases and defendants through the justice system; second, the volunteers demonstrate the community's interest in the outcome of cases from their districts, which is thought to have some impact on the outcome of cases. Volunteers and cases tracked under this measure generally increased to a high of nearly 5,000 cases and more than 9,500 volunteers in 2005; the next year, this measure dropped off precipitously, to less than a tenth of its highs, and then bounced back at a slightly diminished level

in 2007.

The final area of performance analysis, which has been inconsistently applied from year to year, is participation at district advisory subcommittee meetings. District advisory committees (DACs) are district-wide, rather than beat-wide, committees of residents and other community stakeholders that (in theory) work with district commanders to guide the setting of district-wide priorities. DACs are the administrative units for some public relations monies from the CAPS Implementation Office (up to \$12,500 per DAC annually), and are also the organizing point for court advocacy activities, through their Court Advocacy Subcommittees. Beyond those functions, however, the DACs' roles are ill defined and participation and effectiveness vary greatly from district to district. (Skogan & Steiner, 2004) Participation in DAC subcommittees is inconsistently measured (4 of 12 years are missing) so it is difficult to discern a trend or relationship with other measures, but for the years it is described, annual participation is fairly steady between 18,000 and 23,000. Since 2004 it has dropped slightly each year.

In 2005 and 2006, CAPS began to shift focus away from the beat meetings that had been central to its operations for the program's first decade, and initiated the Community Policing Leadership Institute, a training program that aims to increase community participation in crime reduction and "problem solving," the community policing term for addressing general disorder (public drinking, loitering) as well as issues like graffiti, dumping in vacant lots, or malfunctioning streetlights. Starting with fiscal year 2006, the performance measures in the budget's program book shifted from counts centered on beat meeting participation and became a larger array of training-centered measures. Police Department reports continued to publish the beat meeting and court advocacy figures, however. The result is that the performance measures published with

the program budget show a discontinuity between 2005 and 2006 when no performance can be assessed. Of note, it is in 2006, the first year of the new performance regime, that we see the more than 90% dropoff in court advocacy participation. It is also notable that this shift to new performance measures happened after several years of stagnation in beat meeting participation figures. Meanwhile, in Police Department annual reports, CAPS participation moved from a featured position in the front of the book at the program's inception to a statistical annex by 2000.

### **Program Analysis**

Since its outset, CAPS has been touted as a way for the Police Department to address crime and disorder more effectively, as well as the related job of improving the relationship between the police and the communities they work in. So what is the relationship, if any, between the work done by CAPS and measures of crime and disorder?

Crime in Chicago has been steadily dropping since the early 1990s, both in raw numerical terms and per capita (population has more or less held steady around 2,850,000 in that period, so per capita figures don't change much from year to year). While the rate has varied, the counts of both violent crime and property crime dropped each year since the CAPS program's inception, bringing total index crimes from more than 263,000 in 1996 to 162,000 in 2007, the last full year for which figures are available. (See Figure A) With the downturn in the economy, that trend may be reversing, however. By October 2008, total index crime sat at nearly 142,000, up 3.5% over the same period in 2007. (CPD Crime Summary, Nov. 2008) If that rate of increase holds, total index crimes will reach about 167,800 by the end of 2008.

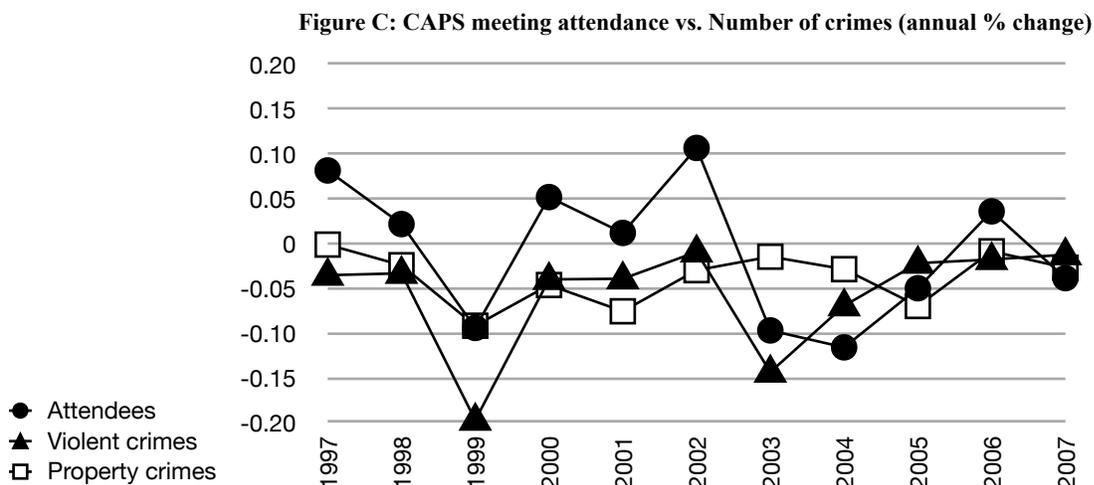
**Figure A: Crime Indicators**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008 YTD	2008 proj
Violent crimes	67,498	65,112	62,947	50,522	48,499	46,593	46,157	39,528	36,780	35,974	35,335	34,895	30,460	36,012
Property crimes	195,618	195,392	190,661	173,159	165,138	152,641	148,098	145,929	141,754	131,865	130,722	127,191	111,227	131,770
Total Index Crimes	263,116	260,504	253,608	223,681	213,637	199,234	194,255	185,457	178,534	167,839	166,057	162,086	141,687	167,782
Clearances	63,162	60,389	58,273	48,296	45,596	41,892	40,065	35,601	34,327	32,844	31,381	30,341	n/a	n/a
Clearance rate	24.0%	23.2%	23.0%	21.6%	21.3%	21.0%	20.6%	19.2%	19.2%	19.6%	18.9%	18.7%	n/a	n/a

Comparing crime to attendance at beat meetings (Figure B), we can see some clear correspondences. While crime has been dropping steadily, meeting attendance increased for a time and then plateaued. But looking at the marginal change in these figures, we can see a parallel between the change in violent crime and the change in meeting attendance: when violent crimes fall quickly, meeting attendance also falls, or grows more slowly. When the rate of decrease of violent crime slows, meeting attendance increases or falls more slowly. (These calculations are based on the raw numerical figures, not per capita rates.) As Figure C shows, the marginal change in violent crime and in beat meeting attendance move roughly in tandem. Property crime displays some of the same behavior but with a lesser degree of correspondence.

**Figure B: Indicators of CAPS participation**

Beat Community Meeting Attendance	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total Meetings	2,598	2,699	2,725	2,886	2,972	3,039	3,163	2,984	2,891	2,968	2,980	2,905
Attendees	59,370	64,221	65,620	59,433	62,520	63,264	70,024	63,228	55,895	53,104	55,016	52,892
Attendees % chg		8.17%	2.18%	-9.43%	5.19%	1.19%	10.69%	-9.71%	-11.60%	-4.99%	3.60%	-3.86%
Avg Attendees/Mtg	22.9	23.8	24.1	20.6	21.0	20.8	22.1	21.2	19.3	17.9	18.5	18.2
Court Advocacy Cases and Volunteers												
Total Cases	1,771	3,004	3,398	3,349	3,266	2,496	2,545	3,224	4,580	4,996	444	4,697
Total Volunteers	4,232	5,158	4,750	3,946	4,998	7,030	5,570	9,111	8,635	9,504	658	6,523



If this past relationship is any guide, the fact that we are seeing a sharp increase in all crimes in 2008 means that beat meeting attendance should also be taking off this year—even as the implementation office undergoes a 22% budget cut, loses almost a quarter of its community organizers, and has its meeting resources drastically slashed.

This raises another question: based on the historical data, what can we say about the CAPS funding level and the number of residents coming out to meetings? Some very coarse-grained ways to look at this are by the total cost per attendee and per meeting (total appropriation divided by total attendees and by total meetings, respectively) and by personnel costs per attendee and per meeting (personnel appropriation divided by attendees and by number of meetings, respectively; this would include CAPS staff only, not sworn personnel). Excluding 1999, which had inordinately low personnel costs and no clear accounting for other costs, cost per attendee has ranged between \$117 (in 2002, the year with the greatest attendance) and \$149 (2000, the year with the largest appropriation). Total cost per meeting ranges between \$2,233 (2005) and \$3,126 (2000). Looking at personnel costs, the per-attendee figure is between \$72 (2003) and \$90 (2000); personnel cost per meeting, between \$1,355 (2005) and \$1,887 (2000).

Assuming that 2009 sees the same attendance rates and number of meetings as 2007,

CAPS will have to run a significantly leaner operation, with total cost per attendee of \$97 and per meeting of \$1,771; personnel costs will be limited to \$65 per attendee and \$1,177 per meeting. Again, these calculations are based on the assumption that 2009 attendance is the same as 2007, but if prior years are any indication, the increasing crime rate means that meeting attendance is likely to increase, which will lead to resources being stretched even tighter. Despite the sparseness of these forecasts, it's worth noting that in the odd startup year of 1999, CAPS ran nearly the same amount of meetings as in subsequent years, and did so with personnel costs of \$36 per attendee and \$733 per meeting—so it is possible to have robust participation at much lower funding levels than the office has grown accustomed to. It's conceivable that the department's budgeters noted the same relationship between crime rate and attendance and have simply shifted resources away from unnecessary marketing and publicity and more heavily into meeting coordination. However, the large cuts in meeting technical costs and equipment rental make this seem less likely.

### **Conclusion**

The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy is moving into a challenging period. Throughout most of its history, crime has been dropping in Chicago and other big cities for a variety of demographic, economic, and social reasons that social scientists are still struggling to explain. The program has produced a setting for dialogue between police and community that has likely contributed to increasing levels of satisfaction with the police department, even in traditionally high-crime neighborhoods. However, a honeymoon period may be coming to an end, as crime rates begin to increase again at the same time that the economic downturn strains revenues and services in all levels of government. For the next several years at least, the program will have to

make do with significantly trimmed staff and resources. It is an open question where, or whether, this slack in community policing will be taken up elsewhere in the department, at a time when it is struggling with a de facto freeze in the pipeline of recruits, and serious crime is likely to continue to rise.

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