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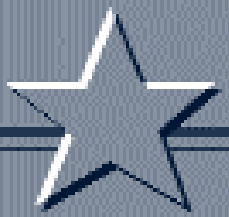
Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Series
No. 6

Disorderly Youth in Public Places

by
Michael S. Scott



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About the Guide Series

The *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* summarize knowledge about how police can reduce the harm caused by specific crime and disorder problems. They are guides to prevention and to improving the overall response to incidents, not to investigating offenses or handling specific incidents. The guides are written for police–of whatever rank or assignment–who must address the specific problem the guides cover. The guides will be most useful to officers who

- Understand basic problem-oriented policing principles and methods. The guides are not primers in problem-oriented policing. They deal only briefly with the initial decision to focus on a particular problem, methods to analyze the problem, and means to assess the results of a problem-oriented policing project. They are designed to help police decide how best to analyze and address a problem they have already identified. (An assessment guide has been produced as a companion to this series and the COPS Office has also published an introductory guide to problem analysis. For those who want to learn more about the principles and methods of problem-oriented policing, the assessment and analysis guides, along with other recommended readings, are listed at the back of this guide.)

- Can look at a problem in depth. Depending on the complexity of the problem, you should be prepared to spend perhaps weeks, or even months, analyzing and responding to it. Carefully studying a problem before responding helps you design the right strategy, one that is most likely to work in your community. You should not blindly adopt the responses others have used; you must decide whether they are appropriate to your local situation. What is true in one place may not be true elsewhere; what works in one place may not work everywhere.

- Are willing to consider new ways of doing police business. The guides describe responses that other police departments have used or that researchers have tested. While not all of these responses will be appropriate to your particular problem, they should help give a broader view of the kinds of things you could do. You may think you cannot implement some of these responses in your jurisdiction, but perhaps you can. In many places, when police have discovered a more effective response, they have succeeded in having laws and policies changed, improving the response to the problem.

- Understand the value and the limits of research knowledge. For some types of problems, a lot of useful research is available to the police; for other problems, little is available. Accordingly, some guides in this series summarize existing research whereas other guides illustrate the need for more research on that particular problem. Regardless, research has not provided definitive answers to all the questions you might have about the problem. The research may help get you started in designing your own responses, but it cannot tell you exactly what to do. This will depend greatly on the particular nature of your local problem. In the interest of keeping the guides readable, not every piece of relevant research has been cited, nor has every point been attributed to its sources. To have done so would have overwhelmed and distracted the reader. The references listed at the end of each guide are those drawn on most heavily; they are not a complete bibliography of research on the subject.

- Are willing to work with other community agencies to find effective solutions to the problem. The police alone cannot implement many of the responses discussed in the guides. They must frequently implement them in partnership with other responsible private and public entities. An effective problem-solver must know how to forge genuine

partnerships with others and be prepared to invest considerable effort in making these partnerships work.

These guides have drawn on research findings and police practices in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia. Even though laws, customs and police practices vary from country to country, it is apparent that the police everywhere experience common problems. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, it is important that police be aware of research and successful practices beyond the borders of their own countries.

The COPS Office and the authors encourage you to provide feedback on this guide and to report on your own agency's experiences dealing with a similar problem. Your agency may have effectively addressed a problem using responses not considered in these guides and your experiences and knowledge could benefit others. This information will be used to update the guides. If you wish to provide feedback and share your experiences it should be sent via e-mail to **cops_pubs@usdoj.gov.**

Acknowledgments

The *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* series is very much a collaborative effort. While each guide has a primary author, other project team members, COPS Office staff and anonymous peer reviewers contributed to each guide by proposing text, recommending research and offering suggestions on matters of format and style.

The principal project team developing the guide series comprised Herman Goldstein, professor emeritus, University of Wisconsin Law School; Ronald V. Clarke, professor of criminal justice, Rutgers University; John E. Eck, associate professor of criminal justice, University of Cincinnati; Michael S. Scott, police consultant, Savannah, Ga.; Rana Sampson, police consultant, San Diego; and Deborah Lamm Weisel, director of police research, North Carolina State University.

Karin Schmerler, Rita Varano and Nancy Leach oversaw the project for the COPS Office. Megan Tate Murphy coordinated the peer reviews for the COPS Office. Suzanne Fregly edited the guides. Research for the guides was conducted at the Criminal Justice Library at Rutgers University under the direction of Phyllis Schultze by Gisela Bichler-Robertson, Rob Guerette and Laura Wyckoff.

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The Problem of Disorderly Youth in Public Places

Disorderly youth† in public places constitute one of the most common problems most police agencies must handle. Dealing with youth disorder requires a significant amount of police time, particularly in suburban and rural communities. Disorderly youth are a common source of complaints from urban residents and merchants, as well as from shoppers and merchants in malls and business districts.[1] Dealing with youth disorder appropriately requires considerable police skill and sensitivity. Officers must balance youths' rights against complainants' rights, distinguish legitimate from illegitimate complaints, at times be firm and at times be flexible with young people, and remain sensitive to how the public will perceive police actions.

† For the purposes of this guide, the terms *youth, young people* and *teenagers* are used interchangeably, with the understanding that some individuals discussed may not fall within the age ranges typically associated with these terms.

Related Problems

Disorderly youth in public places are only one of many disorder and youth-related problems police must handle. This guide addresses the relatively minor, but often highly annoying, misconduct associated with youth congregating in public. This guide does not address the more serious misconduct associated with youth gang violence and intimidation. Additional disorder and youth-related problems include:

- assaults in and around bars,
- graffiti,
- intimidation by youth gangs,
- large crowd management,
- loud car stereos,
- open-air drug dealing,
- panhandling,
- rave parties,

- reckless bicycle riding and skateboarding,
- shoplifting,
- street cruising,
- truancy,
- underage drinking, and
- vandalism.

Factors Contributing to Disorderly Youth in Public Places

Understanding the factors that contribute to your problem will help you frame your own local analysis questions, determine good effectiveness measures, recognize key intervention points, and select appropriate responses.

That young people will congregate in public is both inevitable and socially necessary. Congregating is part of the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood, allowing youth to socialize and bond with their peers, out of their parents' view. Young people's self-identity and self-worth are profoundly shaped by how they believe their peers perceive them, and gathering in public provides opportunities to see, and be seen by, others. Group settings provide a relatively safe context for teenagers to flirt and pair up with one another, supported and protected by their friends.

Kip Kellogg

Congregating in public is an important aspect of youth socialization.

Because youth congregation in public is so ordinary and normal, you must first determine if youths' conduct is actually disorderly and worthy of police attention. You must use sound judgment in deciding how to define the problem. Sometimes you will find that the heart of the problem is complaints that are either exaggerated or motivated by bias, in which case your responses should focus on educating complainants rather than controlling youths' conduct. Whether the conduct is deemed disorderly depends on many factors, including:

- the youths' specific objectionable behavior,
- the youths' age,
- the complainants' tolerance levels,
- the community norms, and
- the specific times and places where the problem occurs.

Communities are often divided over what constitutes acceptable youth conduct. This is especially true in areas undergoing substantial demographic change–for example, an influx of youth where older residents predominated, or an influx of a new ethnic or racial group. Some misconduct, even if accepted by the community, might not be tolerable from a legal standpoint. Conversely, some youth conduct may bother some community members, but may be perfectly legal, perhaps even constitutionally protected. You must balance youths' right to congregate in public against others' right to be free from annoyance, harassment and intimidation. Furthermore, the legal grounds for disrupting youth gatherings in public are typically vague. It is easy to get frustrated by demands to control disorderly youth where no clear legal authority to do so exists.

Young people often do not fully appreciate their conduct's effect on others. What they believe to be normal and legitimate behavior can sometimes make others apprehensive

or afraid. Sometimes the mere presence of large youth groups, or their physical appearance (dress, hairstyles, body piercings, and tattoos), is intimidating regardless of their conduct. People often perceive youth groups congregating in public to be gangs and, therefore, dangerous. The elderly are particularly intimidated by large youth groups. In addition, group size may influence individual behavior–teenagers often behave in front of a group of peers in ways they would not if they were alone or in pairs.

Savannah Police Department

The sheer number of youth hanging out, such as around this roller skating rink, can generate public concern.

Among the specific behaviors (some legal and some not) commonly associated with youth disorderly conduct are

- playing music loudly,
- cursing,
- blocking sidewalks and streets,
- playing games (football, soccer, stickball, etc.) in the street or near residences,
- drinking alcohol, smoking and using illegal drugs,
- making offensive remarks to passersby,
- fighting,
- littering,
- applying graffiti,

- vandalizing property, and
- harassing security staff.

Such problem behavior most commonly occurs

- at shopping malls,
- in plazas in business districts,
- at video arcades,
- in public parks,
- on school grounds,
- in apartment-complex common areas,
- at public libraries, and
- at convenience stores and fast-food restaurants.

Savannah Police Department

Fast-food restaurants are popular locations for youth to hang out.

Disorderly youth are of particular concern to merchants because their presence intimidates shoppers, threatening revenues. Shoppers also frequently cite menacing youth as among their primary safety concerns.[2] However, young people themselves are a source of current and future revenue and, if treated poorly by merchants, will likely remember that treatment years later when choosing where to spend their money. Merchants are more likely to tolerate some disorderly

behavior if the young people are also regular customers. You should be alert to these commercial interests.

Youth surveys have identified some common complaints teenagers have about their opportunities to socialize in public, and about how authorities treat them.[3] Their complaints include the following:

- there is a lack of adequate facilities and activities for them,
- the police and other authorities harass and excessively supervise them,
- there is a lack of inexpensive food and entertainment for them,
- there is a lack of adequate public transportation for them,
- they do not always feel safe in public, and
- merchants and others unfairly stereotype them.

Young people typically say they want a place where they can hang out without excessive supervision, where they have some source of food and entertainment, where they have protection from the weather, and where they are safe from attack by rival groups.

Understanding Your Local Problem

The information provided above is only a generalized description of disorderly youth in public places. You must combine the basic facts with a more specific understanding of your local problem. Analyzing the local problem carefully will help you design a more effective response strategy. To help you define the problem, you should speak with as many people affected by it as you can.

Many incidents related to disorderly youth are not recorded in detail either by police or by private security. Most incidents are considered too minor to justify detailed reports. Unfortunately, it is from those details that the most effective responses will emerge. Consequently, you should first determine to what extent incidents are being recorded, and if they are not, create a reporting system that provides enough detail, at least temporarily, to give you a better understanding of the problem.†

† Even a simple form that allows officers to check boxes rather than write extensive narratives is preferable to reporting systems that capture no detail at all.

†† A special note of caution is in order regarding official juvenile records: You should be sure to review applicable legal and policy guidelines or consult legal counsel before examining or sharing information drawn from official juvenile records. In most jurisdictions, access to and use of juvenile records are restricted.

Asking the Right Questions

The following are some critical questions you should ask in analyzing your particular problem of disorderly youth, even if the answers are not always readily available. Your answers to these and other questions will help you choose the most appropriate set of responses later on.††

Complainants

- Who is complaining about the youth? What are the specific complaints?
- What are the complainants' interests (commercial, peace and quiet, freedom from intimidation)?

- Do complaints seem legitimate or exaggerated? (Some complainants exaggerate their reports of the problem to get a quicker or harsher police response than is justified.)
- Is there objective evidence to confirm the complaints (e.g., customers' staying away from businesses, tenants' moving out of apartments, reports of crimes committed by the youth)?
- Are complaints filed with police, private security or other officials? Are complainants reluctant to file official complaints for fear of retaliation?
- Are there different cultural perspectives on the problem? (Different cultures have different expectations regarding adult supervision of youth.)
- How do complainants believe the problem could be better handled?
- What, if anything, have complainants done on their own to try to address the problem?

Youth

- What are the characteristics of the young people causing the problems? How old are they? (There are significant differences between the interests and motivations of 13- to 14-year-olds and those of 20- to 21-year-olds, even though all are generally considered youth.) What race or ethnicity are the youth? Are they students? What gender are they? (Girls typically have greater parental restrictions placed on them, and they sometimes prefer to hang out indoors.)[4]
- Where do the youth live? Near the place they congregate, or far away from it? How do they get there?
- Do some of the young people have serious personal problems (e.g., are they runaways, substance abusers, victims of child abuse, prostitutes, homeless)?
- How do youth perceive the problem?

- Are youth more or less manageable when they congregate in large groups? (Smaller groups may congregate in multiple locations, making them more difficult to monitor.)
- Is there any evidence the disorderly behavior is motivated by bias (racial or otherwise)?

Location/Time Problem Occurs

- Is the location where the youth congregate urban, suburban or rural?
- Is the location public or private property, or a mixture of both?
- Where, specifically, do the youth gather? Near entrances to businesses or other buildings? Near stairways, escalators or other high-traffic areas?
- Are there comfortable places to sit or lean?
- Why do the youth gather where they do? For purely social reasons, or because they want to be near a particular institution (school, business, tavern, or club)? Why do they say they gather there? Do they feel they have been forced away from other locations, or is there something particular about this location that attracts them?
- What accounts for the location's attractiveness? The type of food served? Access to restrooms, telephones, video machines? Seating (e.g., tables and chairs provided for regular patrons, benches at bus stops)? Absence of a manager or other authority?
- What specific factors contribute to disorderliness (e.g., crowding, differing characteristics of youth and complainants, differing uses of public space, absence of authorities)?
- Are youth congregating where they expect to be visible to the public (and the police), or where they do not expect to be seen?

- Does the manager of the place where youth congregate tolerate disorderly behavior more so than seems reasonable? (If so, the manager may be involved in illicit conduct for which the youth offer some protection.)[5]

Measuring Your Effectiveness

Measurement allows you to determine to what degree your efforts have succeeded, and suggests how you might modify your responses if they are not producing the intended results. You should take measures of your problem *before* you implement responses, to determine how serious the problem is, and *after* you implement them, to determine whether they have been effective. You should take all measures in both the target area and the surrounding area. (For more detailed guidance on measuring effectiveness, see the companion guide to this series, *Assessing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide for Police Problem-Solvers.)*

The following are potentially useful measures of the effectiveness of responses to disorderly youth in public places:

- reduced recorded crime and disorder incidents related to youth in public places;
- reduced calls for police service related to youth in public places (increased reports to officials or reduced anonymous complaints may be a positive indicator initially if you determine that complainants have previously been reluctant to come forward);
- reduced numbers of young people congregating at particular locations (if crowd size contributes to the disorderliness);
- reduced numbers of repeat offenders;

- improved perceptions of complainants (merchants, shoppers, residents);
- improved perceptions of elected officials who often receive complaints about juvenile disorder;
- improved perceptions of youth regarding how fairly they are treated;
- improved perceptions of parents regarding their children's conduct and police treatment of their children;
- reduced costs for repairs due to vandalism (if vandalism is part of the problem);
- evidence of displacement of the problem to other locations (where complaints may be higher or lower); and
- evidence of reduced youth disorder-related crimes and complaints in areas not directly targeted by your initiative (otherwise known as a diffusion of benefits).

Responses to the Problem of Disorderly Youth in Public Places

Your analysis of your local problem should give you a better understanding of the factors contributing to it. Once you have analyzed your local problem and established a baseline for measuring effectiveness, you should consider possible responses to address the problem.

The following response strategies provide a foundation of ideas for addressing your particular problem. These strategies are drawn from a variety of research studies and police reports. Several of these strategies may apply to your community's problem. It is critical that you tailor responses to local circumstances, and that you can justify each response based on reliable analysis. In most cases, an effective strategy will involve implementing several different responses. Law enforcement responses alone are seldom effective in reducing or solving the problem. Do not limit yourself to considering what police can do: give careful consideration to who else in your community shares responsibility for the problem and can help police better respond to it. Give special consideration to involving youth themselves in seeking solutions to the problems caused by their gathering in public.†

† See Kenney and Watson (1998) for a description of an effort to get high school students to apply problem-solving skills to address school safety issues.

There are three general approaches to addressing problems of disorderly youth in public places:

- a *pure control* approach that views the youth as offenders whose conduct is to be controlled and prohibited coercively;
- a *developmental* approach that views the youth more neutrally and adopts methods that, in addition to controlling misconduct, seek to improve the youths' general welfare; and

- an *accommodation* approach that balances the youths' needs and desires against the complainants' needs and desires.[6]

Whenever possible, the developmental and accommodation approaches are recommended because they are more likely to be effective, and they reduce mistrust and hostility between youth and authority figures, including police.[7] The general public and the media tend to react negatively to what they perceive as heavy-handed police responses against youth. Parents commonly complain when police resort to arrest as a means of solving youth disorder problems. Some young people may even find the extra efforts of police and others to control their conduct exciting–a game of cat and mouse–making disorderly behavior even more appealing to them.[8]

The following are specific responses that police and others have applied to youth disorder in public. These responses variously incorporate pure control, developmental and accommodation approaches. They are organized into three categories: (1) creating alternative legitimate places and activities for youth, (2) modifying public places to discourage disorderly behavior, and (3) establishing and enforcing rules of conduct for youth.

Creating Alternative Legitimate Places and Activities for Youth

1. Creating new places for youth to congregate, and providing alternative activities. Recognizing that most young people want to hang out with their peers without excessive adult supervision, some police agencies have supported youth clubs, drop-in centers or recreation centers to attract youth who otherwise would be creating public disorder.[9] In England, the Lancashire police arranged for youth to help an architect design a public youth shelter.[10]

Some shopping malls operate centers where youth can hang out without disturbing shoppers.[11] Some police officers have helped to organize alternative constructive activities for young people such as youth clubs or athletic programs, and have given youth an active role in managing these programs.[12, †] If you go this route, you should take care not to become solely responsible for running a new program. You may be better advised just to call attention to the need for youth programs and activities rather than try to establish and run them yourself.

† Police athletic leagues, first started in New York City in 1914, are now an institutionalized means by which the police help provide alternative positive activities for youth. Part of their stated mission is to prevent juvenile delinquency.

2. Providing outreach services to youth. In addition to needing recreation, entertainment and a place to socialize, some young people need health, legal and social services that they do not or cannot obtain through normal channels. Some youth who create public disorder are supported by stable families, but others are not. Some are runaways, substance abusers, victims of child neglect and abuse, homeless, or prostitutes. Police can support initiatives to provide outreach services to youth.[13] These services can be an effective bridge between youth and formal authorities like the police.[14] Outreach workers can help identify particular needs of youth groups and individuals, and broker services and assistance for them. They can also remind youth to behave appropriately in public, without threatening them with enforcement.

3. Employing youth at businesses negatively affected by disorderly behavior. Some merchants have succeeded in reducing the incidence of youth disorder by employing qualified youth to work in establishments near where young people congregate. The employed youth have a greater sense of responsibility for and stake in maintaining order.[15]

4. Ensuring youth have adequate transportation to and from events. Event planners and parents do not always provide adequate transportation for youth, leaving large

numbers of young people unsupervised on the streets before and after events. Special event and youth program managers should be encouraged to factor transportation costs into their financial calculations. Police in Newport News, Va., addressed a problem of disorderly youths' leaving a roller skating rink late at night by ensuring adequate transportation for them at closing time.[16]

Modifying Public Places To Discourage Disorderly Behavior

5. Encouraging youth to gather where they will not disturb others. If youth are congregating near a particular institution (school, business, tavern, or club), try to get that institution to work with you to persuade the youth to move where their behavior will not disturb others. If rival groups are gathering at the same location, try to change the times when the groups gather, or try to get one group to congregate elsewhere. Some officers have had bus stops relocated to prevent conflicts between rival youth groups. A Joliet, Ill., police officer negotiated with a stadium owner to let youth congregate in a section of the stadium parking lot.[17] Many police officers negotiate informal agreements with youth, for example, exchanging a degree of tolerance of rowdy behavior for keeping noise and litter under control.[18]

6. Avoiding locating businesses that attract youth where others will be intimidated by them. This response applies mainly to shopping malls where mall managers can determine the specific location of businesses. Fast-food restaurants and video arcades commonly attract large youth groups. If they are located near mall entrances and exits or along heavily traveled pathways, shoppers are forced to walk past the youth, and the potential for intimidation rises.[19] Without training,

An Effective Strategy in New York City

Police Officer Kevin O'Connor of New York City's Midtown North precinct faced an ongoing problem with disorderly youth for most of the 1991-92 school year. Each day at dismissal, students from both Park West High School on W. 50th Street and Graphic Arts High School on W. 49th Street would flood the blocks in the immediate neighborhood. Large and noisy groups would hang out in the area, and fights would all too often erupt.

O'Connor realized that the schools' procedures contributed to the disorderly youth gatherings–the schools were dismissing their students at almost exactly the same time, onto the same block of W. 50th Street. With energy running high, the crowding of all those teenagers onto one block produced a chaotic atmosphere that was perfect for escalating petty rivalries into full-scale confrontations–always noisy, sometimes violent and inevitably a major problem for those in the area.

O'Connor got in touch with administrators at both schools. The assistant principal of Park High helped O'Connor understand that "the problem is not only school rivalries, but ethnic and neighborhood rivalries. These schools draw students from different neighborhoods." O'Connor then met with the principals from both high schools, and persuaded them to stagger dismissal times and direct departing students in opposite directions. Since most of the students from Graphic Arts lived in Brooklyn, they would be dismissed at 2:30 p.m. and diverted to 49th Street, where they could catch the 8th Avenue trains back home. Students from Park High would be dismissed at 2:55 p.m., and since most lived in Washington Heights, they would be directed to the trains at 50th Street and Broadway.

This simple strategy–modifying the schools' procedures–effectively discouraged the formation of disorderly groups at the end of the school day. O'Connor believes that the procedural changes reduced the after-school disorder problem by 70 percent.

Note: This account is excerpted with minor stylistic modifications from New York City Police Department (1993).

mall managers may not have a good understanding of how design features and business locations can affect crime and disorder levels.[20]

7. Reducing the comfort level, convenience or attraction of popular youth gathering places. Eliminating comfortable places to sit or lean discourages youth from congregating in particular places (although it might prove a similar inconvenience for others).[21] If the location is outdoors, consider modifying structures (bus shelters, shop doorways, playground equipment, park shelters, pedestrian tunnels, covered alleys, bridges) so that they do not offer much protection from the weather.[22]

The type of background music can also influence where youth choose to congregate: playing classical music, for example, can discourage some young people from hanging out within earshot of it.[23] Intensifying the lighting where youth congregate can also make the location less attractive to them.[24]

Police in Edmonton, Alberta, worked with the community and other city agencies to landscape a park that had become a hangout for older youth who intimidated other park users and vandalized park property. The new park configuration made it more visible from adjacent roads. Problems declined without need for extra police enforcement.[25] Police in Peel, Ontario, worked with school officials to redesign the school parking lot and hallways, thereby significantly reducing disorder problems caused by students and trespassers.[26] Police in Delta, British Columbia, determined that video arcades' physical layout influenced youth disorder levels in and around them. They proposed local legislation that regulates video arcade design in ways that improve arcade employees' ability to monitor youth conduct.†

† The local law also regulates operation hours, occupancy limits, age restrictions, lighting, restroom access, and conduct rules in video arcades. The Delta Police Department's study of the problem and local law has served as a model across Canada (Sheard 1998).

If youth rely on cars to get to the location, or if cars are the attraction (part of a street cruising problem), consider altering parking regulations to limit youths' ability to gather a lot of cars in one place.[27]

8. Installing and monitoring closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras. CCTV, used extensively in the United Kingdom and generally supported by merchants, shoppers and the general public, has shown some effectiveness in controlling youth disorder in public places.[28, †] A Scottish study concluded that a CCTV camera positioned in a public town center had the effect of moving disorder incidents out of the camera's view, keeping fights among youth briefer, with fewer combatants. Overall, the CCTV reduced the *actual* number of disorder incidents, although the study noted that the number of *recorded* incidents might well rise due to the increased CCTV monitoring.[29] Another U.K. study concluded that CCTV was more useful for alerting police to disorder incidents than for deterring disorder in the first place.[30]

† For a review of research on the effects of CCTV and street lighting on crime prevention, see Painter and Tilley (1999).

Establishing and Enforcing Rules of Conduct for Youth

9. Enlisting others to exercise informal social control over youth. You should support and reinforce the informal social control that others can exercise over young people. Enlist parents, school officials, employers, coaches, and others to establish and enforce standards of youth conduct in public. Research has established that people who are responsible for managing places–whether malls, businesses, apartment buildings, commercial districts, or parks–can collectively act to enforce rules and standards of orderly behavior that result in reduced disorder.[31]

Police can notify people, in person or in writing, about individuals causing problems. Officers in Manchester,

England, distributed a leaflet to parents explaining the problems, police responses, parental responsibilities, and potential consequences for failing to control their children's behavior (including sanctions against their public housing privileges).[32] Police in Lancashire, England, videotaped disorderly youth and showed the videotapes to their parents.[33] Many jurisdictions have parental responsibility laws, with sanctions against parents who fail to exercise reasonable control of their children's conduct; however, these laws are rarely enforced.

10. Establishing clear rules of conduct, and educating youth about them. Patrol officers usually develop their own personal standards for youth conduct, which they pass on to the youth by word or action. Unfortunately, the same youth are subject to many different patrol officers' standards. When the standards change depending on which officer is on duty, youth perceive the standards to be arbitrary and, therefore, unfair.[34] You should try to get officers to agree on a reasonably consistent set of standards for dealing with congregating youth.

Shopping mall managers should establish a clear set of rules of conduct and post them where youth congregate. Some merchants impose minimum-purchase requirements or restrict restroom use to paying customers to discourage youth from gathering outside their businesses. Some malls have resorted to requiring teenagers to have parental escorts during certain hours.

Some Dutch police visit schools at the beginning of the school year to inform students about rules of conduct that will apply in places where students are known to hang out.[35] Lancashire police instituted a juvenile nuisance register to log police officers' warnings to young people and justify harsher responses if the youth ignore the warnings.[36]

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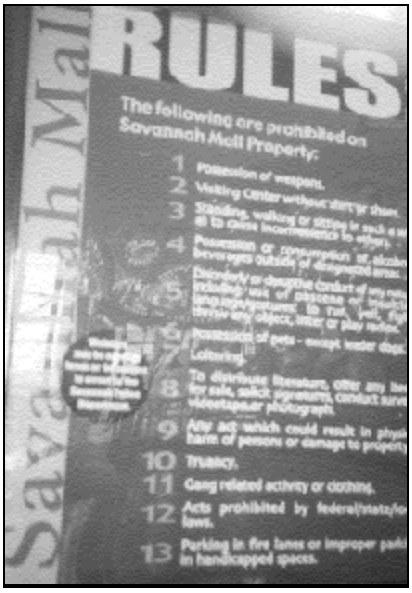

Clearly posted rules in shopping malls are recommended to discourage disorderly conduct.

11. Mediating conflicts between youth and complainants. As noted earlier, young people often fail to appreciate their behavior's effect on others. Bringing youth and complainants together can result in a healthy exchange of perspectives. In some instances, complainants have been known to become more sympathetic to the lack of opportunities for youth, and willing to help provide them.[37] If there is racial or ethnic bias to the complaints, you might consider providing professional cultural awareness training for complainants and youth.[38]

12. Denying youths' anonymity. In some instances, simply getting to know the names and faces of young people, thereby removing their sense of anonymity, is sufficient to discourage them from causing trouble.[39] Without being antagonistic or accusatory, police and private security officers can make special efforts to let youth know they can readily be identified. In some instances, police and private security have

resorted to photographing and identifying youth who create disturbances, either as part of an official trespass warning system, or merely to put the troublemakers on notice that their conduct is being monitored.[40] If you adopt this response, you should make certain you adhere to applicable laws and policies regarding photographing juveniles.

13. Deploying police paraprofessionals to patrol public places where youth congregate. Police in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom hire and assign uniformed paraprofessionals–variously called wardens, special constables or patrollers–to patrol public places where youth often congregate.[41] Evaluations of these paraprofessionals' effectiveness have shown some reductions in citizen fear and complaints about youth disorder in the areas patrolled,[42] but at least in the United Kingdom, the paraprofessionals were not well received by either the police or the general public.[43] Their effectiveness appears to depend on their being reasonable and approachable rather than trying to be intimidating.[44] Some police agencies have supported citizen patrols to help monitor young people's behavior in public.[45]

Private security officers constitute one type of paraprofessional, and while they tend to be dressed and equipped like police officers, some youth are more likely to challenge their authority and try to provoke confrontations if they resemble police.[46] Police might provide training to private security in handling youth in public places.[47]

14. Enforcing truancy laws. Truancy enforcement can be effective in reducing youth disorder occurring during school hours.[48] Police can educate complainants about truancy laws so that they know when and how to notify authorities about truancy violations. However, truancy enforcement, while an increasingly popular idea, is not necessarily an appropriate

response to your particular disorderly youth problem.† For it to be effective, school officials and other juvenile authorities must cooperate with police and develop practices and programs that prevent truancy, while addressing underlying problems that might cause habitual truancy. Police agencies should establish specific policies and procedures for truancy enforcement rather than rely on occasional and highly discretionary enforcement.

† There is a considerable body of literature on truancy and the police role in addressing it that you may want to consult if you use truancy enforcement as a response to disorderly youth problems.

15. Enforcing curfew laws. Curfew laws are intended to keep youth off the streets at night, so that they are more likely to be under adult supervision at home. Some jurisdictions, such as Orlando, Fla., have imposed curfews on juveniles only in the downtown entertainment districts, where problems have been concentrated. Whether curfew enforcement is effective at reducing youth disorder depends on particular local conditions.[49] In many jurisdictions, youth are more likely to cause trouble after school than at night.[50]

Proposals to enact or enforce juvenile curfews almost always inspire community debate.†† The general public and, presumably, young people themselves are more likely to accept curfews if alternative legitimate activities and places for youth to gather exist.[51] If police are expected to enforce juvenile curfews, there must be convenient holding facilities that allow officers to return to the streets quickly; otherwise, they are not likely to take juveniles into custody. As with truancy enforcement, police agencies that opt to enforce curfew laws should establish specific policies and procedures relating to enforcement.

†† See O'Brien and Joseph (1999) for a discussion of the pros and cons of juvenile curfews.

16. Banning troublemakers from private property. If youth are congregating and creating disturbances on privately owned property, such as business parking lots or apartment complexes, you might consider securing authority from the property owners for the police to enforce trespass laws.

Trespass enforcement was one of a combination of responses St. Petersburg, Fla., police used to reduce problems caused by students' gathering in a convenience store parking lot. Stricter truancy enforcement by school officials and the turning off of video games in the convenience store during school hours were the other key responses.[52] Newport News, Va., police also used trespass enforcement to deal with disorderly youth at a shopping plaza, and encouraged judges to order convicted offenders to stay away from the plaza as a condition of a suspended sentence.[53]

Shopping malls are generally considered private rather than public places, giving mall owners and managers greater legal authority to deny access to the premises, but in many jurisdictions, they are considered quasi-public. You should consult with legal counsel in deciding how the police can properly support this response.† Police agencies should establish specific policy guidelines that cover police officers' authority and responsibilities in helping mall authorities enforce the bans. You must take special care not to support arbitrary or discriminatory banning practices. Identities of banned youth should be provided to merchants and security staff.

† American courts recognize the quasi-public nature of shopping malls and have extended certain constitutional guarantees, especially those relating to free speech and assembly, to those visiting malls. The extent to which a mall is considered public or private depends in part on whether there are any public rights-of-way on the mall grounds. Malls with public transportation links, government offices or police substations on the premises are more likely to be deemed quasi-public, thereby limiting mall owners' right to exclude certain people.

Responses With Limited Effectiveness

17. Increasing patrol by uniformed police officers. Merely increasing uniformed police officers' presence around locations where youth gather is expensive, inefficient and usually ineffective.

18. Strictly enforcing laws against youth. Many police officers are hesitant to rely excessively on arrest as a means of controlling troublesome youth behavior. Where juvenile justice system sanctions are lenient, as they often are for minor offenses, officers prefer not to expose youth to that

leniency, hoping that they will believe the sanctions to be serious.[54] It may be necessary for you to strictly enforce some laws, at least for a while, just to convince youth that the option is available. Done properly, some enforcement can open lines of communication between you and young people who might question your authority to act.[55]

Appendix: Summary of Responses to Disorderly Youth in Public Places

The table below summarizes the responses to disorderly youth in public places, the mechanism by which they are intended to work, the conditions under which they should work best, and some factors you should consider before implementing a particular response. It is critical that you tailor responses to local circumstances, and that you can justify each response based on reliable analysis. In most cases, an effective strategy will involve implementing several different responses. Law enforcement responses alone are seldom effective in reducing or solving the problem.

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
Creating Alternative Legitimate Places and Activities for Youth					
1.	14	Creating new places for youth to congregate, and providing alternative activities	Removes excuses for youth to hang out and be disorderly in public, for lack of anything else to do	…there are few or no alternative legitimate activities for youth in the area	Police can support creating alternative places and activities, but should be careful not to become solely responsible for running those places and activities
2.	15	Providing outreach services to youth	Identifies more serious problems of some youth, such as substance abuse, child abuse, mental illness, etc.	…the young people causing the problems are suspected to have more serious individual problems and needs	Requires resource commitments from professionals outside of the police department

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
3.	15	Employing youth at businesses negatively affected by disorderly behavior	Promotes a greater sense of responsibility among youth for maintaining order in those places	…there is viable employment in the area, and young people have skills that match employers' needs	Business owners must be willing to employ youth
4.	15	Ensuring youth have adequate transportation to and from events	Removes excuses for youth to be on the street before and after events	…existing transportation is inadequate	May require additional expenditures from public transportation companies
Modifying Public Places to Discourage Disorderly Behavior					
5.	16	Encouraging youth to gather where they will not disturb others	Separates youth from likely complainants	…there are viable alternative places for youth to gather in the area	May require negotiation because police may not be able to force youth to move; may require place managers' or property owners' cooperation to allow youth to congregate
6.	16	Avoiding locating businesses that attract youth where others will be intimidated by them	Separates youth from likely complainants	…there are alternative sites for the youth-oriented businesses	Requires the cooperation of people such as mall managers; youth-oriented businesses may object to being moved away from the main flow of consumers
7.	18	Reducing the comfort level, convenience or attraction of popular youth gathering places	Discourages youth from congregating in a particular place	…the changes are not unduly burdensome on legitimate users of the place	May require additional expenditures to redesign the place; may discourage legitimate uses of the place; may displace youth to a more problematic location

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
8.	19	Installing and monitoring closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras	Increases the ability of police or private security to detect disorder and respond quickly; increases the likelihood that offenders can be identified later; discourages youth from engaging in disorderly behavior in view of the camera	…police or private security has the resources to monitor CCTV	Cameras must be protected from vandalism; monitoring is labor-intensive; evaluations of CCTV show mixed effectiveness; some communities object to public CCTV on privacy grounds
Establishing and Enforcing Rules of Conduct for Youth					
9.	19	Enlisting others to exercise informal social control over youth	Provides help from others in controlling youth	…youth value their relationship with those seeking to exercise informal social control over them	Police must be careful not to support draconian or abusive forms of punishment
10.	20	Establishing clear rules of conduct, and educating youth about them	Clarifies what conduct is and is not acceptable; removes excuses for unacceptable behavior	…rules are simple, fair and clearly conveyed	Rules must not violate youths' constitutional rights; if youth perceive rules to be unfair, it may exacerbate tension and mistrust between youth and authorities, including police
11.	21	Mediating conflicts between youth and complainants	Helps youth and complainants better understand one another's concerns and perspectives	…youth and complainants are willing to listen to one another, and conflicts are relatively minor	Requires mediation skills; may not be a valid response if offenses are serious

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
12.	21	Denying youths' anonymity	Makes youth realize they can be held accountable for their actions	…the same individuals return to the problem location, and the same police or security officers handle the problem	Compulsory identification and photographing of offenders must comply with applicable laws and policies
13.	22	Deploying police paraprofessionals to patrol public places where youth congregate	Increases the level of surveillance of public places; imposes supervision on youth that is not as threatening to them as police supervision might be	…paraprofession-als are authorized by local law to patrol in public and are properly trained to handle youth disorder	Neither the police nor the general public may support paraprofessionals
14.	22	Enforcing truancy laws	Removes excuses for youth to be on the street during school hours	…there is a place where police can bring truants and quickly return to service, there are meaningful truancy interventions by schools, and likely complainants are educated about truancy laws and how to recognize and report truants	Requires support and resource commitments from school officials and other juvenile authorities
15.	23	Enforcing curfew laws	Removes excuses for youth to be on the street at night, thereby reducing opportunities for them to offend and be victimized	…the general public supports curfew enforcement, and youth disorder occurs at night	Potential legal challenges to curfew laws and enforcement thereof; without public support, the police will appear heavy-handed and youth will be perceived as victims

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
16.	23	Banning troublemakers from private property	Removes the worst offenders from places where they disturb others	…private security and police maintain accurate records of banned people's identities and the time periods for which those people are banned	Potential legal challenges to banning that may depend on whether the property is deemed private or quasi-public
Responses With Limited Effectiveness					
17.	24	Increasing patrol by uniformed police officers			Labor-intensive and only temporarily effective
18.	24	Strictly enforcing laws against youth			Labor-intensive as a long-term strategy; police risk losing public support by appearing heavy-handed

Endnotes

[1] Skogan (1987); Beck and Willis (1995).
[2] Beck and Willis (1995).
[3] National Crime Prevention (1999); Lancashire Constabulary (1999); Parker (1993).
[4] National Crime Prevention (1999).
[5] Meehan (1992).
[6] National Crime Prevention (1999).
[7] White (1998).
[8] White and Sutton (1995).
[9] Bland and Read (2000); Lancashire Constabulary (1999); Ball (1994).
[10] Lancashire Constabulary (1999).
[11] Poole (1991).
[12] New York City Police Department (1993); Lancashire Constabulary (1999); Cleveland Police (1998).
[13] Lancashire Constabulary (1999).
[14] Phillips and Cochrane (1988); Bland and Read (2000); White (1998); Poole (1991).
[15] Phillips and Cochrane (1988); White (1998); Ball (1994).
[16] Eck and Spelman (1987).
[17] Parker (1993).
[18] Meehan (1992).
[19] Poole (1991).
[20] Poole (1991).
[21] Poole (1991).
[22] Lancashire Constabulary (1999).
[23] Chambers (1991).
[24] New York City Police Department (1993).
[25] Cooper and Kracher (1996).
[26] McKay (1997).
[27] New York City Police Department (1993).
[28] Brown (1997).
[29] Ditton and Short (1998); see also Ditton and Short (1999).
[30] Oc and Tiesdell (1997).
[31] Green Mazerolle, Kadleck and Roehl (1998).
[32] Bland and Read (2000); Lancashire Police Constabulary (1999); Cleveland Police (1998).
[33] Bland and Read (2000); Lancashire Police Constabulary (1999).
[34] Meehan (1992).
[35] Phillips and Cochrane (1988); see also Parker (1993).
[36] Bland and Read (2000); Lancashire Police Constabulary (1999).

[37] Phillips and Cochrane (1988); Bland and Read (2000); Cleveland Police (1998); Ball (1994).
[38] New York City Police Department (1993).
[39] Poole (1991).
[40] Eck and Spelman (1987).
[41] Hofstra and Shapland (1997); Southgate, Bucke and Byron (1995); Lancashire Police Constabulary (1999); Jacobson and Saville (1999).
[42] Hofstra and Shapland (1997); Southgate, Bucke and Byron (1995); Jacobson and Saville (1999).
[43] Southgate, Bucke and Byron (1995).
[44] Hofstra and Shapland (1997).
[45] Bland and Read (2000).
[46] Poole (1991).
[47] Phillips and Cochrane (1988).
[48] Bland and Read (2000); Lancashire Police Constabulary (1999); Poole (1991); Books (1995).
[49] White (1998); Bland and Read (2000).
[50] White (1998).
[51] White (1998).
[52] Books (1995).
[53] Eck and Spelman (1987).
[54] Meehan (1992).
[55] New York City Police Department (1993).

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Michael S. Scott is an independent police consultant based in Savannah, Ga. He was formerly chief of police in Lauderhill, Fla.; served in various civilian administrative positions in the St. Louis Metropolitan, Ft. Pierce, Fla., and New York City police departments; and was a police officer in the Madison, Wis., Police Department. Scott developed training programs in problem-oriented policing at the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), and is a judge for PERF's Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing. He is the author of *Problem-Oriented Policing: Reflections on the First 20 Years,* and coauthor (with Rana Sampson) of *Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems: Case Studies in Problem-Solving.* Scott holds a law degree from Harvard Law School and a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Recommended Readings

- ***A Police Guide to Surveying Citizens and Their Environments***, Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1993. This guide offers a practical introduction for police practitioners to two types of surveys that police find useful: surveying public opinion and surveying the physical environment. It provides guidance on whether and how to conduct cost-effective surveys.

- ***Assessing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide for Police Problem-Solvers***, by John E. Eck (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2001). This guide is a companion to the *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* series. It provides basic guidance to measuring and assessing problem-oriented policing efforts. This is available at www.cops.usdoj.gov.

- ***Conducting Community Surveys***, by Deborah Weisel (Bureau of Justice Statistics and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 1999). This guide, along with accompanying computer software, provides practical, basic pointers for police in conducting community surveys. The document is also available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs.

- ***Crime Prevention Studies***, edited by Ronald V. Clarke (Criminal Justice Press, 1993, et seq.). This is a series of volumes of applied and theoretical research on reducing opportunities for crime. Many chapters are evaluations of initiatives to reduce specific crime and disorder problems.

- ***Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing: The 1999 Herman Goldstein Award Winners.*** This document produced by the National Institute of Justice in collaboration with the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the Police Executive Research Forum provides detailed reports of the best submissions to the annual award program that recognizes exemplary problem-oriented responses to various community problems. A similar publication is available for the award winners from subsequent years. The documents are also available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij.

- ***Not Rocket Science? Problem-Solving and Crime Reduction***, by Tim Read and Nick Tilley (Home Office Crime Reduction Research Series, 2000). Identifies and describes the factors that make problem-solving effective or ineffective as it is being practiced in police forces in England and Wales.

- ***Opportunity Makes the Thief: Practical Theory for Crime Prevention***, by Marcus Felson and Ronald V. Clarke (Home Office Police Research Series, Paper No. 98, 1998). Explains how crime theories such as routine activity theory, rational choice theory and crime pattern theory have practical implications for the police in their efforts to prevent crime.

- ***Problem-Oriented Policing***, by Herman Goldstein (McGraw-Hill, 1990, and Temple University Press, 1990). Explains the principles and methods of problem-oriented policing, provides examples of it in practice, and discusses how a police agency can implement the concept.

- ***Problem-Oriented Policing: Reflections on the First 20 Years***, by Michael S. Scott (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2000). Describes how the most critical elements of Herman Goldstein's problem-oriented policing model have developed in practice over its 20-year history, and proposes future directions for problem-oriented policing. The summary report is also available at www.cops.usdoj.gov.

- ***Problem-Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in Newport News***, by John E. Eck and William Spelman (Police Executive Research Forum, 1987). Explains the rationale behind problem-oriented policing and the problem-solving process, and provides examples of effective problem-solving in one agency.

- ***Problem-Solving Tips: A Guide to Reducing Crime and Disorder Through Problem-Solving Partnerships*** by Karin Schmerler, Matt Perkins, Scott Phillips, Tammy Rinehart, Meg Townsend (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 1998) (also available at www.cops.usdoj.gov). Provides a brief introduction to problem-solving, basic information on the SARA model and detailed suggestions about the problem-solving process.

- ***Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies***, Second Edition, edited by Ronald V. Clarke (Harrow and Heston, 1997). Explains the principles and methods of situational crime prevention, and presents over 20 case studies of effective crime prevention initiatives.

- ***Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems: Case Studies in Problem-Solving,*** by Rana Sampson and Michael S. Scott (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2000) (also available at www.cops.usdoj.gov). Presents case studies of effective police problem-solving on 18 types of crime and disorder problems.

- ***Using Analysis for Problem-Solving: A Guidebook for Law Enforcement,*** by Timothy S. Bynum (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2001). Provides an introduction for police to analyzing problems within the context of problem-oriented policing.

- ***Using Research: A Primer for Law Enforcement Managers,*** Second Edition, by John E. Eck and Nancy G. LaVigne (Police Executive Research Forum, 1994). Explains many of the basics of research as it applies to police management and problem-solving.

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- **Problem-Solving Tips: A Guide to Reducing Crime and Disorder Through Problem-Solving Partnerships.** Karin Schmerler, Matt Perkins, Scott Phillips, Tammy Rinehart and Meg Townsend. 1998.

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