

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY



Office of the Commissioner

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Alcohol
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Bureau of
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Office of
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Office of
Traffic Safety

State Fire
Marshal

The Honorable Linda Higgins
328 Capitol

The Honorable Mee Moua
120 Capitol

The Honorable Debra Hilstrom
379 State Office Building

The Honorable Michael Paymar
543 State Office Building

Dear Legislative Chairs:

Over the past eight weeks, we have worked closely with Minnesota's criminal justice leaders to devise a new plan to combat gangs, drugs and violent crime in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. We needed to create an innovative model that would incorporate all the recommendations outlined in recent reports by the Legislative Auditor and the Metro Gang Strike Force Review Panel as well as a plan that the public would support.

Today, we respectfully submit to you our plan for multi-jurisdictional Violent Crime Enforcement Teams (VCET). The VCET plan calls for the formation of new multi-agency units and a new design for statewide information analysis and information sharing among law enforcement.

Our goal is to avoid any interruptions in funding between 2009 and 2010 in order to continue this important work that keeps all of our communities safe. Please let me know if you have any concerns related to this plan. I can be reached at 651-201-7160.

Sincerely,


Michael Campion, Commissioner

VIOLENT CRIME ENFORCEMENT TEAMS

BACKGROUND

Multi-jurisdictional narcotics task forces were introduced in Minnesota in 1988 when federal funding was made available to support such efforts. It was recognized that individuals committing narcotics offenses were doing so across jurisdictional boundaries and that local law enforcement agencies often did not have the specific expertise or available resources to effectively address the growing threat.

During the decade of the 1990's, criminal gangs evolved in Minnesota. Organized national gangs, such as the Gangster Disciples, were migrating to Minnesota and engaging in criminal behavior. In response, the Minnesota Legislature created the Minnesota Gang Strike Force to develop gang specific expertise, identify gang members and share information and intelligence. The goal of the Minnesota Gang Strike Force was to arrest and successfully prosecute criminal gang members. The mission also included gang prevention efforts and law enforcement training components.

Over the last twenty years, this model served Minnesota effectively, but specialized units that target singular offenses or one criminal characteristic may no longer be effective or necessary. This is particularly true in the metro area where local police agencies have broadened their internal expertise and new "hybrid" gangs have emerged as one of the major threats to public safety.

COMBATING CRIMINAL ENTERPRISES & VIOLENT OFFENDERS IN 2010 & BEYOND

Emerging trends and limited resources require new designs to address the most serious crimes negatively impacting local communities. Due to the complexity and cross-jurisdictional nature of these crimes, it is most advantageous to employ a strategy that incorporates the expertise of prosecutors, sworn law enforcement personnel and criminal analysts from local, state and federal agencies working cooperatively to identify, analyze and respond to the most serious threats. A comprehensive plan for this new violent crime-fighting model is outlined below.

THE PLAN FOR VIOLENT CRIME ENFORCEMENT TEAMS (VCET)

In the metro area, the plan for Violent Crime Enforcement Teams will result in the formation of two new multi-agency units funded by the state and a new design for statewide information sharing. Statewide, all new units will be driven by - and consist of - multi-jurisdictional teams intended to dismantle criminal enterprises and disrupt criminal activity by violent and habitual criminals. Participating jurisdictions will work together to identify their targets by analyzing relevant data and information and engaging the community to establish criminal enforcement and prosecution priorities. The model will be required in 2010 for all jurisdictions that receive grant dollars from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety.

In the Twin Cities Metro Area, the efforts will consist of:

The Hennepin and Ramsey County Violent Crime Enforcement Teams will be comprised of a county attorney or designee and sworn law enforcement personnel from local law enforcement agencies in each county. The teams will engage in intelligence driven, proactive investigations intended to disrupt ongoing criminal activity.

Each team will be established by a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) and governed by an advisory board with representation from each participating law enforcement agency. The boards will consist of a County Attorney or designee and a representative from the participating law enforcement agencies. The boards will meet monthly.

A Statewide Information Analysis Unit will be developed and employ an “all-crimes” approach to information gathering, analysis and dissemination to support the new VCETs. It will be a combined effort of local, state and federal agencies. Sharing such a function at a statewide level will reduce duplication of efforts at the local level, provide for deconfliction and disseminate information on a more rapid and targeted basis.

OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Advisory boards that include a County Attorney, or their designee, will govern the VCETs. The new role of the County Attorney, or their designee, who must be indentified by name, intends to significantly increase local oversight and accountability statewide.

In addition, more defined statewide multi-level oversight and accountability will ensure continued effective and efficient use of limited state resources. It will improve public safety in communities throughout Minnesota, increase the professionalism of law enforcement in these multi-jurisdictional enterprises and continue to restore public confidence.

The County Attorneys, or their designees, will advise the board as to:

- The existence of adequate training for officers assigned to the VCETs in order to increase successful prosecutions.
- The handling and processing of evidence, forfeited property and monies according to law and the Department of Public Safety’s Office of Justice Program’s Operating Procedures and Guidelines Manual.
- The use of RISSafe and the deconfliction of law enforcement street operations.
- The submission of criminal investigative data to a designated Statewide Information Analysis Unit.

- The structured convening of commanders from VCETs to coordinate activities, share information and avoid duplication.
- The establishment and maintenance of a focus on successful prosecution of serious offenders.

The Advisory Boards will be responsible for:

- Selecting command and supervisory staff who will oversee the day-to-day operations of the VCET.
- Ensuring VCET operations are conducted in accordance with the highest standards of police integrity and accountability, and the teams are comprised of officers with criminal investigative experience.
- Developing an annual budget and a strategic plan.
- Appointing a fiscal agent and monitoring personnel, records and financial and program activities.
- Analyzing data and local threats.
- Having officer representation from a broad base of law enforcement in the jurisdiction.
- Prioritizing investigative resources and efforts in order to maximize the greatest positive public safety impact on their community.

ADDITIONAL OVERSIGHT

- The Department of Public Safety's Office of Justice Programs will assign an experienced law enforcement professional who will have the specific responsibility of ensuring coordination in the seven county metro area between prosecutors and supervisors. This person will assist with training for members assigned, facilitate the use of RISSafe and ensure the submission of criminal investigative data to a designated Statewide Information Analysis Unit.
- The Office of Justice Programs will enhance its' monitoring capabilities with the assistance of the Minnesota Office of Legislative Auditor.
- The state's Gang and Drug Oversight Council will continue to exercise its' legislatively mandated oversight and responsibilities.

FUNDING

Grant funds may be used to offset the costs of prosecutors, analysts, investigators and support personnel dedicated to the unit as well as operating costs for housing and operating the unit; including contracted services, training, office supplies, investigative supplies/minor equipment and confidential funds.

IMPLICATIONS FOR STATEWIDE EFFORTS

What are currently known as Gang and Drug Task Forces will now become Violent Crime Enforcement Teams as a condition for calendar year 2010 funding. The Statewide Coordinator will provide training and technical assistance to existing task forces to come into alignment with the new design.