

DRUG MARKET INTERVENTION

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Keith Ericksen
Research Assistant
kbe3999@rit.edu

Janelle Duda-Banwar, MSW
jmdgcj@rit.edu

John Klofas, PhD
John.klofas@rit.edu

Irshad Altheimer, PhD
ixagcj@rit.edu

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INTRODUCTION TO DRUG MARKET INTERVENTION

Drug Market Intervention (DMI) is a strategy to combat against open-air drug sales in communities (Reuter, P., & Pollack, H. A. 2012). The primary goal of the Drug Market Intervention is to suppress the local open-air drug marketplaces by classifying the drug sellers into two categories: dangerous and non-dangerous. The classification process is conducted through intensive surveillance, community engagement and intelligence gathering (Reuter, P., & Pollack, H. A. 2012). Crimes often occur in places such as vacant properties that can be used as hotspots for illegal drug trafficking, driving out long-time residents, reducing property values, and providing more opportunity to engage in crime. This approach gives the police an essential tool to apprehend the most serious drug offenders while giving non-serious drug dealers the opportunity to cease drug activity to minimize the social impact. Whether this policy approach is effective will be further analyzed in detail.

IDENTIFICATION OF DEALERS

A first step in the intervention is the development of a list of dealers. The list is generated by surveying patrol officers, probation officers, street narcotics officers, and community members. The police officers will review the arrest and incident reports as well as conduct field interviews associated with possible drug dealers. Lastly, before generating an initial list of dealers, police officers review all known associates and check the suspects' activities (Kennedy, D., 2009, August). Through this identification process, departments are able to get a clear, focused grasp of the problem. For example, according to a case study authored by Kennedy, in High Point, NC, there were 16 active dealers identified in West End. In South Side, there were 26 active dealers and in the most recent site in Greater East Central there were 32 active dealers. This helps departments focus their limited resources.

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“BANKING” THE CASES

The intensive surveillance technique requires that undercover law enforcement interact and inform the dealers that they will be arrested if they do not cease their drug activity. The interaction between the police officers and drug dealers provides options for the drug dealers and for them decide whether to continue or to change their activity to improve their life. According to the research study, *The High Point Drug Market Intervention Strategy*, the deterrence method implemented increased the probability that the drug dealers face legal consequences from 1:15,000 to roughly 1:1.

ENGAGING WITH THE COMMUNITIES

The DMI strategy engages with communities through Influentials, Organizing Services and Home visits. Identifying influentials is an essential tool to reinforce positive norms and expectations. Influentials are defined as relatives and friends who support and value the drug dealers as person and their communities. Influentials are supportive of the drug dealers and rally behind them to get the help that they need.

Organizing services features critical needs such as education, food, housing, employment, clothing, and drug and alcohol treatment to ensure that basic needs are met. In the High Point case, the initial intervention was to offer job opportunities to offenders who can pass the drug test. According to a research study, offenders who are employed are 29% less likely to commit a crime than those who are unemployed (Felson & Staff, 2016).

Home visiting is crucial in developing a police-community relationship. This approach gives the opportunity for the offenders to keep track of their current progress and allows law enforcement to demonstrate support and assistance. The home visit encourages influentials to attend with their relatives to get them help by minimizing the social impact by not arresting them.

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CASE STUDIES

In one case study (i.e., *Strategy: Drug Market Intervention*) since the time that law enforcement adopted the DMI approach in Nashville, TN, they saw a 55% reduction of drug offense. This approach allows law enforcement to develop prosecutable drug cases for the dealers but suspends the cases unless the dealer continues dealing. The DMI partnership brings dealers, families, law enforcement, social service providers and community leaders for meetings to make it clear that open-air markets must stop. It sends a clear message that the community cares about them but rejects their behavior and that the help is open and available to those who need it. The DMI approach was implemented in four different neighborhoods in High Point, NC and saw 44% to 56% crime reductions and 22% reduction in non-violent offenses in Rockford.

The support of law enforcement and community organizations to combat the open-air drug market seems to be working in some communities. A Drug Market Intervention approach offers a combination of surveillance, communication between the community and law enforcement to foster relationships, inform dealers of the consequences drug sales, engage with community services and programs and arrest violent dealers to eliminate the drug marketplaces.

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References

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