

Problem Solving Officer Position

Under the general supervision of a Sergeant of Police¹, a Problem Solving Officer (PSO) is responsible for championing the problem solving process, and the problem solving efforts of other members of the Police Service Area. Each PSO will be assigned to one of 57 community policing beats.

Problem Solving Officers should bring significant patrol experience to the assignment, where performance in all areas of general law enforcement duties has been evaluated as "fully effective" as a permanent member. The scope of work requires familiarity with all units, sections, and details within the OPD structure, and the resources available in each and also the use of myriad investigative tools to build cases (State, County, and OPD databases, as well as third party specialty software, and public domain information.)

The Problem Solving Officer is expected to work independently and possess both critical thinking and problem analysis skills. This is a key requirement, since no one approach can be used to resolve all of the issues presented in any given case. This job requires a high level of poise, tact, and diplomacy, as they are often required to mediate responses by outside agencies, which have competing interests and priorities. The Problem Solving Officer routinely interfaces with community members, business representatives and government officials, not just those criminally inclined. PSOs meet frequently with community members, landlords, Neighborhood Services Coordinators (NSCs), staff from agencies with violence prevention programs funded by Measure Y, attorneys, magistrates, District Attorney Investigators, business owners, and corporate officials.

PROBLEM SOLVING OFFICERS:

- Are expert on the problem solving process.
- Are project case managers and investigators.
- Identify projects and bring successful resolution to the problem(s) as measured by a marked decrease in calls for service and police reports.
- Coordinate and mediate responses inside OPD by interfacing with patrol, Crime Reduction Teams (CRT), and other specialized units. They also coordinate with outside agencies such as Community and Economic Development Agency, Oakland Fire Department, City Attorney, Nuisance Enforcement Unit, Legal Aid, Legal Assistance for Seniors, ALCO Superior Court, ALCO Public Guardian's Office and Conservator's Office, plus other allied state and federal agencies to collectively achieve common goals.
- PSOs should develop superior knowledge of their beats, including acquaintance with residents, business operators, Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) leaders, Neighborhood Watch leaders and other stakeholders.
- Make regular referrals to agencies with violence prevention programs funded by

¹ Problem Solving Officers currently report to PSA Commanders in the Oakland Police Department Neighborhood Services Division. It is foreseen that as more PSOs are hired from Measure Y funding, additional Sergeants will be assigned to supervise PSOs.

Measure Y through the Department of Human Services such as, but not limited to, street outreach workers, employment and training programs, mental health services and re-entry services.

- Together with the NSCs, actively develop a working partnership with community members to identify, evaluate and resolve public safety and quality of life concerns in the beat.
- Must be capable of working with minimum supervision, and must maintain a flexible enforcement and compliance strategy to bring projects to successful resolution.
- Are familiar with the large number of resources available.
- Bring original thinking to conventional problem solving and try new and untested strategies as opportunities arise.
- Generate professional business level correspondence on a daily basis.
- Efficiently balance a significant workload.
- Work both in the field and in a telephone and computer intensive office setting.
- Ensure that projects are relevant to Police Service Area (PSA) problems.
- Assist the PSA Lieutenant with monitoring Problem Solving projects in the Police Service Area or community policing beat, especially when problems cross beat boundaries.
- Maintain a list of outside resources available for problem solving efforts.
- Review, during PSA meetings, the status and needs of problem solving projects in the PSA.
- Meet regularly with the PSA Lieutenants and City staff members (Neighborhood Services Coordinators, other Problem Solving Officers, Sergeants, etc.)
- Are required to attend and participate in community meetings such as Neighborhood Crime Prevention Councils (NCPCs)
- Are strongly encouraged to attend Neighborhood Watch, Oakland Community Organizations, merchant and community groups upon request when attendance is approved by their supervisors.
- Serve as a resource for the Service Delivery System (SDS) in the Police Service Area (PSA.)
- Serve as a researcher for potential Problem Solving projects in the PSA and beat, constantly monitoring the PSA and identifying potential problems.

TYPICAL PROBLEM SOLVING OFFICER CASES

Problem Solving Officers provide resource information to Patrol Officers regarding Problem Oriented Policing projects. PSOs also maintain their own cases in case files and should enter case information into a project tracking data base. These files should be maintained for a minimum of three years. These cases encompass a broad range of issues. Examples might include: illegal business practices (e.g. selling of old unsanitary mattresses as new mattresses), assaults in and around liquor establishments, speeding and reckless driving in residential areas (e.g. side show activities), disorderly youth in public places, thefts of and from cars around parking facilities (e.g. a parking lot near a theater), nuisance and criminal activity associated with homeless encampments (e.g. under the

freeways in parks), crime hot spots that may include street narcotics, loitering, public disorderly conduct, and Beat Health cases such as drug sites (formerly handled by the Beat Health Unit) including houses, apartment buildings or commercial establishments where narcotic trafficking plague the neighborhood with noise, increased crime, disorderly conduct, elder abuse, child abuse and code violations.

The PSOs work with the appropriate sections within and outside of OPD. Typically PSOs might partner with the Crime Reduction Team (CRT), Traffic Division, Vice Division, Alcohol Beverage Action Team (ABAT), Criminal Investigation Division, Neighborhood Services Coordinators, the City Attorney's Office and the City Administrator's Nuisance Enforcement Unit.

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