



CAPS Q&A

City of Chicago / Department of Police • Richard M. Daley, Mayor • Matt L. Rodriguez, Superintendent

Some Commonly Asked Questions About CAPS

What is CAPS?

CAPS, or Chicago's Alternative Policing Strategy, is a partnership of police, community, and other City agencies. Under CAPS, these partners work together in new ways to identify and solve problems of crime and neighborhood disorder, and to improve the quality of life in Chicago's neighborhoods.

When did CAPS start? And when is it coming to my community?

CAPS officially began in April 1993, on a prototype basis, in five of Chicago's 25 police districts. The five prototype districts—Englewood (7th), Marquette (10th), Austin (15th), Morgan Park (22nd), and Rogers Park (24th)—served as a laboratory for testing and improving the CAPS model before it was expanded Citywide. Expansion of CAPS to the other 20 districts began in 1994. Now, CAPS is operational in every police district and every community in the City.

Why did the Police Department make the change to CAPS?

The Department decided to implement CAPS not because we had done a poor job of policing in the past, but because it was time for change. Over the last 30 years, the Department was handling more calls for service, arresting more offenders, and helping to clog the courts and prisons—yet, crime in Chicago remained high, and the public's fear of crime continued to grow. CAPS was created to have a more lasting impact on both crime and citizen fear by bringing more people into the crime-fighting partnership (police, community, and City agencies) and by focusing our efforts on *solving* neighborhood crime problems (as opposed to continually reacting to their symptoms).

How does my police district operate differently under CAPS?

With CAPS, *beat officers* now work the same beat on the same watch for at least a year. This allows the community to get to know their beat officers, and allows officers to get to know their beat—its residents, chronic crime problems, and resources available for solving those problems. Teams of *rapid response officers* answer many of the emergency calls in the district, so beat officers have more time to spend on their beats working with residents on solving problems. The Neighborhood Relations Office coordinates many of the CAPS activities in the district, but residents now work directly with their beat officers in addressing neighborhood crime problems.

Why do I still see officers patrolling in their squad cars? I thought officers were going to be patrolling on foot.

CAPS is not a foot patrol program. Beat officers under CAPS are responsible for patrolling their beat, answering calls for service, and working with the community to solve problems. Sometimes, officers may engage in directed foot patrol around a particular problem area. But overall, members of the community can expect to see their beat officers in a variety of settings—in their squad cars, on foot, at regular meetings with the community, etc.

How are 9-1-1 calls handled under CAPS?

The Department continues to respond quickly to emergency calls for service (and our speed and efficiency will get even better once the City's new 9-1-1 Center becomes fully operational). But to give beat officers more time to work with the community, the Department is changing the way that many *non-emergency calls* are handled. Through the establishment of the police-only non-emergency number (746-6000) and expansion of the Alternate Response Program, more non-emergency calls are being handled over the telephone or by arranging for a follow-up meeting between the resident and the police.

What new police resources are being devoted to CAPS?

To support the Citywide implementation of CAPS, the Department has hired approximately 2,000 police officers over the last two years, increasing the number of sworn police officers to close to 13,500. All district police officers have been trained in CAPS and problem solving, and the new ICAM technology in all districts allows officers to map crime patterns more quickly and easily.

How are other City agencies involved in CAPS?

CAPS recognizes that the police alone cannot solve problems of crime and neighborhood disorder. A key feature of CAPS is the support of other City agencies in addressing graffiti, abandoned vehicles and buildings, malfunctioning streetlights and stoplights, and other neighborhood problems that can contribute to crime. With CAPS, special procedures have been established in all 25 police districts that give priority to those requests for City services that have an impact on crime and safety. More than 53,000 requests have been generated through this system, with a more than 90 percent completion rate.

How can the community get involved in CAPS?

There are numerous ways for the community to get involved in CAPS:

- Residents can attend *beat meetings*, in which they sit down with their neighbors and their beat officers to identify and prioritize neighborhood crime problems, and begin the process of solving them. An average of 200 beat meetings are held each month in the City.
- Residents can get involved in their *District Advisory Committee*, which is made up of residents, business owners, and other members of the community. The Advisory Committee addresses district-level concerns such as youth and family issues, business and economic development, and senior citizen safety.
- Each district also has a *Court Advocacy Subcommittee*. Volunteers from the community identify, track, and attend court cases that are of concern to neighborhood residents.
- *Citizen patrols, Neighborhood Watch groups, block clubs, problem-solving groups*—these and other organizations offer ways for residents to work more closely with the police.

Is the Department offering any training to the community about CAPS?

Yes. Through the Joint Community-Police Training (JCPT) project, residents of all 279 beats have the opportunity to learn about CAPS and how to work with the police in solving neighborhood crime problems. The JCPT project teams police and community trainers who go out into the neighborhoods to offer a brief orientation class and a series of problem-solving sessions to residents. Community training began in May 1995 in 10 police districts, with training activities in the remaining 15 districts to begin in January 1996.