Making Our Communities Safer Together

Overview	Outcomes
This lesson introduces the concept of community policing and the idea that police and community members can work together to make their community safer. Students will begin by brainstorming and creating a poster to illustrate what makes their community great and problems it faces. They will then shift their focus to analyze a hypothetical community's problems. In small groups, students will identify stakeholders, consider the root causes of a problem, and speculate about the consequences of that problem. They will be introduced to other problem-solving steps such as creating action plans and assessing responses. Finally, they will return to a discussion of their own community's assets and challenges and how they could work with police and other stakeholders to create a safer community.	As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:
	1. Define the terms *community policing* and *stakeholders*;
	2. Express their ideas about their community's assets and problems;
	3. Summarize the elements of the SARA problem-solving method;
	4. Identify stakeholders for a community problem;
	5. Examine the root causes of a community problem;
	6. Speculate about the consequences of a community problem; and
	7. Discuss how they could collaborate with other members of the community and the police force to make their community safer.
tip *This lesson includes concepts and activities that provide an introduction to the entire series of* **Street Law Lessons for Police & Teens.** *You might consider teaching this lesson first and following it with either* **Cops on Call & on the Beat** *or the two-lesson set of* **Introduction to the Rule of Law** *and* **Community Policing & the Rule of Law.**	

45 minutes

1. Visualizing Our Community (10 minutes)

2. Problem Solving in Lincoln Heights (30 minutes)

3. Summary/Debrief (5 minutes)

Handouts

- **Handout 1—Lincoln Heights**

- **Handout 2A—Identify Stakeholders in Lincoln Heights**

- **Handout 2B—Identify Causes of the Problem in Lincoln Heights**

- **Handout 2C—Identify Consequences & Scope of the Problem in Lincoln Heights**

Additional Materials Needed

☐ Board, flip chart, or projector

☐ Chalk/markers

☐ Flip chart paper (enough for roughly half the number of students in the class) and markers

☐ Masking tape

☐ You will want to show visual aids for this lesson. If you are teaching this lesson "low tech," at the end of the lesson plan you will find content to transcribe onto the board/flip chart. Alternatively, you can access presentation slides created for you by Street Law at **www.streetlaw.org/police_lessons.**

- **Presentation Slide/Flip Chart A: Our Community**

- **Presentation Slide/Flip Chart B: Lesson Outcomes**

- **Presentation Slide/Flip Chart C: What Is Community Policing?**

- **Presentation Slide/Flip Chart D: SARA Problem-Solving Method**

Your Teaching Partner

Street Law highly recommends you co-teach this lesson. If you are working in a school setting, you should co-teach with a classroom teacher. If you are working in a community setting as part of a pre-existing program for young people, work with the program director or youth education director.

These teaching partners can help you set the lesson in context with what students are learning in other parts of their curriculum or program. They will also know the students better and can advise you on everything from which students work well together for group assignments, whether any of the students might have difficulty with the reading materials, etc. They should also handle any classroom management issues.

Another advantage of co-teaching is if you are called out for a police emergency, your co-teacher can carry on the lesson with less disruption to the students. Finally, for some potentially difficult topics (such as supporting victims of sexual assault or child abuse), it may be helpful to have another adult onsite to help you in the event that a student needs support immediately after the lesson.

Please visit **www.streetlaw.org/police_lessons** for suggestions about how teachers and youth program educators can successfully collaborate with community resource people—like police officers!

Preparing to Teach

☐ Make a copy of this lesson for the teacher or program director and discuss how the two of you will work together to teach it.

☐ Copy the handouts for students.

☐ Prepare presentation slides/flip charts and keep them closed or covered until they are called for in the lesson.

☐ Think of community problems related to crime. Clip newspaper articles on local problems such as vandalism, drunk driving, theft, etc. and post them around the classroom.

☐ Bring materials related to school and community crime prevention programs, particularly ones in which students could volunteer if interested.

☐ Students will be using flip chart paper and markers to create a drawing. There is not much time to complete the activity, so Street Law suggests you pre-position sets of supplies around the room before the lesson begins. In addition, you may want to test the markers and paper to make sure the color does not bleed through. If it does, give students two sheets of paper and tell them to use one behind the other so they do not leave marks on the desks.

Additional Considerations

☐ This lesson plan includes teaching strategies to help students learn new information and skills through activities that are engaging and student-centered. These teaching strategies and activities reflect what Street Law knows works and best practices in law-related education. The teaching strategies used in this lesson plan include: **brainstorming, rank-order exercises, community resource people, large- and small-group discussions,** and **cooperative learning in small groups.**

This plan contains all the steps and instructions you need to lead the activities successfully. If you wish to learn more about how to use these teaching strategies, please go to **www.streetlaw.org/police_lessons.**

☐ At the end of this lesson, there is a summary section. Students will discuss the information they have learned and clarify any concerns. This is a critical step in the learning process. Ask your teaching partner to help you keep track of time in order to reserve five minutes at the end of class for the summary.

☐ If you are teaching this lesson in a school, you may find that some teachers and school administrators are committed to helping their student address certain standards and frameworks called Common Core and the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework. If you (or they) would like to know more about how Street Law lessons support Common Core and reflect the C3 Framework, please go to: **www.streetlaw.org/police_lessons.**

Optional Extension or Teaching with Technology Activities

- Ask students to explore the website for the office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) at the U.S. Department of Justice: **www.cops.usdoj.gov**. Ask students to work in groups to investigate police/community partnerships and programs that are innovative and that adhere to best practices in community policing. Ask each group to learn about one model program and prepare a presentation about it. After different groups have taught each other about different projects, discuss which program(s) might be useful in your community. Then, give students a chance to advocate for that program with decision makers in the police department, city council, school, etc.

  If your own police department has a similar web page, direct students to investigate it as well.

- Take students around part of their neighborhood (or school.) As you walk, ask students to make a map of what they see, literally writing and drawing it. They should take note of resources (people, places, programs, etc.) that help to strengthen the community as well as obstacles (people, places, etc.) that could weaken the community. Facilitate a discussion about how their scan can help lead to better problem solving through the SARA method (described in this lesson).

- Encourage students to learn about how community policing is used in your community. Help them set up interviews with police or other city officials to investigate procedures that have changed as a result of implementing community policing. Students may also want to talk with local activists to find out their opinions on the effects of community policing on local problems.

Web Resources

If you wish to broaden your understanding of the material in this lesson, these resources may be helpful:

- A number of websites provide information about community policing, including the **Community Oriented Policing Services** at the U.S. Department of Justice (**www.cops.usdoj.gov**) and the **International Association of Chiefs of Police Community Policing Committee** (**www.iacpcommunitypolicing.org**).

- In late 2014, President Obama established a task force to look at police/community relationships, officer safety, training, technology, and policies. The group analyzed those issue areas and made recommendations for improving community policing. You can access the task force's initial findings and recommendations at **www.ow.ly/XUD9g** and a guide for implementing those recommendations at **www.ow.ly/XUDB6.**

- **"What Works In Community Policing? A Best Practices Context for Measure Y Efforts**" by Sarah Lawrence and Bob McCarthy, Warren Institute, University of California Berkeley School of Law School, 2013: **www.ow.ly/XUDXI**

  This report gives a good overview of the elements of community policing, the SARA method for solving problems, and best practices for community policing. Though it is a review of the program in Oakland, California, the introductory materials could be useful to anyone.

Visualizing Our Community (10 minutes)

1) After the teacher or program director introduces you, explain your reason for coming to class today. Use your own words, but consider these talking points:

- *Our police department is looking for new or better ways to build relationships with the young people in our community.*

- *I believe that young people can play a big part in helping to make our communities better and safer.*

- *I hope I can share some of my experience with you to help you understand the police department, our procedures, and the laws we must follow.*

- *I also hope you will help me see things better from your perspective.*

- *I believe that when everyone knows their rights and responsibilities, we all live in a more just community.*

- *I believe the only way for our communities to get safer and better is for us to work in partnership with one another.*

- *I plan to visit your class several times—to teach you and to learn from you—to lay the foundation for our working together for a safer community (or school.)*

2) Ask students if they have any questions. Answer them to the best of your ability and as time allows. If there are questions you cannot answer at the moment, explain that you will think about it and get back to them. Make sure you take notes so you can get back to them.

3) Ask students to find one or two others to work with. Students should sit next to their partner(s). Display **Presentation Slide/Flip Chart A: Our Community.** Ask a volunteer to read the directions aloud.

Tell students you will be distributing flip chart paper and markers in a moment. Stress that you are not expecting a masterpiece, just quick and initial ideas. Confirm students understand the task. Tell students they have five minutes to complete their posters. Write the ending time on the board.

4) Once students begin, work with the classroom teacher or program director to quickly distribute flip chart paper and several colored markers to each group.

5) With the teacher or program director, circulate around the room to observe students working. Give students a one-minute warning when time is nearly up.

6) When time is up, invite one or two groups to (briefly) share their drawings.

If there are more than two groups who would like to share, ask them to hang their pictures around the room and tell them you will leave them up for others to see throughout class.

Ask students:

- Considering all of the groups' drawings, what are some of the best aspects of our community? Record their answers on the board/flip chart.

  Tell students to think of these as "assets," or things that give our community value.

- Considering all of the groups' drawings, what are some of the worst aspects—or problems our community faces? Record their answers on the board/flip chart.

  Tell students to think of these as "obstacles," or things that get in our way or that are problems our community faces.

- If you wanted to solve these problems, where would you start?

- What other steps would you take?

- What could your local government do to make it better?

- What can you and other members of your community do to make it better?

- Would you ask police officers to help you in solving the problems? Why or why not?

7) Tell students that one of the goals of today's lesson is to help them think through how members of the community, police, and local government officials could work together to solve community problems. Display **Presentation Slide/Flip Chart B: Lesson Outcomes.** Review the outcomes for the class.

Problem Solving in Lincoln Heights (30 minutes)

8) Tell students that they are going to practice problem-solving strategies by looking at a hypothetical community called Lincoln Heights. Distribute **Handout 1—Lincoln Heights**. Ask volunteers to take turns reading it aloud as others read along silently.

9) Call students' attention to the fact that Captain Jackson is supposed to start a community-policing program. Ask students what they think _community policing_ means. After students have guessed about the meaning of community policing, define and explain it briefly. Show **Presentation Slide/Flip Chart C: What Is Community Policing?**

10) Take each bullet point and ask students if they understand it or can give examples of how that component might work.

Answers will vary. If students do not raise these points, you should explain the following:

- ***Police/community partnerships*** _involve people and groups that are affected by the problem. (You will explain more about stakeholders later in the lesson.) Partnerships make it possible to leverage more assets to solve problems because each group brings different experiences, energy, and resources to the table._

- _When we shift our focus to **solving problems that cause crime,** we shift away from reactive (responding to calls) to proactive (preventing crime.)_

- ***Organizational shift*** _almost always means assigning officers and units to specific geographic areas, (beats.) It can also include different strategies in different departments, but typically it means that everyone from top brass to line officers are empowered, trained, and focused on making it possible for partnerships and problem-solving to succeed. (You will spend less time on this element than others when working with students.)_

11) If you are teaching this lesson in a school setting, ask students how they think school resource officers (SROs) fit into community policing strategies and goals.

Answers will vary. One of the main roles of SROs is to help make schools more safe and to solve problems in the school community by developing relationships with students, administrators, and teachers. SROs serve as liaisons for the police department; community; and students, staff, and administration at the school.

12) Turn attention back to the handout. Invite two students to come to the board/flip chart to write down the ideas students generate. (These students should stay at the board until after the vote is taken in step 14.)

Ask the rest of the class to brainstorm a list of problems in Lincoln Heights.

The list will likely include:

- _poor relationships between residents and police_

- _drug and gun violence_

- *lack of crime witnesses*

- *dangerous situation for police and residents*

- *perception of slow response time when residents call for police and fire trucks*

13) Ask students: If you were asked to pick one problem to solve first in Lincoln Heights, what criteria would you use to pick it?

   Possible responses might include:

- *The most serious or dangerous problem*

- *The easiest to solve to get a quick, positive solution*

- *The problem affecting the most people*

14) Ask students to consider the list of criteria and pick one problem to solve in Lincoln Heights. As you point to the various problems listed, ask students to raise their hands when you point to the problem they think should be solved first. Student volunteers who are standing at the board should keep a tally of the number of the votes. Circle the problem that gets the most votes, and tell students they are going to focus on that problem for the next several minutes.

15) Tell students:

   There are many ways to solve complicated community problems. In departments committed to community policing, many people have been trained in a method called SARA, which stands for **S**canning, **A**nalyzing, **R**esponding, and **A**ssessment.

   There is quite a bit of evidence that indicates when policing strategies focus on the SARA method, communities can achieve significantly more reductions in crime than traditional, reactive approaches to police work.[1]

16) Display **Presentation Slide/Flip Chart D: SARA Problem-Solving Method**.

   Point out the cyclical nature of the model. The process is ongoing; as people assess or evaluate their responses, they make adjustments and develop better plans to implement.

17) Tell students they've already started using SARA, when they identified the Lincoln Heights problem to focus on. Now, they will work with you to analyze that problem.

   Explain that they are going to work with the same partner(s) they worked with on the community drawing.

18) Distribute different versions of **Handout 2 (A–C)** to various groups of students.

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[1] City Policy Associates (2000). *Safer Neighborhoods Through Community Policing, Volume II: Three Case Studies.* US Conference of Mayors. http://www.usmayors.org/bestpractices/community_policing_0401/safer_neighborhoods_2.pdf (accessed 2/2/2016)

Ask students to read the directions on their handouts with their partner(s). Then, invite questions to clarify the task. Tell students they have five minutes to complete their handout. Write the ending time on the board.

As students are working, you and the program director or teacher should circulate around the room to observe and to assist, if you are asked. Give a one-minute warning when time is nearly up.

19) Ask a volunteer from one of the groups who worked on **Handout 2A** to explain the term *stakeholder*. Confirm all students understand the term. Then ask someone else who worked on that handout to name three of the stakeholders their group identified. Then ask another group who worked on identifying stakeholders to list their three different stakeholders. (This is a good exercise in effective listening.) Continue in this way until all the groups who worked on **Handout 2A** have finished naming stakeholders.

Possible stakeholders may include:

- *residents (e.g., parents, young people, older people, etc.)*
- *people who work in the community*
- *police officers (including SROs)*
- *firefighters*
- *local business owners*
- *drug dealers and criminals*
- *people from faith-based organizations*
- *leaders of the neighborhood association*
- *representatives from tenant associations*
- *social service providers*
- *government officials*
- *school officials*

20) Ask students from one group who worked on **Handout 2B** to name three possible causes for the problem in Lincoln Heights. Then ask another group who thought of causes to name three, following this pattern until every group who worked on **Handout 2B** is finished and all the possible causes are named.

21) Ask students from one group who worked on **Handout 2C** to name three possible consequences for the problem in Lincoln Heights. Then ask another group who thought of

consequences to name three, following this pattern until every group who worked on **Handout 2C** is finished and all the possible consequences are named.

22) Display **Presentation Slide/Flip Chart D: SARA Problem-Solving Method** again. Draw students' attention to the part of the graphic that shows "response."

Explain that in the analysis step of the SARA method, stakeholders would also look into what other people are doing to solve the problem. They would look for strategies that have already been tried in their own community and others and adapt the best and most successful ideas.

Ask students:

- Based on your analysis of the stakeholders, root causes, and consequences of the problem, what should be included in your plan to solve this problem?

- What actions should people take? Who should take those actions?

23) Draw students' attention to the part of the graphic that shows "assessment." Explain that assessment is another term for evaluation.

Ask students:

- Why is assessment or evaluation important?

- How would you know if your plan worked? What could you see or measure?

- In what ways could you know your plan made a positive impact?

  Answers will vary, but may include looking at crime rates, interviewing residents, calculating the total cost of implementing the plan, etc.

24) Tell students that it is typical, and even a positive development, for people to discover new problems when they assess their progress. They might also learn that their initial response was not effective.

Ask students:

- If this happens, what should the stakeholders do next?

  Answers will vary, but will likely include repeating the steps in the SARA method.

Summary/Debrief (5 minutes)

25) Ask students to turn to one of their classmates and define community policing in their own words.

> **note** If time allows and you think students need an illustration to more fully understand community policing, you may want to tell them about the Jacksonville example below:

> The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office partnered with stakeholders in the community and used the SARA problem-solving method to try an experiment. They analyzed crime data from the city's most violent criminal "hot spots." They decided to focus on 22 of those hot spots. The group worked to find creative, preventative ways to address crimes in their areas based on the unique needs and characteristics of their neighborhoods. For example, members of the police force and the community repaired damaged fences, installed or improved street lighting, met with business and home owners to improve security measures, removed graffiti, and cleaned up the park. At the end of the study period, community-oriented policing was associated with a 33% drop in the rate of street violence compared to traditional policing.[2]

26) Draw students' attention back to the list of problems they brainstormed at the beginning of the lesson. (These are the real problems that exist in their neighborhoods today.)

Ask students:

- Do you think the SARA method can work for solving any of these problems? Why or why not?

Point to one of the problems on the board and ask:

- What is the definition of a stakeholder?

- Who might be stakeholders for this problem?

- What could be some of the root causes of this problem?

- What could be some of the consequences if we don't solve this problem?

- What could our response be to this problem? What actions should be in our plan?

- How might we know if our plan worked? What could we assess or evaluate?

27) Tell students you recognize this was a very fast and simple discussion of the real problems and assets in our community. Tell students (in your own words) that you would like to continue the conversation with them and to really partner with them to make their community (or school) safer.

Ask students:

- Would you work with me or other police officers who are trying to solve problems in our community (or school)? Why or why not?

  Answers will vary. Hopefully, students will express their willingness. If they do not, you may want to remind them that one of the real purposes of community policing is to collaborate to find solutions—not to simply blame everyone else for the problems or to wait for other people to solve them. If necessary, you may

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[2] Lawrence, Sarah and Bob McCarthy, "What Works In Community Policing? A Best Practices Context for Measure Y Efforts" Warren Institute, University of California Berkeley School of Law School, 2013. https://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/What_Works_in_Community_Policing.pdf (accessed 2/2/16)

want to acknowledge that real partnerships take time and must be built on trust, and that you are willing to do the work and put in the time.

28) Thank students for their insights and participation. Thank the program director or teacher for including you in today's lesson.

Our Community

Create a simple but artistic representation of your community. It could be the neighborhood where you live, the area around your school, or the main part of your city or town.

It should show the best and worst of your community. It could be a picture, poem, sculpture, or other representation of your choice. (It does not have to be perfect; just a sketch or draft is fine.)

Lesson Outcomes

As a result of this lesson, you will be able to:

1. Define the terms *community policing* and *stakeholders*;

2. Express your ideas about your community's assets and problems;

3. Summarize the elements of the SARA problem-solving method;

4. Identify stakeholders for a community problem;

5. Examine the root causes of a community problem;

6. Speculate about the consequences of a community problem; and

7. Discuss how you could collaborate with other members of the community and the police force to make your community safer.

Handout 1—Lincoln Heights

Lincoln Heights is a neighborhood with a high crime rate, a lot of violence, and strained relations between residents and the police. Many residents feel that police are not doing enough to keep the neighborhood safe, while many police officers feel that the residents are apathetic—especially young people—and are unwilling to do their part to keep the neighborhood safe.

Residents are tired of drug dealers, gunfights, and the attitude of their police force. Most of the people in the neighborhood are afraid to go out at night and sometimes even during the day. Residents resent being seen as the problem; teenagers are especially offended by this characterization. People who live and work here think the police do not answer their calls fast enough (or at all) and even the fire trucks do not respond quickly.

The police also are getting frustrated. They want to close down the drug markets, but cannot get nearby residents to help them. After a violent crime has occurred, police in squad cars arrive on the scene but cannot find anyone willing to act as a witness, even though everyone has seen what happened. Youths, in particular, are hostile toward police authority. They often run away when they see a squad car approaching.

The city's police chief appointed Captain Jackson to begin a community-policing program in the Lincoln Heights area. As part of the program, a group of officers is meeting with a group of neighborhood representatives. They want to plan a program to help reduce crime and improve the relationship between residents and the police.
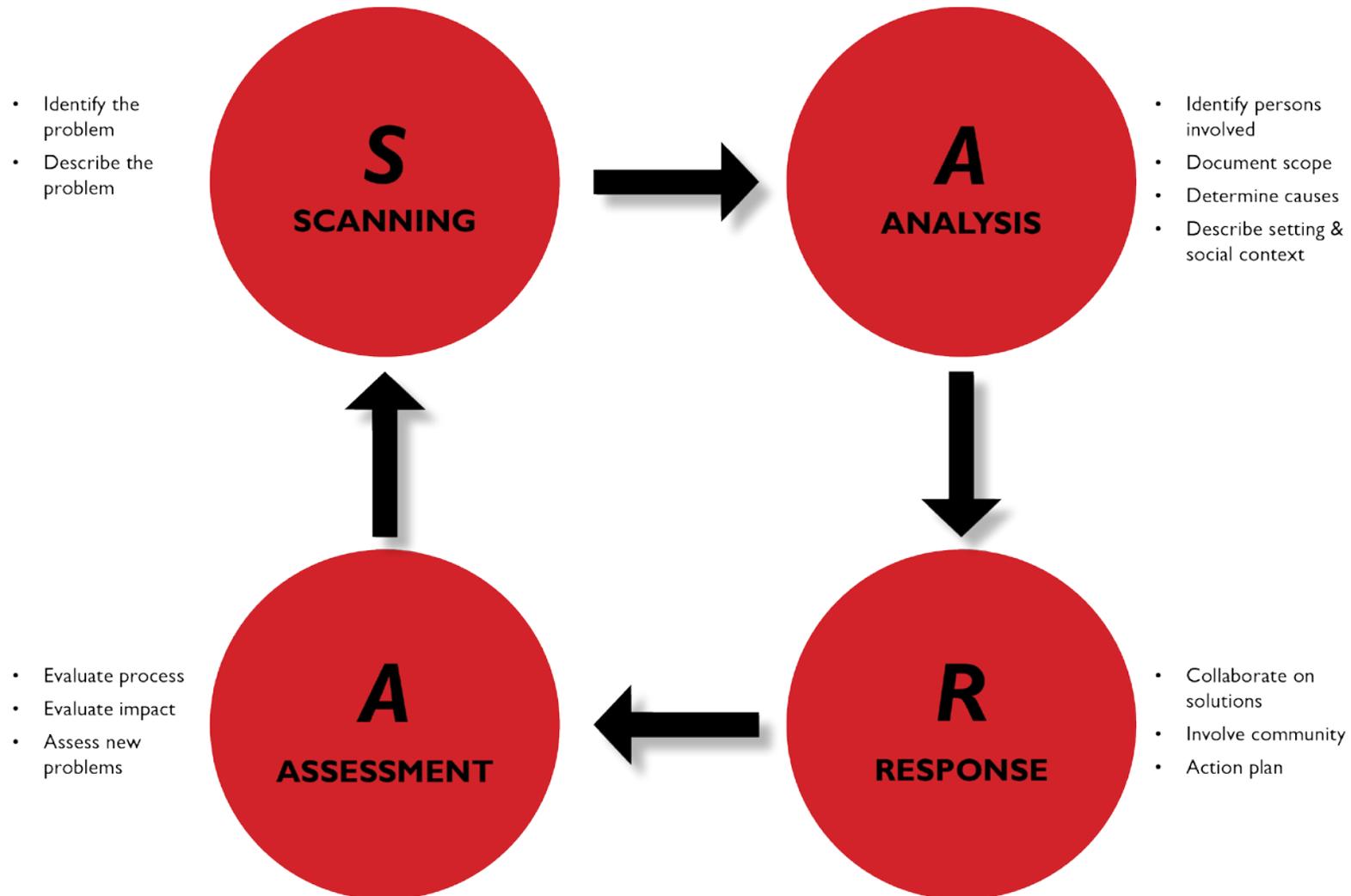
What Is Community Policing?

Community policing is a philosophy or way of thinking about law enforcement that focuses on improving public safety with three key elements:

1. Partnerships with community members;

2. Solving problems that cause crime; and

3. Organizing the police department to make it easier for officers to succeed at building partnerships, solving problems, and improving public safety.

SARA Problem-Solving Model

- Identify the problem
- Describe the problem

S
SCANNING

- Identify persons involved
- Document scope
- Determine causes
- Describe setting & social context

A
ANALYSIS

- Evaluate process
- Evaluate impact
- Assess new problems

A
ASSESSMENT

- Collaborate on solutions
- Involve community
- Action plan

R
RESPONSE

Handout 2A—Identify Stakeholders in Lincoln Heights

Stakeholders are the people involved in or affected by the problem. They may include the people causing the problem, the people hurt or impacted by it, or the people who can help solve it.

Work with one or two other students to identify the people who might be stakeholders in the problem your class identified as top priority to solve. Think broadly.

Once you have identified stakeholders, think about what resources they might be able to contribute to solving the problem. (e.g., money? connections with youths? expertise? time? skills?) Feel free to use your imagination if the details are not given in the description of Lincoln Heights.

Stakeholders	Resources or assets they can contribute
1.	a. b. c.
2.	a. b. c.
3.	a. b. c.
4.	a. b. c.
5.	a. b. c.
6.	a. b. c.

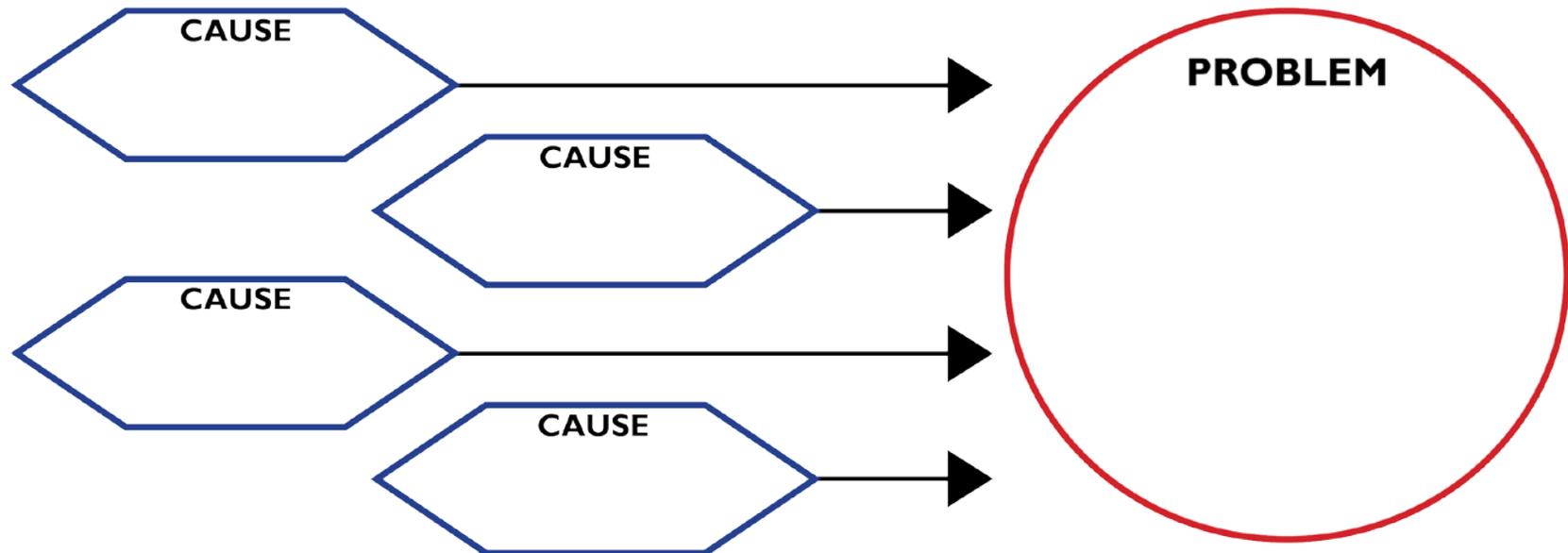# Handout 2B—Identify Causes of the Problem in Lincoln Heights

People who develop solutions to complex problems typically go about it one of two ways. In the first approach, they try to minimize the problem. In the second, they try to address the underlying causes of the problem.

For example, to end truancy, the first approach would focus on getting more students in school. The second approach addresses the underlying reasons why students do not attend school.

Not surprisingly, while approach #1 is good and typically works faster, the second approach is longer-lasting and much more effective.

Write the problem your class identified as a top priority in the circle below.

Work with one or two other students to identify the underlying causes (also known as root causes) of the problem. Think broadly and record your ideas in this graphic organizer. Feel free to use your imagination if the details are not given in the description of Lincoln Heights.

CAUSE

CAUSE

CAUSE

CAUSE

PROBLEM

Handout 2C—Identify Consequences & Scope of the Problem in Lincoln Heights

To successfully solve a problem, people must first think about the size of the problem, also known as the scope of the problem. They should also think about the consequences of the problem.

For example, if people were trying to solve the problem of truancy, they might think about the consequences as: students getting bad grades, students not graduating from high school, and the possibility that those students will have fewer opportunities for good-paying jobs. It is also possible that truant students would be victims of crime or would commit crime. If there are a lot of truant students, the local economy could suffer with fewer highly-qualified workers and income-earners.

Write the problem your class identified as a top priority in the circle below.

Work with one or two other students to speculate about the consequences of the problem. What can happen—or continue to happen—if the problem is not solved? Think broadly and record your ideas here. Feel free to use your imagination if the details are not given in the description of Lincoln Heights.

PROBLEM

CONSEQUENCES

CONSEQUENCES

CONSEQUENCES

CONSEQUENCES