

The Benefits of the Collaboration Between Police Officers and Social Workers

Erica Partenfelder, BSW Student

Faculty Mentor: Megan Callahan Sherman Ph.D., MSW, LCSW
Georgian Court University

Abstract

For many years, social workers and police officers have attempted to work together to better the communities that they serve (Lamin, 2016). Historically, collaboration has not been effective due to a myriad of factors. For many years, it has been the job of the police officers to do work traditionally done by social workers. This has led to high levels of burnout for police officers (Lane, 2019). This systematic review explores traditional social work responsibilities that have been assigned to law enforcement and the potential benefits of social worker and police officer collaboration. It is hypothesized that social worker and police officer partnerships could decrease the number of avoidable deaths as well as an increase in the number of social service referrals. Furthermore, police departments may benefit from utilizing social workers by having them respond to calls related to mental health crises. Further understanding of the potential benefits police offer and social worker collaboration is expected to be impactful for both professionals as well as the communities served by both groups.

Key Words: police officers, social workers, community partnership

Materials and Methods

This study was conducted through a secondary data analysis with articles that were carefully selected through multiple databases. The articles included studies that interviewed a multitude of both police officers and social workers to see how each profession can help each other by working together.

Findings

Some of the findings suggest:

- Over half of the people interviewed believed that community policing (the partnership of social workers and police officers) was benefiting their community.
- Over half of the officers interviewed agreed that social workers can help reduce the number of avoidable deaths.
- According to recent study, over 90% of surveys agreed that social workers and police officers can benefit from social workers attending nonviolent or mental health related calls.
- Another study suggests that about 94% of officers that were surveyed agreed that having a social worker in the department can help with the overall well being of the officers.

Findings Continued

- A study suggests that the biggest setback of advancing the collaboration between police officers and social workers is the stereotypes that past officers and social workers have used against each other for years.

Discussion

The collaboration between social workers and police officers is extremely important for the world today. Social workers can help in police departments by responding to nonviolent calls. They can also respond to calls that include both mental health crisis and social service referrals (Scott, 2023). This can give police officers more time to focus on other tasks that need to get done. The future of this collaboration is extremely important because it can change the way police departments work with social workers for the overall benefit to the community. When moving forward with this collaboration it is important to note that this will not succeed unless everyone is on board which includes social workers, police officers, as well as the community.

Conclusions

The conclusion of this study suggests that police officers would benefit from the collaboration with social workers in all types of departments. The majority of officers that were interviewed in each study agreed that social workers would be helpful in their respective departments because a majority of the officer's time is spent providing social service referrals especially in large cities. The officers agreed that it was the archaic stereotype that social workers often times got in the way of the officers that stopped the advancement of this collaboration.

References

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Contact

Erica Partenfelder

Georgian Court University

Email: ec68356@georgian.edu