

NATI ALERTS

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND THE SENIOR

According to the Administration on Aging A Profile of Older Americans:2003, 77.4% of all seniors lived in metropolitan areas—50% in suburbs and 27.4% in central cities. The remainder 22.6% lived in non-metropolitan areas. In addition, the elderly are less likely to change residence than other age groups.

About thirty-one percent of seniors—10.5 million, live alone. The Bureau of Justice Statistics report, Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety in 12 cities, 1998, states that an approximate 42% of metropolitan residents cite that they were fearful of crime in their neighborhood. In contrast, 71% cited a fear of crime in their city. Senior statistics typically are higher. Those fearful of crime state that assault with a gun and robbery as the street crimes they most feared.

Residents of the same study stated that neighborhood conditions reinforced these fears and affected their sense of safety. Those conditions included public drug use, transients/homeless, abandoned buildings and cars, vandalism or graffiti, loitering, poor lighting, trash, and empty lots.

Neighborhood Safety for Law Enforcement:

The National Institute of Justice formed the Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI) to pinpoint homicide prevention for law enforcement. The study states that to reduce overall crime, consider the following:

- Reduce high crime neighborhood poverty
- Eradicate drug demand
- Federally prosecute all illegal gun carriers
- Offer parenting classes; and,
- Support conflict resolution training and anti-gang programming in the schools.

In 2000, there were 7.7 million background checks conducted in the purchase of a firearm. Two percent were found to be prohibited purchasers. Prohibiting factors included prior felonies, history of mental illness, drug addiction, and domestic violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Improving Criminal History Records for Background Checks, 2002).

Approximately 89% of state criminal history repositories were automated by 2001. States held about 63.6 million criminal records on individuals, with 3 of 4 histories accessible for background checks (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Improving Criminal History Records for Background checks, 2002).

In 2003, an estimated 82.8 percent of the U.S. population lived in a metropolitan area, with an estimated 1.2 million violent crime offenses (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States, 2003).

There were approximately eight property crimes to every violent crime, on average, in 2003 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States, 2003).

Approximately 35% of those surveyed in metropolitan areas reported violent and property crimes to the police (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety in 12 Cities, 1998).

Law Enforcement Community Projects:

Provide a local anonymous vehicle for reporting crime and suspicious activity in neighborhoods. This can be mailer forms posted in your newspaper or public places, or a telephone number in which to leave detailed information (Office of Justice Programs, Project Safe Neighborhoods).

Partner with neighborhood groups to combat neighborhood crime. Involve job training agencies, small businesses, mortgage lending institutions, educational associations and local government to address neighborhood decay (the National Training and Information Center).

Through Project Safe Neighborhoods, identify the most serious, violent offenders in the city and increase the arrest, prosecution and incarceration of these offenders. Studies found that 40% of homicides were connected with more than one assailant and many victims and suspects had prior involvement in the criminal justice system (Office of Justice Programs, Project Safe Neighborhoods).

Neighborhood Safety for the Individual:

- Start or strengthen a Neighborhood Watch, Window Watch, Adopt-A-Senior, or other neighborhood program.
- Find out whether your area has community policing. If not, contact your local police department or sheriff's office to begin one. Build rapport with your officers.
- Help those who need a hand making their homes more secure, such as seniors, people living alone, or persons with disabilities.
- Trim shrubs, install wide-angle viewers, put in deadbolt locks.
- Avoid high-crime areas in your neighborhood and pair or group up for evening excursions.

Neighborhood Safety, Community Efforts:

- For vacant lots, work with your local Environmental Protection Agency, city council, and other local officials to clean up and transfer them to the community for parks and recreation areas (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, A cleaner Outdoors, 2004).
- Neighborhood safety programs that work to fight crime and drugs are entitled by federal law to up to 15 percent of federally seized drug assets, such as money and property. Pursue funding for neighborhood initiatives (the National Training and Information Center).
- Initiate a federally funded Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative through your director of public safety and local law enforcement entities. This project works to combat gun violence and crimes associated with gun possession (Office of Justice Programs, Project Safe Neighborhoods).
- Work with law enforcement, social service providers, community groups, and religious organizations to give seniors crime prevention tools help make them less likely victims of crime. Practitioners agree that senior and community interaction increases a sense of security (National Crime Prevention Council, Coalition Principle: Crime Prevention Requires Cooperation Among All Elements of the Community, 2004).

Provide Senior Transportation:

Transportation is one of the most common needs expressed by seniors that can often lead to 'shut-in' mentality, exacerbating the fear of crime. In order to enhance transportation options, work with your local Eldercare Locator and the Administration on Aging to address the following objectives:

- Better coordination of transport resources.
- Helping older adults recognize and use their transportation options.
- Developing creative and flexible designs for transportation services.

Resources:

U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs
810 Seventh Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20531
www.ojp.usdoj.gov

Project Safe Neighborhoods
Office of Justice Programs
810 7th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20531
AskPSN@usdoj.gov
www.projectsafeneighborhoods.com

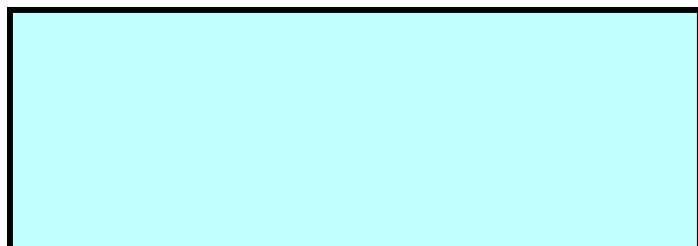
Community Transportation Association of America
1341 G Street, N.W., 10th floor
Washington, DC 20005
(800) 891-0590
(202) 737-9197
webdesign@ctaa.org

U.S. Administration on Aging
Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, DC 20201
(202) 619-0724
(202) 357-3560 fax
aoainfo@aoa.gov
www.aoa.gov
Eldercare Locator (800) 677-1116

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Ariel Rios Building
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460
(202) 272-0167
www.epa.gov

National Training and Information Center
810 North Milwaukee Avenue
Chicago, IL 60622
(312) 243-3035
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