

Versaterm OpsIntel Empowers Lansing Police Department to Deploy Social Workers on Quality-of-Life Issues

In today's complex society, social service workers are regularly in our communities assisting people with the challenges that diminish their quality of life. This includes homelessness and mental health issues. Law enforcement professionals are often the first point of contact with communities in need and spend most of their time on the job resolving conflicts, responding to family disputes, and providing other services to residents.

The Lansing, Michigan Police Department knew it was critical that there be a coordinated effort between law enforcement and social service agencies working together to achieve a common goal. They hired a full-time social worker to integrate the Police Department's high volume of calls for assistance with other services being provided. This included county-wide resources for mental health issues, homelessness, and drug and alcohol addiction.

Having a coordinated effort required the social worker to be aware of every call the Department received pertaining to quality-of-life issues. The social worker also had to have a way to communicate with the police.

The following are the details concerning the original issue, the solution and the implications for the future.

**Make
collaboration
between
police
departments
and social
workers more
efficient and
effective.**

The Problem

Police officers today are required to take on many roles and address numerous community issues. They are expected to have excellent communication, mediation and conflict resolution skills, as well as intervention strategies. They must also know how to recognize signs of mental illness and drug addiction.

The strategy of deploying the police to address every level of community disturbance or problem, including relatively minor, noncriminal infractions, produces policies that translate into potentially destructive practices. This in turn diminishes trust with the community as well as public safety.

Too often, police officers can resolve a situation, only to be called back to the same address for the same problem again and again. Having social workers or social service agencies handle many of these issues can improve results along with community trust.

The Solution

Versaterm OpsIntel empowers law enforcement officers and social workers to collaborate with one another by providing up-to-the-minute data feeds, maps, discussions, bulletins and case management tools.

The social worker at the Lansing Police Department can read all of the discussions within Versaterm OpsIntel pertaining to lesser offenses like trespassing, retail fraud, and issues within homeless camps. She can then identify the individuals associated with these complaints and add them to her task list of people to try to locate and communicate with.

**"VERSATERM OPSINTEL
[FORMERLY STREET SMART]
ALLOWS OUR SOCIAL
WORKERS TO COMMUNICATE
WITH OUR POLICE OFFICERS
AND VICE VERSA. HAVING THIS
COLLABORATION IS KEY IN
MAKING THIS PARTNERSHIP
WORK."**

- Captain Robert Backus,
Lansing Police Department

To facilitate the social worker's communication, a homeless camp list is compiled in Versaterm OpsIntel. This allows the social worker to visit the camps and contact the people in them that have issues. Oftentimes, the situation can be resolved without an officer having to be deployed. The social worker then uses Versaterm OpsIntel to provide information regarding the matter to the appropriate officers. She includes whether she has had successful contact with the individuals. The officer then updates the social worker on any additional information or involvement they have had.

When the social worker identifies a person with a mental health issue, a drug addiction problem or who is homeless, she becomes the front-line person. The Department can also task her with a name, if appropriate.

For example, if an officer encounters someone that is having a mental episode and they want to have the individual mentally evaluated, they can contact the social worker for assistance.



Since the social worker only works 8 hours a day, she tracks the other sixteen hours through information she sees in Versaterm OpsIntel. This allows for her to have important information available at any time.

The “Search” feature is another function that is used in Versaterm OpsIntel. The social worker can search for a person with a particular name to see how often the police department has interacted with them. This provides her with additional insight into the situation she is dealing with.

Being able to collaborate with a social worker frees officers from repeat calls for non-criminal issues and gets residents the help they need from a trained professional who can locate the necessary resources.

The Future

The Lansing Police Department plans to expand the number of social workers they have on staff. Versaterm OpsIntel provides them with the necessary platform for the collaboration of efforts, that results in better outcomes all around.