

**Community Policing** The community policing approach to law enforcement employs problem-solving strategies to identify ways to prevent crimes by getting to root causes instead of relying on arrests as a way to respond to criminal events. Rather than reacting to 911 calls for service, community policing attempts to identify crime “hot spots” and change the dynamics of those places that seem to make crime possible. Rather than keeping citizens at arms length, police officers actively seek partnerships with residents and citizen groups in pursuit of safer streets. Rather than a hierarchical paramilitary structure, community policing seeks to decentralize decision making to officers at the local areas; it also seeks to design area-specific strategies for overcoming crime.

By the end of the 1990s, the community policing movement had become enormously successful. Over 80 percent of police departments said they practiced some form of community policing, and most observers credited the approach as being partly responsible for the drop in crime in the latter half of the decade.

**Environmental Crime Prevention** In some cities, 70 percent of crimes occur in 20 percent of the city’s locations. What produces such high concentrations of crime? And what can be done about those places?

The environmental crime-prevention approach begins with an analysis of why crime tends to concentrate in certain locations and certain times. Next, environmental crime-prevention specialists try to change the places that crimes tend to occur—to change them in ways that reduce crime. They bring light to darkened street corners that otherwise attract gangs as hangouts, establish procedures to keep elevators in repair so that people need not use isolated stairways to get to their apartments, change the traffic flow in streets that used to serve as drug markets, and restore open areas so that they serve as playgrounds rather than vacant lots.

**Restorative Justice** The restorative justice approach to sanctioning offenders seeks to restore the victim, the offender, and the community to a level of functioning that existed prior to the criminal event. The restorative justice approach calls for offenders to admit what they have done and take steps to make restitution. There are four basic types of restorative justice strategies: victim-offender mediation, community reparative boards, family group conferencing, and circle sentencing. In all of these strategies, victims and offenders are often brought together to identify the steps that offenders may take to help victims recover from the crime. Then the offender gets involved in programs designed to help reduce the chances of reoffending.<sup>13</sup>

With growing support from studies, restorative justice programs are becoming increasingly popular. (See “Common Justice.”) Research has shown that when compared with traditional criminal justice, restorative justice programs result in greater satisfaction for both victims and offenders. Some studies also suggest that recidivism rates may be lower for some restorative justice strategies,<sup>14</sup> though research results are mixed.<sup>15</sup> Critics point out that the rhetoric of restorative justice is not always matched by the activities of corresponding programs.<sup>16</sup>

## Justice Programs

Programs of community justice include a varied package of methods. Listing just a few of them illustrates the range and innovative nature of community justice:

- Crime mapping identifies where the problem of crime is most concentrated.
- Citizen advisory groups help identify and prioritize local crime problems.
- Citizen partnerships between justice agencies and citizen groups improve the legitimacy of justice programs and help justice officials tailor the programs to address community needs.
- Local organizations of police, prosecutors, judges, and correctional officials develop local strategies of crime prevention.
- Citizens and victims are involved in sentencing decisions to increase their confidence in the wisdom of the sanctions.
- Offender community service gives sanctions to offenders and restores victims and their communities.