



BJA Bureau of Justice Assistance
Office of Justice Programs ■ U.S. Department of Justice

Department of Justice

Justice

National Sheriffs' Association



In an effort to enhance and expand current Neighborhood Watch activities and to provide formal training for officers, Block Captains and community volunteers, this Neighborhood Watch Toolkit has been developed under the auspices of the National Sheriffs' Association and funded through a grant provided by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U. S. Department of Justice.

Neighborhood Watch

Community Game Plan



This Community Game Plan for Neighborhood Watch has been designed to provide step by step instructions for community leaders to coordinate and support local Neighborhood Watch activities. This game plan is designed for both those interested in forming a Neighborhood Watch group as well as those who have been successful throughout the years.

Community Game Plan

Create awareness

Organize citizens

Coordinate with law enforcement

Identify concerns, issues or problems

Develop strategies

Train

Action steps

For over thirty years law enforcers and their civilian partners have been working together to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in neighborhoods around the country. Today with continued emphasis on crime reduction and the added task of fighting the war on terrorism, Neighborhood Watch is more important than ever. Throughout the country citizens are being empowered and mobilized as they participate in proactive partnerships with their local law enforcement agencies.

Traditionally a Neighborhood Watch group is led by a community member who is actively involved and dedicated to the program. Often these group leaders are selected because of their previous crime prevention experience and training or because of their interest in the program. Some Neighborhood Watch leaders are chosen because of their desire to reach out to and work with the community, while others were selected because of their communication skills or abilities to plan, organize and mobilize others.

The Neighborhood Watch Toolkit is comprised of self-paced learning curriculums and community based presentations with supplemental action-oriented Neighborhood Watch tools. The training is designed to enhance local efforts by highlighting important Neighborhood Watch topics such as recruitment of volunteers, managing meetings, target hardening for homes, observation skills and reporting of suspicious activities.

This game plan will guide you from the initial introduction to Neighborhood Watch all the way through working with established groups as they expand the scope of their local activities and partner with other citizen-based organizations such as Citizen Corps.



The Process

1

Create awareness

The first step in forming or revitalizing a Neighborhood Watch group is to create awareness among the neighbors or potential volunteers about a particular concern or general issue affecting the neighborhood. You may want to collect data from a variety of sources including police reports, personal observations, or media reports to make your point stronger. In some cases, once the factual information on the issue is collected, other concerns may emerge and help to demonstrate the need for an active Neighborhood Watch.

One example of this might be where citizens do not feel safe because of the large number of young people who seem to congregate in a single area and then roam the streets. Once information is collected about this problem, other concerns such as underage drinking, drug use or property crimes may be revealed. The primary concern in the initial phase of forming a Neighborhood Watch is to collect all of the information needed to raise the level of awareness about the identified concerns.

To learn more about creating awareness about community concerns, refer to the *Neighborhood Watch Basics* course and the *Volunteer Management* self-paced training. To educate your volunteers, use the *Creating Awareness* presentation.

2

Organize volunteers

Once data is collected, the organizers can format the information in order to disseminate it among their targeted group of potential volunteers.

Letters, flyers, e-mails or even billboards can be used to spread the message about the concerns and the need for a Neighborhood Watch group.

In some communities, depending on the issues, the local media may work to spotlight the concerns and help to mobilize the citizens. The focus of the second step is to get the word out and begin to recruit individuals who want to form the “core” group of the new Neighborhood Watch effort. This core group will be responsible for recruiting others, meeting with local law enforcement, and building or revitalizing the Neighborhood Watch program. To learn more about how to reach potential volunteers, take the *Volunteer Management* self-paced course and utilize the tools such as the Neighborhood Watch flyer template.

Coordinate with Law Enforcement

Once the neighborhood issues have been identified and the core group has been established, the group should meet with their local law enforcement agency to learn how the public and the police can build a strong partnership in order to create and sustain a Neighborhood Watch group and resolve the community issues.

Law enforcement officials such as police officers or Sheriffs’ deputies will be able to help citizens formalize their Neighborhood Watch. Law enforcers can provide information, literature, training and a host of other important assets to build the new group. The new or revitalized group can register with USAonwatch to become part of the national initiative against crime and terrorism and local efforts can be made to develop and build beneficial partnerships.

3

4

Identify concerns, issues and problems

One of the first meetings the group will want to hold will be to address and prioritize their concerns, issues or problems. Citizen volunteers may take the initiative to address some of these concerns, while other issues may require the implementation of crime reduction strategies by local law enforcement.

Develop strategies

After the community’s concerns have been identified and prioritized, the group should turn its attention to developing specific strategies to address these needs. Often Neighborhood Watch groups do not have a defined mission or specific goals and find themselves with no clear guidance or direction. Numerous activities may occur, but due to a lack of focus they may not resolve the real issues.

A meeting should be held to develop a strategic plan that identifies not only the concerns but also the resources that are available. Locally developed goals with specific objectives and realistic strategies should be agreed upon by the group. A plan of action should be adopted and then implementation strategies designed which will not only guide the plan, but provide a means to assess and evaluate its effectiveness. In order to help facilitate this portion of the planning process, tools such as the Strategic Planning Poster and Visions Worksheet are included in this toolkit. To learn more about strategic planning, and conducting neighborhood needs assessments, refer to the *Strategic Planning* community presentation.

5

Training

Neighborhood Watch leaders and their volunteers should schedule meetings where they can receive training in crime prevention. Local law enforcers can provide a number of

6

training programs that will help the citizens work together to protect themselves and their communities.

Depending on the types of activities that the group is going to undertake, such as neighborhood patrols, clean-up days, seminars, or assessments, citizens can offer a variety of important crime and terrorism prevention services once they receive the proper training and instruction. This toolkit contains community presentations on *Observation Skills*, *Target Hardening for the Home*, and *Reporting Suspicious Activities*.

Action Steps

After receiving training the Neighborhood Watch group is ready to begin conducting a wide range of activities. Across the nation, active Neighborhood Watch groups are recruiting new members, mobilizing volunteers and taking proactive steps to reclaim or strengthen their community against crime and terrorism.

Groups who demonstrate a specific talent in some component of Neighborhood Watch may wish to begin mentoring other programs through the National Sheriffs’ Association Neighborhood Watch Mentoring Initiative. Groups who have demonstrated successes in their community and are reaching out to engage others may be eligible for a National Neighborhood Watch Award presented each year by the National Sheriffs’ Association. For more information on these programs, contact the National Sheriffs’ Association.

7

