

UC research suggests focusing on property owners to reduce police calls to rental properties

November 15 2011

University of Cincinnati researchers have examined calls for police service from apartment complexes, rental units, extended-stay hotels/motels and shopping centers in several Ohio communities in order to identify geographic areas most in need of assistance and suggest programs to reduce call volume.

For instance, in Middletown, Ohio, the researchers initially analyzed [police](#) calls for service to determine whether residents in Section 8 housing required a disproportionate amount of police resources.

In studying service calls over one year's time, the UC analysis found that a handful of all rental properties were skewing demand. They found that over half the calls for service were occurring at just 10 percent of properties. These properties were owned by landlords who rented to both Section 8 and non-Section 8 tenants.

"Several owners had high numbers of properties with Section 8 tenants and with crime, but we found that these owners also had high crime properties without Section 8 tenants. This suggested that the property owners themselves might have created or allowed environments where offenders felt comfortable committing crime," explained Kathleen Gallagher, UC doctoral student in criminal justice.

In other words, problem landlords seemed to be the root of the problem,

not whether residents were using Section 8 housing vouchers or not.

These findings and the recommendation that police educate and focus resources on those landlords owning the properties generating the highest volume of calls will be presented at the Nov. 16-19 American Society of Criminology Meeting in Washington, D.C. That research will be presented by Gallagher, previously a crime analyst with the Alexandria, Va., police department before entering UC's top-ranked criminal justice program; by former UC criminal justice doctoral student Troy Payne now of the University of Alaska; along with John Eck, UC professor of criminal justice, and James Frank, UC professor of criminal justice.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

With police resources straining under numerous service calls, the local police department wanted to analyze deeper cause and effect – as well as possible solutions.

Said Gallagher, "First, we wanted to see if our ideas about places and how they influence crime really held out with our data." The team first started looking at whether Section 8 housing required a disproportionate amount of police resources. Findings indicated that while Section 8 housing in the community was more likely to require [police service](#) than residential properties without Section 8 tenants, Section 8 housing did not generate the highest volume of calls among rental units. Instead, specific units owned by specific landlords seemed to be the problem.

RESEARCH SPURS COMMUNITY ACTION

The research group determined that concentrating on the owners of properties could have a greater impact on decreasing crime and nuisance rather than targeting renters. The recommendation to the small city

police department: focus on the owners of properties with the highest number of service calls. The city developed a task force and armed with a list of the 20 potentially worst landlords/owners in the city, they started with the top three offenders.

Results from the task force so far are mixed – some owners were willing to improve, some weren't willing to go through the steps to make improvements. Gallagher reported, "For one of the property owners, it did reduce crime by over 20 percent." These results are based on UC's second year of analysis.

Gallagher said that research would indicate a need to place more responsibility on property owners, who can have a greater influence on individuals, including potential victims and offenders, who live and visit their properties.

"You need a victim, an offender, and a location to all come together for a crime to occur – take one away, and you can eliminate a crime. The place is stable. It typically doesn't change or move. But through property-owner interventions, you might be able to introduce change that ends up reducing [crime](#)," she said.

Provided by University of Cincinnati

Citation: UC research suggests focusing on property owners to reduce police calls to rental properties (2011, November 15) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-11-uc-focusing-property-owners-police.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.