

Project Abstract: Strategic Response Prosecution

The Strategic Response Prosecution Initiative seeks to develop a means by which a prosecutor's office can evolve beyond a reactive form of "inbox" prosecution, to an innovative approach that emphasizes community involvement and input, inter-agency collaboration, and measurable results. The Alexandria Commonwealth's Attorney proposes taking the SARA model of policing and determining if its guiding principles can be applied to prosecution. SARA focuses on Scanning (identifying/confirming problems of concern to the public and developing broad goals), Analysis (identifying relevant data to be collected, identifying and inventorying resources and developing working hypothesis about a problem), Response (brainstorming new interventions, surveying other intervention strategies, and developing specific objectives and plans), and Assessment (using qualitative and quantitative data to assess a program's success).

This will be accomplished by assigning a full-time, senior level attorney to act as a strategic response prosecutor. This prosecutor will closely collaborate with the Alexandria Police Department's Strategic Response System, which is modeled on the SARA approach to policing. The strategic response prosecutor would offer prosecution input on strategic response initiatives and would attempt to identify tools that are available to prosecutors that could support these endeavors. Examples would include investigative tools like the use of specially-impanelled grand juries and proactive enforcement tools such as seeking civil orders to enjoin nuisance properties. Initiatives would also look at offering prosecution perspective on how diversion and probation and alternatives could be differently structured to help reduce recidivism. The strategic response prosecutor would be heavily involved in attending community meetings, in an effort to obtain community input on prosecution goals and focus. The strategic response prosecutor would be responsible for the prosecution of all crimes arising out of this initiative. The collective purpose would be to determine if focused prosecution response to strategic response initiatives has a statistical impact on crime rates.

This proposal would be additionally supported by the work of the Crime Analysis Unit of the Alexandria Police Department as the research partner. The Crime Analysis Unit will work in tandem with the strategic response prosecutor to collect data on the program's success and provide independent verification of whether benchmarks have been met.

Ultimately the initiative will result in the development of a comprehensive model that could be shared with other prosecutor's office who are interested in developing similar programs in their jurisdiction.