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**A Guide to Conducting**  
**A**  
***Needs and Resources Assessment***  
***Study***  
**for**  
**New York City**  
**Neighborhood Crime Prevention**



Prepared for  
United Jewish Council of the East Side, Inc.  
NYC Crime Prevention Web Site  
[www.nyccrimeprevention.org](http://www.nyccrimeprevention.org)

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© October, 2002

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## Summary

This web site has been designed to offer data and analysis for undertaking a crime prevention needs assessment study of any New York City neighborhood. The data is available for the major crimes (murder, rape, burglary, robbery) for years 1993 and 2000, ranked and broken down by neighborhood for all 75 New York City Police Precincts. This is the only web site that offers a ranking of crime indicators by the 75 New York City Police Precincts. In addition to offering easy to access data by neighborhood, a step-by-step needs and resources assessment manual for community crime prevention has also been prepared. The goal of this guide is to help you make the data relevant and useful.

### Step by Step:

1. Identify the problem
2. Gather data
3. Analyze data
4. Transform data into arguments that will convince people that change is necessary and possible
5. prepare recommendations



### *Why do a crime prevention needs assessment study of your neighborhood*

- based upon the information you gathered, it can identify crime prevention recommendations and strategies that best fit your community
- as a written document, it offers a road map for planning and implementation for the next five years.
- it can convince your various audiences (elected officials, community leaders, government agencies, businesses, homeowners, tenants) of the need for change and build support for trying new strategies

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## A. Definition: What is a Needs Assessment Process?

### A-1. A Systematic Method for Identifying, Documenting, Analyzing and Understanding:

1. What *problems* are of concern to community members?
2. How *serious* each problem is. How to *prioritize* problems.
3. What *strategies* could be developed to generate new *resources*.
4. Where to target additional resources for the greatest *impact*.

### A-2. How to begin the needs assessment process

1. Establish Priorities for Inquiry.

#### a. What Do You Need To Know? Sample Questions/Inquiries:

- what do people feel are the problems?
- what are groups presently doing about them?
- what new organizations and approaches could address the problems in an innovative way?
- what needs help? Where would new resources make the biggest difference?
- how can you go about finding out?



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### ***A-3. Three steps for processing information: Observation, Reception, and Assessment***

- 1. Observation:** information you take in from your everyday observations about conditions in the community. Observations comprise the mini-needs assessments you conduct when you see problems in the community.
- 2. Reception:** small bits of information you take in from a wide range of sources including clients, residents, community activists and leaders, local service providers, board members and the media.
- 3. Assessment:** the last step is the most difficult yet rewarding. Assessment means taking the information you have processed from observation and reception and placing it under closer and more intensive study. The tools of assessment are analysis, thorough documentation, interviews, statistics, and synthesis.

### ***B. Listening to your Community. Questions to ask. Who to get answers from.***

#### ***B-1. List of Questions To Guide Your Study of the Crime Problem in Your Neighborhood***

- 1. Where did the greatest changes in criminal activity take place between 1993 and 2000 (or later)?**
- 2. How can the police, volunteers, community groups work together on neighborhood prevention strategies?**



3. **Is your community maximizing existing resources? Are different sectors of your community working together (local businesses, community groups, religious institutions, tenant and block associations, schools) on crime prevention strategies?**
4. **Are crime prevention strategies being targeted to recent immigrants? How much bi-lingual assistance is there?**
5. **What is different or unique about your community? Main strengths and weaknesses.**
6. **Are different types of crime getting the attention that community residents think they deserve?**
7. **Is your community getting its fair share of government dollars for police and crime prevention programs?**



8. **Are crime prevention strategies and community services performing in your community as well as in others?**

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9. Which area of criminal activity are people most concerned with?
10. Are new ideas and approaches being utilized? Can best practices that have succeeded in other neighborhoods be adapted for your neighborhood?
11. How are regional and national social, economic and political changes impacting the lives of the residents of your neighborhood (welfare reform, information technology, immigration, changes in the economy and real estate market). Are there new strategies local service providers could use to responding to new needs?
12. Are neighborhood service providers working well together? How much local collaboration is there?



**B-2. Who do you want to talk to?**

- Police Precinct Officers
- businesses
- store owners
- youth

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- elderly
  - community based organizations
  - volunteers
  - recent immigrants
  - places of worship
  - tenant associations

### ***B-3. How to get the information you want.***

- *Town hall meetings*
- *focus groups*
- *surveys*
- *interviews*

## **C. Geographic boundaries and data gathering**

To undertake a study of you're the crime problem in your neighborhood, you need to find data that is based on a neighborhood level. The data supplied on this web site is broken down the Police precinct. Other data that may be helpful is available using the community district, zip code, census tract street boundaries.

- Census data
- Community district boundaries
- Police precinct

### **C-1. Gathering statistical data:**

**Examples of Available Information that will give you a better understanding of the crime problem in your neighborhood:**

- -types of crimes committed: murders, rapes, robberies, burglaries, auto theft, vandalism, aggravated assault
- age of criminal: adult (age groups) and youth (14 to 16 years and 17 to 20 years) misdemeanors and felonies
- total population (the Department of City Planning produces data that shows total population by police precinct).

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- teenager population
  - at risk youth indicators (drop out youth, school incidents, truancy)
  - Rikers Island inmates by home address
  - PINS youth (people in need of supervision)
  - recipients of crime victims compensation
  - number of elderly, age 75 or older
  - non-English speaking residents, recent immigrants
  - bias crimes

This information is free. It is generated by various government agencies.

### ***C-2. How to make meaningful comparisons between neighborhoods and on a citywide basis.***

To have gain some perspective on the crime problem in your neighborhood, you will need to make comparisons with other neighborhoods and on a citywide basis. How much crime is there in your neighborhood? How safe is your neighborhood? You can begin by looking at the charts on this web site. Over the past 9 years, there has been a huge drop in the citywide figures for all major types of crimes. There has also been a fairly significant decrease for most of these crimes in all 75 New York City precincts

**DATA is easily available to access:** [www.nyccrimeprevention.org](http://www.nyccrimeprevention.org) web site offers recent data for the major crime statistics. Click on the NYPD Data link and you will find five charts. The charts show how much of a drop or increase there was in the following crime categories: murder, robbery, rape, burglary and youth committed crimes.

The charts offer an easy to use basis for comparison for all New York City neighborhoods. However, since the total population of each precinct varies, you may also want to do a crimes per person comparisons.

**How to do a citywide comparison based on the ratio of number of crimes committed per person.** To make comparisons between precincts, you need to find out the total population figures. Since the total number of people in each precinct varies widely, you will have to use a crimes per person ratio. Once you have the total population figures, you can make a crime per number of people comparison.

**Example:** If the total number of people in one precinct is 205,000 and the total number of robberies in the year 2000 was 400, then the ratio of one robbery for every 500 persons. In the next precinct, the total number of people is 45,000 and the total number of robberies in 2000 was 250. Then the ratio of crime per persons would be 180 people for every robbery. The number of robberies per person was nearly three times as high as in the first. The lower the ratio of persons per crime means that higher the crime rate.

This type of analysis can be used for all major crime indicators (murder, burglary, robbery, rape, auto theft, youth committed crimes)

NOTE: The New York City Department of City Planning converts population data from the Census into the 75 police precinct boundaries. This data is available for the 1990 Census (check with their web site to see when it will be available for the 2000 Census).

## D. Trend Analysis and Findings

A short-term change is usually referred to as a trend. Whether the change becomes permanent or a long term reality remains to be seen. New York City neighborhoods are very strongly influenced by a wide range of social phenomenon. Identifying a trend is a very important way of observing change in your community.

Often several different trends are happening during the same period. How these trends interact with each other is the challenge for a needs assessment study. Examples of trends include changes in population, policing strategies, neighborhood business investment and disinvestment, availability of drugs, growth of gangs and neighborhood volunteer crime prevention activity.



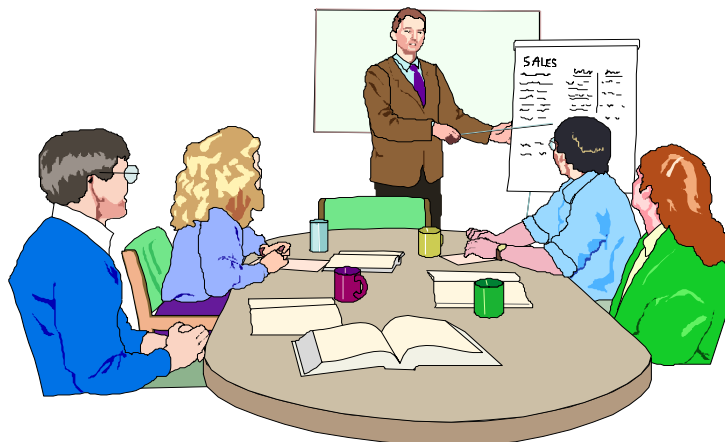
### D.1 Examples of how a trend can influence criminal activity in your neighborhood:

Trend/Social Indicator	Result/New Need	Recommendation
1. Increase in elderly population and especially frail elderly	Elderly are often victims of crimes. Since elderly population grew, there is likelihood that there was also an increase in elderly crime	Task force between community and police precinct to look into crime related problems of the elderly.
2. Increase in people with limited or no	Recent immigrants may be afraid to report a crime or not	Publicize crime prevention in languages spoken by recent

English language skills	familiar with how to report criminal activity	immigrant communities. Outreach and education on how recent immigrants can work with police
<b>Trend/Social Indicator</b>	<b>Result/New Need</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
3. decrease in vacant buildings and lots	Has more investment helped to reduce crime. Were there any changes in certain types of crimes?	Publicize information on the changes to attract more new businesses and residents
4. changes in drug and alcohol use by youth	may cause increase in crimes committed by youth	Plan for and create more opportunities to engage at-risk youth in meaningful activities and employment related
5. new policing tactics and strategies are being employed on over a 1, 2 or 3 year period	Sharp decrease in criminal activity.	Information could be used to attract businesses and residents
6. new policing tactics for youth crime.	Increase in youth arrests for misdemeanors and felonies	New community programs specifically designed to work with youth with arrest records

## E. Recommendations

The most important result of a Needs Assessment Study is to produce a document that is **USED**. If your analysis and recommendations depend on changes that are beyond the control of the combined efforts of members in your community, then your Needs Assessment Study will have little to no impact. A Needs Assessment Study should be a working document for change; a document that is used by community groups, activists, elected officials, and government agencies.



**A needs and resources assessment study will give you information for creating powerful arguments for trying new crime prevention strategies.**

The process of making a set of working recommendations requires putting on our thinking caps. Your needs assessment has identified problems, resources, and strong arguments, substantiated with convincing evidence, for making changes. However, just asking for more money means you have left untouched resources that could be equally helpful. *Your challenge is to make meaningful connections between various resources.*

The recommendations step is an opportunity to focus on the unique way that problems and resources exist in your community. The ingredients that go into a recommendation in one neighborhood may not be appropriate for another. A good recommendation may involve connecting together what may seem like very unrelated groups of resources. However, it is only by looking beyond what you are familiar with will you be able to make these connections.

## **F. Where to find additional data**

There isn't one single place to go to for up to date information on crime by neighborhood. The "Vera Institute of Justice Atlas of Crime and Justice in New York City" is the most comprehensive publication on crime by neighborhood. It was published by the Vera Institute of Justice in 1994. The New York City Police Department web site publishes weekly updates on crime by precinct.

<b>Data</b>	<b>Geographic Area</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<b>Web Site</b>
General population	Census track	US Department of Commerce	<a href="http://www.census.gov">www.census.gov</a>
	Police Precinct	NYC Department of City Planning	<a href="http://www.nyc.gov">www.nyc.gov</a>
Most recent crime statistics	Precinct	NYC Police Department	<a href="http://www.nyc.gov">www.nyc.gov</a>
Various crime related data. Published in 1994.	Precinct	Vera Institute of Justice	<a href="http://www.vera.org">www.vera.org</a>

**NOTE:** Some of the information for this needs assessment study was taken from another publication--- *"How to Conduct a Community Needs and Resources Assessment Study: A Research, Planning and Advocacy Manual for New York City Community Leaders and Human Services Staff"* by David Rubel. This is a 95 page manual that offers an in-depth step-by-step approach to conducting a community needs and resources assessment study. It

also includes 20 different charts of social indicators broken down by the 59 NYC community districts. A complete copy costs of this manual costs \$22.00. E-mail request to [djrubel@erols.com](mailto:djrubel@erols.com).