

Anticrime Program Will Be Broad In Scope, Curtis Says
Developments In Criminal Justice Monthly
National League Of Cities
July 9, 1979, Page 1



Lynn A. Curtis is heading the Public Housing Urban Initiatives Anticrime Program for which he drafted the substance and grant application guidelines. He also has served as policy advisor to HUD Secretary Patricia Harris during the development of President Carter's national urban policy. In the past, Curtis has been a task force director on the National Violence Commission and a consultant to LEAA. Jan Frohman recently interviewed him about the anticrime program.

Q.: Could you tell us a little about the origins and history of the urban initiatives anticrime program and public housing?

A.: Well, I suppose the origin really goes back to 1968, when I met Patricia Harris on the Violence Commission. She was a commissioner; I was on the staff. When she became Secretary of HUD she was interested in developing a comprehensive approach to crime prevention. She asked me to do that. And we developed this program as part of the national urban policy.

Then late last year, Congress passed the Public Housing Security Demonstration Act of 1978. The legislation urged HUD to add more funding to and include more agencies in the anticrime program.

A great many people here have been responsible for the program's development. They include Assistant Secretary Larry Simmons, Executive Assistant to the Secretary Steve Coyle and Deputy Assistant Secretary Clyde McHenry. Assistant Secretaries Geno Baroni, Bob Embry and Donna Shalala also are playing critical roles.

Late last fall to this spring, we were involved in integrating the initial program and the part that was mandated by the Public Housing Security Act of 1978. We did that. We achieved ten interagency agreements. And the secretary announced the program this May 1979.

Q.: What are the components of the program?

A.: We're asking public housing agencies that apply for the program to address a number of areas.

First of all is improved management of public safety at a housing agency. That would begin with obtaining a coordinator for this program, should an award be made, who feels comfortable doing many things at a time, who sees an approach that has to include hardware and software. So we're going to be concerned with the kind of person who can create the right chemistry to succeed. It's an ambitious program, and we're asking for a lot.

Secondly, we're asking for the physical security – the hardware I just mentioned. We think this is important and ought to be continued. We have substantial funds for that. We are also providing funds to rehabilitate facilities within the projects that could then be used for services brought in from other agencies or locally.

The third area is to actively include tenants in the program. The notion behind including tenants is, if the people actually living there have a stake in the program, they will work to make it successful. We don't want to do things for them; we want to facilitate their doing things by themselves.

So a tenant anticrime organization could range from block watches to active patrols to campaigns for better relations and communications with police, to efforts to inform residents what their roles can be in improving the security in the project.

The fourth program area includes social services – both services that work directly to reduce crime, like drug abuse programs or youth programs, and those that would help victims and witnesses.

The fifth program area consists of employment. For this we're getting \$8 million from the Labor Department – CETA Title IV Youth Act Jobs. We're going to employ youths age 16 to 19 who live in the projects. We're saying there is a relationship between unemployment and crime.

The sixth program area involves getting more police working in the projects as well as more sensitively trained police. Here we're basing our effort on some past findings that suggest that if officers are trained, for example, in crisis intervention, in team policing, in handling domestic quarrels, they will be closer to the tenants who will trust them and who will work more closely with them.

And we not only want to secure more sensitively trained police, but we also want security staff who are directly retained by the housing authority to be involved in the same way. We want more and better trained staff.

The final program area involves linkages between the public housing agency and local government, as well as the private profit or nonprofit sector. We're requiring a 10 percent match from local funds. We want to bring in additional resources that we leverage through the federal funds.

Here we're talking not only about programs within the housing project itself but also those in the surrounding neighborhoods – residential, recreational, industrial or commercial. We are saying that crime is certainly not limited to the project, and we ought to try to look at the surrounding area – however that is defined by natural patterns in the city.

Q.: HUD announced two programs, one for public housing agencies over 1,250, one for those under 1,250. What are the main differences between the programs for the larger agencies and for those with fewer units?

A.: Well, they're both part of the same program. Basically, we've taken two tracks. We've set aside \$26 million for the larger housing agencies and \$4.25 million for the smaller public housing agencies. This division was based on the fact that, although there are exceptions, in general, the larger cities with the larger agencies have the more severe crime problems. However, we did want to include the smaller public housing agencies because these places, too, have many problems, and there are also many well-run PHAs that promise success with this kind of program.

But, in answer to your question, the main difference is in the level of funding. In terms of program requirements it is basically the same.



Q.: What is the role of HUD and the Department of Labor in the program?

A.: The Department of Housing and Urban Development is contributing most of the funding up front for the program. We're contributing \$20 million in fiscal 1979 modernization program capital loan authority. We're also contributing \$2.25 million of community development discretionary funds that can be used for a wide variety of programs. The Labor Department is putting in \$8 million of Youth Act Jobs funds, which comes to a total of \$30 million of up-front funding for fiscal 1979.

There will also be other agencies involved, but they are not committing funds at this time. Rather they are waiting until HUD and the Labor Department select sites, and then they may come in.

Q.: HUD has an administrative role. What will the Department of Labor be doing besides putting in some money? Will they have responsibility for administration?

A.: Yes, overall HUD has the administrative lead on this, but we're working closely with the Labor Department. Labor will be involved in every step of the award determination process. They'll be on the review committee that selects the recipients. The Labor Department's central office and field office staff will work on refining the work plans after we make awards and will work with us in monitoring the program.

We'll have a formal evaluation as well, and that will be done by a contractor who will take into account the objectives that HUD and Labor feel are important to measure. And finally, Labor will be providing technical assistance throughout the program.

Q.: What will the role of other agencies be, particularly LEAA?

A.: A number of other agencies have said that they're very interested in the program and want to work with us. This is all within the context of the national urban policy. There have been meetings on this as the policy developed. Those agencies all have said that they can't commit funds at this time, but they do have some discretion both in terms of funding and existing resources that they would like to apply to the program once we select our actual sites.

The other agencies involved include LEAA, the Community Services Administration and several parts of HEW – Administration on Aging, Administration on Children, Youth and Family, and Administration on Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health. Also involved are ACTION, the Economic Development Administration, the U.S. Fire Administration and the Interior Department through its very promising urban parks program.

As far as LEAA is concerned, there are a number of programs that the new administrator, Henry Dogin, would like to share with us. Again, there are no formal commitments, and we have to wait and see what sites we choose. But there is some talk about the possibility of using the victim-witness program, some community anticrime sites and the new LEAA-ACTION Urban Crime Prevention Program.

Q.: What are the most important criteria you are using in choosing semi-finalists?

A.: Most important will be an application that addresses all seven program areas and relates them to one another in a mutually reinforcing way, so that they work together.

We'll be looking for local matches, and we'll be looking for a qualified director of the program. We want some sense of need demonstrated in terms of crime rates. And there are some other criteria, but they are not nearly as important as the first one: comprehensiveness in addressing all program areas.

Q.: Can you give us an idea of what you envision as the role of local governments in this program?

A.: We certainly recognize that crime is a local problem, and we are encouraging localities to come up with individually tailored solutions. So there is an infinite variety of ways in which the various program areas can be addressed. Ideally, we would like the mayor or the chief elected official to coordinate resources, either actual funds or, what is probably more likely in light of budget constraints, in-kind services; for example, moving a drug abuse program into a project.

Another service that really is very important to us is the police. And as I said, we'd like to have the cooperation of the local police chief in the program to make available more and better trained police.

We'll have a local oversight team present throughout the entire program. This basically means that the public housing agency will administer the program, but there will be a group of folks who will meet periodically to monitor that process. That team will consist of a representative of the PHA, the tenants, the mayor's office, the police chief's office, from any other local institution that is contributing funds, as well as from HUD central and area offices.

Q.: The idea is that by involving the different agencies, the potential for a more effective program is there because you have different resources?

A.: Yes, I think that's very important. Among other things, for example, HUD has more funding for hardware programs than for people programs by the basic nature of the sources of our funding. So, in part we are trying to leverage our hardware to get software from other places, both other federal agencies and localities. We're requiring all the local match to consist of people-type programs and not hardware.

Q.: Are there other HUD anticrime programs in operation or being planned?

A.: No other HUD anticrime programs are in operation, although there are bits and pieces in different places. For example, anticrime programming is possible through community block grant funding, and there has been quite a bit of that over the years.

In terms of programs being planned, it's hard to say. Officially this program as part of the urban policy is set up as one-shot effort which means that it will take a year or two to implement and to evaluate.

But the program also responds to a congressional mandate through the Public Housing Security Demonstration Act of 1978. Congress requires us to go back next year and recommend whether there ought to be an ongoing program.