Sierra Systems

Manage Officer Performance & Wellness with an Early Intervention Solution

The Challenge

With intense public scrutiny of relations between police officers and the communities they serve, departments are looking for new ways to **head-off problems before they escalate.**

Police departments already have a lot of data available for performance management analysis: use of force incidents, citizen complaints, praise of officers from other officers or the community. Even the number of calls officers respond to, the type of call, the shifts or locations, pursuits, canine use, and how relative peer groups compare, can all impact the analysis.

To sort through the data and draw the right conclusions some departments are turning to performance management systems - also called **early intervention systems (EIS)** - for data analysis. Analyzing the data allows for monitoring of early indicators of potentially **risky behaviours, exemplary behaviours,** and even indicators of **officer wellness.**

The Solution

EIS takes data from multiple existing sources, often over a dozen, and analyzes the data to **flag unusual patterns for follow-up.** Every piece of data around an officer's job comes together and forms the foundation for what an EIS analyzes. Common data sources can include human resources, shift schedules, training, professional standards/internal affairs, computer-aided dispatch (CAD), police activities, and events such as investigations, arrests, charges from the records-management-systems (RMS), and even the number of charges prosecuted and/or convictions.

Once the EIS has the data, the key is to analyze it. How many times has an officer used force in the past six weeks? That number may be higher for a member of a SWAT team, for example, than for someone who patrols a relatively peaceful neighborhood. Tuning the system to account for these differences is key to making it work.

- Some agencies include each officer's chain-of-command on any given day. If an officer's results are different depending on the supervisor, that will become clear. It also tracks demographic information for officers and offenders, so racial patterns will become apparent. Since it also tracks training, it can identify if an officer is missing critical training.

- The solution Sierra built with the **Los Angeles Police Department** (LAPD) analyzes each officer's performance each night, sending an electronic action item to the supervisor's inbox if a performance varies from similarly-tasked officers.

  The current version of the LAPD's system, which Sierra put together and went live in 2007, is TEAMS II (Training, Evaluation, and Management System). It was originally mandated by a consent decree between the department and the U.S. Department of Justice in 2001. TEAMS II looks at five issues (use of force, complaints, collisions, pursuits, and claims & lawsuits) and analyses how often an officer is involved in these incidents compared with other officers, as well as the frequency of each issue per stop and arrest made.

- In the solution Sierra built with the **New Orleans Police Department** (NOPD), a dashboard allows supervisors to "*look at everybody in their command in 30 seconds and get a summary of what they have done over the past 24 hours*".

  "The supervisors are where change happens and where it affects the people on the street, and giving them the right tools is probably the most impactful thing the system does."

Lessons Learned

- **Data quality** in the data sources being examined is paramount. Whether CAD, RMS, HR, or scheduling systems, if the data is incomplete or of poor quality then the results are not as reliable.

- Getting **officer buy-in** is key. Officers may initially be suspicious of a system that is used to track disciplinary issues. For the system to reassure the community, the public needs to understand how it works:

> NOPD did not want its officers to view the system as punitive. The EIS was not to be a disciplinary management tool, but a **human resource management** tool for alerting supervisors when trends need supervisory intervention. The NOPD solution includes **commendations** and positive comments from the public, as well as granting individual officers self-service access to information in their personnel files.

> Los Angeles had concerns at the beginning that the system would generate extra work for supervisors. Over the next two years, the system proved itself as a helpful tool that assisted supervisors, keeping the teams focused.
>
> Today, the officers feel they are part of an organization that is transparent and holds its people accountable.

- Making **fair comparisons.** Determining appropriate peer groups for each analysis was crucial to ensure comparisons matched officers doing similar work in similar circumstances.

Benefits

- **Early Intervention:**
  Before LAPD had its EIS in place, supervisors were often unsurprised when they heard about officers getting in trouble — but nothing had been done to keep issues from escalating. Now command staff are proactive and intervene, moving people, or changing assignments before an officer gets into a risk-based problem.

- **Staff Retention:**
  It's expensive to train an officer. If you can intervene with training, communication, or counseling to turn things around before it's too late, it is a huge benefit for all concerned.

- **Better Decision-making:**
  Supervisors can now know how their people are performing backed by quantitative decisions. When officers are being considered for new assignments, promotions, or commendations everyone involved wants to be sure the decisions are fair. Without good objective data available, it was easy for those decisions to be based on memory, not on accurate data. EIS also helps ease officers' concerns about fairness and favoritism in making these assignments.

- **Public Trust and Communication:**
   In addition to being able to tell the public that the department has an EIS in place, agencies also have more accurate data available. Releasing data sets to the public helps increase public engagement, transparency, as well as accountability.

- **Officer Wellness**
  Agencies are now looking at using the same operational metrics to flag early detection of potential PTSD-related work behaviours by comparing an officer to their own personal historical metrics and looking for material changes in risky behavior or overall performance.

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Early intervention Systems

- Transparent monitoring of key performance indicators and highlighting potential outliers among peers in similar situations helps the officer, the agency, and the community.

- Scheduling and tracking follow-up tasks for supervisors provides accountability at all levels.

- Tuning of thresholds and peer groups for continuous improvement of the analytics.

Learn More

The solutions for U.S. customers were delivered in conjunction with our US affiliate Sierra-Cedar. To learn more about Sierra's EIS solution and our other Justice and Public Safety solutions and services contact us:

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