



DIVERTING SHOPLIFTERS

A Research Report and Planning Guide



Emily Gold and Julius Lang
The Center for Court Innovation



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
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Office of the Director
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COPS

Dear Colleagues,

The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services has partnered with Target and the Center for Court Innovation to produce this new report on innovative responses to retail theft. The problem of retail theft, or shoplifting as it is also known, creates a significant drain on both public and private resources. It causes losses for businesses, increases prices for everyday consumers, and creates costs for the criminal justice system that must arrest, prosecute, and detain offenders.

Responding to individual cases of retail theft may not consume the resources that one violent crime does, but in the aggregate, they combine to create an expensive problem. We should learn to borrow strategies from the private sector, which in this challenging economic environment, has turned its attention to “margin management.” Reducing packaging, eliminating an unnecessary step in manufacturing, finding a better way to stack boxes—these cost-saving decisions may save only a few pennies per unit, but add up to millions of dollars when considering economies of scale. For law enforcement, better margin management can mean looking at how to save resources by reducing shoplifting through good problem solving, streamlining case processing, and carefully weighing how much low-level offenses really cost our agencies.

Moreover, in addition to the direct costs borne by all of us, retail theft contributes to a larger problem. Since broken windows was first introduced a few decades ago, law enforcement professionals who have embraced community policing have understood that all crimes—low-level offenses included—feed a cycle of disinvestment and disorder, especially in high crime, high poverty, and underserved communities. Shoplifting erodes profits, businesses shutter, and neighborhoods lose safe and convenient places where community members have access to quality goods and services.

Safety and commerce go hand in hand. Customers and employees want to shop and work in spaces perceived as safe. Safe spaces exist in areas where retail is strong, businesses are thriving, and neighborhoods are vibrant. It is our responsibility as law enforcement to help create those safe, attractive, mixed-use environments.

Once again, I would like to acknowledge our partners, Target and the Center for Court Innovation, for taking the lead in producing this resource. The COPS Office hopes that it will create dialogue around this issue and help inspire new ways to tackle a familiar and persistent problem.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Bernard K. Melekian".

Bernard K. Melekian, Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services



Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to present you with a report that documents our recent work with the U.S. Department of Justice COPS Office and the Center for Court Innovation. The report details a research process that involved a multi-disciplinary executive session hosted by Target Corporation during which public and private partners explored promising alternatives for responding to low-level retail theft.

Target is committed to working with local and national partners to strengthen neighborhoods across the country. Recognizing that public safety is a shared responsibility, our program builds strong partnerships with law enforcement agencies. And because of our investments in these partnerships, whether through grants, skill-training, or convening workshops to share ideas, Target has established itself as a leader in advancing what is possible in public-private partnerships.

One of the challenges we are currently addressing is retail theft. It is no secret that retail theft—particularly low-level offending—consumes an enormous amount of public and private resources. In the current fiscal climate, these resources are stretched even more.

Here at Target, we are taking an active and engaged role in alleviating some of this burden on the criminal justice system. Our hope is that in doing so, and encouraging our industry partners to do the same, we can both reduce crime and make our communities safer.

We offer gratitude to our partners—the COPS Office and the Center for Court Innovation—as well as the countless retailers, police officers, prosecutors, and program directors who have contributed to this research. We hope this is only the beginning of an on-going collaboration to address retail theft and other key public safety issues.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Brekke".

Brad Brekke, Vice President, Assets Protection
Target

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Greg Berman, director

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Dear Friends:

The enclosed report is the product of a unique partnership involving the U.S. Department of Justice COPS Office, the Target Corporation, and the Center for Court Innovation. It isn't every day that the public, private, and non-profit sectors come together, but in this case we were united by a shared interest in rethinking the response to retail theft.

Questioning conventional wisdom and dreaming up new ideas is a big part of what we do here at the Center for Court Innovation. Our mission is to help the justice system reduce crime, aid victims, and restore public trust in justice. We accomplish these goals by launching demonstration projects, performing original research, and providing technical assistance to justice reformers around the world.

Our interest in retail theft is animated by a belief that there are no victimless crimes—which begs the question: Is it possible to demonstrate that we take retail theft seriously without increasing the use of incarceration and creating greater burdens on an already over-taxed justice system?

In an effort to begin to answer this question, we worked with our partners at Target and the COPS Office to convene a roundtable that brought together leading retailers, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, program directors, and researchers to map the territory and identify opportunities for innovation.

As the attached report indicates, the conversation was a fruitful one. It is my hope that this document will help spark a wave of experimentation across the country as local jurisdictions look to test new ways of responding to low-level theft. I look forward to working with our friends at Target and the COPS Office in the days ahead to support and sustain this movement.

Regards,



Greg Berman, Director
Center for Court Innovation

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I. Preface

IN FEBRUARY 2011 A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY GROUP OF LAW ENFORCEMENT, PROSECUTORS, RESEARCHERS, SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND RETAIL STAFF CONVENED AT TARGET CORPORATION'S HEADQUARTERS IN MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, FOR AN EXECUTIVE SESSION ENTITLED, "STRENGTHENING THE RESPONSE TO RETAIL THEFT: CREATIVE DIVERSION STRATEGIES AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS." THE EVENT WAS PART OF AN INITIATIVE OF THE CENTER FOR COURT INNOVATION, THE COPS OFFICE, AND TARGET.

"Retail theft is a business problem and a community problem," said Brad Brekke, Vice President, Assets Protection, at Target, in his opening remarks. Shoplifting accounts for almost 20 percent of all thefts in the United States, consuming countless public dollars in police, prosecution, and court costs.¹ For retailers, the annual cost is in the billions. "The traditional paradigm of arrest and prosecution is very costly for our public sector partners," said Mr. Brekke. "At a time when public and private resources are decreasing, we need to explore different approaches."

The executive session set out to tackle some of the tough questions associated with this issue. Are there alternative approaches that the criminal justice system could consider in addressing high-volume, low-level shoplifting cases? Is there a role for retailers in supporting these approaches? And would these new approaches show cost-savings, freeing up public and private resources to be re-directed to other public-safety issues?

"No one agency has the answer," said Matthew Scheider, Acting Deputy Director of the Community Policing Advancement Directorate at the COPS Office. In bringing together a multi-disciplinary group of some of the nation's innovators from the retail and criminal justice communities, the executive session's goal was to uncover some promising strategies that have emerged from strategic public-private collaborations. "We need to partner to innovate," said Mr. Brekke.

Attendees at the executive session hailed from the retail industry, law enforcement, prosecution, academia, and the non-profit sector. Geographic representation included participants from Seattle, WA; St. Joseph, MO; Minneapolis, MN; Atlanta, GA; Anne Arundel County, MD; New York, NY, and Newark, NJ. In addition, over 70 interviews were conducted with stakeholders from around the United States and the United Kingdom to inform this research.

This report aims to catalog the research conducted for this project. It outlines some of the challenges of responding to retail theft that relevant stakeholders must tackle and highlights several promising approaches that provide an alternative to the traditional justice system—whether via streamlined processing or by an alternative intervention for the offender. The report concludes with a guide for jurisdictions interested in piloting a program in their community to improve the response to retail theft.

II. Shoplifting Basics

What is retail theft?

Retail theft—commonly known as shoplifting—refers to the theft of consumer goods from any retail establishment. Criminal law statutes in each state determine the dollar thresholds for misdemeanor and felony charges. Retail theft may be committed by customers or employees, first-time or habitual offenders. This project focuses primarily on non-professional or “opportunistic” retail theft.

Who offends?

Retail theft has a diverse offender profile. “Shoplifters are some of the most interesting cases because you never know who’s coming through the door,” said Barb Darbey, Executive Director of Monroe County (NY) Enhanced Pretrial Services, in a pre-session interview. Retail theft occurs among all socio-economic demographics. One recent study concluded that it was more prevalent among high-income and/or highly educated individuals.² Another report concludes that most non-professional shoplifters do not commit other types of crimes.³

Why do offenders steal?

Motives for retail theft are as diverse as the group’s demographics. “Much shoplifting is opportunistic,” said Ronald Clarke, a Rutgers University professor who specializes in problem-oriented policing, “which means that shoplifters are often little different from a store’s regular customers.”⁴ “Opportunistic shoplifting” describes thefts that are not pre-planned and are committed by individuals stealing for personal use, not for profit or resale. Surveys conducted by the National Association for Shoplifting Prevention concluded that approximately 73 percent of shoplifters don’t plan to steal in advance, and that more than half of all adult offenders find it difficult to stop, even after they get caught.⁵

A small but significant percentage of shoplifters could be described as “professional” shoplifters, stealing for profit or resale (sometimes referred to as Organized Retail Crime). This subgroup accounts for a significantly higher percentage of total dollar losses than their non-professional counterparts.⁶

Who are the stakeholders?

Responding effectively to any community problem requires the coordination of many players. Retail theft in particular involves the business community as a partner in both prevention and response. The primary stakeholders of a well-coordinated strategy would include:

- Retail personnel (corporate and store-level) and retail associations
- Private security
- Law enforcement
- Prosecutors, including specialized property crime units and/or community prosecution teams
- Court staff, including problem-solving courts
- Probation
- Pre-trial services agencies and outside social service providers
- Community members and/or consumers

The impact of retail theft on each of the above stakeholders is substantial. For retailers, retail theft drives up costs due to the security staffing, surveillance, and deterrence measures needed to combat the problem. For the criminal justice system players, low-level retail theft often occupies a large percentage of misdemeanor case-loads, clogging the desks of everyone involved. And for the community—while many of the costs are unseen—they are significant. Increased costs in the private sector translate into increased consumer prices. Community members also may see neighborhood businesses close or cut their workforces in response to lost profits due to shoplifting. Perhaps worst of all, the community may lose trust in the criminal justice process if they perceive the system to be unresponsive to these crimes.

What is the typical response?

The short answer is that typically, there is no response. The National Association for Shoplifting Prevention (NASP) estimates that retail theft offenders are caught only one in 48 times that they steal, so the vast majority of offenses are never addressed.⁷

For offenders who are apprehended, historically, there are two primary responses: (1) “catch and release” or (2) arrest and prosecution. Catch and release often describes situations in which an offender is apprehended in-store, but for various reasons (such as the offender’s age or the circumstances of the offense), the offender is released without further processing. In most other cases, retail staff call the police to initiate the traditional justice system process. One study found that if an arrest is made, approximately 68 percent of offenders will be convicted of their top arrest charge.⁸ Typical post-conviction sanctions include community service, a fine, or jail-time—in addition to a criminal conviction. Diversion from the traditional justice process is also becoming increasingly common for retail theft cases, which will be discussed in Sections III and IV.

In addition to criminal prosecution, a retailer may require a retail theft offender to sign a trespass agreement, prohibiting him or her from re-entering the store for a specified amount of time, possibly forever. Retailers may also choose to sue the offender for civil recovery, a statutory provision available in most U.S. states that allows retailers to demand economic restitution with damages, regardless of whether the offender is prosecuted. Civil recovery is pursued in about half of retail theft cases, although only a fraction of those result in payment.⁹

III. Framing the Problem

RETAIL THEFT PRESENTS MANY CHALLENGES:

Public Misperceptions

“The public seems to believe that casual shoplifting is not a big deal—that it’s okay to steal just a little bit,” said Randall Ferris, Senior Director of Loss Prevention at SUPERVALU. “Offenders frequently tell us: ‘I wasn’t stealing, I was shoplifting.’ The term ‘shoplifting’ perpetuates the problem,” he said. The phrase “victimless crime” is often associated with shoplifting.

Public perceptions may be tied to a lack of understanding about the impact that the offense has on the community. Sharla Jackson, a senior assistant district attorney in Fulton County (GA), explained: “People are more likely to be victims of property crime than violent crime, and yet they don’t understand that their neighborhood store is closing due to thefts.” Increased prices—to cover losses and enhanced security—are another direct result of retail theft.

Costs to Retailers

Addressing retail theft has both direct and indirect costs for retailers. According to a 2009 survey of 25 major U.S. retailers, over one million offenders were apprehended for retail theft at those retailers alone, a nearly 17 percent increase from the previous year.¹⁰ Over \$111 million worth of stolen goods was recovered. But with research indicating that a shoplifter is apprehended only once in 48 times, the total loss to the retail industry is easily in the billions, without accounting for the cost of surveillance measures, security staff, and other preventive and responsive measures.¹¹

Responding to retail theft also brings added risk of liability to retailers. “Retailers have to strike a legal balance between how much you are losing to the shoplifter and how much you could have to pay out in a lawsuit if something goes wrong during the apprehension,” according to Mr. Ferris of SUPERVALU. “You can have a wrongful stop of a truly innocent customer, but also a bad stop of a truly

“SOME COURTS WILL SAY: ‘YOU GOT YOUR \$20 WIDGET BACK; WHERE’S THE LASTING DAMAGE?’”

— Lisa LaBruno
Retail Industry Leaders Association

guilty shoplifter,” said Lisa LaBruno, Vice President of Loss Prevention & Legal Affairs at the Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA). “Both expose the retailer to civil liability and potential brand damage,” she said.

Finally, there are the costs of assisting with prosecution. “It needs to be stressed to ground-level staff that a \$200 theft may seem like a lot at the time, but apprehension and prosecution can be much more expensive,” said Brian Smith, a former loss prevention officer who now teaches at Rutgers University. Of course, decreasing loss prevention personnel can make the stores more vulnerable to retail theft, as well.

Restitution through the criminal and civil court systems can help retailers recoup some of the costs of retail theft, but not all. “Some courts will say: ‘You got your \$20 widget back; where’s the lasting damage?’” explained Ms. LaBruno from RILA. “But they aren’t thinking about the costs of prevention,” she said. Civil recovery is a legal remedy available to retailers to cover these costs, but is pursued in only about half of all retail theft cases and only a fraction of those result in payment.¹²

Costs to the System

The criminal justice system’s traditional response to crime—arrest and prosecution—is also costly. According to a tool developed by the RAND Corporation, a typical theft costs the average police department over \$2,100 to process¹³—and this doesn’t include the time and resources of prosecutors,

defenders, and courts to review and litigate cases. “It’s hard to dedicate the manpower to process misdemeanor shoplifters,” said Lieutenant Michael Brothers, a commander in the Anne Arundel County (MD) Police Department. “We’ll always respond, but it may be severely delayed,” he said.

Some jurisdictions have dealt with these costs by choosing not to prosecute certain retail theft cases. “There are courts in some of our markets that tell us not to bring them our casual shoplifters,” said Mr. Ferris from SUPERVALU. Milwaukee County (WI) District Attorney John Chisholm explained how his jurisdiction used to face a similar dilemma: “We didn’t want to ignore the hardship that retailers were experiencing, but the traditional response wasn’t sustainable from a resource perspective. We were investing an enormous amount of time and system resources, often on cases where a guy stole a packet of bologna,” he said.

Communication Gaps

Communication gaps among agency partners can further frustrate responses to retail theft. “Something as simple as making sure retailers know the arrest and prosecution thresholds can be a challenge,” said Nate Hartle, Senior Group Manager Investigations, Assets

Protection, at Target. Michael Scott, director of the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing (POP Center), explained in a pre-session interview that prosecutors might create unofficial thresholds, such as a \$50-value minimum, but fail to (or choose not to) communicate that to retailers or police. “No one is telling those stores and officers to stop arresting offenders below the threshold,” he said.

Even when partners are committed to keeping the lines of communication open, there are plenty of logistical obstacles to keeping everyone on the same page. “Unfortunately, it is easy for notices to get lost in the mail or to be addressed to the wrong staff member,” said Ms. LaBruno. “From a corporate-level perspective,” said Mr. Ferris of SUPERVALU, “the last thing we want is for our staff not to appear as witnesses in court. But due to staff schedules and the fact that security personnel may rotate among various stores, it’s easy for these breakdowns in communication to occur.”

A common result of these communication gaps is that retailers are unaware of how a case was resolved. “It can be very frustrating when a retailer’s first contact from the prosecutor is a letter stating that the case has been dismissed,” explained Ms. LaBruno from RILA. And in cases where the offender was convicted, the

“WE DIDN’T WANT TO IGNORE THE HARDSHIP THAT RETAILERS WERE EXPERIENCING, BUT THE TRADITIONAL RESPONSE WASN’T SUSTAINABLE FROM A RESOURCE PERSPECTIVE. WE WERE INVESTING AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF TIME AND SYSTEM RESOURCES, OFTEN ON CASES WHERE A GUY STOLE A PACKET OF BOLOGNA.”

— John Chisholm
Milwaukee County (WI) District Attorney’s Office

“I WOULD LOVE TO TAKE CREDIT FOR THE DROP IN CRIME, BUT CRIME IS DOWN EVERYWHERE, AND IT’S DIFFICULT TO KNOW WHY.”

— Mark Metzger
Baltimore County (MD) Police Department

retailer may never learn what sanction(s) he or she received, as there is rarely follow-up contact after a case is resolved.

Challenges of Evaluation

Evaluating the success of a response has many barriers, not the least of which is access to data. Data that may reveal offenders’ re-arrest and conviction rates, for example, is often locked away in law enforcement, prosecutor, and/or court databases, which outside partners may have little luck accessing. The National Association for Shoplifting Prevention (NASP), for example, which runs anti-shoplifting classes all over the country, has had its program evaluated in the handful of jurisdictions that are willing and able to supply the requisite recidivism data. Cost-savings, too, can be difficult to measure due to lack of data; most public and private stakeholders find it challenging to attach a dollar value cost to individual shoplifting cases.

Even with access to participant data, evaluation has its limits if there is no comparison group. For example, a program that demonstrates that only 5 percent of its participants are re-arrested within 2 years must also answer the question—compared to what? Comparing to average statistics won’t pass

muster with the research community because the host of variables that make the groups incomparable (e.g., youths eligible for a diversion program are inherently different from youths who are not).

Another problem is that many responses are implemented in tandem with other approaches. “I would love to take credit for the drop in crime,” said Dr. Mark Metzger, who runs the Baltimore JOINS Program at the Baltimore County (MD) Police Department. “But crime is down everywhere, and it’s difficult to know why,” he explained. Only a larger-scale (and expensive) study would be able to attribute the observed success with a specific intervention.

Summary of the Problems

- Retail theft is often misunderstood to be a “victimless crime”
- Responding to retail theft is costly to public and private stakeholders
- Fostering communication and reconciling the objectives and policies of relevant stakeholders can be challenging
- Few responses are evaluated for effectiveness or cost-efficiency

IV. Diversion

Diversion is a tool to re-route offenders from the traditional justice process. Diversion can happen early in the process (see Figure 1), such as in lieu of arrest, or later in the process, in lieu of formal prosecution.¹⁴

Diversion can be initiated by a variety of system players, including police, prosecution, and the court, involving other community partners as service providers when appropriate. In the context of retail theft cases, some retailers may exercise an informal version of diversion by using their discretion to release certain offenders without calling the police, thereby keeping some shoplifters out of the system.

Objectives

The goal of diversion is to both relieve the pressure on the justice system and to provide more targeted responses for offenders. Interventions and sanctions vary considerably. For retail theft offenders, common sanctions include performing community service, attending an anti-shoplifting class or other educational programming, and paying restitution.

Typical Cases

Of the programs studied for this project, fewer than 20 percent were geared towards shoplifting cases only.

Most programs accept a variety of low-level offenses, such as criminal trespass, low-level drug charges, and simple assault. Many programs accept a mix of misdemeanor and felony cases. Limiting diversion eligibility to non-violent offenses is also common.

Approximately one-third of programs researched for this project accept only first-time offenders. Two programs noted that they recently eased restrictions beyond first-time offenders in order to expand the

program's reach. Some programs that are court-based allow for judicial discretion to override a first-time offender requirement.

Programs may be geared toward offenders of a range of ages. The majority of programs researched

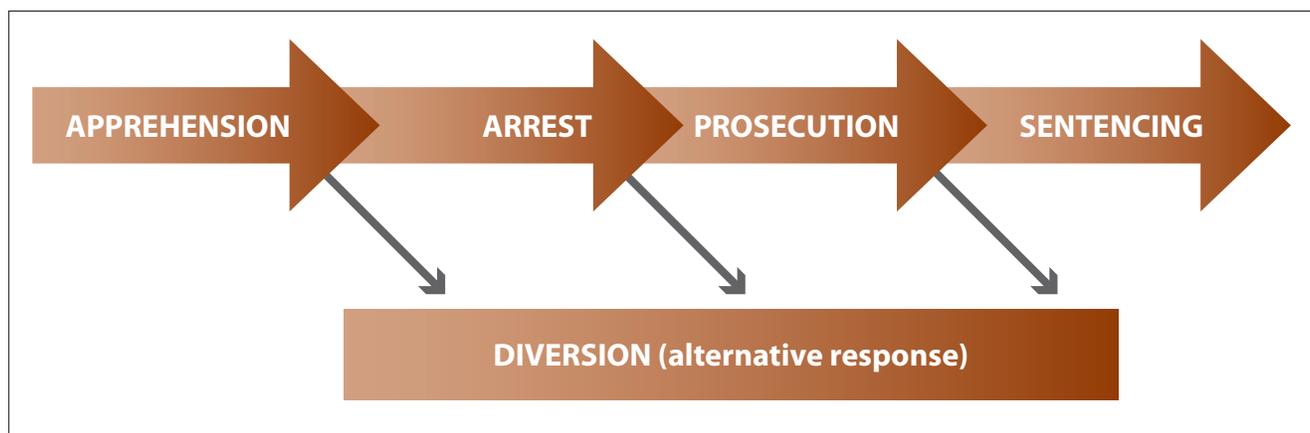
accept adults; many have separate programs for juveniles also.

Skepticism

Despite the benefits suggested by diversion, they are not without criticism. Some stakeholders interviewed for this project were concerned that diversion programs are perceived to be a slap on the wrist. "I don't think a criminal who walks out of my store with an armload of merchandise should get a 'program,'" explained one loss prevention executive of a national retail chain. "Program" is often perceived to be synonymous with a free pass.

*OF THE PROGRAMS STUDIED
about one half restrict cases to
misdemeanors only.*

Figure 1: Diversion and the Criminal Justice Process



The root of the issue here is that all stakeholders (understandably) want offenders to be held accountable for their actions. Community prosecutor Sharla Jackson explained: “Responses that fail to provide accountability to offenders are a waste of time.” Thus, successful diversion programs tackle this head on in a few different ways: (1) they are able to convince stakeholders that, for some offenders, accountability can come in a form other than a criminal conviction and jail sentence; (2) their program’s accountability measures are a good alternative for the cases that would otherwise receive no response at all; and (3) those measures are sufficient to deter both that specific offender from re-offending, as well as future would-be offenders.

V. Promising Responses to Retail Theft

JURISDICTIONS AROUND THE COUNTRY ARE EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW APPROACHES TO RETAIL THEFT. THESE APPROACHES INCLUDE DIVERSIONARY RESPONSES, AS WELL AS OTHER FORMS OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS THAT AIM TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF PROCESSING CASES. THIS SECTION HIGHLIGHTS A HANDFUL OF SAMPLE RESPONSES AND OUTLINES THE KEY COMPONENTS THAT MANY OF THESE PROMISING RESPONSES SHARE.



The Crawley Retail Theft Program is an example of an effective collaboration effort between public and private partners. Retailers participate in victim-offender meetings at the police station with the youth offender and his/her parents to discuss the impact of the offense on all parties. Retailer participants receive a 1-hour training about restorative justice prior to the conference. School Liaison Officers provide educational workshops in local schools as a prevention measure.

Eligibility criteria: Only juveniles (ages 16 and under) with no prior participation in the program or previous retail theft convictions are eligible; juvenile must admit to the offense.

Referral structure and legal status: The responding officer determines eligibility. Upon compliance, the participant receives a “final warning” in lieu of a formal arrest and reprimand.

Costs and funding: The program’s small budget is funded jointly by the police department and the Crawley Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. There is no participation fee for offenders.

“RETAILERS ARE HAPPY TO PARTICIPATE BECAUSE THEY FEEL
THEY ARE GIVING SOMETHING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY.”

— Officer Lisa Smith
Crawley Retail Theft Program, Sussex Police Department

Key Components

Collaboration

“Offenders tell us that they are less likely to shoplift again from a retailer who offered them a positive intervention,” said Caroline Kochman, director of the National Association for Shoplifting Prevention (NASP). Unfortunately, fewer than 20 percent of the programs interviewed have a role for retailers in the diversion process.

Retailer collaboration may include a seat at the table of a victim-offender meeting or co-facilitation of an anti-shoplifting class. Retailers may also be able to aid in preventive efforts by sharing expertise and resources with community partners. The JOINS Program, a juvenile diversion program in Baltimore

County, MD, worked with Target to develop an educational video for local schools. The project capitalized on Target’s surveillance footage of its stores, as well as the JOINS Program’s existing ties in the community. “The video shows students the sophistication of loss prevention, which I think helps with deterrence,” said Mark Metzger, the program’s director.

OF THE PROGRAMS STUDIED
fewer than 20% involve retailers
in the diversion process.

Process Streamlining

Streamlining is an example of a component that can be paired with a diversion program, but can also stand alone. The Seattle Retail Theft Program is an example of a program that doesn’t currently have a diversionary component, but has effectively streamlined the arrest process for certain retail theft cases, thereby decreasing police response time and calls for service.



The Seattle Retail Theft Program is an example of a streamlining program. This retail-police partnership provides training and support for a streamlined out-of-custody filing system for misdemeanor retail theft cases. The program is staffed by just one person—a trained retail theft detective. Most first-time offenders are processed through the pre-trial diversion program at the Seattle Community Court.

Eligibility criteria: The program is available only to misdemeanor offenders who do not have an open warrant.

Referral structure and legal status: At referral, offenders are released (pre-arrest) from the store. Offenders will be notified by mail within 8–12 weeks if the case will be prosecuted.

Results: The program has reduced the volume of calls for service for shoplifting and improved police response times.

Costs and funding: The program is funded by the Seattle Police Department. There is no participation fee.

“THIS PROGRAM HAS TAKEN 2,700 RADIO CALLS OFF THE STREET.”

— Detective Robert Seavey
Seattle Police Department

Research indicates that the use of standardized probable cause affidavits is becoming increasingly common nationwide. The affidavit forms are created by local prosecutors and then completed by retail staff, reducing paperwork for responding police officers and standardizing the evidence that is collected on the scene. The goal of this process is to decrease the burden on law enforcement of responding to shoplifting calls for service and ensure that quality testimonial evidence is collected for prosecution.

Offender Assessment

“Assessing offenders is critical,” said John Chisholm, Milwaukee County (WI) District Attorney. “It helps you single out the people who can be kept out of the system and narrow in on those who are a bigger concern,” he explained.

According to Professor Joanne Katz of the Missouri Western State University, “The research says that if you take low-risk offenders and apply the punishment that everyone else gets, you’re going to make them worse. The chance of reoffending skyrockets.” Appropriate assessments can therefore reduce this risk of making matters worse, as well as for allocating precious resources where they’re needed most.

“BE CAREFUL NOT TO CONFLATE RISK (OF REOFFENDING) WITH NEED (WHAT’S FUELING THE ARREST).”

— Danielle Malangone
Midtown Community Court

“Be careful not to conflate risk (of reoffending) with need (what’s fueling the arrest),” said Danielle Malangone, deputy director of the Midtown Community Court in New York City. Each can be assessed on their own or in tandem—with risk assessments identifying who is at risk of recidivating and needs assessments identifying what issues should be addressed by an intervention.

Assessments can be helpful tools for agencies connecting offenders to diversion programs. “It’s important to figure out who these offenders are so we can make an appropriate recommendation,” said Sharla Jackson. “For example, if we use ‘first-time offender’ as the only criterion for diversion, we include the chronic offender who had simply never been caught before,” she said. Similarly, Professor Katz explained: “There are second- and third-time offenders too who have needs that can better be addressed through diversion.”

Assessments could also be a valuable tool for retailers. First, assessments provide an objective system by which to address offenders, possibly reducing risk of civil liability that occurs with more ad hoc responses. Second, retailers could choose to invite

low-risk offenders back to their stores as customers, reserving trespass agreements for higher-risk offenders. In exploring this option, retailers would need to consider if and how the risk of civil liability would be mitigated or not by using a standardized assessment, as well as how retailers’ use of an assessment would be perceived by law enforcement and prosecutors’ offices.

Dr. Mark Metzger of Baltimore JOINS advocates for assessment to occur early in the process. “If you wait until prosecution, your intervention options are more limited.” Assessment up-front can identify offenders who would be appropriate for diversion from traditional prosecution.

Unfortunately, few evidence-based assessment tools are available in the public domain. Many existing tools can be quite costly and tend not to be geared towards the misdemeanor population. Accordingly, few of the programs examined for this project had access to evidence-based, validated assessment tools that

would allow them to appropriately sort high-risk offenders from lower-risk ones. There is a clear need to invest in developing and validating assessment tools for the shoplifter population.

OF THE PROGRAMS STUDIED
fewer than 20% use
an offender screening tool.

Offender Accountability

Holding offenders accountable—accomplished in the traditional process through prosecution and possible incarceration—can be achieved in other ways in a diversion program. “The public tends to equate accountability with punishment,” said Professor Katz of Missouri Western State University, “but there are ways to hold someone accountable that is not necessarily punitive.”

Many jurisdictions are testing accountability measures that don’t come in the form of a criminal sanction. For example, see youth courts as described on page 13.

“THE PUBLIC TENDS TO EQUATE ACCOUNTABILITY WITH PUNISHMENT, BUT THERE ARE WAYS TO HOLD SOMEONE ACCOUNTABLE THAT ARE NOT NECESSARILY PUNITIVE.”

— Joanne Katz
Missouri Western State University



Youth court (also known as “teen court”) provides a response to low-level offenses committed by young people. Typical youth courts train young people to serve as a literal jury of one’s peers, hearing the low-level cases of fellow youths from their community and crafting individualized sanctions based on each case (e.g., community service, letters of apology, youth development workshops, and referral to needed social services). Youth courts’ flexibility regarding referral sources and offender eligibility allows them to fit in many jurisdictions and work with a variety of community partners.

Eligibility criteria: Eligibility criteria vary by program. Petit larceny (i.e., theft) is the offense that almost all youth courts have in common: 98 percent hear petit larceny cases.

Referral structure and legal status: Program structure varies. Sixty-two percent receive referrals from two or more sources, which may include local schools, police, prosecutors, and/or the courts.

Problem addressed: Youth courts provide an accountability measure to low-level juvenile offenders, while providing a youth development opportunity for participants. Successful completion of youth court often means that the young offender will avoid the negative consequences of the justice system (e.g., criminal conviction).

Costs and funding: Almost 70 percent of youth courts operate within an annual budget of less than \$50,000. Approximately 75 percent of programs receive funding from local government.

Effectiveness: A recent study found that youth courts provide a \$9,200 net benefit per participant to crime victims and taxpayers. (Steve Aos et al. 2006. *Evidence-Based Public Policy Options to Reduce Future Prison Construction, Criminal Justice Costs, and Crime Rates*. Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.) Compliance with youth court sanctions is also often dramatically higher than for traditional courts—averaging 87 percent nationwide.

Some retailers expressed concern that accountability measures that don't include a conviction or guilty plea in criminal court can leave retailers vulnerable to civil liability because the absence of resolution on the criminal matter may support an offender's case that he/she was wrongfully apprehended by retail staff. Jurisdictions should consider how private agreements between retailers and offenders—much like commonly used trespass agreements—might reduce the risks of civil liability in cases where offenders are diverted before criminal conviction.

Interventions to Change Behavior

Some diversion strategies aim to change an offender's behavior to reduce the likelihood that he or she will shoplift again. Anti-shoplifting classes educate offenders about the costs of shoplifting to both retailers and to the community. Many jurisdictions that were consulted for this project had some experience either developing their own anti-shoplifting curriculum or contracting with an outside agency to provide the service.



Much like youth courts, community accountability panels aim to use community members to help establish codes of conduct for their fellow citizens, while relieving some of the burden of low-level offenses on the traditional justice system. Panel members are typically volunteers who receive training to determine an offender's eligibility for diversion and/or appropriate diversionary sanctions. Community accountability panels use community engagement to help offenders repair the harm done to the community. Shoplifting offenses are often one of many offenses that appear before the panels.

Eligibility criteria: Eligibility criteria vary by program. The Kane County (IL) Second Chance Program limits their cases to adult first-time, non-violent offenders.

Referral structure and legal status: Program structure varies by program. The King County (WA) Partnership for Youth Justice is operated by the King County Superior Court and thus receives referrals directly from court. Most programs are set up so that compliant offenders are able to avoid a criminal conviction.

Costs and funding: Costs and funding vary. Most panels are relatively inexpensive to operate, as they rely on volunteer panel members from the community.

Featured program: The Winooski Police Department (VT) operates a community reparative board directly out of their stationhouse as part of a statewide network of community justice centers. The board hears about 200 cases each year.

Evidence suggests that treatment must be prescribed based on an offender's criminogenic needs—dynamic factors associated with criminal behavior—in order to produce positive impacts and change criminal behavior. Yet conventional interventions for shoplifters take a one-size-fits-all approach and therefore may fail to address an individual's most salient needs, including the "criminal thinking" that often precipitates re-offending. In response, the Midtown Community Court (NY) is developing a program that would pair offenders with a unique menu of interventions based on the results of a validated needs assessment. Offenders scoring high in both the employment and antisocial thinking domains, for instance, would receive a combination of job training and a cognitive behavioral change program that includes cognitive restructuring and life skills training.

Restitution & Reparation

Restitution can be a valuable strategy in repairing the harm of the offense, both to the retailer and to the greater community. Community service is a common form of reparation—to repay the community for the harm done. Dr. Metzger advocates that community service should be meaningful and targeted. "The community

service that participants complete in the JOINS program is the same as voluntary community service opportunities in the community, with staff participating right alongside them," he said. "We want kids to feel proud of the work they do."

Monetary restitution can also help retailers recoup some of the losses associated with retail theft. More than half of the programs studied consider payment of

restitution as a possible sanction; some require it before an offender can join the program.

Reparation is a central component of an intervention called restorative justice, which may include a dialogue between an offender and a victim or community panel. Professor Katz, who specializes in restorative justice, said that "restorative justice is a philosophy, not a program," and thus can be an overlay to a range of programs.

Because restorative justice often involves the community in the reparative process, this strategy can have other benefits, as well. "Research has shown that people who volunteer for community accountability boards are less fearful of crime. It has helped counter the incorrect

public perception that crime rates are increasing," Professor Katz said.

OF THE PROGRAMS STUDIED
only 25% have ever tracked
recidivism data.

OF THE PROGRAMS STUDIED
more than 60% incorporate
some form of restitution
as a sanction.

Evaluation

Programs that evaluate their effectiveness are better able to advocate to potential partners, funders, and the community. While recidivism and cost-savings can be difficult to measure, creative programs identify additional performance metrics that are both feasible to track and helpful in demonstrating the program's benefits. These metrics may include increased recovery of restitution or civil recovery, decreased police service calls, and improved public trust in the justice system. "Don't miss out on collecting some qualitative data, too," suggested Nate Hartle, Senior Group Manager Investigations, Assets Protection, at Target. "That's what often generates an emotional response in supporters," he said.

Other Considerations

Civil liability and reputation: "As you go through the prosecution or diversion process, the risk of civil liability to the retailer increases at each stage," explained Lisa LaBruno of RILA. If properly crafted, diversion and other streamlining measures may help retailers mitigate risk. Retailers' commitment to diverting offenders when appropriate can also demonstrate to the community a commitment to improving the justice process.

Participation fee: Approximately half of the programs interviewed charge a participation fee. Multiple interviewees expressed concern that a fee may limit participation by indigent offenders, thereby excluding a significant subset of shoplifters. Retailers, too, may be reluctant to risk reputation damage by partnering with an organization that is perceived to charge unjust fees to program participants.

VI. Planning Guide

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS OFFER GUIDANCE TO PLANNERS EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE RESPONSES TO RETAIL THEFT.

IDENTIFY RELEVANT PLAYERS

- Which players in the jurisdiction have an interest in an improved response?
- What are the priorities and concerns of each?
- Which partner is able and willing to take the lead throughout the planning and implementation process?

MAP OUT BUSINESS AS USUAL

- What currently happens when a shoplifter is apprehended?
- Who has discretion and at what stage in the process?

IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- At what point(s) in the process do things stall?
- When are resources most heavily taxed?
- Where could the process be streamlined?
- How could the process be geared towards better outcomes?
- Are there opportunities (e.g., in-store, pre-charge) to divert certain offenders from the traditional process?

DESIGN A PILOT PROGRAM

Program goals

- What concrete objectives does the pilot aim to achieve?
- How will project stakeholders define what success looks like?
- How long will the pilot last?
- What is the evaluation plan?

Participants

- Are there opportunities to assess offenders' criminogenic risks to help determine who is appropriate for diversion or other responses?
- Which offenders will be eligible to participate?
- Are there opportunities to assess offenders' criminogenic needs to better inform what interventions are appropriate?

Examples of potential program objectives:

- | | |
|--|---|
| □ Reduce recidivism | □ Increase retailers' recovery of restitution and/or civil recovery |
| □ Decrease number of police service calls for retail theft | □ Minimize/decrease retailers' civil liability |
| □ Decrease burden on law enforcement, prosecution, courts, and other justice system agencies | □ Improve offender perceptions of fairness and trust in the justice process |

“YOU HAVE TO GET ADEQUATE STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN OR YOU’LL STRUGGLE TO GET REFERRALS TO THE PROGRAM. THIS INCLUDES GETTING SUPPORT FROM THE DEFENSE BAR; THEY’LL NEED TO SEE THE BENEFITS OF HAVING THEIR CLIENTS PARTICIPATE.”

— Joanne Katz
Missouri Western State University

Partners

- Which agencies would participate directly and how?
- How will partners maintain communication with one another (e.g., monthly meetings or e-mail groups)?
- What kind of support would be helpful from non-participating stakeholders?
- How will senior leadership be engaged to ensure sustainability?

Program components

- Is there a programmatic component that aims to provide offender accountability?
- How will cases be referred to the program?
- Will the program help facilitate restitution payment or another form of reparation?
- Is the program designed to assess the criminogenic risks and needs of offenders?
- What will be the legal status of the case—both during diversion and upon successful completion?
- Will the program use graduated sanctions in cases of non-compliance?

- Will community members be involved (e.g., as volunteers or as members of accountability panels)?
- How will the program alleviate retailer concerns about increased risk of civil liability?

Evaluation

- Which performance measures need to be tracked?
- Which partner(s) will be supplying the data?
- Who will collect and analyze the data?

“BE SURE YOU KNOW WHAT DATA YOU NEED UP FRONT SO YOU CAN TRACK IT FROM THE BEGINNING.”

— Mark Metzger
*Baltimore County (MD)
Police Department*

“IT’S IMPORTANT THAT ALL AGENCIES UP THE ENTIRE CHAIN HAVE BOUGHT IN, EVEN IF THEY DON’T HAVE A DIRECT ROLE. IF PROSECUTORS THINK THE PROGRAM IS A FREE RIDE, THAT MENTALITY WILL TRICKLE DOWN TO THE POLICE.”

— Lieutenant Michael Brothers
Anne Arundel County (MD) Police Department

IMPLEMENT THE PILOT

- Are partners being kept informed of changes?
- Is the program, as implemented, consistent with the original goals and objectives?
- What measures are in place to ensure sustainability of the project?
- Are there opportunities to publicize the project and/or get the community involved?

TRACK THE PILOT’S EFFECTIVENESS

- How did the performance outcomes change over the course of the pilot?
- Do the evaluation results suggest modifications that should be made to the pilot?
- To what extent can observed outcomes be attributed to the program?
- Are there additional performance metrics that should be tracked going forward?

Possible performance metrics:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increased program completion | <input type="checkbox"/> Shortened time from apprehension to completion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced reliance on incarceration | <input type="checkbox"/> Increased recovery of restitution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced recidivism | <input type="checkbox"/> Decreased civil liability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Net cost-savings | |

“RAISING AWARENESS
ABOUT SUCCESSFUL
PROGRAMS HELPS
EDUCATE THE RETAIL
COMMUNITY ABOUT
ALTERNATIVES TO THE
TRADITIONAL PROCESS.”

— Kelly Brandes
Cub Foods/Hormbacher’s

Conclusion

Research conducted for this project highlights the incredible potential for public and private stakeholders to foster new partnerships and collaborate in an experimentation process to better address retail theft. This process is well underway in many jurisdictions around the country, and promising strategies are emerging that tackle a problem that impacts the community in so many ways. At a minimum, the result has been improved communication between relevant stakeholders—and in many cases, programs have achieved positive outcomes such as decreased police service calls and increased diversionary opportunities for young offenders.

Yet despite these efforts, there is much work to be done. Stakeholders must invest in the taxing process of understanding partners’ interests and concerns, as well as confronting challenges such as offender assessment and program evaluation. The collaborators on this project hope that the research and planning guide presented here are helpful to jurisdictions who are interested in undertaking this valuable process.

Key Terms

ASSESSMENT, RISKS AND NEEDS: For the context of this report, risks and needs assessments are validated tools that can gauge who should be treated based on an offender’s risk of recidivism and what interventions are needed to reduce the likelihood of future criminal behavior.

CIVIL LIABILITY: Civil liability is when an individual or entity is required to compensate a plaintiff pursuant to a civil lawsuit or settlement. In the context of retail theft, an apprehended individual may sue a retailer for civil liability if he/she believes he/she was wrongfully detained or was wrongfully injured during the apprehension.

CIVIL RECOVERY: Civil recovery is a legal mechanism that allows victim-retailers to seek civil damages from the offender for retail theft.

DIVERSION: Diversion programs provide alternatives to the traditional justice process. Diversion can occur as early as pre-arrest or as late as post-charge.

FELONY: A felony is a more serious crime than a misdemeanor, as defined by the criminal statutes of each state. In the context of shoplifting, felony retail theft may be defined based on the dollar value of the item stolen and/or whether the offender was acting as part of an organized theft scheme.

JUVENILES: For the purposes of this report, “juveniles” refers to young people up to age 18. The treatment of juveniles by the criminal justice system will vary by state.

LOSS PREVENTION: “Loss prevention” describes the department within a retail corporation that is dedicated to preventing and responding to retail theft. This is also known as “asset(s) protection.”

MISDEMEANOR: A misdemeanor is a less serious crime than a felony, as defined by the criminal statutes of each state.

ORGANIZED RETAIL CRIME (ORC): Organized retail crime is broadly defined as offenses that victimize retailers through the coordinated, criminal efforts of a group of individuals for the purpose of economic gain.

RESTITUTION: Restitution is used here to broadly describe any payment made to a victim-retailer by an offender. This can include the return of the item stolen, as well as other non-monetary approaches that aim to compensate the retailer.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE: Restorative justice is a philosophy that aims to address and repair the harm done to the victim and the community. Restorative justice may include an in-person meeting between the victim and the offender.

RETAIL THEFT: Unless otherwise noted, “retail theft” is used here to describe lower-level offenses of opportunistic shoplifting. This definition is intended to exclude organized retail crime.

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About the COPS Office

The **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources. The community policing philosophy promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. In its simplest form, community policing is about building relationships and solving problems.

The COPS Office awards grants to state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire and train community policing professionals, acquire and deploy cutting-edge crime-fighting technologies, and develop and test innovative policing strategies. The COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders and all levels of law enforcement.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than \$16 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing. More than 500,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.

The COPS Office has produced more than 1,000 information products—and distributed more than 2 million publications—including Problem Oriented Policing Guides, Grant Owner's Manuals, fact sheets, best practices, and curricula. And in 2010, the COPS Office participated in 45 law enforcement and public-safety conferences in 25 states in order to maximize the exposure and distribution of these knowledge products. More than 500 of those products, along with other products covering a wide area of community policing topics—from school and campus safety to gang violence—are currently available, at no cost, through its online Resource Information Center at www.cops.usdoj.gov. More than 2 million copies have been downloaded in FY2010 alone. The easy to navigate and up to date website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.



Target Public Safety Partnerships

Target Corporation's extensive public safety partnerships strengthen neighborhoods across the country.

PUBLIC SAFETY GRANT PROGRAM — Since 1990, our Law Enforcement Grant Program has awarded more than \$6.5 million to law enforcement agencies across the country to fund equipment, training and other initiatives that support law enforcement efforts.

FORENSIC SERVICES — Target operates two accredited forensic laboratories with facilities in Las Vegas, Nev., and Minneapolis, Minn. that specializes in forensic video analysis, audio analysis, image analysis and latent fingerprints. In addition to Target cases, approximately 30 percent of the lab's case load supports law enforcement with examinations of evidence from violent felony crimes at no charge to law enforcement.

INVESTIGATIVE SUPPORT — At Target, we have developed a flexible investigations model that includes investigators, forensic labs and investigations centers located across the country that work together to prevent and resolve significant criminal activity impacting Target.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT — Target is proud to sponsor National Night Out (NNO), helping make this program available in more than 15,000 communities nationwide. National Night Out raises awareness of crime prevention and strengthens neighborhoods.

NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS MEMORIAL FUND and MUSEUM — Target partners with the NLEOMF and supports the annual Police Week activities in Washington, D.C. and the Police Unity Tour. Target is proud to support creation of the National Law Enforcement Museum which will tell the story of American law enforcement through high-tech, interactive exhibits, collections, research and education.

LAW ENFORCEMENT BUSINESS FELLOWSHIP — Target, in partnership with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) Foundation, has developed the Law Enforcement Business Fellowship, which is a training program based on several of Target's most effective leadership development courses, revised and geared toward law enforcement command staff.

SHOP WITH A COP — Shop with a Cop (SWAC) is a store-based event that pairs law enforcement with youth in the community to purchase holiday gifts for them and their families. Each year, Target stores across the country participate in this event to strengthen relationships with law enforcement and support local communities.

Minneapolis-based Target Corporation (NYSE:TGT) serves guests at 1,762 stores in 49 states nationwide and at Target.com. Since 1946, Target has given 5 percent of its income through community grants and programs; today, that giving equals more than \$3 million a week. For more information about Target's commitment to corporate responsibility, visit [Target.com/hereforgood](https://www.target.com/hereforgood).



About the Center for Court Innovation

The Center for Court Innovation is a public-private partnership dedicated to reducing crime, aiding victims, and promoting public confidence in justice.

■ REDUCING CRIME

Independent evaluators documented that prostitution arrests dropped by 56 percent after the Center’s Midtown Community Court opened in Manhattan. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg has hailed the Midtown Community Court for helping to revive Times Square. In southwest Brooklyn, major crime has declined by nearly 50 percent since the opening of the Center’s Red Hook Community Justice Center.

■ REPAIRING DISORDER

Both the Midtown Community Court and Red Hook Community Justice Center sentence low-level offenders to repair conditions of disorder—fixing broken windows, cleaning local parks, painting over graffiti. Each year, the two projects contribute 75,000 hours of community service—more than \$600,000 worth of labor. Compliance rates for community service are consistently 50 percent higher than the national average.

■ REDUCING RECIDIVISM

Participants in the Brooklyn Treatment Court, which offers judicially monitored drug treatment instead of incarceration, re-offend at a rate that is 27 percent lower than offenders who go through conventional courts. Through training and technical assistance, the Center has helped spread the drug court model throughout New York State; over 65,000 New Yorkers have participated in 178 drug courts, which are located in every county of the state.

■ IMPROVING PUBLIC TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

The Red Hook Community Justice Center has a 94 percent approval rating from local residents. Prior to the Justice Center’s opening, only 12 percent of local residents approved of courts. Moreover, a survey of defendants found that 86 percent said that their case was handled fairly—a result that was consistent regardless of race, gender, or educational background. In a phone survey, two out of three Midtown residents said they would be willing to pay additional taxes to support a community court.

■ RESEARCH AND DISSEMINATION

Researchers from the Center have made a number of important contributions to the field, including a randomized trial examining the effectiveness of batterer intervention programs and a national study of the efficacy of judicially monitored drug treatment. Authors from the Center have written numerous books, including *Trial & Error in Criminal Justice Reform* (Urban Institute Press) and *Good Courts: The Case for Problem-Solving Justice* (The New Press). The Center’s award-winning website, www.courtinnovation.org, receives 90,000 visitors each month; visitors download an average of 600,000 documents each year—research reports, how-to manuals, and interviews with leading scholars and practitioners.

■ **IMPROVING VICTIM SAFETY**

New York's 88 domestic violence courts—based on a model created by the Center—handle over 34,000 cases each year, linking victims to counseling, shelter, and other services while strengthening the monitoring of those accused of battering.

■ **REPLICATION**

Each year, the Center's demonstration projects are visited by more than 400 criminal justice officials from around the world. Many end up replicating, either in part or in whole, what they see. For example, there are six dozen community courts around the world based on the Center's model, including projects in England, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa.

■ **AWARDS**

The Center has received numerous awards for innovation, including the Peter F. Drucker Award for Nonprofit Innovation and the Innovations in American Government Award from Harvard University and the Ford Foundation. Other prizes include recognition from the American Bar Association, National Criminal Justice Association, and National Association for Court Management.

The problem of retail theft, or shoplifting as it is also known, creates a significant drain on both public and private resources. *Diverting Shoplifters: A Research Report and Planning Guide*—written for criminal justice agencies, community-based organizations, and retailers alike—explores new ways to respond to low-level theft, while also framing the nature of the problem. The promising practices included in this report focus on using problem solving and partnerships to reduce the level of retail theft, as well as the burden these cases place on the criminal justice system.



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To obtain details on COPS Office programs,
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