



COMPSTAT for Corrections

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The leadership of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) has entered into a partnership with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) to adapt the COMPSTAT strategic control system and implement it to address the management and performance challenges facing the CDCR. COMPSTAT has an impressive track record of improving the performance of police departments across the United States, and has the potential to do the same for the CDCR.

This White Paper describes the elements of the COMPSTAT system, how those elements work together to change an organization's behavior and increase its effectiveness, and issues to consider when implementing the COMPSTAT system in the CDCR.

As implemented in police departments, COMPSTAT is a related group of operational practices comprising of seven core elements

Mission clarification

The leadership of an organization uses COMPSTAT as a tool to clarify its mission and tighten the organizational focus on it. The success of the organization as a whole, and of individual managers within the organization, is defined by their delivery on the mission. In COMPSTAT police departments, delivery on the mission means crime reduction.

- COMPSTAT also includes the achievement of a challenging mission-related "stretch" goal, such as NYPD's goal of reducing crime by 10% over the course of one year.

Internal accountability

- COMPSTAT fixes the responsibility for achieving its goal on a specific set of managers.

- These managers are held accountable in regular COMPSTAT meetings run by members of the senior command staff.
- The managers (precinct commanders or the equivalent in police departments) present oral reports at the weekly meetings in a set rotation. They must answer for the precinct's crime data, shared with both the precinct commander and the command staff prior to the COMPSTAT meeting.
- The command staff questions the manager about the factors underlying crime trends in the precinct, and the tactical interventions made to address them.
- The COMPSTAT meetings are a rare form of direct information exchange between field and command staff.
- Managers who perform well in the COMPSTAT meetings are flagged for advancement. Those who don't are given the opportunity and support to improve, but an extended period of poor performance, or non-performance, will result in the replacement of that individual.
- COMPSTAT meeting performance is public, so that managers know how their peers are performing.

Geographic organization of operational command

- COMPSTAT holds middle managers to a high level of responsibility, but it also provides them with the autonomy and authority to devise and execute interventions to accomplish the departmental mission.

- Units of the organization with separate, non-geographically-based command structures are either placed under the control of the COMPSTAT-accountable managers, or otherwise made answerable for their contribution to the COMPSTAT mission.

Data-driven identification of problems and assessment of the department's problem-solving efforts

- The COMPSTAT meeting discussion begins with data that are accurate, consistently collected, and shared with managers and command staff.
- Data facilitate the identification and understanding of the problems that the organization must address.
- Data make it possible to assess the success of the organization's units in addressing those problems.
- Good analysis and presentation of COMPSTAT data are vital to its effective use.

Organizational flexibility

- A COMPSTAT organization must have the flexibility to shift resources to managers so that they can act based on their enhanced understanding of the crime problems in their precinct.
- Problem patterns are dynamic, so a COMPSTAT organization must be able to continuously assess the needs of its managers and allocate resources accordingly.
- To the extent that resources cannot be shifted, or only very slowly, the effectiveness of the managers in delivering on outcomes will be impeded.

Innovative problem-solving tactics

- COMPSTAT makes middle managers the primary problem-solvers in their organizations.
- COMPSTAT meetings act as a forum to workshop potential or actual problem-solving interventions.
- Due to the comparative nature of the COMPSTAT meetings and the pressure to effectively address problems, effective innovations spread throughout the organization.

External information exchange

- COMPSTAT information can be used to engage external stakeholders and build public support for the organization. This support is invaluable to an organization with ambitious goals planning to engage in innovative and aggressive tactics in order to realize them.
- COMPSTAT meetings can be used to invite

potential partners to assist the COMPSTAT department in achieving its objectives.

Applying the COMPSTAT model to a correctional agency, CDCR COMPSTAT could:

Tighten organizational focus on the mission of protecting public safety and reducing recidivism

- For CDCR institutions, this mission focus would mean operating prisons and camps that are orderly and safe for staff and inmates, and in which inmates are engaged in activities that make them less likely to endanger public safety upon their release.
- For parole, this mission focus would mean reducing re-offending by parolees and increasing the number of parolees who successfully complete their term of supervision and become productive citizens.

Hold the appropriate managers responsible for successfully contributing to the protection of public safety

- Wardens would present at COMPSTAT meetings on the performance of institutions, and parole administrators on the performance of parole regions.
- Focus areas for institutions would include the reduction of criminal behavior among inmates (such as assaults on staff or other inmates, gang involvement and drug use), and facilitation of inmate change (for example, delivering evidence-based change programs.)
- Focus areas for parole would include the reduction of criminal behavior by parolees, as indicated by arrests and absconding from supervision, and the facilitation of reintegration into their communities, by means of activities such as assistance in finding stable employment and housing.

Orient other organizational activities toward supporting the COMPSTAT-accountable managers in this work

- "Matrix" functions of the CDCR would be accountable in COMPSTAT through the wardens and parole administrators. The executive leadership of the CDCR would expect them to give their full support to the actions taken by the wardens and parole administrators to improve their public safety and recidivism reduction performance.
- Representatives of these functions, such as the Offices of Correctional Education, Adult Programs, Substance Abuse Management, Research, and Risk Management, would be present during COMPSTAT sessions to answer questions about their recidivism reduction efforts.

Gather, analyze and present data for problem identification and assessment of problem-solving efforts

- COMPSTAT would require measurement of outcomes, rather than processes, within CDCR.
- CDCR's COMPSTAT unit would assist CDCR components in gathering, analyzing and presenting data for the COMPSTAT meetings.

Match resource allocation to problem patterns

- CDCR resources should be allocated across and within institutions, but in many cases, resources cannot be easily moved from institution to institution. In such cases, the inmate population should be allocated so that fixed resources can make the maximum contribution to public safety.
- In parole, resources and agent time should be shifted from reactive activities to interventions with parolees at risk of re-offending before problems occur.

Devise new problem-solving approaches and disseminate innovative approaches throughout the organization

- CDCR leadership would give its managers the autonomy to devise and execute new approaches to problem-solving.
- Experimental approaches would be allowed and encouraged, and successful innovations are rewarded.
- COMPSTAT sessions would be used to bring attention to successful approaches, and to recommend them to other managers facing similar problems.

Exchange information to build partnerships

- CDCR information is very valuable to other public safety organizations. They could be invited to attend the COMPSTAT sessions and to exchange information with the CDCR.
- The LAPD, for example, is interested in incorporating parole information into its COMPSTAT and intelligence analysis processes, and possibly engaging in a pilot reentry project in Los Angeles.

COMPSTAT FOR CORRECTIONS

In March of 2006, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) entered into a partnership with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) to adapt and transplant the LAPD COMPSTAT management system to the CDCR. Observation of LAPD COMPSTAT convinced the CDCR that COMPSTAT held great promise in addressing the management and performance challenges facing their agency. Bringing this model to an organization with the complexity and geographical sweep of the CDCR represents a bold and

unprecedented application.

COMPSTAT was created in the New York Police Department (NYPD) in 1994, during William Bratton's term as Police Commissioner, as "a 'strategic control system' developed to gather and disseminate information on NYPD's crime problems and track efforts to deal with them" (Weisburd et al., 2003). COMPSTAT has been honored across the country for playing a powerful role in both transforming the NYPD into a data-driven, flexible, strategically-adept and focused crime-fighting operation, and transforming New York City, where crime has fallen dramatically. COMPSTAT's proponents emphasize its potential to drive internal change in the operation of an organization, and external change in the outcomes, specifically crime, that society hopes and expects a public safety organization to affect.

Not surprisingly, a tool of this promise has proved attractive to many other police departments. A 1999 survey of 515 departments with 100 or more sworn officers found that a third had implemented a COMPSTAT-like program, and another quarter were planning to do so (Weisburd et al., 2004). The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) adopted COMPSTAT after William Bratton became the Chief of Police in 2002. As in New York, the implementation of LAPD COMPSTAT has coincided with an impressive drop in crime; violent Part I¹ crimes declined 37.4% in Los Angeles from 2003 to 2005, and Part I property crimes declined 17.1% over the same period (LAPD, 2006).

As part of their COMPSTAT adoption initiative, the CDCR asked the UCI Center for Evidence-Based corrections to produce this White Paper describing the elements of the COMPSTAT system, how those elements work together to change an organization's behavior and increase its effectiveness, and issues to consider in implementing the COMPSTAT system in the CDCR.

The CDCR began implementation of its COMPSTAT system while this paper was being completed. As that effort remained in the early stages of development throughout the writing of this paper, I have left aside any comment on the early form of CDCR COMPSTAT, and focused on the general question of adapting the COMPSTAT system as it exists in law enforcement agencies to the CDCR.

THE COMPSTAT SYSTEM

When Commissioner Bratton took over the NYPD, his administration determined that the department faced a number of organizational problems that prevented it from realizing its potential to reduce crime (Weisburd et al., 2003, 2004). The NYPD lacked a sense of the fundamental importance of its crime control mission. It was not setting high enough expectations for what the organization could accomplish, resulting in chronic underachievement. Many police managers had become

1 Part I crimes, as defined by the FBI in its Uniform Crime Reporting Program, are murder, nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

“moribund” and were doing their work the way it had always been done, regardless of whether that work was effective in controlling crime. The NYPD had a number of organizational structures that impeded teamwork and the optimal allocation of scarce resources. Finally, the NYPD lacked accurate information on both the crime and public safety problems it hoped to address and on how its own resources were being used.

The process that came to be known as COMPSTAT evolved from the efforts of Bratton’s executive leadership team to address these organizational problems. COMPSTAT is a related group of operational practices, rather than a program with an articulated model. In their research on COMPSTAT implementation in police departments across the United States, Willis, Mastrofski, Weisburd and Greenspan (2003) identified seven core elements of COMPSTAT. In order to describe what COMPSTAT is and how it works, it is necessary to describe each core element and how it has operated in the NYPD, LAPD and other COMPSTAT police departments. The seven core elements of COMPSTAT are:

1. Mission clarification
2. Internal accountability
3. Geographic organization of operational command
4. Data-driven identification of problems and assessment of the department’s problem-solving efforts
5. Organizational flexibility
6. Innovative problem-solving tactics
7. External information exchange

Mission clarification

Implementing COMPSTAT begins with a clear statement on the organizational mission, and a consistent focus on that mission in setting organizational goals and devising strategies to achieve those goals. Prior to COMPSTAT, NYPD leaders and managers focused on administrative issues such as avoiding scandals and corruption. Although administrative concerns are important issues for any police department, Commissioner Bratton made it very clear that crime reduction was the mission of the organization, and the COMPSTAT process continually reinforced that. This political and cultural commitment from the top leadership of the NYPD, and also from Mayor Giuliani, was indispensable in giving COMPSTAT the power to change behavior (Moore, 2003).

A COMPSTAT police department will often organize COMPSTAT around the achievement of a mission-related “stretch” goal, a goal that is challenging to achieve. NYPD opted for a hard numerical target, a 10% reduction in crime over the course of one year (Bratton and Knobles, 1998), an approach which Bratton duplicated with the LAPD. Lowell, Massachusetts adopted the non-numerical goal of making it the safest city of its size in

the United States (Willis et al., 2003). Individual employees and overall organizations generally perform at a level in line with their goal. In other words, the goal will generally set the outer bound of agency performance. Failure to set a sufficiently ambitious goal will result in the organization failing to achieve its full potential.

The stretch goal has both an external and internal purpose. The external purpose is to make the leadership of the organization publicly accountable to external stakeholders. A public commitment such as Commissioner Bratton’s to reduce crime by 10% can build stakeholder support for what an organization is doing, and keep the pressure on the executive leadership to deliver on the organization’s mission. The internal purpose of the stretch goal is the continual clarification and reinforcement of the relationship between the activities of operational commanders and the mission.

In an analysis of what made COMPSTAT powerful in changing behavior in the NYPD, Moore and Braga (2003) note that COMPSTAT’s goal of crime reduction is “closely aligned with what external overseers want and expect from the organization, with an important value that the organization is trying to produce, and with a goal that the organization itself wants to produce.” The NYPD’s crime reduction stretch goal was well-suited for both the external and internal purpose, which contributed greatly to the power of COMPSTAT.

Internal accountability

Once the organization’s mission is clarified and a goal is identified, the COMPSTAT system fixes responsibility for achieving its goal on a specific set of “middle managers” and initiates a formal process for the leadership of the organization to call them to account for their performance (Weisburd et al., 2003). An underlying assumption of COMPSTAT is that the organization is able to act to generate outcomes consistent with its mission. Bratton’s belief that police activities could reduce crime was not universally shared within NYPD management, but he built an internal accountability structure around the idea that the NYPD’s precinct commanders could reasonably be held accountable for reducing crime in their precincts.

Bratton established seven objectives for the NYPD at the initiation of COMPSTAT (McDonald 2002). The objectives were:

1. Get guns off the streets
2. Curb youth violence in the schools and on the streets
3. Drive drug dealers out of the city
4. Break the cycle of domestic violence
5. Reclaim the public spaces of the city
6. Reduce auto-related crime in the city
7. Root out corruption and build organizational integrity in the NYPD

These objectives provided guidance to all levels of the organization and a key bridge between the broad stretch goal and the daily tactical decisions necessary to meet it. COMPSTAT meetings became the forum for holding NYPD middle managers accountable for meeting the objectives.

COMPSTAT meetings are held at least weekly (depending on the size of the department), and precinct commanders² are called to present at the meetings in a set rotation, each one appearing once every four to six weeks (Bratton and Knobler, 1998; Silverman, 1999). Crime data are collected routinely and shared with both the precinct commander and the command staff prior to the COMPSTAT meeting. Measures can be compared both with past performance in the unit, or across units within the department. Precinct commanders must answer for their precinct's crime data, particularly as it reflects on the seven objectives.

COMPSTAT meetings are run by one or more members of the senior command staff, who direct questions to the precinct commander.³ Questions require the precinct commanders to demonstrate both analytical ability and understanding (to explain what is driving their crime figures) and tactical knowledge and creativity (to devise and execute interventions to address crime in the precinct.) Managers who excel are noticed and flagged for advancement. Those who don't are given the opportunity and support to improve, but an extended period of poor performance, or non-performance, will result in the replacement of that individual.

It is important to note that in the NYPD and LAPD COMPSTAT, precinct commanders are not strictly accountable for their numbers, but for their efforts. Managers were expected to develop an understanding of the crime problems, and act on that understanding. Managers who got in trouble were those who did not demonstrate an understanding of what was happening in their precincts, or who were not taking any action to address the problems identified in the COMPSTAT data (Moore, 2003). Within NYPD, this proved to be an exacting standard. The NYPD replaced two-thirds of its precinct commanders during the first year of Bratton's tenure (Silverman, 1996). NYPD COMPSTAT sessions are famously high-pressure, aggressive, and occasionally confrontational. The COMPSTAT model does not dictate this, however. LAPD has realized comparable COMPSTAT success with a much less confrontational COMPSTAT style.

Under COMPSTAT, there is no ambiguity regarding who in the organization is accountable for performance of the organization's units. It rests squarely on the

precinct commander level of management. In this manner, they "own" the challenge of delivering on the organization's mission. Clear responsibility for addressing a problem leads to more forceful and concentrated action regarding that problem. Problems that are no one's direct responsibility, serious as they may be, are much more resistant to action.

Many observers of COMPSTAT from within the NYPD noted that COMPSTAT meetings were unusual in that they put field managers in direct, face-to-face communication with command staff. Closing the gap between managers and command staff has benefits for both. It ensures that the field will be clear on the mission-derived priorities of the command staff. Command staff, in turn, will be better-informed of the operational realities that are shaping the performance of the organization.

Moore and Braga (2003) cite three aspects of the COMPSTAT internal accountability mechanism as contributing to its power to change behavior. First, the system holds managers to account frequently enough to capture their attention. A COMPSTAT cycle brings every precinct commander up every four to six weeks. Second, the managers think that their current standing and pay as well as their future promotional opportunities depend on performing well with respect to the COMPSTAT measures. Third, the reviews of performance are public so that everyone can see how well a particular manager has done.

Geographic organization of operational command

COMPSTAT vests operational command in the same managers being held accountable for organizational performance. Concentration of such a high degree of accountability on precinct commanders can be fair and effective only if they have the operational control necessary to bring the organization's resources to bear on the problems they are accountable for solving.

The geographical division of cities into precincts or sectors makes the precinct commander a logical manager to hold accountable in COMPSTAT. However, units of COMPSTAT police departments have separate, non-geographically-based command structures, such as detective bureaus. Under COMPSTAT, these units are either placed under the control of the precinct commanders, or otherwise made answerable through the precinct commander for their contribution to the COMPSTAT mission. They may be required to attend the COMPSTAT meetings, at which the executive leadership can reinforce the need for them to provide the precinct commanders with their cooperation. This gives the managers directly accountable to the executive command staff maximum latitude and support in devising and executing their tactical interventions.

NYPD replicated the COMPSTAT accountability structure down the chain of command in each precinct (Walsh and Vito 2004). Precinct commanders empowered and interrogated their platoon commanders on their efforts to reduce crime, who in turn did the same with

2 I will use the NYPD term precinct commander to denote this level and type of manager within a COMPSTAT police department. The term for the equivalent position varies from department to department.

3 NYPD COMPSTAT was run jointly by the Chief of Department and the Deputy Commissioner for Crime Control Strategies. LAPD COMPSTAT meetings are chaired by the Chief of Police and the Director of the Office of Operations (http://www.lapdonline.org/crime_maps_and_compstat/content_basic_view/6363, retrieved May 30, 2006). Lowell PD COMPSTAT meetings are run by the Chief of Police (Willis et al., 2003).

their sergeants, who did the same with the officers at roll call. This process arose naturally from the hierarchy within the precinct units of operational command, and resulted in COMPSTAT influencing the behavior of many within NYPD who had never and would never attend a COMPSTAT meeting.

Data-driven identification of problems and assessment of the department's problem-solving efforts

With the mission clarified, accountability fixed and command authority provided to the accountable, the COMPSTAT system focuses on providing timely and accurate data to 1) precinct commanders so that they can diagnose the crime problems in their precincts, and 2) to the executive leadership so that they can evaluate the efforts of the precinct commanders to address those problems. Prior to the implementation of COMPSTAT, the data infrastructure in the NYPD was poor, with crime data available three to six months after the fact, if at all (Silverman, 1996). As the executive leadership running the early COMPSTAT meetings demanded that precinct commanders account for what was happening with crime in their precincts, an effective data-gathering effort developed to answer that question. The NYPD did not build COMPSTAT to utilize their data architecture; the NYPD data architecture grew to meet the needs of precinct commanders presenting at COMPSTAT. One of the virtues of COMPSTAT is that it makes middle managers consumers of data, and expands the interest in collecting accurate and useful data throughout organization.

Data perform two related but distinct functions in COMPSTAT. First, they allow for the identification and understanding of the problems that the organization must address. Second, they make possible the assessment of the success of the organization's units in addressing those problems. Moore (2003) refers to these as the diagnostic and

evaluative uses of data, respectively.

Data for diagnostic use assists precinct commanders in finding crime patterns and recognizing previously invisible connections between crimes, so that individual incidents are connected as manifestations of larger problems. Good data are merely the grist for the COMPSTAT mill. In order to use them diagnostically, data must be effectively analyzed and presented. The challenge of gathering timely and accurate data can be so daunting for a large and complex organization that data analysis can receive short shrift. The NYPD and LAPD created COMPSTAT units to gather, analyze and disseminate the COMPSTAT data, which were made available throughout the department. Both the command staff and the accountable managers must have access to the same data at COMPSTAT sessions (indeed, prior to them) in order to have a productive discussion based on the information.

In police departments, the primary mode of data analysis has been mapping. Participants in COMPSTAT

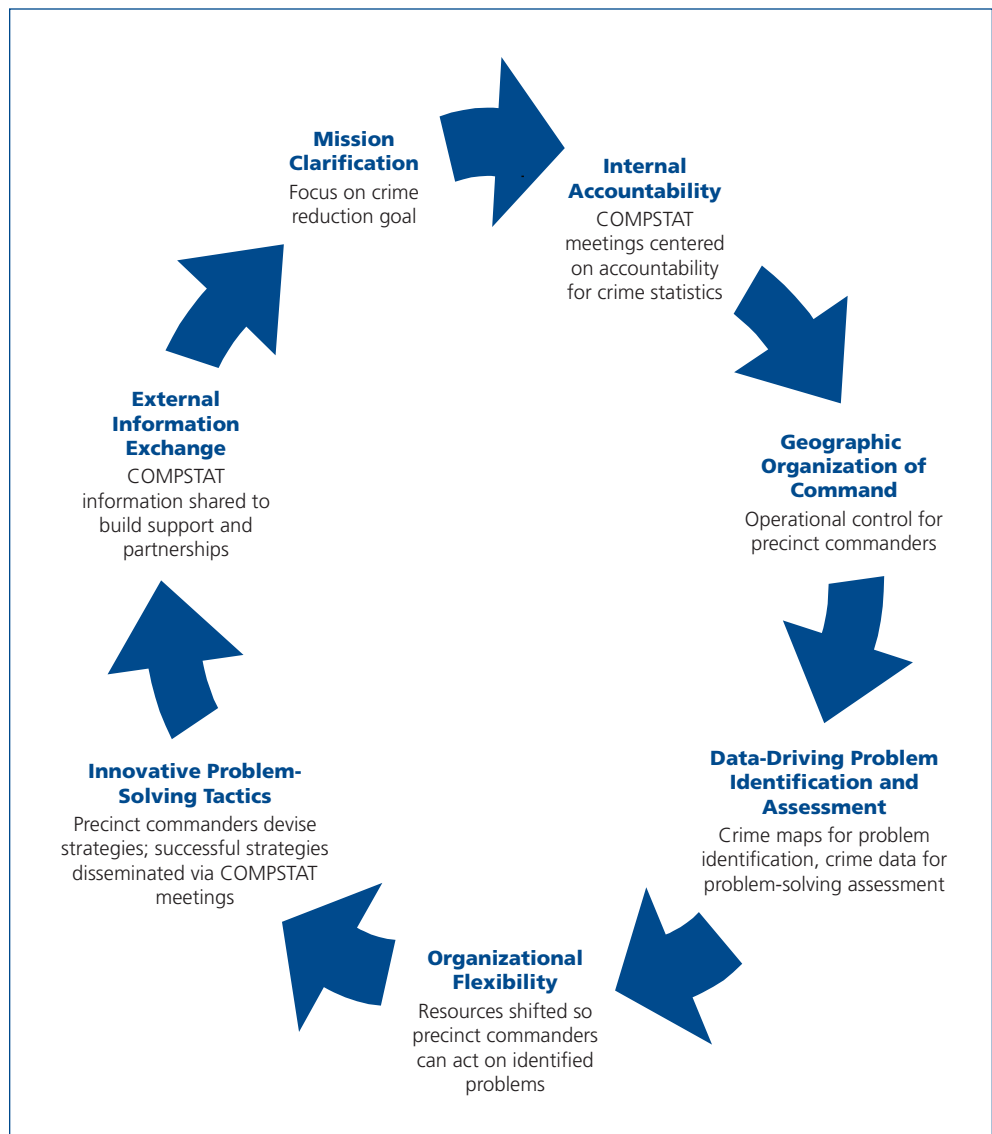


Figure 1. COMPSTAT in the New York and Los Angeles Police Departments

processes in diverse police departments describe the presentation of crime data in maps as a revelation, and the spur to powerful problem identification and intervention work. Crime maps have become such an integral component to COMPSTAT operations that it can be easy to lose sight of the fact that it is not maps in and of themselves that are the key component. Rather it is the maps as an efficient and readily comprehensible tool for interpreting crime data that is important. Another mode of data presentation might allow for completely different but equally valuable insights.

Data for diagnostic use might take many forms and vary over time, because it is being used to find new patterns and assist with new understandings. NYPD's headquarters COMPSTAT unit would occasionally photograph graffiti and other signs of disorder in precincts, and use that information in COMPSTAT sessions. LAPD employs a station inspection protocol to uncover performance inhibitors known as COMPSTAT Plus (Gascon, 2006).

Data for evaluative uses, by contrast, should be consistent across time. COMPSTAT gains much of its power due to its evaluative data coming in measures that "are simple, objective, reliably measured, and continuous so that changes in performance can be observed over time within an operational unit, and across units that are roughly similar" (Moore and Braga, 2003).

Organizational flexibility

A COMPSTAT system must allow for organizational flexibility, because the understanding of crime problems facilitated by timely and accurate data is of little use if the organization cannot adapt its practices to act on that understanding. Presumably, some of the problems and patterns revealed by the data will be of a nature that the organization's structure and routine activities are not configured to address. In these cases, the organization must have the flexibility to shift resources to the precinct commanders so that they can act based on their enhanced understanding of the crime problems in their precinct. In New York, precinct commanders were granted the resources to have their personnel perform decoy operations, execute felony arrest warrants and use plainclothes officers for vice enforcement, activities previously the province of other departmental units (Silverman, 1999).

As problem patterns are dynamic and change over time, a COMPSTAT organization must be able to continuously assess the resource needs of its precinct commanders and allocate its resources accordingly. To the extent that resources cannot be shifted, or only very slowly, it will impede the effectiveness of the precinct commanders in delivering on outcomes.

Innovative problem-solving tactics

By making precinct commanders highly accountable while providing them with operational control, useful data and resource flexibility, COMPSTAT fosters their

creativity in devising innovative problem-solving tactics. The data elements of COMPSTAT give the middle managers a new tool for analyzing the problems they must solve, and also gives the executive leadership a tool for assessing their success at doing so. The geographic organization of command and organizational flexibility aspects of COMPSTAT give them the autonomy and support necessary to be effective problem-solvers. The accountability mechanism of COMPSTAT keeps the pressure on them to concentrate on problem-solving, while the meetings also act as a forum to "workshop" potential or actual problem-solving interventions. Tactics in COMPSTAT departments are not dictated by the command staff, although they may be suggested.

With the license granted to middle managers to devise tactical interventions comes the potential for innovation. Some form of innovation will be necessary if standard modes of operation are insufficient or inefficient to solve the problems facing the organization. Some possible types of tactical innovation include replication innovations (adopting effective practices from other departments that have not been used by the manager's department), application innovations (taking a tactic used in one context and applying it to a different context) and inventive innovations (devising an entirely new problem-solving approach).

The COMPSTAT structure is well-suited to the dissemination of innovation. Given the inherently comparative nature of the COMPSTAT meetings and the pressure of the high-accountability structure to effectively address problems, an effective innovation devised by one manager could be adopted by fellow managers, provided that they faced similar problems. Moore and Braga (2003) believe that the inclusion of many managers in comparable situations is an important aspect of COMPSTAT's power. It allows the leadership of the department to evaluate the performance of managers against one another, but also allows managers to see what their peers are doing, and modify their practice accordingly.

External information exchange

COMPSTAT can be used to engage external stakeholders to further the organization's ability to deliver on its mission. The NYPD makes its COMPSTAT statistics available to the public, and LAPD makes its crime maps available as well. More importantly, select audiences are invited to attend COMPSTAT meetings. In New York, Commissioner Bratton would bring "elite" audiences (the media, politicians, researchers, officials from other police departments) into COMPSTAT meetings to build public support for the department (Willis et al., 2003). Bratton recognized that COMPSTAT meetings are "great theater" (Bratton and Knobles, 1998), and as such could be useful in helping the department to secure the public and political support invaluable to an organization with ambitious goals planning to engage in innovative and aggressive tactics in order to realize them.

COMPSTAT meetings can be used not only to give

information to external stakeholders in a general sense, but also to invite key potential partners to assist the COMPSTAT department in achieving its objectives. COMPSTAT meetings have been attended by parole and probation officials, district attorneys, federal prosecutors, and others who may be able to suggest or cooperate with the devising of tactical interventions.

ADAPTATION OF COMPSTAT TO THE CDCR

There is nothing inherent in the COMPSTAT system that restricts its applicability to law enforcement agencies. William Bratton promotes the adoption of COMPSTAT not only for other police departments, but for any government agency (Swope, 1999.) Baltimore launched the CitiStat system in 2000 to apply a COMPSTAT-style data-driven, strict accountability performance measurement system to all municipal agencies.

The examination below of each of the seven core elements of COMPSTAT listed earlier outlines the advantages of the application of a COMPSTAT system to the CDCR, as well as the challenges that must be overcome in order to successfully adopt and implement COMPSTAT at the agency.

The CDCR contains a basic operational division between its institutions (prisons, camps, and the Division of Juvenile Justice equivalents for youthful offenders⁴) and parole operations. Institutions and parole are sufficiently different arenas of CDCR performance that the seven core elements of COMPSTAT may operate differently in its application to each.

Mission Clarification

Implementing COMPSTAT begins with a clear statement on the organizational mission, and a consistent focus on that mission in setting organizational goals and devising strategies to achieve those goals. The mission of the CDCR is:

“To improve public safety through evidence-based crime prevention and recidivism reduction strategies.”

The CDCR revised its mission statement in 2005 to emphasize the primacy of its public safety and rehabilitative function. Setting a recidivism and victimization reduction goal for CDCR COMPSTAT would support and reinforce the primacy of that aim declared by the mission statement. As recidivism is the continuing engagement of prisoners and parolees in criminal, victimizing behavior, a reduction in recidivism will indicate that the CDCR is delivering on its public safety promise.

In Moore and Braga’s terms, a recidivism and victimization reduction goal would be powerful because it is aligned with the expectations and desires of outside overseers, and it is an important value that the organization is seeking to produce. It serves the external purpose of the goal. It would also serve the internal purpose of

continual clarification and reinforcement of the relationship between the activities of operational commanders and the mission. The effectiveness of a recidivism reduction goal as an internal motivator will depend on whether it will align with the values and desires of staff at all levels of the CDCR, as the “take back the streets” crime control mission did in the NYPD.

Key decisions:

- *Whether to set a concrete numerical goal.* The NYPD and LAPD set numerical crime reduction targets for their COMPSTATs under William Bratton, while the Lowell Police Department chose a more qualitative goal. A numerical target is much more powerful in terms of both external accountability for the executive leadership, and in terms of internal clarification of the mission, but it is also harder to achieve.
- *How far to stretch for the stretch goal.* The stretch goal should be challenging enough to reach that it pushes the organization to the highest level of performance. If the stretch goal is too ambitious, it risks burning out CDCR staff and inviting criticism from disappointed external stakeholders.
- *How to define recidivism.* Recidivism has various definitions: return to prison for any reason, re-arrest, conviction for a new offense. In-prison violence, drug use and gang involvement are not generally considered to be forms of recidivism, but are all forms of continuing criminal behavior that are important to address. It can be measured for different periods of time, or for different groups (first releases, all parolees). The focus of COMPSTAT will change depending on the definition used.
- *The timeline for meeting the goal.* COMPSTAT police departments generally set one-year crime-reduction goals. This may not be appropriate for the CDCR, as tactical problem-solving interventions, particularly in the institutions, may not be reflected in recidivism figures for several years. A three to five year period to reach a stretch goal may be a better fit for a correctional agency.

Internal accountability

Once the organization’s mission is clarified and a goal is identified, the COMPSTAT system fixes responsibility for achieving its goal on a specific set of middle managers and initiates a formal process for the leadership of the organization to call them to account for their performance.

The challenge in establishing that accountability structure is tying the performance of the command units to the accomplishment of the mission. What measures will tell the executive leadership whether CDCR middle managers are delivering on the mission goal? For police

⁴ In the interest of simplicity, I will discuss the application of COMPSTAT to adult institutions and parole only.

departments, the answer has been reported crimes. Police departments keep good records of crime, it is directly related to the mission, it is readily comparable across command units and periods of time, it can be broken down into units of analysis (by type of crime, type of perpetrator, type of victim, location, time of day), and police interventions have the potential to affect crime fairly quickly.

Recidivism reduction is the CDCR mission, but measuring performance on that goal is more complex than measuring crime control success by precinct crime rates in a COMPSTAT police department. The difference between institution and parole operations becomes very important when considering this question. Prison practice and prison-based interventions impact post-release recidivism, but the impact of any aspect of institutional operation on recidivism, whether positive or negative, is likely to take years to manifest. Further complicating the issue is that a prisoner is likely to spend time in several prison facilities over the course of serving a single prison sentence, and to be subject to a multitude of influences at each one, from programs to violence to overcrowding to distance from family, all of which contribute to the likelihood of post-release recidivism.

Recidivism as a COMPSTAT measure for prisons is probably not feasible for these reasons, although recidivism is a viable COMPSTAT measure for parole, where there is a much tighter temporal relationship between parole activities and offender recidivism. In the prisons, accountability for their contribution to recidivism reduction will rest on measures related to the likelihood of recidivism, such as violent incidents within the prison and program participation.

The operations of the CDCR institutions and parole units are complex, and could be measured and assessed in a multitude of ways. In order to maintain a common focus on the measures most important to the executive leadership, a small number of areas of focus, equivalent to the NYPD's seven objectives, should be established for both institutions and parole. These areas of focus will be the subject of all COMPSTAT meetings, and the wardens and parole administrators will know that they must discuss them, and will come prepared to do so. As progress is made in the areas of focus, or new issues assume greater importance to the achievement of the goal, the areas of focus can be changed.

For example, areas of focus for the institutions might be institutional violence, gang involvement of inmates, program completion, and appropriate delivery of health care. For parole, they might be parolee arrests, parolees at large (PAL), parole revocations, employment, housing, and sex offender placement.

Once areas of focus have been established, the task is to determine or devise measures that can answer questions about the area of focus. The measures should serve to answer three questions, as demonstrated taking PALs as an example.

- *How is the unit performing in this focus area? Are*

there more PALs in this parole region than in the past? Does it have more or fewer PALs than the other parole regions?

- *What are the drivers underlying the numbers? What factors make parolees likely to go into PAL status? What are the factors within the parolee population, parole agent and parole unit activities, or factors within the communities in which the parolees live?*
- *What has promise in addressing the issue? What drivers of the PAL problem are amenable to parole intervention? Have some units in the parole region had success in reducing the number of PALs? What did they do? Are there successful approaches from other parole regions, or parole operations outside California? What resources and support would be necessary for parole to take those approaches?*

It is important to note that the “focus areas” method requires two levels of evaluation. The first is the use of COMPSTAT to determine if progress is being made in the focus areas, and the second is higher-level research and analysis to determine if progress in the focus areas is contributing to a reduction in recidivism. If it is not, then that focus area is not appropriate as part of COMPSTAT (which is not to say that it may not be an important organizational imperative for other reasons) and should be replaced.

Key decisions:

- *What are the areas of focus for both prisons and parole. The executive leadership running the COMPSTAT meetings should make it clear to the managers who are held accountable which outcomes they believe indicate progress towards recidivism reduction.*
- *Who will run the COMPSTAT meetings. Running a COMPSTAT meeting requires considerable skill. Meeting facilitators will need to: ask questions which will produce insights from the managers regarding the challenges field staff face in achieving the goal; provide input during the meeting as to what approaches might prove fruitful; and push managers to engage in problem-solving analytical thinking. The person or persons running the COMPSTAT meetings must also do this in a style appropriate for the organization. The more collegial style of LAPD COMPSTAT sessions may be a better fit than the aggressive NYPD style.*
- *How to give incentives for performance through COMPSTAT. The more the careers of the managers presenting at COMPSTAT will be affected by their performance in the program, the more power the system will possess. This will be dictated by the extent to which the*

CDCR is willing to base its assessment of warden and parole administrator performance on COMPSTAT, and the extent to which there are opportunities to reward those managers who do well in COMPSTAT, and replace those who do not.

Geographic organization of operational command

COMPSTAT vests operational command in the same managers being held accountable for organizational performance. In police departments, this responsibility is divided geographically, by precincts or sectors. The “geography” of operational command is quite different in the CDCR, but the COMPSTAT concept of geographic organization of operational command is applicable nonetheless. This simply means placing the power to devise and execute interventions with the same managers who are held accountable for organizational performance. In police departments, which divide their territory into geographical units, this meant making non-geographically bound units of the department, such as detectives bureaus, accountable to the precinct commanders and their equivalents.

Within CDCR institutional operations, prisons and camps are the functional equivalents of precincts on the institution side, with the wardens having operational control over activities within the prison. On the parole side, California is divided into four parole regions, and there are 190 parole units in 84 locations. There is a regional parole administrator for each parole region, a district administrator for roughly each eight parole units, and a unit supervisor for each parole unit. It is unclear the degree to which the four regional parole administrators can devise and execute interventions within the parole system, and parole regions may be too large to be effective COMPSTAT units. District administrators may be better candidates.

The CDCR has a number of offices and functions that have a great potential to impact the likelihood of recidivism, but are not under the operational control of the wardens or parole administrators. Both will need to turn to representatives of the Offices of Correctional Education, Adult Programs, Substance Abuse Programs, Research, Risk Management, and so on, during COMPSTAT sessions, to fully answer questions about their recidivism reduction efforts. In this manner, these and other “matrix” functions of the CDCR will become accountable in COMPSTAT through the wardens and parole administrators. The executive leadership of the CDCR will expect them to give their full support to the actions taken by the wardens and parole administrators to improve their recidivism reduction performance.

Key decisions:

- *How will matrix functions be accountable to the wardens and parole administrators.* Some matrix functions may be placed under the direct control of the COMPSTAT-accountable managers, while

others may remain independent, with representatives attending COMPSTAT meetings and answering for supporting the work of the wardens and parole administrators.

- *What data the matrix functions need to feed into the COMPSTAT process.* Most, if not all, of the matrix functions that contribute to the work or recidivism reduction keep their own data for their own measurement. They will have to organize that data and feed it into the COMPSTAT process so that the complete picture of those operations can be seen in the COMPSTAT meetings.

Data-driven identification of problems and assessment of the department’s problem-solving efforts

With the mission clarified, accountability fixed and command authority provided to the accountable, the COMPSTAT system focuses on providing timely and accurate data to middle managers so that they can diagnose the crime problems in their precincts, and to the executive leadership so that they can evaluate the efforts of the middle managers to address those problems. It seems likely that CDCR, much like NYPD and other COMPSTAT-adopting organizations, will find that it must alter its data-collection apparatus in order to generate the measures that the executive leadership is focusing on in the COMPSTAT sessions in a timely manner. The CDCR will almost certainly need to create greater data analysis capacity in order to fully utilize the COMPSTAT data.

In police departments using COMPSTAT, crime mapping has been the primary mode of data analysis, and it has helped police departments understand the crime situation in their precincts, and to allocate resources and design interventions in response in a way that would not have been possible simply looking at tables of crime statistics. It is unclear what will be the equivalent of maps for the factors that affect recidivism in CDCR’s operations. Parole may find the mapping parolee activity useful. Prisons may not want maps of geography, but instead find it useful to map active conflicts between groups and individuals in each facility, to determine potential sources of violence. This will be a major analytical challenge for the CDCR in moving ahead with COMPSTAT.

Key decisions:

- *Who is responsible for COMPSTAT data presentation and analysis.* The CDCR could create a COMPSTAT unit to handle data analysis and presentation, task an existing unit of the organization (likely the Office of Research) with it, or have each prison or parole region dedicate resources to this analysis. Centralization of the data analysis function has the benefit of ensuring standardization in the data analysis and presentation, facilitating comparative work.

- *How should COMPSTAT data be presented.* The presentation of data is not simply a matter of aesthetics. The organization and presentation of data can be a powerful tool for prompting critical thinking and pattern recognition. Crime maps were the form of data presentation that did this work in police departments. Tables of data are the most basic form of presentation, but are more useful for describing what is happening than in providing insight as to why things are happening.

Organizational flexibility

A COMPSTAT system has to incorporate organizational flexibility, because the understanding of problems facilitated by timely and accurate data is of little use if the organization cannot adapt its practices to act on that understanding. This may operate very differently in the institutions and in parole.

Prisons and camps face a major impediment to organizational flexibility in that the allocation of their resources is closely tied to a physical plant that limits variation in operations. To put it another way, prisons and camps are constrained by the fact that, unlike police departments, they do not intervene into a community or social system; they are responsible for running the community or social system.

The Right Prison, Right Mission concept in CDCR may mean that the COMPSTAT model of resource allocation to problem areas used by police departments needs to be inverted at the CDCR. Under Right Prison, Right Mission, resources are allocated in the system to deal with various offender needs and issues; entire prison facilities or units within them are devoted to addressing inmates with substance abuse problems, family reunification needs, behavioral problems, gang affiliations. Instead of allocation of resources to offenders, offenders are allocated to the facility that has the resources to address their criminogenic needs. The institution is flexible to the extent that it can get offenders where they need to be in the larger system. Allocation of resources within a prison is one form of organizational flexibility, but flexibility in the allocation of prisoners within the prison system may be the greater challenge.

Parole does not have the burden of controlling the system in which its parolees operate, although parole agents may attempt to build structure around a parolee. The resources to be allocated are change support or intermediate sanction options (money for rent, substance abuse treatment slots, GPS units, and so on), and agent time. Here flexibility is necessary to shift parole resources and agent time from reactive activities to interventions with parolees at risk of re-offending before problems occur.

Key decisions:

- *Whether flexibility should be prioritized within prisons, or across the prison system.* This is an exercise in picking your constraints. Duplication

of resources in every prison in California is probably a wasteful use of resources, but moving inmates between facilities can be slow and difficult.

- *How to address staff vacancies.* The CDCR is understaffed in many key areas, and these labor shortages are likely to be a large factor impeding performance. Conflicting staffing demands from wardens and parole administrators is likely, and deciding how to respond to those demands will be a thorny problem for the CDCR's executive leadership.

Innovative problem-solving tactics

By making middle managers highly accountable while providing them with operational control, useful data and resource flexibility, COMPSTAT spurs their creativity in devising innovative problem-solving tactics. If the CDCR is to realize the benefits of innovation within the organization, the executive leadership must create the conditions under which innovation is both possible and desirable for the accountable managers. Innovation is possible if managers have the autonomy to devise and execute new approaches to problem-solving. Innovation is desirable if successful innovations are rewarded, and also if innovations that fail are not punished. In New York, Mayor Giuliani and Commissioner Bratton made it clear that they would support any legitimate police activities in service of the NYPD's crime reduction goal.⁵ A degree of toleration for failure is the precondition for experimentation. Wardens and parole administrators are likely to devise innovative problem-solving tactics if they are explicitly granted permission to experiment with innovative approaches, provided with the resources and cooperation necessary to carry them out, defended against criticism for novel approaches, and given allowance for the possibility of the failure of innovations.

Out of a given pool of COMPSTAT-accountable managers, it is likely that only a small minority will immediately seize the opportunity to innovate. Many of these early innovators will have been attempting to innovate prior to COMPSTAT, but their ability to do so will be enhanced by the other elements of COMPSTAT. The response to these early innovations will be crucial to establishing the role of innovation in CDCR COMPSTAT. If innovative approaches are encouraged and supported, and successful innovations are rewarded, this problem-solving approach will spread among the wardens and parole administrators.

The key to the dissemination of successful innovations is feeding them back into the organization through COMPSTAT, or ensuring that fellow managers learn about the success of their peers' innovations. Moore and Braga (2003) note that having many managers in comparable situations has made COMPSTAT powerful in police

⁵ Commissioner Bratton tied his pledge of support for legitimate police activity with a zero tolerance approach to corruption.

departments. The greater the extent to which managers face similar problems, the greater the extent to which innovative approaches aired at COMPSTAT will spread within the organization. Precinct commanders in COMPSTAT police departments often attend COMPSTAT meetings even when they are not presenting for this reason. In CDCR, with wardens and parole administrators spread across the state, this may be neither practicable nor desirable. Another mode of disseminating the content of COMPSTAT meetings across the organization must be determined.

There is a question as to the extent to which the development of innovative tactics is necessary to the meeting the organization's mission. Innovation is valuable in almost all situations, but it is also inherently more challenging for an organization to innovate than to improve its standard model of operation. Innovation is necessary if the organization's current mode of operation is insufficient to achieve the mission, no matter how effec-

tively and efficiently executed. If the organization could achieve its goal through better execution of its current mode of operation, then a concentration of tighter implementation of that mode might be more desirable than a focus on innovation.

Key decisions:

- *The degree of emphasis to place on innovative approaches.* There is a trade-off between process improvement and innovation, between better management and invention. Which should be emphasized depends on whether the processes currently in place at the CDCR are sufficient in themselves to achieve the mission.
- *How to disseminate innovative approaches.* As wardens and parole administrators devise innovative and effective strategies to address the CDCR's challenges, the executive leadership will want to communicate them to the other wardens

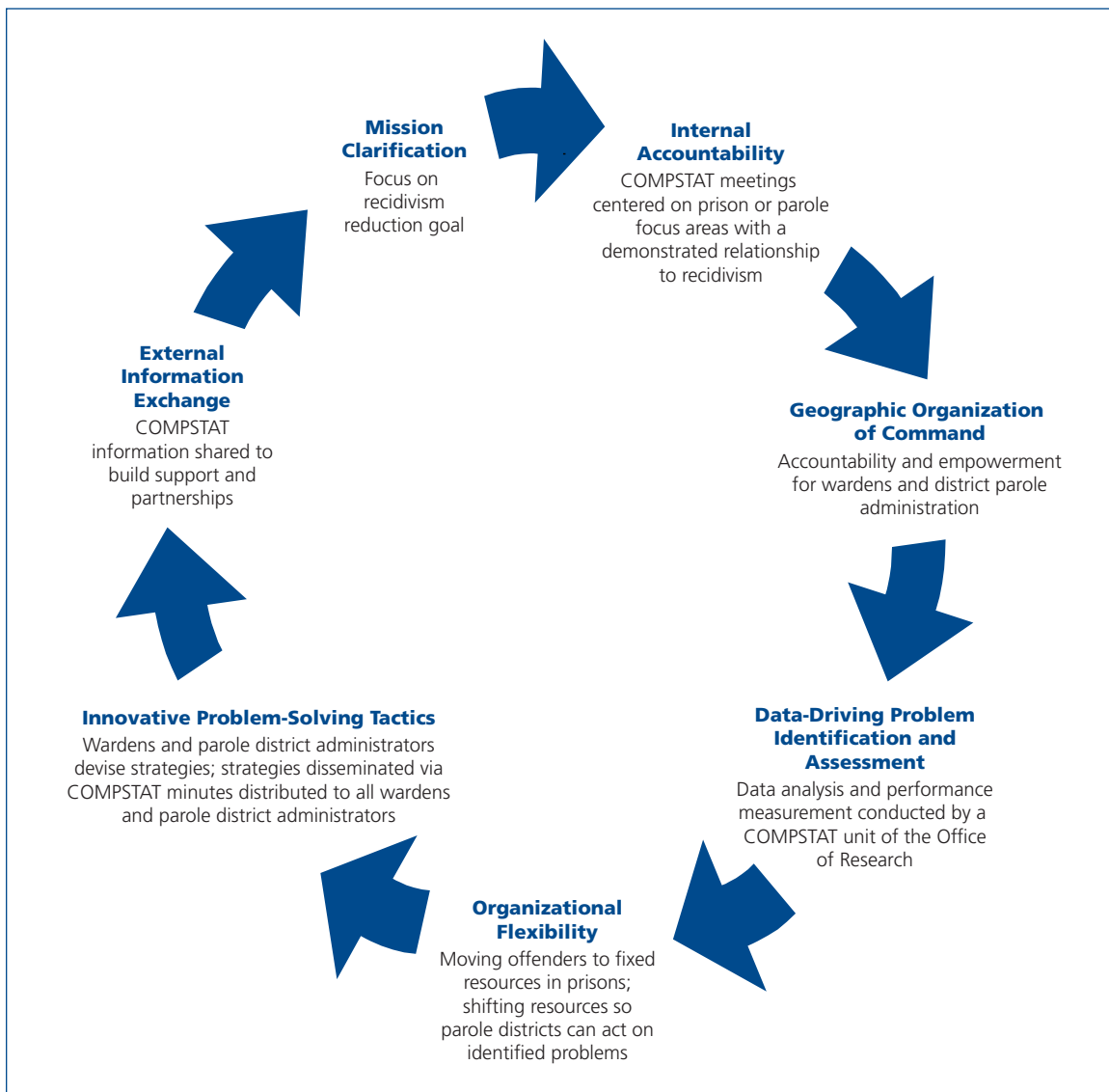


Figure 2. A Model for COMPSTAT in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

and parole administrators. This can be done through COMPSTAT meetings, but that method carries the risk that managers may not find out about innovations if the problem the innovation addresses does not come up during the meeting. NYPD began a process of preparing detailed minutes of each COMPSTAT meeting, distributed to all top-level officials (Silverman 1999.) A standard method for distributing the contents of COMPSTAT meetings to all COMPSTAT-accountable managers is preferable.

External information exchange

COMPSTAT can be used to engage external stakeholders to further the organization's ability to deliver on its mission. COMPSTAT generates a tremendous amount of information within an organization and makes it the subject of discussion between field and executive levels of the organization. The CDCR has the opportunity to make external stakeholders a part of this process. This has the potential to build external support for the CDCR's goals and activities, increase understanding of the challenges facing the CDCR in delivering on its mission, and establish partnerships with external actors who may be able to assist the CDCR in realizing its goals. The LAPD, for example, is interested in incorporating parole information into its COMPSTAT and intelligence analysis processes, and possibly engaging in a pilot reentry project in Los Angeles.

Key decisions:

- *What information to make publicly available.* COMPSTAT departments generally make their COMPSTAT crime data available, but crime information is public information. Making CDCR COMPSTAT information available increases the pressure on the organization to improve its performance, but may also set the external accountability of the CDCR on its terms.
- *When to invite external stakeholders to COMPSTAT meetings.* The early stages of the CDCR COMPSTAT process are likely to be much less focused and effective, as the process undergoes the necessary development to fit the needs and culture of the CDCR. Inviting stakeholders from outside the CDCR to observe COMPSTAT at this stage may be counterproductive.
- *Which external stakeholders to invite to COMPSTAT.* External stakeholders could be invited to COMPSTAT meetings in order to build operational relationships (law enforcement officials, chiefs of probation, prosecutors, community-based organizations), to build external support for CDCR activities (media representatives), or a combination of the two (legislators).

CONCLUSION

COMPSTAT has proved to be a vehicle for dramatic organizational transformation in the LAPD and the NYPD, contributing to impressive improvements in public safety in the communities they serve. CDCR hopes that implementing COMPSTAT in a state correctional agency will yield similar outcomes. Adapting the COMPSTAT model for this purpose is a challenging undertaking. It requires substantial effort from the matrix functions, the institutions, parole, all the data-gathering and analysis specialists, and especially the executive leadership. COMPSTAT assists an organization with being more focused and strategic in its efforts to deliver on its mission. This move to strategic thinking starts with the executive leadership running COMPSTAT asking questions that push the thinking of managers, and making demands on them to think analytically, as problem-solvers. COMPSTAT has substantial promise to improve the CDCR's delivery of its mission, but the investment necessary to realize that promise is substantial as well.

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