



# NEWS

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## **National Center for Victims of Crime Releases “Beyond the Beat” Report on Community Policing and Technology**

**San Diego, CA---**Today at the annual conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Center for Victims of Crime—the nation’s leading resource and advocacy organization for crime victims—announced the release of *Beyond the Beat*, a landmark report on the ethical implications of using information and communications technology (ICT) in community policing. The report, supported by a grant from the MacArthur Foundation, aims to help police departments and community organizations avoid ethical and practical pitfalls as they adopt emerging technologies to enhance public safety and reduce crime.

*Beyond the Beat: Ethical Considerations for Community Policing in the Digital Age* describes how recent advances in one-way communications (e.g., online crime statistics, crime maps, sex offender photographs and registries, officer biographies, offender/parolee release notices, events calendars, and e-mail traffic alerts) and two-way approaches (e.g., online crime reporting, “virtual beat” meetings, customized crime analysis, community listservs, and blogs and online discussion forums about community problems) can help law enforcement combat crime.

Yet these and other emerging technological tools also have the potential to endanger individual rights, community access to law enforcement, and police-community relations, as the report illustrates through real-life scenarios.

To avoid these pitfalls, *Beyond the Beat* offers principles and practical suggestions to help planners anticipate the impact of ICT use on community relations, access to technology, privacy, and organizational capacity.

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“As police departments and community groups harness communications technologies to advance community policing goals, they move into promising but uncharted territory—significantly expanding the amount of potentially sensitive information available to larger numbers of people at greater speeds,” said Mary Lou Leary, executive director of the National Center for Victims of Crime. “We hope that by identifying and exploring such challenges, our report will help define best practices for law enforcement’s use of technology,” Leary said.

The *Beyond the Beat* report is based on interviews with experts in the field; research on how law enforcement agencies are currently using ICT in community policing; and the deliberations of a panel of experts in criminal justice, civil rights, technology, and community organizing convened by the National Center. The Panel on Technology as a Community Engagement Tool for Crime Prevention analyzed a series of commissioned background papers and identified core issues and recommended practices for jurisdictions that are using ICT in community policing. Articulating a common vision guided by shared principles, the panel concluded, could help ground all community policing ICT initiatives.

In applying these principles, planners should assess their technology needs, analyze their local history and norms, choose the most appropriate tools, identify applicable state and federal laws, and then ask if each new technology represents “the right thing to do.” Those who follow this path, *Beyond the Beat* concludes, can better navigate the unfamiliar road ahead.

To download the full report (*Beyond the Beat: Ethical Considerations for Community Policing in the Digital Age*) and related resources, visit [www.ncvc.org/ict](http://www.ncvc.org/ict).

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*The National Center for Victims of Crime is dedicated to forging a national commitment to help victims of crime rebuild their lives. Through its National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-394-2255), the National Center helps victims understand the impact of crime and provides practical information about crime and victimization, skilled advocacy in the criminal justice and social service systems, and referrals to local community resources.*