

# Lesson Plan 3A: SARA Problem Solving Model

## Purpose of the lesson

This lesson reviews the SARA problem solving model. After a brief review of problem-oriented policing, the lesson focuses on the four steps of SARA as a system for guiding police officers as they work through problems, anticipate problems and facilitate an effective networking capability for problem solving, both internally and externally.

### Note to Instructor

The SARA problem solving model is known internationally in policing circles. The RCMP uses a problem solving model called CAPRA (Client, Acquire, Partnerships, Response, and Assessment). Both the SARA and CAPRA models (Lesson 3A and 3B respectively) are included as part of Lesson 3, and either model can be used depending on the protocol of the police agency.

## Overview

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| <b>Learning objectives</b>      | By the end of the lesson, officers will be more familiar with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the problem-oriented policing (POP) concept</li><li>• the four steps of the SARA model</li><li>• the importance of using the steps as a guide</li></ul> |
| <b>Time</b>                     | 15 minutes   |
| <b>Instructional techniques</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Presentation</li><li>• Q &amp; A with discussion</li></ul>   |
| <b>Materials</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lesson plan</li><li>• PowerPoint CD (slides 1–13) or overheads</li><li>• Handout: SARA Worksheet</li></ul>   |

## Procedure

### Slide 1: SARA Problem Solving Model

Introduce yourself (if necessary).

### Slide 2: Review of Lesson 2

Review Lesson 2.

Lesson 2 provided:

- a brief historical review of problem-oriented policing (POP), including the rationale for a shift in policing services
- a definition of POP and an introduction to the underlying concepts, and
- a summary of the strengths and benefits of POP from the perspectives of the community, policy agency, and front-line officers.

### Slide 3: Overview of Lesson 3

Introduce the lesson.

Lesson 3 covers:

- the problem-oriented policing (POP) concept
- the four steps of the SARA model
- the importance of using the steps as a guide
- RCMP uses CAPRA model (equivalent to SARA model)

### Slide 4: What is problem-oriented policing?

#### Learning objective 1

Understand the problem-oriented policing (POP) concept.

Review the basic definition of and concepts involved in problem-oriented policing.

Problem-oriented policing is method for integrating daily police practice with criminal justice theory and research methods in order to develop the best possible means for reducing crime and disorder.

## Slide 5: Effective Problem Solving

Describe effective problem solving.

Effective problem solving addresses community problems on the basis of:

- an understanding of the specific problem, and
- customized responses using strategies that effectively target specific problems.

Research suggests that effective problem solving is achieved through:

- focusing attention on problems, and
- creating response strategies from a diverse pool of approaches.

Emphasize that the SARA model has been identified as an effective problem solving process.

Ask: Does anyone know or recall what the acronym **SARA** refers to?

**Answer:** Scan, Analyze, Response, Assessment.

Allow the group to offer answers; guide as required.

## Slide 6: SARA Problem Solving Model

### Learning objective 2

Be familiar with the four steps within the SARA model.

Briefly describe the four steps of SARA, and the application of SARA in a general sense.

- SARA is similar to other analytical processes.
- SAEA is used as a guide, not a rule. It keeps problem solving efforts on track.
- Effective problem solving depends on implementing all four steps: scanning, analysis, response, and assessment.
- Documentation of each step is essential for future referencing, resource accountability, and providing examples for other initiatives.

Describe the benefits of SARA.

The benefits of SARA are that it:

- is a systematic, logic-driven model
- helps to anticipate problems, and prevent them from occurring or re-occurring
- encourages creativity

- supports police by encouraging collaboration, consultation and sharing responsibility for community safety
- encourages officers to use their working knowledge and experience.

Distribute the handout (SARA WORKSHEET) for the next slide. The handout provides an outline and a more in-depth framework that will be referred to in slides 7 through 10. Address each section of the handout individually as it arises with the PowerPoint presentation.

### Slide 7: Scanning

Explain the purpose of the scanning process.

The purpose of the **scanning** process is to confirm that a persistent and substantial problem exists. This involves gathering information from a variety of sources to support the claim that a problem exists. Some problems will be immediately evident, while others may require more investigation.

Refer participants to the **scanning** section of the handout (pg 1) as you read through Slide 7.

The scanning process includes:

- studying the situation to confirm that a problem exists – gathering data on who, what, where, why, and when
- identifying recurring problems
- using various methods to identify issues (e.g., police files, community surveys, interviews)
- grouping similar incidents into clusters or themes.

Ask: What sources of information are available for police officers as part of the scanning stage?

**Answers:** calls for service data, community groups, citizen complaints, police reports, data from other agencies [schools], officer's experience, media coverage and intuition, etc.

If time permits, ask: How can police become creative in getting additional information to shed light on a community problem?

**Answers:** networking with local agencies; consulting the research about similar issues; talking to other police agencies, citizens, volunteers, interest groups, cultural groups, etc.

## Slide 8: Analysis

Explain the purpose of the analysis stage of SARA:

The purpose of the **analysis** stage is to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the overall problem. This important stage sets the foundation for identifying response strategies, including resources and partnerships for dealing with the specific problem.

Refer participants to the **analysis** section of the handout (pg 2) as you read through Slide 8.

The analysis process includes:

- using the data to define and understand the specific problem
- studying the history of the type of problem
- using knowledge to develop a hypothesis, and
- identifying helpful resources.

Explain that historically, the analysis stage has been the most over-looked, because:

- it involves up-front work
- we tend to assume that we understand the problem before confirming with the data, and
- we tend to be in a rush (in reactive response mode) to solve problems.

## Slide 9: Response

Explain the purpose of the response stage of SARA.

The purpose of the **response** stage is to develop an overall strategy that is specifically designed to address the community problem. The three main tasks are developing the response options, selecting the response, and implementing the response.

The success of this step depends on the degree to which a thorough analysis has been conducted.

Refer participants to the **response** section of the handout (pg 3) as you read through Slide 9.

- **Choose the best strategy based on a thorough analysis:**
  - Ensure that a specific problem has been identified.
  - Ensure that the first two steps (Scanning and Analysis) have been completed.
  - Aim for the ideal response to reduce or eliminate the problem.
  - Incorporate a focus on long term sustainability, prevention, constitutional rights, community values, financial cost, available resources, and ease with which the response can be implemented.

- **Choose the best strategy from available options:**
  - Mobilize the community – to develop ownership and awareness.
  - Work with existing forms of informal social control (e.g., parents, teachers, employers, clergy, community cohesion) – to regulate behaviour.
  - Regulate the environment (e.g., CPTED, Blockwatch, Volunteer Patrols) – to remove opportunities.
  - Include services, such as Victim Services and crime prevention units.
  - Engage civil law – to control public nuisances.
  - Develop new forms of limited authority (e.g., bylaw implementation).

**Note:** For more complex cases, multi-pronged strategies may be necessary.

- **Focus on the small percentage of individuals who contribute to the larger percentage of the problems:**
  - This will promote efficiency and ensure the most effective use of resources.
- **Implement the response, including the design for a future evaluation:**
  - Prioritize concerns.
  - List the tasks.
  - Designate someone to manage the project.
  - Establish timelines.
  - Establish a communication plan.
  - Consider engaging a local college or university to assist with the evaluation.

Make the following additional points:

1. Response options can be championed by police or community. Police responses may include resources through:
  - protection – e.g., surveillance, strategic enforcement
  - situational crime prevention – e.g., CPTED, Block Watch, Volunteer Patrols
  - enforcement – e.g., targeted and timely enforcement (tends to over-used)
  - social development – e.g., implementing a new program as part of the response.
  - community mobilization – e.g., partnerships identified by common interests.
2. While police may identify a problem, the response strategy might be better led by representatives from the community. In this way, police involvement, although still supportive, might be somewhat reduced.
3. It is important to establish agreed-upon criteria for evaluating the response strategy. This will include gathering baseline measurements prior to response

implementation so that comparisons can be made at the assessment stage. For larger projects, universities can form one of the partnerships for accomplishing this task.

## Slide 10: Assessment

Explain the purpose of the assessment stage of SARA.

The purpose of **assessment** is to evaluate both the process and the impact of the response strategy. A rule of thumb is to evaluate whether the response strategy was sufficiently linked to the identified problem.

Refer participants to the **assessment** section of the handout (pg 4) as you read through slide 10.

- **Has the problem been reduced or eliminated? To what degree?**
  - Revisit established markers that will indicate whether change has occurred.
  - Consider the nature, intensity and frequency of occurrences.
  
- **Collect comparison data:**
  - Use multiple types of measurements, both qualitative and quantitative. For example:
    - ⇒ file data review – reduced number and type of calls for service
    - ⇒ client surveys (satisfaction, level of fear, trust, process issues)
    - ⇒ focus groups and interviews
    - ⇒ observational – improved appearance or condition of the area.
  - For larger projects, consider involving research specialists (e.g., universities or colleges).
  - For interventions that require longer timeframes (e.g., those involving social development aspects) consider whether the evaluation has been sensitive to longer timeframes.
  
- **Assess unintended outcomes:**
  - Were there positive or negative aspects of the intervention?
  - What changes occurred that you did not anticipate?
  
- **Determine whether additional resources are still needed:**
  - Does the strategy need to be altered?
  - Can the results be sustained?

Make the following additional points:

1. For effective evaluations:
  - Develop a formal evaluation framework, using pre- and post-intervention measurements.
  - Use indicators from a variety of vantage points (e.g., calls for service, citizen and community satisfaction, levels of fear).
  - Measure the success of stated objectives.
2. Additional outcome measurements may include:
  - assessing the development and quality of community partnerships
  - assessing overall community satisfaction with police
  - assessing the improvements of individual officer competencies
  - evaluating the police agency's ability to adopt problem-oriented policing principles.

## Slide 11: SARA

### Learning objective 3

Understand the importance of utilizing the SARA steps as a guide.

Explain:

The SARA problem solving model is a guide that is intended to facilitate a fluid, action-based process. Therefore, the steps may result in occasional feedback loops, as indicated by the arrows in the diagram.

Make the following additional points:

1. Some projects are complex. The need to monitor progress and adopt a flexible approach may need to occur due to:
  - having missed critical information in the early stages of the analysis
  - changes – resulting from the passage of time
  - shifting hotspots – because of existing interventions, etc.
2. Given social mobility today, criminal justice officials can assume the social conditions continually change. For these reasons, it remains important to monitor projects through “mini-cycles” within the stages of the problem solving initiative. Problem solving is an evolving process.

If time permits, do the following exercise and application:

Discuss a local project that resulted in revisiting certain steps of the problem-solving process.

## Slide 12: Problem solving is effective when...

Summarize effective problem solving.

Problem solving is effective when:

- a focused approach is used
- response strategies are customized
- all steps of the SARA problem solving model are implemented.

## Slide 13: Next Lesson

Introduce the next lesson.

Lesson 6: Crime Prevention through Social Development

- The concepts of Crime Prevention Through Social Development (CPSD)
- The relationship between crime and the social environment
- How to apply this concept within a policing scenario
- The police role in Crime Prevention Through Social Development

## Additional Resources

### 5 I's Model

An alternative model has been suggested by Paul Ekblom of the British Home Office. He has built on the SARA model and proposes the "5 Is" model: Intelligence, Intervention, Implementation, Involvement, and Impact and process evaluation. This system includes a vast array of practical ideas and tools for adopting. A summary can be found at [www.crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk) and [www.jdi.ucl.ac.uk](http://www.jdi.ucl.ac.uk)

– From *Crime Analysis for Problem-Solvers: In 60 Small Steps*, R. Clarke & J. Eck, 2005.

# HANDOUT

## SARA Worksheet

This worksheet can be used by officers as a guide to each of the SARA problem solving steps. It will assist in drawing attention to the various components of the problem, as well as keeping track of all aspects involved.

### SCANNING

- Describe the problem (be specific):
  - What is the problem?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - What are the times and locations?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - How did this come to your attention?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - Who is affected by this problem?
    - ⇒ Direct victims
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
    - ⇒ Indirect victims
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
    - ⇒ Suspects
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
    - ⇒ Witnesses
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
    - ⇒ Businesses

- Are there environmental concerns?
  
- What is being done or has been done to solve the problem?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Is this a police issue? In what way?

## **ANALYSIS**

- What information would be useful to have in order to effectively solve this problem?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- How will you obtain this information?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Did you interview all of the concerned parties?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Did you discuss issue with other officers?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Did you collect data from both public and private sources?

- What are your short- and long-term goals?

- Other personal observations:

**RESPONSE**

- What level of problem solving are you hoping to achieve?

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Eliminate the problem                        |  |
| <input type="radio"/> Reduce the occurrences of the problem        |  |
| <input type="radio"/> Reduce the amount of harm done               |  |
| <input type="radio"/> Remove the problem from police consideration |  |

- List as many ways as you can think of to reduce the problem to the level you desire (don't worry about any obstacles at this point):

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- Choose the best response and provide a more in-depth description:
- Whose help will you need to implement this choice?
- How long will this response take?
- How will you test to find out whether your response was effective?

## **ASSESSMENT**

- Maintain rapport with the original complainant (if there was one) in order to remain informed about any changes in the problem.
- Maintain contact with the agencies that are assisting in problem solving efforts.
- Compare crime and calls-for-service statistics for before, during and after the intervention.
- Compare residents'/neighbours' attitudes towards the problem before, during and after the intervention.
- Did you reach the level you were hoping for?
- What are some of the positive outcomes/side-effects of your response?

