



# Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole

## State Parole Board, City of Reading and Berks County District Attorney Announce Success of Partnership to Reduce Crime Initiative is contributing to 24 percent reduction in crime

Harrisburg – State and local officials today discussed the implementation of the Reading Street Crimes Unit and the success of the initiative to combat violent crime in the City of Reading.

The Reading Police Department has reported a 24 percent reduction in violent crime as a result of this initiative and other measures implemented in the past 10 months.

“Having state parole officers and Reading police officers working side by side has been an effective way to share information and make our community safer,” said Reading Chief of Police William M. Heim. “The SCU has been an important factor in the decline in violent crime that the city is currently experiencing.”

“In January 2013 at the Crime Summit, Governor Tom Corbett committed the assistance of state agencies to help address the increasing violence that the city was experiencing,” said Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole Chairman Michael C. Potteiger. “Through this partnership, we have been working to improve public safety by removing violent offenders from the streets and providing treatment and programming when needed.”

The SCU was created to enable parole agents to ride along with police officers while patrolling high crime areas. It targets high risk offenders under the supervision of the Board who have a history of drugs, guns and violence. This is beneficial because if the officer encounters an individual who is on parole the agent can deal with the situation immediately. If drugs or weapons are found in the course of a contact with a parolee, the police officer can immediately arrest and charge the offender for the new crime.

“This is one of the most successful initiatives that began with the Crime Summit,” said City of Reading Mayor Vaughn Spencer. “The state Board of Probation and Parole offered to bring the Street Crimes Unit to Reading and the police and district attorney were enthusiastic about it. It’s been good for both agencies and the community.”

“We appreciate this cooperative effort with the Parole Board to have this unit present in our area,” said Berks County District Attorney John T. Adams. “It is one of the many ways that state and local agencies work together to make our communities a safer place to live.”

From August 2013 through April 2014, 115 offenders have been referred to the Reading Street Crimes Unit. Parole agents in the Unit work with re-entry agents to refer offenders to programming to change offender behavior and also to assist families with appropriate interventions.

“We have certainly been able to get violent offenders off the street before they can commit another crime, but we are also improving law enforcement relationships in the community,” said Potteiger. “Parolees and families are cooperative once they understand we are there to help, not just arrest someone.”

Of the offenders assigned to the Street Crimes Unit:

- 60 were referred to cognitive behavioral, violence prevention or employment programming or substance abuse treatment
- 8 were recommitted as a technical parole violator
- 6 were recommitted for a criminal violation
- 5 were recommitted as a technical parole violator with criminal charges pending
- 8 successfully completed supervision or transferred from the district



*Speakers at the press conference were: Chief Heim, Chairman Potteiger, District Attorney Adams and Mayor Spencer.*