Special Problems for the Police

- The young, the elderly, and the disabled represent three major groups in society for whom the police must provide specialized services.
- They all need protection from members of their own families, each other, and themselves.
- The young and the elderly are more vulnerable to almost all types of abuse than other age groups in our society.

- Youths between the ages of 11 and 18, more than any other age group, confront and are confronted by police.
- Studies suggest that young people’s future attitudes and behavior toward police and the law are influenced by the way police handle encounters with them.
- Police must deal with an increasing number of crimes by and against the elderly and offer protection, patience, and resolution of what may be the most serious problem of the elderly—fear.
Understanding the Young

- **The First Ten Years**
  - Interactions between the police and children who are ten or younger are positive.
  - Children move through several developmental stages during this period.
  - Children are totally dependent on others to meet their needs.

- **Meeting Basic Needs**
  - For many children, police can be a role model, a powerful authority figure, a protector, an adult friend, a hero, and an avenue to adventure and excitement.
  - Relationships between the police and children are important.
  - There is special training for police officers who deal with children.
    - Officer friendly
    - The talking car

- **The Teenage Years**
  - The period during which most delinquency and incorrigibility take place.
  - Change.
  - Transition from childhood to adulthood.
  - Dependence to independence.
  - No two children proceed through this period and deal with these changes in exactly the same way.
  - Adolescence is the final stage before adulthood.
Rapid changes in all areas of development
Onset of puberty
Physical and sexual maturing
Mental ability changes during adolescence
Relationships with family members may become more distant and relationships with peers, both male and female become closer.

Achievement of new and mature relations with age mates of both sexes.
Achievement of masculine or feminine social roles.
Acceptance and effective use of one’s body.
Achievement of emotional independence from parents and other adults.

Preparation for marriage and family life.
Preparation for a career.
Acquisition of a set of values and an ethical system.
Acquisition and utilization of socially responsible behavior.
Programs for youth are often designed to divert them from the juvenile justice system. Strive to encourage positive behavior within juvenile gangs. In programs geared toward changing juvenile attitudes towards police. Teaching youth about police organization and function.

Understanding the Elderly

A Profile
- More than 60 percent of the elderly live in metropolitan areas.
- Many live in high-crime areas because the rents are lower.
- Crimes by the elderly are increasing.
- The U.S. population is getting older.

Transitions into Late Adulthood
- There is no “typical” older person.
- Development does not stop with becoming an adult.
- Many factors are involved with aging.
- An elderly person has likely relinquished a parental role, lived through the loss of many family members, and prepared for old age.
Physical Facts About the Elderly
- Generally, older people are more affected by chronic disease than by acute illness.
- The most prominent health conditions are heart disease, arthritis, and diabetes.
- Physical limitations and reduced functioning are generally present.
- The aged are more prone to accidents.

Emotional and Functional Facts
- Physical and mental health are usually closely related.
- The level of function depends largely upon the individual’s determination to remain active in order to retain their functioning.
- Other important considerations are nutrition, which is an integral part of health.
- Helping the elderly to meet their basic needs may require a wide range of programs.

Understanding the Handicapped
- The physically and mentally impaired people pose special problems for the police.
- Individuals who are challenged due to such infirmities are often misunderstood by other members of society.
- They are too frequently disenfranchised by governmental entities.
The Physically Handicapped

- Millions of Americans suffer from physical maladies that make their lives more difficult than those of other citizens.
- Handicapped individuals who do not need police protection may still need police service.
- By monitoring parking spaces and ensuring that warning devices designed to warn them are working and in place.

Physiological Disorders

- Tourette syndrome
  - Nervous tics
  - Uncontrolled outbursts
- Autism
  - Difficulties in both verbal and nonverbal communication
- Down syndrome
  - Slower than other children in physical and mental development
  - Distinctive features

Physical Incapacitation

- Individuals who are immobile or limited in mobility may be so for many reasons.
- Spinal cord injuries disable thousands of persons each year.
- Most wheelchair citizens ask only that they be granted reasonable access to buildings.
- Many do not come into contact with the police.
- **The Blind**
  - Total vision loss and partial loss of vision.
  - Usually the result of inherited traits, birth defects, injuries, diseases, and aging.
  - Require assistance in avoiding physical hazards.
  - Require protection from those who would consider them easy targets.

- **The Deaf**
  - May be a product of a birth defect, heredity, disease, injury, or aging.
  - Partial hearing loss is common for older Americans.
  - They are more likely to come into contact with the police.
  - Tend to adopt a group identity.

- **The Mentally Handicapped**
  - Police need to understand the needs of the mentally handicapped.
  - Millions of Americans suffer from some type of mental impairment.
  - Most have no contact with the police.
  - The majority of those who do are victims.
Learning Disorders

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- Dyslexia—letter reversal that makes reading comprehension difficult.
- Dyscalculia—makes understanding math difficult.
- Dysgraphia—difficulty with written work or handwriting.

Mental Illness

- Mild emotional distress to outright insanity.
- The police may come into contact with people affected by a vast range of mental disorders.
- Police receive training in dealing with mentally ill and/or emotionally disturbed individuals.

Understanding the Homeless

- There is no accurate measure of how many homeless people reside within the United States.
- Among the homeless you will easily find individuals from three categories:
  - Elderly who have no pension.
  - Runaways under the age of 18.
  - People who suffer from mental disorders.
Shared Problems

- Dependency Issues
  - The groups are dependent upon other persons for most or all of their basic needs.
  - The young are dependent upon their parents.
  - The elderly and the severely handicapped are dependent on their families.

- According to the degree of their dependence and/or vulnerability to victimization, require special protection from the justice system.
- All persons have the right to a safe environment and to have their lives and property protected.
- As dependence on others increases, the ability to independently exercise rights decreases.

- The constitutional rights of a child to due process in juvenile court proceedings were clarified in *In re Gault* (1967).
- *Parens patriae*, the court acting in the best interest of the child.
- Dependency, vulnerability, and protection are all terms that infer a limit on the ability of a person to choose for themselves, to have charge of life decisions.
When the young, elderly, severely handicapped, or the homeless feel powerless, this feeling is often acted out.
- The person defers to the powerlessness and agrees to be helpless
- The person finds ways of publicly asserting power
- The young are seeking ways to increase their independence while retaining a part of their dependence.

The elderly struggle to retain a part of their independence while their dependency needs increase.
- The young, elderly, disabled, and homeless often are treated “like children” in society.
- Perceptions about them are seldom based on their individual characteristics.
- Instead, they are based on some generalized perception that has become the stereotype of their group.

Myths About Youth
- All teenagers who commit delinquent acts are going to be adult criminals.
- All teenagers have severe adjustment problems during adolescence.
- Teenagers can’t be trusted.
- All teenage groups are gangs.
■ Myths About the Elderly
  ■ People over 65 are more often victimized by crime than the rest of the population.
  ■ Women over the age of 65 are frequently rape victims.
  ■ The elderly are totally dependent on others for their care and offer no contribution to society.
  ■ The elderly can’t enjoy sex because of physiological difficulties.
  ■ Intelligence reaches a peak in the 20s and declines at a steady rate.

■ Myths About the Handicapped
  ■ Handicapped people cannot take care of themselves.
  ■ The mentally ill are dangerous and cannot be trusted.
  ■ The mentally retarded do not know what is going on.
  ■ The police should not treat the handicapped differently from anyone else.

■ Myths About the Homeless
  ■ Homeless people are usually single men.
  ■ Most of the homeless are mentally ill.
  ■ Almost all of the homeless are heavy drug and alcohol users.
  ■ The homeless choose their lifestyle.
  ■ The homeless are all dangerous.
  ■ Homeless people don’t work and they get their money from stealing or from public assistance.
  ■ Setting up services for homeless people will cause other homeless to migrate to your community.
An increasing number of elderly and handicapped people encounter the criminal justice system as offenders; most interact with this system as victims of or witnesses to crime.

- A large number of youths interact with the system as juvenile offenders.
- Those who encounter the system as victims are usually victims of abuse and neglect.

The young and the elderly see life and its opportunities from two different perspectives:
- With anticipation
- With hindsight
- The health issues are different.

The Problems with Programs
- The difficulty in finding a program is not that they do not exist, but the officers are not aware of the resource.
- Many of the programs do not reach the population.
- The program difficulty is that they are time-limited or funding-limited projects.
A New Approach

- The content of the programs we provide for these groups may be valid, although sometimes neither dynamic nor far-reaching enough.
- The greatest problem is in how service is provided.

Triad Programs

- A national community policing effort.
- Consists of a sheriff, the police chief, and the AARP.
- Goal
  - To enhance law enforcement services to area seniors
  - Reduce unwarranted fear of crime
  - To create learning opportunities

Some police departments have created specialized units to handle cases involving senior citizens.
- RUOK (are you okay?)
  - Computer program that calls seniors at least once a day.
- Many departments make use of senior citizen volunteers.