

## The Crime Triangle

The crime triangle offers an easy way to visualize and understand crime problems. Three things must exist in order to have a crime: an **offender**, a **victim**, and a **location**. Lacking any one of these, a crime will not occur.

(Choose a specific crime and explain each piece to illustrate.)

*Example – A jogger runs through a dark parking lot and is assaulted by someone who has been lurking in the shadows.*

- *If the jogger never entered the parking lot, the assailant would be left lurking in the shadows. Eliminate the victim, and no crime occurs.*
- *If the dark parking lot did not exist, the jogger would have taken a different path, as would the assailant. Eliminate the location, and no crime occurs.*
- *Without an assailant, the jogger would safely run through the parking lot. No crime occurs.*

Clearly, if we strategically eliminate one leg of the triangle, we also eliminate the crime. However, your chances of success increase if you can impact more than one leg of the triangle. (Working just on the offenders side often leaves room for new offenders to replace the old ones because nothing has been done to change the environment or the victims behavior.) to be most effective...plan to eliminate TWO legs of the triangle.

When planning to eliminate the crime, it's also important to consider those community members who can exercise control over a specific side of the triangle (we call them Guardians), e.g. social workers, families of victims/offenders, property owners, etc. Guardians give you options for response strategies.

For each side of the triangle, there are people codes, environmental changes, etc. that can exercise control over that side of the triangle to make it safe or more resistant to crime. They are called **guardians**.

*Example; If the problem is drug dealing at a known address, and the offenders are the dealers and the buyers, then the guardian list may include:*

<i>Landlord</i>	<i>Tax department</i>
<i>Health department</i>	<i>Citizen patrols</i>
<i>Nuisance abatement</i>	<i>Parole and probation</i>
<i>Parents of offenders</i>	<i>Parking</i>
<i>Department of traffic enforcement</i>	<i>Etc.</i>
<i>City codes</i>	

*(The crime triangle (also known as problem analysis triangle) comes from one of the main theories of environmental criminology – the Routine Activity Theory, originally formulated by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson.)*