

SUMMER 2023

NEW HAVEN OFFICE OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION BLUEPRINT

ANOTHER STEP TOWARD A SAFER NEW HAVEN



CT Against
Gun Violence
Education
Fund



CITY OF NEW HAVEN
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE
Office of Violence Prevention

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	3
A New Haven Father's Viewpoint.....	6
Overview of the Issue of Gun Violence.....	7
Root causes and risk factors.....	9
Best practices in gun violence prevention.....	12
New Haven violence prevention efforts.....	18
Stakeholder Input Process.....	21
Findings from Community Listening Sessions.....	22
Recommendations.....	27
Appendix.....	37



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of New Haven solidified its position as a leader in the state when it established the first municipal Office of Violence Prevention emphasizing social services and prevention to complement traditional law enforcement-based approaches to community violence. The City commissioned Connecticut Against Gun Violence to prepare this current report to serve as a blueprint for ongoing and future activities. Based on extensive community engagement, research and analysis, we recommend the City of New Haven Office of Violence Prevention:

- Serve as the hub of violence intervention coordination for the City and strengthen partnerships for improved service provision and performance
- Promote transparency and accountability through robust data collection, analysis, and information-sharing
- Serve a supporting role in policy and advocacy to increase access to funding, enhance programs, and address access to firearms
- Foster community engagement as a key underlying strategy in violence prevention efforts

Gun violence greatly impacts the safety, health, and wellness of our communities. For this reason, the City of New Haven has marked its commitment to responding to the urgency of gun violence through the establishment of an Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) under the newly formed Department of Community Resilience, the first of its kind in the state of Connecticut. To guide the development of the work of this new office, the New Haven Department of Community Resilience under the Community Services Administration contracted with Connecticut Against Gun Violence (CAGV) to create a blueprint for the OVP. As a gun violence prevention advocacy organization, CAGV has been working in partnership with elected officials, local leaders, and communities to support both legislative and non-legislative strategies to end gun violence for almost three decades.

This document is the result of an effort led by CAGV which intentionally centers the voices of those who love, live in, and work for the residents of New Haven. Drawing on the input of community members, local leaders, and elected officials, insights were collected, analyzed, and integrated with research of best practices in violence prevention to create the Blueprint. In total, we gathered input from over 250 participants across 14 listening sessions and interviews around the city. This included a significant focus on the most impacted area of New Haven—Newhallville, Dwight, the Hill, Fair Haven, Dixwell, and West Rock. These neighborhoods were chosen because incidents of firearm violence are more frequent and geographically located in these areas compared to other parts of the city. For more information on the community's input, please see pages 22 – 27.

The findings from the community listening sessions center on the following themes:

- Structural inequity
- Policing and criminal justice
- Mental health
- Community engagement and cohesion

We set forth recommendations in direct response to the needs and desires articulated by New Haven citizens. Many of the recommendations contained herein also build on the existing work currently done in the city and incorporates groundbreaking work from other parts of the country.

The Blueprint is intended to serve as the basis for an action plan that will be implemented over the next few years. It should be noted, however, that many of the recommended strategies will require a more sustained effort over time and additional funding. Therefore, it should be considered a living document that is updated as additional research, data, and metrics are developed and new findings emerge. The Blueprint is the work of many caring individuals and organizations, both in the City of New Haven and throughout the country who have spent numerous hours on a plan and vision to end the public health crisis of gun violence. The Blueprint honors the residents of New Haven whose lives have been lost to and affected by gun violence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input, analysis, hard work, and dedication by the following individuals:

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Additional Acknowledgements

New Haven Police Department
 Project Longevity New Haven
 Chief Karl Jacobson
 Renee Dominguez
 Nancy Jordan
 New Haven Board of Alders
 Maritza Bond
 Nakia Dawson, *Bereavement Care Network*
 Merryl Eaton, *Mothers and Others for Justice*
 Keisha Gatison, *Project M.O.R.E.*
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 Paola Serrecchia, *Hope Family Justice Center*
 Alden Woodcock, *Emerge*
 Holly Wasilewski, *Project Safe Neighborhoods*
 Ameena Matthews, *Community activist*

This project also benefited greatly from the guidance of Brian Malte and Cuco Rodriguez from Hope and Heal, Maurice Williams, Dorothy Cohen, David Kennedy (John Jay), DeVonne Bogan, Greg Jackson, Mike McLively (Giffords), Steve Fontana, Andrew V. Papachristos, Nicholas S. Meyerson, and the CAGV Board.

We would also like to acknowledge New Haven's Community Services Administration and Department of Community Resilience, who sponsored this project, and give special thanks to the residents of New Haven for their contribution, without which this endeavor would not have been possible.



A NEW HAVEN FATHER'S VIEWPOINT

Gun violence has plagued my community for decades taking more young lives than I can count. It has destroyed the lives of countless families, causing more trauma than anyone can imagine. I have been experiencing the effects of community gun violence since a teenager, almost every single day of my life as if I had gone into the service and been at war the entire time. I have been a perpetrator of community gun violence as well as a victim of the effects of it. My best friend was killed by the hands of someone close to me in 1994 and my eldest son aged 16 was killed due to community gun violence in 2011. I could pull out a list of names of close friends and others that I either went to school with or played a sport with that are no longer amongst the living because of

"It has destroyed the lives of countless families, causing more trauma than anyone can imagine."

this issue. Most of my peers grew up in poverty and selling narcotics was a way to have money and help provide for their families. It was a chance to get rich quick (so we thought) and get out of the hood. I don't believe that most of us realized just how much firearms play a part in the process of chasing street wealth until it is much too late. I am a first-generation street kid out of my family. My mother, father, and family members before me all worked and are still working-class citizens since they were able to work. My mother was a single mom of three who as we got older lost her job at Pratt & Whitney and fell onto hard times. I was the second oldest child, and at that time, I was a teenager in high school with an opportunity to make \$500 each day if I could stay out until 9pm. I left my mother's home at 15 to live with my sister and finish high school, and to also become part of the drug game to make money, not realizing I would give 11 years of my life to the correctional system over periods of time and would be involved in several shootings taking place throughout the city. To combat gun violence, we must address the root causes. We need to deal with multiple factors that can create the opportunity for both healing as well as growth in several ways for both adults as well as our youth. Resident empowerment and equitable collaborations with city, state and other stakeholders can ensure success.

-SEAN REEVES CAGV

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONNECTICUT GUN VIOLENCE ISSUE

PREVALENCE AND IMPACT

From 2019 to 2020 Connecticut experienced a 53% increase in gun violence.[4] In 2021, gun homicides reached the highest it had been in 25 years with 128 gun-related deaths, followed closely by 119 in 2022.[5] New Haven, one of the state's largest cities, has especially felt this increase. New Haven police records revealed that homicides, nonfatal shootings, and confirmed shots fired have all increased over the last 5 years. For example, according to a New Haven Police Department CompStat report, between 2018 and 2022 confirmed shots fired increased by over 200% and the number of nonfatal shooting victims nearly doubled. Hundreds of residents have been harmed during this time period.

In addition to the serious physical harm and loss of life caused, gun violence has a tremendous economic cost. Because approximately 85% of gunshot victims are uninsured or on some form of public funded insurance, it is estimated that the total direct cost to Connecticut taxpayers for all forms of gun violence is about \$90 million per year.[6] Additionally, law enforcement efforts are funded entirely by taxpayer dollars. These direct costs include healthcare, law enforcement and criminal justice expenses. Using the Everytown Research and Policy Interactive Calculator that estimates the lifetime costs of gun-related incidents, the total cost of shootings to taxpayers in New Haven was over \$14.4 million in 2019, over \$25.1 million in 2020, over \$29 million in 2021, and over \$19.8 million in 2022.[7] Looking at 2021 costs compared with 2019, there is over a 100% increase in economic costs of firearm injury and death in just two years. Though these costs are incurred over a number of years, it is still a significant price to pay for preventable injury and death.

Furthermore, the toll of this violence results in mental and physical consequences that are long lasting and far reaching. Extensive research has long demonstrated the relationship between exposure to violence and psychological symptoms like stress and trauma.[8] For example, exposure to firearm fatality (e.g., losing a loved one) has been linked to mental health symptoms of post-traumatic stress, depression, and complicated grief.[9] Research has also found that young people that are exposed

[4] The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity (CWCSEO). (2021). Report of the Gun Violence Intervention and Prevention Advisory Committee. (2021).

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DPH/Injury-Prevention/CTVDRS/GVIPAC-Complete-Report-Submission_12-30-2021.pdf

[5] Gun violence archive. Gun Violence Archive. (n.d.). Retrieved March 15, 2023, from <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>

[6] Home. Giffords. (n.d.). Retrieved March 15, 2023, from <https://giffords.org/>

[7] Calculate the economic cost of gun violence. Everytown Research & Policy. (n.d.). Retrieved March 15, 2023, from <https://everytownresearch.org/report/economic-cost-calculator/>

[8] Smith, M. E., Sharpe, T. L., Richardson, J., Pahwa, R., Smith, D., & DeVylder, J. (2020). The impact of exposure to gun violence fatality on mental health outcomes in four urban US settings. *Social Science & Medicine*, 246, 112587

[9] Rheingold, A. A., & Williams, J. L. (2015). Survivors of homicide: Mental health outcomes, social support, and service use among a community-based sample. *Violence and victims*, 30(5), 870-883.

to violence and who experience subsequent mental health symptoms for sustained periods of time are more likely to suffer academically and become less engaged with school.[10] Exposure to gun violence can also lead to other problematic behaviors. Young males in the criminal justice system who had been exposed to gun violence are at increased risk to carry firearms.[11] Gun carrying is known to be a strong predictor of future violent victimization.[12] Exposure to gun violence has also been found to impact physical health. Studies have shown relationships between exposure to gun violence, subsequent trauma, cardiovascular health problems, and difficulty sleeping.[13] In these ways, and many others, residents are not only paying for gun violence financially, but also through physical harm and loss of life, and with their long-term health and well-being.

Interpersonal firearm injury and homicide is also known to disproportionately affect Black and Brown communities. [14] While New Haven is a diverse city, there is a distinct pattern of racial segregation across residential neighborhoods.[15] Figure 2 shows the concentration of firearm injury and death in the City of New Haven over the last 7 years. The most impacted neighborhoods are also areas with higher populations of Black and Brown residents. For example, both the Newhallville and Hill sections of New Haven have each experienced 2 homicides and almost 20 nonfatal shootings in

[10] Danese, A., McLaughlin, K. A., Samara, M., & Stover, C. S. (2020). Psychopathology in children exposed to trauma: detection and intervention needed to reduce downstream burden. *BMJ (Clinical research ed.)*, 371, m3073. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m3073>

[11] Beardslee, J., Mulvey, E., Schubert, C., Allison, P., Infante, A., & Pardini, D. (2018). Gun- and Non-Gun-Related Violence Exposure and Risk for Subsequent Gun Carrying Among Male Juvenile Offenders. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 57(4), 274–279. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaac.2018.01.012>

[12] Kelsay, J. D., Silver, I. A., & Barnes, J. C. (2021). The Association Between Adolescent Gun Ownership and Gun Carrying and Adulthood Violence and Victimization. *Violence and victims*, 36(1), 157–192. <https://doi.org/10.1891/VV-D-19-00090>

[13] Kuehn B. M. (2019). Growing Evidence Linking Violence, Trauma to Heart Disease. *Circulation*, 139(7), 981–982. <https://doi.org/10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.118.038907>; Konstam, M. A., & Konstam, A. D. (2019). Gun Violence and Cardiovascular Health. *Circulation*, 139(22), 2499–2501. <https://doi.org/10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.118.039504>; Heissel, J. A., Sharkey, P. T., Torrats-Espinosa, G., Grant, K., & Adam, E. K. (2018). Violence and Vigilance: The Acute Effects of Community Violent Crime on Sleep and Cortisol. *Child development*, 89(4), e323–e331. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12889>.

[14] Santilli, A., O'Connor Duffany, K., Carroll-Scott, A., Thomas, J., Greene, A., Arora, A., Agnoli, A., Gan, G., & Ickovics, J. (2017). Bridging the Response to Mass Shootings and Urban Violence: Exposure to Violence in New Haven, Connecticut. *American journal of public health*, 107(3), 374–379. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303613>.

[15] Rae, D. W. (2003). CREATIVE DESTRUCTION AND THE AGE OF URBANISM. In *City: Urbanism and Its End* (pp. 1–32). Yale University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1np937.4>

2022.[16] Over 80% of Newhallville residents are Black, whereas the Hill’s population is about 45% and 40% Hispanic and Black, respectively. [17] Combined, these two neighborhoods account for one-third of the City’s homicides and close to 40% of nonfatal shootings, despite being home to only about 17% of New Haven residents.[18]

The negative outcomes associated with exposure to violence are an especially critical concern for residents who live in these areas and other neighborhoods like them. In short, the issue of firearm violence in the community is not simply a matter of physical harm done, but also the broader consequences impacting health and well-being of those in the vicinity of these incidents. Therefore, combatting gun violence in New Haven communities also represents an act toward achieving racial equity in quality of life.

ROOT CAUSES & RISK FACTORS

Community gun violence is a very complex phenomenon. While research has uncovered several factors that are commonly correlated with firearm violence, it is still difficult to predict and therefore a challenge to prevent. For example, with community gun violence specifically, the availability of illegal firearms including those that are acquired on the black market or stolen, and the growing problem of ghost guns[19] represents a barrier to relevant agencies predicting where, when, and by whom gun violence might occur. Firearms are durable goods and illegal ones exchange hands quickly and often.[20] For this reason, historically, gun violence has largely been dealt with through response-driven strategies—that is, mitigating harm after it happens with a focus on apprehending the perpetrator to incapacitate them in order to prevent future violent acts. More recently, however, we have come to learn considerably more about the issue and various root causes. With that, researchers and practitioners have made strides in finding ways to both detect risk factors and intervene to reduce risk and better prevent shootings.

[16] The New Haven Police Department (NHPD) maintains violent crime data.

[17] Bureau, U. S. C. (2021, April 26). Census.gov. Retrieved March 15, 2023, from <https://www.census.gov/>

[18] Derived from NHPD and U.S. 2020 Census data.

[[19] National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment (NFCTA). (2023). Crime Guns - Volume Two. Ghost guns are privately made, un-serialized, untraceable firearms often sold in parts or kits online. “The number of suspected ghost guns recovered by law enforcement agencies and sent to the ATF for tracing and tracking increased by 1,083% from 2017 (1,629) to 2021 (19,273).”

[20] Chesnut, K. Y., Barragan, M., Gravel, J., Pifer, N. A., Reiter, K., Sherman, N., & Tita, G. E. (2017). Not an 'iron pipeline', but many capillaries: regulating passive transactions in Los Angeles' secondary, illegal gun market. *Injury prevention: journal of the International Society for Child and Adolescent Injury Prevention*, 23(4), 226–231. <https://doi.org/10.1136/injuryprev-2016-042088>

Risk and contextual factors associated with gun violence can be understood on three levels—individual, family, and community. For example, research has shown that on the individual-level, while most adolescent offenders will not continue to commit crimes into adulthood, a small few who experiences early onset aggression that is not resolved during adolescence are more likely to develop a pattern of antisocial behavior and violence into adulthood.[21] At the family and environmental level, research shows that highly aggressive children who continue on a path of antisocial behavior are more likely to have experienced ongoing environmental risks such as negative parenting practices and persistent harsh or inconsistent discipline.[22] Similarly, studies have shown that young people are more likely to carry firearms where there are less feelings of safety in their communities.[23] In short, structural inequalities (e.g., under-resourced communities) can have a negative impact on people and the communities where people live, work, go to school, and leisure. Table 1 below shows a non-exhaustive list of risk and protective factors for involvement in violent crime.

It is important, however, to recognize that no combination or intensity of risk factors can predict with certainty who will engage in firearm violence or why. In other words, even if all the risk factors are present, an individual's involvement in gun violence may never happen. In fact, research and data from other cities frequently show a small number of individuals in any given community are involved in most of the violence that may take place there.[25] Therefore, it is important to remember that even in communities that are disproportionately impacted by gun violence, most people, including those deemed "at-risk" to commit gun crimes, are generally law-abiding. There is a continued effort to know more about identifying the most effective prevention and intervention strategies. The following section outlines the most cutting-edge approaches to gun violence being utilized in the nation.

[21] Moffitt, T. E. (1993). Adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behavior: a developmental taxonomy. *Psychological review*, 100(4), 674.

[22] Dodge, K. A., Greenberg, M. T., Malone, P. S., & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group (2008). Testing an idealized dynamic cascade model of the development of serious violence in adolescence. *Child development*, 79(6), 1907–1927. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2008.01233.x>

[23] Molnar, B. E., Gortmaker, S. L., Bull, F. C., & Buka, S. L. (2004). Unsafe to play? Neighborhood disorder and lack of safety predict reduced physical activity among urban children and adolescents. *American journal of health promotion: AJHP*, 18(5), 378–386. <https://doi.org/10.4278/0890-1171-18.5.378>

[24] City of Philadelphia (Spring 2021 Updated). Philadelphia Roadmap for Safer Communities. <https://www.phila.gov/media/20210414123750/RoadmapToSaferCommunitiesSpring2021.pdf>; A Majority Of D.C.'s Gun Violence Is Driven By Small Number Of People, Says A New Study. (2022, February 18). DCist. Retrieved March 15, 2023, from <https://dcist.com/story/22/02/18/majority-of-dc-homicides-driven-by-small-group/>; Papachristos, A.V., Wildeman, C. (2014). Network exposure and homicide victimization in an african american community. *American Journal of Public Health*, 104(1), 143-150. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2013.301441; Papachristos, A.V., Wildeman, C., Roberto, E. (2015). Tragic, but not random: The social contagion of nonfatal gunshot injuries. *Social Science & Medicine*, 125,139-150. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.01.056>

TABLE 1. RISK & PROTECTION FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH INVOLVEMENT IN GUN VIOLENCE

	RISK FACTORS	PROTECTIVE FACTORS
INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HISTORY OF VIOLENT VICTIMIZATION • EARLY AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR • ANTI-SOCIAL BELIEFS OR ATTITUDES • SUBSTANCE ABUSE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT • HIGH EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS • POSITIVE SOCIAL ORIENTATION • INVOLVEMENT IN PRO-SOCIAL ACTIVITIES • GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT
FAMILY CONTEXT/ RELATIONSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOW PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT • LOW ATTACHMENT TO PARENTS/CAREGIVERS • POOR FAMILY FUNCTIONING 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POSITIVE SHARED ACTIVITIES WITH PARENTS/CAREGIVERS • SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE • CONNECTEDNESS TO CARING ADULTS OR POSITIVE INFLUENCES OUTSIDE OF FAMILY
COMMUNITY-LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIMINISHED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES • COMMUNITY-LEVEL PREVALENCE OF TRAUMA • ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS SUCH AS EXPOSURE TO TOXIC SUBSTANCES (EX., LEAD) • CONCENTRATED DISADVANTAGE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EFFECTIVE COORDINATION OF RESOURCES AND SERVICES AMONG PUBLIC-SERVING INSTITUTIONS • COMMUNITY COHESION (COLLECTIVE EFFICACY) • GREEN SPACES

Note: Not an exhaustive list. See the Report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)[25]

[25] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Risk and protective factors | violence prevention | injury Center | CDC. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved March 15, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>

BEST PRACTICES IN GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Many of the recommendations contained in this Office of Violence Prevention Blueprint build on existing, groundbreaking work being done in the city and other parts of the country, as well as taking best practices into consideration. It is important to note that violence prevention has been a project of modern society for quite some time now. Approaches have and continue to evolve based on changing understandings of the nature of violence and as the nature of violence changes itself. For this reason, the shift in thinking of gun violence as a public health issue has revolutionized the way prevention is approached. The field of public health views and treats gun violence as a contagion. This framework recognizes that there are various ways to approach gun violence ranging from population-level to tailored individual-level interventions.

There are three levels of prevention: primary, secondary, and tertiary.[1] Primary prevention, also known as universal prevention, aims to promote healthy development in the general population rather than wait for the violent behavior to emerge (e.g., introducing problem resolution skills in the early education curriculum). Secondary prevention, also known as selective prevention, is when strategies are focused on individuals who are at an increased risk for violence (e.g., mentoring programs, mediation services). Lastly, tertiary prevention, referred to as indicated prevention, consists of intensive services for individuals who are demonstrating aggressive behavior with the goal of reducing the risk of future occurrences and/or escalation of violence. Here, we present three nationally recognized and widely used strategies, all of which are also operating across several organizations within the city of New Haven.

Group Violence Intervention (GVI)

One of the premiere violence reduction interventions in the country is known as Focused Deterrence. The Focused Deterrence model uses a strategy that employs the “pulling levers”[27] approach that was popularized initially in Boston with Operation Ceasefire.[28] Criminal groups or gangs that are believed to be actively involved in community violence are called into a meeting, or call-in, and given the message that violence will no longer be tolerated. Law enforcement and other criminal justice partners are present to tell them if any violence occurs, then every available legal lever would be pulled to bring forth an immediate and extreme response to incapacitate the offenders. This is meant to deter or discourage these individuals from engaging in any further illegal activity that might aggravate conflict and lead to violence in the community.

[26] Cornell, D. & Guerra, N. G. (2013). Introduction. Gun Violence: Prediction, Prevention, and Policy, APA Panel of Experts Report. American Psychological Association.

[27] Braga, A.A. and Weisburd, D.L. (2012), The Effects of “Pulling Levers” Focused Deterrence Strategies on Crime. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 8: 1-90. <https://doi.org/10.4073/csr.2012.6>

[28] Braga, A. A., Kennedy, D. M., Waring, E. J. Morrison, A. M. (2017). Problem-Oriented Policing, Deterrence, and Youth Violence: An Evaluation of Boston's Operation Ceasefire. In *Gangs*, 513–43. Oxfordshire, GBR: Routledge.

In addition to promising swift punishment for gun violence, these call-ins also feature community-based organizations that offer social services to help participants access the supports they need to live a productive life free from violence. Participants are encouraged to take advantage of different types of assistance including bus passes, résumé writing and job training programs, and/or literacy and educational programs. The call-ins also feature community members who have been affected by gun violence as well as individuals who were living a life of crime but turned their life around. The purpose of this approach is to both demonstrate the impact of violent acts on those who perpetrate it as well as those that are impacted by the harm and loss violence causes. In this way, the Focused Deterrence approach combines both the threat of punishment as well as a helping hand to provide alternatives to the street and encourage change.[29] Project Longevity New Haven is a GVI that utilizes this focused deterrence model.

Community-Based Violence Intervention (CVI)

Cure Violence is another popular, nationally recognized approach that is similar to Focused Deterrence in that it focuses on high-risk individuals who are suspected to be involved in illegal activities in the community that may lead to violent conflict. [30] The key features of Cure Violence, however, that distinguish it from other approaches is its reliance on credible messengers, or individuals with similar lived experiences of clients that drive the work. Cure Violence is a community violence intervention program that is integrated into the fabric of neighborhoods. It centers on the power of interpersonal relationships, cultural competency, and shared experiences to connect with and promote individual-level change for those who need it most.

Credible messengers are often individuals who have been gang-involved, experienced incarceration, and/or otherwise been impacted by gun violence. These “violence interrupters” or “neighborhood change agents” are skilled in intervention and supporting people on their change journeys. These professionals have credibility in the communities where they work. They reach out to those at the center of gun violence in their communities, build relationships, and work to support healing and address conflict through nonviolent means, including de-escalation and mediation. Additionally, Cure Violence and other programs like it may also offer other forms of support such as helping people find housing or pursue education and employment opportunities. Connecticut Violence Intervention Program (CTVIP) is a CVI in New Haven that is based on the Cure Violence model.

[29] More information can be found below explaining each strategy/approach.

[30] Cure violence global - effective violence prevention. Cure Violence. (n.d.). Retrieved March 15, 2023, from <https://cvg.org/>

Hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs)

Yale New Haven Hospital operates a hospital-based violence intervention program (HVIP). The goal of the HVIP is to reach survivors of violence while they are being hospitalized to prevent subsequent victimization and/or violent retaliation.[31] Hospital-based intervention is critical for two important reasons. First, it is proactive in that victims do not have to seek out support themselves during or following recovery. Instead, those services are offered at their bedside. Secondly, HVIP contact following a violent incident represents a pivotal moment in which life-changing decisions can be made to drastically improve the outcomes for a survivor. In fact, research has demonstrated that victims tend to be more receptive to support in health-care settings than they might be elsewhere. [32] Case managers and social service providers try to meet victims' basic needs and support them to reduce the likelihood of repeat victimization and prevent retaliation which can often be the case with gun violence victims.

Other considerations for prevention

There are a few limitations to even these very popular and widely used strategies. Generally, deterrence by itself may not work for a variety of reasons. For instance, the brain development research shows that youth and young adults have diminished decision-making capacity and do not necessarily fully consider the consequences of their actions. [33] Furthermore, some criminal activities are committed to fulfill basic human needs, which can cause someone to disregard potential consequences because of desperation. Failure to take these points into consideration can limit the sustainability of these solutions. Without addressing underlying causes that allow gun violence to persist, even the best intervention programs will not consistently be effective. Therefore, solutions should include a multitude of strategies that also enhance community resources and protective factors.

[31] Evans, Douglas and Anthony Vega (2018). *Critical Care: The Important Role of Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Programs*. In *Denormalizing Violence: A Series of Reports From the John Jay College Evaluation of Cure Violence Programs in New York City*. New York, NY: Research and Evaluation Center, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York.

[32] Strong, B. L., Shipper, A. G., Downton, K. D., & Lane, W. G. (2016). The effects of healthcare-based violence intervention programs on injury recidivism and costs: A systematic review. *The journal of trauma and acute care surgery*, 81(5), 961–970. <https://doi.org/10.1097/TA.0000000000001222>

[33] Redding, R. E., (2008) *Juvenile Transfer Laws: An Effective Deterrent to Delinquency?* *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1313229>; Steinberg, L., & Scott, E. S. (2003). *Less guilty by reason of adolescence: developmental immaturity, diminished responsibility, and the juvenile death penalty*. *The American psychologist*, 58(12), 1009–1018.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.58.12.1009>; McDonald, S. (2018). *The Influence of Brain Development Research on the Response to Young Adult Males 18 – 24 Years of Age in the Criminal Justice System*. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/the-influence-of-brain-development-research-on-the-response-to-young-adult-males/download>

CAGV conducted a review of the literature and available reports of violence prevention programs and initiatives across the country. Among some of the most utilized and popular evidence-based strategies, we found one fundamental commonality that is shared across those that have demonstrated the most success in reducing interpersonal gun violence. While the various initiatives are unique in some ways, the key to their success is not necessarily the program by itself but rather effective collaboration with the right partners (e.g., community partners, street outreach).[34] Even the most successful interventions explain only a portion of the variance in gun violence rates. Fidelity (i.e., whether the intervention was delivered as intended) of various gun violence reduction interventions is often quite variable, limiting the generalizability of even the most successful interventions. [35] Many factors influence homicide trends among youth, such as poor education and economic opportunities, which increase risk-taking.[36] In many cities, including New Haven, a variety of gun violence reduction programs exist. Therefore, it may be problematic to attribute reduction (or increases) in gun violence to any one intervention, especially when multiple interventions may be in place simultaneously.

It is important to systematically identify why the implementation of gun violence reduction interventions succeed or fail, which may be related to community factors or relations among different community partners. Identifying and understanding the obstacles to implementation helps to explain why communities aggravate or deter gun violence. Networks of intervenors (e.g., cure violence, focused deterrence programs) may also include a wider blend of efforts to reduce gun violence, such as activist organizations and other formal and informal efforts to build community resilience. Additionally, factors such as perceptions of police-community relations will affect levels of gun violence. Because gun violence—especially in urban areas—is a community problem, neighborhood features contribute to rates gun violence and explain a portion of the variance in gun violence that is unexplained by even the most rigorous implementations of gun violence reduction interventions. This means that a robust and well-developed strategy will undoubtedly transcend the bound of any individual or small group of agencies or institutions. The best strategy is likely to involve multiple key stakeholders to address various aspects of the root causes of firearm violence.

Recent literature suggests that the best approaches to effectively reduce gun violence and

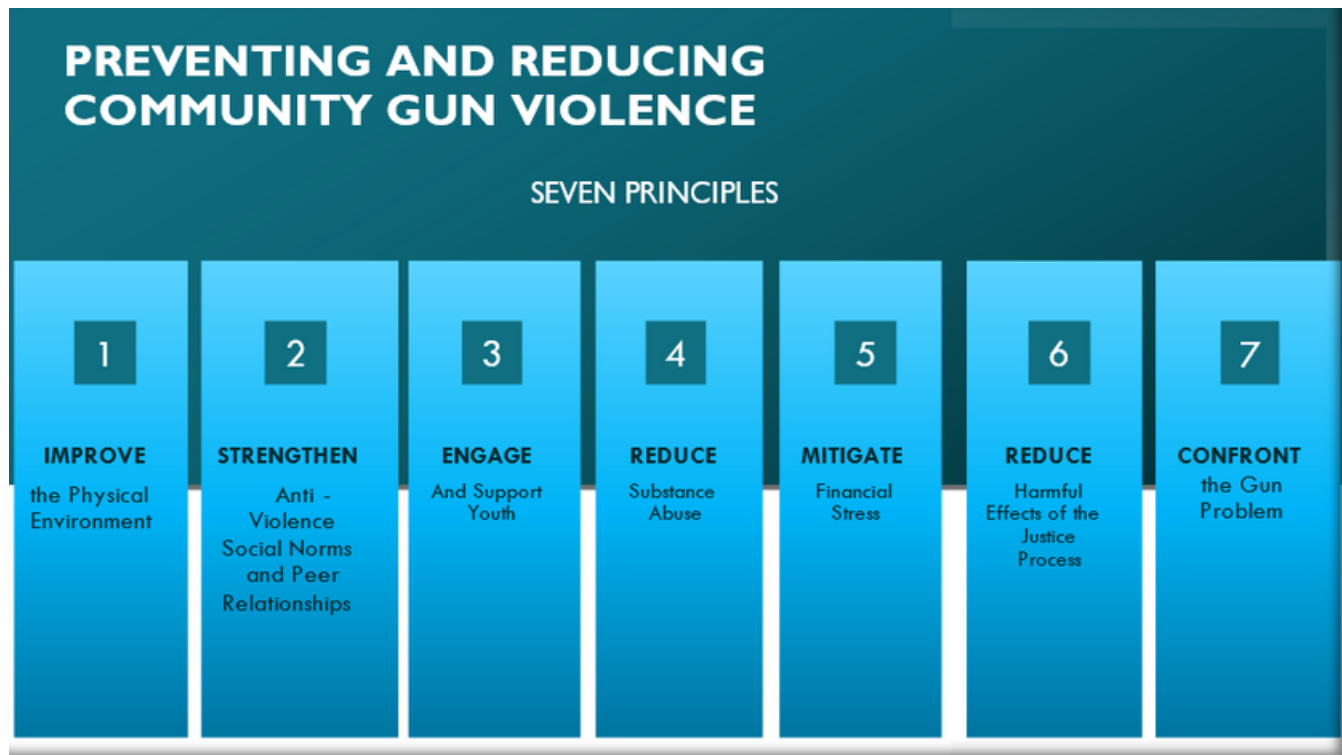
[34] Jannetta, J., Martinez, R., Thompson, P. S., Zweig, J., Robin, L., Courtney, L., Cramer, L., Ervin, S., Matei, A., * White, K. (2022). A Research-Based Practice Guide to Reduce Youth Gun and Gang/Group Violence. Urban Institute Research Report, Washington, D.C.

[35] Braga, A. A., Weisburd, D., & Turchan, B. (2018). Focused deterrence strategies and crime control: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis of the empirical evidence. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 17(1), 205-250.

[36] Foster, H., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2009). Toward a stress process model of children's exposure to physical family and community violence. *Clinical child and family psychology review*, 12(2), 71-94. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-009-0049-0>

promote long-lasting prevention should focus on social factors that underlie the issue. Therefore, this blueprint adopts this approach in its review of evidenced-based practices/strategies consistent with a seminal 2020 report issued by John Jay College.

FIGURE 1. JOHN JAY PRINCIPALS FOR GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION



In the report published by John Jay College Research Advisory Group on Preventing and Reducing Community Violence [37], the researchers argued that gun violence can be reduced without overreliance on law enforcement. The report's goal was to provide guidance on key strategies to reduce violence by investing in people and places and changing the sociopolitical environment. The report suggested that a non-policing approach to addressing gun violence can produce significant benefits that could prevent violence before it happens rather than focusing on stopping the spread in the aftermath. To this end, the researchers identified seven evidence-based strategies (see Figure 1). Table 2 shows a variety of prominent programs in the City of New Haven and their alignment with these strategies.

[37] John Jay College Research Advisory Group on Preventing and Reducing Community Violence (2020). *Reducing Violence Without Police: A Review of Research Evidence*. New York, NY: Research and Evaluation Center, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York.

TABLE 2. NEW HAVEN PROGRAMS & THEIR ALIGNMENT WITH JOHN JAY PRINCIPLES FOR GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

	IMPROVE THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	STRENGTHEN ANTI-VIOLENCE SOCIAL NORMS & PEER RELATIONSHIPS	ENGAGE & SUPPORT YOUTH	REDUCE SUBSTANCE ABUSE	MITIGATE FINANCIAL STRESS	REDUCE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF JUSTICE PROCESS	CONFRONT THE GUN PROBLEM
BEREAVEMENT CARE NETWORK		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
CLIFFORD BEERS			✓	✓	✓		
CT VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAM		✓	✓				✓
EMERGE		✓			✓	✓	
HOPE FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER			✓	✓	✓	✓	
ICE THE BEEF		✓	✓				✓
LIVABLE CITY INITIATIVE	✓						
MOTHERS AND OTHERS FOR JUSTICE			✓		✓		
PROJECT LONGEVITY		✓			✓		✓
PROJECT M.O.R.E.		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS		✓					✓
YOUTH CONNECT			✓				

See Appendix A for descriptions of these programs.

Criminal justice approaches to violence reduction are based on tertiary prevention. Many might argue that it is not sufficient because measures could be taken earlier at the community level to reduce risk (i.e., universal prevention efforts). However, despite the inherent challenges in accurately predicting gun violence, public health campaigns have been successful in reducing other types of negative outcomes in the population by identifying risk factors and promoting safer behaviors (e.g., anti-smoking campaigns to reduce cancer risk, seat-belt campaigns to reduce vehicular fatalities).[38] The ideal approach is primary prevention because it attempts to eliminate the behavior before it even begins by addressing the factors that contribute to it. Still, there are very real, urgent threats currently in the community that cannot be resolved even by eliminating root causes. Therefore, the key to gun violence prevention is addressing the problem using a holistic approach that recognizes the urgency of intervening in violence now but also getting ahead of future violence before it happens.



CITY OF NEW HAVEN RESPONSE TO INCREASED SHOOTING

The City established the Department of Community Resilience in September of 2021 as a hub of social service coordination for the most vulnerable residents of New Haven. The Office of Violence Prevention (OVP), a new addition to the City's social service network under the Community Services Administration's Department of Community Resilience, has the task of enhancing the social safety net and improving socioeconomic outcomes for residents at the highest risk of being involved in community violence. The current administration contracted with CAGV to conduct a community input process to develop a blueprint that is intended to guide the work of the new OVP.

[38] Mozaffarian, D., Hemenway, D., & Ludwig, D. S. (2013). Curbing gun violence: lessons from public health successes. *JAMA*, 309(6), 551–552. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2013.38>

It is important, however, to note that violence prevention efforts began long before the creation of the OVP and this Blueprint. To date, here is a sample of critical measures that the City and its partners have taken to address gun violence (see side panel).

Additionally, in the Spring of 2022, the City of New Haven launched the Program for Reintegration, Engagement, Safety and Support (PRESS) initiative. PRESS represents an interagency collaboration that streamlines communication and case management for high-risk individuals returning to the community from incarceration with gun-related charges. The key activities of collaborative case management consist of leadership meetings, frontline staff case conferencing, regular meetings with parole and probation officers, a re-entry care team, individual case conferencing with community-based organizations, and a pre-release plan at correctional facilities, as well as community-based violence mediation and interruption. The community partners (listed in Table 3) are permitted to collect and exchange information concerning each client in a common database.

Prior to the implementation of PRESS, this group of community partners and agencies did not have centralized, consistent, and trackable coordination. With the new initiative, the group can share information, work collaboratively on a range of carefully selected cases, accurately track social service referrals and utilization by each client, and effectively monitor their outcomes.

NHV PROGRAMS & STRATEGIES

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Creation of the shooting task force
- Increasing the diversity of the police force and recruitment of City residents to better align with its demographics
- Adoption of technology to increase efficiency of investigations including rapid DNA testing, GPS tracking devices, license plate readers, & expansion of ShotSpotter
- Gun buyback programs
- Commitment to community policing & increased walking beats
- Collaboration with state & federal partners

YOUTH & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- Safe Summer program for youth & families
- Youth Connect provides intensive case management & wraparound services to disengaged New Haven Public School youth
- ARPA-funded youth centers (3 finished & 5 more under construction)
- Youth@Work program provides employment for youth & young adults

TARGET INTERVENTIONS FOR HIGH-RISK INDIVIDUALS

- Reentry Welcome Center
- Emerge CT
- Workforce Alliance Pathway to Success program
- DNA of an Entrepreneur - small business education program offered to returning citizens
- Established violence intervention protocols with the local Hospital to prevent retaliation in the aftermath of shootings
- Housing Choice Vouchers to facilitate family reunification for returning residents
- PRESS initiative
- Grant-making for violence prevention and intervention enhancement
- Connecticut Violence Intervention Program
- Project Longevity New Haven
- Clifford Beers Victim Support Services Network

TABLE 3. PRESS PARTNER AGENCIES AND THEIR ROLES IN THE INITIATIVE

ORGANIZATION	STRATEGY	ROLE
CITY OF NEW HAVEN OFFICE OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION	COORDINATION OF PARTNERSHIPS	STREAMLINE SHARING OF CRITICAL INFORMATION BETWEEN RELEVANT AGENCIES & ORGANIZATIONS
CT DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS (DOC), ADULT PAROLE	COMMUNITY SUPERVISION	PROVIDES REFERRALS OF INDIVIDUALS AT-RISK AND PARTICIPATES IN MULTI-AGENCY CASE MANAGEMENT
CT VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAM	COMMUNITY- AND SCHOOL-BASED VIOLENCE INTERRUPTION	VIOLENCE MEDIATION & INTERRUPTION, OUTREACH TO INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE HARD TO REACH
COURT SUPPORT SERVICE DIVISION (CSSD), ADULT PROBATION	COMMUNITY SUPERVISION	PROVIDES REFERRALS OF INDIVIDUALS AT-RISK AND PARTICIPATES IN MULTI-AGENCY CASE MANAGEMENT
NEW HAVEN POLICE DEPARTMENT (NHPD)	LAW ENFORCEMENT	PROVIDES REFERRALS OF INDIVIDUALS AT-RISK & PARTICIPATES IN MULTI-AGENCY CASE MANAGEMENT
PROJECT LONGEVITY	GROUP VIOLENCE INTERVENTION	CASE MANAGEMENT OF GROUP/GANG MEMBERS, CONDUCT CUSTOM NOTIFICATIONS & ORGANIZE CALL-INS
PROJECT M.O.R.E.	PRISON REENTRY AND COMMUNITY-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION	CASE MANAGEMENT FOR HIGH-RISK FORMERLY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS
PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS, U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, PREVENTION & INTERVENTION, FOCUSED & STRATEGIC ENFORCEMENT, & ACCOUNTABILITY	CASE MANAGEMENT, FEDERAL PRISON REENTRY, AND ORGANIZING CALL-INS

While early evaluations of this initiative are still pending, PRESS is believed to be showing promising results due to the strong coordination among these agencies that complement and enhance the work of one another. Notably, the City of New Haven saw 26 homicides in 2021 while in 2022 there were 14, representing a 42% decrease.[39] While this reduction cannot be directly attributed to PRESS and thus should be interpreted with caution, the reduction in homicides coincide with timing of the initiative's implementation. This Blueprint puts forth recommendations that may not only enhance the work that PRESS is doing itself but may also serve as a guidepost for other agencies in the City to enhance their service to help prevent violence more broadly.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT PROCESS

To best inform the recommendations set forth here in this Blueprint, CAGV drew on several key groups as part of the methodology. Data collection involved a series of community listening sessions and interviews with other key stakeholders including violence prevention professionals, clergy, and elected officials. In total, we gathered insights from over 250 participants across 14 listening sessions and interviews around the city. This included a significant focus on the most impacted areas of New Haven— Newhallville, Dwight, The Hill, Fair Haven, Dixwell, and West Rock. These neighborhoods were selected because incidents of firearm violence are more frequent and geographically located in these areas compared to other parts of the city (see Figure 2). Therefore, residents from these neighborhoods were considered uniquely positioned to provide critical insights on various aspects of the issue of community violence through that proximity and lived experience. In fact, many researchers posit that community mobilization and engagement are key factors that can predict lower rates of violence.[40]

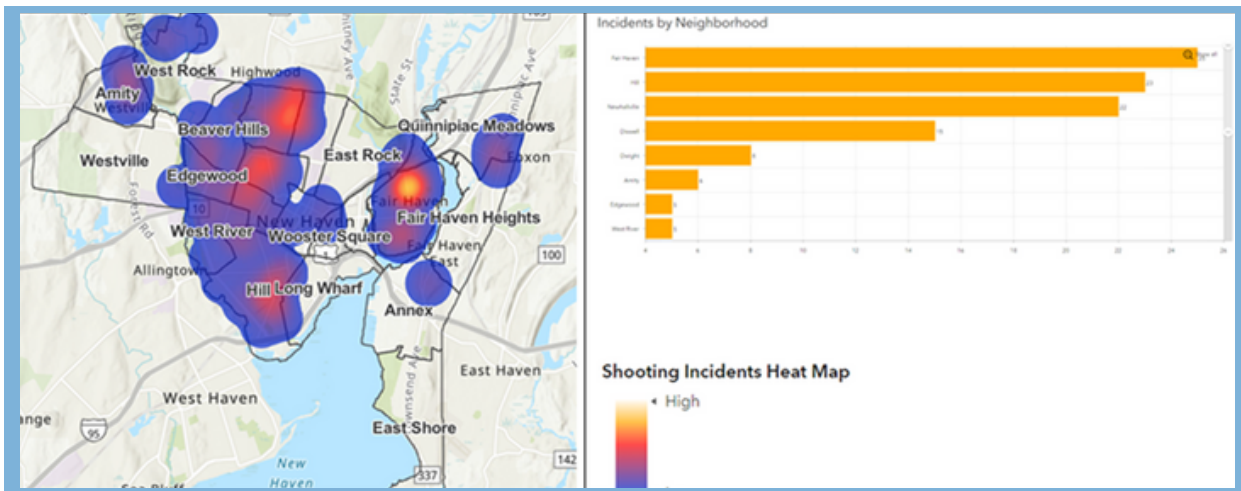
Further, these listening sessions were designed to facilitate inclusivity and equity, while protecting the anonymity of participants to ensure an honest and deep conversation about their communities, without the fear of political fallout, or social media. Additionally, we knew that these conversations could be traumatic, and we wanted to prevent further harm from being done to the people in these communities. Every listening session also had mental health providers available to address any mental health need(s) of participants in real time, as needed.

Finally, in addition to conducting listening sessions in various communities (both in person and virtual), separate listening sessions were conducting with survivors of homicide, members of the New Haven clergy, citizens re-entering the community from prison, police district managers, and the Board of Alders. This was in addition to separate interviews conducted with gun violence prevention organizations, violence interrupters and city officials. An exhaustive list of participant affiliations can be found in Appendix C.

[39] The New Haven Police Department (NHPD) maintains violent crime data.

[40] Richardson M. A. (2019). Framing Community-Based Interventions for Gun Violence: A Review of the Literature. *Health & social work*, 44(4), 259–270. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hsw/hlz026>

FIGURE 2. NEW HAVEN SHOOTING INCIDENTS HEATMAP (2016 - 2022)



Data Source: New Haven Police Department | Made by Dorothy B. Cohen, New Haven Health Department

FINDINGS FROM THE LISTENING SESSION

The findings from the community listening sessions center on themes including structural inequity; policing and criminal justice; mental health; and community engagement and cohesion. While there is considerable overlap between them, these four themes emerged as the most salient across all the listening sessions and warrant their own individual discussions. The following sections present community perspectives on these topics and give examples of how and why they are important to community members who participated in this project.

LISTENING SESSION FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

- Structural inequality aggravates conditions that allow gun violence to persist.
- There is an overreliance on the criminal legal system and punitiveness to address social problems that may be better addressed through community-based interventions and other social strategies.
- More pro-social activities and opportunities for economic security such as education, job training and placement, and positive leisure, are necessary elements to support neighborhood safety and cohesion.
- Violence intervention strategies that rely on deterrence should target the most serious and/or persistent offenders, but other primary prevention efforts must be made more broadly to prevent violence before risk is present.
- Relationships between the police and community members, especially those residing in the most impacted neighborhoods, need to be improved. Building trust would open up lines of communication and make it easier for police to do their jobs in responding to crime.
- Mental health resources are needed to interrupt cycles of trauma exacerbated by structural and community violence. This is especially the case for community members who are more frequently exposed to gun violence.
- The City and other agencies should center community engagement to keep the public informed and involved in ongoing efforts to secure public safety and promote well-being for all.

Structural Inequity

Many participants underscored the role of structural inequity that they believed leads to gun violence being a common phenomenon in neighborhoods of need and socioeconomic vulnerability. One participant stated, *“Until we as a country address the systemic and historical oppression of Black and Brown people... until we address poverty, until we address the disparities in healthcare and education and the like. When a man is struggling... he's going to go out and pick up a bundle, and he's going to stand on the corner, and he's going to do what he has to do.”* This and other similar sentiments were expressed throughout many of the listening sessions. While this is similar to the earlier discussion regarding access to pro-social opportunities, these statements speak not to the general availability of such opportunities, but instead to differential access that is largely determined by the neighborhood in which an individual might be from, have grown up in, or live. This includes the quality of school attended, access to community centers and after-school programs, the availability of safe environments for leisure, and job training programs that lead to a livable wage, and more.

In fact, in 2017 a group of trauma surgeons declared that “gun violence is structural violence” and argued that the phenomenon can only be understood and addressed with an eye toward the social and political contexts that both cause and allow it to persist.[41] Relatedly, some participants pointed to disparities in political and social capital of certain neighborhoods compared to others, underscoring a need for more collective and sustained efforts to unify and advocate for areas they feel exist in the shadows of the rest of the City. One stated, *“Most of us don't live in prominent neighborhoods. I can assure you if you lived in a prominent neighborhood, you wouldn't be ignored, overlooked, put on the back burner. I think that when we don't hold our elected officials accountable, we don't get answers. We don't get results. If we don't know what's available for us, as far as resources, we're not going to get it... if folks don't know how much money is there, or what that money is being used for, that's the way to keep people in the dark.”*

While broad and sweeping reforms to address historical structural inequity is outside of the scope and beyond the individual power of the OVP, participants find it of marked importance to the context and therefore the focused strategies of violence reduction in the City of New Haven.

Policing and Public Safety

Some participants reported complicated relationships with local law enforcement. This included what was described as distrust in police, partly due to feelings of mistreatment and sense that police do not care about some of the residents they are charged with protecting and serving. To this point, one participant stated, *“You don't trust [the police] because you think so many have changed over in our community where they don't stay. They're not policing. They in the cars. I get up one, two o'clock in the morning now, looking*

[41] Zakrison, T. L., Puyana, J. C., & Britt, L. D. (2017). Gun violence is structural violence: Our role as trauma surgeons. *The journal of trauma and acute care surgery*, 82(1), 224.

<https://doi.org/10.1097/TA.0000000000001289>

for a police car, I can't even find one...Trust, these kids don't trust no police, I hardly trust some of them now, and that's not good." While the particular details of this participant's distrust of police are their own, other participants did cite other examples of unresponsiveness and lack of community presence as sources of mistrust and strained relationships as well.

Further, some participants expressed that they do not believe police do enough to find perpetrators of gun violence or prevent it in the first place. For example, one participant stated, "I think [police] need to be more proactive than reactive because showing up after the gunshots and everybody running to the crime scene... the person that just did it is going the other way." Another expressed a similar sentiment related to unsolved homicides: "We got to hold the police department accountable and they have to solve these murders..."

On the other hand, some acknowledged that lack of willingness to cooperate with police investigations as a significant problem for residents who also want to see perpetrators off of the street. A participant shared, "We've had about three shootings.... Me and my daughter, we walk, we talk with people, and tried to get them involved to come out to say something. Everybody sees [the shooters], but they won't say anything." Communication barriers between community members and police have often been cited as one of the greatest challenges to solving gun-related offenses.[42] Sometimes it is a distrust in police or fear of retaliation from the offender or their peers that discourages witnesses from sharing information. One participant argued, "Every time there is one of these shootings, make no mistake, people know who's doing this every single time. The issue at play isn't just the police inability to respond to this, it's not for lack of trying on their part. The issue is, if nobody says what they see or if they're more inclined to try to take the law into their own hands, then nothing's going to get solved." The statement illustrates how victims or their close associates might resort to self-help and retaliate in the aftermath of a shooting instead of relying on the criminal legal system to address the offense.[43]

Finally, many participants recognized the important role that police play in discouraging crime as visible and present "capable guardians"[44] through regular community-policing and patrols. There is a pronounced desire not only for increased visibility of police in neighborhoods for the purposes of deterrence, but also for residents and officers to be more familiar with one another and build trust.

[42] Brunson R.K. & Wade, B.A. (2019). "Oh hell no, we don't talk to police": Insights on the lack of cooperation in police investigations of urban gun violence. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 1–26.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12448>; Carr, P.J., Napolitano, L., & Keating, J. (2007). We never call the cops and here is why: A qualitative examination of legal cynicism in three Philadelphia neighborhoods. *Criminology*, 45(2), 445–480. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2007.00084.x>

[43] Bernstein, M. (2022). Protecting Black Lives: Beyond the Over-policing/Under-policing Paradox. *Sociological Inquiry*. 92(1):64-89. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/soin.12450>

[44] Cohen, L. E., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. *American sociological review*, 588-608; Hollis, M. E., Felson, M., & Welsh, B. C. (2013). The capable guardian in routine activities theory: A theoretical and conceptual reappraisal. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, 15(1), 65–79. <https://doi.org/10.1057/cpcs.2012.14>

Building trust, overtime, may also assist with overcoming the challenge of willing witnesses that could assist in closing cases and keeping communities safe from serious violent offenders.

Mental Health

Gun violence, and the fear of gun violence, is a part of many of the participants' everyday lives. Everyone seemed to know victims and survivors of gun violence. Many participants shared harrowing experiences of their own with close encounters to shooting, with some reporting that they had been victims of gunshot injuries themselves. Exposure to gun violence was so common among participants and their communities that many of them expressed concern about the normalization of it. As one participant expressed, *"...The city has truly been traumatized by all of this [gun violence]... [W]e do need community-based services to help people process some of this trauma... you can get totally desensitized."* There was general concern that frequent exposure to gun violence and associated trauma going unaddressed would be detrimental to the most impacted residents in the long run.

For participants, mental health was considered both a cause and effect of gun violence in New Haven neighborhoods. One reentry professional spoke about how they saw mental health symptomology and the extent to which it can impact the lives of those who experience it often. *"My work as a public defender, I frequently represent people who have been traumatized by witnessing gun violence or losing family, friends, and neighbors to gun violence... The main takeaway from my experience is that this trauma, whether experienced as a child or as an adult, has major long-term effects. I've seen [trauma] contribute to PTSD, depression, and substance abuse in clients. I've seen it contribute directly to a people's ability to trust other people. From my experience, it significantly increases the likelihood of contact with the criminal justice system."* In an earlier section, this Blueprint discussed the high correlation of mental health symptoms with exposure to violence. Here, the participant demonstrates just how mental health issues co-occur with other negative outcomes. Addressing mental health, therefore, could serve as an entry point strategy into reducing risk in other areas of life.

Residents also discussed the stigma of mental health treatment in communities of color. For example, one participant stated, *"There's a stigma in the black families anyways about getting psychiatric help... getting counseling. 'Ain't nothing wrong with me...' We all got issues that need to be addressed. How do we do that? How do we incorporate that in our everyday lives?"* Contrary to any stigma, many participants expressed a desire for mental health resources to focus on residents. Such services are especially desired to help mitigate the impact of structural violence, gun violence, and trauma on the future outcomes of those most impacted.

Community Engagement and Cohesion

Some participants believed that there is not enough awareness of existing efforts to reduce gun violence in the City. As stated by one respondent, *"I think that's one of the biggest problems."*

Everybody feels helpless and they don't know that there's help out there. So, I think maybe marketing and canvassing." Referring to programs and services related to dealing with risk of exposure to gun violence and related issues, this participant suggests that knowing more about the type of assistance that is available could instill hope in residents who may feel discouraged by the violence taking place in their neighborhoods.

Another participant emphasized a need for public accountability for social support agencies to share their progress and performance with the communities that they serve: *"Show me the data from the organizations that are out there saying that they are dealing with gun violence and what neighborhoods and how many people were shot?... Show us the data. These organizations that are out there that do not have the data of what they are doing and the results of what they're doing, they just whistling in the wind. You got to show some stewardship of what you're doing and the data speaks for itself."* To this point, some participants stressed that knowing what is being done to increase public safety would make a difference. Research shows that this kind of transparency and accountability enhances public trust in the institutions that practice it.[45]

Not only do some participants feel isolated from information and services that are critical to improving the quality of their neighborhoods and the well-being of those who reside there, but they also reported feeling isolated from one another. Several participants describe the erosion of community cohesion and explained how it impacts the sense of belonging, ownership, and safety among neighbors: *"What's been happening everywhere over time has been, people, they're forming these little islands unto themselves separate from their community. They do not know their neighbors, they do not know the people they're going to school with so there's this whole detachment thing. If we're all family, let's say we were all one big family, me getting robbed is going to feel like you're getting robbed. You're going to get one to defend me and protect me. If I'm only by myself and only care about myself, it becomes very easy to only identify with myself or think very selfishly. What needs to happen or one of the biggest factors we can do as a community is increase that community connectivity, so everyone feels like we're a unit we all have a stake in this."*

There is a great deal of empirical evidence that supports collective efficacy, or community cohesion, as a community-level protective factor against gun violence. Several studies have found a negative relationship between collective efficacy and homicide—that is, as levels of collective efficacy or social cohesion increase, homicide decreases.[46] The theory behind this is that where neighbors are familiar with one another and therefore willing to intervene in matters of crime and delinquency that they witness, collective willingness to intervene serves as a protective factor that reduces the likelihood

[45] Alessandro, M., Lagomarsino, B. C., Scartascini, C., Streb, J., & Torrealday, J. (2021). Transparency and trust in government. Evidence from a survey experiment. *World Development*, 138, 105223.

[46] Kirk, D.S. & Matsuda, M. (2011), Legal Cynicism, Collective Efficacy, and the Ecology of Arrest. *Criminology*, 49: 443-472. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2011.00226.x>

of violence occurring. In this way, participants' desire for increased community cohesion is in line theoretically with what has been found in the literature. Opportunities to foster community cohesion in areas most impacted by gun violence would be a viable and welcomed strategy. Further, community engagement opportunities can also serve as a platform to foster community cohesion—creating a dual opportunity to both inform and unite neighbors for the greater good.



RECOMMENDATIONS

This project intentionally uplifts the compelling testimony of residents who are most impacted by community violence and have the highest exposure to the risk-factors that commonly precede it. The team took this input into strong consideration, analyzing it alongside the literature on best practices in gun violence prevention and the ongoing work of the City and CBOs engaged in violence prevention work. The following recommendations represent a foundational set of strategies that are in alignment with community demand and national best practices that the City is well positioned to support, implement, and expand as needed to have a significant impact on public safety and community well-being.

Since the Office of Violence Prevention is still in its start-up phase and with limited resources, it should primarily focus on violence interruption while creating the infrastructure to take on violence prevention initiatives in partnership with the Youth Department. This approach aligns well with input received from community members. According to the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, violence prevention refers to the elimination or reduction of the underlying causes and risk factors that lead to violence.[47] Based on this report, violence prevention efforts are thus designed to prevent

[47] National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (2022) Gun Violence Reduction Strategic Plan, Washington DC. https://nicjr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Washington-GVR-Report_V13_050622.pdf

violence from occurring in the first place. Violence intervention efforts, on the other hand, are designed to prevent the reoccurrence of violence or intervene and prevent imminent acts of violence. Both prevention and intervention hinge on deploying services that identify and address age and context-appropriate risk and protective factors.

Also, the report noted that violence prevention efforts are most often targeted towards children and youth whereas violence intervention efforts tend to be focused on the people who are at the greatest immediate risk of violence, who are typically young adults. While violence prevention is a broad field encompassing various types of programs, effective violence intervention is more defined and narrowly focused.

RECOMMENDED SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE OVP

- **Grant making**, to fund non-governmental organization programs that support the objective of reducing gun violence, directly or indirectly
- **Coordination** of violence prevention activities managed out of other agencies or running independently of the city.
- **Promote/Advocate for Employment Opportunities** to help youth and young adults find jobs to develop skills to enter the workforce
- **Training, Technical Assistance and Capacity Building** to increase the efficacy and availability of programs operating in the jurisdiction
- **Reporting and Evaluation** to measure the impact of programs and strategies being used to reduce violence
- **Research and Policy Development** to design empirically driven solutions appropriate to the local context

1) SERVE AS THE HUB OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION COORDINATION FOR THE CITY

A key ingredient to successful gun violence reduction strategies is effective collaboration between criminal justice agencies, mental health providers, credible messengers, community members, victim voices, city officials, and other local stakeholders and organizations. The OVP should serve as the central coordinating backbone entity of the various service-focused gun violence prevention initiatives in New Haven including but not limited to Connecticut Violence Intervention Program (CTVIP), Project Longevity, Project Safe Neighborhoods, Hospital based violence intervention, and other

programs. As the nucleus of violence prevention, the OVP should:

- Strengthen alignment, integration, and coordination with Youth Connect and youth violence prevention programs, including those coordinated by the Youth and Recreation Department, New Haven Public Schools, and youth-serving community-based organizations
- Identify and focus on individuals, groups, and communities at the highest risk of involvement in community violence to ensure they have access to ongoing services, supports, and opportunities
- Maintain an inventory of all violence prevention-focused programs and supportive services in the city, for both youth and adults
- Assess gaps in violence prevention and intervention services on a continuous basis and propose plans to fill them
- Aim to have a community presence including attending community meetings and other relevant events related to community violence
- Convene a coalition of violence-prevention service providers to improve communication and exchange best practices while providing a platform to report programmatic statistics

In addition to coordination, the OVP should take the lead role in program development and stewarding partnerships across violence intervention programs as well as programs that could reduce violence indirectly. Regarding explicit violent prevention and intervention programs that already exist, the OVP should:

- Work with Project Longevity to expand and enhance its work in the City with gang/group violence intervention
- Continue to support CTVIP recruitment of credible messengers with a particular focus on those that are young adults
- Establish a formal agreement with the hospital(s) to ensure efficient information-sharing on gunshot victims to relevant organizations
- Facilitate partnership between the hospital emergency department and violence prevention programs to promote continuity of care for victims and families in the aftermath of violent victimization

Regarding strategies to enhance the way the City can reduce violence indirectly, the OVP should:

- Establish and steward relationships with employers and labor unions to increase capacity for employment opportunities
- Develop strategies to integrate workforce development programming for young people and the hard-to-employ (e.g., skill building and enhancement internships)
- Reduce the time cycle from recruitment to employment for high-risk individuals involved in programming

- Partner with stakeholders to expand supportive employment and transitional jobs.
- Work with the Economic Development Administration to educate employers on the benefits of hiring returning citizens and high-risk individuals
- Continue to support reentry entities (ex., Reentry Welcome Center) to establish standards of comprehensive case management and seamless referral systems for the reentry population
- Collaborate with the Office of Community Mental Health Initiatives to ensure that mental health resources are available to communities after exposure to violence
- Strengthen collaboration with mental health agencies to increase access to mental health treatment for residents who are at high risk of victimization or becoming a perpetrator
- Partner with community members and community management teams to mobilize communities with the goal of strengthening community cohesion

RATIONALE

Based on an extensive analysis of the different approaches and strategies developed across the nation, with particular attention to the benchmark cities, there were several commonalities among them that seem to be associated with some positive outcomes in reducing gun violence in the targeted areas. A dedication to strong implementation as well as addressing multiple intervention points (e.g., mental health, trauma) simultaneously improves outcomes. The most successful approaches were the ones that consisted of an integration of multiple strategies with effective communication and collaboration as critical pieces.

Collaborative partnerships and relationships between the community-based organizations, law enforcement, the judiciary, and schools will increase the likelihood of preventing intentional and unintentional firearm-related injuries. It is worth emphasizing that partnerships are more than putting a team together. How well that team works together towards a common goal for the benefit of those they serve cannot be overemphasized. Therefore, personal differences and disagreements must be given a space to be resolved so the community can thrive.

In summary, a key ingredient to successful gun violence reduction strategies is effective collaboration between criminal justice agencies, mental health providers, credible messengers, community members, victim voices, city officials, and other local stakeholders and organizations.

2) PROMOTE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH ROBUST DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND INFORMATION-SHARING

The initiatives/programs in New Haven and partnering entities serve a critical role in reducing gun violence in different ways. With violence reduction as a city-wide, multi-agency goal, the OVP should be tasked with not only keeping stock of all gun violence programs but also implementing a

system where program-level data and aggregate outcomes are tracked and regularly reported to the public. To that end, the OVP should serve as the coordinating body moving the needle on data infrastructure and accountability on activities related to violence reduction.

For directly funded violence prevention programs, the OVP should:

- Monitor, track, and regularly report out program-specific metrics
- Ensure there are evaluation and quality assurance and improvement plans in place and are followed
- Maintain a strong collaborative relationship with the Health Department epidemiology team to inform data analysis that is informed by epidemiological data related to gun violence
- Mobilize efforts to ensure the continued operational success of PRESS, an innovative signature program of the City, and complete a robust process evaluation, and consider partnering with an evaluator to study outcomes in the near future

For programs not directly funded or not otherwise obligated to report to the City, the OVP should:

- Work collaboratively with such programs to collect and analyze voluntarily reported data
- Remain vigilant in examining and addressing data collection challenges across violence reduction service providers and be readily available to provide technical assistance to set up a data collection system
- Provide technical assistance to create continuous quality improvement systems using the data collected

RATIONALE

Over the past years, there has been a growing movement to better use evaluations to understand and improve organizational performance and outcomes. **Program evaluation** is an essential practice to address the complex problems that programs/initiatives attempt to address. To develop an ongoing program evaluation plan, there are four main steps which should be done in collaboration with a research partner.[48]

STEP 1: CLARIFYING THE INITIATIVE/PROGRAM OBJECTIVES & GOALS

- **CREATING LOGIC MODELS FOR THE PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE HELPFUL VISUALS ABOUT THE PROGRAM'S CORE ELEMENTS AND GOALS**

STEP 2: DEVELOP EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- **PLANNING/IMPLEMENTATION:** HOW WAS THE PROGRAM OR INITIATIVE PLANNED OUT AND HOW WELL WAS THAT PLAN PUT INTO PRACTICE?
- **MEASURING THE ATTAINMENT OF OBJECTIVES:** HOW WELL HAS THE PROGRAM OR INITIATIVE MET ITS STATED OBJECTIVES?
- **CLIENT IMPACT:** HOW MUCH AND WHAT KIND OF A DIFFERENCE HAS THE PROGRAM OR INITIATIVE MADE FOR ITS TARGETS OF CHANGE?
- **COMMUNITY IMPACT:** HOW MUCH AND WHAT KIND OF DIFFERENCE HAS THE PROGRAM OR INITIATIVE MET ITS STATED OBJECTIVES?

STEP 3: DEVELOP EVALUATION METHODS

- THE METHODS USED TO ADDRESS THE EVALUATIONS QUESTIONS MIGHT INCLUDE ANY NUMBER OF RESEARCH STRATEGIES.
- EXAMPLES OF METHODS MIGHT INCLUDE SURVEYS, INTERVIEWS, GOAL ATTAINMENT REPORTS, COMMUNITY-LEVEL INDICATORS OF IMPACT AND MONITORING.
- PROCESS MEASURES TELL YOU ABOUT WHAT YOU DID TO IMPLEMENT YOUR INITIATIVE WHILE OUTCOME MEASURES TELL YOU ABOUT WHAT THE RESULTS WERE.
- OBSERVATIONAL SYSTEMS ARE WHATEVER YOU DO TO KEEP TRACK OF THE INITIATIVE WHILE IT IS HAPPENING.

STEP 4: SETTING UP A TIMELINE FOR EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

- THE DURATION AND MONITORING OF THE TIMELINE WILL DEPEND ON THE NATURE/REQUIREMENTS OF THE SPECIFIC EVALUATION PLAN

Selection of “high impact” programs requires the availability of data. Unfortunately, such data are limited and/or surface level. Therefore, there are several steps that must be addressed as part of these recommendations. First is a data collection plan that helps identify which ones are high-impact. Initiatives that show promise of effectiveness are the best candidates for enhancement. However, this is a process that should be approached with thoughtful consideration. There are several non-exhaustive questions that must be asked. What are the goals of the program/initiative? What data has been collected to measure its success in reaching that goal? Is there a process in place for data collection? Do the individuals that work for the program/initiative have the expertise, willingness, and capacity to collect and analyze the data? Is the program/initiative ready and able to expand? Are there partners (e.g., organizations, institutions, stakeholders) that should be present to increase the chance of successful enhancement and implementation? Is there an accountability plan? A robust data collection, storage, and sharing plan is a critical starting point for measuring the effectiveness of a gun violence reduction initiative.

A general challenge facing many local community-based non-profit organizations is the lack of expertise and infrastructure to create a robust data collection and quality assurance plan to measure their effectiveness and subsequently show proof of high-impact practices. Consequently, these organizations typically must rely on external partners to assist them with their program evaluation needs. This creates a barrier for them because these organizations who provide much needed programs and services to the community do not often have the resources to access (e.g., hire, contract) program evaluators. When they can partner with an academic institution, it is not uncommon for those institutions to maintain the data as “research” which is not necessarily given back to the organization in its raw form for reporting purposes. When such data is provided, it is at times given back only in the aggregate. The abovementioned plan can also help create a strategy for sustainability because agencies will be able to develop, house, and maintain their own data.

3) PLAY A SUPPORTING ROLE IN POLICY AND ADVOCACY REGARDING THE FOLLOWING:

- Legislative and policy initiatives aimed at enhancing gun control
- Policy development and advocacy in areas that related directly to programmatic work such as reimbursement for violence prevention services and state and/or federal policies supporting OVPs
- Initiatives related to addressing root causes of violence including poverty, jobs, and education by providing expertise and data
- For example, advise ongoing initiatives related to environmental factors that could reduce violence including green spaces, lighting, vacant lots
- Grant writing and other forms of advocacy to promote sustainability

RATIONALE

The members of the community and agencies that were interviewed (i.e., results of the qualitative data) noted several root causes of gun violence and its effects in New Haven which were consistent with the established literature on gun violence. This level of convergence across the various data sources creates greater confidence in the findings because they all point to the same consistent set of themes. Some of the main themes are related to poverty and other economic concerns (e.g., lack of affordable housing, unemployment). Furthermore, job and housing opportunities decrease for individuals with criminal histories due to various practices and stigma.

Collaboration with corporations and local businesses targeting more people from the community that have generally been excluded from such opportunities growing up can increase their businesses profile (e.g., positive business reputation, increased talent recruitment base, increased creativity in the workplace, better brand recognition). Moreover, there are several major corporations and employers in New Haven, and it would behoove the city to expand into this broad array of employers considering the root causes of violence being rooted in racism and economics.

The formation of these partnerships also can be viewed as part of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Some experts have noted that corporations are required to carry out their economic and legal responsibilities, but that ethical and philanthropic ones are also expected and desired (e.g., the philanthropic responsibility (“give back”) has been “one of the most important elements of CSR definitions and this continues today.”[49] Supporting the community by creating high-paying quality jobs will improve the economic base of the community, reduce participation in the illicit economy, and reduce gun violence. The city should make a concerted effort to engage with corporations and local businesses to offer opportunities for individuals to become independent so they can meet their fundamental needs through employment/training as they strive to reach their full potential.

In addition, the administration should seek to establish a monitoring system to track investments that will prevent violence in the long term, such as poverty reduction, blight, low-performing schools, disinvestment, and chronic unemployment. It is important to set benchmarks and track outcomes over time. According to the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, this type of strategy can take 15-20 years to achieve but it can be most effective at sustainably reducing violence.[50]

[49] Carroll, A. (1991) The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organizational Stakeholders. *Business Horizons*, 34, 39-48. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0007-6813\(91\)90005-G](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0007-6813(91)90005-G); Carroll, A. B. (2016). Carroll's Pyramid of CSR: Taking Another Look. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, 1, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-016-0004-6>

[50] National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (2022) Gun Violence Reduction Strategic Plan, Washington DC. https://nicjr.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Washington-GVR-Report_V13_050622.pdf

4) FOSTER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AS A CORE PRACTICE OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION

WORK CITY-WIDE:

- Create a platform or pathway for interested residents to engage in violence prevention work on a voluntary basis
- Develop a broad communications plan to regularly inform the public on performance highlights
- Encourage residents to attend COMPSTAT, Community Management Team (CMT) meetings, and other community-facing events in order to stay informed and provide input in violence prevention activities

RATIONALE

The same expectations that organizations have for their clients are some of the same expectations these organizations should have for themselves – accountability. Because of our society’s lack of emphasis on early prevention, gun violence initiatives focus on individuals who are often already at- or high-risk for gun-related death. Given that community members report feelings of fear, powerlessness, contempt for inaction and lack of accountability by officials, this process can attenuate some of the issues. It creates a space for multiple organizations and officials to be held accountable to present data-driven information to the community which should show a joint commitment to positive change.

This process also creates a sense of community empowerment because the community members are there to also ask questions and make requests for changes based on the information they are being presented with in a way that is meant to be more interactional and informational than a town hall meeting. These meetings should be neighborhood specific to enhance the intimate nature of these data-driven accountability-dialogue sessions. Moreover, this has the intended effect of showing a mutual commitment by the city and its partnering organizations to each neighborhood they serve. This is nested in a program evaluation plan because the data collection efforts should have elements of sharing and accountability which also creates opportunities for improvement informed by community feedback. Furthermore, this will help the city make informed decisions about the functionality of its own initiatives and of the organizations they help fund using a data-informed approach.

CONCLUSION

Gun violence is an urgent, complex, and multifaceted problem in the United States and thus requires a multi-pronged approach. Prevention, intervention, and aftercare efforts must be guided by evidence-based research and take socio-economic, cultural, and individual-level factors into account.

The prevention of intentional and unintentional firearm-related injuries will result in more tangible success rates through collaborative partnerships and relationships between community-based organizations, law enforcement, and other public serving institutions. While there has been no shortage of gun violence initiatives, we believe the key ingredient is the effective collaboration and implementing solutions that focus on the root causes of the problem to strengthen communities (e.g., mitigate financial stress, create programs for youth, improve the physical environment). This type of approach is where funding should be directed to achieve the desired goal of reducing gun violence. Adequate implementation, monitoring, sufficient community supports, accountability, as well as addressing multiple intervention points simultaneously may improve the efficacy of these strategies even more. Above all, the community should be at the center of initiatives to end gun violence in the City of New Haven.

While it will require a long-term commitment of resources, determination and collaboration between the City, not-for-profits and the community, tackling the crisis of gun violence is attainable. It is possible, through near-term and longer-term solutions, to prevent gun violence.



CT Against
Gun Violence
Education
Fund



CITY OF NEW HAVEN
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE
Office of Violence Prevention

Bereavement Care Network (BCN)

Bereavement Care Network (BCN) is an organization located in New Haven, Connecticut which focuses on servicing the needs of families afflicted by homicide in the Greater New Haven Community. BCN works with families to coordinate services and provide emotional support assistance as they prepare to lay their loved ones to rest. BCN donations originate from local funeral homes, flower shops, and local grocery stores. BCN recognizes the difficulties associated with complicated bereavement/grief from losing a loved one to homicide. Their mission is to help families understand that they are not alone, and that assistance is available to help them. BCN is also committed to supporting families after completion of funeral/memorial services. BCN maintains contact with the families on a monthly basis. They also offer families “Regroup Time,” which is an aftercare counseling service that creates an additional space to process their traumatic loss. Many of the BCN members have also lost someone close to them due to homicide and this shared experience helps fuel their passion for serving families. They provide primarily aftercare services.

Clifford Beers Community Health Partners (CBCHP)

Clifford Beers Community Health Partners (CBCHP) operates the network of mental health and social service nonprofits in Connecticut that serves children and families. CBCHP’s mission is to improve the health, resiliency, and quality of life for children, families, and communities by ensuring the delivery of easily accessible and highly coordinated services. Their services address their client’s mental, physical, and social support needs. Through its managed services program, CBCHP provide the network partners with back office and operational support services including human resources management, accounting, billing, information technology support, legal assistance, compliance, marketing, communication, and facilities management services. CBCHP also collects data on its services for purposes of program evaluation. Clifford Beers also provided mental health services during the community listening sessions that were conducted in preparation for this Blueprint report. Their work can be considered prevention, intervention and aftercare.

Connecticut Violence Intervention Program (CTVIP)

This is a nonprofit organization in the Dixwell area of New Haven, which serves this area as well as other surrounding areas, and throughout the city. Their motto is “Witness Greatness.” The program is based on a collection of different evidence-based models from across the nation; specifically, the Cure Violence program which originated in Chicago and the CeaseFire program in Boston, as well as additional training through the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (HAVI). They are a hybrid organization that implements both a hospital-violence intervention program (HVIP) strategy, as well as community-violence interruption. They primarily work with at risk youth between the ages of 13 to 24 years old, who are impacted by or involved with violence. CTVIP works in partnership with the

New Haven Family Alliance, Yale New Haven Hospital, Hamden Police Department, Project More, Yale Police Department, the city of New Haven Youth Services Division, and the Juvenile Review Board.

CTVIP employs trauma informed care and unconditional care with every youth they encounter. They reported that they are considered a “one stop shop” for at-risk youth and generally at-risk victims of violence throughout New Haven and the region. CTVIP provides a variety of services including facilitating education, providing employment services, and referrals to mental health resources. They also have a music recording studio on site. Additionally, the outreach workers at CTVIP are key to the success of this initiative because they work individually and as a team to prevent conflict, neighborhood shootings, and homicides. Many of the members of the team are considered credible messengers in the community they serve. Community members who are familiar with CTVIP are generally impressed with their work, however some feel that they would be more effective with additional community-based violence interrupters, especially those that can reach younger high-risk individuals. CTVIP primarily provides intervention and aftercare services, with some prevention.

Emerge, Inc.

Emerge’s mission is to end the pattern of recidivism by employing people who are re-entering society post-release from incarceration. They provide services to help second chance citizens learn new skills, earn income, and provide a space where they can begin to heal from their history of trauma and incarceration experience. EmERGE programs and services are applied using a holistic approach. They provide employment education through a tutoring program to help remove barriers to adult education and workforce training programs through the City of New Haven’s workforce board. EmERGE takes the perspective that education helps eliminate or remove many of the barriers encountered by people returning from prison. They are home improvement contractors who are fully registered and insured and bid on contracts. EmERGE works with parole officers and other violence prevention initiatives like Project Longevity, Safe Neighborhoods, and places to recruit individuals that are at high-risk of engagement in illegal activities.

Emerge works to destigmatize mental health issues. They run “real talk,” a group format discussion that creates opportunities for the members to share and learn from each other. They also focus on teaching coping mechanisms, parenting curriculum, mentorship coaching, financial literacy, food justice classes, health and wellness, and assistance with other different resources that are available in the community to assist their readjustment. EmERGE programs normally run for approximately 6-9 months, with individually tailored schedules that are divided into a 40-hour work week. Upon completion, the clients join an alumni support group designated for people that graduate from the employment program to obtain stable employment. The organization attempts to keep in touch with the program graduates to monitor progress and provide on-going assistance. They provide primarily prevention services, as employment can alleviate a root cause of gun violence.

HOPE Family Justice Center

Family justice centers are a movement across the world to coordinate and advocate to provide ‘best practice’ for survivors of abuse, including gun violence, to help them begin to heal from the trauma. They are akin to “hubs” that deliver immediate and direct access to services and care. The center provides free wrap-around services for the client and family in a client centered, strength-based, hope driven approach in a trauma responsive environment. They work with systems and providers to help the client reach their vision, secure safety, and identify gaps of services. In collaboration with over 150 partners in the community who assist victims, survivors, and thrivers of domestic and sexual assault to receive their support, compassion, and healing they need to overcome their pain. Clients are welcomed regardless of age, income, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, or language spoken. They focus on prevention, crisis intervention, and coordination of all wraparound services while advocating with systems and providers so the client can engage with their community to receive the support they need. The clients are composed of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, strangulation, genital mutilation, and stalking.

During the pandemic, they have seen an increase of hospitalizations for serious injuries, shooting, and other crimes. There has been an increase in demand for basic needs such as housing and food. They also organize community events with community partners such as the city of New Haven, Yale New Haven Hospital, state universities and colleges, New Haven Police Department, legal representatives, and other providers who serve the community. They worked closely with their partners to create a community response so clients can access the services and care they need.

Ice the Beef

Ice the Beef is an urban anti-gun violence youth-focused developmental organization run by community residents in the City of New Haven, founded by Darrell Allick following the murder of his brother Donnell Allick in 2011, and currently run by Chaz Carmon. The organization's mission is to break the cycle of anger in the New Haven community through mentorship, education, pairing up with local students/youths and public schools to spread awareness, and potentially assist young residents who find themselves in the middle of potentially deadly feuds. Ice the Beef talks about using platforms used by the young generation to reach them (e.g., Instagram). They are frequent public speakers and activists within the City and organize several events including backpack give-away and back to school programs.

Livable City Initiative

Livable City Initiative (LCI) is a department of the City of New Haven that is responsible for improving the experiences of people who live and work in the City. They achieve this through neighborhood-focused initiatives including but not limited to enforcement of the City’s housing code

and public space requirements, design and implementation and housing programs to support high quality, affordable, and energy efficient housing opportunities, and other public improvements that bring about safer and healthier communities.

Mothers and Others for Justice

Mothers and Others for Justice (MOFJ) is a grassroots initiative of Christian Community Action. It was founded in 1993 primarily by mothers with the goal of seeking to influence welfare reform efforts. By 2018, MOFJ expanded its membership and name to reflect all its members committed to social, economic, and racial justice. Members use their individual and collective voices, based on experiences, to influence state and local policy and decision makers to implement solutions that help people become self-sufficient. MOFJ promotes transformative participation, school engagement, and political advocacy. Issues addressed by MOFJ include affordable housing, safe communities, and quality health care for all Connecticut residents, spearheaded by HEALTH (Helping Everyone Achieve Lifelong Trusted Healthcare).

Project Longevity

This strategic initiative has its roots in New Haven when it was started in 2012. It was implemented with the goal of reducing gang violence and reconciling communities with law enforcement. The Project Longevity model is a Group Violence Intervention (GVI) strategy, also referred to as Focused Deterrence or Ceasefire, has been studied for years. Project Longevity is an initiative that is intended to be a multi-partner community collaboration and engagement activity between the police departments, community advocates and non-profit social service organizations to help reduce gun violence in multiple cities in the state of Connecticut such as Bridgeport, New Haven, and Hartford. The approach of this initiative is a group violence reduction strategy that is based on the dynamic partnership comprised of a comprehensive law enforcement contingent, a network of social service providers and the residents of these three cities. They do not respond to shootings. The gun violence reduction literature has documented evidence of Project Longevity's effectiveness. According to reports from the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, homicides in New Haven, Hartford and Bridgeport dropped from 75 in 2011 to 31 in 2016, a reduction of more than 50 percent. Statewide, gun homicides in Connecticut fell by 16 percent from 2010-2015 compared to a 14 percent rise nationally. Project Longevity in New Haven^[51] was associated with a reduction of nearly five group member involved shootings and homicides per month.^[52] Community feedback about the program has frequently brought up its close ties with the police, both positively and negatively, as well as a desire that the program focus more on prevention and providing services to its participants.

[51] For purposes of this report, we spoke with the individuals who are directly involved with the day-to-day operations of Project Longevity in New Haven (e.g., Chance Jackson).

[52] Sierra-Arevalo, M., Charette, Y., & Papachristos, A. V. (2017). Evaluating the Effect of Project Longevity on Group-Involved Shootings and Homicides in New Haven, Connecticut. *Crime & Delinquency*, 63(4), 446–467. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128716635197>

Additionally, at-risk adults that are not “gang-affiliated” and juvenile offenders have not been able to participate in the program. Recent efforts have looked at expanding their eligibility criteria. They receive their funding primarily from the State, as one of the few line-item gun violence prevention organizations in CT, and the only CVI strategy under the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), at its inception. They do receive some funding from private sources and have recently been budgeted with housing vouchers. Project Longevity gets data from the New Haven Police on all shootings and homicides, as well as a shooting log. The Project Longevity model is primarily intervention based; however, they do not respond to shootings, but are brought in at a later time.

Project M.O.R.E.

Project M.O.R.E. is a broad program in the city of New Haven that provides supportive housing units for ex-offenders. It initially had four residential programs, transitional houses for individuals on probation, and halfway houses for individuals on parole. The Reentry Welcome Center program started in January of 2021. Their wide range of services include comprehensive case management services, substance abuse interventions, mental health services, employment services, placements and housing services, and other social welfare promoting services for individuals affected by or at-risk for gun violence. In addition, Project M.O.R.E. collaborates with multiple organizations across New Haven to better serve their clients live and improve their quality of life. For example, they have a continuous partnership with New Haven Housing Authority to assist clients in temporary and permanent housing. They gather data related to gun violence to continuously inform service delivery and impact.

Project Safe Neighborhood (PSN)

Similar to Project Longevity, but federally funded, the Department of Justice (DOJ) Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program, started in 2001, “brings together federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement officials, prosecutors, community-based partners, and other stakeholders to identify the most pressing violent crime problems in a community and develop a comprehensive solution to address them.” This is another law enforcement initiative that attempts to build trust in the community, provide community outreach and resources as an alternative to prosecution, but will create focused efforts to utilize the full extent of the US Attorney’s Office and Federal and State law enforcement, should an offender resort to gun violence to resolve conflict.

PSN is coordinated by the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAOs) and the 94 federal judicial districts throughout the 50 States and U.S. territories. PSN is customizable to account for local violent crime problems and resources. An important aspect of PSN is to incorporate research and analysis to inform the decision-making process on the most effective violence reduction strategies. All districts are intended to follow four key design elements of successful violence crime reduction initiatives: 1) community engagements, 2) prevention and intervention, 3) focused and strategic enforcement, and

4) accountability. PSN also encourages the development of practitioner-researcher partnerships that use data, evidence, and innovation to create strategies and interventions that are effective in making communities safer. This data-driven approach enables jurisdictions to understand the full nature and extent of the crime challenges they are facing into direct resources to the highest priorities.

When comparing 82 PSN cities to 117 non PSN cities, there was a 4.1% decline in violent crimes in cities where this initiative was implemented compared to a 0.9% decline in cities where this intervention was not implemented.[53] In addition, the researchers found a 13.1% decrease in violent crimes in PSN with a high level of federal prosecutions. In contrast, during the same period of time the researchers found an increase of 7.8% in violent crime rates in the PSN cities with low federal prosecution districts. This strategy is primarily intervention based.

Youth Connect

Youth Connect is a school-based intervention based in the City of New Haven, which seeks to improve health and wellness outcomes of students and reduce justice involvement from elementary to post-secondary education levels. The program uses a data-driven intervention model, with the main goal of improving school engagement and academic achievement and performance among the program-involved youth across the city. The program has maintained successful relationships and collaboration with the City of New Haven Youth Department, Board of Education, social services agencies, mental health professionals, academic institutions, and community partners.

Youth Connect identifies youth and connects them to the wide range of service providers within the community that are specifically targeted to meet their individual needs. These needs include tutoring, academic support, gang intervention, mental health assessments and treatment, and employment training and placements. The services are categorized into three tiers. Tier one is includes educational re-engagement, drop-out prevention staff (DPS), and school support staff team (SSST). The second tier are referral agencies such as the Department of Children and Family Service (DCF). The third and final tier are for the highest-risk youth and includes agencies such as the New Haven Police Department (NHPD), CTVIP, and juvenile probation and parole.

[53] McGarrell, E.F., Corsaro, N. Hipple, N.K., & Bynum, T.S. (2010). Project Safe Neighborhoods and Violent Crime Trends in U.S. Cities: Assessing Violent Crime Impact.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 26: 165–90; McGarrell, E.F., Hipple, N. K., et al. (2009). Project Safe Neighborhoods—A National Program to Reduce Gun Crime: Final Project Report. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice.
<https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/226686.pdf>