

## Funding Community-Based Violence Intervention Programs in Virginia

### Overview

To reduce gun violence, the Commonwealth of Virginia should invest in community-based violence intervention programs that target individuals at highest risk for gun violence. These programs work to both interrupt cycles of violence and connect the highest risk individuals to social services offered within the community. Research suggests that state investment in community-based violence intervention programs is an effective way to reduce firearm violence.<sup>1</sup> When adequately funded, these evidence-based interventions can reduce violent crime by up to 30%.<sup>2</sup>

### Firearm homicide disproportionately impacts urban communities of color

The firearm homicide rate continues to rise in Virginia, particularly within urban communities of color. Over the last five years (2013-2017), Virginia's firearm homicide rate increased 45%, accounting for 345 deaths in 2017.<sup>3</sup> In Richmond, the number of firearm homicides increased 122% over this same time period.<sup>4</sup> In 2017, African Americans were killed by firearm homicide at a rate 8 times higher than their White counterparts in Virginia.<sup>5</sup> Much of Virginia's firearm violence is concentrated within neighborhoods that face a host of systemic inequities -- discrimination, lack of economic opportunities, and under-resourced public services. Community-based violence intervention programs help reduce violence by addressing these inequities and providing resources to impacted communities.

### How community-based violence intervention programs work

Community-based violence intervention programs bring together community members, social service providers and, in some cases, law enforcement officers to identify networks of high risk individuals. While there are numerous successful models, these programs generally conduct outreach to: 1) deter high risk individuals from engaging in firearm violence, 2) help them resolve potentially violent disputes before they occur, and 3) connect them to education, employment, mental health, and housing services.

### Community-based violence intervention programs reduce firearm violence

Six states have funded community-based violence intervention programs. While the program models funded are slightly different in each state, all six states have experienced reductions in firearm violence within program sites.<sup>6</sup> For example, an evaluation of Connecticut's state-funded program found that it was linked with a 21% decrease in shootings each month.<sup>7</sup> The National Institute of Justice cites two different approaches to community-based violence intervention used in dozens of cities to be effective at reducing firearm violence.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, a meta-analysis found that one model -- focused deterrence -- reduced violent crime by an average of 30%.<sup>9</sup>

### Bottom line

The Commonwealth should fund evidence-based community violence intervention programs that bring together community members and government agencies in an effort to identify high-risk individuals, interrupt cycles of violence, and connect these individuals to social services.

## Sources

<sup>1</sup> Investing in intervention: the critical role of state-level support in breaking the cycle of urban gun violence.(2018) Giffords Law Center. Available:<https://lawcenter.giffords.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Investing-in-Intervention-02.14.18.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Homicide Deaths and Rates per 100,000. WONDER Online Database, 1999-2017. Available: <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>

<sup>4</sup> Firearm homicides reported to EFSGV from the Virginia Department of health. Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Firearm Homicides in Richmond increased from 32 in 2013 to 71 in 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Homicide Deaths and Rates per 100,000. Age-adjusted firearm homicide rates among African Americans compared to White. 2017. WONDER Online Database, 1999-2017. Available: <http://wonder.cdc.gov/ucd-icd10.html>

<sup>6</sup> For MA, CT, NY see: Investing in intervention: the critical role of state-level support in breaking the cycle of urban gun violence.(2018) Giffords Law Center.

For MD see: Webster, D. W., Whitehill, J. M., Vernick, J. S., & Parker, E. M. (2012). Evaluation of Baltimore's Safe Streets Program: effects on attitudes, participants' experiences, and gun violence. *Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence*.

For CA see: Huguet, R., Li, J., Servat, K., & Stofer, K. (2016) Cost benefit analysis: operation peacemaker. University of Southern California.

For IL see: Ritter, N. (2009). CeaseFire: A public health approach to reduce shootings and killings. *National Institute of Justice Journal*, 264, 20-25.

<sup>7</sup> Sierra-Arevalo, M., Charette, Y., & Papachristos, A. V. (2015). Evaluating the Effect of Project Longevity on Group-Involved Shootings and Homicides in New Haven. Researchers found that a 2.38 decrease in shootings (fatal and non-fatal) from 11.64 to 9.26 per month can be attributed to the enactment of the program. Thus, the program was linked to a 21% decrease in shootings per month.

<sup>8</sup> See: focused deterrence strategies. National Institute of Justice:

<https://www.crimesolutions.gov/PracticeDetails.aspx?ID=11> and Ritter, N. (2009). CeaseFire: A public health approach to reduce shootings and killings. *National Institute of Justice Journal*, 264, 20-25

<sup>9</sup> See: Focused Deterrence in Depth. Analyzing the Evidence for Focused Deterrence. Rand Corporation.

Available:<https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TL261/better-policing-toolkit/all-strategies/focused-deterrence/in-depth.html#fn2> and 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.