

REDUCING VIOLENCE THROUGH PREVENTION PROGRAMS

THE CASE FOR COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Violence prevention programs or more specifically “Community Violence Interventions” (CVIs), use a public health approach to address violence. They focus on correcting the underlying causes for individuals at greatest risk of involvement in violence. These programs balance the need for a fair and just system to hold individuals accountable for violent behavior, prevent future violence, eliminate inequities, and advance justice across all communities.¹

To prevent violent crime, many strategies need to be deployed simultaneously and for extended periods of time. CVI is an important component of such a response. Three popular and effective CVI strategies are below:

1. Street Outreach and Mentorship – Employ frontline staff from communities with existing relationships and lived experience who are credible messengers to provide mentoring, life coaching and peer support in a trauma-informed way.
2. Violence Interruption and Crisis Management – Deploy specialists trained in conflict mediation and dispute resolution to respond to and de-escalate potentially lethal situations. Offer trauma-informed supports to those who have experienced violence to prevent retaliation.²
3. Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs (HVIP) – Reach survivors of violence in the hospital with case managers and social service providers to meet victims’ basic needs and work to prevent retaliation.

Steps to Get Started

1. Identify communities impacted by violence and engage community members to discuss CVI program development. Community voices should lead and shape adopted intervention.
2. Convene stakeholders and other partners and identify champions.
3. Identify model programs in other jurisdictions that have potential to succeed in your local community. It is important to understand that community success requires a variety of strategies.
4. No matter what program is selected, make a plan to provide extensive wraparound services for program clients upon initiation, including intensive case management, housing/financial assistance, legal services, therapeutic services, grief counseling, substance use disorder treatment, job training, etc.

¹ Dr. Shani Buggs, University of California, Davis - Violence Prevention Research Program

² Does Violence Interruption Work?, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol 30, no 20, June 7, 2017; authors P. Jeffrey Brantingham et al.

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5. Determine data to measure outcomes and how it will be collected. Data collection will be critical to analyzing efficacy and assuring equitable implementation.
 - Program participant survey data from victim and offender, including satisfaction with process and access to services.
 - Crime data: incidents of violence in community.
 - Community-based evaluation is important; determining what the community determines as success should be incorporated in evaluation.
6. Establish a process and timeline for ongoing feedback to improve program, innovate, and adjust to community dynamics.
7. Identify potential funding streams
 - **Local Government Funding** – County/City funds. Local buy-in is imperative for success and sustained funding is a key indicator of such commitment.
 - **Foundation Funding** – Hospital Conversion Foundations (Ex. [Dogwood Trust -WNC](#)) Local Community Foundations, Z. Smith Reynolds (collaborative Problem Solving), Kate B Reynolds.
 - **State Funding** – [NC Governor’s Crime Commission](#)
 - **Federal Funding** – There are several opportunities, both old and new, to support CVI programs with federal funds.
 - i. **Bipartisan Safer Communities Act** has funding to support CVI programs including funding that local entities can apply for directly.
 - ii. **American Rescue Plan:** The Treasury Department announced that the American Rescue Plan’s (ARP) \$350 billion in state and local funding can be used to invest in evidence-based community violence interventions.
 - iii. **Medicaid Funding** is available for reimbursement for hospital-based violence intervention.
 - iv. Existing federal grant programs (ex. CBVP, VOCA, Young Adult Reentry Partnerships).

Best Practices

1. Include life coaching, supportive healing, case management, restorative justice principles, and community empowerment.
2. Prioritize productive and accountable engagement with law enforcement.
3. Multiple CVI models are used to build an ecosystem in communities.
4. CVI programs are implemented alongside other strategies, understanding that causes of violence are many and require multiple strategies. Comprehensive violence prevention plans are needed.³
5. Paying living wage salaries to CVI staff.
6. Long-term commitment to program, including expansion into other communities.
7. Identify and hire credible messengers from the impacted community to be frontline staff.

³ Sample plan for CVI: https://citycharlottencgov.azureedge.net/Safe_Charlotte_Digital.pdf

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Examples of Community Violence Interruption Programs

1. Cure Violence

- **Strategies Employed:** Street Outreach and Mentorship; Violence Interruption and Crisis Management
- **Overview:** Based on a public health approach, cities across the country have implemented Cure Violence strategies in communities experiencing violence. These methods include: (1) detecting and interrupting conflicts; (2) identifying and treating the highest risk individuals; and (3) changing social norms. Several North Carolina cities have adopted this model including Durham ([Bull City United](#)), [Charlotte](#), Wilmington ([Port City United](#)), and [Greensboro](#).

2. Violence Intervention Program at CHOP (Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia)

- **Strategies Employed:** Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs (HVIP)
- **Overview:** CHOP VIP provides a direct and sustainable connection between the hospital and the community. As part of CHOP’s comprehensive Center for Violence Prevention, this program promotes healing and seeks to reduce re-injury and retaliation through a community and family-focused model that works directly with patients between 8 and 18 years old who are treated at CHOP for an injury due to interpersonal violence.

Duke University Medical Center is in the process of starting a HVIP, and several other North Carolina hospitals are exploring the model, including Atrium (Charlotte), Wake Forest Baptist and New Hanover in Wilmington.

3. Advance Peace

- **Strategies Employed:** Street Outreach and Mentorship
- **Overview:** Advance Peace interrupts gun violence in American urban neighborhoods by providing transformational opportunities to young men involved in lethal firearm offenses and placing them in a high-touch, personalized fellowship. As a result of these efforts, Richmond, California experienced a 66% reduction in firearm assaults causing injury or death between 2010 and 2017.

4. The North Carolina Youth Violence Prevention Center

- **Overview:** The North Carolina Youth Violence Prevention Center (NC-YVPC) supports the needs of youth and families by providing a seamless continuum of services to prevent future violence, support victims, and promote resiliency in coping with life stressors. Services provided through the center include community mobilization and consultation for nonprofit organizations that focus on violence prevention, juvenile justice, and victims of crime, among other issues.

ABOUT THE TASK FORCE FOR RACIAL EQUITY IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The North Carolina Task Force for Racial Equity in Criminal Justice, which is co-chaired by Supreme Court Associate Justice Anita Earls and Attorney General Josh Stein, was established in June 2020. For more information about the Task Force, please visit <http://ncdoj.gov/trec> or email criminaljustice@ncdoj.gov.