



North Carolinians Against Gun Violence Education Fund

Community Violence Intervention Programs

Community violence intervention programs focus on individuals at the highest risk of violence and use prevention and intervention strategies to reduce violence and retaliation. They emphasize employing effective social services to address issues such as education, employment, substance abuse, trauma, and other root causes of gun violence, thereby preventing shootings in impacted communities.^{1,2}

What are the programs, and how do they prevent violence?

Street Outreach/Violence Interruption

Street Outreach/Violence Interruption programs employ Violence Interrupters from the community who interrupt cycles of violence by supporting victims, responding to shootings, mediating conflicts, and providing social services. Trained workers immediately work with the victim's network of friends and family to prevent retaliation, identify ongoing conflicts, and talk to key community actors, constantly following the issue and encouraging a peaceful resolution. Interrupters also work with high-risk individuals to convince them to change their behavior and provide any necessary treatment. They shift community norms to non-violence, responding to every shooting, and supporting behavior change by program participants.^{3,4}

These programs can make an important difference. Baltimore's Safe Streets program was associated with a 32 percent reduction in homicides over the first four years among five of the program's longer-running sites, and a 22 percent reduction over a longer period, compared to what would have been expected had the program not been implemented.⁵

Gate City Coalition – Greensboro, North Carolina

Gate City Coalition, a street outreach program, was developed in 2018 in response to a string of shootings that claimed the lives of multiple teenagers.⁶ Between January and June of 2019, 84 aggravated assaults and homicides were reported in Greensboro's Martin Luther King, Jr. Corridor. Only 61 such crimes were reported in the MLK Corridor during the same period in 2020, however, and 32 were reported in 2021. During that time, the program met with 456 individuals to build connections and assist with or mediate conflicts. Gate City Coalition works with more than 30 staffing agencies in the area to match survivors of gun violence with job opportunities, and 87 percent of the program's surveyed participants found the program positively impacted their lives.⁷

Bull City United – Durham, North Carolina

Established in 2016, Bull City United seeks to prevent community violence through active conflict mediation and the use of violence interrupters.⁸ There was a 31% decrease in the number of aggravated assaults with firearms in the program's focus area during the first six months of 2017.⁹ More recently, from October to September 2022 the program hosted 57 participants, 51 percent of which are employed, and 23 percent are in school. From July 2021 through June 2022, the program conducted 1,365 mediations.¹⁰

Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Programs (HVIP)

HVIPs are rooted in the philosophy that violence is preventable, and empirical evidence demonstrates that a violent injury offers a "teachable moment" and unique opportunity to break cycles of violence. HVIPs focus on

patients in the immediate aftermath of violent injury with the goal of reducing reinjury and retaliation as well as promoting healing and psychological well-being. To accomplish this, HVIPs include a brief intervention in the emergency department or hospital bedside, followed by intensive community-based case management services for a period of approximately six months or more, depending on the program. HVIP services are provided by culturally appropriate violence prevention professionals who often also serve in a mentorship capacity.¹¹ More than 85 cities in the U.S. have adopted this model with the Health Alliance for Violence Intervention (The HAVI).¹²

HVIPs are changing lives and communities around the country. In Baltimore, a study found that individuals who did not participate in an HVIP were six times more likely to be re-hospitalized for a violent injury and four times more likely to be convicted of a violent crime than individuals who received the intervention. Among individuals who benefitted from the program, employment increased from 39 percent to 82 percent, while employment fell for those not in the program. One randomized control trial found individuals receiving HVIP services were half as likely to be convicted of any crime.¹³

National examples

Since 2007, Richmond, California, has invested in CVI efforts, including through the Advance Peace model and a hospital-based violence intervention program. In the five years after the intervention began, homicides in Richmond decreased by an average of 55%. An analysis of Richmond's CVI efforts found that over a five-year period, reductions in violence provided benefits valued at more than \$541 million, with total costs of less than \$2.4 million.¹⁴ The program continues to save lives: more recent analysis showed a 65% decline in homicides, and an 85% reduction in shootings with an injury, from 2007 to 2019.¹⁵ A March 2020 analysis of Advance Peace in Sacramento, California (a replication of the Richmond model), found that for every dollar invested, the city received benefits valued between \$18–\$41, including savings on emergency response, health care, law enforcement, and other criminal justice system costs.¹⁶

Similarly impressive results have been achieved in a variety of cities around the country. Newark, New Jersey, has been a national leader in implementing CVI strategies through its Newark Community Street Team, whose comprehensive approach to violence prevention includes a High-Risk Intervention street outreach program, and a Hospital-based Violence Intervention Program at University Hospital, among other programs.¹⁷ Newark saw a 20% reduction in homicides between 2018 and 2019, when the city reached a six-decade low in lethal violence.¹⁸ New Haven, Connecticut invested in CVI programs, and the number of fatal and non-fatal shootings was cut in half between 2011 and 2016.¹⁹

¹ Cure Violence. [The 5 required components of Cure Violence](#). 2019 Dec.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Community Violence Prevention](#). 2022 June.

³ National Council on Crime and Delinquency. [Developing a successful street outreach program: recommendations and lessons learned](#). 2009 Oct.

⁴ Cure Violence. [What we do](#). 2022.

⁵ Webster DW, et al. [Estimating the effects of Safe Streets Baltimore on gun violence, 2007 – 2022](#). 2023 Mar.

⁶ Anderson N. [After success in other NC cities, councilman works to bring Cure Violence model to Salisbury](#). Salisbury Post. 2022 Feb.

⁷ Wallen C. [“I’m a survivor”: Greensboro woman passionate about fighting gun violence](#). Spectrum News. 2021 Nov.

⁸ [Bull City United](#). Community Intervention and Support Services Department, Durham County, NC.

⁹ Downey-Piper M. [Bull City United update](#). Durham County, NC.

¹⁰ Bull City United Second Quarter Update. Bull City United. Personal communication. 2022 Feb 1. [PowerPoint slides]

¹¹ The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention. [What is a Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Program \(HVIP\)?](#)

¹² The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention. [Our history](#).

¹³ Cooper C, et al. [Hospital-based violence intervention programs work](#). The Journal of Trauma. 2006 Sep;61(3):534-7; 537-40.

¹⁴ Huguet R, et al. Cost-benefit analysis: Operation Peacemaker. University of Southern California Sol Price School of Public Policy. 2016.

¹⁵ Office of Neighborhood Safety Richmond, 2019. UC Berkeley, Institute of Urban and Regional Development. 2020.

¹⁶ Corburn J, Fukutome-Lopez A. Outcome evaluation of Advance Peace Sacramento, 2018-19. UC Berkeley, Institute of Urban and Regional Development. 2020 Mar.

¹⁷ Newark Community Street Team. What we do.

¹⁸ Johnson A. Newark touts lowest murder rate in nearly 6 decades. ABC 7 NYC. 2019 Dec.

¹⁹ Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. Investing in intervention: the critical role of state-level support in breaking the cycle of urban gun violence. 2017 Dec.