

## INVESTING IN COMMUNITY-BASED GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

### COMMUNITY-BASED GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Gun violence intervention and prevention programs avert interpersonal violence by working with a range of community stakeholders to provide support and intervention to those at highest risk for being a victim and perpetrator of violence. To stop the cycles of daily gun violence in impacted communities of color, policymaker must (1) Address the underlying social and economic inequalities that fuel gun violence, and (2) Fund gun violence intervention and prevention efforts that authentically engage individuals impacted by gun violence.

### FIREARM HOMICIDE DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTS UNDER-SERVED COMMUNITIES OF COLOR IN CITIES

In 2018, 13,958 individuals died by firearm homicide in the United States – an average of 38 firearm homicides each day.<sup>1</sup> Much of this firearm violence is concentrated within neighborhoods of color that face a host of systemic inequalities – discrimination, lack of economic opportunities, and under-resourced public services. As a result, disadvantaged communities of color in cities are disproportionately impacted. Twenty-six percent of firearm homicides in the US occurred within urban census tracts that contained only 1.5% of the population,<sup>2</sup> and Black Americans are over ten times more likely to die by firearm homicide than their White counterparts.<sup>3</sup> Yet, even within these communities only a small portion of the population is involved in firearm violence – as perpetrators, victims, or both.

### ADDRESSING UNDERLYING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

Under-served communities of color have been impacted by a legacy of racist social and economic policy. Policymakers should support efforts to address these systemic inequalities that are often at the root of gun violence. These investments will help improve health, promote opportunity, and reduce gun violence. These investments should include:

- Increased funding for job training programs and youth employment opportunities, which evidence suggests can help reduce gun violence.<sup>4</sup>
- Increased funding for recreation and community centers, parks, and pro-social development opportunities, which allow individuals of all ages to build stronger, safer communities and reduce firearm violence.<sup>5</sup>
- Funding for programs that clean and rehabilitate blighted and abandoned property. These programs are associated with both decreases in gun violence of up to 39% over one year and improved community health.<sup>6</sup>
- Incentives for urban development programs that allow individuals in impacted communities to lead efforts for neighborhood revitalization and affordable pathways to home ownership within these communities.

### EFFORTS TO INTERRUPT AND PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

Community-based violence intervention and prevention programs bring together community members, social service providers, and, in some cases, law enforcement to identify and provide support for individuals at highest risk for gun violence. They also help individuals cope with the trauma that is associated with living in neighborhoods where witnessing gun violence is routine.

### SUCCESSFUL VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS GENERALLY:

- Deter individuals at high risk for violence from engaging in firearm violence.
- Help individuals at high risk for violence resolve potentially violent disputes before they occur.
- Connect those at high risk for violence to education, employment, and housing services.
- Provide peer mentoring, trauma-informed services, and culturally responsive mental health supports to individuals impacted by daily gun violence.
- Authentically engage community members to build trust and collaboration between stakeholders.

### EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE-BASED VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS

#### CURE VIOLENCE

In the Cure Violence model, outreach workers are trained to identify conflicts within their community and help resolve disputes *before* they spiral into gun violence. These outreach workers are credible members of the community and well-respected by individuals at a high risk of violence. Outreach workers use their credibility to interrupt cycles of retaliatory violence, help connect high risk individuals to social services, and change norms around using guns to solve conflicts.

**Outcomes:** Cure Violence models have been used successfully in multiple cities, including Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York. New York’s neighborhoods with a Cure Violence site experienced 18% reductions in homicides from 2010-2013 while the matched control neighborhoods experienced a 69% increase during those same years.<sup>7</sup>

#### GROUP VIOLENCE INTERVENTION / FOCUSED DETERRENCE

In the Group Violence Intervention/ Focused Deterrence model, prosecutors and police work with community leaders to identify a small group of individuals who are chronic violent offenders and are at high risk for future violence. High risk individuals are called into a meeting and are told that if violence continues, every legal tool available will be used to ensure they face swift and certain consequences. These individuals are simultaneously connected to social services and community support to assist them in changing their behavior.

**Outcomes:** An analysis of 24 focused deterrence programs found that these strategies led to an overall statistically significant reduction in firearm violence. The most successful of these programs have reduced violent crime in cities by an average of 30% and improved relations between law enforcement officers and the neighborhoods they serve.<sup>8</sup>

#### HOSPITAL-BASED VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Hospital-based violence intervention programs provide gunshot victims admitted into hospitals with wraparound services such as educational support, job training, and mental health services to interrupt retaliatory cycles of violence and reduce the potential for re-injury.

**Outcomes:** One study found that those enrolled in these programs were six times less likely to be hospitalized again for a violent injury and four times less likely to be convicted of a violent crime than those not enrolled in the program. Likewise, an evaluation of Baltimore’s program found that it saved the city \$1.25 million in lowered incarceration costs and \$598,000 in reduced healthcare costs.<sup>9</sup>

### TRAUMA-INFORMED PROGRAMS WITH COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

Trauma-informed programs that employ cognitive behavioral therapy to those at risk for firearm violence have experienced significant decreases in firearm violence.<sup>10</sup> Cognitive behavioral therapy helps high risk individuals cope with trauma while simultaneously providing new tools to de-escalate conflict.

**Outcomes:** Trauma-informed programs in Chicago that provide high risk youth with cognitive behavioral therapy and mentoring cut violent crime arrests in half.<sup>11</sup>

### SHOOTING AND HOMICIDE REVIEW COMMISSIONS

Shooting review commissions bring together law enforcement, community members, criminal justice stakeholders, and service providers to examine firearm violence within their community. Stakeholders collaboratively develop comprehensive interventions that identify high risk individuals and address the underlying factors that lead to violence.

**Outcomes:** The shooting review commission in Milwaukee was associated with a significant and sustained 52% reduction in homicides.<sup>12</sup> A Department of Justice evaluation found shooting review boards to be an effective way to reduce gun violence by building trust between criminal justice stakeholders and the community.<sup>13</sup>

### A COMPREHENSIVE INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY-BASED VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS SAVES LIVES

- Five states (CA, CT, IL, MD, NY) have invested in violence intervention and prevention programs and have experienced reductions in firearm violence within state-funded program sites. Three additional states (NJ, PA, VA) have recently invested in these programs.<sup>14, 15</sup>
- Connecticut's state-funded group violence intervention program was associated with a 21% decrease in shootings in New Haven each month that the program was in effect.<sup>16</sup>
- A state-funded program in Massachusetts led to five fewer victims of violence a month and prevented nearly \$15 million in crime victimization over one year in Boston and Springfield.<sup>17</sup>
- New York State allocated funding for a wide-range of community-based violence intervention and prevention programs including the Cure Violence and Group Violence Intervention models. These investments helped reduce gun homicides across the state by 41% from 2010 to 2017.<sup>18</sup>
- The City of Oakland used both state and city funds to invest in comprehensive community-based gun violence intervention and prevention efforts to reduce gun violence by over 40%.<sup>19</sup> These efforts were authentically led by community members, provided extensive wrap around services, and focused on improving relationships between the community and law enforcement.

### WE MUST REDUCE THE DAILY GUN VIOLENCE THAT DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACTS COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

To do this, policymakers should (1) Address the underlying social and economic inequalities that drive firearm violence in disadvantaged communities of color, and (2) Provide funding to support violence intervention and prevention efforts that bring together community members and government agencies in an effort to identify those at highest risk for being a victim and perpetrator of violence, interrupt cycles of violence, and provide support to those at risk for gun violence. Community-based violence intervention and prevention efforts can save lives.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Homicide deaths and rates per 100,000. WONDER Online Database, 1999-2018.
- <sup>2</sup> Aufrichtig A, Beckett L, Diehn J, & Lartey L. (2017). Want to fix gun violence in America? Go local. *The Guardian*.
- <sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Homicide Deaths and Rates per 100,000. WONDER Online Database, 2014-2018. Non-Hispanic Blacks compared to non-Hispanic Whites.
- <sup>4</sup> Bilchik S. (1999). Promising Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. *US Department of Justice*.
- <sup>5</sup> Hausman AJ, Siddons K, & Becker J. (2000). Using community perspectives on youth firearm violence for prevention program planning. *Journal of community psychology*.
- <sup>6</sup> Branas CC, Kondo MC, Murphy SM, South EC, Polsky D, & MacDonald JM. (2016). Urban blight remediation as a cost-beneficial solution to firearm violence. *American journal of public health*.
- <sup>7</sup> Butts JA, Wolff KT, Misshula E, & Delgado S. (2015). Effectiveness of the Cure Violence Model in New York City. *John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Research & Evaluation Center*.
- <sup>8</sup> Braga AA, 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*.
- <sup>9</sup> Cooper C, Eslinger DM, & Stolley PD. (2006). Hospital-based violence intervention programs work. *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*.
- <sup>10</sup> Abt TP (2017). Towards a framework for preventing community violence among youth. *Psychology, health & medicine*.
- <sup>11</sup> Heller SB, Shah AK, Guryan J, Ludwig J, Mullainathan S, & Pollack HA. (2017). Thinking, fast and slow? Some field experiments to reduce crime and dropout in Chicago. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*.
- <sup>12</sup> Azrael D, Braga AA, O'Brien M. (2012). Developing the Capacity to Understand and Prevent Homicide: An Evaluation of the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission. *U.S. Department of Justice*.
- <sup>13</sup> Azrael D, Braga AA, O'Brien M. (2012). Developing the Capacity to Understand and Prevent Homicide: An Evaluation of the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission. *U.S. Department of Justice*.
- <sup>14</sup> Sierra-Arevalo M, Charette Y, & Papachristos AV. (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>15</sup> Barton C. (2020). Virginia is the latest state to fund local gun violence prevention. *The Trace*.
- <sup>16</sup> Sierra-Arevalo M, Charette Y, & Papachristos AV. (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>17</sup> See: Campie P, Petrosino A, Fronius T, & Read N. (2017). Community-Based Violence Prevention Study of the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative: An Intervention To Prevent Urban Gun Violence *American Institutes for Research (AIR)*. And, Bradham DD, Campie PE, & Petrosino A. (2014). Massachusetts Safe and Successful Youth Initiative. Benefit-to-Cost Analysis of Springfield and Boston Sites. *Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services*.
- <sup>18</sup> Investing in Local Intervention Strategies in New York. (2019). *Giffords Law Center*.
- <sup>19</sup> See: Muhammad, D. Oakland's Successful Gun Violence Reduction Strategy (2018) *National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform*. And McLively M, & Nieto B. (2019). A case study in hope: lessons from Oakland's remarkable reduction in gun violence. *Giffords Law Center*.