CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Beyond Policing: Investing in Offices of Neighborhood Safety

By Betsy Pearl October 15, 2020, 9:03 am

Getty/Michael M. Santiago

Protestors march for the third day since the release of the grand jury report on the murder of Breonna Taylor on September 26, 2020, in Louisville, Kentucky.

OVERVIEW

By establishing civilian Offices of Neighborhood Safety, local governments can strengthen community safety and reduce overreliance on police.

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See also: "The Office of Neighborhood Safety: How Governments Can Support Community-Driven Solutions" by Betsy Pearl

Introduction and summary

In recent years, a series of high-profile cases of police violence—from Michael Brown, Tamir Rice and Eric Garner to George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Jacob Blake—has brought to the national consciousness concerns that have been prevalent among many activists, researchers, and policymakers: What should we expect of the police? Who is responsible for public safety? And what does it mean to invest in safety beyond policing?

The traditional understanding of public safety in the United States has revolved almost exclusively around policing, which is demonstrated by the size of the footprint of police agencies and their corresponding budgets. For example, the number of police officers nationwide has grown by 36 percent in two decades—from less than 700,000 officers in 1990 to more than 950,000 in 2012.[1] As the size of American police forces grew, so too did their role in the community. "Efforts to address underlying community problems through social investment took a backseat [to] policing strategies," noted political scientists Joe Soss and Vesla Weaver.[2] The duties of the modern police force now extend well beyond enforcing the law, to include tasks from treating overdoses and de-escalating behavioral health crises to addressing homelessness and responding to disciplinary concerns in schools. Law enforcement now spends only a fraction of their time responding to issues of violence: American police officers make more than 10 million arrests each year, less than 5 percent of which are for serious violent crimes.[3]

The impact of police force expansion on community safety is debatable at best. While determining the cause of crime rate fluctuations is a notoriously difficult task, an analysis from the Brennan Center for Justice finds that the increase in officers had only a modest effect on crime rates in the 1990s, accounting for between 0 percent and 10 percent of the total crime reduction. Police growth continued between 2000 and 2012, with no discernible effect on crime rates. Instead, societal factors, such as growth in income, likely played a more important part in reducing crime rates during the 1990s and 2000s.[4] Sociologist Patrick Sharkey has also analyzed factors contributing to crime reductions between 1990 and 2012, concluding that community-based organizations likely played a "substantial role in explaining the decline in violence" during this time period. In a city of 100,000 people, every new nonprofit focused on neighborhood safety and wellness was associated with an estimated 1 percent reduction in violent crime and homicide.[5]

The problem with overreliance on law enforcement goes beyond its questionable impact on crime rates, however. When officers are dispatched in response to a wide range of concerns, more and more civilians become unnecessarily ensnared in the justice system. In 2016, Americans were arrested 2.18 million times for alcohol misuse, liquor law violations, and drug-related charges[6]—more than four times the total number of arrests for all serious violent crimes combined.[7] In particular, overreliance on law enforcement has created profound consequences for Black communities, who have long been subjected to overpolicing and aggressive enforcement tactics.[8] Any brush with the criminal justice system, however minor, can have permanent consequences. Even arrests that don't result in a conviction come with a criminal record—and with it, a lifetime of barriers to education, employment, housing, and other basic building blocks of a healthy life. Too often, interactions with the police can prove fatal. Police violence is a leading

cause of death for Black men, who are 2.5 times more likely to be killed by law enforcement than white men.[9] Over the course of their lifetimes, 1 in every 1,000 Black men and boys will be killed by a police officer.[10]

For decades, community-led movements have called for investments in solutions outside policing. And today, as instances of police brutality become more widely reported on in the media and on social media, more and more Americans are now joining the call to reevaluate the role of law enforcement and to shift some police responsibilities to professionals outside the justice system. In late June, an Ipsos poll showed that nearly 95 percent of Americans thought that policing practices needed to change, with more than half of respondents calling for "major changes" or a "complete redesign" of law enforcement.[11] In particular, there is growing agreement that trained civilians—not law enforcement—should be the primary response to low-level issues within the community. The same poll found that 57 percent of Americans support replacing police officers with clinicians or social workers for concerns related to mental health, substance use, domestic disputes, and school discipline.[12]

These attitudes are consistent with the concept of parsimony in the criminal justice sphere, which holds that the state should never impose consequences more severe than necessary to achieve its goals. Put another way, the criminal justice system, including the police, should employ the lightest touch possible. A parallel to parsimony can be found in the evolution of the practice of medicine, which has now come to emphasize holistic and preventative care. Instead of relying on surgical or other invasive interventions that cause long-term scarring and potential side effects, medicine now looks to first prevent illnesses by encouraging a healthy lifestyle and addressing health issues early with noninvasive treatments. Surgery is not removed as an option but reserved for the most significant situations, and care is taken during the procedure to minimize trauma and promote a quick recovery. Policing and the criminal justice system should be likened to a surgical intervention. While they serve a necessary function, their use should be minimized as much as possible in favor of strategies and interventions with fewer adverse side effects.

Even as public sentiment moves in the direction of redefining public safety and investing in more civilian-based efforts, questions remain on how to operationalize and institutionalize these efforts in an effective way. Over the past 18 months, the Center for American Progress, with support from the Joyce Foundation, brought together a group of experts comprising community leaders, researchers, police professionals, advocates, and practitioners to answer those very questions. CAP framed this issue in a previous report, calling for the establishment of: 1) a dedicated civilian office of public safety within the jurisdiction's government structure; 2) a permanent pathway for community members to participate in the development of jurisdiction's public safety agenda and priorities; and 3) a budgetary mechanism that gives residents direct control over investments in community needs.[13]

Building on those recommendations, this report provides a road map for city governments to establish a civilian Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) that provides the infrastructure and resources necessary for successful community-based public safety efforts.[14] With the descriptions of the responsibilities of these offices, city governments can assess the types of proven programs to be implemented, how they can be staffed and funded, and the message they send about a community's approach to safety. The goal is to ensure that community-based interventions are durable, sustainable, and elevated as integral elements of public safety practice—not just an experimental alternative to enforcement.

An ONS is an important step toward a future in which arrest and incarceration are no longer the first response to every issue in society—a future guided by communities most harmed by the justice system, who have been denied a seat at the decision-making table for generations. With the infrastructure to support community-driven solutions, local governments can help bring residents' vision for safety and justice into existence.

Investing in safety beyond policing

1   Americans have traditionally viewed law enforcement as the primary vehicle for creating public safety, a belief reflected in the organizational structure of most city governments. Typically, law enforcement is one of the only government agencies whose mission is explicitly focused on public safety. Law enforcement agencies also tend to be better funded than other municipal departments, accounting for a significant portion of most city-level budgets. As a result, the police are among the few government agencies with the resources and the mandate to respond immediately to issues around the clock.[15] Officers are thus called on to address any and all tasks related to safety. Elected officials tend to reinforce the preeminence of policing by making them the official face of public safety regardless of their effect on crime rates or on communities. When crime rates drop, city leaders hold a press conference commending the police department; when crime rates increase, the police are rarely held publicly accountable, especially when it comes time to make budgetary decisions.

2   Compared with policing and the criminal justice system, the ONS is a modern development, though the community-based interventions they employ have been successfully implemented and evaluated over the last several decades. The city of Richmond, California, was on the forefront of the movement, establishing its ONS in 2007 as a tool for preventing gun violence and strengthening community safety and well-being.[16] Since Richmond launched its ONS, roughly a dozen other cities have since followed suit. Unlike the police department or other traditional public safety agencies, Richmond's ONS is not part of the criminal justice system. Instead, it is housed within the city government and staffed by civilians with no authority to enforce the law. This structure is deliberate: Richmond's ONS supports interventions that intentionally operate outside or parallel to the criminal justice system in order to maintain credibility with those at highest risk of violence.

3   **Figure 1**

Homicide rates dropped significantly in Richmond, California, 2003–2017

Homicides per 100,000 residents

Richmond Office
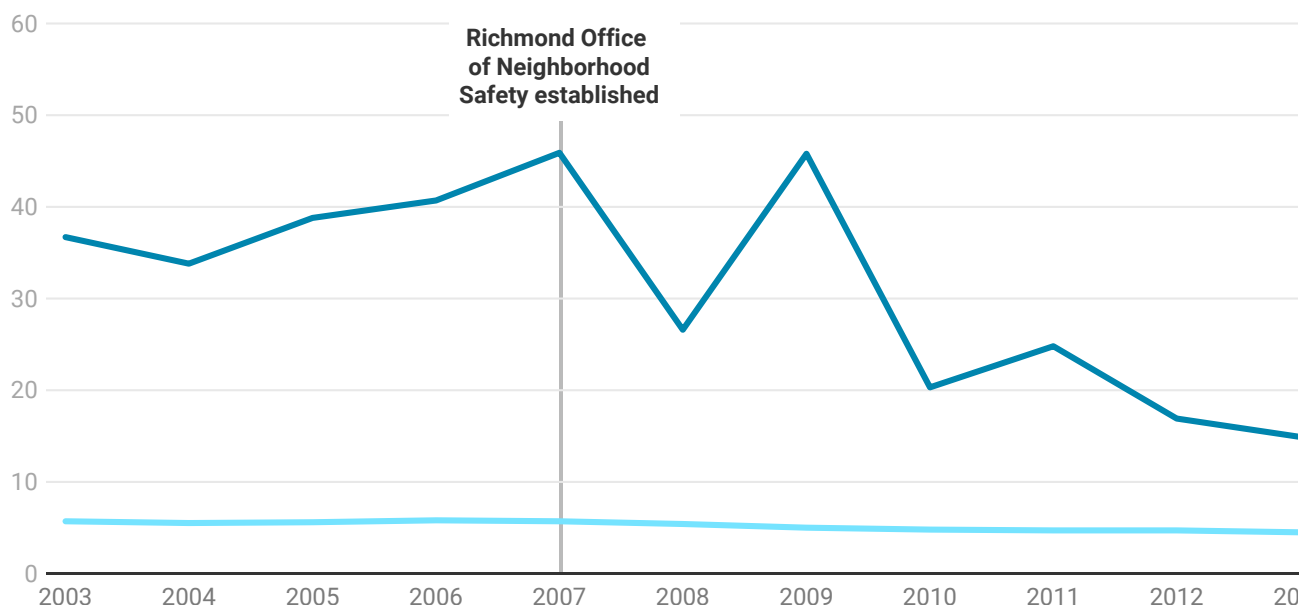of Neighborhood
Safety established

Chart: Center for American Progress •
Source: For the national averages, see FBI Uniform Crime Reports, "2017 Crime in the United States: Table 1: Crime in the United States, by Volume and Rate per 100,000 Inhabitants, 1998–2017," available at https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2017/crime-in-the-u.s.-2017/tables/table-1 (last accessed September 2020). For 2003–2014 Richmond data, see FBI Uniform Crime Reports, "Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics: Crime - Local Level: Data with One Variable," available at (last accessed September 2020). For 2015 Richmond data, see *Richmond Standard,* "Richmond crime data for 2015," November 30, 2016, available at

4 Richmond's ONS has had a profound impact on citywide public safety. When the office was established in 2007, Richmond had the highest homicide rate in California. That year, the city recorded 45.9 homicides per 100,000 people—eight times the national average.[17] Ten years later, in 2017, the city's homicide rate had fallen by 80 percent, to nine per 100,000.[18] ONS programming was associated with a 55 percent reduction in gun homicides and hospitalizations and a 43 percent reduction in firearm-related crimes, according to a quantitative evaluation published in the *American Journal of Public Health*.[19]

5 Richmond's innovation provides important lessons for cities that are considering how to shrink the scope of policing and invest in community-driven approaches to public safety. Cities should take caution to avoid reinvesting funding into public institutions that have caused harm and engendered distrust in the community or into agencies that are not equipped to take on roles vacated by the police. Effective interventions require "a major

reenvisioning and restructuring of how services and assistance are delivered," explains Thomas Abt, a senior fellow at the Council on Criminal Justice.[20] Accordingly, cities should consider creating a new government structure, specifically designed to meet community safety needs and equipped with the financial resources to match its mandate.

The significance of establishing an ONS

6 An ONS gives cities a way to embed community-based safety solutions into the fabric of government, while still maintaining necessary distance between interventions and the justice system. While cities can support community-based interventions without creating an ONS, it sends a valuable message when these interventions are embedded into government practice. The creation of an ONS is a strong public endorsement of community-based safety solutions, which can help shift the popular narrative that envisions law enforcement officers as the sole stewards of public safety. It signals to residents that these interventions are an important part of the official public safety agenda, on par with policing, and challenges the expectation that law enforcement officers are responsible for addressing all social issues by creating another entity explicitly charged the task.

7 More than just a tool for accelerating culture change, an ONS provides the foundation for interventions to achieve a meaningful impact on public safety. This can be particularly important when it comes to interrupting chronic violence. Chronic violence is an entrenched problem that will not be solved overnight; violence interventions need stable financial resources and steady political support over a period of several years, and they need adequate time to take hold before their impact is assessed. City leaders should not hastily withdraw funding or support for violence interventions before these interventions have had a chance to realize their full potential.

8 An ONS can help ensure that community-based interventions receive the sustained support necessary to achieve meaningful, long-term reductions in both violence and the footprint of policing. For one, ONSs can help protect interventions from political instability. Interventions that receive support from political leaders without any formal

codification into the government may be vulnerable to elimination in the event of political turnover. Creating an ONS can also insulate against lapses in funding, another common threat to the sustainability of community-based interventions. Whereas interventions have often had to rely on short-term grants, city departments receive funding through the municipal budget to support operations. Annual budget allocations can ensure that an ONS is able to sustain community-based interventions in the long term, even if external funding streams lapse.

Responsibilities of an ONS

9 An ONS can function as a hub for all nonpunitive approaches to public safety. The Richmond ONS, for example, supports an array of community-based public safety interventions, including violence interruption services and its signature mentoring program, the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship.[21] It also spearheads the Countywide Reentry Planning Council; hosts block parties and other community-building events in neighborhoods vulnerable to violence; offers linkages to educational and employment opportunities for young people; and more.[22] These and a number of other community-based interventions can be housed within a city's ONS in order to improve coordination of these activities. It is important to note that the strategies described below are not mutually exclusive; in fact, an effective violence intervention program may layer elements of multiple strategies to form a holistic approach to meeting the complex needs of clients.

Violence interruption

10 Research shows that in most cities, a large percentage of violent crime can be traced back to a relatively small group of people.[23] To strengthen safety, jurisdictions need a way to engage with this group—a role ill-suited for law enforcement, since the people at greatest risk of violence are often deeply distrustful of the justice system. The violence interruption model employs credible messengers—community members who are able to connect with high-risk individuals based on their shared backgrounds and life experiences—as outreach workers tasked with identifying and mediating conflicts before they turn deadly.[24] Whereas police may be met with suspicion and distrust, credible

messengers gain respect from those most likely to participate in violence. Most credible messengers were once engaged in violence themselves and have often served time in prison, lending them the authority to challenge risky behaviors and attitudes among clients.

Violence interrupters spend much of their time canvassing the target neighborhood, building relationships with residents, and staying abreast of interpersonal dynamics.[25] When tensions break out, interrupters focus on guiding people to a more peaceful resolution. In other words, interrupters use their social standing to mediate conflicts before they escalate.[26]

Violence interruption can occur anywhere, from a social setting to a hospital bed. In fact, some intervention models are specifically tailored to meet the needs of people who have been hospitalized for a violent injury. As part of a hospital-based violence intervention program (HVIP), civilian outreach workers meet with injured individuals and their families in the hospital to discourage retaliatory violence. HVIPs use the experience of injury and hospitalization as a "teachable moment," when a person may be particularly receptive to making a positive change.[27] After engaging the injured individual in the hospital, HVIPs connect patients' long-term intensive case management and supportive services.

Transformative mentoring

Transformative mentoring programs have proved effective at promoting positive behavioral change among the highest-risk individuals. Transformative mentoring—a term coined by an Oakland nonprofit called The Mentoring Center—relies on credible messengers to provide intensive, one-on-one mentorship for high-risk clients. The model pairs mentorship with a structured curriculum rooted in the principles of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), a tool for helping people unlearn unhealthy behaviors.[28] In the context of violence interventions, CBT can help participants develop strategies for coping with trauma, staying calm in stressful situations, and resolving conflict peacefully.[29]

24 Entrenched behaviors do not change overnight; thus, these programs require a long-term, intensive commitment from mentors. Former Richmond ONS Director DeVone Boggan explains that the highest-risk individuals need a "consistent heavy dosage of contact and support" from mentors.[30] During his time in Richmond, Boggan helped pioneer the Operation Peacemaker Fellowship, a violence intervention model that relies on the tenets of transformative mentoring. The program's mentors, called neighborhood change agents (NCAs), connect with their clients, referred to as fellows, every day, multiple times a day, for at least 18 months.[31] Their method has proved effective: Fellows view staff members as "father figure[s]" and "the brothers I never had."[32]

25 The Richmond model, which is now often referred to simply as Advance Peace, combines transformative mentoring with elements of violence interruption. NCAs wear multiple hats: They conduct street outreach to interrupt violence, provide intensive mentorship to fellows, and help fellows navigate the social service system to achieve their personal goals, which may include milestones such as getting a driver's license, completing a GED program, or participating in parenting classes.[33] The fellowship also provides opportunities to travel to out-of-state and international destinations, which can "open the Fellows' minds to life beyond what they've known."[34]
The fellowship has served 127 young men since its launch in 2010.[35] Of that group, two-thirds have not been suspected of any further firearm offenses, and less than 20 percent have sustained any gun-related injuries.[36] In 2019 alone, NCAs spent more than 10,000 hours conducting street outreach.[37] They made 728 service referrals, mediated 37 conflicts, and prevented 16 firearms incidents.[38] Based on Richmond's success, several additional cities are now replicating the fellowship model. Among the jurisdictions to adopt the model is Stockton, California. Building on a strong foundation of interagency efforts to interrupt violence, the city of Stockton's Office of Violence Prevention formally launched its Advance Peace program in 2018. The Office of Violence Prevention interrupted more than 30 imminent shootings between October 2018 and September 2019 , helping to avert between $30 million and $77.5 million in justice system and medical costs associated with gun violence.[39] Meanwhile, it costs roughly $1 million to

operate Stockton's Advance Peace program for four years, and all costs are covered by philanthropic funders.[40]

Job readiness programs

26 Job readiness programs that provide pathways to careers have been shown to reduce violence and other risky behaviors among participants. The focus of such programs can vary widely, from summer jobs for young people to transitional employment for justice-involved residents. Despite these differences, most successful models pair temporary paid work experiences with supportive services and trainings that prepare individuals to succeed in the workplace and achieve long-term labor market and educational goals.

27 Job readiness programming is among the strategies employed by the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE) of Washington, D.C., which was formed in 2017 by consolidating and building upon existing public safety initiatives. ONSE now operates the Pathways Program, a transitional employment model designed to support the young adults at high risk of being affected by violence. The Pathways Program begins with intensive life skills and job readiness trainings for participants, who are eventually placed into subsidized employment opportunities. Along the way, ONSE provides holistic support for participants, connecting them with transportation benefits, housing assistance, behavioral health care, long-term job retention services, and other vital resources to help them meet their personal and professional goals.

Bridging trust gaps

28 An ONS can play an essential role in strengthening community well-being beyond just preventing violence or crime. In particular, a civilian-led ONS can help build more trustworthy governments and bridge the divide between public officials and communities where distrust in police runs deep. This may be especially important among low-income communities of color, many of whom have experienced generations of neglect and harm at the hands of the government. Residents may be disinclined to believe the word of an elected official or to trust the services offered by an unfamiliar provider, compounding

existing barriers to accessing vital information and resources.[41] Civilian credible messengers can help fill this gap, as evidenced most recently by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the pandemic hit the United States, some cities turned to credible messengers to help stop its spread among vulnerable communities. In many cities, credible messengers worked to educate residents about COVID-19, correcting dangerous misinformation about the virus and stressing the importance of physical distancing. "The regular information by the authorities doesn't necessarily trickle down to people on the street," explained Teny Gross, executive director of the Institute for Nonviolence Chicago, an organization that provides violence interruption services to several neighborhoods across the city, in an interview with The Trace. Instead, street outreach workers became the "messengers of public health."[42]

With their credibility in the community, outreach workers have had success in convincing people who may not trust the police or the government to adhere to public health measures. In New York City, outreach workers from Street Corner Resources engaged influential residents to help change the community norms around wearing personal protective equipment.[43] Based in Harlem, Street Corner Resources is a violence intervention service provider supported by the city's Crisis Management System (CMS). (see the "Examples of ONSs throughout the country" text box)[44]
"We got some known gang members that put on masks and gloves," Street Corner Resources' founder, Iesha Sekou, explained in an interview with The City.[45] In the same interview, Sekou recounted a conversation with one such individual, in which she successfully appealed to him to become "the leader that people follow" to take public health precautions.[46]
Credible messengers also helped to navigate police-community relationships during the pandemic, helping to reduce tensions around the enforcement of stay-at-home orders. Street Corner Resources helped to keep the peace after a large group assembled on a street corner to pay tribute to Giovanni Otho, a Harlem resident killed by gun violence during the pandemic.[47] Though the police were called to enforce limitations on large gatherings, credible messengers stepped in to distribute protective gear and urge mourners to maintain physical distance from one another. According to accounts from

The New York Times, officers allowed the memorial to continue safely, even sharing a squad car microphone with Otho's stepmother to address the crowd.[48]

In nearby Newark, New Jersey, local officials dispatched outreach workers, instead of police officers, to break up groups of young people gathered in violation of the stay-at-home order.[49] Outreach workers have used the opportunity to share key information on physical distancing with young residents, who may be more likely to listen to a credible messenger than a police officer. The Newark Community Street Team, a unit of outreach workers launched by the city in 2015, will soon be housed within the city's newly formed Office of Violence Prevention.[50] With the establishment of the office in June 2020, Mayor Ras Baraka (D) announced that violence prevention was now "officially part of the public service architecture, like any other social service we are duty-bound to offer."[51]

Coordinating nonpolice responses for calls for service

In June 2020, the city of Albuquerque, New Mexico, announced plans to create a new civilian public safety agency that will respond to certain social issues in lieu of police officers. Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller (D) described the department as a "third branch of first responders," on the same level as the police and fire departments, that will dispatch unarmed, trained professionals to address issues such as homelessness, substance use, and mental health needs.[52] "We want to send the right resource to the right call—especially where a social worker or trained professional can connect people with the services they need, instead of simply taking folks to jail or the hospital, which have been the only choices until now," Mayor Keller said in the city's press release announcing the plan.[53]

While the Albuquerque Community Safety department is still in its nascent stages, it builds on the foundation laid by other city leaders. In fact, the city of Eugene, Oregon, has long relied on a community-based model for responding to less urgent calls for service. Eugene's Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) program, established in 1989, dispatches teams of medics and crisis intervention workers, rather than police officers, to respond to calls for service related to nonemergency medical and social

service needs. CAHOOTS commonly provides services such as behavioral health interventions and de-escalation, family dispute mediation, welfare checks, basic medical care, and transportation to social services.[54] Interventions such as CAHOOTS offer a cost-effective alternative to law enforcement response. CAHOOTS responds to roughly 17 percent of 911 calls with only 2 percent of the budget of the police department and saves an estimated $8.5 million in police spending every year.[55] Other cities are now looking to CAHOOTS as a model for investing in community-based responses to low-level concerns. In June 2020, for example, San Francisco Mayor London Breed (D) announced plans to divert "non-violent" calls for service away from law enforcement, citing CAHOOTS as a model for the city's approach.[56]

Examples of ONSs throughout the country

Milwaukee: Office of Violence Prevention (OVP)

Per capita spending on the OVP:[57] $4

Per capita spending on the Milwaukee Police Department:[58] $502

Milwaukee's OVP was established in 2008.[59] After experiencing an uptick in homicides and nonfatal shootings in 2015, the city launched a planning process to develop a community-driven framework for reducing violence.[60] Led by the OVP, the planning process engaged more than 1,500 residents in creating the Blueprint for Peace, a comprehensive violence reduction plan rooted in the community's vision for peace in Milwaukee.[61]

Building on the blueprint's recommendations, the OVP is now implementing 414Life, the city's violence interruption program. To interrupt cycles of harm, 414Life's team of credible messengers de-escalate conflicts and provide mentorship and connections to resources for individuals at high risk of engaging

in violence. 414Life also partners with two local hospitals that treat the bulk of the city's gunshot wounds.[62] Whenever a person is admitted to the hospital with a shooting injury, 414Life sends a dedicated hospital responder to discourage retaliation and share connections to supports.[63] As of September 2019, 100 percent of patients accepted the services offered by 414Life's hospital responder, and not a single patient had been reinjured or engaged in retaliatory violence.[64]

New York City: Office of Neighborhood Safety

Per capita spending on the ONS: unavailable

Per capita spending on the New York Police Department (NYPD):[65] $626

New York City consolidated its community-based safety interventions under a newly formed ONS in December 2019.[66] Among the initiatives merged into the ONS was the CMS, a network of violence interruption service providers across the city. Through the CMS, the city government supports community-based groups that are implementing interventions rooted in the Cure Violence model, pairing violence interruption with wraparound supportive services and efforts to change community norms around violence.[67] Findings from the John Jay College Research and Evaluation Center demonstrate the powerful impact of CMS interventions in New York City. In Brooklyn's East New York neighborhood, gun injuries dropped by 50 percent after the city's nonprofit partner, Man Up! Inc., began implementing violence intervention.[68] During the same time period, gun injuries fell by only 5 percent in a matched comparison neighborhood without a violence intervention.[69] And in the South Bronx, the CMS violence intervention operated by Save Our Streets was associated with a 63 percent reduction in shooting victimizations, compared with a 17 percent reduction in comparison areas.[70]

New York's ONS also operates an inclusive community engagement initiative known as NeighborhoodStat. NeighborhoodStat is a joint problem-solving process that empowers residents of high-crime public housing developments to

partner with city leadership to reshape public policy around the community's vision for safety.

Oakland, California: Department of Violence Prevention (DVP)

Per capita spending on the DVP:[71] $26

Per capita spending on the Oakland Police Department:[72] $727

Oakland created the DVP to deepen its existing commitment to community-based violence interventions. In 2004 and 2014, Oakland voters approved ballot initiatives to create taxes that raise funds for public safety agencies. A portion of these revenues are reserved for Oakland Unite, a suite of community-based safety programs originally housed within the city's Human Services Department.[73] Oakland Unite administers grants to community-based organizations to provide a range of violence interventions, including life coaching for high-risk youth and young adults; job readiness and transitional employment programs; violence interruption and hospital-based interventions; and minigrants to support projects led by grassroots groups and individual residents who have experienced violence.[74]

The city established the DVP in 2017 with the goal of amplifying these efforts and elevating Oakland Unite to the same level as the city's police and fire departments.[75] Despite some delays in getting off the ground, the department hired its first chief of violence prevention in September 2019.[76] The DVP is now absorbing Oakland Unite, including its budget of more than $10 million.[77] In addition to operating Oakland Unite, the department will focus on strengthening coordination and reducing duplication of efforts across the various city agencies with a stake in public safety, from the police to the school system to the Parks, Recreation and Youth Development department.[78]

Key considerations for launching an ONS

To maximize the impact of an ONS, cities should intentionally tailor the office to support community-driven safety interventions. Such interventions tend to serve different purposes and populations than traditional government programming, and an ONS should be structured with these considerations in mind.

Engaging credible messengers

When preparing to launch an ONS, government leaders need to consider how they want to engage credible messengers. In Richmond, California, credible messengers are hired directly into full-time employment with the city government.[79] The city-based structure is similar to traditional government programming, in that city employees are responsible for administering services and managing the day-to-day operations of the program. In other jurisdictions, such as Washington, D.C., and New York City, the ONS contracts with nonprofit organizations to provide violence interruption services in neighborhoods throughout the city.[80] There is no one right model; each structure comes with its own strengths and potential challenges.

A city-based approach can help promote sustainability from the outset of the intervention. When interventionists are on city payroll, it can be harder for political leaders to withdraw political and/or financial support for the intervention. This model also may be preferable for interventionists themselves: Government jobs tend to offer greater stability, higher salaries, and better benefits than those in the nonprofit sector. But embedding interventionists within the government is not without its potential challenges. Government bureaucracy can slow down the process of spending funds and can place restrictions on usage of city dollars, giving nonprofits an edge when it comes to rapid response to emerging needs. City employees may also be subject to union contracts that limit their flexibility to work outside normal business hours—an important consideration for street outreach workers, who don't adhere to a 9-to-5 schedule. Finally, there is an inherent risk associated with any intervention that works closely with individuals at highest risk of violence. Entrenched behaviors will not change overnight, and participants

may engage in behaviors that the city government or nonprofit does not condone. The responsible organization must be willing to accept the potential liabilities that come with leading the intervention.

7   Regardless of model, cities should support the professionalization of credible messengers. Their work is difficult and potentially dangerous, and cities should invest in the professional development and support they need to succeed. Credible messengers should receive trainings in the range of competencies required of their jobs, which can include skills such as conflict resolution, motivational interviewing, crisis response, rumor management, and procedures for interacting with police and other city agencies. Cities should also recognize that interventionists have an inherently high-stress and demanding job that can take a significant toll on their health and well-being. To prevent burnout, interventionists should have access to self-care resources, such as mental health supports and stress management trainings, which can help to reduce attrition and strengthen the stability of the program. Finally, cities should develop career pathways for credible messengers to advance into roles beyond front-line violence intervention. Whereas there are currently few opportunities for professional growth in the field of violence intervention, an ONS can create new career ladders by hiring former front-line interventionists into full-time positions within the office. ONSs should offer professional development for front-line workers to help build necessary job-related skills and eventually promote these workers into managerial roles within the ONS.

Creating flexibility

8   City officials should also recognize that community-based interventions differ from traditional government programming, and the structure and function of the ONS should reflect these differences. Cities must consider creating flexibility for ONSs to operate outside the regulations that were developed to fit traditional government agencies. For one, ONSs must be permitted to recruit job candidates from outside the civil service sector and to hire employees with criminal records. Such flexibility is particularly important if the ONS is the direct provider of community-based violence intervention services, meaning that interventionists are hired directly into the ONS as government

employees. In this case, cities must hire interventionists whose background will boost their legitimacy in the eyes of potential clients. In this context, legitimacy may come from having served significant time in prison. This has important implications: Job candidates for interventionists positions must not be ruled out based on conviction history, as is sometimes the case during hiring processes. In fact, one of the primary qualifications for NCAs in Richmond is experience with incarceration, preferably for a gun-related conviction.[81]

Cities should also work with ONSs to identify the bureaucratic requirements that most significantly impede ONSs' agility. Interventionists will likely need to help their clients meet pressing needs, which calls for immediate access to cash. A violence interrupter in Chicago, for example, was able to prevent crime after a client confessed plans to commit armed robberies in order to buy food and diapers for his child.[82] The interrupter gave the man $300 to pay for his family's necessities, and in return, the man handed over his gun.[83] When bureaucratic hurdles prevent interventionists from accessing resources quickly, they often cover these expenses out of their own pocket and then must navigate a cumbersome reimbursement process to recoup their costs.[84] With this in mind, cities should consider establishing an easily accessible fund for interventionists to provide for client needs as well as a streamlined process for reimbursements for ONS staff.

Promoting accountability

ONSs should be held accountable for achieving meaningful improvements in public safety. City leadership must set clear and realistic outcomes goals and then hold ONS leadership accountable for meeting these milestones over the specified period of time. City leaders should work with ONSs to set realistic public safety reduction goals, using the evidence base from other jurisdictions as a guide.

Performance metrics will vary based on the goals of the ONS. For example, an ONS focused on interrupting cycles of violence through street outreach will measure success very differently than an ONS whose primary role is coordinating civilian first responders to less urgent calls for service. No matter its focus, an ONS should build capacity to

collect, analyze, and incorporate data into everyday decision-making. With access to timely and relevant data, an ONS can more efficiently allocate resources and fine-tune service delivery models to maximize the impact of programming.

In addition to strengthening outcomes, data collection is a valuable tool for demonstrating the value of an ONS. If ONS leadership can cite evidence of impact, they can more make a more effective case for funding in city budget negations and philanthropic grant applications. Creating accountability can also help secure buy-in among law enforcement leadership for the ONS' work. Currently, city departments that operate crime prevention programs rarely share any accountability with law enforcement for fluctuations in crime rates. As a result, law enforcement leadership may be unwilling to share their budgetary resources to fund community-based interventions—or to cooperate with such initiatives at all. Thus, city leaders can build law enforcement buy-in for community-based interventions by creating an accountability system that distributes the responsibility for public safety outcomes between the police and the ONS.

The ONS in Richmond, California, provides a powerful example of the importance of accountability. When city officials established the ONS, they presented ONS Director Boggan as the new "gang czar," who would share the onus for reducing violence with Richmond police Chief Chris Magnus.[85] The burden of responsibility for violent crime rates would no longer fall solely on the police department, which Boggan said was a major selling point for law enforcement officials. In addition to shoring up police support for the ONS, sharing responsibility for outcomes also helped the office cement its status as an established part of government operations. By putting the ONS alongside the police department, city leadership signaled that the ONS was a respected and established part of the city government. Reflecting back on instances where he and Magnus were jointly held accountable by city leadership, Boggan called it "one of the best experiences for institutionalizing this work."[86]

Creating a community-driven agenda

4 An ONS can help build a more trustworthy government by being responsive to the needs of residents, who have an important role to play in crafting effective public safety policy. And while city officials have long recognized the value of community engagement, few jurisdictions have determined how to meaningfully engage community members in shaping and implementing policy. More often than not, cities conduct one-off community engagement efforts such as town hall meetings or surveys, without considering a long-term strategy for ongoing partnership with and accountability to the community. The challenge of engagement is particularly acute among communities affected by overpolicing and public disinvestment, where distrust in government can reduce residents' willingness to participate in traditional civic engagement opportunities. The net result is that public safety policies typically reflect the views of elected officials and policymakers, rather than the priorities of the people most affected by violence.

5 To address these deficits, cities should consider creating a permanent pathway for residents to engage with the ONS and shape the development and implementation of public safety policies. Resident engagement should be a systematized part of ONS operations, for the same reasons that it is important for community-based safety solutions to be embedded within the government. By establishing a permanent structure for the city government to partner with residents, local leaders can help to ensure the community's power remains intact during times of political turnover or instability. A permanent structure for residents to shape policymaking also helps to promote accountability for outcomes. Traditionally, residents have little recourse if policymakers fail to act on their input or requests. But when residents have a formal role in the policymaking process, they are empowered to hold city agencies accountable for meeting their needs and delivering on promises made to the community. And when city leaders are responsive to resident concerns, they can start rebuilding trust with residents whose needs have been historically overlooked by the government.

6 In New York, city government leaders have institutionalized the community's role in policymaking through the NeighborhoodStat initiative. Operated by the mayor's ONS,

NeighborhoodStat is a joint problem-solving process that brings public housing residents together with city leadership to develop policy solutions that reflect the community's vision for public safety.[87] Each housing development has its own team of resident leaders, who work with a dedicated engagement coordinator to develop an agenda for strengthening safety and well-being within their community. Through a series of meetings within the housing development, attended by city agency partners, resident leaders engage their neighbors in identifying the most pressing concerns facing the community. Residents collectively generate policy solutions and then vote on how they would like to spend a $30,000 budget, provided by City Hall to support community-identified safety priorities.[88] Several housing developments have voted to use funds for mentorship or job readiness programming for young residents, while others are using their budgets to improve parks, playgrounds, and other elements of the physical environment.[89] Residents also meet directly with executives from the dozens of government agencies and nonprofit service providers, who gather to discuss how their organization can better meet the community's safety needs. During NeighborhoodStat meetings, local leaders identify clear ways in which their agency can support the community's priorities and are later held accountable for their commitments.

Budgeting for community-based interventions

To strengthen community well-being, cities should make a sustained investment in their ONS, ideally as part of the annual city budget. While budgeting processes vary from city to city, the budget cycle typically starts with the development of executive budget, which reflects the mayor's or city manager's proposed spending plan for the city.[90] After reviewing and amending the chief executive's proposal, the city council passes legislation to adopt the finalized city budget.[91] This means that mayors can propose investments in community-driven safety agendas, but they will need buy-in from the city council to bring their vision into reality.

8 Still, as local governments nationwide face budget deficits related to the COVID-19 pandemic, city leaders may look to philanthropies or public grant-making agencies for support. External seed funding can allow policymakers to launch an intervention without relying on taxpayer dollars. However, such funding raises serious concerns about sustainability. Policymakers should make a firm commitment to support grant-funded interventions that achieve their intended outcomes, even after external funding dries up.

9 There are several other models that cities have undertaken for funding community-based safety strategies and other resident-identified priorities, which might include education, economic development, health care, and other building blocks of a healthy community.

Dedicated funding streams

0 Community-based safety strategies can be funded through the city budget. Local leaders can allocate other resources from the city's general fund—a flexible pool of revenue that is used to fund the majority of city operations, including policing.

1 Cities can also establish a dedicated funding stream to support community safety initiatives. A number of jurisdictions nationwide have used ballot initiatives to increase taxes for the purpose of funding a specific initiative or local need, including safety-related issues. Notably, in 2004, voters in Oakland, California, approved Measure Y, a ballot initiative that created new property parcel and parking taxes to raise funds for violence prevention programming and the local police and fire departments.[92] With Measure Y set to expire after a decade, Oakland residents voted to extend its provisions with the passage of Measure Z in 2014.[93] Importantly, Measure Z includes a legislative mandate to fund community-based violence interventions—not just traditional public safety agencies, such as law enforcement and fire departments.[94] Of the roughly $27 million in annual tax revenue generated by Measure Z, 3 percent is set aside for program evaluations and audits, and $2 million is automatically allocated to the fire department.[95] The police department receives 60 of the remaining funds, and 40 percent is reserved for violence prevention and intervention programs. In practice, Measure Z allocates more than $9

million per year to Oakland Unite, the city's suite of community-based violence prevention programs.[96]

Marijuana legalization also presents a natural opportunity for jurisdictions to earmark tax revenue for community safety initiatives. Today, nine states impose taxes on legal recreational marijuana sales, with some states allowing local governments to levy additional taxes as well.[97] In a previous report, the Center for American Progress recommended that states use marijuana tax revenues to create public sector jobs that benefit the communities most harmed by the war on drugs. The report's authors found that California's regulated marijuana market brought in $345 million in tax dollars in 2018—enough revenue to create 10,000 jobs in affected communities.[98] As part of this proposal, jurisdictions could reserve a portion of marijuana-related tax revenue to fund positions within city-level ONSs. Some cities have already established taxes on recreational marijuana sales, intended to fund specific local priorities. The city of Portland, Oregon, for instance, passed a ballot measure in 2016 to levy a 3 percent tax on recreational marijuana sales in order to support substance use treatment, social equity programs, and efforts to protect against unsafe driving.[99] Though the ballot initiative did not specify the allocation of revenue among these purpose areas, the tax was originally promoted as a tool for generating "funds that would benefit and support individuals and cannabis businesses owners that were adversely affected when cannabis was illegal."[100] Still, a 2019 audit found that the vast majority of revenues were allocated toward the police and transportation agencies, underscoring the importance of establishing clear requirements and accountability mechanisms for funding community-driven priorities.[101]

Capping growth of police budgets

One option for funding community-based safety interventions involves limiting the growth of the police department's budget. Most cities reliably increase funding for their local law enforcement agency on an annual basis. But if city leadership commits to capping the police budget, they can free up resources for nonpunitive interventions and other public goods that are essential to community well-being. In other words, the money

that would have been used to expand policing can be redirected toward community-driven priorities for strengthening health and safety.

4   The city of New York provides a striking example of policing growth. According to a recent analysis by the New York City comptroller, the NYPD's budget jumped by 22 percent from fiscal year 2014 to fiscal year 2019, when it reached nearly $6 billion.[102] In an open letter to Mayor Bill de Blasio (D) and City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, a coalition of advocates led by Communities United for Police Reform pointed out that the city "is currently spending more on policing than on health, homeless services, youth development, and workforce development combined."[103] They are now calling for a $1 billion funding reduction for the NYPD, which would bring the department's budget roughly back to fiscal year 2014 levels. Advocates are specifically requesting that funds for the NYPD's "non-police" activities be shifted toward city agencies better equipped to fill these roles, which include responding to behavioral health crises and conducting outreach to people experiencing homelessness.[104]

5   Other cities have committed to reversing planned expansions of policing in fiscal year 2021 budgets, against the backdrop of nationwide protests against police violence. In April 2020, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti (D) proposed to increase the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) budget by 7 percent—or $123 million—in fiscal year 2021.[105] But as demands for divestment in police grew following the killing of George Floyd and other high-profile incidences of police brutality, Mayor Garcetti instead committed to reducing the LAPD's fiscal year 2021 budget by $100 million to $150 million.[106]

6   The movement to curb police budgets is not new; activists in cities such as Durham, North Carolina, have successfully advocated against the growth of policing budgets in previous years. A coalition of activists known as Durham Beyond Policing successfully advocated for "zero police expansion" in 2019, when the City Council rejected a request to add 18 new officers to the Durham Police Department.[107] A portion of the funding allocated for new officer salaries was used to increase wages for part-time city employees. "The safest communities don't have the most cops; they have the most resources," wrote Durham

Mayor Pro Tempore Jillian Johnson (D) in a Facebook post discussing the city's budget process.[108]

Shrinking police budgets

7 Some localities are considering moving beyond "zero police expansion" to shrink the size of the police force, often through officer attrition. Many law enforcement agencies have struggled to hire and retain officers in recent years, leaving an increased number of vacant positions on police forces nationwide. A 2019 survey of state and local governments, conducted by the Center for State and Local Government Excellence, found that policing positions were harder to fill than any other public sector job. According to the Police Executive Research Forum, the law enforcement "workforce crisis" is the result of several converging trends: Fewer people are applying to become police officers, while more and more existing officers are retiring or choosing to leave the profession prematurely.[109] This presents an opportunity for cities to invest in alternatives to policing. As officers leave the force, cities can eliminate some positions, rather than attempt to fill all vacancies.

8 Cities such as New Haven, Connecticut, are already engaging in efforts to shrink police budgets through attrition. New Haven reduced the number of budgeted police positions by roughly 6.5 percent in the fiscal year 2021 budget, a move that will yield $3.5 million in savings.[110] In June 2020, local activists from the Citywide Youth Coalition launched a campaign calling for more significant cuts to the New Haven police budget, with the goal of reinvesting funds in the city's public school system.[111] In Milwaukee, a coalition of local advocates known as the African American Roundtable organized the LiberateMKE campaign to advocate for community-driven public safety solutions. When Milwaukee city leadership reduced the police force by 60 officers upon those officers' retirement, LiberateMKE fought to ensure the funding was used to support resident-identified policy priorities.[112]

9 Beyond reducing the number of officers, a number of American cities are weighing proposals to shrink the footprint of policing altogether. The proposals are a direct result

of long-standing community-led movements to limit funding for police agencies, as well as newer campaigns launched following the murder of George Floyd and nationwide protests of police violence.

The city of Portland, Oregon, for example, has announced plans to disband three policing units that have attracted criticism for their disproportionate impact on communities of color: the school resource officer unit, which stations armed police officers in local high schools; the Transit Division, which enforces fare evasion and other violations on public transportation; and the Gun Violence Reduction Team, formerly known as the Gang Enforcement Unit.[113] When the Gang Enforcement Unit was audited in 2015–2016, auditors found that the unit was disproportionately targeting African American residents for enforcement. Though only 6 percent of Portland's driving-age population is African American, 59 percent of the unit's traffic stops involved African American drivers.[114] In all, Portland city leaders have committed to cutting the police budget by roughly $7 million, with forthcoming plans to reinvest in community priorities.[115] Advocates in Portland are calling for deeper cuts to the police budget, including eliminating vacant positions and implementing a hiring freeze for new officers. "We want [the funding] reinvested in the black community, with the vision of [B]lack people," said Rory Miah, an organizer with local advocacy group Care Not Cops, in an interview with *The Oregonian*.[116]

Conclusion

For too long, cities' public safety agendas have been defined by their law enforcement agency—to the detriment of the community and police alike. As the movement to divest from policing gains momentum, local leaders have the opportunity to make a meaningful commitment to community-based public safety solutions. Many policymakers are already considering strategies that do not rely on the justice system for addressing behavioral health issues, homelessness, and substance misuse. Efforts to divest the police from activities that they are neither trained nor equipped to handle is a promising first step. Yet the conversation around community-driven approaches to public safety should not

end with so-called low-level issues: Community-driven interventions are also an effective tool for preventing violence, a function typically considered under the purview of law enforcement.

2 There is a strong evidence base to suggest that community-based interventions can yield positive outcomes to a range of issues otherwise handled by the police. By embedding these interventions into a civilian Office of Neighborhood Safety, cities can lay the foundation for a meaningful reduction in the footprint of police and long-term shift in our nation's understanding of public safety.

3 Every person deserves to feel safe in their neighborhood, valued by their leaders, and empowered to make their voice heard. A safer, fairer, and more just society is within our reach, and we can no longer settle for the status quo.

About the author

4 **Betsy Pearl** is an associate director for Criminal Justice Reform at the Center for American Progress.

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Appendix: A sample of evidence for community-based violence interventions

Violence interruption

58 Programs focused on interrupting cycles of violence by mediating conflicts and providing targeted interventions for individuals at the highest risk of violence, typically led by led by peers with lived experience.

1. *Cure Violence*

   Overview: A violence interruption model developed by epidemiologist Dr. Gary Slutkin that treats violence like a contagious disease whose transmission must be interrupted.[117] Cure Violence relies on credible messengers to de-escalate conflicts, match high-risk individuals with social services, and change community norms around violence.[118] Originally implemented in Chicago, Cure Violence has since been replicated in cities around the world.[119]

   Outcomes: Cure Violence Chicago sites experienced reductions in shootings ranging from 41 percent to 73 percent.[120] Five of the eight Cure Violence sites studied eliminated retaliation homicides entirely.[121] Another study of Cure Violence Chicago sites found a 31 percent greater decrease in homicides and a 19 percent greater decrease in shootings relative to comparison districts.[122]

Return on investment: Estimates show that every dollar invested in Cure Violence programming results in an estimated $18 savings.[123]

2. **Crisis Management System**

Overview: A network of community-based violence interruption service providers supported by the New York City Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety. The CMS pairs violence interruption with trauma counseling, mental health services, employment programming, and other wraparound services in the 20 precincts with the city's highest rates of violence.[124]

Outcomes: Across all sites, shooting victimizations decreased by 28 percent, and gun injuries dropped by 33 percent in the first two years of implementing a CMS intervention.[125] Young men living in neighborhoods with CMS interventions showed significant reductions in willingness to use violence to resolve conflicts, compared with peers living in areas without interventions.[126]

3. **Baltimore Violence Intervention Program**

Overview: A hospital-based violence intervention focused on individuals admitted to Baltimore's Adams Crowley Shock Trauma Center for violent injuries. To break cycles of violence, the program pairs a brief in-hospital intervention with ongoing community-based case management and social service provision.[127]

Outcomes: A randomized control study found that program participants had a hospital readmission rate of 5 percent, compared with a 36 percent readmission rate among nonparticipating patients.[128] During the follow-up period, nonparticipants were four times more likely to be convicted of a violent offense and significantly less likely to be employed than participating patients. More than 82 percent of participating patients were employed, compared with only 20 percent of nonparticipants.[129]

Return on investment: Estimates show that every dollar invested in a hospital-based violence intervention can save between $10.07 and $15.11 in costs related to health care, the justice system, and lost productivity.[130]

4. ***Caught in the Crossfire***

Overview: A hospital-based intervention program led by Youth ALIVE!, a nonprofit devoted to violence prevention and youth development in Oakland, California.[131] Caught in the Crossfire specialists meet with patients recently hospitalized for violent injuries to discourage retaliation and provide connections to long-term case management. Youth ALIVE! is a member of Oakland Unite, a network of community-based violence intervention service providers funded by the city through the Measure Z ballot initiative.[132]

Outcomes: Caught in the Crossfire was associated with a 70 percent reduction in arrests among participating patients during a six-month period following hospitalization, when compared with a control group.[133] Participating patients were 60 percent less likely than nonparticipants to have any involvement with the justice system during the same time period.[134]

Return on investment: Estimates show that every dollar invested in a hospital-based violence intervention can save between $10.07 and $15.11 in costs related to health care, the justice system, and lost productivity.[135]

Transformative mentoring

A program model that combines a curriculum based in the principles of cognitive behavioral therapy with intensive one-on-one mentorship for individuals at high-risk of engaging in violence.

1. ***Advance Peace***

Overview: A fellowship program developed in Richmond, California, for young men at high-risk of violence involvement. Fellows participate in intensive mentoring, wraparound supportive services, and social-emotional skills-building classes. Fellows who meet program benchmarks are eligible for a monthly cash stipend.[136] Based on the fellowship's success in Richmond, the Advance Peace model has since been adopted by a number of other cities in California, including Stockton and Sacramento.[137]

Outcomes: In Richmond, the Advance Peace model was associated with a 55 percent reduction in gun homicides and hospitalizations and a 43 percent reduction in firearm-related crimes.[138]

Return on investment: An analysis of the Sacramento Advance Peace program found that for every dollar invested, the city saved between $18.20 and $41.88 in averted medical and criminal justice system costs.[139]

2. ***Community and Youth Outreach (CYO)***

Overview: A community-based organization in Oakland, California, that operates transformative mentoring programming for youth and young adults with high levels of involvement with the justice system. The CYO's model combines intensive life coaching with a trauma-informed and a culturally relevant CBT curriculum called Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise.[140]

Outcomes: At least 90 percent of justice-involved young people who participated in CYO life coaching did not recidivate within the first year of release from incarceration.[141] In 2019, 97 percent of participants were not involved in any incidences of gun violence, despite being identified as high risk at the outset of the program.[142]

3. ***Becoming a Man (BAM)***

Overview: A mentorship program for boys in Chicago Public Schools that uses CBT to help participants to develop healthy conflict resolution skills. Young people participate in weekly one-hour group sessions during school hours and may also receive one-on-one academic coaching, counseling, and mentorship.[143] After demonstrating positive results in Chicago, the BAM model is now being replicated in jurisdictions such as Boston, Los Angeles, and King County, Washington.[144]

Outcomes: In Chicago, BAM was associated with a 50 percent reduction in violent crime arrests and a 19 percent increase in graduation rates among participants.[145]

Return on investment: Every dollar invested in BAM yields $2.16 in savings associated with crime reduction and increased labor market earnings.[146] When paired with intensive tutoring, the return on investment for BAM increases to $8.60.[147]

Job readiness programs

A wide range of programs that pair temporary paid work experiences with job readiness trainings and/or supportive services, including summer jobs programs for young people and transitional employment for justice-involved individuals.

1. ***Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)***

   Overview: A supportive transitional work program operating in 11 states.[148] Participants are placed in short-term, paid positions on CEO work crews and meet with job coaches to develop work readiness skills and find permanent employment. Participants continue to work with CEO coaches after attaining full-time employment to support ongoing success.[149]

   Outcomes: Three years after enrollment, CEO participants in New York state were 48 percent more likely than a comparison group to be employed and 19 percent less likely to be reconvicted or rearrested for a felony.[150]

Return on investment: Estimates show that every dollar invested in programs that pair paid work experience with job training saves $1.66 in costs related crime reduction and increased labor market earnings.[151]

2. **Boston Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)**

Overview: A summer employment program operated by the Boston Mayor's Office of Workforce Development that places more than 10,000 young people per year in paid positions with public and private sector employers. Participants also participate in trainings to boost job readiness, increase financial literacy, and strengthen soft skills such as communication and conflict resolution.[152]

Outcomes: SYEP participants had 35 percent fewer violent crime charges and 57 percent fewer property crime charges than the control group. Participants also showed higher school attendance rates compared with the control group, with 4 1/2 fewer days of unexcused absences on average.[153]

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