

COMMUNITY-BASED VIOLENCE-INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

THE PROBLEM

Community-level firearm violence in the U.S. disproportionately impacts communities of color, particularly young black men. Firearm homicide was the leading cause of death for black men and boys aged 15-34 in 2016, and the second-leading cause of death for Latino men and boys in the same age range.

- The causes of gun violence in communities of color are **multi-faceted and can be informed by deep-seated issues** around poverty, discrimination and economic, social and cultural rights. Neighborhoods frequently lack economic opportunity and access to services, and young people may feel the need to protect themselves by carrying a firearm due to a lack of police protection and the presence of everyday gun violence.
- Research indicates that **long-term, adequately-funded, evidence-based projects** tailored towards specific local contexts, and working in partnership with the affected communities, can achieve sustained reductions in firearm violence. Several federal and state-funded and supported evidence-based violence intervention and reduction strategies have proven effective in decreasing gun violence.
- Despite the success of these programs, **lack of funding and lack of political will** have prevented the kind of long-term consistent implementation these programs need. Even in cases where the models have drastically reduced gun violence, community leaders face challenges in maintaining them, sometimes leading to a devastating reversal of the program's gains, and a return to previous higher levels of gun violence.

THE POLICY

By focusing efforts on a concentrated group—engaging community members, offering support, direct services and mentorship to individuals at high risk for engaging in gun violence—many cities have provided alternatives to violence.

TYPES OF VIOLENCE-INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

OPERATION CEASEFIRE MODEL:
WORKS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS, LOCAL OFFICIALS, LAW ENFORCEMENT & DIRECT SERVICE PROVIDERS TO IDENTIFY A SMALL GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS MOST AT RISK OF BEING INVOLVED IN GUN VIOLENCE. THEY ARE INVITED TO IN-PERSON MEETINGS WHERE SPECIFIC BENEFITS AND DIRECT SERVICES ARE OFFERED IN RETURN FOR AGREEING NOT TO ENGAGE FURTHER IN GUN-RELATED ACTIVITY.

CURE VIOLENCE MODEL:
USES A PUBLIC HEALTH FRAMEWORK TO ASSESS GUN VIOLENCE LIKE AN EPIDEMIC, BY FOCUSING ON THE WAY VIOLENCE IS SPREAD FROM PERSON TO PERSON AND INTERRUPTING VIOLENT CYCLES PROACTIVELY, INCLUDING OFFERING REHABILITATION OPPORTUNITIES.

HOSPITAL-BASED INTERVENTION:
BASED ON THE PREMISE THAT PATIENTS ADMITTED TO THE HOSPITAL FOR GUNSHOT WOUNDS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO ARE REPEAT ADMISSIONS, MAY BE AT HIGH RISK OF BEING VICTIMS OR PERPETRATORS OF FUTURE GUN VIOLENCE AND ARE LIKELY TO BE OPEN TO MODIFYING THEIR BEHAVIORS. WITH ADEQUATE SUPPORT, CONNECTION TO DIRECT SERVICES, AND COUNSELING, THESE PATIENTS LEAVE THE HOSPITAL WITH A TAILORED PLAN FOR ALTERNATIVES TO GUN VIOLENCE.

RICHMOND FELLOWSHIP MODEL:
CREATED THE OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY, WHICH IS INDEPENDENT FROM THE POLICE DEPARTMENT, BUT WORKS COLLABORATIVELY WITH POLICE IN THE INITIAL PHASES OF IDENTIFYING HIGH RISK INDIVIDUALS FOR TARGETED OUTREACH AND SUPPORT. PARTICIPANTS ARE OFFERED THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENROLL IN A PROGRAM KNOWN AS OPERATION PEACEMAKER, WHICH PROVIDES A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR CONNECTION WITH SOCIAL SERVICES, TREATMENT, COUNSELING, EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING AND FINANCIAL INCENTIVES.

AIUSA'S RECOMMENDATION

- The U.S. has a duty to take positive action to address gun violence, especially where models exist that could reduce it while making a longterm and life-changing impact on marginalized individuals.
- Congress should pass legislation which supports the implementation and funding of evidence-based violence prevention programs, including the Youth Promise Act.
- State and local authorities must implement and provide sufficient and sustained funding to support community-involved, evidence-based group violence intervention and reduction strategies that have proven effective in decreasing gun violence in communities where there are persistently high levels of firearm violence.
- The design and implementation of these programs must include human rights safeguards including the right to freedom from discrimination, the right to privacy and the right to due process.

Please contact egv@aiusa.org with any questions or to request citations behind any of this information.