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PROSECUTOR INITIATIVES TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE



PCE



Crime and Justice Policy Lab
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

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Prosecutor Initiatives to Reduce Gun Violence

Executive Summary

Overview

Prosecutor offices can play a significant role in decreasing gun violence. An increase in gun violence across the United States has left communities and city governments uncertain about how to respond effectively. While the latest data shows shootings declining in some areas, the number of deaths and injuries brought on by gun violence has increased significantly over the last decade and is even more pronounced following the pandemic.¹ Prosecutors, who have political authority, relationships with government agencies, connections to impacted communities, and access to relevant data, are ideally positioned to convene stakeholders, raise funds, and otherwise champion effective solutions to this critical issue.

The University of Pennsylvania’s Crime and Justice Policy Lab worked with Prosecutors’ Center for Excellence to highlight ways in which prosecutors have taken the lead in attacking gun violence in their communities. These methods include partnering with local organizations on multi-stakeholder strategies, developing their own gun violence reduction programs, and raising funds to support new programming and new partners. The authors looked at prosecutor offices in Delaware County, Pennsylvania; Lake County, Illinois; Oakland County, Michigan; and Ramsey County, Minnesota. The challenges faced by these four offices, as well as their available resources, are like many others across the country.

County Demographics

	Delaware Co, PA	Lake Co, IL	Oakland Co, MI	Ramsey Co, MN
Population served by office (2022)	573,849	711,239	1,274,000	552,352
# of Prosecutors	45	70	100	100
# of Law enforcement agencies	42	43	46	9
County seat	Media	Waukegan	Pontiac	Saint Paul
Largest city	Chester	Waukegan	Troy	Saint Paul
County gun homicide rate (per 100k population in 2022)	5.56	5.60	1.89	9.69
Highest city gun homicide rate (per 100k population in 2022)	32.9 (Chester)	15.4 (Waukegan) 25.4 (Zion) 32.5 (North Chicago)	16.2 (Pontiac)	16.5 (St. Paul)

¹ “Home – Gun Violence Archive,” Gun Violence Archive, <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>

Prosecutor Leadership

These four offices, and the prosecutors leading them, have demonstrated that prosecutors have an important role to play in reducing gun violence. Through their leadership, prosecutors can set the direction for their jurisdiction in a variety of ways, including:

- **Convening Stakeholders:** Prosecutors can use their political authority as elected officials to bring together the stakeholders needed to address gun violence in a coordinated manner.
- **Developing and Sharing Intelligence:** Thanks to the wealth of data, they possess regarding people and groups in close proximity to gun violence, prosecutors can develop their own intelligence on violence dynamics, share intelligence with relevant stakeholders, and encourage the sharing of intelligence across police departments and other criminal justice agencies.
- **Leveraging Local Resources:** Prosecutors can identify, coordinate, and leverage local resources ranging from law enforcement to social services which can support a coordinated gun violence reduction strategy.
- **Advocating for Funding:** Prosecutors can advocate for funding to assist law enforcement, treatment programs, and credible messenger programs.

Each office faced separate challenges and implemented individual solutions.

Delaware County District Attorney's Office, Pennsylvania

Focused Deterrence and Intensive Help for First Time Gun Offenders

The Delaware County District Attorney's Office (DCDAO)—led by District Attorney Jack Stollsteimer—started the Chester Partnership for Safe Neighborhoods (CPSN), applying a focused deterrence strategy that offers resources or social service assistance for those interested and promotes enhanced sanctions for those who choose to continue engaging in gun violence. Regular and systematic reviews of recent shootings by stakeholders (“shooting reviews”) are used to identify the groups and individuals most directly involved in gun violence and to develop a coordinated strategy to address violence through focused law enforcement and prosecution. The weekly review of data also contributes to actions like “call-ins,” where law enforcement, city officials, community and faith leaders, and trusted messengers “call in” known violent crime offenders to a meeting to send the deterrence message and offer services. Targeted enforcement strategies were developed to facilitate collaboration and coordination among those working on cases involving the most violent individuals. The DCDAO also created GRACE, the Gun violence Reduction – Accountability, Change, Elevation program, which is a voluntary but intensive program for first-time gun offenders designed to reduce the chance of reoffending.

Lake County State's Attorney Office, Illinois

Credible Messengers and Services for Those at Highest Risk of Gun Violence

State's Attorney Eric Rinehart heads the Lake County State's Attorney Office (LCSAO), which established a prevention program called the Gun Violence Prevention Initiative (GVPI). The GVPI uses a trauma-informed, collaborative approach to treat violence and is considered an adaptation of the Cure Violence model. The GVPI has six main focal areas: youth engagement, community outreach, violence intervention (through the 'Lake County Peacemakers'), restorative justice, victim services, and firearm risk reduction. The GVPI collaborates in prevention programs with the LCSAO and partner organizations, through direct provision of victim services, promotion of restorative justice practices at the LCSAO, the use of grant funding and data sharing for the Lake County Peacemakers. The GVPI has helped to foster a more collaborative, non-duplicative violence reduction structure in the county.

Oakland County Prosecutor's Office, Michigan

Creating a Stakeholder Group to Develop a Protocol for Reducing Gun Violence

The Oakland County Prosecutor's Office (OCPO), at the direction of Prosecutor Karen McDonald, developed a working group of key stakeholders to create a comprehensive, data-driven protocol to reduce gun violence across all spaces in the county. The working group members focused on a variety of topics, ranging from physical and psychological prevention to community violence interrupter organizations. OCPO developed an online database for stakeholders and some working group members to collect the information gathered during the Commission meetings and to share resources outside of meetings. The protocol and the creation of a foundation to carry out its public awareness campaign were announced in June 2024.

Ramsey County Attorney's Office, Minnesota

Convening Stakeholders, Focusing on Non-Fatal Shootings, and Developing Trauma Informed Services for Young People Involved in Gun Violence

County Attorney John Choi, of the Ramsey County Attorney's Office (RCAO), founded the Violence Reduction Leadership Group (VRLG) in 2021. The VRLG is a group of elected officials and government leaders who hoped to combat the rise of violence during the pandemic. The VRLG decided that a group violence intervention (GVI) initiative could use focused deterrence to decrease gun-related injuries and deaths. The RCAO spurred the creation of a GVI program called Project PEACE, which helps to provide supportive services for youth and young adults involved in gun violence. Project PEACE conducts regular incident review meetings with its partners to discuss recent shootings and identify high-risk individuals who require supportive services. Supportive services are provided in-house or through partners like Healing Streets, a county-wide program that provides community-centered violence prevention and hospital-based

intervention services through mediation, referrals to services, and grief therapy sessions. The RCAO also spearheaded an initiative to focus on non-fatal shootings with an emphasis on improving clearance rates and enhancing prosecutions for those causing the harm.

Recommendations

The programs spearheaded by the four prosecutor offices are wide-ranging, but clearly show there is a leading role for prosecutors to play in gun violence reduction strategies. Important lessons emerge from these programs on how prosecutors can benefit their communities. These offices have demonstrated that by uniting efforts and creating collaborative environments, prosecutor offices can play a pivotal role in reducing gun violence. The common principles that drive these programs are the following:

Convene Stakeholders

Prosecutors have the power to bring stakeholders together to assess the gun violence problem in their jurisdiction and develop a unified, consistent plan to address both gun violence enforcement and gun violence prevention. The stakeholders should meet regularly to amend and improve their processes as they learn more and as circumstances change to avoid mission creep. The VRLG in Ramsey County, led by County Attorney John Choi, shows the positive effect of having community leaders focused on the same problem; their efforts resulted in federal funding and multiple initiatives for gun violence reduction. Similarly, in Oakland County, Prosecutor MacDonald used her political authority to convene a wide variety of local and national stakeholders to collect evidence and best practices on a range of recommendations to reduce gun violence. Once established, stakeholder collaboration should be institutionalized to reduce reliance on current members to ensure that the convening outlasts its founding leaders.

Collect Data and Develop Protocols for Sharing Intelligence

Prosecutors and law enforcement should collect accurate data regarding the people and places most centrally involved in gun violence. Some law enforcement agencies do not have a culture of information-sharing, so this should be promoted by prosecutors. Protocols and pathways for data sharing are essential for combating gun violence. Input from the community is also valuable. Once the data is analyzed, then strategies directly responsive to those data can be developed, and outcomes tracked. Ramsey County and Delaware County have both shown how data can be harnessed to tackle their gun violence problem; for the former, by prioritizing intelligence-sharing in aid of non-fatal shooting investigations; for the latter, by focusing on that small number of individuals most closely associated with actively violent groups. Once quality data is collected and compiled, researchers can also assess the effectiveness of the initiatives, which supports program improvement and funding requests.

Pursue and Acquire Funding

Prosecutors should consider how to use existing resources to support gun violence reduction strategies and advocate for increased funding through external agencies or organizations. The offices described in this paper found various resources to start and sustain their programs. For example, Oakland County started its Commission to Address Gun Violence using only existing staff and office resources, and time volunteered by external commission members. While this was not sustainable, they were able to start by gathering relevant information using these resources alone. To further the work, they established a non-profit which is externally staffed and funded. Other jurisdictions obtained local, state, and federal funding to support implementation. Ultimately, building these initiatives into a standard part of office and local budgets will best ensure sustainability.

Hire or Train Dedicated Staff

Prosecutors should hire or train dedicated staff to support their gun violence reduction efforts to the extent possible. Dedicated staff are less likely to be pulled into competing projects and priorities, which will enable them to stay focused and ensure that programs and strategies to address gun violence are sustainable. The Chester Partnership for Safe Neighborhoods in Delaware County really expanded their outreach and service provision potential once they got grant funding and hired a program coordinator. Lake County GVPI also benefits from a dedicated director, who can track the initiative's many goals and objectives, arrange meetings, and move forward with their collaborative mission.

Encourage the Development of Protocols for Working with Civilian Violence Prevention Workers

Prosecutors should advocate for protocols on whether and when intelligence can be shared between police and professional community-based staff, including frontline violence interrupters and/or credible messengers. While data sharing is necessary to understand and intervene in gun violence, there is a delicate balance of what intelligence can be shared by and with non-law enforcement personnel, particularly when those personnel are working directly with people deeply exposed to gun violence. A great deal of law enforcement data must be kept confidential to preserve investigations. Similarly, frontline civilian violence prevention workers usually cannot share information with law enforcement as it could compromise their effectiveness and physical safety if community members believe them to be violating norms or community trust. Despite these concerns, intelligence sharing can sometimes be carefully facilitated. Though most prosecutors do not work directly with civilian violence prevention workers, they can be a catalyst for professionalizing these programs and encouraging clarification of their roles. Prosecutors can reach out to established civilian violence prevention programs, such as ROCA, to find examples of protocols for when and how staff work with law enforcement.

Engage Researchers

Prosecutors can benefit from partnerships with researchers to document and study these new initiatives and analyze their impact on the reduction of gun violence. Researchers can capture the new processes that accompany gun violence reduction initiatives, and help prosecutors strengthen the connections between resources, activities, and outputs. For example, Lake County GVPI engaged researchers to assist with the development of their Theory of Change. Programs that are further along in development could also benefit from an impact evaluation. Funding for research could come from similar sources to the implementation funding or from funders focused primarily on building the evidence base for gun violence reduction strategies.

Introduction

Gun violence is an urgent problem. Though police departments have traditionally been tasked with addressing this problem, prosecutors are well-situated to champion gun violence reduction strategies. First, prosecutors have political authority and convening power to encourage community stakeholders to work together in an effective manner. They can be leaders who bring together police, community groups and government agencies to develop and implement coordinated gun violence reduction efforts. The prosecutor can convene regular meetings where they share and coordinate their intelligence on gun violence with the police. Together they can identify those people and places that are at high risk of gun violence, either as victims or shooters, and with the benefit of the shared information, the prosecutor and police can create strategies for enforcement. At the same time, prosecutors can encourage their other partners to develop programs that avert violence through social services and other supportive programs.

Some prosecutors have already demonstrated leadership by developing innovative programs to reduce gun violence in partnership with law enforcement and the community. Highlighted in this paper are four examples of modern prosecutors who have spearheaded groundbreaking programs to benefit their communities and reduce gun violence. They are:

- **District Attorney Jack Stollsteimer** – Delaware County District Attorney’s Office (Pennsylvania)
- **State’s Attorney Eric Rinehart** – Lake County State’s Attorney’s Office (Illinois)
- **Prosecutor Karen McDonald** – Oakland County Prosecutor’s Office (Michigan)
- **County Attorney John Choi** – Ramsey County Attorney’s Office (Minnesota)

With support from the Joyce Foundation, the University of Pennsylvania’s Crime and Justice Policy Lab partnered with Prosecutors’ Center for Excellence to capture innovative practices of prosecutors in the Great Lakes region. Though research is still needed to evaluate the efficacy of the programs, they provide excellent examples of how prosecutors can be proactive in addressing gun violence and helping their communities through collaborative initiatives. The programs will evolve as lessons are learned. The goal of this paper is to inspire other prosecutors and offer ideas about the benefits and challenges that can come with these new approaches.

Delaware County District Attorney’s Office (PA): Bringing Resources to a Small City in Need

Overview

In 2019, Jack Stollsteimer ran for District Attorney of the Delaware County District Attorney’s Office (DCDAO) with the commitment to reduce violence in the city of Chester. Chester, which had the highest rate of gun violence in the county, declared a fiscal emergency in 2020 and filed

for bankruptcy in November 2022. Its population has dropped by 22% since 1990 and is now around 32,500. Once elected, DA Stollsteimer’s campaign promise became his number one priority, and he developed a multipronged approach to reduce the city’s violence. He adopted two parallel strategies: first, collaborating with the community to prevent violence by spearheading the creation of the Chester Partnership for Safe Neighborhoods (CPSN), and, second, focusing on those who were the most violent through law enforcement action. He also started Delaware County’s Gun violence Reduction – Accountability, Change, Elevation (GRACE) Program, a diversion program for first-time gun offenders.

Population served by office: 575,873

of Prosecutors: 45 (40 detectives)

of Law enforcement agencies: 42

County seat: Media

Focus city: Chester

County gun homicide rate: 5.56 per 100,000 population in 2022

Chester gun homicide rate: 32.9 per 100,000 population in 2022

Chester Partnership for Safe Neighborhoods (CPSN)

The Chester Partnership for Safe Neighborhoods (CPSN) is a DCDAO-led focused deterrence initiative to bring down gun violence in Chester. Focused deterrence is a strategy that pairs targeted enforcement with offers of social services, both of which are directly communicated to individuals at high risk of gun violence. The group violence intervention (GVI) model utilizes focused deterrence to target the message specifically to those who are associated with groups determined to be involved in active violence. The message conveyed to high-risk individuals is a genuine offer of help for those who want it and a notice of targeted, strategic enforcement against groups that continue their violent behavior.² Through CPSN, the DCDAO works with law enforcement and community partners to implement traditional focused deterrence and GVI components, such as meeting to review all shootings and using “call-ins” to send the deterrence and support message to members of groups engaged in violence.

Since CPSN’s inception, Chester has seen a drop in gun violence, from 87 non-fatal shootings and 32 homicides in 2020 to 27 non-fatal shootings and 10 homicides in 2023. Research has not yet

² Anthony A. Braga, David L. Weisburd, and Brandon Turchan, “Focused Deterrence Strategies and Crime Control: An Updated Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Empirical Evidence,” *Criminology & Public Policy* 17, no. 1 (2018): 206.

determined the extent to which the focused deterrence contributed to this drop. However, the results are encouraging.

Problem Analysis and Shooting Reviews

DA Stollsteimer’s initiatives have benefited from an unofficial relationship with Professor David Kennedy, founder of the National Network for Safe Communities and co-developer of the focused deterrence model. Kennedy advised on an initial violence review in Chester, which identified approximately 250-300 violent individuals from 9 to 10 known groups who were involved in at least 75% of shootings in 2020.

To keep the Chester data current, weekly shooting review meetings are held with Chester Police Department detectives, Delaware County intelligence analysts, crime analysts from DCDAO, and assistant district attorneys assigned to the project. These meetings, led by a senior prosecutor, review not just shootings but also gunpoint robberies, burglaries, and gun cases of high-risk individuals that were identified in previous weeks. The goal is to use data and intelligence to identify the most violent individuals and to develop a coordinated strategy to address the violence through focused law enforcement and prosecution.

Supportive Services, Street Outreach, and Trusted Messengers

At the same time, DA Stollsteimer and his team began reaching out to community and social service partners to create the Chester Partnership for Safe Neighborhoods (CPSN). The members of the CPSN (listed in Appendix A) include a variety of local political leaders such as Chester’s Mayor, the Police Commissioner, and several social service groups. Other members include a workforce development and education support program, non-profits that focus on Black men’s mental health and trauma, and community groups that focus on reducing gun violence. The goal of CPSN is to work collaboratively to reduce violence in a variety of ways, including organizing call-ins, hiring trusted messengers, and supporting GRACE, a first-time gun offender program.

In collaboration with CPSN, the District Attorney’s office hired its first “trusted messenger” in 2021. A trusted messenger is a person who lives in the impacted neighborhood, may have a history of criminal justice involvement, and is respected in the community. The goal of the trusted messenger is to contact individuals who are at risk of creating violence and to connect them with resources and support systems.

With additional funding, the DCDAO now supports three trusted messengers, a case manager/community events coordinator, and a Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator supervises this team and is a liaison to the DCDAO violent crime prosecutor and other law enforcement agencies, such as probation and parole. The coordinator is currently developing methods to track the work of the trusted messengers, including client intake and updates, messenger engagement levels in target neighborhoods, and conflict mitigation outcomes. The messengers are paid up to \$35,610 per year for part-time, hourly work, or up to \$75,000 per year for the one full-time messenger. The DCDAO hopes to expand to five trusted messengers.

The trusted messengers are active and present in the community. Though they wear CPSN gear and carry County IDs, they promise anonymity to those who are concerned about their names being given to the DCDAO. Since CPSN partners with community-based organizations, the trusted messengers can make referrals to provide resources and assistance, such as job opportunities, trauma-informed therapy, transportation, housing, replacement IDs and birth certificates, food, and clothing. With this approach, they have successfully encouraged some on the verge of violent behavior to transition to legal employment opportunities.

The trusted messenger program is a newer aspect of the DCDAO violence reduction program, and it continues to evolve. Though some in law enforcement are supportive of the program, others are concerned about the effectiveness and sustainability of the trusted messengers. Sustainability is a constant concern with efforts in Chester, especially since trusted messengers have been funded by grants that may expire.

Call-Ins

On October 31, 2020, CPSN arranged its first call-in as part of the focused deterrence message. A call-in is a meeting where law enforcement, city officials, community and faith leaders, and trusted messengers “call in” known individuals involved with violent groups. There, the city stakeholders speak against violence, promise swift and certain consequences for future violence, and provide an offer of help for those who want to leave a life of violence. The first Chester call-in involved 12 incarcerated individuals, selected as members of the most violent groups in Chester. These individuals were not currently driving the violence due to their incarceration but were expected to pass the call-in message on to their fellow group members who were committing violence in their community. At that meeting, DA Stollsteimer, the Chester Police Commissioner, the violent crime Deputy District Attorney, and the trusted messenger delivered the traditional focus deterrence message: “If you let us, we will help you. If you make us, we will stop you.” A second call-in was held in June of 2023 with 24 high-risk individuals actively on probation or parole, after which many of the attendees were connected to services.

GRACE

As part of its multi-faceted approach to gun violence, the DCDAO created the GRACE Program. This voluntary but intensive program for first-time illegal gun carrying offenders is designed to reduce the chance of reoffending. Participants, who must be residents of Delaware County, are placed on electronic home monitoring for at least the first 6 months of the 18-24-month program and are expected to comply with several conditions. These conditions include one or more of the following: treatment, counseling, employment, enrollment in educational or job training programs, or other specialized conditions. One trusted messenger from CPSN serves as a mentor for GRACE participants. Successful completion of the GRACE Program will result in: 1) dismissal of the case, and 2) opportunity for expungement provided that there is no new arrest within the year. So far, one participant has successfully graduated from the program, and no one has been removed for failing to adhere to program requirements.

Targeted Enforcement

While the DCDAO provides support and resources to the community through CPSN and GRACE, it also focuses on enforcement for the most violent individuals. The designated violent crime prosecutor of the DCDAO uses intelligence gathered during shooting reviews to work with detectives, crime analysts, and the Chester Police Department to create an enforcement strategy that focuses on the most violent offenders. The DCDAO enhanced collaboration and coordination by creating a team-centric model through co-location and a streamlined management structure. Since witness cooperation is often difficult, this team has developed the skills to build sophisticated prosecutions based on phone records, surveillance videos, and other digital evidence.

Significantly, after the call-in, the DCDAO and law enforcement conducted a targeted enforcement action focused on the most violent offenders in Chester. This reinforced the messages given at the call-in and, in combination with the other elements of the strategy, may explain the subsequent lull in violence.

Funding

Led by DA Stollsteimer, CPSN initially started its collaborative efforts with a mission but without funding. Fortunately, the Delaware County Department of Human Services (DHS) agreed to fund one trusted messenger. Other than a few contributions from the DCDAO asset forfeiture fund, this was the only direct funding of CPSN for the first two years.

The DCDAO then applied for a grant for CPSN from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD). In 2022, the program was awarded \$2 million, which was originally allocated across four components (some adjustments have since been made):

- Paying the salaries of additional Chester police officers.
- Paying for the Fusus camera integration project to enhance video surveillance.
- Funding two trusted messengers, a case manager, and a Program Coordinator, along with resources and support for criminal justice-involved individuals.
- Funding the “Clean and Green” project, including an illegal dumping deterrence project and making physical improvements to the infrastructure and general environment in Chester.

In another innovation, the DCDAO worked with a local foundation to structure a revolving fund that facilitates the rapid disbursements of a small percentage of grant funds to furnish time-sensitive, urgent client services.



DA Stollsteimer with the CPSN team, DA staff, Chatham Police, and Community Members

Next Steps

To move the project forward, a few steps could be taken:

- **Expand and Sustain the Trusted Messenger Program:** Well-run street outreach can be an essential component to a larger strategy to reduce gun crime, but it needs permanent staff that can focus on the project. The DCDAO should consider partnering with other similar organizations that can provide the guidance on needed staffing and funding sources.
- **Advocate for More Law Enforcement Support and Funding:** The Chester PD are underfunded and at times have only two to three officers on duty to cover a city of over 32,000 people. The situation became so dire that in 2022, the DCDAO agreed to pay for some overtime for Chester PD and patrols by the Pennsylvania State Police using asset forfeiture funds. Though DCDAO cannot continue to fund the police, the DA can advocate for additional resources from the county and the state.
- **Encourage Development of Protocols for Information Sharing between Law Enforcement and Trusted Messengers:** There is a very delicate balance regarding how much information should be shared between police, the DCDAO, and trusted messengers. Data sharing is necessary to understand who is currently at risk, but too much data sharing could compromise messengers' effectiveness and physical safety. One successful example of managing this balance is ROCA,³ a community-based organization that engages young people, police, and systems that are at the center of urban violence. CPSN should reach out to groups like ROCA for guidance and suggestions.

³ "Home - Roca," Roca, <https://rocainc.org/>.

Lake County State's Attorney's Office (IL): A Cure Violence Adaptation

Overview

The Lake County State's Attorney's Office (LCSAO), led by SA Eric Rinehart, has established the Gun Violence Prevention Initiative (GVPI) to combat rising firearm incidents and address root causes of violence in the three cities with the highest gun violence in the county: Waukegan, Zion, and North Chicago. The GVPI recognizes gun violence as a public health issue and aims to provide resources to at-risk individuals in the community to prevent future shootings.

The involvement of the prosecutor's office is crucial to the success of the program for four main reasons, outlined by SA Rinehart:

- **The LCSAO is the lead law enforcement agency in Lake County:** Lake County has 43 police departments and multiple local governments. The LCSAO works with all the police departments and is the lead law enforcement agency in the County. As such, the LCSAO is in the ideal position to lead the coordination of a gun violence initiative across the county.
- **The LCSAO can identify people in need of treatment:** Through the cases that come through the LCSAO, the prosecutor can assess which offenders are at risk and who have not received services or treatment.
- **The LCSAO can apply for funding:** The LCSAO has resources to apply for and acquire substantial grants and other types of funding.
- **The LCSAO has control over county prosecutor policies:** The LCSAO can develop fair and equitable plea guidelines and treatment options for first-time weapon possession and other related charges.

Population served by office: 711,239 (2021)

of Prosecutors: 70

of Law enforcement agencies: 43

County seat: Waukegan

County gun homicide rate: 5.6 per 100,000 population in 2022

Waukegan gun homicide rate: 15.4 per 100,000 population in 2022

Zion gun homicide rate: 25.4 per 100,000 population in 2022

North Chicago gun homicide rate: 32.5 per 100,000 population in 2022

Lake County Gun Violence Prevention Initiative (GVPI)

The Gun Violence Prevention Initiative (GVPI) was created in part because of the rise of gun violence in Lake County in 2017. Conversations with law enforcement leaders suggested that a small percentage of individuals were driving the violence. In response, the LCSAO created the Violent Crimes Unit and was awarded a federal Innovative Prosecution Solutions grant; this grant supported the LCSAO's Cyber Crime Forensic Lab to assist with gathering evidence against violent offenders.

However, SA Rinehart also realized that some individuals in his jurisdiction were at risk of becoming involved in violence and was motivated to create the GVPI, a prevention program that offers services rather than focusing on law enforcement. As part of this vision, SA Rinehart wanted to support credible messengers who could reduce threats of gun violence in the community.

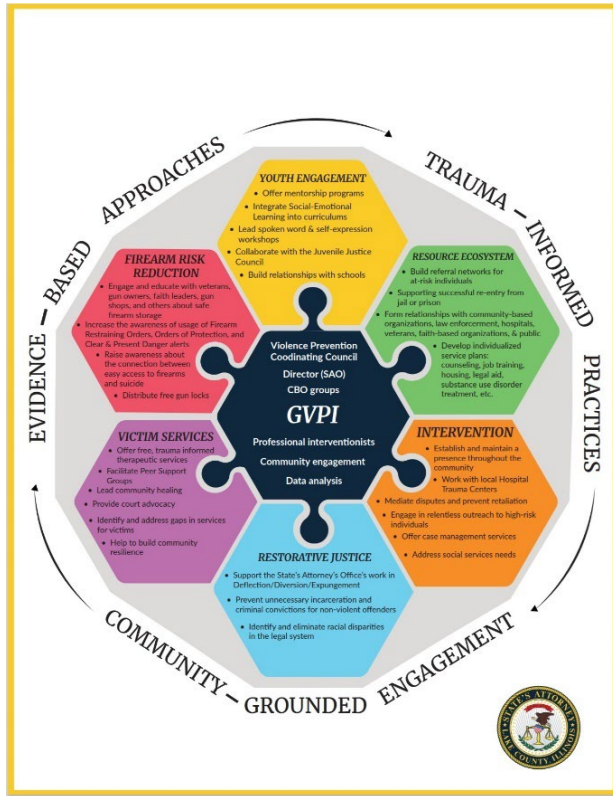
The GVPI implements a trauma-informed, collaborative approach to address the root causes of gun violence in the county. It is considered an adaptation of the Cure Violence model, which treats violence as a disease—it is believed that the spread of this disease can be stopped through data-driven identification and detection of violence, timely intervention, and risk-reduction by changing behaviors and norms.⁴

The LCSAO model of the GVPI has various components:

- Youth engagement,
- Community outreach,
- Violence intervention in the neighborhood,
- Restorative justice,
- Victim services, and
- Firearm risk reduction.

The two main elements of the GVPI are providing services to those at highest risk of gun violence, including victims of recent violence, and deploying credible messengers to interrupt active cycles of violence.

⁴ Butts, Jeffrey A., Caterina Gouvis Roman, Lindsay Bostwick, and Jeremy R. Porter. "Cure Violence: A Public Health Model to Reduce Gun Violence." *Annual Review of Public Health* 36 (2015): 40.



SA Rinehart credited various agencies and community organizations with the work they had already started. His GVPI has built upon these efforts and has brought a centralized, coordinated focus to the project. This has eliminated duplication and fostered collaboration.

Obtaining accurate and real-time data from police agencies in Waukegan, North Chicago, and Zion is an on-going project. Real-time data is necessary for swift violence intervention, and regular data updates are needed to track progress of the GVPI. Various initiatives are underway to enhance data sharing between the GVPI and law enforcement leaders. One outstanding challenge is the extent to which credible messengers can receive law enforcement data that may be sensitive or confidential. Other jurisdictions have

developed systems where these two groups can collaborate in defined ways without risking sensitive law enforcement data or compromising the safety and integrity of their messengers. An agreement on how and when data can be shared may improve as the GVPI program matures and trust develops between the various members of the program.

SA Rinehart hopes that the GVPI will not only reduce rates of gun violence but will also be an opportunity to address racial disparities within the justice system. The demographic breakdown of Lake County is roughly 7% Black, 27% Latino, 12% Asian, and the majority White; however, in 2023, 39% of the 18 homicide defendants were Black and 44% were Hispanic. SA Rinehart believes that integrating prevention, deflection, and diversion programs into or alongside the GVPI will reduce victimization and trauma, as well as decrease justice system involvement for minority youth in the county.

Lake County Peacemakers

‘Lake County Peacemakers’ is a Community Violence Intervention (CVI) organization that works with the GVPI. The Peacemakers are credible messengers that use evidence-based strategies to reduce gun violence, by mediating and preventing escalating fights in the areas with the highest prevalence of gun violence.

The Peacemakers currently have 8 credible messengers (sometimes referred to as violence interrupters), three supervisors, and one program manager. They have been trained in neighborhood mediation and outreach through expert technical assistance providers Marcus

McAllister and Dr. Chico Tillman. The credible messengers are hired through a fiscal agent in Waukegan Township (rather than through the prosecutor's office) so that they are not directly associated with law enforcement. The Peacemakers are a separate entity, and they do not report directly to the SA or provide his office with live intelligence.

The LCSAO studied other community violence intervention groups as inspiration for their model and programming. These groups include Metropolitan Family Services, Communities Partnering 4 Peace, UCAN, Project H.O.O.D., and the Institute for Nonviolence Chicago.

Funding

The GVPI's first financial award of \$560,000 came from the Lake County Board through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant. They then received an additional \$500,000 award through the State of Illinois Budget Allocation following lobbying by SA Rinehart for the program. The GVPI has also received federal grant funding for \$2,250,000 through two separate grants and has applied for further funding opportunities to make sure this work is sustained. Recently, the GVPI has received a \$300,000 state grant from the Office of Firearm Violence Prevention (OFVP) for outreach specialists and case managers with the Peacemakers and victim specialists in the LCSAO. The GVPI also works with OFVP and has received another \$100,000 to convene a collaborative group; this group, the Violence Prevention Coordinating Council, consists of the ten OFVP grantees in the Waukegan-North Chicago area.



Lake County Gun Violence Prevention Initiative Group

Next Steps

The LCSAO has shown great initiative in starting this program, hiring violence interrupters, and rallying other partners to provide resources and services to those at risk of being involved in violence.

However, there are some on-going challenges to the project and next steps to consider.

- **Continued Need for Funding:** Large amounts of funding have been acquired to support this work and will likely be required in the future. A dedicated funding stream is needed to sustain the work in the long term.
- **Need for Data:** The LCSAO must continue to advocate for an appropriate data collection mechanism, both for the GVPI activities overall and for the Peacemakers in particular. This will be the key to refining processes, understanding the effects of the initiative, and communicating successes to the funders.
- **Improved Relationship Between Credible Messengers and Law Enforcement:** Cooperation between the credible messengers and law enforcement needs to improve. Though the three main police leaders are very open-minded, there is still hesitation regarding the sharing of sensitive or confidential data. The GVPI has hired a trusted Chicago police leader who can help gain buy-in from the police and develop templates for sharing data.

Oakland County Prosecutor's Office (MI): Commission to Address Gun Violence

Overview

Prompted by the 2021 Oxford High School shooting in which a student killed four fellow students and injured seven—as well as by an increase in gun violence in Pontiac—Prosecutor Karen McDonald of the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office (OCPO) used her convening power to form the Commission to Address Gun Violence (the Commission), ultimately forming the All of Us Foundation (the Foundation). In doing so, she reached beyond the borders of her jurisdiction to engage experts and stakeholders from across the country on a variety of gun violence issues.

Prosecutor McDonald was motivated to convene this group of stakeholders after finding that her office's data and other gun violence resources were inadequate. The goal of the Commission was to create an evidence-based protocol, providing information and best practices on a range of topics, to inform a public health campaign aimed at reducing and preventing gun violence. The Protocol for Action (the Protocol) was released in June 2024. McDonald's unique position as the central law enforcement leader of the county, combined with her drive and commitment, gave her office the clout and authority to motivate county stakeholders and national experts to undertake this wide-ranging effort.

Population served by office: 1.274 million

of Prosecutors: 100

of Law enforcement agencies: 46

County seat: Pontiac

Largest city: Troy

County gun homicide rate: 1.89 per 100,000 population in 2022

Pontiac gun homicide rate: 16.17 per 100,000 population in 2022

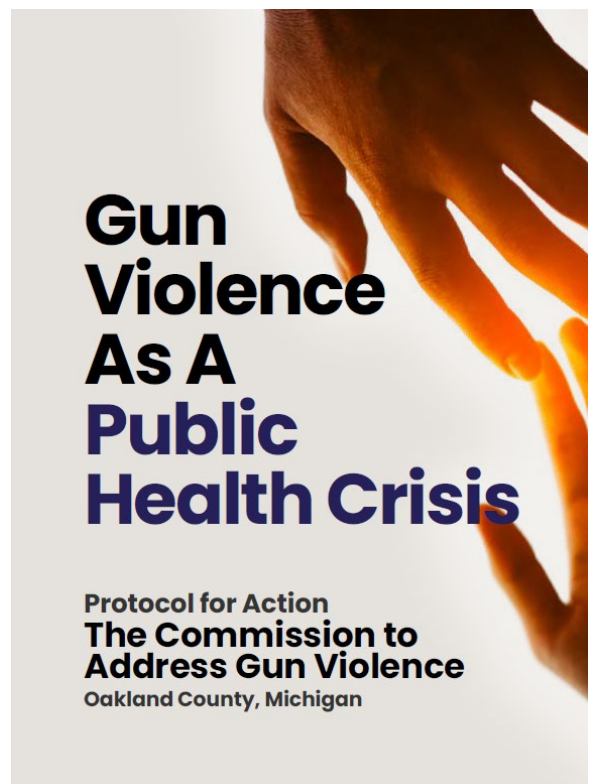
Commission Goals

The goal of the Commission was to create a comprehensive, data-driven protocol to reduce gun violence across all spaces in the county. A significant motivation for the Commission was the 2021 Oxford High School shooting, but Prosecutor McDonald's vision is that gun violence reduction is equally important in other parts of her county. Specifically, the city of Pontiac, which has 5% of the county's residents, has about 40% of gun homicide and assault victims. With a broad view of gun violence, the Commission explored what institutions and individuals could do to assess, prevent, and mitigate the risk of gun violence in its many forms. The hope is that the Commission Protocol can be used locally and nationally to spur initiatives to reduce violent crime.

Commission Members

The 28 Commission members (listed in Appendix B) represented many viewpoints of relevant county stakeholders, including some who have been directly impacted by gun violence. National experts on gun violence also served on the Commission; these individuals were recruited by the OCPO through direct calls and recommendations.

The Commission was chaired by the OCPO Chief of the Family Support Division and the Chief of Administration. The Commission met monthly, with Zoom availability for those who could not attend in person. The Commission created working



Oakland County Prosecutor's Office's
Protocol for Action

groups to address various aspects of gun violence in detail and to create a protocol that can inform future approaches to reducing gun violence.

Commission Working Groups

Seven Commission working groups were created to develop components of the protocol on specific topics of interest; working group members also included residents impacted by gun violence. They conducted their meetings primarily via Zoom, as members are located around the state and country. The groups formed were focused on:

- **Prevention – Physical and Psychological:** To evaluate existing and potential measures geared toward strengthening people skills, such as communication and social-emotional curriculum for the schools. To study measures related to making physical spaces safe and secure.
- **Anonymous Reporting Systems:** To evaluate and make recommendations based on recent research collected to strengthen Michigan's OK2SAY anonymous reporting system.
- **Bystander and Community Violence Interrupters:** To review data and research related to Community Violence Interrupter initiatives and their impact, and to discuss what factors contribute to a successful program. To make recommendations on methods/strategies to empower people to identify when someone is in crisis and when to speak up in their community.
- **Threat Assessment Models and Aftercare:** To evaluate current threat assessment models and make recommendations related to what makes them effective. To make recommendations about appropriate services and resources for those identified as being a threat and in crisis.
- **Tactical Response to Active Violence:** To systematically review and evaluate an active shooter scenario to determine what went well and what did not.
- **Trauma Response and Recovery:** To evaluate what intervention methods are being taken when a person is in crisis and what measures/resources are in place for their long-term success. To address the resiliency of those individuals who have lost someone to gun violence and what steps can be taken to end the cycle of violence.
- **Gun Violence and Health and Inequity:** To review and discuss relevant data regarding the correlation between gun violence and health inequities in underrepresented communities. To identify inequities and make recommendations on small attainable changes that can have long-lasting and meaningful results.

Social-Emotional Curriculum in Schools: Of the topics above, an emphasis of the Commission was the need for social-emotional curriculum in schools. Social and emotional learning (SEL) refers to the process through which children, young people, and adults develop self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.⁵ In addition to positive outcomes related to social behavior and academic success, research has also found

⁵ “Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader’s Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs,” CASEL, March 1, 2003, 5, <https://casel.org/safe-and-sound-guide-to-sel-programs/>.

effects on misconduct problems and emotional distress, which directly and indirectly measure and relate to violence.⁶

During the Commission meetings, these topics are addressed by members of the committee or other presenters, so they can delve into the issues across agencies and specialties.

Database to Share Information

The OCPO developed an online database for stakeholders and some working group members, to collect the information gathered during the Commission meetings and to share resources outside of meetings. Following County requirements, the Commission used a SharePoint database that is organized into folders for each working group, with meeting minutes, and areas for electronic discussions to keep stakeholders educated and engaged.

Data and Evidence-Based Programs

There is some available statewide data on gun homicides at the county and city level, but these data are not very detailed. For example, there are no good statewide metrics for non-fatal shootings, as agencies do not all utilize the “non-fatal shooting” categorization within aggravated assaults. However, for its recommendations, the Committee relied on the available county data alongside widely accepted research from objective evidence, reviewed by experts through a public health lens.

Funding

The Commission was started with virtually no funding. All members of the Commission were volunteers. Prosecutor McDonald and her staff that were assigned to work with the Commission already have full-time duties related to OCPO matters, so their resources are stretched thin.

One step to sustain and expand the work was to create a 501(c)(3) called the “All of Us Foundation.”⁷ It was established to raise funds for support staff and a national public health awareness campaign around the Protocol developed by the Commission.

⁶ Joseph A. Durlak, Joseph L. Mahoney, and Alaina E. Boyle, “What We Know, and What We Need to Find out about Universal, School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs for Children and Adolescents: A Review of Meta-Analyses and Directions for Future Research.,” *Psychological Bulletin* 148, no. 11–12 (December 13, 2022): 771, <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000383>; Rebecca D. Taylor et al., “Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions: A Meta-Analysis of Follow-Up Effects,” *Child Development* 88, no. 4 (July 2017): 1163, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12864>.

⁷ “Home – All of Us Foundation,” All of Us Foundation, <https://allofuscan.org/>.

Next Steps

The OCPO has taken a leadership role in Oakland County on the essential and important question of reducing gun violence. However, it is faced with a series of challenges in moving the project forward and sustaining the effort. Some steps that can be considered include:

- **Hire Dedicated Staff to Manage Implementation of Commission Recommendations:** The implementation of the Protocol would be aided by dedicated staff, who would have the ability and capacity to focus on this work full-time.
- **Form Partnerships to Implement the Protocol:** The Protocol spans a wide range of stakeholders and will require many partners to promote implementation of the recommendations. The Commission members themselves are a great place to start, but getting more buy-in from local organizations and officials (such as those related to the public school system) will be crucial for implementation.
- **Advocate for Accurate and Detailed Data Collection:** The OCPO should leverage its convener role through the Commission to encourage law enforcement agencies to promote effective gathering of gun violence data. This would include the use of standardized data definitions, consistent data collection practices, and regular data sharing among stakeholders.
- **Partner With Gun Violence Researchers:** Researchers are needed to evaluate the extent to which the recommended protocols are implemented and study their eventual impact.
- **Partner with County and Local Government to Raise Funds:** County and local government partners could be especially helpful in promoting the sustainability of the Commission's work through fundraising and constituent awareness.

Ramsey County Attorney's Office (MN): A Focus on Collaboration

Overview

County Attorney John Choi of the Ramsey County Attorney's Office (RCAO) is a key county leader who has focused on improving public safety and enhancing positive community outcomes through collaborative efforts with the police and community groups. He has spearheaded multiple initiatives aimed at reducing gun violence and fostering a healthy community, in part through the Violence Reduction Leadership Group. These efforts have primarily taken two paths: first, a focused deterrence strategy called Project PEACE to reduce gun violence incidents in St. Paul, and second, the enhancement of non-fatal shooting investigations through cooperation, data collection, increased resources, and prioritization of investigative efforts.

Population served by office: 552,352

of Prosecutors: 100

of Law enforcement agencies: 9

County seat and largest city: Saint Paul

County gun homicide rate (including St. Paul): 9.69 per 100,000 population in 2022

Saint Paul gun homicide rate: 16.5 per 100,000 population in 2022

Violence Reduction Leadership Group

The Violence Reduction Leadership Group (VRLG) was founded in March 2021. It was started by County Attorney John Choi as an informal group of elected officials and government leaders who were proactively seeking solutions to the rise of violence during the pandemic. Rather than assigning blame for the increase, the group created positive relationships and learned about the roles each had to play in reducing crime and violence. In early meetings, the group reviewed detailed data on where shootings were occurring. This formed the basis for discussing the best strategies for violence reduction.

As part of their work, the VRLG revisited an analysis of St. Paul violence conducted by the National Network for Safe Communities (NNSC) before the pandemic. The NNSC analysis showed that a group violence intervention (GVI) initiative could use focused deterrence as a promising approach.

With the help of Congresswoman Betty McCollum, the VRLG and County Attorney Choi successfully advocated for a \$900,000 two-year, federal earmarked grant to support the GVI program. Around the same time, the St. Paul mayor created the Community-First Public Safety Commission, which in turn established St. Paul's Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS). The VRLG and the Ramsey County Attorney's Office supported a GVI program called Project PEACE and, once the funding was earmarked, the RCO collaborated with ONS to implement Project PEACE.

The VRLG is still active and continues to work on public safety priorities for partners, including non-fatal shootings and school absenteeism. The VRLG fills a key gap in the county as a place for leaders to convene and work together on key priorities. Because the VRLG is informal and voluntary, there is the risk of the committee losing interest. However, County Attorney Choi maintains focus and participation by creating agendas that are relevant for all stakeholders, so they are energized to join the meetings and continue the work.

Project PEACE

County Attorney Choi was instrumental in promoting and funding Project PEACE, which is the focused deterrence strategy in St. Paul, run by the ONS. It emphasizes supportive services for

youth and young adults involved in gun violence. County Attorney Choi and his office remain an active partner in this initiative to maintain the momentum for the program.

Project PEACE has two main components:

- **Incident Reviews:** Project PEACE partners, including the RCAO, meet regularly to discuss recent shootings and identify other high-risk individuals who need intervention and supportive services. Project PEACE provides therapy directly to those identified and can offer other services, such as workforce development, education, housing, chemical support, and life coaching, through community partners.
- **Healing Streets:** Healing Streets is a county-wide program that provides community-centered violence prevention and intervention services, specifically focused on mediation, referrals to services, and grief therapy sessions.⁸ The program responds to shooting incidents and hospitals where victims are being treated and provides support and services.

Non-Fatal Shootings

A parallel initiative of County Attorney Choi is to focus on non-fatal shootings. This was inspired by a national prosecutor's conference hosted by Prosecutors' Center for Excellence that highlighted traditionally low clearance rates for non-fatal shootings. There, prosecutors discussed how gun violence can be reduced by enhancing investigations of non-fatal shootings and improving the clearance rates for this violence. In Ramsey County, the clearance rate for non-fatal shootings is about 30-35%, which means that at least 65% of the shooters are still on the streets without any consequences, free to commit additional crimes or become victims themselves. County Attorney Choi addressed this disturbing data by reaching out to the police to work collaboratively on improving the clearance rates.

When prosecutors and police focus on non-fatal shootings, whether there has been an arrest or not, it can lead to positive results, including:

- **Identifying Shooters:** Enhanced investigation can identify shooters, who could otherwise either continue their violent behavior or become victims of retaliation.
- **Identifying Victims:** Victims of shootings can receive services to address their trauma and reduce retaliation.
- **Prioritizing Prosecutions:** Prosecutors can prioritize their prosecutions of non-fatal shootings so that the shooters are held accountable. These can be complex cases.

A Ramsey County Deputy Sheriff is on loan to the RCAO to coordinate the review of non-fatal shootings and assist with solving more shootings. His first task was to obtain cases from law enforcement agencies that were not presented to the attorney's office; this would help clarify the factors leading to the low clearance rates. He then researched what other jurisdictions were

⁸ "Healing Streets Project," Ramsey County, <https://www.ramseycounty.us/your-government/projects-initiatives/transforming-systems-together/healing-streets-project>.

doing to improve their clearance rates. One city studied was Denver, Colorado, where the F.A.S.T. Unit (which focuses specifically on non-fatal shootings) has improved clearance rates significantly. The Denver PD’s non-fatal shooting clearance rate of 53% in 2022 was the highest among the most populous cities in the nation.⁹

The lessons learned were that clearance rates can be improved by using homicide investigative techniques for non-fatal shootings, crime analysts, community outreach, and a dedicated prosecution team. This information, along with the coordination from the Deputy Sheriff on loan to RCO, will support newly created non-fatal shooting units in the Saint Paul Police Department and the Sheriff’s Office. The Deputy Sheriff coordinator is also in the process of compiling data about non-fatal shooting and gun homicide cases from the last three years and sharing it with law enforcement agencies.

The RCO has funding for this project through a \$2 million grant from the Ramsey County Manager. The money provides resources for the Sheriff’s Office, adds forensic scientists who can analyze non-fatal shooting evidence, and supports victim and witness emergency funding.



RCAO and Non-Fatal Shooting Initiative Partners Visit Denver F.A.S.T Unit

Funding

The RCO has been very successful in receiving funding for the violence reduction work. As already noted, with the help of Congresswoman Betty McCollum, the VRLG was awarded \$900,000 as a two-year federal earmarked grant to support Project PEACE. One-third of these funds were allocated for technical assistance through the National Network for Safe Communities; one-third was allocated for a coordinator; and the final third was allocated

⁹ Ted Alcorn, “One City’s Surprising Tactic to Reduce Gun Violence: Solving More Nonfatal Shootings,” The Marshall Project, October 30, 2023, <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2023/10/30/nonfatal-shootings-police-clearance-rates-denver>.

towards investing in community navigators who assist community members impacted by gun violence. After conversations with the city of Saint Paul and their decision to run Project PEACE through the ONS, the Ramsey County Attorney worked with the federal grantor to amend the grant to re-allocate one-third of the funding to the RCAO to support the non-fatal shooting coordinator on loan from the Sheriff's Office.

Based on the early non-fatal shooting work, the RCAO presented a plan to the County Manager that would allocate almost \$2 million of the county's surplus public safety dollars to the improvement of non-fatal shooting investigations. Funding is earmarked for a full-time investigator in the Sheriff's Office and \$200,000 toward investigative resources for agencies throughout the county. About \$800,000 of this \$2 million would be set aside in a fund that can be activated only by police; this fund would support victim and witness safety needs for any case in the county with a non-fatal shooting victim. Law enforcement agencies and community support groups will work together to identify needs and request funds.

Next Steps

The Ramsey County Attorney's Office has taken some important steps toward gun violence reduction in their jurisdiction. The following next steps could be considered:

- **Hire Researchers to Evaluate Initiatives:** The RCAO has multiple strands of gun violence reduction work, including the non-fatal shooting initiative and Project PEACE, that could benefit from partnerships with researchers to document their processes and analyze their impact.
- **Institutionalize the Collaborative Work:** The VRLG under County Attorney Choi's leadership has been a key driver for violence reduction efforts in Ramsey County, yet its informal nature means it is vulnerable to reduced participation and external pressures to focus on other issues. Efforts to institutionalize the VRLG, either in its current format or as another form of county collaboration, would ensure that this collaborative group outlasts its current leaders.
- **Encourage Professionalization of the Community Messengers:** The Healing Streets credible messengers provide a key function for Project PEACE. The RCAO should work with St. Paul ONS to provide adequate support, training, and funding to train and professionalize the credible messengers. Research partners should study the program to examine and evaluate the intricacies of credible messengers engaging with those at risk of violence.

Conclusion

Across the Great Lakes region and the United States, prosecutors are adopting innovative approaches to reduce gun violence in their jurisdictions. Though the four programs highlighted have differences, they share a commitment to providing services and support for both victims and those at risk of engaging in violence. These supportive approaches are done in conjunction with focused enforcement of dangerous individuals. The principles that underlie these four prosecutor programs can be replicated by prosecutors in other parts of the country. These principles are:

- **Convene Stakeholders:** Prosecutors have the power to convene stakeholders to assess the gun violence problem in their jurisdiction and develop a unified, consistent plan to address both gun violence enforcement and gun violence prevention.
- **Collect Data and Develop Protocols for Intelligence Sharing:** Prosecutors and law enforcement should collect and share accurate data to identify shooters and shooting locations. This data can be used to develop strategies to focus on those who are most violent.
- **Pursue and Acquire Funding:** Prosecutors' offices should consider how to use existing resources to support reduction strategies and advocate for increased funding through external agencies or organizations.
- **Hire or Train Dedicated Staff:** Prosecutors should hire, or train dedicated staff to implement and sustain the gun violence reduction strategy. Dedicated staff can remain focused on the gun violence reduction mission and are less likely to be pulled into competing projects and priorities.
- **Encourage the Development of Protocols for Working with Civilian Violence Prevention Workers:** Prosecutors should advocate for programs that are properly supervised, professionalized, and have protocols for when and how to work with law enforcement.
- **Engage Researchers:** Prosecutors can benefit from partnerships with researchers to document and study these new programs and analyze their impact.

Using these principles, prosecutors can leverage their leadership to help their communities reduce gun violence. The programs are new and will inevitably evolve, improve, and adjust to changing conditions. As more prosecutors embrace violence prevention as part of their mission, other novel programs will emerge that can be evaluated and serve as models for the future.

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Appendices

Appendix A: CPSN Partners

- Delaware County Department of Human Services
- Delaware County District Attorney's Office (including the Criminal Investigation Division)
- Chester Police Department
- Mayor's Office of Chester
- Political Representatives (e.g., Mary Gay Scanlon)
- The Judiciary
- The Sheriff's Office
- Adult Probation and Parole
- Juvenile Probation
- Chester Community Coalition
- Making a Change Group, including the Gun Violence Intervention Network & Empowerment Program (GVINE)
- Crozer-Chester Medical Center
- Pathstone Corporation
- PA CareerLink/EDSI
- Delaware Community College
- Laborer's 413 (carpenters' union)
- Green Foundation
- Delaware County Foundation
- State Parole
- Boys and Girls Club of Chester
- Chester Bidy Basketball Association
- Widener University

Appendix B: Oakland County Commission to Address Gun Violence Stakeholders

- Susan Benson - Director of Specialized Student Support, Oakland Schools
- Charlie Cavell - District 18 Commissioner, Oakland County Board of Commissioners
- Debra Rivera Ehrmann - Vice President, Centro Multicultural La Familia
- Lt. Jim Etzin - Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services Coordinator, Oakland County Tactical Training Consortium
- Betsey Hage - Chief of Administration, Oakland County Prosecutor's Office
- Thom Hardesty - Director of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, Oakland County
- Nicole Hockley - Co-Founder and CEO, Sandy Hook Promise
- Lt. Timothy Ketvirtis - Second District North Coordinator, Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division
- Dr. Alyse Ley - Associate Professor and Associate Chair, Department of Psychiatry at Michigan State University
- Pastor Derrick McDonald - Prospect Missionary Baptist Church
- Robert VanWert - Special Prosecutor, Oakland County Prosecutor's Office
- Heather Murphy - School Safety Specialist, National Center for School Safety, Prevention Research Center at the University of Michigan
- Buck Myre - President, 42 Strong
- Dr. Peggy Nowak - Neurosurgery and Otolaryngology, Beaumont Hospital
- Dr. Vasilis Pozios - Chief Medical Officer, Oakland Community Health Network
- Dr. Melissa Reeves - Nationally Certified School Psychologist and Past-President of the National Association of School Psychologists
- Kimberly Root - Section Manager, Office of School Safety, Michigan State Police
- Pastor Kevin Sanders - Associate Pastor and Behavior Specialist, Pontiac Public Schools
- Dr. Makenzie Schiemann - President of the National Association for Behavioral Intervention and Threat Assessment
- Mary Schusterbauer - Retired Chief of Oakland County Youth Assistance
- Deleah Sharp – Founder, Identify Your Dream
- Gary Sikorski - Director of Community-Wide Security, Jewish Community Security, on behalf of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit
- Michael Spisz - District 3 Commissioner, Oakland County Board of Commissioners
- Dr. Frank Straub - Director, National Policing Institute's Center for Targeted Violence Prevention
- Tom Teves - Father of Alex Teves who was murdered in the Aurora theater shooting and Co-Founder of No Notoriety
- Markeisha Washington - Chief of Family Support, Oakland County Prosecutor's Office
- Det. Lt. Tim Willis - Special Investigations Unit, Oakland County Sheriff's Office
- Dr. Marc Zimmerman - Marshall H. Becker Collegiate Professor and Director of the Prevention Research Center of Michigan at the University of Michigan