



National Network For Safe Communities

Saving Lives, Saving Communities



Spring 2015

CHRONICLE



NATIONAL NETWORK FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES

The National Network for Safe Communities supports cities around the country in implementing community-based strategies to reduce violence, minimize arrest and incarceration, enhance police legitimacy, and strengthen relationships between law enforcement and communities.

The past few months have seen major developments in our work. In January we welcomed Dr. Tracie Keese to our staff as the project director for the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, and in March, in collaboration with the Justice Department, we and our National Initiative partners selected six pilot sites in which to begin implementing strategies to reduce bias, enhance procedural justice, and foster reconciliation. We launched a clearinghouse [website](#) to make resources available to anyone looking to learn more about the work of the National Initiative.

In other exciting news, we are pleased to announce two major new partnerships. We are working with the New York City Police Department and community leaders to implement NYC Ceasefire in several neighborhoods around the city (see page 2). We have also formalized a partnership with the London Metropolitan Police to begin implementing the Group Violence Intervention.

Finally, we have held a number of groundbreaking working sessions with national and international practitioners to explore police-community reconciliation processes under funding from the Pritzker Foundation; street outreach work under funding from the MacArthur Foundation; and the emerging support and outreach structure under funding from the Langeloth Foundation.

You can read more about this important work in this, the second installment of our newsletter, which we offer to provide you with updates and highlights about the cities we work with, as well as to raise the national dialogue around these proven methods to improve community safety and rebuilding relationships between the criminal justice system and the communities it serves.

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NYC CEASEFIRE



NYC Ceasefire was launched in New York City in December 2014 in collaboration with David Kennedy and the National Network for Safe Communities. The National Network is proud to see the strategy being implemented in its home city.

While homicide in New York City has declined dramatically in recent years—down to 328 murders in 2014, the lowest since 1963 when reliable record-keeping began—there are still certain neighborhoods that experience disproportionate rates of violence.

“NYC Ceasefire is different. We don’t typically communicate directly to people who are involved in crime and say we’re going to offer you help and support if you want to get out of that life, but it’s time to stop.”

Susan Herman, Deputy Commissioner of Collaborative Policing, NYPD

NYC Ceasefire recognizes that most of this violence is committed by a small number of people involved in street groups—gangs, drug crews, and the like—at great risk for violent victimization or offending. It focuses on reducing violence by communicating clearly and directly with these group members through call-ins and custom notifications. NYC Ceasefire has begun by launching in several neighbor-

hoods in Brooklyn with high rates of group-involved homicide and shootings.

The strategy operates under the direction of New York Police Department Deputy Commissioner of Collaborative Policing Susan Herman. It gives group members a message from community leaders (including faith leaders, mothers of murdered children, ex-offenders, and others) that the violence is unacceptable and must stop, from an unprecedented law enforcement partnership (including NYPD, ATF, King’s County District Attorney’s Office, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, probation and parole, and others) that continued violence will be met with swift and certain consequences aimed at groups as whole, and from social service providers that help is available for those who want to change.

In a recent interview with *New York 1 News*, Deputy Commissioner Herman explained, “[NYC Ceasefire] is different. We don’t typically communicate directly to people who are involved in crime and say, we know who you are, we know what you’re doing, we’re going to offer you help and support if you want to get out of that life, but it’s time to stop, and it’s not business as usual anymore. If you continue down this path you’re going to get a kind of attention that you have not received in the past.”

The strategy is in its infancy—so far, the partnership has only held two call-in meetings. But New York is eager to see it work to reduce homicide and shooting in the communities still damaged by group-related violence and extend greater public safety to all of New York’s citizens.

The City of Chattanooga began implementing its Violence Reduction Initiative (VRI) in early 2014 in partnership with the National Network for Safe Communities. Paul Smith has been the project manager since the launch of the strategy, which is based on the National Network's Group Violence Intervention, and has spearheaded the city's efforts to build a "support and outreach" structure to offer help to active street group members. His background as a high school principal has allowed him to make unique connections between law enforcement, community, and social service providers. The following piece, written by Mr. Smith, tells the story of one VRI client, discusses the role of Chattanooga Police Department's Community-Police Response to Victims of Violence (CPRVV) team in delivering custom notifications, and highlights the way the support and outreach structure is working with the city's most vulnerable population in a new way. The name of the client has been changed to protect his privacy.

Incident

On February 14, I received a call from a community member that his brother Cliff (one of our VRI clients) had been brutally beaten with pipes and sticks by five guys on the street. I immediately called Captain Nathan Vaughn of the Chattanooga Police Department and we met the victim and his family at the emergency room. Cliff told us that he had been flagged down by his former associates as he was driving. When he stopped to talk to them, they had beaten him and left him on the side of the road. Regaining consciousness, he made his way to his grandmother's house and from there was taken to the hospital. At the emergency room, Captain Vaughn and I spoke to Cliff and, because of the trusting relationship we have, Cliff shared the names and addresses of the assailants. I spoke with the family and we arranged for Cliff to be relocated to his mother's house to recover. We were concerned about this case because Cliff has a violent history and retaliation was imminent without intervention.

Custom notifications

On February 17, together with the CPRVV team, we visited Cliff and delivered a custom notification to reinforce the message that there should be no retaliation for this incident. I asked Cliff to reach out to his associates to deliver that same message. I asked about Cliff's brother, who was upset about the incident and had already challenged one of the suspects to battle. Thankfully, the suspect would not engage. At my request, the mother called the brother to come over to the house and when he arrived, we delivered a custom notification to him, as well. He promised to stand down. I later received a message from one of Cliff's associates: "The system better not fail this time." He assured me that there would be no retaliation from his group.

The CPRVV team gave Cliff a leaflet for the victim/witness assistance program in the DA's office and highlighted the phone numbers to call. Cliff requested that the police patrol the area surrounding his grandmother's residence because that is where he usually resides. They agreed to do so.

Community support

In 2014, one of our employment partners, the Command Center, helped Cliff obtain a full-time job. The director, Obie Webster, a long-time working partner of mine, took a risk by hiring Cliff. Cliff has an extensive criminal record and has spent time in prison and on parole. Because of the severity of Cliff's injuries and brain trauma, he had to take some time off work. I spoke with Mr. Webster about the case and he assured me that he is keeping Cliff on staff in spite of these events related to his previous lifestyle. Employers like this, who understand the plight of our clients but still take risks by hiring and retaining them, truly make the difference in their lives. As part of VRI we work to build those partnerships.

Protection from harm

Cliff agreed to testify in court against his assailants. Mind you, the assailants are members of his former group, so Cliff was concerned for his own safety and that of his family if he continued to cooperate. To keep him safe from harm, we placed him out of town with a temporary job; he now only returns for court dates and activities with his children. According to Cliff, two days before court, the OG of his former group spotted Cliff driving as he was going to visit his daughter, caught up to him, and threw a beer bottle at his car. Cliff sped away and immediately called me. I conferenced Captain Vaughn onto the call, and he assured Cliff that he would stand with him in court and that members of his unit would keep a watchful eye over him. Cliff called me later and said that he felt safe.

Court and legal assistance

The day before court, Cliff asked me to check if he had any outstanding warrants, and it turned out he had one for failure to appear in court and pay fines in 2014. I called the courthouse and talked to the judge, who agreed to rescind the warrant and issue a new court date so Cliff could testify against his assailants without being arrested. Captain Vaughn attended court with Cliff and asked the judge to order the assailants to stay away from Cliff and his family. The judge did so, but after court, Captain Vaughn took the OG aside and issued his own police warning about Cliff's safety. I visited Cliff and his family shortly after the court appearance, and they expressed their appreciation to VRI for ensuring Cliff's and the family's safety.

Reflections

The harsh reality is that this is a tough group of guys to work with because their daily lives are so unstable and volatile. These are the types of issues that the custom notifications and CPRVV teams deal with every day. Because of our strong community partners we are able to reach out to group members and their families to limit retaliations and make our streets safer. We also work to ensure that the police deliver on their promise to keep them safe, thereby improving the legitimacy of the police in these communities. As we continue this work, we will help the family to make one or two child support payments for Cliff, and help Cliff with transportation to his new temporary home. The support and outreach structure we have developed allows us to meet these guys where they are and serve their most pressing needs.

Law Enforcement

Don't Shoot Peoria: Streamlined Federal Prosecution



In 2012, Peoria implemented *Don't Shoot Peoria*, with the assistance of the National Network for Safe Communities, in an effort to reduce homicide and violence in the city. A central element of the strategy—based on the National Network's Group Violence Intervention—is engaging directly with violent street group members during a “call-in” meeting, communicating a credible law enforcement message about the legal consequences for further violence. After the call-in, law enforcement must swiftly deliver these consequences to any group that continues violent activity, demonstrating the partnership's seriousness and deterring violence by other groups.

A particularly dramatic way for law enforcement to direct sanctions at street groups is through federal conspiracy cases that deliver severe sentences to an entire group.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Tate Chambers, a partner of Don't Shoot Peoria, has established a multiagency approach to expediting historical federal conspiracy cases for groups that continue to engage in violent activity after being notified at a call-in. Chambers' method, modeled on that of the New Orleans Multiagency Gang Unit, uses a process that responds to a group responsible for a shooting by bringing federal charges to as many members as possible within 40 to 90 days of the incident.

The historical federal conspiracy approach is possible because many group members are chronic offenders and can be charged based on existing evidence, which is crucial for an expedited federal investigation. Chambers works with a multiagency team, including local and state police and other law enforcement, that conducts extensive investigative and prosecutorial work concentrated on identifying the group of a shooter; identifying all group members and associates; running criminal histories and gathering other intelligence that establishes connections between group members; and producing evidence to indict the most violent group of offenders.

Chambers has published a practice brief, available at the National Network's website (nnscommunities.org) that outlines the step-by-step process for expedited federal prosecution.

Community

High Point Community Against Violence

High Point, North Carolina, has been a partner of the National Network for Safe Communities for more than 15 years, implementing an intervention for chronic offenders, piloting the first Drug Market Intervention, and most recently using the same approach to reduce domestic violence. An important element of High Point's violence reduction work is building community between police and residents and working to restore trust.

High Point Community Against Violence (HPCAV) is the community arm of High Point's effort. A non-profit, community-driven organization directed by Rev. Jim Summey and President Gretta Bush, it is one of the most unique and long-lasting of its kind nationally. HPCAV acts as a formal coalition connecting local faith leaders; service providers; business owners; city, state and federal law enforcement; police executives and line officers; and other stakeholders committed to reducing violence in High Point. These members of HPCAV hold monthly community meetings to share information and discuss public safety concerns. The organization is committed to voicing the community's standards against serious crime, modeling trusting relationships with law enforcement; and providing support and outreach to offenders who want it.



Members of HPCAV join with law enforcement to participate in direct communication with offenders through “call-in” meetings and “custom notifications,” a method of communicating personalized messages to those at high risk for violent victimization or offending. Rev. Summey and Ms. Bush act as the “community moral voice” during call-ins, and Rev. Summey has gained city funding to assist group members with employment training, educational programs, and a host of other services that contribute to rebuilding their lives. HPCAV also contributes to keeping the broader community informed about developments in violence reduction work by distributing flyers and making

home visits to gather street-level intelligence, discuss recent crimes, and explain police activity to neighborhood residents.

Ms. Bush strongly believes that community members play an essential role in reducing violence. “Every community has that kind of power,” she recently told the *Huffington Post*. The National Network believes that HPCAV's approach has contributed enormously to High Point's durable reductions in violence and serious crime by demonstrating the moral voice of the community, working closely with law enforcement, and making a genuine offer of help to offenders who want to change.

MEDIA



Holder announces steps to improve relationship between police and communities in six pilot sites

AG Eric Holder announced the first six pilot sites for the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, which the [National Network for Safe Communities](#) will lead, in an effort to strengthen relationships between the criminal justice system and the communities it serves.

The six sites are Birmingham, AL; Fort Worth, TX; Gary, IN; Minneapolis, MN; Pittsburgh, PA; and Stockton, CA. The National Network is enormously excited to begin this work and engage with the communities and law enforcement of these cities.



What 21st Century Policing Means

The 21st Century on Policing Task Force released its interim report, including recommendations for improving relationships between law enforcement and the communities it serves. The report highlights the important points that emerged from sessions held across the country over the past several months, including David Kennedy's recommendation that communities support a positive culture and practice of policing that promotes the value and dignity of all, especially the most vulnerable citizens.



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