



Coordinating Safety: Building and Sustaining Offices of Violence Prevention and Neighborhood Safety

Vera INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

National
OVP
Network

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From the Director

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For decades, communities across the country have experienced persistently high levels of violence and other threats to their safety. The standard government response—more policing, more jails, and longer sentences—has not meaningfully helped. At best, these responses offer an incomplete solution, kicking the can down the road. At worst, they are ineffective, unjust, and harmful. Violence in the United States is both a public health and a racial justice issue, and impacted communities have been developing, organizing, and advocating for real solutions. Thankfully, government and other institutions are increasingly taking heed.

There are now 48 city- or county-level offices of violence prevention or neighborhood safety (OVP/ONS) operating across the country, and at least 10 more in development. These offices champion and support community violence intervention and other proven solutions, delivering safety without the social costs that can come with an overreliance on policing. The recent growth of these offices gave us an opportunity to learn more about them: what works well, the challenges they face, and how they can meet their communities' needs. Such research is critical: we have a moral and civic imperative to set these promising institutions up for success.

If adequately resourced and empowered, OVP/ONS can transform our public safety systems, serving as the hub for an ecosystem of civilian government and community-based strategies. This will require commitment to a new approach, centering communities' humanity and healing. It will demand different ways of working, budgeting, and using and sharing information.

This work is under way. Richmond, California, has made a sustained investment in its Office of Neighborhood Safety

and seen a 62 percent decline in homicides and 79 percent decrease in firearm assaults over the last 15 years.¹ And after just two years of service, Albuquerque Community Safety has dispatched trained professionals with backgrounds in mental health and social services to more than 45,000 911 and 311 calls for service—60 percent of those having been diverted from the police.² Offices like these prove that OVP/ONS can manage the collective change we need. But more must be done for these kinds of results to become the norm.

Vera’s Redefining Public Safety Initiative is partnering with cities and counties committed to this work—those looking to end harmful polices and to build effective, civilian-led public safety infrastructures. Prioritizing health and healing—rather than punishment—moves us closer to the equity and safety communities deserve. I have worked toward public safety system transformation for more than 15 years, and it remains a privilege. I am thankful to be in phenomenal company with many leaders of all kinds working in shared purpose. May we continue to learn, improve, grow, and honor the lives and futures lost to violence by building and investing in true safety.

1 Caroline Glesmann, *Over 15 Years of Creating Innovative Solutions to Gun Violence: The City of Richmond, California, Office of Neighborhood Safety* (Oakland, California: Evident Change, 2023), <https://perma.cc/PHR3-NH4P>.

2 Albuquerque Community Safety, “Community Safety Department Marks 2 Years of Service,” October 3, 2023, <https://perma.cc/Q9M4-DW39>.

From the National Offices of Violence Prevention Network

**David Muhammad
and DeVone Boggan**
*Co-directors of the
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Violence Prevention
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It's been nearly two decades since we provided a framework for the development of the first Office of Neighborhood Safety to the city of Richmond, California. To say that we are enthusiastic about the growth and development of the more than 45 such offices that now sit inside of city and/or county government would be an understatement. We also share a hopefulness regarding how the offices in the pipeline will contribute to creating healthier, safer, and more just communities.

Over the course of our discussions about creating the National Offices of Violence Prevention Network in 2020, we were driven by a belief that offices of violence prevention and neighborhood safety could be a powerful tool in helping to restore to health communities impacted by violence. We weren't alone in this belief. Cities United and the Center for American Progress committed to help strengthen advocacy, communications, research, and analysis efforts needed for this burgeoning community violence intervention ecosystem. And now, as a direct reflection of our belief and commitment, we have partnered with the Vera Institute of Justice for this report, *Coordinating Safety: Building and Sustaining Offices of Violence Prevention and Neighborhood Safety*. Vera's report provides both public and community-based stakeholders with valuable information, background, data, and understanding the needs and challenges of implementation. But most of all, this report shows how we can deliver on the promise of what the important infrastructure of offices of violence prevention and neighborhood safety can achieve within local government.

If you have done so or are contemplating the development and implementation of an office of violence prevention or neighborhood safety in your jurisdiction, this report should be one that you give serious attention.

Introduction

Communities across the country have been harmed by violence for decades, and government leaders have struggled to deliver impactful solutions. Overreliance on policing, which has been the primary government strategy to address gun violence and other forms of interpersonal violence, has not produced the safety that communities need and deserve.¹ And governments have failed to meaningfully invest in non-police approaches. The harms of both community violence and status quo punitive responses especially affect Black and other systemically disadvantaged communities.²

Community organizers working to address violence—including community violence, family and intimate partner violence, and gun violence—have long recognized that a different approach is needed. Their advocacy and work show us that the most effective solutions to violence come from a deep understanding of a community’s needs, emphasize the use of data to guide strategies, and prioritize prevention and intervention rather than punishment. The 2020 national protests against police violence and structural racism amplified community demands to redefine public safety—including using non-police strategies to respond to and prevent violence. One innovative way for governments to incorporate these community-centered tenets into policy and practice—and to provide better, more sustainable support to community-based efforts—is by building centralized local offices of violence prevention or neighborhood safety (OVP/ONS). These offices have the potential to radically transform governmental approaches to public safety.

OVP/ONS create a government infrastructure to champion proactive and non-punitive ways to reduce violence. While the scope and strategies of OVP/ONS vary, most offices focus specifically on community and gun violence, with a smaller number also focusing on other forms of interpersonal violence. Offices support evidence-informed strategies through community-specific initiatives—from violence interruption to transformative mentorship to employment programs.³ Some offices are broadly scoped to oversee public safety functions outside of violence intervention, including civilian-staffed crisis response programs and victim services. Crucially, offices

coordinate with community-based organizations and sustain engagement with community stakeholders, which is essential for comprehensive and effective work.⁴ When given sufficient resources and authority, OVP/ONS can coordinate across multiple government agencies and sectors to create a “whole-of-government” approach to safety. In these ways, OVP/ONS can build and lead a local ecosystem of violence reduction, making civilian government and community-based services, rather than law enforcement, the central hub of public safety.

There has been a significant increase in the number of locally established OVP/ONS in recent years. More than half of the 48 city- or county-level offices currently operating were established after 2020, and at least 10 more are in the works. This growth reflects successful community advocacy, as well as increasing receptivity among policymakers to invest in public safety infrastructure outside of the criminal legal system. However, because OVP/ONS are relatively new government structures designed to address complex issues, they are vulnerable to inconsistent political support and resourcing.

As the number of OVP/ONS continues to grow, this is a critical time to examine what’s working well, what challenges exist, and how these offices can take on a leadership role in a jurisdiction’s public safety strategy. To meet this need, the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera), in partnership with the National Offices of Violence Prevention Network and the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, examined how these offices can meet the promise of their vision and grapple with the resource and political challenges that threaten their efficacy and sustainability.

This report summarizes the current state of OVP/ONS nationally and identifies promising practices and recommendations to create and support these offices. It is designed to inform local government leaders seeking to establish or support an office, to equip advocates with information about what works, and to inform OVP/ONS leaders and staff as they advocate for the resources they need to deliver true public safety for all.

OVP/ONS can build and lead a local ecosystem of violence reduction, making civilian government and community-based services, rather than law enforcement, the central hub of public safety.

WHAT ARE OFFICES OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY (OVP/ONS)?

This report uses the term OVP/ONS to describe a local city- or county-level government office or department that enhances community safety using supportive approaches that decenter law enforcement as the primary response to violence.⁵ There are also state-level offices and a newly created White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, which are not the focus of this report.

What do OVP/ONS do?

OVP/ONS most commonly frame their missions as applying a public health approach to violence prevention and intervention. A public health approach prioritizes the health, safety, and well-being of individuals and entire communities. To follow this approach, offices must define and monitor the problem, identify factors that contribute to and protect against violence in the local community, develop and test strategies, and advance widespread adoption of those strategies.⁶

OVP/ONS generally characterize their strategies as violence prevention and violence intervention. These two approaches represent different routes to reduce violence, and they have different timeframes for impact.⁷ *Violence intervention* strategies focus on imminent acts of violence. *Violence prevention* strategies address the underlying causes of violence and thus have a longer timeframe for impact.

In many cities, community-based organizations have been doing community violence intervention (CVI) work for years. Newly established OVP/ONS can enhance the impact of this work through funding, coordination, and capacity-building. These offices can support and strengthen the CVI ecosystem by coordinating government and community stakeholders, developing and implementing comprehensive violence prevention and intervention plans, and coordinating evaluation of community-centered safety efforts. In some instances, OVP/ONS may house CVI programs, and staff and may provide services ranging from life coaching to diversion programming and reentry services.

In addition to supporting the local CVI ecosystem, a few OVP/ONS work to expand civilian-led efforts and strategies for community safety more broadly. This includes efforts to address other forms of interpersonal violence (such as gender-based violence, family and intimate partner violence, and sexual violence); victim services; and 911-dispatched, civilian-staffed crisis response programs. Although these more comprehensive offices are relatively nascent, their existence suggests that OVP/ONS can play a critical and central role in redefining public safety. They can do this by embedding public safety solutions into the fabric of government outside the criminal legal system, creating a hub and infrastructure for nonpunitive approaches, and supporting the sustainability and continuity of interventions and investments in communities that strengthen public safety.

How many OVP/ONS are there?

Vera identified a total of 48 local OVP/ONS that were established from 1994 to 2023, and new offices are currently in development or are being advocated for by local actors in at least 10 more jurisdictions. From 1994 to 2019, the creation of local OVP/ONS progressed at a fairly steady pace. After Chicago's Office of Violence Prevention was established in 1994, four other offices were created from 2006 to 2008 (Los Angeles; Portland, Oregon; Richmond, California; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin) and another 11 were formed from 2017 to 2019. Since 2020, an additional 28 local OVP/ONS have been established.

In light of the growth in offices and the value of peer learning in this area, the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, Advance Peace, and the Center for American Progress, as well as 21 participating jurisdictions, announced the launch of the National Offices of Violence Prevention Network in February 2021. The network has now expanded to include more than 40 jurisdictions.⁸

This recent growth in offices has occurred within a broader context of ongoing community advocacy for community-based approaches to violence prevention and public safety, and expanding government investment. The 2022 federal Safer Communities Act—passed in the wake of the Buffalo, New York, mass shooting—allocated \$250 million through the Office of Justice Programs to

fund CVI.⁹ In April 2022, the Bureau of Justice Assistance launched the Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative, producing an implementation checklist and webinar series.¹⁰ Many local jurisdictions also leveraged American Rescue Plan Act funds to support CVI programs and OVP/ONS.¹¹ Even before these new federal investments, states—including California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia—had created gun violence intervention and prevention grantmaking programs to fund evidence-based approaches to reduce and prevent violence at the local level.¹²

DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

To understand the national landscape of OVP/ONS and identify promising practices, Vera set out to learn from those closest to the work. From September 2022 to July 2023, Vera facilitated focus group discussions and interviews with local office leadership and staff, former office leadership, local community advocates, program leadership and staff, and national training and technical assistance providers. Vera supplemented this work with desk research, looking at a variety of office-related materials.

Vera developed findings and recommendations through iterative phases of data collection and analysis, sharing preliminary findings with all participants for their feedback.

- **Focus groups and interviews.** From December 2022 to July 2023, Vera completed a total of 20 focus groups and interviews with 44 OVP/ONS stakeholders. Of the 44 participants, 27 were local office and government leaders and staff (including six staff and collaborators who specialize in data and reporting); five were former office leaders; 11 were community advocates, community-based program leaders and staff; and three were national training and technical assistance providers.¹³ Participants represented 21 offices and places, including 18 places with existing offices and three places that are developing and/or advocating for offices.¹⁴ Most participants consented to being acknowledged by their names, roles, and office or organizational affiliations. (See Appendix A on page 53

for a full list of focus group and interview participants.) Vera presents quotes anonymously for those who did not provide consent. For each focus group or interview, Vera staff took detailed notes, and one or more team members created a brief summary of key themes and promising practices. Vera audio recorded and transcribed all focus groups and interviews.

- **Desk research.** From September 2022 to July 2023, Vera reviewed office websites, strategic plans, reports, presentations, news coverage, and other published materials and completed profiles for a sample of 27 local offices. The sample included a diversity of office and jurisdiction characteristics, such as when the office was created, its reporting structure within local government, budget and staffing, and city- and county-level offices. Vera also reviewed national reports and resources related to OVP/ONS and the violence prevention and intervention field. (See Appendix B on page 53 for a list of key reports and resources.)
- **Data analysis.** Vera researchers reviewed and discussed the notes and summaries from focus groups and interviews during team meetings. They also used Dedoose qualitative data analysis software to organize transcripts and code a targeted sample of focus groups and interviews. Vera synthesized findings from the focus groups, interviews, and desk research, focusing on promising practices and practical recommendations for OVP/ONS stakeholders.
- **Preliminary findings.** Vera shared preliminary findings with all participants and a group of national training and technical assistance providers in April and May 2023. Vera asked for their feedback on the promising practices and recommendations identified up to that point, as well as suggestions for additional practices to highlight and offices to include in Vera’s data collection. Vera presented the preliminary findings during a virtual convening of the National Offices of Violence Prevention Network in May 2023, hosted three additional virtual sessions that month, and emailed a copy of the findings to all participants to

include those who could not attend one of the sessions. For national training and technical assistance providers, Vera hosted three virtual sessions with 12 participants from nine different providers in April 2023 to present and discuss the preliminary findings. (See Appendix A on page 53 for a full list of training and technical assistance providers.)

Findings

This section summarizes findings and recommendations across three core areas: the creation, scope, and structure of offices; the role of OVP/ONS in coordinating an ecosystem of violence prevention and intervention; and the strategies offices use to define and communicate success. For each of these areas, Vera summarizes the national landscape of OVP/ONS, illuminates the challenges that offices face, and highlights promising practices that address these challenges and support office efficacy and sustainability.

OFFICE CREATION, SCOPE, AND STRUCTURE

Key components of office success include clarity of mission and scope, sufficient resourcing and authority, robust community engagement and planning, and insulation from political transitions.

This section examines the “origin stories” of OVP/ONS to illuminate the local government leadership required to establish a sustainable office and the robust engagement with community and cross-agency stakeholders that is needed to develop a feasible and impactful mission and scope. Vera also examined how reporting structure, resourcing, and activities affect the political stability and durability of offices. Although the analysis focuses on the early

stages of office establishment, the evidence on challenges and promising practices is relevant to stakeholders seeking to support and sustain existing offices.

Establishing an effective OVP/ONS requires robust engagement with government and community leaders

To establish an effective OVP/ONS, leaders must engage in robust planning that includes government and community stakeholders. Inclusive planning processes can build political support, buy-in, and engagement among key stakeholders and leaders that can set up the office for success and sustainability as it defines its mission and scope, develops a strategic plan, and begins implementation.

Mayors and other local government leaders are key actors in mobilizing city resources and policymaking to establish an OVP/ONS—establishing offices through city council ordinances or mayors’ executive orders, for example.¹⁵ They can also create an OVP/ONS by leveraging resources to initiate government-led or supported planning processes—such as task forces, advisory councils, and commissioned studies—or by coordinating existing working groups and partnerships.

- In September 2019, Charlotte, North Carolina, began a multi-year strategic planning initiative to improve public safety systems and policies, including developing a framework to address violence.¹⁶ At the same time as the city’s planning, Mecklenburg County Public Health launched a Community Violence Prevention Plan, which included the creation of the Office of Violence Prevention in 2020 and implementation of the Cure Violence and hospital-based violence intervention programs.¹⁷
- Mayor Baraka of Newark, New Jersey, announced the passage of an ordinance in June 2020 to create the Newark Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery and establish its initial budget. In his announcement, the mayor said, “The Office of Violence Prevention now, by law, is an integral part of the City of Newark. It is officially part of the public service

architecture, like any other social service we are duty-bound to offer.”¹⁸

Planning processes that include community and government stakeholders can generate high levels of investment and support and lay the foundation for an effective and sustainable office. Such processes can maximize the likelihood that the mandate and strategies of an OVP/ONS are grounded in the local jurisdiction’s context and the needs of its residents. They also create a forum for contending with issues of focus, fairness, and expectations. The planning process should produce a shared understanding among participants of the scope and theory of change for the offices so that there is clarity on what an office is and is not expected to do and how it is expected to deliver on its mission.

Robust planning processes should allow sufficient time for research, discussion, and decision-making. Planning processes in the offices included in this study typically took at least one to two years, and a review by Harvard’s Government Performance Lab similarly concluded that “offices often take 18 to 24 months to launch.”¹⁹ OVP/ONS in jurisdictions that do not engage with the community and include it in planning processes can establish offices more quickly but can face challenges related to key stakeholder buy-in, implementation, and sustainability. For example, the Atlanta’s Mayor’s Office of Violence Reduction was established in 2021 following the recommendation of the mayor’s anti-violence advisory council that was tasked with creating recommendations within a 45-day period.²⁰ The mayor’s announcement of the office was met with hesitation by local activists, who had concerns about the administration’s willingness to meaningfully invest in non-police solutions, and the inaugural director of the office was hired the month before a mayoral transition.²¹ In the two years following its inception, the office has faced challenges, including leadership turnover and delays in achieving key milestones, such as funding and launching its CVI program.²²

PROMISING PRACTICE

Establish an advisory board made up of community members and government stakeholders

In St. Paul, Minnesota, the Office of Neighborhood Safety was established in 2022 as an outcome of the city's strategic planning process to re-envision its public safety systems. The city partnered with the Citizens League and the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab to facilitate the planning process and convene a 47-member commission of a diverse collection of community stakeholders, including representatives from community organizations, education, business, law enforcement, faith communities, and cultural and affinity groups. Government agency representatives from the city of St. Paul and Ramsey County were also required to participate in the planning process and serve as resources to the commission members.²³

For many jurisdictions, community advocacy, organizing, and participation have been critical to establishing an OVP/ONS. Community stakeholders have played key roles in building political support and buy-in among government leaders and supporting strategic planning, design, and implementation processes. The OVP/ONS stakeholders who Vera interviewed also noted that learning from other places and receiving support from training and technical assistance providers were helpful in establishing OVP/ONS.

- Alia Harvey-Quinn, executive director of Force Detroit, noted that nationally, “many of these offices, we wouldn’t have got without [community] organizing.”²⁴ Force Detroit’s local organizing efforts included listening, learning, and engaging with long-term residents, “mudroots” activists, peacemaking leaders, and local and state government leaders.²⁵ Force Detroit also visited other violence prevention and intervention programs, hosted national experts, and brought local government leaders to the

National OVP Network’s convening in November 2022 so they could hear firsthand from established OVP/ONS. Soon after the convening, Council Member Gabriela Santiago-Romero proposed an ordinance to establish an OVP/ONS and conduct a community-wide risk assessment to inform the office’s services and programs.²⁶ As of 2023, community organizers are continuing to advocate for the city to establish an office of violence prevention funded at \$50 million per year.²⁷

- Rosie Bryant, director of programs and organizing with Live Free USA, and previously lead community organizer with Faith in Indiana, explained that it took many years of advocacy before the city of Indianapolis funded a CVI program and established the city’s Office of Public Health and Safety in 2018 to coordinate programs and strategies.²⁸ Bryant also shared a lesson about the importance of sustained, long-term advocacy: “implementation is an actual campaign itself. So, once you win the thing [establishing an OVP/ONS] then you gotta make sure the implementation is happening effectively.” For Faith in Indiana, this involved staying engaged with the development of the office and implementation of the CVI programs, including advocating for additional funding and technical assistance from the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform.

Community advocacy, organizing, and participation have been critical to establishing an OVP/ONS.

OVP/ONS have, at times, been established in jurisdictions that already have relatively comprehensive and experienced ecosystems of CVI programs and organizations. As a rationale for creating an office, OVP/ONS leaders and other stakeholders cited the need to expand, fund, better coordinate, and evaluate the existing CVI programs.

- In St. Louis, Missouri, leaders from the Office of Violence Prevention explained that establishing the OVP was essential to coordinating existing work and consolidating funding support.²⁹
- In 2012, both Stockton and Oakland, California, implemented gun violence reduction strategies and saw

promising results after efforts in the previous decade had been discontinued or failed. In response to concerns about the sustainability of their strategies, both cities created OVP/ONS in the years that followed—2014 and 2017 respectively—to create the long-term infrastructure that was needed to sustain impact. Stakeholders in the two cities were particularly interested in strengthening the aspects of their strategies that were civilian-led—that is, strategies focused on safety planning, supportive services, behavior change, and community empowerment.³⁰

OVP/ONS stakeholders highlighted the need for the offices to be intentional, thoughtful, and collaborative in how they support pre-existing community-based programs, organizations, and leaders.

- Synethia White, director of strategic initiatives with Cities United and former director of the Hampton, Virginia, Office of Youth and Young Adult Opportunities, explained: “[it can be] frustrating if the [violence prevention and intervention] effort is very far along and then you hear someone is brought in [at] the government level to lead it, if there has not been a warm hand-off, or relationship building between those who are respected in leading the work. . . . Just dropping [an OVP/ONS] in, quite honestly, is disrespectful. . . . An easy way to avoid that is making sure the community is engaged in the process.”³¹

Offices should develop concrete strategies and plans and consider a phased approach for expanding their support of, and coordination with, long-standing violence intervention programs through collaborative processes with program staff and stakeholders.

OVP/ONS should clearly define their mission and scope

Government stakeholders who oversee an OVP/ONS, community stakeholders, and office leadership must have a shared understanding of the mission and scope of the office and its “theory of change”—a vision for how the office’s activities will lead to impact.³²

Mission

Most OVP/ONS frame their mission in terms of violence *intervention and prevention*. This framing aligns with a public health approach to addressing violence.³³ For example, in Portland, Oregon, and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, the Offices of Violence Prevention describe their missions and strategies as preventing violence at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.³⁴ “Primary prevention” refers to initiatives intended to stop violence before it occurs, “secondary prevention” refers to immediate responses to violent incidents, and “tertiary prevention” refers to addressing the medium- and long-term effects of violence to prevent further harm and acts of violence.

OVP/ONS typically focus on community violence, which is generally defined as incidents of violence between “unrelated individuals, who may or may not know each other, generally outside the home.”³⁵ The majority of OVP/ONS further focus specifically on gun violence in their mission and apply strategies to intervene in or prevent violence for community members who are at highest risk for engaging in or being the victim of gun violence.

Although many OVP/ONS describe their mission as preventing “violence” or “community violence,” most offices do not explicitly identify specific forms of violence (such as domestic/intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and gender-based violence) other than gun violence as being part of their mission.³⁶ However, there are a few exceptions. For example:

- The Oakland, California, Department of Violence Prevention has “five mandates to reduce gun violence, reduce intimate partner violence, reduce commercial sexual exploitation, reduce trauma associated with unsolved cold cases, and reduce levels of community trauma.”³⁷
- Milwaukee’s Office of Community Safety and Wellness was established in 2008 with a strong focus on addressing

Government and community stakeholders must have a shared understanding of the office’s mission, scope, and theory of change.

domestic and sexual violence.³⁸ Office staff continue to coordinate a commission of government agencies and community leaders working to increase safety for victims and survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.³⁹

A few OVP/ONS are either housed within or collaborate with departments that have a broad focus on expanding civilian-led programs and strategies for community safety, including new 911-dispatched civilian first response programs for behavioral health crisis and other nonviolent, non-criminal calls for service.

- The Albuquerque Community Safety Department oversees non-law enforcement response to 911 calls related to behavioral health, oversees street outreach to people experiencing homelessness, and implements a gun violence reduction program. The Department recently received funding to explore the creation of a dedicated OVP that would sit within the department to further expand, coordinate, and increase the equity of their violence prevention work.⁴⁰

Scope

Offices support violence prevention and intervention by staffing programs in-house; by funding, contracting with, and/or building the capacity of community-based organizations (CBOs); or through a combination of in-house and contracted, CBO-led programs. Offices also commonly support the evaluation of programs and strategies and coordinate data collection, analysis, and reporting.

The scope of strategies and activities varies by office, with the majority of programming focused on secondary intervention and a smaller amount of programming invested in primary and tertiary prevention.

- **Violence intervention** efforts “intervene and prevent the imminent act of violence” or immediately disrupt and reduce recurring interpersonal violence.⁴¹ Effective violence intervention efforts focus on the people who are most likely to be involved in violence. Intervention efforts have the nearest-term impact on violence and generally demonstrate results within one to three years.⁴²
 - Violence intervention programs can include street outreach/violence interrupters, fellowship and life coach models, group violence intervention, and/or hospital-based violence intervention programs.⁴³
 - For example, the Minneapolis Neighborhood Safety Department has a team of violence interrupters who leverage their knowledge and credibility within their local communities to anticipate and deescalate conflicts that could result in serious violence. The interrupters “use informal mediation, non-physical conflict resolution, and interruption expertise to prevent situations from turning violent.”⁴⁴ These staff build relationships in the community, support behavior change, and connect people who may be at risk for violence to resources.⁴⁵
- **Violence prevention** refers to “the elimination or reduction of the underlying causes and risk factors that lead to violence.”⁴⁶ Prevention activities include investing in public services, community development, and youth-specific programming and resources. They also focus on the factors that give rise to violence in a neighborhood, such as poverty and unemployment, a lack of educational opportunities, and blight and neglect.⁴⁷ These types of investments typically demonstrate results in five to 15 years.⁴⁸
 - A small set of offices also implement tertiary prevention strategies to reduce and address the harm caused by violence in order to prevent future violence. The

Baltimore Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, for example, “leads interagency coordination efforts to provide support, resources, and services to victims of violence, rooted in public safety and dignity.”⁴⁹ This includes serving as the point of contact to connect survivors of violence to therapy and services—such as emergency relocation assistance, housing, mental health treatment, and employment services—that promote well-being and address trauma that can lead to re-victimization.⁵⁰

Most offices identify coordination across government agencies and CBOs as a core part of their scope. For many offices, this involves coordination of programmatic activities communitywide or at the neighborhood level and overseeing development and implementation of communitywide violence reduction strategies.

OVP/ONS must be granted significant executive and political authority in line with the broad scope of their mission

There is variation in where offices sit within city or county government and how these different reporting models and structures support OVP/ONS. The majority of OVP/ONS (31) report to mayors or city/county manager’s offices, with a meaningful minority (10) housed in public health or human services departments or new cabinet-level departments or commissioners of community safety (6). One office is housed within a police department.

It is important for offices to have adequate authority within government to effectively coordinate and convene other government agencies, implement strategies and programs, and hold other city agencies and programs accountable for meeting their commitments. OVP/ONS stakeholders highlighted that having the authority to coordinate and convene other government stakeholders is “priceless,” and they recommended that OVP/ONS leaders should “sit at planning tables at [the] same level as police chiefs, directors of public health, school systems, whoever is responsible for contact with young people.”⁵¹

- Leaders from the St. Louis Office of Violence Prevention explained that an important piece of their efficacy is having the political support of the mayor and the city’s public safety director. Director Wilford Pinkney Jr. shared: “I am in every important seminal meeting about public safety in the city. . . . [M]y opinion is sought often and what recommendations I make are most often implemented.”⁵²

Reporting structure can also impact an office’s sustainability through political transitions. Many offices—and associated violence prevention programs—have experienced inconsistent political support, which can hamper their ability to build a comprehensive infrastructure for violence prevention.⁵³ Several offices were established by and sit within a mayor’s or city/county manager’s office. Although this reporting structure may help establish new offices, these offices may be especially susceptible to the instability that can accompany executive and political transitions.

Some OVP/ONS have experienced shifts in their reporting structures since their establishment. These shifts generally reflect changing approaches to collaboration across government or are the result of changes in political leadership.

- The Office of Neighborhood Safety in Rochester, New York, was established in 2021 under the city’s Department of Recreation and Human Services. Following the election of a new mayor in 2022, the office was moved to the mayor’s office, and then it was absorbed into a newly established Office of Violence Prevention.⁵⁴

Changes in reporting structure that reduce the convening power or autonomy of offices and their directors can threaten office effectiveness and sustainability.

- The Office of Violence Prevention in Sacramento, California, was launched under the city manager’s office in 2020, but it was shifted to the police department in August 2022.⁵⁵ Assistant City Manager Mario Lara indicated that the transition was intended to support coordination: “[b]y moving the Office of Violence Prevention over to PD there

can be better coordination on identifying the areas that are in the most need.”⁵⁶ However, in media coverage of this transition, violence prevention service providers and activists said that any perception that they work with police could undermine their ability to reach young people in precarious positions.⁵⁷

In some cities, OVP/ONS were initially established within existing departments of health or other social services. But as local commitment to new approaches to public safety grew, and as infrastructure and investment followed, some jurisdictions went on to establish new, civilian-led departments of public safety and relocated the OVP/ONS to become a central office within these. For example:

- The Neighborhood Safety Department in Minneapolis, Minnesota, was established as an office within the health department in 2018 and was shifted to the purview of the newly appointed community safety commissioner and new Office of Community Safety in 2022.⁵⁸
- The Violence Intervention Program in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was initially housed in the Department of Family and Community Services, but it was moved to a new Albuquerque Community Safety (ACS) department in 2022.⁵⁹ The ACS was launched in fall 2021 and also operates 911-dispatched, civilian-staffed first responder teams for issues relating to mental health, substance use, and homelessness.⁶⁰ ACS is a cabinet-level public safety department that operates “independently from and in collaboration” with the city’s police and fire departments.⁶¹

OVP/ONS should be adequately resourced and staffed to deliver on their missions

The size and operations of OVP/ONS vary significantly across the county, based on the size and budgets of the jurisdictions each office serves, its mission and scope, and whether it is structured to staff programs in-house or through contracting with and/or building the capacity of CBOs.

Offices range from those with a staff of one or two—like Mecklenburg County’s Office of Violence Prevention, which was established with a staff of one and an annual budget of \$400,000—to larger offices with in-house programs, like Washington, DC’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, which has 105 staff and an annual budget of \$36.5 million.⁶²

A robust and collaboratively developed scope and theory of change should provide the foundation for building office staffing, operations, and resourcing. Office leaders should ensure that government stakeholders understand what resources the office needs to carry out its work so that budgeting, strategic planning, and staffing needs are anticipated and do not require ongoing and ad hoc advocacy.

Funding

Many office leaders and advocates shared concerns about the mismatch between the broad scope of these offices and the resources they are provided. In many cities, the budget of a local OVP/ONS is less than 5 percent of the budget allocated to the local police department.⁶³ Many offices are not provided with adequate resources to carry out their missions.

The majority of offices are funded through a mix of city general funds, grants, and federal funds. Smaller offices (such as those in Atlanta and Mecklenburg County) have annual budgets in the \$200,000 to \$400,000 range, while larger offices’ budgets range from \$2 million to \$75 million.⁶⁴

For many jurisdictions, one-time federal funding, including via the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), has been crucial to build or expand an office.

- The Baltimore Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement received \$50 million in ARPA funds over three years to fund and expand the city’s community violence intervention ecosystem and violence prevention efforts, including victim services, reentry services, and community healing.⁶⁵

- In Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention funding has helped insulate certain staff positions from the unpredictability of yearly city budgeting.⁶⁶

Although large-scale, one-time funds (also known as surge funds) can seed the ground for more sustainable city investment, many stakeholders shared fears and uncertainty about the status of offices and programs after the “ARPA cliff,” as this source of federal funding dissipates.

In Indianapolis, the city’s three-year anti-violence strategy launched in 2021 was funded through \$150 million in ARPA funds, including \$37.5 million allocated to the city’s Office of Public Health and Safety.⁶⁷ For the first time in its 2024 budget, the city has made the anti-violence strategy a permanent fixture in its annual budget, funding the city’s office, the street outreach and life-coaching Indy Peace Fellowship program, and increasing annual funding for violence reduction grants.⁶⁸

Some jurisdictions have been able to establish or support an OVP/ONS by designating a proportion of their local police department funding to the office.

- Newark’s Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery was established using funds reallocated from the city’s police department. Through city legislation, the office now receives 5 percent of the annual police budget.⁶⁹

The Coalition to Advance Public Safety’s CVI Ecosystem resource includes estimated annual budgets to implement a comprehensive CVI ecosystem for 50 cities with high homicide rates, including costs for OVP/ONS and CVI staff, wraparound support services, staff training, and data and evaluation.⁷⁰ The estimated annual costs range from \$8.4 million for a smaller city like Toledo, Ohio, to \$142 million for the city of Los Angeles.⁷¹ While the coalition’s budget projections for robust CVI infrastructure are consistently higher than existing city investment in OVP/ONS, they are markedly lower than existing local investments in law enforcement. For example, the actual budgets of the Toledo and Los Angeles

police departments are more than \$89 million and \$1.8 billion, respectively.⁷²

Staffing

Adequate staffing is crucial to ensure these offices can carry out their mission and maintain relationships with and be accountable to community and government stakeholders. This requires identifying the staff roles needed in-house that are aligned with the office's mission and scope.⁷³

- Synethia White from Cities United explained how, in the past, OVP/ONS may have prioritized keeping the overhead costs of the office low at the expense of building a sustainable and impactful office:

[T]rends change, so when I started as an OVP director the trend was to have low overhead and put more resources into the community because that's where it needs to be. And in theory it sounds good, right? But in practice, if you are filling up a bucket of water and the holes in it are no sustainability planning, no accounting practices, no training, but the main bucket has a really good heart and really good intentions . . . those holes—you're never going to fill up that bucket. And then when it's time for reporting, you often lack the data and information that you need to show why the efforts still need to be invested in and should still continue.⁷⁴

For example, OVP/ONS should have staff to manage the administrative, financial, and compliance-related functions of grantmaking and funding of CBOs. Many OVP/ONS stakeholders explained how important it is for offices to efficiently administer contracts and disperse grant funds, as delays in payments can be extremely challenging for smaller CBOs with limited resources and can affect their ability to operate programs and retain staff.

- Leaders from the St. Louis Office of Violence Prevention shared that they planned to bolster the capacity of their office by hiring additional staff to focus on administering grants and contracts, as well as on compliance and data reporting.⁷⁵

Some functions do not need to be staffed in-house and may be served through collaboration with other government agencies or CBO partners. Examples include developing government–academic partnerships for research and evaluation, or contracting with a CBO to lead community engagement activities. These strategies may also be useful for offices that encounter challenges with the processes and policies for hiring government employees (such as barriers to hiring people with conviction histories) and the slow timelines of government hiring processes.

Community engagement

Offices should also have sufficient resources for robust community engagement. Community engagement refers to strategies that connect the office specifically with people impacted by community violence and ensure these relationships inform the office’s planning, strategy, and operations. Effective community engagement not only uplifts community expertise, but it also increases CBOs’ access to government decision-makers and provides a mechanism to hold offices accountable to equity goals.⁷⁶ OVP/ONS need resources to deliver on this priority, such as dedicated community engagement staff, the convening of community advisory boards, and the creation of public reporting processes to ensure accountability and transparency to the community.

- Los Angeles County’s Office of Violence Prevention has staff specifically dedicated to community education and engagement, who support communitywide planning and oversight through multiple channels. The office convenes an advisory board whose members include survivors of gun violence. In 2019, the office also established a Community Partnership Council to guide its early strategic planning and implementation. In November 2021, the OVP partnered with six CBOs to create seven Regional Violence Prevention Coalitions throughout Los Angeles County.⁷⁷

Summary of recommendations for office creation, scope, and structure

1. Establishing an effective OVP/ONS requires robust engagement with government and community leaders

- Local government leaders (such as mayors, city/county managers, city council/county legislators) should prioritize robust and broad community and government stakeholder planning processes to establish OVP/ONS and to scope their work.
- OVP/ONS leaders (office directors) should work with community leaders to plan and implement clear strategies to support, coordinate, and enhance violence prevention and intervention programs and efforts, including those that preceded the establishment of the office.

2. OVP/ONS should clearly define their mission and scope

- OVP/ONS leaders should work with community and government stakeholders to clearly define and communicate the office's mission, scope, and theory of change.

3. OVP/ONS must be granted significant executive and political authority in line with the broad scope of their mission

- Local government leaders should endow OVP/ONS leadership with executive-level authority and situate offices to ensure their durability through political transitions.

4. OVP/ONS should be adequately resourced and staffed to deliver on their missions

- Local government leaders should legislate sustainable funding for OVP/ONS and consider the scope of investment relative to funding for policing and other public safety departments.

- OVP/ONS leaders must ensure local government leaders have a shared understanding of the resources the office needs to carry out its work so that the budgeting and staffing do not occur in an ad hoc manner.

COORDINATING GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The need for better coordination of the organizations, programs, and stakeholders working on violence prevention and intervention serves as the rationale for creating many OVP/ONS. As Courtney Scott, assistant chief administrative officer in the Office of the Mayor-President of Baton Rouge, shared: “There’s something that people say, [which] is that we do not have a shortage of solutions. We have a shortage or a deficit around coordination.”⁷⁸

A key function of OVP/ONS should be to convene and coordinate government and community stakeholders involved in violence prevention and intervention efforts. Coordination may reduce silos, increase collaboration, contribute to more comprehensive and effective strategic planning, and strengthen a community’s ecosystem of violence prevention and intervention efforts, which increases efficacy and sustainability.

OVP/ONS stakeholders highlighted different aspects of coordination, including inter-agency and community coordination, data- and community-informed strategy development and implementation, and methods to fund and strengthen CBOs’ organizational capacities. The University of Pennsylvania Crime and Justice Policy Lab and the California Partnership for Safe Communities similarly note that violence reduction leaders need strong management skills and processes for multi-agency and stakeholder coordination.⁷⁹

OVP/ONS should lead inter-agency coordination that encourages a “whole-of-government” approach to violence prevention and intervention

Building a comprehensive public safety ecosystem requires the input of a range of government and institutional partners, in addition to the frontline staff who lead community-based violence intervention and prevention efforts.

A “whole-of-government” approach is one that includes a wider range of departments and agencies than those specifically tasked with community violence policy and implementation. Marcus Ellis, former chief of staff for Washington, DC’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (ONSE), described the importance of the approach in encouraging engagement and accountability across government partners. Ellis shared that:

[T]he approach we’ve had to take is making sure that all of our government agencies know that they have a role in violence prevention [Y]ou think about the Department of Motor Vehicles for example, nothing about their mission is gonna have violence prevention in it. . . . [B]ut when you build out a true ecosystem and you have a mayor that makes sure that everybody has a piece of this pie, you start to see . . . why someone with a violent offense [who] is coming home from being incarcerated needs the DMV in so many ways . . . because of the many things you can’t do without a driver’s license, and the many things you can’t do if, before you went in, you had a ton of tickets It’s like wow, DMV, guess what you have a role in violence prevention.⁸⁰

In Baton Rouge, the mayor established the Safe Hopeful Healthy BR initiative to strengthen coordination, capacity, and partnerships to address the root causes of violence.⁸¹ It is a part of a broader mayoral initiative to create community safety, though it is not yet established as its own office or department. The initiative’s leaders, Courtney Scott and Jazzika Matthews, highlighted the wide range of government stakeholders and institutional partners they collaborate with under the banner of violence prevention and intervention, including health care and hospitals, public

schools, the department of public works, office of community development, the district attorney, and law enforcement.⁸² The initiative recognizes that “law enforcement cannot deliver public safety on their own,” and that a broad range of partners is critical to the success of the initiative’s community-based programs and initiatives.⁸³

OVP/ONS should coordinate comprehensive and data-informed planning and implementation

Communities need comprehensive strategic plans to guide and sustain their violence prevention and intervention programs and initiatives. OVP/ONS are uniquely situated to support such a planning process—facilitating community input and oversight and convening the many government agencies and other stakeholders needed.

Strategic plans should be informed by a comprehensive assessment of risk factors and causes of violence in the local community. This could include, for example, analysis of the frequency of gun incidents in specific contexts (such as intimate partner violence, family violence, or group conflict).⁸⁴ A comprehensive assessment should also consider the social and structural factors associated with violence at the neighborhood and community level (for example, levels of school funding, racial segregation, and food insecurity).⁸⁵ Offices should include qualitative data—namely, the experiences of individual people and organizations directly impacted by violence and working to reduce it—in addition to quantitative, administrative data on violent incidents. Offices can use these different forms of data to identify how to allocate resources and focus interventions and to establish a foundation for using data to refine strategy and implementation.

A range of government and community partners should collaboratively develop strategic plans, and they should identify the partners who are accountable for implementing different parts of these plans. Having many contributors, developers, and accountable stakeholders for a strategic plan can help sustain its implementation, including through political shifts.⁸⁶

PROMISING PRACTICE

OVP/ONS can convene and coordinate community and government stakeholders to develop comprehensive strategic plans for violence prevention and intervention

The ONS in St. Paul, Minnesota, is charged with overseeing development and implementation of a strategic plan to prevent and interrupt community violence. It also oversees the investment of funds to support this work. In delivering on these goals, it works closely with the Department of Safety and Inspections, the city’s police and fire departments, other agencies, and local CBOs.⁸⁷

Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, drew on the input of more than 400 community members—collected through surveys, focus groups, listening sessions, and interviews—to develop a five-year strategic plan on community violence prevention and intervention.⁸⁸ The plan includes 20 strategies across five areas of focus: community engagement and partnerships, support for families and youth, economic opportunity, intergovernmental collaboration, and safer and healthier neighborhoods.

Strategic plans should be actionable and provide a roadmap for implementation. Strategic planning phases should lead into implementation phases, and implementation should be continuously informed by data to monitor and troubleshoot progress toward the plan’s goals.

- As Teferi Brent, a community leader and advocate based in Detroit, emphasized when reflecting on a proposal for a community-wide assessment of risk factors and causes of violence: “I’m all for assessments as long as there is some remedy attached to it to address the issues identified by the assessment . . . as long as there is a commitment to craft policy around the assessment and the outcomes and the action items borne out of the assessment. Those are the things that matter.”⁸⁹

- In 2017, Milwaukee’s Office of Community Safety and Wellness launched its Blueprint for Peace—the city’s first comprehensive strategic plan to prevent multiple forms of violence—after a 10-month planning process that synthesized input from more than 1,500 community members, including hundreds of young people.⁹⁰ The Blueprint was framed as a “living document for action” and outlined structures to support the plan’s implementation, such as a multisector steering council, along with immediate priorities and first year milestones.⁹¹
- In 2021, Baltimore began implementing its five-year strategic plan on violence prevention. The 2020 city ordinance that initiated the plan emphasized the need for community involvement and data, tasking the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement with refreshing the plan “every two years based on outputs, outcomes, and community feedback.”⁹²

OVP/ONS efforts to develop and implement comprehensive strategic plans must be thoughtful and collaborative in including the community-based programs, organizations, and leaders that preceded the office. (See “Office creation, scope, and structure” on page 13.)

OVP/ONS should fund and support CBO and community-led efforts in equitable and strategic ways

Although some OVP/ONS operate violence prevention and intervention programs and employ frontline staff in-house, many offices contract with and fund CBOs that operate such programs.

OVP/ONS should fund and support CBOs and community-led initiatives in intentional, equitable, and strategic ways. Many stakeholders emphasized the critical importance of funding grassroots groups and targeting investments to communities that are most impacted by violence. Dante Johnson, the director of community safety initiatives with Baltimore’s Living Classrooms Foundation, advocated for “funding opportunities to be given to grassroots organizations who’ve proven themselves regardless of stature, but if they’re actually doing the work, and giving them

the opportunity to build their capacities.”⁹³ Prioritizing funding for grassroots work that is embedded in the local community generates more equitable strategies, greater attunement to community needs, and a more innovative and diverse set of approaches. These investments also must align with the office’s mission, scope, and theory of change.

PROMISING PRACTICE

OVP/ONS can facilitate processes to include directly impacted community members in funding decisions.

St. Paul’s ONS established a Neighborhood Safety Community Council to guide the office’s strategy and activities, including grant-making decisions. Director Brooke Blakey shared that the community council is made up of people “with lived experiences. So, those that have experienced gun violence; [such as] mothers or fathers that have lost people to gun violence.”⁹⁴

Multiple OVP/ONS leaders shared that their offices face challenges in dispersing funds due to government bureaucracy and a lack of urgency from government leadership. These barriers can hinder the implementation and sustainability of community-led strategies and programs. As summarized by Arnitta Holliman, former director of Milwaukee’s OVP: “[W]hen people [in] the community [do] not have the necessary resources to do what they do [. . .] it gets in the way of people’s lives being saved.”⁹⁵

These challenges may reflect a lack of political support for the office or a lack of government infrastructure to fund smaller organizations and community-led work. The former coordinator of the ONS in Rochester noted that the city charter “doesn’t allow it to give funds directly to individuals . . . so it leaves a lot of red tape when . . . there’s a need right away.”⁹⁶ Similarly, small CBOs may struggle to provide services under reimbursement-based contracts, which require organizations to front the funds for some period of time. These CBOs need other funding mechanisms so they can pay their staff and operate their programs more sustainably.

In addition to funding CBOs and community-led efforts, OVP/ONS can help build the organizational capacity and sustainability of CBOs, offering support related to fundraising, budgeting, and other financial management functions, as well as communications or data collection and reporting.

In many places, CBOs—including those that have very experienced staff and strong community relationships—may have gaps in their organizational capacity. They may not be established as 501(c)(3) organizations and thus can't directly receive grant funding, and they may have limited capacity for other organizational functions, including communications or data collection and reporting. The lack of organizational capacity among CBOs is a symptom of systemic and longstanding underfunding of Black and Latinx-led violence prevention and intervention efforts and community needs.⁹⁷ As Alia Harvey-Quinn from FORCE Detroit explained, “we’ve had activists on the ground that have been doing hardcore work for decades, unappreciated, unacknowledged, unseen, and funding it out of their pockets.”⁹⁸

OVP/ONS can meet the capacity needs of these CBOs by providing direct operational support or offering training and technical assistance. In places where community organizations and leaders predate OVP/ONS, offices must first engage with and learn from the existing CBOs to see where they can best provide support.

One important way in which OVP/ONS can directly assist CBOs is by supporting program reporting and compliance. OVP/ONS can directly assist with CBO data collection by providing standardized software that tracks program activities and outcomes and designating OVP/ONS staff to provide technical support for data collection and analysis. This can reduce the administrative burden on CBOs and increase standardization of data collection and analysis across organizations. Doing so can help ensure CBOs are collecting data in ways that meet their reporting requirements, promote public transparency, and allow for ongoing evaluation of program impacts.

PROMISING PRACTICE

OVP/ONS can provide training and technical assistance to build long-term organizational capacities for CBOs, focusing on functions such as budgeting, grant writing and fundraising, program evaluation, and communications.

In Minneapolis, the Neighborhood Safety Department runs a program, the Blueprint Approved Institute, that is designed to strengthen CBOs' organizational capacity. Working with a cohort of community leaders and organizations every year, the department focuses on smaller, grassroots organizations with annual operating budgets of \$100,000 or less that would benefit from the institute's assistance. Interim Director Josh Peterson describes the process: "[W]e work . . . on things like communications, evaluation planning, how to become a 501(c)(3), how to build a website, all of those things that organizations may need to position themselves to get . . . funding. So a key piece of what we do is really that investment in the long-term capacity for those organizations."⁹⁹

OVP/ONS should regularly convene government and community partners involved in implementing programs and interventions

OVP/ONS should convene and coordinate government and community partners to enhance the collective impact of a violence prevention and intervention strategy. Coordination should clarify roles and the division of responsibilities and create a shared understanding of the strategic goals of each intervention and how the interventions reinforce each other. Coordination should facilitate sharing of data, information, and experiences of organizational partners and community members closest to the issue. Doing so can inform strategy and operations and identify gaps, needs, and opportunities.

Coordination is crucial to building what Lakeesha Eure, director of Newark’s Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery, calls a “shared village model” in which “everyone knows their lane.”¹⁰⁰ As Eure shared: “Once you start crisscrossing into everyone else’s place, then we have chaos. And so, we are always asking people, “Do you know where you fit in the ecosystem?” and if you don’t know where you fit, then that’s a problem. . . . [S]o we’re really intentional around folks creating the least amount of chaos.”¹⁰¹

PROMISING PRACTICE

OVP/ONS can regularly convene and coordinate government and community partners involved in implementing programs and interventions.

Newark’s Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery manages the Brick City Peace Collective, a collaborative of “grassroots organizations, service providers, and city departments including law enforcement to promote effective collaboration, inform strategy development and implementation, and coordinate resource deployment.”¹⁰² Director Eure explained some of the benefits of the collective’s efforts to convene the multiple CBOs and government partners. These include:

- more efficient and effective delivery of programs and interventions;
- better understanding the capacity and resource gaps that persist in specific neighborhoods or communities; and
- more effectively supporting CBOs to advocate for and access funding.¹⁰³

Newark is also using cross-sector coordination to strengthen its strategic use of data. The Newark Public Safety Collaborative (NPSC), formed in 2018 through Rutgers University, School of Criminal Justice, is a key partner in making data accessible to the city’s Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery, Brick City Peace

Collective, and associated government and community partners.¹⁰⁴ NPSC partners meet regularly to review and interpret data and receive regular citywide and ward-specific data updates. Alex Santana, NPSC director, explained that the democratization of data and analysis is “the cornerstone of what we do,” and Eure highlighted that the “data informs your strategy,” such as where to allocate resources and what types of strategies and interventions to deploy.¹⁰⁵

In Baton Rouge, the Safe Hopeful Healthy BR initiative’s coordination efforts have helped develop the city’s interventions and programs. Since 2022, the initiative has convened monthly meetings for local public safety stakeholders. These are open to “community organizations and individuals interested in reducing gun violence and addressing challenges in [B]lack and brown neighborhoods.”¹⁰⁶ The meetings include organization spotlights, asset mapping, roundtable discussions, and working group sessions. In addition, the initiative runs a series of community meetings, panels, and events to provide community members who are most impacted by violence with opportunities to share their input.¹⁰⁷

Summary of recommendations for coordinating government and community partners

1. OVP/ONS should lead inter-agency coordination that encourages a “whole-of-government” approach to violence prevention and intervention.

Local government leaders should ensure OVP/ONS have the political authorization to effectively coordinate government partners.

2. OVP/ONS should coordinate comprehensive and data-informed planning and implementation.

OVP/ONS should:

- develop comprehensive strategic plans in collaboration with government and community partners;
- use data to inform how to allocate resources and focus interventions; and
- support continuous cycles of actionable planning and implementation.

3. OVP/ONS should fund and support CBO and community-led initiatives in equitable and strategic ways.

OVP/ONS should:

- invest in CBOs and initiatives that are aligned with the office and community's strategy and priorities;
- fund grassroots groups and communities that are most impacted by violence;
- involve directly impacted community stakeholders in funding processes and decisions; and
- provide and/or coordinate operational support and capacity building to CBOs.

Local government leaders should support OVP/ONS leaders in improving and expediting processes to fund CBOs and community-led initiatives in a timely fashion.

4. OVP/ONS should regularly convene government and community partners involved in implementing programs and interventions.

OVP/ONS should:

- clarify roles and division of responsibilities and

- facilitate sharing of data and information to help develop strategy, program operations, and identification of gaps, needs, and opportunities.

Local government leaders should ensure OVP/ONS have adequate resources and authority to effectively convene and coordinate government and community partners.

Local government leaders should invest in building the stakeholder management and coordination capacity of OVP/ONS leaders and staff.

MEASURING AND MESSAGING SUCCESS

Defining, tracking, and communicating about success is essential for OVP/ONS efficacy and sustainability.

Offices should work with government and community stakeholders to proactively define how OVP/ONS will measure success. These efforts can inform local narratives around violence prevention and intervention and the value of non-punitive strategies in delivering safety. Offices that effectively define measures of success and communicate about their impact may realize greater community buy-in and stakeholder support and be less vulnerable to political transitions. Offices should coordinate data tracking that is aligned with their goals and that can inform program planning and implementation.

OVP/ONS should work with government and community stakeholders to define how they will measure success

OVP/ONS—and associated CBOs and government stakeholders—often work in highly politicized environments, which can generate unrealistic expectations around the scope or timeline for success. Offices are often presumed to be solely responsible for resolving longstanding issues of community violence despite their generally small budgets and the need for a wider range of government offices to support these efforts. In a number of places, office directors

have transitioned out of their roles after becoming political scapegoats for spikes in gun violence, and violence prevention and intervention efforts have stalled or been scrapped.¹⁰⁸

As one OVP/ONS leader explained:

Unfortunately, the citizens and politics don't have patience for the time that it takes to undo the cycle of violence that we're in. Folks just want a quick fix and there's no magic bullet, there's no pill that a city can take to cure itself of this. It really is a long-term investment and you got to stay with it, even when it doesn't feel like there's progress being made.¹⁰⁹

To be responsive to this context, OVP/ONS should establish clear and reasonable expectations about definitions of success with community and government stakeholders at an early stage of office planning. They should also proactively ensure alignment during political milestones, such as administration transitions or high-profile incidents of violence.

The OVP/ONS stakeholders whom Vera interviewed emphasized the value of defining and communicating timelines for measuring activities, outcomes, and impacts. Teferi Brent, a community leader and advocate based in Detroit, emphasized that it can take multiple years to demonstrate individual-level and communitywide change:

You got to constantly build relationships in these communities. So, two years is really not enough time [to demonstrate success] considering what [government funders and other stakeholders] want to measure. However, we're trying push them to measure some other things that can contribute to the effectiveness of CVI work, right?¹¹⁰

OVP/ONS should establish clear and reasonable expectations about definitions of success with community and government stakeholders at an early stage of office planning.

PROMISING PRACTICE

OVP/ONS can define process and outcome measures for short- and long-term goals.

On its website, the Washington, DC, Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement says that it can take “years of relentless community work before we begin to reap the benefits of prevention and intervention investments.”¹¹¹ The office outlines process and outcome measures for shorter-term goals (such as building relationships and negotiating ceasefires and mediations) and longer-term goals (such as sustained reductions in shootings and homicides).

In Baltimore, the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement also outlined a range of goals for the city’s CVI strategy.¹¹² Near-term goals included finalizing contracts for the next year, developing training opportunities, and releasing a standard operations manual for all the organizations that were contracted to implement the Safe Streets CVI program. Longer-term goals included using data to identify where additional partners and intervention programs are needed across the city, establishing school-based intervention programs, and developing five-year career pathways for frontline CVI workers.

Mecklenburg County’s strategic plan outlines five-year goals and targets to reduce community violence. County stakeholders note that the plan includes activities, strategies, and goals for which the OVP is not solely responsible.¹¹³ Successfully tracking and achieving these will therefore require collaboration from other government and community partners.

The community stakeholders Vera interviewed highlighted the importance for measures of success to be informed by their expertise:

- Leadership and staff from Youth ALIVE! in Oakland, California, suggested that offices should use measurements

and definitions of success that are meaningful to program staff and participants and are not solely focused on quick fixes or the easier-to-quantify incidents of violence: “We have deliverables that contribute to the larger goals [of reductions in violence]. . . . You know, we got an individual into counseling, they weren’t going to school before and now they’re going two times a week . . . that’s success, that’s gradual and [that’s contributing to] longer term success.”¹¹⁴

- Alia Harvey-Quinn, executive director of FORCE Detroit, also recommended that definitions of and processes for tracking measures of success must be checked for bias.¹¹⁵ The Local Initiatives Support Corporation also emphasizes this point: “[E]valuators of CVI programs must have cultural awareness and humility to understand how to evaluate violence intervention efforts. . . . Academic research has yet to fully conceptualize or fairly and adequately assess community violence and intervention programs.”¹¹⁶

OVP/ONS should track data and build capacity for community-wide planning, reporting, and evaluation

Many communities do not have the capacity to track the data needed for program planning, reporting, and impact evaluation. Tracking data and building data capacity should therefore be a core OVP/ONS function.

Alia Harvey-Quinn, executive director of FORCE Detroit, emphasized the need to evaluate violence prevention and intervention efforts as a duty to the communities most impacted by violence:

We owe it to ourselves to be rigorous and to be thinking about how we’re designing programs such that they are really, really substantial programs. . . . [T]hinking about [the] communities that are hit by cycles of violence . . . and in the very honorable, liberatory history of Black and brown people in America, right? We owe it to that history if we’re going to now be paid for liberatory work. Where we feed our families off of work that

our people bled and died for. Because we are simultaneously decreasing death and decreasing incarceration rates. So we owe it to our people to evaluate our work, and not get caught up in ego, and make sure that we are delivering the best possible outcomes that we can for community.¹¹⁷

Offices can track the processes and activities that contribute to longer-term outcomes, including grant-making and program implementation across the community. As noted, they should also track the types of data and measures of success that are meaningful to community and government stakeholders.

In practice, local offices may not yet have the resources needed to support data tracking and may need to invest in capacity building—both internally and in the CBOs they work with. (See “OVP/ONS should be adequately staffed and resourced to deliver on their missions” on page 24 and “OVP/ONS should fund and support CBOs and community-led efforts in equitable and strategic ways” on page 34.) However, many offices and stakeholders shared promising practices that, if adequately resourced, can be implemented and scaled.

PROMISING PRACTICES

OVP/ONS can measure the degrees of coordination and collaboration across government and community partnerships

Mecklenburg County’s strategic plan attaches metrics to each of its key performance indicators across its areas of focus, including community engagement and intergovernmental collaboration. For example, the plan aims to “[e]stablish shared decision-making framework with community leaders.”¹¹⁸ One metric to track this strategy is the number of program and policy recommendations identified through community engagement activities. The plan also seeks to “[m]aintain infrastructure for on-going intergovernmental collaboration,” and one metric to track this strategy is the number and type of agencies from

diverse sectors represented in collaborative workgroups.¹¹⁹

In St. Louis, one of the OVP's goals is to increase coordination and collaboration and reduce silos across city agencies, CBOs, and programs. Staff noted, however, that progress toward these goals is challenging to track. One way the office is thinking about measuring coordination is by tracking referrals and follow-ups between different programs and services.¹²⁰ For example, if a CBO that focuses on violence intervention is able to refer more participants to services such as housing, employment, or financial supports (either within the same CBO or to another CBO or agency), this could indicate less fragmentation and more coordination across programs and services. To this end, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation's recommends tracking the "effectiveness of partner referrals, including the number, type, and outcomes of the referrals."¹²¹

OVP/ONS can strengthen inter-agency and cross-sector data sharing by forming dedicated working groups and convening key data stakeholders

Multiple local government and non-government agencies across Mecklenburg County and the city of Charlotte (North Carolina), including the county's Office of Violence Prevention, formed the Violence Prevention Data Collaborative in 2020 to combine and share data related to community violence.¹²² The Data Collaborative supports infrastructure and develops data products, such as a Community Violence Data Dashboard and an "integrated data trust" that houses and links data across many sectors.¹²³ Members of the Data Collaborative have also emphasized that there are a range of organizational, technological, legal, and governance barriers to—and facilitators for—sharing cross-sector data.¹²⁴ The OVP/ONS data staff and collaborators Vera interviewed similarly noted challenges in setting up data-sharing agreements among government agencies and sectors.¹²⁵

OVP/ONS can collaborate with CBOs and programs from across the community to align processes for data tracking

In Baton Rouge, the city’s Safe Hopeful Healthy BR initiative partners with a local data organization to support data collection, reporting, and analysis. The data partner works with CBOs and programs to set up metrics and processes for data collection, and it is transitioning from paper-based data collection to an electronic system. Jazzika Matthews from Safe Hopeful Healthy BR explained that it is an ongoing, iterative process for their data partner and CBOs to troubleshoot “what needs to be measured” and how to best implement the process and systems.¹²⁶

OVP/ONS should regularly share data and proactively inform messaging around violence, prevention, and intervention

Local offices should communicate data in ways that are useful to government stakeholders, CBOs, and the broader public. Given the highly politicized environment surrounding community violence, OVP/ONS should support strategic and proactive messaging to inform the public about violence prevention and intervention efforts and help relevant stakeholders and the broader public understand the activities, programs, and expected timelines for impact.

OVP/ONS should communicate that violence prevention and violence intervention are separate but complementary strategies with different timelines for impact. They should also track and communicate whether specific strategies and programs are adequately funded. This will help to set and maintain reasonable expectations for violence prevention and intervention efforts operated by CBOs, OVP/ONS, and other government agencies.¹²⁷

OVP/ONS should also work with local government leadership to plan for rapid response communications—contextualizing high-profile incidents of violence, for example. This requires the office to have communications resources available when needed and to

establish mechanisms to maintain messaging that is aligned with other government officials. For example, Newark Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery Director Lakeesha Eure meets with the mayor weekly to share updated data and metrics and, in collaboration with staff and community partners, provide context and interpretations for why different metrics may be higher or lower across different time frames or geographic areas.¹²⁸

PROMISING PRACTICE

OVP/ONS can use qualitative data to humanize and contextualize community violence intervention and prevention efforts.

The Los Angeles County Office of Violence Prevention created a storytelling project, Violence, Hope and Healing, to document and share the experiences of 100 county residents who were affected by violence. Some of the goals of the county’s storytelling project were to “add a human element and context to data about violence,” lift up “the voices of survivors and individuals most directly impacted by violence and racism,” and “better understand where systems had helped or failed the participants; and to determine if there had been missed opportunities to intervene earlier and more effectively.”¹²⁹ For Los Angeles County, the storytelling project is an example of one of the office’s key priorities: to “shift the public narrative by centering survivor voice and the core message that violence is preventable, as well as increasing awareness of the root causes of violence and elevating solutions to violence.”¹³⁰

Other OVP/ONS stakeholders Vera interviewed also offered strategies for—and highlighted the benefits of—sharing data and information more widely and more regularly through a variety of community forums.

- Lindsay Brown, management analyst with the City of Stockton’s Office of Violence Prevention in California, noted that “Previously, data and outcomes were not being shared externally from our Peacekeeper teams. So, we started

doing community forums to share back with the city, called “OVP Data Café.” We go out on a quarterly basis . . . to all the city community centers and present data to the public. People were mind-blown because they had no idea about the complexity [of the work] that [Peacekeeper] staff do.”¹³¹

- Mo Farrell, deputy director with St. Louis Office of Violence Prevention, explained that assessing the effectiveness of their programs and reporting data to the public “is how we’re going to be holding ourselves accountable to the work that we’re doing.”¹³² The St. Louis OVP has presented Cure Violence program data to the city’s legislature and public safety committees and publicly releases monthly summaries of data and metrics on case management, community outreach, and mediated conflicts.¹³³ The monthly reports also include an explanation of how the program defines and tracks incidents of violence intervention, and their resolution (for example, whether the conflict was interrupted and resolved, and what resources and referrals were provided).
- Similarly, Albuquerque Community Safety produces and publishes monthly reports on its Violence Intervention Program with summaries of participant engagement rates, referrals, and ongoing success rates for participants.¹³⁴ In its June 2022 cumulative report, the program also shared stories of participants who “exited a life of violence,” highlighting their personal experiences and the value of the services that program staff provided.¹³⁵
- In line with its commitment to transparency and its strategic plan promising to “identify, track, and share key performance metrics,” the Baltimore Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement also shares monthly, quarterly, and annual updates on the city’s violence prevention and intervention efforts.¹³⁶

Summary of recommendations for measuring and messaging success

1. **OVP/ONS should work with government and community stakeholders to define how they will measure success.**

OVP/ONS should establish clear and reasonable expectations about measures of success at an early stage of office planning and proactively ensure alignment during political milestones, such as administration transitions or high-profile incidents of violence.

OVP/ONS should:

- include community stakeholders in the process of defining success;
- define and/or clarify theories of change (how the office intends interventions to work), and ensure that theories of change correspond to the office's scope and resourcing;
- set reasonable expectations for the timeline for activities, outcomes, and impacts of the office; and
- develop agreement on metrics to track implementation, outcomes, and impacts.

2. **OVP/ONS should track data and build capacity for community-wide planning, reporting, and evaluation.**

OVP/ONS should:

- collect and report data from CBOs and programs from across the community;
- support and strengthen each CBO's capacity to track data; and
- build internal capacity or work with external research partners to evaluate OVP/ONS efforts.

Local government leaders should:

- ensure OVP/ONS have adequate staff and resources

to track data and build capacity for community-wide planning, reporting, and evaluation.

3. OVP/ONS should regularly share data and proactively inform messaging around violence, prevention, and intervention.

OVP/ONS should:

- support strategic messaging to inform public narratives around violence prevention and intervention;
- help relevant stakeholders and the broader public understand violence prevention and intervention activities, programs, activities, and expected timelines for impact;
- work with local government leadership to anticipate and plan for rapid response communications; and
- share data and information about violence prevention and intervention efforts widely and regularly through a variety of community forums.

Conclusion

Thanks to years of tireless and committed work by community advocates and organizers, ever increasing numbers of people—including many government leaders—now understand that the best solutions to community violence do not lie in punitive responses led by law enforcement and the criminal legal system. The best solutions spring from a deep understanding of a community's needs; use data to guide strategies and programs; and provide holistic, trauma-informed interventions with the people who are most at risk of violence while tackling the root causes of violence.

Vera's research shows that building centralized OVP/ONS is a

promising approach for cities and counties looking to apply these lessons and to implement comprehensive, coordinated, and data-informed strategies to address violence and produce public safety. When they are effectively resourced, structured, and authorized, local OVP/ONS can support and lead a coordinated public safety ecosystem that empowers civilian government and community-based personnel and resources, rather than law enforcement, as the hub of public safety. With OVP/ONS as the heart of a much-needed “whole-of-government” approach, local governments can maximize solutions grounded in community well-being and minimize overreliance on policing.

Informed by the experiences of office leaders and staff, community-based organizations, community advocates, and training and technical assistance providers, this report offers a set of promising practices and recommendations. Vera hopes that more cities and counties will heed this call and establish OVP/ONS or increase resourcing and support to those already in place. At the same time, Vera recognizes that the approach described in this report presents a significant departure from “business-as-usual” for many jurisdictions. Most notably, offices must partner with and include directly impacted community stakeholders and organizations in each stage of planning and delivery—itsself a substantial change in operations for many government agencies. This report shows that, with commitment and intentionality, doing so is not only possible—it is vital.

As the national network of offices continues to grow, opportunities for learning and sharing will also increase. By working and evolving together, these offices have the potential to establish a radically new model for governments seeking to interrupt and prevent violence—building safer, healthier communities and fundamentally redefining public safety.

Offices have the potential to establish a radically new model for governments seeking to interrupt and prevent violence—building safer, healthier communities and fundamentally redefining public safety.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

- All participants were offered an honorarium for participating in a 60-minute individual interview (\$100) or a 90-minute focus group discussion (\$150).
- Focus group #21 and interview #22 were conducted in person. All other interviews and focus groups were conducted virtually using Zoom online video conferencing software.
- Most focus group and interview participants have consented to being acknowledged with their full names and organizational affiliations. Two participants requested to be acknowledged anonymously (interviews #4 and #12).

TABLE 1.
Focus group and interview participants

Number	Type	Name	Office / Organization	Role
01	Focus group: OVP/ONS leadership	Andrea Welsing	Los Angeles County Office of Violence Prevention	Director
		Jen White	Minneapolis, MN, Neighborhood Safety Department	Former manager of interagency & community engagement
		Josh Peterson	Minneapolis, MN, Neighborhood Safety Department	Former interim director
		Tracie Campbell	Mecklenburg County, NC, Office of Violence Prevention	Senior health manager
02	Focus group: OVP/ONS leadership	Mo Farrell	St. Louis, MO, Office of Violence Prevention	Deputy director
		Wilford Pinkney Jr.	St. Louis, MO, Office of Violence Prevention	Director

Number	Type	Name	Office / Organization	Role
03	Focus Group: OVP/ONS leaders and CBO	Kelly Fischer	Los Angeles County Office of Violence Prevention	Deputy director
		Lora Larson	Stockton, CA, Office of Violence Prevention	Director
		Dante Johnson	Baltimore, MD, Living Classrooms Foundation	Director, community safety initiatives
		Dr. Kiah E. Nyame	Rochester, NY, Office of Neighborhood Safety	Former coordinator (and founding director, Ujima Rochester Inc.)
04	Interview	Anonymous, former OVP/ONS and city government leader		
05	Interview: National training and technical assistance provider	Synethia White	Cities United	Director of strategic initiatives
06	Focus Group: OVP/ONS leaders and community engagement staff	Brooke Blakey	St. Paul, MN, Office of Neighborhood Safety	Director
		Riamyrie Walter	Portland, OR, Office of Violence Prevention	Community engagement specialist
		Samuel Brown	Richmond, VA, Department of Human Services	Community safety coordinator
07	Focus Group: Former OVP/ONS leaders	Jacqueline Clemons Moore	Atlanta, GA, Mayor's Office of Violence Reduction	Former director (Current: Grady Health System, The IVVY project director)
		Sasha Cotton	Minneapolis, MN, Neighborhood Safety Department	Former director (Current: National Network for Safe Communities, senior director)
		Arnitia Holliman	Milwaukee, WI, Office of Violence Prevention	Former director (Current: Center for American Progress, director of gun violence prevention)
		Synethia White	Hampton, VA, Office of Youth and Young Adult Opportunities	Former director (Current: Cities United, director of strategic initiatives)
08	Interview: OVP/ONS leaders	Marcus Ellis	Washington, DC, Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement	Former chief of staff (Current: Peace For DC, executive director and Cities United, board member)

Number	Type	Name	Office / Organization	Role
09	Focus Group: OVP/ONS data staff and collaborators	Lindsay Brown	Stockton, CA, Office of Violence Prevention	Management analyst
		MeghanMarie Fowler-Finn	Washington, DC, Office of Gun Violence Prevention	Chief administrative officer
		Rafael Moreno	Washington, DC, Office of Gun Violence Prevention	Data scientist
		Rachel Siegal	Mecklenburg County, NC, Violence Prevention Data Collaborative	Data collaborative member
		Alejandro (Alex) Gimenez Santana	Newark Public Safety Collaborative (NPSC), Rutgers University-Newark	Director
10	Interview: OVP/ONS data staff and collaborators	Joshua Miller	St. Louis, MO, Office of Violence Prevention	Staff member
11	Interview: Community advocacy and CBOs	Teferi Brent	Dignity4Detroit, Detroit Coalition for Peace, Detroit 300, and the Michigan Ban the Box Coalition	Cofounder
12	Interview	Anonymous community stakeholder		
13	Interview: Community advocacy and CBOs	Alia Harvey-Quinn	FORCE Detroit	Executive director
14	Interview: Community advocacy and CBOs (and national training and technical assistance provider)	Rosie Bryant	Live Free USA	Director of programs & organizing (Previously: lead community organizer with Faith in Indiana)
15	Interview: National training and technical assistance provider and advocacy	Greg Jackson	Community Justice Action Fund	Former executive director (Current: deputy director, White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention)
16	Focus group: Community advocacy and CBOs	David Steele	St. Louis, MO, Office of Violence Prevention (Community Stakeholder)	Community evaluator (RFP reviewer)
		Marlene Levine	St. Louis, MO, Office of Violence Prevention (Community Stakeholder)	Community evaluator (RFP reviewer)

Number	Type	Name	Office / Organization	Role
17	Focus group: Community advocacy and CBOs	Glen Upshaw	Youth ALIVE!	Violence interrupter team manager
		Jessica Segura	Youth ALIVE!	Khadafy Washington project coordinator
		John Torres	Youth ALIVE!	Associate director
		Nicky MacCallum	Youth ALIVE!	Healing director
		Paris Davis	Youth ALIVE!	Intervention director
18	Presenting preliminary findings and focus group: National training and technical assistance providers	Aqeela Sherrills	Community-Based Public Safety Collective	Cofounder
		Latrina Kelly-James	Community-Based Public Safety Collective	Director of training & technical assistance
		Synethia White	Cities United	Director of strategic initiatives (Formerly: director of Hampton, VA, Office of Youth and Young Adult Opportunities)
		Dr. Monique Williams	Cure Violence Global	Executive director (Formerly: director of Louisville, KY, Office for Safe & Healthy Neighborhoods)
		Will Simpson	Equal Justice USA	Director of violence reduction initiatives
		Jamie Kim Ramola	The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention	Director of training & technical assistance
		Keiland Henderson	National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform	Violence reduction program manager
19	Presenting preliminary findings and focus group: National training and technical assistance providers	Reygan Cunningham	California Partnership for Safe Communities	Codirector
		Vaughn Crandall	California Partnership for Safe Communities	Codirector
		Kyndra Simmons	The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention	Director of frontline training & technical assistance
		Norman Livingston Kerr	Trajectory Changing Solutions	Founder and chief executive officer (Formerly: assistant deputy mayor for public safety for the City of Chicago)
20	Presenting preliminary findings and focus group: National training and technical assistance providers	Dr. Joseph Wilson	Community Capacity Development	Consultant
21	Focus group: OVP/ONS leaders	Courtney Scott	Baton Rouge, LA, Office of Mayor —President	Assistant chief administrative officer
		Jazzika Matthews	Safe Hopeful Healthy BR	Director of operations

Number	Type	Name	Office / Organization	Role
22	Interview: OVP/ONS leaders	Lakeesha Eure	Newark, NJ, Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery	Director
23	Focus group: OVP/ONS leaders and staff	Angel Garcia	Albuquerque Community Safety, Violence Intervention Program	Social services manager, Violence Intervention Program
		Jeffery Bustamante	Albuquerque Community Safety	Deputy director of violence prevention and intervention
		Mariela Ruiz-Angel	Albuquerque Community Safety	Director
		Serena Sierra Fazio	Albuquerque Community Safety, Violence Intervention Program	Special projects manager

APPENDIX B: KEY RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

What are OVP/ONS?

Cities United, *A Guide to Investing in Safe, Healthy, and Hopeful Communities: Part One* (Louisville, KY: Cities United, 2021), <https://perma.cc/Y9V9-U2JL>.

Citizens League, *Saint Paul Community-First Public Safety Commission* (St. Paul, MN: Citizens League, 2021), Addendum A, Presentation by Andrew Bentley, Kailey Burger, and Mr. Elliot Karl, of the Harvard Government Performance Lab, to the Citizens League, City of Saint Paul Community-First Public Safety Commission, January 27, 2021, <https://perma.cc/Z5WW-JKKE>.

- See pages 203 to 207 for a review of 17 offices of violence prevention by the Government Performance Lab at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Community Justice, *City Violence Prevention Index 2022* (San Francisco: Community Justice Action Fund, 2022), <https://www.endcommunityviolence.com/report/> [also archived at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AHJfDpdOhkY8p2zLJlyGUuf16_zHCw5S/view].

- Community Justice Action Fund's 2022 City Violence Prevention Index scores local offices based on their functions and responsibilities. The index considers factors

such as whether the office has developed a strategic plan, funds and coordinates community-based programs, or evaluates the quality and efficacy of its strategic plan and local programs.

Eisenberg, Rachel, David Muhammad, and DeVone Boggan, “The Role of Civilian Offices of Violence Prevention in Helping Communities Stem Gun Violence,” Center for American Progress, May 10, 2022, <https://perma.cc/D9PB-GCVM>.

Flom, Hernán and Alfredo Malaret Baldo, *Research Brief: Lessons for Effective Offices of Violence Prevention*, Peace in Our Cities, Forthcoming.

Kline, Jessica, “Peace in Our Cities at the World Bank Fragility Forum: Exploring the Promise of Centralized Urban Violence Prevention Units,” Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, April 25, 2022, <https://perma.cc/J2KM-SSX5>.

National OVP Network, *National Offices of Violence Prevention Landscape Scan* (San Francisco: National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, 2023), <https://perma.cc/ZF94-MTVD>.

- The National OVP Network’s 2023 Landscape Scan includes descriptive summaries of 29 of the network’s members, including information about each office’s annual budget, primary funding sources, staff size, and activities. Of the 29 offices featured, two are state-level offices, and the rest are city- or county-level offices.

Pearl, Betsy, *Beyond Policing: Investing in Offices of Neighborhood Safety* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, 2020), <https://perma.cc/KYT7-ZFL5>.

Office creation, scope, and structure: OVP/ONS need adequate staff and resources

The Coalition to Advance Public Safety, “What Is a CVI Ecosystem?” 2023, <https://www.cviecosystem.org/what-is-cvi>.

- The Coalition to Advance Public Safety’s CVI Ecosystem resources include annual budget recommendations to implement a comprehensive CVI ecosystem, including OVP/ONS and CVI staff, wraparound services, training and technical assistance, and data and evaluation support. The resource includes recommended staffing levels and sample job descriptions for OVP/ONS staff, including director, assistant director, community engagement manager, data analyst, and service liaison roles.

University of Pennsylvania Crime and Justice Policy Lab and California Partnership for Safe Communities, “Invest in Governance and Management to Make Violence Reduction Efforts Successful,” April 18, 2023, <https://crimejusticelab.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Action-Research-Management-Strategy-2023.04.18.pdf>.

- This policy brief emphasizes the need for cities to build internal management, governance, and data infrastructure to implement effective violence reduction strategies.
- Also see: California Partnership for Safe Communities, “Understanding Key Capacities for Community Violence Intervention,” 2023, <https://thecapartnership.org/policy-work/understanding-key-capacities-for-community-violence-intervention/>.

Office origins, scope, and structure: OVP/ONS require a clear mission and scope

University of Pennsylvania Crime and Justice Policy Lab, *Invest in Governance and Management to Make Violence Reduction Efforts Successful* (Oakland, CA: California Partnership for Safe Communities, 2023), <https://perma.cc/YT9J-N7AM>.

- This policy brief emphasizes the importance of “theory of change” frameworks to anchor the mission, scope, and activities of community violence reduction strategies.

Coordinating government and community stakeholders

For examples of OVP/ONS strategic plans, see the following:

City of Milwaukee Health Department, Office of Violence Prevention, *The Milwaukee Blueprint for Peace* (Milwaukee, WI: City of Milwaukee, 2017), <https://perma.cc/3Q9T-L252>.

Mayor Brandon M. Scott, *Baltimore City Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan* (Baltimore, MD: Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement, 2021), 7, <https://perma.cc/R3SN-VJGT>.

Mecklenburg County Office of Violence Prevention, *The Way Forward: Mecklenburg County Community Violence Strategic Plan FY2023–FY2028* (Charlotte, NC: Mecklenburg County, 2022), 7-18, <https://mecknc.widen.net/s/sn9pq8sszl/the-way-forward>.

Newark Office of Violence Prevention & Trauma Recovery, *Newark Office of Violence Prevention & Trauma Recovery: Strategic Plan* (Newark, NJ: Newark Office of Violence Prevention & Trauma Recovery, 2023), https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZihFhvvoVqugAXzbpTj_E2-J4KJzEqZG/view.

Safe Hopeful Healthy BR, *2022 Impact Report* (Baton Rouge, LA: Safe Hopeful Healthy BR, 2022), <https://perma.cc/Q8J4-VJYC>.

Measuring and messaging success

Buggs, Shani, Mia Dawson, and Asia Ivey, *Implementing Outreach-Based Community Violence Intervention Programs* (New York: Local Initiatives Support Corporation, 2022), <https://perma.cc/8TVV-APGR>.

- See pages 48 to 53 for a discussion of data management and program evaluation challenges and recommendations for community violence intervention programs, including metrics for tracking success.

Bureau of Justice Assistance, *Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative Implementation Checklist*

(Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, 2022), <https://perma.cc/F8XV-ZY69>.

- This checklist includes steps for measuring success for community violence intervention programs, including creating an evaluation plan, defining performance measures and indicators of success, and collecting and analyzing data.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Mike McLively and Brittany Nieto, *A Case Study in Hope: Lessons from Oakland's Remarkable Reduction in Gun Violence* (San Francisco: Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, 2019), 11, <https://perma.cc/V4CW-99DF>; and Marissa Edmund, "Gun Violence Disproportionately and Overwhelmingly Hurts Communities of Color," Center for American Progress, June 30, 2022, <https://perma.cc/6KA3-NLS4>.
- 2 Vera Institute of Justice, *Community Violence Intervention* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2021), <https://perma.cc/KUQ6-TW2Y>; and Aaron Stagoff-Belfort, Daniel Bodah, and Daniela Gilbert, *The Social Costs of Policing* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2022), <https://perma.cc/6ZN7-M2UT>.
- 3 See for example Bureau of Justice Assistance, "Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIPI)," U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), April 19, 2022, <https://perma.cc/P9YX-UU9B>.
- 4 For a recent summary of the evidence and discussion of the need for a more comprehensive approach to both CVI program delivery and evaluation, see Shani Buggs, *Community-Based Violence Interruption & Public Safety* (New York: Arnold Ventures, 2022), <https://perma.cc/49GY-29W4>.
- 5 Although not included in this research, there are also state-level offices and departments of violence prevention that provide funding, technical assistance, and other support to CVI programs and local OVP/ONS. There are state-level offices in California, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Washington. For more information, see the states listed by the National Offices of Violence Prevention Network (<https://ovpnetwork.org/>), as well as the National Violence Prevention Network (<http://preventviolence.net/states/>) listing of state organizations involved in implementing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Violent Death Reporting System. Additionally, in September 2023, the White House announced the creation of the first White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention and plans for the office to focus on implementing existing legislation to address gun violence and providing support to states that are experiencing increases in gun violence. The White House, "President Joe Biden to Establish First-Ever White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, To Be Overseen by Vice President Kamala Harris," press release (Washington, DC: The White House, September 21, 2023), <https://perma.cc/PEY4-6Q2P>; and Vera Institute of Justice, "Vera Institute of Justice on the Establishment of the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention," September 21, 2023, <https://perma.cc/73F8-YMYZ>.
- 6 CDC, "Violence Prevention Fundamentals," <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/main/prevention-information/47>.
- 7 National Institute of Criminal Justice Reform, *A Landscape Analysis of Washington, DC Community Based Services and Supports* (Oakland, CA: NICJR), 3, <https://nicjr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/DC-LandscapeAnalysisReport.pdf>.
- 8 National OVP Network, *National Offices of Violence Prevention Landscape Scan* (San Francisco: National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, 2023), <https://perma.cc/ZF94-MTVD>.
- 9 S. 2938, 117th Congress (2022), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2938/>; and Everytown for Gun Safety, "What is the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act?" June 21, 2022, <https://perma.cc/DH88-3KKL>.

- 10 BJA, “CVIPI.” 2022
- 11 Sandra van den Heuvel and Marta Nelson, “How the American Rescue Plan Can Foster an Equitable Recovery,” Vera Institute of Justice, August 24, 2021, <https://perma.cc/R4MN-W94L>; and National OVP Network, *National Offices of Violence Prevention Landscape Scan*, 2023, 4, 6, 16, 34, 50, 52.
- 12 Vera Institute of Justice, *Investing in Evidence-Based Alternatives to Policing: Community Violence Intervention* (New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2021), 3, <https://perma.cc/KW56-P5GW>.
- 13 Synethia White and Rosie Bryant shared their experiences and recommendations related to their current and former roles as national training and technical assistance providers and as local office leaders or community advocates, respectively, so they are counted in both national and local categories.
- 14 For the 18 places with existing offices, Vera counted Washington, DC, as one place. Washington, DC, has two offices (Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement and Office of Gun Violence Prevention) and representatives from both offices participated in focus groups and interviews.
- 15 National OVP Network, *National Offices of Violence Prevention Landscape Scan*, 2023, 25, 33, 35, 51.
- 16 City of Charlotte, “Safety and Accountability for Everyone,” <https://www.charlottenc.gov/Public-Safety/Safe-Charlotte>.
- 17 Carlene A. Mayfield, Rachel Siegal, Melvin Herring, et al., “A Replicable, Solution-Focused Approach to Cross-Sector Data Sharing for Evaluation of Community Violence Prevention Programming,” *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* 28, Suppl. 1 (2022), S43–53, <https://doi.org/10.1097/PHH.0000000000001426>.
- 18 City of Newark, “Mayor Baraka Announces Passage of Ordinance Creating ‘Office of Violence Prevention’ and Making All Hate Group Activity Illegal in Newark,” press release (Newark, NJ: Office of the Mayor, June 24, 2020), <https://perma.cc/2H2M-3363>.
- 19 Presentation by Andrew Bentley, Kailey Burger, and Elliot Karl, of the Harvard Government Performance Lab, to the Citizens League, City of Saint Paul Community-First Public Safety Commission, January 27, 2021. Minutes archived at Addendum A to Citizens League, *Saint Paul Community-First Public Safety Commission* (St. Paul, MN: Citizens League, 2021), 202, 205, <https://perma.cc/Z5WW-JKKE>.
- 20 City of Atlanta Anti-Violence Advisory Council, *Anti-Violence Advisory Council Recommendations Report* (Atlanta, GA: Office of the Mayor, 2021), 2, <https://perma.cc/CS5F-263Z>; and Kristal Dixon, “Atlanta Establishes Office of Violence Reduction,” *Axios*, October 8, 2021, <https://www.axios.com/local/atlanta/2021/10/08/atlanta-office-violent-crime-reduction>.
- 21 Jonathan Raymond, “Mayor Bottoms Provides Update on Development of Office of Violence Reduction,” *11Alive.com*, December 12, 2021, <https://www.11alive.com/article/news/politics/atlanta-office-of-violence-reduction-mayor-keisha-lance-bottoms/85-ac098b7a-c1bd-49b9-894d-dd1257bbf301>; and Fairriona Magee, “As Cop City Moves Forward, Anti-Violence Activists See ‘Broken Promises.’” *The Trace*, August 2, 2023, <https://perma.cc/4JP5-ACTU>.
- 22 Magee, “Broken Promises,” 2023, Allie Gross, “As Crime Rose, Atlanta Failed to Spend Millions Earmarked for Violence Prevention,”

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, March 23, 2023, <https://archive.ph/5sLBO#selection-1639.0-1639.81>.

- 23 GPL Blog, “The City of Saint Paul Seeks to Reimagine Emergency Response with Support from the GPL,” Harvard Kennedy School GPL, June 9, 2021, <https://perma.cc/87PW-ZXMR>; and Citizens League, *Saint Paul Community-First Public Safety Commission* (St. Paul, MN: Citizens League, 2021), <https://perma.cc/Z5WW-JKKE>.
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