

# Community Violence Intervention Programs, Explained

September 2021

**Gun violence is rising across the country—in big cities and rural communities, in red states and blue ones. Especially hard hit are Black communities and other communities of color that have experienced decades of disinvestment. But more policing isn't the answer. Our overreliance on the tools of arrest, prosecution, and incarceration has harmed communities—and hasn't made us safer.**

## So, what do real solutions look like?

Community violence intervention (CVI) programs focus on reducing homicides and shootings by establishing relationships with people at the center of gun violence in our communities. These programs support people at the highest risk of being victims or perpetrators—or both—of violence. CVI programs acknowledge the capacity of people to make different choices and pursue other avenues for addressing and resolving conflict. And they can save cities millions.

**Hospital-based violence interruption programs (HVIPs)** reach survivors of violence in the hospital. There, case managers and social service providers try to meet victims’ basic needs and support them, while also working to prevent retaliation.

Some programs involve police. **Group violence interventions** are collaborations among community leaders, social service providers, and law enforcement. With community input, law enforcement identifies those at the highest risk of violence, and partners intervene and provide support. These programs can increase police accountability and build trust between police and communities disproportionately harmed by the criminal legal system. Group violence interventions don’t rely on more police. At their best, they reengineer how police departments operate.

Other approaches **center community**. They employ “**violence interrupters**” or “**neighborhood change agents**” who are skilled in intervention and supporting people on their change journeys. These professionals have credibility in the communities where they work. They reach out to those at the center of gun violence in their communities, build relationships, and work to support healing and address conflict through nonviolent means, including de-escalation and mediation. These programs may also offer other forms of support: they might help people find housing or pursue education and employment opportunities.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The term “community violence intervention” (CVI) has emerged recently to refer to programs and strategies working to reduce homicides and shootings that occur in our streets. CVI reflects an acknowledgement that communities experience this violence directly, so community perspectives are essential in creating and implementing solutions.

There are many forms of violence that communities experience that CVIs don’t focus on—including gender-based

violence, sexual violence, child abuse, interpersonal violence and domestic violence, violence that emerges from hate and bigotry, police violence, and other forms of structural violence.

While it is critical to shed light on effective solutions to gun violence, **we too must acknowledge who and what is left out**, which also deserves investment and recognition.





**DID YOU KNOW?**

**Violence interrupters** and **neighborhood change agents** are outreach workers and nontraditional case managers from the neighborhoods and communities where violence is occurring. Also called peacekeepers, life coaches, or street outreach, they are relatable to the people they work with because of their lived experience. They may have lost loved ones to violence, they may have been shot themselves, they may have been incarcerated, or they may have relatives who have been incarcerated. These skilled professionals are also part of group violence interventions, though these collaborative strategies require careful coordination to preserve outreach workers’ integrity and appropriate separation from law enforcement. Community leaders in these formal roles build relationships with people involved in violence and help them address conflict in nonviolent ways, like mediation. Most importantly, these outreach workers build trust.

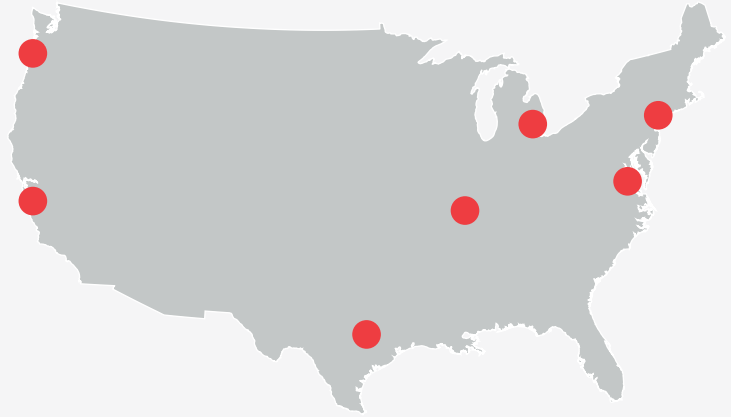
**“It’s about showing up— and continuing to show up— to demonstrate trustworthiness. It’s bringing diapers when you say you’re going to bring diapers, it’s waiting in the lobby while someone’s at an appointment.”**

Daniela Gilbert, director of the Redefining Public Safety program at Vera

**Cure Violence** is an example of a community-based CVI program that cities across the country have implemented. It seeks to change community norms about violence and provide pathways out of violent behavior for young men who have been involved in gun violence. **Advance Peace** similarly invests in the development, health, and well-being of those affected by and involved in gun violence. It runs programs in Richmond, Stockton, and Sacramento, California, and will launch a program in New York City in fall 2021.

## IN THE NEWS

CVI programs have received an unprecedented level of attention in the last year, as shootings and homicides increased. President Biden's [American Rescue Plan](#) includes a proposed \$5 billion in funding for local violence prevention efforts. And cities including New York City, St. Louis, and Washington, DC, have already committed to expanding existing CVI programs and creating new ones. Austin, Detroit, and Seattle have also expanded their CVI programs, and San Jose started a new one.



## Promising results

Neighborhoods in cities including Baltimore, Chicago, New York City, and Philadelphia that have adopted the **Cure Violence** model have seen shootings and killings decrease by more than 30 percent. For every dollar invested in **Cure Violence**, cities can save up to \$18 in reduced medical and criminal legal system costs.

Sacramento's **Advance Peace** program reduced homicides and nonfatal injury shootings by 20 percent from January 2018 to December 2019. For every \$1 spent on **Advance Peace**, Sacramento saved between \$18 and \$41 across emergency response, health care, and law enforcement, as well as other parts of the criminal legal system.

Cities that have invested in **group violence intervention** strategies, including Boston, Chicago, Indianapolis, New Orleans, Oakland, and Stockton, California, have experienced declines of more than 30 percent in shootings that result in injuries.

## Gun violence is a contagion

One shooting can result in three or more retaliatory shootings. CVI programs recognize that gun violence is a public health issue. They offer interventions that can mitigate the spread of gun violence and address the needs of communities where trauma, systemic disinvestment, and interpersonal and financial stressors are driving increased shootings.

Police department budgets remain at all-time highs. It's time for cities to invest instead in community-based solutions to gun violence—like CVI programs—that have been proven to work.

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### For more information

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