



RESEARCH REPORT

# Engaging Communities in Reducing Gun Violence

## A Road Map for Safer Communities

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# Executive Summary

Gun violence inflicts a devastating double blow to communities of color. First, shootings shatter families and neighborhoods. In 2014, homicide was the leading cause of death for African American boys and men ages 15 to 34 and the second leading cause of death for Hispanic boys and men ages 15 to 34. Compared to the rate of gun homicides for white boys and men of the same ages, the rate for African Americans was 21 times greater and the rate for Hispanics was nearly four times greater. Too often, however, the justice system response to this violence inflicts a second blow; intrusive policing tactics and overreliance on incarceration destabilize neighborhoods and damage police-community relations.

Policymakers, law enforcement officials, and experts offer no shortage of ideas to reduce gun violence. These proposals tend to fall into discrete silos: gun control, police crackdowns, after-school programs, and more. Despite these efforts, high rates of gun violence in communities of color persist. And while the nation rallies following mass shootings in majority-white communities, the response to the daily toll of gun violence in communities of color is muted at best.

In an effort to learn what could be done better, we decided to ask people from communities directly impacted by gun violence. We convened more than 100 community members in three diverse American cities—Richmond, Virginia, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Stockton, California. The convenings included faith leaders, law enforcement, social service providers, formerly incarcerated individuals, elected officials, and other community members. Our goal was to hear directly from communities about the factors driving gun violence and about actionable policy strategies to make their neighborhoods safer.

We learned that gun violence is a multifaceted challenge that demands a holistic set of solutions. In communities of color, gun violence is interconnected with issues of policing and prosecution, disinvestment, and marginalization of community voices. Limiting access to deadly weapons must be part of the solution, but it's not the only part. Improving police-community relations and enhancing law enforcement accountability, investing in community-based supports, and creating opportunities for the community to engage in violence prevention are critical in a comprehensive approach to reducing gun violence in communities of color. The following summarizes our findings and recommendations:

## Findings and Recommendations

- **Easy access to guns by a small group of “high-risk” people is a key driver of violence.** Gun violence in communities of color is often driven by a small group of people at high risk of engaging in violence—sometimes no more than 0.25 to 1 percent of the city’s population. It remains too easy for this group to obtain guns. In the hands of these high-risk people, guns escalate minor disputes into fatal incidents, and firearm violence poses a particular risk to law enforcement officers. Limiting easy access to guns by this group is an essential step in reducing gun violence. Our recommendations to address these challenges are as follows:
  - » Prevent the diversion of firearms to people at high risk of engaging in gun violence through universal background checks, mandatory reporting for lost and stolen firearms, permit-to-purchase laws, increased oversight of licensed firearm dealers, and community programs that discourage straw purchasing.
  - » Expand the list of people prevented from purchasing and possessing firearms to include those at higher risk to engage in gun violence, such as stalkers and those who have committed violent misdemeanors or domestic abuse against dating partners.
  
- **Law enforcement tactics that diminish police-community relations harm public safety.** When police are viewed as a trusted and socially legitimate authority, residents are more likely to obey laws and assist in gun violence prevention efforts. Indiscriminate law enforcement tactics that sweep in a wide swath of community members, implicit bias, and other factors that diminish police-community trust undermine public safety. Distrust makes residents less willing to share information with police and impedes law enforcement from effectively working with communities to prevent violence. To improve relations between police and communities of color we recommend the following steps:
  - » Hire, train, and assess police to mitigate implicit biases and to promote procedurally just interactions with citizens.
  - » Hold police accountable through community satisfaction surveys, civilian review boards, body-worn cameras, and the collection of key data (e.g., use-of-force data, racial data on police stops and arrests).
  - » Create more positive police-community interactions through accountable foot patrols, police training in de-escalation tactics, and events that allow officers to engage with citizens outside of an enforcement context.
  - » Prioritize policing and prosecution of violent crimes and firearms trafficking, rather than broader, indiscriminate strategies (e.g., stop and frisk) that alienate community members.

- **Social services that can prevent violence are woefully underfunded.** Those at high risk to commit or to be victimized by gun violence, such as formerly incarcerated individuals and their families, face various challenges. These obstacles include a lack of job skills, a lack of employment and educational opportunities, and trauma. Effective social services that address these challenges can reduce gun violence, but currently these services are inadequately resourced. Our recommendations include the following:
  - » Increase support for community-based programs that work with law enforcement, family members of people at high risk of committing violent acts, social service providers, and those who mediate disputes to change social norms and discourage gun violence.
  - » Invest in wraparound social services that address the full spectrum of challenges faced by many individuals at high risk of participating in gun violence as well as their families, such as mental health treatment, trauma care, drug treatment, housing, job training and placement, and mentoring.
  
- **Improving community engagement in violence prevention is an immediate reform opportunity.** Social service agencies, religious institutions, law enforcement, and other stakeholders in all three cities reported being constrained by inadequate communication and collaboration. Some reported that existing coordination and data collection is not often sustained, and that decisionmakers sometimes develop and implement plans in ways that are disconnected from the larger community. Excellent models are available for quickly and effectively building community engagement structures that not only improve communication across sectors, but also reduce violence. These models include the following:
  - » Sharing data and creating a homicide incident review system to inform strategic planning.
  - » Convening a strategic planning group that meets regularly, provides opportunities for meaningful community input, and develops a violence reduction plan with clear performance metrics.

Together, these recommendations offer holistic strategies for addressing gun violence. While these recommendations represent an ambitious roadmap for policy reform, they also offer a clear opportunity for communities, law enforcement, and a broad array of government and social service organizations to work together effectively to reduce gun violence, build healthier neighborhoods, and strengthen relationships between police and the communities they serve.



# Introduction

In recent decades, gun violence and the criminal justice system's response to that violence have delivered a devastating double blow to communities of color. First, the violence itself takes a toll. Gun-related homicides and other shootings tear apart families and weaken community institutions. Too often, the criminal justice response to this violence inflicts a second toll: frequent street stops and large-scale incarceration lead to communities' lack of trust in police and other government agencies.

Many tactics used to police communities of color are facing increasing scrutiny after a series of high-profile police shootings of people of color and subsequent public outcry. Likewise, disproportionate incarceration rates for people of color are spurring calls for broader criminal justice system reforms. At the same time, rising rates of gun violence in many cities across the country are prompting renewed calls for violence prevention strategies to improve public safety.

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, the Joyce Foundation, and the Urban Institute launched Engaging Communities to learn from communities that are grappling with these issues. The project converts insights from three diverse communities in different parts of the country into a policy roadmap with actionable strategies for reducing gun violence while improving the relationship between governments, law enforcement, and the communities they serve (see box on page 2).

Common themes emerged in the participating cities of Richmond, Virginia, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Stockton, California. Many participants referenced the lack of economic and social opportunity for many young people of color. Though law enforcement is tasked with protecting public safety, some citizens cited tensions between police and residents. Government, law enforcement, and community groups reported being siloed off from each other, underresourced, and limited in the array of tools available to address community needs. Many people—including those who have been incarcerated—said they purchase guns for self-protection because they feel unsafe. At the same time, law enforcement, community activists, religious leaders, and others agreed that easy accessibility of firearms in these communities is a major contributor to gun violence.

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## **The Engaging Communities Methodology**

To develop these findings and recommendations, the Engaging Communities team initially brought together more than 40 civil rights leaders, community leaders, elected officials, law enforcement professionals, religious leaders, researchers, and policy experts for a daylong meeting in Washington, DC, to explore challenges and solutions at the intersection of gun violence, policing, and mass incarceration in communities of color (see appendix A for a list of participants). Participants encouraged a holistic approach to these issues, with a focus on learning from local communities about how they experience them and what is—or isn't—working to address these challenges. We assembled a steering committee of 21 people to design a community engagement strategy and select cities for participation. Community convenings (see appendix B for meeting agendas) were held in Richmond, Virginia (October 20–21, 2015); Milwaukee, Wisconsin (November 12–13, 2015); and Stockton, California (December 10–11, 2015).

These three cities were selected for their geographic diversity, their experience in dealing with gun violence, and the diversity of community stakeholders impacted by gun violence and engaging in efforts to reduce it. They are like many other communities across the country. Each convening gathered 30 to 50 residents, including community leaders, elected officials, formerly incarcerated individuals, law enforcement professionals, religious leaders, researchers, and service providers (see appendix A for a list of members). Participants were selected to be representative of both the city and the wider region. The Engaging Communities team encouraged participation by all residents in attendance, and obtained feedback about the breadth and depth of support for potential solutions identified. The authors synthesized the information collected at the convenings into this report of findings and recommendations, incorporating relevant research to provide further explanation or support.

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We asked participants to go beyond identifying the challenges; we encouraged them to develop ideas and strategies for reducing gun violence in their communities. Many expressed that this was the first time they had been invited to talk with other stakeholders about solutions. Participants offered numerous strategies aimed at reducing the demand for and the supply of guns, including the following:

- reduce easy access to firearms among people at high risk of committing violent acts;
- increase safety by building police-community trust and enhancing police accountability and legitimacy;
- address the root causes of gun violence by investing in job training, life skills training, mental health services, dispute resolution, reentry support, and other “wraparound” social services, particularly for those most likely to be victimized by or to perpetrate gun violence; and

- improve engagement, collaboration, communication, and strategic planning between those who work to reduce gun violence, including religious leaders, nonprofit social service providers, police, other government officials, and community members.

Gun violence imposes immense harms on communities of color, and we need solutions that do not further victimize families and neighborhoods. The following findings and recommendations arise directly from insights provided by a diverse group of leaders who work to improve community health and safety in three American cities impacted by gun violence. We hope these recommendations will help community and religious leaders, advocates, service providers, funders, police, and other government officials move forward as partners in building safer neighborhoods.

# Findings

## 1. Firearm Violence Disproportionately Affects Communities of Color

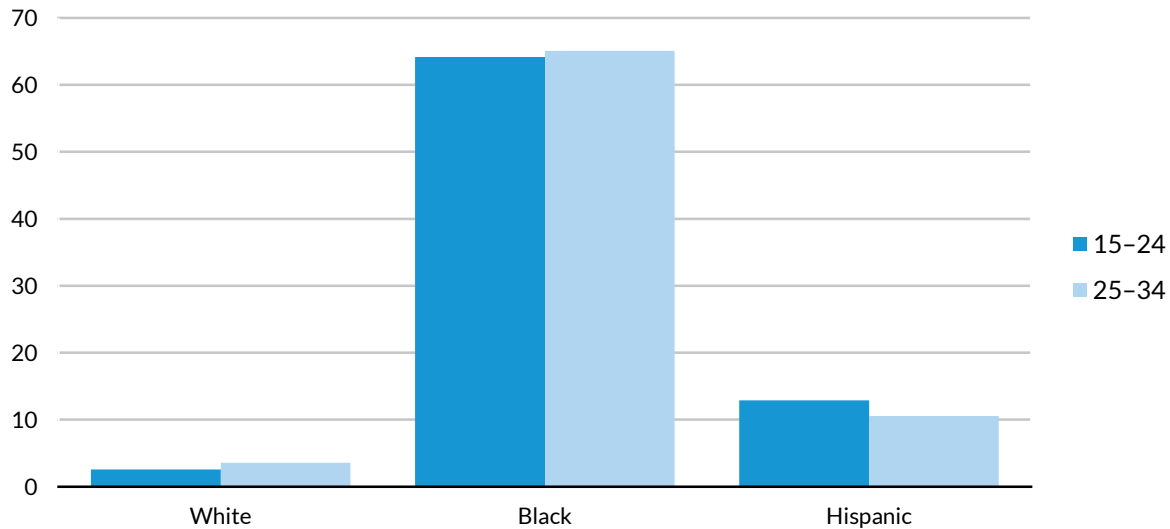
From 2005 to 2014, firearms killed more than 320,000 Americans. While firearm suicide is concentrated among white communities, people of color are disproportionately victimized by firearm homicide. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), firearms were responsible for 69 percent of the 15,809 homicides in the United States in 2014. Black people suffered 57 percent of these homicides despite being only 13 percent of the population. This victimization is particularly acute among young men of color: in 2014, homicide was the leading cause of death for black men ages 15 to 34 and the second leading cause of death for Hispanic men 15 to 34. In that same year (figure 1), black Americans of all ages were 21 times more likely to be victims of gun homicide than white Americans; Hispanic Americans were 3.8 times more likely to die from gun homicide than their white counterparts. The risk was even greater for boys and men of color ages 15 to 34 (figure 1). Compared to the rate of gun homicides for white boys and men of the same ages, the rate for black people is 21 times greater; for Hispanic people it is nearly four times greater.<sup>1</sup> A study of nonfatal shootings in six states in 2010 also found that black and Hispanic men and women had higher rates of injury than their white peers (Howell, Bieler, and Anderson 2014).

These national trends were echoed in Richmond, Milwaukee, and Stockton. In 2014, African Americans accounted for 86 percent of Richmond's homicide victims,<sup>2</sup> despite making up only about 50 percent of the city's population.<sup>3</sup> In the first six months of 2015, black people in Milwaukee were 81 percent of homicide victims, despite being only 39 percent of the city's population (MHRC 2015). In 2011 and 2012, black people in Stockton were 30 percent of homicide victims (Jones 2015), despite being only 11 percent of the city's population.<sup>4</sup>

FIGURE 1

### 2014 Firearm Homicide Victimization Rates by Age and Race

Firearm homicides per 100,000 people



Source: “Web-Based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System,” National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed February 18, 2016, <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars>.

## 2. Easy Access to Firearms by High-Risk People Is a Root Cause of Violence

Despite the overwhelming evidence that firearms are driving the high levels of lethal violence in communities of color, it remains far too easy for people at high risk of engaging violence to obtain guns (see box on page 6). As Anton Bell, the Commonwealth Attorney for Hampton Roads, described it, “The biggest issue I have seen in preventing gun violence is the easy access to firearms.” While preventing such people from obtaining guns may be crucial to reducing violence, participants in both Milwaukee and Stockton reported that obtaining firearms remains easy. Chief Edward Flynn of the Milwaukee Police Department explained that Wisconsin’s laws make evading firearm purchasing restrictions relatively easy, and thus many of the guns his department recovers from crimes were originally purchased in Wisconsin. In Stockton, Rev. Michael McBride of PICO National Network recalled talking to youth who reported being able to easily obtain a firearm for less than \$100; Mirna Juarez of the youth collective G.R.A.S.S.R.O.O.T.S. added that in Stockton “it is easier to find a gun than a job.”

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### Sources of Crime Guns

Research on the sources of guns recovered in crime identifies several ways that people prohibited by law from possessing guns are able to obtain them. The secondary market, in which guns are sold or transferred between private parties, is an important source of guns used in crime (Cook et al. 2007; Wintemute, Braga, and Kennedy 2010). Such transfers are often not subject to background checks to verify the purchaser is legally eligible to own a firearm. Additionally, these transactions often involve social networks of friends and family, which have proven to be a ready source of weapons for people otherwise prevented from buying a firearm (Cook et al. 2007). Licensed dealers can also become a key pipeline for crime guns through “straw purchases,” in which a someone who can pass a background check buys a gun with the intent to transfer it to someone who cannot (Cook and Braga 2001). In other cases, corrupt dealers have been found to divert firearms to illegal markets (ATF 2000). Finally, between 200,000 (Langton 2012) and 500,000 (Cook and Ludwig 1997) firearms are stolen annually; these guns may be used in crime by the person who stole them, or they may be sold to third parties who then use them in crimes (Braga et al. 2002).

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## 3. Many Community Members Carry Guns Because They Feel Unsafe

Across the three convenings, many participants noted that people in their communities carry firearms for self-defense because they feel unsafe and do not believe the police can protect them. In Milwaukee, the discussion in one group noted that merchants who carry cash feel a need to be armed to avoid being robbed. In Stockton, Alejandra Gutierrez, the programs director for Fathers & Families of San Joaquin, reported that some youth she works with have said that “you can’t live in Stockton without a gun.” In Milwaukee and Stockton, participants with criminal justice system experiences expressed similar concerns, noting that while they want to comply with legal requirements that prohibit them from carrying guns, they do not trust that the police can protect them or their loved ones.

This lack of trust in the justice system also makes people more likely to use their guns. Dr. Adria Scharf, executive director of the Richmond Peace Education Center, noted that willingness to use violence is an adaptive behavior that some youth believe will protect them from being harmed. In Stockton, Rev. McBride corroborated these comments, noting that “people don’t trust the criminal justice system for justice, so they get it themselves.” Rev. Willie Brisco of Milwaukee observed that some youth believe that “it is better to be judged by 12 [jurors] than to be carried by 6 [pallbearers].”

## 4. Firearms Escalate the Lethality of Violence

“Access to firearms increases the lethality of violence.” So noted Lori Haas of the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence at the Richmond convening, and several other participants echoed these remarks. These participants indicated that the easy accessibility of firearms means that an argument that might have led to a shouting match or fistfight instead has the potential to become deadly. The research bears these observations out: a 1997 study found that gun assaults are seven times more likely to result in death than all other types of assaults, while robbery with a firearm is about four times more likely to result in death than robbery without one (Zimring 2004; Zimring and Hawkins 1997). Firearms also pose a particular risk to law enforcement officers. From 2005 to 2014, guns were the most common weapon used to kill law enforcement officers, responsible for 85 to 96 percent of all officer slayings. Every year during that same period except 2008, firearms were also the leading cause of death for law enforcement officers.<sup>5</sup>

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*Access to firearms increases the lethality of violence.*

*—Lori Haas, Coalition to Stop Gun Violence*

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Research suggests gun use may create an escalating cycle of violence. Youth exposed to violent acts become more likely to obtain guns themselves for self-defense (Finkelhor and Ormrod 2001) and are also more likely to be willing to use violence themselves (Bingenheimer, Brennan, and Earls 2005).

Guns also escalate the lethality of domestic violence incidents. Family and intimate partner assaults are 12 times more likely to result in death when a gun is involved (Saltzman et al. 1992). This issue is particularly acute for female victims of domestic abuse, who are 5 times more likely to be killed if the person abusing them has access to a gun (Campbell et al. 2003). Summarizing the impact of guns on domestic violence, Lori Haas noted, “If we remove the weapon, we will save some lives.”

## 5. A Small Number of People Are Responsible for a Majority of Violent Incidents

While the impact of firearm violence is widespread and devastating, it is typically driven by a tiny number of community members, many of whom are already known to the justice system and who are also among the most likely victims of violence. Stockton Police Chief Eric Jones estimated that no more than 0.25 to 1 percent of the city's population was actively involved in violence, and that about 83 percent of people in this small group were also involved with the justice system before committing a homicide.

In Milwaukee, 91 percent of homicide suspects in 2014 had been previously arrested at least once (MHRC 2014).

Wider research on the dynamics of firearm violence supports these observations, finding that a small group of people with extensive criminal histories perpetrates the majority of violence (Braga 2003). Moreover, this violence is highly concentrated in small social networks (Tracey, Braga, and Papachristos 2016). In one Chicago neighborhood, 41 percent of gun homicides occurred among a social network containing less than 4 percent of the neighborhood's population (Papachristos and Wildeman 2014).



*Participants at the Stockton convening consider community-based violence prevention strategies.*

## 6. A Lack of Trust between Police and Community Members Harms Public Safety

While police serve an important function in society, public confidence in law enforcement saw a substantial drop in 2015, falling to its lowest levels since 1993 after the Rodney King beating and subsequent protests.<sup>6</sup> The issue of police trust is particularly acute in communities of color, which consistently report lower levels of trust in the police than white communities.<sup>7</sup>



Research finds that people of color disproportionately have negative contacts with police. A 2015 investigation of traffic stops in four states found that black drivers were 1.5 to 5.2 times more likely than white drivers to have their car searched even though searches of white drivers were more likely to yield contraband.<sup>8</sup> In 2012, Judge Shira A. Scheindlin’s review of New York City’s stop-and-frisk program found evidence of unconscious bias, based on the fact that black and Latino people were stopped for “furtive movements” at higher rates than whites. Scheindlin noted that “there is no evidence that black people’s movements are objectively more furtive than the movements of white people” (Fridell 2013).

Many scholars have suggested that these contacts explain the consistently higher levels of police mistrust found in communities of color (Brunson and Miller 2006; see box on page 10). Petersburg, Virginia, Police Chief John Dixon corroborated these findings, noting that “even black law enforcement officers are sometimes worried about how their sons will be approached by police.” A lack of trust between police and communities also limits these two groups’ ability to work together to prevent violence: Commonwealth Attorney Anton Bell in Richmond and Shawn Moore in Milwaukee reported that a lack of trust between police and communities made residents less willing to report information about homicides and other violence to the police.

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*Even black law enforcement officers are sometimes worried about how their sons will be approached by police.—Chief John Dixon, Petersburg, Virginia, Police*

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Conversely, strong relationships between police and communities provide the foundation for effective violence prevention. At the Milwaukee convening, Joy Holliday of the violence prevention group Gary for Life cited Gary’s ceasefire-focused deterrence program. She described an effective evidence-based violence prevention strategy in which community members and peers work with each other and with law enforcement to discourage at-risk people from engaging in violence. Chief Jones in Stockton built on this and suggested that working with the community to focus on specific people who drive gun violence is more effective than broad tactics like New York’s stop-and-frisk program that produces negative police-community interactions.

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### **Implicit Biases**

*Perceptions of police biases among people of color play an important role in explaining the gap in trust between police and communities of color. Jennifer Eberhardt, a social psychologist at Stanford University who studies race and inequality, defines implicit biases as the unconscious prejudices that influence how we deal with unfamiliar people and situations. Such biases are not limited to police but are held by everyone in society and are shaped by the history, culture, and racial inequalities of that society (President's Task Force 2015). While everyone has implicit biases, these perspectives can have a particularly negative impact in the policing context because they may reduce communities' confidence in the fairness of interactions with the police and with the justice system (National Initiative 2016).*

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## **7. Disinvestment in Communities of Color Reinforces Cycles of Violence**

Across all three cities, participants noted a systemic lack of investment in communities of color, particularly in the services needed to help people at high risk of engaging in violence become productive members of their neighborhoods. Representatives from government agencies and nonprofits reported substantial challenges in finding and sustaining the resources needed to maintain social service programs that help formerly incarcerated people and those at high risk of committing violence. Sammy Nuñez, executive director of Fathers & Families of San Joaquin, decried the lack of services available to both victims and perpetrators of gun violence. He also noted that failing to extend support to people involved in the justice system limits the effectiveness of these programs

Stockton's Operation Peacekeeper, a program begun in 1997 to reduce youth and gang violence, struggled to maintain the resources needed to be effective. Operation Peacekeeper deployed an Operation Ceasefire-style approach to violence prevention that combined social services for people at risk of violence with dedicated law enforcement focus on targeting gang violence. Over one year, this program reduced gang-related youth homicide by more than 75 percent (Wakeling 2003). By 2006, however, the program had diminished after the city failed to provide the law enforcement or social service personnel needed to sustain it (Braga 2006). When Stockton faced bankruptcy in the late 2000s, support for these programs became even more tenuous; the program was not reinvigorated until 2012.

Participants in Richmond and Milwaukee noted similar shortfalls in violence prevention programming. In Milwaukee, Chief Flynn emphasized that the juvenile court system is "grotesquely

underfunded.” As a result, youth engaged in crime do not receive the services they need to divert them from future offending and from further, more severe contact with the justice system.

In Stockton and Milwaukee, stakeholders emphasized the need to invest in social services to support both victims of gun violence and their families to break the cycle of violence. Alejandra Gutierrez noted in Stockton that “families dealing with violence have been victimized from early childhood and suffer from generational trauma—a cycle of violence that keeps getting passed down.”

Several participants explained how limited support for returning citizens can drive violence. Reverend Dan Matarita of Hampton Roads, Virginia, and Jarrett English of the Wisconsin ACLU noted that involvement with the justice system prevents people from getting jobs. Without jobs or other supports and services that can provide stability, people are more likely to recidivate or participate in the underground economy, which is sustained by violence. Research bears these observations out, finding that returned citizens with access to effective services are far more likely to successfully and safely return to their communities (Petersilia 2004). In all three cities participants noted that religious institutions play an important role in giving formerly incarcerated people the support, counseling, and social structure to successfully reenter society.

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*Families dealing with violence have been victimized from early childhood and suffer from generational trauma—a cycle of violence that keeps getting passed down in families.*

*—Alejandra Gutierrez, Fathers & Families of San Joaquin*

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## 8. Limited Coordination Hampers Responses to Violence

Across all three cities, social service agencies, religious institutions, law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders reported being constrained by a lack of effective communication and collaboration. Part of the problem is that community feedback is simply ignored—particularly in high-level policy development. As Joy Jackson, CEO of the youth service provider Childish, described, “People request input from the community but don’t act on it, and leaders then formulate plans that are disconnected from the community.” In Stockton, Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence Executive Director Robyn Thomas suggested that when it comes to gun violence prevention strategy, “the policy piece often sits too high and is disconnected from the community.” While this state of affairs may have been acceptable

in the past, participants reported that communities were no longer prepared to be passive spectators in policy development. Sammy Nuñez expanded on this, stating that “public safety used to belong exclusively to law enforcement. Now, we demand to be involved.”

Part of the reason for this lack of coordination is the limited political willingness to work with communities of color. In Richmond, participants noted that a low voter participation and voter disenfranchisement in communities affected by violence reduced politicians’ incentives to engage with these neighborhoods. This political detachment, alongside these neighborhoods’ limited ability to contribute time or money to the political process, means that poor communities have limited impact on political decisionmaking (Bartels 2008; Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2012). As Commonwealth Attorney Bell noted, this is particularly problematic for prosecutor elections, since that office has a large amount of discretion and control over violence prevention and criminal justice policy.

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*Public safety used to belong exclusively to law enforcement. Now, we demand to be involved.—Sammy Nuñez, Fathers & Families of San Joaquin*

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However, communication is also weak among many of the organizations responding to this violence. Participants across sites noted that organizations responding to gun violence were frequently territorial. Even when organizations were interested in collaborating, they faced challenges in sharing information and resources, and in sustaining these collaborations long term.

# The Policy Road Map

These findings clearly demonstrate that gun violence stems from the intersection of several issues, including easy access to firearms, systemic deprivation, and fragmented responses by governments, police, and communities. Reducing gun violence therefore requires a similarly multifaceted approach. This approach can be broken down into four key elements:

- reduce easy access to firearms for people at high risk of engaging in violence,
- improve relations between police and communities of color,
- invest in evidence-based social service interventions, and
- promote cross-sector collaboration with meaningful community engagement.

For each element, we lay out actionable strategies supported by research and community feedback. These strategies include policies and strategies that can be implemented immediately, such as building the structures and support for cross-sector collaboration, and support for long-term projects like building police legitimacy. Where possible, this report makes reference to resources detailed in appendix C that can offer stakeholders further insight on how to execute these strategies.

## 1. Reduce Easy Access to Firearms for People at High Risk of Engaging in Violence

Focusing efforts to curb firearm access by the small group of people at high risk of engaging in gun violence is a potent strategy for reducing gun violence while respecting the rights of lawful firearm owners. Research has demonstrated that a small set of key groups—such as people who have a history of domestic abuse, misdemeanor convictions for crimes of violence, or felonies—are at heightened risk of committing violence if they obtain firearms. Policies can reduce access to firearms in two ways: (1) reduce the diversion of firearms from legal to illegal users and (2) prevent people at high risk of engaging in violence from purchasing firearms.

## Recommendation 1a: Reduce the Diversion of Firearms

Firearms are diverted from legal to illegal users in various ways. Closing off or severely restricting these avenues will make obtaining firearms more difficult for people at high risk of committing violence.

Convening participants identified several strategies that evidence shows can reduce firearms diversion.

- **Mandate universal background checks:** Chief Flynn noted that a majority of the guns his department recovers in crimes have been transferred legally—between private parties. Unlike sales by federally licensed dealers, these transactions do not require a background check, allowing people prohibited from obtaining firearms to evade these restrictions. In response, several states have mandated background checks for private sales, which has cut the number of firearms diverted for use in crimes both within the state and in other states (Kahane 2012; Webster, Vernick, and Bulzacchelli 2009; Webster et al. 2013).
- **Make reporting stolen firearms mandatory:** Participants in all three sites suggested enacting laws that require firearm owners to report when their gun is lost or stolen. Mandatory reporting laws prevent diversion in two ways. First, they make it more difficult for traffickers to conceal their involvement in crimes. Mandatory reporting prevents a trafficker from illicitly trading crime guns and later—when the weapons are traced to the trafficker—claiming the guns were stolen. Second, they provide law enforcement with information about stolen weapons, an important source of guns used in crime. Mandatory reporting has been found to reduce the trafficking of firearms (Kahane 2012; Knight 2011).
- **Pass permit-to-purchase laws:** Permit-to-purchase laws are firearm-purchasing regulations some states have put in place that require interested buyers to obtain a license to purchase a firearm from either a federally licensed dealer or a private seller. These permits are issued by a state or local agency and include a mandatory background check as part of the application process. Permit-to-purchase laws reduce both the diversion of firearms (Webster et al. 2013) and firearm homicides (Webster, Crifasi, and Vernick 2014).
- **Increase oversight of licensed dealers:** At the Milwaukee convening, Jeri Bonavia of the Wisconsin Anti-Violence Effort pointed out that negligent or corrupt federally licensed dealers help divert guns from legal markets for use in crimes. Increasing dealer oversight and targeting the small number of dealers found to disproportionately divert guns to criminal users (ATF 2000) can help reduce the supply of crime guns. Similarly, comprehensive regulation of retail firearm dealers and regular inspections of dealer compliance have been found to reduce firearm trafficking (Webster et al. 2009).



*Milwaukee service providers and community leaders brainstorm strategies for preventing firearm violence.*

- **Use community education to discourage straw purchasing:** While participants agreed that straw purchases of weapons are an important source of illegal guns, some expressed concerns about law enforcement-only approaches that deter straw purchasing with the threat of lengthy prison terms. Programs that educate community members about the risks of straw purchasing offer an alternative approach. Research suggests that women may be recruited to serve as straw purchasers (ATF 2000), so programs that reach out to women could be an element in eliminating straw purchasing as a source of crime guns. Operation LIPSTICK (resource 4 in appendix C) is one example of this strategy: the program uses peer-education programs whereby women educate other members of their communities about the dangers of straw purchasing. Operation LIPSTICK also provides follow-up services to help women being pressured into participating in straw purchasing.

### **Recommendation 1b: Expand the List of People Prohibited from Purchasing and Possessing Firearms to Include Those at Highest Risk of Violence**

A combination of state and federal laws determines who is allowed to purchase and own firearms. Federal laws that apply in all 50 states prohibit firearm ownership and possession by people who have been convicted of felonies or misdemeanor domestic violence crimes, as well as a few other categories.

Some states have supplemented these categories with additional groups. However, in many states, these prohibitions omit key groups of people at high risk of committing gun violence. Josh Horwitz, executive director of the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, noted that in addition to preventing violence, these types of restrictions play an important role in reducing mass incarceration. Rather than penalizing someone with a severe sentence for violence after the fact, prohibiting the acquisition of firearms can prevent serious violence from occurring, thus reducing the reliance on incarceration.

- **Expand domestic violence prohibitions:** One consistent finding in gun violence research is that preventing people engaged in domestic abuse from possessing or obtaining firearms can reduce firearm homicide. Such prohibitions include barring people with state-level misdemeanor domestic violence convictions or any domestic violence restraining orders from obtaining firearms. In many places, the prohibition covers only domestic violence against spouses or the children of spouses. States, however, have the opportunity to further reduce the risk of violence by including people who have committed domestic abuse against dating partners or other family members, as well as convicted stalkers, who have been found to be at higher risk for attempting to kill female partners (McFarlane et al. 1999). The report *Firearm Removal/Retrieval in Cases of Domestic Violence* (resource 3) provides more information on how a jurisdiction could implement these policies.
- **Expand prohibitions for violent misdemeanors:** Currently, federal law and 26 states do not prohibit people with a history of violence that results in misdemeanor convictions from purchasing and possessing firearms.<sup>9</sup> People with prior violent misdemeanor convictions, however, are at higher risk to commit future firearm violence (Wintemute et al. 1998; Wright and Wintemute 2010), and strategies to prevent them from obtaining firearms reduce their risk of arrest for future violence (Wintemute et al. 2001). Expanding state and federal prohibitions to people convicted of violent misdemeanors could reduce the risk of future violence without interfering with the rights of law-abiding gun owners. Similarly, Milwaukee's Chief Flynn, observing that in many places a person might retain their ability to carry a firearm even after numerous violent or firearm-related misdemeanors, asserted that preventing this group from obtaining firearms could reduce violence.



## 2. Improve Relations between Police and Communities of Color

Police have a central role in responding to and preventing gun violence. Yet in order for them to be most effective, police must be viewed as a legitimate authority in the communities they serve. This legitimacy is an important component of a collaborative police-community relationship, which helps reduce and prevent violence. Although relationship building and culture change can seem elusive, several strategies have demonstrated promise in promoting greater police legitimacy. These strategies include training officers in procedural justice strategies and implicit bias, creating more avenues for police-community partnerships, building systems that create police accountability, and prioritizing violent crime.

### **Recommendation 2a: Incorporate Procedural Justice and Implicit Bias Reduction into Law Enforcement Operations**

Promoting procedural justice and addressing implicit bias are essential to building police legitimacy, particularly in communities that have experienced negative encounters with law enforcement. Effective recruiting and hiring practices will be an important part of this. Agencies should recruit and hire people who can work effectively with communities and have procedurally just interactions, and screen out others who may be less able to do so.

- **Assess and address implicit biases in recruits and officers:** As Chief Dixon noted, “hiring the right officers from the start is important. There are some folks you just can’t change.” During hiring and officers’ initial probationary period, departments should assess prospective and probationary officers’ biases, and the likelihood that these biases will negatively affect their interactions with community members. The point of these assessments is not to screen out anyone with implicit biases, as everyone possesses them, but to identify officers who can address their biases in the course of police work and screen out those unable to do so. Departments can assist their officers in this process by providing academy and in-service training that teaches officers how to identify and mitigate their biases. The Fair and Impartial Policing program (resource 5) provides an example of how police departments can incorporate strategies that identify and reduce biases into their operations. Departments can also look to the report *Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy* (resource 6), which explores the training method developed by Engaging Communities steering committee member Tracey Meares and Yale professor Tom Tyler in collaboration with the Chicago Police Department.

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*Hiring the right officers from the start is important. There are some folks you just can't change.—Chief John Dixon, Petersburg, Virginia, Police*

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- **Train officers in procedurally just practices:** Procedural justice suggests that a person's perception of how they are treated by police shapes perceptions of police legitimacy (see box on page 19). As Captain Drennon Lindsey of the Oakland Police Department noted, if officers are to be held accountable for having procedurally just interactions, they need procedural justice training modeled on the practices of successful departments. Such trainings need to be provided through both the academy and in-service training and should explain key procedural justice concepts and demonstrate how these concepts can improve officers' interactions with community members. The most effective programs are delivered by credible messengers—officers with substantial on-the-ground experience who can encourage their peers to engage with these trainings. Departments interested in implementing these trainings can look to the report *Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy* (resource 6) as well as the Building Trust with Communities project of George Mason University (resource 9).
- **Ensure that police reflect the diversity of their communities:** For police to be effective, Rev. Dwight Williams suggested, they “need to better reflect the makeup of the community.” Fridell and Scott (2005) identify three advantages to having a diverse police agency. First, diversity suggests to communities that the agency's practices are equitable. Second, it increases the agency's ability to understand a broader range of perspectives that police may encounter in their neighborhoods. Finally, diversity increases the probability that officers will encounter a wider array of perspectives through daily workplace exposure and learn to better understand these perspectives.



*Petersburg Police Chief John Dixon describes strategies for building police accountability in communities of color.*

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## **Police Legitimacy and Procedural Justice**

Yale University professor Tom Tyler (2004, 86-87) defines police legitimacy as a belief that “police are entitled to call upon the public to follow the law and help combat crime, and that members of the public have an obligation to engage in cooperative behaviors.” The degree to which communities view the police as legitimate has a major impact on public safety. The more police are viewed as legitimate, the more likely people are to assist them and to comply with the law, even among those who are more likely to commit serious violent crimes (Papachristos, Meares, and Fagan 2012; Tyler and Fagan 2008; Tyler, Fagan, and Geller 2014).

Procedural justice is an important part of building police legitimacy. Procedural justice theory suggests that a person’s perception of how they are treated during an interaction with a criminal justice agency—and not merely the outcome of that interaction—matters for how that person and their broader community perceive that agency. For example, when a person is arrested, they are likely to view the encounter very differently if the officer acted respectfully during the encounter than if an officer is demeaning. Procedural justice is generally seen as having four components: citizen participation in the proceedings, neutrality of the decisionmaking figure, respect for the citizen shown by the decisionmaker, and trustworthiness of the decisionmaker’s motives (Mazarolle et al. 2013). In addition to improving police-community relations, Engaging Communities steering committee member Professor Tracey Meares has suggested that building legitimacy through procedurally just encounters can help reduce gun violence in communities of color (Meares 2009).

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## **Recommendation 2b: Use Data to Hold Police Accountable**

Participants across the three sites believed that holding police accountable to the communities they serve is an essential component of building strong police-community partnerships. Such systems also help law enforcement executives assess initiatives, monitor progress toward improving the community’s perception of police, and identify new ways to improve community relations. To advance these goals, accountability systems need to both provide new data sources on law enforcement activity and open existing data to greater outside review (see box on page 21).

- **Measure community satisfaction with police:** Law enforcement agencies should identify and employ meaningful methods to constantly monitor communities’ satisfaction with police. For example, RespectStat (resource 10) regularly surveys people who have had interactions with the police to assess their satisfaction with the encounter. Feedback from this survey allows police executives to assess how districts in their jurisdictions and their agencies overall are doing in their interactions with the community.

- **Develop civilian review boards:** Dante Barry, executive director of Million Hoodies, identified civilian review boards as an essential tool for promoting police accountability. These boards are organized in various ways. Well-resourced boards may have paid staff and more authority through subpoena powers, while other boards rely primarily on part-time staff or volunteers and may have more limited powers. When civilian review boards are implemented properly, some cities and law enforcement agencies have found that they improve police-community relations and the quality of internal police investigations (Finn 2001). Effective civilian review processes build buy-in among key decisionmakers, including law enforcement executives and frontline officers. Cities and agencies interested in establishing civilian review boards can draw on Peter Finn’s *Citizen Review of Police: Approaches and Implementation* (resource 11), which explores how these boards can be structured and what issues and challenges jurisdictions can expect to encounter in developing these boards.
- **Require use of body-worn cameras:** Since 2014, body-worn video cameras have become an increasingly common component of police accountability initiatives. Early studies of body cameras in Rialto, California, suggest that this technology may benefit both police and community members, reducing uses of force and complaints against officers. Body cameras are not a panacea, and agencies implementing this technology need to think carefully about issues such as protecting privacy.<sup>10</sup> However, if used appropriately, body cameras may provide a valuable tool for promoting transparency and accountability. The reports *Implementing a Body-Worn Camera Program* and *Body-Worn Cameras: Model Policy* (resource 12) explore how to effectively deploy a body-worn camera program, while *Do Body Worn Cameras Create More Problems Than They Solve?* (resource 13) addresses some common challenges faced by jurisdictions implementing a body-worn camera program.
- **Make civilian complaint and use-of-force data transparent:** Collecting and publishing complaint and police use-of-force data can help police departments build relationships among the communities they work with. Readily accessible data can help police demonstrate that issues are dealt with fairly and consistently, reducing reasons for distrust (Jackson 2015). Code for America’s Comport project (resource 14) offers an example of how law enforcement agencies can create transparent, publicly accessible use-of-force databases. The Comport database provides aggregated information on the types of force used, the racial breakdowns of who force was used against, and breakouts of which police divisions used force.
- **Collect, analyze, and maintain stop, search, and arrest data based on race:** Requiring that police report demographic data on stops provides transparency and accountability. Officers

should report the race and gender of an individual stopped, the location of the stop, the reasons for the stop, whether a search was conducted, whether contraband was discovered, and whether an arrest was made. Missouri law (Missouri Revised Statutes 590.650) provides an example of how this can be done. The law requires agencies and their officers to gather information on the race, gender, and age of people they encounter in motor vehicle stops and mandates that this information be reported to the governor and the legislature.

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### **The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing**

*On December 18, 2014, President Barack Obama created the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing and tasked it with identifying best practices for improving trust between police and communities while reducing crime. The task force held seven sessions, heard testimony from more than 100 people, and received written testimony from a broad spectrum of justice system stakeholders. Drawing on these insights, the task force developed the Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (resource 8), which organized these findings into six pillars: building trust and legitimacy, policy and oversight, technology and social media, community policing and crime reduction, officer training and education, and officer safety and wellness. Within each pillar, the report offers recommendations designed to improve the relationships between police and communities and promote long-term improvements in the efficiency and character of American policing.*

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## **Recommendation 2c: Create More Opportunities for Police-Community Partnerships**

Procedural justice research that shows positive interactions between police and community residents can improve residents' perceptions of law enforcement (Tyler and Fagan 2008). Law enforcement agencies should embrace police-community partnerships and other strategies that both prevent crime and increase positive interactions with community members.

- **Support accountable foot patrols:** At the Milwaukee convening Chief Flynn noted that foot patrols increase a neighborhood's sense of safety and satisfaction with the police by boosting face-to-face police-community contacts. However, simply sending officers out on foot patrols (or similar out-of-vehicle approaches) does not guarantee that positive, nonenforcement contacts will take place. To encourage positive interactions, law enforcement agencies should measure the community engagement activities of foot patrol officers and their supervisors to

ensure positive contact is occurring, and tie these measurements to officers' evaluations (Cordner 2010).

- **Create nonenforcement community engagement opportunities:** Several agencies have organized events that allow officers to engage with community members outside an enforcement context. In Richmond, Virginia, Sgt. Carol Adams noted that the police department has a Young Adult Police Commission that embeds youth in the department through weekly meetings with agency leadership and gives them an opportunity to bring concerns to department executives. The Community Safety Partnership program (resource 15), a collaboration between the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Police Department, is another example of programming that focuses on building long-term, positive connections between police and communities.
- **Train officers in de-escalation tactics:** De-escalation training teaches officers responding to a critical incident, such as someone brandishing a weapon or experiencing a mental health crisis, to de-escalate the situation by “slowing the situation down” and looking for opportunities to end the incident without resort to force, particularly lethal force. The Police Executive Research Forum report *An Integrated Approach to De-escalation and Minimizing Use of Force* (resource 16) draws on the experiences of an international cross-section of police leaders to share tactics that can be used to de-escalate a situation. Such strategies include creating specialized crisis intervention teams trained to assist people experiencing mental health issues, as well as better supervisory practices to ensure that experienced police leaders and supervisors are on site providing guidance at all critical incidents.

## **Recommendation 2d: Prioritize Policing and Prosecuting Violent Crime**

While the 1990s saw the rise of aggressive enforcement of minor offenses (“broken windows” or “zero-tolerance” policing), many police chiefs and communities increasingly find such strategies counterproductive. Zero-tolerance policing and broad-based strategies like the stop-and-frisk strategies used in New York City and elsewhere in the mid-2000s can lead to indiscriminate arrests and convictions—particularly when targeted in communities largely populated by people of color—for low-level offenses like possession of small amounts of marijuana. These criminal convictions prevent an entire class of citizens from obtaining jobs, housing, and other necessities of life for years. Aggressive enforcement of minor offenses can also deter community members from collaborating with police to stop violent crime and divert law enforcement resources from preventing more violent crime.

Refocusing police and prosecution efforts on gun violence and other serious violence could help address these problems. Chief Flynn noted that in response to violence in Milwaukee, the police department has deprioritized arrests for low-level offenses while working with federal agencies to aggressively follow up on firearm-related crimes.

- **Focus enforcement on violent crime:** Focusing law enforcement efforts on violent offenses and the people at highest risk to commit such offenses is a proven strategy for reducing violence. Discussing Stockton’s strategy for reducing violence, Chief Jones stated that “0.25 to 1 percent of Stockton’s population drives all the violence, and focusing on them reduces violence.” In Stockton and other cities, focused enforcement efforts that concentrate on the small set of people engaged in serious violence have reduced violence (Kennedy et al. 2001; Papachristos and Kirk 2015).
- **Target illegal firearm trafficking:** Mike McLively of the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence pointed out that reducing illegal firearm trafficking is an essential component of reducing violence. To reduce the volume of trafficked weapons, law enforcement agencies should look for opportunities to target high-volume straw purchasers and people who provide these weapons—for example, police sting operations on dealers making illegal sales were found to reduce the diversion of guns to people who use them in crimes (Webster et al. 2006).

### 3. Invest in Evidence-Based Social Service Interventions

Community members in all three sites indicated that gun violence is often a symptom of deeper economic and social challenges stemming from disinvestment in communities of color. These community members insisted that gun violence prevention should also address economic and social challenges facing people at high risk of committing violence and being victimized by violence, as well as those transitioning back into the community from prison or jail. Often, this group, the people at the highest risk of engaging in violence, is also at great risk for being victimized by violence. They may also have been victimized repeatedly before, in addition to facing isolation, abandonment, and social stigmatization. Investments in key evidence-based social service programs for these groups can substantially reduce violence and recidivism while improving their ability to thrive and contribute to the healthy growth of their communities. Investing in evidence-based social services that reduce violence can also lay the groundwork for economic growth. Both Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and San Joaquin

County Administrator Monica Nino identified violence reduction as an essential first step in promoting economic development.

### **Recommendation 3a: Invest in Programs That Change the Norms Facilitating Violence**

Effective gun violence prevention has increasingly focused on changing social norms that favor violence among the small group of highest-risk people. Typically, “changing norms” means conveying through a wide array of means that violence is unacceptable. While part of this process can involve increased law enforcement to elevate the consequences of engaging in violence, evidence suggests the most effective violence prevention programs rely primarily on mobilizing the community—including family members and friends of people at high risk for violence—to send the message that violence is not socially acceptable and will not be tolerated (Papachristos and Kirk 2015; Skogan et al. 2009).

- **Launch community-based violence prevention programs that target social norms:** Two programs have been found effective in working with the community to target the norms and behaviors that drive violence. Cure Violence (resource 18) combines community mobilization against gun violence with conflict interrupters who mediate disputes and discourage retaliation after shootings, as well as social service providers who assist those at the highest risk for participating in violence (Webster et al. 2012). The programs of the National Network for Safe Communities (resource 17) draw on the Boston Ceasefire model (see box on page 25), combining a strong community message discouraging violence, increased law enforcement focused on the people and open drug markets that drive violence, and social service outreach (Braga and Weisburd 2015; Wallace et al. 2015).
- **Educate communities about the risks of carrying firearms:** In Milwaukee, Mayor Tom Barrett suggested that changing the mindset of people who carry firearms is essential to preventing violence. There was broad agreement across the three cities that many people carry guns because they feel unsafe, despite research suggesting that possessing a firearm puts a person at higher risk to be a victim of either firearm suicide or homicide (Wintemute 2015). Carrying a firearm illegally also puts community members at greater risk for arrest and incarceration. Providing community education to help people understand the risks associated with firearm carrying could help them make more informed assessments about how carrying a gun will impact their safety.



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### **Boston Ceasefire and the National Network for Safe Communities**

*The Operation Ceasefire “focused deterrence” model started in Boston and, through the National Network for Safe Communities, has been adopted in Stockton, California, Gary, Indiana, and many other communities. The focused deterrence model concentrates law enforcement attention on people engaged in serious violence. Police explicitly communicate to this group that violence will not be tolerated and that police will respond with increased police presence, arrests, and increased use of probation and parole sanctions for those who break the terms of their supervision. At the same time, as part of the Group Violence Intervention program, service providers, churches and other community groups, and probation and parole officers offer employment, training opportunities, and other supportive social services to individuals at high risk of engaging in violence (see recommendation 3a and resource 17). Together, these programs substantially reduced both youth homicide and nonfatal gun violence (Braga and Weisburd 2012).*

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### **Recommendation 3b: Invest in Wraparound Public Services**

Social services that support and protect people who wish to disengage from violence are an essential component of the effective violence prevention strategies described above. Such services need to “wrap around,” addressing the broad range of needs faced by people transitioning back to the community from jail or prison. Individuals who receive social services through a violence-prevention initiative can often become powerful allies for future violence prevention efforts. Moreover, community members are generally more willing to discourage violence when they know that supports are being offered alongside their condemnation of violence (Crandall and Wong 2012).

- **Deliver services that address the full spectrum of challenges faced by people reentering the community or at high risk of violence:** Many people at high risk of violence or transitioning back to the community from prison will be facing a wide range of challenges that inhibit healthy development and put them at high risk for further involvement with the justice system. They may have been victimized by violence and socioeconomic hardship previously, and such hardships play an inescapable role their development. Social service providers and policymakers will therefore need to work together address a range of needs, which may include mental health treatment, trauma care, educational support, vocational training, job placement, drug treatment, housing, and mentoring. The Los Angeles Gang Reduction and Youth Development program (LA GRYD) offers an example of how to develop a social service infrastructure that can address the broad array of challenges faced by people at high risk of becoming involved in gun violence (resource 19).

- **Deliver support services through peers and people with shared life experiences:** Delivering services through such groups is an important part of engaging the community in violence prevention. Previous research on violence prevention has suggested that peers and people with similar life experiences may be seen as more credible among people at high risk of participating in violence (Gorman-Smith and Cosey-Gay 2014). Anthony Ruiz, the outreach coordinator for Friends Outside, supported this, noting that these “services need to be delivered by someone who has lived that life.” Compensating community members who participate in these collaborative efforts will also help sustain service delivery and ensure that community members can participate fully in violence prevention efforts.

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*Services need to be delivered by someone who has lived that life.*

*—Anthony Ruiz, Stockton Ceasefire*

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- **Include families of people at high risk of violence in service delivery:** Supporting and engaging the families of people at risk of committing future crimes improves the chances that these people will be able to function effectively in the community; in addition, the family receiving services benefits (La Vigne et al. 2008; Shollenberger 2009). At the Stockton convening, Mirna Juarez noted that the primary burden for responding to and remediating violence in many of these communities falls on mothers, who receive only limited consideration in many violence prevention programs. Compounding this issue, as both Elle Cunningham in Richmond and Alejandra Gutierrez in Stockton report, current responses to violence often victimize families of people at risk of violence by targeting them for raids or increased law enforcement attention, further damaging the support system for people at risk. Housing Opportunities and Services Together is an example of a program that seeks to provide services to the whole range of community members suffering the consequences of poverty and violence (resource 20).

## 4. Promote Cross-Sector Collaboration with Meaningful Community Engagement

Gun violence prevention involves a wide array of stakeholders, including community members, police, courts, religious institutions and other nonprofits, local government, and social service providers. Collaboration between these groups is necessary for successful gun violence reduction. Effective collaboration is coordinated through strategic planning, uses data from various sources to identify and address the drivers of gun violence, and promotes civic engagement so that communities can mobilize to execute strategies.

### Recommendation 4a: Integrate and Share Data to Guide Cross-Sector Collaboration

Data are essential to developing effective strategic violence reduction plans. Groups that hope to devise solutions to gun violence first need to understand the major drivers of violence, then how the programs they deploy to address this violence are performing. Accurate data allow collaborators to target the right issues and to provide accountability for organizations leading violence prevention efforts.

- **Create a homicide incident review system:** Incident review systems are a data-driven approach to understanding violence by combining a broad range of data sources, including public health, justice system, and educational data, to develop a detailed understanding of the nature and causes of fatal violence. As Mallory O'Brien, founding director of the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission, suggested, homicide and shooting incident reviews allow communities to understand why violence occurs while providing the insights needed to develop an effective response. The Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission and DataShare system (resource 21) provides an example of the type of data integration that can guide strategic violence reduction efforts, as well as evidence that such an approach can reduce violence.
- **Share accountability measures:** Several participants at the Milwaukee meeting noted that various government agencies and nonprofit service providers that respond to gun violence do emphasize accountability enough. Agencies responding collaboratively to violence prevention should share their performance and accountability metrics and data among themselves and publicly. Sharing metrics and data will help keep agencies accountable for executing agreed-upon strategies while identifying best practices for measuring effectiveness. Track DC (resource 22), a District of Columbia website that shows performance measures for every city

agency, is an example of how accountability measures can be created and shared governmentwide.

## **Recommendation 4b: Support Cross-Sector Community-Based Strategic Planning**

Effective violence prevention requires working with a broad range of groups to identify key drivers of violence, develop solutions to address these drivers, and determine who is best positioned to implement these solutions. Collaborative networks can ensure that efforts continue by regularly convening a wide array of stakeholders. Using these convenings as a platform, stakeholders may then develop and implement a strategic plan that has the input and support of the community.

- **Convene and support a standing strategic planning group:** Successful strategic planning processes engage a broad range of stakeholders who meet regularly. This group should include representatives from the community, government and nonprofit social service providers, religious institutions, and a broad range of public safety agencies including police, prosecutors, and representatives from jail and community supervision agencies. Additionally, this group should meet regularly rather than infrequently or once. Not only do regular gatherings put partners in the same room more often, but they facilitate communication and follow-up outside meetings. Participants in all three Engaging Communities convenings found such communication essential for translating observations into action. The Justice Reinvestment at the Local Level planning guide (resource 23) offers a road map for developing a strategic planning group that can guide these efforts.
- **Create mechanisms for community input and leadership:** Community leadership is an essential component of the strategic planning process and of launching successful violence prevention programs (see box on page 30). As Stockton City Council Member Michael Tubbs noted, “without community-led responses to violence, we will wind up right back where we started.” Joy Holliday reinforced these sentiments, noting that while data play an important role in strategic planning, communities are ultimately most affected by new policies. Thus, communities must ultimately determine what outcomes are most important in a violence reduction effort and what strategies are acceptable means for achieving those outcomes. Obtaining this input is a crucial part of developing an inclusive strategic plan. Community meetings, though often a go-to method for gathering feedback, may be insufficient to reach all but the most civically active community members. Soliciting community opinions door to door provides perspectives from a broader group of residents. Whatever mechanism is used to

solicit community opinion, leaders must make sure resources are available to adequately compensate community members for their work guiding violence prevention strategies.

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*Without community-led responses to violence, we will wind up right back where we started.—Stockton City Council Member Michael Tubbs*

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- **Develop a strategic plan with clear performance metrics:** A strategic planning group should review the criminal justice, social service, and educational data brought by different partners, focus on the most relevant indicators, and develop a plan for reducing violence that is based on clear performance measures. Stockton took this approach in developing the Marshall Plan, a comprehensive violence prevention strategy that involved coordinated action on the part of police, courts, jails, and a wide array of social service providers. The plan began with a detailed assessment of the nature of violence in Stockton, identifying the major factors driving violence. Each partner was then given clear goals designed to reduce this violence, and an Office of Violence Prevention was created to collect data on these efforts and coordinate service provision. Since the launch of the Marshall Plan, Stockton has seen a slow but steady and sustained decline in homicide victimizations and nonfatal shootings, as well as in overall crime.

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### Community Researchers and Participatory Research

Whether data are collected through interviews, focus groups, or door-to-door surveys, having community members take the lead is often an effective way to get better data. Residents typically know the local dynamics and culture of a neighborhood in a way that allows them to engage with other community members more effectively. This model, sometimes referred to as the participatory action research model, allows academic researchers and communities to collaborate to produce knowledge and positive social changes (McIntyre 2008).

Who Pays? The True Cost of Incarceration on Families (deVuono-powell et al. 2015) provides an example of how this process can be implemented. The report developers collaborated with 20 community-based organizations to train community members to interview people impacted by mass incarceration and to learn more about the full range of harms mass incarceration imposes on the families of people who have been incarcerated. Developing research by collaborating with community members who have firsthand experiences with the subject matter can create a more complete picture of the issues and give communities a leadership role in devising solutions to the challenges they face.

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## Conclusion

Gun violence prevention in the United States is at a crossroads. Firearm violence continues to inflict a devastating and disproportionate toll on the nation overall and communities of color in particular and is acknowledged as unacceptable. At the same time, communities of color are increasingly unwilling to accept the high costs and extensive intrusions that the justice system too often inflicts in its response to this violence.

Engaging Communities sought to draw on insights from community members in three American cities to develop a road map for realizing safe neighborhoods. Participants in these convenings identified a clear path forward for preventing gun violence that reduces easy access to firearms by people at high risk of engaging in violence, builds partnerships between law enforcement and communities, increases investments in evidence-based social services, and engages the community



Researchers and community leaders in Richmond compare notes on the factors that drive gun violence.

as full collaborators in cross-sector violence prevention efforts. The recommendations from these communities align with many of the best practices research has identified for reducing violence.

Together, these recommendations represent an ambitious agenda that could substantially reduce violence across the United States, improve relations between law enforcement and communities of color, and reduce the reliance on incarceration by preventing violence before it occurs. Implementing this agenda will require buy-in from community, nonprofit, religious, government, and law enforcement leaders, as well as the support to implement and sustain these solutions. The insights and recommendations provided by these communities present an opportunity to rethink how America approaches gun violence.

# Appendix A. Convening Participants

## Washington, DC

**Judith Browne Dianis**

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*President and General Counsel, LatinoJustice PRLDEF*

**Inimai Chettiar**

*Director, Justice Program, Brennan Center*

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**Kirsten Levingston**

*Program Officer, Ford Foundation*

**Marc Morial**

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**Terrance Pitts**

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**Carter Stewart**

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## Richmond, Virginia

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**John Dixon**

*Chief, Petersburg Police Department*

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*President, Baptist Ministers' Conference of Goochland and Vicinity*

**Rev. Dr. Marlon Haskell**

*President, Baptist Ministers' Conference of Richmond and Vicinity*

**Rev. Dr. M. Julius Hayes**

*Founder, Saturday Academy for Positive Self-Development*

**Wendy Hobbs**

*President, Goochland NAACP*

**Joy Jackson**

*President and CEO, Childish LLC*

**E. Martin Jewell**

*Former City Councilman, Richmond, Virginia*

**Terry Jones**

*Founder, Brothers on the Block*

**Earl Lewis, Jr.**

*Founder, Face II Face Productions*

**Rev. Dan Matarita**

*Restoration & Deliverance Ministry*

**Sen. A. Donald McEachin**

*Senator, 9th Virginia State Senate District*



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*Director/Producer, Operation Black 2 the Light*

**Morris Roberson**  
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**Dr. Adria Scharf**  
*Executive Director, Richmond Peace Education Center*

## **Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

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*Commissioner, City of Milwaukee Health Department*

**Tom Barrett**  
*Mayor, City of Milwaukee*

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*Safe Zone Ambassador, Helping Others Obtain Direction*

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*Managing Partner, Von Communications*

**Mike Wilder**  
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## Stockton, California

### **Patricia Aguilar**

*Cultural Roots Program Volunteer, Fathers & Families of San Joaquin*

### **Tom Amato**

*Executive Director, People and Congregations Together (PACT)*

### **Elisa Batista**

*Campaign Director, MomsRising.org/MamásConPoder.org*

### **Andre Belion**

*Activist, Formerly Incarcerated Standing Together (FIST)*

### **Bobby Bivens**

*President, NAACP Stockton*

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### **Felicia Estrada**

*Program Coordinator, El Concilio*

### **Gary Gershon**

*Lawyer, Stockton*

### **Daniela Gilbert**

*Deputy Director, California Partnership for Safe Communities*

### **Juan Gomez**

*Cofounder, Motivating Individual Leadership for Public Advancement (MILPA)*

### **Maricela Gonzalez**

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### **Mark Gonzales**

*CEO, Institute of Narrative Growth*

### **Alejandra Gutierrez**

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### **Brandon Harrison**

*Youth Leader, Fathers & Families of San Joaquin*

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### **Sokha Kaz Lek**

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*Captain, Oakland Police Department*

### **Andrew Lucero**

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**Rev. Dwight Williams**

*Chair, Stockton Marshall Plan Committee*

**Trevor Womack**

*Deputy Chief of Police, Stockton Police Department*

**Yishmael Yisrael**

*Youth Leader, Fathers & Families of San Joaquin*

# Appendix B. Convening Agendas

## RICHMOND AGENDA (OCTOBER 20–21, 2015)

**October 20**

**Dinner and Group Discussion**

**October 21**

**Welcome and Introduction**

Spencer Overton, President, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

**Facilitated Discussion #1: The Problem**

What does gun violence prevention mean to you? What is the nature of gun violence in your community?

**Facilitated Discussion #2: Solutions**

How do we address gun violence and racial disparities in violence prevention in a way that is effective, respectful, and accountable?

**Breakout Sessions: Getting from Here to There**

In small breakout groups, discuss the solutions you think are most important for reducing gun violence and racial disparities, what challenges or obstacles stand in the way of achieving those solutions, and how you would address those challenges.

**Facilitated Discussion #3: Report Back from Breakouts**

**Facilitated Discussion #4: How Do We Make This Change?**

**Wrap-Up**

Spencer Overton

Nina Vinik, Program Director, Joyce Foundation

Kilolo Kijakazi, Institute Fellow, Urban Institute

## MILWAUKEE AGENDA (NOVEMBER 12–13, 2015)

**November 12**

**Dinner and Group Discussion**

**November 13**

**Presentation from Milwaukee Chief of Police Edward Flynn**

**Welcome**

Spencer Overton, President, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

**Facilitated Discussion #1: The Problem**

What is the nature of gun violence in your community? What does gun violence prevention mean to you?

**Breakout Sessions: Solutions**

How do we address gun violence and racial disparities in violence prevention in a way that is effective, respectful, and accountable?

**Facilitated Discussion #2: Report Back on Solutions from Breakout Sessions**

### **Voting on Breakout Group Solutions**

Vote on which strategies from the breakout groups you believe are most likely to effectively reduce gun violence.

### **Breakout Sessions: Action Plans**

How would you bring these solutions to fruition? What are the challenges to achieving them? How would you address those challenges? Who needs to be involved for this to be successful?

### **Facilitated Discussion #3: Report Back on Action Plans and Group Discussion**

#### **Wrap-Up**

Spencer Overton

## **STOCKTON AGENDA (DECEMBER 10–11, 2015)**

### **December 10**

#### **Welcome and Introduction**

Spencer Overton, President, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

#### **Presentation from Stockton Chief of Police Eric Jones**

#### **Facilitated Discussion #1: The Problem**

What is the nature of gun violence in your community? What does gun violence prevention mean to you?

#### **Breakout Sessions: Solutions**

How do we address gun violence and racial disparities in violence prevention in a way that is effective, respectful, and accountable?

#### **Facilitated Discussion #2: Report Back on Solutions from Breakout Sessions**

#### **Voting on Breakout Group Solutions**

Vote on which strategies from the breakout groups you believe are most likely to effectively reduce gun violence

#### **Dinner and Group Discussion**

### **December 11**

#### **Breakout Sessions: Action Plans**

How would you bring these solutions to fruition? What are the challenges to achieving them? How would you address those challenges? Who needs to be involved for this to be successful?

#### **Facilitated Discussion #3: Report Back on Action Plans from Breakout Sessions**

#### **Wrap-Up**

Spencer Overton

# Appendix C. Road Map Resources

The policy reforms laid out in this road map offer a way for governments, community groups, law enforcement agencies, and nonprofits to prevent violence, improve communication, and build healthier neighborhoods. However, implementing these reforms will be complex, requiring not only time and resources but also flexibility, creativity, detailed awareness of local circumstances, buy-in from community and law enforcement partners, and substantial technical assistance from experts. Daunting as this challenge may seem, cities across the country have begun the hard work of launching strategies that reduce violence in ways that aim to include, rather than harm, communities of color. Along the way, they have provided useful lessons for other jurisdictions, many of which are described in the resources below, which offer a starting point for implementing many strategies discussed in this road map.

Resources are organized based on the four policy areas identified in this report:

- reduce easy access to firearms for people at high risk of engaging in violence,
- improve relations between police and communities of color,
- invest in evidence-based social service interventions, and
- promote cross-sector collaboration with meaningful community engagement.

## Reduce Easy Access to Firearms for People at High Risk of Engaging in Violence

### **1. *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis***

Researchers have developed an immense body of research exploring the impact of gun violence and strategies that can address this violence. *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis* (edited by Daniel W. Webster and Jon S. Vernick, 2013) reviews both the US research and the larger body of international research to explore what policies prevent gun violence. The book explores the evidence developed by leading gun violence researchers on a wide range of topics, including gun violence prevention among people with mental illness, domestic gun violence prevention strategies, and Second Amendment jurisprudence. By identifying evidence-based policy solutions for a wide range of firearm challenges, the book provides jurisdictions with a valuable tool for reviewing the

research support for prospective violence prevention strategies or for identifying possible solutions to a jurisdiction's most pressing violence challenges. This book can be obtained through the [Johns Hopkins University Press website](http://jhupbooks.press.jhu.edu) (<http://jhupbooks.press.jhu.edu>), and a [brief report](#) updating the book's findings can be found on the website of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (<http://www.jhsph.edu>).

## **2. *Regulating Guns in America: A Comprehensive Analysis of Gun Laws Nationwide***

Firearm regulation in the United States is governed by a complex set of federal, state, and local laws. The wide array of different rules governing firearms poses a challenge for either understanding the current state of firearms regulation or identifying opportunities to improve existing firearm laws. *Regulating Guns in America: A Comprehensive Analysis of Gun Laws Nationwide*, a report developed by the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, is an invaluable resource for understanding how federal, state, and local governments regulate guns. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the status of federal and state firearm regulations in 2014 as well as analyses of select local laws. The report analyzes 28 areas of firearm policy including concealed firearm carrying, gun trafficking and straw purchasing, and firearm dealer regulation. The impact of the Second Amendment on firearm policy is also discussed. Each discussion includes references to the relevant case law and notes about how policies on these issues vary across the 50 states. This [report](#) (Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence 2014) can be accessed through the website of the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence.

## **3. *Firearm Removal/Retrieval in Cases of Domestic Violence***

Domestic and family violence incidents represent some of the most dangerous cases of gun violence, and the tools prosecutors and law enforcement agencies have to deal with these incidents vary substantially by state. *Firearm Removal/Retrieval in Cases of Domestic Violence* is a comprehensive report by Kelly Roskam of the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, the Consortium for Risk-Based Firearm Policy, and Prosecutors against Gun Violence that describes the resources and strategies prosecutors and law enforcement have available for navigating these challenging cases. The report provides a comprehensive array of tools for using court-based strategies to deal with firearms in domestic violence cases, including example programs and documents that jurisdictions can use to inform their own efforts. The [report](#) can be accessed at the Prosecutors against Gun Violence website.

#### 4. Operation LIPSTICK

Straw purchasing is an important avenue for obtaining guns used in crimes. Women are often key actors in these transactions, diverting firearms to people who are legally unable to obtain weapons. Preventing these straw purchases without further contributing to mass incarceration and arrests in communities of color is a delicate policy balancing act best achieved through community programming. Operation LIPSTICK is one such program to deter straw purchasing without relying on incarceration. A collaboration between the nonprofit group Citizens for Safety, state and federal law enforcement, and academic researchers, Operation LIPSTICK trains women to talk to other women in their communities about the risks and dangers of straw purchasing. It also provides community service providers with protocols and strategies for preventing women from being exploited as straw purchasers of firearms. An [overview of Operation LIPSTICK](http://operationlipstick.org) can be found at <http://operationlipstick.org>.

## Improve Relations between Police and Communities of Color

#### 5. Fair and Impartial Policing

The Fair and Impartial Policing (FIP) training program provides officers with a forum for understanding what implicit biases are, how these biases can affect their work, and how they can manage implicit biases to improve their policing efforts. FIP trainings are designed to reduce defensiveness or hostility that law enforcement officers may feel at the idea of participating in biases training by avoiding blame and emphasizing the science behind implicit biases. FIP also aims to build bias management into all levels of an agency's command structure by offering trainings for frontline officers, frontline supervisors (e.g., sergeants), mid-level command staff, and executive leadership. In addition, "train the trainer" sessions provide agency staff with the skills and expertise to deliver FIP training to their recruit and frontline supervisor colleagues. Law enforcement officers who have taken FIP trainings have generally given the program positive reviews and have found it effective in helping them address implicit biases (Fridell 2013). More information on FIP can be found at <http://www.fairimpartialpolicing.com/>.



## 6. *Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy*

Drawing on the experience of the Stockton, Oakland, Salinas, and Chicago police departments, this paper from the California Partnership for Safe Communities provides both background and practical lessons on how to implement a procedural justice training program. The guide, *Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy: Using Training as a Foundation for Strengthening Community Relationships*, traces the procedural justice training program to its origins, when tensions between communities of color and the Chicago Police Department (CPD) led CPD to collaborate with Yale professors Tracey Meares and Tom Tyler to develop the first procedural justice training.

This training program explains key legitimacy and procedural justice concepts to officers and emphasizes how they can use these concepts to improve both officer safety and the quality of their community interactions. Using small group work and open discussions, the training helps officers integrate procedural justice principles like respect and neutrality into their interactions with community members. The training also integrates procedural justice concepts into *internal* agency decisionmaking, promoting fairness in procedures like promotion and assignment processes. Encouraging agencies to treat their officers fairly is in turn an important part of helping officers treat people in the community fairly. These trainings are delivered by credible messengers—officers with substantial experience—which further encourages people to engage with the training. Procedural justice training is not a cure-all, but it lays the foundation among agency staff for further procedural justice reforms. The report concludes with a set of checklists agencies can use to plan the launch of their own procedural justice initiatives. *Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy* can be found at the Bureau of Justice Assistance website (<http://www.bja.gov>).

## 7. *Racial Reconciliation, Truth Telling, and Police Legitimacy*

Law enforcement agencies and communities interested in building trust will find it valuable to understand the basic concepts of police legitimacy and racial reconciliation, and why these ideas matter for violence reduction. The guide *Racial Reconciliation, Truth Telling, and Police Legitimacy* from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services provides a readable and nuanced discussion of key concepts in police legitimacy and racial reconciliation. It explores the challenge of preventing violence while building community trust from the perspectives of both community members and law enforcement and explains how the concepts of legitimacy and racial reconciliation are important to effective violence prevention. The [report](#) can be accessed on the website for the National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice (<http://www.trustandjustice.org>). The National Initiative site also

provides examples of other jurisdictions and law enforcement agencies working to integrate procedural justice into their operations.

## **8. Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing**

Convened in the wake of several high-profile clashes between police and communities of color, the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing sought to identify the sources of conflict between police and communities of color and find ways to reduce that conflict and build trust. The *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* is the result of these deliberations. The report is expansive and provides an array of concrete recommendations for rebuilding trust, including procedural justice and legitimacy training, strengthened oversight of and use of police policies, and increased social media engagement. The comprehensive recommendations in the report are designed to improve law enforcement agencies' relationships with their communities as well as the health and safety of frontline officers. The [report](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov) can be found on the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services website (<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov>).

## **9. Building Trust with Communities**

Building Trust with Communities is a project of George Mason's Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy. The program provides law enforcement agencies with a free training resource to help agencies build trust and satisfaction in the communities they serve. The website provides a combination of training guides and videos that take law enforcement agencies through three training modules: awareness, education and training, and action and leadership. Using teaching videos and guided questions, the training encourages law enforcement officers to understand communities of colors' perspectives on law enforcement and to find ways to address implicit biases and stereotypes. All training modules can be accessed at <http://cebcp.org/evidence-based-policing/building-trust/>.

## **10. RespectStat**

Law enforcement agencies interested in improving community outreach are increasingly looking to measure the impact of their strategies with the same rigor they use when assessing the impact of crime prevention strategies. RespectStat, created by the Chicago Police Department, offers one example of how agencies can measure community satisfaction. RespectStat uses a survey, the Police-Community

Interaction survey, to ask citizens who have interacted with CPD officers through a traffic stop or a crime report about their satisfaction with the encounter. The survey is conducted either online or via telephone, and it allows police leadership to evaluate how commanders and districts are performing on building and improving satisfaction.

Findings from this survey can be used for both training and accountability. For training, seeing information from the survey can help officers understand how respectful treatment can improve citizens' perceptions of them—they can see that even if they give someone a ticket, their “car-side manner” can help improve someone’s satisfaction with a stop. For accountability purposes, RespectStat allows law enforcement executives to see how their agencies are performing and how different districts in their agency are seen by the community. This in turn allows agencies to take a data-driven approach to improving community engagement (McCarthy and Rosenbaum 2015).

## **11. Citizen Review of Police: Approaches and Implementation**

Jurisdictions interested in implementing citizen review of police will have a number of choices to make about the model they use to support this review. Such choices will include how to structure the review process, what kind of staff and support to provide the board, and what powers to vest in the board. Complicating this issue is the lack of research on what elements make a citizen review board effective (Walker 2007), so jurisdictions interested in developing these boards must review the array of existing models and determine what structures and elements are most likely to be appropriate for achieving the accountability and oversight they seek. Peter Finn’s *Citizen Review of Police: Approaches and Implementation* broadly surveys the types of citizen oversight panels, the resource investment required for the various types of boards, and the challenges jurisdictions can expect to encounter in the process of developing their own boards. The report also includes case studies of review boards and a resource section with further information on how to structure a civilian oversight process. The [report](http://www.ncjrs.gov) can be accessed at the National Criminal Justice Reference Service website (<http://www.ncjrs.gov>).

## **12. Implementing a Body-Worn Camera Program**

Body-worn cameras are a popular police accountability strategy. While comprehensive studies still need to be done, initial results from the Rialto, California, Police Department suggest that cameras are beneficial for both officers and communities: use of force among officers wearing cameras declined 59 percent while complaints against officers dropped by 87 percent (Ariel, Farrar, and Sutherland 2015).

However, implementing a body camera program requires a significant investment of time, resources, and political capital from the implementing agency. To assist law enforcement agencies in launching effective camera programs, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the Police Executive Research Forum collaborated to develop *Implementing a Body-Worn Camera Program: Recommendations and Lessons Learned*. This document explores how to build community and officer support for a body camera program and how to address some key operational issues that may arise during implementation. The [report](http://www.justice.gov) can be accessed at the Department of Justice website (<http://www.justice.gov>).

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) has created a model policy that addresses the key questions any agency adopting a camera program will have to consider. [Body-Worn Cameras: Model Policy](http://www.theIACP.org) can be accessed at <http://www.theIACP.org>. While every law enforcement agency will have unique needs and local conditions that must be accounted for, the IACP model policy provides a valuable starting point for agencies seeking to craft effective policy,

### **13. Navigating the Challenges and Opportunities of Body-Worn Cameras**

While body-worn cameras have promising applications for building community trust, they are not the panacea they are often identified as. This misunderstanding can lead to mistakes or unrealistic expectations when devising and implementing a body-worn camera program. In “Do Body Cameras Create More Problems Than They Solve?,” Nancy La Vigne draws on research from the field and interviews with policing experts to identify limitations and challenges that a well-designed body worn camera program will have to address to be effective. This [blog post](http://www.urban.org/urban-wire) can be accessed at the Urban Institute’s website (<http://www.urban.org/urban-wire>).

### **14. Comport**

Comport is a Code for America project that seeks to help agencies convert their internal affairs data into open data websites that can be used to build community trust. Comport strives to provide the technological means for law enforcement agencies seeking a transparent, responsible way to share information about complaints, use of force, and officer-involved shootings. The project is compatible with IA Pro, a leading law-enforcement professional standards software program, and is being piloted by the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department. More information about the tool can be found at <http://www.projectcomport.org>.

## 15. The Community Safety Partnership

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) program is a collaboration between the Los Angeles Police Department and the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles designed to build long-term relationships between the police and residents of several Los Angeles housing communities. The program emphasizes positive nonenforcement contacts between police and communities, including police-community collaboration on the development of youth groups and sports teams, regular attendance by police at community meetings, and referrals to social services and mental-health programming. Officers volunteer to participate in CSP and are assigned to the program for at least five years, giving them the opportunity to integrate more fully into the communities they serve. More information about the program can be found at <http://www.lapdcsp.org/>.

## 16. *An Integrated Approach to De-escalation and Minimizing Use of Force*

Police leaders have increasingly recognized that use-of-force incidents, even when lawful, can have a substantial negative impact on their department's relationship with the community. In recognition of this, the Police Executive Research Forum hosted an international law enforcement summit on how to respond to incidents with the minimal amount of force necessary in order to protect both the public and police officers. The summit brought together leaders at all agency levels, from frontline supervisors to agency leaders, and their recommendations were transformed into the report *An Integrated Approach to De-escalation and Minimizing Use of Force*.

The core objective of the report is to help law enforcement "slow an incident down," creating opportunities for additional support to arrive and reducing the pace at which officers proceed to greater levels of force. To help officers with de-escalation, the report offers numerous recommendations, including training officers to interact effectively with people experiencing mental health crises and the formation of specialized crisis response teams that have the training and leadership to manage these incidents more effectively. The [full report](#) can be accessed at <http://www.policeforum.org>. Additional resources on sound police use-of-force management practices from the Police Executive Research Forum can be found at <http://www.policeforum.org/online-documents-topic>.

# Invest in Evidence-Based Social Service Interventions

## **17. Group Violence Intervention: An Implementation Guide**

The Group Violence Intervention (GVI) is a violence prevention program developed by the National Network for Safe Communities (NNSC). GVI uses a combination of community moral authority, targeted law enforcement intervention, and a comprehensive array of social service supports to prevent violence (Braga and Weisburd 2015; Crandall and Wong 2012).

The approach has been evaluated numerous times and has consistently been found an effective strategy for reducing violence if implemented correctly. *Group Violence Intervention: An Implementation Guide* from NNSC provides clear guidance on how a jurisdiction can deploy GVI locally. The [guide](#) is available at the NNSC website (<http://www.nnscommunities.org>). Several other guides about how to implement GVI and other gun violence prevention strategies are available at <http://www.nnscommunities.org/our-work/all-guides>.

## **18. Cure Violence**

Cure Violence mobilizes the community against violence and employs teams of conflict interrupters who mediate disputes and prevent initial conflicts from escalating. The program also provides a broad array of social services to people at high risk of engaging in violence. Services are delivered by people who have similar life experiences to those currently engaged in violence, which gives outreach workers credibility and encourages people at risk of violence to engage with them (Gorman-Smith and Cosey-Gay 2014). Substantial evidence finds this approach to be effective in reducing violence (Webster et al. 2012). More information about the Cure Violence model can be found at <http://www.cureviolence.org/resources/cure-violence-resources/>.

## **19. Los Angeles Gang Reduction and Youth Development**

The Los Angeles Gang Reduction and Youth Development (LA GRYD) program takes a public health approach to discouraging gang involvement and preventing gun violence through initiatives that support the whole community, providing services and support to youth at risk of engaging in violence and their families in conjunction with crisis mitigation efforts for active gang incidents. At the

community level, GRYD provides education on gang issues, gun buy-back programs, and youth activity centers. Youth at risk of joining gangs receive counseling and social services, guided by a comprehensive service delivery plan developed through collaboration between the youth, service providers, and their families. The families of these youth also receive support in the form of case management services that connect families to outside services. Finally, in the case of an active gang incident, the GRYD program seeks to discourage retaliatory violence, calming tensions among people involved with violence and providing social services to victims and their families.

The [Urban Institute's 2015 evaluation](http://www.urban.org) of the GRYD program, describing its service delivery model and history, can be found on the Urban Institute website (<http://www.urban.org>).

## 20. Housing Opportunity and Services Together

Bringing together the range of services needed for a comprehensive gun violence prevention effort and coordinating those services effectively is a substantial challenge. The Housing Opportunity and Services Together (HOST) program provides a model for both delivering these services and measuring their impact. The HOST model seeks to address systemic deprivation among the highest-risk adults and children by providing wraparound social services, including educational supports, job training, and mental health services. To guide these efforts and support ongoing feedback, HOST included researchers in the programs from its inception. This helped ensure that the program had a data-driven strategy and a feedback loop for evaluating progress on the model and making improvements as needed (Popkin et al. 2012). A [range of publications exploring the HOST model](http://www.urban.org) can be found on the Urban Institute website (<http://www.urban.org>).

# Promote Cross-Sector Engagement

## 21. The Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission and DataShare Hub

The Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission (MHRC) and DataShare Hub is a strong national model for communities seeking to guide violence reduction strategies through collaboration and data integration. MHRC brings together a wide array of community, law enforcement, and social service stakeholders to strategically assess homicides and identify strategies for reducing them. Homicides are

subject to four levels of assessment: a real-time review of homicides as they occur, based on the initial police investigation; a criminal justice review that looks into the people involved, their motivations, the place the crime occurred, and the factors that drove the violence; a community service provider review that looks at the systemwide factors that contributed to violence; and a community review that presents MHRC findings to the public. By drawing on all these insights, MHRC is able to provide policy guidance that has been found to substantially reduce homicides (Azrael, Braga, and O'Brien 2013).

MHRC's website (<http://city.milwaukee.gov/hrc>) provides an overview of the commission's work and structure as well as training opportunities for cities interested in developing similar programs. MHRC's operations and impact are also described in detail in a 2013 evaluation by the Department of Justice, *Developing the Capacity to Understand and Prevent Homicide: An Evaluation of the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission*. This [report](#) can be found at the National Criminal Justice Reference Service website (<http://www.ncjrs.gov>).

## 22. Track DC

Law enforcement agencies are not the only organizations that benefit from the greater accountability and transparency that comes from open data. Encouraging all public agencies to share the measures they use to hold themselves accountable and the progress toward these goals, Track DC (<http://dc.gov/trackdc>) is an excellent example of such an effort, a website that allows the public to see the performance measures all DC agencies use and the progress they are making toward meeting their performance goals. Sharing accountability measures across government agencies will encourage the spread of best practices while ensuring that all agencies engaged in violence prevention are held accountable for making progress toward those goals.

## 23. Justice Reinvestment at the Local Level

Communities interested in developing strategic planning efforts should consider the basket of strategies suggested by the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI). Justice Reinvestment at the Local Level focuses on developing broad stakeholder communities and integrating or combining justice system data to promote more effective criminal justice strategies. By bringing together stakeholders from across the community and providing them with detailed justice system information, JRI seeks to maximize the effectiveness of communities' justice systems. Savings from the development of more effective justice system operations can then be reinvested in the community through projects that



improve community functioning and access to opportunity. The *Justice Reinvestment at the Local Level: Planning and Implementation Guide* explains how to build these reform efforts and guide the strategic planning process. The [guide](http://www.urban.org) can be accessed at the Urban Institute website (<http://www.urban.org>).

# Notes

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