

Program Profile: Group Violence Reduction Strategy (New Orleans, Louisiana)

Evidence Rating: Effective - One study 

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Program Summary

This focused deterrence strategy in New Orleans, Louisiana, aims to reduce gang violence and homicide. The program is rated Effective. There were statistically significant reductions found in overall homicide, firearm-related homicide, gang member-involved homicide, and firearm assault from the pretest to the posttest period. Further, New Orleans showed significantly decreased homicide rates after the program was implemented, compared with 14 cities with similar violent crime rates.

Program Description

Program Goals

The Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) is a focused deterrence intervention that was implemented in New Orleans, Louisiana, with the goal of addressing persistent, citywide patterns of violence. Operating through interagency partnerships, the GVRS uses a data-driven approach to identify key offenders who are responsible for a disproportionate share of serious violence in New Orleans. The focused deterrence strategy, which is based on the Boston CeaseFire model, is designed to use problem analyses to identify high-risk groups and gangs, to advise gang members and other group-involved violent offenders (during call-in notification sessions) that they will be subjected to intensified enforcement and prosecution if they continue engaging in violence, and to provide the targeted individuals with access to social services.

Target Population

GVRS targets members of gangs and criminally active groups who are identified through multi-agency partnerships. Those identified become the targets of a three-pronged approach: law enforcement, threat of enhanced prosecution, and access to social services.

Program Components

The New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) conducts separate "offender notification sessions" with the targeted gang members. During the sessions, the groups and gang members are notified about heightened sanctions that their groups will receive for any future involvement in violence; they are then asked to pass along this information to other group members. The individuals are specifically warned that their entire group will be under immediate, enhanced law-enforcement scrutiny for subsequent murders or shootings committed by anyone associated with their gangs. To demonstrate the seriousness of the message, the NOPD provides the groups with examples of previous gangs that were arrested and faced severe federal- and state-prison terms. During these notification sessions, information about social service provisions is also provided.

In addition to these sessions, a small number of individuals receive a "custom notification session"; that is, they are visited by a member of the NOPD who delivers a personalized antiviolence message.

Key Personnel

At the beginning of the project, a working group consisting of NOPD officers; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) special agents; researchers from the University of Cincinnati's Institute of Crime Science; and members of the Cincinnati Police Department collaborated to conduct homicide-incident reviews and gang audits to ascertain potential violent groups. The working group organized information about violent street gangs into "actionable intelligence" that was categorized according to individual gang members, geography, social networks, and participation in violence. From this list, the working group identified potential street gangs from six districts in the NOPD. This list was also continuously updated by the NOPD officials who were most acquainted with the criminal groups and gangs in the area. Other key personnel included social service and community partners, who attended the notification sessions and encouraged attendees to sign up for services. General partners included the Institute of Crime Science at the University of Cincinnati and the National Network for Safe Communities.

Program Theory

GVRS is a focused deterrence strategy, also called the "pulling levers" violence-reduction strategy, which was developed in Boston, Massachusetts, in the 1990s as Operation Ceasefire (Braga et al. 2001). Deterrence theory argues that crime can be prevented when potential offenders perceive the risk of apprehension and the seriousness and swiftness of sanctions to be greater than any benefits that will accrue from committing a crime. Focused deterrence theory operates by delivering a message about the high risk of swift apprehension and punishment to the chronic, serious, violent offenders who are involved in most of the city's violent crime. Focused deterrence theory is rooted in problem-oriented policing, a highly focused law-enforcement approach that aims to assess, identify, and disrupt the underlying causes of chronic crime problems, by using methods beyond traditional police practice (Corsaro and Engel 2015).

Evaluation Outcomes

Program Snapshot

Geography: Urban

Setting (Delivery): Other Community Setting, High Crime Neighborhoods/Hot Spots

Program Type: Community and Problem Oriented Policing, Community Awareness/Mobilization, Gang Prevention/Intervention, Community Crime Prevention , Violence Prevention, Specific deterrence

Targeted Population: Serious/Violent Offender, Gang Members, High Risk Offenders

Current Program Status: Active

Listed by Other Directories: Model Programs Guide

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services, but they also have important differences. For example, in New Orleans, CURE Violence relied on violence interrupters and outreach workers to mediate conflicts between conflicting organizations in the Central City area, while GVRS took a focused deterrence approach. Also, the Cure Violence model engages with law enforcement less directly, whereas the

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GVI model incorporates as central the law enforcement–community partnership. For more information, see the National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College Web site: <https://nnscommunities.org/>

Evidence-Base (Studies Reviewed)

These sources were used in the development of the program profile:

Study 1

Corsaro, Nicholas, and Robin S. Engel. 2015. "Most Challenging of Contexts." *Criminology & Public Policy* 14(3):471–505. https://nnscommunities.org/uploads/Corsaro_Engel_NOLA_Evaluation_The_Most_Challenging_of_Contexts_CPP_2015.pdf

Additional References

These sources were used in the development of the program profile:

Braga, Anthony A., David M. Kennedy, Elin J. Waring, and Anne Morrison Piehl. 2001. "Problem-Oriented Policing, Deterrence, and Youth Violence: An Evaluation of Boston's Operation Ceasefire." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 38(3):195–225.

McCall, Patricia L., Kenneth C. Land, and Karen F. Parker. 2011. "Heterogeneity in the Rise and Decline of City-Level Homicide Rates, 1976–2005: A Latent Trajectory Analysis." *Social Science Research* 40(1):363–78.

Skogan, Wesley G., Susan M. Hartnett, Natalie Bump, and Jill Dubois. 2009. *Evaluation of CeaseFire-Chicago*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice.

Related Practices

Following are CrimeSolutions.gov-rated practices that are related to this program:

Focused Deterrence Strategies

Problem-oriented policing strategies that follow the core principles of deterrence theory. The practice is rated Promising. The evaluation found that focused deterrence strategies (also referred to as "pulling levers" policing) can reduce crime.

Evidence Ratings for Outcomes:

☒ Crime & Delinquency - Multiple crime/offense types

Problem-Oriented Policing

These analytic methods are used by police to develop crime prevention and reduction strategies. The practice is rated Promising and led to a significant decline in crime and disorder.

Evidence Ratings for Outcomes:

☒ Crime & Delinquency - Multiple crime/offense types