



LIVE FREE Violence Reduction Strategies

The LIVE FREE Campaign works to promote effective and proven strategies for reducing urban gun violence in cities across the country. There are four key strategies which are detailed in our report, *Healing Communities in Crisis*.

- **Group Violence Intervention (GVI):** based on Boston's Operation Ceasefire, this is a data-based law enforcement approach that targets the tiny fraction of individuals at risk for being perpetrators or victims of violence (rather than blanketing neighborhoods).
- **Cure Violence:** Chicago-based strategy built around street outreach workers and violence interrupters who work to de-escalate potential violence and steer individuals toward effective community services. Does not include a law enforcement component.
- **Hospital-Based Violence Prevention:** provides case management and resources for hospitalized individuals who are at high risk for being perpetrators or victims of future violence.
- **Comprehensive Approach (Richmond, CA):** combines street outreach and case management (Office of Neighborhood Safety), with GVI, and hospital-based services. Richmond achieved a 75% decrease in homicides using a combination of these strategies.

Each of these strategies have overlapping components and, ideally, should work in tandem with one another. Based on our experience promoting violence reduction in many cities around the country for the last seven years (and having studied past efforts), we have learned some key lessons:

1. The best chance of success occurs when national experts are mobilized in order to build the capacity of *local* agencies and individuals to do this work themselves. Local actors have relationships with the community and can establish and maintain the long-term partnerships necessary to sustain the work over time.
2. Long-term success depends upon effective community organizing. Mayors, police chiefs, and other key actors come and go. What must remain constant is a mobilized community that demands that effective violence reduction strategies be implemented *with fidelity* in their communities over the long term, even when the political winds shift.
3. Organizers and community leaders need to have a clear understanding of effective gun violence reduction strategies in order to advocate effectively. When there is only a cursory understanding of the strategies, even with the best intentions, programs often become watered down, poorly implemented, and show no results.

A full LIVE FREE violence reduction approach will include the following components:

Law Enforcement

Some violence reduction strategies operate in isolation from law enforcement. In some cases, this is due to a mistrust of police and other criminal justice agencies and, in other cases, this is due to law enforcement's lack of interest in modifying their approaches. However, an optimal approach will include a significant role for law enforcement which, when implemented effectively, will target only the tiny fraction of those most at risk for being involved in violence and should also result in decreased incarceration and increased trust between the police and the community.

In order re-orient themselves toward a more effective approach, most law enforcement agencies will require technical assistance as they learn to implement new practices: data analysis and shooting reviews; call-ins; custom notifications; community partner engagement; focused enforcement; and procedural justice training. LIVE FREE has a number of partners whose work we trust and who we recommend be hired by local cities and law enforcement agencies in order to provide this technical assistance. In California, we recommend California Partnership for Safe Communities, and nationally, the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform.

Street Outreach Workers & Case Management

There are various iterations of this work throughout the country. The Richmond (CA) Office of Neighborhood Safety and the Institute of Nonviolence Chicago, for example, use slightly different, but overlapping methods for working directly with those individuals who are most at risk for shooting or being shot. The objective here is to develop deep relationships with the targeted individuals in order to steer them toward community supports as well as more life-affirming choices which will allow them to remain alive and free.

As with the law enforcement component, those engaged in street outreach typically require some outside technical assistance. A common misconception is that the “outreach” can be conducted on an informal basis—either by clergy, community members, or other well-intentioned individuals—without extensive training and support. Street outreach workers should be full-time, professionally paid, trained, and resourced individuals who have life backgrounds that allow them to develop meaningful relationships with the targeted population (often this means being formerly incarcerated or having personal histories of gun violence themselves). Advance Peace, led by the former director of the Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety, is an organization we trust which provides technical assistance to those interested in carrying out this work.

Community Engagement

One of the reasons that effective violence reduction models have had limited success in some of the cities that have tried it, is that city and law enforcement officials have not effectively engaged the community as full partners in its implementation. Community leaders and, in particular, those most directly impacted by the violence, must be central in shaping the program's implementation in order for it to have credibility on the streets and to ensure that needed adjustments and course corrections are made along the way. Key elements of the community engagement process include the following:

- **Steering Committee**: sometimes referred to as the “working group,” this is a committee of approximately a dozen members which are comprised of all the key local partners who

are working together on the strategy. Typically, this includes county or city officials, law enforcement officials, community leaders (e.g., faith leaders, members of the directly impacted community, etc.), and representatives from various agencies that are providing services to the targeted individuals. This group meets regularly to review updated shooting and homicide data, reviews the progress of the individuals who are receiving services, makes adjustments in terms of community messaging, and generally monitors the progress of the work. We recommend that this committee be facilitated by a Violence Reduction Program Manager who can be employed by the city or county.

- Community Night Walks: Typically led by clergy, groups of community members walk some of the area's most dangerous streets at night in order to promote greater engagement with the individuals and networks who are responsible for the violence as well as to promote a wider awareness of the issues. This practice was initiated by faith leaders in Boston during the "Boston Miracle" of the 1990s and is one of the key ways that local faith and community leaders have become involved in mobilizing wider support and understanding of the city's efforts.
- Community Organizing: It is a full-time effort to keep the various community partners—city/county officials, police department, community leaders, street outreach workers, and community service providers—aligned and working in effective partnership. Community organizers are critical in helping ensure that the community is at the table and that key leaders are held accountable for results.



VIOLENCE REDUCTION IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

In order to help track implementation of effective violence reduction strategies in your city, please use this monitoring tool.

IMPLEMENTATION	DATE	DESCRIPTION
Begin clergy/community Night Walks		
Secure verbal commitment to implement violence reduction program from city/county government		
City/county allocates funding from budget for violence reduction program		
City/county contracts with technical assistance provider to assist law enforcement with data-based policing		
City/county contracts with organization to provide street outreach & case management and contracts with technical assistance provider		
Establish city-community Steering Community (aka, "working group") in order to monitor implementation of violence reduction program		
Call-ins have begun		
Street outreach & case management workers actively working with target individuals		
Gun violence reductions are documented (decreases from same time during previous year)		
Reductions in incarceration and/or officer-involved shootings are documented		