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City of Gainesville Policy Program Preliminary Research & Analysis

TOPIC: Community Based Approaches to Gun Violence Prevention
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REQUESTED BY: Mayor Poe

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gun violence prevention is a task that will require an interdisciplinary and multi-faceted approach, which will include law enforcement, local government, health services, and community members. Fostering better relations among the community through mentoring and social services is a fundamental part of reducing the tensions which lead to violence. Community-oriented approaches to gun violence prevention include identifying individuals who are at risk of participating in gun violence, mentoring and providing social services for those individuals to lead them away from violence, and attempting to change the community culture surrounding violence.

This paper details these approaches to reduce gun violence, while highlighting the Cure Violence model as a backdrop to reveal the distinct ways communities can collaborate to prevent gun violence. Cure Violence is a well-documented and supported method to prevent gun violence, and while all aspects of the program may not be necessary in Gainesville, the program features several initiatives that the City could adopt independent of the national Cure Violence program. These include involving non-profits and community members in the identification of those at risk of gun violence involvement, the mentoring of those individuals by community leaders, providing those individuals with access to social services, and working to change community norms surrounding gun violence.

There are several drawbacks to the Cure Violence program, namely that the cost of implementing it, even in just one neighborhood, can rise into the hundreds of thousands. Additionally, the initiative is

predicated on placing community members in potentially dangerous situations, which can bring about liability concerns. Finally, it is integral that those hired as outreach workers have established trust and connections in communities prone to violence, which means it is likely that those individuals have criminal pasts of their own, potentially prompting mistrust and tensions between Cure Violence and law enforcement.

While it is unlikely that the City of Gainesville has sufficient need for the adoption of the entire model of Cure Violence, as Gainesville has significantly lower homicide rates than others who have implemented the program, Cure Violence has several elements which Gainesville could implement independently to combat gun violence.¹ This report details the elements of Cure Violence that have proven successful in other cities, in addition to several other community-based solutions to gun violence, including the creation of a community outreach program centered around the prevention of gun violence, hospital based intervention programs, and various community-based law enforcement strategies.

HISTORY/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Cure Violence Approach

Cure Violence operates under the principle that the most likely predictor of violence is previous exposure to violence, and thus works with community members, law enforcement, and health services to stop the spread of violence. With this type of program, community members, referred to as “interrupters,” personally intervene in cases where violence seems likely to break out, and then remain in touch with individuals who have been or are likely to be involved in violence in an effort to stop its spread. These interrupters are chosen for their established connections in communities which have higher rates of violence.

The national Cure Violence organization will send a group of individuals to consult and advise cities on the creation of a new program. These national partners talk with community and law enforcement members to help understand which communities could most benefit from the program, and which individuals would be best suited to becoming an outreach worker. The chosen individuals then undergo training on conflict mediation and response provided by the Cure Violence team.²

Cure Violence is not only a public health approach to gun violence prevention, it is ultimately an interdisciplinary approach to it. The program also partners with local hospitals and trauma centers to provide a comprehensive response whenever a gunshot, stabbing, or blunt trauma victim arrives at the hospital. This intervention occurs during the critical window after a violent incident to prevent retaliation and interrupt the cycle of violence.³ Following this method, the City of Gainesville could partner with or help to establish local non-profits which serve a similar purpose, and could help to provide resources to victims of gun violence.

¹ <https://www.gainesville.com/news/20190605/city-officials-address-uptick-in-gun-violence>

² <https://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/spt/programs/139>

³ <https://cvg.org/what-we-do/>

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There are three elements to the Cure Violence approach which include detecting and interrupting conflicts, identifying and treating the highest risk individuals, and changing social norms. These elements have been proven to be successful in the cities in which Cure Violence operates, but can similarly be used to guide any community or municipal approach to gun violence reduction.

- **Detect and Interrupt:** To detect and interrupt conflicts, trained violence interrupters and outreach workers are hired to prevent shootings by identifying and mediating potentially lethal conflicts in the community. These same individuals follow up with those who are involved with a conflict to ensure that violence does not reignite. These interrupters work in the community and at hospitals to cool down emotions and prevent retaliations. This element incorporates programs such as hospital-based intervention, where non-profits operate within hospitals to reduce rates of injury recidivism or violent retaliation. This portion can also incorporate elements like trauma identification training and lethality assessments, as both seek to identify individuals most likely to commit crimes and most likely to be victims of crimes, providing information about where violence interrupters are needed.
- **Identify and Treat:** To identify and treat the highest risk individuals, outreach workers work with those of the highest risk to make them less likely to commit violence by talking to them about the costs of violence and helping them obtain the social services they need, such as job training and drug treatment. This portion of the Cure Violence approach emphasizes mentorship and relationship building, as outreach workers help to connect those prone to violence with the resources they need to build a better life. This element operates similarly to the idea of focused deterrence, which is where law enforcement identifies and connects with people who are most likely to commit crimes. However, Cure Violence utilizes this method with community members instead, lessening the role of law enforcement.
- **Change Community Norms:** Finally, Cure Violence emphasizes mobilizing the community to change norms. In this regard, workers engage leaders in the community to convey the message that the community at large does not support the use of violence. Whenever a shooting occurs, workers organize a response objecting to the shooting, and materials and events are distributed to convey the message that violence is not acceptable.

Beyond the cost of implementation, many cities have chosen not to implement the Cure Violence method out of concern for placing community members into situations where they will be involved in potentially dangerous incidents. Some cities are also critical of bringing in an outside organization to handle gun violence in their community, as they feel they have the resources necessary to tackle the problem on their own.⁴

It can also be difficult for cities to recruit and hire individuals who the community trusts, as these individuals may have previous records of incarceration or illegal behavior. It may be difficult to find staff members who are respected and connected with those involved with violence, such as drug trafficking, but who are not currently involved in those activities themselves. According to Cure Violence's Illinois

⁴ <https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/2016/05/18/commissioners-not-completely-sold-cure-violence/84561992/>

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Director, six of their 300 outreach workers returned to crime after being hired. This can lead to potentially tense relations between Cure staff and law enforcement. Similarly, Cure Violence workers need a large degree of independence from law enforcement, so as not to lose the trust of their communities, which can further breed resentment between law enforcement and Cure Violence. In response to this, Cure Violence has implemented strict employment standards, however this in turn can lead to high staff turnover, limiting the ability of members to build strong relationships.⁵

While the City of Gainesville likely would not launch an official Cure Violence program, due to a combination of lack of need and resources, the creation of a municipally recognized and supported community outreach program has been shown to be successful in reducing gun violence and is an approach the City could look into as an independent program. As noted above, the Cure Violence method does not need to be implemented in its entirety, but rather it serves to highlight several community, law enforcement, and health-based strategies the City of Gainesville could take in an effort to reduce gun violence.

Additional Approaches

There are several cities which have opted out of the Cure Violence model in favor of alternative, independent methods of reducing gun violence. The following section briefly outlines strategies which can play a role in the Cure Violence method, but can also be enacted independently.

- **Jobs Programs:** Several communities have implemented programs seeking to educate and employ low-income youth who are at risk of turning to violence. These programs serve to both divert these individuals away from violent paths while additionally generating economic growth opportunities within specific communities and economic sectors. An example of such a program can be found in Tallahassee, Florida, as they launched “Tallahassee Engaged in Meaningful Productivity for Opportunity” (TEMPO) in 2017. TEMPO is an initiative designed to curb violence by helping youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who aren’t in school and who are unemployed earn their GED or secure a vocational job.
- **Hospital Based Intervention Programs:** Designed to reach high-risk individuals who have been recently admitted to a hospital for treatment of a serious violent injury, these programs focus on interrupting the cycle of violence. The strongest indicator of violence injury is a history of previous violent injury. This strategy calls for the screening of patients by law enforcement or trained non-profit staff based on predetermined criteria to identify individuals most at risk for re-injury, and connecting those individuals with case managers.⁶
- **Focused Deterrence Programs:** Focused deterrence is a law enforcement strategy designed to leverage the police, in addition to social service and public health agencies, to confront the

⁵ <https://yaleglobalhealthreview.com/2016/10/08/addressing-urban-violence-the-cure-violence-public-health-approach/>

⁶ <https://tsaco.bmj.com/content/1/1/e000050>

minority of people responsible for the majority of violence. Focused deterrence emphasizes three elements: focus, balance, and fairness. Police and other community leaders should focus on the few individuals who commit and are victims of the majority of local violence. This requires balancing the threat of punishment with offers of help. The element of fairness should involve the clear and transparent communication by law enforcement officials with the community.⁷

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

The following section details the results that several cities have had in implementing either Cure Violence or an alternative community based approach to gun violence.

Cure Violence: Funding and Results

In 2018, Cure Violence received \$5.4 million in funding in Chicago, Illinois, which came from state and city police budgets. In Chicago, the Cure approach reduced shootings by 67% in its first year, and by 16-24% over three years. As the approach was expanded throughout other communities in the city, homicides in Chicago dropped by 35%. A study found that the program reduced shootings and killings by 41% and eliminated retaliatory shootings in five of the seven communities examined. In 2015, budget cuts in Chicago eliminated program workers in 13 of the 14 communities. Homicides began increasing within a month and the following year was Chicago's deadliest in two decades.⁸ In the one community where workers remained in place, violence continued to go down. In 2017, funding was restored and homicides dropped by 16%.

The program has also received \$17.2 million in New York City, which saw a 37-50% reduction in gun violence in two communities, a 63% reduction in shootings in one community, and a 14% reduction in attitudes supporting violence. The study ultimately found an 18% reduction in killings across the 13 program sites, while control regions had a 69% increase in killings.

Jacksonville, Florida, funded a plan to set up the Cure Violence method in two regions of the city. The City Council approved funding of \$764,823 at the beginning of this year to cover the first year's cost. In April of 2019, the city had seen 38 murders, and felt that Cure Violence would be the best method to address this recent uptick.⁹ In September of this year, the mayor of Jacksonville reported that the Cure Violence zones implemented in June went nearly a month with no shootings or homicides. Since implementation, there have been a total of 12 shootings and six homicides in the two zones, with a 25-day period without homicides or shootings. This number is in contrast to the 38 homicides the city saw from January to April of 2019 prior to the program being implemented. In September the city had officially hired 12 outreach workers but had plans to increase that number to 20 workers.¹⁰

⁷ <https://psmag.com/news/how-to-prevent-violence>

⁸ <https://www.thetrace.org/2017/02/chicago-homicides-cure-violence-interrupters/>

⁹ <https://news.wjct.org/post/jacksonville-city-council-funds-cure-violence-program-start-2-high-crime-zones>

¹⁰ <https://www.jacksonville.com/news/20190918/mayor-curry-says-jacksonvilles-cure-violence-zones-went-nearly-month-with-no-shootings-or-homicides>

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In addition to these cities, Cure Violence is operating in over 55 communities around the world and has been shown to reduce violent crime between 20 and 73 percent.

In 2016, the city of Tallahassee, Florida, considered implementing the Cure Violence approach, and the first-year start-up price for the program (which planned to focus on one neighborhood) was expected to be approximately \$450,000. Adding a second site was expected to cost approximately \$650,000, and a five year commitment to the program was expected to amount to \$3.75 million. Of the \$450,000, \$80,000 would be paid for a Cure Violence team to come in and establish the Tallahassee site, while the rest would go towards operating costs and salaries of local employees.¹¹ The city of Tallahassee decided instead to invest in a community policing model, using the funding which may have gone towards Cure Violence to hire more police officers. While the city saw a reduction in violent crime (of approximately 6.6%), the city is still looking into methods to further reduce these acts of violence.¹²

Jobs Programs

Several cities have created education and job training programs in an effort to assist members of the community most likely to be involved in violent activity in creating a better life.

In Tallahassee, Florida, the TEMPO program seeks to educate and employ individuals aged 16-24 through partnerships with businesses, non-profits, and individuals within the Tallahassee community. TEMPO is one pillar of the City of Tallahassee's Community Resilience Plan, which puts an emphasis on climate-adapted infrastructure while putting public safety as the first goal. The program advocates for the inclusion of vulnerable populations in climate adaption plans, notably by training and hiring individuals in the industries that will build and maintain the infrastructure in a warming world. The program has been supported for promoting economic vitality among low-income youth, but also for generating a new population to help with sustainability-related infrastructure. Once individuals graduate from the program, they are placed with companies creating "green jobs" such as working on the city's drainage system, underground utilities, or building new roads and bridges.¹³

The job skills training provided by the City of Tallahassee is estimated to cost around \$500,000 annually, and the cost of employing 10 disconnected youth to paid apprenticeships in the City of Tallahassee costs approximately \$312,000 annually. The other participants in TEMPO are hired by private organizations, where the costs are not taken on by the City of Tallahassee. In the two years since its founding, the program has had 640 participants, and the city estimates that around 7,000 teens and young adults in the city are eligible. By 2020, the city plans to have around 1,000 participants in the program.¹⁴

New York City additionally established their Train & Earn program, which is a short-term career pathway program for low-income youth ages 16-24 who are not working and are not in school. This program

¹¹ <https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/2016/05/15/cost-violent-crime/84402652/>

¹² <https://news.wfsu.org/post/violent-crime-down-shootings-skyrocket-amid-ongoing-efforts-cure-tallahassee-violence>

¹³ <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2019/10/tallahassee-climate-resilience-tempo-jobs-infrastructure/599479/>

¹⁴ <https://www.tal.gov.com/neighborhoodservices/tempo-opportunity.aspx>

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provides job training and employment services, along with academic and professional support services, to help participants find a permanent job or enroll in college.¹⁵

These programs tend to have substantial public support, in that they are both helping to divert low-income youth away from potential violence and generating new jobs and economic growth.

Hospital Based Intervention

Hospital based intervention programs, which integrate health care centers and non-profit organizations, have been shown to significantly reduce injury recidivism rates and medical costs. After a similar program was implemented in Baltimore, Maryland, studies found an injury recidivism rate of 5% for participating patients, compared to 46% for non-participants. This change brought about an estimated \$598,000 in savings. Similarly, an evaluation of an Indianapolis program found a one year re-injury rate at 0% compared to 8.7% for a control group.

The San Francisco General Hospital's Wraparound Project was introduced in 2005, and in its first six years of operation, saw a 400% decrease in the rate of injury recidivism. In this program, all patients at SF General who are victims of violent injury between the ages of 10-20 are screened by case managers. Those who are deemed to be at risk for re-injury are invited to participate in the project. Through the program, they receive intensive case management services and are guided to risk reduction resources. A study of the program found that injury recidivism rates at SF General fell from 16% to just 4/5% for the six years following implementation.

In terms of cost effectiveness, a study found that the prevention of just 3.5 recidivist injuries a year makes the program cost neutral, and that San Francisco's current level of efficacy the program generates hospital savings of approximately \$500,000/year.¹⁶

Focused Deterrence

Oakland, California shows the potential benefits of focused deterrence, as police officials and community leaders coordinated interventions for those who were determined to be most at risk to commit gun violence, hosting call-ins which were then followed by individual interventions.

In Oakland, the effort focused on 400 individuals, and these individuals were informed by law enforcement that the city was aware of the path they were going down and that if they continue down that path they would be punished. However, if the individuals agreed to stop their behaviors, they would be given services including jobs, education, and healthcare to help build a better life. These services are provided by faith-based organizations and are coordinated by Oakland Unite, which is a collaboration of city-funded efforts for those most affected by violence. In Oakland, these services specifically include paid job training, substance abuse counseling, and education and legal support.¹⁷

¹⁵ <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/jobs-internships/train-and-earn.page>

¹⁶ <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/other-laws-policies/intervention-strategies/#hvip>

¹⁷ <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/oaklands-ceasefire-strategy>

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From 2012 to 2017, Oakland's homicide rate fell by almost 50% compared to increases in homicides in cities such as Baltimore and St. Louis.¹⁸ However, Oakland additionally shows that coordination and dedication is key in order for focused deterrence to work. Community members need to be actively involved in order to help hold individuals accountable, and social services must be specifically targeted towards those at risk, rather than broad communities. The primary burden on law enforcement would be to end sweeping actions, and move away from an emphasis of locking up as many as possible.

Further, focused deterrence requires citizens at all levels to be on board with the program, including law enforcement officials, city officials, the heads of social service agencies, and community leaders. It is also important to stick with the program, even if crime rates in the city drop.

Exact research on how much a strategy of focused deterrence would cost the City of Gainesville is unknown, however Christopher Abt, who researches focused deterrence, estimates that a program which tackles urban violence in the 20 cities with the most homicides overall and in the 20 cities with the highest homicide rates would cost \$158 million in the first year and less with ensuing years. That is a rough calculation of less than \$4 million/city.¹⁹

Critics of focused deterrence argue it is too punitive, as the threat of punishment is a fundamental aspect.²⁰ Similarly, the offer of providing social services to individuals is a daunting task, and employment opportunities may be limited, especially given the likelihood of individuals having a criminal record. Finally, there are concerns that focused deterrence will lead to the over-policing of certain neighborhoods that are found to be more likely to commit violence, which are also more likely to be communities of color.²¹

PRELIMINARY COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Cost

- Financial and Operational Resources
 - Tradeoff with hiring more law enforcement, etc.
- Bringing an outside organization into the community
 - May bring about pushback from current activist groups
- Placing community members in potentially risky situations
- Gainesville's problems with shootings may not necessitate such a costly/large scale program

Benefit

¹⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2019/jun/03/gun-violence-bay-area-drop-30-percent-why-investigation>

¹⁹ <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/7/12/20679091/thomas-abt-bleeding-out-urban-gun-violence-book-review>

²⁰ <https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/editorials/philadelphia-gun-violence-homicide-cure-violence-ceasefire-20190901.html>

²¹ <https://theappeal.org/former-lead-social-worker-says-philly-violence-reduction-strategy-fails-to-deliver-on-promises-a2b8a95df8af/>

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- Verified results
- Increase mentorship among community members
- Increase cooperation between health services, law enforcement, and community members

PRELIMINARY AND ILLUSTRATIVE LIST OF POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS

- Cure Violence (national office)
- Gainesville Police Department
- Alachua County Sheriff's Office
- Green Dot
- Non-profit organizations who operate in low income communities

RECOMMENDED POINTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH/DISCUSSION

- In which community/communities would a community-based intervention focus?
 - i.e. where are the most crimes committed?
- What aspects of Cure Violence could Gainesville implement?
 - Community outreach? Hospital based intervention?