# CNA Spotlight

# Comprehensive Approaches to Violent Crime

The Albany, New York Police
Department's Violence Elimination
Plan and the Columbia, South
Carolina Police Department's
Ceasefire Columbia

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### Introduction





This report is part of a series highlighting innovative programs that have been implemented in some of the most progressive police agencies across the country. These reports will highlight some of the nation's most innovative best practices in violent crime reduction; focused deterrence; approaches to gun

violence; officer safety and wellness; community and public safety partnerships; and the use of technology, intelligence, and analytics to reduce violent crime. Each of these reports provides a background on the program, details important components of the program and the agency's approach, highlights the successes the agency has experienced as a result, and identifies ways in other agencies can employ similar programs.

This report highlights two focused deterrence strategies: the Albany (NY) Police Department's Violence Elimination Plan and the Columbia (SC) Police Department's Ceasefire Columbia. To develop this publication, CNA worked closely with both departments over the course of two years and spoke with numerous personnel about the initiatives.



Albany police department officers.

# The Albany, New York Violence Elimination Plan

Chartered in 1686, the City of Albany—New York's capital—is one of the oldest municipalities in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Albany was home to 98,617 residents in 2016 and continues to grow.<sup>2</sup> Despite being the hub for a number of Fortune 500 companies, Albany falls below the state's and the nation's median household income levels and exceeds the nation's median poverty levels.<sup>3</sup> Yet Albany's economy—much of which is dependent on state government and health care services—is beginning to see a resurgence.

The Albany Police Department (APD) has approximately 530 employees, both sworn and nonsworn. APD's ratio of sworn officers to city residents is 3.4 per thousand, greater than the national average of 2.4.<sup>4</sup> APD's robust staffing enables it to go beyond answering calls for service to developing problem-solving techniques that address and protect Albany citizens' quality of life.

The department is organized into two primary divisions: Investigations and Patrol. The Investigations Division contains a number of specialized units, such as Community Response, Children and Family Services (Juvenile and Domestic Violence), Criminal Investigations, and Forensic Investigations, while the Patrol Division includes the Special Operations, Center Station, South Station, and Neighborhood Engagement units.

## The Evolution of the Albany Police Department

In fall 2009, the APD's leadership team—through input from the community and city government—recognized the need for a change in its approach to fulfilling its mission and serving the people of Albany. Rates of nearly all Part I crimes had decreased over the previous five-year period, yet the community perception was that crime was rampant and that the streets of Albany were unsafe; the community also expressed a general feeling of distrust of the APD. To address the community perceptions of safety and to build trust with the community, the APD embraced a community policing philosophy.

To help enact this philosophy, the APD created the department's first strategic plan in 2012. It called for streamlining existing programs and creating new ones to effectively address crime, fear of crime, and quality-of-life issues, while enhancing community involvement and trust

City of Albany, "City History," The Official Site of the City of Albany, NY, accessed August 10, 2016, <a href="http://www.albanyny.org/">http://www.albanyny.org/</a>

 Government/CityHistory.aspx.

<sup>2.</sup> FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), "Crime in the United States 2016," Table 26, accessed August 6, 2018, <a href="https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2016/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/tables/table-26/table-26-state-cuts/table-26-new-york.xls">https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s.-2016/tables/table-26/table-26-state-cuts/table-26-new-york.xls</a>.

<sup>3.</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, "Quick Facts: Albany, New York," accessed August 10, 2016, <a href="http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/3601000,36001">http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/3601000,36001</a>.

<sup>4.</sup> FBI, "Crime in the United States 2016," (see note 2).

through collaboration, partnerships, and transparency. The strategic plan laid out four goals: Taking Back our Streets, Growing our Family, Healing Wounded Communities, and Winning over a Generation. Each new and existing plan, project, and policy within the department would now address one or more of the strategic goals: for example, while the Neighborhood Engagement Unit (NEU) predated the creation of the strategic plan, it now provides more targeted programs to address the goals of Taking Back Our Streets, Healing Wounded Communities, and Winning Over a Generation. The APD created the Albany Violence Elimination Plan (AVEP) to strategically reduce crime by creating partnerships with key stakeholders in the community, in service of the Healing Wounded Communities strategic goal.

#### Albany Violence Elimination Plan

The Albany Violence Elimination Plan (AVEP) is a comprehensive strategy to collaboratively end gun violence by focusing on Albany's most violent people and places to engage at-risk individuals, their families, and social service

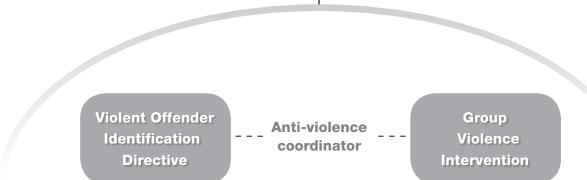
organizations. The AVEP serves as the umbrella over numerous subordinate programs; two of the most important of these are the Violent Offender Identification Directive (VOID), a computer-based risk assessment tool, and Group Violence Intervention (GVI), a focused deterrence program. An anti-violence coordinator oversees both programs. These and other AVEP initiatives bring together many divisions of the police department, as well as other public and private sector stakeholders, to achieve a single goal: reducing gun crime.

#### Violent Offender Identification Directive

VOID is an innovative and proven predictive data analysis tool designed to calculate the risk of an individual being involved in a shooting incident. Created by the APD and the Capital Region Crime Analysis Center (CRCAC), VOID aims to identify people who are in imminent danger of being a victim or suspect in a shooting incident. VOID's algorithm uses four years of shooting data derived from the APD's Records Management System (RMS), including both suspects and victims, to create 120 categories. These



Figure 1. Albany Violence Elimination Plan organizational structure



categories include arrests, status as a suspect in a case, appearance as a subject of a crime analyst bulletin, prior involvement in shots fired, and truancy. The tool aggregates weighted scores to produce a risk-based hierarchy for each individual. Next, the tool generates two outputs: cumulative history and 90-day history. The cumulative history identifies an individual's overall risk for gun violence, while the 90-day history indicates the trend of this risk. An individual with a higher weighted score in both the cumulative and 90-day histories has a higher risk of being involved in a shooting incident in the immediate future—as a victim or as a suspect.

After assigning scores to individuals based on the two types of histories, the tool creates a ranked list of individuals with the highest scores. The APD, recognizing that data analysis does not necessarily capture street-level intelligence, compares this list to information gathered from officers and detectives and creates a monthly Top 10 In Crisis list. The APD uses a two-pronged approach to engage the individuals on this list: enforcement or prevention services.

Members of the District Attorney's (DA) office, APD, Albany County Probation Department, Capital Region Crime Analysis Center, and New York State Parole Division meet weekly for a strategy session to examine overall approaches to prevention and enforcement. Further, APD hosts monthly meetings with stakeholders to coordinate enforcement and engagement efforts for those on the Top 10 in Crisis list. These meetings aim to enhance collaboration between law enforcement and district attorney's offices across multiple jurisdictions. Stakeholders include New York State Police, Troy Police Department, Schenectady Police Department, New York Army National Guard and the DA's office.

The APD's Community Response Unit (CRU) primarily carries out enforcement activities, while its Enhanced Supervision Unit (ESU) carries out prevention strategies. The ESU reaches out to the family members of the individuals on the Top 10 list in order to identify those individuals' needs and understand their family and community dynamics. In collaboration with family and community members, the ESU then works with social services groups to provide services such as job placement, job training, drug and alcohol addiction treatment, and housing. If the individual is not receptive to services or is known to be involved in gang or group violence activities, that individual will likely be invited to the GVI program.

#### **Group Violence Intervention**

The APD partnered with John Jay College of Criminal Justice to develop and implement GVI, its focused deterrence program. GVI is based on the Ceasefire Initiative pioneered by David Kennedy,<sup>5</sup> which focuses on reducing gun violence perpetrated by street gangs and other street groups by addressing the group as a whole. The program takes the Top 10 In Crisis List—generated from VOID—and identifies members of street gangs or criminal groups. The APD then invites these individuals to participate in a call-in to discuss options for their future. These call-ins are held at a neutral location, such as a school or city hall. GVI uses the call-ins to engage all members of the group through the AVEP's two avenues: enforcement and services.

First, the APD, DA's Office, Albany County Probation Department, New York State Parole Division, mayor's office, and federal law enforcement agencies present the enforcement option. They inform group members that if any of them commits a crime using a firearm, law enforcement

<sup>5.</sup> National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College, "Strategies," accessed January 5, 2019, https://nnscommunities.org/.

will prioritize their criminal behavior and prosecute the shooters. A CRU detective also explains that law enforcement agencies will work together to leverage all available resources and strategies, including home visits by probation officers, enforcement of child support orders, and federal prosecution for narcotics usage and possession.

Second, social services groups present the other option: to turn their lives around by accessing available social service programs. The anti-violence coordinator provides details about how to access services such as employment assistance, educational training, and drug and alcohol treatment options. At the conclusion of the call-in, attendees are given a choice: to accept assistance and cease gun violence, or to continue perpetrating violence and risk harsh prosecutions.

GVI held call-ins in July 2015, December 2015, November 2016, April 2017, and June 2018, each targeting a single street gang or violent group. The GVI program is successful largely because the group members hold each other accountable. If one group member commits a gun-related crime, the group as a whole comes under heavy law enforcement scrutiny, and members risk prosecution for other offenses—major or minor, related or unrelated. Deterrence is achieved through "internal social pressure," in which group members hold each other accountable in order to avoid this enhanced law enforcement attention.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Anti-Violence Coordinator**

To oversee VOID and GVI activities, the APD hired an Anti-Violence Coordinator, funded through a state initiative. The Anti-Violence Coordinator, a non-sworn member of the police department, acts as a liaison between the

APD and community partners and also facilitates communication and coordination within the police department itself. The Anti-Violence Coordinator's responsibilities include the following:

- Coordinating focused deterrence activities, including organizing and facilitating the call-ins.
- Coordinating with social service groups to ensure those on the Top 10 In Crisis list have access to services.
- Coordinating with the Albany County Crime Victim and Sexual Assault Center to ensure the Trauma Response Team receives timely information about victims of gun violence.
- Coordinating enforcement activities with internal APD departments.

#### Challenges

Turnover is the biggest challenge for the AVEP. A successful violence elimination strategy requires partnerships between and among multiple law enforcement organizations, as well as community providers and leaders. When leadership or core team members turn over without clear succession plans, it creates a challenging environment for the VOID team, the GVI team, and the APD to continue executing the strategy.

A related challenge is ensuring that all members of the multijurisdictional AVEP team fully understand both the strategy and their individual roles and responsibilities in it. Because the APD has not developed standard operating

<sup>6.</sup> National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College, "Group Violence Intervention," accessed January 5, 2019, <a href="https://nnscommunities.org/our-work/strategy/group-violence-intervention">https://nnscommunities.org/our-work/strategy/group-violence-intervention</a>.

procedures or policies codifying the AVEP strategy goals and implementation metrics for integrating new team members takes time and often slows progress.

A third challenge is ensuring all AVEP programs are a priority for senior officials. Because AVEP programs overlap and complement each other, when one is not supported by top officials, implementation of the others is less consistent. The APD recognizes that a lack of attention to the program has led to complacency. Albany saw an increase in shootings in 2018; the APD attributes the rise in part to a lack of focus on violent crime programs due to the vacancy of command staff positions. Albany has had a new police chief or acting chief every year since 2015.

A fourth challenge is overcoming the lack of comprehensive training about how to properly implement AVEP, VOID, and GVI. The APD implemented VOID and GVI before creating the overall AVEP strategy, adding additional components to VOID and GVI once the strategy was in place to ensure these programs addressed the new goals of AVEP. Members of the department received training about each individual program; however, there are gaps in training on how all of the components of AVEP intersect. These gaps lead to officers performing their duties in a way inconsistent with the goals of AVEP—for example, line officers who receive the Top 10 In Crisis list implementing too much enforcement on individuals participating in GVI—or not enough—because they do not fully understand the holistic goals of focused deterrence. The APD seeks to address this issue through enhanced and increased training opportunities.

#### Successes

Since 2015, GVI has held a total of five call-ins. After the first call-in, the city of Albany went more than one year without a homicide and went almost 18 months without a gun related homicide. During this time, shootings decreased and gun arrests increased.

In 2017, The John F. Finn Institute for Public Safety (Finn Institute) evaluated GVI's effects on reducing criminal activity among participants. The Finn Institute examined all street gang, criminal group–involved, and non-group-involved shooting cases to determine whether GVI had an effect on fatal and non-fatal group-involved shootings. The Finn Institute found that GVI had a substantial effect in reducing group-involved shootings by at least 77 percent.<sup>7</sup>

In the same study, the Finn Institute found that overall attendance for GVI call-ins was 80 percent of those invited. Many of these participants continue to reach out to ESU officers for support after completing the program. ESU officers have assisted a number of individuals with entering trade schools and post-secondary institutions, obtaining jobs, and securing stable housing, as well as obtaining ID cards, baby supplies, parenting classes, and required trade school tools—all of which were barriers to employment and to living a crime-free life. Many call-in attendees also take advantage of employment placement organizations, such as the Cure Violence organization. The APD attributes the reduction in group-involved shootings to participants using the services offered during the call-ins.

<sup>7.</sup> Sarah J. McLean and Robert E. Worden, *Albany's Group Violence Intervention: Implementation and Outcomes* (Albany, NY: The John F. Finn Institute for Public Safety, 2017).

<sup>8.</sup> McLean and Worden, Albany's Group Violence Intervention (see note 7).



Albany Police Department vehicle and motorcycles participating in a community event.

#### Moving forward

The APD has identified a number of short-term goals to improve AVEP, including the following:

- Developing better AVEP training and education programs for all members of the department.
- Educating Albany's city and county judges on the AVEP strategies and programs.
- Further refining data analytics to maximize resources for implementing AVEP programs. Harnessing data from VOID and other data collection programs will allow the APD to implement programs in a more targeted way.
- Developing AVEP standard operating procedures (SOP) to document how to implement its supporting programs.

#### Lessons for other agencies

The APD has learned many lessons while developing and deploying AVEP. It regularly shares three key lessons with other agencies that are interested in developing a gun violence reduction strategy:

- Implementing strategies takes cooperation, buy-in, and commitment from multiple partners. It is important to include law enforcement partners, community partners, and social service providers in the plan. The support and commitment of leadership is key to successfully implementing a strategy like AVEP.
- Make sure all personnel at every level understand the strategy and can share information appropriately. Ensuring all involved personnel support and understand the strategy is important to ensure consistency within and across participating agencies.
- Measure the strategy's success by using data to identify areas that may need to be further developed or refined. Embrace program evaluations to identify the levels of programmatic success and community support.

# The Columbia, South Carolina Police Department

Columbia, South Carolina, is the capital and largest city in the state and is home to the University of South Carolina (USC). The Columbia Police Department (CPD) has 345 sworn officers and 98 support personnel serving the community. Its current chief, W.H. "Skip" Holbrook, was appointed in 2014, during a period of low morale. Since his appointment, Chief Holbrook has focused on engaging residents in identifying and solving community crime problems through initiatives like Ceasefire Columbia and Real Time Columbia, which are described in this report. The CPD has also made efforts to increase transparency and engage with the community through the department's Citizen Review Board, Citizen Police Academy, and social media outreach.

Internally, Chief Holbrook has focused on the challenges of recruiting and retaining officers. Under Holbrook's leadership, the CPD has received its Advanced National The CPD has leveraged funding from the U.S. Department of Justice's Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative to improve the agency's crime and intelligence analysis capa-

> bilities. The focused deterrence program Ceasefire Columbia and its successor Real Time Columbia were developed as part of this new focus on intelligence-driven policing.



Beth Drake, interim U.S. Attorney for the District of SC, presents information to individuals responsible for gun violence in Columbia during the 2016 Ceasefire Columbia event.

Accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA\*), indicating that its poli-

cies and procedures meet national standards in policing.

## Ceasefire Columbia and Real Time Columbia

#### Program origins

In October 2015, the CPD launched Ceasefire Columbia, a partnership aimed at reducing gun violence in high-risk neighborhoods through a focused deterrence approach. Focused deter-

rence aims to change the behavior of offenders through the strategic mobilization of both law enforcement and social service resources.<sup>10</sup> The CPD adopted this strategy to

<sup>9. &</sup>quot;Chief of Police: Chief W. H. "Skip" Holbrook," City of Columbia, accessed December 19, 2018, <a href="https://columbiapd.net/chief-of-police/">https://columbiapd.net/chief-of-police/</a>.

<sup>10.</sup> A. A. Braga and D.L. Weisburd, "The Effects of Focused Deterrence Strategies on Crime: Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of the Empirical Evidence," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 49, no. 3 (2012): 323–358.

address individuals most likely to commit or to become victims of violent crime while improving the quality of life in Columbia's neighborhoods.

Focused deterrence has been implemented in many other urban areas, including Boston, Cincinnati, and Chicago.<sup>11</sup> Ceasefire Columbia was modeled after several such programs, particularly Boston's Operation Ceasefire. Operation Ceasefire used formal meetings, referred to as offender notification meetings or call-ins, to clearly and directly communicate strong messages of deterrence to high-risk offenders.

Ceasefire Columbia sent information directly to probationers and parolees, letting them know that if they were caught with a firearm or ammunition, they would be immediately taken into custody and charged with a serious crime, potentially facing substantial prison sentences. They simultaneously received information about available social services to help them make choices leading to a productive civic life. An overarching goal of the program was to educate offenders about the consequences of future federal firearms violations and other crimes.

The following agencies partnered with the CPD to provide information and services to parolees and probationers:

- U.S. Attorney's Office, District of South Carolina
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
- South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole, and Pardon Services

- FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigations)
- Richland County Sheriff's Office
- Richland County Solicitor's Office
- South Carolina Law Enforcement Division<sup>12</sup>

When Ceasefire Columbia was initially implemented, it focused on reducing gun violence in a specific ZIP code in the North Region (District 1) of Columbia, where a disproportionate amount of the city's gun violence occurs. The area faces significant socioeconomic challenges. In 2015, 42 percent of individuals shot and 45 percent of shots fired occurred in this ZIP code. The same ZIP code accounted for almost 20 percent of all crimes citywide and more than 29 percent of all violent crimes citywide in 2015.<sup>13</sup>

On Thursday, October 29, 2015, approximately 50 individuals from this area who were on probation or parole and federally prohibited from possessing firearms were invited to a call-in with members of law enforcement and social and human service providers. They were advised of the consequences of any future criminal violations, especially possession of firearms or ammunition. Simultaneously, probationers and parolees received information from representatives of social services agencies, such as drug and alcohol counselors, employment and affordable housing representatives, and anger management counselors, who assured them that offenders who choose not to commit additional crimes would have access to the support they need from the community to lead a crime-free life. The

<sup>11.</sup> Violence Reduction Network, Ceasefire: The Effects of "Pulling Levers" Focused Deterrence Strategies on Crime, Research brief (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2015), <a href="https://www.nationalpublicsafetypartnership.org/clearinghouse/Resource/108">https://www.nationalpublicsafetypartnership.org/clearinghouse/Resource/108</a>.

<sup>12. &</sup>quot;Ceasefire Columbia Marks One Year Anniversary," *Columbia Star,* December 2, 2016, <a href="http://www.thecolumbiastar.com/news/2016-12-02/News/Ceasefire\_Columbia\_marks\_one\_year\_anniversary.html">http://www.thecolumbiastar.com/news/2016-12-02/News/Ceasefire\_Columbia\_marks\_one\_year\_anniversary.html</a>.

<sup>13.</sup> Columbia Police Department, 2015 Annual Report, (Columbia, SC: Columbia Police Department, 2016), <a href="https://columbiapd.net/">https://columbiapd.net/</a> wp-content/uploads/2016/10/CPD\_AnnualReport\_2015.pdf.

CPD continues to provide this information to support focused deterrence through its current focused deterrence program, Real Time Columbia.

The CPD and its partners held a second call-in the following year. Approximately 20 offenders were selected to participate, drawn from the entire city of Columbia (as opposed to a specific area). The criteria for selection remained the same as the previous year; however, exceptions were made to include individuals the CPD Gang Unit identified as active gang members. Ceasefire Columbia contacted individuals who were on probation or parole and federally prohibited from possessing firearms. Most of the offenders were eligible for federal prosecution if they reoffended because of their previous convictions. The U.S. Attorney was present at the call-in and provided support for CPD efforts.

In both 2015 and 2016, Ceasefire Columbia's partner, the South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole, and Pardon Services (PPP), hand-delivered letters drafted by the CPD to every identified offender, notifying them that they were required to attend the call-in. These personalized letters informed offenders that they were receiving extra scrutiny from law enforcement. Chief Holbrook commented, "The Columbia Police Department appreciates the partnerships with federal, state, and local agencies because we all share the common goal of reducing violent crimes in our community, and helping these individuals become successful and take advantage of this opportunity." 14

### From Ceasefire Columbia to Real Time Columbia

Real Time Columbia is part of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Operation Real Time initiative that removes repeat violent offenders from the community at the point of arrest. Real Time Columbia is managed by the ATF's Charlotte Field Division, Columbia Field Office, and Violent Crime Task Force and is a collaboration between local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

Ceasefire Columbia evolved into Real Time Columbia in late 2016, as the CPD's partnership with ATF evolved. The focus of the initiative has shifted from prevention through call-ins to expedited arrests of prolific reoffenders, including of those who participated in the 2015 and 2016 call-ins, through collaboration between local and federal law enforcement. The CPD, in partnership with the ATF, maintains a prescreened universal priority offender list that officers reference in the field. Offenders on the Real Time Columbia list are noted as eligible for federal prosecution should they possess a firearm.

Most—but not all—of the Ceasefire 2016 offenders were eligible for and placed on the Real Time Columbia list. If an offender is on the Real Time Columbia list, the ATF adopts the case from the beginning, immediately after the CPD makes an arrest, freeing up capacity for CPD officers and increasing coordination between the ATF and CPD.

As Real Time Columbia continues to evolve, its partners (including the CPD, the Richland County Sheriff's Department, and ATF) have produced lists of offenders they believe to be the main gun violence offenders in Columbia. These lists will inform future Real Time Columbia efforts.

<sup>14.</sup> Columbia Police Department, 2016 Annual Report, (Columbia, SC: Columbia Police Department, 2017), <a href="https://columbiapd.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/annual-report-2016-final-web.pdf">https://columbiapd.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/annual-report-2016-final-web.pdf</a>.

#### Challenges

The CPD, like many other agencies, faced challenges when initiating and sustaining its focused deterrence strategy. One fundamental challenge was ensuring both state and local law enforcement partners and social service agencies, were on board with the concept and goals of focused deterrence. This required the CPD to develop strong consequences for reoffenders, but also to ensure that offenders were offered access to social services that could help them turn their lives around. Social service agencies that have participated in the program include the Alston Wilkes Society, Lexington/Richland Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council, Midlands Fatherhood Coalition, Richland One Adult Education, SC Department of Employment and Workforce, and the United Way.

Data collection and reporting also remain a challenge for Real Time Columbia. The department does not currently have much data ready for analysis to evaluate the outcomes of the project. The University of South Carolina (USC) conducted basic evaluation research on Ceasefire 2016, documenting the meetings and tracking whether attendees reoffended. The original evaluation design also included in-depth interviews with each offender; however, due to delays in establishing a data agreement between the CPD and USC, researchers conducted a post-meeting hard-copy survey instead, which provided less robust qualitative data. In addition, many of the respondents took a copy of the survey but did not complete it, which led to incomplete offender feedback data.

In addition, although researchers tracked attendees' behavioral outcomes for six months after the meeting, little is known about the longer-term effects of the program. CPD officers report that they could, with a good deal of effort, collect additional data that might indicate the levels of success of Ceasefire 2015 and Ceasefire 2016, but to do so the department would need additional staff and financial capacity. The department also lacks internal comparative data that shows that these focused deterrence programs have been more effective than previous approaches at reducing repeat gun crime.

#### Successes

While the CPD would like to collect additional data, the available program evaluation data indicate that offenders who participated in Ceasefire 2016 were less likely to commit probation violations during the six-month period after the call-in than before it.15,16 The assessment of other outcomes is more subjective; however, Real Time Columbia's successful removal of criminals from the street has improved morale, and officers praise its data-driven approach. Officers also perceive an improvement in the CPD's partnerships with federal agencies, particularly the ATF. The majority of high-priority gun cases suspected to be committed by offenders on the Real Time Columbia priority list are now investigated by the ATF from day one, and CPD officers report that the ATF responds rapidly to cases. This frees up officers to conduct other law enforcement activities. According to a CPD captain, "You are going to get ATF resources in real time." Officers also report that the program has increased offenders' awareness of the consequences of reoffending.

<sup>15.</sup> S.E. Wolfe and M.M. Chusciel, *City of Columbia (SC) Police Department Smart Policing Initiative: Addendum to the Final Report* (Columbia, SC: USC Department of Criminology, 2017).

<sup>16.</sup> As of November 2016, only 3 people out of the 50 original attendees have reoffended (Columbia Police Department, 2016 Annual Report [see note 14]).

#### Moving forward

In 2016, the CPD received a Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) grant from the U.S. Department of Justice. Through the grant, the CPD has enhanced its focused deterrence approach to bolster the Real Time Columbia efforts. The enhancements include the increased use of ballistics-based evidence obtained through the department's participation in the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN), and strengthened collaboration with outside agencies and nongovernmental social service providers. In addition, the grant allowed the CPD to hire a ceasefire service coordinator to facilitate future call-ins and maintain ongoing contact with the offenders selected to participate.

Offenders will be selected for the PSN grant initiative through a data-driven point system developed by the CPD's Crime Analysis Division. While the system is still under development and not yet released to the public, it prioritizes the most dangerous offenders on the street in Columbia. CPD leadership and officers sometimes discuss all the real-time, focused deterrence initiatives that have taken place since 2015 as if they are a single project. This is because they are interrelated and mutually focused on reducing gun violence through focused deterrence. According to a lieutenant leading the effort, "We are essentially building off of each program as we move toward greater efficiency in taking a holistic approach to violent crime reduction."

#### Lessons for other agencies

Agencies considering starting a focused deterrence program can take the following lessons from the CPD's experiences:

- Engage and collaborate with local partners. Forced deterrence programs like Ceasefire Columbia and Real Time Columbia require cooperation and collaboration from federal, state, and local partners. A strong partnership between the CPD and the ATF has been instrumental to Real Time Columbia's success.
- Incorporate social services into your strategy. Social services agencies should be engaged throughout the strategy development process to ensure that offenders have the resources necessary to turn their lives around.
- Personalize and target messages. Personalized and targeted messages to offenders help them understand the potential consequences of their actions and evaluate their future choices. As a result of Ceasefire Columbia and Real Time Columbia, offenders are aware that they are receiving extra scrutiny and attention from law enforcement agencies.
- Use data-driven strategies. Data-driven offender identification strategies are important for the program's success in targeting Columbia's most dangerous criminals. Agencies should work closely with each partner agency's analysis or research departments to develop metrics to measure a program's success.
- Leverage potential federal and state funding source.
   The Real Time Columbia initiative is supported by the federal PSN grant. Law enforcement agencies interested in replicating the initiative might consider whether there are federal or state grant opportunities that could bolster their capacity to implement a focused deterrence strategy.

### Conclusion

Both the Albany Police Department and the Columbia Police Department have implemented innovative and comprehensive focused deterrence initiatives to reduce repeat violent crime in their jurisdictions. Through these focused deterrence initiatives, police departments leverage the resources of local and federal law enforcement and social services agencies to achieve their goals. Offenders receive notification that law enforcement will prioritize and prosecute any crimes that they commit through letters and participation in call-ins. Under AVEP, and previously under the Ceasefire Columbia Initiative, offenders receive access to and support from social service agencies, including job training and placement assistance and substance abuse treatment.

The success of focused deterrence initiatives relies on strong engagement with and buy-in from both law enforcement and community partners. It is essential to engage all partners from the beginning of the planning process and to ensure that both leadership and staff have a comprehensive understanding of how to implement the policy. Effective partnerships with law enforcement at all levels and a network of social service groups have contributed to the success of Albany's AVEP and GVI in reducing fatal and non-fatal group-involved shootings. In Columbia, a strong partnership between local and federal law enforcement has increased overall capacity for these agencies to successfully identify violent offenders and investigate crime.

Focused deterrence strategies should also be data-focused and data-driven; both AVEP and Real Time Columbia use data-driven assessment systems to identify and monitor the most violent criminals, and the individuals most likely to be victims of crime. It is also important to use data and research to inform program improvement. Comprehensive program evaluation data allow law enforcement agencies to document the impact of focused deterrence on violent crime reduction and make the case to funders to support such efforts.

### **About CNA**

CNA is a not-for-profit organization based in Arlington, Virginia. The organization pioneered the field of operations research and analysis 75 years ago and today applies its efforts to a broad range of national security, defense, and public interest issues, including education, homeland security, public health, and criminal justice. CNA applies a multidisciplinary, field-based approach to helping decision makers develop sound policies, make better informed decisions, and lead more effectively.

Albany's Violence Elimination Plan and Columbia's Ceasefire Columbia are two examples of focused deterrence programs, which aim to prevent recidivism by connecting offenders to social services while facilitating prosecution of repeat or violent offenses. This Spotlight report describes the two programs' backgrounds and implementation and gives advice for other agencies considering similar programs.

This series of Spotlights highlights innovative programs implemented in progressive police agencies across the country. These reports showcase best practices in violent crime reduction; focused deterrence; approaches to gun violence; officer safety and wellness; community and public safety partnerships; and the use of technology, intelligence, and analytics to reduce violent crime.



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