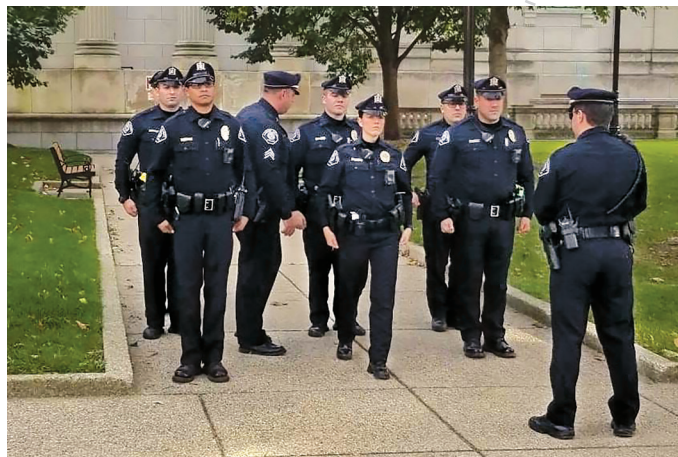


# CNA Spotlight

## Comprehensive Approaches to Violent Crime

### *The Camden County, New Jersey Crime Coalition*

Nola Joyce and Juliana Pearson



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Photos courtesy of various Camden County, New Jersey police officers.

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# Introduction

## The Camden County, New Jersey Police Department

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This report is part of a series of reports 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 the important components of the program and the agency’s approach, highlights the successes the agency has experienced as a result, and identifies ways other agencies can employ similar programs.

This report highlights the Camden County Crime Coalition, or C4, led by the Camden County (New Jersey) Police Department (CCPD). CNA worked closely with the CCPD and its local and federal partners to develop this publication, including a site visit in June 2018 to observe a C4 meeting and speak with participants about the initiative.

The CCPD is a relatively new law enforcement agency, created in May 2013 by the City of Camden, New Jersey, as part of a reorganization of its municipal police department. The radical step of forming a new agency was taken in response to the city’s mounting crime rates, increasing budget cuts, rising fear of crime, and escalating departmental morale problems. To address the serious crime problem in Camden County, the CCPD developed a new

policing strategy that emphasized public safety through strengthened partnerships and relationships with the public. Under the leadership of Chief Scott Thomson, the CCPD implemented a motto of “service before self” and a mission of “reducing the number of crime victims and making people feel safe.”<sup>1</sup>

Camden, New Jersey, covers roughly 8.9 square miles and sits across the Delaware River from Philadelphia. The city’s 74,542 residents are young and racially diverse; nearly all self-identify as either African American (48 percent) or Latino (47 percent). Approximately 14 percent of the population was born outside the United States. The average age is 28. The median household income (in 2015 dollars) is \$25,042, with a per capita income of \$13,412.<sup>2</sup>

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1. “About Us,” Camden County Police Department, accessed February 27, 2019, <http://camdencountypd.org/>.

2. United States Census Bureau, “Quick Facts: Camden, New Jersey,” accessed June 28, 2018, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/camdencitynewjersey/LND110210>.

Camden's population faces significant social and economic challenges. It has historically been among the American cities with the highest crime rates. When the CCPD was established in 2013, drug crimes leading to acts of gun violence were especially rampant. Gang members dealing drugs had taken over parks and other community spaces, and they defended their territory with violent exchanges of gunfire. Out of fear of violent crime, many local residents retreated from parks and public spaces and hid behind double-locked doors; parents kept their children indoors to ensure their safety. High crime rates and public acts of violence created widespread fear and low public confidence that anything could be done to improve public safety. Before the establishment of the CCPD, Camden was widely considered unsafe not only for the people who lived and worked there but also for the officers policing the city.

Since its establishment, the CCPD has implemented a precision policing approach that combines cross-agency collaboration, technology, and engagement with community stakeholders. A cornerstone of this approach is the Camden County Crime Coalition, or C4, a collaborative effort between the CCPD and its local, state, and federal partners to reduce crime. Through C4 and other violence-reduction strategies, the CCPD is using crime data, crime analysis, and community engagement to address public safety issues holistically. Data suggest that these strategies are reducing violent crime and increasing public safety. Between 2012 (before the establishment of the CCPD) and 2017, incidents of violent crime decreased from 1,992 to 1,462, a 27 percent decrease. Total crimes decreased from 5,999 in 2012 to 3,988 in 2017, a 34 percent decrease.<sup>3</sup>

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3. "Uniform Crime Reporting 2017 Current Crime Data," New Jersey State Police, updated May 5, 2018, <https://www.njsp.org/ucr/current-crime-data1.shtml>.

## Camden County Crime Coalition

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C4 focuses on violent criminals, guns, and drug-trafficking organizations, with the goal of bringing offenders to justice and reducing violent crime in Camden County. C4 members include the CCPD's homicide and narcotics investigation divisions; the Camden County Prosecutor's Office; the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA); the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); the U.S. Marshals Service; the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); and the U.S. Attorney's Office. Other state and local law enforcement partners include the sheriff's department, probation and parole departments, and surrounding suburban police departments, such as Lindenwold and Cherry Hill. C4 is partially funded by the Philadelphia/Camden High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA).

C4 was born out of necessity in 2010, when the department was beginning to reorganize into the CCPD. At the time, only around 200 front-line officers were available to tackle crime in Camden. The department needed a strategy that

leveraged the resources of partner agencies, while simultaneously sharing information and resources with them. In addition, CCPD leaders sought to ensure that the agency's strategic approach to crime reduction was aligned with

those of its partners. A memorandum of understanding between agencies established C4, solidified buy-in from leadership, and provided a foundation for a culture of information sharing.

Since 2010, the C4 members have held half-hour meetings four mornings a week (Monday through Thursday) to share information and review cases, progress, and priorities. Participating agencies freely share intelligence and delegate tasks. Although these meetings have no formal standard operating procedures, they typically follow a round-robin format, led by the deputy chief of the CCPD Criminal Investigations Division and the Camden County Prosecutor's Office chief of detectives. During meetings, each agency provides a regular update on any of its work that is relevant to other agencies. For example, the CCPD and other police departments might share information on investigations of shootings and narcotics cases, while the DEA provides updates on federal drug cases. Prosecutors' attendance helps agencies build a strong case throughout the prosecution process. The prosecutors learn about a case from its inception, saving time and effort that would otherwise be expended on collecting and sharing information and resources.

The daily meeting helps participants establish strong relationships, making it easier for them to work collaboratively across agencies and jurisdictions in real time. Participants say the daily meeting has become a tradition and continues today. Through the meetings, participants can gather immediate input on their cases, understand which agencies are working on a case, and learn how they can share and leverage resources. The information sharing in the C4 meetings has allowed partner agencies to share informants and identify and locate high-risk serious offenders more efficiently than if they were working in isolation.

## Challenges

Establishing and sustaining a multiagency group requires continuous commitment from agency leadership to assign and support the members of the group. Agencies expect to receive benefits from their participation equal to or greater than their contribution. C4 benefited from strong early leadership. The original coordinator, Raymond Massi, was the law enforcement coordinator for the US Attorney's Office and currently serves as the deputy director of the Philadelphia/Camden County HIDTA. Prior to that, he was a captain at the CCPD for 27 years, retiring as the



**Two of Camden County's police officers and their K-9 partners.**

commander of investigations. According to current meeting participants, his leadership helped establish a tradition of meeting daily and holding partners accountable.

Reinforcing effective team groups and norms has been essential to ensure C4's effectiveness. Often, law enforcement personnel are afraid to share sensitive information with people outside of their agencies because they do not trust that the information will be protected. Therefore, building trust among group members is critical. For example, C4 members try to ensure that credit for an arrest, seizure, or major investigation or prosecution is shared among the parties, which strengthens mutual trust. Participants also said that Mr. Massi was essential to facilitating data and resource sharing between agencies that had not done so historically.

At times, the turnover of C4 participants is a challenge. Agents and officers get promoted or transferred, or they retire. Personnel transitions require that the group regularly orient new members. However, many of the participating supervisors have worked together for years, which they say contributes to group cohesion.

## Successes

Intelligence and information sharing is the key to the success of C4. The coalition is focused on intelligence, investigation, and prosecution, reducing and preventing violent crime by removing major violent criminals and criminal organizations from the street. To support C4, participants

make a concerted effort to increase the flow of communication between agencies. Participants say that the collegial relationships built during daily meetings improve cross-agency operations and, ultimately, help reduce crime.

Participants allow that C4's success measures are somewhat subjective, because it is difficult to link strengthened collaboration directly to reduced violent crime rates. Nonetheless, they surmise that C4 has improved the homicide solve rate, which reached a remarkable 76 percent in 2016. Before the implementation of C4 and the Neighborhood Response Teams—officers dedicated to improving public safety in high-crime geographic areas—following the transition to the CCPD in 2013, the homicide solve rate had hit a low of 15 percent.

## Moving Forward

The CCPD and its C4 partners have benefited from their collaboration as they investigate violent crimes and bring violent offenders to justice. To support the collaborative culture that has been established, participants say the meetings will continue for the foreseeable future. C4 has become a model for other agencies, who visit Camden to learn how they can strengthen cross-agency collaboration, data sharing, and transparency. C4 practices are so deeply rooted in Camden that participants visiting other agencies are surprised to learn the extent to which Camden and its partners share information or resources across agencies and jurisdictions.



# Lessons for other agencies

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The overarching lesson of C4 is that collaboration allows individuals to trust their coworkers with sensitive information and to work together as a team. Information sharing between agencies gives partners immediate input on cases in real time. Agencies outside of Camden have adopted or considered adopting the C4 model—for example, the Philadelphia Police Department and its partners recently began implementing the program in its East Division. C4 participants shared the following lessons learned for other agencies considering the implementation of a similar strategy:

- **Establish recurring communication between agency partners.** Partnership meetings should be held daily, even if there is little information to report on a specific day. The daily meetings establish both a routine and camaraderie among agencies, helping to break down siloes and facilitate communication. They also help hold partners accountable for taking the actions necessary to collaborate to investigate crimes.
- **Ensure strong leadership and buy-in among agency partners.** Leadership and buy-in were crucial to C4's success. In Camden's case, a strong C4 coordinator helped break down communication and data-sharing barriers between agencies and facilitate relationship building. A memorandum of understanding between agencies ensured that participation was valued at all levels of the agency. It is helpful to engage supervisors who have worked with one another in some capacity over many years.
- **Consider non-traditional methods for funding.** Agencies should consider a funding model similar to that of C4, which was made possible partially by the Philadelphia/Camden HIDTA allowing for the co-location of staff from the various agencies, which in turn facilitated intelligence and information sharing about cases and offenders.

## About CNA

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CNA is a not-for-profit organization based in Arlington, Virginia. The organization pioneered the field of operations research and analysis over 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.

The Camden County Crime Coalition is a multiagency partnership led by the Camden County (New Jersey) Police Department. This Spotlight report outlines the history, membership, and practices of the coalition 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.



CNA Analysis & Solutions  
3003 Washington Boulevard  
Arlington, VA 22201

Vist CNA at <https://www.cna.org>.