

Community Violence Intervention Team (CVIT)

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

In the summer of 2021, in the midst of several violent altercations resulting in the shooting deaths of Antonio Bishop (24yo), Arthur Ellerson (18yo), Arshon Evans (17yo), and Ziair Willis-Wilson (21yo), Ypsilanti Mayor, Lois Richardson convened a diverse group of community members with a singular focus of addressing community violence and saving the lives of our young people.

It is believed 80% to 85% of gun violence in our community is retaliatory in nature. This means that violence in our neighborhoods is predictable therefore it is also preventable. Although the disease of violence is deep-rooted and complex, there are solutions if we are committed to understanding the true nature of the problem and commit ourselves to taking the necessary steps to save lives by stopping violence.

The CVIT was only convened in recent months, however the recommendations below come from the years of lived experience members have in navigating, surviving, and in some cases perpetuating violence in our community. It is this lived experience combined with the expertise brought forth by team members representing government and the real-world experience by team members representing service providers that has brought this plan forward.

For our purposes, when we reference violence, we are focused on intentional violent trauma that is a result of shootings, stabbings, and serious assaults. This is not meant to diminish the impact of other violence related categories. However, by maintaining our narrow focus our intention is to save lives by finally impacting street violence.

We know that violence is a public health issue. The three leading causes of death in the United States for people ages 15-24 are unintentional injury, homicide, and suicide¹. Most of these violent deaths are directly associated with firearms. We also know that exposure to firearm violence approximately doubles the probability that a young person will commit violence within two years². It is also true that hospitalization for violence-related injuries is recurrent, with hospital readmission rates for subsequent assaults as high as 44% and subsequent homicide rates as high as 20%³.

What does all this mean? If a young person in Washtenaw County is impacted by violence, there is a high probability they will either wind up injured a second time or involved in a homicide the next time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 – Set a clear goal: commit to saving lives by stopping violence CCJ 1

Violence is not a police problem or a specific neighborhoods issue. It is a public health crisis and requires a commitment by individuals, governing bodies, service providers, and business alike.

2 – Identify key people and places driving violence CCJ 2

In every community, including our county, violence concentrates among a small group of people and places. To effectively reduce violent crime, communities must begin with a rigorous problem analysis. These analyses draw on incident reviews, shooting data, law enforcement intelligence, and social network mapping to identify the people and groups most likely to become involved in a violent incident. **We must fund an in-depth problem analysis and asset mapping process.** These analyses should then be reviewed by trained street outreach workers and other non-police individuals with relevant experience. This foundational work is critical to creating a shared understanding of a city's violence and guiding collaborative efforts.

3 – Create a plan for engaging key people and places CCJ 3

Commit to building an ecosystems approach to addressing violence. No program or organization can solve this complex problem alone. Compassionate enforcement, street outreach, violence interrupters, and a whole host of services are required for any successful anti-violence initiative. Addressing violence demands a multi-disciplinary response and a strategic plan to effectively organize these efforts. Most critically, leaders must coordinate stakeholder activities focused on the highest risk people and places. Plans should be practical and actionable, detailing concrete commitments: for key people and in key places, who will do what, by when?

4 – Engage key people with empathy and accountability CCJ 4

Those individuals and groups at the highest risk of violence must be placed on notice that they are in great danger of being injured, killed, arrested, and/or incarcerated. This message must be delivered with a combination of empathy and accountability. Supports and services must be offered so people have something better to say "yes" to, but it must be made clear that further violence will not be tolerated.

Outreach workers in neighborhoods and hospitals where shooting victims are recovering can defuse conflicts, connect people to services, and serve as crucial go-betweens for a city and some of its most disconnected citizens, as they do in Detroit with the DLIVE program.

5 – Address key locations using place-based policing and investment CCJ 5

A combination of place-based policing and investment can calm violent spaces. Police are necessary to disrupt existing cycles of violence and stop others from starting. But such short-term actions must be supplemented and quickly replaced by place-based interventions and investments to change the nature of violent micro-locations and the communities in which they are located. Problem-oriented policing, conducted in collaboration with residents can be an effective strategy to begin the process of disrupting violence.

6 – Place responsibility for violence reduction efforts at the top CCJ 6

Every community suffering from high rates of violent crime should have a permanent unit dedicated to violence reduction, with senior leadership reporting directly to the mayor, supervisor, administrator, or sheriff. These units can provide direct services as well as administer funding and should act as a hub for anti-violence efforts.

7 – Emphasize healing with trauma-informed approaches CCI 7

Agencies working with victims and survivors of violent crime should use a trauma-informed approach. This means acknowledging and recognizing the impacts and symptoms of trauma and ensuring that supports and services are delivered in a way that does not retraumatize survivors. Police also experience trauma and benefit from such approaches as well.

8 – Invest in anti-violence workforce development CCI 8

Violence intervention work happens because someone has attempted to or is planning to kill someone else. This work is difficult, dangerous, and requires an expertise that can't be learned in a book. Investing in and building up those who do this work and investing in violence prevention and retaliation mitigation programs are essential to saving lives.

9 – Set aside funding for new stakeholders and strategies CCI 9

There is a large base of rigorous evidence about what works, and what doesn't, when it comes to violence reduction. That said, there is still room for learning and improvement. While most funding should be reserved for strategies with demonstrated track records of success, some portion of anti-violence dollars should be set aside to promote innovation. Development funds should be created to nurture new leaders and organizations with small grants, training, and technical assistance.

10 – Create the Washtenaw County Violence Commission CCI 6 & 10

A new body is needed to continue and expand this work. **Committing to continuous improvement** by understanding violence in Washtenaw, recommending strategies, evaluating the effectiveness of strategies, reporting on progress made, and raising awareness are all important components of a violence commission. Strategies must be tested to see if they stop violence and save lives. Plans must be reviewed and, if necessary, revised. Leaders should embrace a learning culture that is able to recognize when strategies are not working and shift course – without starting over from scratch.

11 – Build a community center in eastern Washtenaw County

Whether it is the *science* behind successful violence intervention strategies or simply listening to what the young people in our community are telling us, safe spaces for young people are essential to stopping violence and saving lives.

12 – Build community mural/safe grieving community space

When listening to those directly impacted by violence, a mural of remembrance and safe space to grieve is needed. This allows us to begin the healing process, release the pain of loss, allow our community to grieve, unify those perpetuating violence, honor those lost, call attention to the issue of violence, and share the reality of violence in our community.

13 – Establish grief and loss community response protocol for violent deaths

When a young person dies from a drug overdose or suicide there are clear steps we take to wrap around their friends and loved ones. We do this because we understand the impact that a traumatic sudden loss can have. Why do we not provide the same support for those who lose a loved one to street violence?

14 – Establish Communication Alert System

For community responders to engage they must be alerted when instances of violence occur. Community responder is used in the broadest terms possible and include all working to cure violence.

CCI - Those local recommendations marked CCI are aligned with the CCI 10 Essential Actions to Save Lives plan⁴

REMEMBERANCE

Since 2008, the following individuals have been lost to violence in Washtenaw County. In their memory we commit to action in order to save the lives of future generations.

Donald Ray Hall – 19yo
Jamar Gardner – 31yo
Demarius Reed – 20yo
Derrick Allen – 29yo
Eric Hargrove – 38yo
Zachary Currie – 18yo
Deshawn Jones – 30yo
Domonique Lee – 28yo
Luis Rivera-Estrada – 41yo
Kelly Campbell-Brown – 53yo
Chris Marsh – 18yo
Brian Matthews – 21yo
Marcus Mackey Jr. – 22yo
Henry Ross – 32yo
Von Cratic – 22yo
Laronte Binion-Phillips – 18yo
Terrell Smith – 46yo

Kenneth Jackson – 17yo
Chris King – 20yo
Edward Gwinner – 29yo
Keandre Duff – 20yo
Allysha Tomlin – 23yo
Jordan Klee – 18yo
Allen Shevrovich – 25yo
David Sloss – 66yo
Brandon Cross – 19yo
Garland Johnson – 23yo
Kevin Hughbanks Jr – 29yo
Aundre Smith – 22yo
Sonni Green – 20yo
Arthur Ellerson – 18yo
Arshon Evans – 17yo
Laryus Dottery – 19yo

Anna List – 17yo
Brandon Charles – 28yo
Keon Washington – 17yo
Derius James – 25yo
Wesley Skinner – 44yo
Nina Battle - 32yo
Deandre Willingham – 20yo
Kevin Hughbanks – 50yo
Keifer Johnson – 26yo
Robert Powell – 38yo
Marquis Gillespy – 16yo
Soloman Brown – 31yo
Reed Carter – 22yo
Antonio Bishop – 24yo
Ziair Willis-Wilson – 21yo
Sean Longoria – 18yo

The purpose of this list is to honor those lost. Any errors or omissions were unintentional and can be updated.

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION TEAM MEMBERS

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END NOTES

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [10 leading causes of death by age group, United States—2020](#). Accessed February 20, 2022.
2. Bingenheimer JB, Brennan RT, Earls FJ. Firearm violence exposure and serious violent behavior. *Science*. May 27 2005;308(5726):1323-1326.
3. Bonderman J. Working with Victims of Gun Violence. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime; 2001.
4. CCJ: As communities around the country confront an ongoing surge in violent crime, particularly homicide, the Council on Criminal Justice launched the Violent Crime Working Group. Composed of a diverse range of leaders, the Group dedicated itself to saving lives by producing anti-violence guidance that is timely, relevant, and reliable. The result was the identification of Ten Essential Actions that communities can take now to reduce community gun violence. Those recommendations listed with CCJ are in alignment with the CCJ recommendations. The list focuses on the actions most likely to make the greatest immediate impact on violence and can be carried out within a year. The full plan can be found here. <https://counciloncj.org/10-essential-actions/>