

# • NGC NEWSLETTER •

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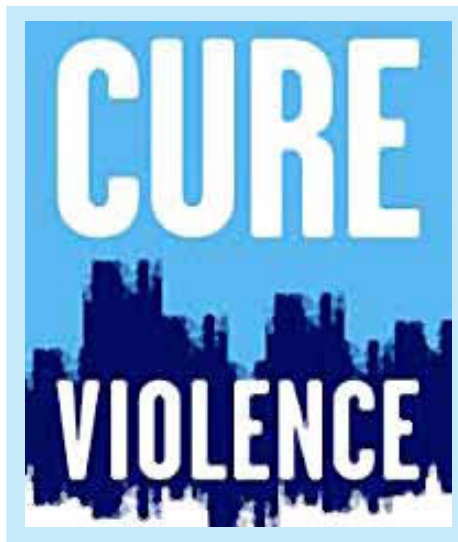


## In This Issue!

- **Cure Violence: *The Interrupters***
- **Vertical Prosecution: Operation Hardcore**
- **Street Outreach and the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model**
- **Massachusetts Shannon Community Safety Initiative**
- **Gang Homicides — Five U.S. Cities, 2003–2008**

Watch  
"The  
Interrupters"  
movie  
HERE.

## Cure Violence: *The Interrupters*



**Cure Violence** (previously known as CeaseFire) began in 1995 with the goal of stopping shootings and homicides in Chicago, Illinois. An interdisciplinary public health strategy, Cure Violence has four core activities that work in conjunction to disrupt the transmission of violence: detection and interruption of potentially lethal events, intervention with highest-risk persons—or those thought most likely to be involved in potential events in the near future—changing group and community behavior and norms, and data and monitoring.

At the street level, Cure Violence employs “violence interrupters,” individuals who, because of their past positions in the community or, in some cases, their prior history with a gang, retain the ability to reach and talk to key active gang members. Violence interrupters utilize these personal relationships to address ongoing disputes, which may prevent them from escalating into shootings. Their activities include talking individuals and groups out of planned violent events and, in some cases, talking with and/or bringing together key individuals who are involved to cool down those conflicts.

One of the keys to this part of the Cure Violence intervention is the ability of its violence interrupters to detect potential shooting events. These events might include a shooting or robbery that could prompt a retaliation; the admission of a shooting victim to an emergency room, which also could prompt retaliation; the release of a particular gang member from prison; anniversaries of deaths or births of key gang members; or gatherings—such as parties, parades, dice games, and club gatherings—where disrespect or miscommunication could result in potentially lethal events if not interrupted. Violence interrupters also keep track of territorial disputes, interpersonal and gang conflicts, the emergence of new factions or cliques, and major arrests that leave power vacuums, all of which may require mediation to prevent lethal gun violence.

Receiving timely information on conflicts that could escalate to deadly shooting events is essential to preventing shootings. Violence interrupters have four main sources of information on these potential shooting events: community members,

The National Gang Center (NGC) is jointly funded by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Bureau of Justice Assistance. NGC conducts research on street gangs and serves as a clearinghouse for individuals and agencies seeking information, technical assistance, and training in the areas of gang prevention, intervention, suppression, and reentry.

For More Information,  
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## Vertical Prosecution: Operation Hardcore



In 1979, with support from the federal government, the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office established a specialized prosecution unit devoted to violent gang crimes: Operation Hardcore (now known as the Hardcore Gang Investigations Unit). Prosecutors handled only gang-related cases, and their caseloads were reduced. Cases were handled vertically, or on a continuous basis, by prosecutors, and additional investigative support was provided (e.g., funds for witness relocation). Los Angeles provides a unique context to understand how one of the largest district attorney's offices in the United States tackled a growing and increasingly violent gang problem. Little is known about the effectiveness of specialized gang prosecution units in the United States.

In a study published in 2011, <http://cjp.sagepub.com/content/22/1/3.abstract>, Pyrooz and colleagues reanalyzed data collected by Judith Dahmann (1982) in her original report, which showed that with vertical prosecution, Operation Hardcore produced more convictions and a higher rate of state prison commitments. Based on 614 murder cases forwarded to the District Attorney's office for charging decisions between 1976 and 1980, the research team focused on the offender, the victim, and incident factors associated with case rejection. In a more rigorous analysis than was used in the original study, it examined whether Operation Hardcore was effective in moving cases forward.

Two key findings were identified: (1)

Cases prosecuted by Operation Hardcore were less likely to be rejected; i.e., gang-related homicide cases prosecuted by the specialized unit were more likely to advance to the next stage of adjudication. A case prosecuted by Operation Hardcore had a 22 percent chance of rejection, compared with a 51 percent chance if not. (2) The more victims, the less chance the case would be rejected, dropping from 64 percent for one victim, 27 percent for two victims, 7 percent for three victims, and 2 percent for four victims. These findings were observed after taking into account a number of factors specific to the suspect, the victim, and homicide(s).

The authors concluded that Operation Hardcore was an effective prosecutorial strategy. During a period of dynamic change and an increasingly violent gang landscape, the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office was able to effectively lessen one of the many obstacles in ensuring justice for victims of gang-related homicides and increasing public safety—prosecutorial charging decisions. In smaller district attorney's offices where the number of gang cases precludes vertical prosecution, at least one attorney should be assigned as the gang expert, one who is familiar with the history, culture, and rivalries of gangs in his respective jurisdiction. This prosecutor could act not only in concert with police gang intelligence but also as a liaison to attorneys prosecuting challenging gang-related cases. ■

## Cure Violence cont.

Continued from front page

local police agencies, high-risk individuals involved in the conflict, and hospital emergency rooms where shooting victims are treated and where friends of the victims often gather with plans of retaliation.

The actual mediations occur in a number of ways. Violence mediators may talk over the phone or one-on-one with key players or influentials, host small group sit-downs or peacekeeping sessions, foster diplomacy between groups, or bring in a respected third party to dissuade further violence and/or negotiate conflicts. Once the key individuals have been approached or convened, violence interrupters employ a variety of different strategies to diffuse the situation, including creating cognitive dissonance by demonstrating contradictory thinking; changing the understanding of the situation to one which does not require violence; allowing parties to air their grievances; dispelling any misunderstandings; conveying the true costs of using violence; buying time to let emotions cool; and seeking out individuals who can use their influence to further assist in cooling down the situation with a potential shooter. ■



## Street Outreach and the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model



The National Gang Center recently published a bulletin titled “Street Outreach and the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model.” The article provides an overview of best practices obtained from practitioners in communities with experience in planning and implementing street outreach activities in the context of the Model.

Click the URL below to download the bulletin:

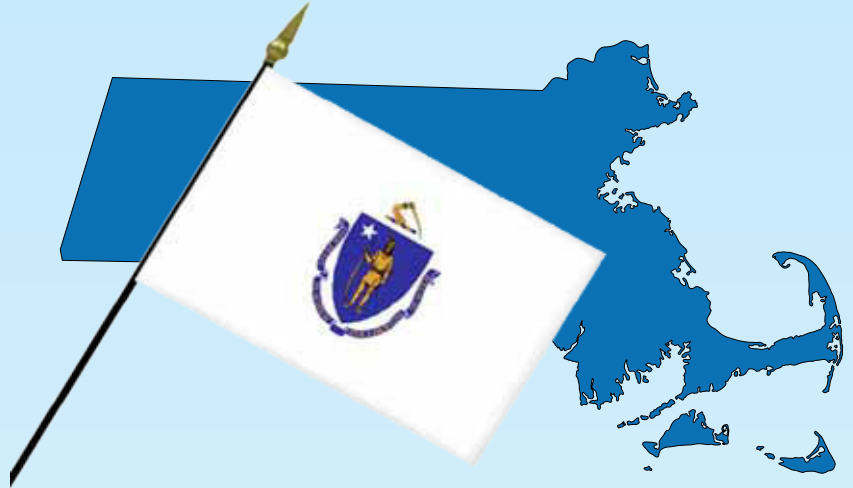
<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Content/Documents/Street-Outreach-Comprehensive-Gang-Model.pdf> ■

<http://info-you-need>

# Did You KNOW?

The NGC hosts an e-mail discussion group on street gangs. For more information, visit the GANGINFO page [HERE.](#)

## Massachusetts Shannon Community Safety Initiative



Named after deceased Massachusetts Senator Charles E. Shannon, Jr., the Shannon Community Safety Initiative (SCSI) was first funded in 2006 by the Massachusetts legislature to implement the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Comprehensive Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Model statewide. Grantees were required to have a population of at least 100,000; have high levels of youth violence and gang problems; and agree to promote regionalization of services where possible, commit to coordinated prevention and intervention strategies, and develop a comprehensive plan to work with multidisciplinary partners. Initially, 15 sites were funded, encompassing 37 communities. In the fourth year, funding was expanded to 17 sites, composed of 41 municipalities. A complete description of the initiative, along with several useful reports and other resources, can be found at: <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/funding-and-training/justice-and-prev/grants/shannon-csi/>.

Awards have totaled more than \$40 million to date. The number of partner agencies varies by site but typically includes faith-based organizations, government agencies, arts and recreation-based programs, and local police departments. Research partners assist sites with data analysis, identification of best-practice programs, and recommendations to improve partner programs.

Social intervention services, such as street outreach, educational support activities, anti-gang education programs, and after-school and weekend enrichment programs, are the most frequently implemented strategies across the sites. Among the most frequently supported opportunities provision strategies are job skills development programs, employment referral programs, and a large number of employment opportunities, including both summer jobs and year-round employment. The third most common strategy is suppression (e.g., directed “hot spot” patrols targeting gang members or gang neighborhoods; joint investigations—federal, state, and local or multiple-community).

A state-funded evaluation noted the importance of establishing a steering committee and found increased collaboration between service providers and police over time. By the third year, 60 percent of service providers had significantly increased their collaboration with police. One-quarter or more of service providers reported a significant increase in the number of referrals they received from law enforcement (37 percent) and the schools (33 percent) since the beginning of the SCSI. A book more completely describing the SCSI was published earlier this year [Gebo, E., and Bond, B. J. (2012). *Looking Beyond Suppression: Community Strategies to Reduce Gang Violence*. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books]. ■

## NGC Products and Services

Surveys and Analysis

Training and Technical Assistance

Comprehensive Gang Model

Law Enforcement Anti-Gang Training

Gang News

GANGINFO Mailing List

Legislation

This collaboration recognizes that street gang activities transcend age and other structural and jurisdictional boundaries. Thus, strategies ranging from prevention through intervention, suppression, and reentry are needed to combat them.

## Gang Homicides — Five U.S. Cities, 2003–2008



This report, published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is the first to analyze data compiled in its National Violent Death Reporting System to compare characteristics of gang and nongang homicides. Included in the findings is an examination of such factors as drug involvement, weapon use, and offense location.

Click the URL below for the full report:

[http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6103a2.htm?s\\_cid=mm6103a2\\_w](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6103a2.htm?s_cid=mm6103a2_w)

## Interested in Anti-Gang Training?

Check out the links below for dates and locations:

### Training and Conferences

<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/About/Other-Training-and-Conferences>

### Law Enforcement Anti-Gang Training

<http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Training-and-Technical-Assistance/Law-Enforcement>

To subscribe to the NGC  
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