



Violence Is Preventable

Violence Reduction Councils Can Help Communities Identify and Implement Long-Term Solutions

THE INTERSECTION OF PUBLIC HEALTH & PUBLIC SAFETY

Violence Reduction Councils take an interdisciplinary, data-driven, and public health-focused approach to violence prevention and intervention. They're proven to prevent violence, enact sustainable improvements to reduce violence in cities, and rebuild trust among local governments, law enforcement, and community members.

THE NEED FOR VIOLENCE REDUCTION COUNCILS

The United States experienced a 30 percent increase in homicide rates in 2020—its highest annual increase in more than 100 years. Homicides are the second leading cause of death for people ages 15 to 24—surpassing cancers, heart disease, diabetes, and liver disease combined.

The U.S. Department of Justice dedicated **\$100 million in competitive grants** to community violence intervention programs, like Violence Reduction Councils, in cities across the country in 2022.

Research shows homicides have a disproportionate impact on Black Americans. Black people are 12 times more likely to die by homicide than white people. Violence Reduction Councils strive to promote health equity and create a community where all people can live free of violence.

BUILDING THE RIGHT TEAM

Team members may include: the mayor, chief of police, executive directors of nonprofits, district attorney, school superintendent, the commissioner of health, etc.

The Violence Reduction Council gathers a diverse set of stakeholders that represent the impacted community. Led by a neutral agency, the Council brings together members in executive and mid-tiered positions from criminal justice, social service, public health, and community groups involved in violence prevention.

Implementing a Violence Reduction Council

The Process Splits Into Two Review Teams: Criminal Justice & Community Service

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REVIEW TEAM

Law enforcement (local, state, federal), prosecution (city attorney, district attorney and federal), and community corrections members evaluate law enforcement sensitive information about the victim, perpetrator, or environment where the violence occurred.

The **key to success** is ongoing, confidential data-sharing across teams.

This team meets routinely to discuss recent homicide and violent crime cases, where they:

- o Analyze data on homicide and nonfatal shooting victims, perpetrators, motives and situational factors, such as demographics, situations which often lead to crime, weapons used, and more
- o Identify gaps and weakness in policy and systematic barriers to violence prevention
- o Collect community feedback from law enforcement, policymakers, community partners, local executive personnel/frontline leadership, healthcare leaders, etc.
- o Provide data-driven recommendations that address systematic barriers, such as poverty or underfunded social services, and immediate risk factors, such as access to guns by people at risk of violence

“Oftentimes information reveals those involved in a homicide ‘knew it was coming.’ They’re predictable. If we can predict them, we should be able to prevent them.”

MALLORY O'BRIEN, PhD, associate scientist, Center for Gun Violence Solutions, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, who created the concept of a Violence Reduction Council in Milwaukee.

COMMUNITY SERVICE REVIEW TEAM

Representatives from the public health department, social service agencies, the school district, community-based organizations, and public safety examine major health events, social-emotional trauma, and other factors, including the physical environment, to understand the gaps in intervention/prevention that may have prevented the violent act.

The Violence Reduction Councils follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s four steps to approach violence through a public health framework:

- 1 Define and monitor the problem.
- 2 Understand the causes of the problem.
- 3 Identify, develop and test solutions and prevention strategies.
- 4 Ensure long-term or community-wide use of the strategies.

Success in Milwaukee:

The Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission—one of the first Violence Reduction Councils—increased the city’s capacity to prevent violence through “improved communication, information sharing, and cooperation.” The program was associated with a 52 percent decrease in the monthly count of homicides in the intervention police districts from January 2005 to December 2007.

Interested in implementing a Violence Reduction Council in your community?

Learn more at americanhealth.jhu.edu/VRC