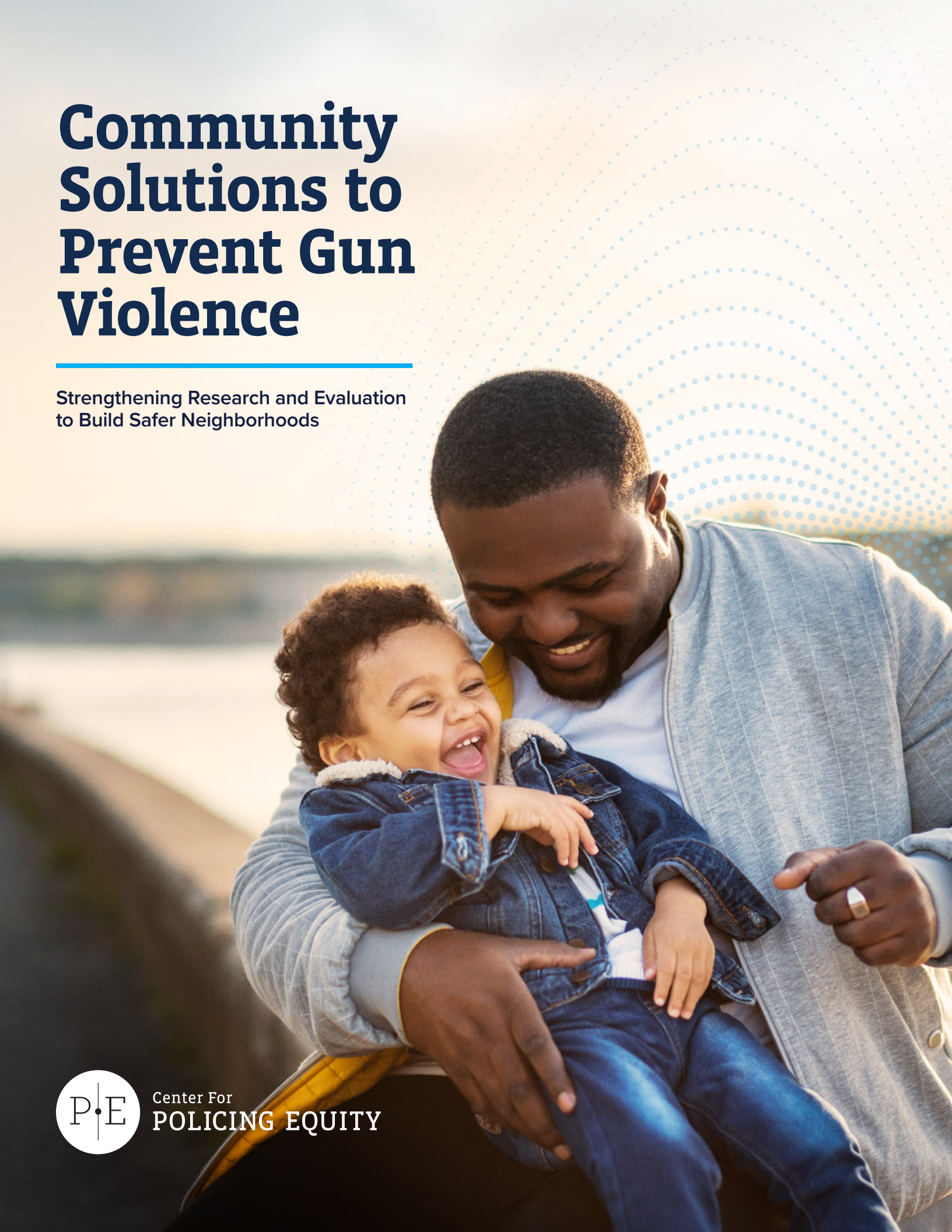
Community Solutions to Prevent Gun Violence

Strengthening Research and Evaluation to Build Safer Neighborhoods



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OVERVIEW

For far too long, law enforcement has been the primary response to the gun violence epidemic in the United States. However, an institution built and sustained through coercive control and violence cannot be expected to bring healing to communities, nor can it address the social conditions that lead people to choose gun violence as a means to an end. Addressing community-level gun violence requires a public health-based approach that centers the community and addresses the root causes of gun violence.

Through evidence-based, public health strategies, Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiatives (CVIPI) provide a comprehensive and compassionate alternative for addressing and preventing gun violence. This issue brief highlights the need for community-driven strategies, examines the current challenges in evaluating CVIPI efforts and argues that effective evaluation must involve community partnerships and focus on the experiences of program participants and violence intervention and prevention specialists (VIPs).

This focus on CVIPI comes at a critical moment. Communities are still experiencing gun violence while simultaneously facing shrinking budgets for prevention and public health initiatives. Staggering cuts to Department of Justice (DOJ) funding, the looming expiration of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in 2026 and the dismantling of the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention threaten the future of CVIPI. Without federal funding and a dedicated office to coordinate and champion CVIPI, these programs may be faced with the decision to scale-back operations or shut down. These converging realities make it clear that the time to rigorously evaluate, strengthen, and sustain CVIPI is now. Doing so can ensure these strategies not only survive current funding gaps, but also become a permanent fixture in the nation's approach to prevent and intervene in gun violence.

INTRODUCTION

Gun violence, a leading cause of premature death in the United States[1], threatens the health and well-being of communities by inflicting physical and psychological trauma on individuals, their loved ones and their communities. A nationally representative survey conducted in 2023 found that 54 percent[2] of U.S. adults have been impacted by a gun-related incident. In 2024, gun violence was officially declared a public health crisis by the U.S. Surgeon General.[3] Traditionally, the public has viewed gun violence as a problem that is repairable through policies that focus on reducing gun possession, accompanied by punitive action from the criminal legal system. However, these mechanisms do not address the root causes of gun violence and are not sufficient as stand-alone preventative measures. Furthermore, policing does little to prevent violence. Neither more officers[4] nor more arrests[5] reduce homicides, and any small reductions[6] from targeted patrols are offset by increased harm[7] and criminalization[8] of already traumatized communities. A public health strategy for gun violence should be holistic[9] and community-centered, using a restorative approach to address the social factors that cause disproportionate harm to marginalized communities.

The gun homicide rate is more than 12 times higher for Black Americans than for their White peers.

Gun violence is a racial justice issue and a public health crisis that is disparately felt by Black people and Black communities. The gun homicide rate is more than 12 times higher for Black Americans than for their White peers.[10] Structural racism is a key factor in these disparate outcomes, and a growing body of research illustrates how racist policies like redlining[11] and segregation[12] have contributed to increased gun violence in Black communities. These factors drastically shift neighborhood environments by concentrating poverty through housing exclusion. Similar research indicates that highly segregated neighborhoods generate lower revenues and, in turn, have less public expenditures.[13] This phenomenon results in less funding for necessary public and social services, like public education systems,[14] driving inequality across racial lines and placing Black communities at a greater risk for gun violence victimization and exposure.[15] Heightened exposure to gun violence can lead to co-occurring PTSD[16] and substance use disorders[17] that further increase the risk of violence.[18]

The same systemic inequities and structural racism that create conditions for gun violence also limit access to behavioral health care[19] and substance use treatment,[20] meaning Black Americans are less likely to receive care.[21] These compounding inequalities create a breeding ground for violence and result in a negative feedback loop where an overall lack of safety and health facilitates an environment of violence. This often triggers more violence and further diminishes the sense of health[22] and safety[23] in the community, cementing violence as a community norm.

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54% of U.S. adults have been impacted by a gun-related incident. In 2024, gun violence was officially declared a public health crisis by the U.S. Surgeon General.

Law enforcement agencies across the country are under pressure to prevent and disrupt cycles of gun violence. In response, many law enforcement agencies employ place-based policing strategies,[24] flooding identified "hot-spots"[25] with officers and intensifying enforcement in areas where shootings are most heavily reported. These tactics are often justified as proactive policing practices that can prevent shootings. However, gun violence is typically concentrated amongst a small number of individuals in a community.[26] Broad enforcement means the vast majority of people stopped, searched, or arrested are not actively involved in violence, making the approach both inefficient[27] and potentially harmful due to increased police contact.[28] While there is limited evidence that focused deterrence or "hot-spot" policing can lead to short-term reductions in crime,[29] the consequences of these approaches can further undermine safety in the communities they are meant to serve.[30]

Policing strategies concentrate enforcement in predominantly Black neighborhoods erode community trust and disproportionately expose residents to surveillance,[31] police contact[32] and arrests,[33] contributing to the overrepresentation of Black people in illegal gun possession charges.[34] In Illinois between 2014 and 2019, 69 percent of those arrested for illegal gun possession were Black, and nearly half had no prior convictions.[35] Many of those arrested were young men under the age of 25,[36] often the same individuals most vulnerable to being victims of gun violence themselves.

A survey of young adults in Chicago's South and West side neighborhoods found that safety was the top reason cited for carrying a gun. The survey also revealed that those who had been shot or shot at in the past 12 months were 300% more likely to have ever carried a gun.[37] Legal scholars and community advocates argue that, by treating those who have committed a violent crime the same as individuals who may be carrying weapons for protection or out of fear, the system may be criminalizing individuals who are at risk of victimization and do not see law enforcement as a protective resource.[38] This punitive approach does not acknowledge the lack of safety and supportive resources in communities that contribute to violence. It also exacerbates racial disparities and criminalization in communities already grappling with high rates of violence and victimization, underscoring the need for approaches to reduce gun violence built for and by the community.

> Through fostering trusting relationships and prioritizing the immediate needs of program participants, CVIPI create healthier and safer communities

Community-based strategies like CVIPI have gained prominence as an effective strategy to prevent and intervene in gun violence that does not rely on the carceral system. CVIPI models, like READI Chicago,[39] Cure Violence[40] and Advance Peace use a violence interrupter model that prevents violence[41] by employing credible messengers, street outreach teams and neighborhood change agents. These groups identify individuals at the center of violence and connect them to resources and opportunities for social and economic mobility. Violence interrupters and neighborhood change agents are often individuals who have lived experiences with violence and deep ties to the community they serve. Their unique perspective means that they can offer tailored support that is distinct from the practices of law enforcement and direct service providers.[42] Through fostering trusting relationships and prioritizing the immediate needs of program participants, CVIPI create healthier and safer communities by changing the behaviors, attitudes and norms surrounding violence in communities and the conditions that perpetuate cycles of violence.[43]

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THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF CVI EVALUATION

CVIPI models are considered community-centered when they intentionally involve the voices and priorities of those impacted by gun violence in their design and implementation.[44] CVIPI models prioritize having staff, advisory boards and decision-makers reflect the community being served, ensuring that interventions are culturally relevant and address the true concerns of residents. Additionally, CVIPI models operate within a collaborative ecosystem of local organizations, faith groups, schools and public agencies, which further grounds intervention and prevention efforts in the community and provides a comprehensive support network.

Unlike law enforcement strategies, CVIPI treats violence as a public health issue and focuses on engaging communities as active participants in co-developing solutions.[45] This includes offering training, resources, and technical assistance that empower communities to sustain prevention strategies independently. As CVIPI strategies have demonstrated their capacity to reduce gun violence and justice system involvement, CVIPI has gained prominence and its evidence base has grown.[46] However, despite promising findings, evaluating CVIPI comes with unique challenges. To-date, evaluations of CVIPI have faced limitations due to evaluators' focus on quantitative metrics, such as crime statistics and cost savings. While these metrics are positive and signal that CVIPI is working as intended, they risk overlooking the community-centered aspects of CVIPI that are central to its short and long-term successes. Understanding the nuances of these challenges and limitations is critical for two reasons: first, robust evaluation frameworks that uplift community voices help ensure programs remain effective and adaptable; second, demonstrating measurable impact through evaluation is essential for securing sustained political and financial support for CVIPI programs.

Community-based Violence Intervention Strategies Display Effectiveness

Evaluations of CVIPI programs demonstrate that this strategy is effective for reducing violence. Chicago's Creating Real Economic Destiny (CRED) program uses street outreach, therapy, life coaching education and job training to disrupt the cycle of violence. CRED showed a 73.4% reduction in violent crime arrests among program alumni.[47] Participants of CRED's partner program, the Rapid Employment and Development Initiative (READI) Chicago, experienced 65 percent fewer shootings over 20 months compared to a control group.[48] READI's evaluation also found that there are 1.3 fewer shootings for every READI participant.[49] Similarly, researchers at the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions determined that Safe Streets Baltimore is associated with a statistically significant 23 percent reduction in nonfatal shootings,[50] and the Capital Region Violence Intervention Program (CAP-VIP)[51] reduced trauma recidivism from 32 percent to 1 percent

after integrating community-based interventionists into their program.[52] By reducing the occurrence of violence, CVIPI can also yield costs savings for communities. This is evidenced by estimations that Safe Streets yields between $7.20 and $19.20 in economic benefits for every $1 invested.[53] Similarly, READI Chicago is estimated to reduce the costs of crime and violence by as much as $182,000 to $916,000 per participant.[54]

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These outcomes demonstrate that community-based approaches to gun violence are effective and cost-efficient. While these findings are compelling, they also highlight a central challenge: evaluations of CVIPI tend to emphasize quantifiable reductions in crime and economic return on investment while undervaluing the less easily measured inputs that make these programs successful. For instance, participants' sense of safety, changes in their conflict resolution skills, and strengthened social networks are critical drivers of CVIPI's success, yet they rarely appear in evaluation metrics.

Violence intervention and prevention specialists (VIPs) play a critical role in the success of CVIPI and need additional support.

A crucial component of CVIPI's success is the unique skill set of violence interrupters, also known as violence intervention and prevention specialists (VIPs). Their lived experiences, credibility, and ability to build relationships determine whether participants engage with programs at all. In interviews with VIPs, researchers found that VIPs draw on their personal connections and lived experiences to form strong relationships with program participants. Their deep understanding of their communities and firsthand knowledge of how violence unfolds enables them to act as effective peacemakers and serve as first responders after violent incidents.[55] Evaluations of programs like READI and CAP-VIP found that relationship-building and establishing trust were essential to achieving higher program participation and subsequent behavior change.[56] While serving as healers in their communities, VIPs risk being retraumatized due to violence exposure.[57] A 2021 survey of 181 Chicago-based VIPs found that, in a single year, this group experiences violence at higher rates than the Chicago police. As a result, many VIPS suffer secondary traumatic stress.[58]

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Due to funding challenges, many VIPs are underpaid and have limited job security. Although the success of CVIPI strategies often relies on the experiences of VIPs, few evaluations capture and center the full breadth of their experiences and the depth of their impact.[59] This limited data collection creates a disconnect between what communities and advocates see as success and what funders and policymakers can evaluate based on current reporting practices.

The current landscape of CVI evaluation demonstrates both promise and limitations. While existing studies show that community-centered approaches can reduce shootings and produce cost savings, many fall short of capturing the full range of CVIPI impacts. As a result, there is a pressing need for more comprehensive evaluation frameworks.

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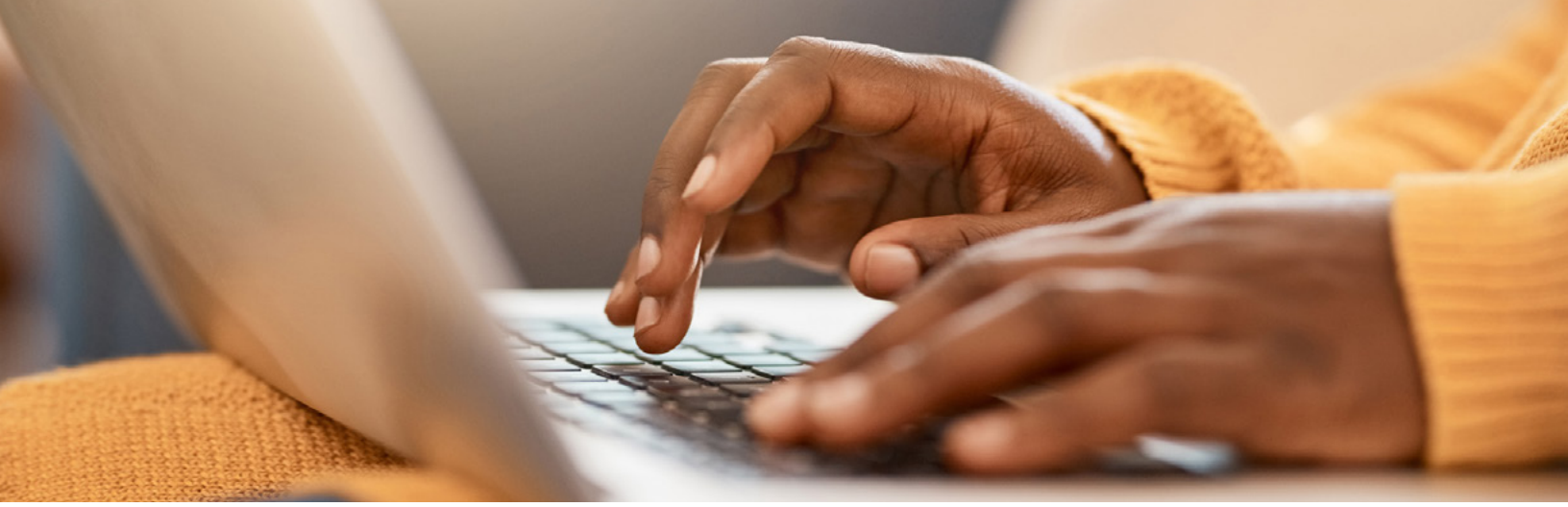

CHALLENGES TO CVIPI EVALUATION

1) Delayed Effects

Community-centered interventions often take years to yield measurable results, as their success depends on supporting participants in building trust, reducing trauma and developing prosocial behaviors. These outcomes unfold slowly and are not always clear in short-term indicators, like yearly crime rates. For instance, a violence interrupter forming trusting relationships with high-risk individuals may not produce an immediate decline in shootings, but it can lay the groundwork for long-term community stability. Adding to the complexity, participants are often simultaneously influenced by multiple systems such as schools, healthcare, housing programs and job training. This interconnectedness makes it difficult to isolate the impact of CVIPI or attribute the program's success to a specific intervention. Evaluators must design frameworks that capture both the immediate and delayed effects of these programs.

2) Methodology and Data Collection

Many instances of interpersonal violence are not reported to law enforcement due to fear of retaliation, mistrust or stigma, limiting understanding of the true scope of violence within communities.[60] Evaluations often prioritize quantitative metrics, such as crime rates, recidivism or hospital trauma admissions. These data sources are fragmented and lack consistent and standardized reporting, making it difficult for researchers to compare program impacts across systems and communities.[61] While crime data can provide tangible evidence of reduced violence in a community, it often fails to capture the nuanced, relational and high-risk work central to CVIPI.[62]

A deeper challenge is the misalignment between what CVIPIs aim to achieve and what evaluators measure. CVIPIs primarily operate at the individual level, fostering trust, behavioral change and conflict mediation among those most at risk.[63] Yet, evaluations for the CVIPI focus on city or community-wide results, which hides smaller-scale, individual changes. Observing individual progress is crucial because it can foreshadow significant shifts at the community level. For instance, the Cure Violence model emphasizes individual mentorship and conflict mediation, which can gradually lead to broader community shifts.[64] Neighborhood crime rates are an incomplete measure of success for violence prevention programs. This metric overlooks the critical role of CVIPIs in helping individuals achieve the personal transformations needed to avoid gun violence.

> Neighborhood crime rates are an incomplete measure of success for violence prevention programs.

3) Incorporating Community into the Evaluation Process

Incorporating community voices into the evaluation process ensures local realities and the priorities of those most affected by gun violence are reflected. When community members are engaged as partners in data collection, they bring valuable insights into social dynamics, historical grievances and barriers to trust that external evaluators might miss.[65] This knowledge is critical to addressing the gaps in traditional evaluation methods. Community engagement enhances evaluation efforts, as evidenced by the Local Initiatives Support Coalition's (LISC) *Collecting Data for a Safer Community report*, which highlights the challenges faced in collecting data to improve community safety outcomes.[66] After requesting crime data from a local law enforcement agency, LISC researchers received crime data based on zip codes rather than addresses or neighborhood-level data, which are more precise.

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The lack of more granular crime statistics, which is common across jurisdictions, complicates the ability of CVIPI to accurately identify their areas of focus. To address this gap, the LISC project team asked local residents to participate in surveys and focus groups to gauge crime prevalence within their communities and pinpoint where the CVIPI team was most needed.[67] By involving residents in the process, the team collected qualitative data that complemented crime statistics, painting a fuller picture of community concerns, needs, and priorities.[68] However, community-driven evaluations require significant resources and logistical coordination. Conducting focus groups, training community members in data collection and ensuring the ethical use of participant information can add complexity to the evaluation process and require more time, coordination and funding to compensate community members for their contributions.[69]

4) Funding Attached to Political Agendas

CVIPIs are vulnerable to political cycles and shifting public opinion. Changes in local, state, federal and organizational leadership can lead to sudden shifts in funding priorities, disrupting program operation, implementation and evaluation.[70] These shifts, especially those that impact funding, compromise the ability of CVIPIs to conduct thorough and meaningful evaluations to demonstrate their impact and receive sustained investment. Without funding for evaluators, programs may struggle to measure a CVIPI's impact in a way that satisfies policymakers, funders and community members. This challenge is amplified by CVIPIs need for long-term evaluation periods to capture its delayed effects. The lack of multi-year funding streams can undermine the perceived legitimacy of CVIPIs, making them vulnerable to skepticism regarding their effectiveness.

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RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE CVIPI EVALUATION PRACTICES

To maximize the potential of CVIPIs, it is essential to address the structural and operational challenges that can hinder their effectiveness. The following recommendations provide a roadmap for enhancing the impact and sustainability of CVIPIs, ensuring they are prepared to disrupt cycles of violence and promote long-term community well-being and safety.

1) Develop Robust Evaluation Frameworks that include Community Voice

Evaluating CVIPI strategies requires a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative data with qualitative insights. Community-based participatory research,[71] for example, includes community members in all facets of the research process, from design to data collection and study publication. Measuring changes in community perceptions of safety, trust in institutions, and reductions in retaliatory violence are metrics that can complement personal narratives, interviews, and focus groups. Together, these approaches ensure that evaluations reflect both measurable outcomes and lived experiences.

> Evaluating CVIPI strategies requires a mixed-methods approach.

Multi-level frameworks that assess individual, interpersonal and community outcomes, and that account for long-term outcomes, are necessary to fully understand the effectiveness and impact of CVIPI. By ensuring that frameworks account for these relationships, evaluators can provide more accurate insights as to what drives success and where interventions must be strengthened.

To avoid understating the value of CVIPI efforts, evaluators must also consider the gradual nature of change and use frameworks that account for long-term outcomes. Models such as RE-AIM (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance) emphasize short-term results, as well as sustainability, equity and broader public health impacts.[72] Applying RE-AIM or similar frameworks enables evaluations to better reflect the real-world complexity of community-centered interventions in the evaluation process. These models acknowledge that early efforts to build trust or shift community norms may not translate into measurable crime reduction for several years but are, nonetheless, essential indicators of progress. By using evaluation approaches that are sensitive to delayed effects and interconnected systems, practitioners and policymakers can avoid prematurely judging interventions as ineffective. Instead, they can gain a more accurate understanding of how CVIPI efforts contribute to sustained community resilience, even when short-term outcomes appear negligible.

Finally, bridging research, policy and practice is essential for the growth and scalability of CVIPI strategies. Practitioners, researchers and policymakers must collaborate to develop evidence-based frameworks to guide implementation and evaluation. Sharing case studies, best practices and lessons learned can inform new initiatives and ensure continuous improvement that advances the scalability and longevity of CVIPI strategies.

2) Select Culturally Competent Evaluators

Evaluators and researchers examining the CVIPI must engage the community through the research process and acknowledge the historical and social contexts at play. Incorporating these insights into research and evaluation plans allows for a more comprehensive assessment of this program.[73] Proper evaluation requires not only technical expertise, but also a deep respect for the people and communities being served. This practice, known as cultural competency,[74] can be strengthened through training in emancipatory research frameworks[75] or shared cultural identity with the community.[76] These qualifications not only build credibility but also create a more comfortable environment for VIPs, program participants, and other community members during research, which can lead to more in-depth feedback. Organizations like The Black and Brown Collective[77] exemplify the importance of centering the voices of Black and Brown communities by prioritizing equity, culturally relevant practices and community-led solutions in their work. Partnering with or drawing inspiration from such organizations can ensure evaluation practices are rigorous and aligned with the values and needs of the communities CVIPI serves.

Proper evaluation requires not only technical expertise, but also a deep respect for the people and communities being served.

3) Center Participant and Violence Intervention and Prevention Staff (VIPs) Experience and Perspective as a Meaningful Outcome

The effectiveness of CVIPI hinges on two factors: the willingness of individuals at the center of violence to participate and their ability to achieve personal development and growth through the program's services. Participants' perspectives are crucial and require direct engagement through qualitative data collection for thorough assessment. Speaking with participants and documenting their experiences can reveal early behavior or attitude changes, such as improved conflict resolution skills, increased trust in community support networks or a greater willingness to engage in nonviolent problem-solving. These insights can also highlight shifts in socioeconomic stability, including improved employment prospects, increased access to mental health or social services and stronger family or peer relationships.

Specific outcomes may vary depending on the program's theory of change, as some initiatives may prioritize economic empowerment alongside violence reduction, while others focus more on trauma, healing and social cohesion. By centering participant experiences, researchers and evaluators can better assess what aspects of interventions are working and where there is room for improvement. Participant-level knowledge creates a foundation for follow-up evaluations that track the community and population-level outcomes of the program. The success of CVIPI strategies often hinge on the ability of VIPs to build relationships and trust. Their experiences and perspectives are also necessary for CVIPI evaluation. By assessing individual and system-level changes, CVIPI programs can illustrate the full spectrum of their impact, from personal transformation to advancements in community safety.

Evaluators must also recognize the risks involved in collecting data from participants and VIPs who may have histories of criminal behavior and high levels of violence exposure. Information on violent incidents or mental health histories is both personal and potentially incriminating, making breaches of confidentiality especially harmful. Participants and VIPs may hesitate to share information due to fear, particularly in environments where violence is ongoing.[78] This fear can lead to participants and VIPs sharing limited or incomplete data that may not provide researchers with the insights needed. Building trust requires adopting trauma-informed approaches[79] that prioritize well-being and address the deep mistrust many communities hold toward institutions because of systemic inequities and discriminatory practices.[80] Communicating clearly about data use and protection fosters trust, leading to more open, honest input and stronger, more ethical evaluations.[81]

4) Leverage Cross-Sector Collaboration While Centering Participant Privacy

CVIPIs should prioritize partnerships with healthcare providers, educational institutions, housing agencies, workforce development organizations and other stakeholders to build a holistic support network. Integrating job training or mental health services into violence intervention programs can address the socioeconomic and psychological factors contributing to cycles of violence.[82] Research on collective impact initiatives underscores the importance of cross-sector collaboration in achieving systemic change, which aligns with the multi-touchpoint nature of CVIPIs.[83]

Integrating job training or mental health services into violence intervention programs can address the socioeconomic and psychological factors contributing to cycles of violence.

Cross-sector collaboration boosts impact by improving data sharing, coordinating responses and aligning evaluations with community needs.[84] Data-sharing agreements allow CVIPIs to use diverse data to analyze program impacts. For example, healthcare providers can offer data on reduced emergency room visits from gunshot wounds, and educational institutions can provide data on improved school attendance or graduation rates. Data sharing not only enhances the scope and accuracy of evaluations, but also identifies systemic barriers that need to be addressed to sustain long-term change.

However, sharing information also requires careful attention to privacy and participant safety. Evaluators must address risks associated with sensitive data, including histories of criminal behavior or high exposure to violence, as well as concerns about retaliation or misuse of personal information. Protecting privacy and using a trauma-informed approach to managing data are essential. To avoid retraumatizing individuals during data collection, researchers should only gather essential identifying information.[85] Further, they should safeguard by de-identifying data,[86] using pseudonyms[87] and establishing data-sharing agreements.[88] Findings should also be reported in aggregate.[89]

Balancing participant privacy with strategic data collection and cross-sector partnerships strengthens CVIPI evaluations. This approach helps demonstrate the effectiveness of these programs and ensures a sustainable model of support. Drawing upon a public health framework, these efforts drive the development of equitable, community-centered solutions to gun violence.

5) Secure Long-Term Funding and Seek Philanthropic Partnerships

CVIPIs often face funding challenges due to political cycles and shifting priorities.[90] Long-term financial commitments from the public and private sectors are crucial for maintaining program stability and achieving sustainable outcomes. To address funding challenges, advocacy efforts should emphasize the cost-effectiveness of CVIPI approaches compared to punitive strategies, such as incarceration, which often come with higher financial and social costs.[91] Policymakers should consider creating dedicated funding streams or multi-year grants for community-based violence prevention, ensuring consistent resources for program implementation and evaluation. These funding mechanisms should include provisions for rigorous program evaluation to build evidence of effectiveness, allowing for continuous improvement and accountability.

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Philanthropic partnerships can provide stable funding for CVIPIs, reducing reliance on inconsistent government grants.[92] This collaboration creates a more reliable funding ecosystem for violence prevention efforts. Long-term financial resources provide CVIPIs with the leverage needed to build safer communities and collect longitudinal data that demonstrates their impact.

CONCLUSION

Despite evaluation challenges, CVIPI consistently displays its ability to prevent and intervene in violence through building relationships, connecting people to vital services and fostering changes in behavior and community norms. Recent evaluations confirm that CVIPIs are effective and transformative. Their success is driven by embracing people with lived experiences as experts and centering the needs of those most impacted by gun violence. These evaluations also demonstrate that treating gun violence as a public health issue and promoting community-driven strategies offers a more effective approach than the traditional punishment paradigm that perpetuates racial inequalities and overlooks the underlying structural and social factors that impact community health and safety.

In April of 2025, the Department of Justice (DOJ) made staggering cuts to the Office of Justice Program's (OJP) Community Violence and Prevention Initiative resulting in $145 million[93] in cuts to community violence prevention programming, training and technical assistance, and roughly $8.6 million[94] in cuts for CVIPI research and evaluation efforts. These devastating cuts paired with the looming expiration of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in 2026,[95] signal that the sustainability of these initiatives is in peril. Additionally, the Trump Administration effectively dismantled the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention, eliminating critical federal support for gun violence prevention strategies.[96] Without federal investment and a dedicated office to coordinate and champion these efforts, these programs will lose political support, critical funding and technical assistance opportunities, and will struggle to establish federal standards and priorities for community-based approaches to violence prevention. To overcome the fragmented policy and funding landscape, CVIPIs urgently need diversified and sustainable funding sources. This requires robust evaluation strategies that not only demonstrate program value, but also effectively communicate nuanced and complex outcomes.

Researchers and evaluators seeking to contribute to the evidence base of CVIPI should broaden their focus beyond crime-based measures traditionally used to evaluate CVIPI. They must also be intentional about partnering with program staff, participants and the greater community to develop measures and tailored evaluation strategies that comprehensively assess the given intervention. Evaluations should also include direct feedback from VIPs and participants. This feedback should reveal the individual and community-level factors influencing their involvement, the challenges and barriers they face and the most meaningful aspects of the program.

By conducting participatory, community-led evaluations of CVIPI strategies, evaluators and researchers can more accurately add to CVIPI's evidence-base, enhance community buy-in to create sustainability for CVIPIs and better align efforts with local priorities to support the overall safety and well-being of communities.

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