

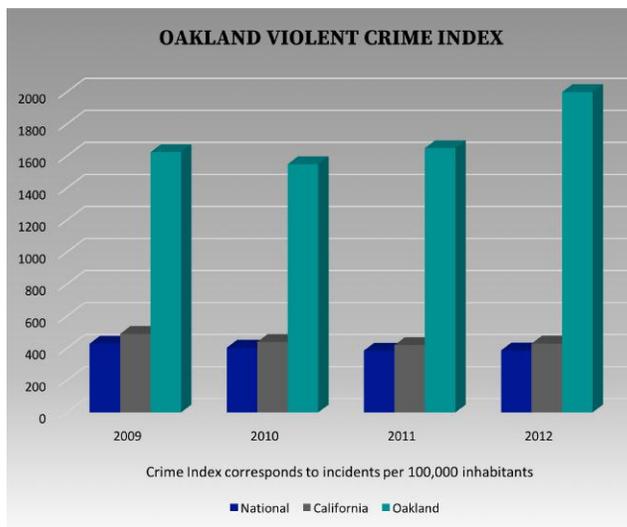
Oakland's Successful Gun Violence Reduction Strategy

January 2018

INTRODUCTION

This paper describes the Oakland Gun Violence Reduction Strategy, which has produced five consecutive years of reductions in fatal and non-fatal shootings in Oakland, reaching the second lowest level in the last 47 years in 2017. The Oakland strategy has received national attention from those concerned about gun violence both because of the continued declines in violence and also the difficult local conditions in which those reductions have been achieved. The purpose of this paper is to accurately describe the Oakland Strategy – its values, components and mechanics.

The City of Oakland has consistently ranked in the top 10 most violent cities in the country for the past four decades. In 2012, Oakland earned the dubious distinction of being the third “Most Dangerous” city in the nation.¹



Over the years, numerous efforts and programs have had starts and stops and partial implementations to try to address violent crime in the City. This has included major public and private investments in

various violence prevention services and strategies since the early 2000s, which did not produce sustained reductions in violence. In late 2012, after advocacy from community and faith based organizations, especially from the local PICO affiliate Oakland Community Organizing (OCO), the City officially launched a violence reduction strategy modeled after the effective Boston Ceasefire initiative.

For the past five years, through two Mayoral administrations, several police chiefs, and widespread misunderstanding on how the strategy operates, Oakland has maintained, evolved and improved this violence reduction program known as Oakland Ceasefire.

The “Ceasefire” name has been used in different cities for many different types of programs which vary widely in substance and effectiveness. As a result, the term Ceasefire is controversial and even maligned. Programs called Ceasefire in other cities have been ineffective and even in Oakland there were prior “Ceasefire” efforts that were ill-conceived and poorly implemented. This has created confusion about what the Oakland Ceasefire strategy actually is and how it works.

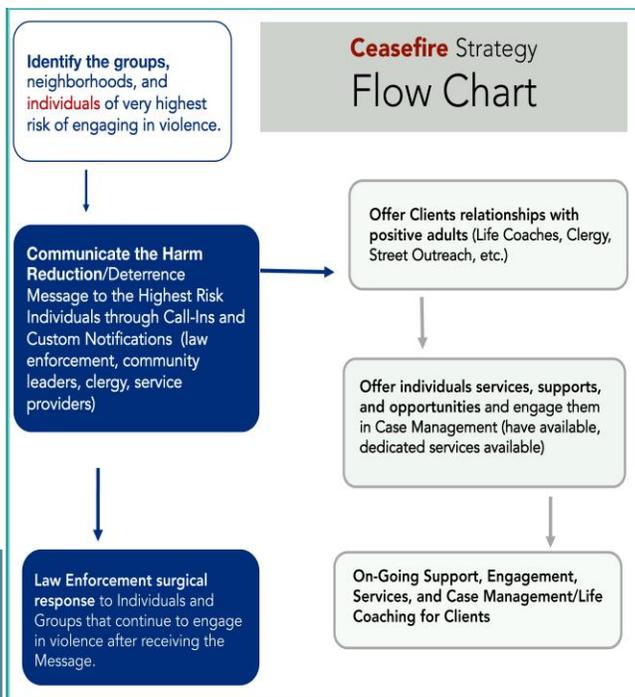
The effective violence reduction principles highlighted in this report are more important than the name of the strategy.

One of the first very important decisions the City made, which has become an essential element of the successful strategy, is to hire a full-time, senior Program Director to lead and manage the strategy. The management of the strategy was not just added on to the list of duties of an already overworked government administrator, it became the sole focus of a very dedicated, experienced leader within the city.

¹ [http://os.cqpress.com/citycrime/2012 CityCrime2013_CityCrimeRankingsFactSheet.pdf](http://os.cqpress.com/citycrime/2012%20CityCrime2013_CityCrimeRankingsFactSheet.pdf)

Although Oakland Ceasefire has evolved significantly since its launch in October 2012, it has maintained adherence to the four core components of a successful violence reduction strategy:

- 1) Data-driven identification of the groups and individuals at the very highest risk of being involved in a shooting.
- 2) Respectful communication of that risk directly to those groups and individuals.
- 3) Make services, supports, and opportunities available that address the needs and build on the strengths of those at the very highest risk of gun violence. Services and supports are most effective when given by respected members of the community with similar lived experiences or are otherwise credible to the target population (“Credible Messengers”).
- 4) Focused Enforcement: Police conduct narrowly focused enforcement operations specifically on those individuals that continue to engage in violent crime after receiving communication and with the explicit purpose of preventing further violence.



THE OAKLAND STRATEGY

Below is a detailed description of how Oakland implemented the four core components of the gun violence reduction strategy.

1. DATA-DRIVEN Identification of the Groups and Individuals at the Very Highest Risk of Being Involved in a Shooting:

In any city, there is a small number of very high-risk individuals who are responsible for the majority of gun violence. In many cities, up to 70% of gun related homicides can be attributed to this small, identifiable group of individuals.²

In Oakland, the first step in the process of identifying this very small group was to conduct a “Problem Analysis.” The City contracted with the consulting group California Partnership for Safe Communities (CPSC) to conduct this study. CPSC also became the City’s on-going consultants on the Ceasefire strategy. (The Executive Director of the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform and the primary author of this report has been a partner consultant with CPSC in Oakland).

The Problem Analysis³ examined all homicides in the previous 18 months to determine the life specific nature of gun violence in Oakland. The Problem Analysis provided detailed assessment on gun violence in the City, including:

- The demographics of the victims and perpetrators of gun violence.
- The prior justice involvement of victims and perpetrators.
- The prior victimization of the victims and perpetrators.

² “Tragic, but not random”: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260110424_Tragic_but_not_Random_The_Social_Contagion_of_Nonfatal_Gunshot_Injuries
³ <http://thecapartnership.org/cms/assets/uploads/2016/02/Oakland-Problem-Analysis-for-City-Council-Report-03.25.14-Slides-1.pdf>

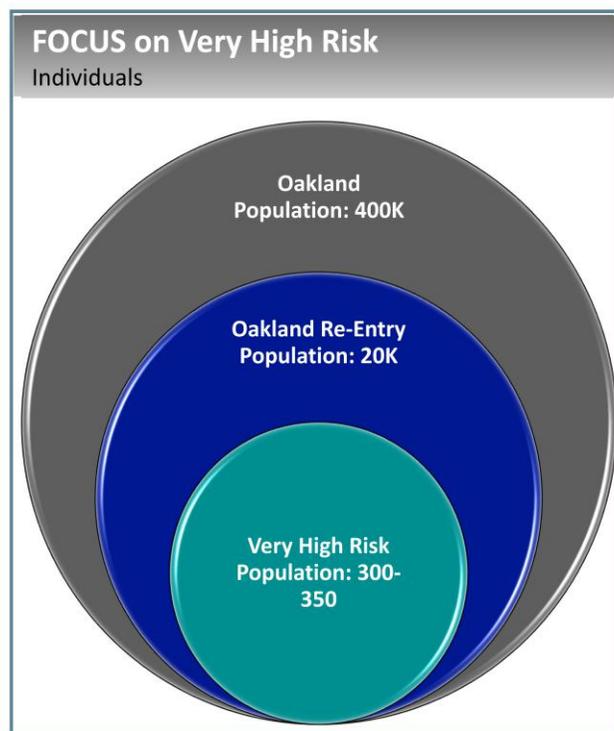
- The cause of shootings by: gang, domestic, robbery, personal dispute, etc.
- The gang/group dynamics in the area (conflicts and the alliances).

The Problem Analysis developed a detailed portrait of the population that is at the very highest risk of being involved in a shooting. It revealed that the highest risk population was smaller, older, more heavily involved in the justice system and more connected to group and gang dynamics than previously understood. For example, the average age of a homicide suspect in Oakland was 28 and the average age of a homicide victim was 30. Many Oakland residents would have argued that teenagers were the main contributors to violence. Also surprising, drug sales and drug conflicts were not a major cause of gun violence in Oakland. Personal disputes associated with group conflicts were by far the main reason for shootings in Oakland, and in many major cities across the country. The profile of the Very High-Risk Individuals likely to be involved in a shooting in the next 12 months in Oakland was determined to have all or at least four of the following five characteristics:

- 1) Young Black and Latino men age 18-35.
- 2) Extensive criminal justice involvement (i.e.: an average of 10 prior arrests; felony convictions, especially firearm charges; been sentenced to state prison; on active probation/parole).
- 3) Members of active Oakland crews/gangs/groups.
- 4) Have been shot before.
- 5) Has a close friend or family member who has been shot in the last twelve months.

Another false perception was that there are thousands of young men in Oakland with

such risk factors. And while there may be far too many young men with two or even three, there is a very small group that have all or at least four of these characteristics.



Although the Problem Analysis provides a detailed profile of which population is the most likely to engage in violence – a foundation – the violence dynamic in cities such as Oakland changes often. Therefore, ongoing assessment of recent shootings provides the information on which groups and individuals to target interventions with immediately.

The Oakland Gun Violence Reduction Strategy conducts weekly Shooting Reviews; meetings to discuss each shooting that occurred in the past week. The Shooting Reviews focus on why the shooting occurred, who is known to have been involved, what gang dynamics may be at play, assesses the likelihood of retaliation and identifies groups and individuals to be targeted with interventions accordingly. The Shooting Reviews also produce Score Cards to track which groups/crews/gangs are most actively violent in the City.

2. DIRECT AND RESPECTFUL Communication

Once specific individuals have been identified through the Problem Analysis and weekly Shooting Reviews, those individuals are then informed of their risk and offered support. This direct and respectful communication is either conducted in a group setting, referred to as a "Call-In", or a small meeting with the individual, known as a Custom Notification.

The main messages delivered to the identified clients are:

- **You are at very high risk of being involved in a shooting soon, either as a victim or a perpetrator.**
- **We respect and care for you.**
- **We want you to remain alive, free from incarceration, and successful.**
- **We want the violence to stop in our communities.**
- **You are on the radar of local law enforcement.**
- **We have services, supports, and opportunities available to you if you are interested.**

For the group meeting or Call-In, the Chief of Police or other high ranking official is present along with presenters who are formerly incarcerated individuals who have changed their lives, community leaders, victims of crime, prosecutors, and service providers.

The Call-Ins are held every three months at a nice church in a neighborhood without any ties to groups or gangs. Staff from the City, community based organizations, and local churches, as well as other volunteers show up early in order to escort each Call-In participant from the sidewalk into the church and to their seats. Everyone sits behind tables

aligned in a square with name tents in front of them. The idea is to host a professional meeting where speakers and participants are on equal footing, and everyone is treated with respect and dignity. Ceasefire staff and consultants help ensure the message is clear and consistent from the presenters.

Eight to ten presenters each speak for 2-3 minutes, with longer introduction and concluding remarks, and the entire meeting is no longer than an hour. After the formal meeting ends, representatives from community based organizations (CBOs), which can offer needed services to the participants, make very brief presentations. Then dinner is provided to everyone, and participants are engaged in one-on-one conversations about their thoughts on the meeting and any immediate service and support needs they may have.

Through regular focus groups and individual work with clients, The Oakland Gun Violence Reduction Strategy has continually received and implemented feedback about the message and style of the direct communication. Informed by the feedback, numerous modifications to the Call-Ins and other aspects of the strategy have been made, including: how the invitations to the meeting are made; the location of the Call-Ins were changed to a more neutral community; the number of law enforcement officials at the Call-In has been significantly scaled back; the number and type of community service providers were enhanced; the amount of observers were decreased; and the length of each presenter was reduced.

In addition to the Call-Ins, there are also Custom Notification meetings for people who either are so imminently at risk they cannot wait for the group meeting or are not under correctional supervision and therefore may not attend a Call-In if not mandated. For Custom Notification meetings, a high-ranking member of the police department and a faith/community leader meets with the individual at their home or neighborhood.

The 2-3 people providing the direct communication will deliver the same message as the Call-In.

3. COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT— Connection to Services, Supports, and Opportunities:

For participants of Call-Ins and Custom Notifications, if they connect with a Case Manager within the next day or two after the meeting, they are eligible to receive a gift card as an incentive to sign-up for Life Coaching services. Funds for ongoing incentives are provided by the City of Oakland's Measure Z fund administered by the Department of Human Services' Oakland Unite initiative.

Over time, Oakland has developed a robust set of services, supports, and opportunities for individuals identified as being very high risk of being involved in gun violence, or "Ceasefire clients." Key to the effectiveness of these supports and opportunities is a focus on building trust with highest risk clients, ensuring safety and reducing harm. This foundation of safety and trust can then lead to longer-term engagement and formal services for many.

In 2004, City of Oakland voters passed the innovative Measure Y initiative to provide ten years of funding for violence prevention services, more police officers, and the fire department. The modest parcel tax was approved for 10 years. The renewal ballot initiative, Measure Z, passed by voters in 2014, included amended language to steer the violence reduction funds specifically toward those at the greatest risk of being involved in gun violence. This was widely interpreted to mean increased funding to support Ceasefire clients. The local PICO affiliate and Oakland Ceasefire partner, OCO, was largely responsible for successfully advocating for the amended language.

The renewed measure resulted in expanded support for Ceasefire clients, including:

- Fourteen full-time Case Manager/Life Coaches, 10 dedicated specifically to Ceasefire and four to young adults otherwise identified as being highly at risk of violence. The City's Oakland Unite agency employs four of the Case Managers and the other ten are hired by CBO's awarded Measure Z grants. (Measure Z also separately funds several case managers across five CBOs to serve youth coming home from the county's juvenile detention center)
- Though Case Managers develop Life Plans and connect clients to needed services, the primary expectation of each Case Manager/Life Coach is to develop a trusting relationship with their clients, spend quality time with them, and focus on helping their client avoid being involved in violence or being incarcerated. Case Managers spend up to a year working with each client, though the time can be extended under certain circumstances.
- Employment service providers offer employment training and job placement. Non-profit organizations receiving Measure Z grants to provide such employment services must prioritize Ceasefire clients into their programs.
- Incentivized stipends for clients: Ceasefire clients on the caseloads of the Life Coaches mentioned above can earn up to \$350 in stipends per month for achieving certain milestones.
- Housing support services: Similar to the employment programs, supportive housing organizations that receive grants through Measure Z must prioritize available slots for Ceasefire clients.
- Though not funded directly by the City of Oakland, two Ceasefire partner CBOs offer Cognitive Behavior Therapy group sessions to Ceasefire clients.

- Ceasefire Case Manager/Life Coaches also have a network of service providers available to connect their clients to, which also includes mental health and drug treatment programs.
- One of the more recent bold and innovative strategies the City of Oakland has employed is the new Relocation program. People who are considered in imminent danger of being a victim of gun violence, many of whom are Ceasefire clients, are referred to the CBO which administers the program. Clients in credible risk of gun violence are supported in relocating to live with family members out of state or they are provided with emergency temporary relocation out of the area until the conflict can be mediated.

All very high risk clients do not need or receive all of the above listed services, but they are made available to the small group of individuals who have been identified as most highly at risk of being involved in gun violence. The City of Oakland spends approximately \$8 million per year on these services, a significant but yet still relatively small investment (this is supplemented by significant private funding). It is worth noting that many studies have shown that a single injury shooting can cost upwards of \$1 million in government spending, including: fire and ambulance response to the scene; police response and investigation; a hospitalization; incarceration; and a criminal trial. At least eight government agencies respond and/or work on each shooting, but often it is even more. Spending less than \$10,000 per client on Oakland's violence reduction initiative is not only showing success, it is cost effective.

individuals that continue to engage in gun violence after receiving the message of risk and an offer of support. Along with very focused enforcement on a small number of people who are engaging in gun violence, police should also de-prioritize enforcement of minor issues like drug possession.

An overt goal of Oakland Ceasefire, agreed upon by the police department, is to reduce arrests and recidivism in the City. And the Oakland Police Department (OPD) is achieving this goal. An effective gun violence reduction strategy should re-focus the entire police department away from enforcement of low level, quality of life violations and instead focus on reducing violence. While OPD's ability to fully implement this philosophy is a work in progress, it has dedicated an elite group of five units with a total of approximately 50 officers under the command of a seasoned Captain, known as the Ceasefire Section. These officers, who have undergone special training and field-based skill-development, work solely on reducing and preventing gun and gang violence. OPD's Ceasefire unit utilizes several tactics including intelligence gathering, dynamic surveillance, social media monitoring, wiretap operations and partnering with other law enforcement agencies to conduct enforcement operations.

OPD now acknowledges that making an arrest is not a success, an evolution for the Department that once judged new trainees by the number of arrests made. But if an arrest directly prevents a shooting, then it is deemed necessary and appropriate. OPD's violence reduction efforts are now based on specific plans developed directly from the weekly shooting review and the ongoing analysis of gun violence as it develops. These near-term (60 day) plans focus on a very small number of specific individuals actively engaged in violence or at imminent risk of victimization (these individuals are referred to community partners for intervention).

4. FOCUSED ENFORCEMENT

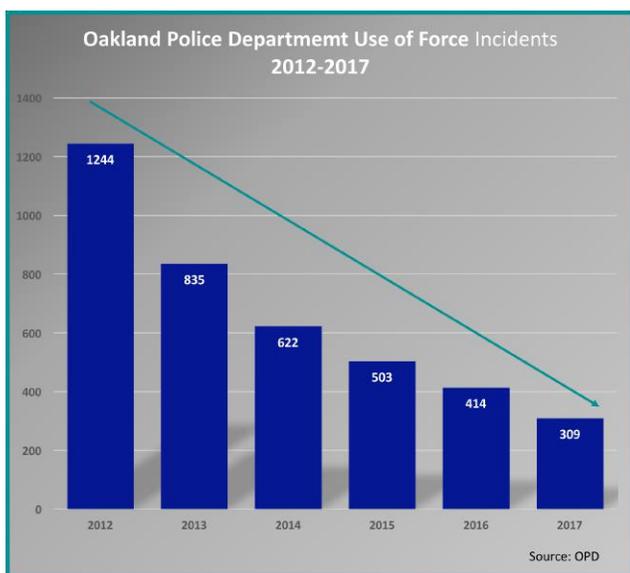
As a last resort, police will prioritize enforcement efforts on groups and

One result of these management changes is that OPD has become more effective at preventing retaliatory shootings, and de-escalating violent group conflicts before they spin out of control. Another result is that OPD's proactive units spend far less time doing unfocused, area-based enforcement with low-risk individuals, and a much greater amount of time understanding the current violence dynamic and focusing on the very small number of individuals driving that violence.

THE MANAGMENT PROCESS

The components of Oakland's violence reduction model are managed through a series of standing meetings, on-going quality assurance, and continuous improvement. As mentioned before, a key component of Oakland's success was the creation of a full-time position dedicated to managing the strategy along with utilizing experienced, hands-on consultant partners over several years. With other Oakland leaders, they developed five standing meetings to coordinate and manage Oakland's gun violence reduction strategy⁴:

- 1) Each week OPD hosts a law enforcement meeting to review the previous week's shootings. The **Shooting Reviews** focus on why the shooting occurred, who is known to have been involved, what gang dynamics may be at play, and identifies groups and individuals to be targeted with interventions accordingly. The **Shooting Reviews** also produce Score Cards to track which groups/crews/gangs are most active in the City.
- 2) Twice monthly, Coordination Meetings bring together OPD, Ceasefire staff and consultants and Oakland Unite Leaders that work directly with CBOs who employ Case Managers and Street Outreach workers. The purpose of this meeting is for law enforcement to provide specific information on gun violence incidents and street conflicts in order for service providers and intervention specialists to focus on the right groups and individuals and to understand their clients' safety needs. The information flow is one way, CBOs do not provide information to police about their clients.



In addition to effective focused enforcement, as a part of Oakland's Gun Violence Reduction Strategy, the police department has also undergone a series of trainings and practice changes to improve police-community relations.

Every single sworn officer in OPD received training in Procedural Justice, which emphasizes treating community members fairly, with dignity, being neutral, giving them voice, and being transparent. Additionally, command staff and officers are also being trained in implicit bias.

⁴ http://thecapartnership.org/cms/assets/uploads/2017/07/CPSC_Management8b-2.pdfnce/

- 3) Once per month, Oakland Unite hosts a **Case Conference** for Case Managers/ Life Coaches serving Ceasefire clients. The Case Conference is an opportunity for case managers to discuss difficult cases, get support from their colleagues, and receive pertinent information from City officials.
- 4) **The Ceasefire Partnership (Committee)**, which serves as a steering committee, meets monthly. The Partnership is made up of City agencies involved in the strategy along with key CBOs, the CPSC Consultant Team and community leaders that have been instrumental in the launch and development of Ceasefire. The Partnership discuss current outcome data, trends, challenges, and plan for upcoming Call-Ins.
- 5) Every other month, the Mayor holds a Ceasefire accountability session with members of the Partnership table. The Mayor, often accompanied by the City Administrator, reviews the latest Ceasefire data on program activities, outputs and outcomes relative to annual benchmarks and receives updates from the Police Chief, Director of Human Services, and Ceasefire Director. These performance review sessions maintain mutual accountability for results between City Agencies, the Mayor's Office and the community partners. A high-level, multi-stakeholder governing board of this type has helped sustain Ceasefire in other cities.⁵

In addition to the above coordination and accountability measures, Oakland's violence reduction model is essentially undergoing two external evaluations. The Measure Z ballot initiative mandates that programs funded by the measure receive a formal evaluation, which is being conducted by the research firm Mathematica. Additionally, the city has hired nationally renowned researchers from Yale and Northeastern

Universities to conduct an independent evaluation specifically of the Ceasefire strategy.

THE OUTCOMES

Oakland's Gun Violence Reduction Strategy (Ceasefire) was launched in October 2012, toward the end of a violent year in the city. In 2012, there were 126 homicides and 556 non-fatal shooting in Oakland. In 2017, the fifth year of the Oakland Strategy implementation, there were 72 homicides and 277 non-fatal shootings, a **-46% reduction in homicides and -49% reduction in injury shootings**. These cumulative reductions represent steady progress over five consecutive years.

Although one factor can never be credited as the sole reason for reductions in violence, there is growing evidence that Ceasefire is a major cause. Some of the evidence also includes spikes in violence when the strategy has been temporarily inactive, as in the months following a major sex scandal in 2016 involving several OPD officers and the abrupt resignation of the Police Chief. While the evaluation will determine whether gentrification played any role in these reductions, it should be noted that deep East Oakland is both the area of the city with majority of gun violence and the area that has experienced the greatest reductions in violence following launch of the Oakland Strategy. It is also the area of Oakland least impacted by gentrification.

Although many major cities experienced increases in violence in 2016 and 2017, Oakland has continued to achieve a steady decline. Oakland's 72 homicides in 2017 registered the lowest murders the City has seen since 1999 and the second lowest in 47 years. While 72 homicides are still unacceptable, the progress is to be celebrated.

Reductions in violent crime have also extended beyond shootings and homicides.

⁵ <https://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/police/community-involvement/cincinnati-initiative-to-reduce-violence/>

In 2013, there were 2,764 armed robberies using a firearm. In 2017, firearm robberies were down to 970, a **-65% reduction**.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

The Oakland Violence Reduction Strategy was developed and implemented at a critical time for the City of Oakland and for the national conversation on police-community relationships. The results to-date demonstrate that even a city like Oakland, suffering from a decades-long violence problem, a turbulent political environment and fractured police-community relationships can make progress on gun violence quickly and effectively.

There is no one element that makes the Oakland strategy effective, but there are some core components that have proven to be important, and are worth highlighting:

- **Partnerships Can Work:** Working partnerships between community members, faith leaders, police, and intervention/outreach organizations are possible and can be very effective in reducing violence if they are guided by data, employ evidence-based strategies and are well managed.

- **Focus is Critical:** Maintaining a data-driven focus of both police and outreach/intervention organizations on people currently at very highest risk of violence is essential. Many millions of dollars of funding and staff resources can be ineffective without this focus.
- **Relationships Matter As Much As Services:** An emerging theme across effective intervention models, building trust relationships and focusing on client safety are key features of the “supports and opportunities” piece of the Oakland Strategy.
- **Effective Management Matters:** Effective senior managers and management systems have been essential in Oakland. This strategy represents significant changes to the culture and activities of public agencies and their work with community partners. This has required skilled, dedicated managers to work together with a share focus on outcomes (reducing gun violence).

Vaughn Crandall of the California Partnership for Safe Communities contributed to this report.

