



NICJR ★
National Institute for
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FUNDING COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION: A CALIFORNIA EXAMPLE

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, community violence intervention (CVI) efforts have expanded at an unprecedented pace across the US. In response to a surge in gun violence amid the COVID-19 pandemic, state and local governments sought effective—and immediate—solutions. At the same time, a growing research-based consensus around CVI efficacy has helped spur the uptake of these programs and strategies nationwide. Sizeable federal investments in these models, along with broader increases in funding for state and local governments, have further fueled this expansion. Since 2021, direct federal investments through initiatives like the White House Community Violence Intervention Collaborative (CVIC) and the US Department of Justice’s Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIPI), coupled with flexible funding to state and local governments through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), have infused hundreds of millions of dollars into CVI efforts across the United States.¹

In addition to the planned sunset of ARPA, in early 2025, the new presidential administration made sweeping cuts to proven public safety initiatives. Local governments must now identify alternative, sustainable sources of funding for this work. The State of California and the City of Oakland both offer promising models for long-term, locally supported investment in CVI. This paper aims to highlight these distinct and effective funding mechanisms.



¹ [Office of Justice Programs CVIPI](#)

STATE-LEVEL INVESTMENTS THAT SUPPORT LOCAL CVI

The California Violence Intervention Program (CalVIP) is the foundation of the State’s investment in community-based violence intervention and prevention. Since its establishment in 2018, CalVIP has distributed more than \$250 million across four rounds of funding to approximately 57 cities and 115 community-based organizations (CBOs) across the state.² The program provides three years of funding per cycle to support evidence-based local violence intervention and prevention efforts. CalVIP is not only California’s most significant commitment to addressing violence through a public health lens; it is also a model for how other states can institutionalize CVI funding across a diverse landscape.

The origin of CalVIP can be traced back to the California Gang Reduction, Intervention, and Prevention Program (CalGRIP), which was launched in 2007 by then-Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to provide funding to cities for gang prevention, intervention, and suppression activities.³ While CalGRIP provided a useful foundation, there was a growing push from community advocates and policy experts to adopt a public health approach to community violence that extended beyond solely addressing gang violence and primarily funded law enforcement.⁴ In 2017, the California State Legislature responded by establishing the California Violence Intervention and Prevention Program, which replaced CalGRIP. CalVIP broadened the State’s focus to include community violence in all its forms.⁵ The program was also intentionally designed to serve California’s full geographic and demographic diversity—funding a wide range of jurisdictions and organizations, from large cities to small rural towns, and from well-established nonprofits to grassroots groups working in communities most affected by violence.

This new approach was further institutionalized in 2019 when State Assemblymember Buffy Wicks sponsored Assembly Bill (AB) 1603, which codified CalVIP into state law and clearly defined its purpose: “to improve public health and safety by supporting effective violence reduction initiatives in communities that are disproportionately impacted by violence.”⁶ The law also specified that CalVIP grants must “support, expand, and replicate evidence-based violence reduction initiatives, including hospital-based violence intervention programs, evidence-based street outreach programs, and focused deterrence strategies.”^{7,8}

² [California Violence Intervention and Prevention Program](#)

³ [California Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention Program](#)

⁴ [Breaking the Cycle: Making Violence Prevention and Intervention A Permanent Policy Commitment of the State of California](#)

⁵ [CalVIP RFP Set for Release](#)

⁶ [Assembly Bill No. 1603](#)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ [California Violence Intervention and Prevention \(CalVIP\) Grant Statewide Dashboard](#)

For much of its history, CalVIP operated with a baseline annual budget of \$9 million from the State General Fund, with occasional one-time boosts.⁹ AB 1603 tripled this amount to almost \$30 million annually and increased the per-grant cap from \$500,000 to \$1.5 million.^{10,11} Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 1603, known as the Break the Cycle of Violence Act, into law in October 2019.^{12,13} At this time, the legislation included a sunset clause, only allocating CalVIP funding through 2025.¹⁴ As the program's structure was formalized and the impact became evident, momentum grew around the need for sustained support.

In 2021, the California State Legislature allocated \$200 million in ARPA funds to CalVIP, marking a historic investment in community violence intervention. Spread over three years, this infusion represented a more than 740% increase in funding for violence prevention and intervention efforts. It enabled 20 California cities and 84 community-based organizations to expand or launch a wide array of CVI services.¹⁵ While the ARPA funding sunsetted after 2024, it demonstrated the strong potential of CalVIP when backed by significant resources.

Even with the progress made under AB 1603 and through the ARPA funding infusion, CalVIP remained susceptible to changes in the State budget because much of its support still relied on temporary or discretionary funding. A growing coalition of local CVI practitioners, national policy advocates, and public safety leaders, known as the CalVIP Coalition, began organizing to establish a permanent, dedicated funding stream that would protect CalVIP from such volatility.¹⁶ This campaign culminated in the 2023 passage of AB 28, the Gun Violence Prevention and School Safety Act. The bill instituted a groundbreaking 11% excise tax on firearms and ammunition sold in California, with the first \$75 million collected each year allocated specifically to CalVIP.^{17,18} The bill also eliminated the need for ongoing annual reauthorizations of the grant and buffered it from future political battles.

Passing AB 28 required a carefully coordinated and expansive campaign. Coalition leaders expanded the bill's appeal by guaranteeing extra funds would support related public safety programming such as school safety initiatives, firearm relinquishment enforcement, and gun violence research. In addition, they included exemptions for law enforcement and small firearms dealers to minimize political resistance. Community voices also played a crucial role, with CVI leaders across the state meeting with legislators to share their stories and illustrate the impact of CalVIP funding.¹⁹

⁹ [California Violence Intervention and Prevention Program](#)

¹⁰ [Assembly Bill No. 1603](#)

¹¹ [Oakland Landscape Analysis](#)

¹² [CalVIP RFP Set for Release](#)

¹³ [California Violence Intervention and Prevention \(CalVIP\) Grant Statewide Dashboard](#)

¹⁴ [CalVIP RFP Set for Release](#)

¹⁵ [California Violence Intervention and Prevention Program](#)

¹⁶ [Breaking the Cycle: Making Violence Prevention and Intervention A Permanent Policy Commitment of the State of California](#)

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ [Assembly Bill No. 28](#)

¹⁹ [Breaking the Cycle: Making Violence Prevention and Intervention A Permanent Policy Commitment of the State of California](#)

Along with AB 28, lawmakers also passed AB 762, which removed a matching funds requirement that had made it difficult for small and rural organizations to apply for CalVIP funding. Both AB 28 and AB 762 now allow CalVIP to address violence across the full spectrum of California communities, from larger cities to smaller rural areas.^{20,21}

CalVIP represents a decades-long effort to transform short-term, volatile funding into a stable, institutionalized source of financial support for violence reduction strategies. CalVIP has shown that with persistent advocacy, a commitment to measuring outcomes, and bipartisan support, states can invest in sustainable, community-centered approaches to public safety. It offers a proven model for building long-term public safety infrastructure that addresses violence in all types of communities.



²⁰ [Assembly Third Reading AB 762 \(Wicks\)](#)

²¹ [California Violence Intervention & Prevention CalVIP Grant Program Cohort 5 Request for Proposals](#)



LOS ANGELES

The City of Los Angeles has utilized CalVIP funding to support the Mayor's Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD). During the CalVIP Cohort 3 grant period (2020–2023), GRYD carried out over 50,000 proactive peacemaking activities across five priority zones. These included street intervention, direct personal engagement, school-based safe passage efforts, and community events.²² This infusion of funding was especially critical amid the COVID-19-related spike in violence that Los Angeles experienced. GRYD's focus on strategic use of data to prioritize certain geographic areas and utilization of trusted community stakeholders have been key to building safety in Los Angeles neighborhoods with high rates of violence.²³

²² [CalVIP Cohort 3 Local Evaluation Report](#)

²³ [Ibid.](#)



BAKERSFIELD

In the City of Bakersfield, CalVIP funding facilitated the implementation of a Gun Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRs) in 2022. GVRs is a comprehensive strategy that utilizes a data-driven process to identify the individuals and groups at the highest risk of committing or being involved in gun violence and deploying effective interventions with these individuals.²⁴ CalVIP funding enabled the City to hire full-time staff members focused on operating GVRs and to engage the California Partnership for Safe Communities to provide GVRs implementation technical assistance.²⁵ Following the January 2022 launch of GVRs, Bakersfield experienced a 37% decrease in homicides compared to 2021, demonstrating the strategy's strong impact.²⁶

²⁴ [Effective Community-Based Violence Reduction Strategies](#)

²⁵ [Bakersfield's Gun Violence Reduction Strategy](#)

²⁶ [Ibid.](#)



PLAYA VISTA JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND BUSINESS SERVICES

Playa Vista Job Opportunities and Business Services (PVJOBS) is a community-based organization that works to place at-risk youth, adults, and veterans in career-track employment.²⁷ With \$500,000 of CalVIP Cohort 2 funding, PVJOBS implemented Project Reach Violence Intervention Via Employment (ReVIVE), a reentry initiative designed to reduce violence and recidivism through trauma-informed care, employment support, and job placements.²⁸ Among 228 Project ReVIVE participants, fewer than 1% recidivated during the grant period, and nearly 60% obtained full-time employment.²⁹

²⁷ [Evaluation Report For Reach Violence Intervention Via Employment Initiative](#)

²⁸ [2018-2022 California Violence Intervention and Prevention Program \(Cohort II\) Summary of Programs, Expenditures and Outcomes](#)

²⁹ [Evaluation Report For Reach Violence Intervention Via Employment Initiative](#)

LOCAL CVI INVESTMENTS: THE CITY OF OAKLAND'S VIOLENCE INTERVENTION INITIATIVES

Like CalVIP, the City of Oakland's violence intervention initiative has evolved over time, increasingly incorporating data and research to better focus on the primary drivers of gun violence. The foundation of the current initiative was laid in 2004, when Oakland voters approved Measure Y, the Violence Prevention and Public Safety Act. This ballot initiative levied a modest parcel tax on property owners in the city along with a parking tax assessment on city-owned garages to raise approximately \$20 million annually for 10 years to fund a variety of public safety-related services. In addition to generating approximately \$8 million annually for community-based violence prevention programs, the initiative allocated resources to hire additional community-oriented police officers and fire fighters.

The violence prevention program funding was designated primarily for disbursement to community-based organizations to provide an array of direct services across the City. Although these programs have evolved over the past 20 years, this early investment was a critical step toward establishing a robust local ecosystem for community violence intervention.

Funding Violence Reduction Programs

Following the passage of Measure Y, the City of Oakland launched a request for proposals to identify and contract with local CBOs to deliver violence prevention programs as delineated in the law. In the first round of funding, more than two dozen local CBOs were contracted across four service areas, primarily targeting youth and young adults. Service contracts were established for three years to allow sufficient time for the development and implementation of new services amid the unprecedented infusion of funding. As contracted CBOs hired and trained new staff and developed new service referral pathways, a citywide violence prevention ecosystem began to emerge. As this ecosystem grew, City staff and service providers began to recognize the need to build a larger infrastructure of support, including data collection and evaluation processes, standardized training and technical assistance, and processes for coordinating across City-funded service providers.

Establishing these systems and processes was also critical for helping the City assess what was and was not working. As the initiative began to approach its 10-year sunset, it became increasingly clear that, while most of the programs were doing a good job at delivering the services they were contracted to provide, violence in Oakland was not decreasing. When the California Partnership for Safe Communities published an analysis of homicides and nonfatal shootings in Oakland in 2012, the issue became clear: While the average age of both victims and suspects of homicides was 28, the vast majority of people being served by Oakland's violence prevention programs were under 18. Moreover, because Measure Y legislation was oriented toward prevention rather than intervention, the programs being funded were not set up to reduce violence in the near term.

Fortunately, in the seven years since Measure Y had begun, Oakland had laid much of the foundation for transitioning to CVI. There was now an established and supported ecosystem of CBOs located primarily in the neighborhoods that experienced the greatest levels of violence, improved communication and coordination between City departments and these CBOs, a citywide case management system for tracking service delivery, and ongoing venues for City-sponsored training and technical assistance to ensure consistency in service delivery methods. The City leveraged these resources as it began shifting away from a focus on prevention and early intervention and toward the increasing evidence base for community violence intervention.

This transition was formalized in 2014 when voters approved Measure Z, a reauthorization of Measure Y with explicit emphasis on “youth and young adults at the highest risk of violence, as guided by data analysis.”³⁰ With the passage of this new legislation, funding priorities shifted toward CVI strategies such as shooting response and violence interruption. Programming for youth also evolved, shifting away from afterschool programs and toward more intensive interventions with young people who had come into contact with the juvenile justice system. Notably, during the implementation of Measure Z, the number of homicides in Oakland dropped to the lowest it had been in more than 25 years—a reduction that remained in effect for seven years, until the COVID-19 pandemic saw disruptions in services and a spike in gun violence around the country.

When the initiative came up for reauthorization again in 2024, it passed overwhelmingly, with more than 70% of the vote.

Key Elements of Oakland’s Violence Reduction Initiatives

Several key elements have contributed to both the effectiveness of, and enduring public support for, Oakland's violence reduction legislation. Importantly, despite California’s reputation as a tax-heavy blue state, State law greatly restricts the ability of local governments to raise taxes by requiring a two-thirds majority to pass property tax increases, along with a number of other restrictions. As a consequence, cities have relatively few avenues for raising funds, especially if those funds are to be designed for “special purposes” rather than the general fund.³¹ To account for this, Oakland intentionally designed the violence reduction initiative to levy a parcel tax and a parking tax, both of which require only a simple majority to pass and can be allocated to specific purposes.

³⁰ [Oakland Measure Z Ballot Initiative Resolution](#)

³¹ [California Property Tax Laws](#)

In addition, anticipating that voters were likely to be hesitant about approving a long-term tax increase that could be hard to undo, each of the violence reduction initiatives has been drafted to sunset after 10 years. Beyond mitigating voter anxiety about long-term taxes, this has had the added benefit of enabling the City to revise and refine the law as it learns more about what works and as the city's needs change.

The initiative also requires a citizens' oversight commission to monitor the proper administration of revenue collection and spending, including a financial audit and an annual evaluation. To ensure that these are conducted regularly and with rigor, 3% of the total revenue collected from the initiative is dedicated to the audit, evaluation, and operation of the oversight commission.

Oakland's experience demonstrates how local governments can build and sustain a robust community violence intervention ecosystem through strategic policy design, consistent public investment, and close collaboration with community-based organizations. Over the course of two decades, the City has shown a willingness to learn from data, respond to evolving community needs, and refine its approach accordingly. The inclusion of sunset clauses, voter-approved revenue mechanisms, and built-in oversight and evaluation processes has helped maintain public trust and ensure program accountability. Oakland offers a compelling model for how long-term, locally anchored investments in CVI can be both politically viable and substantively effective.





YOUTH ALIVE CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE HOSPITAL-BASED VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAM

Youth ALIVE!'s hospital-based violence intervention program (HVIP), Caught in the Crossfire (CiC), is one of several evidence-informed programs funded through Oakland's violence reduction initiative. The nation's first ever HVIP, CiC sends Intervention Specialists to meet with shooting victims in the hospital while they are recovering from shooting injuries. These Intervention Specialists—all of whom are credible messengers from the same communities as the people they serve—work with victims to provide case management, linkages to community services, mentorship, and follow-up assistance. As part of their work to help survivors heal from the physical and emotional trauma of their injuries, CiC staff intervene to avoid potential retaliatory violence. Through counseling and mentorship, CiC Intervention Specialists help clients view their victimization as an opportunity to transition away from violence rather than becoming or remaining enmeshed in cycles of retaliation.



DEPARTMENT OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION LIFE COACHES

As part of Oakland's evidence-based gun violence reduction strategy, known as Ceasefire, the City's Department of Violence Prevention (DVP) employs a team of Life Coaches who work directly with individuals identified as being at very high risk for involvement in shootings. Life Coaches, most of whom have direct personal experience with gun violence and all of whom are credible messengers, provide direct counseling and mentorship, as well as linkages to a variety of City-funded services such as housing, employment, and relocation assistance. Life Coaches are required to intensively engage the very high-risk participants they serve, including through daily communication, in-person engagement two to four times per week, development of detailed life plans, and connection to wrap-around services.

CONCLUSION

Across the United States, the rapid growth of community violence intervention efforts has reshaped our nation's public safety landscape. Violence has decreased nationally in the midst of this transformation; however, the planned sunset of ARPA and sweeping cuts to public safety initiatives by the federal government now threaten this progress. As local governments seek alternative, sustainable sources of funding for this work, the City of Oakland's voter approved violence reduction initiative and the California Violence Intervention Program both offer effective models for long-term, local investment in community violence intervention.

Looking ahead, the future of community violence intervention depends on continued investment, sustained political will, and a commitment to evidence-based practice. California's example offers a blueprint for scaling up and institutionalizing CVI programs nationwide. As temporary federal funding from sources like ARPA phases out, the lessons from California underscore the importance of embedding CVI into long-term public safety infrastructure through legislation, stable revenue streams, and strong partnerships with community organizations. In doing so, cities and states can move toward a public health approach that truly prioritizes safety, equity, and healing.



The image features a large, semi-transparent California state flag as a background. The flag is white with a blue star in the upper left corner, a black silhouette of a bear in the center, and a banner at the bottom with the words "CALIFORNIA REPUBLIC" in black capital letters. The entire scene is overlaid on a dark teal background.

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