



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

VIOLENCE REDUCTION PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prince George's County, Maryland, is one of the largest predominantly Black counties in the United States, with a population of more than 966,000 residents. The County borders Washington, DC, and is the second most populous in Maryland. While Prince George's County has experienced a meaningful decline in gun violence since 2020, violence remains a significant concern among residents and policy makers. The County recorded 96 firearm homicides and 74 nonfatal shootings in 2024, representing a 67% decrease relative to 2020, when there were 226 injury shootings. This decline continued in 2025, when there were 57 firearm homicides and 69 injury shootings. Black residents make up 62% of the county population, yet over the past decade, more than 87% of fatal and nonfatal shooting victims were Black, according to the Maryland Department of Health. The majority of victims were between 20 and 29 years old, underscoring the need for targeted interventions for young adults at the highest risk for violence involvement.

Prince George's is a large county, much of which has very low incidence of violence. But in pockets of the County, especially the cities along the Washington, DC border, rates of gun violence are still high.



Prince George's County has taken important steps to address gun violence. In 2023, the County Council established the Gun Violence Study Workgroup (Workgroup), a multidisciplinary body composed of government officials, public safety leaders, health professionals, and community stakeholders. The Workgroup conducted an in-depth assessment of gun violence trends and unanimously recommended the creation of a County Office of Violence Prevention, along with additional policy and systems-level reforms. At the state level, Governor Wes More created the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention in the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) in 2024, developing the infrastructure to support local violence reduction efforts through funding, technical assistance, and coordination.

The County also benefits from a robust network of community-based organizations (CBOs) delivering prevention, intervention, reentry, and community transformation services. Prevention and youth development programming is particularly strong, with numerous organizations providing mentorship, educational support, mental health services, workforce readiness support, and community outreach. Intervention efforts are led by organizations such as YAAY Me Inc. (YMI), which operates violence interruption and intensive mentorship programs that engage individuals at the highest risk of imminent violence. Youth diversion and school-based violence reduction programs provide interventions for youth involved in delinquent conduct. Several organizations also provide reentry services that support adults returning from incarceration by addressing employment, housing, and behavioral health needs.

Funding issues threaten the stability of these community-led violence reduction efforts. In particular, federal divestment from community violence intervention (CVI) is challenging programs that have contributed to the County's recent success in reducing gun violence. Specifically, federal funding cuts have led to a reduction in intervention services such as street outreach and violence interruption work, and, over the last several years, many local CVI programs and initiatives have had to shut down due to a lack of funding. Community-based organizations are in need of both state and County support to withstand these losses.

The MDH Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention provided a grant to the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) to assess Prince George's County's existing ecosystem of community violence reduction services as part of a larger effort to reduce gun violence across the state. This assessment documents the programs, initiatives, and CBOs that aim to reduce violence in Prince George's County through prevention, intervention, reentry, and community transformation strategies.

This landscape analysis also provides recommendations for strengthening violence reduction efforts in Prince George's County. First, the County should establish an Office of Gun Violence Prevention, as recommended by the County Council Gun Violence Study Workgroup, to oversee the development of a comprehensive, coordinated system of violence reduction services, with a focus on establishing a robust ecosystem for community violence intervention. Second, the County should conduct a gun violence problem analysis (GVPA) to identify the individuals and social networks most likely to be involved in shootings in Prince George's County; this analysis will lay the groundwork for County stakeholders to implement highly focused, data-driven intervention that prioritizes CVI efforts on those at highest risk of being involved in gun violence. Finally, the County should implement a targeted enforcement approach, via the Prince George's County Police Department and the Maryland Division of Parole and Probation, that includes a regular Shooting Review, to focus enforcement efforts on those driving gun violence.

INTRODUCTION

Prince George's County, Maryland, is one of the largest predominantly Black counties in the United States. It is also the second most populous county in the state, with a population of more than 966,000 people. County residents are 62% are Black, 23.9% Latino, 10.7% White, and 4.5% Asian.¹ The County borders Washington, DC, and is one of the wealthiest Black-majority counties in the United States.

Prince George's County also currently has the second-highest number of annual firearm deaths in the state. Fortunately, after increasing for several years, the number of shootings in Prince George's County has recently been decreasing. According to the MDH dashboard, in 2025, there were a total of 57 firearm homicides, down from a high of 125 in 2021. In addition, in 2025, there were 69 emergency department visits due to firearm injuries in 2025, compared to a high of 226 in 2020.²

Figure 1. Prince George's County Racial Demographics, 2025

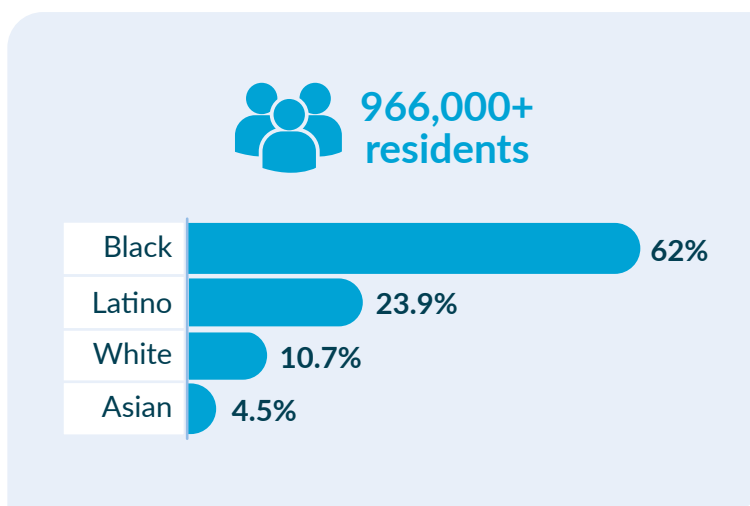


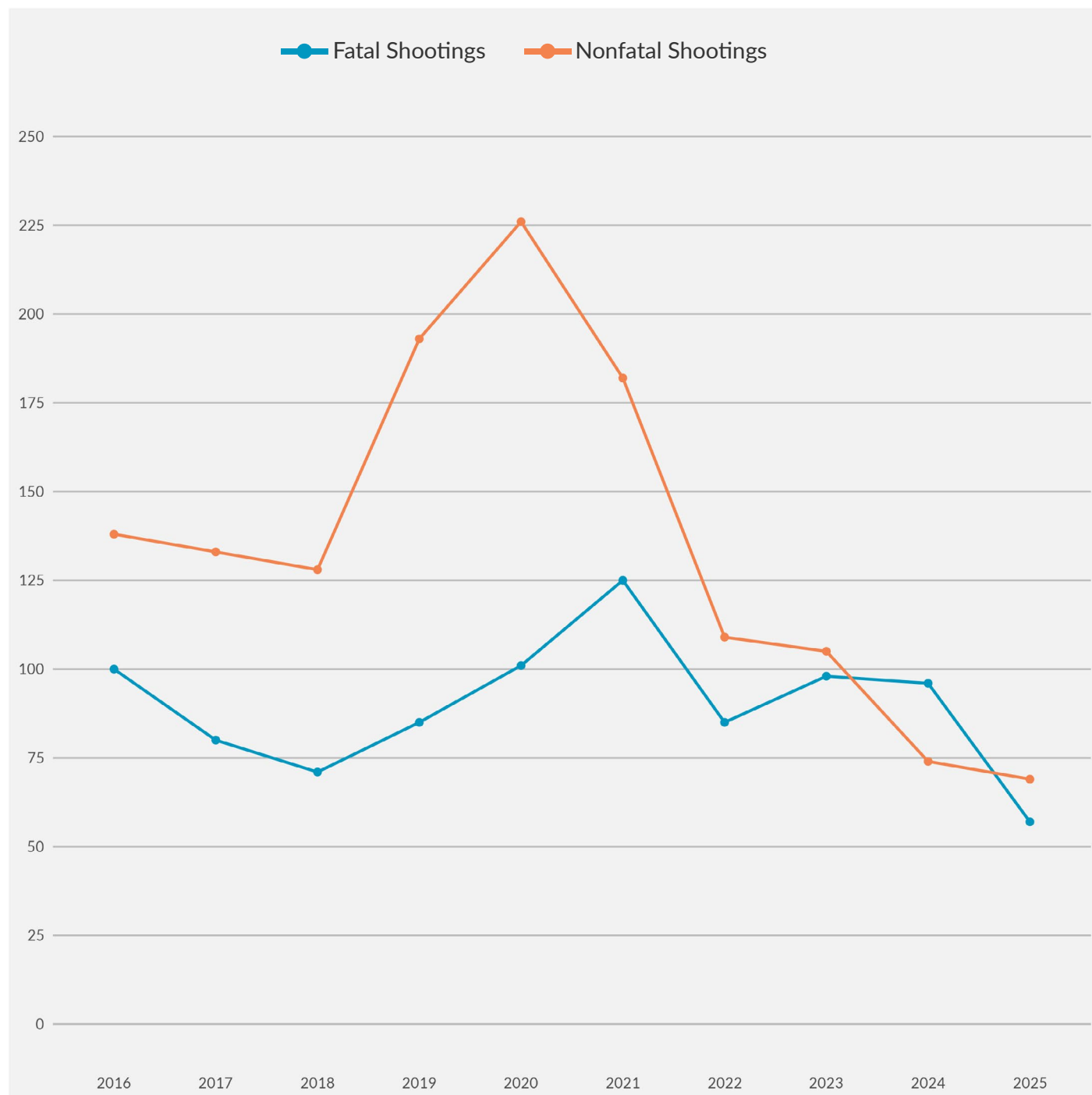
Figure 2. Firearm Homicides and ER Visits for Firearm Injuries, 2020 and 2025



¹ US Census Bureau

² MDH Interactive Dashboard

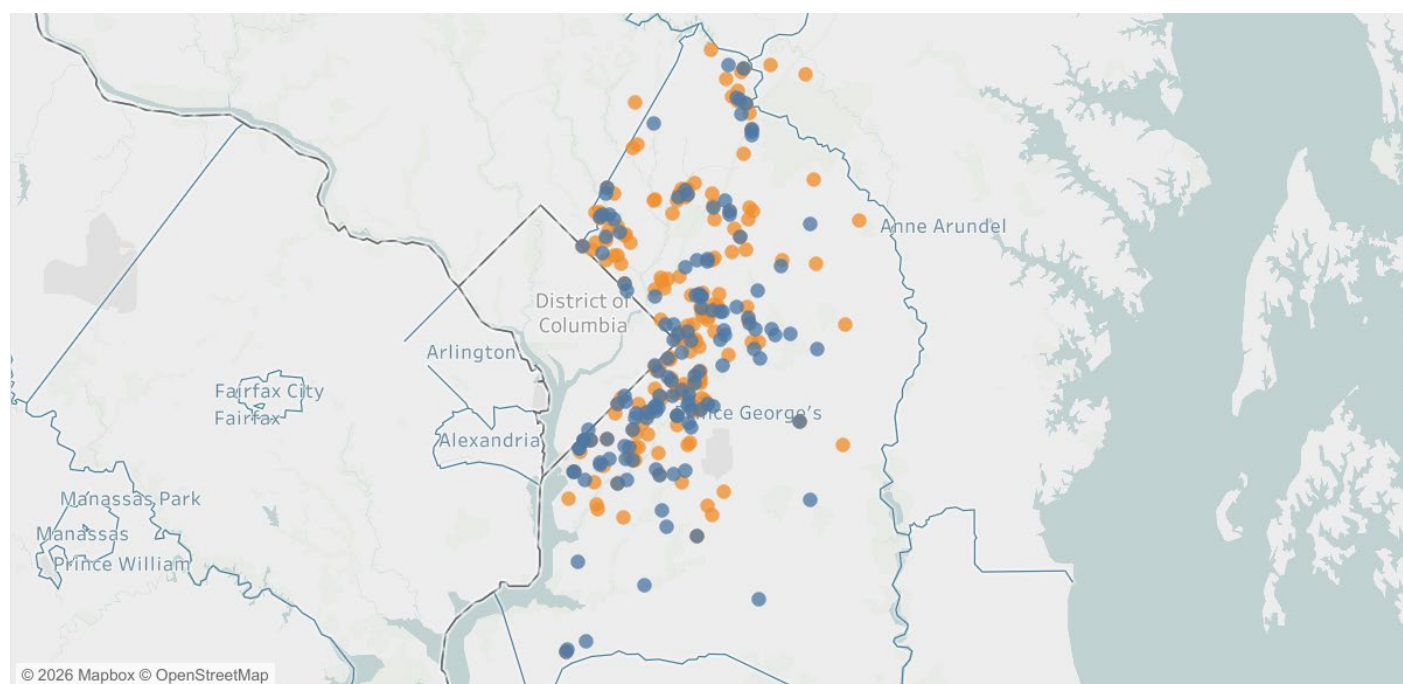
Figure 3. Annual Firearm Homicides and Injuries in Prince George’s County, 2016-2025



As in many places, these shootings are highly concentrated, both demographically and geographically. As shown in the Gun Violence Assessment that accompanies this report, in 2025, 91% of victims and 91% of suspects in fatal shootings were Black, and 89% of victims and 90% suspects in fatal shootings and 81% of victims and 92% of suspects in nonfatal shootings were male.³ Geographically, these incidents cluster along the Maryland/DC border.

³ See NICJR’s Prince George’s County Gun Violence Assessment for more detail on fatal and nonfatal shooting trends in 2024-2025.

Figure 4. Geography of Firearm Homicides and Injuries in Prince George's County, 2024-2025



Shooting Type

■ Fatal Shootings ■ Nonfatal Shootings

In response to the spike in shootings in 2020-2021, there have been notable County and community efforts to combat gun violence in the region. The County Council's Gun Violence Study Workgroup, launched in 2024, has recommended many policy approaches to reducing gun violence, including the creation of an office of violence prevention and changes to gun safety and ownership laws.⁴ At the same time, a solid network of community-led coalitions and CBOs operates violence prevention, intervention, and reentry programs.

Despite these important steps, Prince George's County's violence reduction ecosystem is confronting a number of challenges, foremost among them a major reduction in federal funding for community violence prevention and intervention initiatives. Amid the sunset of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and a substantial decrease in funding from the US Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, several local programs and initiatives in Prince George's County have closed in the past two years. Despite the reductions in violence in Prince George's County over this period, there is now a growing gap between the need for and availability of services for individuals at the highest risk for involvement in gun violence.

To build on the critical progress made over the last several years, it is essential the County increase its investment in violence reduction services, particularly community violence interventions focused on the small number of people most likely to be involved in shootings. Critical steps in this effort should include establishing an office of violence prevention, as recommended by the Gun Violence Study Workgroup, that can oversee the development of a comprehensive array of violence reduction services; conducting a gun violence problem analysis (GVPA) to identify individuals at highest risk for involvement in shootings; and working with the Prince George's County Police Department to establish a focused enforcement strategy.

⁴ Prince George's County group suggests policy changes, victims support to stop gun violence

METHODOLOGY

NICJR conducted this analysis through a series of focus groups and individual interviews with government and community stakeholders in Prince George's County. In March 2026, NICJR convened stakeholders from across the county to discuss violence dynamics in the jurisdiction. Participants discussed the leading causes of shooting incidents, as well as past, current, and future gun violence reduction efforts. The two-hour convening was attended by 38 individuals representing 12 different CBOs, County and State agencies, and academic partners. After the convening, NICJR conducted follow-up interviews with representatives from a number of key CBOs and government agencies. NICJR also reviewed publicly available data from the Maryland Department of Health and the Gun Violence Archive on firearm homicides and injury shootings to understand gun violence trends in recent years.⁵

NICJR VIOLENCE REDUCTION LANDSCAPE FRAMEWORK

The NICJR violence reduction framework around which this report is organized includes three primary programmatic categories: violence prevention, violence intervention, and community transformation. Reentry stands as another key programmatic category within any violence reduction ecosystem and is thus highlighted in this report as well. Each of the violence reduction organizations identified in Prince George's County is categorized in one or more of these categories.

Violence Prevention

Violence prevention refers to the elimination or reduction of the underlying risk factors within individuals that lead to violence, thus preventing violence from occurring in the first place.

Programs and services in this category are often targeted toward children and youth, with a focus on fostering attitudes, competencies, values, and social skills that contribute to successful transition into adulthood. In particular, youth development programming can increase pro-social attitudes, self-efficacy, academic achievement, and readiness for employment. These positive outcomes serve as protective factors against the root causes of violence.

⁵ MDH data refers to intentional shooting incidents as "firearm homicides," and "injury shootings," while the Gun Violence Archive refers to these incidents as "fatal shootings" and "nonfatal shootings." This report reflects the language used in the specific data source being referenced.

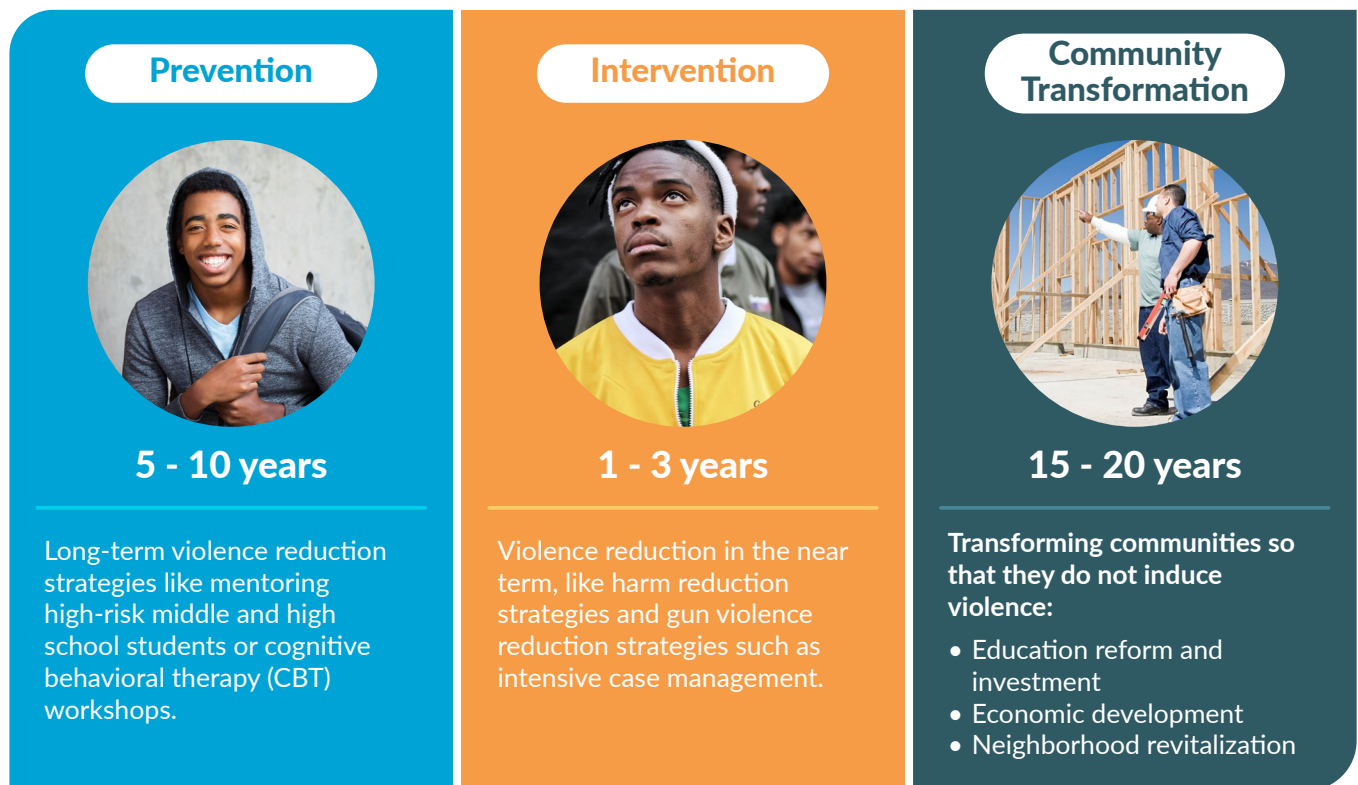
Violence Intervention

Violence intervention efforts are designed to prevent the recurrence of violence or intervene and prevent the imminent act of violence. Violence intervention efforts are specifically focused on the people who are at the greatest immediate risk of violence—typically young adults.

Both violence prevention and intervention hinge on deploying services that identify and address age- and context-appropriate risk and protective factors. However, while violence prevention is a broad field encompassing various types of programs, effective violence intervention is more narrowly defined and focused.

Community Transformation

Community Transformation refers to the elimination of systemic factors that give rise to violence in a neighborhood, like poverty, blight, low-performing schools, disinvestment, and chronic unemployment. While community transformation is a long-term strategy that can take 15-20 years to achieve, if successfully implemented, it can also be most effective at permanently reducing violence.



Reentry

Reentry services also play an important role in the violence reduction ecosystem. These services support formerly incarcerated individuals in successfully “reentering” their communities at the conclusion of their in-custody period, thereby reducing recidivism, increasing public safety, and improving individual outcomes.

OVERVIEW OF PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY VIOLENCE REDUCTION ECOSYSTEM

Policies and Initiatives

The Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention

The Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention is a state-level office founded in October 2024 within the Maryland Department of Health. The Center coordinates the State's approach to gun violence reduction and works to support local firearm violence reduction efforts (such as this landscape analysis). It operates on a three-pillar framework: Prevention and Assessment, Intervention and Response, and Community Healing and Resilience. The goal of this Office is to serve as a hub for gun violence reduction stakeholders such as local community organizations, law enforcement, local health departments, and other relevant government agencies. The Center addresses CBO funding gaps through grant opportunities such as the Three Pillars Grant, which provides funding for prevention, intervention, and community resilience and healing efforts.⁶



Employ Prince George's ReEntry Hiring Incentive

Employ Prince George's is a quasi-governmental nonprofit serving as the principal workforce development entity for Prince George's County. In this capacity, Employ Prince George's serves as the staff, fiscal agent and administrative agent of the Prince George's County Workforce Development Board, the entity managing and distributing the County's Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I fund, and the operator of the Prince George's County Public Workforce System.

One of Employ Prince George's many workforce initiatives is The ReEntry Hiring Incentive, which offers a subsidy to local businesses who hire individuals returning to the community following incarceration. Eligible businesses that pay at least \$15 per hour can receive a \$5 reimbursement for up to 40 hours per week and 1,000 hours per year, for a period of two years. The goal is to reduce barriers to employment for people returning from incarceration while creating economic benefits for local businesses.⁷

⁶ Center for Violence Prevention and Intervention: Home

⁷ Employ Prince George's- ReEntry Hiring Incentive

Extreme Risk Protective Order Liaison Program

Extreme Risk Protective Orders (ERPOs), granted by the Prince George's County courts, temporarily require a person who has been deemed a credible risk to themselves or others to surrender their firearms and ammunition to law enforcement. ERPOs can be filed by family members, spouses, cohabitants, law enforcement officers, or medical professionals who have determined an individual to be at risk of suicide, homicide, or domestic violence.

Prince George's County is one of three Maryland sites funded by the Byrne State Crisis Violence Prevention Grant to increase awareness of these protective orders. Through this funding, the Prince George's County Health Department has established an ERPO Liaison Program that provides free training sessions on what ERPOs are and how they can be used, as well as train-the-trainer programs that equip others to educate the community.⁸

Gun Violence Study Workgroup

Prince George's County created the Gun Violence Study Workgroup in 2023 to identify the underlying causes of increasing rates of shootings. The Workgroup was composed of government officials such as County Council members, law enforcement, the Public Defender, and County Health Department staff, as well as community members. The Workgroup, which concluded in June 2025, conducted an in-depth analysis of gun violence in the county to identify relevant policy approaches to violence reduction. In the Workgroup's final meeting, members unanimously voted to recommend that the County establish an Office of Violence Prevention and invest in local violence interruption models to prevent gun violence, among other policy recommendations.⁹

Hope in Action Anti-Violence Project

In 2021, Hope in Action, a local CBO run by Reverend Tony Lee, partnered with the Prince George's County Office of Community Relations to establish the Anti Violence Project, an effort to build out a comprehensive set of services to identify and intervene with individuals at highest risk of gun violence. Toward this end, the initiative established four program areas targeted toward individuals at risk for being involved in gun violence: 1) Peace Keepers Credible Messenger Program, 2) Diversion and Reentry Services, 3) Community and School-Based Wrap Around Services, and 4) The Violence Prevention Taskforce. The Taskforce was a body convened by Hope in Action that included law enforcement, community leaders, government officials, and more.¹⁰ In biweekly meetings, participants reviewed shootings and crime statistics, and identified ways to regularly engage the community to deliver services and prevent violence. As part of the Anti-Violence Project, the Office of the County Executive established a grant program to fund CBOs that could deliver services that aligned with Project objectives and support efforts to reduce violence.

Unfortunately, despite the strong partnership between the County and Hope in Action, the Anti-Violence Project dissolved in 2024 due to a lack of funding. The dissolution of the Anti-Violence Project, and the violence reduction services it provided, has left a noticeable gap in needed violence intervention services in Prince George's County. The Appendix details the programs and services offered through Hope in Action that have shut their doors since the Project's dissolution.

⁸ Prince George's County Health Department: Extreme Risk Protection Order

⁹ Gun Violence Study Workgroup June Meeting Minutes

¹⁰ Hope in Action Anti Violence Program

Hyattsville Crime Prevention Through Environment Design

The City of Hyattsville sponsored Crime Prevention Through Environment Design (CPTED) trainings in 2019 and 2020. Over 60 city planners, public works, code enforcement, and law enforcement personnel attended the first one day workshop, while 36 people attended the eight-day, four-hour trainings the following year. All 36 passed the exam and are CPTED certified.¹¹

New Direction Youth Diversion Program

With the New Direction Youth Diversion Program, Prince George's County courts offer youth the opportunity to complete a community-based program in lieu of formal involvement with the juvenile justice system. Participating CBOs monitor youth, connect them to resources such as mental health and substance abuse support, and provide coaching and mentorship so they can make better decisions in the future.¹² Youth must be aged 12–18 and have no history of violent activity to be eligible. They can be referred to the program by the State Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), their defense attorney, or the presiding judge in the case. The program lasts 90 days and includes monthly check-ins with the judge.

Prince George's Community College Welcome Home Program



Prince George's Community College (PGCC) launched the Welcome Home program in 2025 to offer tuition-free trade skills training to people returning to the community from incarceration. PGCC partners with the Returning Citizen Affairs Division (RCAD) and Employ Prince George's, both discussed later in the report. This workforce development initiative performs an important role in the reentry ecosystem, and provides tools to people returning to the community

from incarceration to build a strong economic future. To be eligible for the program, individuals must have served five or more years in prison and have been released in the last 18 months.

¹¹ Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

¹² New Direction Youth Diversion Program

Re-Entry Court Program

The Re-Entry Court Program of the Prince George's County Judicial Branch is an intensive 18-month program that uses evidence-based prerelease and transitional services to prevent recidivism. This program is available to residents with no pending charges who may be seeking sentence conversion or community-based placements for substance abuse issues. Those approved are transitioned to community programs and receive intensive supervision as they complete their designated program. Participants receive intensive case management, maintain a curfew, attend frequent court hearings, and are subject to regular drug screenings.¹³

Returning Citizen Affairs Division

The Prince George's County Returning Citizen Affairs Division (RCAD) is a division within the Office of the County Executive that is responsible for overseeing the County's reentry service delivery system. RCAD works to address an array of needs that are common among individuals returning from incarceration to the community, including housing, transportation, and behavioral health and wellness. In recent years, RCAD has worked to increase pre-release planning, going into both county and state correctional facilities to assess needs prior to release and ease the transition from incarceration. In addition to helping people locate housing, RCAD helps obtain identification and other legal documents, determine Medicaid eligibility, and connect currently incarcerated people to RCAD hubs in the community.¹⁴ These hubs, the Bridge Center at Adam's House and the Laurel Multiservice Center, are described in reentry programs, below.



Sustainable Communities Program

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development's Sustainable Communities Program supports community transformation by facilitating revitalization projects in designated Maryland communities. Resources are available for infrastructure improvement, housing production and rehabilitation, transportation improvements, and economic development programs. The Program provides funds to local governments that cover designated neighborhoods with grants like the State Designated Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Areas grant. The Program has a Neighborhood Revitalization Mapper that indicates eligible neighborhood boundaries. More than 25 of Prince George's County's towns and cities are included in the Program's designated list.¹⁵

The Thrive Academy

Launched in 2023 in Baltimore City and County, the Thrive Academy is a youth violence intervention program for young people under Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) supervision who are at high risk of being involved in gun violence. DJS expanded the Thrive Academy to Prince George's County in 2024.

¹³ Re-Entry Court

¹⁴ Successful Reentry: A Playbook for Building an Ecosystem That Works for Returning Citizens in Prince George's County

¹⁵ The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development's Sustainable Communities Program

The goal of Thrive Academy is to reduce young people's involvement in dangerous and delinquent conduct by connecting them with life coaches who can help address the underlying issues that led to their involvement in the juvenile justice system. The most common referral pathway to Thrive Academy is through DJS case managers who use a combination of quantitative and qualitative data to identify young people who could benefit from the program. Once a young person is approved for the program, Thrive connects them with CBOs that provide intensive life coaching services in their county. In Prince George's County, these providers are Jacob's Ladder and Credible Messenger Mentoring Movement (CM3), both of which are discussed in Intervention Programs below. Community providers coordinate weekly meetings with DJS case managers to ensure youth are meeting their probation requirements and receiving the resources they need.

University of Maryland

The Center for the Study and Practice of Violence Reduction

The Violence Reduction Center (VRC) combines rigorous research with practical know-how to stop violence using science. The Center's principles are scientific rigor, real-world relevance, and independence from financial or partisan interests. VRC conducts research in order to provide policy-makers and practitioners with reliable and robust evidence that provides actionable conclusions for the real world. In partnership with San José State University to evaluate the efficacy of street outreach programs in recent years, VRC also partners with practitioners in the community, such as through the Practicum on Partnership-Based Violence Reduction which brings together local leaders and practitioners from a given jurisdiction to learn from experts in the field. This practicum lasts 3-5 days and showcases successful strategies from the field that are backed by rigorous research. VRC also works with government agencies and policy makers to advise on policies at the local, state, national, and even international level.¹⁶

PROGRESS Initiative

PROGRESS is a University of Maryland initiative started in 2023 to use cutting-edge research to advance actionable gun violence prevention and intervention solutions. The initiative concentrates on community violence prevention and intervention, community-based data for action, and safe and secure storage of firearms. PROGRESS connects students and faculty with community leaders to address issues in communities disproportionately affected by gun violence. Together, they host site visits to community partners like Jacob's Ladder, described below. PROGRESS further centers local engagement by partnering with CBOs to disseminate research findings and design research-backed interventions and programs.¹⁷

PROGRESS also serves as a hub for gun violence data from across the state, as well as a generator of original research. For example, the initiative is conducting an evaluation of CVI effectiveness in Washington, DC, as well as studying the connection between social media and community violence. PROGRESS also hosts the Working Group on GeoAI and Gun Violence Prevention that brings together multidisciplinary scholars to discuss the use of geospatial and AI technology in the prevention field. Finally, PROGRESS provides grants for innovative gun violence research.

The Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center

The Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center (MCRIC) was launched in 2018 to establish a stronger relationship between academic experts, policymakers, and practitioners. The Center focuses on crime prevention and reduction by advocating for data-informed decision-making. MCRIC works with local and state agencies,

¹⁶ Violence Reduction Center

¹⁷ PROGRESS Initiative

CBOs, and individuals to provide data analysis and develop data infrastructure. MCRIC also conducts original research, including program evaluations of community-based intervention efforts and policy research such as its report on human trafficking in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. MCRIC also supports the future of criminology scholars and leaders through a partnership with Prince George's Police Department to provide data analysis that exposes students to applied research. MCRIC also connects students with internships and other opportunities across Maryland.¹⁸

Current Programs and Services

Prevention

Community Advocates for Family and Youth

Community Advocates for Family and Youth (CAFY) is a victim services organization in Capitol Heights that works with people who have experienced violent crime. The CAFY Case Management Team works with individuals to assess their needs and connect them to appropriate services, including emergency housing, counseling and mental health care, parenting and family strengthening supports, crisis management, and legal support. CAFY also has a Youth Services program that works with young people to break cycles of violence and abuse through workshops and mentorship.¹⁹



Community Kinship Coalition

Community Kinship Coalition (CKC) has been working in the Prince George's County community for over 30 years, providing youth development by engaging young people in underserved communities. CKC approaches violence prevention through sports and mentorship. Its Community Violence Intervention League teaches youth how to play basketball, which also teaches them sportsmanship and team-building skills. CKC also hosts leadership development and healthy living workshops.²⁰ By creating an environment with strong adult role models where youth feel supported to achieve their goals, CKC aims to prevent youth delinquency, violence, and generational poverty.

District Heights Youth Development Foundation

District Heights Youth Development Foundation (DHYDF) is a member of the violence prevention organization Maryland Association of Youth Service Bureaus. DHYDF provides mental health and positive youth development services, regardless of families' ability to pay. The Foundation partners with local schools to provide group counseling to students referred by school officials. DHYDF also offers Connected Futures for youth and families, which is a group counseling program where teen and parent groups are run concurrently. At the end of

¹⁸ Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center (MCRIC)

¹⁹ Community Advocates for Family and Youth Services

²⁰ Community Kinship Coalition: Community Violence Intervention League



each session, the two groups come together and synergize what they learned, supporting holistic healing for youth and their parents. Additionally, DHYDF organizes free tours of colleges and universities in the region, and it facilitates a Safe and Drug-Free counseling program with a four-session curriculum discussing substance use and abuse. Youth are referred to this program by courts, schools, parents, and other CBOs. DHYF also hosts community events such as the My Sole Knows 5k.²¹

End Time Harvest Ministries

End Time Harvest Ministries (ETHM) is a youth development organization that seeks to end the school-to-prison pipeline by working with youth in Prince George's County who are at risk of school failure. ETHM has a variety of programs to help students graduate on time and prepare them for both college and the workforce. For example, Pathways to Career Success is a college and workforce readiness program with a curriculum tailored for students from grades 9 through 12. Another program called Jobs for Youth places students in six-week summer internships to improve their job readiness and professional skills.²²

The Jayz Agnew Foundation

The Jayz Agnew Foundation, located in Marlow Heights, operates several prevention programs for youth in communities with high rates of gun violence. Its programming includes mentorship that prioritizes building bonds between youth and strong adult role models. Jayz Agnew also provides educational support through tutoring, workshops, and access to essential tools. This foundation also engages in community outreach, including connecting at-risk community members with essential resources and hosting an annual Community Gun Violence Awareness Walk.²³

Intervention

Credible Messenger Mentoring Movement

The Credible Messenger Mentoring Movement (CM3) is a national organization that employs community-based mentors with previous involvement in the criminal justice system. In Prince George's County, CM3 works with youth referred by Thrive Academy due to an elevated risk of being involved in gun violence.²⁴ Mentors serve as both life coaches and case managers,



²¹ [Youth Development Foundation: Home](#)

²² [End Time Harvest Ministries: Our Programs](#)

²³ [The Jayz Agnew Foundation: About Us](#)

²⁴ [Credible Messenger Mentoring Movement: What We Do](#)

working closely with youth and their families to develop a strengths-based life plan that is tailored to the specific needs and experiences of each young person. In addition to near daily contact, mentors connect young people to support for educational, mental health, and basic needs; provide stipends for achieving milestones, and provide opportunities for prosocial recreation.

Jacob's Ladder

Jacob's Ladder is an interfaith coalition that operates across the DC, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) area. In Prince George's County, Jacob's Ladder works with youth on DJS supervision who have been referred as part of the Thrive Academy. In this role, Jacob's Ladder provides a combination of case management and mentorship for youth on DJS supervision, working with young people to develop and achieve individualized life plans, in addition to supporting juvenile justice system navigation and helping to address youth and families' basic needs.²⁵ Similar to the work of CM3, Jacob's Ladder mentors engage in intentional and intensive mentorship and work to expose youth to new opportunities while also helping to address individual and family needs.

University of Maryland Capital Region Health Violence Intervention Program

The Capital Region Health Violence Intervention Program (CAP-VIP) operates out of the University of Maryland (UMD) Capital Region Medical Center. This hospital has the second busiest trauma center in the state and receives over 700 patients with violent injuries annually. CAP-VIP is a trauma-informed program that provides mentorship and guidance to support the medical, mental, and social rehabilitation of patients with traumatic injuries from many causes, including gunshot wounds.²⁶ The goal of the program is to prevent repeat hospitalizations for additional violent injuries, referred to as trauma recidivism, and address the root causes of retaliation and criminal justice involvement. When a patient has a traumatic injury, a CAP-VIP Violence Intervention Specialist meets with them at the hospital bedside to understand both their immediate and long-term needs and provide a wound care kit. Most often, emergency needs include housing or food support. CAP-VIP staff check back in with the patient after one week to ensure they have what they need to continue to heal, as well as to facilitate connections to partner CBOs and determine whether CAP-VIP can support the patient with any other resources.

YAAAY Me Inc.: OneStep Forward

YAAAY Me Inc. is a community-based organization that works across Prince George's County and Washington, DC, to prevent and reduce gun violence. The organization's OneStep Forward program operates as a violence interruption model in Prince George's County. The program identifies individuals who are at the highest risk of gun violence through outreach and referrals from law enforcement, hospitals, and schools. Each identified individual is connected to a credible messenger mentor who works with them to develop an individualized case plan and roadmap to rehabilitation. Participants meet with mentors multiple times per week and have access to many other rehabilitative services, including housing placement and 24-hour crisis management. This program is available to people aged 16–30 who are from Prince George's County.²⁷

²⁵ Jacob's Ladder: About

²⁶ Violence Intervention Program "CAP-VIP"

²⁷ YAAAY Me: OneStep Forward

Community Transformation

The Ayana J. McAllister Legacy Foundation



The Ayana J. McAllister Legacy Foundation works in northwest Maryland, including Prince George's County, to reduce gun homicides and nonfatal shootings through community outreach and educational programming. The Foundation hosts and sponsors community events in neighborhoods with high rates of gun violence. It also leads presentations and workshops that discuss gun violence, educate people on how violence disproportionately impacts communities of color, and empower community members to advocate for gun violence policy changes.²⁸ The Foundation also offers the Ayana J. McAllister Legacy Foundation Academic Scholarship for students who have been personally impacted by gun violence.

Creating Opportunities Within Our Community

Creating Opportunities Within Our Community (COWOC), also known as Dreams Work, Inc., creates opportunities for community members to thrive by bridging the gap to needed resources such as workforce development and economic support. In particular, COWOC has a goal of ensuring economic growth within the Black community in Prince George's County, addressing centuries of economic exploitation and disinvestment through advocacy, education, and economic empowerment initiatives like food drives and financial assistance. This organization also provides job training, mentorship, and entrepreneurship support. COWOC is expanding its Youth Development and Health and Wellness opportunities in order to work with all members of the family to enhance their emotional intelligence and improve family dynamics.²⁹

Reentry

Bridge Center at Adam's House

The Bridge Center at Adam's House is a joint operation of the Prince George's County Departments of Health, Social Services, and Family Services. The Center was the first RCAD hub, serving as the service delivery location for the County's executive reentry division described above. The Bridge Center supports individuals returning to the community following incarceration, with targeted programs for transition-aged youth and veterans, in addition to general services for all individuals returning from incarceration. The supports offered by the Bridge Center include temporary housing; mentorship; support obtaining IDs, drivers' licenses, and other documentation; behavioral health assessments; anger management courses; and a number of other social, emotional, and economic resources.

²⁸ The Ayana J. McAllister Legacy Foundation

²⁹ Creating Opportunity Within our Community

Employ Prince George's: Pathways to Success

Pathways to Success is an Employ Prince George program that specifically targets the employment-related needs of individuals returning to the community following incarceration. This program, offered in partnership with the County's RCAD, is a 6-week, work-based learning model where individuals participate in one-on-one or group trainings designed to improve their workforce readiness and basic life skills. Participants are also eligible to benefit from the ReEntry Hiring Incentive program described above, in which, for qualifying business, the County subsidizes wages for people returning to the community from incarceration.

Laurel Multiservice Center

Laurel Multiservice Center (MSC) is a wraparound organization historically for unhoused people that serves as the most recently established RCAD hub.³⁰ MSC partners with other CBOs to provide their participants with access to financial literacy, housing programs, mental health services, and other resources. The MSC offers basic amenities such as showers, meals, and laundry services, in addition to serving as a one stop shop for reentry resources, such as those provided by the Bridge Center and Employ Prince George.



YAAAY Me Inc.: OneStep

OneStep is another program operated by YMI that focuses on reentry support for people returning to the community from incarceration. This program centers on restorative justice and provides intensive mentorship through individual and group therapy. Similar to OneStep Forward, clients are paired with a credible messenger mentor and receive a tailored case plan that includes employment readiness, mental health support, preparation for independent living, employment, and tools for addressing other barriers commonly faced during reentry. Clients must be between 18 and 30 years old and residents of Prince George's County.³¹

³⁰ Laurel Multiservice Center

³¹ YAAAY Me Inc.: OneStep Program



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

Prince George's County has a strong network of community-based violence reduction programs, with an emphasis on youth-centered prevention services. Prevention programming, including workshops and mentorship opportunities, is widely available through a diverse array of CBOs in multiple cities across the county. These CBOs provide robust youth engagement with the specific goal of preventing youth from becoming involved in gun violence and other forms of delinquency. These current efforts, and the many organizations involved, offer a strong foundation for a growing violence reduction ecosystem in Prince George's County.

There are also a smaller number of intervention programs, the majority of which are targeted towards young people, particularly those under the supervision of the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. As part of DJJ's Thrive Academy, young people identified as being at risk for being involved in gun violence are connected to intensive life coaching and mentorship through Jacob's Ladder and CM3. YMI provides a similar array of services for youth and adults and is unique in that it houses multiple prevention, intervention, and reentry programs under one roof.

In the last several years, Prince George's County has made important efforts to build the infrastructure for reentry and workforce development at the County level. RCAD and Employ Prince George's provide tailored support to people returning to the community from incarceration and offer examples for strong government-CBO partnerships.

Another Prince George's County strength is the history of workgroups and coordinating bodies at both the government and community levels. County government officials have signaled their commitment to proactively addressing gun violence through the Gun Violence Study Workgroup and its resulting recommendation to create an office of violence prevention. Community organizations have tried to streamline their work by creating their own coordinating entities, showcasing their commitment to collaboration and to building a strong foundation for a growing continuum of care.

Despite funding pressures, community members persistently pursue more opportunities to reduce violence. Though Hope in Action no longer functions, its founder is working with private funders to turn an old commercial building into a resource center for justice-involved youth and adults. Modeled after the Opportunity Center in Harris County, Texas,³² this space will house multiple community providers and serve as a one-stop, full-service center where justice-involved youth and adults can receive needed services.

There is also a strong state-level infrastructure for partnership between many actors across the region on gun violence efforts. Through the Thrive Academy, DJS already successfully partners with CBOs to provide intensive intervention services to youth at the highest risk of involvement in gun violence. UMD partners with CBOs and local government through its multiple research centers focused on gun violence reduction and public health approaches to community violence. Finally, the MDH Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention is a growing institution well-positioned to support the Prince George's County ecosystem by providing technical assistance, capacity building, and funding opportunities. The Center can also provide technical expertise and political support for the development of a Prince George's County OVP.

Challenges

The largest challenge facing violence reduction efforts in Prince George's County is the disinvestment from community violence reduction programming. The conclusion of ARPA funding, the inauguration of a new federal administration with different priorities, and changing restrictions on new or existing federal grants have all directly affected the availability of violence reduction services in Prince George's County.

Community violence intervention programs, such as violence interruption services, have especially been affected, and initiatives such as the Anti-Violence Project have ceased to exist as community partners lost their operational funding and shut their doors.

The ongoing reduction of grants threatens the long-term success of programs and constitutes a particularly difficult challenge for smaller CBOs with less grant-writing capacity. Some CBOs in the county lost federal grants but were able to secure emergency resources from private funders. One CBO noted that most state grants are now oriented toward law enforcement, with little available for community programming.

As a result of funding decreases and the recent loss of several violence interruption programs, there is an imbalance between youth and adult intervention programs, with fewer resources for adults. Youth may receive community services through schools or even referrals from DJS, but adults who are at risk of violence are more likely to go unserved.

There is also an imbalance of prevention and intervention programs. Many existing CBOs offer mentorship for referred individuals, but the County lacks violence interrupters and outreach workers who proactively locate individuals in need of immediate intervention and conflict resolution. This is particularly important because individuals aged 20–30 comprise the largest group of people involved in firearm homicides in the county.

One of the glaring gaps in Prince George's County violence reduction ecosystem is intensive intervention efforts focused on those individuals who are at the very highest risk of being involved in gun violence, who, among several other risk factors, are largely between the ages of 20–30.

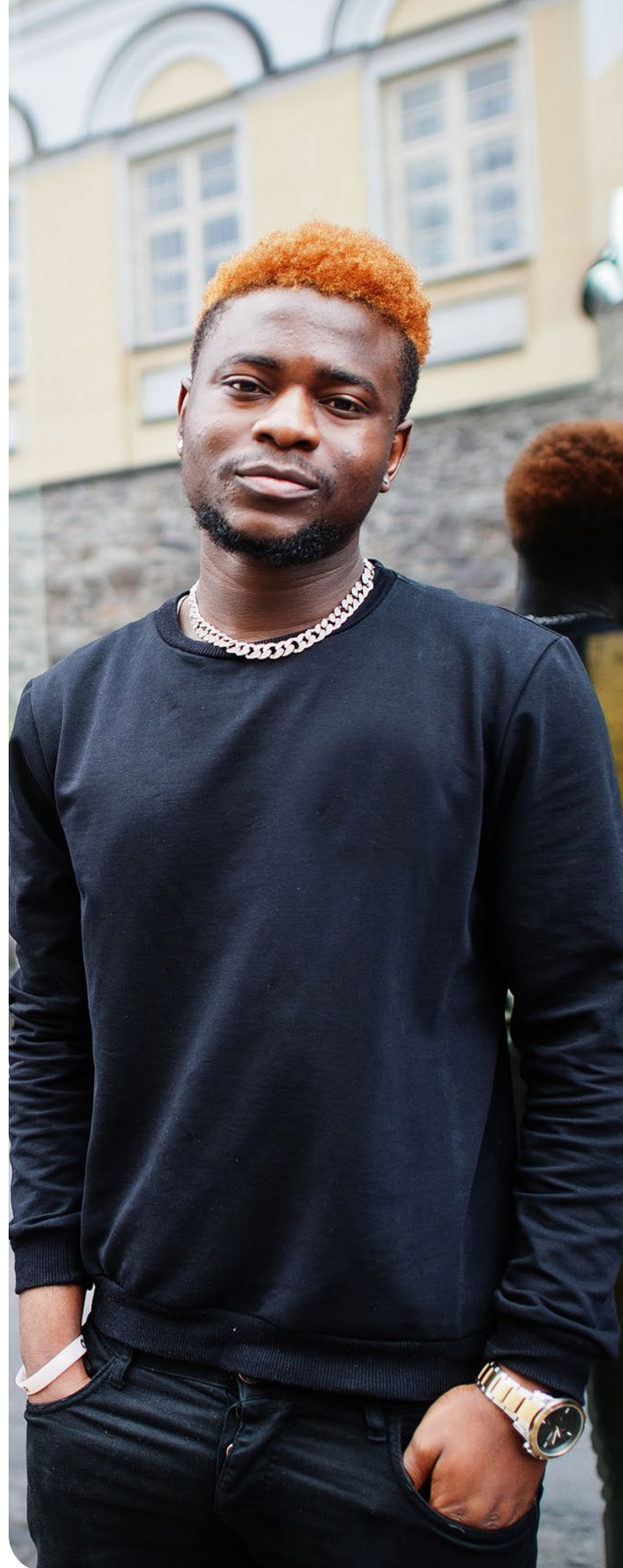
³² Juvenile Lockup Facility Transformed into a Community Hub

One of the glaring gaps in Prince George's County violence reduction ecosystem is intensive intervention efforts focused on those individuals who are at the very highest risk of being involved in gun violence, who, among several other risk factors, are largely between the ages of 20-30.

Stakeholders from across the violence reduction ecosystem also identified inadequate access to housing resources as a significant challenge to their gun violence reduction work. Overly restrictive requirements present one significant barrier. For example, a Prince George's County Health Department worker noted that it can be difficult to place people returning from prison into transitional housing because many housing options require a history of substance abuse, which not all reentering people have. This worker also emphasized that there are limited resources for returning women. Similarly, a CAP-VIP worker noted that existing housing resources are not always the best placements for people who have just sustained a traumatic gunshot wound. Shelters are not adequate places to heal, and there is a need for increased access to three- to five-week emergency placements.

Housing instability is also a barrier to effective violence reduction. A stakeholder who works with youth noted that housing instability can make it difficult for workers to reliably remain in contact with youth. This instability also prevents staff and participants from focusing on rehabilitation and shifts all attention toward solving housing concerns. Stakeholders did note that the housing resources they do have access to are excellent, but indicated that additional beds are needed and eligibility criteria should be expanded.

There is also a lack of behavioral health treatment. Stakeholders in the convening noted that it is difficult to locate mental health professionals who do not have long waitlists, are affordable, and are culturally competent. It is particularly difficult to find inpatient care for people experiencing mental health crises; as a result, many people are held for longer terms in



emergency departments. A stakeholder also noted that it is nearly impossible to find inpatient substance abuse treatment for anyone under 18. Because of this, they must rely on outpatient treatment when it may not be appropriate.

Although Prince George's County agencies offer a wealth of workforce development resources, CBO, DJS, and even County staff reported a lack of appropriate employment opportunities for those who have been involved in the criminal or juvenile justice systems, with many employers unwilling to hire people with criminal records and many people returning from incarceration not being sufficiently prepared to work in the positions that are available to them.

CBOs and agencies that work with youth also struggle with family engagement, creating a barrier to youth rehabilitation. As stakeholders noted throughout the convening and follow-up interviews, youth can work toward rehabilitation on their own, but the effectiveness of that work is limited when they return to a home environment that does not support their growth. Youth also often need parental support to get to their appointments and meet the requirements of their case plans. Some CBOs have programming for parents or family liaisons, which they report has improved youth outcomes. However, some parents remain opposed to engaging in programming because they feel the youth alone is responsible for rehabilitation.

Stakeholders also pointed to limited coordination among various agencies and organizations providing violence reduction services. Many of these stakeholders lamented the loss of the Hope Collective, which used to act as a coordinator of CBOs and services before it lost funding and was dissolved. CBOs noted that they now work in silos and are less aware of what services are available in other organizations. This was evidenced by the fact that during the convening, many organizations remarked that they were hearing of new programs from others in the room for the first time.

Finally, stakeholders pointed to a lack of implementation and follow-through as a challenge to violence reduction efforts in Prince George's County. The Gun Violence Study Workgroup made many recommendations in line with national best practices for violence reduction, however there has been little-to-no action since these recommendations were released.

Recommendations

1. Establish a Prince George's County Office of Violence Prevention

Establish a Prince George's County Office of Violence Prevention, as recommended by the County Council Gun Violence Study Workgroup, to oversee the development of a comprehensive, coordinated system of violence reduction services, with a focus on establishing a robust ecosystem for community violence intervention.

2. Conduct a gun violence problem analysis (GVPA)

Conduct a gun violence problem analysis (GVPA) to identify the individuals and social networks most likely to be involved in shootings in Prince George's County, as well as to better understand the circumstances and dynamics that give rise to shootings.

- a. While the Gun Violence Assessment that NICJR conducted alongside this assessment provides summary characteristics of people involved in shootings, a GVPA can provide a deeper and more detailed analysis of both individuals involved in shootings and the circumstances surrounding those shootings to enable highly informed, data-driven intervention efforts.

3. Implement and provide funding, coordination, and oversight

Implement and provide funding, coordination, and oversight to a community violence intervention strategy that focuses on intensive engagement with the individuals in the County who are at the very highest risk of being involved in gun violence, using criteria identified through the GVPA. The countywide CVI strategy should include street outreach, violence intervention, and life coaching/case management efforts.³³

4. Implement a targeted enforcement approach, via the Prince George's County Police Department

Implement a targeted enforcement approach, via the Prince George's County Police Department, that includes a regular Shooting Review, along with associated coordination processes, to identify individuals at imminent risk of involvement in gun violence and connect them to intervention resources.

- a. Coordinate with the Prince George's County Police Department to establish regular Shooting Reviews, followed by Coordination Meetings to link high-risk individuals to CVI services.
- b. Identify participants who are good candidates for intervention services and make warm handoffs to relevant community providers.

³³ Intensive Life Coaching Report

APPENDIX: PROGRAMS AND SERVICES PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED BY HOPE IN ACTION

The Hope Collective

The Hope Collective was a collaboration of nonprofits that provided important prevention services in neighborhoods with high rates of crime. Programming included youth development, school-based initiatives, and wraparound services. The Hope Collective was part of the Hope in Action Anti Violence Project.

Though individuals from Hope in Action still respond to shooting scenes, the dissolution of this organization led to a reduction in violence intervention services in Prince George's County.

Hope in Action

Hope in Action provided reentry services to youth and young adults reintegrating into the community. The organization offered a reintegration program with client-driven case planning and intensive life coaching three days per week. The program aimed to provide tailored support for clients ranging from first-time offenders to those with extensive criminal justice histories.³⁴

Hope in Action Community and School-Based Wraparound Services

Community and School-Based Wraparound Services was one of the strategies within the Hope in Action Anti Violence Project. This strategy included in-school peer support groups that taught conflict resolution and life skills for short- and long-term problem-solving. School-based efforts were supplemented by nonprofit partners who provide intensive mentorship to justice-involved youth. This strategy also engaged community members by helping people navigate root causes of violence, such as food insecurity, and providing case management services that lasted up to 12 months.³⁵

Hope in Action Violence Interrupters

The Peace Keepers Credible Messenger Program was another strategy within the Hope in Action Anti Violence Project. As part of this strategy, violence interrupters known as Peace Keepers identified individuals who are at high risk of violence and connected them to services and resources that allowed them to change their lives and communities. These violence interrupters were culturally competent credible messengers who met people where they are, including in schools, hospitals, and neighborhoods. Peace Keepers also provided regular mediation sessions for teens and young adults, and responded to shooting scenes to engage family members and friends, provide victim support, and identify individuals who needed conflict mediation or de-escalation.

³⁴ Hope in Action Anti Violence Program

³⁵ Ibid.



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

VIOLENCE REDUCTION PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

NICJR★
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Criminal Justice Reform

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