



# SAFER TOGETHER



05.01.2025-12.31.2030





## OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Neighbors,

I've committed to you that I will not rest or relent until Columbus is the safest big city in America. With the establishment of this community safety plan, I am pleased to take another step toward this goal together.

The plan before you is the result of a collaborative planning process led by the City of Columbus' Office of Violence Prevention and the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR). It's informed by national best practices and emerging innovation for improving public safety, but most importantly, it's rooted in the feedback of over 1,000 community members who represent the diversity of our city.

While this plan is intended to serve as a roadmap for the next five years, it's also an extension of hard work that is already underway. In 2022, I declared gun violence a public health crisis in Columbus and charged Columbus Public Health with devising strategies for reducing gun violence. In 2023, at the recommendation of the Columbus Board of Health, we invested in the creation of the Office of Violence Prevention under the leadership of Director Rena Shak.

Thanks to the early growth and success of the Office of Violence Prevention, the incredible work and dedication of the women and men of the Columbus Division of Police, and the dedication of numerous community partners, our city has continued to develop a comprehensive approach to violence reduction that balances prevention, intervention, and enforcement.

It's clear that this work is paying off. In 2024 alone, homicides dropped by 17%, felonious assaults were down by 25% and the Columbus Division of Police achieved a homicide solve rate of 76%. And 2025 is off to an even better start – in Q1, 12 homicides occurred in Columbus, a 38% reduction from 2024 and the lowest homicide rate in the city since at least 2013.

While this progress is to be commended, a single homicide is too many, and I've been Mayor long enough to know that trends can turn in an instant. Therefore, we must remain unyielding in our pursuit of a safer and better Columbus.

Every child, every family, every neighborhood deserves to feel safe. I am fully committed to supporting the Office of Violence Prevention as it leads the implementation of this plan, and I urge every department, office, agency, organization, business, and individual reading this letter to join us in the work.

I believe our best days are still ahead, as long as we continue this work together.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Andrew J. Ginther".

Andrew J. Ginther, Mayor

Dear Columbus,

I'm very excited to share the Safer Together 614 plan with our city!

The Columbus Office of Violence Prevention was established in 2023 to coordinate our city's violence prevention and intervention efforts. Since then, we've been hard at work engaging the community, City departments, Franklin County agencies, State and Federal partners, local nonprofits and community-based organizations (CBOs), and our hospital systems to better understand what drives violence in Columbus and how it impacts our neighbors, coworkers, families, and friends.

We've gathered City and community partners to build collaboration among those who are on the frontlines of violence prevention and intervention, and we've invested in a safer Columbus through highly successful community engagement events, community violence intervention convenings, grants to community partners, and gun buybacks. The OVP has also begun to build channels for communication and education with the community, to ensure our residents know what resources are available and how to access them.

But more importantly, we are constantly making ourselves available to the community to hear from YOU. We are dedicated to the motto that this work cannot be for the residents of Columbus if it is not also of the residents of Columbus. It has been a joy and an honor to see how the City and community have collectively shown up for this important and impactful work.

I'm so very thankful to Mayor Andrew J. Ginther for this opportunity, his passion and commitment to the residents of Columbus, his unwavering support and encouragement for the Office of Violence Prevention, and his contributions to the development of this plan. More broadly, I'm grateful to the many individuals whose input has shaped the plan before you.

Although the culmination of this planning process is an exciting moment for our city, the work has only just begun. I welcome you to join us in these efforts moving forward. We all have a role to play in making Columbus a safer place for everyone who lives, works, worships, and plays in our city. We can all be **safer together.**

Yours in service,



Rena Shak, J.D.  
Director, Columbus Office of Violence Prevention

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# Introduction

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Like many other cities across the nation, Columbus experienced a spike in gun violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. As noted in the Columbus Landscape Analysis<sup>1</sup>, in 2020, the city saw a nearly 56% increase in fatal shootings and a 132% increase in nonfatal shootings relative to 2019. Given the city's population of 907,901, this amounted to 20 gun-related homicides for every 100,000 residents. Since 2021, Columbus has averaged 152 fatal shooting incidents and 435 nonfatal shooting incidents annually. With violence at such high rates, it has become imperative that the city develop a comprehensive gun violence reduction strategy and build a cohesive community violence intervention (CVI) ecosystem.

In 2022, Columbus Mayor Andrew J. Ginther officially declared gun violence a public health crisis and charged Columbus Public Health, under the leadership of Dr. Mysheika Roberts, with devising strategies for reducing gun violence. Recognizing the fragmented nature of the city's existing violence reduction landscape, the Board of Health formally recommended the development of an Office of Violence Prevention that would coordinate efforts across various initiatives and organizations. As a result, the City of Columbus Office of Violence Prevention was established within the Mayor's Office in 2023.

The Safer Together 614 plan, which is informed by in-depth research and extensive community engagement, represents a crucial next step in the evolution of the city's violence reduction landscape.



<sup>1</sup> [Columbus Landscape Analysis](#)

## Community Conversations

From fall 2023 through spring 2024, the OVP facilitated a six-month community conversation series that sought to determine what the residents of Columbus expect from the Office of Violence Prevention, including what the OVP should prioritize in its strategies moving forward. Following a kickoff conversation attended by more than 200 residents and representatives from multiple City departments, the OVP team led 30 structured community conversations with a variety of stakeholder groups to gather information directly from the community.

In some cases, individuals were specifically invited to participate in a conversation, while other conversations were open to the public. The OVP team made a conscious effort to hear from a diverse representation of Columbus residents, considering race, gender, age, sexual orientation, occupation, and justice system involvement when organizing targeted community conversations. The team also intentionally engaged populations that are more likely to be justice involved, as indicated by local data. Additionally, OVP staff leveraged connections with CBOs to gain access to established groups, with a focus on populations disproportionately impacted by violence such as those facing housing insecurity, youth transitioning out of the foster care system, and the city's New American population.



This community conversation series culminated in a report offering four central recommendations,<sup>2</sup> all of which are at the core of the Safer Together 614 plan:

- 1.The OVP should create new and enhance current channels of communication to the public to spread awareness about its work, programming, and resources as well as how community organizations can obtain assistance.
- 2.The robust community engagement exhibited through this research should be continued and become more intentional. Other, less time-intensive methods of feedback solicitation should also be established.
- 3.The OVP should acknowledge and financially support community organizations that have already established programs and resources across the city. Although the City already funds various community organizations, it should create a more streamlined and intentional approach for violence reduction organizations to access funding.
- 4.The OVP should develop formal and informal partnerships with various entities across the city to provide resources not directly within the OVP’s mission. Partnerships can include advocacy, information sharing, and joint initiatives.

Subsequent community engagement efforts have also informed this plan. The OVP gathered input at 11 community events, displaying a board where community members added more than 500 notes sharing what a safe neighborhood means to them. The team also sought input from more than 100 young people through a Building Safe Community series that visited three youth organizations. The series engaged children as young as six and youth as old as 18 in an exercise where they created their own ideal neighborhood to spark conversations about violence and community safety. *(See Appendix I for a list of populations and groups engaged across all efforts named in this section)*

<sup>2</sup> Jenkins, Zaida L. (2024). Building the Future of Violence Prevention: An Analysis of Community Conversations for the Columbus Office of Violence Prevention [Capstone Paper, The Ohio State University John Glenn College of Public Affairs].

# CVI Ecosystem Workshop and Landscape Analysis Report

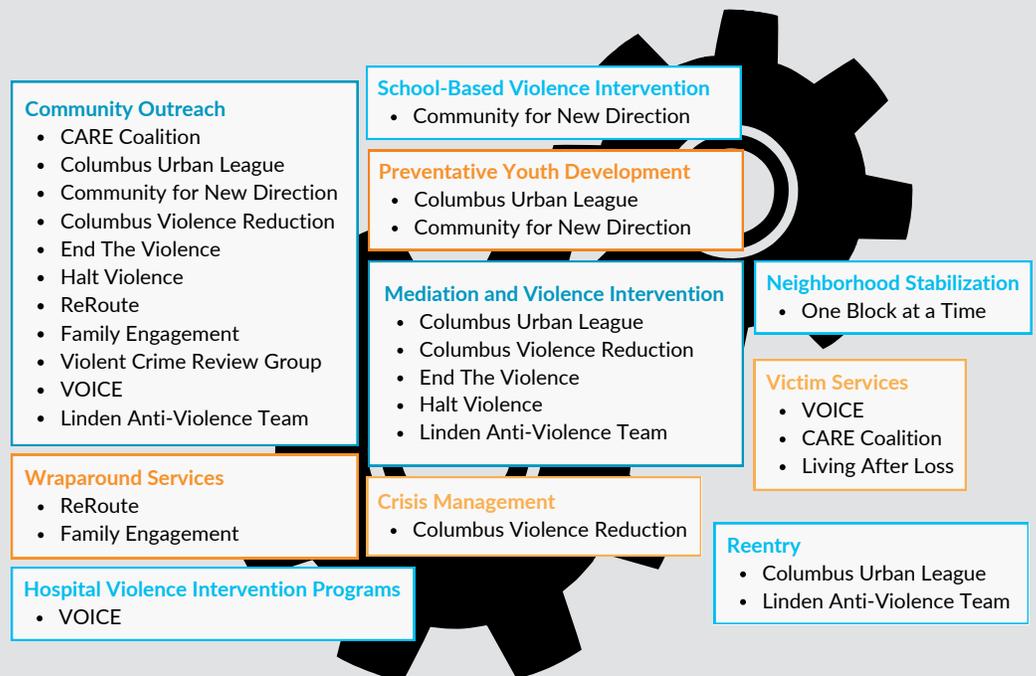
Through research into best practices, conversations with other similar cities across the US, and input from a wide range of community members, it became clear to the OVP that building a cohesive, citywide community violence intervention ecosystem is essential to significantly and sustainably reducing gun violence in Columbus.

To this end, in February 2024, the City of Columbus hosted a convening to begin building relationships among the city’s CVI providers, and the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform participated in the convening to begin developing a landscape analysis of the Columbus CVI ecosystem. The event engaged four CBOs and six City programs that are already carrying out a majority of the CVI work in Columbus. The event also highlighted six additional organizations that are actively engaged in local gun violence reduction initiatives.

Nine of the ten participating entities were subsequently interviewed by NICJR to delve deeper into their approaches. The NICJR team also interviewed key OVP staff and reviewed publicly available documentation to describe the organizations and efforts that compose the local CVI ecosystem. Additionally, through the convening, interviews, and document review, NICJR identified emerging entities whose contributions could enhance the CVI ecosystem. The resulting Columbus Landscape Analysis report identifies both strengths that can be leveraged and challenges that need to be addressed as Columbus moves forward in reducing violence.<sup>3</sup>



## Columbus, OH Existing CVI Ecosystem



## Strategic Planning and Community Feedback

Drawing upon information gathered through the community conversations and landscape analysis, in August 2024, the OVP team engaged in a strategic planning workshop facilitated by NICJR. Through this workshop, the team identified three proposed pillars and associated strategies to guide the city's violence reduction efforts over the next five years.

NICJR then developed a draft Strategic Plan outline that was first shared with the OVP team for feedback and then presented to the community via a Big Table Talk held on September 25, 2024. This community feedback session was attended by approximately 50 individuals representing the community, youth, CBOs, the local LGBTQ population, judicial system, and a variety of City agencies. OVP staff presented the proposed pillars and strategies and then facilitated breakout groups where participants discussed the strengths and gaps of the draft outline. This input allowed the OVP team to further refine the Plan to align to community needs, priorities, and resources. The draft Plan was subsequently shared with the City agencies and departments named throughout this document for additional input and feedback, to ensure it is reflective of the full breadth of existing and planned violence reduction efforts in Columbus.





# Pillars and Strategies

1

## Pillar One

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### Coordinating Safety Support Services

- Evolve Group Violence Intervention
- Develop Cohesive CVI Ecosystem
- Deliver Comprehensive Victim Services
- Empower Returning Citizens
- Enhance Youth Services
- Bolster Co-Response and Non-Police Response Models

2

## Pillar Two

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### Engaging in Advocacy and Program Innovation

- Conduct Routine Programmatic Evaluation
- Implement Grantmaking
- Provide Training and Technical Assistance
- Engage in Policy Development and Advocacy

3

## Pillar Three

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### Fostering Collaboration and Coordination

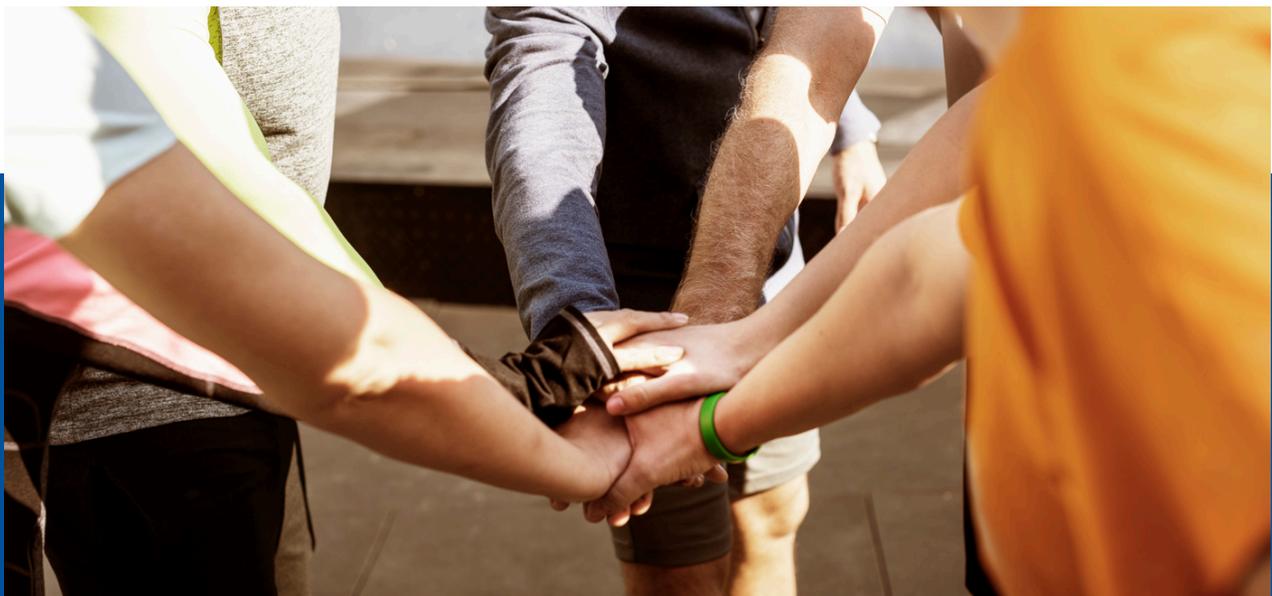
- Expand Community Relationships
- Engage Community Stakeholder Groups
- Coordinate Interagency Partnerships

## Collaborating with Community for Violence Reduction Efforts

Although this strategy spans the next five years, Mayor Andrew J. Ginther and his administration have already begun implementing key elements. The OVP is focused on reducing recidivism and all forms of violence in partnership with residents; the City; and institutions such as schools, courts, businesses, and faith groups. As noted above, the OVP has begun to coordinate local violence reduction efforts by convening City departments and CBOs to provide feedback on the Office's work and develop a comprehensive CVI ecosystem.

In collaboration with the community, City departments, and CBOs, the OVP will (1) strengthen and grow its community engagement and services, including by expanding its violence intervention and prevention initiatives to cover all forms of violence; (2) build its capacity to provide funding, training, and technical assistance to CBOs, as well as to engage in policy and advocacy work; and (3) deepen collaboration and coordination with stakeholders to solicit more feedback and generate buy-in from the community and other City agencies to approach public safety as a collective responsibility.

Through successful implementation of this plan, the OVP will strive to achieve all goals under each pillar by January 30, 2030. Progress toward goals will be measured through key performance indicators (KPIs) set by the OVP. Given the newness of this work, progress toward many of the KPIs will be assessed relative to baseline measures established in the first calendar year of Strategic Plan implementation. **Ultimately, the City's primary goal is an annual 10% reduction in homicides and nonfatal shootings.**



# Columbus Office of Violence Prevention

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## Mission Statement

The Columbus Office of Violence Prevention empowers residents to embrace safety and well-being by strategically reducing violence through a collaborative, community-driven, public health approach.

## Guiding Principles

### Equity

Every life matters, and everyone deserves to live in a safe neighborhood.



### Foundation

Significant and sustainable violence reduction is only possible when systemic issues driving violence are addressed.



### Community

The community comes first, always. We empower those who are working toward community solutions to community violence. We proactively communicate our intentions and plans, and our work is continuously shaped by community input.



### Investment

Proper distribution of resources is necessary for violence reduction initiatives to provide impactful and measurable results.



### Collaboration

Everyone has a role to play in creating public safety. We create significant, lasting change when we work together.



### Evidence

Our work is informed by data and best practices, and we continuously use data and evaluation to strengthen our efforts.





# Pillar 1: Coordinating Safety Support Services

Across numerous conversations, the Columbus community emphasized the need to interrupt cycles of community violence while addressing its root causes. By growing the CVI ecosystem, clarifying services, and increasing redundancies across providers, Columbus will ensure that youth and their families, individuals at the highest risk of engaging in or being a victim of violence, and returning citizens can choose a positive path away from violence. Equally important, this system of care will ensure that all individuals impacted by violence can find healing and hope.

## KPIs

- Increase the number of highest-risk individuals engaged by the CVI ecosystem by 5% annually
- Increase the number of intervention staff across CVI ecosystem organizations by 10% annually
- Increase the number of City-funded violence reduction organizations with certification training and continuous learning for staff by 10% annually
- Increase the number of community events supported by the OVP by 10% annually

# Pillar 1: Strategies

## 1.1 Evolve Group Violence Intervention

Columbus has already made progress in intervening with the small number of people who are actively involved in group violence, namely by establishing a Group Violence Intervention model and the Columbus Violence Reduction (CVR) program.



### Group Violence Intervention

In the Columbus Group Violence Intervention model, the Columbus Division of Police (CPD) holds twice-monthly Shooting Reviews that inform its response to gun violence. CVR attends these meetings and uses information from them to inform the geographic focus of its activities. CPD also shares shooting data with community partners to inform their targeting of resources.

High-level information from Shooting Reviews is shared with the City's Violent Crime Review Group, where representatives from CPD, Department of Public Safety, Columbus Public Health, OVP, Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, Columbus Department of Neighborhoods, and Department of Building and Zoning Services discuss crime trends, patterns, and statistics and plan whole-of-government responses to violent crime.

Individuals identified by CPD as being at very high risk for violence involvement are referred to either a Call-In or a Custom Notification, where representatives from CPD; CVR; OVP; and a variety of government, faith, and community groups come together to communicate that risk, offer services and supports, and warn of the consequences of continued violence involvement.

Building upon this foundation, the OVP will continue to evolve Columbus's approach to Group Violence Intervention. The recent move to house CVR within the OVP was an important step in this evolution. Moving forward, the OVP will continue to work with CVR to clearly define its role in the CVI ecosystem, foster collaboration among the CVR and OVP teams, and increase CVR coordination with other agencies and organizations.

Intensive life coaching from credible messengers is a crucial component of any CVI ecosystem, and it is currently a gap in the Columbus CVI ecosystem. Credible messengers are people who are from impacted communities, who have similar lived experiences as the people they serve, and/or who have lived experience of violence. The OVP will further evolve group violence intervention in Columbus through the introduction of intensive life coaching for individuals at very high risk of becoming perpetrators or victims of gun violence. In addition to establishing a life coaching program within the OVP via CVR, the Office will support CBOs as they stand up their own credible messenger life coaching programs. This will likely include providing training and technical assistance, and it may also include offering financial support.

Finally, the OVP, with support from the Ohio State University Center for Health Outcomes and Policy Evaluation Studies, has begun to work toward establishing robust data collection and data sharing norms across the CVI ecosystem. This ongoing work includes defining specific outputs and outcomes to be tracked by all entities within the ecosystem and establishing a data system for that reporting. It also includes providing training and technical assistance to ensure all entities understand how to collect and report data as well as how to use data to drive their own decision making. With access to reliable and thorough data, the City will be equipped to make data-driven decisions related to violence reduction programming and investments.

## **1.2 Develop Cohesive CVI Ecosystem**

Columbus will continue to build the CVI ecosystem to address root causes of violence. This includes providing access to wraparound supports such as housing, transportation, substance use disorder treatment, and workforce development. It also includes access to counseling, cognitive behavioral therapy, and other social-emotional supports to navigate everyday challenges. Key to this work will be collaboration and coordination with and among City departments and CBOs.

Equally important, the OVP will facilitate provider access to certification training, which will align providers with best practices and position them to operate at the highest level of effectiveness. The OVP will also work to clearly define service types so all providers understand how they fit within the ecosystem. The Office will further support ecosystem development by building redundancy in service provision, drawing in additional providers over time whose efforts align with those of existing ecosystem entities so the work can continue seamlessly if community needs outstrip an individual provider's capacity.

Relatedly, the OVP will support increased coordination among providers. This includes establishing referral processes for when a provider is at capacity or seeking to make a warm handoff for services outside their specialization. The development of a community violence emergency preparedness plan will support this coordination, defining a clear course of action so all entities within the ecosystem can work together seamlessly when a shooting takes place. In developing this plan, the OVP will draw upon Columbus Public Health's expertise in other forms of emergency preparedness planning.

### **1.3 Deliver Comprehensive Victim Services**

Columbus will strengthen and expand victim services to ensure all individuals impacted by violence have access to the resources and support needed to work toward healing. This will first include broadening the ecosystem's definition of "victim" to include not only those who are directly and indirectly impacted by gun violence but also those impacted by domestic violence (DV), including intimate partner violence. This is especially important given that, in 2024, 18% of all homicides in Columbus were related to intimate partner violence.

The OVP has already established a new position, Domestic Violence and Education Prevention Coordinator, that will focus on DV. The Office will support new DV efforts that align with existing local initiatives, including abuser intervention programming and specific resources for people who are homeless as a result of abuse. The OVP will also assess existing venues for reviewing fatalities such as the Violent Crime Review Group, the Columbus Public Health Child Fatality Review meetings, and the county-level Fatality Review Group for DV cases to determine whether there is need for a city-level Fatality Review Group specifically focused on DV.

### **OVP Domestic Violence Efforts**

The OVP has created a three-pronged approach to DV: research, prevention/education, and intervention.

The OVP is hiring an academic researcher to analyze all 2024 and first quarter 2025 DV homicide data. This researcher will also analyze as many DV cases as possible. Through this research, the OVP aims understand the demographics of perpetrators and victims, localities most affected, and any other context helpful to targeting resources.

The OVP is also contracting with three expert entities to support facilitation of, at minimum, 25 community conversations with affected populations over a 12-month period. Those experts are Diana Williams, a DV survivor from the Ohio Women Against Domestic Violence; Dana Brock, a former DV perpetrator and reformed citizen from The Lives Worth Saving Foundation; and Glenn Harris, an expert from the Ohio Domestic Violence Network who focuses on healthy relationships, toxic masculinity, etc.

The OVP continues to invest in Columbus' only Domestic Violence shelter, CHOICES, as well as in expanding the Advocacy Crisis Team (ACT-DV) pilot program operated by CPD and the Center for Family Safety and Healing (see 1.6 for details). Additionally, the OVP continues to invest in, and is helping to develop, the Batterer's Intervention Program that is a partnership between Franklin County, the Franklin County Municipal Court, and the OVP.

The Columbus Recreation and Parks Department Violence Outreach Intervention Community Engagement (VOICE) program will continue to play a key role in the City's victim services. VOICE supports victims of violent crime with resources to aid in recovery and prevent reinjury and incarceration, including engaging victims in cognitive behavioral therapy to address barriers and develop self-reliance.

The Columbus Division of Police's numerous DV efforts will also continue to play a key role. This includes the work of CPD's Victim Liaison that guides victims, witnesses, and homicide victims' next of kin through the initial legal process and connects them to resources. Other notable CPD efforts include but are not limited to a school-based teen dating violence program, multi-lingual community education campaigns, and ACT-DV (see 1.6 for details).

Across all victim populations, strengthening services will include ensuring access to health resources such as hospital care and grief counseling (which Columbus Public Health makes available to the community) as well as creating both physically and emotionally safe spaces, particularly when the community is grieving as a result of gun violence.

## **1.4 Empower Returning Citizens**

Columbus will strengthen and expand employment services and supports that empower individuals who are returning from incarceration. Building upon existing programming in the Ohio Reformatory for Women, this will include expanding direct hire programs to all Ohio Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation institutions.

Empowering returning citizens will also include advocating for the evolution of hiring practices and adopting and expanding other employment programming. This includes the OVP's continued partnership with the Central Ohio Restored Citizens Collaborative to address the challenges of reentry while fostering authentic engagement with impacted individuals and communities. It also includes strengthening a partnership between the Columbus City Council, the Department of Neighborhoods, and the Department of Public Service that places returning citizens in a Center for Employment Opportunities job training program. This program focuses on community cleanup, with the potential for permanent employment within the Department of Public Service following program completion.

## 1.5 Enhance Youth Services

Columbus is home to 306,106 youth under the age of 24, including 230,742 young people under the age of 18. In Columbus, there are approximately 11,200–16,900 opportunity youth (under the age of 24) who are neither employed nor in school.

Columbus will collaboratively work to enhance programming for high-risk youth and their families, with a focus on holistically meeting their needs through wraparound services and supports. The City and its partners will work to meet all young people where they are by supporting the creation of safe spaces for them and expanding youth violence prevention efforts and school-based CVI programming.

One such key effort is the Columbus Middle School After School Collaborative. Recognizing middle school as a key developmental stage for violence prevention, this data-driven partnership between Mayor Andrew J. Ginther and the Columbus City Schools Superintendent funds afterschool programming on middle school campuses, with an emphasis on building youth resilience. The Collaborative gathers funded providers monthly to discuss challenges and needs, participate in trainings, and build collaboration and coordination. The Collaborative also emphasizes data collection and analysis as means of telling the story and understanding the impact of its work. It has established data infrastructure to this end that can be useful to other youth prevention efforts.

More broadly, Columbus will work to strengthen and more effectively coordinate the many programs and resources available to youth. For example, the Recreation and Parks Department, Department of Health, CPD, and the City Attorney’s Office partner in ReRoute, a program aimed at building resiliency and empowering youth, families, and communities through comprehensive wraparound support. The Recreation and Parks Department VOICE program (see 1.3) serves victims as young as six, and its Applying Purpose and Passion to Service program provides youth (including ReRoute participants) with paid work experience within City departments and local businesses. The Department of Neighborhoods Commission on Black Girls engages young people in restorative work. The CPD Beyond Enforcement program works with numerous City and community partners to help high-risk youth understand the impact of gun violence on their families and communities, and the CPD Teens and Police Service program establishes connections between law enforcement and middle and high school students while teaching important life skills.

The City also funds a variety of community-based summer programs that take place in or serve youth who reside in “Opportunity Neighborhoods” through its Summer Youth Grants, which are administered by multiple City departments. Columbus will work to ensure that OVP-administered grants are awarded to projects that intentionally focus on violence reduction.

Additionally, Columbus will formally implement safe passage, building upon the success of pilot efforts at the close of the 2023–2024 school year.

## Safe Passage

Toward the end of the 2023–2024 school year, the City was made aware of the threat of violent conflicts during dismissal at South High School. A number of City and community partners mobilized in response, including the OVP, Department of Neighborhoods, Columbus Urban League, End the Violence, and Southside businesses and community members. These partners collaborated to gather information and then develop and implement a Safe Passage pilot program that ensured students were able to travel safely from South High School to their next location. Thanks to partners' visible presence on the ground, there were no conflicts in the closing days of the school year. The OVP remains actively engaged with this school and aims to recreate this partnership for future school years.



Finally, the OVP, CPD, and Franklin County Court of Common Pleas Division of Domestic Relations and Juvenile Division will work together to fully integrate youth violence prevention and intervention services into the juvenile justice system. This will include collaborating closely to build more robust youth reentry services, caregiver supports, youth programming, and more in juvenile facilities.

## 1.6 Bolster Co-Response and Non-Police Response Models

Columbus has made significant progress in establishing response models that meet the needs of individuals experiencing mental health crises, substance use disorder, and other quality-of-life issues that may not be best addressed through traditional police response but can often impact public safety. Moving forward, the City will continue to strengthen these efforts and improve coordination among them.

The Right Response Unit is a collaboration between Columbus Public Health, CPD, Columbus Division of Fire, and the Department of Public Safety. Embedded within the Emergency Communications Center, this Unit triages mental health-related calls, moving them away from a traditional police response to a Community Crisis Counselor who assesses callers' needs and connects them to mental health and addiction treatment systems, as opposed to the criminal justice system.

If it is immediately apparent that a call for service involves someone in crisis, the Emergency Communications Center dispatches Mobile Crisis Response (MCR). Likewise, if patrol responds to a call for service and encounters someone in a mental health crisis, they frequently request MCR. MCR pairs specially trained CPD officers and Columbus Public Health clinicians to de-escalate and stabilize crisis situations, assess needs, and connect or transport patients to appropriate resources.

The Specialized Program Assessing Resource Connectivity is a multi-agency Emergency Medical Service outreach team that assists people identified through 911 calls and community referrals with their health and/or social service needs. The program is operated through a partnership between Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging and the Columbus Division of Fire.

CPD is also currently piloting the Advocacy Crisis Team (ACT-DV), a co-responder model in which an advocate from the Center for Family Safety and Healing responds directly to the scene of a DV incident to provide a trauma-focused, on-scene advocacy response for domestic violence survivors. CPD will expand this pilot to additional locations over time.

Beyond these immediate responses, the Rapid Response Emergency and Addiction Crisis Team provides vital follow-up and linkage to treatment and resources for individuals who suffer from alcohol and substance use disorder. Additionally, the new Crisis Center operated by the Alcohol, Drug, and Mental Health Board of Franklin County will provide urgent care for people in mental health or addiction-related crises, serving as an important resource for response teams encountering individuals in need of transport to immediate care.



## Pillar 2: Engaging in Advocacy and Program Innovation

In establishing an Office of Violence Prevention, the City has taken a momentous step toward ensuring all Columbus residents are empowered to embrace safety and well-being. Moving forward, the OVP will play a central role in achieving this vision by coordinating, providing funding for, and evaluating the city's community violence intervention ecosystem; expanding the training and technical assistance available to those working toward public safety; and advocating for local, state, and federal violence reduction policies.

### KPIs

- Conduct programmatic evaluations of OVP-funded CBOs every two years
- Launch a community violence reduction grant process
- Provide at least one annual CVI education opportunity to violence reduction organizations

## **Pillar 2: Strategies**

### **2.1 Conduct Routine Programmatic Evaluation**

Programmatic evaluation supports data-driven improvements so the ecosystem can better serve those who are impacted by violence. Evaluation can also provide compelling evidence of the effectiveness of violence reduction efforts, which is crucial for long-term sustainability.

To this end, the OVP will establish routine evaluation of the CVI ecosystem. Building upon existing work with Ohio State University (see 1.1), this will include identifying an external research partner, establishing data-sharing agreements with stakeholders and/or a data-sharing memorandum of understanding, and securing funding for costs associated with evaluation.

### **2.2 Implement Grantmaking**

The OVP will establish a formal grantmaking process to support CBOs engaged in violence reduction work. Initial steps will include identifying a fiscal intermediary and assessing the ecosystem's current funding landscape to determine gaps. The OVP will also work to secure funding for redistribution from a mixture of public and private sources.

Once this initial work is complete, the OVP will develop and implement a formal request for proposals (RFP) process that aligns to grantmaking best practices and reduces barriers to CBOs effectively applying for and administering grant funding.

### **2.3 Provide Training and Technical Assistance**

The OVP will partner with other City and County agencies and departments to enhance and expand the training and technical assistance available to providers within the CVI ecosystem. The Office will work to ensure that training and technical assistance are responsive to emerging challenges, aligned to the City's violence reduction strategies, and tailored to providers' needs.

The OVP will conduct skills assessments and solicit provider input to establish a baseline understanding of providers' strengths, gaps, and challenges. The OVP will use this information to plan training and technical assistance offerings, which will be delivered both by OVP staff and by contracted entities with relevant expertise. The Department of Neighborhoods' pilot Leadership Empowered Nonprofit Training Series may serve as a model for pieces of this work.

In addition to identified needs, the OVP will prioritize engaging all ecosystem partners in trauma-informed training so all services are delivered in a manner that supports healing and prevents retraumatization. Notably, Columbus Public Health has existing trainings in deescalation, trauma-informed care, and vicarious trauma that can be leveraged to this end. The OVP will also provide training and technical assistance that equips and encourages providers to intentionally hire credible messengers.

## 2.4 Engage in Policy Development and Advocacy

In addition to strengthening and expanding direct CVI services, the OVP will establish a focus area to address systemic causes of violence at the policy level. Through this focus area, the Office will advocate for local, state, and federal violence reduction and firearm safety policies on behalf of the Mayor's Office.





## **Pillar 3: Fostering Collaboration and Coordination**

While there are a number of agencies, organizations, and resources dedicated to reducing violence in Columbus, a lack of coordination and collaboration has limited the effectiveness of these efforts, and community members are often unaware of the help that is available.

The Office of Violence Prevention will actively work to remove silos among the multitude of partners who are key to this work. This includes fostering a whole-of-government approach and coordinating interdepartmental partnerships, ensuring that every City department and office understands its responsibility to contribute to public safety. It also includes strengthening relationships with community stakeholder groups such as local businesses and philanthropic organizations. Across all partners, the OVP will work to increase understanding of the many intersections within this work.

The OVP will also work to increase community awareness through a variety of communications channels as well as continue to create opportunities for community input that can shape the city's violence reduction efforts.

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### **KPIs**

- At least 1 data sharing agreement created and executed with an OVP partner annually
- Advisory Board created that includes targeted stakeholder groups

## Pillar 3: Strategies

### 3.1 Expand Community Relationships

The OVP will educate the community on what community violence intervention is, and it will work to increase community awareness of local violence reduction efforts. The Office has already made important progress in establishing regular communications via the OVP website and social media. Moving forward, the OVP will continue to provide consistent and high-quality engagement through both channels. The Office will also establish a newsletter that will highlight activities and outcomes from the OVP and other partners in the CVI ecosystem.

#### 2025 Safer Together education campaign

The OVP's 2025 Safer Together campaign aims to build community knowledge about specific risk factors for violence while disrupting detrimental social norms and preconceived notions that perpetuate violence. The campaign also includes specific messaging related to domestic violence. The Safer Together campaign aims to reach all residents of the City of Columbus through social media, community conversations, and other effective means that will allow the message to be heard.



The OVP will also create a comprehensive directory of providers focused on violence prevention and intervention, leveraging and building upon existing resource directories held by the OVP, Public Health, Recreation and Parks, Division of Police, and other relevant City entities. This resource will classify service type(s), target population(s), and target geographic area(s) and include contact information for each provider. The directory will be widely distributed via ecosystem partners, the OVP website and social media accounts, and other creative channels to increase community awareness of resources available and how to access them.

Equally important, the OVP will create opportunities for community members to provide authentic feedback that will inform service planning and the improvement of existing efforts. The Office will prioritize collaborative approaches to data collection, and it will share findings with community stakeholders. This will include establishing regular community dialogues to gather input on needs and feedback on current and upcoming CVI efforts. These dialogues will be thoughtfully planned with attention to accessibility (e.g., location, time of day, frequency, and availability of language interpretation) and timing relative to planned OVP and ecosystem activities. The Office will also leverage other methods such as surveys to engage community members who may be unable or unwilling to attend community meetings.

The OVP will engage in targeted outreach to specific populations that may be disproportionately or uniquely impacted by violence and underrepresented in community conversations, such as the New American and LGBTQ communities. The Office will also target outreach to Violent Crime Review Group zones.

### **3.2 Engage Community Stakeholder Groups**

The OVP will intentionally cultivate new and strengthen existing relationships with community stakeholder groups. This will include building collaborative relationships with local businesses and philanthropic entities who can support public safety efforts. It will also include creating an Advisory Board to more deeply engage specific community stakeholder groups.

The OVP will also leverage the grantmaking process (see 2.2) to incentivize collaboration among CBOs, the OVP, and other City departments and offices. Additionally, building upon the directory described above (see 3.1), the OVP will develop an internal provider directory that will document CBOs' interactions with the OVP, to track relationships and help identify future opportunities for collaboration and coordination.

CPD will continue to grow and strengthen the Chief's Citizen Advisory Panel to ensure the community is engaged and informed. In the future, CPD will introduce Community Compstat to these meetings, which will include sharing updates on cases when possible, honoring community partners with awards, providing relevant crime data, and breaking bread to encourage relationship building between CPD and the community.

Relatedly, the City Council is creating a New American Commission that will serve as a venue for addressing relations between CPD and the New American community, among other things.

### 3.3 Coordinate Interagency Partnerships

The OVP will develop and strengthen interagency partnerships among the full range of city and county agencies whose work intersects with public safety. While this does include key partners such as schools, detention facilities, courts, and hospitals, the OVP will also work to generate buy-in for the principle that every agency has a responsibility to contribute to public safety. For example, “clean and green” efforts such as Keep Columbus Beautiful—which can play an important role in building community cohesion and reducing violence—could be fruitfully coordinated with the work of the OVP.

The OVP will also work to ensure that all agencies are aware of each other’s resources and how to connect community members to them. For example, the Division of Fire distributes gun locks, and Public Health distributes medication and gun lock boxes, operates vending machines that dispense Narcan and other resources, and maintains a needle exchange program—all of which play an important role in supporting safety and reducing violence.

As a first step, the OVP will conduct an assessment to identify gaps, barriers, and needs that currently hinder interagency partnerships. This assessment will inform the OVP’s partnership building work moving forward, which will include but not be limited to developing and implementing a centralized data reporting system (see 1.1) and establishing a taskforce that will allow for a regular cadence of touchpoints with partner agencies. The Violent Crime Review Group (see 1.1) will also continue to serve as an important vehicle for collaboration on violence reduction efforts.

# Strategic Plan Timeline: 2025

The following timeline maps out the first partial year of plan implementation, through the end of 2025. For the remaining calendar years covered by this plan, the timeline will be updated annually by the Office of Violence Prevention.

PILLAR STRATEGIES	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	
Roll out Domestic Violence Three-Pronged Approach	★								
Facilitate Monthly CVI Ecosystem Meetings	★								
Create a Centralized Resource Hub for Columbus Violence Reduction Team Participants	—		★						
Evaluate Group Violence Reduction Strategy for Expansion Readiness		—		★					
Support Citywide In-Person Reentry Service Provision				—				★	
Implement Scene Response Protocols						—		★	
Finalize OSU Research on CVI Ecosystem Data Collection							★		
Begin Development of Consistent Evaluation Tooling for Violence Reduction Efforts							—		★
Pilot Uniform Data Collection Across CVI Ecosystem				—		★			
Deploy Community-Based Grantmaking Opportunities	—							★	
Provide Training and Technical Assistance to CVI Ecosystem Partners	—							★	
Provide Violence Reduction Policy Recommendations, Advocacy, and Support	—							★	
Launch Safer Together Education Campaign		★							
Create and Maintain Comprehensive Directory of Violence Reduction Providers	★								
Launch Courageous Community Conversations on Domestic Violence	★								

# Appendices:

## List of Selected Community Engagement Activities

### Community Conversations

Community Group	Population(s) Represented	Date
Public Meeting	Leadership and residents of Columbus, OH	September 19, 2023
Ohio State University Social Work Class	Masters-level social work students in juvenile justice class	September 26, 2023
National Association of Social Workers, Ohio Chapter and Columbus Association of Black Social Workers (joint community conversation)	Professional social workers within Columbus, OH, interested in solutions to community violence	October 12, 2023
ALL That Summer Program	African American young adults (middle school and high school-aged) and their parents (separate sessions)	October 27, 2023
Advocate for Domestic Violence	Survivors of domestic violence	January 12, 2024
Compassion Outreach Ministries of Ohio Men's Group	Unhoused men on the west end of Columbus, OH	January 21, 2024
Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction Group	Incarcerated men at Pickaway Correctional Institution, sentenced from or returning to Franklin County, OH	January 23, 2024
All Nations Church MENTality	African American males of all ages impacted by mental health	February 7, 2024
National Pan-Hellenic Council Youth Program	College-bound young scholars from median income households	February 8, 2024
Independence High School Girls	Multicultural group of young girls involved in school leadership	February 8, 2024
Somali Community North Side	New American Somali population	February 9, 2024
Basecamp Recovery	Individuals living with addiction	February 12, 2024
Linden STEM Middle School Students	Middle school students impacted by violence	February 13, 2024

Community Group	Population(s) Represented	Date
Ohio State University Off Campus and Commuter Services	Faculty focused on university commuter / off-campus students	February 14, 2024
Male Behavioral Health at New Birth Church	African American males of all ages impacted by mental health	February 15, 2024
Guadalupe Youth Summit	Hispanic Youth (majority Catholic)	February 22, 2024
Far West Side Area Commission	City leadership	February 27, 2024
Linden Business Community	Small business owners	February 28, 2024
Independence High Schools Boys	Multicultural group of young boys involved in school leadership	February 29, 2024
Elevate Northland	Northland business community	February 29, 2024
James A. Karnes Corrections Center Inmates	Incarcerated men awaiting trial for violent crimes	March 1, 2024
STAR House	At-risk, unhoused young individuals aged out of the foster care system and living with mental health issues	March 4, 2024
Wedgewood Middle School Teachers	Teachers in school with high-risk students and issues with violence and crime	March 4, 2024
Congolese Community Religious Leaders	New American religious population	March 9, 2024
Juvenile Community Enrichment Services	Juvenile probationers	March 11, 2024
Adult Parole Authority	Adults convicted of felonies in Columbus, OH	March 12, 2024
Franklin Nonprofit Collaborative at Gladden House	Nonprofit leadership on the west side of Columbus, OH	March 14, 2024

# Safe Neighborhood Activity

Community Group	Population(s) Represented	Date
Spring Break Barnett Community Center	Eastside Columbus residents (youth and adults)	March 29, 2024
Spring Break Beatty Community Center	Near Eastside Columbus residents (youth and adults)	April 1, 2024
Spring Break Barack Community Center	Southside Columbus residents (youth and adults)	April 3, 2024
Spring Break Douglas Community Center	South Linden Columbus residents (youth and adults)	April 4, 2024
Spring Break Glenwood Rec Center	Columbus residents (youth and adults)	April 5, 2024
Somali Community Resource Fair	New American population	April 20, 2024
Wellness day in the community for Trauma-Informed Awareness Week	North Linden residents	May 13, 2024
Rise Up Cbus	Eastside Columbus residents	June 6, 2024
Cap City Driving Park	Southside Columbus residents	June 8, 2024
Cap City Barnett Rec Center	Eastside Columbus residents	June 22, 2024
We Are Linden	Linden youth disproportionately impacted by violence	July 22, 2024
Restored Citizen Summit	Restored citizens and professionals (justice-involved and those working with them)	August 15, 2024

# Building Safe Community Series

Community Group	Population(s) Represented	Date
Faith Missionary Baptist Church Reaching Higher Heights	Southside youth (approximately 7-15 years old)	July 15, 2024
We Are Linden	Northside youth (approximately 10-18 years old)	July 22, 2024
Woodland YMCA	Youth with special needs (multicultural and foster youth in group)	August 7, 2024



# Glossary

**CBO** - Community-based organization

**CPD** - Columbus Division of Police

**CVI** - Community violence intervention

**CVR** - Columbus Violence Reduction

**DV** - Domestic violence

**IPV** - Intimate partner violence

**KPI** - Key performance indicator

**MCR** - Mobile Crisis Response

**NICJR** - National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform

**OVP** - Office of Violence Prevention

**RFP** - Request for proposals





# SAFER TOGETHER 614