



# NATIONAL NETWORK FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES

## NOTES FROM THE FIELD Ohio Community Initiative to Reduce Violence

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By Lisa Contos Shoaf<sup>1</sup>

Ohio, alongside California, New York and North Carolina, is one of three states that are working from the state level to replicate the National Network's group violence reduction and/or drug market intervention strategies in multiple sites. Violent crime is a great source of concern for both officials and residents in Ohio, as it is in many states across the country. Homicides in particular have a lasting impact not only on individuals and families, but also on neighborhoods, schools, businesses, and religious communities.

The Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS), as the lead criminal justice planning agency in Ohio, sought out the expertise of criminal justice researchers to identify strategies shown to reduce violent crime. OCJS' goal was to offer assistance to cities that wanted to implement proven focused deterrence strategies to affect violent crime—in particular, gang and group-related violent crime.<sup>2</sup> OCJS turned to Professor David Kennedy at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to learn more about the focused deterrence strategy he developed in Boston in the mid-1990s.

### **Development of the Ohio Community Initiative to Reduce Violence**

OCJS took a strong interest in Professor Kennedy's work in Boston and in other cities. In January 2007, OCJS invited him to Ohio to speak with chiefs of police from several of Ohio's urban cities, including Cincinnati's Chief Streicher, who was already in the initial stages of discussion with Professor Kennedy about what was to become the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence, or CIRV (pronounced "serve").

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this paper, the term "groups" will be used as a general term to indicate individuals within more formal, structured gangs as well as those within less formal, loosely structured groups.

OCJS closely followed the work being done in Cincinnati, watching and documenting the processes involved in implementing the strategy. OCJS provided funding to Dr. Robin Engel of the University of Cincinnati to evaluate the CIRV initiative. OCJS also began discussions with Professor Kennedy and the CIRV team about ways in which this strategy could be implemented on a larger scale rather than city-by-city. This laid the groundwork for what was to become the Ohio Community Initiative to Reduce Violence.

### **The Ohio Community Initiative to Reduce Violence**

The Ohio Community Initiative to Reduce Violence, or OCIRV, brings together local, state, and federal partners throughout Ohio in a common effort to reduce gang-related violent crime. In line with the OCIRV goal of providing aid to cities interested in implementing this violence reduction strategy, OCJS funded the CIRV team (Cincinnati) and Professor Kennedy to offer training and technical assistance to those cities willing to engage in the initiative. In the beginning, various forms of training and technical assistance were provided to several cities that initially showed interest. In addition to Cincinnati, two cities—Canton and Dayton—are currently implementing versions of the strategy tailored to their local needs. Cleveland is implementing a juvenile strategy incorporating elements of focused deterrence. The city of Toledo had made significant progress toward implementation of the strategy, but had to delay its execution due to police layoffs. They plan to renew their efforts in the fall of 2011.

Since 2008, the following training and technical assistance has been offered to interested cities free of charge through OCIRV:

- OCJS, along with the Northern Ohio Violent Crime Consortium, co-hosted a two-day intensive training in April 2008. The training, which was conducted by the University of Cincinnati researchers, members of the CIRV team, and Professor Kennedy, provided an in-depth look at each component making up the CIRV structure, offered a significant amount of time for questions and answers, and allowed for breakout planning sessions. Attendees included police chiefs and officers, representatives from the Mayor's office, city and county prosecutors, probation and parole, service providers, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), the U.S. Attorney's Office, and local universities. Approximately 100 individuals attended.
- The University of Cincinnati and members of the CIRV team have provided trainings across Ohio on topics of interest to those cities implementing the strategy, such as data collection and evaluation

and the provision of services. They have also created a Best Practices manual to assist cities in implementation.

- Technical assistance has been provided by the University of Cincinnati, members of the CIRV team, and OCJS to those cities conducting a preliminary incident review (to identify the extent to which certain crimes are gang-related) and intelligence gathering on gangs and individuals within gangs. This is an intense two days of data collection, with additional follow-up generally necessary. University of Cincinnati researchers generate a report and a spreadsheet based on the data collected, which is provided to the Chief of Police for review and is used extensively when developing the strategy. Five cities took advantage of these services.
- Technical assistance has been provided by the CIRV team, OCJS, and Professor Kennedy for call-ins and call-in rehearsals.
- Program manager meetings and conference calls have been hosted on a periodic basis to discuss issues as they arise for participating cities.
- OCIRV cities implementing the strategy serve as learning sites for other interested cities. They allow people to observe call-ins and data gathering sessions (i.e., incident review, intelligence gathering), as well as team meetings.
- OCJS and the Community Initiative to Reduce Gun Violence (Dayton/Montgomery County) co-hosted a September 2010 conference titled *Ohio Community Initiative to Reduce Violence: Strategic Responses to Gun and Drug Crime* to provide further exposure for the focused deterrence strategy since being implemented in three cities (Cincinnati, Dayton, and Canton). This conference also introduced attendees to the High Point Drug Market Intervention strategy. The conference was attended by nearly 200 people.
- OCIRV is in the process of working with University of Cincinnati researchers to create a website containing information, resources, data, and training opportunities available to the interested persons.

### **Status of OCIRV Cities**

#### The Canton Community Initiative to Reduce Violence

Canton took time to evaluate its city's needs before implementing CIRV. After attending the CIRV workshop in April 2008, it held additional meetings with OCJS staff and with Professor Kennedy.

The chief hired as his program manager a former captain in the Canton Police Department who was actively involved in community policing. Canton held its first call-in in April 2010. In 2010, the city has had two homicides, neither of which were group-member involved. The city held its second call-in in December. In February 2011, the Canton CIRV team underwent transition as it hired a new program manager, a well-known and active pastor in the community. OCJS has been providing training and technical assistance as the pastor works to familiarize himself with the strategy. The city hopes to hold its third call-in during the summer of 2011.

#### The Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence

Cincinnati's CIRV initiative has served as a model program for the state, and has been highlighted by NNSC as a model nationwide as well. A two-year evaluation of the CIRV initiative revealed that since the strategy was fully implemented in July 2007, the city has seen a statistically significant 34.8% reduction in homicides as well as a statistically significant 11.3% reduction in shootings. CIRV has received numerous awards for their achievements, including the 2008 National Criminal Justice Association Outstanding Criminal Justice Program Award, the 2008 International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) / Motorola Webber Seavey Excellence in Law Enforcement Award, and the 2009 International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) / West Excellence in Criminal Investigations Award.

CIRV has expanded their initiative to include community and prison-based call-ins. They also conduct home visits to maintain the deterrent effect achieved between call-ins. The home visits, which are modeled loosely after Boston's Operation Night Light, partners the police department with probation, parole, and the ATF to deliver the anti-violence message to high-risk violent group members under court-mandated supervision.

#### Dayton/Montgomery County Community Initiative to Reduce Gun Violence (CIRGV)

The Dayton/Montgomery County region began looking into the focused deterrence strategy upon the arrival of its new chief, Richard Biehl, in January 2008. Chief Biehl was a former assistant chief in the Cincinnati Police Department and later served as Executive Director of Cincinnati's Community Police Partnering Center. He was very well-versed in the strategy prior to their implementation. Representatives from the city attended the two-day workshop in April 2008 and began implementation of their focused deterrence strategy, known as CIRGV, in November 2008.

CIRGV has held seven call-ins between November 2008 and September 2010, and reported a decrease in group member involved homicides of 64 percent between 2008 and 2010. CIRGV serves as a learning site for other cities, actively attends program manager conference calls, and co-hosted the 2010 OCIRV conference. Most recently, they have expanded their focused deterrence strategy to the juvenile population.

### **OCIRV: Where Do We Go From Here?**

OCIRV works to expand its efforts to other Ohio cities. Two cities, one large and the other medium-sized, have expressed interest in adopting the focused deterrence strategy. Funding to provide on-site training and technical assistance by the CIRV team, University of Cincinnati researchers, and Professor Kennedy remains available through at least mid-2011. Members of OCIRV work in conjunction with the National Network to promote the strategy and to ensure its successful implementation.