

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

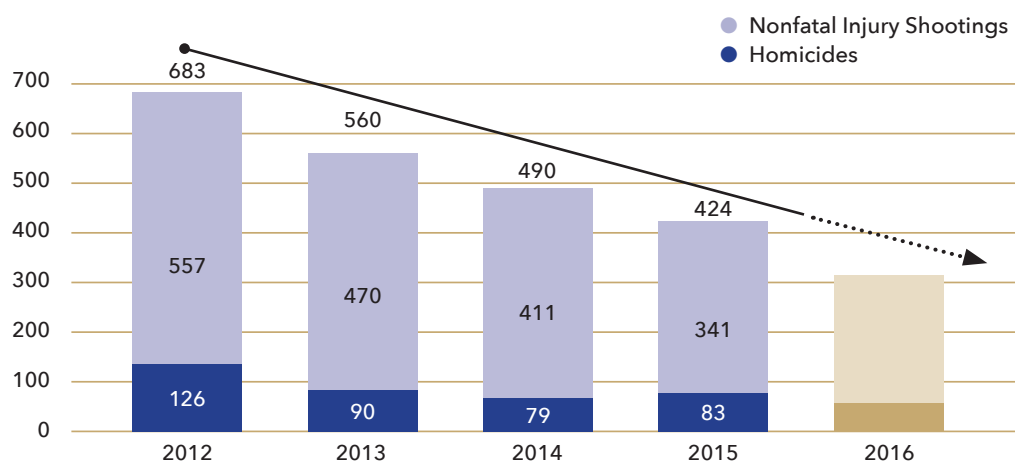
STRENGTHENING POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS GOES HAND-IN-HAND WITH REDUCING VIOLENCE: AN UPDATE ON OAKLAND CEASEFIRE

OVERVIEW

Despite Oakland's history of troubled police-community relations and serious violence - it has averaged nearly 110 annual homicides for over four decades - shootings have declined by a remarkable 40 percent since the city implemented Ceasefire in late 2012.

News stories about Ceasefire often describe it as a "carrot and stick" approach that rewards young men who step away from violence while targeting those who don't with intensive enforcement. But Ceasefire's most distinctive feature involves an alliance of civic, criminal justice and community leaders communicating a respectful and compassionate anti-violence message to young people at highest risk of violence. In Oakland, these partners embrace procedural justice: treating people respectfully, giving them a voice, avoiding bias in decision-making and demonstrating goodwill.

The payoff is not just fewer shootings. By incorporating procedural justice principles into Ceasefire implementation, Oakland is reducing its reliance on tactics that contribute to over-incarceration, strengthening frayed community-police relations and building bridges to safety and opportunity for young men who otherwise deeply distrust police.



The last six months have been one of the safest periods in Oakland over the past 40 years, with 31 homicides and 110 shootings from October 2015 - March 2016. While recognizing there is much more work to be done, this update highlights ways the police department's commitment to principled policing has catalyzed rather than slowed its efforts to reduce violence.

THE PRINCIPLES OF PROCEDURAL JUSTICE

Researchers have found, repeatedly and across different ethnic groups and communities, that departments that practice procedural justice see increased public support, cooperation and compliance with the law.

The principles are straightforward: **1** treat people with dignity and respect; **2** give them a “voice,” a chance to tell their side of the story; **3** make decisions based on facts, not irrelevant factors such as race; and **4** act in a way that reassures people you have their best interests in mind.

PROCEDURAL JUSTICE & CEASEFIRE: THE MECHANICS

Ceasefire’s emphasis on in-depth analysis of local violence grounds implementation in facts and evidence, rather than in bias and unfounded opinions.

Oakland’s police department began its Ceasefire planning by completing a “problem and opportunity analysis” - a systematic examination of hundreds of shootings that produced a comprehensive picture of local violence. The department now also conducts weekly “shooting reviews” during which knowledgeable front-line officers carefully review recent shootings to illuminate who is at risk of participating in violence. These analyses reveal that a surprisingly small number of people generate most of Oakland’s violence - far less than 1 percent of the city’s African-American and Latino young men.

Investing in analysis has helped the department narrow its focus to individuals most likely to endanger themselves or others. In other words, the department is better able to direct resources in ways that are most effective in stopping violence and are justified by facts about risk, rather than irrelevant factors such as race. This has also enabled the department to reduce its reliance on tactics and strategies - such as gang injunctions, curfews and aggressive street-level drug enforcement - that tend to sweep African-American and Latino young men at low risk of violence into the criminal justice system with little or no public safety benefit.

Ceasefire’s communications with people at risk of violence are designed to convey respect and enable them to share their side of the story.

Ceasefire’s primary communication tool is a small meeting - sometimes referred to as a “call-in” - that is typically held in a church or community center. Community, clergy, street outreach and criminal justice leaders gather around dining or conference tables with 10 to 20 young men at high risk of violence.

The partners share their commitment to making neighborhoods safe and keeping the young men alive and free, while providing them with clear and accurate information about the risks of violence and incarceration. The tone is serious, but also respectful and compassionate. Speakers

THE CEASEFIRE APPROACH

Ceasefire combines: **1** analyzing serious violent incidents and trends to identify individuals at highest risk of violence; **2** respectfully communicating the risks associated with violence to those individuals; **3** offering supportive relationships that lead to safety and opportunity; and **4** narrowly focusing enforcement efforts on those individuals that persist in violence.

This approach is strikingly effective. In 2012, the Campbell Collaboration, an interdisciplinary group of social scientists that analyze the best available research on important social issues, published a rigorous review of all evaluations of the Ceasefire approach. The authors concluded that it significantly reduced violence and recidivism in 9 of 10 cities.

avoid lecturing or sermonizing. The overarching theme is one of shared concern for the well-being of the young men as respected members of the community. When time is of the essence, the Ceasefire message is compressed into a one-on-one conversation with a police officer, ideally in partnership with a community or clergy leader, and delivered wherever is most convenient.

These meetings and conversations are designed to provide multiple opportunities for those at risk of violence to ask questions, voice concerns and express opinions. Speakers and participants share a meal following the call-ins, during which the young men are invited to express concerns about the criminal justice system, discuss their experience with social services and share their perspective on the speakers' message.

The Ceasefire partners offer financial incentives to the young men to participate in more formal listening sessions - on a one-time basis or as a standing advisory group - during which they gather to discuss and share thoughts and concerns. The police department and Ceasefire partners take this input seriously and often use it to improve program design.

Through Ceasefire, Oakland's police department is changing the way it engages with people at risk of violence to do what's in their best interest despite difficult circumstances.

Oakland's problem and opportunity analysis showed that the vast majority of individuals at risk of violence had been arrested *many* times. Their journey through the criminal justice system did little to reduce the risk of further violence.

Ceasefire provides a framework for altering this path. First, it greatly narrows the department's focus, through analysis, to people at the highest risk of violence. Second, the department and its Ceasefire partners engage as many individuals in this relatively small group as possible through respectful and compassionate communication rather than through enforcement. Third, the department works closely with partners to help the young men establish supportive relationships with outreach workers and case managers.

STOCKTON: ANOTHER POLICE DEPARTMENT BUILDING TRUST & REDUCING VIOLENCE

Stockton is a diverse Central Valley community of nearly 300,000 residents. Since emerging from bankruptcy, Stockton has been rebuilding departmental policy and practices around the principles of procedural justice, including incorporating them into the design of its Ceasefire initiative. Despite significant budgetary and staffing challenges, the department has steadily addressed violence, reducing homicide rates by 30 percent over the past three years.

During the first two months of 2016, Oakland's police department and its partners shared the Ceasefire message with more than 100 young men. The partners met every two weeks, sometimes more often, to strategize about how to connect each individual to supportive relationships. Oakland employs 10 committed, resourceful "relationship-based" case managers who carry small caseloads consisting only of people at the very highest risk of violence. These case managers concentrate on building a strong rapport with their clients, offering stipends and incentives to build relationships faster, and making three or more in-person contacts with each client every week.

CONCLUSION: OPD'S COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

Oakland's police department has not only adopted Ceasefire as a program, but has also undertaken deeper organizational changes. These signal its commitment to tackling tough crime problems while stepping away from practices that damage police-community relations and contribute to over-incarceration. Changes have included developing a comprehensive procedural justice training strategy; revising policies and practices that are important to people disproportionately affected by violence and crime so they better reflect the principles of procedural justice; and adopting performance indicators to heighten departmental transparency and accountability.

Meaningful progress in reducing serious violence and strengthening police-community relations is exceptionally hard-won - and, like many other cities, Oakland has much more work to do. But the principles of procedural justice provide a set of unifying values that are binding Oakland's diverse partners together for the long-term work needed to make the city safe while ensuring young men at highest risk of violence have a future of hope and opportunity.

Stewart Wakeling, Daniela Gilbert, Vaughn Crandall California Partnership for Safe Communities

CPSC works with communities to reduce violence, to reduce reliance on enforcement practices that contribute to over-incarceration, and to strengthen trust between criminal justice agencies and the communities they serve (<http://thecapartnership.org>). CPSC is a hands-on technical advisor and process facilitator for the Oakland and Stockton Ceasefire partnerships. CPSC thanks The Andrus Family Fund, The California Endowment, Kaiser Permanente Northern California Community Benefits, and Californians for Safety and Justice for their generous support.