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THE JOHN F. FINN INSTITUTE
FOR PUBLIC SAFETY, INC.

CeaseFire-Chicago: A Synopsis

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October, 2008

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The John F. Finn Institute for Public Safety, Inc., is an independent, not-for-profit and non-partisan corporation, whose work is dedicated to the development of criminal justice strategies, programs, and practices that are effective, lawful, and procedurally fair, through the application of social science findings and methods. The Institute conducts social research on matters of public safety and security – crime, public disorder, and the management of criminal justice agencies and partnerships – in collaboration with municipal, county, state, and federal criminal justice agencies, and for their direct benefit. The findings of the Institute’s research are also disseminated through other media to criminal justice professionals, academicians, elected public officials, and other interested parties, so that those findings may contribute to a broader body of knowledge about criminal justice and to the practical application of those findings in other settings.

The Finn Institute was established in 2007, building on a set of collaborative projects and relationships with criminal justice agencies dating to 1998. The first of those projects, for which we partnered with the Albany Police Department (APD), was initiated by John Finn, who was at that time the sergeant who commanded the APD’s Juvenile Unit. Later promoted to lieutenant and assigned to the department’s Administrative Services Bureau, he spearheaded efforts to implement problem-oriented policing, and to develop an institutional capability for analysis that would support problem-solving. The APD’s capacity for applying social science methods and results thereupon expanded exponentially, based on Lt. Finn’s appreciation for the value of research, his keen aptitude for analysis, and his vision of policing, which entailed the formulation of proactive, data-driven, and – as needed – unconventional strategies to address problems of public safety. Lt. Finn was fatally shot in the line of duty in 2003. The Institute that bears his name honors his life and career by fostering the more effective use of research and analysis within criminal justice agencies, just as Lt. Finn did in the APD.

Introduction

The term “Ceasefire” is widely associated with Boston’s “Operation Ceasefire,” which was a focused deterrence initiative conceived and implemented in 1996, and replicated (with some variations) in a number of other cities since then. Focused deterrence initiatives target high-risk offenders for enhanced enforcement, and notify the offenders that continued violence will evoke extraordinary enforcement actions, in order to more effectively deter the violence in which the targeted offenders are prone to engage.¹ However, a number of other violence-reduction programs go by the name “Ceasefire,” and they are not focused deterrence initiatives. One of those, implemented by the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention (CPVP), differs from the Boston model in a number of respects, but it too has been favorably evaluated.² We briefly describe the philosophy and theory behind CeaseFire-Chicago, describe the program components, and discuss the findings on its effectiveness.

Chicago implemented the Project for Violence Prevention in 1995. Unlike the enforcement-focused, deterrence-based CeaseFire strategies favored by Boston and its progeny, Chicago’s program applies what it characterizes as a public health approach to violence prevention. That is, violence is viewed as a serious health threat in the same way as polio, smallpox, and HIV/AIDS. The disease metaphor implies that the spread of violence can be interrupted. According to CPVP Executive Director Gary Slutkin, “punishment doesn’t drive behavior. Copying and modeling and the social expectations of your peers is what drives your behavior.”³ A two-stage approach toward violence follows from this premise. First, Slutkin observes, as you would fight tuberculosis, “find those who are most infectious and stop the transmission. This means going after young men most likely to fire a gun and set off a spiral of further violence and try to stop them pulling the trigger. The longer-term aim, like treating AIDS, is to change the behavior of the whole group so that shooting (like unsafe sex) becomes unacceptable in the peer group, even gang communities.”⁴

We would note that if CeaseFire-Chicago represents the public health approach to gun violence,⁵ it does not differ dramatically from a contemporary criminal justice approach. Over the past twenty-five years, criminal justice has become more proactive and more preventative in its approach to public safety problems, more eclectic in the tactics that are designed and implemented, and more prone to partner with social service agencies and community institutions to reduce crime and disorder. The parallels between these approaches extend from strategic theory to strategic practice. Criminologists will recognize the proposition that peer influences shape the (delinquent) behavior of youth as social learning theory. Law enforcement will recognize the concentration on high-risk youth as the same strategic focus of focused deterrence initiatives.

CeaseFire’s program theory rests on three factors that contribute to violence – norms, decision-making, and risks – and the CeaseFire model addresses each in turn. First, to

¹ See Heidi S. Bonner, Robert E. Worden, and Sarah J. McLean, *Focused Deterrence Initiatives: A Synopsis* (Albany: John F. Finn Institute, 2008).

² For a comprehensive description and evaluation of CeaseFire-Chicago, see Wesley G. Skogan, Susan M. Harnett, Natalie Bump, and Jill DuBois, *Evaluation of CeaseFire-Chicago* (Chicago: Northwestern University Institute for Policy Research, 2008).

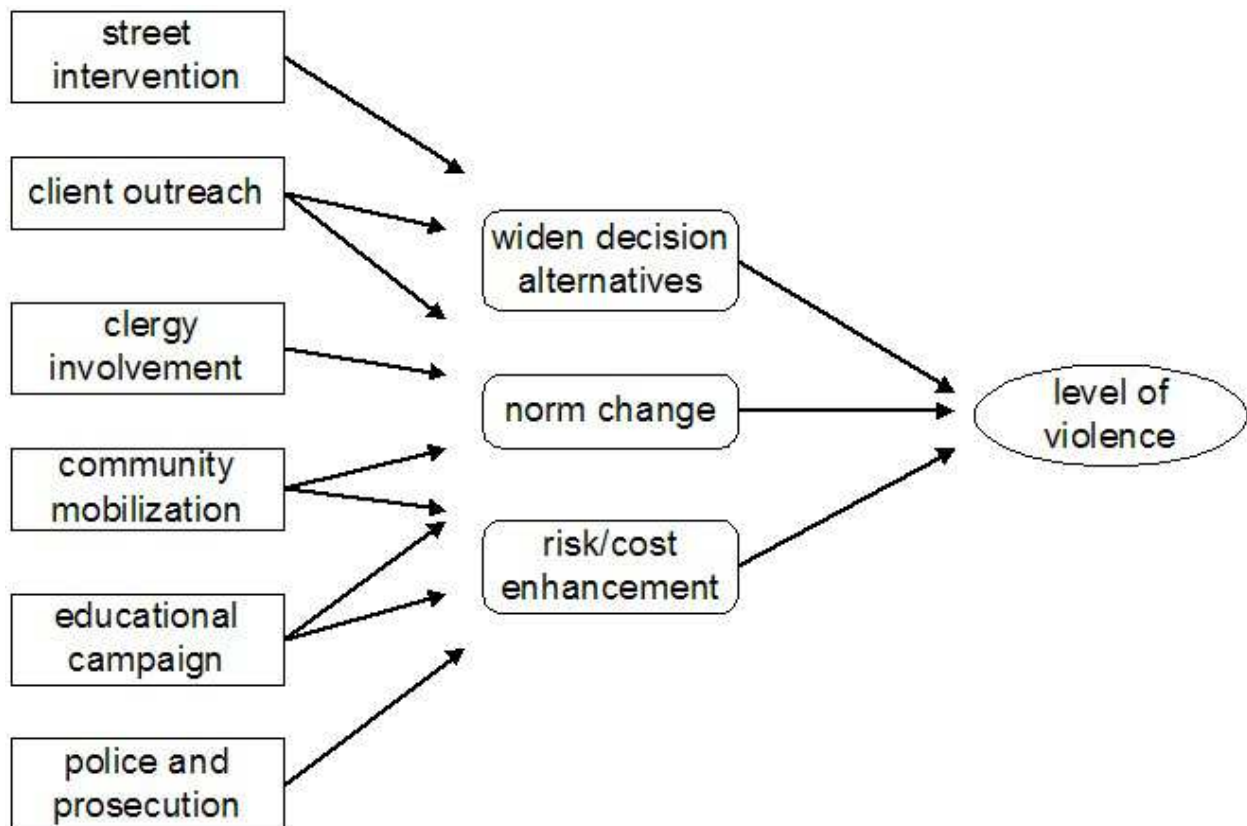
³ Alex Kotlowitz, “Blocking the transmission of violence,” *The New York Times Magazine* (May 4, 2008).

⁴ Damian Whitworth, “Street violence is an infection. I can cure it,” *The Times* (July 2, 2008). Available online at http://women.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/women/the_way_we_live/article4251027.ece.

⁵ Also see David Hemenway, *Private Guns, Public Health* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2004), especially chap. 2.

influence community norms about the appropriateness of violence, CeaseFire-Chicago provides for community mobilization, public education, and mentoring via outreach workers (more on these components below). Second, to provide immediate alternatives to violence at the time when individuals are making decisions about retaliation, CeaseFire-Chicago uses “violence interrupters” to intervene. Finally, to heighten awareness of risks – incarceration, injury, or death – CeaseFire communicates a classic deterrence message.

CeaseFire-Chicago’s Program Theory⁶



To date, Baltimore, Maryland, Kansas City, Missouri, and a number of cities in New Jersey, including Newark, Irvington, and Camden, have adopted the CeaseFire-Chicago model. Rigorous evaluations have not been conducted in these other jurisdictions, and in some cases it is difficult to ascertain whether the jurisdiction is implementing the Boston model, the Chicago model, or some hybrid of the two.

⁶ Skogan, et al., *op cit.*, p. 1-4.

Program Components

The goal of CeaseFire is simple – prevent shootings. Although CeaseFire staff hopes for broader behavioral changes, there is no expectation that offenders will desist from offending altogether, only that they refrain from gun violence. Furthermore, the Chicago strategy focuses on *preventing* harm (in the form of shootings), though harm *reduction* is also seen as a worthwhile goal. Although CeaseFire staff frequently negotiate truces to prevent violence, they also occasionally negotiate a fistfight or payment of a fine in order to prevent a *shooting*. On-the-spot alternatives to gun violence are improvised. Because the CeaseFire goal is so tightly defined, the program focuses on behavior change among a small number of individuals in a community (most outreach workers have only ten clients at a time).

CeaseFire-Chicago puts community involvement, not law enforcement, at the forefront. Project members involve community-based organizations and focus on street-level outreach and conflict mediation to change community norms regarding violence (particularly gun violence). These CeaseFire activities are conducted in each of 25 sites across Chicago, and they are organized around five core components: outreach and violence interruption, public education, faith-based leader involvement, community mobilization, and criminal justice participation.⁷

Outreach and Violence Interruption

Outreach workers are street-smart individuals who maintain a client base of high-risk youth. Their goal is to establish a relationship with their clients so that they may attempt to steer them away from violence and toward education and employment opportunities. Outreach workers are trained to recruit as clients high-risk individuals, who meet at least four of the following criteria: between the ages of 16 and 25; have a prior offense and arrest history; a member of a gang; formerly in prison; the recent victim of a shooting; involved in high risk activity (in practice, this meant involvement in street drug markets).⁸ CeaseFire participants are recruited on the streets.

Violence interrupters, generally former gang members, represent a newer CeaseFire component, which dates to 2004. Violence interrupters were added to the CeaseFire program because outreach workers were unable to reach the most high-risk people. Interrupters have the necessary background – a familiarity with the players and an intimate understanding of gang culture – to navigate the street gang world. Under the program model, interrupters work at night to monitor impending conflicts; their focus is to reach out to high-level gang leaders to call for truces and to stop retaliations. In January 2005, two full-time violence interrupters were placed at a local hospital to mediate with victims of violence and their families.

Public Education

In addition to client-oriented outreach work and case-oriented conflict mediation, CeaseFire-Chicago employs a broad-based public education campaign to promote nonviolence. Following a public health approach that has been successful in targeting smoking, seat belt use, drunk driving and more, the public education campaign seeks to change community norms and increase awareness of the costs of violence. Neighborhoods are saturated with succinct nonviolence messages (“Stop the Killing,” “No More Shooting”) in a variety of formats (posters,

⁷ CeaseFire: Fiscal Year 2007, Report to the State of Illinois (August 2007). Available at: <http://www.ceasefirechicago.org>.

⁸ Skogan, et al, *op cit*.

flyers, yard signs, bumper stickers, etc) that point out the consequences of gun violence. CeaseFire staff believe that it is the volume of literature distributed rather than the details of the message that result in behavior change, which is why saturation is key to the public education component. The goal is “massive messaging.”⁹

Faith-Based Leader Involvement

CeaseFire also enlists the help of faith-based leaders in the community, whose work is intended to complement that of CeaseFire outreach workers and assist in community mobilization. Clergy are considered one of CeaseFire’s most important local partners both for outreach and for direct service provision. Eighty-seven percent of the churches collaborating with CeaseFire had separate not-for-profit arms that provided services.¹⁰ Clergy also operate safe havens, counsel high-risk youth, provide leadership in response to shootings, and preach nonviolence. Because many people turn to their place of worship for comfort and guidance, “faith-based leaders are in a unique position to influence the thinking and behavior of community members and those who are at risk of involvement in shootings and killings.”¹¹ Indeed, 72 percent of surveyed clergy had direct contact with CeaseFire clients.¹²

Community Mobilization

Community mobilization efforts are designed to build a base of support for CeaseFire activities, stop violence in the near term, and change the underlying conditions that lead to violence in the long term. According to the CeaseFire-Chicago website, the development of a violence prevention plan – which describes the violence in the community, efforts to respond, and identified the goals and activities directed at stopping the shootings – is central to mobilizing a community. Additionally, community organizations were often asked to provide citizen input (via local coalitions). Members served on hiring panels, and helped generate turnout for marches and responses to shootings. Additionally, when CeaseFire staff had to travel to the state capital to lobby for support, community organization members often help fill the buses.

Law Enforcement

Finally, CeaseFire is heavily dependent on partnerships with criminal justice, especially for information. CPVP basically “structured their entire initiative around the availability of timely information on shootings and killings from police.”¹³ However, the police were generally reluctant to share intelligence, and although police headquarters was aware that CeaseFire wanted access to information in the police districts, no policy guidance was given to local commanders on how to respond to information requests. Some sites managed to gather information in other ways (e.g. via a police scanner). But we might expect that such reluctance to share information with non-sworn personnel – especially people whose backgrounds afford them access to the street gang world – would be found in any city that implements a CeaseFire program. At the same time, CeaseFire staff had information that law enforcement wanted, but their credibility with clients and others would be compromised were they to share it. These

⁹ Skogan, et al., *op cit.*, p. 1-11

¹⁰ Skogan, et al., *op cit.*

¹¹ CeaseFire: Fiscal Year 2007, Report to the State of Illinois (August 2007), p. 4, available at <http://www.ceasefirechicago.org>.

¹² Skogan, et al., *op cit.*, based on survey results.

¹³ Skogan, et al., *op cit.*, pp. 6-12.

mutually unfulfilled expectations, along with histories of unpleasant contacts with the police, were the sources of tension between police and CeaseFire staff.

Police commanders also sat on hiring panels and officers frequently participated in CeaseFire directed community responses to shootings, providing security and traffic control at CeaseFire events. But plans for enhanced prosecution of perpetrators in shootings were never realized.

Costs

Original funding for CeaseFire-Chicago came from multiple sources; contributions from federal and state grants as well as from local foundations and corporations led to a budget of \$6.2 million for 2005 and \$9.4 million for 2006. However, in 2007 Illinois' governor discontinued funding for CeaseFire and the operating budget dropped to \$3.6 million.¹⁴ Interestingly, although the mayor was supportive of the program, the City of Chicago never provided any funding. Individual CeaseFire sites operate on budgets of about \$250,000 per year.¹⁵

The CeaseFire program currently operates in five areas in Chicago – only two of these sites remain under the CPVP umbrella. Due to the loss of state funding in 2007, CPVP operates a CeaseFire demonstration and training program on Chicago's West Side (with federal funding) and also has grant funding to provide training and technical assistance to other cities seeking to implement the CeaseFire model.

Outcomes

Skogan and his colleagues conducted an extensive process and outcome evaluation of CeaseFire-Chicago. For the process evaluation they conducted observations, interviews and surveys to examine how the program operated in the field, and for the outcome evaluation they utilized statistical models, hot spot maps and network analyses to assess CeaseFire's impact on shootings and murders.¹⁶ The authors caution that shortcomings of the data and the time series research design temper the conclusions that can be reached about the impact of CeaseFire on violent crime.¹⁷ However, an analysis of seven Chicago sites (of the twenty-five in which the program then operated) reveals that the introduction of CeaseFire was associated with significant declines in actual and attempted shootings in four areas. Additionally, four sites experienced declines in persons actually shot. Overall, six of the seven program areas became

¹⁴ Funding for CPVP staff was stable because it came from local foundations and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (which manages federal pass through money). Individual CeaseFire sites, however, were funded by yearly appropriations from the state legislature which made them vulnerable to political machinations. See Skogan, et al, *op cit*.

¹⁵ Skogan, et al., *op cit*.

¹⁶ Evaluation staff observed 63 headquarters meetings and 52 weekly meetings of violence interrupters and outreach workers, and conducted interviews with 10 headquarters staff. Multiple visits were made to 18 program sites and staff conducted 79 interviews, attended 31 meetings, and went on 15 ride-alongs with outreach workers. A total of 153 surveys were gathered from CeaseFire staff and evaluation staff conducted 230 interviews with potential CeaseFire collaborators (clergy, police, business, etc). Additionally, staff interviewed 297 CeaseFire clients.

¹⁷ These shortcomings include a lack of any measures of strength of the programs in the analysis, the use of crime rates (due to significant changes in beat populations over the time frame) and potential errors from projecting population figures forward from the 2000 Census, and a large degree of spillover in the geographical targeting of interventions.

safer and there is conclusive evidence in four of the six sites that a decrease in the intensity of shooting hot spots was due to the introduction of CeaseFire.¹⁸

Transplanting Ceasefire-Chicago

Chicago-CeaseFire is based on an explicit and plausible set of expectations – its program theory – and the evaluation conducted by Skogan, et al., was well-designed and executed, with fairly persuasive evidence of impacts on shootings and shooting related injuries. CeaseFire-Chicago is, then, a program that offers promise of some relief from gun violence in urban neighborhoods in which gun violence is rife. We would caution localities considering such a program, however, that the generalizability of the findings from Chicago are unknown. Programs that have sought to replicate the model are in the early stages, making it difficult to assess the success with which the program can be adapted and implemented in other settings. Nor do we know whether every component (e.g., outreach workers, violence interrupters, the faith community) is vital, or whether sites exploring the development of such a program might eliminate a component or alter the model without compromising its violence reduction benefits.

In making an informed decision to adopt a CeaseFire program, which is service intensive, localities should take stock of existing resources to ensure that offenders contacted by program staff have access to a broad array of services (e.g. social, educational, and vocational) and, where available, evidence-based services and programs.

Localities considering the adoption of such a program should acknowledge at the outset the importance of information sharing. The resistance of Chicago law enforcement to sharing information with CeaseFire staff is not surprising, given the entrenched resistance of law enforcement to sharing information, the background of many violence interrupters, and the multi-site scope of the program, which necessitates buy-in from multiple districts and levels within the police department. The resistance of CeaseFire staff to sharing their information with law enforcement is also unsurprising, as they must maintain the trust of their clients and other people on the street in order to be effective. Program planners should describe the nature of needed information and work with law enforcement to prescribe information sharing protocols.

Justice, service, and community-based agencies working together can interrupt the cycle of violence. With the shared commitment of a multi-agency partnership, violence prevention efforts benefit from the perspective and expertise of each agency, and the costs need not be borne by any single agency. Moreover, the sustainability of any program is bolstered by multiple streams of funding, as it becomes less likely that cuts in one source of funding will force the program to close its doors. Jurisdictions considering the adoption of a CeaseFire program should capitalize on the opportunity to tap blended funding streams.

¹⁸ The intensity of shooting hot spots declined in two other sites as well, but evidence linking the decline to CeaseFire was inconclusive.