



Research Brief: Evaluating Schenectady County's STRONG Program

Practitioner:

Schenectady Police Department
Detective Yoni Moskow
(518) 382-5245
yoskow@schenectadypd.com

Academic Partner:

The John F. Finn Institute for
Public Safety

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Summary:

The Finn Institute conducted an evaluation of Schenectady County's version of the Group Violence Intervention model, known locally as Schenectady STRONG. Researchers solicited feedback from project partners to assess fidelity to the GVI model. They also measured STRONG's impact on shooting incidents in the city of Schenectady.

Background

The Group Violence Intervention (GVI) model is designed to reduce group-related homicide and gun violence by directly engaging a small number of people actively involved in gun violence. This is primarily done through the call-in, a face-to-face meeting between group members and a partnership of community and law enforcement leaders at which partners communicate a credible moral message against violence, provide notice of the consequences of further violence and offer services. Custom notifications are also delivered to reinforce the GVI message. Since the STRONG program began in 2016, As of September 2019, Schenectady County has had three call-ins (one in April 2016, one in November 2016, and one in October 2018) and delivered eight custom notifications.

Design

Researchers provided technical assistance and evaluated the program. They surveyed law enforcement members of the partnership about its effectiveness, how well the program was implemented and sustainability. They examined program information and data, including intelligence gathered on groups, message and service delivery at the call-ins, and enforcement actions. Researchers also examined 72 months of data pre- and post-intervention (September 2012 – August 2018). During that time, Schenectady

experienced 98 shootings with injury; just under half of all shootings were group-involved (48 of 98), and two were unknown to be group or non-group involved.

Results

- 10 percent of identified group members (52 of 496) directly heard the STRONG message, either through call-ins or custom notifications.
- Among the 11 group-involved shooting incidents since the first call-in, law enforcement responded to two with enforcement actions.
- Members of the partnership were generally positive in their responses regarding group effectiveness, progress to full implementation and ability to sustain programming over time.
- Compared with the pre-STRONG period, shootings overall declined 43 percent post-intervention (from 2 shootings per month to 1.14 per month), while group-involved shootings declined 46 percent (0.82 to 0.44 per month). Over the same period, non-group shootings increased 4 percent (0.68 to 0.71 per month).

About the Research Consortium

An initiative of the state Division of Criminal Justice Services, the Research Consortium promotes criminal justice research and the use of data and evidence by facilitating partnerships between local practitioners and college and university-based researchers. The research design and conclusions detailed here are the sole work product of the academic partner that conducted the research. Neither DCJS nor the State of New York endorse the program, methodology or results.