



Albany: Violent Offender Identification Directive

Practitioner:

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Summary:

Albany's Violent Offender Identification Directive aims to prevent future gun-related violence by targeting identified individuals with enforcement and service-based intervention.

Problem

From 2009 to 2011, the number of shooting incidents in Albany increased 67 percent (27 vs. 44). The Albany Police Department analyzed gun violence data and determined that a small number of individuals were involved in the majority of shooting incidents in the city. Based on this information, the department sought to develop a person-centric strategy to intervene and prevent gun violence.

Program Description

Albany's Violent Offender Identification Directive identifies and prioritizes individuals who should receive increased attention for enforcement and prevention services, with the goal of reducing their involvement in gun violence as either the victim or the perpetrator.

The Albany Police Department identifies these individuals using a two-stage approach. First, staff at the Capital Region Crime Analysis Center use a tool to generate two numerical scores that assess an individual's likelihood of engaging in gun violence. One score takes into account an individual's criminal history, and the second assesses his or her criminal activity during the previous 90-day period. Emphasis is placed on information

reflecting recent violent activity, as it is an important indicator of the potential for engaging in near-term violence.

Second, the department uses these scores in combination with human intelligence from investigative reports, Enhanced Supervision Unit officers, and other sources, to identify the ten individuals in crisis who should be prioritized for enforcement and intervention services. This Violent Offender Identification Directive list is shared with the police department, District Attorney's office, parole and probation departments at weekly meetings.

Police use a two-pronged approach to prevent gun violence among individuals on the list. Using enforcement tactics, the Community Response Unit investigates individuals who are suspected of participating in recent criminal activity to build prosecutable cases and remove them from the street. At the same time, the Enhanced Supervision Unit offers outreach and contacts these individuals and those who are positive influences in their lives to deter criminal activity. Through the cultivation of relationships with individuals and organizations within the community, the Enhanced Supervision Unit offers these individuals services such as job placement, mental health

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treatment, housing assistance, education and training, as well as assistance with navigating the systems that provide these services.

Funding

The Albany Police Department administers the Violent Offender Identification Directive within their existing resources.

Program Reviews or Evaluations

In 2015, The John F. Finn Institute for Public Safety in Albany assessed how well the Violent Offender Identification Directive tool predicted future involvement in gun violence. To test predictive accuracy, Finn researchers computed scores for individuals based on historical data through 2012, before the program was implemented. These scores predicted whether the individuals were either a suspect or a victim of a shooting during 2013. Using this method, Finn concluded that the tool sufficiently identifies those likely to be involved in gun violence as a victim or perpetrator.

Supportive Research

The Violent Offender Identification Directive is based on a [focused deterrence](#) policing strategy, which targets specific criminal behavior committed by a small number of chronic offenders. Law enforcement confronts these offenders to inform them that violence will not be tolerated and offers to link them with services to change their behavior.

The Violent Offender Identification Directive also follows tenets of [procedural justice](#), which is based on four central principles: fairness in criminal justice processes, transparency in actions, opportunities for voice, and impartiality in decision making. Research suggests that when officers incorporate procedural justice into their interactions with individuals, it promotes positive organizational change, fosters good relations with the community, and enhances safety for officers and the public.

Critical Success Factors

- Intelligence gathering and information sharing about individuals on the list is crucial. Intelligence from investigations, the weekly Violent Offender Identification Directive meetings with the Enhanced Supervision Unit and other officers, debriefings of offenders, and conferences with arresting officers is shared with all partners. This ongoing, regular

communication and information sharing helps ensure that the two-pronged approach – enforcement and service intervention – does not cause internal departmental conflict.

- The collection and use of human intelligence is an important piece of the VOID list. Applying human intelligence provides context to identified individuals and narrows the focus to prevent illogical placements on the list (e.g., someone who has moved).

Lessons Learned

- Through their work with individuals and organizations in the community, the Enhanced Supervision Unit became a credible and reliable source for connecting individuals with services and providing guidance.
- Individuals must be removed from the list once they are involved in pro-social activities and are no longer at high risk of involvement in gun violence.
- Due to limited resources, the department focuses only on the top 10 individuals identified by the tool and included on the list. Depending on the availability of resources, other jurisdictions that implement a similar program can adjust the number of individuals on the list.

Additional Comments

- In April 2020, the Albany Police Department stopped in-person outreach due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Enhanced Supervision Unit shifted to phone outreach, which mostly resulted in communication with individuals of influence (such as mothers and significant others).
- Due to a department-wide shortage of officers, the size of the Enhanced Supervision Unit was reduced in Spring 2020. Vacancies within the Enhanced Supervision Unit were not filled until May 2021, impacting outreach to VOID members.

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