

## **Brief Summary: An Evaluation of CeaseFire-Chicago**

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This is a very brief summary of the findings of an evaluation of CeaseFire, a Chicago-based violence prevention program that was active in numerous sites in Illinois. The program is administered by the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention (CPVP), which is located at the University of Illinois' School of Public Health. The evaluation focused on program development and implementation, and on its impact on clients and the community. It was conducted independently by a team from Northwestern University's Institute for Policy Research. The evaluation was funded by the National Institute of Justice. An 18-page Executive Summary and the full report are available at: [www.northwestern.edu/ipr/publications/ceasefire.html](http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/publications/ceasefire.html)

### **The Program**

Based on a public health model, CeaseFire works to interrupt the cycle of violence and to change norms about behavior. Some program elements focus on risky activities by a small number of carefully selected members of the community with a high chance of either "being shot or being a shooter" in the immediate future. An outreach staff counseled clients they recruited on the street. In the main, they were young men already marginalized from the rest of society; they found their friends, identity and respect among their youthful peers, as far from the constraints of society as they could put themselves. The job of outreach workers was to mentor and counsel them, assess their needs, and connect them with a broad range of services. CeaseFire's violence interrupters worked alone or in pairs, mediating conflicts between gangs and intervening to stem the retaliatory violence that threatens to break out following a shooting. They worked the street in the night, talking to gang leaders, distraught friends and relatives of recent shooting victims, and others who were positioned to initiate or sustain cycles of violence. Local clergy and community groups participated in marches, rallies and prayer vigils focused on reinforcing the unacceptability of violence in the community. Educational materials were distributed that aimed at changing norms about violence and enhancing knowledge of the risks of engaging in violence.

These interventions were theory driven, based upon concepts and strategies adapted from the public health field. The program aimed at communicating the social and personal costs of involvement in violence, changing community norms regarding violence, and providing on-the-spot decision alternatives for clients and gangs facing impending violence. A notable feature of CeaseFire's staffing was their commitment to hiring culturally appropriate messengers to carry the word to the community. Who they hired was a strategic consideration, and the program was staffed by street-savvy individuals who were carefully selected, trained and supervised, and who had legitimacy with community members and could talk frankly with clients and gang members.

## **Impact on Clients**

CeaseFire insisted that clients be “high risk” on several indicators, and we found that most were. Based on personal interviews and other data on a random sample of almost 300 clients, more than 80 percent had been arrested, 56 percent had spent “more than a day or two” in jail, 20 percent had been to prison, and about 40 percent had been on probation or parole. Most had been involved in a gang, many of them somewhere up the hierarchy. Almost 60 percent never got past grade school.

Once in the program they saw their outreach workers frequently, and two thirds or more were active participants in CeaseFire activities and helped out with the program. More than half participated in the marches and vigils that are held following a neighborhood homicide.

In interviews, clients reported getting a great deal of assistance with the problems they brought to the program.

76 percent reported needing a job, and 87 percent of them got job-seeking help from their outreach worker

37 percent reported they wanted to get back into school or a GED program, and 85 percent of them got help in doing so

34 percent wanted help in disengaging from a gang, and virtually all of them received help from their outreach worker

Clients who sought help from their outreach worker for getting a job, getting a school credential, and getting out of a gang were more likely to be successful at these by the time we interviewed them, with disengaging from their gang being the most difficult goal. However, they often had complex problems calling for a broad range of coordinated services.

A striking finding was how important CeaseFire loomed in their lives. After their parents, their outreach worker was typically rated the most important adult in their lives, well above their brothers and sisters, grandparents, coaches and clergy. Clients noted the importance of being able to reach their outreach worker at critical moments – when they were tempted to resume taking drugs, were involved in illegal activities, or when they felt that violence was imminent.

## **Impact on Shootings and Killings**

The evaluation examined the impact of introducing CeaseFire on shootings and killings in the targeted area. We did this in three ways: comparing changes in over-time trends in violence, shifts in shooting “hot spots,” and changes in “who shoots who” within and between gangs. Before-after changes in targeted areas were compared to shifts in matched areas of the city that did not have CeaseFire.

Over-time trends revealed that violence was down by one measure or another in six of the seven areas that were examined statistically. The broadest measure of shootings (which included attempts) declined an additional 17 to 24 percent, due to the program. In four overlapping sites there were distinctive declines in the number of persons actually shot or killed ranging from 16 to 34 percent.

Crime hot spot maps were used to examine the concentration and overall density of shootings in space. Overall, there were decreases in the size and intensity of shooting hot spots in six of seven CeaseFire areas, and in four of them this was due to the introduction of the program.

The report also considers how homicides within and among gangs changed with the introduction of CeaseFire in eight areas. This was examined using data drawn from police case files. There were significant shifts in gang homicide patterns in five of these areas due to the program. Four sites saw a decline in retaliatory killings; average gang involvement declined in three areas; and two sites experienced a decline in the percentage of killings attributed by the police to gangs.

The table below summarizes these findings for specific CeaseFire sites.

Summary of CeaseFire Impact Analysis

	Changes in Violence Due to the Program		
	shootings down <sup>a</sup>	hot spots cooler	gang homicide decline
Auburn-Gresham	-17%	-15%	gang involvement in homicide down reciprocal killings down
Englewood	-34%		
Logan Square	-22%		gang involvement in homicide down reciprocal killings down
Rogers Park		-40%	
Southwest	-24/-27%		gang involvement in homicide down
West Garfield Park	-24/-23%	-24%	reciprocal killings down
West Humboldt Park	-16%	-17%	
East Garfield Park	not evaluated	not evaluated	reciprocal killings down gang involvement in homicide down

Note: <sup>a</sup> Two measures: all actual and attempted shootings, and all persons shot or killed; gun homicide alone also lower in Auburn-Gresham due to the program.