

Vera

Using Public Funding for
Community Violence
Intervention Strategies:
Successes and
Challenges

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Joyce Foundation Lunch and Learn

Vera's Redefining Public Safety initiative

We support communities to design, strengthen, and invest in civilian-led public safety ecosystems

Goals:

- Build and institutionalize effective civilian-led public safety infrastructure
- Discontinue harmful policies of the current enforcement-centered system



Session Outline

- 1. Research project and OVP/ONS 101**
- 2. Findings and Recommendations for Building and Sustaining Offices**
- 3. Implications and Opportunities**
- 4. Q & A and Discussion**

New Vera report: *Coordinating Safety: Building and Sustaining Offices of Violence Prevention and Neighborhood Safety*

Coordinating Safety: Building and Sustaining Offices of Violence Prevention and Neighborhood Safety

Vera INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

National
OVP
Network

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vera.org/publications/coordinating-safety

Coordinating Safety: Goals & Key Audiences

Highlight and share promising practices and lessons learned for building and sustaining impactful offices of violence prevention and neighborhood safety

- Inform local government leaders seeking to establish or support an office
- Equip advocates and funders with information about what works
- Encourage and inform OVP/ONS leaders and staff

Data Sources & Methods: Partnership with NOVPN

- A learning community and network of local Offices of Violence Prevention and Neighborhood Safety, est. Feb 2021
- Thank you to the National OVP Network and all participants!



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Partners and Funders:



Data Sources & Methods

20 focus groups and interviews with 44 participants, spanning 18 local offices and 3 places that were developing and/or advocating for a local office

- Office leaders and staff (community engagement, data); former office leaders; community-based programs and advocates; national training and technical assistance providers
- Local offices: Los Angeles County CA, Oakland CA, Stockton CA, Washington DC, Atlanta GA, Indianapolis IN, Baltimore MD, Minneapolis MN, St. Paul MN, St. Louis MO, Mecklenburg County NC, Newark NJ, Albuquerque NM, Rochester NY, Portland OR, Hampton VA, Milwaukee WI, Anonymous
- Places developing: Baton Rouge LA, Detroit MI, Richmond VA

Reviewing office websites and strategic plans, reports, news coverage

Coordinating Safety: Data Sources & Methods

Sharing preliminary findings with all participants and national training and technical assistance providers

- California Partnership for Safe Communities, Center for American Progress, Cities United, Community Capacity Development, Community-based Public Safety Collective, Community Justice Action Fund, Cure Violence Global, Equal Justice USA, The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention, Live Free USA, National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform, National Network for Safe Communities, Peace in Our Cities, Trajectory Changing Solutions, Youth ALIVE!

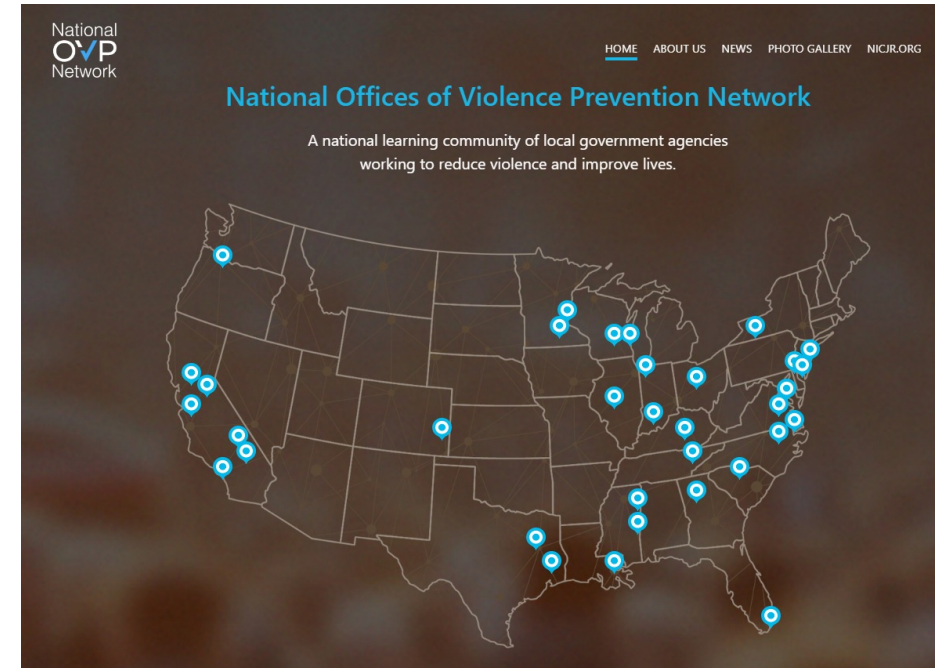


OVP/ONS 101: What are they and how many are there?

“Offices or departments that enhance community safety using supportive approaches that decenter law enforcement as the primary response to violence”

48 local (city or county government-level) offices established from 1994 to 2023

- Many new offices since 2020
- At least 10 more places developing or advocating
- Offices require govt and community leadership, usually ~ 1 - 2 years to plan and launch



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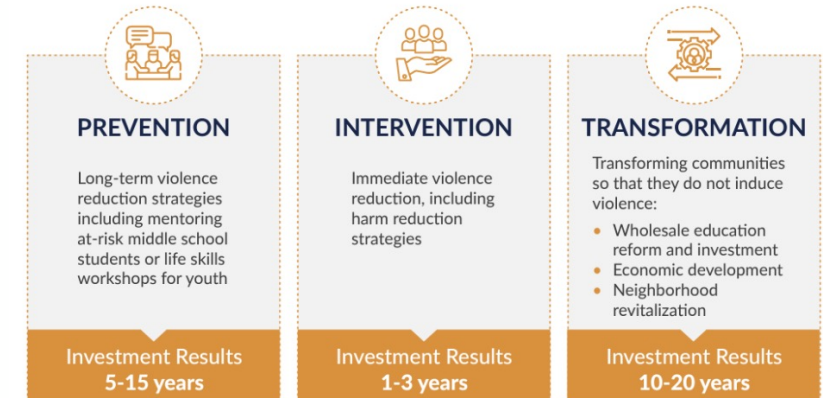
OVP/ONS 101: What do offices do? – Mission and Scope

Mission and Scope:

- All – community violence/gun violence intervention and prevention
 - Including victim services and upstream prevention efforts
- Some – other forms of violence: domestic/IPV, gender-based and sexual
- Some – broad focus on expanding civilian-led programs and strategies for community safety, including civilian 911 response

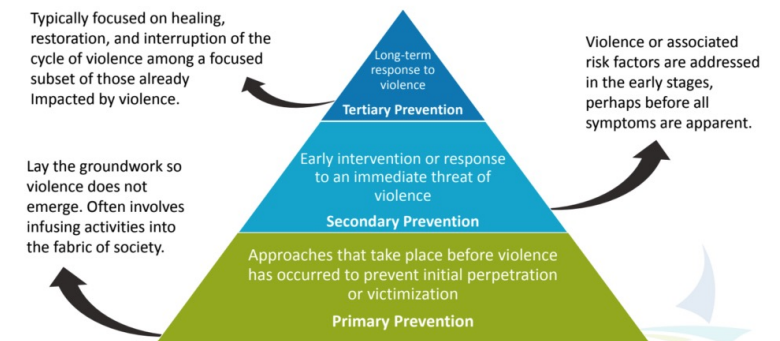
I. VIOLENCE REDUCTION

Violence reduction efforts can be broken down into three domains: violence prevention, violence intervention, and community transformation.



<https://nicjr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/DC-LandscapeAnalysisReport.pdf>

The OVP Approach: Prevention Pyramid



<https://www.womenspress.com/a-public-health-approach-to-violence/>

OVP/ONS 101: What do offices do? – Functions

Public Safety Plan – develop and implement comprehensive violence prevention and intervention plans

Coordinate government and community partners for a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach to violence

- Some offices house programs and staff in the office; some contract with community-based organizations (CBOs); some do both
- Offices can support organizational and programmatic capacity building for CBOs

Public Safety Data – collect and share data on community/system-wide violence prevention and intervention efforts

OVP/ONS 101: Staffing and Budgets

Non-programmatic/frontline staff roles include:

- government coordination, community engagement, grants and contract management, CBO and program capacity building, data and evaluation

Most offices are funded through a mix of general budget funds, grants, and federal funds

- ARPA funding has been crucial for building or expanding many new offices – impending “ARPA cliff”

Findings and Recommendations

Office Origins

Scope and Structure

Coordinating Government
and Community Partners

Measuring and
Messaging Success

Findings and Recommendations: Office Origins

Establishing an effective OVP/ONS requires **robust engagement with government and community leaders**

- OVP/ONS leaders should **work with community leaders to support, coordinate, and enhance violence prevention and intervention programs and efforts that preceded the office.**
- Local government leaders should **prioritize and resource robust and broad community and government stakeholder planning processes to establish OVP/ONS and to scope their work.**

Findings and Recommendations: Office Origins

Robust and inclusive planning processes can maximize the likelihood that the mandate and strategies of an OVP/ONS are **grounded in the local jurisdiction's context and the needs of its residents**

- **Community advocacy and organizing, learning from other places, and receiving support from training and technical assistance providers have been critical to establishing OVP/ONS in many places**
- **Mayors and other local government leaders are key actors in mobilizing city resources and policymaking to establish an OVP/ONS, including through city council ordinances or mayors' executive orders.**

Findings and Recommendations

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Findings and Recommendations: Scope and Structure

OVP/ONS leaders should clearly define and communicate the office's **mission and scope**, “**theory of change**” (how the office's activities will lead to impact), and **staffing, resources, and infrastructure** needed to carry out the work

Local government leaders should:

- Set up offices with **executive-level authority to ensure sustainability through political transitions**
- Legislate **sustainable funding** for offices – consider investments relative to policing and other public safety departments.

Findings and Recommendations

Office Origins

Scope and Structure

**Coordinating Government
and Community Partners**

Measuring and
Messaging Success

Findings and Recommendations: Coordinating Government and Community Partners

OVP/ONS should:

- coordinate a **whole-of-government** approach to violence prevention and intervention
- coordinate **comprehensive** and **data-informed** strategic planning and implementation – clarify roles, facilitate sharing of data to inform strategy and program operations
- **fund and support community-based organizations and community-led efforts**

Findings and Recommendations: Coordinating Government and Community Partners

Local government leaders should:

- Invest in building the **stakeholder management and coordination capacity** of offices and their leadership
- Ensure offices have the **political authority to effectively coordinate government partners**
- Support offices in **improving and expediting processes to fund community-based organizations** and community-led efforts

Findings and Recommendations

Office Origins

Scope and Structure

Coordinating Government
and Community Partners

**Measuring and
Messaging Success**

Findings and Recommendations: Measuring and Messaging Success

OVP/ONS should work with government and community partners to **proactively define how success will be measured and reported**

- **set reasonable expectations for the scope and timeline of violence prevention and intervention efforts**
- **define and/or clarify theory of change (how the office's activities will lead to impact), and corresponding staffing and resources**

Findings and Recommendations: Measuring and Messaging Success

OVP/ONS should track and share data, and build capacity for community-wide planning, reporting, and evaluation

- track **processes** and **outcomes** of **shorter-term** and **longer-term** goals
- **share stories** that uplift the successes and experiences of programs and frontline staff, and individuals impacted by violence
- strengthen **infrastructure** and **capacity** for tracking and sharing data
- inform **public narratives** and plan for **rapid response communications**

Implications and Opportunities

Transforming civic
infrastructure to
advance public safety

Q&A and Discussion

When they are effectively **resourced, structured, and authorized**, local OVP/ONS can **support and lead** a coordinated public safety ecosystem that empowers civilian government and community-based personnel and resources, rather than law enforcement, as the **hub of public safety**.

Thank you!

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