



**Working Group
on Police and Community Healing**

**A Strategic Action Investment Plan
May 3, 2019**

People are not built to experience cumulative trauma. No one can handle seeing time and again a dead or injured child, drug and sexual abuse, family violence, and shootings and walk away unscathed. These experiences have long lasting influence on each person's life and the lives they touch.

Introduction: The Need for Immediate Action

All forms of violence, personal and community, have robbed neighborhoods throughout the United States and in Connecticut of a sense of connection, safety and well-being.

Establishing positive relationships and long-term trust between police and community members is paramount to improving public safety, curbing crime, and facilitating individual and collective healing and resiliency.

Over a four-month period, a small working group, led by New Haven Mayor Toni Harp and Governor Ned Lamont, along with leaders in the fields of law enforcement and trauma-informed intervention will meet to identify promising and successful police and community strategies that have been instrumental in establishing trust and strengthening cooperation between law enforcement and the communities they serve not just in Connecticut but in jurisdictions throughout the country.

There is not nor should there be one templated solution for Connecticut. While these successful strategies can serve as important guides, to be successful, establishing trust and cooperation must be developed from the “ground-up” and focus on the unique characteristics and needs of each community and police department.

Connecticut must commit itself to building a public/private collaboration to support interested cities and towns in expanding or creating new strategies to address violence and police shootings. Working cooperatively, the state can promote police and community partnerships, prevent crime, build trust, and enhance community and officer wellness and resiliency.



The impact of trauma from violence increases the risk of not only post-traumatic stress, but also depression, anxiety, substance abuse, physical and mental health problems, interpersonal relationships, family issues, and risk of suicide.

Background: The Crisis

While the crime rate for violent, property and unreported crime has decreased over the last 25 years,¹ high profile incidents of mass and police-involved shootings on our communities has increased.

Mass Shootings

The number of community mass shootings reported in the United States has increased substantially in recent years. While the federal government has never defined "mass shooting" as a stand-alone category, the most commonly accepted definition, from the Congressional Research Service is: a shooting in which a gunman kills four or more people, selects victims randomly (ruling out gang killings or the killing of multiple family members), and attacks in a public place. Some studies have reported that mass shootings occurred in the United States more often than in other countries

Law Enforcement-Involved Shootings

According to the most recently available FBI UCR reports, in 2013 there were 461 justifiable homicides by law enforcement personnel.² An additional source of data examined is the "Counted" Guardian database. According to this database, in 2015, police officers killed at least 1146 people in the United States.³ Over 25 percent (26.7%) of these victims of police violence were Black Americans, 50.7% were White, and 17.0% were Hispanic.⁴ Of those people killed by the police, 20% were found to have been unarmed at the time of their death.⁵ In addition, at least one-fourth of all people fatally shot by the police in 2015 displayed signs of mental illness.⁶ Advocates and activists, particularly local organizers and leaders of color, have been highlighting the persistent problems faced by African-American communities in the United States and articulating what steps need to be taken to address these issues.

¹ L.B. Eisen and Oliver Roeder. America's Faulty Perception of Crime Rates. Brennan Center for Justice, New York University School of Law. March 16, 2015. www.brennancenter.org/blog/americas-faulty-perception-crime-rates (accessed 9/7/16)

² <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/offenses-known-to-law-enforcement/expanded-homicide/expanded-homicide-data-table-14-justifiable-homicide-by-weapon-law-enforcement-2009-2013.xls> (accessed 9/3/16)

³ Guardian, The Counted, People Killed by Police in the US (<http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2015/jun/01/the-counted-police-killings-us-database>) (accessed 9/5/16)

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/final-tally-police-shot-and-killed-984-people-in-2015/2016/01/05/3ec7a404-b3c5-11e5-a76a-0b5145e8679a_story.html (accessed 9/5/16)



***There is a critical need to create trauma-informed interventions
for police officers and community members
who are affected by violence.***

The Impact of Trauma on Youth

The majority of Americans have experienced at least one traumatic event in their lives. For example, between 30 and 40 percent of youth exposed to community violence develop post-traumatic stress symptoms, such as re-experience (nightmares, intrusive thoughts, and flashbacks); avoidance of traumatic triggers and emotional numbing (constriction of affect); and physiological hyper-arousal (hyper-vigilance, insomnia, and behavioral problems).

Emotional and behavioral problems, learning difficulties, misdiagnosed or improperly treated health problems, and trauma histories, all suggest the need for intervention. For high school students and young adults, years of untreated problems can lead to unmanageable issues resulting in school failure, poor work ethics and significant undiagnosed mental health issues.

The Impact of Trauma on Police

Law enforcement officers are at-risk due to the high incidence of experiencing disaster and traumatic stress in their daily encounters on the job. The impact of trauma increases the risk of not only PTSD but also depression, anxiety, substance abuse, physical and mental health problems, interpersonal relationship and family problems, and increased risk of suicide.⁷

In addition to burn-out, compassion fatigue and job-related stress among police officers, there are two main factors contributing to physical and emotional safety concerns: witnessing primary trauma, and witnessing secondary or vicarious trauma (crisis or violence in others). In 2018 there were 163 line of duty deaths and 165 police officer suicides. In 2019 there have been 35 line of duty deaths and 72 suicides so far. For every police officer suicide, there are hundreds of police officers out there, still working and suffering from undiagnosed Post Traumatic Stress. In addition, for every police suicide there are another thousand police officers who are struggling with other problems brought on by the job - anxiety, depression, alcoholism, marital problems, and more.”^{8 9}.

⁷ Felitti, V. J., & Anda, R. F. (2010). The relationship of adverse childhood experiences to adult medical disease, psychiatric disorders and sexual behavior: Implication for healthcare. In R. A. Lanius, E. Vermetten, & C. Pain (2010), The impact of early life trauma on health and disease: The hidden epidemic (pp. 77–87). New York: Cambridge University Press

⁸ Badge of Life, A New Police Suicide Prevention Program

⁹ CDC, 2010 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). Adverse childhood experiences reported by adults—Five states 2009. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 59(49), 1609–1613..



In communities, especially those that have experienced unforeseen mass violence or police shootings, the importance of establishing positive relationships and long-term trust between police and community members is paramount.

Action Items

Trauma-Informed Interventions

While there is a growing focus on the role of trauma in individual health, there are significant gaps in resources to help design and deliver the services that are needed to address trauma within both law enforcement and the community. An extensive menu of best/promising practices in the expanding field of trauma-informed responses to exposure to violence will be developed.

Police Rapid Response

Retired Newton Police Chief Michael Kehoe, co-author of *Preparing for the Unimaginable* which describes the essential steps in a rapid response to mass shooting incidents, will take a leading role in this work for police departments seeking help in developing or refining their rapid response capabilities or those that may require immediate assistance in a critical situation in their cities or towns.

Law Enforcement and Community Approaches

Understanding trauma-informed approaches and promoting positive community engagement are critical aspects of community healing and resiliency. Increasing transparency in communications between police and community members helps to address the needs of those directly impacted by unforeseen and severe incidents – maximizing communication and promoting community problem-solving.

Examples include¹⁰:

- Protocols for sensitive death notifications;
- Cultural competency and implicit bias training;
- Community-based violence-interruption activities;
- Protocols for evidence-based and culturally-grounded grief counseling;
- Longer-term counseling or peer-to-peer supports for law enforcement and community members to help process the level of traumatic exposure;
- Police cadet, mentor, and recreational activities designed to nurture and maintain positive police and youth trust and support .

¹⁰ FY 2016 Vision 21: Law Enforcement and the Communities They Serve: Supporting Collective Healing in the Wake of Harm



In order to build community trust and positive relationships between police and youth, investments must be long-term.

Technical Assistance

Cities and towns committed to transparency, police/community engagement, and the need for trauma-informed culture and practice will be offered direct assistance in developing and implementing their strategies. Training and technical assistance resources will also be made available through agencies and organizations including divisions within the Department of Justice divisions (such as the Office of Justice Programs and the Office of Victims of Crime), National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and institutes able to assist in supporting the project sites.

For police departments, working group members will be able to offer assistance in conducting a comprehensive needs assessment of the department's culture and practice related to both primary and secondary trauma, and the actual or potential scope and nature of high-profile, law enforcement-involved shootings and other incidents of violence to assist in identifying potential approaches that best fit.

For the community, members will offer to with municipal, business and social service leaders to: identify the availability of trauma-informed services and interventions for those impacted by incidents of violence, including families, victims, and the community-at-large; and, to identify the availability of and specific preventative programming recommended by police officers and community members.

Criteria

At the outset, ten cities and towns will be selected to participate in the strategy. Criteria for city and town selection will include at minimum: (1) evidence of commitment from key law enforcement and community leaders and stakeholders; (2) understanding of the importance of addressing the issue of trauma; (3) demonstration of strong commitment to culture change and to a trauma-informed approach to building police and community resilience; and (4) evidence of capacity to manage the local planning and implementation processes. Key considerations will also include geographic distribution and community size (small, medium and large).

RFP and Site Selection

City and town applicants will respond to the Request for Proposal via an online submission system. The Team will conduct webinars on the RFP and be available to respond to questions from all applicants. In addition, interactive webinars hosted through the United States Attorney's Office - District of Connecticut will be a vehicle used to inform interested communities about the project's goals and application process. Team members will review submissions to determine if submitted proposals meet the threshold criteria for participation. Communities with the highest scores will be selected to participate with an emphasis on geographic and community diversity.



***Disseminating program information is essential. Connecticut's findings
- its promising practices and challenges - will be shared.***

Information Sharing

An interactive website will be developed and designed to be highly accessible, bi-lingual, culturally-sensitive, and mobile-friendly, modeled on other successful technical assistance sites. It will link to the many federal, state, and private websites related to trauma, community healing, and police officer wellness. In addition, the website will have the capacity to be expanded over time to ensure distribution of the most up-to-date and promising information.

Dissemination of Findings

A compendium of resources will be designed to assist police departments and communities interested in replicating the promising practices identified from each site, such as written protocols, outreach materials, and training materials, together with a detailed inventory of the tools and publications already available. This will include tool kits currently available through a variety of DOJ¹¹ and other federal, state, and private websites that have compiled extensive information. Law enforcement members of the national team will be heavily involved with the compilation and distribution of materials related to policing practice, rapid response and police/community relations. Team members with expertise in victim assistance and mental health will assist in the production of materials related to developing trauma-informed and community resilience interventions in schools and communities-at-large.

2022 National Symposium

A National Symposium on Promising and Best Policies and Practices in Police and Community Wellness will be organized. Representatives of law enforcement and community members from each demonstration site will present their collaborative work and its impact. The intent of the Symposium is to serve as a catalyst for the broad dissemination of Connecticut's work as well as the promising and best practices to jurisdictions throughout the United States.

¹¹ See OVC toolkit example at <http://www.ovc.gov/pubs/mvt-toolkit/partner-plan.html>



Working Group Staff

The Justice Education Center, Inc.

The Justice Education Center, Inc. is uniquely qualified to lead this effort. The Center's experience working with law enforcement, criminal and juvenile justice reform spans 43 years, amassing a broad and deep institutional knowledge of all aspects of the justice system. Its core value is that collaboration and partnership between the public and private sectors is essential to successfully address the complex issues of criminal and juvenile justice reform and community safety. The Center serves as fiscal representative and grant manager for the Office of the U.S. Attorney, District of CT on 3 federal Project Safe Neighborhoods grants (2004, 2014 and 2016), an initiative focusing on reduce gun and gang violence in inner cities and develop prevention and intervention programs. In June, 2016, The Center, on behalf of the Connecticut Task Force on Eyewitness Identification Reform, coordinated the first National Symposium on Eyewitness Identification Reform at the Yale School of Law (www.eyewitness2016.com) in concert with the School's Criminal Justice Clinic.

The Justice Education Center works closely with the Office of the United States Attorney-District of Connecticut to develop strategies that will enhance positive police and community connections and to offer a range of wellness and resiliency interventions for police officers, community members and their families. Beginning in December 2016 and with funding from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, The Center assembled a group of national leaders in the fields of police reform, victim assistance, trauma intervention, and community resiliency. Hosted by the Office of the United States Attorney in New Haven, the leaders focused on the latest research to improve police community relations and promote healing.

The Justice Education Center's mission has been to prevent and reduce crime and violence, improve public safety, strengthen local communities and offer young people essential opportunities to achieve emotional wellness, innovative pathways toward educational success and sustainable growth in their chosen careers.

The Center's Board of Directors includes leaders within Connecticut's law enforcement, juvenile and criminal justice systems as well as those within government, local community, business, and education sectors.