

EVALUATION OF PENNSYLVANIA COMMUNITY VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

PCCD VIP GRANTS SURVEY REPORT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Presented by:

NORC at the University of Chicago

Jeanette Hussemann, PhD

John K. Roman, PhD

Gregory Haugan

Elena Navarro

Sofia Rodriguez

Genevieve Citrin-Ray

Ashley Hendrickson

Lauren Seward

Presented to:

Pennsylvania Commission on Crime
and Delinquency

Temple University

Heather Goldsworthy, PhD

Caterina Gouvis-Roman, PhD

Max Whitehead-Zimmers

Christina C. Reardon

Executive Summary

In 2021 and 2022, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD), funded nearly 200 Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) programs and Coordinated Community Violence Intervention (CCVI) pilot strategies to support communities in efforts to intervene and prevent violence across the Commonwealth. In 2023, PCCD funded NORC at the University of Chicago and Temple University-Harrisburg to document successes, challenges, and lessons learned from PCCD's VIP grantees. In the fall of 2023, NORC developed and distributed a survey for VIP grantees to collect site-specific data on program operations and implementation. This brief summarizes data developed from the 185 grants awarded to 157 organizations who completed the VIP survey.

Grantee Organizations and Programmatic Focus

Most of the organizations leading a VIP program (83%) are 501(c)(3) nonprofits—7% are government agencies and 4% are non-501(c)(3) status nonprofits. Over half of these organizations (55%) have operated for over 20 years. Most (80%) have received just one PCCD VIP grant since 2021, while 20% received two PCCD grants. Most PCCD VIP grantees geographically serve the greater Philadelphia area (60% of grantees) and Pittsburgh (15%). VIP-funded organizations focus broadly on community prevention services, including; community improvement (34%), crime prevention (31%), mentoring or credible messenger outreach and support (26%), education (23%), recreation and after-school activities (21%), employment services (17%), and mental health services (15%).

Overall, the programs supported by PCCD VIP funding are small: over half of the grants (54%) were reported to support between one and five full-time staff, and 34% support between one and five part-time staff. About one in eight programs (13%) report that the VIP grants did not support any full-time staff, and 29% report that no part-time staff were supported by their grant. Staffing limitations were a key barrier reported by VIP grantees: over one-third identified not having enough staff and too little funding as primary barriers to meeting demands for programming.

Funded Projects

VIP-grant funded projects deliver a wide array of services and programming.

- Youth development, leadership, or mentoring programs (36%);
- Education or employment-related training and services (33%);
- Recreation programs, such as after-school activities, summer camps, or organized sport (23%);
- General case management (21%);
- Mental health or cognitive behavioral therapy programming (20%).

About one in six (16%) of VIP grants funded violence interruption programs, including street outreach, conflict resolution or mediation, and hospital-based or -linked violence intervention. A small proportion of respondents list alternative justice programs, including diversion programming, restorative justice, and peer courts (8%), and legal services and supports, including court services, expungements, and record sealing (3%).

A useful way to conceptually organize VIP grantees is to distinguish between prevention and intervention services. NORC used the presence of risk-related eligibility requirements to classify funded programs—those with no eligibility restrictions are classified as prevention-focused and those with specific eligibility criteria are classified as interventions. Using this framework, the VIP-funded programs are about evenly divided: 53% are classified as prevention-focused and 45% as intervention-focused. Among VIP intervention programs, there are a variety of eligibility criteria: 50% have requirements related to age, 41% screen by location of residence, 38% target a specific risk factor (e.g., substance use) or vulnerable population (e.g., victims of domestic violence), and 21% require prior justice system involvement.

The NORC/ Temple evaluation will focus on the extent to which VIP-funded programs use evidence to guide program practice. The survey finds that close to half (45%) of VIP intervention programs and over a third (37%) of VIP prevention programs have logic models framing the inputs, activities, and expected outcomes of their VIP-funded efforts. The majority of both prevention and intervention programs with 60% reporting having completed an internal or external evaluation. Most programs reported tracking information about participants, though nearly a third rely on paper records.

Next Steps

These survey reports establish a baseline for the process and implementation evaluation of PCCD grantees in the study period. In addition, these results were used to select 40 VIP sites for further study, which included site visits, formal interviews, and other qualitative data collection. Findings from this survey analysis were combined with administrative grantee performance data for site selection. To create a sample that is representative of all VIP sites, VIP grantees were stratified into eight domains. Sites were first divided into two cohorts: Philadelphia area programs (60%) and programs serving areas outside of Philadelphia (40%). Next, within each cohort, sites were stratified into prevention or intervention, and, whether they received a larger or smaller grant than the median award. Five VIP grantees were then selected in each of the eight domains.

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