Community-Supported Violence Reduction Strategy

Concept Paper

Introduction

This document outlines a proposed initiative for community areas on the Southside of Chicago that would collaborate with the Chicago Police Department and other key partners to implement a comprehensive Community-Supported Violence Reduction Strategy (CSVRS) in six community areas bounded by 35th street on the North, 63rd Street on the South, Lake Michigan on the East and the Dan Ryan on the West. Corresponding to Chicago Police Department (CPD) Districts 002 and 003, the community areas addressed in this proposal include West Woodlawn, Washington Park, North Kenwood, Oakland, Douglas, and Grand Boulevard. These communities suffered 65 homicides and 304 shooting incidents over the last three years.

VRS has proven successful in New York and is being piloted by the Chicago Police Department in two Chicago communities. This Initiative would add structured Community Support to VRS to complement and support implementation of law enforcement strategies by building community infrastructures for community engagement and provision of coordinated programming and services. The Initiative would also provide an opportunity to explore whether the CSVRS model can help improve the quality of the justice system and reduce the number of youth incarcerated while increasing public safety.

Overview

In collaboration with the Governor's Office, the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority (IVPA) has made funds available under the Special Project Grants program to conduct community activities that seek to impact the many individual, community and societal factors that contribute to the unacceptable high levels of interpersonal violence in Illinois communities. As part of this Special Project, and under the leadership of Senator Kwame Raoul, IVPA is making $1 million available to implement the Community-Supported Violence Reduction Strategy (CSVRS) in the above mentioned neighborhoods through a comprehensive approach. This approach includes:

1. Work in partnership with the Chicago Police Department to build public will and community buy-in and engagement in the CSVRS Initiative through public awareness and outreach activities, and development of neighborhood safety coalitions/councils and block groups in each of the six community areas.

2. Supporting a range of evidence-based, trauma-informed interventions, support services and activities needed to successfully implement the VRS strategy in a manner that reduces violence and crime while providing alternatives to violence, diversion from involvement in the criminal justice system and pathways to positive lifestyles for youth and young adults at risk for violent behavior. Existing intensive intervention models such as Redeploy Illinois, JISC (Juvenile Intervention Support Center) or other pre-arrest and/or pre-charge diversion strategies, temporary alternative family (foster) care, mental health assessments and treatment, and Multi-systemic Family Therapy would be considered, as well as less intensive programs and activities such as paid and volunteer opportunities to participate in neighborhood safety efforts; mentoring; tutoring and educational supports; and job/job training programs.

3. Partnering with key State, City, County, foundation, corporate and community leaders from the public and private sectors to leverage resources, guidance and support to ensure the success of the Initiative.

4. Evaluating the process and outcomes of the CSVRS Initiative to measure effectiveness, support program and quality improvement, and replication of the model if proven effective.

5. Providing training and technical assistance to CSVRS partners and community residents to support effective implementation of the Initiative.

Key sponsors of the Initiative would include Senator Kwame Raoul, the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority, the University of Chicago and the Chicago Police Department. Outreach is also being made to Chicago and Cook County Public Safety Offices, local aldermen, the Chicago Housing Authority, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Park District, Metropolis Strategies and other key groups who would work together through a **CSVRS Sponsor Council** to shape and guide the Initiative.

The Initiative would be implemented through a collaborative among the Quad Communities Development Corporation, the Southeast Chicago Commission and the Washington Park Consortium. These three agencies would serve as the administrative, fiscal and program management agents for the Initiative, and would be responsible for coordinating implementation of the strategic plan in partnership with the Chicago Police Department and under the guidance and support of the CSVRS Sponsor Council.

Development of the CSVRS strategic plan and implementation budget, as well as further Sponsor Council recruitment and fundraising will occur in the first several months of the Initiative, scheduled to begin in early April. The strategic plan will include specific, measurable goals and objectives, and roles and responsibilities for key partners.

Summary

Violence is an epidemic that diminishes and destroys the quality of life and freedom of individuals, families and communities. The CSVRS initiative is a unique opportunity to provide a comprehensive strategy to reduce violence in six Chicago neighborhoods. Multiple strategies that help reduce risk factors and increase protective factors associated with violence will be implemented so that 1) community members will welcome and engage with law enforcement to implement VRS-related approaches to reducing violence and crime; 2) community members are offered alternatives to help stabilize their community; and 3) community organizations will have the resources and technical support needed to adequately serve the needs of community members.

3-29-12