

**FOCUSED DETERRENCE STRATEGY REDUCES GROUP MEMBER INVOLVED SHOOTINGS
IN NEW HAVEN, CT**

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Though much of the United States is experiencing historic lows in violent crime, there are select places that have not followed the broader trend of the Great American Crime Decline. One such city is New Haven, Connecticut. Despite a decrease in homicides during the 90s and early 2000s, New Haven's homicides once again began trending upward starting in 2003. By 2011, New Haven recorded 34 homicides, just shy of its 1991 high of 36; the city's murder rate of 26.2 per 100,000 steadily outpaced the rates of larger cities such as Washington, D.C. and Chicago, and mirrored that of Oakland, California.

To address the rising death toll, state officials, city leadership, and the newly returned chief of police, Dean Esserman, moved to implement a group violence reduction strategy that had shown success in other urban centers, such as Cincinnati, Chicago, and Boston. This strategy is based on the tenets of *focused deterrence*.

WHAT IS FOCUSED DETERRENCE?

In comparison to traditional deterrence strategies such as increasing the number of police or performing massive enforcement sweeps throughout entire communities, focused deterrence strategies focus limited resources on those most likely to be victims or perpetrators of a particular crime. In the case of urban gun violence, this means young men involved with street groups such as gangs or drug crews.

The focused deterrence strategy implemented in New Haven is based off the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) pioneered in Boston in the 1990s, known as Boston Ceasefire. Key to the intervention are call-ins, meetings between street group members and law enforcement, social service providers, and community members, during which the law enforcement-community partnership delivers three points to attendees¹:

1. A community moral message against violence;

¹ For an in-depth discussion of the call-ins and the strategy more generally, see materials produced by the National Network for Safe Communities <http://nnscommunities.org/our-work/strategy/group-violence-intervention>

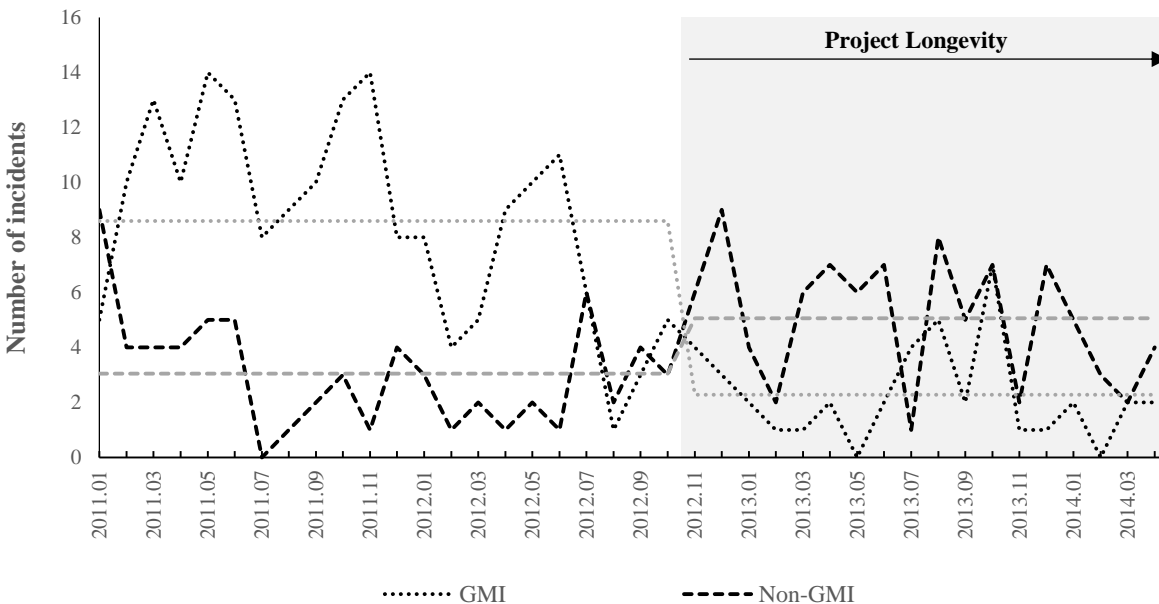
2. A credible law enforcement message about the consequences of further violence; and
3. A genuine offer of help for those who want it.

Should members of a street group ignore the message of the intervention, they and other members of their group become the focus of local, state, and federal law enforcement partners.

PROJECT LONGEVITY: FOCUSED DETERRENCE IN NEW HAVEN

Beginning in November 2012, New Haven had its first call-in; since that time, more than a half dozen call-ins have been conducted. Using data on shootings and homicides since 2011, FIGURE 1 shows the trends for group member involved (GMI) and non-GMI shootings and homicides before and after the first Project Longevity call-in.

FIGURE 1. *GMI and Non-GMI Shootings and Homicides in New Haven, CT*



Determining whether a particular intervention “works” requires a consideration of multiple, overlapping factors. Complicating matters is that some interventions—especially those dealing with social issues like gun violence—are not amenable to true experimental methods. Our recent study conducted several different types of analyses that examined rates of fatal and non-fatal GMI shootings in New Haven before and after the start of Project Longevity. We find support that Project Longevity is associated with decreases in fatal and non-fatal GMI shootings in New Haven. Our key results include the following:

- The significant decrease in GMI shootings and homicides show in FIGURE 1 are strongly associated with the implementation of Project Longevity in November 2012. Our

conservative estimate is that Longevity is associated with approximately **4.6 fewer GMI shootings and homicides per month**.

- A similar decrease was *not* seen in nearby Hartford, CT, suggesting our observed decrease was *not* part of a broader, statewide decline in violence.
- The decrease in GMI events is *not* attributable to a general decline in group criminal activity, such as co-offending.

PROJECT LONGEVITY MOVING FORWARD

Three years into its implementation, our results suggest that the decrease in GMI shootings and homicides are because of Project Longevity and its focused deterrence framework. New Haven is only the first of three Connecticut cities slated to be part of Longevity; Bridgeport and Hartford have since begun doing their own call-ins with high-risk group members. With New Haven joining the likes of New Orleans, Cincinnati, Chicago, Los Angeles, Indianapolis, and Boston, the evidence continues to mount in favor of focused deterrence strategies like Project Longevity.

With national attention focused on the detrimental effects of mass incarceration on communities, focused deterrence offers a promising way forward. By focusing limited resources on those most likely to be affected by gun violence, not only will those most in need of help receive it, but fewer people are likely to get caught up in an already overwhelmed criminal justice system.