

# North Carolina Department of Public Safety

## and North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

### Opportunities for Philanthropy to Support Violence Prevention and Reduction\*

April 2024



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES



NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC SAFETY

This document provides an overview of some violence prevention and reduction activities happening in North Carolina, followed by a summary of several types of opportunities—both broad and specific—for philanthropy to collaborate with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), the NC Department of Public Safety (NCDPS), and other partners working to address violence prevention/reduction. The opportunities for philanthropy range in terms of type and scope, and level of investment needed to yield impact.

## North Carolina and Violence Prevention

NCDPS and NCDHHS have worked to address violence in alignment with their agencies' respective missions. NCDPS' efforts to address violence reflect its mission to "safeguard and preserve the lives and property of the people of North Carolina through preparation, prevention, and protection." As part of its work to "provide essential services to improve the health, safety, and well-being of all North Carolinians," NCDHHS works to prevent and reduce violence by addressing correlated health and safety factors. Working in parallel, both agencies have implemented numerous violence prevention, intervention, and reduction strategies for many years. In addition, several communities across North Carolina have developed violence prevention and interventions activities as well.

## NC Office of Violence Prevention

Starting in 2022, NCDHHS and NCDPS began intentionally collaborating to address violence as both a public health and public safety issue. A November 2022 [white paper](#), informed by public health and public safety experts, provides a framework outlining how North Carolina addresses violence and its causes as public health issues and describes some of the work that was already being done across the state. The July/August edition of the NC Medical Journal featured violence prevention leaders across the state providing additional insight, information, and progress on [Reducing Firearm Injury and Death in North Carolina](#).

The North Carolina Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) was established in March 2023.<sup>1</sup> The creation of the Office of Violence Prevention has played a key role in facilitating collaborative work between NCDHHS and NCDPS and coordinating efforts across state agencies and local leaders to lead the state in implementing a "whole of government" approach to preventing and reducing violence.

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\* This document was developed in partnership with the North Carolina Office of Strategic Partnerships.

<sup>1</sup> Governor Cooper established the North Carolina Office of Violence Prevention by executive order dated March 13, 2023. (See <https://governor.nc.gov/news/press-releases/2023/03/14/governor-cooper-signs-executive-order-establishing-state-office-violence-prevention>.) Gerard Tate was appointed OVP's first director on June 20, 2023. (See <https://www.ncdps.gov/news/press-releases/2023/06/20/tate-serve-first-director-nc-office-violence-prevention>.)

Operating within NCDPS and in close partnership with NCDHHS, OVP is using a public health approach to collaborate with state and local agencies to reduce violence by:

1. Enhancing awareness, collection, and sharing of data;
2. Identifying, leveraging, and managing funds to enhance and expand programs;
3. Enhancing collaboration and facilitating information and best practice sharing;
4. Supporting public awareness campaigns;
5. Providing technical assistance, advising, and identifying training for local programs; and
6. Working with research entities to design, evaluate and promote best practice and evidence-based interventions.

## NCDPS, NCDHHS, and OVP Interagency Collaboration

Several areas of work strands demonstrate the complementary and collaborative nature of efforts and initiatives that NCDPS, NCDHHS, and OVP are undertaking. This [timeline highlights some accomplishments and actions realized and planned in 2023-24](#) reflecting collaborative work and funding streams focused on violence prevention activities. Examples of some of this work are described below.

### *Data collection and analysis*

Both NCDPS and NCDHHS manage data assets related to injury, death, and crime to better understand violence and develop effective prevention strategies.

- The [Injury and Violence Prevention Branch](#) (IVPB) within NCDHHS' Division of Public Health oversees several relevant data efforts including the [NC Violent Death Reporting System](#), which collects information on the circumstances of violent deaths; [NC DETECT](#), the state's statewide syndromic surveillance system, which collects data from emergency departments; the [NC FASTER](#) program, which collects and disseminates emergency department data on nonfatal firearm injuries; and the [North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics](#), which collects health statistics.
- NCDPS oversees the [Criminal Justice Analysis Center](#), which produces criminal justice system research and maintains the NC Justice Data Portal, a centralized database for criminal justice data collected by various state agencies.

### *Grantmaking*

The Governor's Crime Commission (GCC), which coordinates the state's applications and disbursement of federal criminal justice funding, has led the following efforts:

- Partnership with the U.S. Attorney's Office and OVP to administer and begin sub-awarding violence prevention grants.
- Approval of Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grants to Hospital Violence Interruption Programs in multiple locations across the state (see discussion below on opportunities for philanthropic engagement).<sup>2</sup>
- A successful application for competitive federal funding from the U.S. Office of Justice Programs' [Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative](#), which will be used to support OVP's

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<sup>2</sup> The North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission is directing \$750,000 in funding to two hospital programs to expand violence prevention and intervention programs in North Carolina. North Carolina is also expecting to receive federal Bipartisan Safer Communities funding to support more community-based violence prevention and intervention programs using a [Cure Violence model](#). (See <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/news/press-releases/2023/11/01/state-announces-750000-grants-expand-hospital-violence-prevention-and-intervention-programs>.)

technical assistance program, as well as help launch violence prevention programming in rural areas across the state based on recent crime data.

### *Implementation*

Several NCHHS and NCDPS strategies focus on addressing factors that contribute to incidents of violence. These include:

- **Safe firearm storage campaign.** NCDPS' Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) launched [NC S.A.F.E.](#) (Secure All Firearms Effectively), a comprehensive, statewide initiative designed to raise awareness of the importance of safe firearm storage. In partnership with NCDHHS, JJDP will lead efforts to provide education on firearm safety and safe storage best practices, distribute gun locks to community firearm safety teams, provide [Counseling on Access to Lethal Means](#) (CALM) training, develop a map of safe storage locations, and coordinate work on firearm safety and prevention with community organizations, local health departments, pediatricians, local suicide prevention teams, among others. The next phase of the safe storage campaign starting later this year will include more suicide prevention and vehicle safe storage messaging.
- **Suicide and sexual violence prevention.** NCDHHS' Injury and Violence Prevention Branch (IVPB) leads efforts to provide statewide primary prevention activities. IVPB works with local health departments, faith communities and other prevention coalitions to improve behavioral health/mental health outcomes and reduce suicide and sexual violence, as well as promote resilience across the state.
- **Access to re-entry services.** In partnership with the Department of Adult Corrections, NCDHHS' Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Disorders is working to expand access to re-entry services that help reduce recidivism among formerly incarcerated people who are struggling with mental health and substance use disorders.
- **Medicaid expansion,** which provides health coverage for more adults to help meet their basic medical needs, is also providing funding for NCDHHS to allocate to community and hospital-based Community Violence Intervention Programs (see discussion below on opportunities for philanthropic engagement), as well as Healthy Opportunity Pilot communities, in which Medicaid funds can be used to meet basic needs like food and housing, which unmet can be drivers of violence.
- **Improving community health.** NCDHHS leads the state's work to improve health in communities statewide. The [Healthy North Carolina 2030](#) report outlines 10-year goals for improving certain health indicators,<sup>3</sup> several of which are correlated with violence. The [North Carolina State Health Improvement Plan](#) (NC SHIP) operationalizes the health improvement plan with the involvement of many partners statewide.<sup>4</sup>

### Opportunities for philanthropic engagement

OVP's work in the first year has focused on establishing a foundational framework for future interventions; forming partnerships with local governments, law enforcement agencies, healthcare and public health providers, and community organizations and collecting information and data that informs the strategies for

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<sup>3</sup> The indicators derive from the [County Health Rankings population health model](#) developed by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The twenty-one population indicators represent four categories of factors that affect health, plus two health outcomes.

<sup>4</sup> A memorandum on opportunities for philanthropy to engage with NCDHHS' efforts to implement the NC State Health Improvement Plan is available upon request. Contact Erin Fry Sosne, Director of Strategy, Division of Public Health at [Erin.Fry.Sosne@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Erin.Fry.Sosne@dhhs.nc.gov)

understanding and addressing community violence.<sup>5</sup> These activities have highlighted community-level challenges that must be addressed to reduce violence. The following discussion describes areas of need that present opportunities for philanthropy to participate in and support OVP's violence prevention and intervention efforts.

### *Violence intervention programs*

Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs focus on reducing violence, including gun violence, by using trusted community members to establish relationships with people at the highest risk of being victims or perpetrators of violence.<sup>6</sup>

Health systems are increasingly implementing Hospital-based Violence Interruption (HVI) programs. Usually located at Level 1 trauma centers,<sup>7</sup> these programs employ staff to provide follow-up post-intervention care management and connection to resources for gun violence victims and their families.

Though violence intervention programs statewide will receive additional funding support in 2024,<sup>8</sup> both hospital and community-based programs generally need additional programmatic support to meet areas of need related to delivery of services, including:

**1. Increasing workforce capacity and competencies.** The local prevention workforce—including CHWs, violence interrupters, and other outreach workers—is the cornerstone of violence prevention. Supports are needed to ensure that staff in violence prevention/intervention programs are equipped to work with those in need of services. Philanthropic investments could help provide:

- **Community Health Worker (CHW) training and certification.** Violence intervention programs often use CHWs as part of their staffing models to help connect people to needed resources. North Carolina community colleges offer the Standardized Core Competency Training program for CHWs.<sup>9</sup> However, many prospective community health workers need support (e.g., scholarships or stipends) to participate in and/or complete training and certification programs.
- **Violence prevention/intervention training.** Investments are needed to enable community-based prevention teams to participate in the basic training, certification, and ongoing education that nurtures development and enhances professionalism and empowerment of a workforce effective at combatting violence. New staff urgently need initial education in evidence-based violence prevention and intervention strategies. Such trainings include the [Health Alliance for Violence Intervention \(HAVI\) Violence Prevention Professional Certification training](#) and the [Community Healing through Activism and Strategic Mobilization \(CHASM\) Community Health Worker Trainings](#), which deliver specialized, public health-informed education on core competencies and practices for violence prevention professionals. In conjunction with [Injury-Free NC \(IFNC\) Academy training](#), access to foundational training and certification will increase capacity of community violence workers to address violence through well-informed and strategic interventions.

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<sup>5</sup> See *NC OVP Year End Report 2023* available at <https://www.ncdps.gov/documents/ovp-end-year-report-2023/open>

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/dhhs-cwh-report-web-7-18-18/download>, and <https://cvg.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> North Carolina has six Level 1 trauma centers: Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte; Duke University Medical Center in Durham; UNC Hospital in Chapel Hill; University Health Systems of Eastern North Carolina in Greenville; Wake Forest Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem; and WakeMed Health and Hospitals in Raleigh.

<sup>8</sup> See note 2.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://ncchwa.org/services/training/>.

- **Technical Assistance.** Ongoing technical assistance is essential to ensure high-fidelity implementation of evidence-based violence prevention strategies following receipt of training. A comprehensive approach that encompasses both education/training and implementation support through technical assistance ensures the success of these programs and standardizes practices for data collection, analysis, and evaluation, which are crucial for the sustained development and enhancement of the local prevention workforce. Investments are needed to support creation of a resource that can support ongoing technical assistance, data collection, and evaluation.<sup>10</sup>

**2. Creation or expansion of programs.** Support is needed to increase staffing at violence intervention programs and enable community outreach and partnerships, both of which are fundamental to violence prevention/intervention programs increasing sufficiently to meet demand.

- **HVI programs** across the state are severely affected by staffing shortages, with a few major programs having only one staff member. This is not adequate to sustain a successful program and HVIs need funding to increase staffing capacity. HVIs also need funding to expand support of staff development and to facilitate community partnerships (travel funds, events, etc.) that are vital for the success of the programs and reduce the likelihood of staff turnover due to burn out.
- **CVI programs** receive funding from municipal, county, and federal governments but CVIs are also in need of support to hire and sustain their staff. In addition, CVIs also need more flexible funding to cover bus cards, food stipends, vouchers, and case management services that help connect clients to basic subsistence needs such as food, housing, and transportation.
- **Medicaid expansion and implementation of NCDHHS' Healthy Opportunity Pilots (1115 Medicaid Waiver)** increases the opportunity for individuals to have their basic health and social needs met, the lack of which are key drivers of violence, and also provides the opportunity for reimbursement of violence intervention programs. NCDHHS can provide additional information related to opportunities for philanthropy to support Medicaid expansion and Healthy Opportunity efforts.

#### *Other violence prevention supports*

Other initiatives impacting local capacity for addressing or understanding community violence present opportunities for philanthropic support.

- 1. Expansion of Safe Storage options.** As part of NCDPS' safe firearm storage campaign, NC S.A.F.E., various locations statewide, including Federal Firearm Licensees (FFL), are providing storage where people can voluntarily secure a firearm away from their homes temporarily. These sites can be an important resource in certain scenarios; for example, when a grandparent receives a visit from a grandchild or a parent is worried about their child's mental health. Federal guidance provides for a firearm self-storage option that requires use of storage lockers at FFLs choosing to participate.<sup>11</sup> Funds are needed to purchase self-storage lockers, subsidize FFLs for loss of retail space, and support data collection and evaluation of efforts.
- 2. Continuation of NC-FASTER.** As previously described, NC-FASTER provides timely emergency department visit data related to firearm-related injuries occurring across the state in all 100 counties. Work on NC-FASTER also produces quarterly firearm injury reports that are posted and disseminated to key partners

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., [The Colorado Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence](#) and the [Colorado Gun Violence Prevention Resource Bank](#).

<sup>11</sup> As described in an [open letter](#) dated July 24, 2023 from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, U.S. Department of Justice to all Federal Firearm Licensees providing assistance on understanding their obligations when they choose to provide firearm storage services to their customers and public pursuant to Executive Order 14092 on Reducing Gun Violence and Making Our Communities Safer.

across the state working to decrease violence prevention. Much of this work is in partnership with UNC-CH Carolina Center for Health Informatics (CCHI) host of NC DETECT (NC's statewide syndromic surveillance system and emergency department visit data). CDC funding for this work was lost in the fall of 2023. Philanthropy can help to continue this data infrastructure.

3. **Funding of a statewide firearm epidemiologist/program coordinator.** The state's increased activities related to violence prevention has precipitated an increase in data requests from research partners and local programs. A state level position dedicated to generating core data and surveillance on violence prevention and related activities, assessing all key data assets across relevant policy sectors (e.g., health, justice, education), and compiling and disseminating data packages would help translate data into action at the state and local levels.
4. **Develop a resource hub/bank and data dashboard** that incorporates multiple data sources related to violence prevention (e.g., incidences of violent deaths, emergency department visits, safe gun storage practices), including from government entities and evidence-based and evidence-informed prevention programs.<sup>12</sup>
5. **Enhance and expand data visualization** of all North Carolina data assets related to safety and violence to improve utility and effectiveness of current information.

#### *Evidence-based practices/Academic community partnerships*

Data and evidence from violence prevention programs in North Carolina and across the country are helping to increase understanding about the strategies that are most effective to reduce violence. In addition, a multi-partner research workgroup has been convened that can work with communities to advance that body of work. OVP, NCDPS, and NCDHHS' Injury and Violence Prevention Branch would welcome thought-partnership with philanthropy on opportunities to:

1. **Conduct a needs assessment of community programs** and an evaluability assessment to determine how researchers can best support CVI/HVI programs in North Carolina. Such assessments would explore whether communities need technical assistance or backbone support on their collective impact framework (e.g., organizing around a shared vision and shared goals, help conducting research and evaluation and reporting out, a best-practices hub), and based on identified needs inform development of additional research activities and/or programmatic supports.
2. **Assess the fidelity** to evidence-based CVI models that North Carolina community-based organizations are implementing to inform the need for supports to improve programmatic operations.
3. **Provide guidance to new violence prevention/intervention on data elements** that should be collected and timing of collection to facilitate effective program evaluation and continuous improvement.

**For more information related to violence prevention and intervention, contact Siarra Scott, Deputy Director, Office of Violence Prevention, NC Department of Public Safety at [siarra.scott@ncdps.gov](mailto:siarra.scott@ncdps.gov)**

**For more information related to injury and violence data, suicide, sexual violence, social drivers of violence, contact Glorina Stallworth, Branch Head, North Carolina Division of Public Health, NC Department of Health and Human Services at [glorina.stallworth@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:glorina.stallworth@dhhs.nc.gov)**

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<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., the [Colorado Gun Violence Prevention Resource Bank](#).