

COMMUNITY BASED VIOLENCE INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION INITIATIVE IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Introduction

Community violence generally happens outside the home in public spaces. Most community violence involves a relatively small number of people as victims or perpetrators, but its effects impact entire communities, eroding public health, causing economic disruption, and contributing to lasting individual and community traumas. Mitigation efforts typically focus on high-risk individuals, gun violence, specific violent crime problems, as well as the historical and structural challenges that often result in community violence.

Tip: See the [CVI Glossary](#) for definitions of bolded terms found throughout this Checklist.

Definition: Community violence intervention (CVI) is an approach that uses **evidence-informed** strategies to reduce violence through tailored **community-centered** initiatives. These multidisciplinary strategies engage individuals and groups to prevent and disrupt cycles of violence and retaliation, and establish relationships between individuals and community assets to deliver services that save lives, address trauma, provide opportunity, and improve the physical, social, and economic conditions that drive violence.

The CVI approach includes or employs:

- Trusted, **credible messengers** and practitioners to deliver key **intervention** elements.
- Representatives of the affected communities as full partners who provide input and guidance on the intervention's approach.
- A focus on those individuals at highest risk of experiencing or perpetrating community violence in the near term.
- Data from multiple sources that are vetted for racial, ethnic, economic, or other biases to inform the approach.
- Practices that are informed by, and [respond](#) to, the impact of [trauma](#) on [individuals and the broader population](#) in historically underinvested communities.
- Public, private, and community **stakeholders** most impacted by violence, building authentic relationships to prevent violence, strengthen community resilience, and build social capital.
- [Racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic equity](#), including understanding the many social, demographic, economic, and institutional factors that perpetuate community violence, and bringing supportive responses directly to the neighborhoods and people with the greatest need.



Guiding Principles

Community-centered: The CVI approach must be informed by, and tailored to, community residents and **stakeholders**, and everyone involved must prioritize the needs of the community. This means social service partners are engaged to align and collaborate with residents and law enforcement partners in order to reduce violence and build community.

Equitable and inclusive: Care must be taken to guarantee the community members most affected and most disenfranchised are [included](#) in creating CVI solutions so they can benefit from them.

Evidence-informed: Each CVI strategy should be built using evidence generated by multiple disciplines and a variety of methods. Evidence used to support a CVI program may include findings from research and evaluation as well as case studies, expert opinions, or documented lessons learned from the field. Ideally, a CVI program will engage in research and evaluation to help build the evidence base for what works.

Effective and sustainable: CVI programs must demonstrate measurable impacts on violence and community well-being, and they must have access to resources that enable responses to new and ongoing challenges over time.

Step 1: Engage Community Members and Conduct a Community Violence Assessment.

1.1. Get community input.

Actively engage residents and **stakeholders** to understand their perspectives on, and insights into, violence in the community and form trusting relationships that ensure equal and active roles throughout the CVI process.

- [Engage](#) with the community and share available data and information on local community violence to inform discussions, ensuring all residents and voices are represented, including those not typically represented in community initiatives.
- Build training opportunities to ensure that residents and other key stakeholders are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective public safety partners.
- Offer diverse opportunities for participation, creating multiple entry points for [residents/stakeholders to get involved](#) and stay engaged with CVI efforts.
- Consider potential roadblocks such as **planning fatigue** or skepticism among community residents and [modify](#) the CVI engagement strategy accordingly.

1.2. Collect and analyze [data](#).

Compile data and perform an in-depth [community violence assessment](#) that identifies the people and [places involved in violence](#), [the root causes of violence](#), assets that can support the CVI strategies, and gaps/needs to be addressed.

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- Use multiple qualitative and quantitative data sources, including:
 - **Law enforcement data** to learn WHERE violence happens, WHO is involved in violence, WHAT type of violence is occurring, and WHEN violence most frequently occurs.
 - **Public health data** to learn WHO is victimized, WHEN victimization occurs, and WHAT type of victimization is most frequent.
 - **Community organization data** to learn WHO is receiving services for involvement in violence, WHERE community residents do not feel safe, WHY violence is occurring in certain places, WHAT are the community's assets and needs, WHO are trusted leaders in the community, and WHAT are the underlying issues that cause violence.
 - **Landscape analysis** to learn about the historical, current, and proposed policies, strategies, and systems impacting the community and community violence.
- Check for **biases** in data sources to mitigate their influence. Consult with research or technical assistance partners as necessary.
- Identify** community policies, **community comprehensive plans**, and **local assets** and note existing strengths you can build upon for the CVI efforts, in addition to identifying any needs/gaps.
- Examine the local capacity for **systems-led** and **community-based leadership** of CVI. If community organizations do not have the capacity to implement federally funded programs, implement a plan to move toward community leadership over time.

Step 2: Form a Community Collaboration.

2.1. Identify partners to form a [collaboration](#) for CVI.

Recruit partners with complementary missions and skill sets that can work together to help address the priorities you have selected.

- Identify public health partners such as hospital-based victim services, trauma centers, health departments, mental health services, and prevention specialists.
- Identify public sector partners such as law enforcement, courts and supervision, corrections, schools, housing, parks and recreation, and other municipal departments. Government entities should avoid artificial "turf" or boundary issues that hamper collaboration and information sharing.
- Identify community-based partners such as existing **wraparound service** providers, faith-based organizations, community leaders, resident organizations, community development corporations, job-training centers, re-entry programs, and victim service organizations, including domestic violence programs and rape crisis centers.
- Identify other service providers and institutional partners such as criminal justice-based victim/witness assistance units, social service and behavioral health organizations, agencies treating substance use and mental health disorders, and arts and environmental organizations.
- Identify private entities such as local businesses, foundations, and job training and job placement partners.

2.2. Bring partners together and [build trust](#).

Set expectations and conditions that will help you successfully manage the partnerships.

- Define the shared goals and vision for the CVI work.
- Define the roles and responsibilities of each partner clearly so each partner knows what is expected of them and how they will work with one another.
- Conduct any necessary relationship building to repair and overcome legacies of strained relationships or mistrust.
- Establish communication, coordination, and accountability processes, including those that address philosophical differences regarding the goals/strategies of CVI efforts.
- Identify potentially overlapping strategies/policies/community efforts among partner organizations and assign roles accordingly to maximize the resources available to CVI efforts.
- Identify, engage, and hire trusted, **credible messengers** and practitioners from the community. Provide trainings, professional development and supports, and compensation for their work. Anticipate that special considerations may arise when employing individuals who have been involved with the justice system.

2.3. Strengthen the collaboration.

Ensure partners have the ongoing knowledge, skills, and resources needed to successfully implement the CVI approach.

- Determine whether all of the necessary partners are engaged in the collaboration and identify any missing partners who need to be at the table.
- Build **community-based organizations'** [capacity](#) to strengthen and scale their work to effectively meet the complex needs of persons engaged in and/or impacted by community violence.
- Work with a [research partner](#) and/or technical assistance partner to help identify where and with whom to focus CVI efforts and measure the CVI strategies' impact.
- Identify opportunities to include [trauma-informed](#) approaches and [responses](#) throughout CVI.
- Consider potential roadblocks, such as organizations that lack experience working with persons with criminal history or gang affiliations. Address any capability and safety concerns up front to ensure referrals to these partners are successful.

Step 3: Implement CVI.

3.1. Select the CVI strategies.

Review your CVI strategies and tailor your community's approach to ensure alignment with the highest risk individuals, groups, and locations as identified in the **community violence assessment**.

- Determine the priorities for your CVI strategies based on the results of the **community violence assessment** and community input. Consider:

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- Specific areas of the community or neighborhood where violence more typically occurs.
- Specific types of violence that most impact the community.
- Specific groups or populations on which to focus the CVI strategies.

These priorities should be tailored to your specific community.

- Select one or more CVI strategies. These strategies focus **interventions** on individuals at highest risk of involvement in violence and/or on places where violent incidents are most likely to occur.
- Consider including [prevention programs](#) that complement the selected **interventions**.
- Customize the CVI strategies so that they meet the needs, issues, and priorities of the local community, because CVI is not a model that can be easily replicated or implemented in a one-size-fits-all manner.
- Build a roadmap for the CVI strategies ([a logic model](#)) that provides a framework for implementation, program monitoring, and evaluation. A roadmap identifies the core components of a program and the connections among activities, process, and outcomes. Consider including a theory of change in the roadmap.

3.2. Create a supportive structure for implementation.

Establish a [clear management structure](#) to put the selected strategies into action and that identifies who runs the programs. This includes instituting processes for selecting community-based providers to operate the CVI programs, developing an agreed-upon action plan for program implementation, and building a flexible environment that allows for making necessary program changes over time.

- Select the CVI partners. Include a range of organizations and agencies with deep relationships in the community and experience in [authentic community engagement](#) that are well positioned to implement a CVI program and provide services. Consider professional qualifications as well as relevant experience and credibility with the individuals, groups, and location being served. Seek flexible funding from local and/or larger agencies, if needed, to pass through funds to smaller, less resourced partners.
- Create an action plan. When developed in collaboration with the key partners, this plan can help ensure everyone involved in implementation is on the same page and no key tasks fall through the cracks. An action plan includes all implementation tasks, deadlines, and person(s) responsible.
- Engage with training and technical assistance providers to address implementation issues and challenges and receive CVI training, as needed.
- [Make changes to the CVI programs and/or strategies](#), as needed, so that throughout the implementation process, they are tailored to the needs of program participants or to meet the community's gaps and challenges.

Step 4: Setting CVI Up for Success.

4.1. Engage the community and seek frequent feedback on all aspects of CVI.

[Community engagement and feedback](#) are central to implementation, just as they are in previous steps. The focus during implementation is raising community awareness of the CVI efforts and progress, seeking continuous feedback to adjust and adapt the program as needed, and making concerted efforts to hear from community voices not typically heard.

- Use multiple communication channels to inform community members and **stakeholders** about CVI and how to access resources. These resources must reach the organizations supporting those communities and individuals most impacted by violence.
- Establish multiple feedback opportunities for community members to provide input on the CVI program's implementation, such as community forums, online feedback mechanisms, and websites/social media.
- Continue to focus on **authentic community engagement**, ensuring all community groups are represented and diverse voices are heard.
- Compensate community-based partners and community members for their time and contributions. They are often asked to provide significant input/effort without recognition of the value of their time.
- Develop a continuous quality improvement plan to ensure that all community input is incorporated into the CVI program.

4.2. Assess CVI partners and law enforcement collaboration.

Determine the role of law enforcement agencies in the CVI strategies, as well as the type of relationship that needs to be established between law enforcement and the CVI partners. The relationship should consider issues of trust and safety, including privacy and the treatment of intelligence and sensitive law enforcement information.

- Determine the level of [collaboration between the CVI partners and law enforcement](#) as well as court supervision and corrections required for successful implementation, and communicate this to all **stakeholders** involved. Emphasize the shared goals of saving lives and promoting community safety.
- Provide the CVI partners and law enforcement stakeholders with cross-training opportunities so that they understand and respect each other's roles and the importance of alignment and collaboration in supporting the CVI program.
- Establish the frequency and channels through which the CVI partners and law enforcement stakeholders will share data, information, and feedback, as needed.

4.3. Develop holistic, trauma-informed approaches for the CVI program.

[Trauma-informed approaches](#) reduce the likelihood of retraumatizing individuals and communities, can help to mitigate the effects of prior trauma, and disrupt cycles of multigenerational trauma. They optimally promote safety, trust, empowerment, and healing for individuals at highest risk for involvement in violence, and [for communities as a whole](#). Trauma-informed care is critical to safe and supportive crisis intervention, **wraparound service** provision, and other central CVI activities.

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- Provide [training](#) to CVI **stakeholders** and program staff on the impact of trauma, research on adverse childhood experiences, and trauma-informed care.
- Integrate trauma-informed policies into all aspects of the CVI program or initiative.
- Provide comprehensive **wraparound services** for program participants and their family members, if appropriate, including cognitive-based therapy, subsidized employment, life coaching, supportive healing, case management, restorative justice opportunities, and community empowerment resources.
- Establish mechanisms to engage, incentivize, and retain participants for the full length of the CVI program, or for an adequate amount of time for the holistic supports to have impact.

4.4. Develop and support CVI staff.

Staff selection, professional development, and staff supports must be strategic and meaningful to ensure program stability and the staff's capacity for success.

- Recruit trusted, **credible messengers** who are able to connect with, gain the trust of, and motivate people who are at highest risk for involvement in violence to successfully challenge and transform their harmful thought processes, attitudes, and actions.
- Institute a leadership structure to manage CVI staff that includes best practices for hiring, vetting, training, and ensuring safe practices. Stay informed about recommended fair chance hiring approaches and proactively address any potential issues when employing individuals who were previously involved with the justice system.
- Provide staff, particularly **outreach workers** and **violence interrupters**, with comprehensive support, including adequate training (e.g., trauma and respite support), management, income, and job security.
- Build staff knowledge and skills through ongoing professional development, advancement, and career track opportunities.

Step 5: Measure Success.

5.1. Identify and track the CVI program's performance measures.

Engage in a continuous process of measuring, tracking, and reporting progress toward program goals as well as documenting successes.

- Identify and track the CVI **performance measures** for continuous improvement. Learn about the [difference between program evaluation and performance measurement](#). Ensure program partners have the tools, training, and technology to support this work by engaging funders, **research partners**, and other **stakeholders** to build capacity. This may include the creation of mentoring opportunities to support these efforts.
- Measure [program quality](#) as part of the performance measurement.
- Include community members' feedback when defining the performance measures and indicators of success.
- Hold the collaborating partners accountable by developing and tracking metrics on their participation and activities.

5.2. Collect and analyze data on the CVI program's outcomes.

Data collection can be challenging for CVI programs, but adding to the evidence base is important to secure future funding and **sustainability**.

- Use data from multiple sources to assess and analyze outcomes. Read examples of CVI evaluation reports: [Early Signs of Success for Chicago Street Outreach Collaboration](#), [Outcome Evaluation of Advance Peace Sacramento](#), [READI Chicago](#), and [The Effects of Cure Violence in The South Bronx and East New York, Brooklyn](#).
- Understand the biases in common data sources to mitigate their influence.

5.3. Evaluate the CVI strategies.

Consistent, ongoing evaluation provides an objective way to determine the CVI strategies' impact, and it yields tangible lessons learned to improve the CVI program in real time.

- Create an evaluation plan that incorporates process and outcome measures. [This resource](#) provides a step-by-step framework to plan and implement an evaluation.
- Incorporate [racial equity and inclusion](#) into the evaluation plan, as some data measures may not fully capture the holistic experiences of the community (e.g., calls-for-service data as crimes are often under- or unreported).
- Work with a **research partner** who can serve as an objective expert to conduct the evaluation. Learn tips for [selecting a research partner here](#) and [here](#).

Step 6: Sustain Success and Continuous Improvement.

6.1. Implement a sustainability process.

Sustainability planning is a process for identifying what aspects of a CVI program work in a community and maintaining positive outcomes over time. To maintain positive outcomes, the CVI partners must continuously assess and devote fiscal resources to their CVI efforts.

- Plan for **sustainability** early by building relationships with representatives from the public, private, and community sectors who can play important roles in continuing local efforts over time. Identify the representatives who may become CVI champions and capable of gaining and sustaining community buy-in, support, and resources for CVI.
- Use performance measures, evaluation findings, storytelling, and culturally literate messaging to demonstrate CVI's value to the community and potential funders in order to sustain the effort over time.
- Achieve and maintain financial stability by developing a grant/funding strategy with the CVI partners.
- Continuously learn from and leverage other communities' CVI experiences and efforts by forming peer-to-peer partnerships with CVI programs in other jurisdictions.