

# LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS REPORT FOR CITY OF WILMINGTON, DELAWARE



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# Introduction

The City of Wilmington contracted with The Community Based Public Safety Collective (The Collective) to complete a landscape analysis to support the City in achieving its goals for violence reduction. The landscape analysis' purpose is to help inform the City's strategy for implementing potential community based public safety initiatives, including but not limited to "supporting community violence intervention (CVI) organizations and a public safety round table."

The Collective is the nation's premier training and technical assistance (TTA) and capacity building provider for emerging Community Based Public Safety (CBPS) initiatives, also known as Community Violence Intervention (CVI) agencies. Launched in early 2021, The Collective's mission is to strengthen neighborhood leadership by investing in education, advocacy and training of community based public safety practitioners and organizations. The Collective is motivated to a single goal: to create a world in which lives are not lost to community violence.

In June 2021, The Collective became one of four national TTA providers to lead the Community Violence Intervention Collaborative, a 16 - jurisdiction initiative designed to build the capacity of CVI organizations nationally in cities that experienced spikes in violence during the pandemic. This initiative is associated with the Biden Administration.

The Collective's work is informed by over three decades of collective work by the organizations' founders, Aqeela Sherrills and Elizabeth "E" Ruebman, as well as their team members. The most recent iteration of their work being the Newark Community Street Team (NCST), a community based public safety initiative which they co-founded in the City of Newark, New Jersey. NCST was founded in 2014 and is credited with a 48.4% reduction in murder, a 8.9% reduction in aggravated assaults and a 19.8% reduction in auto theft in their area of focus, the South Ward.

It is important to make the distinction between *violence intervention* and *violence prevention*. Both are vital to the well-being of communities, but they take different approaches, require different skills and expertise, and address different community needs.

*Violence prevention* services are designed to stop violence before it occurs by strengthening community social networks and addressing issues that have been identified as risk factors leading to violence. These services can include youth development/enrichment programming, referrals to mental health and substance abuse treatment, assistance with employment and housing, and community-based support on social or family challenges. All of these services are designed to improve individual and community well-being.

*Violence intervention* reduces violence by providing direct support to those at the greatest risk of perpetuating violence and those who are already connected to violence. Violence intervention workers accomplish this crucial mitigation of harm through street outreach, group intervention, hospital-based violence interruption, retaliation prevention and the brokering of peace agreements between rival individuals and groups.

Since prevention does not always succeed, it is immeasurably important that a plan is in place to interrupt violence when it does happen. These services are life-saving for those in acute crises. There is a high threshold for arrest and prosecution, so often interventionists are the only way to prevent additional people from being hurt or killed.

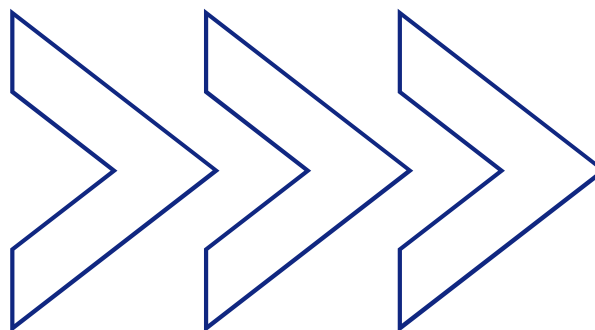
Given the complex causes and factors of community violence, a broad range of action must be taken in order to meaningfully address it. While prevention and intervention services are both essential in reducing violence and harm, and both require sustained funding, the purpose of this report is to highlight ways to build community infrastructure for *intervention* work.<sup>1</sup>

The Collective is grateful for the opportunity to support Wilmington as it embarks on a bold effort to save lives through violence intervention.

# Background and Methodology

The landscape analysis included a review of crime and hospital data, including demographics of victims and responsible parties, motivations of shootings, and neighborhood hotspot data; survey administration; and a two-day site visit to conduct in-depth interviews with City leadership, community members, interventionists and other stakeholders.

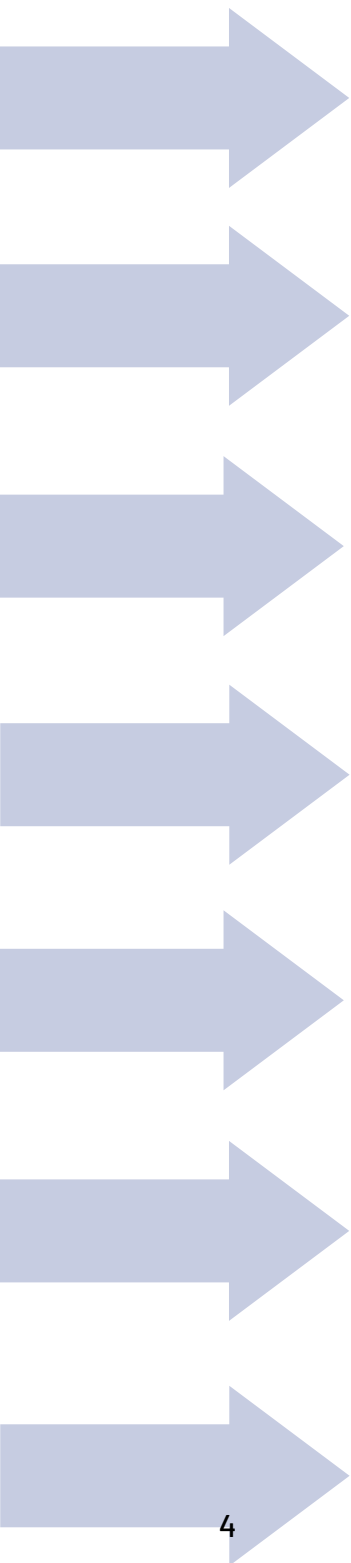
The Collective conducted over 58 interviews in person during the site visit, on the phone and via Zoom following the visit (list of interviewees in appendix). The interviews were with a wide variety of stakeholders who provided insights into the current violence; explained the efforts and resources available to address violence; and shared the history of the City. The interviewees were passionate about reducing violence and spoke to us candidly. As such, all interviews were off the record and The Collective has not attributed the feedback to specific individuals. The Collective also spoke with people who are more familiar with street violence and are not mentioned by name. Finally, The Collective conducted a survey of 20 “boots on the ground” front line workers. Those findings are shared below.



# Assets

## *General Violence Reduction Assets in the City of Wilmington*

### **The Collective immediately recognized tremendous assets in Wilmington.**



Mayor Purzycki and the City Council are committed to violence reduction and adopting innovative strategies. The City leadership is deeply concerned about the violence crisis and made the effort to travel to Newark to learn about possible solutions.

Chief Tracy is open to innovation and the Police Department recently made public safety data readily available to the public and to stakeholders by posting CompStat reports on its website weekly. The Police Chief is an enthusiastic advocate for the Group Violence Initiative (GVI).

GVI receives training and technical assistance support from the National Network for Safe Communities, the creator of the GVI model, and the National Network reports that this site is adhering to the model and operating at a high level.

There is an existing CDC Report that led to the formation of the Wilmington Community Advisory Committee that has been convening partners around solutions to underlying causes of violence with a focus on "accessing state services for the community."

The Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence has been advocating for public and private investment in community violence intervention.

There are numerous prevention and intervention organizations in the city run by community members who care deeply about reducing violence in their community. Without exception these organizations have not received adequate financial support to reach their full potential. Many organizations are in need of organizational infrastructure that will allow them to apply for and manage funding.

Wilmington is rich with people who love their city and want to reduce violence.

# Social Environment

“There are two  
Wilmingtons.”

“There are two Wilmingtons.” This quote was repeated in various ways by numerous interview participants and aligns with the CDC Report<sup>2</sup> and The People’s Report<sup>3</sup> findings. Interviewees repeatedly described the disparity that exists in Wilmington between the communities that are invested in and the communities that are not.

Wilmington appears to suffer from the same structural racism that contributes to violence in almost every American city. Racially discriminatory housing policies set in place by federal, state and local governments in the 20th century drove residential segregation and shut Black Americans out the primary source of wealth-building - homeownership - while devaluing assets and creating a vicious cycle of disinvestment in their communities.<sup>4</sup> The War on Drugs which has been documented to have targeted Black neighborhoods<sup>5</sup> and the Black men within the neighborhoods, removed much of the Black male leadership and parenting from neighborhoods through disproportionate arrest and incarceration. The barriers to successful reentry after incarceration are formidable, including excessive fees and fines, restrictions on housing, and minimal job opportunities, compounding the economic and social isolation of the Black neighborhoods. It is no surprise then, that the median income of Black families in Wilmington is nearly half that of white families according to a report in 2019 by Prosperity Now and JP Morgan Chase & Co. Black residents had a higher percentage of households with zero net worth, a lower homeownership rate and higher percentage of cost-burdened renters.<sup>6</sup>

2 <https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/cdcfinalreport.pdf>

3 <http://www.thepeoplesreport.com/report.html>

4 <https://cinnaire.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Cinnaire-Policy-Paper-on-Wilmingtons-Single-Family-Investment-Challengev2.pdf>

5 <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/race-mass-incarceration-and-disastrous-war-drugs>

6 [https://prosperitynow.org/sites/default/files/resources/RWD\\_\\_Profile\\_Wilmington.pdf](https://prosperitynow.org/sites/default/files/resources/RWD__Profile_Wilmington.pdf)

The historic and continued structural inequality can not be separated from the physical violence that exists in Wilmington.<sup>7</sup> Over and over during the interviews for this report, the lack of employment opportunities - especially for those previously incarcerated, lack of housing opportunities, failing educational opportunities, lack of investment, lack of access and a lack of opportunity were referenced when speaking about violence in Wilmington. Many of the conversations were permeated by a profound pain from the circumstances that Black people in Wilmington have had to endure.

“We have no control over the schools, prison or social services.” This quote captures another frequent theme in the interviews: Wilmington does not have full agency which limits the city’s ability to improve public safety. For example, most students in Wilmington are dispersed to four separate districts in surrounding areas and while there is a vocational-technical high school, there are no traditional high schools in which to focus violence reduction efforts. Numerous participants referred to the County and State as bad partners who control many resources, namely social services, yet are not invested in improving the quality of life for Wilmington’s residents.

Some city residents interviewed for this report expressed concerns that neighborhood redevelopment efforts might cause the displacement of current residents. Wilmington’s City Administration and City Council stated their commitment to preventing displacement of residents from their existing neighborhoods.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.thepeoplesreport.com/>



There is a common perception that certain entities become popular among policymakers and garner all the resources.

Wilmington is a small city and many participants conveyed the importance of being polite and not antagonistic to other stakeholders but it was clear that few people trust one another to engage in valuable work to reduce violence. Internal and unspoken tensions have clearly been a barrier to success for many initiatives. Several City Council members have an overtly contentious relationship with the Police Chief and many residents reported carrying significant trauma from officer involved shootings. There is a common perception that certain entities become popular among policymakers and garner all the resources. The intervention organizations are known to have conflicts with one another as well. The collective trauma and lack of trust in the community was palpable to The Collective team. The Collective was told that there are several leaders who have access to individuals directly involved in violence but that these leaders feel uninvited, isolated from resources and mistrustful of decision makers and therefore they don't engage in formal efforts to reduce violence.

There are numerous prevention and intervention programs operating within the city. Many rely on volunteer labor and others on minimal public funding. Funding decisions do not seem to be matched to needs that are identified by data as much as by political alliances. The City has embarked on meaningful initiatives such as the Hope Zone, the CURE Violence Model and the Wilmington Citizens Advisory Council that have not been able to maintain support nor undergo evaluation. Several interviewees suggested that there is a history in

Wilmington of "funding programs to fail" - meaning that they are given enough funding to pass as support but not a sufficient amount to bring programs to scale or support evaluation and process improvement. Additionally, funding opportunities often have barriers that make it challenging for small organizations to apply for and manage funding without training and technical assistance.

# Nature of Violence: Key Findings

The City's homicide rate is a true cause for concern. In 2021, there was a 26% increase in murders in the City of Wilmington. In the first five months of 2022, there have been 33 shooting incidents in the City of Wilmington, resulting in 40 victims (33 wounded, 7 killed). In comparison, the next highest number of shootings in a Delaware city is 6 incidents with no deaths resulting.<sup>8</sup> The City experienced a 13% decrease in shootings with 118 shooting incidents (approximately 14% of which were juvenile shooting incidents) resulting in 149 shooting victims (12% of which were juvenile shooting victims) in 2021. Of the 285 defendants arrested on gun charges in 2021, 45 were juveniles.<sup>9</sup> The case closure rate for homicides was 59% in 2021 (which is considered high compared to national averages).

An aggressive police enforcement campaign is believed to have "taken the most violent off the streets," including a 19 person indictment,<sup>10</sup> and City leaders believe that this would be an opportune moment to layer in other strategies. The Police Department is very supportive of the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) model being operated by the State within Wilmington.

The Collective also conducted a survey of 20 "boots on the ground" front line workers made up of individuals working in the field from the GVI program and the Center for Structural Equity. A review of the survey results revealed that although the majority of front line workers work long and varied hours, exceeding a standard 40 hour work week, most reported being satisfied and enjoying the work. In addition, a large percentage reported having been

The Police Department is very supportive of the GVI model being operated by the State within Wilmington.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.delawareonline.com/in-depth/news/2021/08/16/delaware-gun-violence-database/5518513001>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.wilmingtonde.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/10569/637787153813930000>

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that large arrests can often lead to future additional violence because of power vacuums and because of the destabilization of the arrestees' families.

victims of violence and having family members that had been victims of violence, and in both cases not being particularly satisfied with law enforcement's response.

The challenges reported by the front line workers included inadequate relocation services and the need for transferable housing vouchers; a lack of housing and employment for clients; and a lack of mental health support for themselves and clients. Wilmington is a small city and people know each other. There is nowhere to hide. The State's Victim Compensation System is not conducive to emergency relocation and therefore victims of gun violence are frequently left to be revictimized or to engage in preemptive violence, presenting a formidable obstacle to interventionists' work to reduce violence.

In 2021, the Wilmington Police Department's Victim Services Unit had 2,508 victim calls, conducted 318 office/home/field visits and completed 293 Victim Compensation applications. The Police Department's Youth Response Unit, which has clinicians who work with children and their families to provide free, voluntary trauma assessment and short-term counseling services for those who are victims of, or witnesses to, a traumatic event, served 119 carryover clients and 75 new clients, and made 274 referrals.<sup>11</sup>

There was a frequent assertion that violence in Wilmington is connected to, or spills over to, Wilmington from neighboring areas, in particular, Philadelphia. As such, interventionists should be connected to people on the ground in Philadelphia.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

# A Targeted Approach to Violence

Evidence confirms what individuals on the front lines of intervention know first-hand, that even in communities with high rates of violence only a small percentage of individuals are directly involved. Those involved in the violence usually make up no more than 1% of the community's population and are often connected through social networks. Those who are at highest risk of perpetuating violence are also at the highest risk of becoming a victim of violence.<sup>12</sup>

This small percentage of individuals responsible for the largest percentage of violence are often hardest to reach by traditional government organizations and approaches. In order to reach these high-risk individuals, interventionists must be in a relationship with the individuals. It requires credible individuals with relationships that can support and affect the behavior of those high-risk individuals. High-risk individuals require a lot of attention in order to reduce violence. Building relationships, knowing how to communicate, and how to sustain contact with those high-risk individuals is the foundation of everything that has been proven to work in addressing violence.<sup>13</sup>

There are existing strong programs that are worthy of funding, however the focus of this analysis is on building community infrastructure to address violence by serving individuals at highest risk in specific geographic violence hotspots. Additionally, members of the City Council expressed great interest in community policing, police practices, and prevention activities which are all valuable and important matters but not within the scope of this analysis. Interviewees informed us that previous efforts have been geared toward strengthening and supporting intervention services through core entities like the GVI Support and Outreach Team, Center for Structural Equity, and Christiana Care Hospital-Based Violence Intervention. The Collective recommends enhancing those organizations/programs while simultaneously broadening the reach of intervention services with additional community based public safety organizations and infrastructure.

<sup>12</sup> <https://nnscommunities.org/strategies/group-violence-intervention/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2019/07/05/nns-conference-celebrates-10-years-of-creating-change-in-communities/>

# Existing Initiatives Focused on Reducing Violence

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These initiatives were identified by The Collective, but we can not attest to their individual program quality:

## **Group Violence Support and Outreach Team (GVI)**

GVI is a national, evaluated model<sup>14</sup> that is the intellectual property of the National Network for Safe Communities, from whom the program receives training and technical assistance. GVI is known as a “focused deterrence” model, meaning that it focuses on the small number of individuals within a community who are causing gun violence. The Support and Outreach Team appears to enjoy widespread support among stakeholders in Wilmington and has a large, dedicated and professional staff that includes clinicians, social workers, peers, youth life coaches and lived experience individuals.

GVI is a State social services program that receives referrals from law enforcement. They conduct weekly Custom Notifications (contacts with particular group members) and Call-Ins (meetings where the central messages of the GVI strategy are communicated, services available, and the meaningful legal consequences of continued violence) are conducted every three months.

GVI Support and Outreach is funded by a blended stream of state general funds and federal TANF funds. Last year, Support and Outreach only received \$100,000 from state general funds with no guarantee of renewal for the coming year. The TANF funds they have received support juveniles and families, but not single adults. The TANF funding was accessed from an available pool of unspent funds from previous years and is about to run out. The yearly TANF allocation is insufficient to support the program at its current level.

The demands on the program are tremendous. The GVI front-line staff have been attempting to manage caseloads 2 to 3 times best practice levels for over a year due to funding issues. In addition, only a handful of the Support and Outreach

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<sup>14</sup> <https://nnscommunities.org/strategies/group-violence-intervention/>

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Team are state employees. Many are temporary staff hired through a third-party staffing agency. As such, the benefit package is not the same as the state benefit package, producing an obvious inequity. GVI Support and Outreach and the Director John Cook have a strong reputation throughout the community and their partner agencies and organizations as well as documented success with participants in their targeted population.

Although GVI is experiencing success with their Call-In acceptance and has a strong reputation, one of the challenges reported by GVI Support and Outreach is that when they host a Call-In, which is attended by probation officers, police officers, DOJ attorneys, USDOJ attorneys and others, invited attendees worry that it is a “set-up” and that they will be arrested if they show up. This illustrates the reality that while the program is valuable and impactful, many individuals that are too fearful of systems-involvement will be reluctant to engage with any systems-involved program.

#### **Center for Structural Equity (CSE)**

CSE is a 501(c)(3) that provides mentoring and prevention programming for youth, case management, violence mediation, interruption and community outreach and workforce development training. CSE receives government and philanthropic dollars, has fiscal infrastructure and operates with protocols and procedures. CSE can also use the United Way for fiscal administration of funding. CSE operates a Crisis Intervention Team with 13 full-time staff and an evening six-person crew part time, and needs additional funds to expand. CSE is hiring four people to work at schools and will hire seven more people. CSE also provides victim services and crime scene response though they could use additional capacity to serve more.

Several stakeholders expressed concerns that this program does not cooperate with law enforcement and that it challenges what it sees as structural racism and/or unjust systems. The Collective would like to note that both things are appropriate for the work that CSE is doing and should not be used to invalidate their need for funding. CSE operates citywide but its center of gravity is the North Side.

CSE has received extensive capacity building support from Social Contract. They would benefit from additional intervention training (PCITI Level I and Level II). They would also benefit from hiring and training younger staff.

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### **Youth Advocate Program, Inc. (YAP)**

YAP is a national nonprofit in 32 states and Washington, D.C., serving nearly 150 communities, including Delaware. YAP partners with youth justice, child welfare, behavioral health, and other systems to provide community-based alternatives to youth incarceration, congregate child welfare, behavioral health placements, and neighborhood violence. In a partnership with the state of Delaware, YAP serves approximately 50 youth in an innovative re-entry program. Using an effective and racially equitable wraparound services model, they begin providing services to youth and their parents upon adjudication and continue for six months post release. The contract with the state has recently been expanded to enable the inclusion of YAP clinicians to provide cognitive behavioral therapy and a workforce coordinator. YAP is currently funded through the State and other grants to serve youth “returning” to the community from the Ferris School, but receives no funding from the City. With additional funding, YAP could provide intervention services to youth highest at risk of being victims and/or perpetrators of violence who are not newly “returning” from facilities like Ferris School.

### **ChristianaCare Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Program (HVIP)**

The HVIP is just over a year old, is run by dedicated and passionate medical staff and has a 67% consent rate for eligible patients who join the program. The hospital funds the program itself from its Department of Health Equity program and supports three full-time employees. With current funding levels, it is only able to serve gunshot and stabbing victims, not the numerous assault victims that it sees, and cannot operate 24/7. The program focuses primarily on connecting victims to follow up healthcare and other needed services. It reports that there is a month-long wait for mental health services. The HVIP’s patient data show that gunshot victims generally fall into two age groups: Black men in their 20s and Black men from 45–65. The HVIP does not track justice involvement of its participants (which would be interesting data) but it does track reinjury rates.

Nemours Children’s Hospital is in the early planning stages for an HVIP. Between 2018 and 2021, Nemours averaged approximately 71 emergency department assault admissions per year and have experienced 55 in just the first half of 2022. An HVIP at Nemours would be an important addition to the public safety ecosystem.

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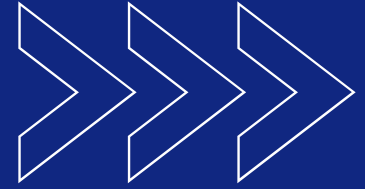
### **Wilmington Community Advisory Council (WCAC)**

WCAC is a diverse group of state and local stakeholders, created in 2016 to address youth violence based on the 2015 CDC Report. The Council serves as a convener, broker and advocate for broadly addressing the root causes of violence, e.g. toxic stress and trauma, behavioral health, unemployment and neighborhood safety. It brings community organizations and coalitions together to connect them to expertise and resources. It advocates for policy changes that remove barriers. The WCAC appears to be known as a good convener around policy.





# Areas for Innovation or Improvement



Key stakeholders throughout the city could benefit from a deeper understanding of **trauma, the variety of causes of trauma, and the connection between unresolved trauma and violence**. They could also benefit from a deeper understanding of why violence is (now) viewed as a public health issue. Many interviewees referred to outdated beliefs that people engaged in violence simply need to change their mindset or their lifestyle, not recognizing the cognitive and psychological impacts of intergenerational and on-going trauma, nor the economic and social isolation imposed on people living in the neighborhoods most impacted by violence. Violence is not an issue of morality that can be solved with punishment or simple attitude change; it is a health crisis requiring a reasoned, multifaceted response. **A public health response engages those in closest proximity to the issue and equips them with the skills and resources to intervene, prevent and treat issues of violence.**

Reducing violence requires meeting the holistic needs of those living in distressed communities. Both perpetrators and victims of violence at some point have been failed by multiple systems through-out their lives, resulting in complex needs. This work must be connected to a broader ecosystem of support services to meet the demands for healing and transformation for those connected to violence. Successful intervention often requires access to resources that enable a person to survive outside of street life. **We suggest that policymakers connect with those doing intervention work and learn the unique challenges of the work as well as the skills and characteristics of those who excel in the work.** (The Collective could organize a structured briefing to educate policymakers if there is interest.)

People throughout the Wilmington community suffer from high levels of trauma, especially those highest at risk of being victims and/or perpetrators of violence. There are many socio-ecological and cultural barriers to seeking and obtaining mental health services. In order to overcome those barriers, there is a great need for appropriate clinicians with a background in trauma informed approaches that are culturally competent and more flexible in the way that they schedule and hold appointments in order to meet the needs of the population.<sup>15</sup> The City does not provide mental health or social services but it could potentially serve as the lead applicant for the Victims of

<sup>15</sup> <https://wilmingtonde.swagit.com/play/11082021-579>

Crime Act (VOCA) funds to create a Trauma Recovery Center (TRC, a national model that serves self-identified victims of violence free of charge) or to lead a planning committee to prepare for a TRC. For examples of how other places have successfully advocated to use VOCA funds for Trauma Recovery Centers, the City could look to the States of New Jersey, California, and Ohio.

Several interview participants identified the lack of victim services as a significant problem in Wilmington. In particular, the State victim compensation system does not meet the needs of most gun violence victims because it aggressively screens for “contributory conduct,” and requires cooperation with law enforcement without considering whether or not cooperation would endanger or traumatize the victim.<sup>16</sup>

While the Wilmington Police Department victim services staff are believed to be dedicated and compassionate professionals, the staff are all white and the majority of gunshot victims are Black, and given many Black people’s reluctance to engage with law enforcement because of historical trauma, the City needs additional victim services providers that are culturally competent and separate from law enforcement.<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, the Victim Services Unit does not get activated until there is a police report which may take several days, too long to wait for a victim, and there are no relocation services without an arrest which leaves victims vulnerable to additional violence or retaliation. **Policymakers would benefit from understanding the nexus between robust victim services for *all* victims and violence reduction, and then working to change state statutes governing victim compensation in order to effectively reduce violence.** (This is an area of The Collective’s expertise.)

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<sup>16</sup> <https://attorneygeneral.delaware.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/50/2019/08/VCAP-Brochure.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> [https://8670822.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/8670822/Reports/FAVC%20Report%2027\\_05%20Final%20\(1\).pdf](https://8670822.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/8670822/Reports/FAVC%20Report%2027_05%20Final%20(1).pdf)

# Additional Violence Prevention and Intervention Programs

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The Collective identified the following additional organizations that are engaged in prevention, intervention, and reentry, but we can not attest to their individual program quality:

- **The HOPE Commission** is a government supported reentry nonprofit. They receive referrals through corrections and re-entry court and accept male participants with high to mid-level offenses. The program provides peers, case management, substance abuse, and job placement. They serve approximately 200 people a year. The peers manage conflicts and the program is trauma informed.
- **Wilmington Peacekeepers Association.** The Collective was unable to connect with the Wilmington Peacekeepers but anti-violence activists are essential to preventing a community from normalizing violence.
- **Flexkings Training (Tahali Nichols)** is a for-profit business that promotes individual and community health and well-being. They provide youth mentoring and programs, such as a Guns Down, Gloves Up Violence Prevention Program. The founder, Tahali Nichols was a Network Connect Community Well-Being Ambassador. He has organized cross community sports activities and events. He is doing scene response and intervention work on his own currently and appears to be a respected figure in his community that is called upon at all hours. He is creating a 501(c)(3) nonprofit to expand his prevention and intervention work and create a younger generation of interventionists.
- **Out of the Ashes (Coley Harris)** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works to heal families through addressing issues of dysfunction and restoration in a transparent and authentic manner. They focus on incarceration-based family trauma through group and one-on-one sessions, parent coaching, and restorative reintegration. Coley Harris is a known figure in the community as an interventionist.

- **Scholars Turf Youth Lounge (Joy Dixon)** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that started a community center on the Northside in February 2021. ScholarsTurf provides a hygiene closet and food pantry for youth and families, as well as running a youth program that provides safe haven for younger children. The founder Joy Dixon was a Network Connect's Community Well-Being Ambassador. Through her community center she provides summer enrichment programs and has created a social emotional curriculum for youth who have experienced violence. She funds the organization almost entirely herself. She received a small grant from The Laffey-McHugh Foundation, but has never been connected to public dollars.
- **Stop the Violence Prayer Chain Foundation** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization engaged in prevention and community awareness work. Their stated mission is to serve children and families who have lost loved ones to gun and domestic violence and are living below the poverty level. The Collective was not able to connect with them.
- **Culture Restoration Project** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Using cultural tenants as their foundation, Culture Restoration Project offers culturally competent educational programs and services, including Knowledge of Self and Black History, that build self-resilient youth leaders and communities. Their programs focus on cultural competence, English Language Arts (reading/writing skills), history, technology, arts, critical thinking, entrepreneurial and business skills, and public speaking. They have partnered with Central Baptist Community Development Corporation to renovate a vacant building in the heart of the historic Eastside to create a transformative community space that will serve the social and cultural needs of the community. Self empowerment and Black History programming is an essential prevention component in the public safety ecosystem.



- **Network Connect** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 2019 that takes a community connection, resource building and information awareness approach to youth development with community at its center. Network Connect promotes youth development through four key programs, Community Well-being Ambassadors, Teen Co-Learning Spaces, Future Culture Creators and Reverse the ACES. The founders, Cierra Hall-Hipkins and Erin Hutt have experience in administering employment and training programs, social work, community outreach, and working with vulnerable populations such as, low-income, low-literacy, learning disabled, incarcerated and reentering, homeless, victims of domestic violence, English language learners, youth at risk of dropping out of school, and victims of traumatic stress. Erin and Cierra are credentialed trauma-informed trainers. A team of their Community Well-being Ambassadors are trained as interventionists and work with Darryl Chambers. Some of their services are provided statewide and they have credibility throughout the city.
- **Mending Hearts Support Group** provides peer support for individuals who have lost loved ones. In 2015, the founder, Lanita Brooks, lost her son to violence. She started Mending Hearts in 2017 to help anyone experiencing grief to be able to connect with others in the same situation and provide peer support. Mending Hearts conducts an annual Mother's Day event to raise funds. There are no paid staff. Lanita and her sister do all the work for the group. Mending Hearts is not a 501(c)(3) organization but has a partnership with a 501(c)(3), One Village Alliance, to receive funds.
- **Delaware Center For Justice** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization focused on issues and actions impacting the legal system, including: ending mass incarceration and policing reform (in both communities and schools); bail, fines, and fees reform; wrongful conviction compensation; no death penalty in Delaware; implementing restorative/transformational justice practices throughout the State; and ending systemic racism. In addition to their long tradition of non-partisan policy advocacy the Delaware Center for Justice offers several programs. Their programs for adults include: Adults (50+) Victims Services; Community Reintegration Services; Court of Common Pleas/Victim Restoration & Community Conferencing; Read In, Read Out (links incarcerated parents with their children through storytelling); Safe Spaces (offers help to cope with grief and loss for those who have lost loved ones to homicide); and Women in Transition (helps incarcerated women to confront negative thinking and engage positive networks to prevent recidivism). Their programs for youth include: School Offense Diversion; Victim Sensitivity; Victim Offender Conferencing; and Risks and Decisions (for youth in detention; teaches skills and strategies necessary for coping with chaotic environments and reducing violent behavior). (The Collective was unable to contact the Delaware Center for Justice.)

# General Recommendations

- In order to learn the unique challenges of community violence intervention, as well as the skills and characteristics of those who excel in the work, The Collective suggests that policymakers do site visits to community violence intervention organizations and build relationships with practitioners. (If interested, The Collective could organize a structured briefing to educate policymakers on the subject matter.)
- There is a cohort of existing organizations within Wilmington that provide intervention services both officially and unofficially. The Collective recommends that the City expand the pool of organizations financially supported to do CVI work and who have relationships with elected officials and policymakers. It is essential that there be a broad base of organizations doing intervention work, including those who are not necessarily polished and/or politically savvy. For example, New York City funds 22 organizations to comprise its crisis management system and cover all the neighborhoods. Obviously, the City of Wilmington would not need that number of organizations but the city would benefit from expanded violence intervention infrastructure.

Many of the existing leaders and/or organizations would benefit from leadership development and robust training on fiscal management, organizational management and formal intervention protocols. In advance of releasing new funding, the City should offer training on preparing to apply for and manage funding to prepare them to access emerging state dollars. This training could include understanding fiscal sponsorship and establishing effective and equitable partnerships.

The Collective recommends that the City then provide new funding for community based intervention programming that is targeted solely at the data-identified, likely victims and perpetrators of gun violence, and works within the data-identified hot spots.

The Collective recommends that in advance of releasing funding for this category and the recommendation above, the City provides intensive capacity building technical assistance to grassroots community based organizations. Grassroots violence intervention organizations are generally unable to secure government funding because of insurance requirements, SCC requirements, and a lack of grant writing skills.

The technical assistance should include training on preparing a grant application, managing grant funds, data collection and grant reporting. Many organizations may have to apply with a fiscal sponsor or in partnership with other organizations. RFPs should require that organizations participate in the TTA process to receive funds. In addition, RFPs should require data collection by the organizations.

Intervention requires a long-term investment with adequate funding, therefore The Collective suggests that the City offers 3 years of funding for no fewer than five organizations of no less than \$100,000 per year each. Three years of funding would allow organizations time to build up additional funding and allow them adequate resources to support a database and staff to track data; professional training; insurance; and emergency expenses.

Intervention programs would benefit from in-depth organizational assessments and training and technical assistance on standard operating procedures, accountability, ethical standards and ongoing professional development and training to boost organizational health and operate programs with model fidelity.

- There is an acute need to fund intervention programming to create a 24/7 high risk intervention and crisis response program that partners with all local hospitals. As previously noted, the ChristianaCare HVIP is only able to serve gunshot and stabbing victims who are admitted to the hospital. The hospital would benefit from a paid community partner to do 24/7 crisis response at the hospital to mediate disputes and provide casework to assault victims who may or may not be admitted to the hospital. The Collective recommends that the City issue a bid for a community based organization to provide “treat and release” services to people who are injured by violence including assault victims and provide 24/7 crime scene and hospital response. This could be funded through the aforementioned RFP process.
- Nemours Children’s Hospital does not have an HVIP despite the volume of pediatric gunshot injuries. Additionally, many youth are hospitalized for injuries resulting from assault before they become gunshot victims. If Nemours had a funded community partner to do intervention after all violent injuries, they could reduce gun shot injuries. The Collective did not receive data about St. Francis hospital but it is likely that it could benefit from connection to an intervention program that could respond to victims of violence before they are treated and released. Concerns were raised that not all children (under 18) who are gunshot victims are being sent to Nemours, which is the Level 1 pediatric trauma center. The Collective was not able to obtain EMS’ policy for routing to patients to hospitals but this is an area for exploration.



- Across programs there was a visible need to identify, recruit, and train a new generation of leaders. Most programs are staffed by older men who do not have adequate credibility amongst younger people. Youth leadership and personal development programs for young people **connected to street violence** are essential components of violence intervention infrastructure. The Collective would recommend that programs include Black ancestral cultural traditions. Furthermore, intervention programs need connections with multi-denominational spiritual leaders to ensure a diverse network.
- Victim services are inadequate, primarily due to limitations of the State Victim Compensation system. There is no immediate response to victimization. The Victim Services Unit is not activated until there is a police report generated. A police report may take several days. Additionally, many victims are not comfortable seeking assistance from a law enforcement agency or participating in the prosecution, yet they still need victim services in order to break the cycle of violence. There are also no relocation services without an arrest, leaving victims vulnerable to additional violence and retaliation.

In 2021, Wilmington Police Department's Victim Services applied for the BJA Byrne Criminal Justice Innovation Program Grant that would have increased capacity of the Wilmington Victim Services to hire additional personnel; align and coordinate Victim Services, CVI programs and state social service agencies; increase utilization of victims services; and reduce retaliatory shootings and homicides. The project was not funded but The Collective would suggest repurposing and building on this concept. The Collective recommends that the City engage in advocacy on the state level to improve the state victim compensation system and to ask the state VOCA administrator to fund Trauma Recovery Centers that fund all self-identified victims. There is legislation currently proposed in New York (S-7573A/A-8612B) designed to increase access for victims by removing mandated interactions with police as a condition of compensation that could serve as a model for advocacy by the City. The Collective and others can advise on this advocacy.



- Currently, the Youth Advocate Program, Inc. (YAP) is contracted by the State to provide services to specific classifications of youth returning to the community from Ferris School. The director and others in YAP are trained in intervention. New funding opportunities would potentially allow YAP to expand its services in order to provide intervention services to youth outside of their current clientele of returning youth. In other words, YAP is currently only contracted to serve “returning” youth, but through additional funding opportunities they could provide intervention services to youth highest at risk of being victims and/or perpetrators of violence who are not newly “returning” from facilities like Ferris School.
- The Collective recommends that the City fund an annual or semi-annual (depending on need) intervention academy to certify a large cohort of interventionists from various organizations that work within the violence hotspots. The academy should have a low barrier application process. Building an army of interventionists trained in the same protocol and procedures would strengthen the public safety ecosystem in Wilmington.
- Many individuals and organizations are spending their personal finances on prevention and intervention programs. The Collective recommends that the City expand their current Mini-Grant program for community-based organizations to apply for grants from \$5,000-10,000 to support them in providing meaningful prevention, intervention and trauma focused services. The Collective suggest offering Mini-Grants in the following categories:
  - Community intervention groups conducting Community Walks in particular “hotspots,” and providing stipends to credible messengers to serve as Community Ambassadors to utilize their relationships to intervene in and mediate conflicts.
  - Organizations that provide extra-curricular activities, sports and athletics, arts activities, outdoor outings, field trips, character building activities, etc.
  - Healing Circles that provide an opportunity for youth and adults to share about trauma and seek support from peers.
  - Safe Passage at summer school programs to establish “safe routes” for youth that can serve as a deterrent to violence. Safe Passage is a program that deploys teams of outreach workers to key exit and entry points of the school, bus stops, stores and intersections where youth congregate in and around the school. Safe Passage allows outreach workers to develop relationships with youth and parents, intervene in and mediate potential conflicts, and ensure that students arrive to and from school in a safe and timely manner.

In order to introduce new programming, the City would have to identify a home to administer the funds, monitor the programs and lead coordination among agencies. The Collective is aware that City leaders are interested in establishing an Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) to fund, coordinate and monitor violence prevention and intervention work. OVPs can be incredibly valuable but they are also subject to limitations because a) They face the bureaucratic roadblocks that are inherent in any government agency and can end up slowing down the work, and b) They are subject to changes in administration and to political influences. The City might consider awarding funding to an intermediary agency to subgrant funding and maintain oversight of the funded work. In the event that the City would like to form an OVP, The Collective recommends that the Director have extensive knowledge of violence intervention, capacity building for grassroots organizations and methods of simple data tracking and process evaluation. As well as dedicated staff, OVPs require dedicated funding. Nationally, annual OVP budgets for cities with comparable population sizes to Wilmington range from \$550,000 to \$4.2 million, and full-time equivalent staffing ranges from four to 18 staff members.<sup>18</sup>

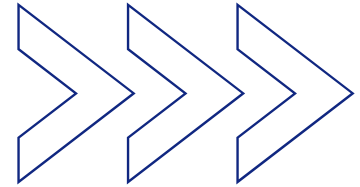
In the interim (and possibly beyond), the Department of Parks and Recreation appears well positioned to serve as the home for violence intervention programming. This recommendation is based on the current activities and programs administered by the Department, and the expertise and intervention related experience of Ian Smith, Director of Parks and Recreation. The Department would likely require additional staff to manage a new program.

City leadership expressed interest in identifying an organization to lead a Wilmington version of the Watts Gang Task Force or the South Ward (Newark) Public Safety Round Table. These bodies are community led (as opposed to law enforcement or elected official led) forums in which stakeholders and residents join as equal partners in creating safety. These forums are **solutions-oriented and rooted in accountability and follow through**. Based on feedback from the site visit and follow up interviews, The Wilmington Citizens Advisory Council seems well suited to lead a Wilmington Public Safety Round Table (or choose a name of their liking). Leading a Public Safety Round Table requires funding to support a moderator, promotions, food and staff to track follow ups.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://ovpnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/National-OVP-Landscape-Scan-Jan-2022.pdf>

# Appendix

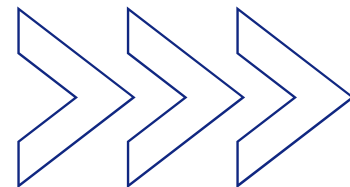


## A. List of Interview Participants

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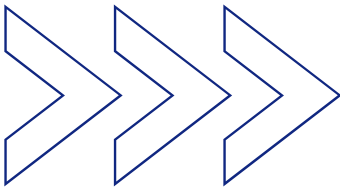
The Collective is grateful to the many people who took the time to speak to us and direct us to information. Wilmington is full of people who care deeply about their community and it was an honor to meet them.

Albert H. Mills	Councilmember
Alisia Drew	Social Contract
Bregetta A. Fields	Councilmember
Charles Bass	Community Member
Chris Johnson	Councilmember
Cierra Hall-Hipkins	Network Connect
Corie Priest	Community Engagement Specialist, Delaware Department of Justice
Darius Brown	Executive Director, Hope Commission
Darryl “Wolfie” Chambers, M.A. (plus numerous team members and youth attending the program)	Structural Equity and University of Delaware
David Chen MD MPH	Clinical Lead for Empowering Victims of Lived Violence (EVOLV), Physician-Scientist at the Institute for Research on Equity and Community Health, ChristianaCare Health System
David Karas Ph.D.	Police Policy and Communications Director, Wilmington Police Department
Daykia Hunter-McKnight	Delaware State Senator Lockman’s Office
Dr. Debra Mason	Deputy Executive Director, Hope Commission
Dr. Hanifa Shabazz	Wilmington Community Advisory Council
Dubard McGriff	Community Organizer
Fred Fogg	Youth Advocate Program, Inc.
Erin Hutt	Network Connect
Ian Smith	Director of Parks and Recreation



John P. Cook (plus approximately 15 team members and program participants)	Director of Support and Outreach, Group Violence Intervention, Department of Health and Social Services
Joy Dixon	Scholars Turf Youth League
Karen Wilding	Nemours Children's Health
Konya Copeland	Community Member
Lanita Brooks	Mending Hearts Support Group
Linda M. Gray	Councilmember
Maria D. Cabrera	Councilmember
Meghan Wallace	Special Advisor, Governor's Family Services Cabinet Council
Michelle Harlee	Councilmember
Mike Purzycki	Mayor
Mildred Turner	Community Member
Moe Hamilton	Community Member
Nnamdi Chukwuocha	State Representative
Omar S. Douglas	Youth Advocate Program, Inc.
Richard Watson	Cultural Restoration Project
Robert J. Tracy (plus 5 members of the Department)	Chief of Police
Shane N. Darby	Councilmember
Stephanie Hamilton	Victim Services Supervisor, Wilmington Police Department
Stephen McAllier	Community Member
Tahali Nichols	FlexKings Training
Vanessa Santiago	Program Manager, ChristianaCare Health System
Yasser Payne Ph.D.	University of Delaware
Yolanda M. McCoy	Councilmember
Zanthia Oliver	Councilmember

# Appendix

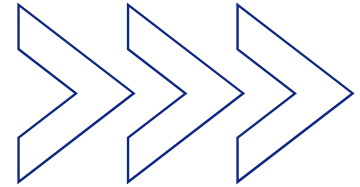


## B. List of Individuals Contacted for Interviews Without Success

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Chief John Looney	Wilmington Fire Department
Coley Harris	Out of the Ashes
David Bever	Delaware Center For Justice
Franklin D. Cooke	Representative - District 16, Delaware General Assembly
Sherry Dorsey Walker	Representative - District 3, Delaware General Assembly
Stephanie T. Bolden	Representative - District 2, Delaware General Assembly
Todd Veale	The Laffey McHugh Foundation
Wilmington Peacekeepers	Community Group

# Appendix



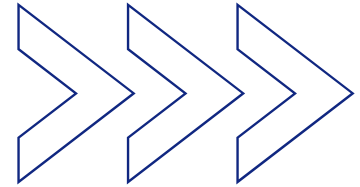
## C. Suggested Action Steps for the City of Wilmington

The Collective provided general recommendations in the report. The following Action Steps are intended to provide more specific and immediate recommendations for next steps the City of Wilmington can take to address community violence and build up a sustainable community based intervention infrastructure.

- In the face of the on-going gun violence crisis in Wilmington, The Collective recommends that the City make funds immediately available to the existing, operational intervention organizations to support their ability to intervene in on-going violence. These identified organizations are the Center for Structural Equity, YAP, and GVI. The Collective recommends that the grants should be up to 75% of the organizations' current budgets to allow for expansion. The grants can be for a single year because the organizations will be able to apply for recommended competitive funding to continue programming.

The three organizations should be required to collaborate and must develop MOUs (as a condition of receiving city funds) that outlines their roles, areas of collaboration and other logistical considerations.

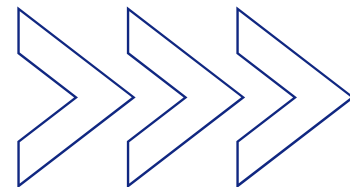
- To address the high level of traumatic stress and associated hyper-vigilance resulting from the violence, The Collective recommends the immediate release of funds to Network Connect to train, deploy, and manage 20 Community Ambassadors/Interventionists. Based on The Collective's interviews, Network Connect appears to have the relationships, programming, and administrative capacity for this project. Network Connect's Community Well-Being Ambassador Initiative is a community-driven, place-based program designed to increase community well-being and resiliency of targeted neighborhoods, connecting individuals to resources and information for housing, youth support, healthcare, employment, mental health, transportation, substance abuse, and other services. Operating out of six host sites throughout the City of Wilmington, their cohorts are trained and serve as Ambassadors for a year, with many renewed for a second year. Some of the current Ambassadors work alongside the Center for Structural Equity. Additional funding would allow them to expand their team with Ambassadors specifically trained as interventionists.



- After the immediate investment in the three existing organizations (GVI, CSE, and YAP) to address current issues of violence, and the deployment of Community Well-Being Ambassadors through Network Connect, The Collective recommends the City expand the pool of organizations financially supported to do CVI work and who have relationships with elected officials and policymakers. It is essential that there be a broad base of organizations doing intervention work, including those who are not necessarily polished and/or politically savvy.

However, the City's community violence intervention strategy is in need of coordination. As the City begins to fund intervention work, there needs to be oversight of the programming. All city-funded organizations should be required to collaborate with other community based and municipal agencies. The Collective recommends that the City develop an RFP to fund an external coordinator for intervention organizations/services. The position should operate with a clearly defined scope of work including:

1. Organizing and managing weekly coordination meetings. Develop the agenda, take notes, ensure follow up.
  2. Manage outreach to invite other stakeholders as needed.
  3. Identify and purchase data licenses for all organizations to track activities. Secure training on data management for participating organizations.
  4. Review monthly activity reports from organizations on the use of their grant funds.
  5. Draft annual report to Mayor and City Council on the intervention activities.
  6. Require MOUs among participating entities.
- The Collective recommends that the City develop an RFP to fund community-based intervention programming that is targeted solely at the data-identified, likely victims and perpetrators of gun violence and in the data identified hot spots. In order to apply, organizations (those currently funded and those not currently funded would be able to apply) must be located in or provide services in strategic hotspots; have street level relationships; actively engage in intervention work. The RFP should require organizations to participate in City coordination, to collaborate with other community based and municipal agencies, and to participate in City-sponsored Training and Technical Assistance in order to receive funds.
    - Funding should be over a 3-year period for at least 5 organizations at no less than \$100,000 each per year.
    - Funding for organizations contingent on participation in city sponsored coordination discussed previously.



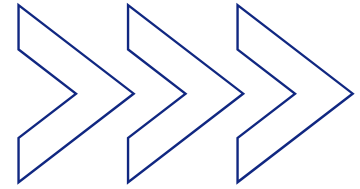
- In order to address retaliatory and repeat violence, The Collective recommends that the City develop and issue an RFP to create a 24/7 high-risk intervention and crisis response program that will partner with all local hospitals and provide “treat and release” services to people who are injured by violence including assault victims. The funded entity will provide 24/7 crime scene and hospital response. Note that this is a large contract that one of the 5 existing grantees can also apply for. This program will require staffing for 24/7 coverage, significant training and funds for emergency relocation.
- The Collective recommends that the City fund an entity to run a Public Safety Roundtable, a community led (as opposed to law enforcement or elected official led) forum in which stakeholders and residents join as equal partners in creating safety. These forums are solutions-oriented and rooted in accountability and follow through. Based on feedback from the site visit and follow up interviews, The Wilmington Citizens Advisory Council seems well suited to lead a Wilmington Public Safety Round Table (or choose a name of their liking) although the funding can be awarded competitively. Funding would support a moderator, promotions, food and staff to track follow-ups. There should be a defined scope of work that includes:
  - Convening bi-weekly meetings held on a standing schedule
  - Identifying specific public safety concerns and tasking participants with developing solutions
  - Taking notes and holding all participants accountable for follow through.
- The Collective recommends that the City advocate on the state level to improve the state victim compensation system and to ask the state VOCA administrator to fund Trauma Recovery Centers (TRC), a national model that serves all self identified victims of violence free of charge. As previously stated, there is a great need for appropriate clinicians with a background in trauma informed approaches that are culturally competent and more flexible in the way that they schedule and hold appointments in order to meet the needs of the population.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> <https://wilmingtonde.swagit.com/play/11082021-579>



# Appendix



## D. Next Steps The Collective Can Provide Wilmington

The Collective was contracted to conduct a landscape assessment, however, The Collective is available to assist with all phases of implementation, if desired. The Collective can develop a proposal to assist with the following activities as a group or a la carte.

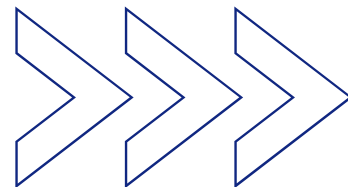
Potential future activities include:

- In order to effectively respond to the violence occurring in Wilmington, the existing and emerging intervention organizations would benefit from a certified professional training. The Collective could offer an Interventionist Academy that would engage the Professional Community Intervention Training Institute (PCITI) Level I & II Certifications in Conflict Resolution/Mediation and De-escalation strategies for up to 20 interventionists per year.
- Assist with development of RFPs. The Collective can assist with designing the RFP, crafting a scoring system, assembling a scoring committee, and more.
- Typically intervention organizations are in need of training in order to apply for and manage public dollars. Preparation sessions in advance of releasing dollars are an effective way to engage qualified intervention organizations. The Collective could offer two preparation sessions for interested organizations to train them on how to get ready to respond to an RFP and to plan for complying with grant rules. For organizations that are funded by the City to deliver intervention work, The Collective can provide Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) over a one-year period for up to 10 organizations. Each organization would have a customized “road map” for enhancing and strengthening the programmatic and fiscal infrastructure of their organization. The Collective can advise on topics including but not limited to financial management, operational protocols, hiring, and relationship management.
- Advise on creation and operation of the Public Safety Roundtable. The Collective can advise on how to replicate and customize the Watts Gang Task Force model for community-led public safety.
- The Collective identified a need to recruit younger leadership into the intervention work in Wilmington in order to connect with younger people engaged in violence. The Collective would recommend that the City establish a Community Sentinels Program to cultivate a new generation of leadership and, working through a host organization, The Collective can train on implementing the Sentinels curriculum and provide a peer exchange to experience The Sentinels Program in operation at Newark Community Street Team.
- The Collective can connect the City to training and technical assistance to help facilitate the development of an Office of Violence Prevention, if desired.

## E. Wilmington Recommendations Spreadsheet

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**Community Based Public Safety Collective**  
[cbpscollective.org](https://cbpscollective.org)

