

# Allegheny County Department of Human Services’ Community Violence Reduction Initiative



In local communities where gun violence is very high, people have been working on solutions without the sustained funding and technical assistance needed to support programs proven to reduce gun violence.

In an effort to change this paradigm, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS), in partnership with the Allegheny County Health Department (ACHD) issued two Requests for Proposals (RFPs) designed to bring these resources to communities with the highest rates of violence.

These RFPs, for which at least \$50 million has been committed over the next five years, sought proposals for evidence-based, comprehensive and well-coordinated public health approaches to community violence reduction both within and across highly impacted communities:

The [RFP for Community Violence Reduction Plans from High-Priority Area](#) sought strategies aimed at reducing community violence within highly impacted communities and asked stakeholders in those communities to come together to:

1. Create a community violence reduction plan, which includes commitment from implementing and facility partners to carry out their chosen community violence reduction programs.
2. Choose a lead agency (who we call the **Community Quarterback**) to coordinate and oversee the implementation of that community violence reduction plan on behalf of the community.

For this RFP, funding was prioritized for highly impacted communities outside of the City of Pittsburgh, with some exceptions:

- Sto-Rox
- Penn Hills
- Greater Wilkesburg Area
- South Hilltop: Mount Oliver Borough and Pittsburgh’s Allentown, Beltzhoover, Knoxville and Carrick neighborhoods
- Woodland Hills: Braddock, East Pittsburgh, North Braddock, Rankin, Swissvale and Turtle Creek
- Mon Valley: Clairton, Duquesne, McKeesport and Homestead

In addition to funding existing efforts that show results or promise in reducing community violence, the county is funding the following evidence-based community violence reduction programs *within* these highly impacted communities:

- [Cure Violence](#) treats the spread of violence like a disease and disrupts it through credible violence interrupters, prevents it by connecting those most at-risk to services via outreach

workers, and changes community norms around violence. The program focuses on those at highest risk of victimization from or perpetration of gun violence, primarily older youth and young adults ages 18 through 34.

- **Becoming A Man (BAM)** is a school-based program that employs full-time licensed counselors who work with at-risk young men in grades 6 through 12, five days a week, through cognitive behavioral therapy, peer support and future orientation.
- Programs like the **Rapid Employment and Development Initiative (READI)**, a paid transitional jobs program that is primarily focused on violence prevention by identifying those most at risk for involvement with violence. Outreach workers relentlessly engage men at highest risk, who build skills and take part in cognitive behavioral therapy through the format of a 9-to-5 workday, five days a week. The program focuses on those at highest risk of victimization from or perpetration of gun violence, primarily older youth and young adults ages 18 through 34.

Communities that deploy Cure, BAM, or programs like READI are connected to the developers of these programs (i.e., Cure Violence Global, Youth Guidance and Heartland Alliance, respectively) to receive ongoing training and technical assistance to ensure program fidelity. Additionally, ACHD's Office of Violence Prevention will continue to monitor Cure Violence sites.

The **RFP for Countywide Support for Violence Prevention** lays out our strategy to reduce community violence across highly-impacted communities and involves:

1. Identifying a countywide convener to bring together all relevant stakeholders within the county for basic information-sharing about community violence prevention and to ensure that violence reduction efforts are coordinated across municipal and neighborhood borders, unduplicated and proactive in their approach.
2. Funding evidence-based community violence-reduction efforts that make more sense to operate centrally. These efforts cover the *entire county* but have a particular focus on the aforementioned highly impacted county municipalities AND hot spots in the City of Pittsburgh.

The following are centralized community violence reduction efforts that the county is funding *across* highly impacted communities:

- **Shooting review boards** in which relevant stakeholders come together on a regularly recurring basis to systematically determine why a given shooting (fatal and non-fatal) occurred, identify trends and use these data to inform prevention and intervention
- **Hospital-based intervention** sends credible trauma responders and outreach workers to the bedsides of gunshot victims in hospital trauma centers to connect at-risk young men to necessary services and stop the spread of violence by interrupting retaliation. The program serves victims of all ages, but primarily focuses on older youth and young adults.
- **Victim and family support** to connect gunshot victims and their loved ones – of all ages – to mental health services and survivor support groups.

- Building capacity to implement **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)** which uses blight reduction, strategic lighting placement, and vacant building and lot remediation as tools to reduce the opportunity to commit violent crime.

The following are the awardees from [the Community Violence Reduction Plans from High-Priority Areas RFP](#).

- 1) **Sto-Rox:** Focus on Renewal (Community Quarterback) and their implementing and facility partners for Cure Violence, READI and BAM (Sto-Rox H.S).
- 2) **Penn Hills:** Penn Hills School District (Community Quarterback) and their implementing and facility partners for Safe Spaces and BAM (Penn Hills H.S)
- 3) **Greater Wilkesburg Area:** Community Forge (Community Quarterback) and their implementing and facility partners for Cure Violence and BAM (Westinghouse H.S).
- 4) **South Hilltop:** South Pittsburgh Coalition for Peace (Community Quarterback) and their implementing and facility partners for Cure Violence, READI, Safe Spaces and BAM (Carrick H.S).
- 5) **Woodland Hills:** Greater Valley Community Services (Community Quarterback) and their implementing and facility partners for Cure Violence and READI.
- 6) **Mon Valley:** Steel Rivers Council of Government (Community Quarterback) and their implementing and facility partners for Cure Violence and BAM (Clairton H.S).

The following are the awardees from the [Countywide Support for Violence Prevention RFP](#).

- 1) Countywide Community Violence Prevention Convener: Neighborhood Resilience Project
- 2) Shooting review boards: Social Contract
- 3) Hospital-based intervention: Reimagine Reentry
- 4) Victim and family support: Center for Victims, Community Engagement Association

An evaluation of program fidelity and outcomes will inform future investments in violence reduction strategies.

Learn more about the requests that were issued:

- [RFP for Community Violence Reduction Plans from High-Priority Area](#)
- [RFP for Countywide Support for Violence Prevention](#)