Cure Violence (formerly CeaseFire)

cureviolence.org

Comprehensive; Ages 16–25

Effectiveness
(Read the criteria for these ratings)

- **Effective gang program**
- **Effective adult program**

Risk Factors

Individual
Exposure to firearm violence

Fearless

Few social ties (involved in social activities, popularity)

Gang involvement in adolescence

High alcohol/drug use

High drug dealing

Illegal gun ownership/carrying

Physical violence/aggression

Violent victimization

Family
Delinquent siblings

Family history of problem behavior/criminal involvement

Family poverty/low family socioeconomic status

Family violence (child maltreatment, partner violence, conflict)

Living in a small house

Poor parental supervision (control, monitoring, and child management)

School
Frequent truancy/absences/suspensions; expelled from school; dropping out of school

Low school attachment/bonding/motivation/commitment to school

Poor school attitude/performance; academic failure

Poorly organized and functioning schools/inadequate school climate/negative labeling by teachers

Community
Availability and use of drugs in the neighborhood

Availability of firearms

Community disorganization

Economic deprivation/poverty/residence in a disadvantaged neighborhood

Exposure to violence and racial prejudice

Feeling unsafe in the neighborhood

High-crime neighborhood

Neighborhood physical disorder

Neighborhood youth in trouble

Peer

Association with antisocial/aggressive/delinquent peers; high peer delinquency

Association with gang-involved peers/relatives

Gang membership

Peer alcohol/drug use

Description

Cure Violence (formerly CeaseFire) is another effective broad community approach to preventing and reducing gang violence. Undergirded by the public health model, the program approaches violence as an infectious disease. The program tries to interrupt the next event, the next transmission, the next violent activity" (Kotlowitz, 2008). The program targets a small population: members of the community with a high chance of "being shot or being shooters" in the near future. This model prevents violence through a three-pronged approach.

Detection and Interruption: Cure Violence is a data-driven model. Statistical information and street knowledge helps identify where to concentrate efforts, focus resources, and intervene in violence. This data identifies communities most impacted and provides a picture of those individuals at the highest risk for violence.

Behavior Change: Cure Violence intervenes in crises, mediates disputes between individuals, and intercedes in group disputes to prevent violent events. Outreach workers counsel clients and connect them with services; violence interrupters engage members of the target population on the street, mediating conflicts between gangs and working to prevent the cycle of retaliatory violence from starting after a violent incident. The core training for employees is related directly to the work and focuses on conflict mediation and response.

Changing Community Norms: Cure Violence works to change the thinking on violence at the community level and for society at large through the use of public education, community-building activities, and motivational interviewing with the highest risk. For disproportionately impacted communities, violence has come to be accepted as an appropriate—even expected—way to solve conflict. At the street level, Cure Violence provides tools for those most likely to be involved in altercations to resolve conflicts in other ways.

Researchers from Northwestern University conducted evaluations of Cure Violence programs at multiple sites. The outcome evaluations revealed that there were significant changes in gang homicide patterns (e.g., decreases in gang involvement in homicides and fewer retaliatory killings) that could be attributed to the program, but no individual site improved on all outcome measures (Skogan, et al., 2008).

The evaluation of Baltimore's Safe Streets program (July 2007 through December 2010) is the first rigorous evaluation of a replication of Cure Violence. Safe Streets outreach workers mediated 276 incidents. "Safe Streets was fully implemented in four of Baltimore's most violent neighborhoods, engaging hundreds of high-risk youth and mediating over 200 disputes with the potential to lead to a shooting. The program was associated with less acceptance for using guns to settle grievances in the one intervention neighborhood where attitudes were studied in two waves of community surveys. Program participants are benefiting from their connections to outreach workers in numerous ways that are likely to be protective against involvement in violence. Because gun violence extracts such enormous loss of life and social costs, efforts to prevent it should be high priorities, even when public and private resources are scarce. The Cure Violence program model represents a very promising strategy for reducing gun violence and changing social norms surrounding violence" (Webster, et al., 2012).

Endorsements

National Gang Center: Effective program

Contact

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References

Skogan, W. G.; Hartnett, S. M.; Bump, N., and Dubois, J. (2008). *Evaluation of CeaseFire-Chicago*. Chicago, IL: Northwestern University.

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All CeaseFire reports are available at the evaluator's organization: http://www.ipr.northwestern.edu/publications/papers/urban-policy-and-community-development/ceasefire/index.html