

WEST/SOUTHWEST COLLABORATIVE RESPONSE TO GUN VIOLENCE

October 2021

BACKGROUND

This past year in Philadelphia, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, our community has experienced exponential increases in gun violence, homicides, and victimizations. According to the Controller of the City of Philadelphia, there have been 435 homicides to date in 2021, a 14% increase from 2020. There have also been 1,741 shootings, 378 of which have been fatal.

As a result of Philadelphia's epidemic of gun violence and other violent crime, social service agencies are experiencing an increased demand for their services. However, with limited resources and funding, many of these agencies are unable to meet the needs of this unprecedented demand. The most effective way for social service agencies to address the dramatic increase in gun violence in the face of limited capabilities is to collaborate efforts with other social service agencies, anti-violence community groups, law enforcement, health systems and other well-resourced institutions. Yet during a time when gun violence has peaked in Philadelphia during a pandemic that has shifted our traditional ways of operation, a formal multi-stakeholder collaboration has yet to be initiated.

CALL FOR COLLABORATION

The **WEST/SOUTHWEST COLLABORATIVE RESPONSE TO GUN VIOLENCE** (WSW Collaborative) was envisioned as an inclusive, multi-organizational response by community, academic, health system, and government stakeholders to the dramatic increase in gun violence and its impact on victims, co-victims (surviving family members of homicide), and communities in the West and Southwest neighborhoods of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The WSW Collaborative is primarily composed of four key collaborators representing university, government and community-based organizations; specifically: **Anti-Violence Partnership of Philadelphia (AVP)**, a nonprofit victim service agency that has been providing support services, including counseling, to victims of violence and co-victims of homicide since 1983; **Beloved Care Project (BCP)**, a community-based grassroots organization that aims to tackle the root causes of pain and

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trauma among those most impacted by violence in Philadelphia; **Penn Injury Science Center** (PISC), a national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention-funded Injury Control Research Center; and the **Philadelphia District Attorney's Office's Crisis Assistance Response and Engagement for Survivors of Homicides (CARES) Unit**, a municipal program that provides crisis support to a victim's family in the immediate aftermath of a homicide. Additional collaborators will include: **Code Red PA**, a statewide collective co-founded by the City of Philadelphia's Department of Public Health's Injury and Violence Prevention Program to reduce gun violence; **Cure Violence Philadelphia of Temple University**, which provides violence interruption and street outreach primarily in North Philadelphia; and the **Pennsylvania John Paul Pryor Shock Trauma Center at Penn Presbyterian**, Penn's Level 1 Trauma Center that sees over 2500 trauma contacts and admits 1500 trauma patients per year.

The WSW Collaborative seeks to embody a cross-section coordination of expertise, skills, and services from the public, nonprofit, and grassroots levels to collectively address the scale and complexity of gun violence in West and Southwest Philadelphia. West/Southwest Philadelphia represents one of two main geographic areas in Philadelphia that has the highest concentrated violence, and has particularly endured staggering increases in gun violence in the past year. As noted by Thomas Abt, a nationally recognized researcher and expert on crime, in his book, *Bleeding Out: The Devastating Consequences of Urban Violence-- and a Bold New Plan for Peace in the Streets* (2019), to reduce violence, we need a new notion of community, one that is tightly focused on the hotspots where violence concentrates.

According to Kania & Kramer (2011), no single organization is responsible for any major problem, nor can any single organization cure it. The vision thus is simple:

Together, we can end the cycle of violence.

A NEW COMMUNAL HUB

The WSW Collaborative will be based out of AVP's West Philadelphia office located at **5548 Chestnut Street**, encompassing 2,960 square feet of space. Four organizations will share and use this space: AVP, BCP, CARES, and PISC.

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The areas of knowledge and expertise of these unique organizations are as follows:



AVP

*Victim support services;
criminal justice support and
advocacy; information and referrals;
crisis counseling; individual therapy;
support groups*



CARES

*Homicide crisis response;
information, resources, and
referrals; emergency support;
supportive counseling*



BCP

*Community violence
interruption; street outreach;
healing circles (forthcoming)*



PISC/Penn Trauma

*Violence prevention; trauma-
informed care; community
engagement; research and evaluation*

By convening AVP, BCP, CARES and PISC in one centralized space, it allows each organization to work in close collaboration to complement services, align programmatic activities, and maximize responses to the immediate individual and community needs of the surrounding neighborhoods. It also enables a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and structured processes for a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities between the four organizations. By housing these organizations, the office will be transformed into a central community hub in the West and Southwest communities of Philadelphia.

Similar to a community resource center, this transformed space will provide structured activities in a communal setting that provide service linkages to address existing gaps in community resources (e.g., ongoing food assistance) and promote healing, recovery, and violence prevention through traditional and non-traditional therapies and healing practices (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy, support groups, yoga therapy, healing circles).

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GOALS

The goals for the WSW Collaborative are as follows:



To help achieve these goals, the WSW Collaborative will engage with the Tamarack Institute (Tamarack), a leading force in community change since 2001. Tamarack provides consulting in five interconnected learning areas:



Collective Impact

How can we mobilize collaboration across sectors for systems change?



Community Engagement

How can we engage the community to create and realize bold visions for the future?



Collaborative Leadership

How can we bring the right people together in constructive ways?



Community Innovation

How can we create, test, and scale new approaches?



Evaluating Impact

How can we identify and amplify what works?

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By providing the WSW Collaborative with technical assistance (i.e., tailored workshops and individual coaching), Tamarack can help the WSW Collaborative build critical skills and capacity for participants to work collectively across sectors in order to catalyze community change for years to come.

We need new solutions to address the magnitude of impact that the increase in gun violence has and will have for generations on the community.

The WSW Collaborative is a solution.

OUR TEAM

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