



Community Involvement Committee

To: Chair Jessica Vega Pederson and Board of County Commissioners 6 pages

From: Community Involvement Committee

Date: May 21st, 2024

Subject: Public Safety & Gun Violence Engagement Subcommittee Recommendations

Introduction to the topic:

In the fiscal year 2023-2024, this subcommittee of the Community Involvement Committee (CIC) focused on community involvement in County programs related to violence prevention and response. Violence prevention and response spans many County departments, offices, and programs, including Public Health, Multnomah County Sheriff's Office, District Attorney, Policy, Community Engagement, and more.

Violence prevention and response is also a key issue of interest to community members. In a summary from the [Council on Community Justice \(mid-year 2023\)](#) “though the level of serious violent crime is far below historical peaks, it remains intolerably high, especially in poorer communities of color.” According to the [District Attorney's Office's Data Dashboard](#), issued cases involving gun violence are still on the rise. These statistics don't include cases that aren't in the system, including suicide, and are the closest we found to uncovering the impacts of gun violence on Multnomah County residents.

The County is participating and investing in strategies to lower gun violence and increase public safety, but the public is still largely in the dark on what work is being done, how they can be involved in improving safety, how to report crime, how the complex system of different jurisdictions from County, city, metro, policing/enforcement, education, corrections, rehabilitation, victims services, public health, community-based organizations, and infrastructure/neighborhood improvements work together. From all of our work as a community advisory body, we rarely heard about work around reducing guns, gun safety, eliminating illegal firearms, or red-flag laws. This stood out to us as a significant deficit that the County has in talking about these difficult issues with community members.

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Why the Community Involvement Committee chose to focus on this topic:

The CIC met on October 7th, 2023 to discuss work for the year. In these conversations, themes around public safety, gun violence, and youth involvement in violence prevention emerged as common interests. CIC members shared concerns and experiences with a lack of information about County responses to violence, and how to access data related to County policies and programs. The CIC also noted it as an issue of interest to communities and groups most impacted by firearm and community violence, including those who are historically underrepresented and underserved by the County, as well as of interest to the County Board. This intersection of a lack of public knowledge and access, and high interest among the community, the CIC and the Board of County Commissioners led the CIC to agree on this topic for Fiscal Year 2024.

Process:

This subcommittee began meeting in October 2023 and met monthly to better understand the County's programs and policies, and how the community, especially those most impacted by community violence, are and could be involved in County programs and decision-making. We were quickly impressed by the depth and breadth of this issue and current County programs. In our learning process, we consulted:

- Carl Green, *Community Justice Manager, Gang Unit / African American Program / Latino Program / Electronic Monitoring, Department of Community Justice*
- Karl Johnson, *Community Justice Manager, Juvenile Department, Department of Community Justice*
- Shawn Overstreet, *Senior Deputy District Attorney, Multnomah County District Attorney*
- Sheriff Nicole Morrisey O'Donnell, *Multnomah County Sheriff's Office*
- Troy Hollis, *Community & Adolescent Health Program Supervisor, Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Multnomah County Health Department*
- Jerome Sloan, *LCSW, CADC III | Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs | Program Supervisor, Gun Violence Impacted Families BH Response Team, Multnomah County Health Department*
- Scott Williams, *Program Manager, Gun Violence Impacted Families Program, Multnomah County Health Department Public Health Division*
- Olivia Kilgore, *Community Engagement Program Specialist - Youth KSA, Multnomah County Health Department Public Health Division*
- Jasmine Haro, *Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion, Multnomah County Health Department Public Health Division*
- Charlene McGee, *Director, Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion, Multnomah County Health Department Public Health Division*
- Raffaele Timarchi, *LPSCC, Strategic Initiatives Manager*

Subcommittee members also attended the following public meetings to understand how their work on violence prevention engages the community and/or the County:

Subcommittee members: Angel Brophy (subcommittee chair), Jenny Shadley, Kristina Edmunson, Patrick Nolen **Staff:** KellyAnn Cameron

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- Focused Intervention Team Community Oversight Group “FITCOG” (1/18/24)
- Local Public Safety Coordinating Committee “LPSCC” (3/25/24)
- Multnomah Youth Commission Youth Violence Subcommittee (3/26/24)

Observations and Findings: “Gun Violence has no jurisdictional bounds”

Throughout our meetings, several key findings and recurring themes emerged, reflecting the aspirations and concerns of various agencies, programs, and community stakeholders.

- There is active and growing collaboration between programs and departments, especially at the leadership and policy levels.
- Current collaboration efforts broadly leave frontline staff, clients, and the community out of the collaboration and budgeting/contracting processes.
- Firearm and community violence increased during the COVID pandemic, and will continue to fluctuate with historical events. We would like the County to continue preventative work even as numbers fluctuate. Any amount of violence is unacceptable.
- "Gun Violence has no jurisdictional bounds" - collaboration among all jurisdictions is critical, and this collaboration has to involve community.
- There is interest and precedent for larger, community-centered town halls or similar gatherings related to violence and how the County is and can respond.
- There is a lack of clear data and information systems impact community awareness and understanding of the issue and feedback or involvement opportunities.
- Website revitalizations and data visualizations are planned around this issue with the Sheriff’s Department.
- Many programs have an interest in increased community engagement, but lack dedicated staff time for deep involvement.
- Many voiced support of preventative programs and investments, and noted challenges in communicating about the outcomes of prevention (“measuring what doesn’t happen”) and advocating for ongoing investment with leadership and community.

Recommendations

1. **Centralize information access for the community to understand and engage:** A throughline across meetings was the need for more centralized resources for community members concerned about violence and curious about how to understand and get involved in the County response. Each department or program working on violence prevention and response could link to the centralized resource to share referral information and data visualization from all relevant programs. This contributes to community engagement through streamlined access to critical information and services. This could include, but is not limited to:

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- a. **Creative data visualization:** clear, publicly accessible data that shows the public where investments are made and outcomes of violence prevention and response work (people served, visualized feedback, etc) in Multnomah County and across jurisdictions. This could be especially helpful in visualizing the impacts of preventative work, which we understand can be harder to understand and communicate with the public.
- b. **Outreach and feedback cycles** with the community around what data is helpful to the community and what data visualization tools and methods are most effective.

Topline Recommendation: The need for centralized information and data visualization is echoed in past recommendations from the CIC, as well as recommendations on the budgeting process. We request that the Board report back to the CIC in fall 2024 about progress towards this need.

2. **Provide Culturally Specific Education opportunities:**

How can the County do a better job of sharing information about these laws and other updates to community violence prevention and response with County staff and community?

Bring information, data, and engagement opportunities to the community through public-facing informative programs, school workshops, specific impacted groups, and other groups that are hard to reach through traditional communications channels like non-native English speakers.

Regular updates and education for employees are also critical to ensure employees can share accurate information internally and with the community. We found opportunities for County staff and the Sheriff's office to learn about Oregon's safe storage law and Oregon's Extreme Risk Protection Order (red flag law). The County staff we spoke with were not familiar with these laws (although we did not query everybody we spoke with).

3. **Collaborative platforms and events for consultation and information:**

We recommend that the County support and sponsor collaborative events around violence prevention and response, such as conferences and town halls. These would invite community members to partner and engage with County and partner government agencies, community-based organizations (CBOs), educational institutions, public health bodies, and those impacted by violence. These platforms would facilitate the exchange of information, ideas, and priorities among various stakeholders and include both sharing information and actively involving the community in shaping County programs and responses.

- a. We recommend a goal of hosting one (1) open town hall with diverse stakeholders invited in FY25, and plan to host an annual gathering or similar event on this issue.

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- b. This recommendation builds on the success and power of Youth Violence Prevention Week programming and other youth- and neighborhood-focused existing events and programs.

4. Budget & Policy Decision-making power Community Involvement:

A recurring theme in our conversations was the need to enhance community involvement in community violence policy and budget decisions, particularly concerning youth, victims, those with lived experiences, and other impacted communities. This involves increasing access for directly impacted individuals and frontline staff to participate in decision-making processes and power-sharing when it comes to decisions around violence prevention, including budgeting and contracting.

- a. Note: this relates to the CIC Budget Engagement Subcommittee, and we encourage those working on community engagement in violence prevention and response to also review those recommendations.

5. Continued Advocacy and Reflection:

Over the course of this subcommittee year, we had many productive conversations with a variety of groups, but we were only able to start the conversation. There is a lot more to learn and know about this important topic. Participants recognized the complexity of the issues discussed and the ongoing need for advocacy to understand, improve, and better coordinate community engagement around this critical issue and reflection. Some suggested the continuation of discussions or recommendations to address challenges effectively, echoing past recommendations as a basis for future action.

Topline Recommendation: We recommend ongoing investment in improving community engagement related to violence. This could include (but is not limited to) a County-wide task force, continuing the CIC's work, and/or leadership by the County Chair's office.

Conclusion:

These findings and themes highlight the collective efforts of agencies and stakeholders in addressing community engagement with complex issues, public health, and safety. By prioritizing proactive communication and community involvement that is transparent and collaborative the County can ensure that communities most impacted by violence are both leading, participating in, and informing the County's violence prevention efforts, leading to greater well-being and safety of the community.

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A note on backgrounds and life experiences of subcommittee members:

Angel Brophy (she/her) serves as the Subcommittee Chair and is a Community Health Worker for her Filipino Community to provide wrap-around services with the National Alliance for Filipino Concerns.. Angel's 2nd term ends 8/24/2026

Jenny Shadley (she/her) is a Graphic Design Supervisor and Photographer at Clark College in Vancouver, WA, where she serves on many committees including the Climate Improvement Task Force, and chairs the Art Selection Committee. She also serves as a Clark College non-representational shop steward for the Washington Public Employee Association. Jenny's 1st term ends 9/9/2024

Kristina Edmunson (she/her) runs her own communications practice. She advises nonprofit organizations, government officials and other thought leaders throughout the state. Kristina's 1st term ends 9/9/2024.

Patrick Nolen (he/him) is a volunteer and serves on the board of the Portland Peace Team. In addition he volunteers with the Mental Health Association of Portland. He has previously worked, served on the board and organized with Sisters of the Road and other nonprofits. He currently works as a Peer Wellness Support Specialist. Patrick's 1st term ends 9/9/2024

Contact Information:

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