



Freeport Community Plan

A plan to address community and programming needs related to gun violence prevention as identified in the Freeport Community Needs Assessment

2023

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01. INTRODUCTION

In 2022, the United Way of Northwest Illinois applied for and received a State of Illinois R3 planning and capacity-building grant to identify community and programming needs related to gun violence prevention and to develop a community needs assessment and plan to address these needs.

The United Way engaged Maggie Strong Consulting out of Quincy, Illinois, to lead the assessment and planning process. A steering committee of community stakeholders convened in August 2022 and oversaw the development and distribution of a stakeholder survey and interviews. These primary data sources along with secondary data collected from national, state, regional, and local sources, became the basis of the Freeport Community Needs Assessment.

The Freeport Community Needs Assessment is a 117-page stand-alone report of the strengths, weaknesses (needs), perceptions, opportunities, and challenges facing the Freeport community. By identifying its most pressing issues and concerns, the community can develop a plan to address its greatest needs and allocate resources more effectively.

Informed by the data contained in the Needs Assessment, Freeport community stakeholders gathered on February 9, 2023, for the purpose of developing and prioritizing community-wide strategies that support the safety and well-being of all residents. 41 participants representing education, government, law enforcement, non-profits, healthcare, and business in Freeport attended the all-day planning session.

The results of the planning session and subsequent youth and young adult focus groups held May 8 and 9, 2023, in Freeport, led to the core initiatives and strategies contained within this Freeport Community Plan.

02. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The 2023 Freeport Community Needs Assessment and Plan is a project of volunteer citizens and stakeholders of Freeport who answered the call for help, and to whom we would like to express our deepest gratitude for their service.

Grant recipient and coordinating agency:



**United Way
of Northwest Illinois**

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ILLINOIS CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION AUTHORITY



RESTORE. REINVEST. RENEW.

Assessment and Plan Consulting Firm:



03. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Throughout the year-long assessment and planning process, three priority areas consistently rose to the surface: building trust, investing in people, and investing in place. From these three priority areas (and the data that led to their development), grew the Freeport Community Plan which contains five core initiatives and 19 strategies.

This plan has been developed by and for the residents and stakeholders of Freeport. It is a roadmap, and it's a beginning. Included under each of the five core initiatives are the rationale, strategies, potential outcomes, evidence, and program examples and resources for each initiative.

All Freeport residents and stakeholders - from individual citizens to elected officials, from business representatives to non-profit leaders, from students to seniors - should look at this plan with an eye toward finding their place in its implementation.

Everyone's skills, resources, and hard work will be needed to ensure the plan's success. Implementing the plan will not be fast or free. The community will have to come together to make long-term investments, including in areas and communities that have suffered from disinvestment over the years. These investments may seem difficult at the outset, but they have the potential to pay back significant dividends in the form of stability, safety, growth, revitalization, and most importantly - lives.



Building trust.

Building trust in the Freeport community is essential for its well-being, growth, and success. A foundation built on trust facilitates cooperation and collaboration, enhances communication, and increases stability and security among community members.



Investing in people.

Investing in people works to interrupt the cycle of victimization, trauma, and retaliatory violence by engaging people at the highest risk for violence.



Investing in place.

Investing in housing and place, or the environment, can interrupt the cycle of disorder, decay, and crime by remediating untended and dilapidated houses, buildings, and public spaces which in turn creates safer streets.

04. CORE INITIATIVES

1. Build trust through engagement and accountability.

2. Create protective environments.

3. Connect youth to caring adults and activities.

4. Intervene to lessen harm and prevent future risk.

5. Promote family and caregiving environments that support healthy development.

Build trust through engagement and accountability.

RATIONALE

Building trust in the Freeport community is essential for its success, growth, and well-being. A foundation built on trust facilitates cooperation and collaboration, enhances communication, increases stability and security, and promotes a sense of belonging. Building trust in a community requires a combination of actions and attitudes, including:

- **Communication:** Encourage open and respectful dialogue between different groups and listen actively to each other's perspectives.
- **Transparency:** Be honest and transparent in all actions and decisions; avoid actions that could be perceived as deceptive or manipulative.
- **Empathy:** Try to understand the experiences and perspectives of others; show compassion and understanding towards their feelings and opinions.
- **Responsibility:** Take responsibility for one's own actions and decisions; work towards finding mutually acceptable solutions.
- **Collaboration:** Encourage collaboration and teamwork; find common goals that can bring different groups together.
- **Inclusiveness:** Foster an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and respected, regardless of their race, background, or beliefs.



Build trust through engagement and accountability.

STRATEGIES

1. Establish a Community Advisory Board.

- Promote ongoing involvement in and oversight of the effective implementation of the Community Plan.
- Engage underrepresented members of the community in shared governance, service, and action (“Nothing about us without us”)
- Incentivize youth and young adult participation and provide them with training and support.

2. Develop a community dashboard.

- Align residents and stakeholders, including government, school district, non-profit organizations, and businesses around outcomes to improve lives, reduce crime, and close disparities.
- Track data, analyze to inform policy and resource decisions, identify service gaps, monitor progress, promote accountability, and reinforce alignment.
- Track disaggregated data to ensure accountability to equity goals.

3. Increase focus on justice for victims of gun violence.

- Assist gun violence survivors in finding justice for their loved ones while positively impacting the homicide clearance rate in Freeport.
- Support Freeport Police Department efforts during the investigative process.

Build trust through engagement and accountability.

STRATEGIES

4. Advance, operationalize, and prioritize racial equity.

- Prioritize participation in equity leadership training – leading by example with city leadership and staff, elected officials, and non-profit and business leaders committing to training first.
- Make a public declaration to commit to racial equity to open doors for more meaningful communication among leaders and impacted residents. (e.g., resolutions, racial equity guiding statement, racial equity presence on website and social platforms, sharing disparity data or personnel demographics data.)
- Dedicate new or align existing resources to create a system capable of bringing about change and build a team to address the impacts of racism.
- Commit to policy and system change, analyzing existing and new policies through a racial equity lens.

Build trust through engagement and accountability.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

- Increases in community participation
- Stronger relationships
- Increases in social cohesion
- Increases in well-being and safety
- Increases in data transparency
- Increases in collaboration and engagement
- Increases in efficiency and effectiveness
- Reductions in victimization and perpetration of violence
- Increases in deterrence
- Increases in public safety
- Increases in the prevention and intervention of violence
- Increases in advocacy and awareness
- Increases in institutional trust and legitimacy
- Increases in social justice
- Reductions in discrimination
- Increases in economic advancement
- Improved public health
- Increases in civic participation
- Increases in democratic participation
- Increases in local knowledge
- Reductions in power imbalances
- Increases in responsiveness to community needs

Build trust through engagement and accountability.

EVIDENCE

1. Establish a Community Advisory Board.

Community Advisory Boards serve as a source of leadership and provide structure to guide a partnership's activities. Creating a culture of accountability through a board or council will help build trust and can be a key component of successful projects. ([source](#)).

2. Develop a community dashboard.

Community dashboards provide a centralized platform for sharing information, data, and updates with the community. This transparency fosters trust and accountability by enabling community members to access and review relevant information. ([source](#)) Dashboards and data tools can tell the story of government spending priorities and can provide foundations for accountability and advocacy. ([source](#)).

3. Increase focus on justice for victims of gun violence.

Disadvantaged communities of color typically have low fatal and nonfatal shooting clearance rates in part because of poor witness cooperation. Diminished clearance rates have also been shown to intensify minority residents' claims that officers do not care about keeping them or their neighborhoods safe. ([source](#)).

4. Advance, operationalize, and prioritize racial equity.

Racial equity is a moral and economic imperative: as research from the National Equity Atlas, the Federal Reserve, and others have shown, eliminating racial inequities will strengthen local economies. ([source](#)).

Build trust through engagement and accountability.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

1. Establish a Community Advisory Board.

- Community Advisory Boards: A Synthesis of Best Processes (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3103575/>)
- Consumer Advisory Boards (Center for Health Care Strategies) (<https://www.chcs.org/media/Community-Engagement-Infographic-12.17.19.pdf>)
- Tennessee Department of Children's Services Community Advisory Board Toolkit (https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/dcs/documents/in-home-tn/volservices/TN_DCS_CAB_Toolkit_InHomeTN.pdf)
- Urban Institute Tools and Resources for Project-Based Community Advisory Boards (https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/104938/tools-and-resources-for-project-based-community-advisory-boards_0.pdf)

2. Develop a community dashboard.

- City Grip Open Data and Transparency (https://citygrip.org/practice_area/open-data-and-transparency/)
- Police Data Initiative (<https://www.policedatainitiative.org/>)
- CityScore (Boston) (<https://www.boston.gov/innovation-and-technology/cityscore>)
- Irving Connects (https://performance.envisio.com/dashboard/Irving_Connects)

3. Increase focus on justice for victims of gun violence.

- Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) (<https://everytownresearch.org/report/voca/>)
- The TraRon Center (Washington, DC) (<https://traroncenter.org/programs-and-services>)
- 'We Don't Talk to Police' Criminology and Public Policy Research Article (<https://ccjs.umd.edu/sites/ccjs.umd.edu/files/pubs/Criminology%20%20Public%20Policy%20-%202019%20-%20Brunson%20-%20Oh%20hell%20no%20%20we%20don%20t%20talk%20to%20police.pdf>)

Build trust through engagement and accountability.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

4. Advance, operationalize, and prioritize racial equity.

- Government Alliance on Race and Equity (<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/>)
- PolicyLink – Lifting Up What Works (<https://www.policylink.org/node/63646>)
- National League of Cities Municipal Action Guide Advancing Equity in Your City (<https://www.nlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/NLC20MAG20on20Racial20Equity.pdf>)

Create protective community environments.

RATIONALE

“Creating protective community environments in which young people develop is a necessary step towards achieving population-level reductions in youth violence. Approaches that modify the characteristics of shared public places are considered community-level approaches. Such approaches can involve, for example, changes to policies or the physical and social aspects of settings to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors for youth violence. These changes can have a significant influence on individual behavior by creating a context that promotes social norms that protect against violence. These approaches can improve perceived and actual safety and reduce opportunities for violence and crime and, in turn, increase protective factors, such as residents having more prosocial interactions and opportunities to support youth. Approaches that create protective environments can reduce violence-related injury and death as well as have long-term benefits by reducing children’s exposure to violence and the consequences of this exposure.”

Source: A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors (<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv-technicalpackage.pdf>).



Create protective community environments.

STRATEGIES

1. Modify the physical environment.

- Prioritize investments in the public realm that provide safer, more welcoming, and more comfortable environments. (e.g., increasing lighting, managing accessibility to buildings and public spaces, street cleaning, increasing security, creating green spaces, sponsoring community events that bring residents together)

2. Invest in housing.

- Revitalize housing citywide (repair, remove, redevelop) with a focus on areas with the highest levels of social vulnerability, poverty, and crime (wards 3 and 5). (e.g., abandoned building and vacant lot remediation)
- Design public housing and community spaces with an awareness of residents' trauma and purposefully provide physical environments to support positive interpersonal relationships.
- Encourage mixed-use development. Smart Growth principles encourage the development of healthy and vibrant communities through compact building design, walkable neighborhoods, diverse housing and transportation options, and a variety of land uses including open spaces and areas for social interaction.

3. Establish a new (or expand an existing) community center.

- Increase the number (or usable square footage) of safe spaces offering a variety of athletic and recreational activities while also connecting people with resources and supportive services.
- Promote community centers as public venues where community members go for a variety of reasons, including socializing, participating in recreational or educational activities, gaining information, and seeking counseling or support services.

Create protective community environments.

STRATEGIES

4. Invest in public transportation.

- Encourage investments in a more reliable, safer, and expanded transportation system both within the City of Freeport and connecting Freeport to nearby communities.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

- Reductions in nonfatal physical assault, firearm assaults, nonfatal shootings, and homicide
- Reductions in violence-related injuries among youth
- Reductions in nonviolent and violent crime and arrests
- Reductions in gang-related violence
- Reductions in community risk factors for youth violence (e.g., alcohol use by minors)
- Reductions in acceptability of using guns to resolve disputes
- Increases in normative beliefs that violence is unacceptable
- Improved social networks
- Reduced isolation
- Improved wellbeing
- Increased community involvement
- Increased civic participation

Create protective community environments.

EVIDENCE

1. Modify the physical environment.

- Community-driven crime prevention by environmental design programs focus on neighborhoods' physical environment, addressing issues such as blight and vacant lots to create safe public spaces and reduce the number of areas where activity that leads to gun violence can occur. ([source](#))
- Smart Growth principles encourage the development of healthy and vibrant communities through compact building design, walkable neighborhoods, diverse housing and transportation options, and a variety of land uses including open spaces and areas for social interaction. ([source](#))

2. Invest in housing.

Crime is related in part to the built environment. Public safety is enhanced when people are incorporated into the social and economic life of the community. Physical blight, as evident in dilapidated housing, is also associated with increased criminal activity. Signs of physical disorder are a signal to criminals that residents are not invested in a neighborhood and are therefore less likely to report crimes. ([source](#))

3. Establish a new (or expand an existing) community center.

Community Centers strengthen social connections, reduce social isolation, and improve health and wellbeing among participants. Establishing community centers may help reduce disparities in access to services and recreational facilities for residents with low incomes and under-resourced communities. Community centers appear to improve the health and wellbeing of users by building positive social relationships that include the exchange of resources, information, and emotional support. Community centers may also increase community engagement and participants' sense of citizenship. ([source](#))

Create protective community environments.

EVIDENCE

4. Invest in public transportation.

Transportation Systems help ensure that people can reach everyday destinations, such as jobs, schools, healthy food outlets, and healthcare facilities, safely and reliably. *(source)*

Create protective community environments.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

1. Modify the physical environment.

- Healthy Places by Design (<https://healthyplacesbydesign.org/>)
- Smart Growth (<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/what-is-smart-growth/>)

2. Invest in housing.

- Choice Neighborhoods (<https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/CNGRANTEEREPORT2015.PDF>)
- IHDA Community Revitalization (<https://www.ihda.org/developers/market-research/community-revitalization/>)
- NeighborWorks America (<https://www.neighborworks.org/Community/Revitalization/Stable-Communities/Community-Revitalization/Implement-and-Maintain>)
- Housing Action Illinois (<https://housingactionil.org/who-we-are/mission-values-vision/>)
- Local Housing Solutions (<https://localhousingsolutions.org/housing-policy-library/code-enforcement/>)

3. Establish a new (or expand an existing) community center.

- Boston Centers for Youth and Families (<https://www.boston.gov/departments/boston-centers-youth-families>)
- BronxWorks Community Centers (<https://bronxworks.org/>)
- Family YMCA of Northwest Illinois (<https://freeportymca.org/>)
- Boys and Girls Club of Freeport and Stephenson County (<https://bgcfreeport.com/>)
- The King Community Campus

4. Invest in public transportation.

- Transit-oriented Development (TOD) (<http://www.tod.org/>)

Connect youth to caring adults and activities.

RATIONALE

“Young people’s risk for violence can be buffered through strong connections to caring adults and involvement in activities that help young people grow and apply new skills. Relationships with caring adults, in addition to parents or caregivers, can influence young people’s behavioral choices and reduce their risk for involvement in crime and violence. These caring adults could include teachers, coaches, extended family members, neighbors, and community volunteers. Exposure to positive adult role models helps youth learn acceptable and appropriate behavior. Through positive interpersonal relationships and learning activities, youth can also develop broad and healthy life goals, improve their school engagement and skills, and establish networks and have experiences that improve their future schooling and employment opportunities. These connections and experiences and the many benefits they contribute to, such as enhanced academic performance, are protective against involvement in crime and violence.”

Source: A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors (<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv-technicalpackage.pdf>).



Connect youth to caring adults and activities.

STRATEGIES

1. Implement mentoring programs.

- Provide new or expand existing mentorship programs with a focus on age groups most affected by violence (ages 10-19 (greatest % of victims) and 20-29 (greatest % of offenders)).
- Pair youth with volunteers from the community with a goal of fostering relationships that will contribute to growth opportunities, skill development, and academic success.

2. Establish after-school, weekend, and summer programs.

- Provide more opportunities for youth to strengthen their social and academic skills and become involved in school and community activities to expand their prosocial experiences and relationships.

3. Prepare future leaders.

- Establish a Future Leaders Academy/Summer Youth Employment program that pays teenagers to work at participating businesses and participate in weekly training/events.
- Focus on positive youth development and the following pillars: employment, job-readiness skills, college and career exposure, financial literacy, community impact, leadership, and personal health and wellness.

Connect youth to caring adults and activities.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

- Reductions in perpetration and victimization of violence
- Reductions in physical fighting and delinquency
- Reductions in involvement in gang activity
- Reductions in rates of arrests for violent and nonviolent crime
- Reductions in drug selling
- Reductions in alcohol and drug use
- Reductions in truancy
- Reductions in rates of school dropout
- Increases in academic performance and perceptions of academic abilities
- Increases in graduation rates
- Increases in parent-child relationships and parental trust
- Increases in positive relationships with teachers or prosocial adults
- Increases in job skills
- Increases in social-emotional skills
- Increases in employment and earnings

Connect youth to caring adults and activities.

EVIDENCE

1. Implement mentoring programs.

There is strong evidence that mentoring programs reduce delinquent behavior, aggression, and drug use for at-risk youth. Effects can vary significantly by program; programs that make emotional support or mentee advocacy a key component appear to have greater effects than programs that emphasize modeling or teaching. Mentoring is one of the most used interventions to prevent and reduce delinquent behavior. ([source](#)).

2. Establish after-school, weekend, and summer programs.

- Program participation may decrease risky and violent behavior. There is some evidence that summer youth employment programs (SYEP) decrease arrests for violent crime. Programs also increase employment and earnings for youth during the year that they participate, especially disadvantaged youth. ([source](#)).
- Positive Youth Development programs engage young people in intentional, productive, and constructive ways while recognizing and enhancing their strengths. Research indicates that young people who are surrounded by a variety of opportunities for positive encounters engage in less risky behavior and ultimately show evidence of higher rates of successful transitions into adulthood. ([source](#)).

3. Prepare future leaders.

Students who experience traumatic events report increased self-efficacy and reduced trauma symptoms after participating in a leadership program, compared to non-participants. An after-school leadership program for middle school students shows increases in self-esteem and leadership activities, which in turn reduces reports of delinquent behavior a year after program participation; Black students experience a greater decrease in delinquent behavior than white peers. ([source](#)).

Connect youth to caring adults and activities.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

1. Implement mentoring programs.

- MENTOR (https://www.mentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Final_Elements_Publication_Fourth.pdf)
- National Mentoring Resource Center (<https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/>)
- Credible Messengers (<https://cmjcenter.org/>)
- Check & Connect (<http://checkandconnect.org/model/default.html>)
- YouthBuild USA (<https://youthbuild.org/>)
- Generations United (<https://www.gu.org/>)

2. Establish after-school, weekend, and summer programs.

- National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (<https://dropoutprevention.org/>)
- What Works Clearinghouse (<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/resources/what-works-clearinghouse>)
- Police Athletic League (<https://www.palnyc.org/>)
- Association of Midnight Basketball (<https://www.amblp.org/>)
- Law Enforcement Explorer Program (<https://www.exploring.org/law-enforcement/>)

3. Prepare future leaders.

- Tallahassee Future Leaders Academy (<https://www.talgov.com/employment/tfla>)
- 4-H Civic Engagement programs (<https://4-h.org/programs/civic-engagement/>)
- HOBY Leadership Seminars (<https://www.teenlife.com//summer/hoby-hugh-obrian-youth-leadership/>)
- Youth Empowerment Solutions (<https://yes.sph.umich.edu/>)
- Youth Leadership America (Anaheim) (<https://www.ylamerica.org/what-we-do>)
- Youth Leadership Academy (Ohio State University) (<https://lifesports.osu.edu/what-we-do/outreach/high-school-programs/youth-leadership-academy/>)
- MGR Foundation's Youth Empowerment program (<http://beta.scopeinteractive.com/MGRF/>)
- C5 Association's Youth Program (<https://c5leaders.org/>)

Intervene to lessen harm and prevent future risk.

RATIONALE

“Many youth who engage in violence as teens and young adults have histories of childhood conduct problems, aggression, violence perpetration and victimization, delinquency, and criminal behavior. These youth often have other known risk factors for violence, including substance use, academic problems, associations with deviant peers, and home environments characterized by disruption, conflict, violence, and other family problems. Many have experienced traumatic events and show signs of behavioral and mental health problems from experiencing, witnessing, and living with chronic exposures to violence and in unhealthy environments. Justice responses, such as incarceration alone, have limited effect on youths’ future criminal behavior, and some policies, such as the transfer of juvenile offenders to adult criminal courts, can result in worse outcomes for youth. Other approaches designed to address these youths’ many risk factors have the potential to interrupt the continuation and escalation of violence. These interventions can also create resiliency and strengthen familial protective factors, such as parental monitoring, parent-child communication, and behavioral management.”

Source: A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors (<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv-technical/package.pdf>).



Intervene to lessen harm and prevent future risk.

STRATEGIES

1. Provide treatment to lessen the harms of violence exposures.

- Improve access to cognitive behavioral health services including treatment for both mental health and substance use disorders.
- Reduce the stigma around mental illness through communication and education.
- Support increased emphasis on social-emotional learning both inside and outside of the classroom.
- Integrate behavioral health into primary care practice.
- Advocate for the development of inpatient/residential behavioral care in Freeport.

2. Establish a program to reduce recidivism.

- Target people who are most likely to re-offend (who); use practices rooted in the latest research on what works to reduce recidivism (what), and regularly review program quality and evaluate how closely the program adheres to its established model (how well).

3. Advocate for two embedded police social workers.

- Prioritize the hiring of two licensed social workers at the Freeport Police Department.
- A social worker's job description can involve de-escalating and remediating mental health crises, manic episodes, or domestic disputes through crisis intervention and conflict resolution skills.
- Trained professionals, such as licensed clinical social workers (LCSW), treat mental, behavioral, and emotional disorders, provide treatment plans, and follow-up to evaluate their effectiveness.

Intervene to lessen harm and prevent future risk.

STRATEGIES

4. Implement a Community Violence Intervention (CVI) Program.

- Focus on high-risk people and places (focused deterrence); implement evidence-based strategies; commit to long-term, stable funding; facilitate community input and engagement.
- Group Violence Interventions (GVI) are collaborations among community leaders, social service providers, and law enforcement. The Group Violence Intervention Strategy is based on the insight that, in most American cities, an incredibly small and readily identifiable segment of the population is responsible for most of the gun violence.
- Hospital-based Violence interruption Programs (HVIP) reach survivors of violence in the hospital.
- Community-centered violence interrupters or neighborhood change agents are skilled in intervention and supporting people on their change journeys. These professionals have credibility in the communities where they work.

5. Become a Trauma-Informed (and trained) Community.

- Community trauma is the sum of the hurt and suffering of individuals and collective trauma experienced in communities with elevated levels of violence.
- Trauma-informed care is an approach used to engage people with histories of trauma. It recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma can play in people's lives.
- Increase understanding and awareness of the impact of trauma; Develop trauma-informed responses; Provide strategies for developing and implementing trauma-informed policies.
- Community-based participatory research, community leadership, peer role modeling, support networks to cope with recurring trauma, and creative outlets to express residents' collective trauma are recommended strategies.
- Implement training community-wide, including among criminal justice professionals, civic leadership, educators, non-profits, and service organizations.

Intervene to lessen harm and prevent future risk.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

- Reductions in victimization and perpetration of violence
- Reductions in nonviolent and violent crime
- Reductions in arrests and recidivism
- Reductions in gang involvement
- Reductions in out-of-home placements
- Reductions in siblings' criminal behavior
- Reductions in teen dating violence
- Reductions in child abuse
- Reductions in substance use
- Reductions in symptoms of PTSD, depression, and behavioral problems
- Increases in school attendance and homework completion
- Increases in positive parenting and family management practices (e.g., monitoring and supervision)
- Improvements in family relationships and communication
- Reductions in repeat calls to the Police Department
- Improvements in community relations
- Improvements in mental health
- Increased adherence to treatment

Intervene to lessen harm and prevent future risk.

EVIDENCE

1. Provide treatment to lessen the harms of violence exposures.

- There is strong evidence that integrating behavioral health into primary care practice improves mental health, especially depression symptoms. Integrating care also increases patients' adherence to treatment. Collaborative care approaches that use case managers to organize and integrate behavioral and primary care improve response to treatment, increase remission and recovery from symptoms, and increase satisfaction with care among patients with depression in the short- and long term. *(source)*
- Mobile Health, also known as mHealth, uses text messaging and applications on mobile devices to deliver healthcare services and support to individuals with mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, stress, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance abuse. Text messaging interventions range from educational to informational to automated reminders or supportive messages sent to individuals participating in longer-term treatment. *(source)*

2. Establish a program to reduce recidivism.

Research has demonstrated that programs that adhere to the principles of risk, need, and responsivity and use a cognitive behavioral approach are the most effective at reducing recidivism. People returning to their communities from prison or jail have complex challenges and needs that contribute to the likelihood that they may be incarcerated again. These challenges include mental health, substance use, housing and homelessness, education and employment, and children and families. *(source)*

Intervene to lessen harm and prevent future risk.

EVIDENCE

3. Advocate for two embedded police social workers.

Adding embedded Police Social Workers (PSWs) to a law enforcement agency can improve community relations, decrease repeat calls, and provide vital interim services to not only the community, but the agency itself. As social problems continue to rise, PSWs can be the key to reducing some of the workload on officers and agencies while also working to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community. ([source](#)).

4. Implement a Community Violence Intervention (CVI) Program.

Gun Violence Interventions (GVI) and recidivism reduction strategies are two of the most effective tools for addressing serious violence. Researchers have found that focused deterrence which is at the heart of the GVI model “has the largest direct impact on crime and violence.” ([source](#)).

5. Become a Trauma-Informed (and trained) Community.

Trauma-informed approaches to community building are a suggested strategy to improve health outcomes and social connections in low-income communities. Available evidence from early implementation of the Trauma Informed Community Building model in Potrero Hill, San Francisco suggests these initiatives may improve mental health and increase physical activity, increase connections among individuals from different cultures and generations, and increase feelings of safety among participants. Experts suggest community development initiatives that include components of trauma-informed community building, capacity building, empowerment, and network development may increase community resilience in response to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and adverse community environments. ([source](#)).

Intervene to lessen harm and prevent future risk.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

1. Provide treatment to lessen the harms of violence exposures.

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's Academy for Integrating Behavioral Health and Primary Care (<https://www.ahrq.gov/cpi/about/otherwebsites/integrationacademy.ahrq.gov/index.html>)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (<https://www.samhsa.gov/resource/ebp/academy-integrating-behavioral-health-primary-care>)
- Collaborative Care Model (AIMS Center at the University of Washington) ([https://aims.uw.edu/collaborative-care#:~:text=Collaborative%20Care%20\(CoCM\)%20is%20a,dueto%20their%20persistent%20nature.](https://aims.uw.edu/collaborative-care#:~:text=Collaborative%20Care%20(CoCM)%20is%20a,dueto%20their%20persistent%20nature.))
- Mobile Health for Mental Health (mHealth) (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5897664/>)
- American Psychiatric Association useful, safe, and effective apps (<https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/mental-health-apps>)

2. Establish a program to reduce recidivism.

- Safer Foundation (Illinois) (<https://saferfoundation.org/>)
- Delancey Street Foundation (<https://www.delanceystreetfoundation.org/>)
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/preventing-future-crime-cognitive-behavioral-therapy>)
- Employment Connection (<https://www.employmentstl.org/about>)

3. Advocate for two embedded police social workers.

- Bloomington, IN Police Department (https://cops.usdoj.gov/html/dispatch/08-2021/police_social_workers.html)
- Co-Responder Models (<https://bja.ojp.gov/program/pmhc/learning>)
- Social Work and Law Enforcement Project (Connecticut) (<http://swleproject.com/>)

Intervene to lessen harm and prevent future risk.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

4. Implement a Community Violence Intervention (CVI) Program.

- Everytown Community-based gun violence intervention organizations (<https://everytownresearch.org/report/community-led-public-safety-strategies/>).
- Cure Violence (Chicago) (<https://cvg.org/>).
- Safe Streets (Baltimore) (<https://monse.baltimorecity.gov/safe-streets-new/>).
- Advance Peace (<https://www.advancepeace.org/>).
- Project Longevity (Connecticut) (<https://www.projectlongevity-ct.org/>).
- National Institute of Justice (www.crimesolutions.gov).
- Aim4Peace (<https://www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/health/aim4peace-violence-prevention-program>).

5. Become a Trauma-Informed (and trained) Community.

- Trauma-Informed Community Building (TICB) model developed by BRIDGE Housing Corporation and Health Equity Institute (<https://bridgehousing.com/PDFs/TICB.Paper5.14.pdf>).
- Peace4Tarpon Trauma-Informed Community Initiative (<https://www.peace4tarpon.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Resource-Guide-2018.pdf>).
- Peace4Gainesville (<https://www.peace4gainesville.org/>).
- Neighborhood Resilience Project (Pittsburgh, PA) (<https://neighborhoodresilience.org/>).
- Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) (<https://traumaawareschools.org/index.php/learn-more-cbits/>).
- Support for Students Exposed to Trauma (SSET) (<https://traumaawareschools.org/index.php/learn-more-sset/>).
- The Knowledge Center at Chaddock Trauma-Informed Schools (<https://www.tkcchaddock.org/>).
- Addressing Trauma from Gun Violence (<https://everytownresearch.org/report/invisible-wounds-gun-violence-and-community-trauma-among-black-americans/>).

Promote family and caregiving environments that support healthy development.

RATIONALE

“The family environment plays a key role in shaping youth's physical, emotional, social, and behavioral health, and this influence extends from early childhood through late adolescence and beyond. Family environments that are unstable, stressful, lack structure and supervision, have poor relationships and communication between family members, and use harsh or limited discipline with children are risk factors for youth violence and contribute to young people developing other risks, such as poor problem-solving skills and early and continued perpetration of aggression.

Decades of research show that nurturing and supportive family environments where caregivers build warm and caring relationships with children, monitor children's activities and friendships, set age-appropriate expectations and rules, and use consistent and nonviolent discipline significantly lower the risk for youth violence and other adolescent health risk behaviors. The promotion of positive family environments throughout a child's development is connected to caregivers' knowledge about healthy and age-appropriate child development as well as the ways families communicate, manage behavior, and resolve conflict.”

Source: A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors (<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/yv-technicalpackage.pdf>).



Promote family and caregiving environments that support healthy development.

STRATEGIES

1. Implement early childhood home visitation.

- Programs provide information, caregiver support, and training about child health, development, and care to families in their homes, and help families access services.
- Some programs begin during pregnancy, while others begin after the birth of the child and may continue up through the child entering elementary school.

2. Establish parenting skills and family relationship programs.

- Provide caregivers with support and teach communication, problem-solving, and behavior monitoring and management skills.
- Specific program content typically varies by the age of the child but often has consistent themes of child development, parental monitoring and management of children's behavior, appropriate use of rewards and punishment, parent-child communication and relationships, and youth's interpersonal and problem-solving skills.

3. Support early childhood education and care programs.

- Center-based, preschool education programs that foster children's cognitive and social-emotional development.
- Childcare provider services including training, professional development, quality improvement, accreditation, credentialing
- Advocate for financial incentives to providers that serve priority populations (parents who work nonstandard hours, parents of infants and toddlers, children in rural areas, children with special needs)
- Early Head Start (EHS) including child care, parent education, health and mental health services, and family support programs

Promote family and caregiving environments that support healthy development.

POTENTIAL OUTCOMES

- Reductions in behavior problems and disruptive behavior at home and school
- Reductions in physical fighting, aggression, and delinquency
- Reductions in arrests, convictions, and probation violations
- Reductions in alcohol and drug use by youth and parents
- Reductions in family conflict
- Reductions in child maltreatment (abuse and neglect)
- Reductions in parental depression and stress
- Increases in compliance with caregiver's directions
- Increases in prosocial behavior (e.g., social-emotional skills, social skills, such as concern for others, empathy, and cooperation)
- Increases in parent-child connection, communication, and relationship quality
- Increases in positive parenting practices, such as monitoring and supervision of youth's activities, use of consistent and nonviolent discipline, and involvement and support of youth
- Increases in school readiness
- Improved family functioning
- Reductions in aggression and stress

Promote family and caregiving environments that support healthy development.

EVIDENCE

1. Implement early childhood home visitation.

There is strong evidence that early childhood home visiting programs prevent child maltreatment and injury and improve children's cognitive and socio-emotional development. Early childhood home visiting programs have also been shown to improve birth outcomes, maternal health, parenting behaviors and attitudes, and increase family economic self-sufficiency. ([source](#))

2. Establish parenting skills and family relationship programs.

Multiple systematic reviews of various parent skill and family relationship approaches have demonstrated beneficial impacts on perpetration as well as risk and protective factors for youth violence. There is strong evidence that group-based parenting programs reduce conduct, behavioral, and emotional problems among participants' children. Such programs also improve mental health, increase positive parenting skills, and decrease harsh parenting practices for parents in the short term. ([source](#))

3. Support early childhood education and care programs.

- There is strong evidence that preschool participation increases academic achievement and improves children's cognitive and social skills. Preschool participation improves social-emotional abilities and can modestly reduce social deviance in adolescence. ([source](#))
- The first few years of life lay the foundation for resilient, safe, healthy, and economically secure children. Access to high-quality childcare and early learning opportunities strengthens this foundation and directly supports the success and well-being of rural families. ([source](#)) Early Head Start can improve parenting, parent supportiveness, engagement, and emotional responsiveness, and increase use of positive discipline. ([source](#))

Promote family and caregiving environments that support healthy development.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

1. Implement early childhood home visitation.

- Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV) (<https://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs-impact/programs/home-visiting/maternal-infant-early-childhood-home-visiting-miechv-program>).
- Healthy Families America (https://www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org/?gclid=CjwKCAjwg-CjBhBnEiwAMUvNW667YpN4uiD9g4BRT2wRtHJ78JNUR6NpDy0oVVsktEiMh1YhfIPkvx0C40UQAvD_BwE).
- Nurse-Family Partnership (https://www.nursefamilypartnership.org/nfp-moms/?gad=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwg-CjBhBnEiwAMUvNW8yNa7EOyhERdOi-L4zy0V05kciZi-mgSjJaJ6OntzgCcqlihxAyrRoCs5QQAvD_BwE).
- Parents as Teachers (<https://parentsasteachers.org/>).
- Early Head Start-Home Visiting (<https://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/effectiveness/Early%20Head%20Start%20Home-Based%20Option/In%20brief>).

2. Establish parenting skills and family relationship programs.

- The Incredible Years (<https://incredibleyears.com/>).
- Parent Management Training-Oregon Model ([https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27283222/#:~:text=Parent%20Management%20Training%2DOregon%20Model%20\(PMTO\(%C2%AE\)%20\),contexts%2C%20cultures%2C%20and%20formats](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27283222/#:~:text=Parent%20Management%20Training%2DOregon%20Model%20(PMTO(%C2%AE)%20),contexts%2C%20cultures%2C%20and%20formats)).
- Group Triple P – Positive Parenting Program (<https://www.triplep.net/glo-en/home/>).
- Families and Schools Together (https://www.familiesandschools.org/?gclid=CjwKCAjwg-CjBhBnEiwAMUvNW2eH_dWt-KNP93PMyd2bntN3CF1gVIOqD4qUCkx7rD62SQIVrFDyBoCTPIQAvD_BwE).
- Healthy Families America (https://www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org/?gclid=CjwKCAjwg-CjBhBnEiwAMUvNWyuTzNcQ7AFYiBAB0nF_p66UibuFRVN2bpgBN5aqDa1Kurr3s_wQKWBoC27MQAvD_BwE).

Promote family and caregiving environments that support healthy development.

PROGRAM EXAMPLES & RESOURCES

3. Support early childhood education and care programs.

- Administration for Children and Families Office of Child Care (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ>)
- Illinois Cares for Kids (<https://www.illinoiscaresforkids.org/>)
- Early Head Start (<https://ecels-healthychildcarepa.org/resources/national-childcare-resource-centers/item/375-early-head-start-national-resource-center.html>)
- YWCA Child Care Solutions (<https://www.ywcanwil.org/childcare-home/>)

05. TAKING AND SUSTAINING ACTION

The successful implementation of the Freeport Community Plan will require collaborative efforts of government agencies, community organizations, healthcare providers, law enforcement agencies, and concerned citizens and stakeholders. Clear timelines, responsibilities, and allocations of resources must be established to ensure effective execution.

Ongoing evaluation and monitoring mechanisms must also be put into place to assess progress and make necessary adjustments. Key performance indicators, such as reduced gun-related incidents, increased community engagement, and improved mental health outcomes, should be determined and tracked to measure the plan's effectiveness.

01 Establish an Implementation Team (Community Advisory Board)

- Identify key stakeholders, including representatives from local government, law enforcement, community organizations, healthcare providers, schools, and concerned citizens.
- Form a Community Advisory Board responsible for overseeing and coordinating the plan's execution.
- Define roles, responsibilities, and communication channels within the Community Advisory Board. (President, Vice President, Secretary, etc.; bylaws; committees for specific strategies; role of UWNl; meeting times, etc.)

02 Develop an Action Plan

- Create a detailed action plan that outlines specific tasks, timelines, resources needed, organization leads and supports, etc., for each strategy.
- Assign responsible parties (leads and supports) for each task and establish mechanisms for accountability and progress tracking.

Taking and Sustaining Action

03 Secure Funding and Resources

- Identify potential funding sources, including government grants, private donations, and community partnerships.
- Develop a comprehensive budget that allocates resources to support the implementation of strategies and initiatives.
- Seek necessary approvals and secure funding commitments to ensure sustained support throughout the implementation process.

04 Raise Awareness and Mobilize Community Support

- Develop a comprehensive communication and outreach plan to raise awareness about the community plan and its objectives.
- Engage community members through public forums, town hall meetings, and awareness campaigns to foster understanding, support, and participation.
- Establish partnerships with media outlets (traditional and online) to disseminate information and promote community involvement.

05 Implement Strategies and Initiatives

- Initiate the execution of each strategy and initiative based on the established action plan.
- Ensure clear communication channels among responsible parties (leads and supports) to facilitate smooth implementation and address any challenges or roadblocks.
- Regularly monitor progress, provide support, and adapt strategies as needed.

06 Enhance Collaboration and Partnerships

- Foster collaboration among stakeholders through regular meetings, trainings, workshops, and collaborative projects.
- Strengthen partnerships with community organizations, schools, healthcare providers, and law enforcement agencies to leverage resources and expertise.
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices and lessons learned to enhance the effectiveness of prevention efforts.

07 Monitor and Evaluate Progress

- Establish evaluation metrics and indicators to assess the plan's progress and impact.
- Regularly collect and analyze relevant data, including gun violence incidents, community engagement levels, and mental health outcomes.
- Regularly report data using a community dashboard.
- Conduct periodic evaluations to identify areas of success, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.
- Use evaluation findings to refine strategies, reallocate resources, and enhance the overall effectiveness of the plan.

08 Sustain, Expand, and Celebrate

- Develop a sustainability plan to ensure long-term impact of the prevention efforts (change doesn't happen overnight).
- Seek opportunities to secure continued funding, support, and resources beyond the initial implementation phase.
- Explore avenues for expanding the community plan to reach, engage, and serve a broader audience and address evolving needs and challenges.
- Celebrate successes – big and small. Step back and acknowledge that this work is difficult and that small achievements and milestones should be celebrated.

ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Information that is closely related to the information in the Freeport Community Plan is kept in the following separate documents. They are available online at www.uwni.org or by contacting the United Way of Northwest Illinois office.

- Freeport Community Needs Assessment
- Freeport Needs Assessment Compression Planning Session Summary Report
- Freeport Youth and Young Adult Focus Groups Report
- Freeport Community Plan Action Plan Template



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2023 Freeport Community Plan

