



Media Advisory

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Research Documents Reduced Gun Violence in Crown Heights, Brooklyn

Evaluation measures impact of the Save Our Streets prevention program

NEW YORK, N.Y., Jan. 23, 2013—According to new research from the Center for Court Innovation, the average monthly shooting rates in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, where the anti-violence project **Save Our Streets** operates, decreased by six percent from early 2010 through 2011. In surrounding areas shooting rates increased by 18 to 28 percent. When compared with the upward trend in the surrounding precincts, the research suggests that gun violence in Crown Heights was 20 percent lower than what it would have been without Save Our Streets.

The new research report, “Testing a Public Health Approach to Gun Violence,” details a comprehensive impact and process evaluation of the anti-violence initiative Save Our Streets, which started in Crown Heights in 2010. Save Our Streets is based on the Cure Violence model (formerly known as Chicago Ceasefire), which treats outbreaks of violence like epidemics of disease. Rather than traditional crime control methods, the Cure Violence model takes a public health approach similar to campaigns that have addressed other risky behaviors such as smoking and seatbelt use.

Gun violence in Crown Heights has been serious and persistent. In 2009, the year prior to initiation of Save Our Streets, there were more than 49 nonfatal shootings and more than 50 arrests for illegal gun possession in the local precinct.

To prevent gun crime, “violence interrupters”—individuals with a direct knowledge of the streets who have gotten their lives back on track—work to break the cycle of violence and retaliation by interrupting volatile situations before people get hurt.

“Violence interrupters cool off heated conflicts by providing on-the-spot mediations in the street,” explained Amy Ellenbogen, who oversees Save Our Streets. “Violence interrupters are trained in special mediation techniques, and they use their knowledge of the consequences of violence—which often comes from personal experience—to calm dangerous situations.”

“We observed a unique downward trend in gun violence in Crown Heights when compared with upward trends in several similar neighborhoods and across Brooklyn as a whole,” said Sarah Picard-Fritsche, co-author of the study. Picard-Fritsche added that researchers also found that the ongoing work of Save Our Streets is well-known in the Crown Heights community.

“When somebody gets shot, they go out and speak to the family and the kids involved,” said Saekuan Allah, a community activist in Crown Heights. “They put a cap on it to not blow the violence out of proportion.”

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“This is a program about everybody,” added Willard Hawkins, a community activist and Save Our Streets volunteer who lost someone close to him because of gun violence. “Violence interrupters are the foot soldiers making the neighborhood safer. I thank them every day.”

Save Our Streets program activities during the evaluation period were supported by funding from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs, and the Ostrodd Foundation. Current program funding comes from Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs and the New York City Young Men’s Initiative.

The study is available for download at:

http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/SOS_Evaluation.pdf

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