

Overview

Save Our Streets (S.O.S.) Bronx is part of a network of community-based efforts throughout New York City to end gun violence. S.O.S. was the first among the network to adapt the Cure Violence model to New York. S.O.S. uses public health strategies to respond to incidents and prevent violence before it starts. S.O.S. works closely with local organizations, neighborhood churches and pastors, community residents, and the individuals considered most likely to commit a shooting. Independent evaluators credit S.O.S. Bronx with reducing gun injuries by 37 percent when compared to a similar area not served by Cure Violence.

The Model

- **Outreach:** The program deploys outreach workers and violence interrupters who engage men and women in the community at risk of perpetrating or being victimized by violence. The staff, who all have intimate knowledge of life on the streets, serve as counselors, offering advice and guidance on how to respond to conflicts without violence. They use positive peer pressure to redirect high-risk individuals towards school or jobs and help them think and behave differently about violence.
- **Public Education:** S.O.S. staff and community volunteers distribute palm cards and posters with messages that promote peace and alternatives to violence. Community stakeholders have signs in their windows supporting our “Stop Shooting, Start Living” message in the neighborhood. E-mail blasts, texts, and messages on social media keep the community updated.
- **Community Mobilization:** S.O.S. works with a wide range of community partners that seek to spread an anti-violence message. The program organizes community forums, rallies and marches, speak-outs, and barbecues to advance a simple idea: our community is moving past gun violence.
- **Hospital Response Program:** S.O.S. Bronx partners with Lincoln Hospital to address violence in the community by sending staff to work with patients injured by gun or knife violence to prevent retaliation or repeat episodes and identify at risk individuals for intervention. S.O.S. worked with 283 patients in 2019.
- **Faith-Based Leaders:** Faith-based organizations are an essential partner. Faith-based leaders are encouraged to preach against gun violence from their pulpits, attend vigils, counsel people who are potentially involved in gun violence, and refer high-risk individuals to the program.
- **Use of Data:** S.O.S. uses data to identify neighborhood “hot spots” and the times of day and days of week that shootings occur. This allows resources to be focused most effectively.

Enhanced Services for Victims

Through a grant from the Victims of Crime Act, S.O.S. Bronx provides enhanced services to survivors of crime.

- **Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)** is the only federal grant program supporting direct assistance services to victims and survivors of all types of crimes both in our community and throughout the 5 boroughs as needed. S.O.S. Bronx has been awarded the grant to extend and enhance services to survivors of crime in our community.

Youth Programming

- **Working with Justice-Involved Youth:** S.O.S. Bronx is contracted through the city Administration for Children's Services to work with young people in Horizon Detention Center, The Children's Center, and the Close to Home program. The goal is to reduce violence by changing mindsets of the youth we serve. Staff facilitate workshops, including Job Readiness, Know Your Rights (provided by Legal Aid), Self-Care and Awareness, Reflections of Oneself, and Creative Arts plus game and movie nights. If needed, staff will accompany participants to court and write recommendation letters to help support their cases.
- **Conflict Mediation in Schools:** School-based conflict mediation provides culturally competent programming to at-risk youth to reduce their involvement in violence while increasing attendance, academic progress, and other social measures. The program includes school-wide activities to change the culture around violence and to assist schools in their response to incidents in school or the community.
- **Anti-Gun Violence Employment Program:** This program is a seasonal employment program for participants 14 to 24-years-old. The program consists of two phases: a six-week summer program and a 25-week school-year program. Job responsibilities include

community canvassing, asset mapping, data gathering, community outreach, and coordinating shooting responses.

- **In This Together:** Also known as "ITT," this is a therapeutic program that fosters a safe space for individuals in the community and participants to share and process trauma experienced by themselves or someone close to them. Through individual and group therapy, participants learn coping skills and other techniques such as mindfulness to incorporate in their daily lives. Groups like the King and Queen Makers tap into the greatness of young people and teach them how to use their talents to be positive and safe.
- **Youth Council:** The Youth Council serves young people ages 16 to 24 by providing a safe space to develop leadership and community skills. Participants work to become positive contributors to their neighborhoods. Learning takes place through workshops, community meetings, and recreational activities. Goals include reducing violence and forming a healthy, vibrant peer culture.

Community Development

- **Workforce Development:** S.O.S. Bronx provides workforce development to all members of the community (youth, whether in or out of school, and adults of all ages). Services include soft- and hard-skill development, job search assistance, career coaching, vocational training, and interview skill-building. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, S.O.S. provided virtual programming through the Anti-Gun Violence Employment and Summer Bridge Programs.
- **Bridging the Gap:** In 2019, S.O.S. Bronx piloted an intergenerational discussion series that brought together seniors and youth. Through ten sessions, S.O.S. Bronx staff served youth ages 16 to 24 and seniors 54 and older. Participants exchanged life experiences through storytelling, discussions, and community meals that built new

relationships and understanding among group members.

- **Anti-Poverty Program:** S.O.S. Bronx recognizes that residents in Morrisania, Mott Haven, and throughout the Bronx often experience food insecurity. Through our Soup and Sandwich initiative, S.O.S. Bronx served over 1,700 residents in 2019 with a free meal while engaging youth, seniors, the homeless, and other vulnerable populations. Additional services include meal delivery, food-box distribution, and an annual giveback where staff prepare and provide hot meals to homeless individuals along with food vouchers for local supermarkets.

- **Outreach to Seniors and Parents:** S.O.S. Bronx runs bingo games for seniors, receives referrals from community partners and parents to intervene with neighborhood youth, and partners with Vibrant, a community-based organization, to provide virtual and in-person parenting classes.

For More Information

Save Our Streets (S.O.S.) is operated by the Center for Court Innovation, a non-profit that seeks to promote safety in neighborhoods and fairness in the legal system. The Center for Court Innovation created S.O.S. in Crown Heights, Brooklyn in 2009. In 2012, S.O.S. expanded into three additional communities, Bed-Stuy (Brooklyn), Mott Haven and Morrisania (Bronx).

Contact at Elizabeth Delmonte-Hatton
at edelmonte@sossouthbronx.org.