Report on the Perceived Needs of Non-Fatal Gun Violence Victims

Report By:

Neil J. Vincent
Sancent Consulting, Inc.

Aileen Robinson
Victim Services
Chicago Police Department

Kevin Hund
Victim Services
Chicago Police Department

Shaharazad Grays
Alternatives, Inc.
Social Worker

Inquiries about this report can be directed to Neil J. Vincent, Ph.D. at 312-362-7383 or neil.vincent@depaul.edu
Acknowledgments

This needs assessment project and report was made possible through a grant (2018-V3-GX-K049) from the Law Enforcement-Based Victims Services Program (LEV) sponsored by the Justice Research and Statistics Association-Center for Victim Research, The International Association of Chiefs of Police, and the Office of Victims of Crime-U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

I want to thank The Chicago Police Department- Crime Victims Advocacy and Support Pilot Project administrators, Aileen Robinson and Kevin Hund, as well as the three Victim’s Advocates for their support and participation in carrying out this needs assessment.
Problem Description

*Gun Violence in Chicago.* During the year 2020 and through the first quarter of 2021, Chicago saw significant increases in gun violence throughout the city and within the three pilot districts served by the Crime Victims Advocacy and Support Pilot Project (CVAS). The city’s total gun cases for 2020 and through March of 2021 was 1,405. Total gun victims numbered 1,755, with non-fatal gun cases totaling 1,155, resulting in 1,403 total non-fatal gun violence victims. Over the six-month period, Chicago averaged approximately 94 non-fatal gun violence victims per month.

During the first and second quarter of 2021 and in the CVAS pilot districts (Third, Fourth, and Eighth), there were 294 total gun cases (Q1, 117; Q2, 177). The gun violence during this period resulted in 399 total victims (Q1, 163; Q2, 236), resulting in 248 gun cases with non-fatal victims (Q1, 92; Q2, 156) for a total of 320 non-fatal gun violence victims (Q1, 112; Q2, 208) in the project pilot districts. Table 1 summarizes the gun violence statistics for the first and second quarters of 2021 within the pilot districts (Chicago Police Department Report, 2021).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pilot 2021 Q1</th>
<th>Pilot 2021 Q2</th>
<th>Pilot Total</th>
<th>City 2020 Q1</th>
<th>City 2021 Q2</th>
<th>City Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Gun Cases</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>951</td>
<td>1,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Gun Victims</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>1,240</td>
<td>1,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gun Cases with Non-Fatal Victim</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>1,297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Fatal Gun Victims</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>1,041</td>
<td>1,642</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chicago Police Department Report, (2021)*

The current statistics for gun violence and non-fatal gun violence victims in Chicago clearly document the problem as an urgent public health crisis. Over the six months of 2021 in the three pilot districts, there were an average of 49 total gun cases, 67 total gun victims, 41 gun cases involving non-fatal gun cases, and 53 non-fatal gun violence victims per month. These statistics clearly document the need for the Crime Victims Advocacy and Support Pilot Project in the pilot district and the need for the project to be scaled up to provide services to all of Chicago.
Crime Victims Advocacy and Support Pilot Project (CVASP)

In response to the gun violence in Chicago, the Chicago Police Department developed and implemented the Crime Victims Advocacy and Support Pilot Project. The CVASP began serving the third, fourth, and eighth police districts in October of 2020. Three victim’s advocates, one in each district, respond to non-fatal gun violence victims, offering support services. The project flow begins with the referral process when the advocates receive the major incident notification log with details of the incident and the victim’s contact information. Advocates make the initial contact, usually by phone. However, when the phone number is unavailable, the advocates initiate contact by sending a letter to the victim’s address. If the advocates successfully make contact with the victim, they schedule an initial face-to-face contact. Because of the COVID pandemic, there are few face-to-face meetings and most advocacy sessions happen by phone. After the initial contact, the Advocates conduct an intake/assessment that leads to the development of an individualized support plan. Throughout the support of non-fatal gun violence victims, the Advocates conduct, at a minimum, three follow-up visits at 30, 60, and 90 days, but most victims received more contacts with the Advocates. During the support phase, Advocates (1) provide assistance with completing the Crime Victims’ Compensation application, (2) provide crisis counseling and support, (3) provide victims with information and referrals to community partners, (4) engage in a community education campaign to notify the pilot communities about the program, and (5) engage in detective division and criminal justice system advocacy. The Advocates document the support services they provide in case records throughout the duration of their work with victims.

During this period, the program provided support to 114 non-fatal gun violence victims—37 in District 3, 40 in District 4, and 37 in District 8. Twenty percent (14) of the victims contacted in District 3 refused services. Seventeen percent (8) of contacted victims refused services in District 4. District 8 had the lowest refusal of services at 5% (2). Program wide, 17% of non-fatal gun violence victims who were contacted refused support from the program. Table 2 summarizes the pilot district program statistics for the first six months of 2021 (Chicago Police Department Report, 2021).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>District 3</th>
<th>District 4</th>
<th>District 8</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total shootings</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims served</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims refused</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chicago Police Department Report, (2021)
CVASP Needs Assessment Project

The CVASP needs assessment project was developed in collaboration between CVASP administrators Aileen Robinson and Kevin Hund and researcher Neil J. Vincent, Ph.D. We applied for and received a Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA) LEV Grantee-Researcher Partnership mini grant at the end of 2020. The CVASP project administrators assisted with the reporting of gun violence statistics, developing interview questions, collecting case record data, and writing this report. Additionally, Neil Vincent hired a social work student research assistant, Shaharazad Grays, to help with the project. She assisted with every aspect of the project, including interview question development, data analysis, and report writing. The project had the singular objective of exploring the immediate comprehensive needs of non-fatal gun violence victims who reside in the City of Chicago.

The needs assessment project utilized a mixed-method approach. We conducted qualitative interviews with three CVASP victim Advocates and analyzed 51 case record intake/assessment forms.

Data Sources

Our practitioner-researcher collaborative developed two primary data sources for this needs assessment project. The data sources included an Advocate Interview Protocol (See Appendix 1) and Case Record Intake Form (See Appendix 2). Neil Vincent and Shaharazad Grays were primarily responsible for developing the interview protocols. The researchers developed draft questions and sought input from both CVASP program administrators, as well as staff from JRSA. CVASP program administrators were primarily responsible for developing the intake form with the researchers providing feedback. We proposed interviews with gun violence victims, as part of this needs assessment. However, although some victims expressed interest in participating in an interview, ultimately, no victims contacted the researchers to be interviewed. A lack of victim’s voice in documenting their needs is a significant limitation of this needs assessment.

Advocate Interview Protocol. The Advocate Interview Protocol is an 7-question, semi-structured interview document. It begins with a brief informed consent statement. It begins by asking Advocates about the reasons victims declined services. The needs assessment items are divided into two primary sections—concrete needs and mental health needs. Although the CVASP provides support to individuals, this protocol also asks about family needs. The interview protocol concludes by asking about needs Advocates were able and not able to provide referrals to address. We interviewed all three advocates in March 2021. We conducted the interviews using the Zoom platform. The interviews were recorded and Zoom provided a verbatim transcript.

Intake Form. The Crime Victim Advocacy and Support Program Intake Form collects the following information from victims: contact information, demographics, victimization type, special accommodations, and emergency service needs. The researchers created a basic spreadsheet form where we documented demographic information, health insurance status, and emergency needs. In May 2020, the researchers conducted the case record analysis at the central
headquarters of the Chicago Police Department. CVASP administrators provided photocopies of the intake form with identifying information redacted to ensure anonymity. The researchers analyzed 51 case records.

The data collection from the intake form included the collection of basic demographic information. We collected the variables race/ethnicity, gender, and age. Age was a grouped variable with the following categories: 13–17 years old, 18–24, 25–29, and 30–60. Of the 51 cases analyzed, 57% of the victims were African American, 43% were Latino. Sixty-five percent were male. The age category 18–24 represented the highest percent of gun violence victim at 53%, followed by 30–60 year olds (18%), 13–17 (16%), and 25–29 year olds (14%).

**Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data sources (Advocate Interview Protocol and Intake/Assessment Form) was a straightforward process. There were two ways the researchers discerned the needs of gun violence victims. First, need was identified by a direct articulation of need. Second, in a more indirect way, the researchers identified need by the articulation of a presenting problem. If the Advocates or intake form documented an existing problem, then it can be assumed that a need exists. For instance, on the intake form, there is an item documenting the presence or absence of health insurance. If the form showed that the victim did not have health insurance, there was an assumption of need for health care coverage.

**Results**

The analysis of Advocates’ interviews and case record analysis yielded several urgent needs presented by gun violence victims. We divided the needs into two broad categories: basic/practical needs and mental health needs. The basic/practical needs include (1) victim compensation, (2) health insurance, (3) housing, (4) disability services, (5) transportation, (6) legal advocacy, (7) youth development services, (8) food, and (9) employment. Mental health needs include (1) immediate crisis counseling and (2) trauma-informed therapy. The needs reported here are similar to those found in previous studies. See the citations below.

**Basic/Practical Needs**

**Victim Compensation.** There is clearly a need for income support for this population of gun violence victims. Victim Compensation Services help support the cost incurred by victims from the shooting, such as hospital bills and lost wages (Juillard, 2016).

**Health Insurance.** Many of the victims in this study were either uninsured or underinsured. Consequently, they incurred significant medical-related debt. The victims need services that will help them acquire health insurance, possibly through Medicaid or other insurance providers (Patton, et. al, 2019).
**Housing.** Housing is a significant need for the gun violence victims. Victims either needed to relocate if they are in fear of retaliation, their homes were damaged as a result of gun violence, or they wanted to move from a violent area. Some victims may need to find alternative housing if they can no longer access their homes because of a disability (Juillard, 2016, Smith, et. al, 2013, Vasquez & Houston-Kolnik, 2017).

**Disability Services.** Some victims become disabled because of gun violence. As a result, victims may need physical and/or occupational therapeutic services (Kroll, 2008, Vasquez & Houston-Kolnik, 2017, Task Force, 1996).

**Transportation.** Transportation is a fundamental need for living in a large urban center. Victims may need assistance with transportation to court hearings, medical appointments, or mental health visits (Patton, et. al, 2019, Richardson, et. al, 2020, Vasquez & Houston-Kolnik, 2017).

**Legal Advocacy.** Victims need emotional support when communicating with law enforcement or at court hearings. Victims may also need court support to obtain court documents or file court papers (Juillard, 2016, Smith, et. al, 2013, Vasquez & Houston-Kolnik, 2017, Task Force, 1996).

**Youth Development Services.** Young victims may need youth development services. Mentoring, academic support, after-school programing, sports, and creative arts are possible experiences that may help youth cope with their traumatic experience. Youth services may also help youth find a positive direction for their life and prevent further victimization or perpetration of violence (Juillard, 2016, Patton, et. al, 2019, Smith, et. al, 2013, Zun & Rosen, 2003, Task Force, 1996).

**Food.** Some victims experience food insecurity and are in need of assistance. A lack of proper nourishment affects a victim’s ability to recover from their injuries (Vasquez & Houston-Kolnik, 2017).

**Employment.** Some victims lacked employment. Unemployment has significant consequences for the gun violence victim's ability to cope with their physical and mental injuries. Unemployment makes it less likely that they have health insurance to cover medical expenses, and/or decreases the likelihood that they are able to relocate or have sustainable housing (Francis, 2018, Juillard, 2016, Smith, et. al, 2013, Zun & Rosen, 2003).

**Mental Health Needs**

**Immediate Crisis Counseling.** The earlier crime victims receive crisis counseling, the better their mental health outcomes will be. Victims need immediate, short-term crisis counseling services to cope with the trauma of being a victim of gun violence (Juillard, 2016, Richardson & Bulloch, 2019, Vasquez & Houston-Kolnik, 2017, Shepherd & Rivara, 1998, Task Force, 1996).

**Trauma-Informed Therapy.** Those victims who are seriously traumatized by gun violence will need competent, trauma-informed therapy, possibly for the long term (Juillard, 2016, Patton, et.
The examples of basic/practical needs provide evidence that the victims in this needs assessment are under-resourced, experiencing significant, complex, and enduring urgent needs. The mental health needs show that the victims are in need of immediate, crisis-oriented mental health services, and possibly the need for long-term therapy to cope with the trauma's enduring impact.

**Implications for Gun Violence Victim’s Advocates and Practitioners**

This needs assessment informs a number of implications for how victim advocates and mental health practitioners may mobilize services in support of victims of gun violence. The Crime Victims Advocacy and Support Pilot Project serves under-resourced gun violence victims, who present a complex, challenging, interrelated mix of basic/practical and mental health needs. For example, a gun violence victim who lacks income and employment means that they are less likely to have health insurance, resulting in high medical debt; live in inadequate housing; be food insecure; lack adequate transportation; and need low-cost or free mental health services.

Consequently, gun violence victims need a complex, interrelated web of services. It is a challenge for Advocates to address these complex needs. Victim’s advocates need to engage in enhanced case management, where they provide support for basic needs and crisis counseling, so Advocates must be case managers and crisis counselors. Typically, basic needs must be addressed first. Offering concrete, tangible support first allows Advocates to connect with victims and build the trust and rapport needed to engage them in services and refer them to other service providers, like trauma-informed therapy. Additionally, the needs assessment allows program administrators to identify where services exist and where there are gaps. Program administrators can attempt to fill the gaps in services and explore where needs may be filled with additional services or referrals.

**Continued Partnership**

In addition to the LEV mini-grant opportunity, the collaboration between the Chicago Police Department’s Office of Victim Services and researcher Neil J. Vincent, Ph.D., is also funded by a three-year grant from the Office of Victim’s Crime of the U.S. Department of Justice. The grant will end on September 30, 2022. Under this funding, the partnership will continue for at least one more year. Additionally, the CVASP administrators plan to significantly expand the project with more funding. The administrators hope to find funding to continue our research-project collaboration, which they identify as vital to the expansion of the CVASP program.
References


Richardson, Joseph; Bullock, Che. (2019). Life After the Gunshot: A Research-to-Practice Fellowship Project. University of Maryland for the Center for Victim Research, Victim Research-to-Practice Fellowship Projects, 2018 cohort, 7 pgs.


Appendix 1

Non-fatal Gun Violence Victims
Needs Assessment
Advocates Interview Protocol

Informed Consent Statement: The purpose of this project is to understand the needs of gun violence victims in the days and weeks after the violence has occurred. The project is funded by the Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA). We are interviewing advocates because you work closely with non-fatal gun violence victims and we value your perspective. We ask you to participate in an interview lasting about 30 minutes. We will record the interview for accuracy. Participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. You can choose not to participate or stop participating after the interview has started without any negative consequences to you. Your identity will be kept confidential and we will not identify you in any way in the reports we write or to your employer. Your recorded interview will be kept confidential. The recording will be kept on a password protected computer and only myself and my research assistant will have access to it. We will transcribe the interviews for analysis. Myself and my RA will be the only individuals viewing the transcripts. We will delete recordings at the end of the project. Do you have any questions or comments? If you agree to participate, we can now start the interview.

1. Can you tell us about any instances where people have declined services? Please do not identify any victims.

2. What would you say are the primary concrete needs (i.e., medical, legal, housing, education, emergency financial assistance, etc.) presented by non-fatal gun violence victims?

3. What would you say are the primary psychological, emotional, social needs presented by non-fatal gun violence victims?

4. In working with victims of non-fatal gun violence, have you helped them identify any additional needs beyond the needs they initially presented?

5. What needs do families of non-fatal gun violence victims present to you when you have worked with them?

6. Of all the needs of non-fatal gun violence victims and family members you identified, for which ones were you able to provide referrals or other assistance?

7. Of all the needs of non-fatal gun violence victims and family members you identified, for which ones were you unable to provide referrals or other assistance?
Appendix 2

Chicago Police Department
Crime Victim Advocacy and Support Program
Intake Form

Name: ________________________________________________________________
D.O.B (MM/DD/YR): ____________________________________________________
Address: ____________________________________________________________

City________________________ State_______ Zip Code______________

Number of Adults in the household: ________ Number of Children in household: ______

Phone Number ○ Cell____________________________ ○ Work______________________
○ Home_______________________________________
Safe to contact ○ Yes ○ No Safe to text ○ Yes ○ No Safe to leave a message ○ Yes ○ No
Message Details: ○ Brief ○ Detailed

Email: ________________________________

Emergency Contact Information
Name: ______________________________________________________________
Phone Number: ______________________________________________________
Relationship: _______________________________________________________

Age (self-reported):
○ 0-12 ○ 25-29
○ 13-17 ○ 60+
○ 18-24 ○ Not Reported

Race/Ethnicity (self-reported):
○ Black/African American ○ Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander
○ American Indian/Alaskan Native ○ White/ Non-Latino/Caucasian
○ Asian ○ Other ○ Hispanic/Latino ○ Multiple
○ Not Reported
Gender Identity (self-reported):
  - Female
  - Male
  - Other
  - Not Reported

LGBTQ:
  - Self-reported
  - No information given

Source of Income:
______________________________________________________________

Employment: _________________________________________________________________

Health Insurance:  ○ Yes  ○ No

Prior Service Recipient:  ○ Yes  ○ No Date of Service:

Victimization Type (choose all that apply):
  ○ Direct Victim  ○ Indirect Victim
    ○ Non-fatal Gun Crime
    ○ Assault
    ○ Sexual Assault
    ○ Elder abuse/Neglect
    ○ Stalking
    ○ Child abuse/Neglect
    ○ Domestic/Family violence
    ○ Adult  ○ Child
    ○ Human trafficking/Sex
    ○ Teen Dating Violence

Accommodations/Special Populations: (check all that apply) (self-reported):
  ○ LEP
  ○ Language ____________________________________________________
    ○ Translator Service Used
    ○ Sign Language Interpreter
    ○ Disability
    ○ Veteran
    ○ Homeless
    ○ Mental health
    ○ Other

Emergent Services Needed:
  ○ Housing  ○ Medical
  ○ Child care  ○ Pet care
  ○ Food

CPD Information/Resources:
Beat of occurrence ________________________________________________

RD#____________________________________________________________
Detective Assigned_______________________________________________
DVLO Assigned___________________________________________________
Crime Victim Advocate Assigned_____________________________________

Potential Retaliation Case:  ○ Yes  ○ No

Was Victim Given
  - Crime Victim Rights
  - Crime Victim Compensation Application
○ Application In-progress  ○ Completed
  Date Completed: ______________________  Confirmation #:

  ○ Domestic Incident Notice
  ○ Sexual Assault Incident Notice
  ○ Victim Incident Notice