

Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention 2023 report



Biennial report per [RCW 43.330A.020](#)

**OFFICE OF FIREARM SAFETY
AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

December 2023

Report to the Legislature

Director Mike Fong

Acknowledgments

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Executive summary

Overview

In 2020, the Legislature created the Washington Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention (OFSVP) in the Department of Commerce (Commerce) to support and coordinate the implementation of evidence-based firearm violence intervention and prevention strategies across the state.¹

Since then, firearm sales have remained steady in Washington just as violence rates have grown across the state and the nation. At the same time, there has been increased state and federal support for violence prevention and intervention programming and research.

The work of OFSVP and our ability to leverage the position of this statewide office has benefitted greatly from the increase in research and data collection, federal funding opportunities, and support from the Governor and Legislature. This confluence of events has strengthened our state's ability to measure the effectiveness of reduction strategies and helped us to best direct investments toward the problems the office was created to address. At the same time, an increase in firearms in homes and on the street has produced a counter current. Mass shootings have continued to be a regular occurrence and generated predictable –if temporary - attention from the media and policymakers. Yet mass shootings account for only about 1% of the firearm deaths in our country. It is the everyday gun violence – suicides, domestic violence, street violence – that accounts for so many more deaths and injuries, tragically and regularly impacting families and communities across the state. Collectively, we have our work cut out for us.

Key highlights

In the time since we launched a statewide office, OFSVP has made strategic investments in evidenced-based violence reduction strategies. The office has also collaborated closely with subject matter experts within the state and nationally to ensure our efforts are keeping up with unprecedented research and understanding of the causes of firearm violence and emerging strategies to see reductions.

There are known strategies to reduce access for those at risk for intentional or unintentional firearm violence. OFSVP has focused attention on safe storage outreach and education and improved implementation of our protection order laws. There is much opportunity to improve the state's work in this area.

Community gun violence is a very particular problem with very particular, well-established solutions. Some intervention strategies are more immediate. Prevention strategies can often have long-term effects. OFSVP has focused its community firearm violence reduction efforts on supporting intervention, prevention and planning efforts.

Accurate, real-time firearm-related data is critical to communities, researchers and policymakers for understanding root causes, developing effective violence reduction strategies and improving evidence-informed policies. Data can identify impacted populations and communities and play a key role in measuring the effectiveness of reduction efforts and directing prevention and intervention investments. There are many opportunities to improve firearm-related data collection and sharing. Opportunities exist around the collection of data regarding firearm violence incidents, particularly firearm injuries. Many data gaps exist to better inform our understanding of the use of the state's protection order laws for firearm relinquishment and prohibition.

¹ RCW 43.330A.020

And improved data collection is critical to better understanding the effectiveness of our collective investments in firearm violence reduction strategies. OFSVP will continue to work with data owners and users across the public health and criminal justice systems to identify and improve available firearm-related data sources, data collection methods, and data-sharing mechanisms.

Legislative mandate

RCW 43.330A.020 details the role and responsibilities of OFSVP, including reporting requirements:

- (1) The Washington office of firearm safety and violence prevention is created within the department for the purposes of coordinating and promoting effective state and local efforts to reduce firearm violence.
- (2) The duties of the office include, but are not limited to:
 - (a) Working with law enforcement agencies, county prosecutors, researchers, and public health agencies throughout the state to identify and improve upon available data sources, data collection methods, and data-sharing mechanisms. The office will also identify gaps in available data needed for ongoing analysis, policy development, and the implementation of evidence-based firearm violence intervention and prevention strategies;
 - (b) Researching, identifying, and recommending legislative policy options to promote the implementation of statewide evidence-based firearm violence intervention and prevention strategies;
 - (c) Researching, identifying, and applying for nonstate funding to aid in the research, analysis, and implementation of statewide firearm violence intervention and prevention strategies;
 - (d) Working with the office of crime victim[s] advocacy to identify opportunities to better support victims of firearm violence, a population that is currently underrepresented among recipients of victim services;
 - (e) Contract for a statewide helpline, counseling, and referral services for victims, friends, and family members impacted by gun violence and community professionals and providers who engage with them;
 - (f) Contract with the University of Washington to develop a best practice guide for therapy for gun violence victims;
 - (g) Administering the Washington firearm violence intervention and prevention grant program as outlined in RCW 43.330A.050.
- (3) The office shall report to the appropriate legislative policy committees by December 1st every odd-numbered year on its progress and findings in analyzing data, developing strategies to prevent firearm violence, and recommendations for additional legislative policy options. The first report must be submitted by December 1, 2021.

This is the second report submitted to satisfy the reporting requirements in [RCW 43.330A.020\(3\)](#).

Recommendations for additional legislative policy options

To support the goals of reducing firearm violence in Washington, OFSVP recommends policymakers consider the adoption of the following policy and budget priorities. This list of actions is consistent with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics,² University of Washington researchers³ and partners conducting research sponsored by OFSVP.

² [Firearm-Related Injuries and Death in children and Youth: Injury Prevention and Harm Reduction](#), American Academy of Pediatrics, Lois K. Lee, et al, Volume 150, number 6, Dec. 2022.

³ [Misclassification of Firearm-Related Violent Crime in Criminal Legal System Records: Challenges and Opportunities](#), Julia P. Schleimer, et al., Open Access 2023.

1) Program support

Continue to provide policy and budget support for known, effective firearm-related harm reduction strategies at the individual, household and community levels. Policies and funding should include those that focus on

- The safety of firearms themselves as consumer products (e.g., technological or biometric controls).
- Safe storage education and outreach programs.
- Suicide prevention efforts.
- Improved implementation of firearm relinquishment and prohibition laws.
- Firearm violence prevention and intervention programming.

2) Data system integration

Take policy steps towards a comprehensive, real-time data system that gathers and connects firearm-related healthcare and criminal justice information in one source. The system should include:

- Collection of both deaths and injuries caused by firearms.
- Accessible and detailed information-sharing across local and state cross-system databases, including those of public health, law enforcement, prosecutors and courts.
- Support for adopting electronic report writing and uniform coding and standardization of firearm information across agencies.

3) Criminal code revision

Revise the state's criminal codes to better identify firearm-related violent crimes in criminal records by more clearly classifying existing crimes as to whether they involved a firearm. This will mitigate the current situation of undercounting firearm-related crime as reflected in criminal charges. Revising criminal codes in this way need not further criminalize behaviors that are not currently criminalized. Changes can be modeled after those in place in California state law and existing coding protocols and standardization in the public health community.

4) Crime analyst network construction

Provide funding to support a framework for evidence-based social network analysis resources at the state level, building on successful efforts in King County and the City of Yakima. This initiative should include support for regional crime analysts.

5) Collaboration among system partners

Encourage the broader community of clinicians, public health advocates, community partners, researchers, funders and policymakers to collaboratively address firearm injuries and death.

6) Research, analysis and evaluation

Along with increased and improved data collection and connection, funding and support should be provided for research into the causes of firearm violence in our state and the identification of the most effective intervention measures. The UW Firearm Injury Policy Research Program is engaged in nationally significant research. It consistently attracts and retains an impressive roster of students and staff. Continued and increased legislative support for this program is recommended.

OFSVP progress and data analysis

Scan for the
OFSVP data
inventory



Or visit the
[Inventory of
Firearm-Related
Data for
Washington State
website.](#)

Accurate, real-time firearm-related data is critical to communities, researchers and policymakers for understanding root causes, developing effective violence reduction strategies and improving evidence-informed policies. Data can identify impacted populations and communities and can play a crucial role in measuring the effectiveness of reduction efforts and directing prevention and intervention investments.

One of the core duties of OFSVP is to work “...with law enforcement agencies, county prosecutors, researchers, and public health agencies throughout the state to identify and improve upon available data sources, data collection methods, and data-sharing mechanisms.” RCW 43.330A.020(2)(a). In the same section, the office is further directed to “...identify gaps in available data needed for ongoing analysis, policy development, and the implementation of evidence-based firearm violence intervention and prevention strategies”

OFSVP inventory of firearm-related data

To improve data collection and sharing in our state, OFSVP has worked with the University of Washington (UW) Firearm Injury and Policy Research Program to convene and collaborate with public health and criminal justice systems partners. The resulting inventory includes links to 31 state and national sources of firearm-related data, provides summaries of those sources, and describes the strengths and limitations of each.

The inventory is regularly reviewed and updated as analysts from OFSVP and the UW Firearm Injury and Policy Research Program work with partners to make improvements and connections.

OFSVP data dashboard

In 2023, OFSVP launched a dashboard analyzing available Washington-specific firearm-related information related to subjects such as homicide, suicide, hospitalization, causality, and demography. The dashboard primarily relies on data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Washington State Department of Health. The dashboard – which is regularly reviewed and updated – is intended for use by policymakers, the media, advocates, researchers and other partners.

The section below presents an analysis of select available data.

Scan for the
OFSVP Data
Dashboard



Or visit

[The Washington State Office of Firearm Safety and Violence Prevention Dashboard](#)

Conclusions from OFSVP data analysis

General trends

Beginning in 2009, the number of firearm violence incidents began exceeding the number of auto accidents in the United States and three out of every four homicides involved a firearm. National data reports in 2020 state, there were more than ten firearm deaths for every 100,000 Washington residents.⁴

Community and family experience with firearm-related incidents is more common today than in previous generations. According to a 2023 report from KFF⁵, one in five adults report they have been personally threatened with a firearm, 19% have had a family member killed by a firearm, and 17% have witnessed someone being shot.⁶

From 2019-2021, there were 2,502 firearm-related deaths in Washington. Sixty-six percent were self-inflicted, while the remaining 34% were accidental or a result of domestic violence or community gun violence. The Washington Department of Health, Washington Tracking Network⁷ reports that from 2018-2020, there were 1,462 firearm-related injuries in the state that required hospitalization. While there is comprehensive data on firearm-related **deaths**, data collected about firearm-related **injuries** is much less complete; the injury numbers are likely significantly higher than indicated by available data.

In 2020, firearm violence became the leading cause of death for children in the U.S. According to the CDC⁸, among youth aged 14–17 years, suicide and homicide are the second and third leading causes of death respectively. Most youth homicides result from firearm injuries; firearms are the most common method of youth suicide. Washington's youth are at risk with 25% of eighth, 29% of 10th and 33% of 12th-graders reported **accessing a handgun was not hard**.⁹ Further, 1.8% of sixth, 2.2% of eighth, 2.2% of 10th and 3.2% of 12th-graders reported that **they had carried a weapon to school**.¹⁰

⁴[gunsvmotorvehicles22.pdf \(vpc.org\)](#)

⁵ KFF is the new name for Kaiser Family Foundation.

⁶ [Americans' Experiences With Gun-Related Violence, Injuries, And Deaths | KFF](#)

⁷ [Washington Tracking Network \(WTN\) | Washington State Department of Health](#)

⁸ [Fast Facts: Firearm Violence and Injury Prevention | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC](#)

⁹ [Healthy Youth Survey Results - Healthy Youth Survey \(askhys.net\)](#)

¹⁰ Ibid.

Firearm sales

Firearms sales in the U.S. and Washington spiked during the pandemic. Between January 2019 and April 2021, an estimated 7.5 million Americans purchased firearms for the first time.¹¹ Based on background checks for firearms transfers reported by licensed firearms dealers at the point of sale, estimated annual firearm sales and transfers in Washington were:

- 2020 – 569,540
- 2021 – 502,237
- 2022 – 476,683
- 2023 (Jan-Oct) – 319,090¹²

In October 2023 alone, **more than 30,000 firearms** were sold in Washington, consisting of approximately 20,000 hand guns and 10,000 long guns.¹³

At the same time, the number of suspected privately made firearms (PMFs)¹⁴ recovered by law enforcement agencies and submitted to the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives for tracing increased by 1,083% from 2017 (1,629) to 2021 (19,273). The dramatic rise in trace submissions involving PMF's reflects – among other things – increased criminal use of these hard to trace firearms.¹⁵

While thousands of firearms are purchased by law abiding citizens and with no intent to commit crime, the dramatic increases in available PMFs and firearms in general creates a counter current to violence prevention and intervention efforts.

“Greater firearm availability is associated with increased risks of firearm suicide and unintentional deaths in youth 0 to 24 years of age. Increased state-level firearm household ownership and prevalence has been associated with higher state-level rates of firearm suicides, homicide, and unintentional deaths in children 5 to 14 years of age. Stronger state-level legislation is associated with lower state-level firearm prevalence and access and decreased firearm deaths in children and youth.”

Firearm-Related Injuries and Death in children and Youth: Injury Prevention and Harm Reduction, American Academy of Pediatrics, Lois K. Lee, et al, Volume 150, number 6, Dec. 2022.

Community violence

Community firearm violence can be generally described as **deliberate acts of interpersonal violence in public spaces by a person or persons not intimately related to the victim**. Data collection regarding this type of firearm violence is particularly important because the violence occurs in a small number of neighborhoods among a small number of individuals. In Washington and elsewhere, community gun violence has a dramatically disproportionate impact on young boys and men in urban communities of color.

¹¹ M. Miller, W. Zhang, and D. Azrael, “Firearm Purchasing During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Results From the 2021 National Firearms Survey,” *Annals of Internal Medicine* 175, no. 2 (2022): 219-225.

¹² [How Many Guns Did Americans Buy Last Month? \(thetrace.org\)](https://thetrace.org)

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Sometimes called “ghost guns.”

¹⁵ [National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment: Firearms in Commerce Volume One](https://atf.gov) (atf.gov)

Demographic data from Washington indicates¹⁶:

- From 2019-2021, males ages 15-39 were at highest risk to be a victim of community firearm violence.
- Victimization is highest at ages 20-24 and starts to decrease at age 25.
- Black males have the highest risk of becoming victims of gun violence in our state. From 2019-2021, the homicide rate affecting black males rose dramatically each year.

Domestic violence

The presence of firearms makes domestic violence incidents far more likely to end in death for the perpetrator, family members and responding law enforcement officers.^{17,18} Since 2001, the number of annual domestic violence-related fatalities in Washington has ranged from 39 to 75. On average, from 2001-2019 nearly half (49%) of female homicide victims were killed as a result of intimate partner violence.¹⁹ From 2015-2020, 63 women were shot and killed by their intimate partner in Washington, accounting for 85% of all intimate partner homicides.²⁰

Federal and state laws can limit firearm possession and ownership for individuals who have been convicted of certain domestic violence crimes and for those subject to various court orders or.²¹ For instance, Washington's risk protection laws can temporarily prevent individuals at high risk of harming themselves or others from accessing firearms. This includes civil protection orders, extreme risk protection orders (ERPOs) and orders to surrender and prohibit weapons (OTSPWs).²² Using the ERPO law, for example, family and household members or a law enforcement officer can obtain a court order upon a showing of evidence that the person poses a significant danger, including danger resulting from threatening or violent behavior. From when the law went into effect in 2017 through December 2021, 708²³ ERPOs requests had been filed in Washington. However, no ERPOs had yet been filed in 12 of Washington's 39 counties.²⁴ This data along with research and analysis funded by OFSVP indicates an urgent a need for improved education and outreach.²⁵

Suicide

Suicide continues to be the most common form of death from firearms in Washington, accounting for 76% of firearm fatalities.²⁶ Nearly 69% of all suicide deaths in Washington involve firearms.²⁷ From 2019–2021, 1,872 people in Washington died by gun-related suicide.²⁸ There are few intentionally self-inflicted, firearm-related injuries seen in hospital emergency departments. This is because most people who use a firearm in a suicide attempt die from their injury.²⁹

¹⁶ [WISQARS \(Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System\) | Injury Center | CDC](#)

¹⁷ [Intimate Partner Violence, Firearm Injuries and Homicides: A Health Justice Approach to Two Intersecting Public Health Crisis.pdf](#) (nih.gov)

¹⁸ [Regional Domestic Violence Firearms Enforcement Unit](#) - King County, Washington

¹⁹ [Domestic Violence Fatalities and Homicide Rates in Washington State – Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#) (WSCADV)

²⁰ [Intimate Partner Violence | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC](#)

²¹ See [18 U.S.C. § 922\(g\)\(9\)](#); [27 C.F.R. § 478.32\(a\)\(9\)](#); [RCW 9.41.040\(2\)\(a\)\(ii\)](#)

²² [RCW 7.94](#)

²³ [Guide to Using Extreme Risk Orders to Save Lives](#) | Everytown Research & Policy

²⁴ Green and O'Sullivan, "[Washington voters led much of the nation in saying guns must sometimes be seized to prevent violence. How's the law working?](#)" The Seattle Times, (June 1, 2021)

²⁵ [Three Interventions Toolkit](#) - Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center (hiprc.org)

²⁶ Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "[Washington Fact Sheet](#)," (Jan. 2020)

²⁷ [Firearm Violence Policy Brief](#) (wa.gov)

²⁸ CDC [WONDER](#).

²⁹ CDC, Fast Facts, "[Firearm Violence Prevention](#)".

While firearm-related homicides tend to most impact young Black males, suicide data is vastly different in age and race of victimization.

- 53.2% of white males commit suicide with a firearm compared to other races, (Black 28.3%, White Hispanic 20.8%, Asian/Pacific Islander 14.5%, and more than one race 22.3%)
- The data indicates rates of suicide by firearm for all age groups fluctuated between the three years of data with the exception of males aged 75-79 who showed a dramatic increase.
- Unlike community firearm violence, a preceding or upcoming crisis, current mental health problems, history of suicide thoughts or plans, intimate partner problems and health problems are the incidents that led to suicide.

Stolen firearms

“There are enough firearms stolen on an annual basis to arm all offenders who commit firearm homicides, firearm assaults, and firearm robberies each year....most firearm offenders do not appear to obtain crime guns through direct theft. Instead, stolen firearms play an indirect role in trafficking and diversion to the underground firearm markets used by prohibited persons, juveniles, and other risky individuals seeking firearms. Given the very large scale of firearm thefts in the U.S., it seems likely that stolen firearms are a significant source of firearms to violent criminals.”

Source: National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment: Crime Guns - Volume Two (atf.gov)

Firearm thefts from private owners' vehicles, homes and persons, accounted for 96% of all firearms stolen in the United States from 2017-2021.³⁰

According to the National Firearms Commerce and Trafficking Assessment, across the country:

- More firearms are stolen from private individuals compared to federal firearm licensed dealers and commercial shippers.
- 9mm pistols are the most common type of firearm stolen, followed by rifles, revolvers, and shotguns. These four weapons types account for 98% of all firearms stolen from private individuals.
- A gun connected to a crime is often used not far from where the gun was stolen.³¹
- When a firearm is recovered, individuals aged 18-24 are the largest age group found to be in possession of stolen firearms.
- Males are 92.7% more likely than females to be in possession of a stolen firearm.

In Washington from 2019-2022, law enforcement received reports of more than 15,000 stolen firearms.³² The number of stolen firearm incidents has been rising yearly.

Washington data indicates:

- From 2019-2021, firearm thefts increased 6%.
- In 41.7% of cases where the firearm was stolen from a vehicle, the vehicle was parked at the residence or home of the owner.

³⁰ [NFCTA Volume 2 Part V \(atf.gov\)](https://atf.gov)

³¹ Crime gun is defined as a stolen firearm used to commit an offense.

³² Lost/stolen firearm data provided by Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, 2019-2022 data request.

- In cases of theft, larceny and burglary, the firearm was stolen from the primary residence 73% of the time.

Developing strategies to prevent firearm violence

Safe storage strategies

Firearm availability in the home significantly increases the risk of theft, suicide and death from domestic violence.³³ Research indicates that removing access to a firearm decreases the likelihood of firearm-related suicide.³⁴ One study found that in most of King County's youth suicide deaths from firearms, youth obtained the weapon from a family member. In roughly a third of cases, the weapon was stored unlocked or loaded.³⁵

All of this indicates the need for continued efforts to require or encourage secure storage of firearms.³⁶

At the request of Governor Inslee, OFSVP received \$1 million in state funds for SFY24/25 to support safe storage programs and suicide prevention outreach and education efforts across the state. Through contracts with King County's Lock It Up program, Seattle Children's, and the University of Washington Firearm Injury and Policy Research Program, this funding will be used to expand, leverage, and evaluate existing safe storage education and outreach throughout Washington. The initiative will include increased collaboration with health care providers, the Veterans Administration, law enforcement, schools, firearms dealers and communities across the state. The University of Washington will evaluate these efforts to help inform future investment in this area.

Strategies to improve access to and implementation of court orders

In SFY 2023, OFSVP distributed \$1 million in state funds to support a suite of initial, time-limited projects to identify steps needed to improve the implementation and enforcement of Washington laws related to removing firearms from individuals and to issue, serve, and enforce court orders that prohibit firearm possession by individuals who present a heightened risk of harm to themselves or others such as Orders to Surrender and Prohibit Weapons (OTSWs) and Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs).

This initial investment confirmed that Washington needs to expand and invest in the adoption of best practices in training, policies, and implementation of firearm relinquishment programs and in making sure system partners and families have access to accurate and accessible information.

Building on the foundational analysis and recommendations developed with the state funding, in the coming years, OFSVP will invest in next steps to improve the implementation and enforcement of Washington laws related to firearms relinquishment and prohibitions using U.S. Department of Justice funding from the Byrne State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP) created under the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act adopted by Congress in 2022. Washington has been awarded \$5.2 million for the first two years of SCIP. We expect to receive half that amount for the three remaining years of the program. Under the guidance of an advisory board, this funding will be directed at improving implementation of our protection order laws, and – specifically – carrying out the recommendations coming out of last year's efforts. The program will focus on:

³³ Mann and Michel, "[Prevention of firearm suicide in the United States: What works and what is possible](#)," (2016), American Journal of Psychiatry. American Psychiatric Association,

³⁴ Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence, "[Child Access Prevention and Safe Storage](#)"

³⁵ Public Health – Seattle and King County, "[The impact of firearms on King County children and youth](#)"

³⁶ Washington law allows those in crisis to voluntarily, temporarily store their firearms.

- Using best practices to create and implement policies and training.
- Using subject matter experts and communications specialists to develop and distribute current, consistent, accurate and easy-to-use information and online tools to public and system partners for education and outreach.
- Scaling up and replicating successful multi-disciplinary approaches to issue, serve, and enforce firearm relinquishment orders.
- Securing, storing, and tracking relinquished firearms.
- Researching, collecting data, and evaluating processes and outcomes to improve the understanding and effectiveness of the implementation and enforcement for court-ordered firearm relinquishment.

Community firearm violence intervention and prevention strategies

Community gun violence is a very particular problem with very particular, well-established solutions. Some intervention strategies are more immediate. Prevention strategies can often have long-term effects. The cost of effective community violence prevention and intervention is small compared with the taxpayer-funded healthcare and law enforcement costs associated with community gun violence.³⁷ OFSVP has focused its community firearm violence reduction efforts on supporting intervention, prevention and planning efforts.

“...understanding the context in which CVI programs operate is critical to understanding and evaluating them. This includes recognizing 1) historical processes that have contributed to the inequitable burden of community violence in racially and economically marginalized communities, 2) the personal histories, traumas, and resilience of youth, their families, and the staff doing the work, 3) the ongoing exposure to trauma and violence that staff face day-to-day, 4) the organizational structure and services available to staff, and 5) the barriers to organizational capacity and resources, including funding. Without situating CVI in historical and contemporary context, the problem and solution to community violence can be individualized and pathologized, leading to further inequities, misaligned expectation, and poorly conducted evaluations.”

Social Impact Evaluation and Assessment of Youth Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Programs, Year-End Report to OFSVP, Julia Schleimer, Vivian Lyons, Dominique Smith, Ali Rowhani-Rahbar, Dept. of Epidemiology, University of Washington, August 2023

Intervention strategies

During SFY23, Commerce funded five community-based programs providing youth firearm violence intervention services using three different approaches: The Family Integrated Transitions (FIT) Program for Juvenile Offenders, Safe and Successful Youth Initiative (SSYI), and Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Program (HVIPs). Additional strategies included using credible messengers and outreach to connect at-risk youth to programs and services. All of these approaches seek to interrupt the cycles of violence, victimization, and retaliation to reduce the incidence of firearm violence.

In total, \$2.25 million was distributed to the following programs across the state: Harborview Medical Center, Dispute Resolution Center Walk About Yakima Program, City of Tacoma (subcontracts to several programs), Community Passageways, BIPOC Apostrophe and the King County Prosecutor’s Office (subcontracts to Choose Freedom and Burien’s BRAVE program).

³⁷ [The Economic Cost of Gun Violence](#) | Everytown Research & Policy

The goal of these programs was “...to deliver evidence-based intervention services to youth who are at high risk to perpetrate gun violence and who reside in areas with high rates of gun violence”³⁸, to perpetrate and/or be victims of firearm violence and who reside in areas with high rates of firearm violence.” OFSVP contracted with the UW Firearm Injury Policy Research Program to conduct a social impact evaluation and assessment of these programs. This work focused on four significant efforts: theory of change co-development, workshop facilitation, qualitative interviews, and measurement co-development. The findings and recommendations from the assessment were finalized in August 2023 will be used to guide further OFSVP investment in these and other intervention programs. The UW Firearm Injury Policy Research Program will continue to evaluate and support firearm violence intervention programs funded in SFY24/25.

Prevention strategies

During SFY23, OFSVP supported prevention programs designed to decrease engagement with the juvenile justice system, encourage health and well-being, and foster community engagement as a means to prevent violence. Prevention programs funded include:

- Healthy Youth Initiative: (\$2 million) This grant funded Virginia Mason Franciscan Health (VMFH) to provide violence prevention services to youth and adults aged 12-24 in the South King County area. VMFH subcontracted with community-based organizations to provide outreach services including street outreach, youth employment, case management, and behavioral health services.
- Yakima Valley Gang Violence Prevention Project: (~\$400,000) Through this program, the Northwest Communities Education Center, in collaboration with Radio KDNA, developed and delivered programs designed to prevent gang violence.

While prevention efforts can positively affect community collaboration and understanding, the benefits and outcomes are generally difficult to capture and measure.

Planning strategies

Through the Healthy Youth Planning program during SFY23, OFSVP supported three organizations to lead strategy development for future youth violence intervention and prevention programming in Pierce County, Yakima County and the city of Vancouver. The goal of the projects was to design a community-supported, collaborative, evidenced-based strategy to prevent violence, decrease engagement with the juvenile justice system, and encourage health and well-being for youth. These initial investments in planning and community collaboration are expected to yield results in future years.

Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative

In September 2023, Washington competed successfully to become one of four states awarded funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIPI). Over the next three years, OFSVP will use this \$4 million federal award to further develop and refine local and statewide strategies to support community-based services to prevent and intervene in firearm violence and to improve coordination and collaboration among statewide partners.

Based on strategies developed through shared decision-making with Community Advisory Councils, OFSVP will deliver technical assistance and training to help organizations and agencies apply and compete for funding in underserved parts of the state. Once OFSVP identifies organizations and agencies to be funded, OFSVP will make available capacity-building training and resources to expand existing services or build new programs.

³⁸ [Senate Bill 5693, section 128, subsection 110\(b\).](#)

Connecting communities from across the state, OFSVP will convene an annual gathering of state and national experts and community participants. Finally, by working with a CVIPI Subcommittee to develop a statewide strategy using CVIPI funds, OFSVP will be able to best deploy the responsibilities and resources of the office to guide and improve firearm violence intervention and prevention efforts statewide, assisting organizations in adopting data-proven solutions responsive to community needs.

Strategies to improve and increase data collection and sharing

Accurate, real-time firearm-related data is critical to understanding patterns of firearm violence and the effectiveness of our collective investment in violence reduction efforts. Working with researchers and other system partners, OFSVP is committed to taking steps toward developing a comprehensive data system that integrates healthcare and criminal justice information in one source to the extent possible.

Using data in social network analysis

In SFY23, OFSVP commissioned an assessment of the potential expansion of the use of social network analysis (SNA) to interrupt the cycles of violence, victimization, and retaliation to reduce the incidence of firearm violence in Washington. Under the leadership of the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, this type of analysis is being implemented successfully in King County. It has been used elsewhere in the state in the past. OFSVP sought to understand the barriers to and opportunities for sustainable deployment of this proven, evidenced-based practice in other Washington communities.

SNA is a mathematical tool used to understand relationships within networks, how these relationships form, and behavior patterns across networks. The tool provides visual associations between unrelated individuals, producing web-like graphics called sociograms. Sociograms demonstrate social ties among individuals. When combined with law enforcement and/or public health data, an SNA can identify individuals at risk of engaging in or being a victim of firearm violence, and where concentrations of violence occur.³⁹

The research team assessed the existing public safety ecosystems in five sample communities with historically high violent crime rates: Kent, Lakewood, Moses Lake, Spokane, and Vancouver. Based on this assessment and interviews with 20 community-based organizations and 10 law enforcement partners in the focus cities, the team sought to understand how firearm violence is being addressed, who is involved in firearm violence reduction efforts, and what steps could better support organizations and agencies working in those communities to reduce firearm violence.

The SNA assessment produced the following findings:

- Community-based organizations and law enforcement agencies agree they need to develop better working relationships, communicate, and trust each other.
- Community partners lack short and long-term resources for capacity building to carry out firearm violence reduction strategies that lead to long-term sustainable programming.
- Organizations and agencies would welcome enhanced resources, tools and capacity to implement the SNA tool into existing strategies to reduce firearm violence.
- Public safety ecosystems can be disconnected and often have separate components to address firearm violence operating independently.
- Public safety ecosystems do not have a coordinating agency or individual to sustain network cohesion, reducing the strength of the ecosystem and its potential to combat firearm violence. This is due to smaller

³⁹ [Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications, Wasserman and Faust 1994](#)

jurisdictions not having analytic resources. Crime analysts are often not trained in how to conduct SNA, and police commanders need training on how to use data to inform strategy.

The SNA assessment produced the following recommendations:

- Develop and provide SNA education and training for law enforcement and community partners.
- Design and provide practice guidance for data-sharing between law enforcement and community agencies.
- Establish and support regional crime analysts to bridge connections among law enforcement agencies, provide the necessary information to perform SNA, and produce findings for law enforcement and community-based partners.

Strategies to increase and improve access to firearm-related data

Continuing to convene data users, connect data systems and use data for informed decision making

Since OFSVP was launched, data collection, analysis and sharing have been part of the office's mission. There are many opportunities to improve firearm-related data collection and sharing. Opportunities exist around the collection of data regarding firearm violence incidents, particularly firearm injuries. Many data gaps exist to inform better our understanding of the use of the state's protection order laws for firearm relinquishment and prohibition. And, improved data collection is critical to our better understanding of the effectiveness of our collective investments in firearm violence reduction strategies.

OFSVP will continue to work with data owners and users across the public health and criminal justice systems to identify and improve on available firearm-related data sources, data collection methods, and data-sharing mechanisms. The office will convene partners to identify gaps in available data needed for ongoing analysis, policy development, and the implementation of evidence-based firearm violence intervention and prevention strategies.

OFSVP created a data dashboard so that policy makers, responders and practitioners, and community members can access accurate, timely data to support informed decision-making. OFSVP also has a priority to collect qualitative and quantitative data related to the activities, outputs, and outcomes of grantees and contractors. This allows the identification of challenges and opportunities to improve the delivery of violence intervention and prevention services.

OFVSP will continue to partner with the UW Firearm Injury Policy Research Program and grantees to implement a theory of change and execute a plan for data collection, analysis and reporting to benefit the organizations while ensuring compliance with reporting requirements. Going forward, the outcome of this work will include a plan for data sharing among funded partners. It will also have data sharing policies and procedures incorporating needed privacy protections. Key lessons from the efforts to date are that there is a need for flexible databases and data reporting methods and that reporting metrics are best developed in partnership with grantees.

Recommendations for additional legislative policy options

To support the goals of reducing firearm violence in Washington, OFSVP recommends policymakers consider adopting the following policy and budget priorities. This list of actions is consistent with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics,⁴⁰ University of Washington researchers⁴¹ and partners conducting research sponsored by OFSVP.

1) Program support

Continue to provide policy and budget support for known, effective firearm-related harm reduction strategies at the individual, household and community levels. Policies and funding should include those that focus on

- The safety of firearms themselves as consumer products (e.g., technological or biometric controls).
- Safe storage education and outreach programs.
- Suicide prevention efforts.
- Improved implementation of firearm relinquishment and prohibition laws.
- Firearm violence prevention and intervention programming.

2) Data system integration

Take policy steps towards a comprehensive, real-time data system that gathers and connects firearm-related healthcare and criminal justice information in one source. The system should include

- Collection of both deaths and injuries caused by firearms.
- Accessible and detailed information-sharing across local and state cross-system databases including those of public health, law enforcement, prosecutors and courts.
- Support for adopting electronic report writing and uniform coding and standardization of firearm information across agencies.

3) Criminal code revision

Revise the state's criminal codes to better identify firearm-related violent crimes in criminal records by more clearly classifying existing crimes as to whether they involved a firearm; this will mitigate the current situation of undercounting firearm-related crime as reflected in criminal charges. Revising criminal codes in this way need not further criminalize behaviors that are not currently criminalized. Changes can be modeled after those in place in California state law and existing coding protocols and standardization in the public health community.

4) Crime analyst network construction

Provide funding to support a framework for evidence-based social network analysis resources at the state level, building on successful efforts in King County and the City of Yakima. This initiative should include support for regional crime analysts.

⁴⁰ [Firearm-Related Injuries and Death in children and Youth: Injury Prevention and Harm Reduction](#), American Academy of Pediatrics, Lois K. Lee, et al, Volume 150, number 6, Dec. 2022.

⁴¹ [Misclassification of Firearm-Related Violent Crime in Criminal Legal System Records: Challenges and Opportunities](#), Julia P. Schleimer, et al., Open Access 2023.

5) Collaboration among system partners

Encourage the wider community of clinicians, public health advocates, community partners, researchers, funders and policymakers to collaboratively address firearm injuries and death.

6) Research, analysis and evaluation

Along with increased and improved data collection and connection, funding and support should be provided for research into the causes of firearm violence in our state and the identification of the most effective intervention measures. The UW Firearm Injury Policy Research Program is engaged in nationally significant research. It consistently attracts and retains an impressive roster of students and staff. Continued and increased legislative support for this program is recommended.