

## STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

# FIREARMS



**BJA**  
Bureau of Justice Assistance  
U.S. Department of Justice



**CNA**  
ANALYSIS & SOLUTIONS

### COLLABORATION

Collaboration and information sharing about firearms-related topics and investigations will strengthen local efforts at reducing violent crime.

- ★ Jurisdictions should consider establishing firearms task forces or working groups composed of representatives from federal and local law enforcement (including county sheriffs' offices) and prosecutors' offices.
- ★ Regular and organized meetings of these task forces or working groups will allow for information sharing, collective strategizing, communication, and support during the investigation and prosecution of firearms cases.
- ★ By strengthening investigative collaboration, PSN teams can work toward better identifying local crime trends, building stronger cases leading to more successful prosecutions, and ultimately reducing crime.

### COMMUNICATION

Establishing and connecting a US Attorney firearm liaison with a similar point of contact in a local prosecutor's office is crucial to establishing and maintaining communication during the prosecution of firearms cases.

- ★ When possible, US Attorneys' Offices should share the specific criteria under which they will consider taking jurisdiction of a local firearms case.
- ★ Local law enforcement and prosecutors' offices may benefit from establishing a procedure that allows for the early and automatic screening of firearms cases to identify those that meet the federal criteria and help to ensure that the earliest possible decision on case jurisdiction is made.

### CONSIDERATION OF PROCESS

Because each jurisdiction operates under different procedural requirements, it is important to consider differences in case initiation and court process when determining appropriate case jurisdiction, and when considering the timing of jurisdictional decision-making.

- ★ Having familiarity with specific jurisdictional processes, such as detention hearings, preliminary hearings and grand juries, rules of evidence, speedy trial requirements, motion timelines, and discovery timelines, is essential.
- ★ This familiarity will not only allow for informed decision-making regarding jurisdiction but also permit the proper consideration of the rights of victims and witnesses by preventing them from having to testify in multiple proceedings relative to the same incident.
- ★ Considering process will also assist in preserving state and federal resources, for example, by preventing certain evidence from being transported and tested at more than one laboratory.

# EXAMPLES

## **EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN'S PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS TASK FORCE**

The Eastern District of Michigan's Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) Task Force is an example of a collaborative strategy. Detroit has a law enforcement task force composed of local law enforcement officers, state police, corrections officers, the sheriff's department, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Contact prosecutors at the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office and the US Attorney's Office work closely with the task force. The contact prosecutors are notified of firearms arrests and then review each firearms-related arrest within 24-48 hours so that an initial determination can be made on whether the case will be prosecuted in state or federal court. There are clearly established criteria under which firearms cases are reviewed and considered for federal prosecution, and such criteria are shared with the prosecutor's office.

The members of the task force and the contact prosecutors also participate in bi-weekly meetings to discuss crime trends and specific firearms cases in their jurisdiction. One meeting, "Cease Fire," fosters discussion and information-sharing around gangs and other groups/individuals who are driving violence within Detroit. A second meeting, "GUNSTAT," allows the task force to discuss and evaluate firearms arrests within their jurisdiction. GUNSTAT is a risk-assessment tool used in every firearms-related case. The risk assessment and GUNSTAT score are considered when making decisions on case jurisdiction.

**For more information on the Eastern District of Michigan PSN Task Force model, contact Assistant US Attorney Jeanine Brunson ([jeanine.brunson@usdoj.gov](mailto:jeanine.brunson@usdoj.gov) or 313-226-9567).**

## **PROJECT SAFE 14 PROGRAM**

The Project Safe 14 program is a partnership between the US Attorney's Office in the District of South Carolina and the 14th Circuit Solicitor's Office. The program targets the area's repeat offenders by leveraging state and federal resources and sharing intelligence and personnel. An intelligence unit within the Solicitor's Office and a full-time Special Assistant US Attorney (SAUSA) at the US Attorney's Office work together to identify career criminals and to make jurisdictional decisions around the prosecution of cases. The intake unit at the Solicitor's Office gathers daily information on all recent arrests. Background investigations are conducted, and a daily booking report is generated. The intake unit also coordinates with South Carolina's Fusion Center, which is run by the State Law Enforcement Division, to gain access to additional information held by the state. The booking report is shared with all law enforcement agencies in the circuit so that they can see who has been arrested in neighboring jurisdictions.

In addition, the US Attorney's Office and the 14th Circuit Solicitor's Office communicate on which cases may be appropriate for federal prosecution. Cases that meet the agreed-upon criteria are flagged in a shared criminal case management system, and a direct referral is made to the SAUSA. The SAUSA coordinates with a federal task force officer, who reviews the evidence, and a decision is made on case jurisdiction.

**More information about Project Safe 14 can be found at <https://scsolicitor14.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Project-Safe-14-program-description.pdf>.**

For more information, and to inquire about assistance in these and other areas related to firearms case processing, contact the PSN Training and Technical Assistance Team at [psntta@cna.org](mailto:psntta@cna.org).