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**Project Safe Neighborhoods Case Study Report: District of Nebraska**

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**PSN Case Study Report #9**

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## Foreword

In 2001 the Bush Administration made the reduction of gun crime one of the two major priorities of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), along with defeating terrorism and enhancing homeland security. The vehicle for translating this goal into action is Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). PSN represents a **commitment** to gun crime reduction through a **network** of local partnerships coordinated through the nation's 94 United States Attorney's Offices. These local partnerships are supported by a **strategy** to provide them with the resources that they need to be successful.

The PSN initiative integrates five essential elements from successful gun crime reduction programs such as Richmond's Project Exile, the Boston Ceasefire Program and DOJ's Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI). Those elements are: partnerships, strategic problem solving, outreach, training and accountability.<sup>i</sup>

The strategic problem-solving component of PSN was enhanced through grants to local researchers to work in partnership with the PSN task force to analyze local gun crime patterns, to inform strategic interventions, and to provide feedback to the task force about program implementation and impact. At the national level, PSN included a grant to a research team at the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University (MSU) to provide support to the strategic problem-solving component as well as to conduct research on PSN implementation and impact. As part of its research role, MSU has produced a series of strategic case studies of PSN interventions that have emerged in a number of jurisdictions across the country.<sup>ii</sup> The current report is part of a second series of studies focused on implementation of PSN in particular districts.

These site-specific case studies are intended to provide information about how PSN has been structured and implemented in different jurisdictions. PSN is a national program tailored to address varying gun crime patterns in local jurisdictions. One of the key roles of the research partner is to analyze these patterns to help inform the PSN task force. The local nature of PSN, however, makes it important to examine implementation and impact at the local level. Consequently, this series of site-specific cases studies addresses these issues.

The local nature of the national PSN program also creates challenging evaluation issues. Whereas some components of PSN (e.g., coordination through U.S. Attorney's Office; national media campaign; inclusion of research partners and community engagement partners) are common across the country, other components are locally driven (e.g., specific target areas, intervention strategies). Additionally, there is significant variation across the various PSN districts in terms of the timing of PSN implementation. It appears that in districts with existing federal-state-local programs focused on gun crime, the implementation of PSN often occurred at a quicker pace than was the case in districts where new relationships focused on gun crime had to be forged. Similarly, where research partners had established relationships with local criminal justice agencies the integration of research tended to occur more rapidly.

These characteristics raise a number of thorny evaluation issues. For example, the national dimensions of PSN make it difficult to identify comparison sites to assess the impact of PSN. Similarly, the multiple components of PSN make it difficult to generalize across all PSN districts in terms of the nature and intensity of PSN intervention strategies. For example, in some districts, PSN has meant a significant increase in federal prosecution of gun crime cases coupled with a communication strategy of a deterrence-based message. This reflects a Project Exile-type strategy. In other districts, research helped isolate particular target areas and

dimensions of gun violence (e.g., gangs, drug market locations) and resulted in focused interventions targeted at these dimensions. This reflects a SACSI-type strategy.

Given this variation across districts, as a first step in the national research program, a series of site-specific case studies is being conducted. Having decided on this approach, the first challenge was on choosing districts for study. The main criterion for selection was a sense that key components of the PSN strategy had been implemented in a meaningful fashion and had been in operation for a sufficient period to potentially affect levels of gun crime. The MSU research team has reviewed multiple indicators in an effort to identify districts meeting these criteria. These include district reports to the Department of Justice (DOJ), interviews with PSN project coordinators and PSN research partners, and review of data and project reports submitted to DOJ. From these sources, districts have been nominated for a possible case study based on:

- Evidence of implementation of PSN strategies (e.g., increased federal prosecution, joint prosecution case review processes, incident reviews, offender notification meetings, chronic violent offender programs, targeted patrol, probation/parole strategies, gang strategies, prevention, supply-side strategies, etc.)
- Evidence of new and enhanced partnerships (local, state, federal; community, etc.)
- Integration of research partners and/or evidence of research-based strategies
- Meaningful implementation for a sufficient time period to allow assessment of impact
- Sufficient base-rate levels of gun crime to allow assessment of impact

In effect, we employ these dimensions to ask: Is gun crime being addressed differently in this district based on one or several of the PSN core components?

For districts meeting these criteria, we then sought districts representing different regional and demographic dimensions (e.g., region of country, large city, medium city, rural jurisdictions) and with different local histories of federal, state, local relationships and involvement of researchers. The initial three case studies reflect these criteria. The Middle District of Alabama (MD AL) reflects a small U.S. Attorney's Office whose largest city is

relatively small. It is also a district where prior to PSN there was minimal federal-state-local coordinated gun crime reduction efforts and little involvement of local researchers. In other words, PSN was “starting from scratch” in terms of coordinated, multi-agency, gun crime reduction. The Eastern District of Missouri (EDMO), in contrast, had a long history of coordinated violence reduction initiatives, including SACSI. It focused on a major urban jurisdiction (St. Louis) that consistently ranks among the nation’s leaders in levels of gun crime. The district also had a long history of working with the local research partner. The District of Massachusetts, like EDMO, also had a long history of multi-agency violence reduction efforts, particularly through the Boston Gun Project that served as the foundation for SACSI and as one of the foundations of PSN. In this case, however, we focused on PSN implementation in Lowell. Here the interest was driven by the question of whether PSN could facilitate the transfer of multi-agency, strategic problem solving from one jurisdiction (Boston) to another (Lowell). Lowell also represents an opportunity to examine PSN in a small city. The common ingredient in each site is that evidence suggests that gun crime is being addressed in a new and serious fashion through PSN.

The current report focuses on the District of Nebraska. Similar to PSN in the Eastern District of Missouri and in the District of Massachusetts, PSN in Nebraska built upon prior experience with multi-agency strategic problem solving through the district’s participation as an informal participant in the SACSI initiative.

Once sites were identified, the MSU research team conducted site visits to learn more about PSN structure, implementation, and impact. Cooperative relationships between the local research partners and the MSU research team were established for the purpose of generating the case studies. This provided the benefit of the “deep knowledge” of the local research partners



with the “independent eyes” of the national research team. This approach will continue to be employed through an ongoing series of case studies in additional PSN sites.

Given this strategy, in effect a purposive sampling approach, the case studies cannot be considered representative of PSN in all 94 judicial districts. Rather, these are studies of PSN within specific sites. Through these studies, particularly as more and more case studies are completed, complemented by evaluations conducted by local research partners, we hope to generate new knowledge about the adaptation of the national PSN program to local contexts as well as about the impact of PSN on levels of gun crime in specific jurisdictions.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Context:** The District of Nebraska encompasses the entire state. Nebraska is relatively sparsely populated with population centers in Omaha and Lincoln. The PSN initiative operates at three levels. A major focus is on Omaha, the district's largest city. A second PSN working group operates in Lincoln. Additionally, the PSN task force serves the entire district through liaison with the U.S. Attorney's Office.

**Task Force:** The focus of this case study is the PSN task force serving the city of Omaha. This working group is comprised of federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutors, the Department of Corrections, the state Crime Commission, Weed and Seed, the local school system, and research partners from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The working group benefits from the active participation of the U.S. Attorney and the Omaha Chief of Police. Coordination is provided by a PSN Operations Director with support from the Law Enforcement Coordinator. The working group utilizes a strategic problem solving approach involving regular incident reviews and analysis from the research partners. The working group relies on regular meetings including gun crime case screening, incident reviews, and a gun, gangs, and drugs enforcement team. The statewide task force and the Lincoln working group include similar multi-agency participation.

**Problem Analysis:** The research partners used a wide variety of data sources and analytic techniques to assess the gun crime problem and provide feedback to the working group. These included UCR and related police data, crime mapping, gun tracing, incident reviews, and community surveys. Statewide crime data revealed that Omaha accounted for a disproportionate amount of the district's gun crime. Deeper analysis of the situation in Omaha indicated that gun crime was largely concentrated in two sections of the city and that much of the gun crime was the product of the nexus of guns, gangs, and drugs.

**Strategies:** The PSN working group in Omaha utilized a number of interventions to reduce gun crime. These included incident reviews to better understand patterns of gun crime, joint gun crime prosecution case screening, increased federal prosecution of gun crime offenders, firearms tracing, targeted enforcement (e.g., directed police patrol, probation/parole home visits, warrant service), and notification meetings with juveniles.

**Outcomes:** Overall, in Omaha the average number of firearm offenses per month was reduced from 77.4 per month before the PSN intervention to 61.6 per month after PSN was implemented. Time series analyses indicated there was a statistically significant reduction in the overall firearm offenses by 20 percent, per month, following the PSN intervention. During this same period, property offenses remained stable in Omaha thus suggesting that PSN's focus on gun crime was responsible for the decline in gun crime.

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## **Project Safe Neighborhoods in the District of Nebraska**

The District of Nebraska (NE) encompasses all 93 counties in the state of Nebraska and nearly 77,000 square miles. It is one of the 26 states that has only one federal judicial district.

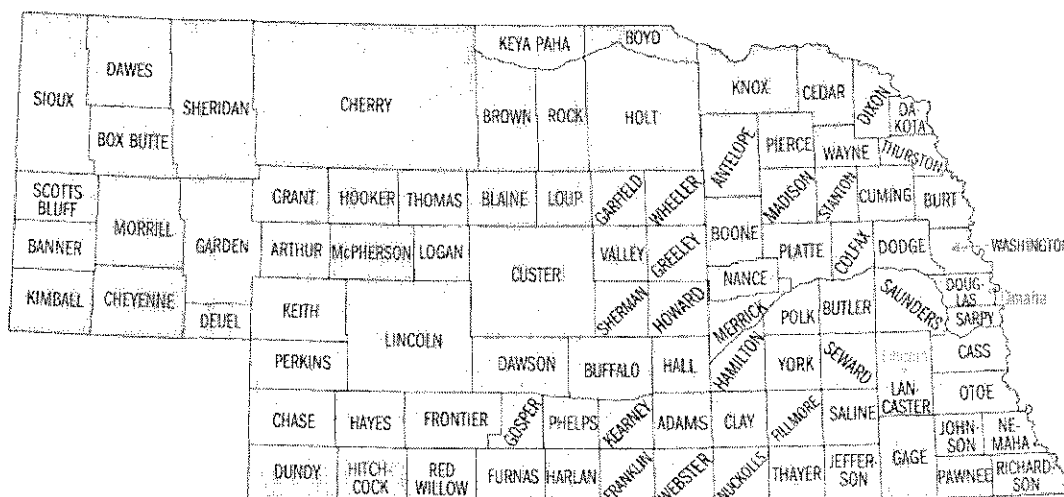
### **District of Nebraska**

The District of Nebraska is in the middle-tier compared with all federal judicial districts in terms of population size. The district ranks 59<sup>th</sup> out of the 90 U.S. districts<sup>iii</sup> with an aggregate of 1,711,263 total inhabitants.<sup>iv</sup> The city of Omaha, in Douglas County, is the largest city within the district, with a population of just over 390,000 people, which accounts for 23 percent of the district's overall population and over 80 percent of Douglas County.

In terms of population demographics, Omaha has a population that is mostly white (78.4%), which is higher than the U.S. average of 75 percent. The homeownership rate for Omaha residents is just over 59 percent (59.6%), which is lower than the district of Nebraska (67.4%) and the U.S. average (66.2%). Finally, Omaha has a very high population density with an average ratio of 3,370 people per one square mile, substantially higher than the average for the state of Nebraska (22.3 people per square mile) and the U.S. average (79.6 people per square mile).

Aside from Douglas County, where Omaha is located, additional population concentrations can be found in two other major counties: Lancaster County and Sarpy County. Lancaster County is home to the city of Lincoln, the state capitol. Lancaster houses over 261,000 residents (nearly 16 percent of the overall state population). The smaller cities of Bellevue, Gretna, La Vista, and Papillion, all make up Sarpy County. All three of these counties, Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy, are relatively close in proximity, as they are all found in southeast Nebraska (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: District of Nebraska**



Compared with other U.S. districts, the District of Nebraska does not suffer from extremely high violent crime rates, as evidenced by Uniform Crime Report data from 2001 at the outset of PSN. Specifically, the district ranks 71<sup>st</sup> overall among federal judicial districts (lowest quartile) in its murder rate, with an average rate of 0.25 murders per 10,000 inhabitants. Additionally, the district ranks 57<sup>th</sup> (third quartile) in aggravated assault rate with 20.45 assaults per 10,000 inhabitants. However, Douglas County has a much higher violent crime rate. Specifically Douglas County has a homicide rate over twice that of the entire state with 0.54 homicides per 10,000 residents. Similarly, the aggravated assault rate in Douglas County, 38.29 assaults per 10,000 people is nearly double that for the state.

Table 1 displays the murder and aggravated assault rates for Douglas County, the overall district, comparably sized U.S. counties, and the U.S. county average. When comparing Douglas County to the other 76 counties in the U.S. with a similar population<sup>v</sup>, we see that the Douglas County murder rate ranks twenty-sixth (second quartile). The aggravated assault rate also ranks

twenty-sixth (second quartile). These descriptive statistics from 2001 give an indication that Douglas County has a much higher rate of violent crime than the overall District of Nebraska. Further, the aggravated assault rate is higher in Douglas County than across the United States and is also higher than the average of equally sized U.S. counties.

**Table 1: Aggravated Assault and Murder Rates, 2001**

Site	Aggravated Assault Rate (Per 10,000)	Murder Rate (Per 10,000)
United States Average*	30.65	0.65
District of Nebraska	20.45	0.25
U.S. Counties of Comparable Size**	33.99	0.66
Douglas County	38.29	0.54

\*90 federal judicial districts

\*\*Counties ranging from 347,000 to 579,000 population

## **The Development and Implementation of PSN**

### ***Building on Existing Partnerships***

In 1999, the District of Nebraska participated as an unfunded Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI) site. Led by the United States Attorney's Office, Project Impact was a gun violence initiative targeted at juveniles in the Omaha area. Operational activities and the development of a comprehensive offender database system were funded with Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) funds.

Project Impact included local, state and federal law enforcement, probation and parole, social services, as well as community partners. This program was modeled after gun violence reduction programs such as Operation Ceasefire in Boston and Project Exile in Richmond, Virginia.

The premise of Project Impact was to hold serious, violent juvenile offenders accountable for their actions. Using the Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment (SARA) model and

with help from researchers at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, youth violence, particularly gun-related violence, was examined, strategies were developed and implemented, and then evaluated. In 2000, three primary Project Impact law enforcement operations (i.e., offender notification meetings, Nightlight Operations, and Ceasefire Operations) were used both together and independently to address and reduce youth violence.

Project Impact Offender Notification Meetings were designed to send the message of “stop the violence” to youth. The message was specifically geared toward groups of youths engaged in violent behavior, known youth offenders that resided in violent areas, or students involved in problem behavior. At each meeting, representatives from law enforcement agencies provided the message of accountability by letting the youth know what could happen to him or her if he or she chose to continue engaging in a violent lifestyle. Representatives from community organizations provided the message of opportunity for offenders to leave behind their violent lifestyle with the assistance of services and guidance.<sup>vi</sup>

Nightlight Operations involved the teaming of a police officer and probation officer who together made home visits to youths under correctional supervision (i.e., probation and/or parole) and who were either engaged in violent behavior or a violent group or resided in a violent geographic location. While these particular operations were not necessarily in direct response to an actual rise in gun violence, the operations were capable of establishing a focused law enforcement presence within known gun crime hot-spot areas and upon known offenders. The Nightlight teams made home visits to ensure youth were in compliance with the terms of their court orders as well as to reinforce the overall message and visibility of Project Impact.

Project Impact Ceasefire Operations entailed deployment of law enforcement to “hotspot” areas in response to an incident involving gun violence. Teams of police officers,

probation/parole officers, and federal law enforcement officers conducted “zero-tolerance” operations focusing on a group or groups of offenders that were responsible for the violence.

In addition to the law enforcement strategies employed during Project Impact, community involvement was also a very important facet of Project Impact. Community teams were comprised of local organizations, schools, churches, neighborhood associations, and concerned neighbors in both North and South Omaha. The teams organized such events as neighborhood clean-ups, neighborhood safety block parties, school events and art contests, and were involved with other community organizations throughout Omaha.

In the District of Nebraska, when President George W. Bush announced Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) in early 2001, transitioning Project Impact to PSN was a logical choice. With solid groundwork laid out by Project Impact, the transition to PSN made sense. That is, partnerships to address youth gun violence were already in place, three seemingly successful law enforcement initiatives had been executed and continued to be intact, and a comprehensive data system had been established. The addition of PSN funds now made it possible to take gun violence reduction efforts district-wide expanding from a single city, age-group focused program. Also, PSN brought with it the leverage of federal prosecution.

### **The Structure of PSN in the District of Nebraska**

As noted at the outset, the State of Nebraska is one of 26 states where the entire state is one federal district. Due to the large geographic area of Nebraska, tough decisions had to be made as to how to focus the district’s PSN efforts. Omaha was selected as the primary focus area. A statewide PSN taskforce was created as well as regional working groups in both Omaha and Lincoln.



## PSN Task Force in Nebraska

The statewide PSN taskforce was formed to provide input as to strategy and funding as per the mandates of the DOJ's Bureau of Justice Assistance. The state-wide task force consists of the following agencies:

- United States Attorney's Office (USAO)
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF)
- Douglas County Attorney's Office
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Nebraska State Crime Commission
- Nebraska Department of Correctional Services, Adult and Juvenile Probation and Parole
- Omaha City Prosecutor
- Omaha Police Department
- Omaha Public Schools
- University of Nebraska at Omaha
- U.S. Marshals Service
- Weed and Seed—North Omaha and South Omaha
- Adams County Attorney's Office
- Bailey Laueran Marketing
- Boys and Girls Club
- Campfire Midlands Inc.
- Crimestoppers
- Dakota County Attorney's Office
- Dawson County Attorney's Office
- Douglas County Sheriff's Office
- Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)
- Grand Island Police Department
- Hall County Attorney's Office
- Lancaster County Attorney's Office
- Lincoln County Attorney's Office
- Lincoln Police Department
- Nebraska State Patrol
- Neighborhood Associations
- Precinct Advisory Councils
- Police Athletic League
- Sarpy County Attorney's Office
- Sarpy County Sheriff
- Scottsbluff Police Department

### *Regional Work Group in Omaha*

Due to the decision to initially focus on Omaha, two different but related working groups developed: one working group specific to the efforts in Omaha and another working group in Lincoln. Much of the strength of the working group in Omaha comes from the fact that the USAO was able to capitalize on already existing violence reduction programs and relationships- one of the biggest being an already existing Weed and Seed program.

The Omaha working group is a fully functioning, active, cohesive unit. Turf issues and personal differences, which often serve to derail task forces, have been virtually non-existent as there is a sense of openness among task force members. Communication is free flowing and members feel as though they can approach each other. Turnover, another problem that plagues task forces, has been minimal. And, the little turnover that has occurred has generally been to the benefit of the taskforce.

### *PSN within the U.S. Attorney's Office*

Michael G. Heavican was appointed as the United States Attorney for the District of Nebraska in March 2001.<sup>vii</sup> Shortly after Mr. Heavican took office, President George W. Bush officially announced Project Safe Neighborhoods and the process of distributing funds to the districts began. While the President tasked each USA with implementing PSN in his or her district, he did not dictate how this should be done: "How" was left up to the U.S. Attorney.

Initially, Mr. Heavican, along with the Law Enforcement Coordinator, went on the road to acquaint law enforcement and prosecution with the PSN initiative. During this same time period, the PSN taskforce began meeting and identified gangs, drugs, domestic violence, felons in possession, juvenile offenders, corrupt Federal Firearms Licenses (FFLs), and straw purchasers as key elements of their gun violence problem. Of those elements, the District chose

to focus on the investigation and prosecution of gangs and drugs. Consistent with PSN strategic problem solving element of PSN, the Research Partners (RPs) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) were instrumental in identifying two areas within the city of Omaha, and subsequently the city of Lincoln, as their focus areas. Gang activity, and specifically retaliatory gun violence in northeast and southeast Omaha was particularly concerning to Task Force members. In Lincoln, domestic violence and armed robberies were the primary concerns.

The District of Nebraska took a unique approach to the PSN Project Coordinator's position within the USAO. In the majority of districts across the country, the PSN Project Coordinator is an Assistant United States Attorney (AUSA) who, along with his or her normal caseload, is assigned the additional responsibility of coordinating PSN for the USAO and is supported by other USAO staff such as the Law Enforcement Coordinator. The District of Nebraska instead chose to dedicate a portion of their funding to hire an individual from outside the USAO to act as a full-time PSN Project Coordinator whom they designated their PSN Operations Director.

In May 2004, the PSN task force hired a retired Omaha Police Department (OPD) Sergeant whose last assignment within the police department was to supervise the Gang Unit. The Operations Director came to the PSN task force with the institutional knowledge and established relationships, which could only enhance PSN operations in the District. And, unlike every other PSN Project Coordinator, he would not carry a caseload thereby allowing for 100 percent of his time to be devoted to PSN- related activities. However, the Law Enforcement Coordinator continued to play a significant supporting role.

Bringing with him an essential connection to OPD, institutional knowledge, and enthusiasm for PSN, the PSN Operations Director created or enhanced several operations and

partnerships grew or were fortified under his leadership. Repeatedly the PSN partners indicated that [the Operations Director] was “the glue” of the operation. They noted that without Mr. Heavican’s (USA) support of PSN and confidence in the selection of [the Operations Director], this creation of the Operations Director’s position would not have been possible. Many commented that Nebraska’s PSN effort would not have been as strong without the respected leadership of the Operations Director.

And, due to the smaller size of the USAO, Mr. Heavican did not task just one or two AUSAs with prosecuting gun cases. He instead spread the responsibility out across the office. The NE USAO has nine Assistant U.S. Attorneys in the Criminal Division and 16 in the Drug Section, all of whom are expected to prosecute 18 USC Sections 922 and 924 firearms cases. While the majority of USAO staff work out of the main office in Omaha, the branch office in Lincoln houses seven attorneys.

#### *Firearms Case Screening Team*

While attending the PSN National Conference in Kansas City in June 2004, Mr. Heavican and other members of the team learned about gun case screening teams that were being utilized in sites like the Western District of Tennessee (Memphis). Soon afterward, in September 2004, the PSN Operations Director along with representatives from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) and the Omaha Police Department (OPD) began to screen firearm cases once a month for potential federal prosecution. Known as the Firearms Case Screening Team (FCST), they soon learned that there were too many firearm cases to screen at a monthly meeting and therefore started screening cases every day. The process begins with OPD supervisors. Each morning, they review and screen incident reports looking for cases to flag as potential weapons violations. Supervisors examine every report, regardless of

the incident type, but pay particular attention to robberies, assaults and other major incident types. Next, an ATF agent assigned to PSN and co-located at OPD, pulls the list of cases that have been flagged as potential weapons violations. This list is forwarded to the Operations Director and the team makes decisions about each case. After his initial screening, the Operations Director sends an email out to the tri-agency screening team advising them as to what the intended course of action is for each case. If a case meets certain criteria it will be forwarded on to the Guns, Gangs and Drugs Team for further screening and for a final decision as to the best venue for prosecution (see Figure Two).

The FCST encourages an open exchange atmosphere which allows the team to maintain a rapport and exchange vital information to decrease if not eliminate cases pleading out, cases otherwise lost to double jeopardy, or cases “falling through the cracks.” The USAO maintains records as to how many cases are prosecuted locally and federally. These numbers are readily shared with both the City and County Prosecutor’s Offices. Finally, the Operations Director takes on the very important responsibility of keeping the local police officers informed about the status of their gun cases through e-mail. From inception to February 2006, 643 cases had been reviewed by FCST.

**Figure 2: Summary of Gun Crime Problem in Omaha**

- 
- Geographically concentrated gun crime hotspots
  - Chronic offenders carrying and using illegal guns
  - Gangs and the nexus between gangs, guns, and drugs
- 

***Training***

Adhering to the core elements of PSN, the District of Nebraska recognizes the importance of providing training for prosecution, law enforcement, and criminal justice officials as an integral part of the initiative. Initially, the U.S. Attorney met with prosecutors and law

enforcement officers across the district to acquaint them with PSN. PSN was also presented at the 2003 statewide law enforcement conference along with a full day of ATF delivered training (e.g., Characteristics of An Armed Gunman).

A three-day ATF/International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) conference for prosecutors, investigators and line officers was held in June 2004 in Omaha. The first day was a brainstorming session for county and federal level employees and commanding officers on proper handling of a recovered gun, conducting an investigation, and training line officers. The following day, there was a one-day training for line officers in local police and sheriff's departments on firearms investigations. In conjunction with Weed and Seed, ATF/IACP sponsored training was held on how to engage the community in the PSN process.

In an effort to help educate local law enforcement, members of the FCST conducted a two-hour training on identification of firearms, firearms case screening, and federal firearms statutes for two Omaha Police Department recruit classes at their academy in 2005. Additional sessions are planned for police academy classes and in-service training for veteran police officers. The FCST has noticed an overall increased awareness of gun violence in the district as well as an improvement in report writing since implementing the training. This in turn has led to better gun crime cases in terms of the quality of police reports supporting both local and federal prosecution. Additionally, the Operations Director rewrote the firearms policies for OPD's Standard Operations Procedures Manual (SOPs). While changes were not officially made to the SOPs, OPD officers are being even more careful in the way they handle gun cases and these procedures are supported by the Chief of Police.

### ***Community Engagement and Media Campaign***

The District of Nebraska chose to partner with Bailey Lauerman, a marketing and communications firm with offices located in both Omaha and Lincoln, as their Community Engagement Partner. Bailey Lauerman produced PSAs to be used in conjunction with the free PSAs created and distributed by the Department of Justice to communicate the message “*Hard Time for Gun Crime.*” Bailey Lauerman’s expertise and history in the community helped the PSN Task Force get the most for their money when purchasing traditional print, radio, and television advertising space. They also worked to strategically place advertisements on billboards and bus benches.

### ***Research Partners***

Many newly formed PSN task forces have indicated they had some difficulty choosing, integrating, and fully utilizing a research partner (RP) for their task force. In contrast, some of the key players in the task force had previous experience with researchers at the Juvenile Justice Institute (JJI) at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Consequently, it made sense to continue to build on existing relationships with the JJI and therefore, the researchers from JJI soon became fully integrated members of the PSN Task Force.

In addition to regularly attending task force meetings, they began by providing a problem analysis of gun crime in the district, which helped to lead the task force to focus their PSN efforts in Omaha and then Lincoln. The RPs also developed and analyzed surveys given to juveniles who attended notification meetings while also providing regular feedback on other strategies implemented by the task force. Finally, they conducted an overall program evaluation.

## **The Nature of the Gun Crime Problem in the District of Nebraska**

During the 1999 implementation of Project Impact, a data-driven project to address juvenile gun crime in Omaha, the USAO worked with researchers to develop an initial picture of gun violence in the district. Data indicated that the City of Omaha accounted for over 80 percent of the gun crime occurring in Nebraska. The picture that emerged indicated that gun violence was concentrated in several geographic areas of Omaha (northeast and southeast) and that a significant portion involved gangs and the nexus between gangs, guns, and drugs. Over 28 gangs and 2,600 gang members have been identified.

Project Impact was expanded to proactively address all gun crime in Omaha and Lincoln in 2001 as Project Impact evolved into Project Safe Neighborhoods. The USAO and the PSN Research Partners used the previous Project Impact research to help guide them. Consistent with findings from a number of other PSN sites, many victims and offenders involved in gun crime had extensive records of prior criminal involvement.

## **Gun Crime Reduction Strategies**

In the District of Nebraska, use of multiple data sources and intelligence information indicated heightened gun violence in the City of Omaha specifically in southeast and northeast Omaha. Identification of the gun violence problem and its geographic nature then allowed the task force to formulate the application of enforcement and prevention strategies to areas in most need of attention.



### *Increased Federal Prosecution and Joint Gun Case Prosecution Screening*

#### *The Gangs Guns and Drugs Meetings- “more than just finding the best venue for prosecution”*

Central to the Omaha PSN task force is the Guns, Gangs, and Drugs Team (GGD). The GGD was initially developed in response to a series of gang-related shootings in Northeast Omaha. The team meets once a month at the USAO and is attended by the USA, AUSAs, other USAO staff including the Law Enforcement Community Coordinator (LECC) and Operations Director, county and city attorneys, the OPD Police Chief, upper management in several local law enforcement agencies including members from OPD’s Gangs, Narcotics, Robbery and Homicide Units, USMS, FBI, ICE, DEA, and ATF. Approximately 40 attendees are regularly present. Numerous individuals report out on the prior month’s activities and ongoing or new cases. The meetings serve multiple purposes including updates on the status of investigations, sharing of information, and the planning of proactive enforcement initiatives focused on gun, gang, and drug hot spot places and people.

The PSN Operations Director moderates the GGD meetings. The meetings usually begin with the Operations Director presenting an update on the status of the FCST and Firearms Tracing Project (FTP) cases. At each meeting, a spreadsheet is distributed to the attendees which contains information like the offender’s name, offender status (e.g., in custody, fugitive, etc.), county where the case came from, type of case (e.g., gun, drug, gun and drug, etc.), agency or agent in charge, the date when the case was received, indictment status, case status (e.g., trial pending, plea pending, etc.), and AUSA assigned. Along with the spreadsheet, the Operations Director prepares a slide show of proposed indictees that includes a picture of the offender and a brief description of the case circumstances. The presentation also includes updates on indictment

numbers and Gun Case Screening Team statistics. About two-thirds of the cases discussed at the meetings involve both guns and drugs.

A key strategy, the GGD meetings are described by participants as the ideal time and place to make indictment and complaint/warrant decisions, gain proffer information, disseminate progress updates, and have an open discussion of any pending or open business. The Team has obtained a record number of indictments and prioritized curbing gun violence and holding offenders accountable for gun and drug violations. Members of the Team also participate in monthly crime indictment review meetings, directed patrol in high crime areas, supply side interventions, investigation of gang violence, and probation/parole home visits.

To assist the USAO with the increased case load resulting from the FCST and GGD meetings, state and/or local prosecutors have been cross-designated to help prosecute federal gun cases. Additionally, the Douglas County Attorney's Office (DCAO) received PSN funds to hire a gun prosecutor. In addition to attending GGD meetings, the gun prosecutor is also a member of the Firearms Case Screening Team (FCST), prosecutes cases, attends monthly Indictment Review meetings, assists in securing prosecution documents, delivers speeches at Juvenile Notification meetings, and acts as a liaison for the local prosecutor's office.

### **Figure 3: Case Criteria**

- If the proper charge was filed,
- If the case violates any federal statute,
- Intelligence on where the gun was purchased,
- If a federal firearms case against the suspect is appropriate,
- If the suspect is in violation of any immigration statute, and
- If the suspect is in violation of any domestic violence statute

Screening meetings also occur in Lincoln on the first Thursday of the month and are attended by the PSN Operations Director. In addition to the FCST meetings, and the GGD

Team, PSN leaders decided to employ other proven strategies in an effort to curb the gun violence problem. These included firearms tracing, incident reviews, juvenile notification meetings, Ceasefire Operations, Directed Patrol, Nightlight Operations, as well as ICE and Marshal and OPD fugitive warrant service initiatives.

### *Firearms Tracing Project (FTP)*

The Chief of the Omaha Police Department expressed a desire to have all firearms traced that were seized by officers in his department. The PSN Operations Director saw the benefits of doing so and, as a result, the Firearms Tracing Project (FTP) was developed and implemented in May 2004. In September 2004, an OPD officer from the Intelligence Unit was assigned full-time to the FTP. Firearms traces that had previously been conducted only on an as-needed basis now had become standard operating procedure. At the end of 2005, over 500 firearms had been traced as part of the FTP. Having traces on all firearms seized has improved case prosecutions from an evidence standpoint. Task force members report that not only have the traces helped to prosecute individual gun offenders, but an added benefit has been the ability, in conjunction with other law enforcement agencies, to successfully prosecute Federal Firearms Licensees (FFL). Moreover, FTP information entered into a tracking database created for the project is aiding in the identification of straw purchasers.

### *Incident Reviews<sup>viii</sup>*

Crime incident review meetings are convened to discuss recent gun crimes in detail. These meetings are coordinated and hosted by the Omaha Police Department and take place at OPD Headquarters. There are usually about 40 attendees from a variety of local, state, and federal criminal justice agencies including the OPD Chief of Police as well as the Lieutenant and Sergeant over the OPD Gang Unit. The meetings generally last one-hour and are held monthly.

Specifically, attendees use this venue to discuss shooting timelines, view crime scene, suspect, and victim photographs, hear case updates as well as learn about new gang members.

Information sharing is the key component to these meetings.

The crime incident review meetings are similar to the Guns, Gangs, and Drugs Team meetings in that the Operations Director presents updates on the status of the FCST and the FTP cases. Additionally, some multi-agency enforcement operations are scheduled and coordinated during monthly incident review meetings in an attempt to avoid overlap of resources and to not compromise existing undercover operations.

### *Juvenile Notification Meetings*

Juvenile Notification meetings, led by the PSN Gun Prosecutor from the Douglas County Attorney's Office (DCAO), are held for both incarcerated juveniles and juveniles on probation or those juveniles deemed at risk for involvement in violent activity. The message presented to youths at the meetings is one of zero tolerance of gun violence as well as service and prevention options. Targeted at youths in the seventh through ninth grade, meetings last approximately 90 minutes and are held either in a cafeteria, auditorium, or classroom. Enhanced partnerships between OPD and Omaha Public Schools have afforded the opportunity for seven Juvenile Notification Meetings during the 2005 –2006 school year at both traditional and alternative schools. For these meetings, the schools identify students whom they believe are best suited for the Notification message.

### *Ceasefire Operations, Directed Patrol, and Nightlight Operations*

Along with Incident Reviews and Juvenile Notification Meetings, the District of Nebraska also employed several law enforcement operations some of which were also used during Project Impact: Ceasefire Operations, Directed Patrol, and Nightlight Operations. These

operations typically respond to the gun crime patterns identified in the incident reviews and are coordinated as part of the Gang, Gun, and Drug Team meetings. For the most part, these enforcement actions were conducted as distinct operations but on several occasions two operations were conducted simultaneously (e.g. Nightlight and Ceasefire and Nightlight and Directed Patrol).

Ceasefire Operations involved the heavy deployment of police, probation and parole officers, along with federal law enforcement agencies (e.g., ICE), to a specific geographic area. Ceasefire Operations were initiated in response to recent increases in gun violence in a certain area of the city. These operations resulted in citizen contacts, traffic stops, warrant arrests, and drug-related arrests. For example, directed patrol operations focused on deterrence through saturation of officers who make traffic stops and citizen contacts in high crime areas and were very popular with OPD. These efforts were complemented by the U.S. Marshal Service's Metro Area Fugitive Taskforce that conducted warrant sweeps. Finally, during Nightlight Operations, probation and parole officers were deployed to enforce conditions of probation and parole as well as convey the zero tolerance for gun violence message.

Additionally, through funds made available by UNO, a research assistant was hired in 2005 to work with ATF by running criminal histories, obtaining certified conviction documents, and assisting with planning Juvenile Notification meetings, database management, and coordination with such groups as Weed and Seed and victim/witness programs.

Figure 4: Gun Crime Problem and PSN Strategies

Problem	Overall Strategy	Specific Components	
Geographically concentrated gun crime	2 task forces	Omaha and Lincoln	
	Use of existing relationships		
	Increased police operations in target areas	Ceasefire Operations	Directed patrol
Chronic offenders carrying guns	Incapacitate	USAO commitment to federal prosecution	Increase in gun crime cases and defendants
	Increase federal sanctions	Gangs Guns and Drugs Team	Increase flow of cases and improve quality
		Firearms Tracing Project (FTP)	Plug loopholes between state and federal system
	Increase supervision of gun crime offenders	Nightlight Operations	Tracing every seized firearm
	Deterrence	Juvenile Notification Meetings	Probation and parole sweeps; zero tolerance for gun violence message
Gangs and nexus between gangs, guns, and drugs	Sharing information through regular meetings	Gangs Guns and Drugs Team	
		Incident reviews	Information sharing between local, state, federal agencies

## Results

### *Evidence of Implementation—Outputs*

The prosecution data clearly reflect that the goal of increasing federal prosecution of gun crime offenses has occurred in the District of Nebraska. As previously mentioned, lawyers from both the general crimes unit and the drug unit are tasked with prosecuting gun cases. Since the announcement of PSN in 2001 and the full implementation of PSN in the District of Nebraska, the number of indictments under U.S. Code 922 and 924 has increased dramatically. In FY 2001 there were 54 indictments under US Code 922 and 924. This increased to 95 indictments in FY 2002, to 166 in FY 2003, up to 171 in FY 2005, an increase of 200 percentage points since 2001. Similarly, the number of defendants prosecuted in federal court increased from 63 in FY 2001 to 111 in FY 2002 and 196 in FY 2005. This increase in indictments and defendants placed the District of Nebraska in the top nine percent in terms of its percentage point increase in federal prosecution. The numbers are even more telling when considered in light of the district's population. As one of the less populous federal judicial districts (ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> least populous out of 90 federal districts<sup>ix</sup>), the 2003 rate of defendants per 100,000 is 11.0. This federal prosecution rate per 100,000 population is ranked 8<sup>th</sup> among the 90 federal judicial districts.

Additionally, anecdotal evidence suggests that the Douglas County Prosecutor's Office and Omaha City Prosecutor's Office have been successful in closing a revolving door related to offenders being prosecuted for multiple carrying concealed weapon (CCW) firearms charges. The Douglas County Attorney's Office (DCAO) generally handles all felony gun cases whereas the Omaha City Prosecutor's Office will prosecute misdemeanor gun cases. Prior to collaboration between the two offices, offenders were pleading out to minor infractions such as

ordinance violations and thereby avoiding weapons violations. This “system fix” was a direct result of communication and collaboration between both local prosecutor’s offices and the USAO.

In addition to the increased commitment to federal prosecution, the District of Nebraska implemented many law enforcement strategies. From January 2005 to August 2005, OPD, probation and parole, and ICE performed three Nightlight Operations, four Ceasefire Operations, which included one five-day operation, five Directed Patrols, and one combined Nightlight and Ceasefire Operation. Seven of the operations were conducted in the Northeast Precinct, one was conducted in both the Northeast and the Northwest Precinct, one was conducted in the Northwest Precinct, and four were held in the Southeast Precinct. Total efforts netted 18 firearms seizures, 131 misdemeanor arrests, 15 felony arrests, and 125 drug-related arrests.<sup>x</sup>

### *Evidence of Impact—Outcomes*

As is the case nationally, the Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative in the District of Nebraska will ultimately be evaluated on whether the strategies implemented reduce gun crimes. In order to provide a preliminary assessment of violent crime and firearm patterns, we provide a description of the different types of offenses over time by relying on graphs and comparing pre- and post-intervention averages for a number of different crimes. However, this strategy is somewhat limited because any increase or decrease in the graphs and averages may be due to seasonality, drifts, or chance alone. Consequently, we then employ time series analyses as a tool to assess PSN impact on gun crime.<sup>xi</sup>

As an initial step in the outcome analysis, the research team reviewed the annual trends in three firearm related crimes: homicide, armed robbery, and aggravated assault. Table 2 displays



the changes in all firearms offenses between 2000 and 2004.<sup>xii</sup> Gun crime fluctuated between 2000 and 2002 and then declined.

**Table 2: Gun crime trend data - City of Omaha**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Homicide with a firearm	24	13	19	17	15
Aggravated assault with a firearm	604	410	421	298	308
Robbery with a firearm	400	329	552	500	470
<b>Overall gun offenses</b>	<b>1028</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>992</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>793</b>

The research team treated February 2003 as the intervention date. This was the point of PSN implementation when law enforcement training had occurred and there was a significant increase in federal prosecution for gun crimes. Additional components of the PSN strategy were developed in 2004 and 2005. Due to the relatively small number of homicides involving a firearm, homicide, aggravated assault, and robbery with a firearm were combined into a composite measure of violent gun offenses. Although we present the trend for these offenses individually, the focus of the analysis was on the composite measure as this represented the task force’s goal of reducing violent gun crime in Omaha.

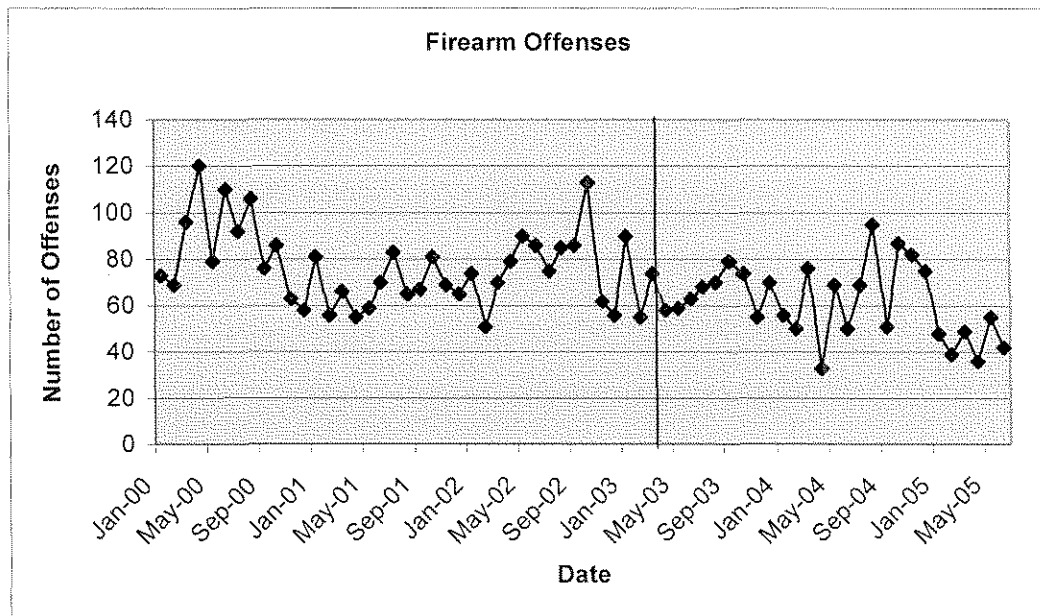
Overall, in Omaha the average number of firearm offenses per month reduced from 77.35 per month before intervention to 61.62 per month after February 2003. These preliminary findings are suggestive of a reduction in gun crime. However, in order to assess the significance of these trends, the research team conducted a time series analysis. This type of analysis is considered one of the most powerful evaluation tools because it can take into account trends in crime before the intervention point and assess the significance of any change in levels of crime following the intervention.

The time series analyses are based on data in monthly format from January 2000 through June 2005. We examined what is known as a zero order transfer function, or abrupt permanent change, that is designed to test whether the trend in crime following the February 2003

intervention date was significantly different than the pre-intervention trend. All of the time-series conducted adhere to the assumptions of the ARIMA (Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average) modeling requirements, specifically bounds of stationarity and invertability (details of the analysis are presented in the Technical Appendix).

Table 3 presents the key findings.<sup>xiii</sup> Both aggravated assaults with a firearm and robberies with a firearm had a decline, as suggested by the direction of the coefficients. However, neither change attained statistical significance when examined individually. Homicide with a firearm increased slightly but overall remained relatively stable. When the total number of firearm offenses was examined at the aggregate level, the ARIMA models show a statistically significant reduction ( $p < .01$ ) from pre-intervention to post-intervention. The analysis indicates there was a statistically significant reduction in the overall firearm offenses of 20 percent, per month, between pre- and post- PSN intervention.<sup>xiv</sup> Figure 5 displays the statistically significant decline in overall firearm crimes from the raw number of offenses.

**Figure 5: Pattern of Total Gun Offenses in Omaha**



A potential alternative explanation for this decline in gun offenses could be that overall crime rates in Omaha were declining at a simultaneous, or similar, rate. If this were the case, the above findings would simply be a result of a global decline in crime in general. In order to control for a possible global change in crime independent of firearm offenses, we conducted time series analyses of the monthly property crimes of motor vehicle thefts and burglaries. The hypothesis is that if the decline in gun crime was due to a global decline in crime, then property crimes should follow a similar decline.

When examining these comparison offenses, there was actually a slight increase in the average number of burglaries, although this change was not statistically significant. Motor vehicle thefts experienced a decrease, although again, the series was not statistically significant. Thus, property offenses remained consistent over the period of the time series.<sup>xv</sup> That is, the comparison to property crime is consistent with an interpretation that PSN led to a reduction in gun crime.

**Table 3: Time Series Analysis – February 2003 Intervention Date**

Crime	Pre-intervention Mean	Post-intervention Mean	Mean Difference (Post-Pre)	ARIMA Model			Intervention Coefficient (s.e.)	p-value
				p	d	q		
<b>Targeted Offenses</b>								
Assault	147.2	125.2	-22	0	1	2	-.37 (1.2)	.760
Robbery	36.4	35.8	-0.6	2	0	0	-3.4 (4.9)	.490
Homicide	1.56	1.58	.02	0	0	0	.01 (.34)	.957
Total firearm offenses (Ln)	4.32	4.08	-.24	0	0	2	-.23 (.08)	<b>.003</b>
<b>Comparison Offenses</b>								
MV Theft (Ln)	5.78	5.60	-.18	0	2	2	-.01 (.02)	.544
Burglaries	269.5	285.4	15.9	1	0	0	11.9 (15.9)	.453

**Summary**

PSN in the District of Nebraska can best be summed up as a combination of a Project Exile and Boston Ceasefire approach. Research and past experience indicated the need to focus resources first on Omaha and then later expand into Lincoln. Additionally, the remainder of the state would be served through the commitment to prosecute gun cases federally and by providing law enforcement training. Prior to PSN, federal prosecution for gun crimes had not been a top priority for the U.S. Attorney’s Office, however, they did have the existing relationships in place to turn that around quite quickly. Additionally, local law enforcement knew gun cases were slipping through the cracks and that existing loopholes needed to be addressed if a deterrent message was to be credible. Interviews conducted with task force members revealed the elements of leadership, partnership, and regular meetings as key to the implementation of PSN in Nebraska.

### *Leadership*

PSN leadership in the District of Nebraska started in the USAO. Acting as host of the GGD meetings, the USA, Mr. Michael Heavican, repeatedly demonstrated his commitment to PSN each month. The USA also supported the creation on the PSN Operations Director position whose sole job was PSN, a role unique to the District of Nebraska. Finding the right person for the job was instrumental for PSN as their PSN partners continually refer to the Operations Director as “the glue” to PSN in the District of Nebraska. Strong leadership was demonstrated within the USAO by the PSN Operations Director as well as the Law Enforcement Coordinator and these players capitalized on existing relationships by coordinating with federal, state, and local agencies to create the momentum needed to implement a successful PSN program.

### *Partnerships*

The USAO in the District of Nebraska has a strong history of established partnerships across the state. However, using research to help in the fight against gun violence was new to everyone. Indeed, it was not a matter of establishing partnerships, it was more a matter of changing the way business was done to combat gun violence.

ATF has been a strong partner as demonstrated by their dedication of two agents to PSN. With the help of the agents and the RA, ATF assists with the FTP and FCST, attends regular strategy meetings, and provides coordination for community and prevention activities. Similarly, ICE has proven to be a powerful federal partner. Their ability to arrange enforcement operations, deport offenders with weapons violations, and share intelligence makes them an asset not always utilized in PSN sites. Similarly, the USMS Metro Area Fugitive Taskforce is the lead agency for warrant sweeps.

Prosecutors from the federal, county, and city level found ways to prosecute gun violations without customary turf issues. Anecdotal evidence suggests that where there were deficiencies, loopholes, or cracks in the system, prosecutors found a way to collaborate to minimize the loss of cases. Daily communication and attendance at regular PSN meetings have been the primary vehicles for enhanced and coordinated prosecution.

Finally, placing trust in the integration of research propelled the taskforce toward selection and implementation of strategies. The research partners worked with the PSN task force partners on problem analysis and impact assessment. They participated in every meeting and enforcement operation and provided continual feedback by measuring outputs and conducting outcome evaluations. The researchers participated in every meeting and enforcement operation as opposed to relying on second-hand information and data. These efforts have helped provide a clear understanding of PSN in Nebraska through outcome and output evaluations.

Inclusion of regional law enforcement and school systems from surrounding communities that border Omaha has enhanced information sharing, improved the tracking of weapons, increased cases submitted for prosecution, and spread the PSN message.

### ***Regular Meetings***

Attendance by the USA and Chief of Police at each monthly GGD meeting demonstrates the District's commitment to PSN and to gun crime reduction. Attended by approximately 40 individuals each month, the amount of pertinent information shared is notable. Also held on a monthly basis, Incident Reviews afford the opportunity to discuss the most dangerous and important incidents and emerging gangs or gang members. Members of the regional working group also noted that having the same individual/representative consistently attend each of the

different meetings helped to maintain reliability and retention of information and institutional knowledge.

### ***Challenges***

The District of Nebraska did not seem to face many of the traditional challenges. That is, they avoided major turnover in personnel, and the necessary relationships had been established prior to the implementation of PSN. Key partners were eager to take part.

Members of the task force did note some resistance from some judges to the increasing number of gun cases. Both federal and local prosecutors made note of this obstacle but have not let it deter them from bringing cases to court.

And, not uncommon in other jurisdictions, some task force members were questioning the benefit of Incident Reviews. While information sharing was occurring, local law enforcement felt follow-up by means of enforcement operations was lacking. Thus, as PSN developed, the task force implemented directed patrol operations, warrant sweeps, and Operation Nightlight initiatives as mechanisms to follow-up on violent crime patterns revealed in the incident reviews.

### **Conclusion**

PSN in the District of Nebraska with its comprehensive task force, integration of research, a balance of enforcement and prevention strategies, and effective use of a media campaign is following the PSN model as envisioned and directed by DOJ.<sup>xvi</sup> Following assessment of the district's gun crime problem, the initial focus was on Omaha and particular areas of the city that accounted for a disproportionate amount of the district's gun crime. PSN expanded to provide coverage to the full district, particularly through federal prosecution of gun offenders, the media campaign, and training, as well as expanding to Lincoln, the second largest

city in the district. Interviews consistently indicated that PSN resulted in improved federal, state, and local coordination of law enforcement resources and a focused and sustained commitment to reducing gun crime. Finally, assessment of the trend in gun crime offenses in Omaha is suggestive that the PSN effort may have had a positive impact on reducing gun crime.

**Figure Four: Summary of Key Components of the District of Nebraska’s Successful PSN Task Force**

Key Component	Description
Leadership	Active role of U.S. Attorney, Chief of Police; PSN clear priority
PSN Task Force Structure	Shared responsibility (U.S. Attorney, PSN Operations Director, Law Enforcement Community Coordinator) PSN cases prosecuted by both drug unit and general crime unit (25 AUSAs)
Partnerships	Utilization of existing relationships Inclusion of research partners as task force members and integration of research into PSN process Active involvement of media and community engagement partners
Regular Meetings	FCST communicates daily, meets weekly; Incident Reviews and GGD monthly meetings



## **SIDE BAR ON LINCOLN**

Domestic violence and armed robberies are the primary concerns of the PSN regional work group in Lincoln. Lincoln was represented in the statewide Task Force and began to implement PSN strategies in 2004. This included Firearms Case Screening attended by the PSN Operations Director, along with several law enforcement efforts.

Home Visits are one of three law enforcement efforts being executed as a PSN strategy in Lincoln. Between March 2005 and August 2005, 397 adult probationer or parolee Home Visits were made. Reporting high rates of success, Lincoln Police Department (LPD), both Adult and Juvenile Probation, and Lincoln District Parole Office made 231 successful contacts (58%) during 397 adult Home Visits and 172 successful contacts (74%) during 233 juvenile Home Visits. A total of 199 searches, 123 adult and 76 juvenile, were executed and 186 drug and alcohol tests, 98 adult and 88 juvenile, were performed. Over an 8-month period from January 2005 to August 2005, between a combination of Home Visits and Saturation Details, LPD reported making 49 warrant arrests, issuing 75 drug-related arrests/citations, and seizing four firearms.<sup>xvii</sup>

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## Technical Appendix – Analysis of Impact, Time Series Analysis

The data analyzed are in monthly format from January 2000 through June 2005. We examined two distinct zero order transfer functions, or abrupt permanent change functions, time series statistics with intervention dates in February 2003. All of the time-series conducted adhere to the assumptions of the ARIMA (Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average) modeling requirements, specifically bounds of stationarity and invertability.

The first step was to ensure that each crime type was stationary over time. If so, we used the raw data. If not, logging (natural logarithm) the data addressed the issues of variance non-stationarity. In the case of property offenses and motor vehicle theft, we both logged and differenced the series in order to parcel out some of the unstable spikes in property offenses that occurred across time.

After assessment of the stationarity issue, the series were plotted and the autocorrelation functions (ACF) and partial autocorrelation functions (PACF) were examined to see if key spikes required modeling any moving average (the  $q$  in the tables) or autoregressive (the  $p$  in the tables) components. Each series modeled the spikes, if necessary, independent of one-another (i.e., the best series were identified to fit each crime type independent of one-another). None of the models has any  $q$ -statistics, or white-noise estimates, that are statistically significant (which follows another assumption of time-series statistics). The series fit the data independent of the intervention component.

Finally, an intervention component was added to the model and assessed. All of the models had an error distribution that conformed to the assumptions of ARIMA models (e.g, none of the white-noise statistics were statistically significant).

## Endnotes

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- <sup>i</sup> Background on PSN is available through Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2004; McGarrell, 2005; and at the Department of Justice's PSN website, [www.psn.gov](http://www.psn.gov).
- <sup>ii</sup> See Decker et al., 2005; McDevitt et al., 2005; Klofas et al., 2005; and Bynum et al., 2005.
- <sup>iii</sup> Comparable demographic and crime statistics were unavailable for the federal districts of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and the Marinas Islands. All comparisons are based on the 90 remaining federal districts.
- <sup>iv</sup> All population data are based on the 2000 U.S. Census.
- <sup>v</sup> The exact population for Douglas County is 463,585. Thus, we looked at all counties with a population of +/- roughly 25 percent (e.g., counties with at least 347,000 and at most 579,000).
- <sup>vi</sup> See Klofas et al., 2005.
- <sup>vii</sup> Mr. Heavican resigned and took a position on the State Supreme Court and Mr. Joe W. Stecher was appointed U.S. Attorney on October 2, 2006 and has remained committed to Project Safe Neighborhoods.
- <sup>viii</sup> For a more thorough discussion of crime incident reviews, please refer to Klofas and Hipple (2005).
- <sup>ix</sup> Comparable population data were unavailable for the federal districts of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and the Marinas Islands. All comparisons are based on the 90 remaining federal districts.
- <sup>x</sup> Robinson and Culver, 2005.
- <sup>xi</sup> Time series analysis provides an opportunity to assess whether a change in crime is statistically significant (i.e., not due to chance) accounting for a number of factors such as trends, heterogeneity, and magnitude. Additionally, 'outside factors' (such as an overall increase or decrease in city wide crime measures) may have an influence on the change in violent gun crime rates. In order to control for these potential external factors, we analyze property crimes to assess whether there was a simultaneous reduction in crime that could have occurred at the time of the intervention, which could ultimately explain any changes in the results.
- <sup>xii</sup> Part of the 2005 year was analyzed to increase statistical power although data were not reported for the entire year.
- <sup>xiii</sup> For a more detailed discussion please refer to the Technical Appendix.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Since the natural logarithm of offenses was used in the analysis, we report a factor reduction of -.23 between pre- and post-intervention. In order to convert from the log form to a percentage change in the actual number of offenses, we use the standard formula [exponential (beta coefficient) -1], or in this case [exponential (-.23) -1], which equals -.205. This equates to a 20 percent reduction in gun offenses.
- <sup>xv</sup> We also attempted to conduct time series analysis on larcenies as well as a composite offense, property crimes, which was the summation of all larcenies, burglaries and motor vehicle thefts. We could not fit any models to these series as they were too unstable, resulting in too much 'unexplained' error.
- <sup>xvi</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2004. See also, [www.psn.gov](http://www.psn.gov); McGarrell, 2005.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Robinson and Culver, 2005.