# **DELAWARE STATE UNIVERSITY**

###  Center for Neighborhood Revitalization and Research

**DOVER PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD**

**Year 4 (October 2022 through September 2023)**

**Final Assessment Report**

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**Background**

To address violent crime in the City of Dover, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of Delaware has partnered with NeighborGood (NG), the Delaware State University Center for Neighborhood Revitalization and Research, the State of Delaware Department of Correction, and the Dover Police Department to collaboratively create and execute RAAP.  RAAP is a U.S. Attorney’s Office reentry strategy that utilizes two ex-offenders to augment and expand existing efforts targeting violent criminal activity in Dover.  Serving as violence disrupters in the target area, the two ex-offenders, referred to as Engagement Specialists, use a community needs assessment strategy which seeks to deter and de-escalate ongoing violent criminal activity, essentially serving as force multipliers for the District’s Project Safe Neighborhoods violent crime reduction strategy.  Through this engagement, the Engagement Specialists assess individual and family needs and make linkages to services. Through relationships with residents, the community-based providers assess the circle of care, positive influencers, and negative instigators. This information allows the caseworkers to facilitate activities to prevent or deter potentially violent interactions in the neighborhood.

The project is referred to as Dover Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). Preliminary work began in the fall of 2018 with Engagement Specialist services initiated in February 2019. Federal funding was secured, and the formal partnership was established in May 2019. In 2022, the community partner changed from Peace by Piece to NCALL and, in 2023, NCALL changed its name to NeighborGood Partners.

**Role of Center for Neighborhood Revitalization and Research (CNRR)**

Delaware State University’s Center for Neighborhood Revitalization and Research (CNRR) serves as the research partner, providing reports to guide the project as well as assess the project’s impact on reducing violent crime. In this role, CNRR assists NeighborGood Partners (NGP) and the Dover Police Department (DPD) in meeting their project goals and objectives. As the research partner, the CNRR:

1. Provides assessment reports at least quarterly. Assessment reports will include, at a minimum, analysis of crime data in community engagement areas, similar areas not receiving community engagement, and the City of Dover. Assessment reports will also include updates on project implementation and impact, evaluating goal and object achievement for both NGP and the DPD. Quarterly assessments document progress toward goal achievement, including but not limited to community resident needs, service referrals, strengths, influencers, instigators, and views on police/community relations. Assessment reports, designed to guide project implementation and impact as well as inform expansion and continuation of the collaborative intervention, are provided quarterly.
2. Collaborates with partners in completing required reporting, including the final report.
3. Participates in the Dover PSN Task Force.
4. Identifies, trains, and supervises DSU student interns.
5. Maintains at least weekly communication with NGP and DPD.
6. Facilitates training and workshops. The training and workshops address describing and defining crime and other neighborhood problems based on data and developing the continuum of strategies based on research and evidence-based practice related to the identified neighborhood problems.
7. Collects and analyses project data, including monitoring collection and transfer of community engagement data, analyzing community engagement data, and requesting and analyzing crime data related to proposed projects.

**Dover PSN Outcome Measures and Assessment Methodology**

The Dover PSN team established four outcome goals.

1. Reduce violence as measured by arrest data by 10% by the end of the project. The CNRR requests arrest data and heat maps from the DPD on an annual basis. The data is provided by geographical location representing where the Engagement Specialist is providing community services. The CNRR compares the arrest data across years to determine changes in arrest rates by crime category and to assess if the project has achieved its outcome. The DPD also provides arrest data for three comparable areas not receiving PSN services. Tracking arrest rates in comparison neighborhoods allows the CNRR to assess if the PSN intervention contributes to reduced violence.
2. Increase community engagement and service connection by engaging 240 community residents each year for a total of 600 by the end of the project and connecting at least 40% of them to needed services. NGP Engagement Specialists send case notes and summary data to the CNRR quarterly. The CNRR tracks the number of residents engaged and the number connected to services to determine if the outcome was achieved. The CNRR also summarizes a sample of the case notes periodically to provide a more detailed picture of the Engagement Specialists' work conducted in the community.
3. Reduce gang related violence in at least 30% of the engagement specialist interactions. The CNRR worked with the NGP and the U.S. Attorney’s Offce to revise the engagement specialist case note format to ensure that activities related to reducing gang related violence was accurately and consistently recorded. The CNRR calculated the percentage of all engagement specialist activities and interaction dedicated to reducing gang related violence for each reporting quarter and for the year.
4. Increase sense of safety in the communities receiving community engagement and service connection by at least 25%, therefore more residents will report feeling safe by the end of the project compared to the number at the beginning of the project. The CNRR developed a community survey in collaboration with DSU student interns and the Dover PSN team. The DSU student interns are trained to administer the surveys. Survey administration occurs at least annually. The CNRR analyses the surveys and provides the findings to the Dover PSN team to use in guiding their work.

**Goal Achievement Assessment**

1. **Reduce violence as measured by arrest data by 10% by the end of the project.**

The PSN project deploys Engagement Specialists in neighborhoods with high crime rates as a strategy to make communities safer and, in turn, reduce police reports. The PSN evaluation partner and the Dover Police Department, also a PSN partner, have worked to identify a crime data source that aligns with quarterly reporting. Beginning in January 2021, DPD began providing more time-sensitive crime data to supplement the annual crime data. The annual crime data, including arrest data and heat maps, aggregates criminal activity for the entire year but is not available until several months after the end of the year. As such, up-to-date information is needed to inform interventions in a timely manner. To meet this need, the DPD provides quarterly police reports. The police reports record the daily reports submitted by DPD officers. These reports are summed by type of offense and graphed to determine change in criminal activity in the service communities compared to a corresponding similar community. For this report, the two service areas are Downtown and Simon Circle. Capital Green is used as the comparison community for Downtown and Barrister is used as the comparison community for Simon Circle.

The goal of the Dover PSN effort was to reduce crime by 10% by project end. Although the project remains operational, progress toward the goal is evident. In the Downtown service area, crime decreased by 6% and, in Simon Circle reports decreased by half (49%). In an effort to determine if this reduction was, in part, due to the PSN activities, the number of crime reports in the service areas were compared to the number of crime reports in comparable areas. Chart 1 below shows that the total number of reports taken by the DPD increased in all four communities from 2021 to 2022 and decreased in all four communities from 2022 to 2023. Downtown experienced a small decrease (6%); whereas, Capital Green experienced a large decrease of 42%. The other service area, Simon Circle, experienced a large decrease (49%); whereas, Barrister only experienced a 23% decrease.

Because the Dover PSN project focuses on reducing violence, changes in the number of crimes against a person are also assessed. Chart 2 below shows similar trends as evidenced with the total number of reports taken by the DPD. Both the service areas experienced reduction in crimes against a person at or above the targeted 10%. Between 2021 and 2023, the number of crimes against a person in Downtown Dover decreased by 10% and in Simon Circle the decrease was 35%. However, both comparison areas experienced larger decreases with a 49% decrease in reports involving crimes against a person in Capital Green and 56% in Barrister.

It is important to note that the number of DPD reports is dependent on many factors, including but not limited to the number of citizen calls to the police, resources, and police strategic deployment to specific communities. As such, the comparison to other communities provides an indication that the trends in crime reports are similar although the extent of the changes varies. In addition, because the size of the communities is small, the number of reports is low, and the fluctuation in reports taken makes it difficult to assess trends and differences between the communities. Thus, the comparison is strictly for descriptive purposes and to provide a more time-sensitive picture of criminal activity in the listed communities for the Task Force partners. Most important, however, is that in the service areas, PSN engagement specialist are contributing to a decrease in crime in general and crime against persons specifically.

1. **Increase community engagement and service connection by engaging 240 community residents each year for a total of 600 by the end of the project and connecting at least 40% of them to needed services.**

The PSN Engagement Specialists provide a range of services in two communities, Downtown and Simon Circle. The goal of the project is to increase community engagement and service connection by engaging 240 community residents each year for a total of 600 by the end of the project and connecting at least 40% of them to needed services. Chart 3 shows that during Year 4 the PSN engagement specialists worked with 346 community members, exceeding the target by 144%. In addition, the Engagement Specialists also maintain contact with community members engaged in previous quarters. They have, on average, 1250 contacts with community members per quarter.

Both the number of new community members and the number of contacts with community members has increased over the course of the project, indicating the need and effectiveness of the model as a community service intervention. Chart 4 shows the growth in community engagement across the project years. It also shows that the Engagement Specialists have far exceeded their project goal of engaging at least 600 community members. At the end of the fourth year, the Engagement Specialists had worked with 1,745 community members, almost three times the project goal.

The PSN project also aims to connect at least 40% of community residents to services. During Year 4, the Engagement Specialists provided services to over 260 community members. The Engagement Specialist provided multiple services and/or service connections to many of the community members. The Engagement Specialists connected or provided services to over 80% of the community members they engaged, well over the targeted 40%. Engagement Specialists continued to focus their attention on reducing violence by engaging with positive influencers to create safer communities and by engaging with negative influencers and community members with gang affiliations to reduce the likelihood of violent interactions or situations.

As indicated in Chart 5, the Engagement Specialists efforts increased the number of interactions to de-escalate potentially violent incidents and to intervene in gang-related interactions. Over the course of the year, they facilitated 21 de-escalations and intervened in gang related activities 427 times. They engaged with 27 negative influencers and 609 positive influencers. The Engagement Specialists contacts across all categories increased over Year 4, particularly for the number of gang related interventions. The continued increase in gang related interventions coupled with the continued increase in the number of interactions with positive influences suggests that the RAAP intervention may be an effective gang prevention strategy.

Year 4 Total = 609

5

1. **Reduce gang related violence in at least 30% of the engagement specialist interactions.**

Over the course of the project, the Engagement Specialists have increasingly focused their efforts on intervening in gang related violence. To that end, they have engaged with negative influencers and affiliates of gang members. In Year 4, 45% of their interactions and interventions involved gang related activities, gang members, or affiliates of gang members. In other words, almost half of their interactions were gang related. This level of gang related interactions exceeds the 30% target by 15%.

1. **Increase sense of safety in the communities receiving community engagement and service connection by at least 25%.**

Due to contract delays and lack of resources, the impact of the Dover PSN project on sense of safety has not been assessed in Year 4.

**Summary & Recommendations**

The Dover PSN is achieving and, in some cases, far exceeding its goals.

* **Reduce violence as measured by arrest data by 10% by the end of the project.** The work of the PSN Engagement Specialists and the Dover police have contributed to a reduction in crime in the two PSN service areas, Downtown Dover and Simon Circle. In Downtown Dover, the overall number of crime related reports taken by the police decreased by 6% over two years. For reports related to crimes against a person decreased by 10%. In Simon Circle, crime decreased by 49% and for crimes against a person it decreased by 35%.
* **Increase community engagement and service connection by engaging 240 community residents each year for a total of 600 by the end of the project and connecting at least 40% of them to needed services.** In Year 4, the Engagement Specialists worked with 346 community members, exceeding the annual goal of engaging 240 community members by 144%. Over the life of the project, Engagement Specialists have worked with 1,745 community members, almost three times the project goal of 600. In Year 4, the Engagement Specialists also connected or provided services to over 80% of the community members they engaged, well over the targeted 40%.
* **Reduce gang related violence in at least 30% of the engagement specialist interactions.** Almost half (45%) of the Engagement Specialist interventions involved gang related activities or community members with gang affiliation.
* **Increase sense of safety in the communities receiving community engagement and service connection by at least 25%.** Due to contract delays and lack of resources, the impact of the Dover PSN project on sense of safety has not been assessed in Year 4.

Based on the project achievements, it is recommended that:

1. The Dover Police Department reports taken data continue to be tracked and assessed as the primary measure of violence reduction. It is also recommended that the assessment of violence reduction focus on total number of reports and the reports related to crimes against a person.
2. Continue Engagement Specialist focus on interventions related to gang related activities. Increase description of gang related interventions in Engagement Specialist case notes.
3. Provide additional resources to assess if the intervention has contributed an increased sense of safety among residents in the Dover PSN service areas.