

REDUCING VIOLENCE THROUGH PROACTIVE POLICING AND PREVENTION

Location:

Rockford, IL

Organization:

The City of Rockford

Description of the organization:

The City of Rockford is the third largest city in the state of Illinois with 290 sworn police officers and a population of nearly 150,000.

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Overview

While overall crime dropped in Rockford since 2001, the violent crime rate increased by 35 percent between 2001 and 2010, driven mostly by aggravated assaults. A significant portion of the gun-related aggravated assaults involved young people as both victims and offenders (40 percent were 18 or younger) and at least half were African Americans (48 percent of victims and 62 percent of offenders). During the same time, the city also experienced a high level of heroin overdoses and deaths, which were concentrated among young white adults (29 and younger).

In June 2014, the City of Rockford submitted a request for assistance with a focus area on public safety. The city asked the Diagnostic Center to (1) assess the scope of violent crime and heroin abuse in Rockford; (2) develop system-wide response strategies to reduce violent crime and drug use and (3) offer strategies to enhance community engagement.

The Diagnostic Center analyzed crime and public health data and interviewed criminal justice, public health and community stakeholders to develop a baseline of the city's violent and gun-related crime issue and assess the scope of heroin abuse. The Diagnostic Center conducted a total of 58 interviews with key stakeholders about community engagement by law enforcement and held two focus groups with local residents living in high crime areas.

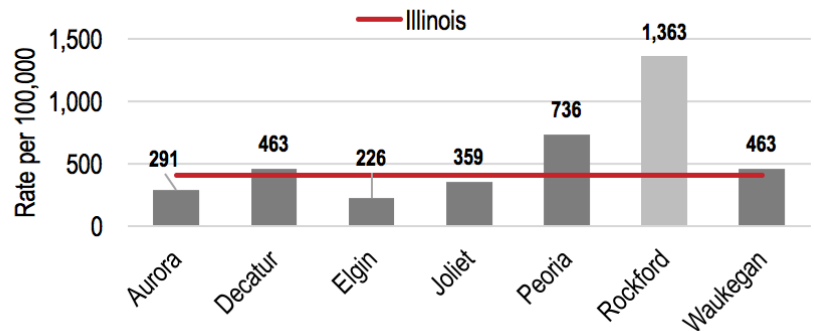
The Diagnostic Center also leveraged local data systems and information on policing and other criminal justice practices. A committee of public health officials was formed to provide input and guidance on public health data and solutions related to violence prevention and opioid/heroin abuse. The committee included representatives from the National Center for Injury Prevention, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Health Resources and Services Administration.

After completing the in-depth Diagnostic Analysis, the Diagnostic Center matched a series of recommendations and data-driven models to address the City of Rockford's needs and presented its findings and recommendations to the community.

Data-driven Programs and Practices Recommended to Address the Issues

- Multi-strategy, Collaborative Approaches
- Focused Deterrence
- Use of Naloxone
- Participation in a State Prescription Monitoring Program

Violent Crime Rate per 100,000 Residents, 2012 – 2013

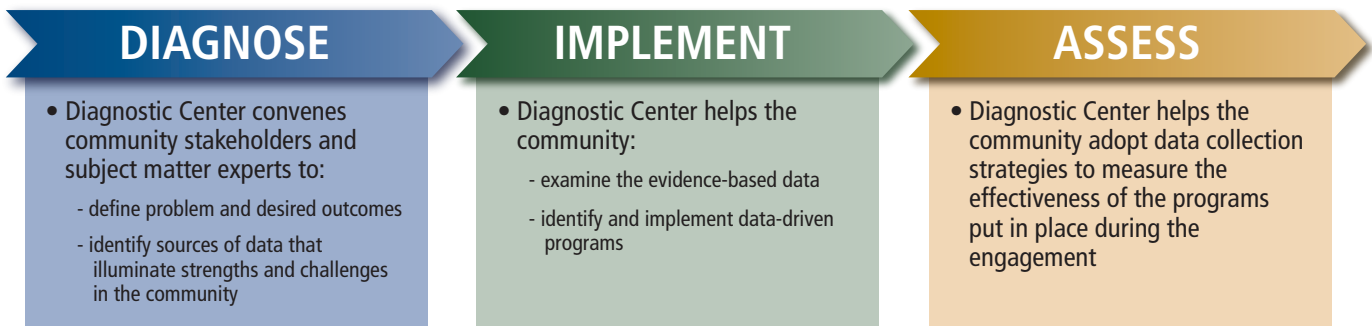


The Diagnostic Center

The Diagnostic Center is a technical assistance resource provider designed to build community capacity to use data to make short- and long-term evidence-based decisions about criminal justice and public safety. Diagnostic Center engagements enhance the ability of public safety executives to collect and use local data to understand the jurisdiction's issues, make decisions about programs and practices and support efforts to integrate data and evidence into policies. The Diagnostic Center invests in what works by bridging the gap between data and criminal justice policy at the state, local and tribal levels.

The Diagnostic Center Process

After being contacted by the City of Rockford, the Diagnostic Center began its three step process to help the city better understand the factors contributing to the increase in violent crime and illegal drug use. During the Diagnose Phase, the Diagnostic Specialists collected and analyzed local data to assess the issue and then aligned findings to promising practices with demonstrated success in reducing violent crime and heroin/opioid abuse. That analysis identified six factors contributing to their challenges.



Six Factors Contributing to the Issues

Based on the data and interviews, the Diagnostic Center identified six factors contributing to Rockford's public safety challenges:

1. Persistent Violence

Rockford continues to experience high levels of violence driven by aggravated assaults, including gun-related and domestic assaults. Much of the gun violence involves small disorganized gangs of juveniles.

2. Community Barriers

Rockford's Westside neighborhoods have high poverty rates, limited resources and a lack of employment opportunities, particularly for individuals with criminal histories and those returning from prison. Additionally, there were challenges hindering collaboration among elected officials and law enforcement leaders.

3. Gaps in Law Enforcement Strategies

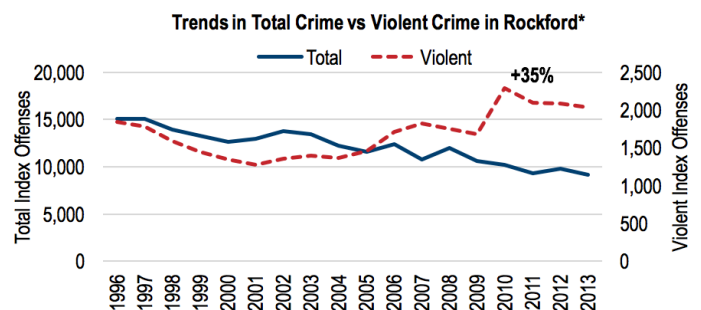
The Diagnostic Analysis revealed the Rockford Police Department (RPD) was not fully implementing evidence-based strategies such as focused deterrence and officer training on the Lethality Screening Instrument. There was also limited use of data for shaping violence reduction strategies, such as a hot list of gun offenders. The Department had a very low clearance rate for gun crimes compared to the national average.

4. Gaps in Community Engagement

Although improving, police have gaps with engagement in high crime neighborhoods. The community perceives that police are not leaving their cars and engaging with the community enough. They characterize police interactions with youth as largely involving enforcement actions, and collaboration remains a challenge.

5. Lack of a Communitywide Response to Violence

Efforts to reduce youth violence have been hindered by a lack of prevention and early intervention programs along with insufficient coordination and collaboration among service providers and community organizations. Community members most impacted by violence have had limited input and involvement in strategy development.



6. High Levels of Heroin/Opioid Use

The heroin/opioid problem in Rockford mirrors the problem nationally. Rockford was found to have a lack of prevention and community education programs, drug treatment capacity and a strategy to help people overcome their addiction. There has also been a lack of coordination among law enforcement, public health and service providers—all of whom come into regular contact with addicts.

Detailed Descriptions of Each Data-Driven Programs/Practices Recommended to Address the Issue(s)

Multi-strategy, Collaborative Approaches

Community-based, multi-disciplinary strategies to reduce violence outperform more limited interventions. They capitalize on the strengths of multi-faceted law enforcement strategies and include a community-level component that targets well-established risk factors. A study that assessed cross-sector, multi-agency interventions to address urban youth gun violence revealed these types of programs had a significant impact on youth violence leading to substantial reductions in fatalities, gang-involved homicides or shootings. A meta-analysis of policies and programs around gun violence found that comprehensive, multidimensional community-based programs were more effective than other more limited interventions in reducing gun violence, particularly those programs that focused on community organization and mobilization as well as more holistic interventions that included social support and treatment programs for offenders and their families.

Focused Deterrence

Focused deterrence is a proactive policing/crime reduction strategy in which carefully selected high-risk offenders are subject to concentrated law enforcement attention and offers of social services. The overall idea of focused deterrence strategies is that police can increase the certainty, swiftness and severity of punishment in a number of innovative ways, often by directly interacting with offenders and communicating clear incentives for compliance (i.e., availability of needed services) and consequences for criminal activity. A systematic review of focused deterrence strategies revealed these interventions were associated with significant reductions in gun violence.

Use of Naloxone

Naloxone injection has been approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and used for more than 40 years by emergency medical services personnel to reverse the effects of a heroin overdose when administered in a timely fashion. Naloxone has proven effective at saving lives when administered by first responders, typically firefighters or paramedics, who are trained and have it readily available. Since police are often the first to arrive on the scene of an emergency or may happen to encounter someone who has overdosed, it is also important for them to have training in the use of and access to naloxone.

Participation in Prescription Monitoring Program

State prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs) track prescription drug information from pharmacies and make it available to authorized users such as doctors, often by means of a secure, electronically accessible database. PDMPs have been shown to reduce practices that result in prescription drug abuse, including prescription fraud, forgeries, “doctor shopping” and improper prescribing and dispensing of highly abused drugs such as opioids. Evidence shows that reducing these practices results in lower rates of addiction, overdose and death associated with misuse of prescription drugs. Reducing levels of addiction to prescribed opiates may ultimately lead to less use of heroin which often becomes a cheaper alternative for the addicted prescription drug user.

Diagnostic Center’s Recommendations

- Create a multi-sector collaboration of community stakeholders to build local capacity for preventing youth violence and promoting positive youth development
- Work together to implement evidence-based violence reduction strategies in the law enforcement community
- Enhance and fully implement proactive policing strategies
- Embrace principles of community-oriented policing and enhance community engagements
- Work with the Winnebago County Mental Health Advisory Committee to support evidence-based practices in response to the heroin/opioid epidemic
- Use criminal justice data collected for more system-wide, strategic and problem-focused analyses

Community’s Response

The City of Rockford accepted the recommendations related to violent crime and gun violence and is working with the Diagnostic Center to implement training and technical assistance focused on four key areas, including implementing evidenced-based practices in homicide investigations and community policing and developing a coordinated community response to youth violence. The Diagnostic Center is also working with the City to implement training around focused deterrence and social network analysis for violence reduction and police legitimacy training to improve both internal relationships in the police department and external relationships between police and the public.



In May 2016, a team of six from Rockford visited the Boston Police Department and met with their counterparts to learn from Boston's Smart Policing Initiative. This initiative focuses on implementing new homicide investigation practices identified in the literature to improve clearance rates. The Rockford team also observed Boston's community policing and youth services in action. In addition, a team of nine from Rockford visited New Orleans in June 2016 and met with a wide array of youth violence prevention stakeholders involved in NOLA for Life, a comprehensive murder reduction strategy. The team learned about the stakeholders' collaborative approach, multi-dimensional programs and initiatives, strategic planning process and collection of outcome data.

Two experts visited Rockford in April 2016 to provide an overview of focused deterrence initiatives in Madison, WI and discussed how to implement such efforts successfully. In July 2016, two experts in the application of social network analysis and focused deterrence from Kansas City visited Rockford to conduct training for law enforcement officials. The training was designed to assist Rockford in implementing a program that uses social network analysis to identify the highest risk, violent offenders and uses focused deterrence practices to change their behavior. Finally, six RPD officers attended a three-day training in Washington, DC, on procedural justice where they participated in hands-on learning about practices that police officers can use to enhance community engagement. These officers will train the remaining Rockford officers on the procedural justice practices they learned.

Using the Diagnostic Center's recommendation, Rockford increased collaboration between agencies to proactively respond to gun crimes and reduce youth violence.

Impact and Outcome

The City of Rockford and federal agencies have taken steps to implement the Diagnostic Center's recommendations, including:

- The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) more than doubled the size of the ATF Rockford Office and committed to a data-driven and intelligence-led policing approach to gun crime investigations:
 - Formed an Interagency Task Force with the RPD and Winnebago County Sheriff's Office (WCSO)
 - Trained task force members on the use of the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network and trace data to build more comprehensive investigations into responses to violent gun crimes
- Formed a Violence Reduction Workgroup that meets twice monthly:
 - The Winnebago County Health Department is leading the effort and numerous other stakeholders are participating from youth services, public schools, juvenile probation, public housing and a local hospital
 - The Workgroup is creating an action plan to provide a crisis action team for children who have been the victims of or witnesses to gun violence, including the use of trauma informed care and wrap-around services and a Cure Violence approach to stop shootings in high violence neighborhoods
- In addition to the ATF Task Force, the RPD assigned officers to four Interagency Task Forces with federal law enforcement agencies and the WCSO:
 - Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Violent Crime Task Force
 - Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Regional Task Force
 - Stateline Narcotics
 - Domestic Violence Unit
- The RPD consolidated investigative units to improve clearance rates. The department geographically assigned detectives into specialized units for Violent Crimes, Property & Financial Crimes, Youth & Sensitive Crimes and a dedicated Afternoon Shift
- The RPD received a grant from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority to support a research partner and to plan and implement focused deterrence strategies and procedural justice training
- The RPD implemented the Specialized Community Oriented Policing Enforcement Team
 - Focuses exclusively upon known violent offenders in the city to support focused deterrence
 - The team consists of 12 officers deployed to the streets in two teams and two officers assigned to a newly created Intelligence Unit, which also has two Crime Analysts attached

Insights Gained

- Multi-strategy, community-based approaches can lead to more effective outcomes when addressing youth violence
- Evidence-based strategies and programs, found to reduce crime in one jurisdiction, must be fully implemented and with fidelity, to achieve similar reductions in another community
- Public health approaches focused on data analysis, community collaboration and evidence-based programs should be integrated into responses to violence as well as the opioid epidemic

