

**Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice
Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Public Safety
Oversight Hearing
"Supporting Providers Serving the City's Crisis Management System"
November 4, 2022**

Good morning, Chair Hanks and members of the Committee on Public Safety. My name is Nora Daniel, and I'm Chief of Staff for the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice. I'm joined today by Sarah Cassel, Director of Diversion and Re-entry Initiatives, from the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS), Deputy Executive Directors Cana Osborne and Karina Christiansen, and Rodney Carvajal, Senior Director for ONS. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about MOCJ's work within the city's public safety continuum.

MOCJ advises the Mayor on public safety policy, and designs and implements programs and justice initiatives, from the New York City Crisis Management System to alternatives to incarceration and re-entry services. We work with law enforcement agencies and personnel, other City agencies, service providers, not-for-profits, foundations, and the public to implement effective strategies that make the City safe and fair for all New Yorkers.

Recognizing the interconnected and holistic nature of public safety in historically disinvested communities that also experience the brunt of heightened levels of gun violence, in December 2021, this body codified the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS). ONS, housed within MOCJ, is a crucial component of the public safety continuum, and is a necessary part of our efforts to co-produce public safety in partnership with local communities. ONS combines efforts from the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety (MAP), the Office to Prevent Gun Violence (OPGV), and Atlas to share resources and holistic assistance for New Yorkers affected by violence. ONS' teams work with our network of residents and community leaders to ensure that more New Yorkers have the agency and ability to define public safety directly for themselves. As such, ONS relies on the strength, experience and expertise of community as guiding principles and is committed to ensuring that marginalized communities have access to capital and opportunities.

Given these initiatives' goals of enhancing safety, Atlas, OPGV and MAP serve overlapping populations in the city's highest crime neighborhoods. All three programs are part of a larger effort to reduce violence and prevent and minimize criminal justice involvement by addressing the root causes of violence that have disproportionately impacted ONS' serviced communities.

I will share here a few more details about the OPGV portfolio and the Crisis Management System.

OPGV

Launched in 2014, OPGV works to address gun violence through a shift in social norms and the work of community members in mediating disputes to prevent shootings. The Crisis Management System (CMS) deploys teams of credible messengers — community members whose backgrounds allow them to connect with and motivate at-risk individuals — to 31 sites where they implement the Cure Violence model of mediating conflicts on the street and direct New Yorkers to services that can create peace and support healing, including a year-round employment program, mental health services, trauma counseling, and other opportunity-centered resources. This initiative has brought measurable benefits to communities citywide: researchers found that, across CMS sites, shooting victimizations fell by 28% over the first 24 months following a site launch, compared to the 24 months prior to the launch, with gun injuries down 33%. Researchers also found that CMS increased trust in police and decreased residents' reliance on violence to settle disputes.

As a part of the City's historic investment in public safety and in partnership with the City Council, the city increased its commitment to CMS and anti-gun violence work by launching an RFP for the CMS system in FY22. The RFP awards will be announced in the Spring of 2023. The Administration continues to improve its commitment to innovative programming that enhances safety within communities. In addition to investments in CMS, the city is also expanding its MAP programming to include a total of 30 MAP sites, up from 15. We are looking forward to implementing this programming in the coming months. I'll now elaborate a little on the bills the Council has introduced.

Bills

Intro 439

Intro 439 would require MOCJ to submit an annual report on criminal justice programs, including alternatives to incarceration, re-entry and other programs. We are supportive of the goals of Intro 439, and we look forward to working with the Council to ensure that we are able to present the information in the manner that would best demonstrate the effectiveness of the programs.

Intro 756

Intro 756 would require MOCJ to provide training and operational support to organizations in the Crisis Management System. MOCJ supports the goals of Intro 756, and we are committed to providing the support that CMS organizations need to thrive. Currently, CMS providers are sub-contracted through Blocpower. Under this sub-contract, CMS providers have been afforded one-on-one support through the sub-contracting process to ensure that they are able to fulfill the administrative requirements of contracting, while continuing to provide the vital services that support our city's public safety continuum. In addition, recently, CMS providers participated in a non-profit capacity building workshop provided as a partnership between MOCJ and the law firm Cleary Gottlieb Steen and Hamilton.

We are currently working with Cleary to schedule a second workshop and other supports as needed. ONS continues to explore ways to provide additional support to CMS providers to ensure that they have the training and foundation required to operate their programs

The Administration is grateful for the Council's support of the Crisis Management System and our criminal justice programs, and we look forward to working with you to implement the goals of the bills.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on MOCJ's work, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

Precinct	Council District + Member	Organization	Program Name
23	8 Ayala	Getting Out and Staying Out	Stand Against Violence East Harlem (SAVE)
25	8 Ayala	Getting Out and Staying Out	Stand Against Violence East Harlem (SAVE)
32	9 Jordan	Street Corner Resources	Street Corner Resources (SCR)
40	8 Ayala	Center for Court Innovation	SOS South Bronx
40	8 Ayala	TBD via RFP	
42	16 Stevons	Center for Court Innovation	SOS Morrisania
43	18 Farias	Jacobi Medical Center	Stand Up to Violence (SUV)
44	16 Stevons	Bronx Connect / Urban Youth Alliance, Inc.	Release the Grip (RTG)
44	16 Stevons	TBD via RFP	
46	14 Sanchez	Good Shepherd Services, Inc.	Bronx Raises Against Guns (BRAG)
47	12 Riley	Good Shepherd Services, Inc.	BRAG
48	15 Feliz	Bronx Connect / Urban Youth Alliance, Inc.	RTG
52	15/ 14 Feliz / Sanchez	Good Shepherd Services, Inc.	BRAG
60	47 Kagan	Jewish Community Council	Operation HOOD (Helping Our Own Develop)
67	45 Louis	Elite Learners	Elite Learners
69	42 / 46 Barron / Narcisse	Man Up! Inc.	Man Up
70	45 Louis	Brownsville Think Tank Matters	DRUM
71	35 Hudson	Elite Learners	Elite Learners
73	41 Mealy	CAMBA, Inc	Brownsville In, Violence Out (BIVO)
73	41 Mealy	Center for Court Innovation	Consortium (Elite Learner + BTM)
75	42 Barron	Man Up! Inc.	Man Up A
75	42 Barron	Man Up! Inc.	Man Up B
77	35 Hudson	Center for Court Innovation	SOS Crown Heights
79	36 Osse	Center for Court Innovation	SOS Bed Stuy
81	36 Osse	Man Up! Inc.	Man Up C
88	35 Hudson	TBD via RFP	
101	31 Brooks-Powers	Safe Space, Inc.	Rock Safe Streets
103	31 Brooks-Powers	King of Kings	King of Kings
105	28 Adams	King of Kings / 100 Suits	King of Kings / 100 Suits
113	27 Williams	I Love My Life/Life Camp	Life Camp
114	26 Won	Community Capacity Development	696 Build Queensbridge
114	26 Won	Community Capacity Development	Community Capacity Development
114	26 Won	Community Capacity Development	Community Capacity Development
120	49 Hanks	Central Family Life Center	True 2 Life

Neighborhood/ Area Serviced	Start Date (M/Yr)	Current Status
East Harlem (Johnson + Jefferson Hou	May-16	Fully Operational
East Harlem (Wagner) Catchment exp	Jul-19	Fully Operational
Central Harlem	Jul-16	Fully Operational
Mott Haven	Jan-13	Fully Operational
Patterson + Mitchell Houses	Expected FY24	Coverage by Bronx Teams
Morrisania	May-15	Fully Operational
Monroe + Soundview Houses	Jul-21	Fully Operational
East Concourse/ Concourse Village	Mar-16	Fully Operational
Highbridge	Expected FY24	N/A
University Heights	May-15	Fully Operational
Eastchester	May-16	Fully Operational
Belmont/ East Tremont/ East Farms	Jan-19	Fully Operational
Fordham	Jan-19	Fully Operational
Coney Island	Mar-16	Fully Operational
East Flatbush	Jan-22	Fully Operational
Canarsie	Jul-21	Start Up- Partial Services
Flatbush	Jul-21	Fully Operational
Prospect Lefferts Gardens	Jul-21	Fully Operational
Brownsville	May-15	Fully Operational
Brownsville	Jul-20	Fully Operational
East NY	Jul-12	Fully Operational
East NY	May-15	Fully Operational
Crown Heights	Feb-12	Fully Operational
Bed Stuy	May-15	Fully Operational
Bed Stuy (Roosevelt Houses)	Sept-21	Fully Operational
Fort Greene	Expected FY24	Not Operational
Far Rockaway	May-15	Fully Operational
South East Queens	Jul-21	Fully Operational
Springfield/ Laurelton	Jul-21	Fully Operational
South East Jamaica	Jan-13	Fully Operational
Queensbridge	Jan-16	Fully Operational
Astoria Houses	Jul-21	Start Up- Partial Services
Woodside Houses	Jul-21	Fully Operational
North Shore/ Stapleton	Apr-14	Fully Operational

TESTIMONY OF:

Jacqueline Gosdigian, Senior Policy Counsel

BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES

Presented before

New York City Council

Committee on Public Safety

Oversight Hearing on Supporting Providers Serving the City's Crisis Management System

November 4, 2022

My name is Jackie Gosdigian and I am a Senior Policy Counsel at Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS). Brooklyn Defender Services is a public defense office, representing approximately 22,000 people each year who are accused of a crime, facing the removal of their children, or deportation. We thank the Committee on Public Safety and Chair Hanks for the opportunity to address the Council about public safety and the city's crisis management system.

For over 25 years, BDS has worked in and out of court to protect and uphold the rights of individuals and to change laws and systems that perpetuate injustice and inequality. Our staff consists of specialized attorneys, social workers, investigators, paralegals and administrative staff who are experts in their individual fields. BDS also provides a wide range of additional services for our clients, including civil legal advocacy, assistance with educational needs of our clients or their children, housing and benefits advocacy, as well as immigration advice and representation.

BDS commends this Council for recognizing the importance of community-based responses and crisis management as crucial components of violence prevention. We urge the council to remember that community accountability and healing *coupled with* investment in education, housing, and employment are key elements of a holistic approach to preventing violence, particularly gun violence. The City Council can and should exercise its authority to divert funding from the NYPD and invest in proven solutions. The NYPD is an omnipresent force in

Brooklyn ^(BDS) Defenders

certain NYC neighborhoods, yet it is abundantly clear that they do not offer a solution to violence. The Brooklyn communities with the highest rates of violence are already the most surveilled by NYPD. We call on the City Council to meaningfully investing in both pre- and post-arrest programming that addresses gun and other violence as a public health issue as well as addressing the harm of police profiling and surveillance in low-income, Black and Latine, and immigrant communities. In order to meaningfully address violence, the city must continue to invest in evidence-based programming to reduce violence.

Recommendations

I. Increase funding for organizations using the Cure Violence model

BDS appreciates this Council and Mayor Adams' support of a public health-focused approach to reducing gun violence. The Crisis Management System serves to prevent violence through the use of trusted, credible messengers. Instead of investing in surveillance, a better plan for the future of this City and its people relies on true investment in its people—in housing, education, and medical and mental health care—and in proven solutions, not the failed policing visions of the mass incarceration era.

In 2012, the city launched a Cure Violence initiative, and has come a long way with the implementation of the Crisis Management System, but prevention and intervention efforts that could be effectively implemented to curtail gang violence are still underutilized and underfunded. While certain programs that are used may reinforce marginalization through partnerships with the NYPD, others have proven to be successful in strengthening community-based safety and security. At its most effective, the strategy leverages the experiences of young men of color, many of whom are former gang members, to act as “credible messengers” of an anti-violence message and “violence interrupters” to prevent and reduce gun and gang violence. Notably, this model does not require the use of the NYPD’s criminal group database—or other methods of government surveillance—to successfully build rapport with people who are gang involved.¹ Community-

¹ The NYPD maintains a secretive, internal list called the Criminal Group Database—also known as the Gang Database—in which the Department labels almost exclusively young Black and Latinx New Yorkers as gang members. Over 99% of the people on the database are non-white. There is no independent oversight of who is placed in this database, individuals do not need to be convicted of any crime to be placed on it, and there is no way to challenge gang designations. Criteria for designation include “living in a known gang area” and “association with gang members.” Even in instances where the database correctly identifies someone as a gang member, police cataloging of young people does not enhance community safety. The NYPD surveils children and young adults, sometimes for years, without alerting parents that their children are in trouble or providing meaningful interventions. Mass surveillance, such as through the Domain Awareness System and these types of covert gang operations, commands enormous budgetary expenses without measurable improvements in safety. Identified gang members are targeted for harassment and abuse by police. They are charged with inchoate crimes and crime by association, rather than the commission of specific acts, and warehoused for complex prosecutions. Massive NYPD resources are spent building cases in back rooms instead of improving the lives of young people and their communities. Gang policing criminalizes affiliation with friends, relatives, and neighbors without achieving community safety. This practice is

Brooklyn Defenders

based organizations working under the Cure Violence model employ “violence interrupters” and outreach workers from the community who have themselves experienced violence and also have strong relationships with young adults, community leaders, and service providers.² Violence interrupters stop conflicts before they happen, and outreach workers redirect the highest-risk youth away from life on the streets and the criminal system. All of this is done by unarmed community members, who value every person’s right to security and protection from harm.

In 2020, the Center for Court Innovation released a groundbreaking report titled “Gotta Make Your Own Heaven,” detailing the experiences of 330 young New Yorkers with guns, violence, safety, and the police.³ This remarkable study provides a unique, firsthand perspective into the lives of young people and the challenges they face in NYC. Strikingly, the hundreds of young people interviewed consistently identified threats from police as a reason to carry a gun or seek protection within a gang. They identified “violent victimization by police,” “police harassment for small infractions but lack of responsiveness for serious crime,” and “fear of being shot by a police officer” as major contributors to lack of their neighborhood’s safety. Most of the young people interviewed described “an overall sense that the police were a negative force in their communities” and “sens[ed] a lack of care for people in the community.” They also drew a direct connection between the way they were treated as “less than human” and their race.

City Council should consider reallocating more resources away from punitive responses to alleged gang membership toward interventions that have proven effective in reducing violence and other unlawful activity. Specifically, we advocate for an increase in funding for community centers, high-quality and engaging programming, and organizations using the Cure Violence Model. The city should also shift resources away from policing alleged gang or crew members and toward providing the support that individuals, families, and communities need to thrive. This strategy should focus on the root causes of social marginalization and any violent or otherwise problematic behavior.

II. Provide Alternative to Incarceration and pre-plea diversion programming

While the Crisis Management System and the Cure Violence Model are a critical part of ending violence in this city, the city must also focus on what happens if someone is arrested. We cannot assume that because the city is increasing the number of credible messengers and enhancing CMS, that this reaches every member of the community. The fact is, even with CMS, arrests are still happening, and what happens to these New Yorkers—often young people—has been overlooked. There has been quite a bit of discussion in the city around different approaches to preventing violence, however, once a person is arrested for an alleged violent crime, there is a serious lack of programming, alternatives to incarceration, or other diversions from criminal

costly in both human and fiscal terms and has no impact on public safety. The City Council should move to eliminate the Gang Database and to rein in horrifically abusive and violative NYPD gang policing practices.

² For more information, visit cureviolence.org

³ The Center for Court Innovation, “Gotta Make Your Own Heaven: Guns, Safety, and the Edge of Adulthood in New York City,” available at:

https://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2020/Report_GunControlStudy_08052020.pdf

Brooklyn ^(BDS) Defenders

legal system involvement. The Brooklyn District Attorney, Eric Gonzalez recently announced that he plans to launch a restorative justice program to stop shootings. But even this “first of its kind” program is not an “alternative to incarceration,” and participants “will be those without pending matters before his office.”⁴

BDS is fortunate to have great relationships with several alternative to incarceration programs that provide many of our adolescent clients with holistic services. For our clients facing charges of alleged gun possession, however, there are only two available alternative to incarceration programs: Youth and Congregations in Partnership (YCP) and Project Redirect. Both are run by the Brooklyn District Attorney’s (DA) office and require the consent of the DA’s office for admission. There is really no clear criteria used to determine eligibility for these programs and the process for acceptance is unilateral and highly secretive. Once a young person is fortunate enough to be found eligible, that person usually faces prison time and a permanent felony record if they are unsuccessful in the program. However, these programs usually allow for defendants to get their cases dismissed and sealed upon completion. YCP is the preferable option for our clients, because it is more specifically tailored to meet the needs of the participant. This program requires young people to participate in weekly meetings with DA staff, attend school or work, and abide a curfew for a year. However, in our experience, adolescents who are alleged to be gang members are never offered this program, and instead are pushed to Project Redirect. Often times our clients are not involved in gangs but are erroneously flagged by NYPD and the DA’s office for being “gang involved” for no specific reason other than living in a certain neighborhood or housing project.

Project Redirect is a deeply problematic and secretive program. Much of what we know about it is reported by clients who have participated, as defense attorneys are generally prohibited from accompanying them in discussions about the program with prosecutors, with the occasional exception of a preliminary briefing. Project Redirect is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to complete for most targeted participants. It lasts between eighteen months and two years and requires defendants to abide by a deeply regimented schedule of school, work, and meetings with the DA’s office, with deviations for tasks like purchasing milk for the family at a local bodega permitted only with prior approval, often via text messaging. In our experience, very few clients are able to complete this program, which results in a mandatory minimum sentence in upstate prisons.

More funding is needed for new, evidence-informed programming and alternatives to incarceration for New Yorkers that have been arrested. But, these alternatives will not be successful without buy-in from District Attorneys, because, as discussed below, harsh mandatory minimum sentences make non-jail options useless without DA consent.

⁴ Ben Brachfield, Brooklyn DA to launch ‘restorative justice’ program bringing rival gang members together to stop shootings, *Brooklyn Paper*, June 22, 2022, Available at <https://www.brooklynpaper.com/exclusive-brooklyn-da-to-launch-restorative-justice-program/>



III. Pass a resolution in support of the End Mandatory Minimums Act and Youth Justice and Opportunities Act

There are available legislative solutions in New York that can work in tandem with community investment and crisis management. Harsh mandatory minimum prison sentences in New York make it difficult for communities to regroup and reunite after a tragedy. Sending someone, especially a young person, to prison has a devastating effect, not only on that person's individual ability to re-enter society with stable housing and employment, but it has a widespread effect on the community fabric, tearing apart families, neighbors, and communities. Even with available alternatives to incarceration, judges across the city and the state of New York are bound by mandatory sentencing guidelines set forth in the Penal Code. We must end mandatory minimum sentencing and we ask the council to support and pass a resolution urging the enactment of the End Mandatory Minimums Act (Myre S.7871/Meeks A.9166).

In addition to mandatory incarceration, having a criminal record has lifelong insurmountable consequences for a person. Youth and Young Adults in the communities we serve are particularly vulnerable to police interaction, especially when they are still continuing to grow and mature into their mid twenties and grappling with peer pressure and decision-making skills. We ask the council to support and pass a resolution urging the enactment of the Youth Justice and Opportunities Act (YJ&O) (Myrie S749A/O'Donnell A3536A). This legislation gives New York the chance to lead the nation by expanding its laws to protect the futures of young people under the age of 26, enhance community well-being, and provide emerging adults the opportunity to move forward in their lives without the barrier of a criminal conviction. The Act would also reduce State and local spending on youth incarceration—money that should be invested in communities to alleviate poverty and homelessness, ensure quality education, and fund other needed resources. In turn, this bill would help stabilize communities, promote community health, and increase public safety for all.

Conclusion

In an effort to be “tough on crime” and “crack down on guns,” the city has given up on its citizens once they are involved the criminal legal system, especially young people and those accused of possessing a firearm. We are not willing to give up on the people and communities we serve. The answer is not to round up New Yorkers from low-income communities, lock them up in a cages, and throw away the keys. It is clear, based upon decades of research, that this pro-incarceration model is not only unsuccessful in preventing violence, it destroys communities by causing irreparable harm to families and future generations. As an alternative, BDS welcomes the opportunity to work with the city, in cooperation with the District Attorneys, to create opportunities for people who have been arrested, particularly those charged with gun crimes, to participate in pre-plea programming. We thank the city for continuing to see the importance of the Crisis Management System, credible messengers, and the cure violence model. We urge the city to go further, to consider those that may not have benefited from these community interventions, and invest in its citizens even after they have had contact with law enforcement or the criminal system.

Brooklyn ^(BDS) Defenders

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at jgosdigian@bds.org.



Research. Development. Justice. Reform.

520 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10018

p. 646 386 3100

f. 212 397 0985

courtinnovation.org

Courtney Bryan. Director

**Center for Court Innovation
New York City Council
Committee on Public Safety
October 25, 2022**

Good afternoon, Chair Hanks and esteemed members of the Public Safety Committee. Since its inception, the Center for Court Innovation (the Center) has supported the vision embraced by Council of a fair, effective, and humane justice system by building public safety through sustainable community-driven solutions. The Center’s longstanding partnership with Council over the past twenty-five years has helped bring this vision to life through evidence-based programming. This work spans the entire justice continuum and strengthens communities and systems. In each instance, our aim is to provide a meaningful and proportionate response, to treat all people in our programs with dignity and respect, to prioritize public safety, and to produce much-needed cost savings for the City.

The Crisis Management System (CMS) is a central pillar of the City’s approach to reducing gun violence. The Center’s has a history of unique knowledge and expertise in working to reduce gun violence and increase public safety. Our research team has evaluated programs that address gun violence in New York City and New York State, and recently conducted a unique study examining why young New Yorkers carry guns. This work has provided us with lessons learned for effectively reaching the CMS’s target populations, as well as understanding the importance of consistent and quality implementation to achieve the results these models have demonstrated in the past.

Who Carries Guns?

We must start by setting an understanding of the target population for this violence prevention work; gun violence in New York City is often attributed to youth gang conflicts, and young people are often the primary victims and perpetrators of gun violence. Our study of 330 16-24-year-old New York City gun carriers, [*'Gotta Make Your Own Heaven': Guns, Safety, and the Edge of Adulthood in New York City*](#), revealed a few important contextual factors.

First, violence was a near-universal experience among the young people we interviewed. 88% had a family member or close friend shot, 81% had been shot or shot at themselves, 70% had witnessed someone getting shot, and 67% had been attacked with another weapon like a knife or a bat. Second, there was a clear pathway between their victimization, decrease in trust in others, and feelings that carrying a weapon to protect themselves was the only choice left to them. They held a widespread belief that they could be victimized at any time; guns served to protect them from real or perceived threats from other gun carriers—rival gang members, residents of other housing developments, and the police.

Additionally, this population had significant involvement with the criminal legal system. 88% had previously been arrested, and 63% had been incarcerated. Discrimination and criminal records meant that many of these young people had no access to the mainstream economy. They were already experiencing real poverty, so they turned to alternative survival strategies (such as drug dealing and robbery). Guns would often come out as part of these methods of survival. This is a place where we see structural oppression at play, setting the context for gun carrying.

Making the Connection: Credible Messengers

The Center’s ongoing research evaluates programs addressing gun violence across New York State, particularly regarding the implementation of programs meant to reach young gun carriers. This population is hard to reach and therefore hard to serve effectively. To access these young people, the Center hires individuals with the street and cultural knowledge—gang experience, music, social media, image—that allow us to gain trust and create safety.

It is important the right staff are hired. Credible messengers are a key component of many of these programs, but they must be credible with the target population *in the present moment* for them to be effective. These programs require someone within current street networks to validate them, and for young people to safely and regularly engage in the support services they want and need. These frontline staff must have current “street” experience and cultural knowledge to connect and have legitimacy with the target population. This makes thoughtful and strategic hiring absolutely necessary to program success.

Hiring community-based credible messengers brings challenges. Many of the people who are the right fit for the work have not held traditional jobs before and may need help transitioning to the non-profit world. As well as support acquiring the technology and communication skills the work might entail. They are also likely to have experienced the same levels of trauma as the participants, and will need Human Resources and other supports not often provided to more traditional staff. Given that many CMS program staff members will not have past traditional employment, they will need training and support on program models and fidelity.

Findings and Evaluations

Our research found that while some models may be evidence-based—meaning there have been rigorous evaluations that demonstrate the model has positively moved key indicators such as reducing gun violence—success is not given in all replications and is highly dependent on model fidelity and robust implementation. Programs should not rush through early planning stages, and ensure the infrastructure is in place to manage the program once it is fully running.

The findings of the Center’s research with young gun carriers, combined with the lessons learned from our evaluation of programs that address gun violence, speak to the importance of CMS program staff having the training and support needed to deeply understand, reach, and build trust with the target population. As well as be able to support participants in thinking through and addressing issues related to safety, trauma, self-knowledge, and healing.

The findings speak to the need to evaluate these programs’ implementation. Assessing key metrics would demonstrate the level of model fidelity. New questions to ask include:

- Do we have *real* credible messengers?
- How do we know our credible messengers have legitimacy?

- How much training have we offered our credible messengers on things necessary to the program, ranging from being trauma-informed to conducting data entry?
- Are we reaching the target population, or are we serving at-risk people who are not likely to pick up a gun?
- How many hours of services have our participants received, and what is the quality of those services?

These metrics will vary by specific program, but the importance of developing, tracking, and reporting them cannot be overstated. It will help programs fine-tune their programming and make mid-course corrections, and it will help the City make informed decisions related to funding, technical assistance, and program replication.

The findings also speak to the need to evaluate these programs' impact. Traditionally, measures of crime and violence have been used. However, as the young people in our study have highlighted, safety is more than just protection from crime and violence. Given some of the larger structural issues faced by many of these communities, looking at additional measures that get at some of the root causes of crime and violence are necessary—indicators such as economic security and mental health. These can be measured at the program participant and community levels. For example, having a bank account, a job that provides enough to meet individual and family needs, and stable housing at the individual level; and poverty rate, unemployment rate, and housing burden at the community level.

Innovative Recommendations for Reducing Gun Violence

The Center's findings speak to the need for new and innovative approaches to addressing gun violence, like the Center's The Heights pilot. The Heights is focused not just on stopping shootings but building safe space and supportive community for gun-carrying and gang-involved youth. Providing a safe location for these young people allows them to explore individually and collectively what the world has to offer beyond "the block" and what "the block" has to offer the world. To learn crucial critical thinking and analytical skills to start creatively thinking about where and how they can envision breaking some of these patterns of violence.

Additionally, the Center works to increase capacity of BIPOC organizations. BIPOC organizations know their communities, and their participation in the CMS strengthens the legitimacy of the approach while supporting neighborhood vitality. Through programs like the Brownsville Violence Prevention Training Consortium, we can expand on the capacity of small, BIPOC-led and community-based organizations to participate in efforts to reduce gun violence.

The Brownsville Violence Prevention Training Consortium trains and supports Brownsville-based community organizations that are interested in either becoming a CMS provider or, in the case of those organizations already providing CMS services, expanding and strengthening their role within the system. This ranges from providing technical assistance in navigating contracting, to training on maintaining program fidelity, to uplifting proven models centered around mediating conflicts, to training peer counselors, to promoting restorative justice and healing practices.

In its first year of implementation, Consortium member organizations funding increased by over \$2.5 million collectively. Consortium members developed and implemented over 10

collaborative community events and implemented coordinated responses to multiple incidents of community violence.

Conclusion

We are grateful for the partnership of Council over the years in supporting so many of these programs. The Center stands ready to continue partnering with the Council to evaluate and implement data-driven solutions and meaningful responses to reduce gun violence and create real community-driven safety and justice for all New Yorkers. We are available to answer any questions you may have.

**THE
LEGAL AID
SOCIETY
CRIMINAL
DEFENSE**

New York City Council Committee on Public Safety

November 4, 2022

10:00 a.m.

Oversight: Supporting Providers Serving the City's Crisis
Management System (CMS)

Presented by:

Roslyn R. Morrison, Esq.
The Legal Aid Society
Community Justice Unit
120-46 Queens Boulevard
Kew Gardens, NY 11415
RRMorrison@legal-aid.org

I. Introduction to LAS' CJU and CMS/CV Organizations

Good afternoon, I'm Roslyn Morrison, Senior Attorney in the Community Justice Unit of the Legal Aid Society. I provide General Counsel support to Crisis Management Systems (CMS) nonprofit organizations in the borough of Queens. I've worked in CJU for the past year, although I've been a public defense lawyer for almost 20 years. CJU was established in 2011 by the City Council's Task Force to Combat Gun Violence, as a necessary component of the New York City Cure Violence Model. CJU staff includes attorneys, community organizers, paralegals, and interns; we work together to provide comprehensive legal services to the 30 CMS/CV organizations throughout all five boroughs of New York City.

I would like to thank the City Council and the Chair, Kamillah Hanks, for recognizing the importance of the CMS system and advocating for increased investments in CMS by providing organizations with the support that they need to continue and expand their work. CMS should always be a priority within the Council because it is an important part of the public safety ecosystem.

CJU shares the CV philosophy that violence can be curtailed with early intervention and community engagement. In addition to legal services, CJU conducts extensive community outreach and draws on cross-functional expertise in all divisions within the Legal Aid Society—such as Civil (Immigration, Housing and access to Benefits), Family law (Juveniles), and of course our Criminal Division. We have connected our CMS partners, participants and community members to a vast network of services, including but not limited to: Know Your Rights, Safe Surrenders, navigating Family, Criminal and Housing Courts, Certifications of completion, community support at Shooting Responses, Immigration services, Housing Rights Advocacy, a 24/7 Legal Hotline, and much more.

II. CMS/CV Organizations are a fiscally responsible way to reduce violence and make communities safer by addressing systemic needs

CMS organizations in New York City have been shown to reduce shootings by 20% in some areas and by over 60% in others. The current model has been very effective, and there is increasing demand for CMS organizations to expand their services, due to a number of factors such as: the end of eviction moratorium, displacement due to rezoning, an uptick in gang activity, inflation, among others. Of course, poverty has always been an integral component underlying criminality, and as Queens Borough President Donovan Richards poignantly observed at a recent Public Safety Forum, "you can't incarcerate your way out of poverty."¹

CMS/CV organizations need more funding; they receive a fraction of funding in comparison with NYPD. NYPD has been allocated approximately \$10.8 billion for FY 2023.² CMS/CV organizations will likely receive less than 1% of this level of funding, even though statistics not

¹ Queens Borough President, Donovan Richards, TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS HOSTS COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON PUBLIC SAFETY IN QUEENS - 10/03/2022, Westlaw Classic.

²See <https://cbcnyc.org/research/six-fast-facts-about-nypds-preliminary-fy2023-budget>, last visited October 24, 2022.

only show that they directly reduce violence in their communities, but also prove that after engaging with CMS/CV organizations, community members more often choose non-violent methods of dispute resolution.³ The science and data show real results: “the deployment of more violence interrupters, and provision of summer employment programs will have an immediate ameliorative effect on the increased violence that has been occurring in these communities.”⁴

Sustainable public safety requires a stabilizing and supportive social network within a community. Grassroots organizations need resources and autonomy so that they can provide people with the necessary support; they must also build trust. “It requires repairing the harm that has been inflicted on poor and working-class communities of color by generations of systemic racism and economic exploitation. Government must direct public resources into communities where poverty, trauma, and despair are fueling violence and empower community members to decide how public resources can best be used to enhance community wellness.”⁵ Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright acknowledged the crucial role of CMS/CV organizations at a recent public safety forum highlighting that “one of the big investments that we've made and we'll continue to make, is in the crisis management system. So these are credible messengers. These are people who are on the front lines, on the ground, community members who have really stepped up” to prevent violence.⁶

The Crisis Management System involves employing formerly incarcerated people from the neighborhood to mediate the violence and conflicts within the community. This is how community members become part of the solution. After adopting the Cure Violence Model, the Queensbridge Houses, one of the largest public housing communities in the country, went over 600 days without a shooting, according to a 2017 New York Times article.⁷

In late 2021, New York City’s application for federal funds provided a concrete analysis of the economic benefit of the City’s gun violence interruption programming. Using hospital and other data, MOCJ was able to calculate the savings CMS and its providers have on programs like Medicaid. Specifically, pre-pandemic evaluations show that, from 2014 to 2019, gun injuries in four selected CMS sites decreased by 50% compared to a 32% reduction in matched sites without CMS. Fewer gun injuries and hospitalizations translate into real economic savings and healthier communities.⁸

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, Jr., recently announced that ten community-based organizations were selected to receive \$20,000 each from the Manhattan D.A.’s office for

³ *The Effects of Cure Violence in the South Bronx and East New York, Brooklyn*, Sheyla A. Delgado, Laila Alsabahi, Kevin Wolff, Nicole Alexander, Patricia Cobar, Jeffrey A. Butts, authors. Research and Evaluation Center at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York: 2017.

⁴ 2021 NY REG TEXT 589788 (NS), 2021 NY REG TEXT 589788 (NS), New York Regulation Text: 9 NYCRR 8.211, September 8, 2021 (*Approx. 2 pages*).

⁵ *Shifting Power to the Community: A Hopeful Experiment in Brownsville, Brooklyn*, 2022 WLNR 6321489, Gotham Gazette, Eric Gonzalez and Cyrus Smith, March 2, 2022.

⁶ Deputy Mayor Wright, TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS HOSTS COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON PUBLIC SAFETY IN QUEENS - 10/03/2022, Westlaw Classic.

⁷ CUNY: Documenting Public Housing-To-Prison Pipeline Is A Personal Mission, Targeted News Service (US) (September 29, 2022) (*Approx. 6 pages*).

⁸ NEW YORK CITY’S ANTI-GUN VIOLENCE PROGRAMMING RECEIVES \$20.5 MILLION FEDERAL INVESTMENT, States News Service, December 29, 2021, (*Approx. 5 pages*).

initiatives to present youth gun violence. DA Bragg emphasized how those community-based organizations “demonstrated their capacity to reach young people at high risk of involvement in gun violence and steer them toward a better path. I’m deeply grateful to them for serving our youth and making our communities safer, and excited to work together in the coming months.”⁹

III. Working Collaboratively to Implement the Support for CMS/CV Organizations Outlined in Int. No. 756-2022

The support for CMS organizations envisioned in Int. No. 756-2022 is vital; however, it would be worthwhile for the Council to consider allowing MOCJ the option of outsourcing the provision of these services. For example: some of the smaller, more newly established CMS organizations receive technical support, human resources grant writing, and the like from a larger, more established organization, such as with Sheltering Arms and Rock Safe Streets in Queens, and CAMBA and BIVO in Brooklyn.

Another recent example of how partnering with CMS/CV organizations produced concrete results was their role in ensuring that there were no shootings or deaths at the September 2022 J’Ouvert and the West Indian Day parade. Mayor Adams publicly thanked Pastor Monroe from the God Squad, Camara Jackson from Elite Learners, AT Mitchell from Man Up, and Anthony Newerls from BIVO. “Let me tell you how refreshing it was for me personally, to hear members of this department calling for them, ‘Hey, we need God Squad over here, we want to break up a party. We want to tell people they have to turn the music down.’ When they were calling, seeing Elite Learners standing out there 4 in the morning on Nostrand and Church, one of our toughest corners every year.”¹⁰

CJU provides holistic legal representation, training and otherwise supports CMS organizations to ensure that they meet their contractual obligations and fulfill the needs of their participants and community members. CJU’s collaboration with Red Hook Initiative to create a Youth Ambassador training is a great example of how CJU provides legal services to community participants. CJU staff teaches youths Know Your Rights and Gang Database Workshops so that they can then present those workshops to their peers. This is important because information lands differently when it comes from another youth and member of the same peer group. Furthermore, the youths receive certifications and also acquire essential leadership and conflict-resolution skills.

Another consideration might be a partnership with CMS organizations and the Department of Mental Health and Hygiene to provide mental health services in the catchment areas. Outsourcing, together with an expansion in partnerships with others who have been providing the support outlined in the Bill may be the best way to address the needs of CMS organizations, without overburdening MOCJ. At a recent Public Safety Forum, Commissioner Ashwin Vasan, Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, shared that the administration will soon release plans to address three key areas that are particularly important for people living with serious emotional

⁹ D.A. BRAGG FUNDS TEN CRUCIAL YOUTH GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVES, States News Service, August 10, 2022, (*Approx. 10 pages*).

¹⁰ TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS MAKES A PUBLIC SAFETY-RELATED ANNOUNCEMENT, 09/06/2022, Westlaw Classic.

and behavioral health needs: healthcare, housing, and community.¹¹ “Too often we often we work a lot on providing the first two, but we don't think enough about the third. And the third really drives people into isolation, social isolation, which can worsen into crisis and often end up in the events that we see and that cause us so much pain and trauma.”¹²

At a recent Public Safety Forum, Chancellor Banks, New York City Department of Education discussed a new initiative called Project Pivot, where he and his team identified about 138 different organizations from around the city who will work with a whole host of schools, schools that primarily have experienced some level of challenge, and need additional levels of support.¹³ These are organizations which provide mentors, safe passage to and from school as well as tutors.¹⁴

IV. Int. No. 756-2022, with the considerations shared herein, is an Important Building Block in the Continued Success of CMS/CV Organizations

I strongly urge this Council to pass Int. No. 756-2022, taking into account the recommendations that I've shared, so that the CMS organizations can expand their exemplary work and continue to not only make communities safe, but ensure that they thrive.

Thank you.

¹¹Commissioner Ashwin Vasan, Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS HOSTS COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON PUBLIC SAFETY IN QUEENS, 10/03/2022, Westlaw Classic.

¹²Commissioner Ashwin Vasan, Department of Mental Health and Hygiene, TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS HOSTS COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON PUBLIC SAFETY IN QUEENS, 10/03/2022, Westlaw Classic.

¹³Chancellor Banks, TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS HOSTS COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON PUBLIC SAFETY IN QUEENS, 10/03/2022, Westlaw Classic.

¹⁴Chancellor Banks, TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR ERIC ADAMS HOSTS COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON PUBLIC SAFETY IN QUEENS, 10/03/2022, Westlaw Classic.

Greetings All, my name is Ramik Williams, I represent Kings Against Violence Initiative. We are an anti violence, youth development organization working with young people primarily in Brooklyn. With MOCJ funding we are the Violence Intervention Program in Kings County Hospital. We also work in NYCHA residences, community spaces and within schools. Our work serves two purposes, responding to the traumatic manifestations of violence and preventing violence from occurring and in some cases reoccurring. We are a data driven organization that tracks our efforts and outcomes with all of our participants and our program services. We strive to be effective and efficient. This is human services work however, and some of our work is empirical. We support an evaluation of the effectiveness of our work. We believe that this level of diligence will improve the Crisis Management ecosystem by identifying shared language, best practices and interconnected work. As much as we appreciate the value of governance and metrics, however, we would caution against any oversight that is strictly data driven. Any evaluation must allow for the vertices of our work to exist. The positive outcomes we all desire may take time and on the surface may not look effective. Meaning it may take time for us to engage, hard to reach, disconnected young people. The efforts may look ineffective on monthly and quarterly reports, while the long term impact may produce a young person actively and positively engaged in society. Change takes time.

Equally, we support the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice providing training and operational support to service providers. In fact, we at KAVI are launching a Center for Strengthening Violence Intervention Programs that will provide technical assistance to such service providers and those that want to be one, throughout the city. We recognize that not everyone who forms a not for profit organization has the experience and tools necessary to maintain that organization. Moreover we recognize that each of these organizations deserve a chance at sustainability provided they are doing upstanding work.

In closing, I would like to thank the City Council Members that have supported KAVI: Members Joseph, Hudson, Louis and Mealy, and look forward to working with other members as we expand our work throughout New York.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 756-2022 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ROSILYN MORRISON

Address: 120-46 QUEEN'S BLVD, Kew Gardens NY 11415

I represent: The Legal Aid Society, Community Justice Unit

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 756+439 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 11-4-22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rachel Swaner

Address: Court Street Brooklyn, NY 11231

I represent: Center for Court Innovation

Address: 520 8th Avenue NY, NY 10018

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 0439-2022 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 11/4/2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ramik Williams

Address: West 135th Street NY, NY 10037

I represent: Kings Against Violence Initiative

Address: 147 Prince Street BKLYN, NY 11201

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 11/4/2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jackie GOSDIGAN

Address: _____

I represent: Brooklyn Defender Services

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 0439-2022 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 11/4/2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sherry Tulk

Address: E. 16th St, NY, NY

I represent: Self

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 439, 756 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 11/4/2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nora Daniel, Chief of Staff

Address: 1 Centre St, 10th Fl, NY, NY

I represent: Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 439/756 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KARINA CHRISTIANSEN

Address: 4 DEPUTY EXEC DIR, MAYOR'S OFFICE OF NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY

I represent: MOCJ - ONS

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 439/756 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Carla Osborne - Deputy ED ONS

Address: _____

I represent: Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 439/756 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 11/4/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Rodny Carvalal, Senior Director

Address: _____

I represent: MOCJ - office of Neighborhood safety

Address: 1 Centre street, 10th floor N.Y., N.Y. 10007

▶ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◀

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 439/756 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 11/4/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sarah Cassel, Director of Diversion and Reentry Initiatives

Address: _____

I represent: MOCJ

Address: _____

▶ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◀